

## On debunking myths – the full scale of diversity

It is easy to attach a simplistic definition to the area of inclusivity and diversity or use it solely as a fashion trend. But what do we do to bring real value to employees and the local community, and can this be combined with business profit for the organisation? Roksana Nisbet and Magdalena Pawłowska discuss the full scale of diversity – which must go hand in hand with inclusion.



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**Magda:** In Warsaw as well as in Krakow, at the beginning of the existence of the Inclusion & Diversity Council, we faced the problem of the so-called **'rainbow patch'**.

**Roksana:** That's true. We actually started off with a few initiatives related to the LGBTQ+ community, and that was the association some of the staff had with the I&D area.

I remember one situation from last year. We were talking in a small group of people before a meeting and, at some point, I mentioned the upcoming Pride Month initiatives. In response I heard: "Well yes, as I&D as many colours in the rainbow, huh?". It was meant as a joke, but rather a bad one.

**Magda:** And how did you respond to that?

**Roksana:** In a 'human' way – I commented that if this is the only way I&D is seen in the organisation, then there is still a lot of change to be had.

**Magda:** Rightly so. This is certainly an issue in most organisations – **how to increase the reach of diversity and inclusion work to support all**

**community groups**. And to support realistically enough. The activities of companies, in this example, for the LGBTQ+ community, come down to switching the company logo to a rainbow during the Pride Month celebrations. It is a little harder to find examples of systemic solutions such as helping transgender people through the transition process or offering family benefits to same-sex couples.

**Roksana:** We have a similar situation every year around Women's Day, when employers celebrate gender equality. Unfortunately, this does not always go hand in hand with closing the pay gap or eliminating unconscious biases in HR processes. The rainbow logo and demonstrations under this



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symbol are visible in the media, especially social media, which is also often an end in itself. After all, **one of the most important aspects of I&D work is to increase the visibility of certain social groups, but shouldn't building diversity in a corporate environment have a deeper meaning?**

**Magda:** Of course it should. Let's look at the publications of well-known organisations as an example. Looking at the data published by McKinsey or MIT Sloan, it is easy to see the **correlation between the diverse and inclusive nature of teams and their level of creativity and innovation**, their ability to make ethical decisions or to recognise the needs of clients more effectively. Aon, too, published [the 2022 Global Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Survey](#), which found that 82% of companies with high levels of engagement have a clear definition of DE&I.

**Roksana:** Which is everything companies need to do better in the labour market. However, we still see actions resulting from superficial treatment of the subject, dictated either by lack of knowledge or pink-washing (unethical action for show). In the meantime, research clearly shows that increasing diversity and inclusion is key to the development of companies, and this can only be achieved through **the systematic implementation of a well-thought-out strategy**. What does this look like at Aon in Poland?

**Magda:** Elements of the global Inclusion & Diversity strategy are embedded in the objectives of our leaders, People or Talent Development departments – globally but also at the local level. On top of it all, we develop an action plan for each subsequent year within the I&D council. It's important to note that developing the areas of diversity and inclusion is not just the domain of HR. It's everyone's responsibility, especially executives and managers. All leaders contribute to building inclusive teams, but it is also true that we are all leaders when it comes to our daily interactions and decisions. Employees in every position and department have a sphere of influence where their attitudes and behaviours can contribute to or undermine the overall I&D mission.

**Roksana:** Even more so because the reach of diversity is so vast, and it's not just ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity or religion that fall under the umbrella of the term. It's also visible and invisible aspects such as disability, neurodiversity and the type of relationship with loved ones, for example parenting, caring for the elderly or the sick. All of these issues make up who each of the company's employees is. So if an employer wants to **create a welcoming and comfortable place where everyone can feel fully themselves**, they need to be mindful of what we have in common and what is different.

**Magda:** I agree! And here you have touched on another important issue. Because once diverse talents are invited into an organisation, it is not enough just to celebrate diversity, although this is more than advisable. You also need to pay attention to that second letter in the I&D acronym. **Inclusion in a company is to make diversity work in practice for all parties**. That no one feels excluded because the company has not taken care of special needs related to a specific area of diversity, or that social media slogans are not quite reflected in everyday practice. It's harder to change HR procedures than it is to draft a post on LinkedIn, but the real value for employees is definitely related to this first step.

## podcast

One element of an I&D strategy can be the implementation of inclusive language in a company.

We discuss best practices in this area with communication experts in the premiere episode of the "Różnorodność" podcast.

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