

The fate of an ageing workforce at the EPO

“Building a workplace where everyone feels welcome, respected and where everybody can bring their authentic self” - “Corporate social responsibility” “Leave no-one behind” - “International women’s day” - “Shadowing day” “International day of people with a disability” - “Women’s network” - “The rainbow group” “The special needs network”

Source : <https://intranet.epo.org/the-office/working-the-epo/diversity-inclusion>

Reading these quotes you would think the EPO is an employer treating its employees with respect and fulfilling its duty of care. However, the current policies are focusing on productivity as the main (sole) criterion for appreciating staff with unrealistic production expectations in many cases.

Such policies do not take into account the facts of life (e.g. health problems) and even worsen them with production corridors affecting in particular the ageing workforce.

In addition to that, other issues come into play:

- working digitally in general
- new IT tools that are frequently updated
- high pace of procedural changes
- sedentary work causing physical problems, such as eye or back trouble
- concentration issues

Those among the ageing workforce who are considered, regardless of their condition, as performing below the expectations of their corridor are currently being singled out by line managers.

They are regularly forced to attend meetings with the team manager, director, often HR partner and even sometimes principal director.

The pretext for these meetings is:

“We are here to help you reach your goals”

But the real reason is to make it clear to him or her that:

“Your production/productivity is too low”

“You are not doing enough according to your grade and experience”

“You are being unfair towards the younger colleagues in the team because they do more for less money”

“You are lowering the team’s production figures”

Which may then be followed by:

“This low production/productivity could lead to the initiation of the incompetence procedure”

And even:

“Maybe you should consider working part time”

“Maybe it is time to retire”

Such a procedure is experienced as institutional harassment forcing employees to retire or even resign.

By focusing solely on productivity aspects, the EPO is actually ignoring the specific competencies of each employee in its workforce. Ageing employees accumulate significant knowledge over the years and are a precious asset for training purposes and decision making.

Instead of chasing out ageing employees, the EPO should rather invest into its workforce and be up to the standards it pretends to have in its communication campaigns.

Sincerely yours

The Local Staff Committee Munich