

# Management of an age-diverse workforce in the company

## Управління персоналом компанії різного віку

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**Purpose:** is the issue of managing an age-diverse workforce in a company or enterprise.

**Method:** the article used the method of empirical calculations.

**The results of the study:** during the research it was established that teams are most productive when they are not made up of the same people, people in the team must be able to work together and respect each other, but at the same time, they should represent different qualities, experiences, and skills that will complement each other for the benefit of the whole team.

**Практична цінність дослідження:** Cooperation within age-diverse teams increases the value of group or team IQ. It has been empirically proven that the element which most significantly affects group IQ is not the average IQ of individual group members, but rather the level of their emotional intelligence. The key to a high group IQ is harmony in the relationships of group members, communication skills and receptivity.

**Papertype:** practical.

**Key words:** management, age-diverse workforce, managing teams, discrimination, responsibility.

**Мета роботи:** є питання управління віковою різноманітністю робочої сили в компанії чи підприємстві.

**Метод дослідження:** використаний метод емпіричних розрахунків.

**Результати дослідження:** під час дослідження було встановлено, що команди є найбільш продуктивними, коли вони складаються з різних людей, люди в команді повинні вміти працювати разом і поважати один одного, але в той же час вони повинні представляти різні якості, досвід, а також навички, які доповнюватимуть один одного на благо всієї команди.

**Practical implications:** співпраця в командах різного віку підвищує цінність IQ групи або команди. Було емпірично доведено, що елементом, який найбільше впливає на груповий IQ, є не середній IQ окремих членів групи, а радше рівень їхнього емоційного інтелекту. Ключем до високого групового IQ є гармонія у стосунках членів групи, комунікативні навички та сприйнятливність.

**Тип статті:** практична.

**Ключові слова:** управління, вікова різноманітність робочої сили, управління командами, дискримінація, відповідальність.

## 1. Introduction

Within the introduction, it is also appropriate to open the question whether age-diverse or homogenous work teams appear to be optimal from the point of view of work efficiency, productivity and creativity. It is generally true that although influencing the age structure of the company's staff is quite difficult and may raise suspicions of age discrimination, creating age-diverse or, on the contrary, homogeneous teams is much easier and also more natural. Therefore, the basic theoretical premise of this article is that in terms of achieving work results and creating a positive atmosphere in the workplace, age-diverse teams appear to be the best. Managing them is a real challenge for the management. The opinions of experts will be cited to support this theoretical premise.

Jozef Výrost, Ivan Slaměník and Eva Sollárová et al. note that "... age-diverse work teams work more efficiently and innovatively. If all team members are in their thirties, it is unlikely that they will look for solutions to problems in very different ways... But the life and work experiences of an older colleague can bring a new point of view, and avert or weaken risky actions. In addition, a company that can appreciate and properly use also older employees (that is, it is not inclined to get rid of them by giving notices or suggesting early retirement) can significantly save on costs. With the given person, the expertise remains in the company, in which the company has often invested considerable sums in the past, and older employees can serve as mentors to younger ones.

Moreover, research shows that older workers have a high degree of loyalty to their employer." (Výrost, Slaměník, Sollárová et al., 2019, p. 652).

The idea presented by Jiří Bláha, Andrea Čopíková and Petra Horváthová also fully corresponds to the text cited above, when they emphasize that an age-diverse work team "...not only brings the dynamism of youth, but also takes into account the professional and life experiences of older workers and significantly reduces age discrimination and on the contrary, increases work productivity." (Bláha, Čopíková, Horváthová, 2016, p. 197).

### **The importance of age diversity in the workplace**

At the beginning of the article, it was already mentioned that age-diverse teams seem to be the best in terms of achieving work results and creating a positive atmosphere in the workplace. In support of this basic theoretical basis of the article, it is possible and appropriate to quote the following opinion of Alena Šafrová Drážilová, who tries to look at the investigated issue from the opposite side, while clearly coming to the conclusion that "... teams are most productive when they are not made up of the same people ... With an age-homogeneous team, there is a risk that we will have to deal with a fourth replacement in due to maternity leave or third retirement within half a year. Additionally, we will repeatedly deal with requests to reduce working hours in order to pick up children from kindergarten or every now and then to fill out income certificates for mortgage applications. However, this does not mean that the team should be composed of disparate individuals. Definitely not – people in the team must be able to work together and respect each other, but at the same time they should represent different qualities, experiences and also skills with which they will complement each other for the benefit of the whole." (Šafrová Drážilová, 2019, p. 169).

