



FINAL SUMMARY - RECOMMENDATIONS:

**PROJECT TITLE: Holistic Intercultural
Preparation (HIP)**

PROJECT NUMBER: 2019-1-ES01-KA202-065513

DECISION TO GO ABROAD:

☒ More than half of the workers surveyed decided individually to work abroad (58,33%), so it is not primarily a decision taken by the company. As an exception we find that in Belgium the highest percentage of responses indicate that it was the company that first sent the employee to work abroad, closely followed by the individual decision of the employee. As far as companies are concerned, among the skills they look for in an employee when assigning him or her to a job abroad, open and flexible character are particularly important in all four countries, although in Germany and Belgium the employee's technical knowledge is also especially valued, being the first choice in the case of Belgium.

In the case of both expatriates and companies, it should always be kept in mind that these factors as well as decisions can be influenced depending on whether it is a long-term travel or a shorter one. Likewise, there are cultural gaps between countries, and it should be kept in mind that even if the country is relatively close, cultural differences can also be a problem that may not help the expatriate to decide whether to leave his or her home country or not.

□ Improvement possibilities:

- Expand the possibility of international development within the company, developing career plans so that the company can select national profiles or positions that may be more useful abroad based on its business model. It is essential that companies be sensitised to this issue.
- It would also be advisable to take trainees into account. One option for companies that would be very useful would be to create several and detailed specific programmes for them to travel abroad.

INITIAL PREPARATION:

☒ In terms of the initial preparation that workers receive, it tends to focus on organisational support both from the point of view of workers and companies. It is worth mentioning that in Italy, taking into account only the workers' opinion, there is not much preparation for the stay abroad and it tends to focus mainly on language learning (from the company's point of view, it would be different). In fact, learning the language of the host country, in general, is the second most considered option for a stay abroad by both workers and companies. It is important to note that many of the



respondents indicated that they do not receive any initial preparation and that this is an issue to be taken into account to ensure the success of the professional assignment given that from the companies' point of view, 99% consider that some initial preparation is done.

- ☒ With the exception of Germany, intercultural preparation is rated as very low by employees. In fact, from the companies' point of view, only German companies offer intercultural training, with a very significant percentage compared to the other three countries. On the other hand, it is significant that when rating the importance of initial training, both workers and companies consider intercultural preparation to be an important issue, but in reality, intercultural training hardly exists, and in only one of the four countries does it happen at all.

Improvement possibilities:

- Give a deeper preparation before leaving the country. It should go further than just organisational support and language classes. It would also be worthwhile to create detailed plans for intercultural preparation that cover the personal and professional needs of workers.

- ☒ With the results obtained in our survey, there was no support to help establish the family in the destination country but this may be due to the fact that most of the respondents did not have a family and/or because of the period of stay, it was not necessary. However, this is an important aspect to take into account in order to ensure the success of the international professional assignment.

Improvement possibilities:

- It is crucial to analyse whether the length of stay is going to be long and whether this may cause the possibility of becoming a problem for the family.
- The company should offer more support in order to facilitate the settlement of the family in the country of destination of the assigned workers.
- In the same way, getting a visa can be a complex process. The company should help both the person concerned and their family members with these issues.

PREPARATION DURING THE STAY:

- ☒ During the stay abroad, the most important aspects in all four countries are support from a member of the team, socialising opportunities inside the company (highly mentioned by German employees and not very much by Italian employees) and language classes in the host country versus intercultural coaching (not very significant).

Improvement possibilities:

- Workers should receive intercultural coaching. It would also be helpful if the company could provide a clear definition of this concept. In other words, the



expatriate needs to have a clear understanding of the exact areas in which he/she will receive such support during the stay in the new country.

- ☒ Regarding to the company/career related integration support received during the “expat stay” under the expat’s point of view, there is no homogeneous criterion between countries, with Mentoring in Italy, Information about corporate culture / company organisation in Germany and Spain and not applicable in Belgium.

□ Improvement possibilities:

- Provide employees with more complete information from the company on integration support during their stay, taking into account various aspects to complement all the information, such as mentoring, corporate culture, career development, etc. In fact, it has been detected that hardly any information is provided in relation to expectations with reference to the period after having comeback from abroad although workers select this as the least important aspect. For this reason, it would be advisable to give as much explanation as possible and to explain what these expectations will be.
- ☒ The options of support from a peer and/or superior of the worker and participation in community life, access to programs, and collaboration in social activities are the most selected by workers and in the companies there is homogeneity in terms of considering support from a member of the team as a priority.

□ Improvement possibilities:

- As options for improvement, we consider it essential to continue to strengthen these two measures as well as practical support to families in the cases they require. As mentioned above, in our study there were no significant results in terms of support for workers' families and for this reason it is often undervalued but we considered as a priority.
- The option of creating a peer group in the country of destination can greatly help the person involved to feel more secure there in case of any unexpected situations.

DIFFICULTIES:

- ☒ In Belgium, Italy and Spain, homesickness is highlighted as the main difficulty for workers, with the case of Germany, where poor social life also highlighted with a great percentage. In this case, having a low social life can also express itself in homesickness, but it does not have to. As far as the company's point of view is concerned, the main problem cited is the problem of integrating families, except in Spain, where the poor social life is highlighted. These are generally external factors, outside of work: non-adaptation of the family, poor social life or homesickness.



□ Improvement possibilities:

- It is essential to pay attention to all social and professional aspects of the workers' environment in order to avoid negative repercussions on professional performance.

CONCLUSIONS:

As demonstrated by the results of the company survey, the major impact of the failure of expatriate processes is mainly economic due to the investment in human capital, the associated costs and the failure to achieve the targets. For this reason, it is important to pay attention to all the elements involved in the process and, in particular, to intercultural preparation, creating systematic and specific preparation processes in the companies for the workers who go abroad.

Furthermore, the essential problem that tends to arise in all the countries analysed is the lack of integration, either of the worker or his/her family. Therefore, preparation should not only focus on language aspects and organisational support, but should also address the social and cultural environment so that the worker (and/or his/her family) can adapt and avoid failure in the assignment.

During the course of this project, we have realised how wide this field is and how many things we still have to improve in order to make the expatriate experience as positive as possible. For this reason, we would be pleased to present a new project looking more deeply into some aspects of this topic.