

elexon: living corporate responsibility - prompt financial support with a clear message

elexon, the Aachen-based charging infrastructure provider and leader in the logistics sector, is paying its employees a temporary monthly energy allowance.

elexon, a leader in the charging infrastructure industry for logistics will be paying its employees a voluntary & temporary monthly energy allowance based on income starting with their October salary. "As a company, we can't offset all the consequences of the current geopolitical situation, but we can live up to our corporate responsibility and make decisions that help mitigate rising costs as far as possible," explains Marcus Scholz, Managing Director of elexon GmbH. This decision is being implemented at short notice, is calculated and based on solidarity and supported by the entire corporate structure.

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- **Energy allowance based on annual income: < €40K = an energy allowance of €200 per month, < €55K = €150 per month and < €90K = €100 per month.**
- **> €90K was excluded from the energy allowance on a voluntary basis**
- **Positive employer branding as an added bonus**
- **Modern corporate culture is essential for making quick decisions based on solidarity**

Assuming corporate responsibility

In the coming fall and winter, elexon employees will be facing additional financial challenges. Although politicians are discussing putting together concrete relief packages, the elexon management team has decided it won't wait for a political solution, but instead act itself - on a short-term, monetary basis. "Although employers are not obligated to offset rising energy costs or anticipate or supplement government policy measures, our energy allowance is intended to compensate for a certain percentage of the additional costs incurred. Our aim wasn't compensation, but to provide genuine monetary support to our employees as quickly as possible" continues Marcus Scholz.

When companies and employees show solidarity

According to recent article in the "Handelsblatt", the increase in costs due to the energy crisis for apartments with approx. 80 square meters (sqm) and oil or gas heating could add up to more than 1,500 euros. Based on a similar calculation, elexon determined how much its new energy allowance should be. A model based on solidarity and limited until spring 2023. The first step was to survey all employees with an annual income of more than 90,000 euros: Should elexon compensate them for their additional energy costs proportionally? The answer was unanimous - No. A response that reinforces Marcus Scholz's commitment to modern corporate management. Higher-paid employees can compensate these additional costs more easily themselves, which means that employees who earn less receive a higher allowance. The decision: Employees with an annual income of less than 40,000 euros receive an energy allowance of 200 euros per month. Employees with an annual income of more than 40,000 and less than 55,000 euros receive 150 euros per month, and employees who earn more than 55,000 but less than 90,000 per year receive 100 euros per month. Annual incomes over 90,000 euros were excluded from the energy supplement following prior discussions. Currently, 35 out of 40 employees are entitled to this allowance. After the seven-month period, the total energy allowance will amount to a maximum of 1,400 euros and a minimum of 700 euros. Based on the premise that an apartment with about 80 square meters will incur estimated additional costs of 1,500 euros this year, elexon will cover about half of this amount. The entire investment comprises just under one percent of the current EBIT margin. "This is our contribution to assuming social responsibility and I am very happy that elexon's corporate structure and our current financial situation allow us to do it, because of course, decisions like this are strongly related to the economic situation of a company," says Marcus Scholz. At elexon, the high-earners decided to forgo the allowance, and the shareholders were very much in favor of the solidarity concept. There was a consensus across all hierarchy levels to act in solidarity in order to cover the costs.

The special allowance will be paid starting October 2022, following the 300-euro energy allowance introduced by the government. Elexon's energy cost allowance is currently limited until the end of April 2023. The elexon management team hopes that by the time the allowance is launched, a political framework will be in place to allow these payments to be passed on to employees tax-free. "If companies are willing to make their own social contribution, then the government shouldn't profit from it," says Marcus Scholz.

At the same time, an early rollout of the payments is important. In view of the current debate on reintroducing mandatory work from home, the topic is becoming increasingly important for employees. By sending employees home to work, employers save on electricity and the like, while employees must deal with significant additional costs. The main expenses incurred when people work from home are electricity and heating, and the flat-rate home office tax will have little effect on many employees due to the time restrictions. The relief packages planned by various federal states help only to a limited extent, since more than half of elexon's employees do not live near the Aachen headquarters, but are spread all over Germany. "Companies like us, with decentralized employee management and a strong emphasis on the "NewWork" model, focus on personal responsibility and individuality," adds Marcus Scholz

Do good and talk about it - employer branding with style

Just one week after Marcus Scholz posted the decision on his LinkedIn profile, the message had already received more than 173,000 impressions and over 2,000 likes. A level of perception that has begun to have a positive impact on the company's overall image and HR activities. "In the first week after the initial post, we received four applications that directly referenced this business decision. Applicants who applied not just due to the job profile, but also because of this decision," explains Hanna Zintzen, HR Manager at elexon. "If you correlate the additional corporate expenditure resulting from this decision with the added value in the area of employer branding, then you would probably have to invest more than 50% of this sum in HR measures in order to achieve a similar effect." Many employees posted about about the energy allowance on their social media accounts. And, although special bonuses had already been offered during the year and benefits are standard at elexon, this campaign received particularly positive feedback. Over 90% of the employees also personally thanked the management team.

"This allowance isn't based purely on altruism. Helping our employees is paramount, no question about it, but the positive effects for our employer branding and image also count. It's sign of appreciation for our current and future employees," confirms Marcus Scholz. Although elexon has been able to build a skilled workforce with its popular "New Work" philosophy, truly committed professionals are an ongoing target in the HR department.

A quick decision backed by serious commitment

Looking back, this idea has strengthened the entire company. It started on a Friday night drive home. "On my way home for the weekend, I was listening to a podcast about the increased costs of heating and the implications of these costs for people and their homes. This got me thinking about what we, as a company, could do to offset these high additional costs for our employees," explains Marcus Scholz. The idea was presented to the HR team the next Monday and the process began. It took less than two weeks to complete. Three days after the first phone call, the basic calculation had been made and the respective salary clusters created. The concept was explained and approved in a strategy meeting at management level. A week later, the employees were informed by e-mail. The shareholders were then informed as well. "Since this topic was not one of the decisions that required co-determination at elexon, and I was sure that there would be no veto from the shareholders, it was a normal agenda item. And as I expected, all of the shareholders agreed to the idea, complete with positive feedback," says Marcus Scholz about the decision-making process.

"I think we need to remind society that internal processes can be both balanced and quick, at the same time. In recent years, entrepreneurial inertia has increased greatly due to political correctness, opinion research & co. Quick business decisions need to be seen, once again, as a positive process," concludes Marcus Scholz.

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About elexon

Elexon is a joint venture established in 2019 by SMA Solar Technology AG (SMA), AixControl GmbH and aixACCT charging solutions GmbH aimed at advancing the development of charging infrastructures for EVs across Europe.

Elexon operates as a full-service provider and, as a result of the merger, boasts extensive expertise in the field of electromobility. The company focuses on charging infrastructure, energy and load management, as well as the provision of electricity via renewable energies.

With its 360° charging infrastructure solutions, elexon offers its customers holistic plug-and-play solutions for the planning, installation and service of efficient EV charging parks from a single source.

Image 1: Image credit: Rick H. - stock.adobe.com