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BEYOND DECLARATIONS: THE REALITY OF INCLUSIVE TRAINING IN POST-SOCIALIST EUROPE

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Abstract: *In recent years, organizations operating across different sectors have been facing increasing demands for socially responsible business practices, which also implies the development of inclusive work environments. In an effort to adapt to these changes, many organizations are introducing diversity-oriented training programs. In this paper, research was based on empirical data and examines whether there are differences between private and public organizations in post-socialist countries regarding the implementation of diversity-oriented training. In addition, the analysis explores whether organizational size acts as a moderating factor in this relationship. Overall, the results indicate a low level of diversity training implementation in both sectors. However, performed non-parametric analysis indicates greater engagement and proactivity of organizations operating in the private sector, compared to organizations from the public sector, while the applied hierarchical linear regression showed that the size of the organization does not have a statistically significant moderating effect. The findings suggest that, in the context of developing inclusive and socially responsible human resource management practices, institutional logic is more important than organizational capacities. In addition to presenting the results of the empirical analysis, this paper also provides insights into how diversity-oriented training contributes to organizational adaptability and employee development.*

Keywords: *diversity-oriented training; human resources; inclusive HRM; social sustainability; post-socialist countries*

JEL Classification: *M53, M14*

INTRODUCTION

Today, many organizations are exposed to growing pressures to align their operations with the principles of social responsibility and global sustainability goals. In this context, organizations are increasingly investing in the development of inclusive

work environments, with diversity training becoming an integral component of contemporary human resource management (HRM). Diversity training programs can be described as planned learning activities aimed at increasing awareness of individual differences, reducing prejudice and discriminatory behavioral patterns, and developing the competencies necessary for effective collaboration in diverse work settings (Ehrke, Ashoe, Steffens, & Louvet, 2020). Therefore, it can be concluded that such training programs serve both to raise awareness of diversity and to enhance employees' specific skills (Ferdman, 1996; Bezrukova, Jehn, & Spell, 2012), while prior research indicates that the integration of these two elements produces stronger and more enduring effects (Bezrukova, Spell, Perry, & Jehn, 2016). Aust, Cooke, Müller-Camen, and Wood (2024), as well as Campos-García, Alonso-Muñoz, González-Sánchez, and Medina-Salgado (2024), emphasize that these initiatives should not be viewed solely through an ethical lens, but also as a strategic instrument for improving environmental, social, and governance (ESG) performance and advancing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

Despite the growing importance of such initiatives and practices in the global discourse, it should be emphasized that sustainable HRM practices, including diversity training, are unevenly represented across organizations, sectors, and even national contexts. These observed differences can be attributed to variations in managerial traditions, organizational cultures, and national cultures (Čutura & Jerković, 2020). The extent to which organizations engage in socially responsible initiatives and practices depends on managers' perceptions of their relevance, as well as on prevailing institutional logics and organizational capacities. For example, public sector organizations often operate under conditions of bureaucratic inertia, political oversight, and fragmented governance systems (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017). Such institutional logic contributes to formal and declarative support for inclusive principles, but not to their operationalization in everyday practice. In contrast, organizations in the private sector, particularly those operating in a competitive environment, view diversity as one of the strategic instruments that contributes to their legitimacy, fosters innovation and facilitates talent attraction (Barney, 1991). These patterns indicate the need for theoretical and empirical consideration of sectoral affiliation as one of the factors influencing the application of diversity-oriented HRM practices.

The literature still offers a limited understanding of these sectoral patterns in the post-socialist context, where specific institutional and cultural legacies continue to have a strong influence on organizational behavior. In this sense, post-socialist European countries represent a particularly relevant research context, because transitional processes have led to the formation of hybrid forms of HRM practices in the private sector, while in the public sector employee management patterns are still strongly influenced by politicization (Zolak Poljašević, Gričnik and Šarotar Žižek, 2025). Numerous authors (Fylling, Baciú and Breimo, 2020; Bartlett, Puratic and Sarajlić, 2024; Husar Holmes, Elias and D'Agostino, 2023) observe that most of these countries are formally committed to the development of inclusive work environments, but that the actual application of such activities is usually limited, uneven or symbolic. Examining the role of sectoral affiliation in shaping and implementing diversity training within this specific context may therefore contribute to a deeper understanding of the institutional constraints that affect their application.

This paper examines whether sectoral affiliation (public versus private sector) influences the implementation of diversity training programs in post-socialist European organizations. In addition, it analyzes whether organizational size, as an indicator of structural and organizational capacity, serves as a moderating factor in this relationship. Although previous research indicates that larger organizations are more inclined to adopt progressive HRM practices (Wyatt-Nichol and Antwi-Boasiako, 2012), the interrelationship between size and sector remains insufficiently explored, especially in the post-socialist context. Accordingly, this paper aims to answer the following research question: how do specific institutional logics, which are present in the private and public sector, influence the implementation of diversity training in post-socialist organizations, and to what extent does organizational size influence this relationship?

The paper presents the results of an empirical data analysis based on the CRANET survey. Appropriate statistical methods were applied, including nonparametric testing and hierarchical linear regression. To measure the level of engagement in the implementation of diversity training, a composite scale encompassing eight key dimensions of diversity was used. This paper contributes to the literature on sustainable HRM by highlighting differences in the implementation of diversity training between the public and private sectors. The analysis demonstrates that the degree of their application depends on the institutional environment in which organizations operate. By focusing on post-socialist countries, which are often underrepresented in global diversity debates, the study enhances understanding of the challenges and constraints organizations face in developing inclusive HR practices.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. The next section presents the theoretical framework and formulates the research hypotheses. This is followed by a description of the methodology and a presentation of the key empirical findings. The paper concludes with a discussion of the results, conclusions, limitations, and directions for future research.

LITERATURE OVERVIEW

Diversity training represents planned organizational activities, that are aimed at managing individual and group differences among employees. These differences include gender, ethnicity, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, and related socio-demographic characteristics of the employees. Such training intends to reduce prejudice and discriminatory behavior, promote equal opportunities for all employee groups, and develop the competencies necessary for effective collaboration in diverse work environments. Diversity training constitutes an integral component of sustainable HRM. These initiatives and practices are increasingly adopted under the influence of ESG frameworks and global sustainability goals (Aust, Cooke, Muller-Camen i Wood, 2024; Campos-García, Alonso-Muñoz, González-Sánchez i Medina-Salgado, 2024).

Contemporary research indicates that such initiatives are not implemented solely under the influence of ethical principles, but also driven by organizational interests. Specifically, existing studies show that inclusive and socially responsible human resource management practices contribute to organizational resilience, performance, and competitiveness in the labor market (Abad & Wynn, 2022; Duchek, Raetzke, & Scheuch, 2020; Okatta, Ajayi, & Olawale, 2024). In this sense, diversity training links standards of fairness, inclusion, and social responsibility with organizational develop-

ment.

Diversity training is not only an instrument of sustainable human resource management, but rather a strategic tool (Aust, 2024) that fosters organizational sustainability and adaptability (Sult, Wobst, & Lueg, 2024; Bilderback, 2024). In the case when such training programs are developed with an explicit focus on inclusivity, they extend beyond individual competence development and at the same time promote issues of fairness and equitable participation among different employee groups (Adegbite, 2024; Kuknor & Kumar, 2024). This approach to HR development underscores the importance of socially responsible and ethical organizational behavior, especially in contexts characterized by pronounced inequalities or the underrepresentation of certain social groups (Folbre, 2012; Trofimov & Baawi, 2020). Diversity training also contributes to raising awareness of bias and strengthening inclusive leadership (McGuire & Bagher, 2010). Empirical studies further associate these initiatives with enhanced mutual respect, psychological safety, and team-level innovation (Shore et al., 2011), while at the organizational level they contribute to the reinforcement of organizational legitimacy (Aust, Cooke, Müller-Camen, & Wood, 2024).

It should be emphasized that the real effect of such training programs largely depends on institutional support, which implies their permanent inclusion in formal policies and organizational practices. Without institutional support, the effects of diversity-oriented initiatives are usually short-term and symbolic, with no real impact on behaviors, decisions and relationships within the organization (Dobbin and Kalev, 2018; Dasborough, 2025). In the literature, this kind of exclusively declarative support for diversity programs is described by the term “diversity washing” (Baker, Larcker, McClure, Saraph and Watts, 2024; Beckert and Koch, 2025).

