Diversity and inclusive culture step-by-step

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR ORGANIZATIONS

Karolina Długosz, Maciej Herman, Kamil Kuhr, Monika Kulik, Aleksandra Niedźwiedzka-Ścisłowska, Kamila Luttelmann, Anna Miazga, Artur Nowak-Gocławski, Małgorzata Petru, Katarzyna Piecuch, Susanna Romantsova, Kinga Wysieńska-Di Carlo, Tadeusz Reimus, Dominika Sadowska

Edited by Dominika Sadowska
Diversity and inclusive culture step-by-step

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR ORGANIZATIONS

Karolina Długosz, Maciej Herman, Kamil Kuhr, Monika Kulik, Aleksandra Niedźwiedzka-Ścisłowska Kamila Luttelmann, Anna Miazga, Artur Nowak-Gocłowski, Małgorzata Petru, Katarzyna Piecuch, Susanna Romantsova, Kinga Wysieńska-Di Carlo, Tadeusz Reimus, Dominika Sadowska

Edited by Dominika Sadowska
This multi-author publication is a joint effort on the part of a group of individuals and organizations representing the D&I Roundtable initiative, the Polish Institute for Human Rights and Business, and Diversity+, who joined the project “D&I in the workplace. A Step-by-step guide. Manual development project” implemented by the Polish Institute for Human Rights and Business thanks to grant funding from the Embassy of the Netherlands in Poland (WAR-PD-2020-19), and together with the support of organizations represented at the D&I Roundtable. The original Polish version was published in 2021.

The current English version of this publication was made possible with support from the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE) and from the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Authors
Karolina Długosz, Netguru
Maciej Herman, LOTTE Wedel
Kamil Kuhr, AstraZeneca
Monika Kulik, Orange Polska
Aleksandra Niedźwiedzka-Ściółtowska, AstraZeneca
Kamil Luttelmann, LOTTE Wedel
Anna Miazga, CWS Group
Artur Nowak-Gocłowski, Grupa ANG S.A.
Małgorzata Petru, BANK BNP PARIBAS
Katarzyna Plecuch
Susanna Romanowska, IKEA
Kinga Wysieńska-Di Carlo, Diversity+ i CONSIRT IFiS PAN
Tadeusz Reimus, Mental Health Helpline
Dominika Sadowska, Diversity+

Edited by Dominika Sadowska
English translation: Karolina Więckowska
Proofreading: Guy Torr, Adrienne Fanning, Beata Faracik

Graphic design
Project Manager: Agnieszka Szamałek-Michalska, CD PROJEKT S.A.
Producer: Magdalena Darda-Ledzion, CD PROJEKT S.A.
Artwork: Paulina Łukiewska, CD PROJEKT S.A.
Cover design: Agnieszka Momot, CD PROJEKT S.A., Paulina Łukiewska, CD PROJEKT S.A.
Typesetting of the English version: Tomasz Kłos, CD PROJEKT S.A.

Published by The Polish Institute for Human Rights and Business
ul. Mireckiego 25/36, 42-200 Częstochowa, Poland www.pihrb.org

This publication is available under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 license. This means that the materials can be used freely, copied, distributed, displayed and utilized on condition that their authors are accredited. For more information go to: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/deed.pl

This publication is available free of charge in electronic format at www.pihrb.org

Częstochowa, 2022 (English and Russian edition), 2021 (original Polish edition), Chapter 8 is updated to reflect dates in 2022.

Table of contents

Foreword ___________________________________________ 7

A few words about values in business ____________________ 9

1. Introduction – why do we need D&I? ___________________ 13

2. D&I in Polish law _________________________________ 17

3. D&I in an organization _____________________________ 27

   3.1. How to kickstart D&I in an organization? _____________ 27
   3.2. D&I and its place in the organizational structure __________ 34
   3.3. D&I strategy for organizations _________________________ 37
   3.4. Communicating D&I __________________________________ 43
   3.5. The role of Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) in building an inclusive culture ____ 53
   3.6. Measure for measure. Identifying and monitoring D&I levels ____ 63
   3.7. Measuring negative and inclusive behaviors, satisfaction, belonging, and trust ____ 78

4. D&I competences ___________________________________ 87

   4.1. Developing D&I competences _________________________ 87
   4.2. A few words about boundaries. Inclusive leadership __________ 96
   4.3. Inclusive language in the workplace _________________ 100
   4.4. Managing diversity-related conflict ___________________ 112
   4.5. How to be a D&I leader and keep a cool head _____________ 117
5. Mental health as a D&I component ................................................................. 125

6. Cross-cutting D&I practices at the core of an inclusive organization ........ 131
   6.1. D&I in recruitment .................................................................................. 133
   6.2. D&I in hiring ......................................................................................... 136
   6.3. D&I in onboarding .............................................................................. 139
   6.4. D&I in employee development (promotions and personal growth) .... 141
   6.5. D&I and employee retention ................................................................. 143
   6.6. D&I and offboarding .......................................................................... 144

7. How to bungle D&I projects ........................................................................ 147

8. Diversity calendar ....................................................................................... 151

9. Selected useful terms and phrases for discussing D&I issues and building an inclusive culture ................................................................. 157

About the Authors ........................................................................................... 163

In place of the ending .................................................................................... 170
Foreword

The publication you are now reading is meant to be a practical guide to the rich and complex world of diversity, and the intricacies of building an inclusive organizational culture. Although numerous publications out there have been devoted to combating discrimination, fostering and managing diversity and creating an inclusive culture, we have observed that practical guides, especially ones offering a step-by-step approach, that illustrate good practices and are grounded in real-life experience and local contexts, therein indicating what needs to be done – and not done – if we are to enjoy an inclusive culture, are few and far between.

This guide is an attempt to fill that gap and even though it is not an exhaustive attempt to cover the topic of diversity and inclusion (D&I) in organizations, it is meant to be an inspiration created from the experiences, thought, concerns and questions its authors have faced throughout their respective journeys towards inclusive organizations.

Such a comprehensive manual was made possible thanks to the efforts and engagement of all the individuals who represent the D&I Roundtable initiative, the Polish Institute for Human Rights and Business and Divercity+. These efforts have been supported financially by the Embassy of the Netherlands in Poland, which is a longtime champion of the attitudes and values that the people of the Netherlands live by, and that are reflected in the country’s policies, including diversity and inclusion, with special consideration of LGBTQIA+ persons.

As importantly, this manual, in its final form, has been developed not only by the authors of the individual chapters, but also through the joint efforts of the remaining members of the D&I Roundtable initiative. Their engagement, experience and views have influenced and informed our thinking on the topics and areas explored herein. Their contribution, knowledge, practice and volunteering has resulted in a guide that we want to share with you so that together we can build a more friendly world for all.

What we have in common, and what enables collaboration in such a diverse environment, is our strong conviction that companies have a responsibility to respect human rights, including the principle of equal treatment, preventing discrimination on any grounds as well as ensuring decent work and an inclusive organizational culture. Dutch companies operating in Poland share and act upon this conviction in their everyday practices. We
believe that these values will make members of various minority groups, including the LGBTQIA+ community, who face unparalleled discrimination, feel included, safe and able to shape not only their own organizations but also the larger society they live in.

This publication comes at a crucial moment. The European Union is currently working on a new human rights and sustainability due diligence directive that directly affects businesses and their obligations. Already now investors demand disclosure of non-financial information, including social impact, preventing human rights violations in areas such as equal treatment, nondiscrimination, health and decent working conditions. According to the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, due diligence includes a number of actions: from diagnosis, policies and strategies to specific actions in everyday operations that determine whether the risk of any negative impact on human rights will materialize and whether these human rights are likely to be violated. When due diligence is accompanied by effective communication and procedures for reporting human rights violations and infringements, organizations have an early warning and response system for potential crisis situations. It is essential not only because it can protect these organizations from problems that escalate, potentially leading to lawsuits, but also because it fosters mutual trust among employees, facilitates solutions, and helps evolve organizational culture.

Companies that act now in a few years’ time will be way ahead of their competitors. But more importantly, they will become valued employers and partners.

Every journey begins with a single step.

Enjoy and be inspired!

Daphne Bergsma
Ambassador of the Netherlands to Poland

Beata Faracik
Co-founder and President of the Board at the Polish Institute for Human Rights and Business

Dominika Sadowska
Founder Divercity+

A few words about values in business

We first met in June 2020 as a small group of D&I professionals. It was not long after the Court of Justice of the European Union announced its judgment of April 23, 2020 concerning violation of anti-discrimination regulations and legal consequences for employers as well as their liability for public statements made by their representatives. The goal was simple: we wanted to get together and think of responses to violations of D&I standards and values. Each and every one of us had faced situations when these values were under attack but we lacked the knowledge, experience and, sometimes, the legal context to respond appropriately.

We needed a safe space to discuss, share experiences, support one another and dissect tough situations among like-minded people. We created the D&I Roundtable to be able to talk about diversity and inclusive culture. All this happened during the pandemic, so we only met online. This virtual setting worked from day one. It turned out that we all – D&I professionals – much needed this opportunity to share our thoughts and concerns over matters we faced in everyday work and here in a safe environment, so that we could analyze complex circumstances and events in our organizations.

We all appreciated the fact that we could discuss not only our victories but also failures and challenges. We needed a community where we could share, learn and support one another.

It has been nearly a year of regular D&I sessions filled with everyday concerns, good practices that worked as well as things that didn’t exactly work but nevertheless taught us a lot. We exchanged views about various developments in our country, wondering what impact they had on our organizations and the people in them. Our D&I Roundtable also served as a “professional support group” when we needed the strength and motivation to keep fighting for what we believed in.

We are united in the belief that inclusive culture is something worth striving for in organizations with people from diverse backgrounds, with different views, beliefs and needs. Diversity offers an abundance that we can all benefit from. It is as important for human survival as biodiversity. Knowing how to manage diversity, build and foster an inclusive organizational culture helps us see beyond employees and notice human beings, which brings us closer to creating more sustainable workplaces.
With this publication we would like to offer support and guidance to those who share our beliefs but may not yet know how to effect change towards an inclusive culture in their organizations or are looking for inspirations. We hope that our experience will be of help.

Enjoy the read and let’s be in touch!

D&I Roundtable
1. Introduction – why do we need D&I?

MACIEJ HERMAN (HE, HIM), LOTTE WEDEL

Although it is now over 20 years ago I still clearly remember the first study of so-called personality types I was a subject of in my first workplace, and here right after I had graduated from university. Due to the rather high attrition rate at that company, they repeated the study every year. The results that came that year deeply shook the executive team. It was the first time that the team had turned out to be very diverse in terms of social backgrounds, thinking styles and preferred modes of collaboration. Previously the results of that study had indicated that the organization was a monolith – people seemed alike, easy to manage and predictable. So how come such a profound change was uncovered from one year to the next? As a young employee, fresh out of college, no one cared to explain this to me. But I remember that the management was clearly disappointed. Back in the 1990s and in early 2000s managing homogenous teams was common, natural and even desirable. Teams that strayed from that “standard” were considered a threat to productivity.

In another company I worked for later in my career the high-performing team that I was a part of was nicknamed “the tank.” We achieved top results on a pan-European scale. Our excellent, superefficient ways of working drastically outperformed those of our competitors. We were a group of vastly different people and these stellar results started occurring only after one year of working together, when our boss was replaced. This new manager presented a completely different approach, offering us support and at the same time allowing us to figure things out for ourselves with a healthy dose of freedom and independence.

Confident that I could manage my own team, I moved on to another company. The challenge posed to me by my new boss there proved daunting. I was put in charge of the toughest region in Poland, where our strongest competitor ran rampant, staff were demotivated and major customers seemed bent on bringing us down. And there was this meeting I will never forget, that my superior organized at a seaside hotel. The business objectives were pretty standard: increase sales and market share. My boss had invited me – a regional sales manager – along with the heads of marketing, HR, finance, legal, logistics, a HoReCa trade marketing coordinator, an events manager and receivables
controller. Instead of having sales broadly represented at the meeting he chose to rely on a "collection" of men and women of varying ages, with drastically different backgrounds, whose day-to-day jobs had little to do with sales. This logic was completely new to me and I struggled to understand what such a "random" group of extremely diverse individuals could reasonably achieve in that setting. However, after 2 days of workshops followed by months of interactions over a detailed plan that was later to turn out to be the largest plan budget-wise in the company’s history, and which in the following 2 years was to contribute to the increasing of my regional market share from 15.9% to 23.4%, the wisdom my boss had demonstrated was revealed and became one of the most valuable business lessons in my career. The potential of a deliberately selected and diverse team is limitless.

Global economic growth in recent years has irreversibly affected societies, markets and technologies. Our communication and competitive environment has been altered forever. Everyday we see new data and information flowing our way. The sheer number of variables, technologies. Our communication and competitive environment has been altered forever. Everyday we see new data and information flowing our way. The sheer number of variables, technologies. Everyday we see new data and information flowing our way. The sheer number of variables, technologies.

What makes us different from one another? On the one hand, there are some visible and obvious signs, so called primary characteristics, such as sex, age, skin color, ethnic background, degrees of (dis)ability, psychosexual orientation, and sexual identity. These differences often give rise to stereotypes that everyone is familiar with and, unfortunately, some believe. One of the most common ones is that "men are more analytical than women" – a notion that has been long refuted by neuroscientists.² Another, one of my “favorite” stereotypes brands different generations as certain kinds of people: Gen X – hardworking; millennials – narcissistic and entitled; Gen Z – hypersensitive, etc. I encourage all who subscribe to such thinking to try and look at research by the American psychologists K.H. Trzesniewski and M.B. Donnellan.³ They have recently proven that intergenerational differences, as much as they exist, are subtle and have no practical meaning.

What does all this entail? As a result some less than competent HR representatives will refuse to hire candidates aged 50+, thinking they are “inflexible” and “can’t be bothered anymore”, which is clearly nonsense.

How are we different from a practical, business point of view? We have different beliefs and attitudes. This leads to the different norms and values we profess. We represent different social styles – the way we approach other people, including coworkers. We have different experiences, which are often linked to organizational maturity and employee attitudes. Finally, we are culturally different, which is determined by our backgrounds and upbringing.

However, when I think of a well-functioning team I prefer to think in terms of diversity rather than differences. While differences naturally tend to divide us, diversity is a common asset for all of us that can positively drive the most important processes unfolding within organizations.

What made that diverse team that I became a part of several years ago initiate one of the greatest success stories on the market? Today it is clear and simple to me: a real mix of cultural backgrounds, experiences, viewpoints, and social styles creates a unique space where necessary change can be designed and implemented.

There is one more thing, at least as important, namely the role that companies play in society. What is our role as managers and executives? Anyone who believes that our role is exclusively to shape and influence our organizations, the people in them and our local markets is hugely mistaken. Throughout childhood we are under the influence of our parents, friends, schools and – indirectly – politicians that shape, for instance, the education system. As adults we spend at least half of our waking time at work. To this we add time spent with family, a small group of friends, some also connect with their

---

Before we start talking about diversity and inclusion and taking action to include underprivileged persons and groups, we must begin with ensuring the minimum legal standard for equal treatment in employment and prevent and respond to discrimination.

It is important to distinguish between anti-discrimination actions and D&I initiatives by employers. Confusing the two not only leads to difficulties identifying organizational maturity in terms of strategic approach to D&I and adequate non-financial reporting, but it can also bring chaos to an employer’s ability to fulfill their duty to disclose information on equal treatment in employment under Article 94 (1) of the Polish Labor Code.

The law in Poland, essentially, stops at this minimum standard and leaves all further-reaching actions to individual sensitivity, wisdom, creativity, and above all, to individual decisions made by conscious employers.

Article 32 of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland stipulates that all persons are equal before the law; all have the right to equal treatment by the government, and that no one can be discriminated against in public, social, and economic life for any reason. However, equality is not yet a reality. It is an ideal state that we are striving for. Compliance with applicable anti-discrimination laws is the very foundation and starting point for any further actions. Anti-discrimination policies, procedures, and practices implemented by individual organizations should go beyond that line of statutory duty to build awareness of diversity and its abundant benefits. Most of all, they should shape the world of work where everyone feels welcome and safe just the way they are. And all this is merely a springboard to launch us on a journey towards an inclusive organizational culture.
to others in a similar situation. Direct discrimination occurs, for instance, when employees from Ukraine receive different wages than Polish employees even though they perform work of the same value.

**Indirect discrimination** is a situation where the differentiation criteria, practices, or internal rules applied are seemingly objective and neutral, while in fact they lead to unfair treatment of most or all individuals belonging to a certain social group. An example may be a recruitment process where the requirements are formulated in such a way that older people are excluded (assuming that age is not an objective and justified obstacle in the performance of the job in question).

**Sexual harassment** is a form of gender-based discrimination. It is behavior that is sexualized or refers to sex, aiming at or resulting in violation of the dignity of the harassed person, creating an intimidating, hostile, humiliating, or denigrating atmosphere around this person. Sexual gestures, jokes, or remarks such as embracing or kissing can be a form of harassment. The most severe form of sexual harassment is rape.

**Harassment** is a broader category of undesired behaviors. It does not have to be sexual in context or related to sex/gender. It is behavior that is aimed at or results in violation of the dignity of the harassed person, creating an intimidating, hostile, humiliating, or denigrating atmosphere around this person.

### 2. Grounds of discrimination

Discrimination is the practice of unjustified unfavorable treatment of a person on the grounds of their characteristics that are unrelated to the job they perform. The list of grounds of discrimination in the Labor code is non-exhaustive, and which means that the legislation only mentions examples of grounds that make it unlawful to differentiate among persons and their circumstances. The examples include sex, age, disability, race, religion, nationality, political views, trade union membership, ethnicity, denomination, sexual orientation, and full-time or part-time employment. In their judicial practice, courts tend to point towards other grounds of discrimination, such as appearance, living with HIV, being in the process of legal counsel internship, citizenship, gender identity, parental status, or place of residence.

While exploring grounds of discrimination, the utmost care and sensitivity should be applied as changing circumstances, such as increasing remote work and attitudes towards vaccines, may see the emergence of new, previously unknown causes for discrimination.

Grounds of discrimination that apply to persons who perform work under conditions other than employment relationship are, unfortunately, a closed list. They are identified in the Act of December 3, 2010, on the implementation of some regulations of the European Union regarding equal treatment (hereinafter referred to as the Anti-discrimination or Implementation Act). This means that discrimination cannot invoke any grounds other than what the Act stipulates, which are: sex, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, denomination, worldview, disability, age, and sexual orientation. This is a serious weakness of the Act because it provides unequal protection to different persons depending on whether they have an employment contract or are self-employed (serving as a B2B contractor). At the same time, it is the conscious employer who can and should – through their anti-discrimination policies and procedures – protect all employees and contributors to the company equally from various forms of discrimination. Regardless of the approach that the Act takes by narrowing grounds of discrimination, we should assume that the constitutional principle of equality before the law and non-discrimination guarantees protection for all persons who have been unfavorably treated based on personal characteristics other than those mentioned in the Anti-discrimination Act. In practice, this means that regardless of the form of employment – contract employee, self-employed contributor, or someone hired by a third company – the duty to protect against discrimination includes all of us. Employers have an obligation to prevent direct and indirect discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, and encouraging or inciting discrimination.

### 3. When differential treatment is justified

Not every case of differential treatment of employees constitutes discrimination. Employees have equal rights resulting from the fact that they perform the same duties equally. Article 11 (2) of the Labor Code emphasizes that this especially refers to equal treatment of men and women in employment. The category of entities that this provision applies to is unknown causes for discrimination.

---

4 Ruling of the Supreme Court of November 29, 2017 [I PK 367/16]: Unlawful criteria for differential treatment include such factors as appearance, if in certain circumstances it can be considered a cause for differential treatment that is a manifestation of discrimination in the form of harassment or that leads to restrictions due to physical, mental and psychological functions that – in conjunction with other obstacles – may, while these restrictions are persistent in nature (Article 18(3a) § 5, item 2 of the Labour Code); disclosure of one’s HIV-positive status, parental status, being in the process of legal counsel internship, citizenship, place of residence.
to includes employees that have a relevant common characteristic, namely the same performance of the same duties. This means that, first of all, it is acceptable to differentiate between the rights of employees who perform different duties or the same ones but in a way that is not the same, and secondly, the legal status of employees can be differentiated on the grounds of their personal differences (predispositions) and their differences in performance (differentiation). In other words, objective and just differentiation among persons and their circumstances should not be deemed discrimination, even if the criterion for this differentiation is one of the characteristics that have been deemed discriminatory (e.g., disability).

It is worth noting that the criteria that justify differential treatment are at least as important as discriminatory criteria because an imprecise or inappropriate use of a criterion that justifies differentiation may thwart the purpose of anti-discrimination initiatives and solutions. These criteria should be objective; however, they probably cannot be completely separated from local traditions and customary practices.

4. Inequality or discrimination?

The use of the terms unequal treatment and discrimination in the Labor Code leads to a certain lack of clarity. Until recently (before the amendment of September 7, 2019), discrimination was deemed to be an aggravated form of unequal treatment based on specific grounds of discrimination listed in the provision. An employer was acting in a discriminatory manner when they treated an employee less favorably than other employees due to a reason indicated by the law. In other cases, we were dealing with “merely” unequal treatment. Currently, however, unequal treatment of persons who identically perform the same duties is deemed tantamount to discrimination. The rationale behind this amendment was that there were no reasonable grounds to differentiate between the prohibition of discrimination and that of unequal treatment. Furthermore, there was no reason why the consequences of violation of these principles should vary for employers.

5. Compensatory actions

An important legal solution aimed at eradicating inequality is called “compensatory actions.” Article 18 (3b) § 3 of the Labor code exempts from violations of the principle of equal treatment in employment all actions undertaken for a specified period of time. This is to level the playing field by decreasing actual inequalities in favor of a large part or all employees that have been distinguished for reasons deemed as discriminatory. In practical terms, it can mean that persons from an underprivileged group may be hired, retained, or promoted despite not fulfilling all the requirements or being less qualified than other applicants for a given job. Applying gender quotas for filling certain positions in a company is an example of such a practice.

6. Hate speech

Legislation rarely manages to keep up with new social developments. This also goes for so-called hate speech. The Polish legal system does not include a definition of hate speech, although we can all agree that this phenomenon indeed exists. It involves the use of language in order to instigate hatred or incite violence or discrimination against minorities that are the object of prejudice. On the one hand, hate speech is a demonstration of stereotypes and prejudice, and on the other hand, it additionally perpetuates them. It leads to discrimination and violence and could be linked to hate crimes.

According to the definition of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, “hate speech covers all forms of expressions that spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, antisemitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including intolerance expressed as aggressive nationalism or ethnocentrism, discrimination or hostility towards minorities or persons originating from migrant communities”.

Even though the Polish legal system has no specific regulations on hate speech and hate crimes, we do consider them illegal. Seeking protection from hate crimes, we can turn to characteristics of crimes cataloged in the Criminal Code – discrimination (Article 119),

---

5 The Supreme Court in its ruling of February 22, 2018, file no. II PK 112/17.
6 Judgment of the Supreme Court of February 28, 2019, file no. I PK 50/18: It shall not be discriminatory to apply a criterion that differentiates among entitles who belong to a group that has been distinguished for reasons deemed as discriminatory (e.g. disability) from the remaining employees if it is objectively justified in light of a lawful goal that is to be achieved, while the means to achieve that goal are appropriate and necessary.

8 Art. 119. § 1. of the Penal Code: Whoever uses violence or makes an unlawful threat towards a group of persons or a particular individual because of their national, ethnic, political, or religious affiliation, or because of their lack of religious beliefs, shall be subject to the penalty of the deprivation of liberty for a term of between 3 months and 5 years.
Legally speaking, there is no reason that employers should not introduce their own LGBTQIA+ community. The role of language in fostering an inclusive organizational culture is discussed in detail in another chapter. Suffice it to say that because the legal system leaves a lot to be desired in this respect, it is the employer who carries the additional moral and ethical burden of preventing and responding to even the tiniest manifestations of not only hate speech but also speech of contempt, prejudice, and stereotypes. Legally speaking, there is no reason that employers should not introduce their own principles of equality and non-discrimination that also apply to persons with disabilities and persons who are LGBTQIA+. In this case, the constitutional norm mentioned above should serve as the minimum standard. Moreover, one can seek protection in civil law, in provisions on personal rights (Articles 23, 24, and 448 of the Civil Code).13 Employers have a duty to respect the dignity and personal rights of employees. This should be clearly demonstrated by employers and their representatives’ actions and by creating a work environment where employers provide effective protection against the violation of employees’ personal rights.

Regardless of the legal basis we adopt, it is vital for us to object and immediately respond to hate speech. Employers should use disciplinary measures prescribed by the labor law against anyone who uses hate speech. Anyone using hate speech should know that they will inevitably be reported to law enforcement or be sued. On the other hand, legal intervention should be used as a last resort and only when actions based on the values and culture of zero tolerance of hate speech fail to produce satisfactory results.

7. Employer’s responsibility

Each employer bears responsibility for discrimination, instigating or encouraging discrimination against their employees resulting from their own actions, negligence, or decisions (for instance, those of the executive board members). The employer is also responsible for cases where some employees discriminate against others (line managers, executives, coworkers). These cases may include harassment or sexual harassment. The employer is also responsible for not preventing or responding to such situations, not taking action to eradicate discrimination, or taking only perfunctory or belated actions.

Essentially, responsibility for violating another person’s personal rights is on the perpetator. However, it is possible that the employer can be held accountable for the actions of one employee against another. Such responsibility will be the employer’s own if the violation occurred through the fault of an organ of a legal entity (e.g., a board member). The employer may also be held accountable for the actions of an employee who violates the personal rights of another if they are aware of such violations and choose to tolerate them. The employer’s duty to respect employees’ personal rights results in their duty to prevent and counteract such violations among employees.14

8. Equality policy

Building and implementing internal anti-discrimination and equality regulations should be a part of the effort to build an inclusive organizational culture. All this sends a message to those who believe in stereotypes, use hate speech, and hurt others with their prejudices that the organization will not stand for such behavior. An equality policy can also support and help representatives of underprivileged groups. It shows them that the organization accepts them just the way they are, that it cares about their safety and comfort, and diversity is seen as a valuable asset. Having such regulations in place is evidence that the employer makes an effort to comply with their obligations in terms of equal treatment.

