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The Polish Diversity Charter: Polish Challenges and Potential for Further Development

The objective of this paper is the presentation of the role of the Polish Diversity Charter in promoting diversity management in Polish companies, especially gender equality. It takes a look at the historic background, challenges facing Poland in this area, and initiatives and perspectives for the further development of efforts fostering the equality of men and women. The paper uses proprietary analyses prepared on the basis of global indexes and Polish research.

Key words: Diversity Charter, diversity, women, gender equality, equal opportunity, anti-discrimination, gender disparity.

Introduction

The Responsible Business Forum (FOB), the largest and oldest active nongovernmental organization in Poland concerned with business social responsibility, has been promoting the topic of diversity in its publications for many years now. As of 2012, it is the sole coordinator of the Diversity Charter (DC) in Poland. The Diversity Charter is a voluntary, albeit formal, written obligation on the part of the employer to implement equal treatment policy as well as diversity management, to provide antidiscrimination education for employees, and to actively work against discrimination and mobbing in the workplace. Its signing signifies a readiness to report on actions taken and to disseminate diversity management among the business and community partners of the given organization. In many cases joining the group of signatories is in fact the beginning of conscious management and garnering of benefits as stemming from diversity in the workplace.

A Little History

“United in Diversity” is the official motto of the European Union that first appeared in the year 2000. It is also seen in publications of the Responsible Business Forum. The idea is simple and clear to everyone: the European Union unites the efforts of all Europeans for peace and development, while at the same time taking pride in its wealth of diverse cultures, traditions, languages, and lifestyles. Diversity is a good that unites us. There is space for development for everyone. Everyone can expect respect and understanding regardless of sex, age, race, convictions, lifestyle, or method of communication. The motto is extremely current if one remembers the year 2000 as the year of hope and expectations that after the Autumn of Nations of 1989 when the Berlin Wall ultimately fell together with its enforced division of over forty years into the Eastern and Western blocs. A few years later, in 2004, the European Union family was enlarged for a fifth time with the largest group to date: ten nations of which most—eight—were from the Eastern block—the Czech Republic, Estonia, Poland, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Slovakia, and Slovenia as well as Cyprus and Malta.

At the same time, in January of 2004, the Montaigne Institute, a French think-tank, published a report devoted to equal opportunity. Soon afterwards, in collaboration with leading French companies, it commenced further work on the wording of Europe’s first Diversity Charter. On October 22, 2004 that Charter was signed by thirty-three French companies (*French Diversity Charter: History*).

Over successive years the initiative captured attention as well as adopters in countries such as Belgium, Italy, Germany, and Spain, which soon had their own national Diversity Charters.

In 2009 their representatives prepared reports describing success factors in the promotion of the Diversity Charter in each of the countries, including specific conditions necessary for the introduction of the Diversity Charter as well as common elements linking this initiative in the various countries. The reports were submitted to the European Commission with the hope that they will be used for further promotion of diversity management in Europe (*French Diversity ...*). In effect, 2010 saw the emergence of the Diversity Charter Platform under the auspices of the European Commission—a platform for the exchange of knowledge, experience, and collaboration among European countries associated through the Diversity Charter within the framework of the “Support for Voluntary Initiatives Promoting Diversity Management in the Workplace across the EU” Project. It facilitates regular meetings of representatives of the Charters and work on common tools, including study visits and research. In 2014, within the framework of the Diversity Charter Platform, the “Diversity Management Implementation and Impact amongst Di-

iversity Charter Signatories in the European Union” Study was conducted among the signatories to the then thirteen Diversity Charters. It encompassed over 7,000 companies, including public administration entities, NGOs, and over 13.5 million workers (*Diversity Management Implementation and Impact amongst Diversity Charter Signatories in the European Union Report*).

Plans for 2016 include the repeating of the study in all fifteen countries that now have a Diversity Charter. The study was launched in Poland in April. A brief account of its results is worth noting in order to show how Poland presents itself against a background of other European countries. However, before proceeding on to this it is first worth looking at the challenges facing Poland against a background of other countries with which Poland has historical links and the experience of almost fifty years of postwar history.

Polish Challenges against a Background of Other Countries of Central and Eastern Europe

Poland is the first and as of yet one of three—together with Estonia and the Czech Republic—countries of the former Eastern Bloc where the Diversity Charter is present. The decided bulk of countries that accessed to the European Union in 2004 do not have Diversity Charters (six former countries of the Eastern Block as well as Malta and Cyprus) as is also the case in countries that accessed later (Bulgaria, Romania, and Croatia). In this context worth considering is if and how common history impacts matters of diversity in the workplace.

Everyone Is Equal, but Men Are More Equal

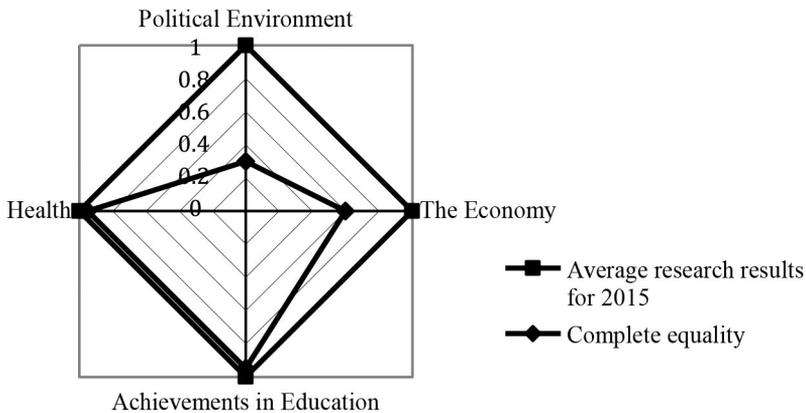
The common past of the countries of the former Eastern Bloc is primarily the heritage of a command economy and an ideology proclaiming universal equality. Everyone was equal on a declarative level, regardless of sex, origin, language, or religion, although there were problems with the last point in formally lay states. Changes that took place in those countries in the wake of World War II involved universal access to education, healthcare, and the mass entry of women onto the labor market, including into occupations previously considered masculine. In effect, in terms of both education and employment of women, standards in the former countries of the Eastern Bloc were exceptionally high as compared with Western Europe and North America (Klenner and Leiber, 2010).

The high share of professionally active women was, on the one hand, a derivative of the economic situation: The income level was relatively low and this condition led

to the full employment of women. On the other hand, the socialist state guaranteed broad access to childcare in the form of nursery schools and kindergartens. Thus, women could reconcile professional work with motherhood. Such a lifestyle model served to equalize opportunities for women on the labor market, but at the same time it in no way signified partnership in sharing obligations. In public discourse the traditional male and female roles were never questioned. This point of view also found support in the patriarchal family model promoted by the Roman Catholic Church. A similar situation was seen in most countries of this bloc, with the exception of the Czech Republic and Estonia, countries that were just about 100% lay. However, worth stressing is the fact that the officially decreed principle of equal treatment in the socialist economy had little in common with respect for individuality, specific conditions, and the expectations of each human being—the essence of diversity.

After 1989 women found themselves in the group most strongly touched by changes during system transformation. All this meant that the topic of gender equality proved to be decidedly the most popular in the above-mentioned study (2014). It received 48% of indications among all the countries it encompassed. It also proved a priority in Poland, where it achieved a result of 69% (*Overview of Diversity Management ...*, 2014).