In addition, prior research highlights the importance of factors such as leadership commitment, alignment between diversity initiatives and existing organizational policies, structures, and governance mechanisms, as well as the systematic evaluation of their effects over time (Nishii & Mayer, 2009; Devine & Ash, 2022; Bezrukova, Jehn, & Spell, 2012). The outcomes of diversity programs also vary depending on the institutional environment. Organizations operating within clear regulatory frameworks and supportive organizational cultures tend to achieve more substantive results than those constrained by institutional inertia or formalistic approaches to HRM (Dobbin & Kalev, 2018; Cocchiara, Connerley, & Bell, 2010). Real progress in inclusive HR development can be achieved only through continuous learning processes supported by top management (Nishii, 2013; Roberson, 2006; Fujimoto & Härtel, 2017) and embedded within existing HRM practices. As can be concluded from the previous literature review, this topic received considerable academic attention, but still remains relatively underexplored within the post-socialist context.

Post-socialist countries represent a specific institutional framework for analyzing the processes discussed above. In these countries, the practices of sustainable HRM remain underdeveloped, and progress largely depends on the attitudes and support of the management, as well as on the available organizational capacities (Brajković, 2018; Serafini, Wood and Szam, 2020). The still present legacy of centralized control and the often ambivalent approach to diversity further hinder the diffusion of inclusive HRM practices (Chepurensko & Szanyi, 2021; Serafini, Wood, & Szam, 2020).

Training activities are primarily oriented toward the acquisition of technical competencies required for effective job performance, while competencies related to communication, collaboration, and interpersonal relations tend to receive less attention (Kupets, 2018; Chankseliani & Silova, 2018). This observation also applies to diversity training. Limited resources, weak coordination, and insufficient financial capacity are among the most frequently cited reasons for the low prevalence of inclusive HRM practices. Unfortunately, this issue does not represent an isolated organizational problem, but rather reflects broader institutional constraints (Doh, Rodrigues, Saka-Helmhout, & Makhija, 2017; Bartlett, Purać, & Sarajlić, 2024).

In Western Balkan countries, inclusion policies have been formally adopted as part of the European integration process; however, their practical implementation is largely symbolic (Milovanovitch, Simić, Smak, & Bacher, 2022). The understanding of diversity is further burdened by ethno-nationalist narratives and entrenched social resistance to pluralism (Glorius, 2020; Boduszyński, 2010). As a result, existing structural inequalities are strengthened, and access to developmental opportunities for marginalized groups becomes increasingly constrained (Kulić, 2024; Ivlevs & Veliziotis, 2018). Nevertheless, some studies indicate that the processes of European integration, donor initiatives and multinational networks contribute to the spread of inclusive HRM practices within the post-socialist context (Bartlett, Puratic and Sarajlić, 2024; Poór et al., 2020).

The level of organizational engagement in diversity-oriented initiatives, including training programs, is further shaped by ownership structure, which influences resource availability, accountability patterns, and the degree of managerial autonomy (Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury, 2012). This sectoral differentiation is particularly pronounced in the post-socialist context. Public sector organizations operate under conditions of procedural rigidity, political influence, and, in many cases, chronic resource constraints. Given the very limited level of managerial autonomy in the public sector, such institutional conditions tend to encourage the development of a formalistic approach to human resource management (Lapuente & Suzuki, 2020; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017; Meyer-Sahling, 2009). As a consequence, diversity initiatives and programs in the public sector often assume a largely symbolic character and are further constrained by modest budgets and the socio-political sensitivity of diversity-related issues (Dobbin & Kalev, 2018; Husar Holmes, Elias, & D'Agostino, 2023).

On the other hand, organizations that operate in the private sector are significantly more exposed to competition, both on the market of products and services, and also on the labor market. Some of these organizations recognize diversity initiatives and training programs as strategic tools. They acknowledge that diversity training can contribute to higher employee engagement, innovation, and market adaptability (Roberson, 2006; Roberson, Moore, & Bell, 2024; Shore, Cleveland, & Sanchez, 2018; Jentjens, Georgiadou, & Hennekam, 2025). This strategic orientation differs substantially from the normative-administrative and politically constrained nature of HRM in public institutions. Regardless of the view of some authors, who argue that even in the private sector, programs focused on diversity are more driven by ESG compliance requirements than by real readiness for change (Ahmed, 2012; Meyer and Peng, 2016), it can be expected that diversity training is more prevalent in private organizations, even within the post-socialist context. Based on the previous analysis of sectoral differences, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H1: Compared to public sector organizations, private sector organizations implement diversity-oriented training and development programs to a greater extent.

