INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO THE MANAGEMENT
OF CULTURALLY DIVERSE HUMAN RESOURCES
IN TODAY'S LABOUR MARKET

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Abstract: A multicultural team, because of its specific nature, requires special attention from part of the management. The use of standard management tools in this respect seems to be completely inadequate. We should look for solutions that will not only integrate such a team, but also bring out its valuable potential. Therefore, the main objective of the article is to indicate an innovative approach to the management of culturally diverse human resources. All considerations will be complemented by pilot studies conducted among the employees from the Silesian Voivodeship in the period from March to July 2019. The study considered such issues as: innovative ways of motivation used in multicultural teams (the first place was taken by the creation of an innovative atmosphere) or possibility of multi-level employee participation (the first place was taken by the influence on determining changes in the organisation).

Keywords: cultural diversity management, multicultural teams, motivation systems, trainings.

1. Introduction

"In times of economic globalisation and dynamic changes in the environment, enterprises must include many social, technical, business and economic factors in order to gain and maintain competitive advantage" (Ober, 2017, p. 279). Social conditions, which are a domain of the modern labour market, are becoming increasingly important.

The modern labour market can be described as "an area of activity in which free labour resources are confronted with job offers" (Szydlik-Leszczyńska, 2012, p. 12). These resources, as a result of the above-mentioned processes of globalisation (related to the opening of EU labour markets and the inflow of foreign investments to our country) (Kalina-Prasznic, 2011), have become culturally diverse.

Diversity, on the other hand, can be defined simply, i.e. as the quality of being quite different and unique at an individual or group level (Smith, 1998).

Managing a multicultural team (understood as "ensuring that employees from different cultural backgrounds can make their own contribution to strategic objectives of an organisation") (Mazur, 2011, p. 8) is an important social condition that must be considered by today's managers. It is connected not only with overcoming all kinds of barriers, stereotypes and prejudices, but, above all, with designing a thoughtful and effective process of adapting employees to an organisation and a non-standard (innovative) approach to managing them.

As J. Ober emphasises: "Innovation is understood as the introduction of a new or significantly improved solution in a company's practice in relation to a product (goods or service), process, marketing or organisation. The essence of a product solution is to offer it on the market, whereas for the other three innovations it is to use it in the company's operations" (Ober, 2017, p. 280).

Effective implementation of a wide range of modern solutions to an organisation depends to large extent on creating an innovative organisational atmosphere. Its domain is a lack of fear among managers when undertaking innovative actions and the ability to take associated risks, the ability of a company to adapt to an ever-changing environment and the creation of a career path for employees, which is based solely on their skills, knowledge, talent, competence and creativity (Bratnicki, Kryś, and Stachowicz, 1988).

The above-mentioned creativity, as experts emphasise, is increasingly becoming a domain of multicultural teams (Cox, and Blake, 1991).

However, the development of such an atmosphere is a long-term process and should be based on the recognition and respect of cultural differences in the organisation, the constant solving of related problems and the strong supporting of desired values that foster the introduction of changes at various levels of the organisation's functioning (Trompenaars, 2012).

The main objective of the article is to indicate an innovative approach to the management of culturally diverse human resources. All the considerations will be complemented by pilot studies conducted among the employees from the Silesian Voivodeship in the period from May to July 2019.

2. Forms of non-standard (innovative) approach to managing a multicultural team

Managing a culturally diverse team is a great challenge for managers. Employees from different cultures are usually very demanding since their approach to many issues is different. Furthermore, such a team may give rise to conflicts resulting from prejudices against co-workers. Therefore, the traditional leadership is not an option. It is necessary to take a step further and equate the management of such a team with leadership. It can be defined as: "influencing the behaviour of others by a sort of social influence that occurs when one person

(the leader) is able to cause desired behaviour in someone else who succumbs to them because of both the bonds between them and social relationship that exists between them" (Ober, 2015, p.222).

