

# **GENERATIONS Z IN EUROPE**

# THE CHANGING CONTEXT OF MANAGING PEOPLE

Edited by Professor Emma Parry, Cranfield School of Management, Swindon, UK

The past two decades have represented a time of unprecedented social, technological, and economic change that has required a transformation in human resource management (HRM). Shifts in demographics, continued increases of women in the workforce, and greater mobility across national borders have led to higher diversity in the workplace. Advances in technology, including social media, have enabled new ways of doing business through faster communications and vast amounts of data made available to all. Mobile technology with its ubiquitous connectivity has led to renewed concerns over work-life balance and extreme jobs. These and many other changes have seen evolving attitudes towards work and careers, leading to different expectations of the workplace and mean that existing ways of managing people may no longer be effective. This series examines in depth the changing context to identify its impact on the HRM and the workforce.

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# GENERATIONS Z IN EUROPE: INPUTS, INSIGHTS AND IMPLICATIONS

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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Elodie Gentina is the author of two books on Generation Z: *Marketing et Génération Z (Marketing and Generation Z)*; Paris: Dunod, 2016) and *Des Z consommateurs aux Z collaborateurs (Generation Z: From Z Consumers to Z Co-workers)*; Paris: Dunod, 2018, in French).

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## Series Editor Foreword

The attention paid to generational differences over the past 10 years has been overwhelming. If you open almost any media publication in the areas of human resource management, marketing or politics, you will find an article discussing the values, expectations and preferences of the younger generations and how these are different from those of people in their 50s and beyond. In particular, practitioners, consultants and the media alike have become fascinated with the Millennial generation (those born between the early 1980s and late 1990s) who have entered the workforce in large numbers over the past 20 years. Attention is now moving on to the newest generation, that is, just starting to enter the workplace – known as Generation Z (born from the late 1990s onwards). This book is one of the first to provide a detailed examination of that generation within Europe.

In academic arenas, the idea of generational differences – at least those depicted in the popular groupings of Veterans, Baby Boomers, Generation X and Millennials – has been treated with some cynicism and with frustration at the overwhelming reliance on this concept within practice. This is mainly due to doubts about the strength of the evidence for differences between these groups. In fact, analyses of this evidence, including those that I have undertaken myself, suggest that the findings in regard to generational differences are mixed and do not provide substantive proof of differences between generations. In addition, those studies that do show generational differences fail to agree in relation to what the characteristics of each generation are.

One reason behind this confusion might be the tendency for commentators to take those characteristics ascribed to generations in the United States and apply them universally, regardless of the country or the context. Indeed, given that theory around generational differences suggests that individuals develop their values, attitudes and expectations as a result of their experiences when growing up, I have always felt that it makes no sense to presume that these experiences – and therefore the characteristics of a generational group – would be the same across different countries and societies. This text, finally, addresses this issue in some detail by examining the recent contexts within a number of European countries and the impact of growing up in these contexts on the characteristics of those individuals from Generation Z. This text is unique in providing this analysis, and therefore, I was very pleased to include it as part of this series – and also to contribute a chapter myself. I hope that you will enjoy this detailed analysis and use it to obtain a deeper understanding of how generational characteristics are shaped by the environment, and how we might expect the attitudes of younger people to be changing over time.

*Emma Parry*

*Series Editor, The Changing Context of Managing People*





# Preface

For several years, ‘millennials’, ‘digital natives’ and other names for ‘Generation Y’ have been in the focus of academic research and at the forefront of the discussions among practitioners in companies, politicians, teachers, parents as well as the media. However, in the last few years, a new generation has moved into focus. Even though ‘Generation Z’ is not particularly an inspiring name, this group of young people born sometime after the beginning of the 1990s are about to become real game changers. As the *New York Times* phrased it: *Move Over, Millennials, Here Comes Generation Z*. Generation Z is totally different from other generations before, as they are more realistic, mistrust politicians, companies and the media, and furthermore prefer to keep their work and private life strictly separate. In this regard, companies should start to get ready for them.

Since Generation Z is totally connected to the Internet, they are also quite often considered as the first truly global generation. But what exactly does that mean? Global, yes, but identical? This is the question we are dealing with. For us, Europe, with its social, cultural, political and lingual diversity, is a perfect research object.

We are going to find out whether there is a specific European Generation Z and what drivers have been influencing the shaping of this generation. What, for instance, does the Generation Z in Russia have in common (or not) with the Generation Z in Spain? How do factors like the social, economic and political environment or family influence the development of special (same or different) value systems in Generation Z members? To the best of our knowledge, there is no book out dealing with the Generation Z in Europe. This means, our book *Generations Z in Europe*, might be the first one.