In addition to the ownership structure, the size of the organization can also influence the application of inclusive HRM practices. Larger organizations typically have more developed HR structures, greater financial resources for HR programs, and higher public visibility. These factors increase both their capacity and their motivation to develop and implement diversity-oriented initiatives (Cox, 1993; Barney, 1991; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Forcadell & Elisa, 2022). From a resource-based perspective, larger organizations are better positioned to design and sustain such initiatives and programs, including diversity training (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967). In line with these arguments, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Organizational size positively moderates the relationship between sectoral affiliation and the implementation of diversity training.

The formulated hypotheses provide the foundation for the empirical analysis, which is presented in the subsequent section.

METHODOLOGY AND EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

In this paper, a cross-sectional research design was applied in order to examine the prevalence of diversity training across different organizational settings. As already elaborated in the previous segments of the paper, such HRM practices are relevant for the improvement of the social responsibility of the organization, are therefore increasingly linked to ESG performance and the Sustainable Development Goals. In this research, diversity training is viewed as an instrument of sustainable HRM, aimed both at raising awareness of diversity and at developing employees' specific skills. In this way, the research contributes to a better understanding of how HR development can support the creation of socially responsible work environments.

The main objective of the study is to assess the extent to which diversity-oriented training programs are implemented in the public and private sectors and to examine how organizational size moderates this relationship. In this context, diversity training is conceptualized as a signal of organizational readiness to ensure greater representation and equal participation of marginalized or underrepresented groups within organizational processes. The prevalence of diversity training programs thus also reflects a broader organizational commitment to diversity-related issues. Unlike purely declarative policies, diversity training programs require tangible investments, organizational support, and active leadership involvement. Their presence may therefore be considered a relevant indicator of genuine institutional commitment to diversity. Such analytical approach provides a foundation for understanding how institutional and organizational conditions shape sustainable HRM practices in the post-socialist context.

The data used in this research were drawn from the international CRANET project (Cranfield Network of International Human Resource Management), which conducts standardized surveys of HRM practices across several dozen countries worldwide. The CRANET survey is carried out cyclically at multi-year intervals and is based on a unified research methodology that enables systematic comparison of HRM practices across countries, as well as across different institutional and organizational contexts (Zolak Poljašević & Berber, 2024; Zolak Poljašević, Berber, & Došenović Milaković, 2025). For the purposes of this analysis, data from the most recent survey

wave (2021–2022) were used, comprising a sample of 1,118 organizations from 11 post-socialist European countries.

According to the CRANET methodology, the survey includes organizations with more than 100 employees, and respondents are HR professionals or individuals responsible for human resource management within their organizations. The analysis in this study includes only organizations operating in the public or private sector, while organizations classified as mixed, non-governmental, or non-profit were excluded from the sample. The final sample consisted of 75% private sector organizations and 25% public sector organizations.

A composite measure called the Inclusive Training Scale (ITS) was used to measure the degree of representation of training programs focused on diversity. This scale was used to identify training and development programs targeted at underrepresented or marginalized employee groups. Respondents indicated whether their organization offered training or career development programs aimed at promoting diversity for eight target groups: ethnic minorities, older employees (50+), persons with disabilities, women, immigrants, refugees, young workers (under 25 years of age), and LGBTQ+ individuals. The internal consistency of the eight binary items was checked using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, and the obtained result ($\alpha = 0.792$) confirms the good reliability of the scale and justifies their unification into a single measure. Accordingly, the ITS was constructed by summing the binary responses (range: 0–8), where higher values indicate that an organization's diversity programs encompass a broader range of underrepresented employee groups. Conceptually, this scale reflects the degree to which organizations invest in diversity-related initiatives and their overall orientation toward socially responsible HRM practices.

Sectoral affiliation (private versus public sector) constitutes the independent variable in this research. It was operationalized as a binary variable (0 = public sector, 1 = private sector). This coding scheme also reflects a theoretically grounded expectation that private sector organizations are more strongly oriented toward diversity-related practices, as they operate under greater market pressures and enjoy higher levels of managerial autonomy. This assumption is consistent with institutional and contingency theories, which emphasize sector-based differences in HRM practices.

