Identification of the 'Practice'

TITLE of the good practice: Strategic Plan for HRM development
Country/Region: Province of Trento (Italy)
Nature: Programme – Measure – Project – Other: Programme
Period*: 2012-2014 (further planning 2015-)
Budget: = 3 full time equivalent staff members
In which language(s) available: Italia/partially in English
Final beneficiary: the organisation (Autonomous Province of Trento) as employer and its 4,000+ employees
Leading partner: Autonomous Province of Trento HR Service, with the support of expert centres and consultancies
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*: If known/if available

Description of the 'Good Practice'

What was the problem?:
Currently, the Italian public administrations (and even in all of the organisations due to the global competition) are undertaking a spending review; the new PAT's HRM strategy, within this context and according to this goal, seeks to promote a way of working that can be cost saving, but also can enhance flexibility, work-life balance of workers and their well-being at work regardless of their age. Indeed, the aim has been to increase the PAT's managers and supervisors awareness of the processes of ageing at work (PAT's employees mean age in 2013 = 48 years; 25% of the total workforce aged 54+) and of how it could affect the perceived quality of work in order to sustain the development of age-positive (and cost saving) HR practices.

What were the objective(s)?:
1)   save costs (significant reductions in total office occupancy, no overtime payment, no meal vouchers paid in the day of telework) and preserving productivity of work
2)   better balance of work and family life
3)   increase individual and organisational flexibility
4)   foster workers well-being at work regardless of their age
5)   invest in ICT
6)   participation in local community and social and environmental benefits
7)   age management

What did you do?:
1) Launch of a Teleworking programme (TelePAT) addressed to all of the employees (2012-ongoing)
So far 200 employees (about 5% of the workforce) are teleworkers now: 94 home based, 87 from 12 telecentres and 23 nomad telework (only managers). Before starting teleworking, employees and managers have been trained to learn about this new way of working: security, a new way of team building and supervision (having feedback about performance).
2) Organisational survey involving all of the PAT employees (with unlimited duration contracts) with the support of Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore (2013)
The WWELL Research Centre of Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore has developed a questionnaire, named Quality of Ageing at Work Questionnaire (QAW-q), as an action-research tool aimed at supporting the awareness raising process about critical aspects deriving from the employees' ageing at

work. Based on the key elements of the "workability" concept - health, competencies, motivation, work organisation - the QAW-q broadens its perspective through introducing four other elements aiming at bridging intra-organisational dimensions affecting the employees' condition to external socio-institutional environment and constraints: work-life balance, employment and economic stability, professional identity and relations at workplace. The QAW-q also aims at weighing the influence of the different meanings of age (chronological age, job seniority in the company and years of payment to social security schemes) on the individual perceptions and on the assessment of the organisational performance related to the eight key topics mentioned above. To fulfil this objective, the QAW-q has been structured as to intersect the "individual", "organisational" and "age influence" levels. Therefore, for each of the eight topics, six answers are collected: three of them related to the individual perceptions; two of them asking either an evaluation of past experiences and future expectations; the last one related to the assessment of the organisational performance on that specific topic.

The questionnaire has been administered among all of the PAT's employees in the autumn of 2013. Two out of three employees completed the questionnaire, thus the number of collected questionnaires reached 2,923.

The detailed results have been discussed with the top management and within the HR department in order to support the awareness raising process and to implement organisational measures fostering the quality of ageing at work of all the employees (age management).

3) Implementation of an age management plan as part of the overall HR strategic plan (2014)
In the summer of 2014 six focus groups, bringing together managers and lower staff, were set up in order to address specific topics to be improved according to the critical factors that had arisen in the survey (e.g. the impact of care responsibilities on the quality of daily work and on professional identity; the work motivation of younger employees and that of older employees).

4) Implementation of a communication plan concerning age-friendly organisational policies addressed to all employees (2014-)

Was there a specific focus on gender, diversity?:
The project had no specific focus, but all the analysis carried out took into account the influence of the gender dimension and care responsibilities on the perceived quality of work, at different ages.

What did you achieve?:
Employees and managers have increased their awareness on how the quality of daily work is perceived according to diversity in age, generation of belonging and seniority. The "voice" opportunity given to employees at every functional level has improved the organisational climate. Managers and the HR department understood which possible future issues to focus on (e.g. telework; the influence of care responsibilities) in order to improve the wellbeing of their employees, together with the degree of correlation among the different fields analysed thanks to the questionnaire (e.g: how to act to improve the perception of the employees concerning their work-life balance through sustaining their general satisfaction). Managers and the HR department gathered from the analysis of the situation new ideas and suggestions for further development of age management practices.
With regard to the TelePAT programme, since the beginning of the programme the objectives have been steadily monitored through data analysis, focus groups, questionnaires. These are the results:
1)   Cost savings: no overwork time paid, reduced costs for meal vouchers, cost savings for reductions in office occupancy
2)   Work life balance: less absenteeism, reduced career breaks (leaves) to take care of children, elderly people or deceased family members
3)   I.C.T.: e-works and e-phone to do videoconferences, to call and to do groupware
4)   Environmental benefits: reduced transport and consequent pollution, reduced emissions, traffic congestion.

What were changes or effects of the good practice?:
a) Promoted a reorganisation in the company (still on-going) and a redistribution of roles and tasks
b) Started a dialogue between management and employees,
c) Improved the organisational climate
d) Inreased flexibility
e) Raised age diversity awareness

What were the critical points to get the project running?
Concerning the survey, no some ? resistance to the implementation of internal analysis was met.
Concerning TelePAT:
a) Problem to say "No, you can't do it" to people that are not suiteble to telework
b) Problem to fix tele-workable activities, objectives and indicators to monitor results
c) Teleworking can have a negative impact on working relationships between the teleworker and their co-workers, especially if their co-workers do not telework. Co-workers that do not telework can feel resentful and jealous because they may consider it unfair that they are not allowed to telework as well or because they think that if their colleagues are not in the office, they themselves have to execute the tasks that would otherwise have been carried out by the former.
d) Managers' key concerns about telecommuting are fear of loss of control; they would like to be able to see them, "just to be sure; really even if the employees work in the office, the managers cannot have the possibility or the time to check their jobs.

Transferability:
Which part of your approach could be used in another context?
The QAW-q can be effectively used in other contexts, both in Italy and abroad, provided a proper translation of the questionnaire is available. Moreover, thanks to its modular structure, according to the features of the local institutional setting, it could also be integrated, implemented or modified (both its topics and/or questions).
The whole TelePAT process can also be transferred in other local and national contexts and in other organisations.

Which conditions are needed to optimize the transferability of the project?
The only condition is to have a governance model able to make the changes valuable and to pay attention to training the managers and the workers to adapt to this new way of working.

Link with the focus of the network (Tick more than one box if necessary):
      SYSTEM level
      ORGANISATIONAL level X
      INDIVIDUAL level
      Life phase
      Career phase
      Generation

Other information

Any other useful information on the Good Practice: