DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION MANAGEMENT AS A KEY ELEMENT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF ORGANIZATIONS IN POLAND

Wioleta GAŁAT

Krakow University of Economics, Department of Public Management; galatw@uek.krakow.pl,
ORCID: 0000-0002-6807-8176

Purpose: The aim of the article is to analyze how diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) policies are integrated into the sustainable development strategies of Polish organizations. The author also examines specific actions undertaken by companies within their DEI policies and identifies challenges related to their implementation.

Design/methodology/approach: The study is based on document analysis: reports from four editions of the Diversity IN Check initiative (2021-2024) and the list of employers most advanced in diversity and inclusion management (2021-2025), as part of the Responsible Business Forum initiative. Content analysis was applied, along with diachronic and synchronic comparisons, considering the methodological variability of the studies over the years.

Findings: The results indicate a progressive formalization of DEI strategies in Polish organizations and their integration with business goals and sustainable development. At the same time, practical actions, especially in relation to supporting groups at risk of exclusion, remain fragmented and uneven. The greatest difficulties concern the implementation of programs targeted at people with disabilities, the LGBT+ community, and caregivers of dependent adults.

Research limitations/implications: The study is limited to secondary data analysis from Diversity IN Check reports and does not include direct research on organizations. Future studies could expand the methodological scope to include interviews or case studies, especially in the SME sector or among universities.

Practical implications: The results provide organizations with knowledge about gaps and areas that require development in the context of DEI. They allow for better alignment of actions with the goals of sustainable development strategies and support the professionalization of diversity management strategies within organizations.

Social implications: The implementation of DEI policies supports equal opportunities and inclusivity, which directly impacts employee quality of life and the building of a more just society. The results may also inspire the development of social responsibility strategies.

Originality/value: The article provides a unique analysis of the evolution of DEI approaches in Poland, based on a long-term and comparative perspective of data from the Diversity IN Check initiative. It contributes to the development of literature on diversity management in the context of sustainable development in the Polish environment.

Keywords: diversity, DEI, sustainability, social responsibility. Diversity IN Check.

Category of the paper: Research paper.

1. Introduction

The issue of organizational management can be approached from various specific perspectives, such as human resource management, diversity and inclusion management, sustainable development management, and many others. Although each of these perspectives is important, it is particularly essential to perceive the organization as a whole. Moreover, a classification of these approaches in terms of their mutual interdependence and influence is highly valuable. Only such a holistic approach can lead to effective management within individual specialized perspectives. In the case of diversity and inclusion management, it should be noted that this particular perspective is most strongly linked to sustainable development management and, consequently, to the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies implemented by the organization.

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) management is treated as a key element of sustainable development in organizations, having an impact on the social, economic, and environmental dimensions (Karbowska, 2023). DEI is not only associated with the promotion of equal opportunities and social justice but, above all, contributes to increasing organizational innovation and competitiveness (Kupczyk, Kubicka, 2014; Gross-Gołacka, 2016; Anand, 2021). In Poland, a major initiative aimed at monitoring and evaluating organizational activities in the field of DEI is the Diversity IN Check (DINC), implemented by the Responsible Business Forum (FOB). The purpose of this initiative is to assess the maturity of employers in diversity management and in building inclusive working environments (FOB, 2024a).

The aim of this article is to analyze how diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) policies are integrated into the sustainable development strategies of Polish organizations. The author also examines specific actions taken by organizations within their DEI policies and identifies challenges related to their implementation. The study is based on reports from four editions of the Diversity IN Check initiative (2021-2024) and on the list of employers most advanced in diversity and inclusion management (2021-2025). The following research questions were formulated in the article:

P1: How and to what extent are DEI policies formally integrated into the sustainable development strategies and business objectives of Polish organizations?

P2: How do Polish organizations implement specific programs and actions in the field of diversity and inclusion management, particularly in relation to supporting groups at risk of exclusion, and what challenges do they encounter in this process?

