

## DECENT WORK AS AN ELEMENT OF ORGANIZATION MANAGEMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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**Purpose:** One of the greatest plagues of the twenty-first century is considered to be forced labor, also referred to as modern slavery. The aim of the research was to indicate that the identification of the threat of forced labor is a key business risk. It is both morally reprehensible and directly affects the loss of reputation, commercial contracts, or is in direct conflict with the law.

**Design/methodology/approach:** A renowned Polish manufacturer of advertising media was selected for the study through purposive selection. The said manufacturer employs an average of 160 employees per year, of which 69% are production employees. The solutions have been developed based on the following research methods: literature analysis, document analysis, surveys and interviews.

**Findings:** The research confirmed that identifying the threat of forced labor is a key business risk - both morally reprehensible and directly affecting the loss of reputation, business contracts or is in direct conflict with the law.

**Research limitations/implications:** A survey of the literature has revealed a research gap in the area of analyzing the dependency of decent work as a component of organizational management in the context of sustainable development. The research presented in the article refers to one enterprise and provides a basis for discussion on identifying the risks of the occurrence of forced labor as a key business risk and encourages further research in this area.

**Practical implications:** The results developed in the progress of the conducted research provide opportunities to describe the management process of countering forced labor. According to the principle of going from particular to general, the main way of obtaining input data emerges, to which at a later stage there will be dedicated tools to manage the process as such.

**Social implications:** The conducted research is a part of promoting good practices among local business, fostering dialogue with the public, and building a good corporate image.

**Originality/value:** The value of this article lies in the implementation and testing of tools (surveys in particular) in describing the process of countering forced labor as such.

**Keywords:** social responsibility, sustainable development, decent work, forced labor.

**Category of the paper:** Research paper.

## 1. Introduction

Contemporary macroeconomic policy trends increasingly point to the need to adopt more responsible development models based on solidarity and social equality. There is a perceived need to create such systemic solutions so that the effects of prosperity can benefit everyone regardless of social status or place of residence. This is possible by focusing attention on people, their needs and opportunities for development. This approach is increasingly being implemented in public policies, creating a framework for sustainable national development. The transformation towards sustainable development is a complex process. It requires a partnership that brings together many actors in socio-economic life. The United Nations makes it clear that this action in partnership is the most effective way to achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. These include decent work and economic growth (Goal 8) (Kusiak, 2021, p. 6).

In 1999, at the World Economic Summit in Davos, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan announces the Global Compact Initiative. The first official alliance between business and non-governmental organizations is formed, which was designed to ensure that the transformation of globalization takes into account, among other things, social issues such as:

- Human Rights - including the elimination of all violations of them, and
- labor standards - including the elimination of all forms of forced labor.

The initiative promotes among enterprises, the adoption of human rights principles in their operational activities and their application. Emerging further regulations like the EP Directive NFRD<sup>1</sup> and the EP Directive CSRD<sup>2</sup>, not only create orders and prohibitions, but show the way for companies to function in society and the economy. All regulations are moving away from declarative formulas, like reporting one's business status quo, to specific tasks that become a license for the company's existence. Social issues, and in particular the prevention of forced labor, are not just about meeting ethical standards in the business chain, or the requirements of the law - today it's the ticket to working with big customers, and tomorrow with everyone. It's the key to competitive advantage and business development.

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<sup>1</sup> DYREKTYWA PARLAMENTU EUROPEJSKIEGO I RADY 2014/95/UEz dnia 22 października 2014 r. zmieniająca dyrektywę 2013/34/UE w odniesieniu do ujawniania informacji niefinansowych i informacji dotyczących różnorodności przez niektóre duże jednostki oraz grupy.

<sup>2</sup> DYREKTYWA PARLAMENTU EUROPEJSKIEGO I RADY (UE) 2022/2464z dnia 14 grudnia 2022 r. w sprawie zmiany rozporządzenia (UE) nr 537/2014, dyrektywy 2004/109/WE, dyrektywy 2006/43/WE oraz dyrektywy 2013/34/UE w odniesieniu do sprawozdawczości przedsiębiorstw w zakresie zrównoważonego rozwoju.

It should be noted, however, that while enterprises in their business model manage quite efficiently in the financial and marketing area, the so-called "soft" issues, including Employee Rights, are based mainly on OHS services and HR, and their regulator is mainly the Labor Code. Today, the situation is changing significantly. There are no ethical standards that do not apply to the prevention of forced labor. The response of the companies is astonishment and misunderstanding. Questions are asked: Why is more demanded of them than the inspection of the National Labour Inspectorate? What's the difference? By what right should a company agree to control human rights practices? And it is around this problem that the reflections presented in this article are concentrated - according to the principle of going from particular to general, the main way of obtaining input data emerges, to which at a later stage there will be dedicated tools to manage the process as such. Starting with employee surveys and interviews to determine risk, plus existing tools, and adding good practices, certain opportunities arise to describe the management process of preventing forced labor.

