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Second-time award for family-friendly employer Federal Environment Agency “audit berufundfamilie®” certificate gets three-year extension

The Federal Environment Agency (UBA) has been awarded the certificate of the “audit berufundfamilie®” (workandfamily audit) for the second time today in Berlin in recognition of its status as a family-friendly employer. Minister for Family Affairs Ursula von der Leyen and Parliamentary State Secretary at the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs, Ms Dagmar Wöhrl, handed over the certificate of the renowned Hertie Foundation to UBA Vice President Dr. Thomas Holzmann. The certificate for UBA is thereby extended as of mid-May by three more years and represents renewed recognition of the family-friendly working conditions at the Agency.

“We have accomplished quite a lot in the past three years”, Dr. Holzmann concluded and looked ahead by adding, “We will not come to a standstill, for we seek to become even better”. He continued, “UBA does not want to do without the best qualified and highly motivated staff when family obligations take priority”.

Thanks to flexible working works, Agency staff can better manage both job and family. UBA also offers the possibility to telecommute, that is working from the home. The parent-child workrooms at both offices in Dessau-Roßlau and Berlin also make life easier. A family affairs office has been in place since last year to help staff arrange care for relatives. UBA staff can also contact this office for advice and arrangement of child care.

The goals set for the coming three years are: UBA would like to boost management’s consciousness of family-friendly human resources management. This incorporates taking into account the needs of both full-time and part-time employees when scheduling meetings, ensuring reliable working hours through sound work scheduling, and striving to strike a balance between the needs of employees with and without family obligations. By the same token, it must be said that management staff also have private lives which, in the words of the Vice President, “is a fact that unfortunately is often disregarded”. Finding a balance between work life in a management position and family life is therefore expressly included on the Agency’s agenda. A service to keep contact with staff on parental leave, also offered by UBA, will improve and maintain relations between the Agency and staff and make it easier to return to work. Holidays are sometimes longer than parents’ holiday leave time, and a programme for children during these times aims to assist parents in finding appropriate childcare.

Both sides stand to gain when there is a balance between the interests of the Agency and those of its staff. According to a study commissioned by the berufundfamilie® GmbH, job satisfaction and motivation increase in 85 percent of all cases; work quality in 70 percent of cases. Actively practiced family-oriented personnel policy is not simply a charitable social policy. When businesses have a stake in their employees' private lives, they enjoy tangible economic benefits, for the costs of flexitime schemes, telecommuting or arranging care for relatives are considerably lower than those incurred by replacement of staff, absenteeism, overlap time, and labour turnover.

The audit helps businesses and institutions to put a long-term system of family-friendly personnel policy into place. It is granted for a period of three years and is under the patronage of the Federal Ministry of Family, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth and the Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology.

UBA was one of the first federal authorities to be acknowledged by the Audit for its family-friendly working conditions in 2006. The Federal Cabinet resolved in Summer 2008 to have all federal ministries acquire certification of their family-friendliness with the "audit berufundfamilie®".

More information is available at: <http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/uba-info/beruf-und-familie/index.htm>.

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