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# *Diversity and Inclusion in Romanian Organisations*

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**Abstract:** *Where do corporations stand when it comes to diversity and inclusion? Unfortunately, Romania lacks information not only on diversity and inclusion, but also on how corporations act towards implementing and promoting these new concepts within the workplace. This paper aims to provide an overview on how diversity and inclusion are perceived in Romania, and how companies respond to the needs and concerns of modern society regarding diversity and inclusion. This research highlights that Romanian companies struggle with implementing and promoting diversity and inclusion activities and processes due to employees' rigid mentality, which resists any changes coming from such initiatives. Experts state that Romanian organisations are still in an incipient stage, and taking a step forward means taking risks, which companies do not want to be responsible for. Even so, the increasing demand for diverse and inclusive workplaces lead organisations to allocate more and more resources and acknowledge that they must adapt to fulfill society's expectations. This paper addresses not only people who wish to gain a better understanding of the current status of diversity and inclusion on the Romanian market, but also specialists looking for up-to-date information on how diversity and inclusion are perceived in 2024 by corporations and employees, in order to get insights on what needs to be remodelled in the current business strategy.*

**Keywords:** *diversity, inclusion, communication, processes, diversity and inclusion strategy, D&I, Romanian organisations, mentality*

## **1. Introduction**

Modern society is continuously evolving. Given their strategic position in society, along with their economic, social, and ethical responsibilities, organisations must adapt to current social expectations to maintain a positive public reputation.

In Romania, organisations have begun to embrace the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and demonstrate their commitment to functioning as responsible corporate entities within society. However, the current state of diversity and inclusion in Romania remains an area of concern.

Over recent years, the workforce in Romania has become increasingly diverse, influenced by factors such as mass immigration resulting from political unrest in Europe and Eastern Asia, as well as a growing number of individuals openly declaring their sexual orientation or gender identity. These developments are reshaping the workforce landscape and directly impacting organisations operating in the local market. Furthermore, societal changes extend beyond these factors, as citizens adopt new personal values, principles, and beliefs.

Each organisation possesses its own values that reflect its business and corporate environment. Recently, there has been a shift in these values to align not only with corporate standards but also with social expectations. This shift results in new responsibilities, as public expectations now require corporations to go beyond superficial changes.

A practical approach is necessary, one that reflects societal values through initiatives, processes, and activities with tangible impacts. Consequently, organisations are expected to be seen as advocates for diversity and inclusion through their corporate culture, internal processes, and external activities. Diversity and inclusion, like CSR, have transitioned from being voluntary commitments to essential mandates influenced by societal expectations. Many organisations have begun

signing the Romanian Diversity Charter, publicly committing to supporting, protecting, and promoting diversity within the corporate framework.

This study aims to investigate how organisations in Romania perceive diversity and inclusion, highlighting the challenges faced in a society characterised by limited expertise in these areas and a division between those resistant to change and communities advocating for it. Moreover, this research provides factual data that may assist specialists seeking to better understand the implementation and promotion of diversity and inclusion strategies within Romania's local market.

## **2. Research Methods**

The research employed three methods: content analysis, interview sessions, and an assessment form, each addressing different components of the study.

### **Content Analysis**

The Romanian Diversity Charter has over 200 signatories, including multinationals, public institutions, embassies, and universities. From this list, five well-known corporations in software development were selected for analysis: Accenture, Vitesco Technologies, Luxoft, Yazaki, and FEV. The extent of their commitment to promoting diversity was evaluated through their public communications on their websites and social media, specifically focusing on their activities on LinkedIn as the primary platform connecting them with the public.

### **Interview Sessions**

Interviews served as a valuable research method, facilitating the collection of key insights on diversity and inclusion from industry experts with over 15 years of experience. A strategic selection of ten questions covered aspects such as adaptability, challenges, and online visibility in relation to diversity and inclusion. Interviews were

conducted with five specialists across Human Resources, Marketing, and Communications from various sectors, including engineering, retail, consulting, and marketing. The aim was to gain a deeper understanding of how these concepts are perceived across different fields.

### **Assessment Form**

The assessment form was designed to reach additional experts, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the efforts organisations are making towards diversity and inclusion, their current standing regarding internal implementation processes, and any challenges faced. The form was distributed to specialists in Human Resources, Marketing, Employer Branding, Corporate Social Responsibility, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DE&I), and Communication. Responses were collected from 21 specialists aged 21 and above, employed at medium to large companies with varying experience in the field.

The assessment form contained 24 questions, including socio-demographic inquiries, primarily focusing on diversity and inclusion within the respondents' organisations.

### **3. Results**

Organisations in Romania are still in the early stages of promoting diversity and inclusion, both internally and externally. These concepts can often stir controversy, leading corporations to remain within their comfort zones rather than taking bold steps to enhance their visibility in this area.

Nonetheless, the outcomes of the few companies investing in diversity and inclusion initiatives frequently do not meet expectations, primarily because social media algorithms prioritise content that engages the audience, and topics related to diversity often fail to capture interest.

Some organisations focus on external visibility, while others take a more gradual approach, beginning with internal efforts directed at their employees. Despite ongoing attempts to embed diversity and inclusion within organisational culture, many employees do not perceive their workplace as being genuinely diverse and inclusive. Consequently, organisations may inadvertently project an impression of enforcing change rather than fostering authentic engagement with diversity and inclusion initiatives. Additionally, implementing a truly diverse and inclusive culture presents challenges due to the rigidity of some employees' mindsets, a lingering effect of Romania's past communist regime.

Unfortunately, educating employees about the benefits of diversity and inclusion requires substantial time and resources. When communicating diversity and inclusion initiatives, experts emphasise several key aspects: messages must be professional yet respectful towards minorities; they should reflect the organisation's acceptance of individual differences as valuable contributions to its culture; they must promote freedom of expression, and overall communication must convey a zero-tolerance policy against any form of discrimination.

At present, organisations find themselves in a challenging position. The lack of specialists with expertise in diversity and inclusion is a significant factor contributing to the hesitance to adopt new approaches; a dedicated specialist could provide guidance on best practices in this area. Nonetheless, organisations are perceptive and recognise opportunities as they arise. While many do not allocate a dedicated annual budget for diversity and inclusion programmes, they do not overlook potential investments, making ad-hoc decisions to maintain their status until a specialist is brought on board to lead the initiative.

The transition towards a diverse and inclusive workplace can be a positive experience for employees if companies actively listen to their needs and concerns and include them in decision-making processes by seeking feedback that highlights areas for improvement, thereby embracing a range of perspectives.

#### **4. Conclusions**

This study has offered valuable insights into the dynamics of diversity and inclusion as integral components of corporate strategy. Due to their relative novelty within Romanian culture, these concepts require further examination. The challenges organisations face are not indicative of an inability to progress; rather, they underscore a need for better comprehension of employee and public expectations in a rapidly evolving environment. Effecting change necessitates a period of acknowledgment and adaptation to the benefits that diversity and inclusion can bring to a thriving workplace.

Today, discussions surrounding diversity and inclusion often overlook the complexities involved. Organisations must adapt to the myriad aspects of diversity and inclusion, but this requires thorough preparation and a foundational approach.

#### **Webography**

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