Ultimately, the management of this process can be implemented into quality management systems, for example, to meet ethical standards, but it will also bring important benefits to employees, such as:

- high culture and employment security,
- continuous professional development,
- high quality and the facilitation of social matters,
- equal opportunities for all regardless of different forms of employment.

On the other hand, the employer will receive a response in the form of higher productivity, lower absenteeism, or higher quality of work. The inconspicuous, and until recently bypassed, human rights issues when skillfully managed become an economic value that no enterprise can pass by indifferently.

A confluence of social and economic forces is colluding to create a perfect storm that is radically transforming the nature of work around the globe, reducing the availability of decent work, and increasing precarious work (Brynjolfsson, McAfee, 2014; Guichard, 2013; ILO, 2016; Standing, 2014). Unemployment, underemployment, and the rise in contract, temporary and precarious work, and low wage jobs are particularly challenging for the poor and marginalized and for those without skills that are consistent with marketplace needs (Blustein et al., 2023, p. 9).

## **2. Sustainability and decent work**

Sustainability, which everyone cares so much about these days, is often seen through the prism of achieving economic results that will not be worked out at the expense of the environment or social cost. It is not a long-term benefit to achieve rapid economic growth that

will not be able to continue due to the devastation or significant impoverishment of the conditions that are necessary for that growth. Awareness of such dependence is increasingly present in entrepreneurs operating in their home countries, but not quite in the countries to which they move their operations to reduce production costs, where legal standards are sometimes lower. This is a big problem, and one that has been worked on for years to solve (Kusiak, 2021, p. 10).

More dynamic, yet stable and long-term economic development is possible if it is sustainable. However, such will be the case if it is based on people at the starting point. Unfortunately, short-sightedness when it comes to development opportunities and the pressure of making a quick profit deprive many decision-makers of the ability to see the benefits - including the financial ones - of paying attention to people, rather than just a positive bottom line. While positive changes can be seen, they do not necessarily stem from an awareness of where the many values of business lie and what values business can create for the future while conducting its business. Changes in attitudes aimed at taking greater care of the employee and creating conditions for his or her development are today stimulated by the difficulty of attracting new job candidates, which is the result of, among other things, the demographic decline, labor emigration, but also the development of a global consciousness and culture based on the idea of human dignity. Along with these comes the objection that 20th-century working conditions are still an acceptable standard. These changes can be supported by making all stakeholders - employers and employees - aware that, at the same time, long-term and sustainable development will only be possible if value is also seen in a humanized economic process, and not only in the effect of labor in the form of a service or product detached from a positive relationship with the social environment (Kusiak, 2021, p. 10).

Working represents a core aspect of human life, optimally providing a means of sustainability, social connections and contribution, self-determination, and a source of meaning (Blustein et al., 2023; Blustein et al., 2016; Dik et al., 2013; Duffy et al., 2016; Lysova et al., 2019).

Access to decent work is a basic human right, a position that is consistent with policy statements from both the ILO and the UN. Decent work has been defined by the ILO (2008) as a mutually agreed way of identifying the conditions and characteristics of work that are crucial for prosperity (Blustein et al., 2023). Decent work is a construct that defines the baseline attributes of work, reflecting the International Labour Organization's (ILO's) four strategic objectives: "the promotion of rights at work; employment; social protection; and social dialogue" (Blustein et al., 2023, p. 290; ILO, 1999, p. 6).

Adopting as a goal of social responsibility activities the maintenance of work capacity of the company:

- meets the expectations of employees and others working on its behalf, i.e. the expectations of its core group of stakeholders,
- contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, which include the promotion of stable, sustainable and inclusive economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all people (United Nations, 2015).

Corporate social responsibility is the responsibility of a company for their environmental, social and economic impact on society. It is a new quality that has taken hold in the enterprise market for several years. At first in the formula of good practices, now by various types of regulators such as the OECD guidelines, the Global Compact or the latest Directive of the European Parliament and the Council (EU) 2022/2464 (with regard to corporate sustainability reporting), it has come into existence in the form of defined activities and goals.

One of the motivators for these activities based on criteria of respect for human rights are the international social standards required in the value chain, by large multinationals. Meeting these requirements is a prerequisite for doing business with them. The origins and genesis of these standards can be traced back decades ago. Among others, the association of companies, NGOs and trade unions Ethical Trade Initiatives (ETI) in 1998 developed one of the first Ethical Code of Conduct in Europe, called ETi Base Code. The purpose of the above was to calibrate ethical requirements in the supply chain to influence the promotion of positive behavior that improves the lives of workers. Among other things, this code was the basis for the SMETA audit procedure, whose methodology also applies to corporate governance and hiring practices.

