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vision RH

HR Overview - Monitoring Human Resources news from France, Europe and around the world

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vision RH is a newsletter published by the French Directorate General for Administration and the Civil Service (DGAFF). It draws on information sources and reports issued by public administrations, the private sector, international organisations and the press, in several different languages. It aims to provide a broad view of current human resources and civil service initiatives.

Solidarity and well-being, common denominators of social action for government employees

“Directly or indirectly improving the employment, working and living conditions of staff and their families, by helping them cope with difficult situations and facilitating their access to various community services”: this is the **definition of social action** in the French civil service. Social action, financed by the government, largely entails the **provision** of services in exchange for a contribution by employees.

Looking at practices in other countries, we note that the economic and organisational models and the scope for social action are different in almost every country.

In **Belgium**, **Spain** or **Switzerland**, social action is piloted by the government, which, if necessary, delegates tasks to a non-profit organisation. As in France, labour unions are represented in management committees.

Some countries manage their catering and housing services in-house, but outsource other services through grants:

- In Germany (and in Austria), **Sozialwerke** are non-profit organisations that mainly focus on holiday and leisure activities. However, some **Sozialwerke** offer financial support to their members for **childcare**, as well as support for retired staff and staff with disabilities.
- In the United Kingdom, **Charities for Civil Servants** are charities advising and assisting all public employees free of charge in solving the (personal and financial) difficulties they may encounter. Only leisure activities are subject to a contribution by employees. In Ireland, the **Public Service Friendly Society (PSFS)** offers similar assistance to its members.

In Italy, social action is the sole responsibility of a central government entity for social benefits (INPDAP for the public sector, which was integrated into **INPS** in 2011, while continuing to manage separately the rights of public employees who can benefit from housing assistance, emergency loans and **scholarships** for their children).

In the countries of northern Europe (the Netherlands and Scandinavia), certain social action benefits that are specific to the public sector — which supplement or replace those already available to all citizens — must be negotiated with professional organisations and must be specifically mentioned in **collective agreements**.

Across the Atlantic (Canada and the United States), social action — organised by public-sector employers — takes the form of **assistance programmes and assistance to employees** financed by the government. Professional associations and/or labour unions

offer specially-negotiated rates for certain [market services](#) (insurance and banking, leisure, etc.). Australia and New Zealand have similar models.

Changing lifestyles increasingly affect employees' expectations and needs in terms of social action. Such benefit programmes can be a genuine source of attractiveness for public-sector employment provided it is subject to innovation and adaptation, as shown in one section of a [European study](#) carried out by the University of Rotterdam as part of the LIPSE project.

Notes

For more information: oecd.org





NEWS CIVIL SERVICE, HR POLICY AND INNOVATION

An initial assessment of institutional reforms in Europe

France's CNFPT and the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration (IASIA) have prepared an [inventory](#) of the administrations of 49 European countries, identifying the major changes and reforms carried out since the 2008 financial crisis. This report highlights the general trend — driven by budget cuts — to merge local government entities and eliminate intermediary echelons, as well as a slight effort to strengthen regional government.

Notes

For more information: cnfpt.fr (in French)



Belgium's public sector turns to temporary staff

A royal decree in Belgium now authorises the public sector to use temporary staff. Temps may be used only in the following cases: replacement of a contract employee (due to a temporary leave of absence or termination) or a civil servant on long-term leave or moving to part-time work; additional staff cover for peaks of activity; or exceptional work (limited to six specific situations).

Notes

For more information: belgium.be (in French)



A report on innovation paths in European administrations

This initial study by Polish and Hungarian researchers aims to establish a better understanding of innovation capacities and processes. According to the researchers, public administration is fostering creative workplaces in all countries, but progress is still hampered by factors such as an unfavourable institutional framework, weak innovation leadership and insufficient data collection.

Notes

For more information: edu.pl





NEWS RECRUITMENT, TRAINING AND SKILLS

A programme for the return to employment in the UK Civil Service

The Civil Service offers contracts for individuals who have not worked for at least two years or whose current employment is not commensurate with their level of qualifications and skills. Lasting six weeks to six months, depending on the post, these contracts enable employees to update their knowledge and enhance their work experience, with a view to recruitment in a permanent position.

Notes

For more information: gov.uk



New rules for the appraisal of German civil servants

Germany has introduced new rules for appraisals of civil servants. These appraisals have a major impact on civil servants' promotions and/or requests for transfers. A judgment handed down by the Stuttgart administrative court of appeal states that "specific grounds" must be given for any downgrade to a civil servant's appraisal score. The judges considered that this obligation to give grounds for a lower appraisal score stems from the principle of legal protection, guaranteed by the Basic Law (Germany's constitution).

Notes

For more information: dbb.de (in German)



Willbot, SNCF's new chatbot to assist in recruitment

In order to meet its sizeable recruitment needs (4,500 hires expected in 2019) and to streamline the processing of the 250,000 applications it receives annually, French railway operator SNCF is launching a [new platform](#) with a chatbot. Internet users thus have the opportunity to discover the various jobs within the group and to chat with current staff (60 "ambassadors" will answer potential applicants' questions and share their own experiences).