Figure No. 1. Global Gender Gap Index for 2015



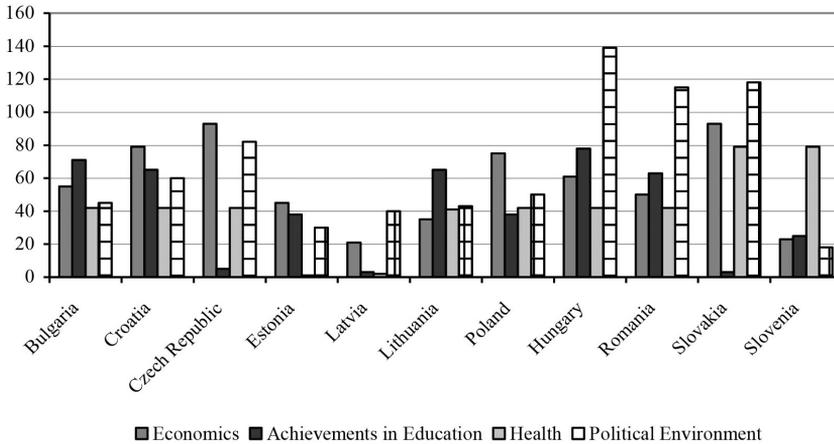
Source: *The Global Gender Gap Report*, 2015.

Unfortunately, gender-based discrimination is a priority topic the world round. It is simply a fact. Gender equality has not been achieved in any country. This finds confirmation in the most recent results of the most important ranking looking into gender inequality starting with the year 2006 (*The Global Gender Gap ...*, 2015).

In its already Tenth Edition, the *Global Gender Gap Report* encompassed a total of 145 countries in line with their ability to eliminate differences between men and women in four areas:

- Economics – wage level and share level and access to positions requiring high qualifications;
- Achievements in Education – Access to basic and higher education;
- Power / the Political Environment – Representation to decision-making structures;
- Health – Average longevity.

Figure No. 2. Gender Inequality Index in Four Dimensions in the Countries of Central and Eastern Europe (position in the GGG 2015 ranking in each of the dimensions)



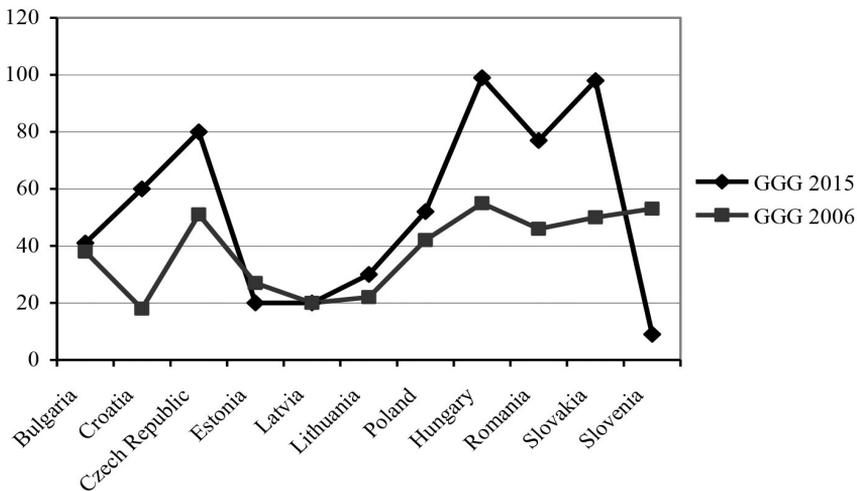
Source: *The Global Gender Gap Report*, 2015.

Out of 145 countries, in 2015 Poland was in 51st place. That position has change over the past five years, but it is difficult to say if the change was decidedly to the benefit of women. In 2011 Poland occupied its highest place to date—42nd. In 2015 as compared with the previous year when Poland came out worse in three of the four dimensions of the index: **economic – 75th** place (a drop from 61st), **educational – 38th** (a drop from 36th), and **health related – 42nd** (a drop from 37th). Only the political index went up from 68th place to 52nd. Against a background of European countries, including those of the former Eastern Bloc, Poland occupies a much weaker position than might have been expected (*The Global Gender Gap ...*).

Being the largest from among the countries of the former Eastern Bloc, Poland is approximately in the middle of the table, where the biggest inequality between men and women is in questions of the economy.

