

CAREER MANAGEMENT WITHIN THE EUROPEAN UNION ORGANIZATIONS

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Abstract: The analysis of the career management practices within the European Union organization allows the procurance of a general vision over the necessity of their existence, applying and development within the Romanian business environment. The present economical-social context requires a reconsideration of the importance granted to the activities specific to the human resources career management at an organizational level.

Key words: career, human resources management, planning

The career management is considered to be the process¹ of design and implementation of purposes, strategies and plans which allows the organization to satisfy its needs of human resources, and the individuals to achieve their career purposes. It also includes the planning and career development integration as well as the functional interdependencies of planning of the individual career, organizational career and career development.

The career management, as component part of the human resources management, can be characterized by the diversity of conceptions and practices, diversity resulting from the geographical, economic, linguistic, legislative and cultural differences between the European Union countries. At the level of organizations, the career management introduction and implementation is influenced by an ensemble of factors belonging to their general external environment, to their specific external environment and to their internal environment (see fig.1).

<u>I ECONOMIC FACTORS</u>	<u>II POLITICAL FACTORS</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the access to the capital market and the obligations towards the stakeholders; - the competition accentuation on the internal and international plan; - the crediting policy, the inflation and the rates of exchange; - the stage of economy and its development perspective; - the availability and the workforce cost. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work legislation and the European norms regarding the working schedule, the income levels and work practices; - the attitude regarding social corporative responsibility; - the government policy regarding the continuous training; - the legislation regarding the environment and work health and safety.
<u>III SOCIO – CULTURAL FACTORS</u>	<u>IV TECHNOLOGICAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the demographic factors (number of population and households); - the lifestyle (the attitude towards work, rest and family structure); - changes regarding the cultural values and the consumption habits; - regional factors (levels of education, skills availability, locations attractiveness, time allotted to business trips). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - changes regarding the communication and production technologies; - the extension of process and product innovation within the industry; - the need of research and development investments, - the technological transfer rate, - the need of drawing knowledge from external sources; - work organization.

¹ Aurel Manolescu: Human Resources Management, 4th Edition, the Economical Publishing House, Bucharest, 2003, page 324;

Fig. 1: The factors influencing the career management²

The economical and social environment analyst, who monitor the changes, suggested that individuals no longer take into consideration the development of a “lifetime career” in only one job or organization, but they assume the responsibility of managing their own career routes. The arguments aim at the changes within the European economy as well as at the changes within the organizations’ management, elements which lead to the reduction of the confidence in the possibility of a linear, progressive career. Nevertheless, the studies performed³ show that most of the employees are attached to the organization in which they activate, hope to work at least 5 years within it and expect to be promoted during this interval. There are a few organizations which renounced to the employment contracts for an undetermined period of time or to the traditional elements of career management such as the succession plans or the inside promotion.

Nevertheless, the ones who accepted the traditional career’s decline are the young people and the highly qualified professionals, who lay the stress on a professional development able to assure their competitiveness on the labor market. Also, more and more individuals approach the success in a career from a wider perspective which takes into account the personal life objectives, the spare time allotted to vacations and to the community in which they activate. To the support of this affirmation comes a recent study⁴ regarding work in Europe, study which shows that the employees within the Union consider health, family, friend and spare time to be more important than work, which occupies only the 5th rank in their priorities.

The tendency according to which the employees assume the responsibility of their own career development becomes more and more obvious, but these employees need the support of the organizations in which they activate.

Thus, through the career management practices, the organizations can approach in a coherent, consistent and proactive manner their employees professional support and development. Due to the fact that they cannot promise a lifetime workplace, the organizations must take into account their employees personal aspirations, they must contribute to the development of their professional skills in order to increase their competitiveness on the work market and to assure a better financial safety. Also, the correlation of the organizations strategic objectives with the employees’ objectives became an element necessary to the procurance of the competitive advantage; a motivated and co-operative personnel is an essential element in the assurance of the company’s competitiveness on a continuously changing market.

In the present conditions of the labor market, where the employers from the European Union are confronted with difficulties of recruiting the necessary personnel, the employees development is highly important for guaranteeing the future of the organization and for sustaining the competitive advantage.

The strategies of the European companies regarding the administration of human resources aimed at the increase of employees’ performance during the last few years, and the main *action directions*⁵ were:

- encouraging the *continuous training* by means of the individual skills upgrade courses, online courses and mentoring; **Obs.:** In the latest European⁶ investigation regarding the work and life conditions it has been noted that the access to the professional training has not been improved during the latest 5 years, noticing as well a training deficit during the entire life for older or less skilled workers, in spite of the work legislation modifications within the union and of the financial support by the European Social Funds; also, the part time and temporary employees benefited quite rarely of training courses as compared to the full time employees.
- *Keeping the persons valuable* for the organization by elaborating strategies regarding the old personnel, the knowledge management, the completion of the databases with practical information;
- Promoting a *policy of equal chances* by equitable trainings, diversity encouraging policies etc.

² Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) – Career management (a guide);

³ CIPD Research report, Pressure at work and psychological contract, Guest and Conaway, 2002;

⁴ Capital no.11/March 15, 2007, Euro barometer 2007, page. 36-37;

⁵ www.fedee.com: „Human resource management in an expanded European Union”;

⁶ www.eurofound.europa.eu; The European Foundation for Improving the Life and Work Conditions,2007.

- Encouraging the reach of the *balance between the professional and the personal life* by rendering the work schedule, the benefits and compensations, etc. more flexible; **Obs.:** In EU 27, the work schedule includes, in average, 40 hours/week (the central and northern countries have shorter schedules - France 35 hours, Holland 33 hours – and the eastern and southern countries have longer work schedules, over 40 hours) , allowing thus the performance of a balanced life for 80% of the European people.
- The improvement of the *professional performances* by:
 - using the performance management methods: benchmarking, reengineering, objectives management, employees evaluation through the 360° feedback method, quality circles introduction etc.
 - improving the recruiting process by sponsoring students, the online recruiting which allows the automatic CV-s selection, the head-hunting;
 - creating evaluation and development centers;
 - conceiving and applying the succession plans;
 - reducing the rate of absenteeism through the motivation programs, through the monitoring of the long-term absences and so on ;
 - assuring a pleasant work environment, bearing the transfer costs, various types of help in critical situations and so on.

The career management is approached differently within the organizations, according to the size of the company, to its economical and financial power, to the geographical area where it performs its activities as well as to the importance that it grants to human resources management in general.

Most of the companies conceive and develop activities of *careers administration*⁷ for the employees with development potential, especially for the superior and average level managers. There are yet few organizations that have created strategies which take into account all the employees.

The most used career management practices aiming at the entire personnel are the following:

- the existence of a *job posting system*, namely of an internal site presenting the vacant jobs within the company to which all the employees can apply;
- the formal evaluation / the evaluation of the career development plan with the manager ;
- informal support from the direct superior/ human resources managers / functions managers, regarding the career;
- career movements administrated by the organization;
- succession plans;
- formal mentoring activities;

The activities addressing to all the employees are especially informal and not always effective; they imply especially performances evaluation within certain employee/manager discussions, moment in which the career development level is also assessed.

The employees consider that the most effective activities regarding career management are:

- the internal jobs market;
- the evaluation and development centers;
- the development programs aiming at work/career experience;
- the career counseling by individual trainers;
- the coaching regarding the career;
- the formal performances and career development evaluation;
- the career plans for the employees with high development potential;
- informal support from the human resources and/or department manager;

⁷ CIPD: Managing employee career: issues, trends and prospects, 2003;

A very important role in applying the career management is held by the *company superior management*, by: changing the line managers' attitude in the sense of rendering them more responsible, assuring the necessary resources and correlating the human resources activities with the business necessities.

At present, the employees consider the acquiring of experience and the development of new professional skills and competences, elements allowing them to change the organization, to work in other countries and even to change their activity field, to be more and more important. This situation will lead to the career management transformation in a strategic instrument of the human resources management from any organization.

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