2. Literature review

2.1. DEI in the Context of Sustainable Development

The concept of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion encompasses a multidimensional approach to management, based on three pillars: diversity, equity, and inclusion. In management sciences, diversity management refers to workforce resources and is viewed as a source of new opportunities in a competitive market (Lisowska, 2021; Roberson, 2006). Diversity refers to the presence of individuals with different demographic characteristics, backgrounds, cultures, and even experiences and research confirms that such diverse teams tend to be more innovative and creative (Tucker, 2023). In a workplace where diversity is accepted and appreciated, employees are more willing to share their talents, are more creative, less conformist, and more committed to the organization's goals, which translates into higher productivity, lower turnover, and greater job satisfaction (Lisowska, 2021; Cox, Blake, 1991). Equity assumes the elimination of barriers and biases so that all individuals within an organization have fair access to opportunities and resources. This, in turn, positively affects employee engagement and motivation, which directly influence organizational performance (Proniewski, Kiełczewski, 2023). Inclusion focuses on creating an environment in which each individual is respected and can actively participate in the life of the organization, thereby increasing engagement and employee loyalty and building organizational resilience to change (Baran, 2024; El-Amin, 2022; Weaver et al., 2024; Shore et al., 2011; Schmidt, 2021; Ciuk et al., 2022).

Today, DEI is not only a major challenge and management trend for organizations, but also a strategic necessity in the context of implementing sustainable development strategies. Research shows that DEI strategies contribute to transforming workplace culture, increasing minority representation within organizations, and enabling the implementation of effective business strategies (Tucker, 2023; Baran, 2024). Organizations, regardless of their size, play a key role in promoting the ideas of equality, diversity, and social inclusion, and their internal policies may indirectly influence societal development (Schmidt, 2021). In the near future, the market value of organizations will increasingly be determined by non-financial factors such as reputation, talent acquisition capabilities, and crisis management capacity (Lisowska, 2021), which is why a focus on human capital is becoming even more important.

It is also worth highlighting the key role of DEI in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in areas such as gender equality, the reduction of inequalities, and the promotion of decent work and economic growth (Nishii, 2013; World Economic Forum, 2020). DEI practices support the building of responsible, open, and resilient organizations that provide full participation opportunities for all stakeholders and thus implement the principles of social justice and corporate social responsibility (CSR). Organizations increasingly recognize that operating in line with the principles of sustainable

development and CSR is not only a means to improve reputation (Gadomska-Lila, Wasilewicz, 2016), but also a strategy for positioning themselves as attractive employers. CSR, as a response to the challenges of sustainable development, entails acting in accordance with accepted social norms by integrating social, ethical, and environmental initiatives (Jaźwińska, 2016). This can lead to increased competitiveness, stakeholder acceptance, and interest from partners and potential employees (Gadomska-Lila, Wasilewicz, 2016; Jaźwińska, 2016).

The concept of sustainable development is a fundamental determinant of global progress, aimed at improving quality of life and societal well-being in three key areas: economic, environmental, and social. Thus, sustainable competitiveness integrates economic, social, and environmental aspects, and improving activities or products in the context of sustainable development involves adapting and aligning with the external environment through the integration of economic, ecological, and social goals (Gadomska-Lila, Wasilewicz, 2016; Proniewski, Kiełczewski, 2023; Proniewski, Zielińska, 2023). The relationship between DEI strategies and these three dimensions is presented in Figure 1. The very concept of sustainable development is an intergenerational initiative that seeks to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Gadomska-Lila, Wasilewicz, 2016; United Nations, 1987). In this context, managing diversity, equity, and inclusion is becoming an increasingly important component of organizational strategies and a key tool for building a sustainable future (Strzelczak, 2021; Schmidt, 2021; Shore et al., 2011).
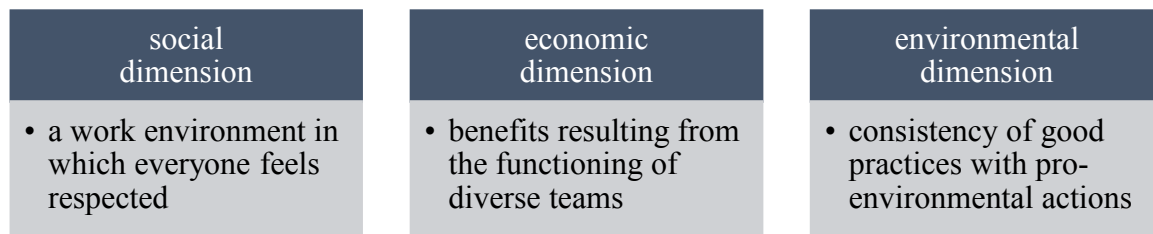
social dimension	economic dimension	environmental dimension
• a work environment in which everyone feels respected	• benefits resulting from the functioning of diverse teams	• consistency of good practices with pro-environmental actions