Organizational size was included in the research as a moderating variable. It was measured by the total number of employees. Due to pronounced positive skewness in the original data (Skewness = 13.666; Kurtosis = 239.746), a logarithmic transformation was applied, resulting in a normally distributed variable (LogSize) suitable for regression analysis. Conceptually, organizational size reflects an organization's structural and resource capacities for implementing diversity training, as derived from resource-based theory. On the one hand, larger organizations typically have more developed HR structures and greater availability of resources for HR programs. On the other hand, larger organizations are more visible and subject to stronger expectations from key stakeholders. For these reasons, the inclusion of organizational size as a moderating variable is theoretically justified.

The analytical procedure applied in this research consists of two steps through which the proposed hypotheses are tested. In the first step of the analysis, it was determined whether there is a difference in the degree of application of diversity training between organizations in the private and public sectors. For this purpose, the non-para-

metric Mann-Whitney U test was applied. The choice of a nonparametric test was based on several characteristics of the primary data. First, a substantial imbalance exists in the size of the observed organizational groups. Second, the composite ITS measure has an ordinal nature. Finally, the Shapiro-Wilk test was applied to the primary data and, in the case of the dependent variable, confirmed a significant deviation from normal distribution ($p < 0.001$), accompanied by pronounced positive skewness and kurtosis. Considering these data characteristics, the Mann-Whitney U test was deemed appropriate for testing the first hypothesis.

The second step of the analysis aimed to examine whether organizational size moderates the relationship between sectoral affiliation and the implementation of diversity training. For this purpose, hierarchical linear regression was applied. In Model 1, the ITS was regressed on sector (public = 0; private = 1) and LogSize. In Model 2, an interaction term (Sector $\times$ LogSize) was introduced to test the moderation hypothesis. All continuous variables were mean-centered prior to analysis in order to reduce multicollinearity and facilitate interpretation of the results. Variance Inflation Factors remained below commonly accepted thresholds ($VIF < 2$), indicating no multicollinearity concerns. This analytical approach was therefore considered appropriate for testing the second hypothesis.

All statistical analyzes were performed in the SPSS program (version 27.0), using the standard level of statistical significance $p < 0.05$ for hypothesis testing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the main findings derived from the previously described analytical procedure. The results relate to the observed sectoral differences and the absence of a moderating effect of organizational size on the relationship between sectoral affiliation and the implementation of diversity training programs.

The values of the ITS ranged from 0 (no programs implemented) to 8 (all programs implemented), with a mean value of 1.01 ($SD = 1.65$). It should be noted that the distribution of the data was highly asymmetric (Skewness = 2.028) and strongly leptokurtic (Kurtosis = 4.190), indicating that the majority of organizations in the observed sample implemented either a very limited number or no diversity training programs. This conclusion is further supported by a median value of 0 at the level of the full sample, pointing to an exceptionally low prevalence of diversity training practices in the post-socialist context.

Differences in the distribution of results between sectors were also observed. Public sector organizations exhibited a narrower interquartile range ($IQR = 1$), whereas a wider distribution of values was recorded in the private sector ($IQR = 2$), indicating greater variability in the implementation of diversity training programs among private organizations. To determine whether the observed differences were statistically significant, the Mann-Whitney U test was applied. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 1 and indicate a statistically significant difference in the level of diversity training implementation between public and private sector organizations.

Table 1. Mann–Whitney U test: Sectoral differences in the Inclusive Training Scale

Sector	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Public	279	486.51	135,737.00
Private	839	583.77	489,784.00
Test Statistics ^a			Value
Mann–Whitney U			96,677.000
Wilcoxon W			135,737.000
Z			–4.841
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)			.000

^a. Grouping Variable: Sector

Source: Authors' calculations

Organizations operating in the private sector exhibited a higher mean rank (583.77) compared to public sector organizations (486.51). This result indicates a greater tendency of diversity training implementation in the private sector. The Mann-Whitney U test confirmed the presence of a statistically significant difference between the two sectors ($U = 96,677.000$; $Z = -4.841$; $p < 0.001$), thereby supporting Hypothesis 1. This finding is consistent with theoretical expectations suggesting that private sector organizations are more inclined to adopt diversity-oriented programs due to competitive pressures, the need for market adaptability, and alignment with international standards and business practices. Although the overall prevalence of diversity training programs remains low in both sectors, the existence of a statistically significant sectoral difference underscores the importance of organizational context in shaping sustainable HRM practices.