Notes

For more information: sncf.com (in French)





NEWS SENIOR MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP, DIGITALISATION

Changes in the way managers are selected in the Australian civil service

The Australian civil service is changing the way it selects its senior management in order to speed up recruitment and improve coordination across ministries (which launched this initiative in an endeavour to pool their pools of candidates). By strengthening central oversight, this new procedure also ensures independence and reduces overlaps in processes.

Notes

For more information: apsc.go.au



Better recognition for Canadian civil servants

Each year, every federal department will have to nominate at least five employees for various awards. This initiative is a response to an internal evaluation that revealed that civil servants are “largely underrepresented” in Canada’s honours system. The Office of the Governor General is responsible for ensuring that all departments cooperate in this matter.

Notes

For more information: gg.ca



A digital apprenticeship programme for the Irish public sector

The Irish government's "Fastrack to IT" and Civil Service HR departments have designed Ireland's first apprenticeship programme aimed at helping participants take up government jobs, more specifically in the digital professions. After a two-year period during which participants are paid and earn their credentials in IT networks or programming, the successful candidates will have access to career opportunities in government departments and offices.

Notes

For more information: per.gov.ie





NEWS SOCIAL DIALOGUE AND QUALITY OF WORKING ENVIRONMENT

European study on new work organisation methods in the public sector

Carried out by the Austrian Presidency of the European Union as part of the EUPAN network, this [study](#) examines the latest developments in terms of time management, work location and organisational methods in European administrations. By addressing the legal and sociological aspects and presenting various practices, the aim is to show how to respond to many challenges, such as those related to digital deployment.

Notes

For more information: oeffentlicherdienst.gv.at (in German)



Luxembourg provides mortgage assistance to government employees

Luxembourg will award a mortgage interest subsidy for its civil servants in order to reduce the expenses of repaying a mortgage taken out to build, purchase or convert accommodation serving as a primary and permanent residence. The subsidy is fixed at 0.50% (increased by the same amount for each dependent child) and is calculated on the balance of the loan multiplied by the rate indicated on the amortisation table.

Notes

For more information: public.lu (in French)



Agreement on longer paternity leave for Spanish civil servants

Labour unions and the Spanish government have signed an [agreement](#) to gradually extend the length of paternity leave for civil servants. It increases leave from 5 to 8 weeks at the beginning of this year, then to 12 weeks in 2020 and to 16 weeks in 2021. The government wanted to create a social pact for the future by helping to eradicate the gap between the careers of men and women after the birth of a child.

Notes

For more information: mptfp.gob.es (in Spanish)



“VP2”, another look at work/life balance at KPMG

Many companies have begun to focus strongly on boosting employees’ wellbeing as a means to maintaining staff loyalty.

Following a consultation involving 200 employees, the [KPMG group's VP² charter](#) has set the goal of achieving work/life balance for all its staff. Broken down into seven main areas, it breaks new ground by tackling a particularly widespread phenomenon in France: [presenteeism](#).¹

Managers’ top priority is to “promote added value rather than hours on the job”.

They [formally undertake](#) to organise work in accordance with each employees’ requirements, to use tools efficiently and in a way that respects employees’ personal lives, and to plan meetings at times that are convenient for everyone.

This system — which is evaluated every two years — also provides for special follow-up for every woman on maternity leave.

In May 2018, the charter was incorporated into [a comprehensive business agreement on quality of life at work](#), signed with staff representatives, which includes the right to disconnect, new forms of work and the prevention of psychosocial risks.

¹ According to a [study](#) carried out by *Fellowes*, French companies are the most affected in Europe.

Notes

For more information: kpmg.fr (in French)



Access to employment and in-house promotion in the Italian public sector

The Italian government continues to reform its civil service. After implementation of the **Madia Act**, one of the flagship measures to **combat absenteeism** (team managers are now held accountable as much as employees in cases of misconduct, which, if repeated, becomes grounds for dismissal), **new provisions** came into force at the beginning of the year. They concern recruitment, evaluation and internal promotion.

While the **civil service entry exam** remains the means to gain access to public employment (as guaranteed to the professional organisations during **reform** of the status of civil servants), the government wanted to streamline and overhaul the entry exam:

- All exams for an equivalent level of recruitment and combining the same skills will be pooled (the “**single exam**” rule)
- Departments will have to assess the number of potential candidates, and when there is a large number of candidates in relation to the number of posts offered, organise **online pre-selection tests** to reduce the costs incurred by the testing centres
- Tests for assessing candidates’ adaptability to employment (**psycho-technical tests** during the written exam portion, and group role playing during the oral exam portion) must be included in every civil service entry exam. These tests will be weighted the same as academic knowledge in the final score.
- Members of **selection boards** will be chosen by drawing lots from a list of individuals (both inside and outside the administration) who have responded to a call for applications and met the conditions laid out.

With regard to internal promotions, individual assessment (which, since the beginning of 2018, now has to be **carried out on the same criteria as the evaluation of the department's collective performance**) opens up new possibilities: professional examinations will be reserved for those employees “with the best results” over the previous three years.

A **national web portal** dedicated to recruitment and civil service exams will be launched soon. All government departments will be required — in accordance with **the principles of transparency** — to publish notices for upcoming exams, the composition of selection boards, and the lists of candidates admitted. Each candidate will have access to a personal account to track his or her progress.

Notes

For more information: funzionepubblica.gov.it (in Italian)



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