It is important to introduce an unconventional style of leadership, adapted to a given situation. With regard to the undoubted specificity of such a team, a team style based on significant autonomy of the employees may be taken into account. A workgroup ("self-directing" or "interfunctional") analyses the problem, proposes alternative ways of solving it and chooses the best one on its own (Rogowski, 2001). It is also important to note that the management, while taking certain, non-standard actions in the above-mentioned scope, should show maturity and also possess a certain set of features that will facilitate making unconventional decisions. These may include (Kożusznik, 2005):

- assertiveness, understood as self-confidence and the belief in one's own right, which enables one to defend it and achieve one's own goals in different environments,
- motivation, i.e. the ability to direct one's own energy towards precisely defined goals and treat it as one's own, which results from our identity and being oneself,
- creativity – this concept includes: the ability to effectively perform tasks which, what is important, are performed for the first time; searching for original and unusual ways to solve particular problems; creating new, unconventional ideas,
- criticism – it is characterised by the ability to maintain distance and, more importantly, to reject one's own projects when they are likely to be worse than others. The lack of this feature causes serious consequences for the manager because they do not see their own mistakes and, as a result, they do not develop thus lose the possibility of self-control,
- extroversion – defined as openness to the outside world, setting one's own goals in it, as well as focusing on specific activities and measurable effects of those activities,
- lack of pathological deformations – understood as the absence of features adversely affecting mental condition, which may effectively prevent the implementation of assumed priorities. Such features include the fear of people or aggression.

When managing a multicultural team, a very important process that should be constantly monitored and modified is the motivation process. Traditional methods in this respect, based mainly on financial incentives, remain far from sufficient. The examples of unconventional motivational actions are presented in Table 1.

Table 1.

Examples of instruments for motivating a multicultural team

Name of the motivational instrument	Examples of implementation methods
Creating a friendly, innovative atmosphere	– Team building trips; – Organisation of the so-called Culture Days during which the participants will be able to learn more about a different culture (customs, traditions) of the members of a multicultural team; – Conducting regular conversations with employees about their expectations and needs, not only during adaptation to new organisational conditions, but also during the entire work process; – Creating a concrete and transparent ethical code that sets out the organisation's priority standards and values;
Innovative training	– Providing innovative trainings, using innovative training techniques, on effective communication or cultural differences, which should lead to their acceptance,
Building psychological contracts	– Building a relationship of trust and cooperation between the superior and the subordinate by making mutual concessions and compromises satisfying both parties,
Prevention of professional burnout syndrome	– Ensuring that employees can rotate their jobs so that they find a place where they feel really comfortable,
Signing the Polish Diversity Charter	– Active implementation of anti-mobbing and anti-discrimination policies, creation of equal opportunities policies.

Source: Kochmańska, A. (2016). Efektywne zarządzanie zasobami ludzkimi zróżnicowanymi pod względem kulturowym. Uwarunkowania i korzyści dla organizacji. *Przedsiębiorczość i zarządzanie. Vol. 17, No. 2, Part 3,* pp. 101-110.

Another aspect which is worth analysing and has a positive impact on the management of a multicultural team is multifaceted participation. The term can be defined as: "measures to enable employees to take initiatives and take co-responsibility in the work process" (Piwowarczyk, 2006, p. 82). It should be emphasised that this is not only about initiatives related to participation in the determination of priority objectives of the organisation, but, above all, about participation in various projects or a significant impact on the changes introduced to the organisation. Simultaneously, this will enable the acceptance of changes by employees, which, along with the involvement of managers, will enable their proper implementation into the organisation (Ober, 2015).

Another important aspect of managing a multicultural team is communication. It is necessary to skillfully use its two forms, paying attention not only to verbal but also non-verbal message. As M. Bartosik-Purgat stresses, "it is worthwhile to increase the awareness of all those who come into contact with representatives of different cultures about the existence of cultural differences in this area" (Bartosik-Purgat, 2006, p. 107). Cyclical meetings at which targets are set for the next period are not enough and employees feel that they are being treated as objects. Regular trainings should be organised to reduce these differences. Such meetings should be held with employees individually to build relationships based on mutual trust.

3. Analysis of test results

The (pilot) studies were conducted among the employees of organisations operating in the Silesian Voivodeship from March to July 2019. Their aim was to verify whether and in which areas the management presents a non-standard approach to managing a multicultural team.

The study method was a diagnostic poll, the technique – a survey, the study tool – a survey questionnaire (consisting of 7 closed-ended and open-ended questions). The study involved 164 respondents (including 79 women and 85 men). Most of them had higher education (41.64%), 37.19% – secondary education and 21.34% – vocational education. The majority of respondents (34.14%) were aged 25-34, followed by respondents aged 35-44 (25%). The respondents aged 45-54 constituted 20.73% of the surveyed population, In addition, 13.41% were respondents aged up to 24, while 6.7% were respondents aged 55 or more. Analysing the respondents in terms of job seniority, it can be stated that the largest group were the respondents working from 11 to 15 years (38.41%). The following positions were taken by employees with 6-10 years of experience (28%), over 15 years of experience (20.73%) and 0-5 years of experience (12.8%). All respondents were working in non-executive positions.