Figure 1. DEI Strategy in Three Dimensions.
Source: Own elaboration based on: Schwab, 2014, pp. 53-55.

At both the EU and national levels, there are numerous legal regulations supporting DEI, ranging from the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to directives on equal treatment and strategies for gender equality or the inclusion of specific groups (Responsible Business Forum, 2021). Since 2017, EU Directive 2014/95/EU (amending Directive 2013/34/EU) has required large publicly listed companies to disclose information in their annual reports regarding diversity and related policies (Lisowska, 2021; Żaba-Nieroda, 2023). In the absence of such measures, companies must explain why steps have not been taken to create a more diverse work environment, teams, or boards (Lisowska, 2021).

Furthermore, under EU Directive 2023/970, starting in 2026, employers with more than 100 employees will be required to ensure pay transparency in relation to gender (Lisowska, 2024). However, in 2025, the European Commission announced the so-called Omnibus package, aimed at simplifying and reducing reporting obligations under the CSRD Directive and ESRS standards, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises. As part of these changes, deadlines for mandatory reporting were postponed and the number of required disclosures in the areas of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) issues was reduced (European Commission, 2025).

Although the core obligations related to diversity and inclusion remain in force, the new regulations give organizations greater flexibility in determining which aspects including those related to DEI they consider material from the perspective of so-called double materiality. In practice, this may affect both the scope of data disclosed in this area and the actual actions undertaken by organizations.

2.2. Diversity IN Check

Diversity IN Check is an initiative of the Responsible Business Forum, aimed at analyzing the maturity of employers in Poland in the area of diversity management and building inclusive organizations. This initiative also seeks to support employers in monitoring their own strategies, procedures, and practices in this field. It consists of two main components: an organizational monitoring tool (a questionnaire) and a list of the employers most advanced in diversity and inclusion management in Poland. The Diversity IN Check questionnaire is based on international standards and guidelines (SDGs, ISO 26000, ISO 30415, GRI Standards, OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, ISO 30415:2021 Human Resource Management Diversity and Inclusion), as well as the experience of the Responsible Business Forum gained through the implementation of the Diversity Charter in Poland. The study enables employers to assess the maturity level of their diversity management practices and the inclusiveness of their organizations, while also helping them identify strengths and areas for development. Each employer, regardless of the result obtained, receives an individual report presenting their position in relation to the average and best scores in the study. Diversity IN Check is conducted on an annual basis (FOB, 2025).

3. Methods

The analysis was based on Diversity IN Check (DINC) reports from the years 2021-2024 and the lists of employers most advanced in diversity and inclusion management in Poland (2021-2025). The report from the 2025 edition was not yet available at the time of writing.

The study conducted as part of this initiative is based on a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire includes five areas (Responsible Business Forum, 2024a):

1. Foundations of management – this area analyzes whether respect for diversity is reflected in the mission, vision, and values of the organization. It examines the existence of separate D&I strategies and policies, their thematic scope, and management methods. It also looks at risk management tools and systems related to anti-discrimination and respect for human rights, as well as the declarations made by organizations. This area includes, among others, verification of whether organizations have anti-discrimination, anti-mobbing, and anti-harassment procedures, whether diversity management is directly reported to the board, and whether there are written goals related to diversity management.