Přemysl Janíček, Jiří Marek et al. also point out an interesting aspect of the importance of age diversity in the workplace when they talk about the fact that cooperation within age-diverse teams increases the value of group or team IQ. Empirically, according to the aforementioned authors' team, it has been proven that the element that most significantly affects group IQ is not the average IQ of individual group members, but rather the level of their emotional intelligence. The key to a high group IQ is harmony in the relationships of group members, their communication skills and group sensitivity. In such teams, the manifestation and application of cognitive abilities in one or more team members motivates people in the sense that they try to be more active in thinking and acting, so that the final result of the team is better than the sum of the results of individual members, which is the essence of the so-called synergistic effect. (Janíček, Marek et al., 2013, p. 481).

Lenka Kolajová also talks about the synergistic effect in this context, according to which the members of an age-diverse team are connected by certain bonds, they compensate for the possible shortcomings of one team member with the strengths of the other, they enrich each other with their ideas and thoughts, all of which creates new values. The synergistic effect thus definitely increases the success of the team, but it is necessary to emphasize – and Lenka Kolajová does so honestly – that the synergistic effect usually arises only in a well-coordinated team. The way to team maturity is not always easy, and initially its effectiveness may even be lower than the sum of the results of its individual members. Among the basic conditions for effective team synergy are, in particular, cooperation, trust and cohesion across age categories. In this context, we can also talk about group cohesion, i.e. the overall attractiveness of the team both for its members and even for non-members. An age-diverse team, which is at the same time cohesive at the appropriate level, is characterised by more intensive cooperation between individual members, greater resistance to obstacles and pressure from the environment, and on the contrary by lower absenteeism and turnover, also more advanced communication skills within the team, greater openness of its members, and a lower rate of tolerance towards dishonesty, etc. (Kolajová, 2006, p. 44-45).

**Prejudice, stereotypes and discrimination based on age**

Age stereotypes – Hana Urbancová comments – are assumptions about the characteristics of individuals of a certain age group, which usually do not correspond very well to reality, and are usually based only on the age of the respective individual. The aforementioned expert describes how certain prejudices based on age manifest themselves in company practice. The consequence of prejudice against older workers is, for example, the fact that when recruiting new workers, their CVs are discarded based on age alone. Sometimes it even happens that the organisation does not offer further development opportunities to older employees, because they think that this investment is not worth it. Modern technological tools tend to be available only to younger workers. The experience of older employees tends to be neither appreciated nor used. There is also pressure to retire earlier. The consequence of prejudice against younger workers can be the fact that the organisation does not want to hire young women because they have small children or will want to have them in the near future. Organisations can also be negative or dismissive of younger employees' ideas and suggestions. The opinions and ideas of younger workers are ridiculed, their mistakes are exaggerated, etc. (Urbancová, 2021, p. 20-21).

Together with Jan Průcha, however, it is necessary to emphasize in a fundamental way that the fact that someone harbours prejudices against members of a certain social group does not constitute discrimination against them, as discrimination only manifests itself through actual actions. Discrimination, according to the aforementioned expert, refers to negative issues resulting from prejudice. Someone who is under the influence of prejudice may, under certain circumstances, commit discrimination. However, if prejudices are managed to be kept under the control of the company, then they no longer turn into discriminatory acts. However, if there are not sufficient barriers to prejudice in society, then prejudice can manifest itself in discriminatory behaviour, which varies in intensity on a scale ranging from simple social avoidance of members of a certain group up to extremely aggressive acts. (Průcha, 2004, p. 70). In this context, Jakub Tomšej adds that in the Czech Republic, we unfortunately encounter discrimination on the basis of age quite often. (Tomšej, 2020, p. 34).