An analysis of the survey questions is presented below.
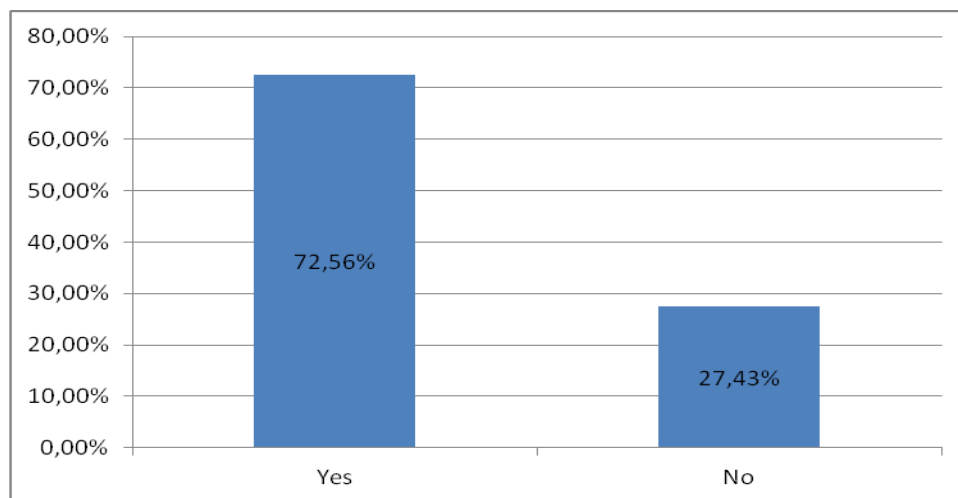
**Figure 1.** Cooperation of respondents in multicultural teams. Source: authors' own study.

The first issue addressed in the survey was the cooperation of respondents in multicultural teams since this is the basis for asking our questions about the non-standard approach to managing such a team. After analysing the respondents' answers, it has been found that the vast majority of them (as much as 72.56%) have (or had) such experience. This result is not surprising as labour market resources are becoming more and more culturally diverse as a result of globalisation (as it has been mentioned before). Therefore, management must meet the extremely difficult challenge of integrating such a team and (which is a priority) identify it with the values of the organisation. Only 27.43% of the respondents have not worked in multicultural

teams so far. It can be assumed that the situation of these employees will soon change and they become members of a multicultural team in the near future.
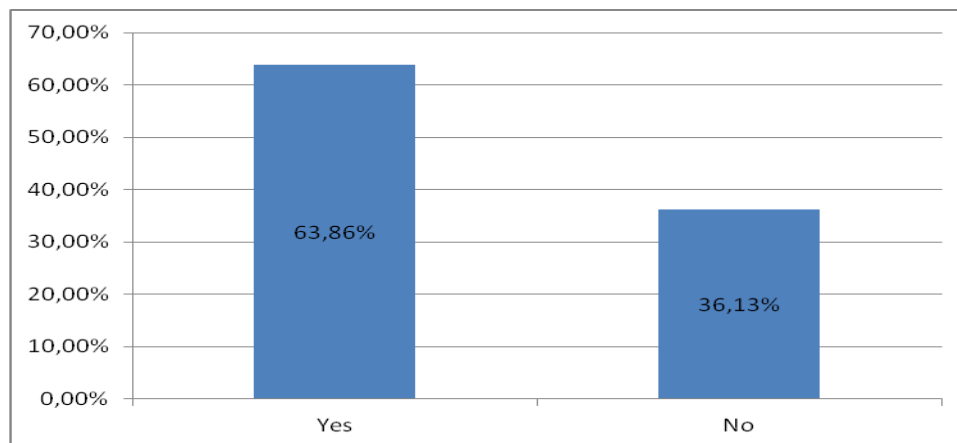
Figure 2. Opinion of respondents on the use of innovative ways of motivation by superiors in multicultural teams. Source: authors' own study.