The results of the company's assessment audit are transparently communicated on the SEDEX online platform and are not taboo on the Buyer-Seller line. Every year, more and more companies not only undergo assessments, but also create their own standards, which are an extension of already existing solutions like Coca Cola's TCCC standard. This organization requires its customers to formalize compliance with human rights, a process approach rather than a declarative formula. Even today it is not enough to communicate a Human Rights Policy, it needs to be implemented into one's own value model in a process-oriented way so that it can be managed.

At the moment when the added value in the financial or social form has been defined, risk evaluation management is indispensable in the continuous improvement of the process, and the resume of this is the word "formalization", resulting i.a. from the previously described standard which falls into the area of non-financial risk management. It is impossible not to mention the SWA McDonald standard, which is a development not only of the SMETA standard and ETI Base Code, but also the internal code of conduct, which the organization has developed in accordance with the adopted business model based on respect in the context of human rights. This standard very precisely defines the "form of forced labor", where high requirements are placed on the basis that employment procedures, whether those used by

a company or employment agency, provide employees with employment on a voluntary basis. These requirements are described in great detail by McDonald's:

- no employee may be locked up or guarded,
- no employee may be indebted to an establishment or recruitment agency in a way that prevents him from freely resigning from work,
- employees can resign from work at any time without financial penalties and potential loss of permanent residence rights,
- employees must not feel threatened or afraid that something bad will happen to them or their families if they quit their jobs (...) (SWA, 2015, p. 3.6).

According to Article 2(1) of International Labor Organization Convention No. 29, forced or compulsory labor means any work or service that is required of some person under the threat of any penalty and to which the person has not volunteered. In practice, the most used is the International Labor Organization's operational definition of forced labor, in which adult forced labor is defined as work to which a person has not volunteered (the concept of "involuntariness", non-voluntariness") and which is performed under threat of punishment (the concept of "coercion") applied by an employer or other third party to a working person. Coercion can take place already at the stage of the recruitment process to force such a person to accept a job, or when the person is already working - to force him to perform activities/tasks that he did not agree to at the recruitment stage, or to prevent him from leaving his job (Hard to see..., p. 13).

In Poland, forced labor is not explicitly prohibited by any legal act. At the same time, the Constitution guarantees everyone the freedom to choose and practice an occupation and to choose one's place of work. The obligation to work can only be imposed by law. Under the Criminal Code, forced labor is prohibited, but still not clearly specified (Konstytucja RP, art. 65; Kodeks pracy, art. 10; Kodeks karny, art. 115).

The Working Group on Labor Relations developed a definition, which, after being adopted by the Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility Team, was referred by the Minister of Investment and Development to the Minister of Justice with a recommendation for use in further legislative work. According to this definition: "Forced labor or services is the provision of labor or services under conditions of exploitation, performed under the influence of coercion resulting from violence, threats, deprivation of liberty, demands to work off a debt, the seizure of an identity document, a travel document or a document authorizing a foreigner to stay in the territory of the Republic of Poland, non-payment of wages, or any other gross violation of the rights of an employee" (Faracik, 2020, p. 22).

The essence of forced labor is that it is performed under control in a situation of dependence on the employer, with the goal of exploiting the person and making a profit at his or her expense. Taking control of the victim makes it possible to exploit him or her, even with his or her consent. The victim of forced labor is placed in what is known as a situation of vulnerability, which leaves the person with no other - real or acceptable - choice than to submit to such an abuse (Faracik, 2020, p. 20).

Moreover, in the context of human rights, there is a very strong emphasis on the use of forced labor of people deprived of their liberty, which is categorically forbidden unless legally permitted according to a government program. The standard requires that in such a case McDonald's be informed of such a situation before engaging in business cooperation. Also of great importance is the standard's requirement mandating equal treatment of employees regardless of their membership in unions and other labor groups. Workers have freedom of association. The supplier also must create a work environment that counters instances of discrimination especially in the context of recruitment, training, working conditions and assigned tasks. The Code demands that the employer treats employees fairly in terms of housing or the access to the canteen. However, it should be stated that all the Codes are a set of requirements for a standard and do not provide any ready-made solutions and, as a result, only highlight good practices or describe a process principle. It is up to the employer, as part of its corporate governance, to create the tools and mechanisms to effectively manage respect for human rights and prevent forced labor.

It is also worth noting that the standards quite often set higher requirements also in terms of human rights than the local law, much to the surprise of entrepreneurs who say they operate according to the "letter of the law".