Andrea Pokorná considers age-based discrimination – or ageism – to be highly dangerous socially. Such discrimination assumes that individual representatives of a certain age group show not only different characteristics, but also different human and social values. However, a clear definition of ageism still does not exist, which is due, among other things, to the fact that we are dealing with one of the most complex concepts of both contemporary social and political sciences and social psychological practice. Nevertheless, according to the above-mentioned expert, ageism can be defined as a process of systematic stereotyping and discrimination of people for their age, which is manifested by a very wide spectrum of phenomena, such as avoiding contact with individuals of a certain age group, open aversion towards them, etc. In essence, ageism is a shared belief about the qualitative inequality of the individual phases of the human life cycle, which in practical life can manifest itself in all kinds of discrimination on the basis of chronological age or the individual's belonging to a certain generation. Within ageism, one can further distinguish, for example, so-called 'youthism', which is discrimination against young individuals, or, on the contrary, 'adulthoodism', which in turn is discrimination against adults. The term ageism in the narrower sense of the word can be used to refer to discrimination against older individuals. (Pokorná, 2010, p. 69-70).

**Managing an age-diverse workforce*****Diversity management***

Diversity management – Jan Průcha and Jaroslav Veteška point out – represents a very important part of the human resources management strategy. In corporate practice, it is a planning process for organising, managing and supporting a mix of social diversity. The basic principle of diversity management is the fact that successful individuals do not form a homogeneous but a heterogeneous group, as they include men and women, young and older workers, people of

different ethnic origin, skin colour, religion or the absence of it, different sexual orientations, etc. Creating a diverse environment in companies, according to the aforementioned pair of authors, positively affects employee satisfaction and is considered a strategic advantage of organisations. Creating diverse work teams and respecting this personal, social and cultural diversity leads to effective and successful performance of work tasks and activities. However, diversity management is also a communication, even a management process oriented towards the future and the ability to use the potential of differences between people for more intensive development of the company. (Průcha, Veteška, 2012, p. 76 – 77).

Jaroslav Nenadál et al. add to the above that diversity management can be characterised as the active and conscious creation of a strategic, strongly value-oriented, future-oriented communication and management process, which consists in the acceptance and use of differences and similarities between people as potential driving forces of the organisation and creating added value. Diversity management is thus a phenomenon superior to the simple concept of equal opportunities, because it mostly refers only to the observance of legal norms trying to prevent the disadvantage of certain groups of the population. The aim of diversity management is to expand the insufficient number of human resources and to enrich them in companies by using groups of workers that were usually neglected before. Mothers of small children or people suffering from mental disabilities are one of such groups. (Nenadál et al., 2018, p. 212 – 213).

And it is precisely the mothers of young children who – as a specific and disadvantaged group of workers in their own way – show that diversity management should be quite close to age management as well. The needs of employed mothers with children certainly represent a challenge, in the solution of which the approaches of age and diversity management must be intertwined.

However, Eva Kislingerová et al. point to the complications and complexity of implementing diversity management. Because it is not possible to simply declare optimistic attitudes or positive management approaches, but above all it is necessary to create such an internal psychological and social environment and culture of the organisation that minimises risks and maximizes positive effects. Diversity management means organising and managing heterogeneity and using it to the benefit of the company. It is necessary to realize that diversity alone does not imply any value. In addition, heterogeneous teams are more difficult to manage than homogeneous teams, in which cooperation and coexistence are possible without serious mistakes or misunderstandings resulting from the diversity of people. Heterogeneous organisations are much more demanding on the social competence of managers, however, if they are well organised and led by really competent managers, then they really achieve better results than homogeneous ones, which is a significant finding. (Kislingerová et al., 2008, p. 175 – 176).