Following the analytical procedure described above, the subsequent analysis examined whether organizational size moderates the relationship between sectoral affiliation and the implementation of diversity training programs. Hypothesis 2 assumed that the association between private sector affiliation and the extent of diversity training implementation would be stronger in larger organizations. As outlined in the methodology section, this hypothesis was tested using hierarchical linear regression.

In Model 1, the Inclusive Training Scale was regressed on sectoral affiliation and mean-centered organizational size (log-transformed). The model explained a small but statistically significant proportion of variance ($R^2 = 0.016$; $F(2, 1065) = 8.451$; $p < 0.001$). Sectoral affiliation emerged as a statistically significant predictor ($B = 0.472$; $p < 0.001$), whereas organizational size did not demonstrate a significant effect ($B = 0.142$; $p = 0.152$). The inclusion of the interaction term (Sector $\times$ LogSize) in Model 2 did not improve model fit ($\Delta R^2 = 0.001$; $p = 0.410$), indicating the absence of a moderating effect of organizational size. These results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Hierarchical Regression Model Summary for Sector Type and Size Interaction

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.125 ^a	.016	.014	1.669	.016	8.451	2	1065	.000
2	.127 ^b	.016	.013	1.669	.001	.678	1	1064	.410

a. Predictors: (Constant), centeredlogsize, sector

b. Predictors: (Constant), centeredlogsize, sector, interactionlogsize

Source: Authors' calculations

The results presented in Table 3 indicate that sectoral affiliation is a statistically significant predictor in both models ($p < 0.001$), whereas neither organizational size nor the interaction term reached statistical significance. Multicollinearity diagnostics did not reveal any concerns, as all variance inflation factor values remained below the recommended threshold ($VIF < 2$).

Table 3. Coefficients for the Moderating Effect of Organizational Size on the Relationship between Sector and Inclusive Training Scale

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	.729	.106	6.891	.000		
	Private or public	.472	.121	.119	3.905	.000	1.001
	centeredlogsize	.142	.099	.044	1.434	.152	1.001
2	(Constant)	.730	.106	6.893	.000		
	Private or public	.464	.121	.117	3.822	.000	1.008
	centeredlogsize	.082	.123	.025	.668	.504	1.542
	interactionlogsize	.174	.212	.031	.824	.410	1.543

Dependent Variable: Inclusive Training Scale

Source: Authors' calculations

The results of the hierarchical linear regression indicate that Hypothesis 2 was not supported. In this case, organizational size did not have a direct impact on the application of diversity training, nor did it moderate the relationship between its application and sector affiliation. These findings suggest that sectoral affiliation represents a more influential determinant of sustainable HRM practices in the post-socialist context than organizational size. From a conceptual perspective, the results lend support to the greater relevance of institutional factors over organizational capacities, thereby opening space for a broader interpretation of the empirical findings.

The confirmation of Hypothesis 1 highlights the importance of institutional context in shaping diversity-oriented HRM practices. This finding is consistent with theoretical expectations derived from institutional and contingency theories, which emphasize sectoral differences in managerial practices. The results further support the view that competitive pressures and a higher degree of strategic autonomy in the private sector create more favorable conditions for the adoption of such initiatives (Pollitt

& Bouckaert, 2017). Previous research indicates that diversity training is often implemented for reputational purposes in the labor market, to enhance talent attraction, and in response to stakeholder expectations (Jentjens, Georgiadou, & Hennekam, 2025; Roberson, Moore, & Bell, 2006). This pattern is particularly pronounced in multinational companies. Although these motivations do not necessarily lead to substantive changes in organizational values, they partly explain the higher prevalence of diversity training programs in private sector organizations.