___

9 Art. 212. § 1. of the Penal Code: Whoever imputes to another person, a group of persons, an institution or organizational unit not having the status of a legal person, such conduct or characteristics that may discredit them in the face of public opinion or result in a loss of confidence necessary for a given position, occupation or type of activity shall be subject to a fine, the penalty of restriction of liberty or the penalty of deprivation of liberty for up to one year.

10 Art. 216. § 1. of the Penal Code: Whoever insults another person in his presence, or though in his absence but in public, or with the intention that the insult shall reach such a person, shall be subject to a fine or the penalty of restriction of liberty. § 2. Whoever insults another person using the mass media shall be subject to a fine, the penalty of restriction of liberty, or the penalty of deprivation of liberty for up to one year.

11 Art. 256. of the Penal Code: Whoever publicly promotes a fascist or other totalitarian system of state or incites hatred based on national, ethnic, race, or religious differences or for the reason of lack of any religious denomination, shall be subject to a fine, the penalty of restriction of liberty, or the penalty of deprivation of liberty for up to one year.

12 Art. 257. of the Penal Code: Whoever publicly insults a group within the population or a particular person because of their national, ethnic, race or religious affiliation or because of their lack of any religious denomination or for these reasons breaches the personal inviolability of another individual shall be subject to the penalty of deprivation of liberty for up to 3 years.

13 Art. 23. of the Civil Code: The personal interests of a human being, in particular health, freedom, dignity, freedom of conscience, name or pseudonym, image, privacy of correspondence, inviolability of home, and scientific, artistic, inventive, or improvement achievements are protected by civil law, independently of protection under other regulations.

14 The Supreme Court in its ruling of February 2, 2011, file no. II PK 189/10.
non-discrimination, and respect for employees’ personal rights. This approach will serve to enhance the employer’s image as one that creates equal opportunities and cares about all employees’ sense of safety. Finally, pragmatically speaking, such policies can also serve as a legal basis for identifying violations of employees’ obligations should hate speech or other discriminatory behaviors against coworkers occur.

An equality policy should be co-developed together with employees, regardless of their form of employment, be it full-time, as a B2B contractor, or as a third company employee. Participating in this effort will increase a sense of ownership of these new regulations, which in turn will foster assimilation and compliance. The process itself should aim at raising awareness and sensitivity.

CHECKLIST

BY KATARZYNA PIECUCH (SHE, HER)

Equality policy in an organization

In chapter 2. D&I in Polish law, on page 17, you will read about provisions that oblige organizations to provide equal opportunities for all employees. However, guaranteeing the legal minimum does not mean that companies cannot implement other initiatives in order to build a culture of diversity that makes sure everyone is included, especially persons from underprivileged groups.

One of the solutions could be implementing an equality policy that features a statement of commitment from the company but at the same time is a tool for building a culture of diversity. The checklist below will show you what areas and chapters can be included in such a document. Of course, it should reflect each organization’s unique nature and it should be developed in a participatory spirit, with all or at least key employee groups represented. Thus, the list below sets a baseline, and different organizations will surely add components and ideas that are especially important to them.

**ORGANIZATION’S EQUALITY POLICY**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Basic terms and definitions: discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, inciting discrimination, instructing to discriminate, mobbing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Goals of the equality policy and its place in the organizational structure. Why is this policy being implemented? What values does it support? What organizational culture does help create? What is the goal?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Description of specific actions that are undertaken by the company in order to guarantee workplace equality. For instance, these could be compensatory actions to narrow the disproportion between women and men in managerial positions or anti-discrimination training for everyone in the company.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Description of the system implemented in the company to make its equality policy work: a department or job position or a person responsible for implementation and monitoring, concrete documents and regulations referring to the policy and its various rules.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. D&I in an organization

3.1. How to kickstart D&I in an organization?

How to start the conversation about D&I and get the ball rolling has been the subject of many papers and publications. Consequently, all readers of this manual can easily go online to find articles, webinars and other sources developed by specialized consulting companies and NGOs. Most of these materials focus on how we can promote diversity and inclusion in our organizations. They outline how to research the subject, verify current company policies and approaches, engage management and support grassroots-level initiatives, etc. As useful as these tools and publications are, in practice, at least in my view, they often tend to focus on specific actions and their subsequent steps. But someone has to take that very first step and kickstart the conversation about D&I in their organization. This initial stage can seem so daunting, for a variety of reasons, that many people stop trying before they even begin.

When I first started dealing with this subject, it was not my lack of knowledge about the available tools that proved problematic but the very process of creating interest and adding a new area to my job description. It took me a considerable amount of time to convince others, as well as myself, that it was I who should take on this subject, that is something important and as a person responsible for sustainability in the organization I could also take a closer look at D&I. So let’s start with the initiator of the “D&I conversation” in the company. Many publications will tell you that D&I often starts from grassroots-level initiatives, and as much as it is true, I personally believe that it is a more difficult path that requires more effort. It may be because then you are not getting any official resources such as a designated budget or approved time. These things will have to wait. It is surely easier if your actual work is already linked to D&I. For departments such as HR, sustainability, CSR, investor relations or communications taking interest in this area is only natural and so they can easily “take on” D&I. On the other hand, grassroots-level initiatives often come from a place of passion, which makes them more effective than actions taken by someone who has been directed to act on the matter. A lot depends not only on your position within the company but even more is determined by the kind of organization you are in, and whether you will manage to engage others. The role and
This approach is perfect for the grassroots-level initiatives mentioned above. It can be described in these simple words: Let’s do something small and see whether it will grow. Your first action may be dictated by what you can influence in the organization. I believe it is good to look around you, within your own functional area, which you know well and are competent in. If you are a product or service designer, you can think of its usability for different groups of people, such as senior users, and offer accommodations in this particular context. Starting with a product is always a great idea, although it can be tricky at the same time because it affects the very core of the company’s existence. However, this way you may have a better chance of getting decision-makers to support you because the benefits of extending the company’s product offer can be quantified. Consequently, you are eliminating one of the greatest obstacles faced by anyone who wants to effect change in any organization – getting your business case approved.

Initiating activities outside of your functional area is bit more difficult, however, as the examples of several companies show, though still doable. Many organizations have started by acting on or responding to topical social or local events. In one company I worked for the conversation about supporting women started when one of our female colleagues became ill. Her coworkers got involved in an awareness campaign for breast cancer prevention. Then the employer joined the campaign and started promoting mammography screening both within and outside of the company. In that particular case nothing happened on the level of D&I strategy or policy but I can imagine that it could have. This is why it can make sense to start by supporting one particular group – in my example, women – and then consider the needs or health concerns of other groups, such as persons with disabilities or senior employees, etc. Another good idea is for the company to get engaged in initiatives launched in their business environment, such as pride parades that have become a permanent fixture in the calendars and activities of several Polish cities. Similarly, a company can support the Neurodiversity Acceptance Month, International Transgender Day of Visibility, World Refugee Day, International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia and other special dates in the D&I calendar. You can find a sample calendar in Chapter 8: D&I calendar on page 151. Although such things tend to take the form of individual, discrete campaigns that only last a day or a week, a group of people inspired and motivated by such campaigns can form and continue to work all year round on various activities within the company. And I know from experience that it is often the case. Let’s not hesitate to use one particular moment and try to build something big and sustainable off it. It is crucially important to ensure that the company’s engagement in individual campaign-type activities does not just lead to incidental interest in D&I but rather becomes an opportunity to inspire, network, and talk about values that will drive a systemic approach to D&I in the whole organization. Additionally, it will be easier for you to convince others to take action when the goal is commendable, linked to company values but doesn’t require a huge change that may intimidate and discourage decision-makers. Any successful activity will help you get a foothold and promote further D&I initiatives.

**Start with yourself, or the power of small steps**

Regardless of how your D&I journey started, it would be good to make sure you don’t travel alone. This is why one of the important steps we should plan for is to engage others. It is good to start with those who can benefit from D&I in one way or another or may be professionally interested in developing this area in the company. Look for potential allies in the HR team, ask about their plans, tell them about your needs, ideas and offer help. Other functional areas where you can find supporters include sustainability, investor relations and communication. If, however, you are met with indifference, use internal messaging services and, the intranet, and posters to build an informal D&I team. Just remember that this area is vast and diversity can mean many things for many people! Your job will be easier when you state clearly which dimension you want to start with in the process of designing the new approach or tell coworkers about your own motivation.

You have no idea what to focus on first? I didn’t either. One of the initial things I did as I set out on my D&I path was a small survey on how people in my organization defined and understood diversity. I didn’t do it to collect arguments to convince my superiors that the topic was important for employees. I did it to overcome an obstacle that I ran into. Many people I had talked to while trying to garner support for my idea saw diversity exclusively in the context of LGBTQ+ rights. Back then the rights of the LGBTQIA+ community were at the center of the social and political reality in our country, which led to the fact that any human rights conversation became political. So I wanted to demonstrate that even though sexual orientation and identity were important and relevant from the point of view of the organization, D&I was about many other dimensions because all human beings “hold” many of them at the same time. I conducted a very short and simple survey – just two questions. The first one was closed-ended: I proposed a list of various characteristics...
and asked my respondents to select those that they deemed important in the organization. The characteristics that I had chosen included age, sex, religion, psychosexual orientation and sexual identity, disability, appearance, nationality, mental health and more. Additionally, respondents could write their comments. The second question was open and referred to specific activities that, according to respondents, could be implemented for individuals who identified themselves with the above-mentioned groups. My respondents named such initiatives as trainings, meetings, elimination of barriers – I was surprised how many specific ideas my coworkers had. My response rate back then was about 10% (of all employees), which was not bad at all. I thought it was a good start for a conversation about diversity and I got what I wanted – based on the information my colleagues provided I developed our company’s definition of diversity. The most popular characteristics selected by the respondents became the motivation and mandate for further actions. That exercise also helped me distribute work among our Diversity Team members, which I’ll talk about below. The survey made me realize one more thing that I should be taking into account in my plans. One respondent wrote that they really didn’t feel like work was the right place to talk about the LGBTQIA+ community. This was phrased in a much less palatable manner but it showed me that introducing D&I in any organization would not always be easy and may lead to unpleasant situations, cause resistance and conflict because people in the organization had different views and a D&I policy meant, above all, respect for everyone, even if we happened to disagree. Read more about diversity conflicts in Chapter 4.4. Managing diversity conflicts, on page 115.

Later in my career I had more opportunities to observe a similar, more in-depth study in another company. That company was asking about such issues as the current state of D&I in the organization, whether employees ever experienced discrimination or other negative behavior in the workplace, and what D&I actions the company could take as well as what employees expected in this area. The results were presented as infographics and served not only as a baseline for the D&I unit but were also published on the intranet.

This is where I would like to share a mistake I made in my early D&I days. As I initiated D&I in my company I was looking for people who could help me implement them. I didn’t feel confident enough to announce my plans to the whole organization because I felt I was lacking in expertise and had nothing really valuable to offer. So I went to one department that should be vitally interested in fostering diversity – HR. Then I also managed to engage a few people from communications and employer branding. I was very happy to see that some of them wanted to join my team and I never expected that it would only last a year. To this day it is unclear to me why it ended the way it did. However, if I were to guess I would say lack of motivation. I had plenty of it and it was both professional and personal in nature. But my teammates seemed to treat our D&I work as yet another duty, which, given their day-to-day workloads, naturally became less of a priority. If I were to embark on this process again today, I would actively look for people who may be – like me then – less knowledgeable but can make up for it with passion and perseverance. You will find more about employee resource groups in Chapter 3.5. The role of employee resource groups (ERGs) in building an inclusive corporate culture, on page 53.

Craft arguments and find a sponsor

Anyone who has ever worked for a large company or corporation knows full well that without a sponsor or a budget very little can get done. The person who decides how you spend your working hours needs to be on your side. Not everything can be done after hours and anyway, why would you be devoting your free time to solving these issues, if they are affecting the whole company and its development? How to prepare yourself for the process of convincing others that D&I is important? If you have managed to conduct a survey and diagnose needs, your first tool is right there. I assure you that every management board would be curious about results. Secondly, it helps direct the conversation to specific topics without getting bogged down in attempts to define diversity.

Let’s go back to the timeline. After I conducted my survey, the Diversity Team members distributed among themselves four topics that, according to the survey results, turned out key for the organization. For each topic we suggested specific ideas for possible actions. I took on the thread that was left without a lead person – psychosexual orientation and sexual identity. I started by employing a simple but extremely effective method. In collaboration with a local organization I put together an open workshop. It was about diversity in general but with a focus on the LGBTQIAP+ community. Anyone could sign up for the seminar but of course the number of seats was limited. To my surprise many executives showed up. It was yet another sign and an argument I could use in further conversations. However, I understand that not everyone finds themselves in such a comfortable situation and the conversation about creating a D&I policy is lacking these arguments. In such cases you need to craft them based on external sources, data and reports. I used the Edelman Trust Barometer study, which reflected employees’ expectations from leaders. In the question about what “is important my CEO speak out on”, 77% of respondents indicated diversity. I also wanted to draw attention to expectations coming from external stakeholders, and finally to demonstrate the business outcomes achieved through diversity. Such research was conducted by McKinsey & Company and it suggested that ethnic and sexual diversity in an organization is linked to better financial performance. These are pretty strong points, but to be absolutely sure I have it all
figured out I also use benchmarking. Decision-makers usually respond well when they are shown how their company fares against its peers, so it is a good strategy to draw their attention and interest. Today it is relatively simple and all the data you need is included in annual performance reports, which are the first source I turn to. Apart from financial performance these documents outline plans and future strategies. Besides wanting to be well prepared for D&I discussions I simply like to learn about other companies as they are a great source of inspiration. If you approach your decision-makers this way, you have a significant chance of success and your plan to implement D&I actions will surely find sponsors within the organization.

Obviously in a more evolved and aware company the effort of finding the right arguments is better spent on specific actions and areas. Let me mention one organization I am working with as I am writing this chapter. They have nominated a D&I Council, which is mostly composed of executives. The Council has conducted an internal, in-depth analysis and included resulting D&I goals in the company growth strategy. I was not there when this organization first embarked on their D&I journey but I am sure that today, with such a high D&I awareness, they don’t need to explain “why” and can focus on “how” instead.

Have a plan

Sure, a plan. I am a great fan of plans, strategies and road maps. For me, especially in non-financial areas, sound management, good understanding of goals and deliberate choice of indicators are of great importance. Make a plan, identify goals, try to understand them together with your management and even if you fail to achieve them, it will be easier for the company to move forward in one, clear direction. Read about D&I strategies and how to develop them in Chapter 3. D&I strategy for organizations, on page 27.

Tips for beginners:

1. Look around you and think how you can foster diversity in your day-to-day work.
2. Take advantage of an important idea, initiative or activity to start the D&I conversation in the company.
3. Look for people in the organization who may have a professional interest in managing diversity in the workplace but never forget about “regular” employees who are passionate about D&I.
4. Match your actions to the level of awareness in the company.

5. Check how diversity is defined and understood across the organization and what your coworkers’ expectations are.
6. While looking for a sponsor develop arguments based on internal and external data.

Beginnings tend to be difficult. New approaches, broadening perspectives, change… In the busy, no-nonsense world of organizations these are often met with tepid reactions. It comes as no surprise, given that most of our coworkers already have plenty on their plates, that any extra duties, even of great significance, lose their urgency. But remember that they all want to work in a friendly place, be part of well-performing teams grounded in mutual respect and understanding. It is your job to show them the goal and the path.
The term D&I evolves and expands to take on more and more issues. As it strives to achieve its mission, operating in various social contexts, every organization pays special attention to selected dimensions of D&I. Initially diversity was discussed in the context of gender equality, age, disability, sexual identity and orientation, and other legally protected characteristics. Then the conversation shifted to include ways of thinking and acting, learning styles, multitude of talents, life circumstances, and recently, increasingly, mental health, people care, wellbeing, and work-life balance (WLB).

At BNP Paribas we do not confine D&I to any particular functional area. The position dedicated to D&I management is placed within HR as a liaison and common denominator for many previous activities in various structures of our bank. So the culture was built before the structure, and the latter was molded to serve the former – complement it and ensure synergies. Fostering diversity is also part of our corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainability strategies. In the BNP Paribas Group in every country there is a post of Diversity Officer, held by two people – one from HR and the other representing the business side.

We think that any credible organization demonstrates consistent behavior towards its employees and associates, customers and surrounding communities. And we implement many projects in all these areas, thus building a diverse and inclusive organization.

From the perspective of our employees we foster positive relationships in the workplace; we manage D&I throughout the company lifecycle and in all HR processes; we design development, talent management programs and knowledge-sharing initiatives; we offer cafeteria plans of benefits (giving employee benefit choice options); we support the growth of employee resource groups, etc.

When it comes to our customers we openly claim that we want to be a bank that is accessible to everyone. The token of our commitment to an inclusive culture were stickers saying “Open zone for everyone” placed in our branches. Our advertising campaigns raise important social issues, such as gender equality and other sustainable development goals. We put special emphasis on accessibility for persons with disabilities.

Finally, with regard to our social environment, we actively support employees who promote D&I in their local communities through our Local Ambassadors program, leaders of the volunteering competition and volunteers of the Noble Gift social initiative. Our BNP Paribas Foundation, together with expert organizations runs a number of programs and projects that support persons at risk of exclusion, foster cultural diversity and equal opportunities through education.
3.3. D&I strategy for organizations

SUSANNA ROMANTSOVA (SHE, HER), IKEA

Strategy is not the consequence of planning, but the opposite: it is a starting point.

Henry Mintzberg

As companies that operate based on values we are getting this special opportunity in Poland to shape a new, more inclusive reality in our workplaces and while supporting diversity we can also have a positive effect on the whole of society.

Without a doubt being a D&I pioneer comes with a number of challenges. We should constantly seek balance between business objectives and the needs of people that work in the organization as well as the everchanging socioeconomic context that we are all immersed in.

Nonetheless, turbulent times, rapid change and challenging circumstances can bring great possibilities. They have the potential to change our work culture, to make us more innovative and take interpersonal relationships to a whole new level. “When nothing is sure, everything is possible.” (Margaret Drabble).

An organization’s approach to interpersonal interactions is often reflected in its D&I strategy. It is invaluable both to the company itself and its employees as well as its business environment. Having it in place means that the company treats workplace relationships – and the values they are governed by – strategically, which means that they can transform from a wonderful idea to become a real, viable and measurable business priority.

For this to happen we need to strive for the full integration of the D&I philosophy with all the processes, systems, and business practices in the organization, and demonstrate these values in our social engagement. This means that having a D&I strategy becomes a necessity for any organization to develop sustainably and build its competitive advantage.

The future belongs to agile, socially engaged and responsible companies. And this future starts now.

D&I strategy is more than just a PowerPoint deck for the C-suite
1. Develop a unique D&I business case for your organization

“What does it mean for my company?” – this is the initial question that should be the starting point as you develop your D&I strategy. A strong business case for diversity and inclusion leaves no room for doubt, is well referenced and to most of us – very familiar. However, for a D&I strategy to effect a meaningful change in any company, it has to be internalized at individual, team and organizational levels. The business case should outline why this particular company should focus on supporting diversity and building an inclusive culture. Obviously these strategies come in different shapes and sizes – from very extensive to fairly simple ones. A strategy can fit on 2 to 3 pages stating why D&I is important for the organization with regard to the three pillars of any business: people (employees), customers and brand. The purpose of such a unique business case is not just to raise awareness among decision-makers but also to engage all employees in actions that create and foster an inclusive workplace.

As you draft this document, it is good to remember that some things that may be obvious for the author, who is responsible for developing this strategy, are not necessarily as clear to all employees, suppliers, customers or stakeholders. Therefore, a D&I strategy should also take the care to define and explain certain terms, include various perspectives – not only of people inside but also outside of the organization.

Helpful questions as you work on the D&I business case for your company:

1. How is your brand perceived?
2. When people think of it, do they say: “This is a place where I’d like to work because it fosters diversity and inclusion.”? Or maybe they say the opposite: “I don’t think I would be welcome there.”?
3. What are the coworkers/employees like? Do you know how they identify themselves and speak about themselves? If not, it may be worth conducting a voluntary self-identification campaign that will illustrate how diverse the company already is?
4. Do the employees reflect the organization’s customers?
5. Do the employees reflect local communities and the business landscape?

2. Audit the as-is

If you don’t know where you are, how are you to know where you’re going?

Analysis of the as-is or a comprehensive audit answers the “what?” question. Try to collect as much data as possible about employees, associates, customers, the local communities around your company as well as your company’s own processes and systems. It is also important to analyze their relations and interactions.

Sample categories for a D&I audit:

1. Leadership: What do leaders think about D&I and inclusivity in your organization? Do they, and if so how, develop competencies in the area of inclusive leadership? Are these competencies part of their quarterly or annual appraisal?

2. Demographics: Who are the employees in your organization? Diverse representation of various groups is vital as well as knowledge as to where and in which processes it may be lacking, and how to prevent this from happening. You may want to start by defining diversity for your organization – its prerequisites and dimensions – and understanding how it is distributed throughout the company, both in horizontal and vertical structures. All inequalities that you observe should be followed up with in-depth analysis.

3. Inclusion survey (Inclusion Index): How do employees feel about their work, its conditions, growth opportunities, rapport with superiors and coworkers and relationships in their teams in the context of inclusion and diversity appreciation? These results should be cross-referenced with demographic data, namely “broken down” by gender, age, background, and other available categories of data. Otherwise you won’t see the whole picture. Additionally, you can organize focus sessions and conduct individual interviews to reveal where your organization currently is in its journey towards inclusivity. The Inclusion Index can also take into account the results of other surveys, such as belonging, relationships and satisfaction scores. You will learn more about D&I surveys in Chapter 3.6. Measure for measure. Diagnosing and monitoring diversity and inclusion levels, on page 63. Sometimes dashboards can be helpful, like Spotify; AT&T; such an initial map or data set can help you see and understand diversity in your company.
4. Maturity analysis: How far along are you as a company in the process of creating an inclusive workplace? Are you still introducing the topic and building awareness among employees or maybe you are taking your first steps towards adjusting your existing systems and processes?

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION MATURITY MATRIX

 LEVEL 1

RAZOWY
D&I is on the agenda for discussions but no concrete plans are in place to define or achieve desired outcomes beyond those required by regulation. The operating group or businesses will put additional measures in place to respond to any problems.

 LEVEL 2

AWARENESS
Diversity is increasingly recognized as a business benefit and an inclusive culture is acknowledged as key to success. D&I initiatives are deployed at local level and monitored to support continuous improvements.

 LEVEL 3

UNDERSTANDING & APPLICATION
Management recognizes the business benefits of diversity and can demonstrate that it is implementing D&I strategies designed to create an inclusive work environment.

 LEVEL 4

INTEGRATED
D&I is fully integrated into day-to-day activities. Management is committed to creating an environment that supports D&I initiatives reflect local needs and support the success of the operating group or business.

 LEVEL 5

SUSTAINABLE
D&I is “how things are done” – it’s part of business as usual and embedded in day-to-day activities. D&I drives strategic impact on business performance is clear and D&I enhances competitive advantage.

5. Market, competition and business environment analysis: What are other companies doing? What do customers expect? Can we see ways to collaborate and effect change together? Who would you like to invite to shape the D&I philosophy with you? Synergistic approaches benefit everyone! New insights and sharing experiences can inspire your organization and help fill gaps in existing knowledge and practices that may be weakening your strategy.

3. If the strategy is for the people, engage them in its development

You can devise strategies based on information obtained from the two previous stages, however, this is only half the battle. The other half is all about listening and really hearing the people you work with. Successful implementation of a D&I strategy also hinges on the engagement of the board, executives and every single employee and here from day one. Introducing a diversity and inclusion policy in any company requires a high level of change-management skills. Remembering that “everybody wants development; nobody wants change” (Søren Kierkegaard), we should make sure that the D&I strategy is created in the spirit of participation so that everyone can contribute to it. So it is not only the document itself that matters, equally crucial is the process of its development. Participation is key to inclusion, to building a culture that shapes everyone in the organization, and, on the other hand, is shaped by them. This approach will not only allow you to ensure that the strategy comprehensively reflects the real needs of all coworkers but it will also give them a sense of responsibility and involvement in the design and implementation processes.

This journey is a long one, sure, but it pays off as it brings people closer and focuses them on a set of common values, supports their sense of community and belonging in the organization.

Remember to include performance indicators. Monitoring the effectiveness of your strategy on a regular basis – using relevant metrics and tools – will prove very useful when you evaluate it and plan for continued efforts. Having such tools in place will allow you to assess any real change that has occurred (or not) in your organization. Ways to monitor your D&I efforts are described in Chapter 3.6. Measure for measure. Diagnosing and monitoring diversity and inclusion levels, on page 63.

4. Combine everything together and act with consistency, maintaining a degree of flexibility

You know why your organization needs a D&I strategy. You know what specifically you need to do as well as when – dictates your implementation tactics.

“Less means more” is the golden rule for D&I strategies. Let efficacy and real, measurable impact on the positive experience of your employees, customers and local communities be your compass in all D&I efforts.
It is good practice to break down all the ambitious plans into small, mid-size and large initiatives. The smallest ones will guide your company in internal and external communication by maintaining the sense of agency and empowerment. Mid-sized initiatives will show that the change is underway and real improvements happen gradually, while giving you the satisfaction as you see some progress in the short perspective rather than having to wait for years. Large endeavors will have the most powerful impact on the objectives that you set for the company as a whole. They will not only contribute to positive change in the workplace but also boost your brand and competitive advantage as well as have considerable social impact. Before you start selecting specific tools for strategy implementation and put them into an action plan it is good to do a SWOT analysis of the implementation effort and prepare a communication process to garner support from the very beginning. Remember that the simplest tools are the best and effective doesn’t necessarily mean complex and costly. Read more on planning communication around your D&I strategy in Chapter 3.4. Communicating D&I, on page 43.

5. Always remember that the only thing constant in life is change

People’s needs change, the market evolves, social contexts shift. Your strategy should be relevant and flexible. Especially in these times of VUCA, full of volatility, uncertainty, complexity of changes and processes, strategies need to be designed for the short term to remain agile. Your company’s direction may be the same for years, however, your D&I action plans and tools should always respond to current needs and expectations. Otherwise they will be nothing more than a set of lofty ideas.

