

Establishing links with the private sector for spouse & partner employment opportunities

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Working Group Members:
Portugal, France, Italy, Spain, Switzerland

I. Introduction

- Employment is a key concern for spouses and partners of foreign affairs officers.
- At the 2010 Annual EUFASA Conference in Madrid, the Spanish Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs suggested that EUFASA Associations should exchange information regarding employment opportunities abroad, and possibly extend existing MFA/Association agreements with national and multi-national private companies to fellow European spouses seeking employment.
- Thus, this Working Group was created to share best practices for employment in the private sector, as well as to explore the possibility for EUFASA Associations to exchange information and contacts among themselves for the employment of spouses/partners.
- Much of the work accomplished in this working group is based on the premise that being well trained and skilled does not always suffice, contacts can make the difference. And if some of us have established contacts with private companies, than why not join forces and share them with other EUFASA Associations?

II. Review of responses to questionnaire

A questionnaire was sent out in January 2011 to the 23 members of EUFASA. 21 responses were received.

Summary of responses:

1. Has your MFA or Association established links with the private sector to facilitate the employment of spouses/partners of MFA employees?

Yes: 28,5% (6 responses)

No: 71,5% (15 responses)

2. Type of engagement with the private sector

- FR: Annual subscription (MFA) with two international employment placement groups
- GR and CH forward CVs to private companies on a case-by-case basis
- ES is creating a database of companies present abroad
- NL, SE, CH promote job searching through recruiters and counsellors

3. Scope of engagement with the private sector

- GR, SE support finding employment at home
- AT, FR, CH support finding jobs abroad
- NL supports finding employment both at home and abroad

4. Reciprocity: Would you support a system whereby the agreements between your MFA/Association with private enterprises would be extended to other EUFASA member associations?

- In favour: 70% (13 responses)
- Against: 10% (2 responses)
- No opinion: 20% (4 responses)

III. Examples of links with the private sector and best practices

A - Formal partnership/agreements with private companies and recruitment agencies

- Annual subscription with International Placement Employment Group called « Magellan ». The DHR within MFA submits the CVs of transferable officers for consideration by the above Groups (France)
- Agreement with career coaching services to help spouses/partners to find jobs in a specific sector at home (Sweden) or both abroad and at home ("C&G Career Services" for the Netherlands)
- Agreement with an international recruitment agency ("Adecco") to assist spouses/partners to find employment abroad (Switzerland)
- Partnership with a Travel Guide Editor ("Gallimard") to update their guide books through the employment of spouses/partners which carry out this work when posted abroad (France)
- Development of links for paid employment with tour operators who require guides in specific countries where cultural, practical and inside knowledge of country can be carried out by spouses/partners posted abroad. In 2011 our Association established links with "Terre Entière" for this purpose (France)

B - Informal contacts with companies

- Contacts with individual private companies in order to forward members' CVs on a case-by-case basis abroad (Switzerland) and in capital (Greece)

- Creation of an internal network of private companies which would consider spouses/partners and children of MFA employees for possible employment opportunities in the home capital (Greece)
- Association members are advertised to private companies for temporary employment for specific events, such as festivals and conventions, or for replacements of staff (maternity leave) (Portugal)

C - Other practical ways of helping spouses find employment in the private sector

- Co-operate with national Chambers of Commerce or consult their websites which often have detailed listings of national companies abroad and in some cases even advertise job openings and/or invite job seekers to post their CVs online. (Austria, Spain, Switzerland)
- Request/ask MFAs to include up to date information concerning private companies established abroad in Post Reports for consultation by spouses/partners prior to posting (Spain)
- Create job committees in Embassies or Consulates for spouses/partners to access a database of their countries private companies in posting (France)
- Create an "employment group" within your Association where Association members working for private companies mentor members of your Association in their job search (Portugal).
- Organize informal discussion meetings on specific themes relating to "working abroad in the private sector" or "international mobility" in Associations for spouses/partners to share their career paths and other professional experiences (France)

- Invite a senior employee from a large national or multinational company to speak at your Association about his/her work and about networking opportunities. For example: invite a representative from the European Professional Women's Network (www.europeanwn.net)
- Ask the members of your Association which are working in private companies - in capital or abroad - to inform the Association when they will be leaving their jobs, so that another spouse can apply to the position.

D - Recommendations presented at previous EUFASA Conferences remain valid

- MFA should plan transfers well in advance to give enough time for spouses/partners to prepare their CVs and start networking (France)
- MFA to provide financial support for career counselling (NL)
- MFA or Associations should provide career coaching workshops and meetings with professional job consultants (Austria, France)
- Implement a system of helping spouses/partners to develop a professional education. A lump sum of money that the spouse can use at his/her convenience to come back on the job market: language courses, IT, specific skills request (Switzerland, France)
- Increase the number of bilateral agreements which enable diplomats' spouses/partners to engage in paid employment in private sector removing legal obstacles thus facilitating access to employment (Spain)

IV. Sharing of information and contacts among EUFASA Associations

The idea of reciprocity among EUFASA Associations is that contacts established with private companies by one country for the hiring of spouses/partners of diplomats could be extended to other EUFASA member associations. This way, the private companies would have a wider pool of candidates to choose from, and candidates for jobs would have more opportunities to find placements.