In contrast, public sector organizations in the post-socialist context often operate under conditions of rigid administrative procedures, limited managerial autonomy, and pronounced politicization (Meyer-Sahling, 2009; Kopecký, Mair, & Spirova, 2012; Zolak Poljašević, Gričnik, & Šarotar Žižek, 2025). As previously noted, public sector organizations tend to adopt diversity policies in a largely declarative and symbolic manner in response to external pressures, while their practical implementation frequently remains limited (Husar Holmes, Elias, & D'Agostino, 2023). The findings of this study further indicate that sectoral context represents an important factor for understanding organizational behavior (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Ahmed, 2012; Shore, Cleveland, & Sanchez, 2018).

Contrary to expectations, organizational size did not significantly moderate the relationship between sectoral affiliation and the implementation of diversity training in this empirical study. Despite theoretical assumptions grounded in the resource-based view (Barney, 1991; Cox, 1993), the interaction effect proved to be negligible. These findings suggest that, in the post-socialist context, sectoral affiliation, that reflect broader institutional conditions, exerts a stronger influence on organizational behavior in the field of HRM than structural capacities alone (Howard, 2003). This interpretation is consistent with the study by Richard, Roh, and Pieper (2013), who argue that smaller organizations may demonstrate greater openness toward diversity initiatives due to lower levels of bureaucratic inertia and stronger internal alignment. Such results challenge the assumption that larger organizations are inherently better positioned to implement diversity-oriented initiatives and programs.

Overall, the findings of this study assign greater explanatory power to sectoral and institutional factors, indicating that the mere existence of organizational resources is not, in itself, a sufficient condition for the development of sustainable HRM practices.

CONCLUSION

This paper primarily analyzes the differences between the public and private sectors regarding the application of diversity-oriented training programs in post-socialist European countries. In addition, it explores the moderating role of organizational size in the relationship between the observed variables. The findings confirm the existence of a statistically significant difference in the level of diversity training implementation between private and public sector organizations. Although the majority of organizations in the sample implement few or no diversity-oriented training programs, private sector organizations nonetheless demonstrate higher levels of adoption. The results further indicate greater variability in diversity training practices among private organizations. With respect to organizational size, the findings reveal that this moderating variable does not exert a statistically significant effect. From a conceptual

standpoint, the results point to the greater importance of institutional factors compared to structural capacities in shaping diversity-oriented HRM practices.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings presented in this study contribute to the literature on sustainable human resource management. Empirically, the research offers new insights into the post-socialist context. Given that post-socialist countries remain relatively underrepresented in the global discourse on sustainability and diversity-oriented practices, the results enhance understanding of the specific institutional conditions under which such practices emerge.

Post-socialist societies are characterized by the legacy of centralized control and fragmented reform processes. In some countries, attitudes toward diversity remain ambivalent, while in others these issues are further shaped by ethno-nationalist narratives and deeply rooted societal resistance to pluralism. Experiences from Western Balkan countries indicate that formal commitment to diversity policies does not necessarily translate into substantive organizational change. This conclusion applies to both public and private sector organizations. Competitive pressures and the need to align management practices with international standards and ESG frameworks may encourage the formal adoption of diversity-oriented practices, yet they do not inevitably lead to meaningful organizational transformation.

Given that diversity training programs require leadership commitment, organizational support, and tangible investments, their presence can be regarded as a relevant indicator of genuine institutional commitment to diversity-related issues. Therefore, the exceptionally low level of diversity training implementation observed among organizations from 11 post-socialist countries constitutes an important empirical finding and suggests the need for a more substantial shift toward bridging the gap between formal declarations of diversity and their actual organizational enactment.

Despite the contributions outlined above, this study has several limitations. Some of these stem from the CRANET methodology itself. The cross-sectional research design does not allow for the examination of changes in diversity-related practices over time. Since the research is based on self-reported data, the general applicability of the findings is limited, and at the same time there is a risk of socially desirable responding. In addition, the survey instrument used for data collection does not capture qualitative aspects of the observed training programs, such as their content or contextual adaptation, which could reveal more complex patterns of variation. Given the generally low level of diversity training implementation in both sectors, future research should focus on identifying factors that either facilitate or constrain their broader adoption. Future research could involve comparative analyses between post-socialist countries and advanced market economies, which would help clarify whether the patterns identified in this study reflect broader structural dynamics or remain specific to the post-socialist context.

Ultimately, the findings suggest that the development of organizational practices oriented toward sustainability and diversity requires institutional conditions that enable a true transition from words to action.

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