3.4. Communicating D&I

Communication is sometimes called the queen of skills. When we consider communication with regard to diversity in a company, we should be talking about general rules of good communication. But what is good communication, which – as the queen of skills – paves the way for other competencies that will prove necessary to design and implement a D&I culture in your organization? Good communication, meaning what exactly?

When I talk about communication, I like to use the classic and commonly quoted model by Roman Jakobson. According to this model, communication takes a sender and a recipient who have a common language (the code) that helps create the message; they are in contact with one another (directly or indirectly) and operate in a common context, meaning they have similar knowledge about the reality that the message refers to.

People’s needs change, the market evolves, social contexts shift. Your strategy should be relevant and flexible. Especially in these times of VUCA, full of volatility, uncertainty, complexity of changes and processes, strategies need to be designed for the short term to remain agile. Your company’s direction may be the same for years, however, your D&I action plans and tools should always respond to current needs and expectations. Otherwise they will be nothing more than a set of lofty ideas.

Communication is sometimes called the queen of skills. When we consider communication with regard to diversity in a company, we should be talking about general rules of good communication. But what is good communication, which – as the queen of skills – paves the way for other competencies that will prove necessary to design and implement a D&I culture in your organization? Good communication, meaning what exactly?

When I talk about communication, I like to use the classic and commonly quoted model by Roman Jakobson. According to this model, communication takes a sender and a recipient who have a common language (the code) that helps create the message; they are in contact with one another (directly or indirectly) and operate in a common context, meaning they have similar knowledge about the reality that the message refers to.

Communication is sometimes called the queen of skills. When we consider communication with regard to diversity in a company, we should be talking about general rules of good communication. But what is good communication, which – as the queen of skills – paves the way for other competencies that will prove necessary to design and implement a D&I culture in your organization? Good communication, meaning what exactly?

When I talk about communication, I like to use the classic and commonly quoted model by Roman Jakobson. According to this model, communication takes a sender and a recipient who have a common language (the code) that helps create the message; they are in contact with one another (directly or indirectly) and operate in a common context, meaning they have similar knowledge about the reality that the message refers to.

Communication is sometimes called the queen of skills. When we consider communication with regard to diversity in a company, we should be talking about general rules of good communication. But what is good communication, which – as the queen of skills – paves the way for other competencies that will prove necessary to design and implement a D&I culture in your organization? Good communication, meaning what exactly?

When I talk about communication, I like to use the classic and commonly quoted model by Roman Jakobson. According to this model, communication takes a sender and a recipient who have a common language (the code) that helps create the message; they are in contact with one another (directly or indirectly) and operate in a common context, meaning they have similar knowledge about the reality that the message refers to.

Communication is sometimes called the queen of skills. When we consider communication with regard to diversity in a company, we should be talking about general rules of good communication. But what is good communication, which – as the queen of skills – paves the way for other competencies that will prove necessary to design and implement a D&I culture in your organization? Good communication, meaning what exactly?

When I talk about communication, I like to use the classic and commonly quoted model by Roman Jakobson. According to this model, communication takes a sender and a recipient who have a common language (the code) that helps create the message; they are in contact with one another (directly or indirectly) and operate in a common context, meaning they have similar knowledge about the reality that the message refers to.

Communication is sometimes called the queen of skills. When we consider communication with regard to diversity in a company, we should be talking about general rules of good communication. But what is good communication, which – as the queen of skills – paves the way for other competencies that will prove necessary to design and implement a D&I culture in your organization? Good communication, meaning what exactly?

When I talk about communication, I like to use the classic and commonly quoted model by Roman Jakobson. According to this model, communication takes a sender and a recipient who have a common language (the code) that helps create the message; they are in contact with one another (directly or indirectly) and operate in a common context, meaning they have similar knowledge about the reality that the message refers to.

Communication is sometimes called the queen of skills. When we consider communication with regard to diversity in a company, we should be talking about general rules of good communication. But what is good communication, which – as the queen of skills – paves the way for other competencies that will prove necessary to design and implement a D&I culture in your organization? Good communication, meaning what exactly?

When I talk about communication, I like to use the classic and commonly quoted model by Roman Jakobson. According to this model, communication takes a sender and a recipient who have a common language (the code) that helps create the message; they are in contact with one another (directly or indirectly) and operate in a common context, meaning they have similar knowledge about the reality that the message refers to.

Communication is sometimes called the queen of skills. When we consider communication with regard to diversity in a company, we should be talking about general rules of good communication. But what is good communication, which – as the queen of skills – paves the way for other competencies that will prove necessary to design and implement a D&I culture in your organization? Good communication, meaning what exactly?

When I talk about communication, I like to use the classic and commonly quoted model by Roman Jakobson. According to this model, communication takes a sender and a recipient who have a common language (the code) that helps create the message; they are in contact with one another (directly or indirectly) and operate in a common context, meaning they have similar knowledge about the reality that the message refers to.

Communication is sometimes called the queen of skills. When we consider communication with regard to diversity in a company, we should be talking about general rules of good communication. But what is good communication, which – as the queen of skills – paves the way for other competencies that will prove necessary to design and implement a D&I culture in your organization? Good communication, meaning what exactly?

When I talk about communication, I like to use the classic and commonly quoted model by Roman Jakobson. According to this model, communication takes a sender and a recipient who have a common language (the code) that helps create the message; they are in contact with one another (directly or indirectly) and operate in a common context, meaning they have similar knowledge about the reality that the message refers to.

Communication is sometimes called the queen of skills. When we consider communication with regard to diversity in a company, we should be talking about general rules of good communication. But what is good communication, which – as the queen of skills – paves the way for other competencies that will prove necessary to design and implement a D&I culture in your organization? Good communication, meaning what exactly?

When I talk about communication, I like to use the classic and commonly quoted model by Roman Jakobson. According to this model, communication takes a sender and a recipient who have a common language (the code) that helps create the message; they are in contact with one another (directly or indirectly) and operate in a common context, meaning they have similar knowledge about the reality that the message refers to.

Communication is sometimes called the queen of skills. When we consider communication with regard to diversity in a company, we should be talking about general rules of good communication. But what is good communication, which – as the queen of skills – paves the way for other competencies that will prove necessary to design and implement a D&I culture in your organization? Good communication, meaning what exactly?

When I talk about communication, I like to use the classic and commonly quoted model by Roman Jakobson. According to this model, communication takes a sender and a recipient who have a common language (the code) that helps create the message; they are in contact with one another (directly or indirectly) and operate in a common context, meaning they have similar knowledge about the reality that the message refers to.

Communication is sometimes called the queen of skills. When we consider communication with regard to diversity in a company, we should be talking about general rules of good communication. But what is good communication, which – as the queen of skills – paves the way for other competencies that will prove necessary to design and implement a D&I culture in your organization? Good communication, meaning what exactly?

When I talk about communication, I like to use the classic and commonly quoted model by Roman Jakobson. According to this model, communication takes a sender and a recipient who have a common language (the code) that helps create the message; they are in contact with one another (directly or indirectly) and operate in a common context, meaning they have similar knowledge about the reality that the message refers to.

Communication is sometimes called the queen of skills. When we consider communication with regard to diversity in a company, we should be talking about general rules of good communication. But what is good communication, which – as the queen of skills – paves the way for other competencies that will prove necessary to design and implement a D&I culture in your organization? Good communication, meaning what exactly?

When I talk about communication, I like to use the classic and commonly quoted model by Roman Jakobson. According to this model, communication takes a sender and a recipient who have a common language (the code) that helps create the message; they are in contact with one another (directly or indirectly) and operate in a common context, meaning they have similar knowledge about the reality that the message refers to.

Communication is sometimes called the queen of skills. When we consider communication with regard to diversity in a company, we should be talking about general rules of good communication. But what is good communication, which – as the queen of skills – paves the way for other competencies that will prove necessary to design and implement a D&I culture in your organization? Good communication, meaning what exactly?

When I talk about communication, I like to use the classic and commonly quoted model by Roman Jakobson. According to this model, communication takes a sender and a recipient who have a common language (the code) that helps create the message; they are in contact with one another (directly or indirectly) and operate in a common context, meaning they have similar knowledge about the reality that the message refers to.
**Sender**

In a company’s internal communication the official sender is the organization itself, which includes diversity into the organizational culture and makes sure that it becomes a topic of information as well as a standard that sets the scene for inclusive communication. Therefore, not only is what we say important but also how we say it: Ensuring equal treatment at the level of the language used means, for instance, that we should use feminatives – feminine forms of job titles; the way we talk about persons with disabilities or refer to minority and underprivileged groups. Using the term “gender” in the Polish reality may be a political or religious statement, “an invalid” may be considered non-inclusive by persons with disabilities. This is why we need to be aware of inclusive terms, phrases and contexts.

By taking and expecting responsibility for language the organization sends a clear message that it supports and applies certain ideas – not only through projects and programs but also through the form of its communication with employees and the outside world.

When a company “speaks” it means its communications department and those responsible for various internal communication tools. They need to know these principles and use them consistently to ensure harmonized and coherent communication. It is good to develop these principles in writing, for instance in the form of standards for communication towards equality or nondiscrimination. They should be promoted throughout the organization with a specific person allocated to monitor compliance.

At Orange we have adopted “The Principles of Responsible Communication” that we treat as a guide as we craft messages to employees, customers, business and social partners. Our principles state that “every form of communication – promotional, advertising or corporate, targeted internally or to the outside world – shall:

- reflect diversity among our customers,
- be culturally appropriate in each country,
- ensure the accessibility of our message (for instance for elderly persons, persons with disabilities and neurodiverse persons),
- be free of stereotypes,
- not contain offensive comments or remarks”.

These general guidelines are then translated into specific principles for the language that must be used in our messages as well as the rules for the photos and images that we want and can use.

The role of the formal sender is played by the person whose signature is displayed below any given message. This could be the individual in charge of the entire organization, for instance the CEO or managing director, or the manager responsible for a certain area. Communication coming from a high level sends a clear message to the whole organization that diversity is important and gets due attention.

However, we should not always send messages from the top level of the organization. “Ambassadors of diversity” should also have a voice because through their work, experience and personal stories they lend credibility to the message. It is thanks to them that the message becomes genuine and human: we trust these people because we know that their words are aligned with how they think and act. A statement about the accessibility of the company’s services for persons with disabilities sounds completely different when it says: “I have a disability and I experience this every day...” As we communicate about D&I we need to remember that it is not only the initial message that counts but also all that follows because it creates a whole system of guidelines and principles in the area of diversity and inclusion. Ultimately it is all about making each and every one of us an ambassador for diversity, so that we both speak and act with inclusion in mind to build a coherent and consistent message about the importance of an inclusive culture for our organization.

Looking at our example, I imagine that it is the CEO or managing director who should announce that the company has adopted a diversity policy. It would be best done together with the person assigned to manage D&I as it shows everyone in the organization that there is a specific person responsible for this area. And it would be good to use the plural – “we”, so that everyone can feel like they are part of the process, both affected by it and engaged in it. The message becomes more credible when we see genuine commitment on the part of management because as they say “inclusion starts with I”. Further implementation of this commitment is usually delegated to the person in charge of D&I in the organization.

**Recipient**

On the other side of the communication process sits the recipient – an individual or a group. Let’s not assume that there is a “general” target audience. When you send a message to all employees it is different from your communication with executives or managers. The diversity of functions and job titles is compounded by the cultural differences, different age, education, experience and views of individual people. The same message will be read differently by someone who is convinced and supportive than by a doubting and skeptical person.
Imagine who specifically reads your message and how they may perceive it. Will this person respond better to an emotional and “human” narrative, reference to shared values and ideas or rather to scientific arguments supported by studies of the links between diversity and team management and creativity? Will the “human” or the “business case” component work better? On the one hand you may use the language of numbers and business projects, quoting increased levels of satisfaction among senior customers due to new standards in service or benefits for teams resulting from multigenerational collaboration. And on the other hand, you can tell “human” stories, like an interview with someone with the longest tenure in the company, who can talk about how their workplace experience and the organization itself have changed over the years.

A date in the calendar – International Women’s Day, International Day of Persons with Disabilities, Mother’s or Father’s Day – may give you a “pretext” to act. It could be an opportunity to show some statistics about the company and its employees but from a slightly different angle. I remember when once, for Diversity Day, we prepared some numbers for managers about coworkers on maternity and paternity leaves, the youngest and oldest employee, how many people in the company studied the humanities vs. how many had background in the sciences, the longest tenure with the company and the gap between men’s and women’s salaries in their teams. It was the first time they got to see “their people” from such angles. It set them thinking and illustrated their teams’ diversity.

While referring to the newly adopted D&I policy, it is worth showing your recipients why the company did it, what it means for them and point them to more in-depth sources of information about the topic – this could be a training session about diversity. For the executive team you may want to draft a dedicated message outlining all the areas of organizational and people management affected by a D&I policy, and what benefits can be achieved by having one in place. Regardless of the type and form of communication you choose, we need to use the language of benefits, be genuine and show what D&I really means for specific individuals.

It is good to craft your D&I arguments in a way that ensures understanding from people in the audience so that they see it touches them all, affects their work, attitudes and behaviors. However, D&I communication is only partially about high-level rhetoric and it also, in a large part, involves the ability to sell ideas, concepts, plans and strategies. So if you want to garner support in the organization for D&I, you should plan this process and align your communication with the many dimensions of diversity represented throughout the company: neurodiversity, multitude of values but also such factors as age, ethnicity and nationality, language, religion and even political views.

Message

The theme of your message is diversity, or rather the principles of respect and appreciation towards diversity. This message can be crafted at different levels. It may be good if the very first message on the topic is part of an event or activity when employees get to hear about the subject. It could be a celebration of Diversity Day with executives present to sign the D&I policy; you may invite experts to talk in-depth about D&I; you can follow up with a quiz for employees that will help them learn about the D&I policy and some facts – including diversity statistics – about the company in a fun and exciting way. (Do you know the percentage of women in the company in managerial positions? What nationalities are represented in the organization? What is the percentage of persons with disabilities in our company? These are just a few examples of diversity quiz questions).

Initially, when you communicate D&I issues you need to demonstrate the company’s strategic approach to diversity and explain why the topic is so crucial, what it means for the organization, how it affects its plans and everyday actions. Then you can move on to more detailed activities and projects, all the while stressing that they are part of a bigger picture. You can even develop a phrase or a tagline that will always appear in messages about D&I initiatives, for instance “Project X is implemented as part of our D&I policy that is based on mutual respect and equal treatment...”.

It is key that messages about diversity become a permanent ingredient of ongoing communication. They should appear on a regular basis and in a variety of contexts. It is also important to use the language of business: to present commitments and objectives that we set for ourselves, illustrate ways to implement as well as outcomes.

Find inspiration about Diversity Day celebrations in such sources as the infographic developed by the Diversity Charter coordinated by the Responsible Business Forum, called “How to organize Diversity Day”17.

Code

The kind of language we speak is important too. It must be clear both for the sender and recipient. Sometimes you need to “translate” some specialist jargon into more approachable,

were surprised by their direct and unusual communication (“Do you think I am too old to be a hostess – why?”). After that event we received a lot of emails from employees saying that they had liked the idea and that the event, where we showed ways to overcome diversity stereotypes, achieved what we had planned.

Direct communication that allows us to deliberately eliminate communication barriers in the area of D&I can be applied during all sorts of conferences, events, trainings and seminars, where we can meet and discuss diversity. Indirect communication includes a wide range of internal channels: company publications, the intranet, mailings and newsletters. These comprise an invaluable source of D&I communication.

Context

The context means a link to a broader landscape and timeframe as well as cultural or religious aspects. Incidental messages about D&I issues when the company is undergoing other significant changes can be seen as a “red herring” or something that employees will find irrelevant at that specific moment. Other times it is a lack of communication that may seem symptomatic – when there is something important going on and employees expect that the company will take a stand.

The context can materialize as a situation or an incident that the company needs to respond to; sending a message that it disapproves – or approves – of certain behaviors and attitudes. This way the organization places a given event in the context of its internal values, its ethical code, standards and organizational culture.

It is important for the company to communicate its commitment to equal treatment and diversity this way.

Therefore, it is worth choosing the right moment to announce the company’s new D&I policy deliberately and place it in a broader external context, for instance pointing to some social as well as internal developments – referring to the values that the company espouses.

And finally, the most important matter: Communication concerning diversity should be kept alive and vibrant, which means being constantly in dialogue with employees, responding to their needs, listening to them, referring to current events, and reacting to violations of commonly accepted principles. Regardless of how you manage your D&I communication, employees themselves are the best ambassadors of this cause – ones

simple phrases or find a Polish word for some English-language term, which is often a challenging part of managing D&I. At times you need to explain a given term and the way it is understood in the organization because its meaning in a more generalized context is distorted. Make sure that the way you talk about D&I is approachable for a diverse group of people. One good exercise it to try and draft a clear message for a “naive reader”, which means showing your text to a person unfamiliar with the subject to check how they understand it. We can also use the so-called 8 to 80 test: If the communication is clear and uses plain language, the message will be understood by anyone aged 8 to 80.

Our message saying that the company has adopted its D&I policy should be accompanied by a definition of diversity because only then can the message be “decoded” by all recipients in a consistent way that minimizes any distortions. When we first introduced the topic of diversity to Orange employees, we started by asking them for their definitions. We learnt that it was broadly framed and included such dimensions as social background, individual and personality differences, but also diverse experience and functions within the organization. Together we came to the conclusion that by managing D&I “we want to create a culture of collaboration where everyone feels respected, can freely pursue their professional and personal passions”. This statement has become a part of our ongoing communication also in the context of the company’s corporate social responsibility strategy.

Contact

By contact we mean both direct and indirect interactions with the use of all available internal communication tools.

The indirect mode is prone to all sorts of distortions and requires additional tools and techniques to ensure that the recipient can effectively decode the message as it was intended by the sender. Useful techniques include active listening and paraphrasing skills. Distortions occur due to such common factors as our own stereotypes and prejudices, that are often responsible for communication barriers. As we try to manage these perceptions we reach for tools that help us confront our own limitations and open us, as well as our communication, to diversity.

Anything that leads to awareness building is immensely helpful here, for instance the Living Library – read more about this tool in Chapter 4.1. Developing D&I competencies, on page 89. Sometimes all it takes to dismantle old patterns is an element of surprise. Once we invited a team of hosts and hostesses of different ages to a company event. For our participants it was the first time that they got to see senior persons in this role and
that clearly state diversity is an important value for them and apply its principles in their everyday work and personal lives.

**Last but not least**

In this article I have focused on internal communication but any company that adopts a D&I strategy should also communicate it to its external stakeholders – customers, business and social partners, while managing D&I should go beyond the context of human resources.

As we consider diversity, let’s be aware of how we talk about it. The notion that the language we use determines – to a lesser or greater degree – the way we see the world and shapes our thinking has been researched for years. If this is the case, then with our words we can foster social attitudes and behaviors by choosing certain phrases to describe “otherness” – someone different from ourselves – manifested through skin color, gender, age, sexual orientation, sexual identity, disabilities, and views or religion.

Therefore, when we refer to principles of managing D&I we often mean certain communications standards – the language of equality and empathy. On the one hand, this involves avoiding stereotypes and marginalization, exclusion and stigmatization in our messages; on the other hand we need to use inclusive language, such as feminatives and other linguistic means to make sure various social groups are represented in our communication.

In one diversity competition for our employees the winner phrase was: “We are the same in 7.8 billion ways.” And I guess this is what it’s all about.

---

**SAMPLE CHECKLIST**

*BY KATARZYNA PIECUCH*

**Communicating diversity**

Words can shape social attitudes and behaviors. This is why the way we craft our D&I message is crucially important.

The checklist below will help you take care of key dimensions of this message so that your organization’s goals are achieved, recipients’ needs are met, and the right code is used in a relevant context.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORGANIZATION AS SENDER</th>
<th>☑</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Uses inclusive language (learn more in Chapter 4.3. Inclusive language in the workplace, page 100.)</td>
<td>Irrespective of whether the message is coming from the leader of your organization or someone from the executive team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Develops, applies and monitors compliance with standards of inclusive communication</td>
<td>Standards can be a useful tool in building awareness among employees but they can also serve as guidelines for customer communication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Appoints or organizes an election of diversity ambassadors or creates a job position responsible for D&amp;I</td>
<td>The actions that you take are determined by your organization’s maturity and readiness for such a position.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MESSAGE RECIPIENT(S)</th>
<th>☑</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Have/has varying needs and awareness of D&amp;I</td>
<td>This is why it is so important to start by identifying who your recipient(s) is/are and what kind of message will best resonate with them: storytelling or a business case.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Best respond(s) to the language of benefits</td>
<td>As you draft your message for and about diversity, you should consider using positive language, pointing to benefits for each specific target group. It is worth emphasizing the value of diversity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.5. The role of Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) in building an inclusive culture

ALEKSANDRA NIEDŹWIEDZKA-ŚCISŁOWSKA (SHE, HER), KAMIL KUHR (HE, HIS), ASTRAZENECA

1. Employee resource groups: definition, goals and benefits for the business

a. What are employee resource groups?

Employee Resource Groups, or simply ERGs, are grassroots-level initiatives launched and led by employees, that support the notion of a diverse and inclusive workplace and whose actions are aligned with organizational values and objectives.

The first ERG was set up in the 1960s in the United States by the then Xerox CEO Joseph Wilson as a response to racial discrimination. To this day ERGs remain an important factor in fostering an inclusive work environment: 90% of Fortune 500 companies have them and nearly every organization with over 1500 employees enables the creation of ERGs.

ERGs are usually launched by people with shared identities or characteristics (such as skin color, sex, psychosexual orientation, (dis)abilities, religion, parenthood) and their allies. Among the main goals of such resource groups are their efforts to foster a sense of community and belonging, support, personal and professional growth in the workplace.

b. Why should companies support employee resource groups?

Employee resource groups are the source of numerous business benefits, both for employers and employees.

---

18 In English the terms “affinity groups” or “business network groups” are also used to refer to grassroots-level networking initiatives. These groups though not the same are, however, similar in nature. In Polish the literal term used is “employee networks”.


If there are already two or several of you, get together and brainstorm\textsuperscript{23}, to identify your vision, mission and action plan for, say, the following 6 months. This timeframe works best as you are just beginning and have no idea what resources you are going to get so it would be difficult to draft a realistic long-term plan.\textsuperscript{24} But at this point do take the time to identify how you’ll be able to tell your ERG is growing nicely.

Come up with a communication plan and set up regular meetings. We all have different communication styles so discuss what’s best for your particular group (for instance, e-mails to recap meetings and delegate tasks; internal messaging systems to share ideas). Setting up regular meetings is a good way to remind yourself and other members about your ERG – it is easy to forget with everyone’s day-to-day workload. If it turns out that there is nothing new to discuss you can always call off one of your meetings.

Get support from management. Use your vision, mission and action plan to present the initiative to management and get their support. Ideally, you should get financial support but – for a variety of reasons – this is not always possible, so try small steps. First get the management team to support your ERG with appropriate communication: ask them to talk about it to increase its visibility, declare their support and the importance of this initiative, and encourage others to join you. And when you meet your 6-months plan, you can revisit a possible financial commitment because by then you’ll have shown that your group is worth investing resources in, including money.

Cultivating an inclusive organizational culture: ERGs help build a sense of community, belonging and increased agency. They facilitate interactions with decision-makers and management. They shed light on the needs of marginalized groups and improve their comfort and psychological safety. In this way ERGs can contribute to a more inclusive work environment (for instance, offices adjusted to the needs of persons with disabilities, gender-neutral bathrooms, etc.)

Attracting talent: members of ERGs can promote the notion of workplace inclusion in their local communities, social media and even during career fairs and events. They serve as a “raving review” of your organization and help actively attract talent.

Supporting employee development and talent retention: ERGs offer learning and growth opportunities that often go way beyond one’s job description (leadership, strategy development, project management, coaching, mentoring, etc.). They also give their members networking opportunities and increased visibility. When people feel they can grow, they become more engaged, which helps the company retain talent.

Partnership with the business: ERGs offer the organization the collective knowledge and experience of their members with regard to meeting the needs and challenges of communities they represent. This phenomenon is called reversed mentoring. ERGs can also act as consultants, helping design business strategies, test ideas and solve problems. All this allows companies to make more socially responsible business decisions as well as create better, more inclusive products and services.\textsuperscript{22}

2. Good practices for establishing ERGs

a. Where do we start?

Find people you want to work with. If one of your coworkers is engaged in the daily life of the organization, ask them to launch an ERG together. If you don’t know any such people, use internal communication tools to present your ideas. In multinational companies it may be good to reach out to existing ERGs in other locations and ask them for guidance and tips on how best to begin.


\textsuperscript{23} You can go to the Liberating Structures website for inspiration on how to conduct such a meeting, https://www.liberatingstructures.com.

\textsuperscript{24} Multiannual strategies are increasingly abandoned for ones that are more suitable in a VUCA world – Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous..
→ **Find a sponsor.** As you talk to executives find someone who is the most open to your idea and convince them to become your sponsor. The main job of a sponsor is to boost the visibility of your ERG at C-suite level. If they see you, chances are that your support from management will be maintained and your budget will benefit from it.

→ **Go and ask others about their needs.** Take advantage of every chance you get to talk about your ERG: use your own network, company communication tools, posters, events and parties. At the same time continuously look out for any unmet needs that your group can help respond to. You can do this “at the watercooler” or by conducting a survey (you can develop a questionnaire that you’ll send via e-mail or give out during an event). All that you learn in this process can be used to update your 6-month plan or set a longer-term direction (1 to 2 years out).

**See a sample questionnaire below.**

Answer the questions below to help identify your needs and expectations from our employee resource group.

What made you interested in our employee resource group?

1. What should we focus on in the next 6 months?

2. What can our ERG do to support you in your everyday life in the organization?

3. How do you think our ERG should communicate with others in the company?
   Below we list follow-up questions.
   → What kind of information do you expect?
   → In what form?
   → Through what channels?
   → How often?

b. What next?