Our book compares the European Generation Z in terms of country- and culture-specific drivers based on interdisciplinary and international scientific research. It presents a generation born into a crisis-ridden, mobile and digitalised Europe. We do not talk about ‘the’ Generation Z in Europe in singular, since beyond all the similarities of young people in Europe, we see striking differences. Therefore, we use the plural and talk about Generations Z in Europe.

As the Generation Z is now and will be in the years to come, entering the labour market, the time is right to sensitise companies to the needs of these young future employees. We have to reflect on the opportunities a generation might create for a labour market that grew up in different social, cultural and political contexts in different European countries, but in a completely globalised world, and that is more mobile than any generation ever before. What challenges does the working world face as ‘GenZ’ enters professional life? How can diversified companies benefit from these country-specific differences between generations? What do companies need in order to respond effectively to the

generational change in working life? What consequences can be seen for politics and the educational system in dealing with Generation Z?

Being academics ourselves, the authors of this book also aim at academia: both to give a little impetus for research about young people in Europe and to provide material for teaching. What more could be interesting than discussing with young people in Europe the Generations Z in Europe?

There are segments in this book where objective facts about Generation Z are combined with personal thoughts about Generation Z in that particular country. Our goal as Editors of this book is to give the reader a chance to understand Generation Z in its variety across Europe. This includes impressions as indicators for a culture-specific perception of social reality, history and zeitgeist.

Taking this into account, there is a second target group for our book: politicians, even though they do not have discovered these young people in their relevance yet and we are sceptical that they will. But the dynamics of Europe are changing and the political establishment in Europe might find out that there is something else beside the traditional group of voters and lobbyists. In the process of convergence and divergence politicians should in their own interest begin to think about Generation Z.

It looks as if politicians neither understand Generation Z in their own country, not to speak of Generation Z in Europe. We do not judge whether they are not able to do so or just see other and basically older groups more of interest as voters. But this is dangerous. The idea of Europe can only continue to be developed if the young people get a chance to be part of it. Therefore, we would be happy if at least one or two of the ten thousands of politicians in Europe would read our book.

Our book starts with the section ‘Input: What Great Thinkers Would Let Us Know’, which provides some theoretical approaches and scientific background. How can basic sociological/philosophical theories be applied to research about Generation Z? This part introduces classical thinkers like Karl Mannheim, Jean Baudrillard, Marshall McLuhan and Neil Postman. It aims to embed the following country-specific chapters in common theories, taking into account the deeply interdisciplinary approach to Generation Z. The Editors chose, in this part, a more dynamic approach to the basic theories, so the short chapters focus on ‘how the theorists would have talked to us’, experimenting with a change of perspective.

The following main section is titled ‘Insights: What the Experts Tell Us’ and gathers together different analyses of researchers from all across Europe. All country-specific chapters follow the same structure, with every chapter giving us information about the Generation Z in each country. It starts by contextualising the research: Which historical lines might influence the younger generation’s lives? What is the specific cultural context? What demographic, economic or political outlines are given in the country? How is education organised? What conflicts and tensions are present in the social discourse? To be able to compare the scientific results, we have to consider and understand the different situations that Generation Z is growing up with. Another question would be: What technological drivers, media, or role models influence the younger

generations – compared to the Generation Z in other European countries, but also in relation to previous generations?

Furthermore, for the main section, it is important to explore what the ‘typical Z’ in each country is feeling, thinking or doing. Are there special attitudes and visions? What is the younger generation expecting from future employers or jobs? What about their work–life arrangement? How is their consumption oriented? Are they more pessimistic or more optimistic? Last but not least, the contributors had to develop some recommendations for different target groups.

The chapter ‘Implication: What Do We Want?’ offers a look into the future: representatives from Generation Y share their visions and expectations about Generation Z and its future role in Europe.

Thanks to all the authors who worked on this project. Since we did not just want to put together some isolated articles, interaction and coordination were necessary: this book is based on an international and interdisciplinary conference held at Saarland University in Saarbrücken, Germany, in November 2016 organised by the Chair of Business Administration, especially Organisational Behaviour, Human Resource Management, and Information Management, and the Collegium Europaeum Universitatis Saraviensis (CEUS). This conference brought together an excellent team of researchers from the whole of Europe and was such a great experience that we went on to organise a symposium about Generations Z in Europe at the Academy of Management in Atlanta, USA, in August 2017. Now in November 2018, the book is completed and more joint projects will follow.

We also thank the team at Emerald and our other partners who helped us realise both the conference and the publication, in particular, Villa Lessing – Liberale Stiftung Saar, Saarland University’s international research funding and the Eastern partnership programme of DAAD, as well as of course our whole team. They all made this book possible which is not the end of a process. It is a beginning.

Christian Scholz and Anne Rennig