If a business unit wants to be in the supply chain, many companies in the B2B market need to raise this level and adapt it to the standard and requirements of customers. As an example, let's look at the issue of remuneration for employees hired under a civil contract according to the SMETA standard:

- 6.1 Working hours must comply with national laws, collective agreements, and the provisions of 6.2 to 6.6 below, whichever affords the greater protection for workers. Subclauses 6.2 to 6.6 are based on international labour standards.*
- 6.2 Working hours, excluding overtime, shall be defined by contract, and shall not exceed 48 hours per week.*
- 6.3 All overtime shall be voluntary. Overtime shall be used responsibly, considering all the following: the extent, frequency and hours worked by individual workers and the workforce as a whole. It shall not be used to replace regular employment. Overtime shall always be compensated at a premium rate, which is recommended to be not less than 125% of the regular rate of pay.*
- 6.4 The total hours worked in any 7-day period shall not exceed 60 hours, except where covered by clause 6.5 below.*
- 6.5 Working hours may exceed 60 hours in any 7-day period only in exceptional circumstances where all of the following are met:*
  - this is allowed by national law,*
  - this is allowed by a collective agreement freely negotiated with a workers' organization representing a significant portion of the workforce;*

- *appropriate safeguards are taken to protect the workers' health and safety, and*
- *the employer can demonstrate that exceptional circumstances apply such as unexpected production peaks, accidents or emergencies.*

6.6 *Workers shall be provided with at least one day off in every 7-day period or, where allowed by national law, 2 days off in every 14-day period.*

Also worth mentioning is the international rating company EcoVadis, whose methodology for assessing a company's sustainability is also based on the principles of the Global Compact. Suppliers on the basis of dozens of criteria are evaluated in terms of respect for human rights and mutual respect, for social needs.

In the evaluation elements in the context of labor law and human rights, we will find a series of questions of the type:

- who pays recruitment fees,
- working conditions including code of ethics,
- structured relations with employee representatives,
- child labor and forced labor (e.g., commitment or measures taken to prevent or eliminate child labor or forced labor),
- diversity, equality and inclusion.

Such questions were considered, not so long ago, to be voluntary or necessary ones. However today there is only one answer - it is an opportunity to add value to the business model and often "to be or not to be in the market". So, it is not worth running away from the change. Just adapt to it by implementing certain processes and describing them in procedures.

### **3. Methodology**

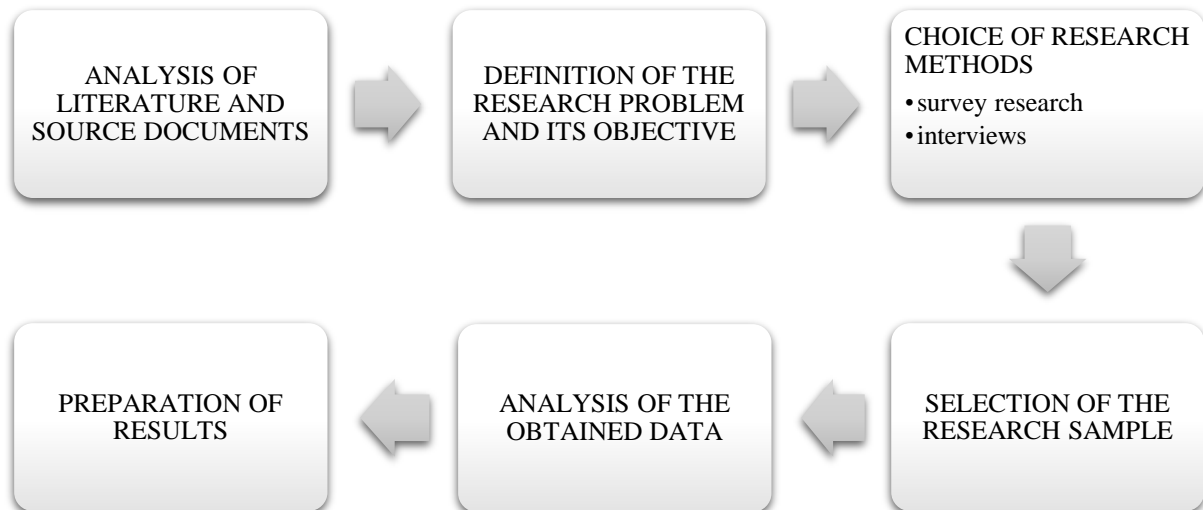
For the purposes of this article, a research scheme was prepared (Figure 1).