Respondents who declared in question No. 1 that they cooperated (or still cooperate) in multicultural teams were asked whether their superiors use unconventional ways of motivating employees. The vast majority of them (as much as 63.86%) gave a positive answer. However, 36.13% of respondents believe that management relies primarily on conventional methods in this respect. As this question illustrates, not all managers make full use of the available, innovative ways of motivating employees. It is not only about financial instruments, but also (or perhaps above all) about non-material elements which equally (or not to a greater extent) influence the stimulation of employees to better and more efficient work.
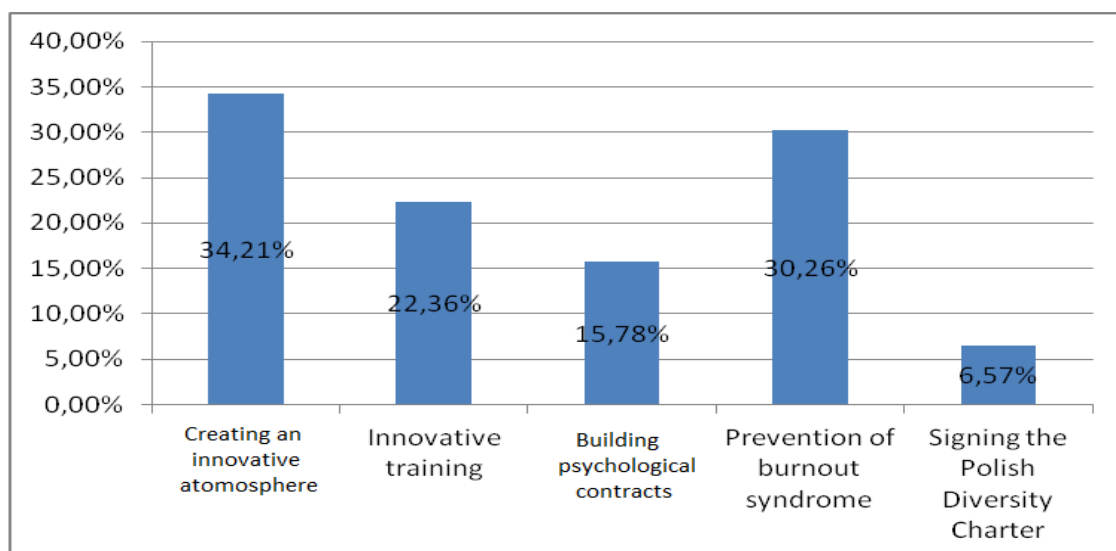
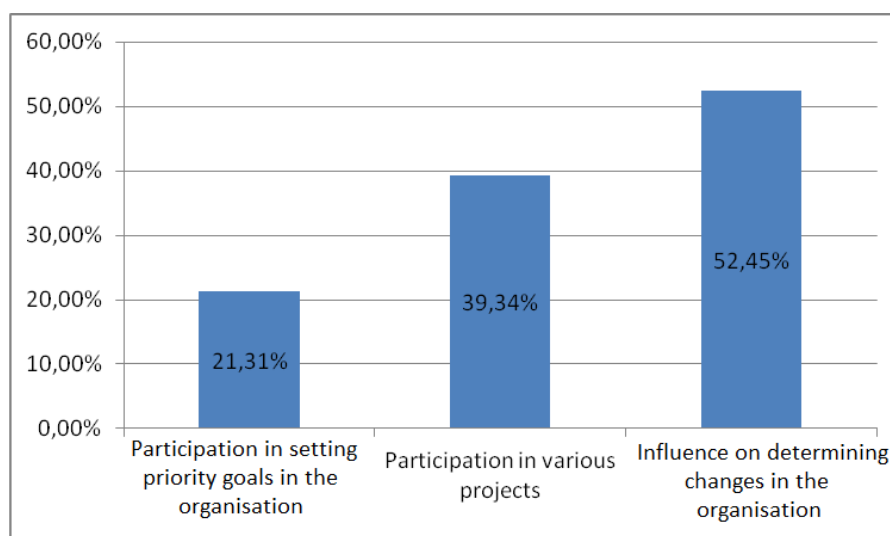**Figure 3.** Innovative ways of motivation used in multicultural teams. Source: authors' own study.

The respondents who positively replied in question No. 3 were asked to indicate unconventional ways of motivating employees. They could choose from all the indicated alternatives. The first place was taken by the creation of an innovative atmosphere (34.21% of indications), followed by prevention of professional burnout syndrome (30.26% of answers).