### **Age management**

The term 'age management' – as Libuše Čeledová, Rostislav Čevela and Zdeněk Kalvach summarise – is used to denote the management of workers with regard to their age in the context of abilities and potential. Age management touches on such topics as age discrimination, the employment of older generations of workers, especially those for whom the label 50+ is used, leaving jobs, the social responsibility of companies, more generally the aging of the population, etc. Age management relates to company strategies in the field of employment of older people, to age diversity, work-life balance, alternative work schedules, health and lifestyle of older workers, intergenerational transfer of knowledge in the company and, in this context, to talent management, succession in the company hierarchy, etc. A fair age management, however, must also include the support for young workers and their families, combining working life with family life and childcare, for example through appropriate adjustment of working hours, often in cooperation with older workers. The concept of age management is also based on the creation of conditions for the employment of older people, as well as for the support of lifelong learning, the overall improvement of people's quality of life and a multilaterally beneficial intergenerational dialogue. (Čeledová,

Kalvach, Čevela, 2016, p. 87 – 88).

It is necessary to highlight several essential aspects from the above text. This is primarily a focus of age management not only on older workers – which would be an inadmissible simplification of age management and a misunderstanding of its essence – and therefore its extension to the needs of younger workers, and at the same time a more general emphasis on the harmonisation of work life on the one side and family life on the other, which is important especially for younger workers with small children. Nevertheless, it is unfortunately a fact that most authors of professional age management literature focus primarily on older workers. However, it is beyond any doubt that, in addition to the elderly, members of the younger generations also have their justifiable needs and that it is necessary to pay attention to them.

This applies, for example, to Lucia Depoo, Hana Urbančová and Markéta Šnýdrová, who correctly point out that the main contribution of age management is the possibility of more effective use of the workforce through understanding and perception of the needs, also of the abilities of employees of different age groups and the overall improvement of the quality of human resources in the respective organisation. When implementing age management, it is necessary to work especially with the experience and knowledge potential of all employees of the company, while any discrimination based on age is completely unacceptable. The measures implemented as part of age management should then be part of the company's overall strategy. Among the typical measures of age management according to the mentioned three authors are: workforce planning according to age diversity; special forms of selection and recruitment of employees for different age groups; placement of workers to appropriate job positions; adaptation of the work program, e.g. by adjusting the work environment or working hours; the possibility of personal and also career development for all age groups; skill growth at every age and then adapted further training of older workers; creating tools supporting intergenerational learning, the development of a number of various health measures and more general safety measures, etc. (Depoo, Urbančová, Šnýdrová, 2020, p. 36).

Renata Kocianová characterises the practice of age management as a measure that combats age barriers and at the same time promotes diversity and such activities that ensure that every employee gets the opportunity to fulfil his/her potential and is not disadvantaged because of his/her age. Age management strategies can be approached in several ways. At the individual level, the strategy should focus on individual workers and should address abilities, health, quality of life, social relationships and the contribution of workers of different ages to the organisation. At the level of work collectives, strategies should be created on the basis of collective dialogue and partnership between trade unions and employers. And finally, at the level of the entire organisation, age management strategies should focus on the task of maintaining skills and a qualified workforce, as well as on knowledge transfer, diverse human resource management practices, etc. (Kocianová, 2011, p. 112 – 113).

## **2. Material and methods**

### **Introduction of companies**

Already at the beginning of this article, it was mentioned that four companies will be presented in the research part, among whose employees a questionnaire survey will be carried out. All enterprises were guaranteed anonymity, so they are referred either by letters: A, B, C, D. In all four cases we are dealing with industrial enterprises. The selection of these organisations was influenced by their willingness to cooperate. In the beginning, many different companies or managers were contacted, but the need to provide sensitive corporate data and talk about their internal environment turned out to be a problematic issue. Only the above-listed organisations agreed to provide relevant data.

In the first case (A) we are dealing with an enterprise of the engineering industry, in the second case (B) with a company in the food industry, and in the third (C) and fourth (D) case with enterprises of the electrical engineering industry. Only the first company – A – is owned by Czech capital, while the other companies are owned by foreign capital. In all four cases, these are prosperous enterprises that are traditionally considered stable employers in the respective regions. In total, they employ thousands of workers.