There is a lack of research in the literature that indicates that respecting human rights identifying the threat of forced labor is a key business risk. The literature includes a framing of forced labor in the context of human trafficking (Pohl et al., 2018; Klaus et al., 2020; Klaus, 2014; Wiczorek, 2017; Markiewicz; Wiczorek, 2017a; Dąbrowski, 2012; Lasocik 2006).

The main research problem was to determine the impact of respecting human rights as one of the main areas of running a socially responsible enterprise.

The research problem formulated in this way implies the main objective of the research, which is to point out that identifying the threat of forced labor is a key business risk as both morally reprehensible and directly affecting the loss of reputation, business contracts, or being in conflict with the law.

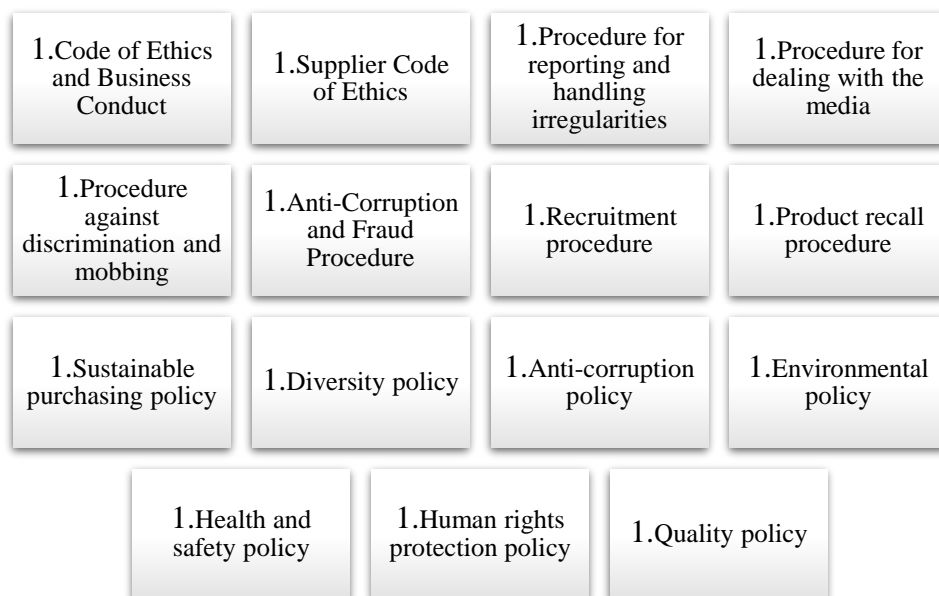




**Figure 1.** Research scheme.

Source: own elaboration.

A renowned Polish manufacturer of advertising media, which has been in business for 30 years, was selected for the study by purposive sampling. It enjoys great confidence among the world's leading companies from 42 countries on 5 continents. The company has an annual average of 160 employees, 69% of whom are production workers. The company implements good management practices in accordance with ISO 26000 Social Responsibility Guidelines. In terms of Corporate Social Responsibility, procedures and policies of conduct have been implemented at the company under review to strive for continuous improvement in the company's operations (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Procedures and policies of conduct.

Source: own elaboration.

As part of the Human Rights Policy, the implementation of the Anti-Forced Labor procedure is underway at the company under review.

The study was conducted in two stages:

1. In 02.2023, interviews were conducted at the headquarters of the surveyed enterprise:
  - interviews among representatives of four agencies that act as intermediaries in hiring foreign workers for the surveyed enterprise,
  - surveys among foreign employees working in production.
2. In 04.2023, interviews were conducted among Polish employees.

During the research, a questionnaire on forced labor was used, which is Annex 7 to the publication *Forced Labor Guide How to Recognize and Counteract It* (Faracik, 2020).

#### 4. Own research

Fifty-six employees hired through four employment agencies participated in the 02.2023 survey: A (34 employees), B (10 employees), C (8 employees), D (4 employees). Tables 1-7 present the results from the survey responses.

82% of the respondents have a work permit or statement of assignment. In terms of paying a fee to get a job, three respondents answered that they had to pay an intermediary or some other person in their country of origin and one respondent indicated that they had to pay an agency or intermediary or some person in Poland. All respondents answered in unison that they had not had any document taken away from them, that they could move freely and leave their place of residence, and that they did not feel intimidated in connection with the work.