What is interesting is that this applies to almost all the countries of the former Eastern Bloc. The social and economic development that took place in these countries after 1989 did not bring with it changes favoring the leveling of gender disproportions. This is visible when comparing the positions occupied by these countries in 2006 (when the GGG Index was launched) with the latest results. It was only in Estonia and Slovenia that changes proved favorable for women, while in Latvia the situation remained practically little changed. Most of those countries (Poland, Romania, and Hungary) occupy receding position in successive rankings.

Figure No. 3. The Countries of Central and Eastern Europe in GGG Gender Inequality Rankings for 2006 and 2015



Source: *The Global Gender Gap Report*, 2015.

Thus, although each of the countries of the former Eastern Bloc occupies a relatively high position in terms of the Human Development Index¹ and in Human Rights (with results in intervals defined as high and very high), in matters of gender equality there is still much left to be desired in most of them.

During the Sustainable Development Summit that took place in New York on September 25–27, 2015, seventeen targets were approved for implementation

1 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_Development_Index>.

over the upcoming fifteen years. “Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” (*Agenda on Sustainable Development 2030 ...*, 2015) applies to the elimination of discrimination as stemming from gender and remains very much current.

The Diversity Charter in Poland

When taking into account the fact that the greatest differences in the situation of men and women pertain to economic matters, it is clear that promotion of diversity management in the workplace is of very special importance in the process of providing equal opportunities for the sexes. Present in Poland as of February of 2012, the Diversity Charter is a tool that may facilitate this. The initiative to create a Polish Diversity Charter made its appearance one year earlier during a May meeting of the representatives of French companies in Poland. Formal work commenced in September in the group of companies of the Responsible Business Forum Strategic Partners. Its wording was worked out over successive months, through wide-ranging inter-sector consultations encompassing business, public administration, and nongovernmental organizations. The inauguration of the coming into effect of the Polish Diversity Charter took place during a conference at the Chancellery of the Prime Minister of Poland. It was signed by fourteen companies at that time under the auspices of the Government Plenipotentiary for Equal Treatment and the Citizens’ Rights Ombudsman. The Orbis Group became the conference partner while Orange Polska became the official Diversity Charter Guardian and remains so today. Over successive years honorary auspices over the Diversity Charter was granted by the Minister of Labor and Social Welfare. As of 2016, honorary auspices over the Diversity Charter is in the hands of Dr. Adam Bodnar, Citizens’ Rights Ombudsman, and Wojciech Kaczmarczyk, Government Plenipotentiary for a Citizens’ Society and Equal Treatment. Today, the group of signatories of the Diversity Charter has grown to almost 130 companies, organizations, and public administration units. The City of Slupsk signed the Diversity Charter on May 24, 2016 and intensive efforts are underway to have the Capital City of Warsaw join the group of signatories. It is difficult to overestimate the role of Warsaw in bringing about social change. It is both an enormous employer and a center molding attitudes and influencing its residents. Their strategies and policies as well as sensitivity to questions of diversity can be a strong impulse in the further development of the Polish Diversity Charter. As was mentioned earlier, there are many areas for development in Poland. Research conducted under the auspices of the European Commission in 2014— Diversity Management Implementation and Impact amongst *Diversity Charter Signatories*

in the *European Union Report* (2014)—demonstrated that Polish companies concentrate their efforts in this area on gender equality in the workplace (69%), where successive priority areas are age management and efforts aimed at the disabled.

Polish business practice in promoting women in the workplace may be subdivided into three areas: advocating of equal treatment, equal opportunities, and promotions and recruitment. It is within such a framework that employers benefit from both soft tools (support for bottom-up worker initiatives and worker integration into interest groups such as women networks, using gender sensitive languages, and training) as well as hard tools (remuneration policy, antidiscrimination, and procedures and criteria for advancement and selection of the managerial staff). Continuous monitoring of both the employment structure and remuneration is very important. It is a basis that makes possible the management of these areas. This is all the more true as research shows—*Ogólnopolskie badania wynagrodzeń* [Polish nationwide remuneration research] (Sedlak and Sedlak, 2013)—that women in Poland earn 20% less than men filling the same job positions. This is very clearly seen in the previously discussed Global Gender Gap 2015 index of the World Economic Forum. In terms of pay equality for the same work, Poland is 124th in the world, although in 2006, when the GGG was created, it was 108th (as to the total economic indicator, Poland fell from 50th place in 2006 to 75th). This shows just how much remuneration policy management in the context of gender is needed in Polish business.