2. Employee engagement – this area focuses on activities aimed at engaging employees in the idea of diversity and inclusion. It checks whether organizations conduct internal surveys on equality and diversity, company values, and inclusive culture building. It also analyzes the involvement of top management and executives in promoting diversity policies, and examines the existence of support networks for various employee groups.

3. DEI programs and initiatives – this area examines specific initiatives and programs implemented by organizations to support diversity and inclusion. It reviews solutions that support work-life balance, including childcare and dependent care options, such as remote work opportunities, flexible working hours, and additional caregiver leave. It also assesses the delivery of training in equal treatment and inclusive culture building.

4. Outcome indicators – this area analyzes how the implemented activities translate into specific indicators related to employment, promotions, and salaries of women and men, employment of persons with disabilities, and foreign nationals. It checks data regarding access to training, job tenure, employee retention, and use of parental leave. It also monitors the representation of women in various positions and their salaries in comparison to men.

5. Products and services – introduced in 2024, this area assesses whether the services and products offered by businesses take diversity into account. It evaluates the accessibility of products and services for marginalized groups, particularly persons with disabilities, neurodivergent individuals, and non-heteronormative individuals. It also analyzes whether products are adapted to various needs, such as sensory preferences.

To answer the research questions P1 and P2, document content analysis and comparative analysis were applied both diachronic (2021-2024) and synchronic (within one year, across different types of organizations). Particular attention was paid to how organizations declare and implement DEI policies in the context of sustainable development strategies and whether such activities are treated as part of corporate social responsibility integrated with ESG goals.

The analytical procedure included the following steps:

1. Identifying organizations included in the analysis in each DINC edition.
2. Analyzing the structure of the questionnaires and the weightings assigned to individual areas (based on information from the reports).
3. Qualitative coding of the report content and organizational declarations regarding the integration of DEI with sustainable development goals.
4. Comparing results over time and across organizations to assess the presence of DEI as an integral component of sustainable development and CSR strategies.
5. Drawing analytical conclusions regarding trend changes and the level of institutionalization of the DEI approach in the organizational sector in Poland.

The variation in the areas and their weightings across different editions of the study was taken into account in the comparative analysis. Detailed information on the share of individual areas in the overall score is presented in Table 1.

Table 1.
Share of Individual Areas in DINC Study across Editions

Year	Management Fundamentals	Building engagement	Programs and Activities	Outcome Indicators	Accessibility of Products and Services (formerly: Products and Services)	COVID 19
2021	29%	28%	43%	Not scored		Not scored
2022	27%	28%	45%	Not scored		Not scored
2023	22%	23%	37%	18%		
2024	19%	20%	33%	17%	11%	
2025	Data not yet published	Data not yet published	Data not yet published	Data not yet published	Data not yet published	

Source: Own elaboration based on: Diversity IN Check: Raport 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024.

Methodological variability creates certain challenges in comparing results. However, this trend is also justified by the dynamic development of the DEI concept and the need to respond to emerging issues, as was the case in 2021 and 2022, when a separate COVID-19 area appeared in the report.

4. Results

Between 2021 and 2025, a total of 129 unique organizations participated in the Diversity IN Check study. Nine organizations took part in all five editions (2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025), demonstrating the longest and most consistent commitment to the initiative. Ten organizations participated in four out of five editions, which indicates strong and long-term engagement in diversity management, although they may have joined later or skipped one edition. Another ten organizations took part in three editions, and fifteen organizations

participated in two editions. The largest group, comprising as many as 85 organizations, participated in only one edition of the initiative 39 of which joined in the most recent edition (2025), while 46 participated in one of the earlier editions (2021-2024).

On one hand, this dynamic growth in new participants reflects the increasing interest in the Diversity IN Check initiative and growing awareness of the importance of diversity and inclusion management among Polish employers. On the other hand, the relatively high number of organizations 46 that participated only once suggests the need to implement measures aimed at maintaining long-term engagement.