**Table 1.**

*Responses to questions regarding the contract under which respondents perform work*

Questions	Responses by agency employment			
	A	B	C	D
<i>Do you have a written contract under which you perform work (e.g., employment contract, contract of mandate or other)?</i>				
Yes. I have signed a written contract and have my copy	33	10	8	4
Yes. I have signed a contract but do not have my copy	1	-	-	-
<i>If you have a written contract, please indicate which contract you have signed:</i>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>
Employment contract	13	1	2	1
Contract of mandate	19	9	4	3
Contract for work	1	-	-	-
Other	1	-	2	-
<i>Is the contract written in a language you understand?</i>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>
Yes, it is written in the language I speak and is understandable to me	29	10	8	4
It is written in a language I do not understand, but it was translated orally	5	-	-	-
<i>Do you do the kind of work you were contracted to do with your employer before you started?</i>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>
Yes, I am only doing the kind of work I was/are contracted for	27	8	5	4
Yes, I am doing the kind of work I was/am contracted to do, and in addition I voluntarily agreed to other duties	6	2	3	-
No, I have been forced to do other work	1	-	-	-

Cont. table 1.

<i>Can you voluntarily resign from your job?</i>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>
Yes	32	9	8	4
No	2	1	-	-
<i>Do you have to work off the debt incurred by getting a job in Poland or by imposing disproportionate penalties?</i>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>
No	19	9	4	2
I have no work-related debt	15	1	4	2

Source: own elaboration based on survey research.

Only one employee responded that he has an employment contract but does not have his own copy. As for the type of contract, 63% of respondents indicated a contract of mandate and 30% an employment contract. One person indicated a work contract and 3 others. Such variation in responses may be due to a mis differentiation of contract types in terms of employment. The respondents were foreigners and this misunderstanding of the form of employment may be due to different legislation in the country of origin. Representatives of employment agencies during the interview declared that workers are employed on a contract of mandate, with a statutory hourly rate.

Only five respondents indicated that the contract was written in a language they did not understand, having been translated orally.

On the subject of doing work, 79% of respondents confirmed that they only do the work they were contracted to do, 20% that they do the work they were contracted to do, and in addition they voluntarily agreed to other duties. One person responded that they were not forced to do other work.

95% of respondents indicated that they could voluntarily resign from their jobs, three people answered that they did not have this option.

61% of respondents answered that they did not have to work off the debt incurred by getting a job in Poland or by imposing disproportionate penalties and 39% answered that they had no work-related debt.

**Table 2.**

*Answers to questions on health and safety training and preventive examinations*

<b>Questions</b>	<b>Responses by agency employment</b>			
	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>
<i>Have you received health and safety training prior to being allowed to perform the work?</i>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>
Yes	34	10	8	4
<i>Did you understand anything from the health and safety training?</i>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>
Yes, because the training was in a language I understood	31	10	8	4
No, because the training was in a language I don't understand	3	-	-	-
<i>Did you have to pay for health and safety training?</i>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>
Yes	2	-	-	-
No	32	10	8	4
<i>Before starting work, did you have a preventive medical examination referred by your Polish employer?</i>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>
Yes and I did not have to pay for it	14	10	5	2
No	20	-	3	2

Source: own elaboration based on survey research.

All respondents were trained in occupational health and safety (OHS). 93% of the respondents understood the discussed scope of the health and safety training. Three respondents said they did not understand because the training was in a language they did not know. 96% of respondents answered that they did not have to pay for OSH training. Two respondents indicated that they had to pay for the training.

55% of respondents answered that they had to have a preventive medical examination before starting work, to which they were referred by their Polish employer and did not have to pay for it. 45% of respondents answered that they had not had a preventive medical examination before starting work, to which they were referred by their Polish employer.

**Table 3.**

*Answers to questions on post-work rest and break time*

Questions	Responses by agency employment			
	A	B	C	D
<i>Do you have time to rest after work?</i>				
Yes, each day I have at least 11 hours of uninterrupted rest between shifts and at least 35 hours of uninterrupted weekly rest.	32	10	8	4
Yes, I have rest time, but it happens to be shorter than the above-mentioned point.	2	-	-	-
<i>Do you have breaks at work (meal breaks, opportunity to use the restroom)?</i>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>
Yes, I have breaks and they are sufficient for rest, going to the toilet, eating a meal.	33	8	8	4
Yes, I have breaks, but they are too short for rest, going to the toilet and eating a meal.	1	2	-	-

Source: own elaboration based on survey research.

The total of 96% of respondents answered that each day they have at least 11 hours of uninterrupted rest between shifts and at least 35 hours of uninterrupted weekly rest, two persons indicated that it sometimes occur that this time period of uninterrupted rest may be shorter.

For three respondents, the breaks in working time are too short to rest, go to the restroom, and eat a meal.