As coordinator of the Polish Diversity Charter, the Responsible Business Forum takes initiatives and serves the promotion and integration of companies, signatories to the Charter, and supports companies in implementing diversity management. That is the goal that every signatory takes on as a responsibility and finds its way into the annual report on data relating to diversity. The companies, signatories to the Charter, can take part in the annual Diversity Day, which is organized in May, and benefit from lectures and practical workshops with the participation of Polish and foreign trainers, and learn details of implementing diversity management from leaders on the Polish labor market. The Forum is also the initiator of an informal group associating representatives of organizations acting for women in business, maintained both within the framework of major international companies such as Deloitte and the SheXO Club as well as foundations such as PWN and VitalVoices, and also promoting entrepreneurship by women such as the Sieć Przedsiębiorczych Kobiet [Network of Entrepreneurial Women]. It encourages women in managerial positions to get involved in media projects such as last year's series of interviews prepared thanks to collaboration with "Wysokie Obcasy" [High Heels]. Greater interest by the media is necessary. One of the few studies in this area is the "Rozwój

zawodowy kobiet i mężczyzn: stereotypy, motywatory i bariery” [The professional development of men and women: Stereotypes, motivators, and barriers] Think Tank. Another interesting initiative is the *Sukces pisany szminką* [Success written using lipstick] series and the “Znane ekspertki” [Known women experts] campaign for increasing the representation of women in information and journalistic programs as well as at strategic conferences. However, these continue to be only solitary examples.

Just how much there is still left to do is confirmed by statistics, which clearly state that even among signatories to the Diversity Charter, the share of women filling managerial posts amounts to a mere 20%. These data depict tendencies in effect in Poland. The results of research by the Warsaw Stock Exchange leave no illusions. The largest Polish companies—companies listed on the stock market, including those with shares belonging to the State Treasury—have less than 15% women on their management and supervisory boards and approximately 7% of their presidents are women. If this is compared with the European average, which amounts to 21.2% women members of boards in the largest listed companies, then the distance to be made up is clearly visible (Adamska et al., 2015).

This is a piercing picture of the place occupied by women in Poland and, more broadly, in the modern world. It is a place that is basically unrelated to their potential and education. If the analyses look at various sectors and regions of the world then it may turn out that women are even more absent. This was confirmed by the recent “The CS Gender 3000: Women in Senior Management” report (Credit Suisse Research Institute, 2014), which indicates significant regional differences that are even more meaningful than subdivision by sector. What is interesting is that there is a confirmation that globalization serves to further positive changes and eliminating differences on a regional level.

The rankings and research mentioned earlier encompassed the whole world. What is the situation in Europe? In 2015 the European Commission published the results of public consultations conducted during the summer of that year and pertaining to the equality of men and women in the countries of the European Union (*Results of Public Consultations ...*, 2015).

The almost 5,000 responses from private individuals as well as nongovernmental organizations, academic communities, and government representatives are to serve as a basis for the priorities of European Union diversity policy in the area of gender. The three key challenges are pay differences, the overly low number of women in the highest positions in world politics and business, and prejudice stemming from convictions as to the roles of men and women. Over 90% of organizations recognize the need for further strengthening of policies serving gender equality.

The Directorate–General for Justice of the European Commission, which is responsible for this matter, has been working on strengthening the position of women in business for years. In 2012 it forwarded a “hard” proposal according to which women are to make up 40% of all members of supervisory boards of listed companies by 2020 (excluding small– and medium–sized companies). Yet other forms of tools include initiatives serving strengthening, promotion of this theme in the public space, and the building of partnership and coalitions.