Moreover, some organizations may have treated their participation in Diversity IN Check as a one-time assessment of their DEI maturity or as an opportunity to explore the topic without intending to engage annually. Nevertheless, given the significant increase in participating organizations in 2025, it will be particularly interesting to observe employer behavior in 2026. That will be the moment to determine whether organizations are continuing their commitment or whether their involvement was a one-time effort. The breakdown of organizational engagement is presented in Table 2.

Table 2.
Organizational Engagement in the Diversity IN Check Initiative

Number of Diversity IN Check editions an organization has participated in	Number of employers most advanced in diversity and inclusion management in Poland
5 editions	9
4 editions	10
3 editions	10
2 editions	15
1 edition	85

Source: Own elaboration based on: Diversity IN Check Responsible Business Forum, https://odpowiedzialnybiznes.pl/diversity-in-check/, 10.07.2025.

Certain insights into the level of engagement of Polish employers can be drawn from the results in specific areas, as presented in Table 3.

Table 3.
Overall Results of the Diversity IN Check Study

Research Area	2021 (Average %)	2022 (Average %)	2023 (Average %)	2024 (Average %)
Overall Score	**60%**	**65%**	**68%**	**64%**
Management Fundamentals	63%	71%	74%	71%
Programs and Activities	56%	57%	59%	59%
Building Engagement	62%	73%	69%	66%
Outcome Indicators	N/A	N/A	76%	75%
Products and Services	N/A	N/A	N/A	40%

Source: Own elaboration based on: Diversity IN Check: Raport 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024.

The overall Diversity IN Check score increased from 60% in 2021 to 68% in 2023, indicating growing maturity in organizations' diversity and inclusion (D&I) management. However, a slight decrease to 64% occurred in 2024, which may be attributed to a larger number of participants and the introduction of a new area: "Products and Services". The "Management

Fundamentals" area steadily grew to 74% in 2023, reaching 71% in 2024, which reflects a high level of formalization of D&I strategies (95-98% of organizations have such documents). The weakest area continues to be "Programs and Activities" (56-59%), indicating an insufficient translation of strategies into concrete initiatives for various groups, including caregivers, migrants, people with disabilities, and LGBT+ individuals. In the "Building Engagement" area, an increase to 73% was observed in 2022, but the indicator dropped to 66% in subsequent years, despite high involvement from executive boards low engagement from middle management remains an issue. Meanwhile, the "Outcome Indicators" area is currently the highest rated (76% in 2023 and 75% in 2024), reflecting the growing importance of measuring and reporting diversity data. The new area "Products and Services" scored only 40% in 2024, highlighting that organizations still take limited account of DEI principles outside the workplace such as in their offerings, communications, or relationships with suppliers.

In attempting to answer the first research question (P1: How and to what extent are DEI policies formally integrated into sustainable development strategies and business goals of Polish organizations?), it should be noted that DEI policies are embedded within the sustainable development strategies of Polish organizations on several levels, indicating their increasing though still incomplete integration.

First, it is important to emphasize that the Diversity IN Check survey is based on international standards and guidelines. These include the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 5, 8, and 10), ISO 26000 (concerning social responsibility, including human rights and labor practices), GRI standards (on diversity and equal opportunity), the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, and ISO 30415 (dedicated to diversity and inclusion). This systematic foundation shows that DEI is treated as part of a broader approach to responsible and sustainable management.

Furthermore, the formal documentation of DEI strategies by organizations in Poland is notable. The vast majority of surveyed organizations have a diversity management strategy and work toward creating an inclusive organizational culture. In the 2021 edition, 96% of organizations had such a strategy 46% in the form of standalone documents and 50% as part of other strategic documents (e.g., codes of ethics, HR policies, CSR or sustainability strategies). Similar results were recorded in subsequent years (96% in 2022, 98% in 2023, 95% in 2024), with a consistent tendency to incorporate DEI into broader strategic documentation.