**Clear segregation of responsibilities.** Choose decision-makers for your ERG – people who will represent your group (for instance in meetings with management) and team members responsible for specific tasks/areas (such as communication or events).

Develop a so-called succession plan, meaning the way, time and order in which you will hand over responsibilities to one another.

→ **Revise your vision, mission and action plan as you go.** As you plan for events always link them to the specific objectives of your ERG. Check alignment with strategy on a regular basis (like every 6 months) and if need be, make adjustments.

→ **Identify evaluation methods.** It is worth considering how you will monitor and evaluate progress on your goals. For instance, you can use an evaluation sheet after every event.

**A sample evaluation sheet for a workshop:**

This questionnaire will take you no more than 3 minutes and it will help us improve things.

**How strongly do you agree, on a scale of 1 to 5, with the following statements?**

1 – strongly disagree
2 – somewhat disagree
3 – neither agree nor disagree
4 – somewhat agree
5 – strongly agree

b. What next?
Keep your ERG members engaged. You can do this in regular informal meetings that will nurture your sense of community and belonging. Ensure open communication within the group. For instance, ask others in the ERG whether they feel comfortable with their tasks and responsibilities. Do not forget about transparency (consulting your vision and mission with everyone, not just group leaders) and balancing the day-to-day workload with ERG duties (members of your ERG should discuss their involvement with their superiors and include it in their individual performance goals).

c. What worked for us? What worked for us?

Increase your ERG’s visibility during company events. AZPride Poland is an employee group operating in AstraZeneca Pharma Poland. Its role is to educate and raise the visibility of LGBTQIA+ persons in the workplace, build a community and alliance culture. Soon after the group was formally established the company planned its Empowerment Summit – a day dedicated to fostering diversity and inclusion. It was a great occasion for us to first introduce ourselves to the Warsaw branch of the company so we turned to the event’s organization committee and asked how we could help. During the event we described our plans, handed out rainbow-colored lanyards and conducted a workshop about inclusive language. This gave us better visibility and the committee received our support in setting up the event.

Our group got the resources to conduct the workshop and consult its content, however, not all ERGs will have the requisite expert knowledge in a given area. Building workplace communities and belonging are as important as educating people!

3. Learn more

General overview of employee resource groups:


→ The Benefits Of Employee Resource Groups
The checklist below will help you plan the whole process of establishing ERGs in your organization and monitor progress. It can be something that you share with coworkers who are interested in ERGs and it may be useful in meetings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TASK</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Define the objective for your ERG</td>
<td>☑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Find people you want to work with</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choose people who are active and engage in the organization’s life. If you don’t know any such coworkers, reach out through internal communication channels to introduce your initiative, and invite others to join.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Brainstorm</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet with those who responded to your “announcement”. Together develop the vision, mission and action plan for the next 6 months.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Come up with a communication plan and set up regular meetings</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree on how often you will meet, how you will present follow-up from your meetings and how to distribute tasks among the team. It is difficult to maintain an ERG without a minimum of a general structure and set of rules.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Get support from management</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use your ERGs vision and plans to get management to stand behind you. Initially you may just ask them to openly declare their support for the initiative. In the long term it is crucial to get a budget approved for your group to develop.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Find a sponsor</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is someone at C-level about whom you know that they are your ally. They will increase your group’s visibility among decision-makers in the organization. This will boost your relevance and make you more sustainable.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tips for companies on how to support ERGs


3.6. Measure for measure. Identifying and monitoring D&I levels

DR KINGA WYSIEŃSKA-DI CARLO (SHE, HER), DIVERCITY+

Guidelines for effective diversity management and building inclusive organizational cultures change over time, as we expand our knowledge about such areas as workplace management, diversity, interpersonal relations, and the dynamics of social inequalities and their consequences. This knowledge stems from, among other things, the fact that measurement methods are constantly improving. The better and more accurate we are at estimating relationships between various factors, the more certain we can be that a given intervention (an action aimed at effecting a desirable change) makes sense (or does not).

For instance:

→ The more accurately we can establish which measurable characteristics are correlated, and to what degree, with wages and salaries (for instance by using increasingly more sophisticated techniques of wage decomposition), the more likely we are to reduce the impact of certain variables that are not linked to productivity (for example, gender, motherhood or nationality).

→ Increased ability to measure reactions of different individuals and groups to various stimuli (for example, reactions to implementing an inclusive language in the company’s internal communication) leads to more adequate solutions for enhancing and fostering D&I.

→ Im precyzyjniej możemy zmierzyć różnorodność i nierówności, tym lepiej możemy opisać naszą organizację i jej potrzeby, a w konsekwencji opracować skuteczny plan działania.

Unfortunately, decisions concerning D&I policies are sometimes informed by trends and fads rather than by rigorous measurement and comprehensive diagnosis. In the latest issues of professional journals, one can read about increasingly intricate and nuanced solutions (such as neuromanagement), while consulting and training companies are racing to offer attractive tools and seminars. The problem is that the efficacy of these tools has
Diagnosing diversity

Your first step should be to diagnose diversity in the narrow sense. What does this mean?

There is increasing awareness that diversity has more dimensions than gender, age, skin color, ethnicity, disabilities, neuro-atypicality\(^{(28)}\), or being part of the LGBTQIA+ community (these are among the characteristics mentioned explicitly in the so-called Implementation Act). It also includes characteristics such as views and opinions, political affiliation, education level, learning and working styles, skills, etc. The narrow understanding of diversity refers to the so-called ascribed statuses, namely characteristics that are not chosen nor earned through effort, resolve, or talent, and which we cannot change through hard work or strong will (these are therefore legally protected characteristics). Most of them remain unchanged throughout the course of our lives (like skin color or ethnicity), “salient” (meaning easily seen), and may activate stereotypical expectations in all areas of life.

Building an inclusive organizational culture is extraordinarily difficult in a workplace in which individuals may differ in terms of working styles and extraversion levels, but most of whom are cisgender men without disabilities who also share a common background and educational status, the median age is 35, and where most managerial positions are filled by men (except for HR, communication, and PR departments). In such companies, it makes sense to take care of the fundamental factors that drive motivation, satisfaction, and engagement. Moreover, in these firms, talking about inclusion, taking steps towards inclusion in its broader meaning, would equate unfair treatment due to sex, sexual orientation, and gender with personality types!

Obviously, the example above is exaggerated. But it illustrates the nature of the challenge we are faced with; we can only create an inclusive culture that embraces diversity in an organization that is already diverse. Otherwise, the first step should be increasing diversity. Trying to fix the wrong diversity issues (and using inadequate means) can cause more harm than good. So, how can we check whether ours is a diverse organization and, if so, what kind of diversity do we have?

So, before you decide what specific actions to take in the area of D&I and what support to seek for your organization, it is worth considering the following questions:

1. Do I have a clear picture of diversity in the company at all its levels (from the lowest to the very top echelons)?
2. Do I know which dimensions of diversity merit particular attention?
3. Do I know which areas are especially problematic—that is, which significantly contribute to inequalities?
4. Do I know which employee groups exhibit the lowest engagement, belonging, and mental and physical wellbeing scores, as currently measured by the company?

Whether you already know the answers to the questions above or you are just starting to diagnose your organization, the tips below may serve as your checklist and minimum standards for D&I diagnosis and monitoring.

---


There are several ethical and legal requirements that need to be considered when collecting and analyzing sensitive data. Such data cannot be gathered without individual consent, and they need to be provided on a voluntary basis. This information must also be collected and stored by the organization in an anonymized form.

An external company commissioned to undertake research, i.e. collect and analyze sensitive data must apply procedures that prevent identification of individuals. All data that enable the identification of an individual (for instance a physical or IP address) must be destroyed following completion of any study (if it is a stand-alone study) or stored on a secure drive, and the IP address or employer ID should be stored separately from the answers to the questionnaire (for example, respondents should be assigned random numerical IDs). Descriptive statistics should be reported at the aggregate level only, as this makes identifying any person impossible. For instance, if the organization has employees that identify as LGBT+, and descriptive statistics concerning this characteristic, when reported at the team- or even department-level, may cause colleagues to guess the person’s identity, then this variable should not be reported at that level. This variable should instead be included/reported in analyses of diversity or inequalities at the firm level.

Bear in mind, however, that whenever information has been provided on a voluntary basis, monitoring D&I variables involving sensitive data over time may prove difficult. For instance, even if the trust of data subjects (e.g. employees) who decided to share sensitive information has not been abused, there may be some changes outside the company’s control (for instance, in societal attitudes) that will prevent these data subjects (employees) from sharing certain information again.

Diagnosing diversity goes beyond simply gathering information about specific variables. It involves data analysis. Below I describe key areas of analyses: (1) composition and segregation; (2) pay gaps; (3) employee turnover and retention; (4) hiring and recruitment; (5) negative behaviors; and (6) satisfaction, trust and engagement.
Workforce composition

The most basic analyses of diversity involve looking at:

1. The proportions of people in various groups (such as genders or age brackets) in the company compared with the composition of the overall labor market and sector/industry/occupation; for some characteristics it may be helpful to explore the structure of wages and salaries as reported by Statistics Poland\(^\text{29}\) every two years.

2. The conditional distribution of individuals who fall into various groups at different organizational levels and positions, considering their roles, departments, teams, and tenure in the company (applying the above-mentioned principle of anonymity whenever we are dealing with sensitive information).

3. Simple segregation and concentration/isolation indices (for instance the Gini index, Theil index, isolation index).

Before you embark on the analyses mentioned in items 2 and 3 you should make sure that the roles and positions in the organization are adequately defined and classified to reflect decision authority, required levels of competence, number of subordinates/employees reporting to a given position, etc.

Why conduct this type of analysis?

- When you compare conditional distributions, you can identify under- and over-represented groups: (1) in the whole company (compared to the labor market, specific industries, or occupations); and (2) within parts of the company structure.

- When you calculate and decompose key segregation indices, you can get a sense of how the organization’s diversity is distributed (diversity is a resource). This means, for instance: (a) how likely individuals belonging to two different categories or groups are to interact (index of exposure/isolation); (b) how dispersed individuals with various characteristics are, both horizontally – between departments, and vertically – between positions (dissimilarity indices, e.g., the Gini index); and (c)

how diversity at different organizational levels or in different units compares to diversity in the entire company (the Theil index).

Analyzing pay gaps

Even simple analyses of pay gaps can reveal inequalities and point to the correlates of pay gaps (variables that are statistically linked to certain levels of pay). This includes, for example, comparing medians, averages, and quartiles of wages/salaries between individuals from different protected groups but holding jobs at equivalent organizational levels and fulfilling equivalent roles, having the same tenure, etc.

More advanced approaches, such as regression analysis, can allow you to identify how much wages and salaries change depending on a given attribute of an employee, as well as the shape and strength of this relationship. In addition, multiple regression and wage decomposition can illustrate the extent to which pay gaps are correlated with other characteristics of employees (not just data on protected characteristics but also education status, experience in general and tenure within the company, the number of working hours, role and position in the organizational structure, etc.) and whether there is an unexplained/residual difference (resulting, for instance, from less common forms of discrimination or unobserved differences in productivity or engagement).

Before you start analyzing pay gaps, you should define a full-time and a part-time employee (independent of their contract type and controlling for the type of contract). This will help you establish the basic hourly rate. Separately, you should look at the amount of discretionary benefits (bonuses) – studies suggest\(^\text{30}\) that, for instance, gender-based pay gaps are to a large degree linked to discretionary bonuses, including overtime bonuses in the case of so-called flexible work arrangements. If you want to compare pay gaps over time (meaning you want to be able to monitor changes), you should set a specific date each year to collect and analyze the data. This date should be set for a day/month/period that best reflects the company’s typical employment structure in a given year. This way you can avoid challenges caused by having to adjust for turnover, promotions, and shifts in work arrangements or working hours.


Why conduct this type of analysis?

- Pay gaps are among the most fundamental measures of labor market inequality. If, in your organization, pay is lower among workers with legally protected characteristics or other attributes that have no bearing on productivity, it is a clear sign that your organization, while possibly diverse, fails to comply with equality and inclusion standards.

- In most organizations, wages and salaries are confidential, even if salary brackets that dictate base pay for different roles and categories of job positions are known. Individuals that belong to protected groups that you monitor may not even realize that they are being discriminated against or unequally treated in terms of pay, and surveys of workplace satisfaction and belonging will not detect that. For instance, if in a certain company a woman holding a given position earns the equivalent of average salary in Poland, while her male colleagues in equivalent positions earn 1000 PLN more, the woman may be perfectly happy with her situation, despite the fact she is not being treated equally.

Analyzing turnover and tenure gaps

Another important aspect to include in the diagnostics process is employee turnover and tenure, which should be measured controlling for the diversity dimensions you choose to monitor and company structure. This entails comparing turnover among employees from the monitored groups for a set period of time, controlling for job positions and whether someone left voluntarily or was let go.

As you analyze retention, which is a bit more difficult to measure, you will find survival analysis helpful; in the social sciences survival analysis is sometimes referred to as "event history analysis." If you apply these models to retention, you can estimate the probability of someone staying employed and the risk of career interruptions (like temporary leave or resignation), controlling for various parameters, both fixed and time-varying (the latter includes, for instance, the length of professional experience, change in parenthood status, or sick leave).

Why conduct this type of analysis?

- Exploring employee turnover and retention, controlling for dimensions of diversity, allows you to identify groups of individuals who tend to quit or be let go more often than others, as well as those who are easier (or harder) for the company to retain. If, for instance, you find that employees of a certain family status are more likely to quit, this means that the company should take a closer look at the root causes (unfriendly family policies) and possible solutions, such as more family-friendly policies.

- Such analyses are an objective, although indirect, measure of workplace satisfaction. There can be any number of reasons why people quit their jobs. Some are obvious, whereas others are less straightforward. The reasons employees may give during exit interviews are quite often distorted by processes of rationalization, attribution errors, or general reluctance to reveal that information.

- Such analyses are an objective, although indirect, measure of workplace satisfaction. There can be any number of reasons why people quit their jobs. Some are obvious, whereas others are less straightforward. The reasons employees may give during exit interviews are quite often distorted by processes of rationalization, attribution errors, or general reluctance to reveal that information.

Analyzing hiring and recruitment processes and outcomes

Comparing job applicants’ profiles with the composition of the labor force in general, in a specific industry or region (e.g., graduates with a specific education profile), controlling for dimensions of diversity, is an objective (albeit indirect) measure of a company’s D&I reputation/employer brand.

Moreover, comparing the characteristics of candidates who make it to more advanced stages of the hiring process and get a job offer with all applicants, or with profiles of candidates that were “rejected” at earlier stages, is a measure of how effective your hiring is.
Let us assume that you want to measure the occurrence of negative behaviors in a project-driven, flat organizational structure (not one with many hierarchical interdependencies), where working arrangements, including hours are flexible, and most people work “outside of the office” (say, during the COVID-19 pandemic). Which indicators of task-related (workload related) behaviors should you choose? When someone is assigned too many tasks? Or when there is lack of feedback? Or maybe getting urgent tasks on a regular basis? And how do you measure personal exclusion?

Regardless of the scale or tools you choose for measuring negative behaviors in the workplace, you need to make sure that you observe expected correlations in the answers to specific questions, i.e. between items designed to measure negative behaviors and their consequences, and that these correlations are statistically significant.

Another component of this diagnosis of diversity and negative behaviors is analysis of existing complaints procedures. The sheer number of complaints caused by such behaviors, however, is not an adequate indicator of diversity and inclusion (it may imply both level of trust in the organization or awareness of unacceptable behaviors, as well as prevalence of negative acts). It is the type and intensity of the organization’s response to such conduct that determines whether or not negative behaviors are tolerated.

Engagement, trust, and satisfaction

Only after we measure and estimate the values and parameters described above can we move on to analyzing differences in declared levels of engagement, trust, satisfaction, wellbeing, etc.

Analyses of answers to questions concerning satisfaction and engagement should be used for identifying systematic differences between groups, as well as for monitoring changes.

When analyzing the answers to these kinds of questions, one needs to explore the characteristics of those individuals who refused to answer these questions or ignored the survey altogether (non-response analysis), as well as anomalies (for instance, respondents who always go for answers in the middle of the scale). Non-response and quasi-response patterns may point you towards groups that are particularly unmotivated and/or distrustful.

Negative behaviors

Another component of your diagnosis should be an accurate and thorough identification of any negative, undesirable, or aggressive behaviors occurring in the company, controlling for diversity dimensions. Such behaviors can be named and classified differently depending on whether we focus on the nature of the very behavior, its legal liability, or its psychological consequences.

Usually, these behaviors are referred to as:

- Mobbing, aggression/bullying, or psychological terror in the workplace;
- Harassment and sexual harassment;
- Counterproductive or unacceptable work behaviors such as microaggression, passive aggression, etc.

Negative behaviors are difficult to measure. As you design or select your diagnostic tools you need to consider your organization’s unique characteristics, the nature of the phenomenon itself, as well as the broader social context. Tools designed to measure negative behaviors rely on individual perceptions and interpretations of certain behaviors. Therefore, while pay gap analysis does not require much effort for assessing the validity and reliability of the measurement tools, when measuring negative phenomena such an assessment is a key part of the process.
Even experimental and quasi-experimental techniques come with a set of assumptions that are not often easy to meet.

Unfortunately, too often in the field of management and social sciences in general we encounter erroneous generalizations and, as a result, the misallocation of resources and efforts. Particularly when multiple D&I initiatives are launched at the same time, it is nearly impossible to determine what specifically caused changes in the selected indicators. Was it one specific action, a combination of actions, merely the intent to act, or was it just employee turnover that led to changes in the selected indicators that we track? Making things worse, all our results are prone to error, and any intervention can affect each of the monitored groups differently. This is why precise measurement and monitoring of the above-mentioned indicators over time is the best approach (even if it is only an approximation) to identifying actions that coincide with desirable change.

Monitoring diversity

Monitoring diversity and inclusion involves consistent repetition of all the measurements that you conducted at the diagnostic stage, followed by a comparison of outcomes. It is important that when analyzing changes over time, one needs to account for measurement error. Even standardized tools, including scales and tests with proven validity and reliability, are prone to measurement error. Therefore, the more measurements, the higher the likelihood that your estimates will indeed reflect change (or its absence).

The fact that we are dealing with repeated measurements, some of which are repeated with the same respondents and some with different ones, means that it is crucial to select the right statistical tools. Without going into the technical details of different models, it is important to note that when choosing the type of test to use to determine the significance and size of change, you need to check whether the assumptions of the model are met (for instance, regarding the independence of observations, measurement invariance, missing data, etc.).

Based on monitoring (repeated measurements) we can track various aspects of diversity and inclusion that cannot be easily assessed during diagnosis. These aspects include: (1) upward mobility (dynamics of promotions, including, for instance, how fast and how often individuals from different groups get promoted); (2) horizontal mobility (skill development such as company-funded trainings, co-funded education, time off for professional courses, and changes in the definitions of roles, positions, jobs, even if their titles and place in the organizational structure remain the same).

The results of both diagnoses and monitoring should be presented to all employees. Concealing results or presenting them selectively can undermine trust and lead to reluctance in providing sensitive information in the future.

Evaluating the effectiveness of interventions

Measuring the effectiveness of any intervention—i.e., concluding that a certain action caused a change in certain indicators—is challenging. This is because we are unable to observe simultaneously, in a specific setting, outcomes with and without the intervention.

---

**SAMPLE CHECKLIST**  
**BY KATARZYNA PIECUCH**

Successful implementation of an organizational culture built on diversity and inclusion is a process that is best initiated with a snapshot of the current state of diversity. The checklist below contains all the areas that should be explored at this stage. The following steps are monitoring and evaluation of the indicators defined at the “diagnostic” stage.

### DIAGNOSING DIVERSITY – AREAS OF ANALYSIS

1. **Dimensions of diversity**  
   We explore dimensions that are relevant in the broad and local contexts of our organization, such as sex, age, educational status, employment status, parenthood, and family status. Other characteristics, like psychosexual orientation, gender identity, disability or health status, ethnicity or nationality, and religion can be important, too. NOTE: many of these dimensions are considered sensitive information, therefore the process of gathering and analyzing it should be entrusted to a professional external organization.

2. **Workforce composition**  
   For instance: identify the proportions of employees from different groups within the company and compare these proportions to the overall labor market or one sector/industry/occupation; analyze the distribution of persons from different groups at all levels of the organization.

3. **Analyzing pay gaps**  
   You can also do simple calculations (like comparing medians, averages and quartiles of wages/salaries between employees from different groups who are at equivalent organizational levels, play similar roles or have the same tenure) or more advanced analyses (multiple regression and wage decomposition).

4. **Analyzing turnover and tenure gaps**  
   For instance: compare employee turnover in monitored groups for a given period taking into account attributes of job positions and whether people left voluntarily or were let go.

5. **Analyzing hiring and recruitment processes and outcomes**  
   Comparing job applicants’ profiles with the characteristics that define the potential of the labor market in general, a specific industry or region (e.g. graduates with a specific educational profile), taking into account the monitored dimensions of diversity.

### MONITORING DIVERSITY

1. **Systematic repetition of all the measurements conducted at the stage of diagnosis, followed by a comparison of outcomes.**

2. **The results of diagnosis and monitoring efforts are presented to all employees.**

### EVALUATING YOUR ACTIONS

1. **Periodic evaluation of actions undertaken to build a D&I culture in order to check whether they have influenced your D&I indicators.**

2. **Implementing change based on the outcome of your evaluation.**

### Negative phenomena

Accurate and thorough identification of any negative, undesirable and aggressive behaviors occurring in the company with regard to the diversity dimensions you monitor.

### Engagement, trust and satisfaction

This is the final step that comes after you already know the results of the above-mentioned analyses. You measure differences in declared levels of engagement, trust, satisfaction, and wellbeing, etc.
3.7. Measuring negative and inclusive behaviors, satisfaction, belonging, and trust

In all areas of social life, we encounter phenomena that are relatively easy to measure (such as gender-based occupational segregation or hierarchy of management), as well as those that are more elusive and not easily observable (such as competency levels, social capital, and trust). Social phenomena are notoriously challenging and difficult to measure due to their inherent characteristics. They are often abstract constructs, the meaning and scope of which need to be clearly delineated prior to measurement or monitoring. And, from the examples mentioned above, we can already see that: (a) some phenomena are easily defined, rather undisputable and quite “intuitive,” while others may be more challenging; and (b) some indicators that capture the very nature of some phenomena—their levels or intensity—are easier to read and interpret than others.

Anyone who has ever had to draft competency-based job descriptions or competency profiles for their company or organization has faced the challenge of having to identify the very essence of each competency, its **levels, how the competency and its levels are manifested in individuals**, as well as the **minimum level of this competency that is required or essential** for a given role.

Let’s assume that a competency consists of knowledge, skills, and an individual’s disposition toward using both. For example, suppose we’re talking about communicating in a foreign language. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages defines and describes different levels of foreign language proficiency, both active and passive. A person can, however, understand a text or message at a different level than they can speak or write. What level of competency does this imply?

And how can you measure these various levels? Do you measure them in terms of how many and what kinds of mistakes are made? Who defines those mistakes, based on what criteria? Must the text (fragment of speech) contain certain vocabulary? Which words and phrases are indicative of a certain level of proficiency? Is it enough that the message is free from mistakes, or should it also be culturally appropriate, especially if the qualitative criteria include knowledge of idioms?

Without a precise definition of the scope of a given competency, and its indicators at different levels in each dimension, judging whether a person has it, and at what level, is rather arbitrary. And with any arbitrary measurements come undesirable implications – both when it comes to interpreting the assessment results and (un)equal treatment.

The example above illustrates the key issues one needs to tackle when one wants to measure, monitor, and shape various aspects of diversity and inclusion (and other socioeconomic constructs) in one’s company. These challenges are listed below.

- **A question of definition** – What should I consider when defining the essence of a given phenomenon or construct? What are the key elements and characteristics? Should I look at regulations, literature, or the context in which the company operates?

- **A question of proof** – What do I need to observe to be able to claim that a certain phenomenon has occurred and at what level? How can I observe attitudes and values?

- **A question of interpretation** – Can I interpret the result, behavior, or response in the questionnaire unequivocally?

- **A question of intervention** – Do the results, behaviors, or responses in the questionnaire point directly to the need for specific actions or the (in)efficacy of existing solutions?

The answer to all these questions is: It depends. However, as I am aware that this answer – commonly used by social scientists – may not be sufficient for many readers, I will elaborate (because, after all, it depends ON something). Below I discuss all these challenges, using examples of the D&I terms and constructs that are most frequently used in organizations.
A question of definition

Some D&I terms (as in other areas of management) have regulatory, scientific, and popular definitions—for example, discrimination, including harassment, and mobbing. Other terms, such as diversity, inclusion, and trust, have not been officially defined or regulated, even though they are systematically studied and used in day-to-day language. Finally, there are terms with everyday meanings that differ from those defined by law or management science—e.g., harassment or sexual harassment.

When you try to build a definition of a phenomenon or construct, you should, above all, be pragmatic. The goal of diagnosing and monitoring various aspects of the organization and its units is not only to capture/detect the presence of a phenomenon (or its absence) but also, if it’s present, to identify its intensity and dimensions. Narrow definitions such as those used for regulatory purposes, helpful though they may be, tend to focus on negative, extreme, particularly harmful and deliberate aspects of certain behaviors or occurrences, and are therefore often too limiting for organizations that seek to prevent undesirable phenomena (and their escalation) and foster inclusion.

The statutory definition of mobbing refers to persistent and long-lasting harassment or intimidation of an employee, which: (1) results in the decreased self-evaluation of professional suitability; and (2) causes or is intended to cause humiliation, ridicule, or isolation of the employee, or their elimination from a team.

According to this definition, there are a number of criteria that have to be fulfilled for a given behavior to be classified as mobbing. Moreover, some of the criteria mentioned in the definition have nothing to do with the behavior itself (persistent and long-lasting harassment or intimidation or humiliation), but rather with its (intended or unintended) consequences, such as decreased self-evaluation of professional suitability, a sense of being humiliated or ridiculed, isolation, or elimination.