Further positions were taken by: innovative training (22.36%), building psychological contracts (15.78%) and signing the Polish Diversity Charter (6.57%). It should be emphasised that this document is very important because it regulates the issues related to the management of cultural diversity (inter alia, in terms of combating discrimination in multicultural teams) very precisely, which is why the number of enterprises signing this document is increasing year by year.
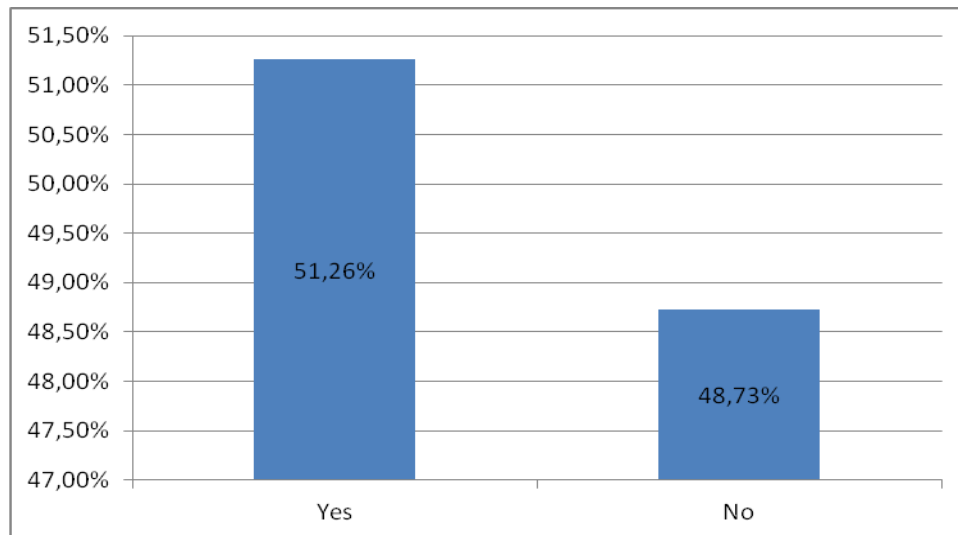
**Figure 4.** The use of different forms of participation in multicultural teams. Source: authors' own study.

Another issue analysed in this study was the possibility of multi-level employee participation. After analysing the answer to this question, it has been found that 51.26% of the respondents have such a chance, whereas 48.73% of the respondents have no influence on the way the organisation is managed. This result is optimistic because it shows that managers enable employees to co-decide about the company's future. This simultaneously affects the creation of positive superior-subordinate relationships in the team (because it demonstrates a high level of trust of the management staff towards employees) and causes an undoubted increase in creativity and commitment of multicultural team members.

Figure 5. Forms of participation used in multicultural teams. Source: authors' own study.
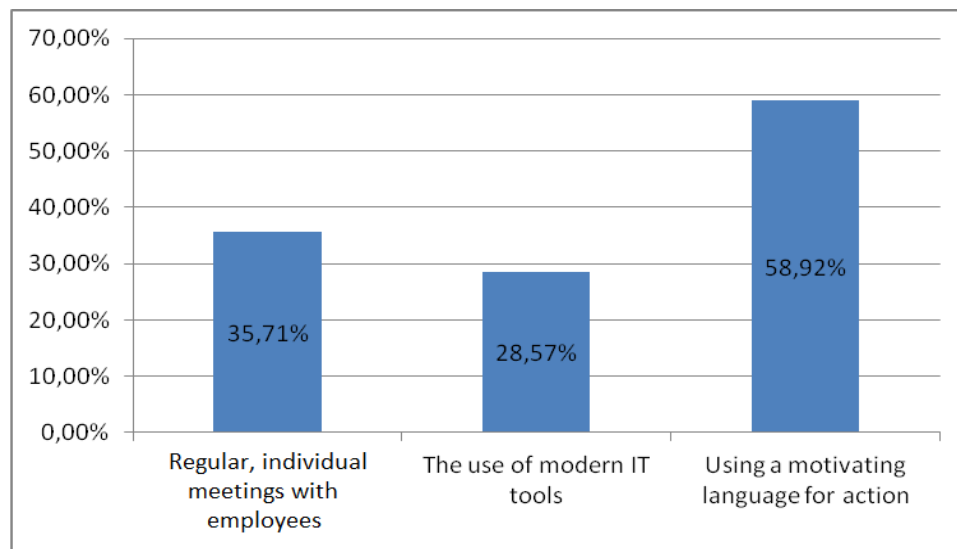
The respondents who positively replied in question No. 4 were asked to indicate the specific forms of participation used by managers.