Growing with every year, the involvement of business may stir great hope for change. Those are the conclusions found in the “Putting All Our Minds to Work: An Assessment” Study (Deloitte, Business and Industry Advisory Committee). Representatives of companies from around the world agree “business is the strongest factor for changing and strengthening the position of women in business” (although they admit that support is needed on the level of politics, discussions, and the media in this area). An example of such change coming from business in Poland is the initiative of the Perspektywy [Perspectives] Educational Foundation and Siemens, a signatory to the Diversity Charter, which prepared the “Potencjal kobiet dla branży technologicznej 2015” [The potential of women in technological industries 2015] Study and simultaneously proposes making the year 2016 the year of Women in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics).

Thus, coalitions and partnerships working against discrimination, including providing equal opportunities for the sexes, can do a lot of good. Greatly simplified, that is the role of the Diversity Charter in Europe.

At the same time, it should be stressed that the Diversity Charter is more than only an effort against discrimination and promotion of diversity with respect to gender. It also applies to other premises, including several that are not recognized in the Polish Labor Code. This is especially true of age, disability, race, religion, nationality, political convictions, trade union membership, ethnic origins, confession, sexual orientation, and employment for a fixed or undefined time as well as full– or part–time. None of these can be criteria for discrimination. The Polish Diversity Charter also speaks of lifestyle and communication style. Nevertheless, it is already visible today that demographic challenges involving the aging of society with the simultaneous challenges of the labor market, where young people, including those with good and very good educations are the group most touched by unemployment, are becoming a burning issue. The world, including the labor market, is full of contradictions. It is young people who more and more consider values linked with their own development as being important, not necessarily understood in the context of professional development. Unlike their parents, the Baby Boomers or Generation X, they are not willing to sacrifice everything for work. Tele–work and

flexible working hours are becoming commonplace. At the same time we are witnesses to new models of managing businesses—social entrepreneurship, an inclusive/collaborative economy, and the sharing economy. It can only be hoped that innovative solutions will meet the social and economic challenges of the modern world as well as the individual needs of employees to an ever-increasing degree. This change is also becoming increasingly visible in Poland, which has been building a free market for barely a quarter of a century.

Leaders in diversity management, companies concentrating around the Diversity Charter, are already implementing solutions that are simultaneously serving those companies and their employees, and are implementing programs facilitating harmonious development and wellbeing. This is most certainly the direction of the future. As is indicated by all demographic prognoses, the number of professionally active people will remain on a level similar to today's. What will change significantly is the number of people excluded from the labor market. Innovation, also meaning changes in efficiency, work effectiveness, and care for employees are all important parts of the answer to their related challenges. Diversity is an important part of the answer to the challenges of the future labor market in Poland and the world.

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Polska Karta Różnorodności – polskie wyzwania i perspektywy dalszego rozwoju

Streszczenie

Celem niniejszego artykułu jest przedstawienie roli Karty Różnorodności Forum Odpowiedzialnego Biznesu w promocji zarządzania różnorodnością w polskich firmach, zwłaszcza pod kątem równości płci, oraz pokazanie uwarunkowań historycznych i polskich wyzwań w tym obszarze, a także inicjatyw i perspektyw dalszego rozwoju działań wspierających równość kobiet i mężczyzn. W tekście wykorzystano własne analizy przygotowane na podstawie danych ze światowych indeksów i polskich badań.

M a r z e n a S t r z e l c z a k – General Director, member of the Board of the Responsible Business Forum. Expert in the area of communications and CSR, ICC coach with experience in communication strategy and CSR acquired in major capital groups in the financial industry and energy sector. Graduate of Polish Studies at the University of Warsaw, post-graduate studies in public relations and strategic marketing management at the SGH Warsaw School of Economics, CSR at Koźmiński University, Executive Summer School on CSR at the University of Geneva, and Sustainable Development Leader Program at the University of Cambridge. As of October of 2014, the Responsible Business Forum is responsible for the whole of the organization of the Diversity Charter in Poland, especially with respect to the promotion of diversity and development.