Consequently, mobbing is understood legally as a set of extreme behaviors that are persistent, lasting, and repeated systematically. If our goal is to prevent mobbing in the organization, however, we should like to be able to detect its initial symptoms before they become severe. We should therefore consider the possibility that mobbing is an extreme form of a type of behaviors that share similar characteristics, taken to the extreme. Let’s call them “negative” behaviors.

Let’s think, what might be the characteristics of such behaviors? They might include:

- Behaviors that limit another person’s or group’s right to freedom of expression;
- Behaviors that go beyond commonly* acceptable forms of criticism or negative feedback concerning a person’s or group’s performance;
- Behaviors commonly* deemed as derisive or offensive towards a person or group;
- Behaviors that involve attributing specific characteristics to a person or a group based on their belonging to some broad social category;
- Behaviors that limit a person’s or group’s access to resources that are necessary in the course of their duties;
- Behaviors that limit the ability of a person or group to maintain interpersonal relationships in the workplace;
- Behaviors—both verbal and nonverbal—commonly* considered aggressive towards a person or group.

According to research, all these behaviors, if they occur systematically, are correlated with negative consequences (such as decreases in wellbeing, sense of belonging, engagement, and trust), both for individuals and teams, even though these implications are not components of the behaviors per se.

If we define negative behaviors, for instance, as “all behaviors occurring in the workplace, or in the course of performing work for an organization, that violate the dignity and sense of individuality and subjectivity of a person or persons that receive remuneration from this organization”, leaving out the causes and consequences of these behaviors, and with the appropriate operationalization (i.e., carefully selected indicators), we gain:

32 One often hears people say that some behaviors are acceptable in their organizations because, for instance, "this is our culture" or because "sometimes we shout and curse but soon it all goes back to normal" (Maja Sawicka, Małgorzata Sikorska, Struggling with Emotions in Times of Social Change: Control Restoring Operations in the Workplace and the Family, “Polish Sociological Review” 2020, Vol. 212. No. 4, p. 418, par. 2; doi.org/10.26412/psr212.02.2/psr212.02.). Others may justify behavior by claiming that "this is my sense of humor" and "I would never do this for real". By using the word "commonly" I want to point out that although organizational cultures differ, as individuals within any organization have different communication and expression styles, there is a repertoire of behaviors that are universally considered unacceptable, offensive, or aggressive if they are aimed at a specific person or a group (shouting, insults, ad personam arguments, threats, an invasion of personal space, "jokes" that violate a person’s or group’s dignity, etc.). The extent to which a given organizational culture tolerates such behaviors, and how they are perceived at an individual level, should also be explored.

Suppose we are interested in measuring inclusion among the employees of our organization. Let’s also assume that from the many different definitions of inclusion, we have selected the following: “Inclusion refers to the extent to which the group treats individuals in a way that meets their need of belonging and uniqueness.”

This definition suggests that: (1) inclusion consists of at least two dimensions, namely a sense of belonging and a sense of uniqueness; (2) it is the group that can be inclusive towards an individual (such that a sense of belonging is not the same as identifying with the group); and (3) an individual cannot fulfill their sense of belonging and sense of uniqueness without the group.

What implications does this have for operationalization? First, if the group is the source of inclusion, we should focus on indicators that take this aspect into account. If we want to use survey methods, we cannot just ask, “Do you feel appreciated at work?” or “Do you trust your superiors?” Rather, we must ask: “Do your coworkers encourage you to be yourself/to freely express yourself?” or “Do your coworkers make you feel like a full-fledged member of the team?”

Second, the selected indicators should allow us to capture both dimensions of inclusion independently. This means that we should draft a set of questions about the sense of belonging and another set of questions concerning one’s sense of uniqueness.

Third, inclusion is a gradational construct, which means that one’s sense of belonging and uniqueness can be higher or lower. Our indicators and tools should therefore allow us to organize our observations according to the levels of fulfillment of these needs in a group.

And, finally, we need to select indicators carefully, so that you can clearly observe inclusion rather than related but distinct phenomena such as psychological safety, self-esteem, identification with one’s group, and openness to diversity.
A question of interpretation

When comparing definitions and indicators of negative behaviors and inclusion we might notice that some of the definitions explicitly point to a link between an indicator and a construct, whereas in other cases we need to verify whether our indicators accurately and reliably capture the nature of a given phenomenon, due to its “hidden” nature.

To assess the validity of our indicators and measurements we need to make assumptions about “what is linked to what.” In the example of measuring inclusion, based on the literature, I noted that identification with the group, self-esteem, psychological safety, and openness to differences are all factors linked to this phenomenon. It follows, then, that if we want to see whether our tool in fact measures inclusion, we need to examine the other constructs as well and identify correlations between inclusion and indicators of these constructs. Bear in mind that the remaining constructs should also be measured with tools of proven validity, so that we can avoid the trap of “validating the unknown by means of the unknown.”

Another way of estimating the validity of our indicators is to identify how precisely position on a scale (in this case the inclusion scale) predicts the specific behaviors or outcomes that we have reason to believe are consequences of those positions. The most important outcomes for an organization might be to check the degree to which level of inclusion predicts job satisfaction, interpersonal trust, group conflict, creativity, and productivity, as well as retention, turnover, absenteeism, and presenteeism.

This approach allows us to better understand the chain of relationships between different phenomena. Levels of job satisfaction or interpersonal trust are the consequences of inclusion, not its components! This is why ensuring that each indicator is unambiguous and linked to a specific construct is so crucial for the interpretation of our results.

A good way to illustrate this is the measurement of generalized trust towards specific individuals and institutions.

**Generalized trust** is usually understood as a belief that people have good intentions and are not deliberately trying to cheat or exploit others. This is not to say that one cannot be cautious. I may trust in others’ good intentions but I still log out of my email account whenever I use public computers. I am cautious because I don’t like risk and I don’t want to expose myself to unpleasant situations, not because I distrust other people in general. Most survey-based measurement tools, unfortunately, treat trust and caution as two extremes of the same scale. This includes, for instance, some version of this very common survey question: “Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can’t be too careful in dealing with people?” As a result, trust is often underestimated. And, when generalized trust is measured this way, it usually shows no correlation with behavioral indicators of trust, such as the level of cooperation in situations of uncertainty.

Generalized trust is different from (inter)personal trust. The latter is developed in one-on-one relationships with specific people and under specific circumstances. It is not only my generalized belief about others’ intentions but, above all, my personal experiences with particular people that determines whom I trust and how much. It determines, for instance, that I can rely on cooperation from my teammates X, Y, and Z, but not teammate A or B.

The final type of trust we’ll discuss is that towards institutions. It refers to one’s conviction that an institution shall work efficiently and for the good of all its stakeholders. As a result, trust towards an organization means that we believe it to be fulfilling its commitments and respecting the needs and rights of its employees and those it serves.

All three types of trust are interrelated to a certain extent, but they are not the same. Therefore, to measure each of them you need to select different indicators that you will subsequently validate based on slightly different behaviors.

The tools we use to measure the construct we are interested in should not only be valid but also reliable. Reliability means that the values of indicators or sets of indicators must

---

35 Kinga Wysieńska-Di Carlo, Zbigniew Karpiński, An Experimental Study of Status Effects on Trust and Cooperation. [w:] SAGE Research Methods Cases, cz. 2; doi.org/10.4135/9781526444448.
4. D&I competences

4.1. Developing D&I competences

KAROLINA DŁUGOSZ (SHE, HER), NETGURU

True knowledge is knowledge by causes.
Aristotle

Designing and implementing a D&I policy in any organization means designing and implementing change in a specific knowledge area, skill, and approach within the organization. To do this successfully, one needs the right competencies at an individual level, in the management team, and in the organization as a whole.

This trio of competencies requires adequate knowledge, skills, and attitudes. To ensure effective design and implementation of the D&I policy, the organization needs to measure and map existing competencies and identify ones that are missing. Understanding the needs of employees, managers, and the organization itself in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes will serve as a robust foundation for further planning and actions.

The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn.
Alvin Toffler

Developing competences on all the above-mentioned levels can include steps to raise awareness and sensitivity, such as:

- Inspiratoria eye-opening sessions
- AMA sessions (Ask Me Anything) with a representative of a certain minority group or community or an expert in such areas as aging and elderly persons, LGBTQIA+, LGBTQIA+ parents and children, migrants, persons with refugee experience, persons from families with many children or with foster care experience, persons with

be internally consistent but so too must be the results, regardless of who is doing the measuring, and when and where it is done, assuming no intervention has been implemented or no substantive change affecting a given phenomenon has occurred.

A question of intervention

Only when you have collected the results of accurate and reliable measurements of various interlinked constructs and phenomena can you begin to think about the types of interventions you should undertake.

Grounding your decision solely on one set of results or type of phenomena often leads to misguided, ineffectual solutions that are a waste of an organization’s financial and social resources.

For example, focusing exclusively on job satisfaction or engagement without measuring negative behaviors or discrimination leads to a distorted image of organizational reality. This is especially true insofar as satisfaction and engagement scales are not designed to capture undesirable behaviors.

When you consider specific interventions, you should also bear in mind that behaviors are the easiest to observe, which means they are also the easiest to modify. Feelings, interpretations, and individual perceptions, on the other hand, are more difficult to measure and change.
disabilities. These sessions can be held online or offline in the Living Library format

- In-depth awareness-raising workshops dedicated to specific areas
- Diversity day/week
- Pilot projects

There are many ways to organize learning and development sessions – offline, online, and hybrid meetings – suited to the needs of individual employees and managers, including:

- Interactive webinars
- Skills development workshops
- Knowledge pills

Skills development initiatives can take the form of closed sessions/trainings – just for one company – open workshops, and other formats such as one-on-one sessions, coaching, mentoring, cross-mentoring, and reverse mentoring.

What do we need to understand about D&I?

What we know is a drop, what we don’t know is an ocean.

Isaac Newton

There is no single, constant set of information that will be enough to design and implement D&I strategies and policies. Depending on your industry, organizational structure, business environment, and the scope of your planned actions, you will need different kinds of knowledge and information sources.

Below we present what is absolutely necessary and could be the basis for your further exploration of diversity and organizational culture of inclusion and belonging.

- The law and employers’ duties resulting from it. Fulfilling these obligations is the minimum standard for managing diversity. However, we must not confuse managing diversity with preventing negative behaviors, including discrimination and mobbing, the latter being what every employer is legally bound to do. Read more in chapter 2: D&I in Polish law, on page 17.

- The knowledge of existing patterns, including cognitive biases: Cognitive bias affects human attitudes, emotions, thinking, and behavior (actions). Read more below about these patterns and ways to deal with them. Understanding the following will be especially useful:

  - **Confirmation bias**
    It is our tendency to prefer information that confirms our prior beliefs, regardless of whether they are true. Consequently, instead of looking for the objective truth, we end up looking for arguments that support what we already believe is true.

  - **Hindsight bias**
    Or so-called creeping determinism occurs when we say, for instance: “I knew this would happen” or as they say: “Hindsight is 20/20.” This tendency is about judging decisions based on outcomes rather than assessing whether these choices were reasonable when they were being made.

  - **The halo effect**
    This happens when, based on positive or negative first impressions, we automatically attribute certain characteristics to a person although we haven’t really observed them.

  - **The framing effect**
    This cognitive bias, described by Tversky and Kahneman (1981, 1986), can be compared to the half-full and half-empty glass dilemma. It happens when we are forced to make decisions facing uncertainty and our risk tolerance varies depending on whether we focus on gains (here we tend to avoid risk) or losses (here we tend to seek risk).

  - **The Dunning-Kruger effect**
    This bias we can jokingly call “I am not an expert, but I know this... .” It happens when people who are unqualified in a certain area tend to overestimate their own knowledge and skills, while true experts do the opposite – underestimate their abilities.

  - **The bandwagon effect**
    It can be compared to herd-like behavior. Individuals often tend to believe in certain things or engage in certain activities because many other people do this.

- Micromessages as well as conscious and subconscious ways to exclude people, inclusive communication, managing diversity-related conflict, inclusive language – these
are just some of the topics to explore when planning an organization’s D&I policy. These areas are crucial from the point of view of designing and implementing D&I solutions.

- Inclusive technology and solutions - Learn about adaptive technologies: one-handed keyboards, induction loops for persons with hearing aids, screen readers or magnification software for persons with visual impairment, WCAG for developing websites. While developing solutions and arranging workstations and office space, you can also turn to neuroscience to help you make the physical space in the workplace more inclusive not only for persons with disabilities but also for the elderly, neurodiverse (on the spectrum or with dyspraxia) and highly sensitive individuals, etc.

- Participative processes – You may want to check whether the way solutions, products, and processes are designed and implemented in the organization take into account diversity among employees. You need to look at both bio- and neurodiversity. Maybe a participative design process – engaging and including people from different organizational structures – will prove a way to support inclusion and its mechanisms throughout the organization.

Good practices for developing D&I competencies

Below you can see the list of initiatives and actions that have been implemented recently in our organizations to help develop D&I competences both in employees and managerial teams.

- Providing knowledge
  - Identifying and combating mobbing and discrimination: The nature and implications of these phenomena for teams and coworkers, tools for identification, and combating these undesirable behaviors.
  - Inclusive language for managerial staff, communication departments, HR, and employees
  - Managing diversity-related conflict – tools, techniques, and the role of managers/executives and HR.
  - How to measure D&I in organizations: Measurement tools and their application in HR.

- Educating recruiters about disabilities: What to ask and how, what to offer, and how to ensure equal opportunities and reasonable accommodations for candidates with disabilities?

- How to make sure that the hiring process is free from unconscious biases and how to educate recruiters.

- Recruitment and onboarding processes open to transgender persons: Solutions, answers, and good practices in building a trans-inclusive organization.

- Micromessages as negative behaviors in the workplace: Tools to identify, prevent, and respond to them.

- Facts and myths about LGBTQIA+ and tools for developing an inclusive workplace.

- Intergenerational management: Tools and good practices.

- Intercultural competence in the organization: How to communicate effectively and how to manage conflict linked to intersecting cultures.

- Raising awareness and sensitivity around diversity

  - Living Library
    Living Library (or Human Library) is an international movement for human rights and social dialogue. Just like in a traditional library, “readers” of the Living Library can select from a wide variety of titles. The only difference is that the books are actual human beings, with their biographies and stories, and reading is replaced by conversation. Currently, the Human Library is made up of thousands of volunteers and is a registered trademark that can only be used following consent from the Human Library Organization. The Human Library was officially recognized by the Council of Europe as a teaching and learning method in the area of human rights. In 2020, the first Living Library had its 20th anniversary. In Poland, the movement is coordinated by a non-profit organization called Diversja. Read more here: www.zywabiblioteka.pl.

  At Netguru we felt inspired by the Living Library, which led to a pilot project based on a similar concept. It was called “Live Books of Netguru”, where our employees
Geriatric simulator suit – see what it is like to be an elderly person

In order to raise awareness in the area of intergenerational management, the organization can rent a “geriatric simulator.” It is a suit designed by German scientists to allow anyone to experience the physical aspects of old age – its limitations, hardships, and challenges. Each of us can try it on and experience what it feels like to be elderly, struggle with joint flexion, or try to reach objects on high shelves. The suit is an excellent teaching tool, and above all, it engenders sensitivity and consciousness around intergenerational issues.

Meeting with a user of websites and apps who has a visual impairment

All websites and mobile apps maintained by public institutions in Poland must now be digitally accessible. Thanks to the notion of digital accessibility, websites and apps can be easily used by persons with all kinds of disabilities, including hearing, visual, and motor impairments as well as intellectual and cognitive disabilities. To fully appreciate the crucial role of digital accessibility in fostering inclusion of persons with disabilities, it is good to learn firsthand how they use various digital solutions.

D&I – the knowledge needed and ideas for initiatives

Below you will find a list of topics you need to know about if you want to understand D&I. This list is surely not exhaustive and only serves as our subjective proposal and a minimum standard. The second part of the list contains examples of awareness-raising activities that have proven successful in organizations who have implemented D&I culture and education.

• Geriatric simulator suit – see what it is like to be an elderly person
• Meeting with a user of websites and apps who has a visual impairment
• Moving about in a wheelchair

As part of this project, we conducted four series of meetings with employees who shared their experiences with others in individual chats. Here are the headlines – quotations from our Human Books – from internal ads that promoted the campaign and the meetings:

- I would never think that geography has such an impact on the way people define who I am
- Then I see news that Poland is the most homophobic country in the EU
- Depression might touch anybody really
- I woke up, tried to get out of bed and I immediately fell down

Ultimately, the project comprised 45 sessions, and 90% of participants expressed their satisfaction.

In 2021, as a continuation, we ran the campaign called “Narrative matters” whose purpose was to raise awareness of inclusive language. We added International Women’s Day to the above-mentioned celebratory occasions. The campaign was initiated with a chat about how to empower women in the organization: Narratives matter: “Like a girl” – what does it mean to you?

D&I – the knowledge needed and ideas for initiatives

Below you will find a list of topics you need to know about if you want to understand D&I. This list is surely not exhaustive and only serves as our subjective proposal and a minimum standard. The second part of the list contains examples of awareness-raising activities that have proven successful in organizations who have implemented D&I culture and education.
## Knowledge about D&I

1. Regulations and employers’ obligations to prevent discrimination.
2. Mobbing, discrimination – understanding of the terms and the ability to identify these phenomena. Knowledge of the tools to prevent and respond to them.
3. The notion and meaning of diversity, including the ability to manage diversity-related conflict.
4. Underprivileged groups – understanding their needs and respective solutions that help create an inclusive working environment. Distinguishing between facts and myths about all the various groups, including LGBTQIA+, persons with disabilities, elderly persons, neurodiverse persons, women, etc.
5. Measurement tools for D&I and how to use them in HR practice.
6. Awareness of cognitive mechanisms, for instance, how stereotypes affect our judgment and decisions – conscious and subconscious patterns of exclusion and privilege.
7. Micromessages as negative behavior – tools to identify, prevent, and respond to them.
8. Inclusive communication and the principles of implementing inclusive language.
9. Understanding inclusive technology and solutions, for instance: WCAG standards for building websites, one-handed keyboards, induction loops for persons with hearing aids, and screen readers or magnification software for persons with visual impairment.
10. Knowledge of hiring processes that are free from unconscious biases, include equal opportunities and reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities, and open to transgender persons, fostering a trans-inclusive organizational culture.

## Examples of D&I Awareness-Raising Initiatives

1. Knowledge pills.
2. In-depth workshops devoted to the above-mentioned issues, including sessions that develop skills necessary to build an inclusive culture.
3. Inspirational/eye-opening sessions.
4. AMA sessions (Ask Me Anything) with a representative of a certain minority group or community or an expert.
5. Living Library as a special form of AMA sessions: www.zywabiblioteka.pl.
6. “Wheelchair for a Day” – renting a wheelchair used by persons with motor disabilities for a day to allow employees without such disabilities to experience life from a different perspective.
7. “Become an elderly person for a day” – renting a “geriatric simulator” suit that allows employees to feel and experience the limitations faced by elderly persons.
8. Diversity Day/Week.
4.2. A few words about boundaries. Inclusive leadership

When I see in someone’s bio that they call themselves “a leader”, I immediately lose interest. The same goes for “visionary” and “serial entrepreneur”, the latter making me think of serial killers, as well as “CEO and leader.”

The role of any CEO is to execute and manage. CEOs need to be efficient and effective, and their actions need to be compliant with applicable laws, but they do not need to be good leaders. This notion is difficult to imagine in progressive organizations of today, however, technocratic management models still exist out there in the corporate world and they don’t necessarily make organizations bad. With a mature CEO, any organization will thrive, even without emotion. Such an approach could be useful in times of transformation, for a short period, when specific things need to get done. Let’s not expect every CEO to be a skilled leader. And under no circumstances should we make leaders out of CEOs!

Surely in today’s complex, unpredictable, and volatile world, companies where people are the main asset will struggle or fail to grow when the CEO is not a leader. (Note: people as an asset, not a resource! We should stop referring to people as resources. It is impossible to build an inclusive and diverse organizational culture if you call people “human resources”. Words matter. They convey intent, especially when they come from the CEO or leader.)

Sustainable and socially committed companies need leaders, including CEOs who are leaders. I am not sure but maybe the line between a manager-CEO and a leader-CEO is in their approach to sensitivity and vulnerability. I don’t know whether a leader can be seen in isolation from the people they impact. Leading ideas, projects, companies, or causes means ruling people’s hearts and minds. When I think of a leader, I see a manager who has plenty of managerial skills but, above all, sensitivity that allows them to see the world in all its complexity. Leaders are people who take a broad view of the world, and are emotional and compassionate. They take responsibility for the lives of their followers; they care for their wellbeing. (Another digression: I believe that the word “employee” should disappear from our vocabulary. This term tends to provoke a one-sided approach to human relationships in the workplace, making us see people as resources rather than vital building blocks of any company. I prefer the terms coworker and contributor. This is how I see board members as well as experts and specialists working in remote areas of the country. We all work together, and we all contribute. Looking at people this way is kinder and much needed.)

It seems to me that today we need leaders who are more focused on the human dimension. Seeing one’s coworkers, customers, and clients as human beings rather than records in a database is not as easy as it may seem. We may be skilled and trained to use a whole toolbox for relationship building and inclusive management, but all this does not make us empathetic leaders. One professor at Harvard once said that it was time to send business leaders to literature courses rather than more MBA programs and there was some wisdom to it.

I believe that sometimes it is the painstaking journey towards the truth – including the truth about oneself – that may be the recipe for shaping good leaders. Illusions that we create on Facebook and Instagram, like pictures of happiness or purpose, are the bane of leaders. One needs a lot of self-reflection. It seems to me that today’s leaders are not only people who are willing to learn, unlearn, and relearn but also ones who question what is seemingly constant. Looking for new meanings allows us to see more broadly, farther, and helps us discover things. To me, there is no mature leader without the will to doubt and explore.

When a company is born, when founders invite their first coworker/contributor, they lose the right to fully control the organization; they cross the line where there is no authoritative decision making. The form of the organization does not matter here. It does not matter whether you are the sole founder, shareholder, or manager. This is of immense importance as it is the foundation of diversity and inclusion. From this moment on – in terms of values, human rights, and responsibility – the company is a common good. It requires dialogue to come up with common rules that will bind and cement the organization. Dialogue may be a term that is faded with overuse, but it is crucial in an inclusive culture. Conversation, even when it seems there is only room for decisions, is key.

And here, we are approaching another boundary. To what extent can executives and owners “insert” their personal values and views into the company? They can do so only to the extent that the company’s common values and principles allow. And not an iota more. When a leader’s own worldview shapes the company, it is dangerous and always undesirable. Many of us have recently supported the Women’s Strike on behalf of our organizations. Any company that respects human rights and fundamental values should defend these rights. As businesses, we have civic duties and should react when something feels wrong. Without a doubt, the violation of women’s rights that has occurred...
Navigating these boundaries is hard but it is part of a leader’s duties and should become a leadership skill. For a company, the boundary of authenticity is the line beyond which it is willing to make uncomfortable and costly decisions. It is a company’s ability to refuse profits, even to make a loss in order to follow its values. Often such decisions can shift strategies, beliefs, and futures. In 2014, we chose to withdraw products offered by a Polish bank known for misselling practices. This tough decision ended up costing us hundreds of thousands of Polish zlotys a year in margins. But we decided to go for it because we had pledged to our shareholders that we would always respect our common principles. If we were the ones talking about the social responsibility of the financial sector and the need to combat misselling, it would be irresponsible of us to continue to offer products or services from a supplier who was notorious for selling customers things they didn’t need or understand and couldn’t afford, at what we believed was an indecent price point. This decision changed our approach to partners and coworkers. We paid a high price not only because of what we lost in sales but also because many of our coworkers left as they had a hard time accepting the company’s decision, which they saw as a loss of high-margin products and a threat to their own income. I am sharing this because we need such “moments of truth” to revise the company’s values as well as the values of our people. Sometimes we should make room for big ideas to clash with business realism.

Let’s go back to another boundary. CEO or leader – where does leadership begin? It begins when one crosses the line of responsibility for the common good and for others. The moment you realize that neither you nor your business is the center of the universe gives you access to this boundary. Leadership is not a decision. It is not a river you decide to dip into. It is not like you can build a great company, make a lot of money, and choose to be a leader. It is not about going to Davos and pondering the state of the world. You can read about leadership, but being a true leader takes a certain kind of awakening. These may be several awakenings, a process in which the boundary emerges and beyond it the pain of the business and social reality you glimpse is unbearable. And then you start feeling responsibility for people you previously didn’t even consider having a glass of wine with because they were “strangers.” What is crucial in leadership is the willingness to pay the price, to deny yourself something for the sake of common good. But it is not common, this move from the realm of words to the realm of actions. Leadership is about taking responsibility for the part of reality that is outside of your official role. It is also the ability to allocate financial and technical resources responsibly, to take care of the people and their energy to benefit common goals without violating the rights of other stakeholders.

And nearly finally: What is courage? Whether we are talking about a CEO-manager or a leader both will face choices that call for courage. What does courage mean? It means the strength to tell the truth, even at a personal risk. Courage means that you choose to defend your company’s values, even if you know there would be a price to pay. Courage means speaking about your emotions and showing vulnerability and humanity.

And finally. Do we need to combine the word “leader” with the adjective “inclusive”? I believe you can be a leader that is in the process of learning inclusivity. It is a humbling experience, an inextricable part of one’s leadership journey and one needs to embrace it. This act of embracing takes effort, maturity, and awareness of one’s own limitations. Leadership is a magical place where there is no difference between an inclusive leader and a leader. You cannot be a non-inclusive leader. The very nature of leadership, with its sensitivity and responsibility towards the people you encounter, is inextricably and inevitably linked with inclusivity. Without it, leadership ceases to be leadership.
4.3. **Inclusive language in the workplace**

**ALEKSANDRA NIEDŹWIEDZKA-ŚCISŁOWSKA (SHE, HER), KAMIL KUHR (HE, HIM), ASTRAZENECA**

1. **Inclusive language in the workplace: definition, objectives, and benefits**

Linguistic research shows that the way we speak is not merely a reflection of reality, but it can also be an instrument that helps us shape and explore the world. Oftentimes, societies change faster than their languages. It is important to be aware of these transitions and let them show through the way we speak. “Noticing” in our language some groups that have not been talked about is one of the most common tools to shift mindsets and societies as well as prevent prejudices.36

a. **What is inclusive language?**

Inclusive language37 is free from words and phrases that express – sometimes subconsciously – prejudices, stereotypes, privilege, discrimination, or views concerning individuals or groups. Inclusive language involves all dimensions of diversity, such as skin color, ethnicity, religious beliefs or non-denominationality, world view, gender identity, psychosexual orientation, age, (dis)ability, and mental health.