Next, the connection between DEI objectives and business strategy is worth noting. In 2021, 82% of surveyed organizations included diversity management goals in strategic documents, and in most cases (92%), these goals were aligned with business strategy and subject to monitoring. These figures remained consistently high in following years, with evidence of continued alignment between diversity objectives and the organizations' business strategy (95% in 2022, 83% in 2023, 84% in 2024), underscoring the strategic approach to DEI.

Equally important is the influence on key operational areas. The study analyzed whether respect for diversity is reflected in organizations' mission statements, visions, and values. DEI policies influence key HR processes such as recruitment, remuneration and motivation systems, employee development, and performance evaluations. Organizations clearly declare that their diversity-related activities are aligned with their adopted sustainability strategy.

Creating dedicated positions and teams is also significant. In 2021, 96% of organizations had a separate position, team, or advisory body for diversity management, or these responsibilities were assigned to other departments (e.g., CSR, HR, ethics). Although the percentage of organizations with a separate DEI position/department is lower (30% in 2023, 36% in 2024), the overall assignment of competencies in this area remains high (72% in 2023). In large organizations, the need for a dedicated position or department is emphasized to effectively monitor and communicate the diversity policy.

Turning to the second research question (P2: How do Polish organizations implement specific programs and activities as part of diversity and inclusion management, particularly in supporting groups at risk of exclusion, and what challenges do they face in this process?), it must be noted that the greatest challenge remains the implementation of concrete programs and actions targeted at groups at risk of exclusion.

Although organizations declare the existence of strategies and procedures, the "Programs and Activities" area consistently scores the lowest from 56% in 2021 to 59% in 2023-2024 while other categories exceed 60-70%. The most frequently supported group includes caregivers 85-100% of organizations offer flexible working hours or remote work, and some provide additional paternity leave or subsidies for fathers using parental leave. Nevertheless, support for caregivers of dependent adults and nursery benefits remains marginal.

In the area of disability, as many as 90% of organizations declare workplace accessibility, but the employment rate of people with disabilities remains low (1.4-2%), and accessibility certifications are rare (e.g., 3 organizations out of 77 in 2024). Programs for the LGBT+ community are implemented by approximately 45% of organizations (2024), whereas in 2021, 72% declared no such activities. Age management is more common 85-89% of organizations declare activities in this area, primarily focused on managerial competencies and intergenerational integration. Programs for migrants are still underdeveloped (only 15% in 2021, 60% in 2024), as are initiatives for neurodiverse individuals, although their number is growing (43% of organizations in 2024). Women are covered by numerous developmental and communication initiatives, yet the gender pay gap remains at 85-92%. These data confirm that despite increasing awareness and declarative engagement, actual DEI actions remain selective and unevenly developed depending on the target group.

Polish organizations, despite advancing formalization of diversity and inclusion approaches, still face significant cultural, social, and institutional challenges. Persisting traditional gender roles lead to lower male involvement in caregiving responsibilities, despite the availability of appropriate organizational solutions highlighting deeply rooted perceptions

of women as default caregivers. Difficulties in breaking stereotypes and prejudices are particularly evident in relation to LGBT+ individuals and people with disabilities, limiting the effectiveness of inclusion efforts. A negative public narrative, deepening social divisions, and economic uncertainty present additional barriers to DEI development, especially for smaller entities operating in an unfavorable institutional environment. Moreover, the low level of DEI integration in supply chains and product and service design remains a key area for improvement only 43% of organizations in 2023 and 2024 required suppliers to adhere to diversity standards, and even fewer implemented programs to support diverse suppliers. The new "Products and Services" area, rated the lowest in 2024 among all categories, indicates insufficient inclusion of inclusive perspectives in offered solutions, further confirmed by the lack of internal regulations in 68% of organizations. Therefore, despite growing interest in DEI, the practical implementation of actions targeting the needs of marginalized groups and the integration of these values into operational activities of organizations require further development and systemic support.