### **Questionnaire survey methodology**

The aim of the questionnaire survey was to find out what opinions ordinary employees of all the above-listed companies have about the management of an age-diverse workforce. The respondents therefore were ordinary workers in the position of manual labourers in production, while the intention was to obtain exactly 200 respondents, so that approximately 50 respondents would come from each of the enterprises. Another goal was to achieve that half of the respondents were women and therefore – understandably – the other half were men, and at the same time half of each of these groups were female or male respondents under the age of 45 and the other half were those over the age of 45. In the end, it was possible to fully achieve all these objectives. The survey took place between 4th September and 13th October 2022.

All respondents were asked the following questions in the questionnaire:

1. Does your company discriminate against ordinary employees on the basis of age?
2. Have you personally been discriminated against in your company based on your age?
3. Are younger workers preferentially hired for the positions of ordinary employees in your company?
4. Are older workers preferentially hired for the positions of ordinary employees in your company?
5. When hiring a worker in your company, are mothers with small children neglected?
6. Does your company accept new employees?
7. Does your company also employ seniors who are already retired?
8. If there are layoffs, are younger workers preferentially laid off in your company?
9. If there are layoffs, are older workers preferentially laid off in your company?
10. If there are layoffs, are mothers with young children primarily laid off in your company?
11. Are layoffs often in your company?
12. When organising work and managing people, do your superiors take into account the needs of older workers and accommodate them?
13. When organising work and managing people, do your superiors take into account the needs of younger workers and accommodate them?
14. When organising work and managing people, do your superiors take into account the needs of mothers with small children and accommodate them?
15. Are there good interpersonal relationships between employees of different generations among ordinary employees in your company?
16. Does the management of your company organise training for you, ordinary employees, in the area of discrimination based on age, ageism, etc.?

### 3. Results and discussion

#### Evaluation of the questionnaire survey

1. Does your company discriminate against ordinary employees on the basis of age?

	Women under 45	Men under 45	Women over 45	Men over 45
Definitely yes	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Rather yes	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Neutral opinion	12 %	14 %	10 %	14 %
Rather not	18 %	24 %	22 %	20 %
Definitely not	70 %	62 %	68 %	66 %

The distribution of responses to the first item of the questionnaire survey can be interpreted as the fact that there is no discrimination against ordinary employees on the basis of age in the surveyed companies. Between 10% and 14% of the respondents took a neutral position on the question, which may mean that sometimes there occur a certain more controversial case in this regard, however, its seriousness is unlikely to be very significant.

2. Have you personally been discriminated against in your company based on your age?

	Women under 45	Men under 45	Women over 45	Men over 45
Definitely yes	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Rather yes	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Neutral opinion	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Rather not	6 %	10 %	6 %	8 %
Definitely not	94 %	90 %	94 %	92 %

The distribution of responses for this question of the questionnaire survey only confirms the finding that was made above through the previous item, which is that there is no age-based discrimination against ordinary employees in the surveyed companies. All respondents without exception declared negative answers, which means that they personally did not encounter discrimination based on age. It must be stated that this is without doubt a very positive finding.

3. Are younger workers preferentially hired for the positions of ordinary employees in your company?

	Women under 45	Men under 45	Women over 45	Men over 45
Definitely yes	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Rather yes	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Neutral opinion	2 %	4 %	0 %	2 %
Rather not	14 %	10 %	16 %	12 %
Definitely not	84 %	86 %	84 %	86 %

In none of the surveyed companies – at least according to the respondents from among the ordinary employees – it does not happen that younger workers are preferentially hired. None of the interviewed respondents declared a positive answer. Already at this point, it can be revealed that we will encounter a similar result for several other questions of the questionnaire survey. A speculative explanation of the observed fact can therefore be formulated on this basis. Because this can be caused by a chronic shortage of workforce in the Czech Republic, which does not avoid the processing industry either. If companies have a shortage of workers, then they cannot choose too much among potential applicants and they cannot discriminate based on age at all.

4. Are older workers preferentially hired for the positions of ordinary employees in your company?

	Women under 45	Men under 45	Women over 45	Men over 45
Definitely yes	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Rather yes	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Neutral opinion	0 %	2 %	4 %	2 %
Rather not	12 %	14 %	8 %	12 %
Definitely not	88 %	84 %	88 %	86 %

Through the distribution of responses to this question of the questionnaire survey, it was definitely not found that older workers were preferentially hired for the positions of regular employees in the surveyed companies, which corresponds to previous findings.