**Table 4.**

*Answers to questions on remuneration*

Questions	Responses by agency employment			
	A	B	C	D
<i>Do you receive your salary regularly, i.e. at least once a month?</i>				
Yes, I receive my salary and it is paid regularly on the agreed date	34	10	8	4
<i>Do you have free access to your salary and can you dispose of it without restrictions?</i>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>
Yes, I receive the money directly into my hand	34	-	6	2
I receive the money in my bank account, to which I have unlimited access	-	10	2	2
<i>Does the employer deduct any additional (other than insurance premiums or tax) amounts from your salary, e.g. for accommodation, food? [you can mark several options].</i>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>
No	33	10	7	1
Yes, the cost of coming to Poland	-	-	-	1
Yes, the cost of accommodation	1	-	-	3
Yes, cost of transportation to work	-	-	-	1
Other	-	-	1	-

Source: own elaboration based on survey research.

All respondents receive their salary regularly. 75% of respondents receive money directly in cash and 25% receive money to their bank account, to which they have unlimited access. It is noteworthy that agency A pays salaries directly in cash and agency B pays them into bank accounts. The remaining agencies use both forms of paying salaries.

As much as 91% of respondents answered that the employer does not deduct additional amounts from their wages. It is worth noting that all employees hired through agency B responded that they have no additional deductions from their wages.

One respondent hired through agency A answered that he had accommodation costs deducted, and voluntarily agreed to this, as getting a job depended on it. The amount deducted is exactly what the employee agreed to.

One respondent employed through agency C indicated that he had other (he did not specify which) deductions, while specifying that he voluntarily agreed to these deductions and that he does not know if the amount deducted is the amount he agreed to.

Three respondents employed through agency D, answered that they have deducted accommodation costs, in addition, one answer each is that there are deductions for the cost of coming to Poland and the cost of transport to work. Two respondents voluntarily agreed to the indicated deductions and one added, getting a job depended on it. One respondent indicated that the amount deducted was exactly the amount they agreed to, and two responded that they did not know.

**Table 5.**

*Answers to questions on discrimination*

Questions	Responses by agency employment			
	A	B	C	D
<i>Do you feel discriminated against - treated worse than others at work?</i>				
Yes	2	-	-	-
No	32	10	8	4

Source: own elaboration based on survey research.

It appears that 96% of those surveyed do not feel discriminated against. Two employees hired through Agency A indicated that they felt that way.

Respondents unanimously answered that they did not feel intimidated about their work and that they were free to move around after work, leaving their place of residence.

**Table 6.**

*Answers to health insurance questions*

Questions	Responses by agency employment			
	A	B	C	D
<i>Do you have health insurance?</i>				
Yes	12	10	5	2
Don't know	16	-	3	1
No	6	-	-	1
<i>Are you eligible for free medical care?</i>				
Yes	12	6	6	2
Don't know	20	4	2	2
No	2	-	-	-

Source: own elaboration based on survey research.

As much as 52% of respondents indicated that they have health insurance, 36% that they don't know if they do and 13% that they don't. It is noteworthy that all employees hired through Agency B responded that they have health insurance. 46% of respondents answered that they could use free medical assistance, 50% that they did not know if they could and 4% that they could not.

During the interview, agency representatives declared that all employees have both health insurance and can use free medical assistance.

This discrepancy in responses may be due to a lack of understanding of the laws in Poland and knowing what an employee is entitled to under a given contract.

**Table 7.**

*Answers to questions about the place to live*

Questions	Responses by agency employment			
	A	B	C	D
<i>Did your employer provide you with a place to live/housing?</i>				
Yes, and the conditions at the place of residence are sufficient	20	-	-	2
Yes, but the conditions are not sufficient	2	-	-	-
No	12	10	8	2

Source: own elaboration based on survey research.

39% of the respondents answered that the employer provided them with a place to live, 4% also confirmed this fact, while they believe that the conditions are not sufficient.

57% of respondents answered that the employer did not provide them with a place to live. It is worth noting that all workers hired through agencies B and C responded that the employer did not provide them with a place to live.

Interviews among Polish employees in 04.2023 were conducted:

At the company's headquarters. A total of 43 employees were interviewed:

- production department (33 employees), including: employees of: sewing, printing, production planning office, technology, assembly, clothing and production,
- trade department (8 employees),
- health and safety department (1 employee),
- administration department (1 employee).

Among the employees interviewed, one declared that he or she was employed on a contract and that one was running an established business. The remaining respondents answered that they were employed on a contract of employment. The content of the contract and aspects of the resulting contract are known. Workers were trained in health and safety and did not have to pay for it.

38 employees responded that they perform the work they were contracted to do, three employees that they additionally voluntarily agreed to other duties, one employee declared that they were additionally forced to perform additional duties, and one employee declared that they perform completely different work but agreed to do it.

Regarding the performance of preventive medical examinations, prior to the start of work, only the contracted employees answered that he had not been referred by the employer for such examinations and had not had them performed.

In terms of rest time, two employees responded that it happens to be less than at least 11 hours of uninterrupted rest between shifts and at least 35 hours of uninterrupted weekly rest.