5. Discussion

The analysis indicates a growing interest in DEI among Polish organizations, particularly in the formalization of strategies and anti-discrimination policies. In most organizations, diversity management is reflected in internal documents and reported at the executive level. There is also an increasing share of organizations that monitor data disaggregated by gender; at the same time, the analysis of pay disparities remains a key issue (Bierca, Strzelczak, 2023). The representation of women in senior management positions remains limited. The employment rates of people with disabilities and foreign nationals are still low (Responsible Business Forum, 2024a). Practices supporting inclusion and combating stereotypes are implemented unevenly and require further development. Despite clear declarations, organizations face difficulties in implementing actions that translate into real organizational change. Sustainable development and DEI are dynamic and complex concepts reflected in policy, the economy, and society, despite ongoing challenges and differing interpretations. A holistic approach is essential to reconcile often conflicting social, economic, and environmental objectives (Proniewski, Kiełczewski, 2023; Horn, 2019).

At the same time, there is growing awareness that DEI is not only an ethical obligation but also a strategic element that supports innovation and competitive advantage. Demographically and socially diverse teams demonstrate greater creativity, which may contribute to market success (Ciuk et al., 2022). Further actions are needed, particularly in the areas of implementation, impact measurement, and inclusion of new dimensions of diversity. DEI should be permanently embedded in the organization's sustainable development strategy.

Despite the existing legal framework and growing awareness, diversity management in Poland remains a significant challenge (Lisowska, 2021). Research shows that progress in this area over the past decade has been unsatisfactory, both in terms of the number of entities declaring openness to diversity and the quality of actions undertaken (Lisowska, 2021).

Among the key barriers hindering the implementation of DEI actions are: lack of stakeholder interest, legal regulations, competitive pressure within the sector, and lack of demand for products or declining profits (Jaźwińska, 2016). In the Polish context, workplace diversity is often reduced in practice to gender and age, while aspects such as race, religion, or nationality are less frequently addressed (Lisowska, 2021). Another problem is the lack of understanding or insufficient integration of the essence of the sustainable development concept within organizational strategies, which can lead to decreased effectiveness and hinder growth (Jaźwińska, 2016).

6. Summary

In successive editions of the Diversity IN Check study, a growing interest in diversity and inclusion management among organizations has been observed, reflected in the systematic increase in the number of participating organizations—from 46 entities in 2021 to 104 in 2025. Despite this positive trend, the participant structure remains dominated by large organizations and signatories of the Diversity Charter, which may indicate limited representation of smaller organizations or those outside formal structures promoting DEI. The most frequently represented sectors are services, trade, transport, banking, the financial and insurance sector, as well as consumer goods and pharmaceuticals, which may suggest greater sensitivity of these sectors to social and reputational issues. An interesting development is the participation of the first two universities in the 2025 edition. While there is observable progress in implementing diversity policies, significant disparities in the level of advancement of DEI activities are also evident. Even among organizations declaring openness and engagement, there remain substantial gaps that require further development and deeper integration of diversity values into organizational strategies.

The findings of the study lead to several recommendations. Of key importance is the stronger linkage of DEI initiatives with measurable organizational outcomes, as well as the development of systems for monitoring their effects. Particular attention should be directed to areas that have so far remained marginalized, such as support for persons with disabilities, the LGBT+ community, migrants, and caregivers of dependent adults. It is also essential to integrate the DEI perspective into product and service design and into supply chains, as well as to strengthen the engagement of middle management.

At the same time, it should be emphasized that the research presented in this article has certain limitations. Relying exclusively on secondary data from DINC reports and the list of the most advanced employers restricts the ability to fully capture practices implemented in smaller and less formalized organizations. The variability of methodologies across successive editions further complicates longitudinal comparisons and calls for caution in interpreting trends. In this context, future research should be expanded to include case studies and qualitative interviews, as well as focus on SMEs and public institutions, in order to better capture the diversity of the Polish market and to identify the factors that foster the effective implementation of DEI strategies.

Acknowledgements

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