5. When hiring a worker in your company, are mothers with small children neglected?

	Women under 45	Men under 45	Women over 45	Men over 45
Definitely yes	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Rather yes	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Neutral opinion	6 %	2 %	4 %	2 %
Rather not	8 %	12 %	8 %	14 %
Definitely not	86 %	86 %	88 %	84 %

Neither older nor younger workers are preferentially hired for ordinary positions in the surveyed companies, and mothers with small children are not neglected either; this finding once again only underlines the findings made in the previous questions.

6. Does your company accept new employees?

	Women under 45	Men under 45	Women over 45	Men over 45
Definitely yes	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %
Rather yes	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Neutral opinion	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Rather not	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Definitely not	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %

The clear distribution of responses to this question of the questionnaire survey leaves us in no doubt that all surveyed companies are hiring new employees. This finding makes it possible to mark as relevant the speculation formulated above, that due to the chronic lack of workforce in the Czech Republic, companies in the manufacturing industry cannot choose too much among potential applicants, as a result of which the possibility of discriminating on the basis of age is significantly eliminated.

7. Does your company also employ seniors who are already retired?

	Women under 45	Men under 45	Women over 45	Men over 45
Definitely yes	78 %	80 %	80 %	78 %
Rather yes	16 %	12 %	14 %	12 %
Neutral opinion	6 %	8 %	6 %	10 %
Rather not	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Definitely not	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %

The findings made through this question of the questionnaire survey only add to and at the same time confirm the findings made through the previous questions. In all four surveyed

companies, new employees are also seniors who are already retired. This also indicates a shortage of supply on the labour market.

8. If there are layoffs, are younger workers preferentially laid off in your company?

	Women under 45	Men under 45	Women over 45	Men over 45
Definitely yes	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Rather yes	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Neutral opinion	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Rather not	4 %	0 %	2 %	2 %
Definitely not	96 %	100 %	98 %	98 %

Through this item of the questionnaire survey, it was found that not only younger workers are not preferentially laid off in cases of layoffs in the surveyed companies, but that apparently layoffs do not occur too often, which can be inferred from the significant concentration of answers for the variant "definitely not". It will be possible to confirm this speculation below through the relevant item.

9. If there are layoffs, are older workers preferentially laid off in your company?

	Women under 45	Men under 45	Women over 45	Men over 45
Definitely yes	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Rather yes	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Neutral opinion	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Rather not	2 %	2 %	0 %	4 %
Definitely not	98 %	98 %	100 %	96 %

In this case, we can essentially repeat the comment formulated for the previous question, i.e. that in cases where there are layoffs in the investigated enterprises, not only younger workers, but also older workers are not preferentially laid off.

10. If there are layoffs, are mothers with young children primarily laid off in your company?

	Women under 45	Men under 45	Women over 45	Men over 45
Definitely yes	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Rather yes	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Neutral opinion	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Rather not	0 %	2 %	4 %	0 %
Definitely not	100 %	98 %	96 %	100 %

Even in this case, nothing was found that did not fully correspond to what was already stated for the previous two questions of the questionnaire survey. Even mothers with small children are not preferentially laid off in the investigated enterprises when layoffs occurred in the surveyed enterprises.

11. Are layoffs often in your company?

	Women under 45	Men under 45	Women over 45	Men over 45
Definitely yes	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Rather yes	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Neutral opinion	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Rather not	0 %	2 %	0 %	0 %
Definitely not	100 %	98 %	100 %	100 %

Due to the fact that – as was established on the basis of the respondents' statements – layoffs are not very frequent in the surveyed companies, quite understandably there is not much space to interpret layoffs as age discriminatory.

12. When organising work and managing people, do your superiors take into account the needs of older workers and accommodate them?

