



October 27th, Paris. Lucas van Wees new elected president of The European Association for People Management (EAPM).

Read the interview with Lucas van Wees regarding his new role as president of the EAPM.

Presently HR director of the University of Amsterdam, you just have been elected president of the EAPM. What are the main issues of your presidency?

EAPM is the umbrella body representing national HR Associations in over 30 countries with a total of 250,000 members all over Europe. Founded in 1962, EAPM is growing and by working more closely together, our national associations can contribute to the betterment of work and working life by providing professional expertise to develop people management across Europe. Before I joined the University of Amsterdam as HR Director, I've worked over 30 years for multinationals as Philips, Shell, KPN and KLM both in HR, commercial as line management jobs. In combination with my role as Member of the Board of the Dutch HR National Association and as Vice President of the EAPM I've seen what it takes to move people agenda's forward. You know the saying: If you want to travel fast, go alone. If you want to travel together, be slow.

The 28th EAPM Congress takes place at a critical turning point in EU history, with Brexit or the revision of the directive on posted workers. What kind of message can address your association for the next months?

“Brexit means Brexit” but “Europe means Europe”. As we all live and work on the same continent, we all share the same history and destiny. Europa has a unique place in the world. Humanistic traditions, democracy and the basics behind our institutions were all founded in Europe. Quality of life, sustainable development, equality and community sense are all European features. As such we are still a beacon for humanity. The very nature of the HR profession is rooted in this European tradition. Rightfully so, the motto of the 28th European Congress in Paris is “European HR, new landscapes”. As Europeans we have the moral obligation to be optimistic. Therefore, we should as HR professionals embrace the challenges ahead and make Europe a better workplace, for our organizations, our workforce and above all our children.

How can the HR support the digitalization of the economy and his impact on the workforce?

We see a great deal of supporting HR roles in this field. To name some of them, in random order. First, in many organizations HR itself deals with the digitalization of its own administration, products and services. This can be a trigger for the standardization and automation of many other, non HR, internal processes. Second, by means of our learning and development activities

we support the “digital readiness” of the workforce. Third, HR helps to transform and restructure companies as a result of the digitization of the economy. Fourth, digitization leads to new business models, scale and start ups for which substantial growth needs to be channeled and fueled. Activities as onboarding, recruitment and retainment are vital elements. Fifth, moral and ethical questions as well as privacy concerns are related to the introduction of new technologies. For instance, how to deal with novel face recognition techniques? Finally, when it comes to life long learning we can strengthen the link with educational and governmental bodies for future relevant technological curricula e.g. in the field of data science, robotics or artificial intelligence. All in all, our profession is in the center of many of these activities, questions and concerns as most of these are related to social change, reforms and adaptation of the workforce matching current and future needs of companies.

In which fields do you think that the European level can play a bigger role than national ones to influence positively social dialogue in the companies?

The current and future challenges in Europe requires a relevant and modern approach on people management. The EAPM and it’s associations, representing numerous professionals around our continent, is there to voice, inspire and lift our profession to address these challenges. When it comes to the changing nature of work, the workplace

and our current and future workforce we need to be ready and to drive our people agenda forward. As the umbrella body EAPM is very much in the heart of these developments, we are well placed to facilitate positive dialogues with international governmental organizations, partners and other stakeholders. Our cross border network opportunities helps to build support mechanisms for our members.

You have certainly observed the reforms made in France concerning the labour code and the future reform concerning the professional training. Would you say that they go in the right way ?

In one of my former roles I was Vice President HR at KLM Royal Dutch Airlines holding a global role for the over 100 countries where we had commercial activities. In 2003 the company merged with Air France and over a decade I worked closely with my colleagues from Air France in the post merger integration. In these role I’ve spend substantial time in France, understanding the various dilemma’s the company and the country was facing. Many observers have been doubtful whether France can change. With your new President, your country has a new change. But you know what the reply of the Chinese President Mao was when he was asked “how do you think about the French Revolution?”. He replied: “too early too tell”. As Europeans though we have a moral obligation to be optimistic! Let’s stick to this attitude but be cautious as well.



The new board of the EAPM