For example, the spouse of a French diplomat would be given the contacts to apply for a job abroad with Telefonica, and the spouse of a Spanish diplomat would be given a contact with Air France, based on the exchange of information between France and Spain through EUFASA.

Such exchange of information is not easy to implement in practice. There are pros and cons, as illustrated in the chart below.

“SWOT analysis” for exchange of information related to private sector employment among EUFASA Associations:

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Larger pool of enterprises to choose from, more opportunities to find employment - Foreign-born spouses can access jobs in companies from their home country/mother-tongue - Solidarity with Associations which do not offer any support for finding employment - For companies, a larger pool of candidates to choose from - Candidates are available on the spot and do not need living allowances or other expatriate benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not many associations have established links with the private sector - Increased work for associations (enhancing ties with companies, forwarding CVs, advertising job offers, exchanging data with other associations) - Misbalance between those associations which can offer this service and those who can not - Discontinuity of Association board members make it hard to keep contacts up-to-date - Most of the potential candidates have an "non linear" CV with gaps and/or under qualified jobs and voluntary work which is too often disregarded by "real economy" - Problems getting work permits, or issue of having to give up diplomatic status when working in the private

	sector - Possible image deficit of the diplomatic career in the private sector - Issue of competition among spouses
Opportunities - Candidates may find jobs in sectors they haven't thought of; enterprises may recruit candidates with atypical profiles. - Companies are aware of the issue of spouses' employment as pre-requisite for the acceptance of postings overseas for their own employees, and may therefore be sensitive to demands for opening job opportunities overseas to diplomat spouses - For the companies, hiring on a temporary, one-time basis avoids social security obligations and offers to employers the possibility of hiring skilled, flexible and reliable staff. - For the spouses, working in the private sector enables them to immerse more quickly and fully in the host country culture	Threats - Insufficient high level support from MFAs & lack of funding through MFAs - Risk of losing health insurance - Candidates may have unrealistic expectations with regard to their position or their salaries - Lack of a proactive approach, often linked with poor motivation, encouragement and lack of confidence.

Ideas put forward by EUFASA Associations in the framework of this Working Group are listed below and shall be discussed at the Budapest Conference:

a) To establish a system whereby EUFASA member associations would internally contact each other providing a network of employment placement options with private companies on receiving official confirmation of transfer abroad (possibly through the creation of a permanent discussion group on the EUFASA website)

b) To create within the EUFASA website a database with contacts of private companies present abroad (which are open to hiring expatriates, spouses/partners of diplomats).

c) To establish pan-European agreements with multi-national companies/employment agencies for the benefit of all EUFASA member associations.

4. Conclusions & Recommendations

To Associations:

- Capitalize on the experience and contacts of members of your Association who are already working in the private sector.
- Capitalize on the Best Practices of other Associations and customize them to satisfy your own Association's needs and special characteristics.
- Create an "employment group" within your Association to share ideas and establish a network of contacts. Use your association website as a forum to exchange views and experiences on working abroad.
- Create a support system whereby, whenever a working diplomat spouse has to leave his/her job because of moving on to next posting, he/she advertises it in the Association, particularly when returning home from posting.
- Establish a list/database of private companies, which are interested in hiring expatriates abroad or which need local information from abroad, as well as a list of media outlets which advertise international jobs.
- Contact private sector associations, chambers of commerce and/or your national Confederation of Employers to raise the issue of spouse employability and their value on the job market overseas.
- Share data & contacts regarding employment among EUFASA Associations.
- Include information on employment in the files of the "European Coordinator System" established by EUFASA.

To MFAs:

- Continue to consider the employment of spouses/partners of foreign service officers as a means to increase the attractiveness of the career (especially for female and younger employees), to reduce the number of rejected postings and unwanted leaves.

- The MFA, rather than the Association, should establish agreements with private companies and employment agencies. MFAs are in a better position for starting the talks and for “selling” diplomatic spouses.
- The MFA should support career counselling for spouses returning from abroad.

To EUFASA:

- Establish a section on employment on the EUFASA website, where information on employment opportunities, in Europe and outside of Europe, can be listed.
- Re-establish links with the United Nations and inquire if EUFASA could have access to their international job database.
- Raise the issue of spouse employment at the EU level, by inviting a high level official of the European External Action Service (EEAS) to speak at the next EUFASA Conference.

Useful Links:

- Magellan International Mobility Placement Group:
<http://www.magellan-network.com>
(A network for human resource managers, which has worldwide contacts & operations)
- C & G Careers Services: <http://www.cg-services.com>
(Worldwide mobility solutions for expatriates, their spouses/partners and international Human Resources Professionals)
- Adecco: <http://www.adecco.com>
(Short-term and long-term job offers in more than 60 countries and territories around the world)
- European Professional Women’s Network:
www.europeanpwn.net
- International Federation of Business and Professional Women:
www.bpw-international.org