	Women under 45	Men under 45	Women over 45	Men over 45
Definitely yes	58 %	52 %	54 %	56 %
Rather yes	22 %	26 %	24 %	26 %
Neutral opinion	16 %	14 %	16 %	12 %
Rather not	4 %	8 %	6 %	6 %
Definitely not	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %

The distribution of responses to this question of the questionnaire shows that, in the opinion of the majority of respondents, supervisors take the needs of older workers into account when organising work and managing people, and that they accommodate them. A total of 78% to 82% of respondents from the respective groups expressed themselves in this spirit, i.e. roughly four fifths of the total number. Only 12% to 16% of the respondents took a neutral position in this regard, so only a small minority of respondents from the ranks of male and female industrial workers declared a milder version of the negative answer.

13. When organising work and managing people, do your superiors take into account the needs of younger workers and accommodate them?

	Women under 45	Men under 45	Women over 45	Men over 45
Definitely yes	52 %	52 %	50 %	54 %
Rather yes	24 %	28 %	28 %	22 %
Neutral opinion	18 %	16 %	20 %	16 %
Rather not	6 %	4 %	2 %	8 %
Definitely not	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %

With a certain simplification, it is possible to state that the distribution of answers for this question of the questionnaire survey corresponds to a large extent with the distribution of answers for the previous item, which means that superiors, when organising work and managing people, also take into account the needs of younger workers and accommodate them.

14. When organising work and managing people, do your superiors take into account the needs of mothers with small children and accommodate them?

	Women under 45	Men under 45	Women over 45	Men over 45
Definitely yes	54 %	54 %	52 %	54 %
Rather yes	28 %	30 %	32 %	28 %
Neutral opinion	14 %	16 %	14 %	12 %
Rather not	4 %	0 %	2 %	2 %
Definitely not	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %

Through the two previous questions of the questionnaire survey, it was established beyond any doubt that the superiors in the surveyed enterprises take into account the needs of younger and older workers when organising work and managing people and that they accommodate them. It was precisely in this sense that a significant majority of the respondents of the given groups, comprising approximately four-fifths of each of them, expressed their opinion. The question asked

as part of this part of the questionnaire survey refers to the same problem in the case of mothers with small children, and it was found that even in this case the opinion of the respondents does not differ significantly from that found for the mentioned previous two questions. Perhaps we can only point out that the share of negative and neutral answers is somewhat lower than in the previous two cases, while the share of unambiguously positive answers is, on the contrary, higher. From this fact, it is probably possible to speculatively conclude that the managers of the surveyed enterprises take into account the needs of mothers with young children when organising work and managing people and accommodate them to a somewhat higher extent than they do in the case of younger and older employees. It is certainly a very gratifying finding considering that mothers with young children represent a more vulnerable group.

15. Are there good interpersonal relationships between employees of different generations among ordinary employees in your company?

	Women under 45	Men under 45	Women over 45	Men over 45
Definitely yes	32 %	28 %	30 %	32 %
Rather yes	44 %	46 %	44 %	42 %
Neutral opinion	18 %	22 %	24 %	20 %
Rather not	6 %	4 %	2 %	6 %
Definitely not	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %

The overwhelming majority of respondents from all four groups are of the opinion that there are good interpersonal relationships between employees of different generations among the ordinary employees of the surveyed enterprises. A total of roughly three-quarters of the respondents declared positive answers to the question asked. A minority of less than a fifth to less than a quarter of the respondents of the respective group took a neutral position in this respect. Only 2% to 6% - i.e. only a very small minority – then chose “rather not” as an answer option. None of the respondents gave a clearly negative answer. This finding can certainly be described as gratifying and positive.

16. Does the management of your company organise training for you, ordinary employees, in the area of discrimination based on age, ageism, etc.?

	Women under 45	Men under 45	Women over 45	Men over 45
Definitely yes	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Rather yes	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Neutral opinion	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Rather not	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Definitely not	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %

The distribution of the answers to the last question of the questionnaire survey – characterised by its absolute clarity – leaves us in no doubt that in none of the companies investigated as part of this survey, the management does not organise any training for ordinary employees in the field of discrimination based on age, ageism, etc. However, it can be assumed that such trainings are not needed, because there is no discrimination in this regard in the examined enterprises – judging by the results of this questionnaire survey.