They could choose from all the indicated alternatives. The first place was taken by the influence on determining changes in the organisation (52.45% of responses). Such actions enable the employees not only to bring their ideas in this area, but also to accept the changes occurring in the company more easily. Next place was taken by participation in various projects (39.34%) and participation in setting priority goals of the organisation (21.31% of indications).
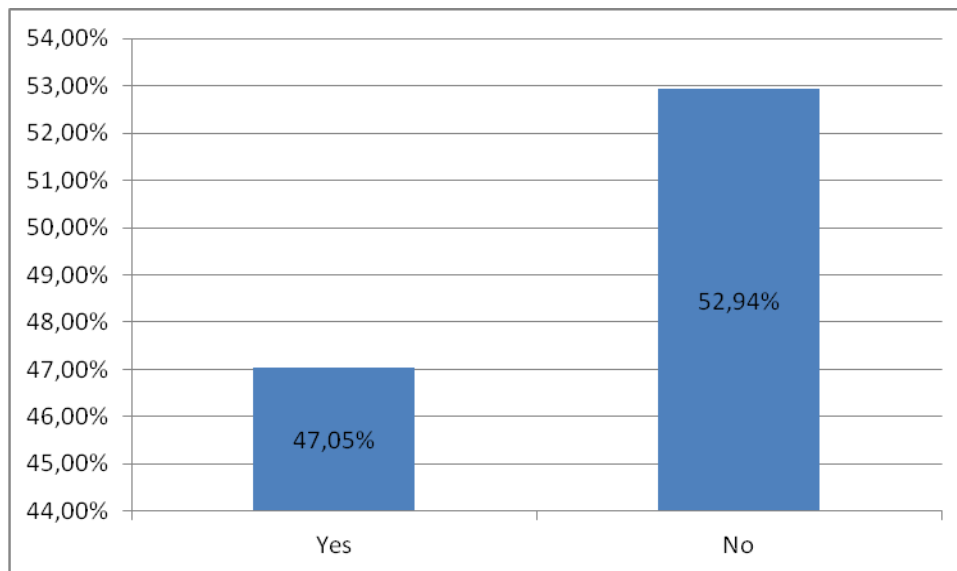
Figure 6. A non-standard way of communication in multicultural teams. Source: authors' own study.

The last issue analysed in this study was a non-standard way of communication with employees in multicultural teams. As shown in the chart above, 47.05% of respondents confirm that their superiors use unconventional patterns in this area, whereas 52.94% of respondents believe that managers use traditional forms of communication. The obtained result in this regard shows that it is worth working on it and improve communication by making more use of its unconventional forms.

Figure 7. Unconventional forms of communication in a multicultural team. Source: authors' own study.

The respondents who positively replied in question No. 6 were asked to indicate unconventional forms of communication used by managers. They could choose from all the indicated alternatives. After analysing the answers, it has been found that their superiors used (or use) primarily the language motivating to act (58.92% of indications). This is a significant element that affects the quality of performed tasks. The following places were taken respectively: regular, individual meetings with employees (35.71%) (thanks to which the employee feels that they are treated as subjects) and the use of modern IT tools (28.57% of answers).

Conclusions

Culturally diverse teams are increasingly becoming the domain of today's companies and their management constitutes an undeniable challenge for the management. The use of traditional processes for this purpose proves to be insufficient. Therefore, they should be constantly monitored and modified in order to integrate a multicultural team and develop a sense of identification with the organisation. Only then will we bring out valuable potential from the team and achieve our goals. The studies conducted for the purposes of this article show that management is aware of this issue and applies an innovative approach to culturally diverse human resources. As an evidence, we can present the results of the pilot studies:

1. The management uses unconventional ways of motivation for employees, such as: creating an innovative atomsphere, organising innovative trainings, building psychological contracts, preventing professional burnout syndrome or signing the Polish Diversity Charter.
2. The management uses various forms of participation in multicultural teams, e.g.: influence on determining changes in the organisation, the possibility of participation in various projects, participation in setting priority objectives of the organisation.
3. The management uses a non-standard way of communication in multicultural teams, such as: the language motivating to act, individual meetings with employees, focusing on modern IT tools.

Naturally, we should constantly look for new solutions in this area, taking into consideration the employees' needs in this respect.

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