All employees interviewed responded that:

- they have sufficient breaks at work;
- they are paid regularly, once a month, and it is deposited into employee bank accounts to which they have access;

Eleven employees declared that they had a voluntary insurance premium deducted.

In terms of discrimination, three ladies declared that they felt this way. As for the reason, they indicated that it was in relations with foreigners (especially workers from Ukraine) concerning, among other things:

- the timing of receiving work clothes (foreigners get them faster and 3 sets each),
- the claimability of foreigners,
- quality of foreigners' work.

Regarding health insurance and the use of free medical assistance, one employee declared that he did not know if he had such options.

All employees declared that they can voluntarily resign from their jobs.

Based on the conducted research, the following recommendations can be indicated:

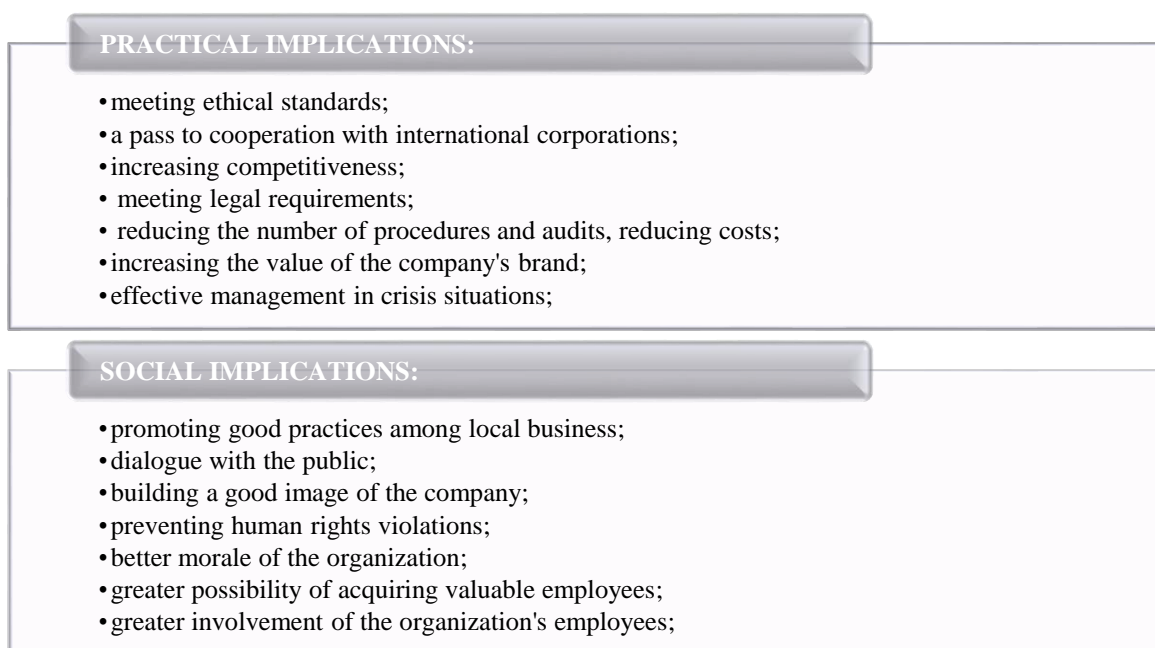
- 1) conducting training in the field of:
  - cultural differences,
  - differences resulting from the form of employment,
- 2) conducting periodic audits of contracts concluded by employment agencies with employees,
- 3) control over the deadlines in the delivery of work clothes and the dates of washing clothes that employees have provided under an employment contract,
- 4) discretionary bonuses for those employees who train newly hired employees, in particular foreigners,
- 5) in the information leaflet for employees it is worth including:
  - brief information about the form of employment, in particular about the type of contract and what results from it, in particular pay attention to issues related to medical care and taxation,
  - dictionary of basic phrases/words used on a daily basis, in particular at work.

## 5. Summary and conclusions

The company's management is increasingly convinced that it is worth being a socially responsible employer who, through the right policy in the area of employee relations, gains over the competition.

Changing environment, among others: pandemic, demographic trends, changes in the labor market, inequalities and social disproportions, technological development, globalization, pose new challenges to enterprises. Companies are increasingly recognizing the need for a broader openness to groups of employees, including the goals and life priorities of society.

From the material collected in the course of research and the analyses carried out, practical and social implications can be indicated (Figure 3).



**Figure 3.** Practical and social implications.

Source: own elaboration.

On the basis of the interviews, the following conclusions can be drawn: there is a visible cultural difference both in everyday behavior and work between Poles and foreigners, which affects human relations and the sense of exclusion, and this has a direct impact on the quality of work.



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