

Diversity and inclusion : What are we talking about?

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Introduction

For the past twenty to thirty years, in Europe, many employers have been implementing actions to promote a more inclusive and respectful working environment. These organisations – private, public and academic – seek to:

- Avert the risk of discrimination;
- Ensure the health and safety of every team member;
- Attract talent and build loyalty;
- Create the conditions for overall performance.

The plurality of these actions is part of a framework generically called "**diversity and inclusion policies**".

Diversity : what are we talking about?



The term "diversity" originated in the United States and has been widely used since the early 2000s, under the drive of public authorities and companies. Defining its concept, its origins and its links to non-discrimination or social responsibility is not simple. Depending on the meaning it is given, **diversity covers a heterogeneous reality that will vary from one organisation to another**: depending on the target populations (women, people with an immigrant background, young people, seniors, people with disabilities, etc.), objectives (professional equality, equal opportunities, diversity, non-discrimination, etc.) or markers of individual identity such as religious affiliation or sexual orientation.

Diversity: the managers' outlook

According to a study conducted by AFMD and Numeum in 2022

- **74% of managers consider their teams to be "diverse"** even if they do not always agree on what "diversity" is. Most managers refer to "the diversity of profiles and skills", whereas the notion of diversity makes it possible to reason in terms of objectives and the prevention of discrimination.
- **Women are less likely than men to list gender as a component of the diversity** of their team.
- **For more than half (55%), managing a diverse team is not more demanding**; On the other hand, for 18% of them, it calls for adjustment and equity.
- **The differences in perception are greater when comparing generations.**

What is inclusion?



Inclusion is a complex concept made up of five pillars:

- ✓ **Equity**, which generates a strong sense of justice;
- ✓ **The implementation of intersectional actions**, which include all diversities;
- ✓ **A dynamic of integrative cooperation**, going beyond the simple juxtaposition of individuals;
- ✓ **The acknowledgment of all identities**, balancing uniqueness and belonging, and social engagement;
- ✓ **Actions as well as a social climate** that neutralise stereotypes of all kinds.

Inclusion has a direct impact on employees' **sense of belonging**, sense of being heard, and sense of being able to express oneself authentically and safely.

How does this apply to management?

Inclusion is based on respect for the rules of non-discrimination. This means enforcing them, setting an example in all situations and enforcing sanctions when necessary. Otherwise, discrimination will remain the norm and inclusive discourse will have no chance of being listened to.

Managers occupy an important place among the many cogs of inclusion. They are the ones charged to implement the rules coming from above in their teams' daily activities. HR processes set the framework, and managers guarantee its implementation.

References

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