



PRESS RELEASE

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND DIVERSITY IN THE WORKFORCE: ELECTRICITY SECTOR SOCIAL PARTNERS UNVEIL GOOD PRACTICE TOOLKIT

The Social Partners in the electricity industry - Union of the Electricity Industry-EURELECTRIC representing employers, and EPSU/EMCEF for the trade unions- yesterday unveiled at a workshop a practical guide entitled *Equal Opportunities & Diversity - Toolkit / Best Practices Guide*. This first handbook addressing these issues in the electricity industry translates the results of an academic study to the level of practical implementation and contains suggestions on how to improve existing situations based on the experience of a wide range of European electricity companies.

The social partners in the electricity industry -EURELECTRIC, EMCEF, and EPSU- are committed to equality and diversity and have continuously worked together on Equal Opportunities and Diversity issues. The handbook unveiled yesterday is the result of a series of activities that have been undertaken by EURELECTRIC, EMCEF and EPSU, including a 2003 *Joint Declaration on Equal Opportunities and Diversity*, in which the partners stated their commitment to the construction of a “democratic, pluralist and open Europe that respects the dignity and integrity of all human beings”; and a research study on *Equal Opportunities and Diversity- Changing Employment Patterns in the European Electricity Industry* published in January 2005, comprising a mapping of the European electricity industry workforce and an account of equal opportunities policies at supra-national, national and company levels, thus providing the basis for policy making and learning strategies.

The “Equal Opportunities and Diversity Toolkit – Best Practices Guide” is the first handbook addressing these issues in the electricity industry. It translates the results of an academic study to the level of practical implementation, providing practical advice and concrete tools for employers, managers and unions to accommodate and implement equality and diversity programmes and initiatives in the workplace.

The practical guide covers the business benefits of equality and diversity and provides an overview of equality and diversity policies, practices and procedures that can be introduced in the workplace. It also highlights a range of initiatives that can be put in place to provide a supporting workplace culture that focusses on equality and diversity and addresses the work-life balance and flexible working hours, providing tools for introducing smart and flexible working conducive to an organisational culture that promotes diversity. Additionally, the handbook provides specific equality tools to help organisations implement equality and diversity at a practical level; and examines how equality and diversity can be driven forward through a social-partner approach by harnessing the potential for workplace solutions agreed between unions and management, which can help to promote equality and implement diversity strategies.

The project was made possible through funding by the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities.

* available on www.eurelectric.org under Catalogue of Publications/ Management Issues/ Social Affairs
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