The purpose of inclusive language is to counteract such prejudices. In the business context, this kind of language is required to build and foster an organizational culture of belonging as well as nourish the organization’s values.

b. **Business benefits**

You are building a friendly workplace and an inclusive organizational culture.

You are stressing the presence and relevance of minority groups that are part of your organization, which boosts people’s sense of belonging.

> Your organization becomes more appealing to diverse candidates.
> Your clients know that you care about everyone.
> Inclusive language should be used by everyone in the organization throughout all its levels, starting from hiring, onboarding, and employment to offboarding and parting ways with employees.

2. **Guidance for organizations**

The following recommendations are based on one fundamental assumption: We don’t want language to be an instrument of one’s dominance over another. We want language to reflect a simple rule: Communicate with others the way you want to be communicated with.

We know that the implementation of inclusive language in an organization is a complex process. It requires education, shaping attitudes, and introducing administrative adjustments. All these changes affect both spoken and written language across all communication channels (website, social media, external comms.) What’s important is a consistent message.

Actions described below can help you navigate this process. They can be introduced gradually, depending on your organization’s level of maturity.

a. **How to write?**

> **Use underscores in the names of job titles and roles**

Example:

- **Dyrektorki_rzy** (female and male directors)
- **Instead of:**
- **Dyrektorzy**
- **Dyrektorzy/Dyrektorki**

36 Język równościowy, Amnesty International, page 2. Note: Polish grammar distinguishes between the 3 genders: masculine, feminine, and neuter, which are reflected also in the way verbs are conjugated. While this is now slowly changing, traditionally, when referring to groups comprising both male and female members, masculine plural endings were/are used. Also many occupations/positions have been traditionally used only with the singular or plural masculine ending.

37 In Polish as well as the phrase “inclusive language” you can also hear people referring to it as “language of tolerance” and “language of equality.”
Why? The female form appears as the first one, which helps us break away from male dominance and shows that male forms and suffixes are not universal. The feminine suffix is for everyone who wants to be addressed and referred to as a woman. The masculine form comes second – for all those who want to be addressed with male pronouns and suffixes. Between these two suffixes comes the underscore. It is for everyone who wishes to use word forms other than feminine or masculine, such as non-binary, both, all, neither, or who have other preferences. The underscore is better than the slash (/) because instead of a binary choice between feminine and masculine it provides you with a whole range of possible options.

→ Try with "person" + adjective

(in English it can be adjective + person or a different structure)

For example, "persons working/contributing" (in Polish: osoby współpracujące) instead of "employees" (in Polish: pracownicy i pracownice; i.e. the word employees comes in both feminine and masculine forms).

"Person" is a term that one can relate to regardless of one’s gender identity – it is inclusive for transgender and non-binary persons. Additionally, structure "persons working" includes everyone who does work for the organization, be it on civil-law contracts or employment contracts.

→ Use feminatives

In Poland, the use of feminatives often sparks vivid debates. It may be good to reflect exactly why some feminine nouns denoting professions or job titles cause such emotional reactions. On the one hand, there is the issue of prestige. In the Communist era in Poland, masculine forms denoting professions and jobs were considered more “noble”, which led to the elimination of feminine suffixes from names of professions and occupations that were perceived as more esteemed. On the other hand, we may be falling prey to our longtime habits. Feminine forms for some jobs: doctor - lekarka, teacher - nauczycielka, and hairdresser - fryzjerka, do not cause any objections because these occupations have been traditionally feminized, which has been long reflected in our language. It is different with other professions and titles, such as president – prezydentka, or surgeon – chirurżka, because historically, and until recently, these positions have been inaccessible to women. According to the Council for the Polish Language (Rada Języka Polskiego), it is socially justified to strive for gender symmetry in language and there are no linguistic arguments against creating feminine forms of words.

→ Put your personal pronouns in the email footer

You may be wondering why one should put their personal pronouns in their email footer along with job title and phone number.

First of all, as small a gesture as it may seem, it creates a more inclusive workplace. If you are cisgender, you have probably never discussed your personal pronouns with your friends. However, transgender and non-binary persons are constantly faced with people addressing them with the wrong pronouns. Stating your personal pronouns in your email footer normalizes this issue and shows others that you want to create a safe and comfortable workplace for everyone.

Secondly, if you work in an international company, looking at someone’s name it is not immediately clear what pronouns to use when addressing them. Stating people’s personal pronouns can help avoid awkward situations.

Example:

Alex Lewiatan
Pronouns (zaimek): she/her (ona/jej)
Director of HR Department (Dyrektorka Departamentu HR)

→ Używaj neutralnych płciowo zwrotów grzecznościowych

The most common salutations are not gender-neutral: “Dear Ladies and Gentlemen”/”Szanowni Państwo” refers to men and women while excluding non-binary persons. “Dear”/”Drodzy” refers only to men. “Dear persons”/”Drogie osoby” or “Good
When you are talking to a person with a visual impairment, it is good to announce yourself as you enter the room.

- Adjust your speech (speed and vocabulary) to the needs of the other party. For instance, persons who are on the autism spectrum may have a hard time reading your face or catching ironic remarks.

- When you work in a multinational environment, remember that your coworkers’ language skills may vary. Think twice before you use metaphors, jargon, idioms, or acronyms as well as non-verbal messages, like gestures.

- If you are unsure about the pronunciation of someone’s name or surname, don’t hesitate to ask them to repeat and confirm.

c. What action to take as an organization

> System solutions

Your first step can be about changes to your company’s HR systems and programs: Create feminine and masculine names for job titles and encourage the practice of sharing people’s preferred pronouns.

> Job ads

It is good to remember about inclusive language in the initial stages of recruitment and hiring, namely when you write job ads. See if they reveal any expectations relating to gender, age, (dis)ability, or student status. If such expectations are unjustified and not relevant to the nature of the work/job title being offered, think about how you can rephrase the ad.

Example:

If you want your job ad to be gender neutral, the best way is to use roles and job titles with underscores, for instance: “we are looking for a receptionist” and receptionist comes in both feminine and masculine forms), or neutral wording: “we are looking for a person to manage the reception area.”
Language training/workshops

They can be conducted by coworkers (if they have the right expertise), NGOs, or training companies that specialize in this area and have the requisite knowledge and experience.

Example:

We often don’t realize how our behavior or remarks are perceived by others. Seeing one’s mistakes is the first step toward improving one’s communication. Company-wide workshops devoted to subconscious biases and preferences can prove very helpful.

Implementing change in any organization is impossible without support from management. Therefore, workshop sessions about inclusive language for leaders or representatives of communications units are a good idea.

Don’t use phrases that other groups may find hurtful

Maybe you don’t find the word “Murzyn” (the Polish equivalent of “Negro”) to describe a black person offensive. But be aware that the person you are talking to may object to being referred to in a way they can’t relate to and find derogatory. What’s more, in Polish there are numerous phrases using this offensive term that are definitely not neutral and that appear not only in the context of skin color. Show respect towards any group that has been suffering from racial discrimination and violence. If a given phrase or word does not refer to your own identity, please do not use it.

If you are unsure, ask

If you don’t know how to address someone or are unsure how to refer to a certain characteristic, just ask. At the same time, be respectful of other people’s boundaries. Before you ask, stop to think whether you would be offended by this very question.

Remember that asking someone about their pronouns is a sign of respect rather than nosiness, so don’t be shy. This is especially appreciated and important for transgender and non-binary persons. Research shows that individuals who are free to use the name and pronouns aligned with their experienced gender present fewer symptoms of severe depression (by 71%), have fewer suicidal thoughts (34%), and make fewer suicide attempts (65%).

A good joke is one that makes everyone laugh

Our intentions matter, yet we can say hurtful things without realizing it. So it is good to pay attention not only to what we are saying but also how it comes across. It is not a question of self-censorship or “political correctness” but of empathy and respect towards others. If you hear a joke that may be offensive, speak up. We know it is hard and uncomfortable, but your reactions can make a difference.

A good compliment is one that genuinely pleases the recipient

Our compliments are usually given with the purest of intentions and we really want to make the other person feel good. However, just like in the example above, it is not so much your intentions that are the most important thing here but rather how the compliment is received. For instance, in business context compliments to do with appearance or outfit may not be appreciated despite the speaker’s intentions. In such situations, it is better to recognize people’s skills or achievements.

Don’t be afraid to apologize

We all blunder sometimes and make inappropriate remarks. Making mistakes is not so bad as long as we are willing to learn from them and apologize for our behavior. It is not a sign of weakness but of maturity.

e. Learn more

- Język równościowy, Amnesty International
- Agnieszka Małocha-Krupa, Katarzyna Hołojda, Patrycja Krysiak, Wiktoria Pietrzak, Równościowy savoir-vivre w tekstach publicznych
- Poradnik: Jak mówić i pisać o grupach narażonych na dyskryminację. Etyka języka i odpowiedzialna komunikacja
  https://etykajezylka.pl/?fbclid=IwAR3CfjgCvZ5vCqBSMPA69-6PB5yC7PwPL2yXlSpqUT4uYjsnTkjJP8
- Max Masure, "Why I Put Pronouns on Email Signature (and LinkedIn profile) and You Should Too," Medium, August 11, 2018,
- Dowiedz się więcej o zaimkach: https://zaimki.pl/

SAMPLE CHECKLIST: INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE CHECKLIST

Check whether you use inclusive language

BY KATARZYNA PIECUCH

The need to use inclusive language, as well as its benefits, has been described in chapter 4.3: Inclusive language in the workplace, p. 100.

Below, we present a number of good practices to keep in mind if you want to use inclusive language. This checklist will help you determine whether the way you communicate is inclusive and whether there is room for improvement in this area.

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE IN WRITING

1. I use underscores in the names of job titles and roles in the organization. Example: Dyrektorki_Dyrektorzy.

2. I use the structure “person + adjective” (in English the equivalent could be “adjective/adverb + person” or a number of other words or phrases). Example: “persons working in the organization,” “coworkers” or “contributors” instead of “employees.”

3. I use feminatives. Example: dyrektorka, psycholożka, informatyczka (director, psychologist, IT specialist – always with the feminine suffix if you refer to women in these roles/positions).

4. I indicate my pronouns in my email footer. Example: she/her; he/him; they/them.

5. I use gender-neutral forms of address. Example: „Dear everyone”, „Dear All”, “Hello,” “Good morning/afternoon” instead of “Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,” or “Dear Employees.”

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE IN SPEECH

1. I make sure I know how to address everyone in meetings. At an organizational level, as well as in meetings (especially with people from outside of the company present), I make sure it is clear how we should address one another: by first names, Pan_Pani (formal address that uses verbs in third-person singular) or with job titles.
SAMPLE CHECKLIST: INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE AT THE ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL

For organizational benefits of inclusive language go to chapter 4.3: Inclusive language in the workplace, str. 100.

The following checklist will help you bring inclusive language into your organization.

1. Create equivalent job titles using masculine and feminine forms.
2. Develop principles of inclusive communication in consultation with representatives of underprivileged groups.
3. Conduct a language/communication audit of your website, social media pages, messages, and statements addressed to clients and coworkers.
4. If the nature of the work, working conditions, or professional standards do not require it, do not mention gender, age, (dis)ability, or student status in your job ads.
   Example: “We are looking for a person to manage our reception area.”
5. Implement the following elements of the onboarding process: Identifying one’s personal pronouns, preferred version of the job title, and form of address. Inform candidates about existing communication standards, such as inclusive language.
6. Raise awareness of inclusive language throughout the organization: Talk to coworkers and educate them.
7. Check on a regular basis whether and how your standards for inclusive language are working. Are they up to date and do they include everyone?

BE PERSON-CENTRIC. INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE AND INDIVIDUAL NEEDS (examples)

1. When I describe someone, I don’t refer to their identity traits unless it is absolutely necessary.
2. Talking to a person who is in a wheelchair, I position myself in a way that facilitates eye contact.
3. When in conversation with a deaf person, I address and look at the person directly instead of addressing them through the interpreter.
4. When talking to someone with a visual impairment, I inform them of relevant spatial aspects, such as someone entering the room or leaving.
5. When referring to persons with disabilities, I avoid phrases suggesting suffering or victimization such as “a person battling with…”, “a person suffering from…”
6. I adjust the way I speak to the needs of the persons I’m talking to. For instance, I remember that neurodiverse persons (e.g., on the autism spectrum) may find it difficult to read non-verbal cues, including facial expressions, and understand irony.

2. When I introduce myself, I tell people my pronouns.
I state which pronouns I use: she/her, he/him, or other ones.

3. I address people by names and pronouns they indicated as their preferred ones. It is especially important in case of transgender persons.

4. If I don’t know how to address someone or I am unsure of how to refer to a certain characteristic, I simply ask.

5. I make sure that I pronounce interlocutor’s name correctly.

6. In a multicultural and multilingual environment, as well as whenever I speak to neurodiverse persons, I try to avoid metaphors, jargon, idioms, and acronyms that may not be comprehensible for all.

7. I don’t use words or phrases that people from certain groups may find offensive.

8. I speak up whenever I hear a joke that can be considered offensive.

9. I correct myself and apologize when I have made a mistake.
4.4. Managing diversity-related conflict

DOMINIKA SADOWSKA (SHE, HER), DIVERCITY+

We only know how to fight or love one another,
but we don’t know how to be beautifully and powerfully different.
Cyprian Kamil Norwid

Diversity is about differences. They include differences between individuals resulting from neurodiversity, sex, psychosexual orientation, gender identity, intergenerational and cultural issues (like perception of time, power, distance, and attitudes towards hierarchy), worldviews and values, language and ethnicity, as well as differences in communication and learning styles, sourcing information, and experience. Regardless of their source, these differences shape organizational culture. When they are well-defined and accepted, they can be a real asset, supporting human interactions. At the same time, it is natural and inevitable that differences have generated conflict and will continue to do so.

Conflict is like death and taxes: Sooner or later we will all face it

Disputes and conflict have always existed, and they will continue to occur in different areas of our lives whether we want them or not. Especially now, living in VUCA times (where VUCA stands for volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity), we have remote work, a lot of uncertainty, many changes and turbulences, with our decisions informed by different kinds of data than before, and an increasing pace of work. Work has appeared – like an unwanted guest – on our doorsteps, putting strain on our family lives, and with limited communication capabilities – especially nonverbal communication – conflict brews easily. Sooner or later, everyone in any organization, be it a leader or manager, will be a party or witness to a dispute or may have to resolve a dispute resulting from diversity. Therefore, while discussing D&I we should not overlook conflict management because, just like communication in a diverse environment, conflict resolution remains one of the fundamental competencies in the area of D&I.

Highly developed communication and conflict resolution skills also mean that you have better tools to prevent and respond to negative behaviors in the organization, as well as better and more effective support for fostering a culture of belonging and inclusion. Everyone in the company should be developing these skills, especially managers, executives, HR representatives, and members of ethics and anti-mobbing commissions.

Can a conflict of values be of value?

Conflict often means opposing views, positions, and clashing interests. Sometimes, just the possibility of conflict causes concerns, reluctance, or uncertainty. But friction is what produces energy! The value that conflict brings to an organization is surely underestimated. When it is badly managed, conflict is destructive, but with a constructive approach it can be your ally in all processes linked to human interactions. It reveals and allows us to name important needs of various parties, their perspectives, visions, and expectations. Let’s venture a hypothesis that conflict can be something necessary, positive, and even vital from the point of view of organizational growth. If it concerns diversity of thoughts, ideas, and concepts, the very process of resolving it can lead to breakthroughs and turning points and can be a “spin doctor” for inclusion, and fuel for innovation and creativity.

For conflict to serve a positive purpose in the organization and generate potential instead of a threat or negative emotions, several conditions need to be met.

Every debate or conflict has its right time, namely the time when it can be positively resolved, and the process of its resolution will be effective, constructive, and will foster relationships. This will take place when the solution is developed by parties in talks and negotiations. If an organization supports constructive conflict resolution, over time people tend to consider disputes as a natural element of relationship building, problem solving, and participatory processes. The positive experience resulting from effectively solving a problem helps cement team relations, boosts psychological safety, and increases one’s sense of influence over the organization. All these are key factors that contribute to a culture of belonging. If, however, a dispute or conflict involves third parties, it becomes an instrument of a power play between teams, leads to gossip and warring factions, and bilateral negotiations are not enough to solve it.

My experience suggests that remote work has led not only to a higher number and nature of misunderstandings in organizations, but also conflict management tools have changed. Resolving conflict with mostly indirect communication between parties requires meetings and conversations that – despite being conducted in good faith and with good intentions – are much more difficult. Videoconferences, regardless of the technical solutions used to conduct them, are not ideal when we are dealing with delicate and intricate matters resulting from diversity and touching on key values. Such disputes are easier and more effective to resolve through direct interactions. Then we have access to more information, and we can more effectively support the flow of communication between parties using such means as non-verbal language, which is very limited when we work remotely. On
the other hand, there are situations when videoconferencing is the only available option to communicate and look for solutions.

If a conflict arises, is it better to resolve it quickly or rather wait for a chance to meet face to face? Definitely, you should try and resolve it with tools that are available in the moment. Dragging the conflict out does not serve the parties or the organization. Instead, parties dig in and start to become fixated on their respective positions, arming themselves with new tools, building fortresses of expectations and arguments, and looking for alliances.

For the process to be effective, we need to make sure that it is supported by the right facilitator. Given the complexity of such situations and lack of direct interactions, it is worth considering getting support. I have often seen such support offered by qualified coworkers (ethics ambassadors, persons of trust) and HR representatives. Other times, organizations prefer to turn to external mediators who design and conduct mediations via a process that has been previously agreed upon. Regardless of how such mediations are conducted and by whom, it is important that the facilitator should be impartial and have no vested interest in the outcome of the process. It needs to be someone who is not linked to either of the parties so that they could not be swayed, even potentially, in any direction.

Disputes and conflicts resulting from diversity among coworkers are, in their nature, about values and reasons that we all relate to and that we are all sensitive to. Issues such as disabilities, age, sex, ethnicity, religion, gender identity, psychosexual orientation, and worldview are ones that can unite and divide us. While mediating such conflicts, it is especially crucial to draw the line between a facilitator’s personal preferences and attitudes and the mediation process itself. If you come to suspect that your own experience, social engagement, worldview, biases, and prejudices may affect your ability to remain objective, you should consider stepping down as a mediator. If you are a party to the dispute, make sure that the mediator you have selected is impartial and neutral.

The mediator, as well as the whole mediation process, should be agreed upon by everyone involved. It is unacceptable for the organization (HR, executive team) to impose this or any other form of conflict resolution. However, I have often encountered situations when organizations have obliged parties in conflict to take one initial session with a mediator, after which they can freely decide whether to pursue this method of dispute settlement.

“Don’t cut what you can untie.” (Joseph Joubert)... unless you absolutely can’t untie it. There are conflicts so inflamed that parties are unable to think towards a constructive resolution; conversations about needs and perspectives are fruitless; parties refuse all attempts to find a solution or all attempts are failed and just end up dragging the conflict out. Albeit rarely, it happens that parties are not interested in resolving their conflict because remaining in a dispute brings them more benefits than ending it although, for a number of reasons, they are reluctant to admit it. Additionally, when both parties focus on wreaking psychological havoc on the opponent with a wide range of available, although sometimes ethically dubious, tools, the conflict or the process of its resolution are no longer going to bring any added value to the organization and can turn out to be destructive, both to those directly involved as well as witnesses or even entire teams. In such cases, one should consider legalistic interventions rather than rely on “humanistic” ones. Such stages of conflict call for managerial decisions, anti-mobbing proceedings, or other courses of action that the organization has prescribed for dealing with negative situations.

In practice, successful resolution of any conflict rarely means that one party fully recognizes the other party as right. Diversity conflicts, which are often linked to our attitudes, beliefs, stereotypes, and prejudices as well as conscious and unconscious biases, often touch on values and cultural or religious norms, so effective solutions should go beyond one party convincing the other about what’s right. Obviously, this approach can only exacerbate the dispute and deepen the chasm as it is highly unlikely that one party will suddenly accept the values professed by the other or conclude that their beliefs are inferior. In such circumstances, all attempts to resolve the conflict through confrontation, competition, or persuasion will not work. It may be good to try a different tack and look for common ground, find a common goal that both parties can strive for (for instance, a sense of influence, good working atmosphere, effective communication, timely delivery of reports, generating a certain level of sales), as well as tools to achieve it. Key to this approach is acknowledging diversity and the right of each party to stick to their own values, attitudes, and rituals. Agreeing on values such as mutual respect, human dignity, and psychological safety in work relations can be a starting point. Having this as a foundation, we can begin conversations about the specific needs of both parties and tools to fulfill them going forward.

Any dispute or conflict should be resolved only with those directly affected and the principle of confidentiality should apply. You need to avoid publicizing the conflict and involving third parties by asking them to generate solutions or exploring team member preferences or trying to establish who initiated the dispute. Those who started the conflict have the capacity to find the solution and end it. Making the dispute public, spreading rumors, or playing the blame game undermines the search for understanding. With these
4.5. How to be a D&I leader and keep a cool head

SUSANNA ROMANTSOVA (SHE, HER), IKEA

Introduction

Working in D&I is not just a regular job. It is more of a vocation for those who are constantly looking to answer these questions: Why is equality still not a privilege available for everyone? Why is diversity not seen as added value? Why is inclusion not an integral part of every workplace?

A person in charge of D&I in their organization is a powerful agent of change, a source of energy and boundless optimism, who believes that we can make a difference in this world. Such a person does not expect the world to change by itself; they are ready to kickstart and implement change. A D&I leader is hardly ever a random person. To have the will and courage to constantly challenge the status quo and seek new solutions, this person should be genuinely motivated and have deep convictions accompanied by strong values. Very often, this strength comes from their true character.

“Wounded healer,” the concept developed by Karl Jung, is the most accurate, in my opinion, description of a D&I leader’s character. “It is his own hurt that gives him the measure of his power to heal,” says Jung stressing this person’s great potential to help others. Designing and implementing change in the area of people’s attitudes and beliefs often comes at a personal cost to a leader.

After successful conflict resolution, you should address all the parties and teams to inform them about the solution that has been developed. Do this, especially when the dispute was witnessed by other individuals or teams or when the whole situation was seen as having affected the performance of others in the organization (for instance, when different interpretations of data made it more difficult for others to carry out their tasks; management styles acceptable in one organization can be considered mobbing in other places; setting dates and deadlines with different times zones involved). Such feedback fosters trust and a culture of open communication. But it should be up to the parties what information to communicate, how it will be communicated to the rest of the organization, and what details of the settlement they want to make public. Usually, it is enough to announce that the conflict has been resolved and what the rules are going forward, and if anyone needs support as a result of this situation, they can turn to, for instance, HR leaders.

The dispute should be resolved under optimal conditions, with parties comfortable to speak openly about their needs and intentions and also willing to talk about other possible solutions. In practical terms, it may mean that you will need to provide some space that ensures confidentiality and intimacy. Sometimes talks can be held off premises, so that no one can see that a certain conference room has been booked by one or the other party and so that the mediator’s regular visits to the company offices – and whom they meet – are not noticed by coworkers. Optimal conditions also mean that enough time is allocated to the process. Sometimes the goal can be reached in one session, other times it takes weeks. With remote work, when parties are not in one room together, the dispute can be settled via videoconferences or even via email. However, for such a remote process to be effective, both parties need to be willing to put in the effort, behave responsibly, and respect confidentiality. The facilitator needs to have the right skills, too.

A badly managed conflict can be destructive for the organization, it can undermine its values and goals, and even turn into mobbing. Team leaders are therefore responsible for creating the culture, communication process, and dispute settlement mechanisms that allow everyone, in all dimensions of individual diversity, to feel safe, free from fear of judgment, and have genuine space to share their ideas and views while remaining true to themselves and their values. These are, no more no less, the fundamentals of D&I.”

So, how can you fulfill your potential to create positive change both in the workplace and in the wider society, all the while maintaining inner harmony and peace?

1. Check your expectations

The starting point on the journey toward a sustainable achievement of the mission and real impact on inclusivity in the organization should involve checking expectations, both external and one’s own.

Too high, unrealistic expectations can cause undue tension, constant dissatisfaction, and inner anxiety. They can negatively affect interactions with others and cause burnout, which is as difficult as it is common among activists. Additionally, when your goal is as noble as fostering diversity and inclusion, you can easily fall into the “savior” trap. Working in D&I is about changing people or saving anyone. Such an approach is condescending and detrimental in the long run – for all parties involved.

To me, the role of a D&I leader is about raising awareness of this important topic, analyzing the situation in the company, systematically managing change, improving processes, and supporting equal access to resources in the organization. Reasonable expectations based on analyses of the actual situation, available resources, reviewed objectives, and consistent values. It is worth noting that every company is at a different level of maturity. Therefore, it seems that the most crucial part is to constantly strive toward progress rather than perfection. Perfectionism has no place in D&I efforts.

2. Do not go it alone

Being a D&I leader may be regarded as a completely separate role, siloed and therefore making the person in this position feel isolated. It could be a good idea to present and see D&I as a priority for the whole organization: all departments and leaders.

To achieve this perception of D&I, you can create a shared reason for “why D&I,” including a business case and human case that are common for the whole organization and resonate with everyone in it. For this effort to succeed, there needs to be a close link between designing and implementing D&I and the company’s values and vision. Another step will be to integrate the D&I approach into the “coworker lifecycle” – from employer branding, hiring process and onboarding to development opportunities, benefits, succession, internal communication, and last but not least, offboarding.

When D&I has become part of the HR department’s responsibilities, it is high time to engage the marketing and internal communication teams. It is crucial to act comprehensively and consistently in communicating the same values to customers, external partners, stakeholders, and the broader market. Cohesion and authenticity of both internal processes and external actions, as well as actively demonstrating the company’s D&I approach to the outside world, creates a domino effect, spilling over to other departments and processes in the organization. It is like a lifebuoy or “a call to a friend” so that a D&I leader never has to walk alone.