#### **Suggestions and recommendations for the researched issues**

Proposals and recommendations for the researched issues should be formulated on the basis of findings made through a questionnaire survey. The basic finding is that in the investigated companies – and these are four different companies from different branches of the manufacturing industry – there is no discrimination against ordinary workers, i.e. manual labourers in production,

on the basis of age, that there are more or less good relations between members of different generations of ordinary workers and that when organising work and managing people, superiors take into account the needs of younger and older workers, as well as of mothers with small children, and that they accommodate them. At the same time, it was found that in all the companies surveyed, new employees are hired – even from the ranks of seniors on old-age pensions – and that layoffs occur only exceptionally, which further reduces the space for possible age discrimination. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that it is not necessary to propose any recommendations to improve the practice of managing an age-diverse workforce in the company. Perhaps it would only be possible to recommend the implementation of training for ordinary workers in this area, but given the facts found, such training appears to be unnecessary.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The aim of the presented article was to answer the question in what ways an age-diverse workforce can be managed. In conclusion, the following statement of the theoretical part of the article can be repeated, because the findings of the research part were briefly summarized in the text of the last part of this article.

It can therefore be repeated that in terms of achieving work results and creating a positive atmosphere in the workplace, age-diverse teams appear to be the best. Teams are most productive when they are not made up of the same people. People in the team must be able to work together and respect each other, but at the same time they should represent different qualities, experiences and skills that will complement each other for the benefit of the whole team. Cooperation within age-diverse teams increases the value of group or team IQ. It has been empirically proven that the element which most significantly affects group IQ is not the average IQ of individual group members, but rather the level of their emotional intelligence. The key to a high group IQ is harmony in the relationships of group members, communication skills and receptivity. The basic conditions for effective team synergy are especially cooperation, trust and cohesion across age categories. An age-diverse team that is cohesive at the same time is characterised by more intensive cooperation between individual members, greater resistance to obstacles and pressure of other people, less absenteeism and turnover, more advanced communication skills, greater openness of its members, lower tolerance for dishonesty, etc.

Age stereotypes are ideas about the characteristics of individuals of a certain age group, which usually do not correspond very well to reality, and are usually based only on the age of the respective individual. The consequence of prejudices against older workers is, for example, the fact that when recruiting new workers, their CVs are discarded only on the basis of age, that the organisation does not offer opportunities for further development to older employees because they think that this investment is not worth it, there is also pressure to leave earlier into retirement. The consequence of prejudice against younger workers can be the fact that the organisation does not want to hire young women because they have small children or might want to have them in the near future. Organisations can also be negative or dismissive of younger employees' ideas and suggestions.

Diversity management is an important part of the human resources management strategy. In corporate practice, it is a planning process for organising, managing and supporting a mix of social diversity. The basic principle of diversity management is the fact that successful individuals do not form a homogeneous, but a heterogeneous group, because they include men and women, young or older workers, people of different ethnic origins, skin colours, religion or the absence of it, different sexual orientations, etc., which positively affects employee satisfaction and is considered a strategic advantage for organisations. Creating diverse work teams and respecting this personal, social and cultural diversity leads to effective and successful performance of work tasks and activities. Diversity

management is thus a phenomenon superior to the concept of equal opportunities. The aim of diversity management is to expand the insufficient human resources and to enrich them in companies by using groups of workers that are usually neglected.

The term 'age management' is used to refer to the management of workers with regard to their age in the context of abilities and potential. Age management touches on such topics as age discrimination, employment of older workers, leaving jobs, social responsibility of companies, more generally the aging of the population, etc. Age management refers to companies' strategies in the field of employment of older people, age diversity, work-life balance, alternative work contracts, health and lifestyle of older workers, intergenerational transfer of knowledge in the company and, in this context, talent management, succession in the company hierarchy, etc. However, fair age management must also include support for young workers and their families, combining work life with family life, and with the care of children, e.g. through appropriate adjustment of working hours in cooperation with older workers. The main benefit of age management is the possibility of more effective use of the workforce through understanding and perception of the needs and abilities of employees of different age groups and the overall improvement of the quality of the organisation's human resources.

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## 6. Competing interests

The author declare that they have no competing interests.

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