As a D&I leader, your biggest and irreplaceable asset is the engagement of your coworkers. Remember about openness, trust, and space for others to show initiative. Always support all enthusiasm and manage it transparently, systematically, and with determination.

Undoubtedly, any D&I leader is the spark that ignites the whole process. This is why their role involves embracing and sustaining a proactive approach as “every great dream begins with a dreamer.” (Harriet Tubman).

3. Know that you don’t know anything

A D&I leader should never stop learning and growing in the process of achieving their mission and vision. Such a person needs to constantly develop and hone their skills to be able to support others and to navigate the ever-changing realities that keep revealing new approaches to D&I. At the same time, they have to bear in mind that implementing D&I policies is inextricably linked to change and change management. This calls for going through changes themselves as well as accompanying others, which calls for flexibility and openness to the unknown.

The world is changing at breakneck speed, as are human beliefs and needs. Additionally, social and political circumstances play a role, and they tend to be highly unpredictable. Therefore, in order to remain up to date and adaptable, an organization’s D&I policy needs to span a maximum of three years and be regularly reviewed. Similarly, action plans must be reviewed annually so that they adequately reflect the needs of coworkers, customers, and local communities.

A D&I leader should deploy the same philosophy to their own growth: On the one hand, they should see it strategically and, on the other hand, with personal flexibility. It is worth remembering that personal development means much more than a university diploma, a specialized course or training certificate, or even literature, studies, scientific articles,
Effectiveness should be at the very heart of a D&I leader’s approach to work and implementation of their organization’s D&I strategy. In this case, the Pareto rule comes in handy: Which 20% of actions can guarantee 80% of results and which tasks take up 80% of our time and give us only 20% of the results? D&I is not about the sheer number of programs and initiatives – it is about the quality of change. A deliberate approach to responsibilities and goal setting can unexpectedly release a lot of energy.

Leaders’ energy is one of the most valuable assets of any company as well as a source of genuine change. To maintain and nourish this positive energy, D&I Leaders should watch closely for a balance between “giving” and “taking.”

Personally, I “give” most during trainings, public speeches, and important presentations in the company. And although this act of giving my energy is very rewarding, I always remember to “recharge” afterward. I replenish my energy working with my team, brainstorming, reading books (not about D&I), or traveling. Everyone likes something different, depending on their personal interests and needs, but being conscious about the management of one’s energy is key and universal. You need to ensure it every day, not just during the pandemic.

“Put the oxygen mask on yourself first, and everyone around you will breathe a little easier” – as Regina Brett aptly put it.

And finally...

It is not the end because diversity work never ends. Inclusion is a journey, not a destination. A D&I leader is constantly traveling, asking others to join them. It is tough at times, and other times you jump for joy because you have managed to make a difference. Surely you will fail and make mistakes, after which you get back up and learn your lessons to be a better and stronger leader.
3. High-level communication skills
Leaders are good at connecting with people and building relations. They have the ability to maintain an open dialogue, including on controversial topics. A leader is open to various views and ways of thinking. Such a person is gracious and tactful. Other characteristics helpful in this role include enthusiasm and the ability to inspire others.

4. Empathy
A D&I leader is sensitive, seeing the world’s complexity and the bigger picture; they are emotional and compassionate. They see other people as individuals with their own needs. Empathy is particularly key when working to include underprivileged persons and groups.

5. Courage
Leading change in the area of D&I often requires that you need to speak and act openly in order to reconcile the goals and needs of dominant groups with those of persons threatened with exclusion. The challenge is all the more complicated because in many organizations it is the privileged groups that make all the decisions. Telling the truth and challenging the status quo takes courage because they often come with personal risk.

6. Optimism
A leader is someone who believes that we can change the world and who sees opportunities to make a difference.

7. Proactive approach
A leader recognizes and believes in the power of their own actions. They take steps to improve the organization’s D&I culture and never give up in the face of missteps and failed attempts.

8. Change management skills
A leader is not a savior. D&I leaders’ responsibilities are not as much about getting the organization to the state of “perfect diversity” but rather systematically working on change, progress, eradication of risks and threats, striving for constant improvements in the area of D&I, and adapting to ever-changing realities.

9. Flexibility and pursuit of growth
D&I leaders unwaveringly challenge themselves and their D&I knowledge. And this is why they do courses, read articles and reports and studies, and listen to other leaders and experts. They ask questions, watch closely, and learn from feedback, other people’s personal stories, open conversations, and through monitoring changes in attitudes, responses, and views.
5. Mental health as a D&I component

TADEUSZ REIMUS (HE, HIM), MENTAL HEALTH HELPLINE

When I think of mental health in organizations, especially in the times of COVID-19, I feel like I am peering down a deep well, leaning ever-so-slightly and suddenly ending up in its icy water. Wherever we look, whichever study we read, and whomever we ask, there is a common sensation of decline and alarm, a feeling that good times are behind us and there is only cold, stillness, and darkness ahead.

The latest studies conducted by Polish organizations that are waiting for publication as I write these words (Stresoodporni (Stressproof), Human Power 2021) indicate that after almost a year of the pandemic, nearly 80% of respondents still experience panic attacks that are difficult to cope with. Seven out of ten respondents feel more stressed than before the pandemic, while nearly 40% are worse off mentally than when the pandemic began. In the early days of COVID-19, we were more willing to turn to physical exercise for comfort, while now it has been replaced with unhealthy habits – this is true for as many as seven out of ten respondents. Other factors are also unusual. For instance, despite a decline in the labor market, one out of five questioned is thinking of changing jobs due to overload. We take less care of ourselves, and we experience fatigue. Our lives see more frustration and anger than calm, optimism, and hope. Our dominant moods are those of anxiety and stress. In my 20-some years as a consultant and psychotherapist, I have not seen data this bad in organizations.

Surprisingly, in these circumstances, most of us can feel similar to how excluded minorities, whose emotions are commonly often ignored, feel all the time. When we look at many other clinical studies from 2020, some mental disorders (depression) are on the rise (according to WHO, depression has been diagnosed three times more often than before the pandemic), while other conditions, such as obsessive-compulsive disorder, produce fewer symptoms and become less acute. As one of my patients said, "I have been wearing a mask, gloves, and using hand sanitizer dozens of times a day for 12 years, sometimes till my hands bled, and now the world doesn’t think I am crazy anymore. Now, I have become an expert."
Is there anything else we can do instead of running? I believe there is – a deliberate and strategic approach to D&I that looks at the organization and teams in need of support, not just from the point of view of addressing diversity and inclusion of underprivileged groups but also from the point of view of protecting every coworker and providing them individual psychological support to cope with whatever they may be going through. This is the work we do with our clients at the Mental Health Helpline.

Our lives are not insulated from the outside world. Whatever is going on at work affects our personal lives. Our home situation has an impact on our careers. In the last year, we have been facing unprecedented crises that have left us with an equally unprecedented array of mysterious emotions. Together, we have been experiencing lingering uncertainty, an ambiguous sense of loss, and huge, collective misery. Nothing will ever replace holding hands with a loved one, embracing an old friend, a first kiss, or just sitting next to a kind stranger. This period of isolation from others has given us the possibility to uncover the emotional states and suffering that are common for various minorities when their rights, which are taken for granted by the majority, have been denied. From the perspective of mental health, this is a great opportunity to change not only our laws and customs but also our sensitivity which tells us that – on a certain fundamental level of being human, having needs and desires – not only are we not different but we are the same.

The pandemic has forced people to take more time for themselves than they ever have before. Along the way, it has changed and broadened the way we see ourselves, and others. Many people in organizations have realized something surprising, for instance, that self-care is not about buying a certain brand of clothes, using a trendy shade of lipstick, or working towards a perfect, trim figure. For many of our clients, the very purpose of life has become a priority, which has changed their needs as month after month with the virus passed. Fears surrounding longevity and mortality are not just hypotheticals. Similarly, we have started to look for ways to make teammates feel that they belong to something bigger than just the company logo. Therapists’ offices are filled with stories, not theories, told by coworkers who are learning to see human beings and not “cases.” For many of them it is all new, giving them a chance to reflect, learn, and appreciate diversity more and as a result – to be more inclusive in the future.

How come there is such a strong link between D&I and mental health? I believe it is mostly because of the place of psychiatry in medical sciences. Often, my clients are shocked when they hear that in my area there is no such thing as a norm that would be “set in stone.” There is no single, official definition because (according to WHO) cultural differences, subjective feelings, and competing professional theories affect the very definition and perception of this term.

Let’s think about how we describe someone who is mentally ill or seems a bit “weird.” We refer to such persons as crazy, deranged, psychopaths, mental, not quite there, nuts, stupid, idiots, unhinged, or clowns. This one is one fry short of a happy meal. That one has one screw loose. The list goes on and on and, out of respect for my readers, I am not mentioning some of the other insults that often come with these words and phrases.

If any of you has ever worked in D&I, you have heard these words many times. Those who are part of a discriminated minority know very well how much these words can hurt.

Now, let’s think about how we describe persons who are in good mental health. The list of expressions is much shorter. You can refer to someone as mature, self-actualizing, or well-adjusted. These adjectives are rather bland and have no emotional impact that we feel when we hear words from the first list. Maybe this is why we devote considerably less attention to mental health than to mental illnesses. Similarly, there is much more focus on managing diversity (which accentuates differences) than on inclusion (which encourages common ground and integration with acceptance of existing differences).

Possibly the fact that so little attention is paid to mental health is why our vocabulary in this area is inadequate. According to the medical model, if there is something “wrong” with an individual, the role of a clinician – a physician or psychologist – is to “fix the problem.” It is done in order to “cure” the individual and eradicate their symptoms. This way, the person is “normal” again and by normal we mean that nothing is “wrong” with them anymore. The fact that we refer to it as a “condition” and speak of “treatment” and “signs and symptoms” suggests that mental illness and suffering are equivalent or even identical to physical disorders.

According to the medical model, when a mental disorder occurs, any clinician’s job is to eliminate the problematic behavior or set of ideas that prevent the individual from having a “normal life.” When this succeeds, the person is alright – they are normal. But are they as good as they can be? Some psychologists started thinking about what it meant to be more than just “alright.” We also need to bear in mind that the very definition of the norm, which I described above, has often led to abuses. For instance, homosexual tendencies were removed from the list of mental disorders only in 1990!

During the pandemic, it has become abundantly clear that health and illness are not put
understand that despite these times are trying for every single one of us, some may be even more vulnerable due to their poor support structures, resources, or health.

Ensure the right system of psychological support and promote it among coworkers.

Empathetic leaders can realize that the pandemic has affected everyone, not just their companies. They are aware of the impact that stress can have on work ethic and productivity. Moreover, they are prepared to solve their followers’ problems via open lines of communication. Clear and transparent communication concerning day-to-day operations, expectations, and goals can help alleviate stress caused by the unknown.

Finally, organizations should disseminate reliable information about the nature of the virus and use affirmative ways to inform employees about the importance of safe, inclusive workplaces. In these times of pandemic misinformation, prejudices and stereotypes (racial, sexual, nationalistic, and others) can spread faster than the actual virus. Internal communication efforts and psychological support can help promote reliable information, gauge emotions and concerns among coworkers, and, most importantly, play a role in mitigating the consequences of prejudices and stereotypes. All this can help us slowly but surely emerge from the deep well.

From the point of view of organizations, I see five things that can make us swim instead of sink:

1. Knowledge of warning signs – organizations have to raise awareness of mental health; their efforts should also include the “hard” component; managers need basic knowledge of psychopathology to be able to take care of themselves and others. I recommend discussing case studies taken from the organization itself to identify what went wrong and what good practices could be applied, for instance, when facing disturbing behavior. Too often, our reactions are inadequate or delayed.

2. Competence to conduct supportive conversations – a conversation like this, aimed at supporting a coworker psychologically, should be part of any company’s OH&S. Research on mental crises suggests that if a person overloaded with anguish gets support fast, we can prevent the crisis from exacerbating, help the person function successfully in social contexts and stop any persistent disorders.

3. Sense of acceptance and togetherness in the team – it is time to understand and appreciate that mental health is our common business and concern, just like clean air. Not turning to your team for help – not reaching out to your social and professional networks – is not good for you and the team.

The only psychologist’s name that will appear in this chapter is that of Corey Keyes. According to Keyes, mental health is like flourishing. He conducts extensive research in order to identify characteristics that can be linked to this very state: high level of health and low level of illness. Keyes has also introduced a new concept to psychology – languishing. Quoting his last study from before the pandemic, about 17.2% of patients were flourishing. Another 56.6% were described as moderately mentally healthy (“alright”), 12.1% were languishing, while 14.1% were depressed. Those who are languishing are not mentally ill, however, they show few signs of mental health. A bit like most of us, left feeling miserable after 2020.

Without a doubt, the pandemic has presented a challenge for organizations and their current approach to managing employees as well as their overall culture. As COVID-19 is still spreading, causing lockdowns, ruining global markets, and keeping people in isolation – it is more important than ever for organizations and their leaders to support inclusivity for the sake of those who may feel more “abnormal” than before. It is a new territory for all involved. Regardless of whether we are talking about a private or public company, a non-profit, or a university, the largest organizations can be an example of how companies should (not) respond to crisis. There are deliberate strategies that leaders should consider, making sure that even in the times of this pandemic their organizations remain open to everyone.

As COVID-19 spread, a whole number of responses surfaced: fear, anxiety, and inability to focus, along with growing health and safety concerns. In these uncertain times, what we need most is stable and calm leadership that brings us all together. It is suggested that to survive, organizations should:

- Be empathic in communications and take notice of the anxiety experienced by the (co)workers
- Maintain loops of feedback so that (co)workers can voice their concerns and problems can be solved.
professional networks is like having your arm injured in an accident, refusing to see a doctor, continuing to come into work, and trying to do everything exactly the same as before the accident, all the while berating yourself for having an unproductive arm. Especially in such situations, we need a reality check that a mature and kind team can offer.

4. Culture of authenticity in the workplace – currently there exists an extensive body of research and literature on the link between mental wellbeing and long-term productivity, collaboration, protection from burnout, or the opposite – growing absenteeism. A deterioration of one’s mental condition that is not caused by individual disorders but rather by one’s inability to cope with stress and inadequate self-regulatory functions (in other words, being inauthentic) as well as lack of social support shows a direct correlation with individual and team productivity levels, thus affecting business objectives.

5. Procedures – as much as we don’t like them, without procedures there is no reference point for anything, and no change will ever happen. As psychologists in organizations, with years of business experience, we believe that just like factory owners decades ago had to take care of OH&S because the costs of work accidents were too high (financially and socially), today’s leaders need to address psychological health and safety to lower the growing cost of sick leave due to burnout, depression, and somatic diseases caused by inability to cope with stress, as well as excess attrition rates, especially among the younger generation.

6. Cross-cutting D&I practices at the core of an inclusive organization

OMINIKA SADOWSKA (SHE, HER), DIVERCITY+

An inclusive organizational culture is shaped by coherent and consistent actions throughout the entirety of organizational levels and areas, both internal and external.

The latter means that an organization requires an inclusion policy for its customers, stakeholders, and social partners as well as to build its image accordingly by working together...
with other companies and local government. Some companies engage in employee volunteering programmes, including competence volunteering, external D&I initiatives (Women’s Day, Refugee Day, Transgender Day of Visibility, IDAHOT – read more about the D&I calendar on page. 151) and develop non-financial reports that include the D&I component. These actions support diversity and create an inclusive safe space within, as well as around, the company.

When we look at some retail data, we can see that customers tend to appreciate organizations that are committed to D&I activities.44

41% shoppers withdrew a minimum of 10% of their business from retail chains that were insufficiently committed to D&I.

29% shoppers who took part in this study are more willing to shop with a retailer who shares their D&I values.

42% shoppers that belong to ethnic minorities claim they will switch retailers to those that are actively engaged in fostering D&I. (According to data collected after the first wave of the pandemic, Poland is currently home to approximately 2 million migrants, representatives of national and ethnic minorities).

41% shoppers are also ready to switch. (It is estimated that there are approx. 2 million LGBTQIA+ persons currently living in Poland). The same proportion of young people also claim they are ready to do so.

42% customers are willing to pay a premium of at least 5% for their shopping in a store that openly supports the notion of D&I.

6.1. D&I in recruitment

At this stage it is crucial to build and foster a positive candidate experience, including, and perhaps above all, when it comes to D&I (D&I candidate experience). Even if a candidate does not end up getting hired, we can safely assume that they will discuss/share their experience of the recruitment process with other people, which will affect the company’s social image. (72% of candidates with a negative candidate experience share it publicly via employer review sites).

A positive candidate experience will, on the other hand, help convince candidates that their potential employer’s declarations about D&I are authentic and will allow them to verify the employer’s values and vision. We know from research that job candidates pay close attention to potential development opportunities, organizational culture and the way they are treated throughout the entire recruitment process. However, only 2% of companies claim that they stay in touch with candidates on a regular basis to inform them about the status of the process. Yet we don’t know whether in doing so they use each candidate’s preferred mode of communication. Still, it seems that the “career opportunities” section of a company website (development path, possible remuneration levels, values, development programmes, employee benefits) as well as its recruitment process are the areas that should include and communicate existing D&I practices. It is the perfect place, albeit one underutilized, to introduce potential and future employees to company values.

Below we have listed our suggestions that can be helpful when you want to reflect on your D&I policy within your organization’s recruitment policy and practices.

1. **Draft a clear and exhaustive list of job requirements.** Make sure that these are as detailed as reasonably possible. Verify the relevance of each of them, cross-checking each requirement with the company’s system of job descriptions. This will allow you to mitigate the risk of recruiters falling into the trap of unconscious bias & privilege or the temptation to check candidates’ cultural fit, which can be a direct threat to the D&I policy or even lead to discrimination. (There are known examples of processes where recruiters have discriminated against some candidates who have just moved to Poland, due to concerns over their “stability”).

2. **Draft the job ad.** The law dictates that job advertisements shall be free from any and all forms of discrimination, be it direct or indirect (read more in Chapter

The recruitment campaign can and should be organized in a way that makes your job ad accessible to different groups of applicants. It is a good idea to diversify your communication about the recruitment process: using print ads along with infographics and podcasts will enable you to reach applicants with diverse information processing styles, including persons with hearing or vision impairment, as well as people with different preferences in terms of information sources. Check whether the site where you place your ad is up to basic WCAG standards (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines). At this stage it is also recommended to communicate some elements of your D&I practices and policy.

The job application form, apart from including natural language, should be structured in a way that makes it approachable to neurodiverse individuals (avoid idioms, jokes or metaphors), persons with visual impairments (enabling high contrast), applicants with a different first language (simple phrases, no idioms or jargon). Consider or check whether your organization could use so-called blank CVs that include only information that is strictly necessary for recruiters, and do not feature any irrelevant data that could trigger unconscious biases. Maybe you will find that your organization doesn’t need CVs at all? If it is not an essential occupational requirement (like for actors, hosts/hostesses, male/female models), disable photos and information concerning hobbies because this data can trigger biases and has nothing to do with productivity or performance. If you use AI for recruitment, make sure that the data that feeds into your algorithms reflects reality and various diversity dimensions, both at the level of the immediate business environment as well as region or country. If you are designing a recruitment system based on homogenous (uniform) types of data, for instance, introducing more photos of white persons vs. racialized persons (translator’s note: the term racialized has recently begun to replace the terms persons of color and non-white persons to refer to all people that are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in skin color) and more phrases, competences and titles in male form can cause the scoring system to inevitably undervalue non-white/non-Caucasian persons and women. The same can happen for other characteristics.

Ensure a diverse (in many ways) team of recruiters. The more diverse the recruiting team is the more likely it is that they will meet the needs and expectations of candidates and the lower the risk that your organization ends up hiring only people who are similar to you (similarity bias). Make sure that the team is prepared for the process in terms of having a good job description and required competences but also in terms of their ability to prevent biases or personal preferences throughout the process. It would be good to give recruiters appropriate training. For instance, you can encourage them to ask themselves so-called flip questions [Tina C. Nielsen, L. Kepinski, Inclusion Nudges], for example: “If this response came from a man, would I also consider this candidate overconfident?”

Make sure that job interviews are structured in a way that responds to the needs of various candidates. For instance, holding a job interview remotely will make it easier for neurodiverse applicants as well as those with limited mobility and possibly single parents or caregivers. Sign language interpretation or a speech to text capability can help meet the needs of deaf persons. You can ask: “Do you need the recruitment process to be adjusted to suit your needs and if so, what kind of adjustment would be best for you?” A candidate may let you know that due to their mobility impairment (for instance affecting the hands) they need more time to complete online questionnaires or they will be coming to the interview with their service dog. In order to prevent discrimination as well as eradicate unconscious bias and privilege from job interviews, the recruitment team should draft a structured interview with the same questions for each candidate. And the interview scorecard should be designed in a way that excludes the impact of irrelevant factors on the outcome of the process. Perhaps your organization will find it useful to reach out to schools, technical and vocational colleges, universities and career counsellors with your D&I philosophy and practices. This way you can introduce your organization and show real career opportunities to future employees. This is a highly effective tactic to promote diversity, mainly, but not only, in highly segregated occupations.
6.2. D&I in hiring

Onboarding is the stage when reality meets employer’s prior declarations about D&I. The very employment basis (civil law contract vs. labor law contract), remuneration, time and place of work are all factors that can support and foster inclusion or the opposite – facilitate exclusion. Make sure that the impact of all these elements on direct and indirect discrimination has been thoroughly examined:

1. Make sure that the criteria for labor law and civil law contracts are neutral when it comes to reasons and consequences (for instance, hiring most people from a certain group as B2B contributors) for different groups of employees. It could happen that attributing a certain employment basis or work schedule to a specific group of job positions will lead to de facto discrimination of representatives of a certain social group. It is a good idea to audit existing procedures, forms and practices. Pay attention to multiple grounds for discrimination instead of looking just at sex, age, (dis)ability, skin color and ethnicity. Check for the potential consequences for persons or groups that are distinct due to such factors as religion or being nondenominational, worldview, psychosexual orientation, gender identity, family status, neurodiversity, and other dimensions of diversity that may be present in the organization. Any contract you sign entails a transfer of data to you as the employer. This data is then entered into the company’s internal registers and directories, and in some organizations it is also used to issue work clothes and equipment. This is a time to be extra careful and sensitive to the many various dimensions of diversity. It could occur that the personal data in one’s documents (name, surname, sex) does not correspond to that person’s gender identity or appearance. In such a situation the employer should use the official data in the contract. After the person delivers a court decision confirming their gender reassignment, the contract can be modified accordingly. However, there is nothing to say that internal documents could not reflect this person’s preferred data/gender identity. The same goes for ID badges, business cards, work clothes and email address, etc. It is good practice to allow for such internal documents to reflect employees’ actual gender preferences.

2. Make sure you work towards eliminating any gender pay gaps in your company and create a strategy to reduce these. Ensure that this phenomenon is measured adequately.

3. When it comes to the place of work consider whether the company office, or any other place specified by the employer, is in fact a necessity. It may well be that allowing people to work remotely turns out cheaper or more convenient and productive. Whatever you decide, it is an important issue that needs to be carefully reviewed when you implement your D&I policy. Neurodiverse individuals will perhaps feel better working remotely, as will persons with some disabilities. Even before the pandemic a number of studies (LinkedIn Global Talent Trends 2019 Report) indicated that nearly 80% of employees preferred remote work, including 35% of women and 29% of men who claimed that the option to work remotely was an important factor in choosing an employer. If, for various reasons, remote work is not an option, make sure that the workspace and common areas (kitchen, corridors, social spaces, toilets and locker rooms) are inclusive for everyone. You can hire a professional consultancy company to audit your offices from the point of view of inclusion. These days such audits incorporate not only the preferences of those with disabilities (workspace adjustments such as earmuffs, keyboards for one hand typing, etc.) and neurodiverse individuals (temperature, light and sound intensity, colors) but also of people from different age groups (using so-called affordances), and of different health statuses. Research shows that employees are reluctant to go back to their offices after the pandemic not only because they feel more comfortable working from home or any other place but also because they feel uneasy and unwilling to risk their health by being near other people. All these challenges can be solved when your work spaces are designed appropriately to enhance a positive workplace experience of diverse groups. On the other hand, if not arranged correctly, the working space can lead to a negative experience. Special attention should be paid to transgender and neurodiverse persons, as well as persons with disabilities, for whom a well-designed workspace is not just a matter of nondiscrimination but also of dignity, quality of life, and mental wellbeing. So make sure that at least one toilet is gender neutral – designated for all genders/sexes, and if your employees need to wear work clothing, make sure that company locker rooms allow for privacy. Don’t forget about adequate signage and room size, as well as other required adjustments in toilets for persons with motor disabilities, and provide a quiet place to recuperate for neurodiverse employees.

4. The same applies to working hours: check when you need the whole team to be available on site and when you could cater to employees’ individual preferences. This is very important for parents and caregivers but also for neurodiverse people, who need to organize their work around certain habits and activities, such as prayer, physiotherapy, training sessions, therapy, dietary regimes, etc. Knowing that some flexibility is allowed will not only enable them to optimize their work but also take care of their work-life balance, which in turn boosts employee satisfaction and retention. Therefore, it is not a cost but rather an investment.

6.3. D&I in onboarding

Onboarding (actions aimed at helping new employees to adapt and get up to speed) is one of the crucial phases in an employee lifecycle as it is to a large degree responsible for any positive or negative employee D&I experience. What should you ensure at this stage?

1. Develop a D&I preference questionnaire for newly hired employees that will give them the opportunity to:

   - voluntarily provide diversity data (for example ethnicity, psychosexual orientation, gender identity, disabilities, neurodiversity or other temporary conditions affecting their mental health, and possible afflictions such as anxiety or phobias, etc.), which will make it easier for the organization to arrange their workspace adequately;
   - reveal their preferred gender pronouns, so that the organization can make them visible in both internal and external communication (for instance in their email footer);
   - choose the preferred form of their job title in both internal and external communication: male, female or neutral;
   - request an additional meeting with HR representatives. This could be a good idea for employees who want to talk about their individual needs and preferences with regard to various dimensions of diversity (neurodiversity, mental health, disabilities, transsexuality) and establish to what degree the organization can meet these needs.

   If a transgender person is joining the team:

   - suggest an additional meeting where you can enquire about their needs and expectations from the company and the work itself;
   - ask how they want to be addressed, which gender pronouns to use, what information they want included in internal and external communication, including its visual components (email address, ID badge, contact information on the intranet);
   - outline the company’s practices and the forms of support it offers to transgender persons (including the scope of medical insurance, complaints system to report negative behaviors, mental health support helpline, LBBTQIA+ ERGs, etc.).
6.4. D&I in employee development (promotions and personal growth)

Hindering someone’s chances of advancement or their access to improvement of their professional qualifications due to a specific characteristic that is not linked to performance and productivity may be a form of discrimination. This area is regulated by the Labor Code and its implementing act. You can read more about it in Chapter 2: Legal aspects of D&I. D&I in national regulations, p. 17. If we want the individual and team development processes, and the incentive system, including promotions, to support the company’s D&I policy it is worth investing in a development strategy that will not only embrace diversity but also foster an inclusive culture in the organization.

Our suggestion is to start with an audit of your employee development and incentive systems. This exercise will allow you to check whether decisions concerning each individual’s growth opportunities made across all stages are based solely on merit and are not affected by conscious or unconscious biases & privileges. This audit should also encompass tools for performance assessment that can as well be biased, which is illustrated by differences between individual performance scores of men and women vs. team performance scores. In this case women’s scores are more likely to be underestimated.

It is good to have clear criteria for promotions and access to trainings. Similarly, expected results should be defined in a way that eliminates the impact of any personal biases or preferences. At this stage it is useful to have a system in place that takes into account merit and actual performance rather than intentions or intuition.

- Check whether the people responsible in your organization for implementing the incentive and advancement systems have adequate knowledge of D&I, especially of conscious and unconscious bias & privilege.
- Make sure that the structure of the team responsible for approving promotions, access to training, and employee benefits reflects the entire organization’s diversity.
- Introduce the practice whereby each decision about any employee’s advancement/career is justified in the form of feedback and documented in a designated data sheet.

2. Make D&I training mandatory for new hires. Ensure that the training syllabus includes such topics as perception of diversity in the organization, stereotypes, prejudice, conscious and unconscious biases & privileges as well as inclusive language in communication and standards for reporting negative behaviors in the organization.

3. Make a meeting with the company’s head of D&I and representatives of employee networks a mandatory part of the onboarding process when newly hired employees are introduced to the company’s D&I policy, including best practices, possibilities to network and organize ERGs, participate in local D&I initiatives.

4. Consider a buddy system – appointing a buddy/mentor for each new hire, who will facilitate all the practicalities, help them adapt, reduce stress and increase their comfort. It is important that every buddy be sensitive towards social diversity issues and all the various needs that it generates as well as tools that the organization can use to meet these needs. It is crucial for every buddy to agree with their mentee what kinds and forms of support would best suit the mentee’s needs and preferences.
6.5. D&I and employee retention

A high retention rate is what every HR professional, HRBP and employer wants. And what fosters higher employee retention is a culture of belonging, based on three pillars: comfort, relationships, and a sense of influence. All these lead to higher psychological comfort, job satisfaction, increased trust towards the employer as well as workplace attachment.

Feeling comfortable as an employee means that one feels safe in a psychological sense. We feel safe when we are not judged on anything that is irrelevant to our performance; when we obtain a clear message that it is all right to be the way we are; and when we are accepted and respected. It shows itself in a variety of ways: we can always speak out as equals, we are not being interrupted, we feel listened to and we do not – directly or indirectly – experience negative behaviors that result from prejudice and intolerance, such as microaggression, scornful language, discrimination, harassment or mobbing.

Team relationships are affected by a multitude of factors, including a highly competent, inclusive leader who knows and applies adequate tools at different phases of the group process that the team is currently in. These relationships show themselves through the way people interact with one another, the way they trust and respect their coworkers, including one another’s central and peripheral values. Their awareness of existing differences is accompanied by a common denominator – a positive work climate and shared purpose.

Employees’ sense of influence over the company and the way it operates can be achieved through various participatory processes. These can include the appointment of certain new roles (such as anti-mobbing and anti-discrimination committees, positions of trust) as well as the design and implementation of strategies (for instance ethical work environment, preventing mobbing, etc.). Another important aspect concerns including individual employees in processes that directly affect them, such as career path development or their performance improvement plan (PIP). Agency and autonomy are also linked to one’s sense of contribution, thus creating solid foundations on which a culture of belonging can thrive.

→ Collect information about different dimensions of diversity among employees who have/have not been promoted; have/have not been referred for trainings; have/have not received benefits. This will allow you to check in the future whether all groups within the organization are promoted equally and whether there are excluded groups or people limited in their access to advancement or training opportunities. Read more in Chapter 3.7. Measuring negative and inclusive behaviors, satisfaction, belonging, and trust scores, p. 78.

→ Make sure that D&I competences are part of your organization’s managerial appraisal system and are included as one of the criteria of your 360-degree feedback.

→ Include defined D&I competences in your company’s criteria for promotion and advancement.

→ Design diverse forms and ways for employees to develop their D&I competences, knowledge, skills and sensitivity towards the situation of various underprivileged groups. Offer a variety of methods to include all employees and embrace their diversity (remote and hybrid as a way to meet the needs of persons with disabilities and neurodiverse employees, with an option of sign language interpretation, at times that do not interfere with work-life balance).

→ Ensure D&I development for everyone in the organization and make D&I trainings part of your regular, mandatory curriculum, especially for managerial roles.

→ Support and foster the formation and development of employee resource groups because they don’t only help their members grow. They can also be a valuable source of reversed mentoring for managers in the organization and enable access to cross-mentoring projects.

6.6. D&I and offboarding

When an employee leaves the company it is usually a result of many different factors. More than 20% of all employees choose to leave because of the work atmosphere they have been experiencing, which is linked to D&I.47

Positive employee experience during offboarding is a strong sign of the organization’s maturity and its commitment to implementing and developing D&I policies; a clear message to the leaving employee as well as the ones staying; and a statement to the market saying that the company is an ethical and inclusive workplace.

Remember that it is impossible to implement everything all at once, however, every little step – a pilot project or an audit – brings you closer to your goal. Be mindful and listen to employees, identify your own biases and respond when necessary.

If an employee decides to leave for such reasons, their offboarding process should be preceded by a thorough analysis of a larger number of factors, such as their personal and family-related needs, possible enrollment in outplacement programmes, and employee benefit packages allocated according to diverse and relevant criteria beyond tenure. Successful offboarding, the process of severing ties between an employee and the company, involving all procedures and principles that govern the termination of employee-employer relations, is also a great opportunity for the company to collect important and useful information that will help further its D&I policy.

➔ Check whether your company can include D&I-related criteria in the process of examining reasons for resignation.

➔ Develop participatory standards for communicating offboarding, taking into account the following: what do you communicate to the employee in question and to their coworkers; the presence of their superior; feedback; the form, mode and process of termination.

➔ Draft a feedback questionnaire for employees who leave the company that includes D&I-related questions (about comfort, team relationships, a sense of agency/empowerment, experiencing or witnessing negative behaviors).

7. How to bungle D&I projects

Everything we have shared so far are our best practices, trusted solutions, knowledge, and experience we have amassed over the years. But the road that took us there was far from easy. We stumbled and fell many times, sometimes we had to take several steps back. To this day, we are in the process of learning how to design and implement D&I best, most effectively, and successfully. We learn at conferences, from research papers, studies, pilot initiatives, books, and articles. We learn from our mistakes and failures. But most of all – we learn from one another. We can always ask, check, and turn for advice from those with different experiences and perspectives, and this is exactly the purpose that the D&I Roundtable serves. We are extremely grateful for this opportunity.

This chapter was written so that you can lose the notion of yourself as an all-powerful leader, always successful, changing the world, with medals and applause waiting for you at the end of this bumpy road. We want to share with you some situations that we have gotten to know about through our D&I work, situations that, even though they did not happen in our organizations, show that pages upon pages of literature and the best of intentions are sometimes not enough to save you from a spectacular failure. Still, instead of hanging your head in resignation, we urge you to apologize, learn your lesson, and move on.

Holidays and festivals

- Happy Easter!
- But I celebrate Passover.

Holidays and festivals are a time of joy, but also anxiety. Do I express my greetings and if so, how to make sure that I don’t offend people who observe other festivals or do not celebrate any? Attempts to find a “safe” formula sometimes end up with wishing people “a happy spring break.”

Dietary habits

Once during a round of negotiations that was dragging on, there was a Hindu participant whose diet was very restrictive and allowed almost exclusively fruit,
If you are not sure how to comment on something, just don’t. If the only comment that comes to your mind refers to someone’s identity, personal trait (especially gender or sexuality), definitely refrain yourself from making the remark. This golden rule can save you a lot of embarrassment.

A joke or a blunder?

Sense of humor is important in life, sometimes it can even be a lifesaver. But work humor is completely different from what we can allow ourselves in a private context. If you work in a diverse environment, be particularly mindful of the jokes you tell! Remember that older persons will find some jokes a bit difficult to grasp, a joke referring to someone’s identity or personal characteristic may be perceived as a microaggression, whereas “funny” remarks about gender or sexuality can be seen as sexual harassment. Humor can be a minefield :)

Feminatives

A work meeting online – four women, one man, an engaging topic, and very little time. At one point He sends a chat message: “Less feminine forms in the plural, pleeeaaase, because seriously I am confused as to whether our arrangements concern me and what I’m going to be accountable for!”

Inclusive language really is a challenge.

and not even every kind. For a day and a half, he did not eat until the secretary brought in... a bag of fruit.

A vegan, a vegetarian, a fruitarian, an ovo-vegetarian... The dietary requirements of your business partners may surprise you, especially when you have just ordered pizza for lunch: with eggs, bacon and flour with gluten.

Kissing

When my boss, who is Spanish, greeted a client from Japan – I froze. I knew that a kiss on each cheek, in a public place, will be the most “memorable” part of the client’s visit.

Physical contact at work has different rules than in our social lives. Kissing a woman’s hand (a couple of decades ago, a common greeting seen as an expression of respect for women), is frowned upon – it can even be regarded as indecent. But what to do when a person whose culture only accepts nods as greetings is greeted with a kiss on the cheek?

Language

An acquaintance said to a Jewish client during a meeting:

– You are in the right church but in the wrong pew...

– I don’t know about a church... – the confused client replied.

I was talking to a non-binary person. I knew she was non-binary because during introductions she gave her pronouns: she, her. But she had a beard and mustache! I kept addressing her all wrong. In the end, I decided to use impersonal forms...

It is rarely intentional; it is rather our absentmindedness or obliviousness that causes us to say something that makes us blush for a long time when we remember the blunder.

Innocent remarks or microaggressions and microinvalidations?

– LGBTQIA and all these other letters that are supposed to be there.
– Don’t worry, whatever you don’t manage to say, you will make up for with good looks.
– Great, this campaign will get them all wet in their pants!

If you are not sure how to comment on something, just don’t. If the only comment that comes to your mind refers to someone’s identity, personal trait (especially gender or sexuality), definitely refrain yourself from making the remark. This golden rule can save you a lot of embarrassment.

A joke or a blunder?

Sense of humor is important in life, sometimes it can even be a lifesaver. But work humor is completely different from what we can allow ourselves in a private context. If you work in a diverse environment, be particularly mindful of the jokes you tell! Remember that older persons will find some jokes a bit difficult to grasp, a joke referring to someone’s identity or personal characteristic may be perceived as a microaggression, whereas “funny” remarks about gender or sexuality can be seen as sexual harassment. Humor can be a minefield :)
8. Diversity calendar

BY KAROLINA DŁUGOSZ (SHE, HER), NETGURU

### JANUARY 2022

**Month-long initiatives:** Poverty Awareness Month in the US

**Important dates in the diversity calendar:**

- **1 January** – New Year’s Day
- **4 January** – World Braille Day
- **7 January** – Christmas Day (Christian Orthodox)
- **17 January** – World Religion Day
- **18 January** – Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- **27 January** – International Holocaust Remembrance Day

### FEBRUARY 2022

**Month-long initiatives:** Black History Month, Relationship Wellness Month

**Important dates:**

- **1 February** – National Freedom Day (US)
- **12 February** – Chinese New Year
- **12–14 February** – Losar or the Lunar Tibetan New Year (Buddhism) (a movable feast that falls on a new moon after the sun enters the Aries)
- **14 February** – St. Valentine’s Day
- **15 February** – Nirvana Day (Buddhism)
- **20 February** – World Day of Social Justice
### May 2022

**Month-long initiatives:**
- Mental Health Month
- European Diversity Month

**Important dates:**
- **1 May** – Labor Day, International Workers Day (the day of labor and solidarity)
- **1 May** – end of Ramadan (Muslim)
- **17 May** – International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia
- **21 May** – World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development
- **30 May** – World Multiple Sclerosis Day

### June 2022

**Month-long initiatives:**
- AIDS Awareness Month
- Black Music Month
- Pride Month (LGBTQIAA+)

**Important dates:**
- **24 June** – Pride Day (LGBTQIAA+) (the date depends on country and city)

### July 2022

**Important dates:**
- **30 July** – International Day of Friendship
- **30 July** – Islamic New Year / Hijra New Year

### August 2022

**Important dates:**
- **9 August** – International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples
- **19 August** – World Humanitarian Day

---

### March 2022

**Month-long initiatives:**
- Ethnic Equality Month
- Gender Equality Month

**Important dates:**
- **3 March** – European Equal Pay Day (a movable feast, the date is determined by fluctuations in the average pay gap)
- **4 March** – Employee Appreciation Day
- **8 March** – International Women’s Day
- **17 March** – St. Patrick’s Day
- **21 March** – Naw-Ruz (Bahá’í New Year)
- **25 March** – International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade
- **31 March** – International Transgender Day of Visibility

### April 2022

**Month-long initiatives:**
- Neurodiversity Awareness Month

**Important dates:**
- **2 April** – start of Ramadan (Muslim)
- **2 April** – World Autism Awareness Day
- **17 - 18 April** – Easter (Christian)
- **21 April** – start of Ridván (Bahá’í)
- **22 April** – Earth Day
- **24-25 April** – Easter (Christian Orthodox)
- **25 April** – International Noise Awareness Day
- **27-28 April** – Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day – Israel’s national holiday)
### DECEMBER 2022

**Month-long initiatives:**

- Movember (men’s health awareness month, including awareness of such diseases as prostate cancer)

**Important dates:**

- 1 December – World AIDS Day
- 3 December – International Day of Persons with Disabilities
- 10 December – Human Rights Day
- 25, 26 December – Christmas
- 26 December – start of Kwanzaa

---

### OCTOBER 2022

**Month-long initiatives:**

- Breast Cancer Awareness Month
- Down Syndrome Awareness Month

**Important dates:**

- 2 October – International Day of Non-Violence
- 10 October – World Mental Health Day
- 11 October – National Coming Out Day (LGBTQIAA+)
- 18 October – European Anti-Trafficking Day
- 22 October – International Stammering Awareness Day
- 24 October – Diwali (Hindu)

---

### SEPTEMBER 2022

**Month-long initiatives:**

- Alzheimer’s Awareness Month

**Important dates:**

- 21 September – International Day of Peace
- 23 September – International Day of Sign Languages
- 26 September – European Day of Languages
- 27 September – World Tourism Day

---

### NOVEMBER 2022

**Month-long initiatives:**

- Movember (men’s health awareness month, including awareness of such diseases as prostate cancer)

**Important dates:**

- 9 November – World Freedom Day
- 25 November – International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women
9. Selected useful terms and phrases for discussing D&I issues and building an inclusive culture

**Antisemitism** – a kind of xenophobic attitude against persons of Jewish origin that can manifest itself through hate speech, discrimination and hate crimes rooted in prejudice against this social group.

**Asexuality** – a sexual orientation term used to describe persons who do not experience sexual attraction toward individuals of any gender.

**Bisexuality** – romantic and sexual attraction toward more than one gender.

**Cisgender (cissexuality)** – alignment between a person’s sexual identity and their sex assigned at birth.

**Coming out** – from the English-language phrase “to come out of the closet” – refers to the process of revealing one’s psychosexual orientation or gender identity. We suggest that the phrase revealing one’s psychosexual orientation/gender identity should be used instead.

**Direct discrimination** – this occurs when a person has been, is or can be treated unfavorably – due to their personal characteristics or affiliation with a certain group – compared to others in similar situation. Such a form of discrimination occurs, for instance, when employees from Ukraine receive different (lower) wages than Polish employees even though they perform work of the same value.

**Disability** – is a lasting or transient inability to perform social roles due to the permanent or long-term impairment of one’s condition, especially one resulting in an inability to work.

**Discrimination** – (from Latin discriminatio – differentiation) – unfair and prejudicial treatment of a person compared to others based on a certain personal characteristic or affiliation with a certain group, which is not justified by any objective reasons.
Discrimination includes such phenomena as: direct and indirect discrimination; discrimination by association, assumption, harassment, sexual harassment; inciting or ordering discrimination. Discrimination can also take on a multiple form (i.e. be based on more than one characteristic, including cross-discrimination where one person experiences discrimination on multiple grounds at the same time).

**Foreigner** – a person who does not have the citizenship of the country where they are residing. We suggest that the term migrant should be used instead.

**Gender (sociocultural sex)** – a term that refers to differences between men and women that are formed in the process of upbringing and socialization and are linked to the social context, i.e. social attitudes, roles and behaviors that have been/are traditionally attributed to women and men by society, its norms, culture and dominant religion.

**Gender identity** – a gender/sex one relates to. It can be the same as sex assigned at birth or it can be different from it.

**Gender pay gap** – is the difference between the average gross hourly rates earned by men and women.

**Heteronorm/heteronormativity** – an implicit and automatic assumption that a society is heterosexual.

**Heterosexuality** – romantic and sexual attraction to persons of the opposite sex.

**Homophobia, biphobia, transphobia** – unfriendly, hostile attitudes towards homosexual bisexual and transsexual persons.

**Homosexuality** – romantic and sexual attraction to persons of the same sex.

**Inclusion** – is a social or organizational culture that embraces and recognizes the abundance of social diversity and provides conditions for all stakeholders to participate equally in shaping its norms and principles.

**Indirect discrimination** – this is a situation where the differentiation criteria, practices or internal rules applied are seemingly objective and neutral, while in fact they lead to unfair treatment of most or all individuals belonging to a certain social group. An example may be a recruitment process where the requirements are formulated in such a way that “older people” are in fact excluded from it (assuming that age is not an objective and justified obstacle in the performance of the job in question).

**Integration** – a two-way process that involves including persons from underprivileged groups within the social majority while recognizing their autonomy and diversity.

**Intersexuality (intersex)** – a term describing persons whose body does not fit the binary definitions of men and women based on the anatomy of internal and external reproductive organs.

**Intercultural competence** – a social ability of being aware of differences between cultures and behaving adequately in the face of these differences.

**Intolerance** – lack of respect for other people’s practices and beliefs that manifests itself in rejecting behaviors or views different from one’s own; this underlies > xenophobia and > discrimination.

**LGBT+** – acronym for: L - lesbians, G – gays, B bisexual persons, T – transsexual persons. This acronym has other variants, including (I – intersex, Q – queer, A – asexual, A - allies, and P – pansexual). In order not to exclude any psychosexual orientation or gender identity there is a + at the end of the acronym, meaning that all other psychosexual orientations and gender identities are included.

**Micro-inequities** – verbal or nonverbal expressions of prejudice that can lead to exclusion or discrimination.

**Mobbing** – actions or behaviors towards or against an employee that involve persistent and long-lasting harassment or intimidation of the employee, resulting in their decreased evaluation of their professional suitability, as well as causing or aimed at humiliating or ridiculing the employee, isolating or eliminating them from the team.

**Non-binary person** – someone whose gender identity is beyond the dichotomy between men and women.

**Person with disability or disabilities** – a person with lasting or transient impairment of physical, mental or intellectual abilities, which may hinder or prevent their full and effective participation in social life.
**Prejudice** – a biased and generalized perception of individuals or groups based on their factual or imagined characteristics or features.

**Psychosexual orientation** – romantic and sexual attraction that determines one’s readiness to romantically and erotically engage with persons of a certain sex. There are four basic sexual orientations: heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual and asexual.

**Sex/gender reassignment** – a process – often long and complex – leading to alignment between one’s appearance, expression or personal data and one’s gender identity. It can include medical transition (introducing changes in the body), legal transition (re-assigning and modifying one’s sex in one’s documents) as well as social transition (a change in one’s gender role).

**Stereotype** – is a simplified and generalized set of beliefs about a certain group of people that involves their psychological and physical characteristics as well as assumptions about the alleged behaviors and attitudes of this group.

**Transsexual person** – defines their gender identity differently from their sex assigned at birth.

**Transsexuality** – lack of alignment between one’s sex assigned at birth and one’s gender/sexual identity.

**Transsexual woman** – a person identifying herself as a woman whose sex assigned at birth was male.

**Transsexual man** – a person identifying himself as a man whose sex assigned at birth was female.

**Unconscious bias & privilege** – a term describing the cognitive biases formed while we process information about other individuals and which is caused by stereotypes and assumptions about certain social groups.

**Workplace sexual harassment** – unacceptable behavior of a sexual or gender-based nature aimed at or resulting in the degrading or humiliating of an employee as well as violating their dignity. This can include physical, verbal and nonverbal elements.

**Workplace harassment** – undesirable behavior aimed at or resulting in violation of an employee’s dignity and creating around them an atmosphere of intimidation, hostility, degradation and humiliation.
About the Authors

Karolina Długosz (she, her), Sustainability Lead at Netguru – a consulting, software development and digital design company. She is in charge of sustainable development, following the philosophy of B Corporation. She has over 10 years of experience in the areas of social responsibility and sustainable development. Karolina received the 2019 People Who Change Business Award by the Responsible Business Forum.

Maciej Herman (he, him), CEO Lotte Wedel, has been with Wedel since 2008 and in FMCG for over 20 years. He gained his experience in various sales positions at major international companies (Kompania Piwowarska, Frito Lay, Procter&Gamble). Under his leadership Wedel has become one of the fastest growing confectionery companies in Poland, successfully expanding into international markets.

Kamil Kuhr (he, him), Learning Technology Partner at AstraZeneca. He manages equality training and education initiatives. He has co-founded the LGBTQIA+ ERG at AstraZeneca and is a PhD candidate at the SWPS University of the Social Sciences and Humanities in Warsaw. Kamil has completed the summer human rights course Humanity in Action. His interests include social inclusion of refugees and LGBTQIA+.

Monika Kulik (she, her), Corporate Social Responsibility expert at Orange Poland. She is responsible for developing and implementing the company’s CSR strategy, non-financial reporting, stakeholder dialogue and digital integration initiatives. She is a member of the board of the Responsible Business Forum and a PhD candidate at Kozminski University.
Małgorzata Petru (she, her), andragogue – an expert in adult education, graduate of the University of Warsaw (with honors). Małgorzata has extensive experience in a variety of different areas of HR and spent many years in the automotive industry. For three years now she has served as career management expert and Diversity Officer at BNP Paribas. She co-founded and leads the program “Women changing BNP Paribas”, which promotes the idea of diversity and inclusion at the bank. She is a firm believer in lifelong learning and co-chairs the foundation Education First [Po Pierwsze Edukacja] that supports promising educational projects targeted at various social groups. In her free time Małgorzata is passionate about healthy living; she has completed postgraduate studies in nutritional counselling at the Warsaw University of Life Sciences.

Katarzyna Piecuch (she, her), a corporate social responsibility and exclusion prevention specialist. For nearly 20 years she has been involved in developing intersectoral partnerships and initiating projects that support equal opportunities and the inclusion of underprivileged groups, volunteerism and social engagement as well as work-life balance. For several years now she has been moderating, with unwavering fascination, creative problem solving processes and designing change using the Design Thinking method.

Tadeusz Reimus (he, him), psychotherapist, consultant, and coach. He practices integrative psychotherapy, works as a consultant and is an ICF Professional Certified Coach (PCC); a psychologist by education and vocation. He graduated from the Jagiellonian University’s Department of Philosophy and Psychology, receiving a scholarship from Tilburg University (the Netherlands). For 20 years Tadeusz has implemented change in teams and organizations. He leads a team of therapists at the mental health support helpline www.mhhelpline.com. He is a lecturer, the author of strategic documents and a facilitator. He coordinates strategic projects for businesses and government institutions.
Susanna Romantsova (she, her), Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Leader at IKEA. She is responsible for creating an inclusive workplace and integrating all dimensions of diversity into the company’s business practices. She has co-authored IKEA Poland’s 3-year D&I strategy, the Paternity Leave IKEA, “50/50” and Gender Equal Pay initiatives, and the company’s inclusive leadership approach.

Dominika Sadowska (she, her), business coach, mediator, lawyer. She specializes in organizational culture architecture, law and employee relations regarding D&I. For over 15 years she has brought together business, scientific and humanistic perspectives working at different organizational levels and with diverse groups of customers, from CEO and executive teams of multinational corporations to sales representatives, civil servants, engineers, people in positions of trust, and uniformed forces, for example the police and armed forces. Dominika designs and implements D&I strategies and policies, conducts audits of negative behaviors and investigates cases of discrimination and mobbing. She is a mediator with a specialization in D&I conflicts; a founder and expert at Divercity+.

Kinga Wysieńska-Di Carlo, PhD (she, her), a sociologist with her focus on social research methodologies, discrimination and group processes. She has studied and worked in Poland (Jagiellonian University, Collegium Civitas, Polish Academy of Sciences) and the United States (University of Iowa, University of South Carolina, Cornell University). She works with Divercity+ as an expert in measuring diversity, inclusion, discrimination, and negative behaviors in organizations.
In place of the ending

We would like to hear from you and how you evaluate this publication. We care about every opinion, comment and suggestion. We would also like to learn about your own history related to the design and implementation of D&I, your best practices and the challenges that may still be ahead of you.

We would appreciate it very much if you choose to share them with us:

d.sadowska@divercityplus.com
beata.faracik@pihrb.org

The English version of this publication was made possible with support from: