

# For an Inclusive and Diverse Workplace

*t h e i m p a c t*

*The International Labour  
Organization (ILO) of the UN*

## On the Impact of the Training Program



International  
Labour  
Office

► Katalin Tardos

BUDAPEST, 2007



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*Katalin Tardos\**

# On the Impact of the “For an Inclusive and Diverse Workplace” Training Program

In 2006 the International Labour Organisation has developed a training program for medium and large size companies in order to raise interest and awareness of the for-profit sector in the business case of social inclusion and diversity beyond the level of legal compliance. This paper aims to assess the impact of the training program, in other words, to follow-up on the change process induced by the training among participating companies. A major objective of the follow-up survey was to determine whether a two-days anti-discrimination training program can be effective in inducing new company attitudes and policies with regard to social inclusion and diversity, and if yes, in what areas does the training have the largest impact.

## THE TRAINING PROGRAM: OBJECTIVES AND CONTENT

The ultimate objective of the training program was to raise awareness of companies on the necessity to struggle against discriminatory workplace practices, and assist and support them in formulating their own equal opportunities or diversity strategy. Before explaining the structure and content of the program, let me first outline the most important concepts used during the training. The concepts can be represented as concentric circles with the smallest circle representing the narrowest notion, and the largest, the broadest. The narrowest concept is that of *equal treatment*. In case of discrimination in employment, employers breach the principle of equal treatment required by law. *Equal opportunities policy* is a broader term, it refers to those initiatives that employers put in place in order to support disadvantaged groups on the labour market to enhance their chances to gain employment and have fair representation at the workplace. The term *diversity management* integrates both the principle of equal treatment

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and that of equal opportunities. The major assumption of diversity management is that all visible and invisible differences of employees present in the workforce represent a source of value for the organisation, if these differences are managed well. The notion of *corporate social responsibility* (CSR) is based on the acknowledgement of different stakeholders' interests, and thus implies the equal treatment and non-discrimination of employees. *Equal opportunities* or *diversity policies* can be integral part of CSR, but the term encompasses many other features like environmental protection, sponsorship, community support, customer protection, etc. The broadest term, which involves all the notions previously discussed, is the *ethical behaviour* of companies.

The training program is composed of six modules. The objective of the *first* module is to raise awareness on the typical ways *diversity* is treated within an organisational context, the role of stereotypes and prejudices in inducing discrimination. In the framework of the first module training participants view the “*Tale of O*” video film that presents, through the characters of *O*s and *X*s, the typical workplace behaviour towards each other of representatives of the majority and minority groups. The video film provides a great opportunity for training participants to recall their own experiences with regard to the relationship of majority and minority groups, as well as to examples of social exclusion and inclusion. Through the interactive discussion typical mechanisms leading to social exclusion at the workplace are brought to the surface. The next step is to recall and discuss examples of minority groups present at the given workplace and bring to the surface the various reasons that may lead to becoming an “*O*”. To sum up, the objective of the first module is to prepare participants emotionally, and to create a positive attitude towards the topic of the training.

The *second module* focuses on the basic concepts and legal regulations linked to discrimination. Having completed the second module, according to the objectives, participants should be apt to identify different fields of discrimination (selection, promotion, job allocation, type of employment relationship, payment, separation), as well as the different types of discrimination (direct and indirect discrimination, harassment, retaliation, unlawful segregation) that may occur at the workplace. First, participants do an exercise in which they have to evaluate in relation to each disadvantaged group the fields in which discrimination is most likely to happen to them. In such a way participants draw the “social map” of discrimination by themselves. Interestingly, participants' understanding of the major tendencies of discrimination in employment proved to be conducive to research results in this field, i.e. participants manifested a relevant social knowledge on discriminatory processes. Afterwards, training participants have to evaluate cases to assess whether discrimination was at play or not, and if yes, which type. This exercise is fundamental from the point of view to ensure that participants are able to detect concrete practices involving discrimination at their workplace beyond being able to estimate the social relevance of the phenomenon (see social map of discrimination). After having been acquainted with the national and European legal framework of discrimination, training participants learn about the major theoretical and practical differences of the three organisational approaches to diversity (equal treatment, equal opportunities, and diversity management).

The *third module* aims to link the previously discussed individual and social problems to the organisational level, in other words, to inspire among training participants (who belong to the same company) a collective reflection on the level of inclusiveness and diversity of their own organisation. Interestingly, this attempt first encountered a certain level of resistance among participants, which might be due to several reasons. Firstly, it might be an unconscious refusal of admitting to have any problems with the organisation itself. In other words, the reasoning goes, “just because discrimination exists out there in the society, does not mean that it exists inside the organisation, too.” Secondly, there might be a fear of bringing to the surface and making public negative company information. All processes of self-assessment, whether it is individual or organisational, imply a tension, a fear of the impact the result of the self-assessment might have. Thirdly, participants at this point of the training could not envisage how the self-assessment process will support them in planning their own diversity strategy. From a methodological point of view, the module offers a self-assessment questionnaire based on international standards to measure the social performance of companies in the areas of workforce composition, human resource management, equal opportunities and diversity initiatives, and company parameters of ethical and legal nature. Through small group

discussions participants identify the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation in these four areas. It is important to stress that participants have complete discretion over the type and amount of information to be disclosed. The objective of the questionnaire is to provide guidance on the type of data relevant to the subject matter, and give ground on which individual and subjective evaluations can be confronted. The third module, after having identified on a consensual basis the strengths and weaknesses of the company, concludes on the priorities of a possible company level equal opportunities and/or diversity strategy. According to our experience, it was by the end of the third module that training participants understood how this training would assist them in designing their own company level strategy.

*Module four* explores the business case for an inclusive and diverse workplace through two company case studies (Deloitte & Touche, and Shell Hungary) and the presentation of the results of a European survey in this field. Basically, the module aims to demonstrate why it is worth changing attitude and taking action to become more inclusive, but also puts emphasis on mapping company motivations.

*Module five and six* search answers to the question of “*How to do it well?*”. The fifth module presents Hungarian and international examples of best practice. Within this module teams are formed and they hold a brainstorming session concerning possible company initiatives for different groups hit by discrimination. Collected ideas can be integrated to the company action plan and diversity strategy. By analysing the case of IBM, participants can study the multitude of processes that need to be managed well if an organisation aspires to become a “best practice” candidate. This process evaluation leads to the *sixth and final module* that examines the necessary processes for implementing an equal opportunities/diversity action plan or strategy.

## COMPANIES ENROLLED IN THE TRAINING

The *Combating Social Exclusion at the Workplace: Corporate Social Responsibility in Hungary* project of the International Labour Office, in the framework of which the presently discussed training program has been developed, started in the fall of 2005 by preparing the feasibility study. The final version of the training material was developed by June 2006. In the summer of 2006 two companies have enrolled for the ILO training. (Both companies had participated in the series of interviews conducted in the framework of the feasibility study, thus they had been informed about the objectives of the program right from the beginning.) From Fall 2006 the ILO has been conducting an intensive marketing campaign to raise interest among companies to participate in the training program. Despite several proofs of curiosity and interest, no other companies have made the decision to undergo the training program as of Spring 2007 (when this paper has been written.) Obviously this very fact is in itself an important sign of dominant company attitude towards workplace discrimination and equal opportunities, and the lack of willingness to make changes in relevant workplace practices, but this is not the topic of the present paper.

## METHODOLOGY OF THE IMPACT STUDY

Related to the previously discussed case numbers, in the present paper a case study approach will be adopted to assess the impact of the “*For an Inclusive and Diverse Workplace*” training among the two participating companies. Three data sources will be analysed: first, the results of the satisfaction questionnaire completed by participants at the end of the two-days training will be reviewed. Secondly, interviews conducted in February 2007, nine months after the training, with HR managers responsible for Equal Opportunities and Diversity of the two companies will be analysed. Thirdly, electronic questionnaires have been distributed to training participants in February 2007 to make them evaluate the impact of the training.<sup>1</sup>

1. Electronic questionnaires have been completed only by Magyar Telekom participants.

The impact study's methodology is based on the assumption that the more committed training participants become to the issue of workplace inclusion and non-discrimination, the more likely it will be that the company will implement a more conscious policy in this field. Furthermore, it is assumed that the more conscious the equal opportunities and diversity policy is, the more probable to have less cases of breaching the principle of equal treatment, thus a better level of equal opportunity. However, it is important to state that this paper does not intend to give an evaluation, in statistical terms, on whether the number of company cases of discrimination have decreased or not, or equal opportunity improved or not at the two companies. In this respect the companies themselves will need to make a self-assessment of their social performance for the very reason to be able to evaluate the long-term impact of certain new initiatives in this field. The focus of attention in this study is on the extent and direction of changes concerning company equal opportunities and diversity initiatives after the training, and not on statistical analysis.

## REACTIONS IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE TRAINING

One of the most frequently used methods to evaluate training effectiveness is to measure the satisfaction of training participants at the end of the training in relation to various criteria. Thus, basically the reactions are recorded, in other words, one can assess to what extent participants were satisfied with the content, the practical transferability, the methodology, the trainers, etc. of the training. At the end of the ILO training participants also filled in an evaluation sheet. In the next section these results are presented and discussed. First module content, then practical transferability, finally the overall evaluation will be analysed.

### Satisfaction with Module Content

The evaluation sheet included a five point rating scale. Number *one* on the scale stood for very *unsatisfied*, whereas *five* represented *very satisfied*. (See Table 1.) Participants from Hungarian Post evaluated the fifth, the sixth, and the first modules the highest on average; topics included Best Practices of Equal Opportunities and Diversity Management, Tools to Promote Equal Opportunities and Increase Diversity in Business, and Raising Awareness. Satisfaction was lowest with the modules on the Key Concepts and Legal Framework of Equal Opportunities, which can be related to the fact that several labour law experts were among the participants, and knowledge concerning legal compliance was already existent in the organisation.

Participants of Magyar Telekom were the most satisfied with the first, the second, the third, and the fifth modules. Highest satisfaction was reached by the awareness raising module, but topics on key concepts and legal framework, self-auditing, and best practices were also appreciated. The lowest level of satisfaction was attached to the module on the business case of diversity. In my opinion, this can be due to the already existing awareness on the benefits of diversity to business, and the necessity to link business results and diversity initiatives, thus the module did not provide that much of a novelty for Magyar Telekom participants.

Survey results underline the importance of consultation prior to the training session with company officials, in order to assess the specific needs of the given company and tailor the training to their needs by focusing more on relevant topics to them.

**TABLE 1**  
*Average satisfaction with module content*  
 (On a 5 point scale: 1 = very unsatisfied, 5 = very satisfied, averages)

Modules	Hungarian Post	Magyar Telekom
<b>Module 1:</b> Awareness Raising	4,4	4,5
<b>Module 2:</b> The Key Concepts and Legal Framework of Equal Opportunities	3,9	4,4
<b>Module 3:</b> Methods for Auditing the Organisatio	4,1	4,4
<b>Module 4:</b> The Business Case for an Inclusive and Diverse Workplace	4,3	4,1
<b>Module 5:</b> Best Practices of Equal Opportunities and Diversity Management	4,7	4,4
<b>Module 6:</b> Tools to Promote Equal Opportunities and Increase Diversity in Business	4,4	4,3

### Satisfaction with Practical Transferability

Data in Table 2, on the one hand; show that, overall, training participants were satisfied with the practical transferability of the modules. (Number 4 on the scale represented “satisfied”.) On the other hand, one can see that, in average, general satisfaction is somewhat lower for *transferability* than for *content*. However, there is strong correlation between the satisfaction levels for transferability and content, in general.

Participants of Hungarian Post were the most satisfied with the *fifth* (Best practices) and the *first* module (Awareness Raising), while being the least satisfied by module *two* (Key Concepts) and module *three* (Self-Auditing). On the contrary, participants of Magyar Telekom were the most satisfied with the practical transferability of module *two* (Key Concepts) and module *three* (Self-Auditing), exactly those that Hungarian Post appreciated the least according to the evaluation made right after the training session. The correlation between satisfaction with content and transferability is reflected in the fact that the lowest rating has been assigned to the same module by Telecom participants for both content and transferability, namely; module number *four* (Business Case).

**TABLE 2**

*Average satisfaction with the practical transferability of the modules  
(On a 5 point scale: 1 = very unsatisfied, 5 = very satisfied, averages)*

Modules	Hungarian Post	Magyar Telekom
<b>Module 1:</b> Awareness Raising	4,4	4,1
<b>Module 2:</b> The Key Concepts and Legal Framework of Equal Opportunities	4,0	4,3
<b>Module 3:</b> Methods for Auditing the Organisatio	4,0	4,3
<b>Module 4:</b> The Business Case for an Inclusive and Diverse Workplace	4,2	4,1
<b>Module 5:</b> Best Practices of Equal Opportunities and Diversity Management	4,5	4,2
<b>Module 6:</b> Tools to Promote Equal Opportunities and Increase Diversity in Business	4,2	4,1

### Overall Satisfaction with the Training Program

In general terms, the trends for overall satisfaction are very similar for the two companies. Table 3 highlights that satisfaction with regard to *the quality of training and background materials, the clarity of training objectives, and the atmosphere of the training* both companies were unanimously satisfied with. (Ratings fell between 4,5 and 5 for these items.) Furthermore, the satisfaction level was similar for both companies concerning *the extent to which the training was well organised and interesting; its usefulness and content*. Training participants evaluated these items on average between 4,0 and 4;4.

Two items received average rating below 4,0, namely, *the extent to which the training met the expectations of the participants*, and *the extent to which the allocated time for fulfilling the training objectives was adequate*. (Ratings ranged from 3,6 to 3,9.) At the very beginning of the training we collected training expectations from the participants which were revisited at the end of the training session together to assess whether initial expectations were covered or not. On the first day the trainers explicitly stated which of the expectations were unrealistic to achieve or not. During the training sessions it seemed that most of the expectations were met; but apparently a few participants were not completely of the same opinion.

As mentioned previously, the training program was designed to last for two days. No doubt, the program was very intensive, difficult to deliver in two days. Ideally two and a half days should have been allocated to treat the six modules as equally important. The current problem could be solved by better needs assessment prior to the training; thus trainers could know which modules to focus on during the training sessions.

### 3. TÁBLÁZAT

*Overall satisfaction with the training*  
(On a 5 point scale: 1 = very unsatisfied, 5 = very satisfied, averages)

	Hungarian Post		Magyar Telekom
How satisfied were you with the quality of training and background materials?	5	To what extent were the training objectives clear?	4,7
How useful did you find small group activities and exercises?	4,6	How satisfied were you with the quality of training and background materials?	4,7
To what extent were the training objectives clear?	4,5	How satisfied were you with the training atmosphere?	4,5
How satisfied were you with the training atmosphere?	4,5	How well was the training organised?	4,4
How well was the training organised?	4,4	Overall how useful did you find the training?	4,3
Overall how useful did you find the training?	4,1	Overall how interesting did you find the training?	4,2
Overall how interesting did you find the training?	4,1	Overall how satisfied were you with the content of the training?	4,2
Overall how satisfied were you with the content of the training?	4,0	How useful did you find small group activities and exercises?	4,0
To what extent did the training meet your expectations?	3,8	To what extent did the training meet your expectations?	3,9
To what extent was the allocated time adequate for fulfilling the training objectives?	3,6	To what extent was the allocated time adequate for fulfilling the training objectives?	3,9

Quite interestingly, satisfaction levels with the usefulness of small group exercises were radically different in the two companies. As a matter of fact this turned out to be the only true difference between the trends in overall satisfaction items. Hungarian Post ranked small group activities and exercises on almost the highest level (4,6), while Magyar Telekom was in absolute terms satisfied (4,0), but was far from suggesting this being one of the strengths of the program. This tendency might also be linked to the fact that Magyar Telekom participants have a more extended experience with this type of training method, in other words, it was not perceived as something new for them.

The second part of the study aims to follow up on new developments after completion of the “*For an Inclusive and Diverse Workplace*” training; as well as to present the major characteristics of practices and policies implemented in the field of equal opportunities and diversity management of the two companies. In this second part of the impact study we shall investigate training effectiveness, on the one hand, by examining long-term satisfaction of participants, i.e. the extent to which participants believe having achieved training objectives; on the other hand, by assessing outputs, in other words, results reached since the training.<sup>2</sup>

2. It is important to mention that both companies have possessed a series of good practices prior to the training programme in the field of equal opportunities and diversity management. From a methodological point of view, it would be rather difficult to separate new practices implemented as a result of the training from those that were not. Hereby, we will only focus on output; i.e. various practices and policies introduced after the training.

## THE CASE OF HUNGARIAN POST

### Motivation to Participate at the Training

Since January 2005, state-owned companies and public organisations are obliged to prepare an equal opportunities plan that has to be accepted by the trade-unions, as well. At Hungarian Post, the second largest employer in Hungary, there was a clear commitment of top management to comply with the law, and enhance the level of equal opportunities. As part of the strategic decision-making process, a separate committee empowered to design the equal opportunities plan was set up. Top management of Hungarian Post involved the trade unions in the work of the committee right from the beginning even though the law only requires a final consent. At the beginning of the process both representatives of the employer and those of the trade unions were irresolute of what exactly needed to be done. It was during the preparation of the first equal opportunities plan for the period of 2005–2006 that committee members became aware of the fact that new knowledge and know-how was needed to execute certain parts of the plan, as monitoring the implementation process. As they have put it: “the training opportunity had just arrived at the right time”. Hungarian Post was one of the companies to participate in the series of interviews made for the feasibility study of the training; the special price offered for the pilot trainings was considered reasonable, thus the decision to participate in the program was quickly made. In fact, training participants were members of the Equal Opportunities Committee, including HR and PR professionals, trade-union representatives, training and development experts, and lawyers.

### Follow-up—Achievement of Training Objectives

The interview conducted with one of the HR officials of Hungarian Post revealed that awareness of discrimination related issues has substantially increased as a result of the training. Participants have become a team of people “speaking the same language”, sensitive and committed to the issue. The change process has been perceived as a qualitative one, of which participants are rather proud. As a matter of fact, this enhanced awareness is regarded as one of the main outputs of the training program.

According to the interview, today they are much better equipped to discover the cases of discrimination as a result of the training. It has become clear to them that it was impossible to improve the situation of all disadvantaged groups at once, they rather needed to focus on one group at a time.

From the three distinct approaches dealing with discrimination in employment; the Hungarian Post focuses mainly on complying with the principle of *equal treatment* and enhancing *equal opportunities*. The logic of *diversity management* is much less prevailing in organisational decisions and actions. Focusing on the business case of diversity has not yet been a major concern at Hungarian Post. Rather, the idea that enhancing equal opportunities did not necessarily imply great investments on behalf of the employer was voiced during the interview. As a matter of fact, presently implemented programs do not entail large financial engagements.

Concerning the long-term evaluation of the training, nine months after the training session, the *first* module on awareness raising and the *fifth* module on best practices were considered still the most useful. Reactions to the *third*, the company’s self-audit module, have somewhat changed. During the follow-up interview the relevance and usefulness of the third module on the company’s self-assessment was acknowledged, as it supported the organisation when the time had come to monitor the results of the first equal opportunities plan. The training provided necessary background knowledge to rethink the methodology of collecting appropriate data on equal opportunities. Other outputs of the training were the more advanced communication strategy linked to various practices, as well as the integrated, systems thinking approach.

## Post-Training Results and Initiatives

### ► **New Equal Opportunities Plan**

One of the biggest achievements since the training at Hungarian Post is the new version of the equal opportunities plan covering the period of 2007–2008. The equal opportunities plan includes chapters related to compensation, healthy working conditions, selection procedures, group lay-offs; training and development, work-life balance, benefits, and the reintegration of women on maternity leave.

*School-leavers and young employees* were added to the target groups of the modified equal opportunities plan. They have carefully analysed the data collected among young employees last year, and plan to redo the survey this year as well. Hungarian Post has prepared a *Guide for Young Employees* in order to better inform them about the different services available within the company (training options; mentorship; talent bank, loans; etc.)

For *women returning from maternity leave* planned initiatives include reemployment, support for reintegration, opportunity for part-time jobs, and training possibilities to update knowledge.

Hungarian Post had the intention to set targets in the equal opportunities plan in a relatively flexible manner in order not to endanger the peaceful relationship among management and trade-unions in case some of the targets were not met for external reasons. The equal opportunities plan was made public through its publication in the official Post News, and through the intranet, too.

### ► **Grievance procedure for cases of discrimination**

Hungarian Post has developed a well-structured grievance procedure in case of discrimination in the framework of which the Human Resource Department has to investigate the details of the complaint and decide on the composition of the grievance committee, thus ensuring the principle of equal treatment.

### ► **Internal Equal Opportunities Award**

In summer 2007 an *Internal Equal Opportunities Award* will be announced for which different organizational units can hand in a tender to win the award. One million Hungarian Forints will be granted to the best unit. With the Internal Equal Opportunity Award Hungarian Post intends to promote the idea of respecting equal treatment and promoting equal opportunity along all organizational units, and foremost among middle managers.

### ► **Questions on discrimination in the attitude survey**

From 2007 questions related to discrimination and the level of equal opportunities will be integrated into the *regular attitude survey* (called *How are you dear colleague?*) carried out by Hungarian Post every second year. Thus satisfaction levels linked to equal treatment will become possible to study.

### ► **Participation at workplace award competitions**

Various *workplace awards* aim to measure the social performance of firms. Hungarian Post postulated for the Inclusive Workplace Award in 2006, and won second price in the large companies' category. In 2007 they plan to participate in the competition for the Best Workplace Award.

### ► **Training for trade union representatives**

The Post Trade Unions will organize a *two-days training program* on the principles of equal treatment and non-discrimination *for trade union representatives* in the summer of 2007 in cooperation with ILO and the trainers of the *For an Inclusive and Diverse Workforce*.

▶ **Collecting labour statistics**

*Labour statistics* are collected in a fashion to be able to provide a back up to monitor developments in the field of equal opportunities.

▶ **Management development program**

The issue of equal treatment and equal opportunities has been integrated into the *management development program*.

▶ **Sponsoring**

*Sponsoring activities* have been carried out on a larger scale in 2006.

▶ **Communication an initiatives**

*Communication strategies* are more consciously developed around different equal opportunities initiatives.

## Problems Articulated

The interviewee of Hungarian Post has mentioned two problem areas. The first one is linked to the presently running European Year of Equal Opportunity for All, 2007. Hungarian Post would be ready to participate in some of the activities, but does not have information about how companies could get involved in the different actions organized by the Ministry. The second one is a more general one that presents a real challenge for the organization, namely, how to communicate the equal opportunities plan and the nature of the accountability management has in implementing it. The major concern relates to communicating the equal opportunities plan in a way not to raise conflict for other groups not targeted by the plan.

## THE CASE OF MAGYAR TELEKOM

### Motivation to Participate at the Training

Magyar Telekom's basic motivation to participate at the ILO training was to gain support in rethinking in a more systematic way the various initiatives and programs already in place at the company. One of their main objectives was to evaluate their achievements made so far and formulate new objectives to improve the effectiveness of the efforts in the field of equal opportunities. In addition, Magyar Telekom aimed to support the team formation of people committed to implement the equal opportunities and diversity policy of the company. In the beginning of 2006 the company decided to prepare an equal opportunities plan despite the fact that preparing such a plan was only a recommendation, and not an obligation, for the for-profit sector according to the law on Equal Treatment. For the training session, Magyar Telekom has appointed participants from different organisational units, following the suggestions made by ILO on how to organize the training. It is important to mention that four different units have responsibilities linked to equal opportunities and diversity management: Human Resources, Public Relations, Training and Development, and Sustainability Departments. The company considers this organisational model effective.

## Follow-up—Achievement of Training Objectives

In spring 2007 training participants of Magyar Telekom have filled in the electronic follow-up questionnaire on the extent to which former training objectives have been met sent to them nine months after the training session. According to the respondents (8 returned questionnaires) training objectives have been in great part achieved. During the follow-up interview Magyar Telekom's official has emphasised that the training was efficient in raising awareness on discrimination in employment among training participants. Training participants have become a group of committed people who meet bi-monthly to review and discuss current tasks related to equal opportunities and diversity management, and monitor their implementation. Respondents of the electronic questionnaire have indicated as the most useful parts of the training, in the framework of measuring their long-term satisfaction, that modules relating to awareness raising, best practices, and company self-audit proved to be the most useful. The module on basic concepts was not mentioned among the most useful in the follow-up survey, only directly after the training session. Whereas the module on best practices was more positively evaluated when measuring long-term satisfaction.

## Post-Training Results and Initiatives

### ▶ Social Charta

Magyar Telekom has published a *Social Charta* on respecting fundamental human rights.

### ▶ Diversity policy

A declaration on Magyar Telekom's *Diversity Policy* has been formulated and published. Both documents are available on the company's web page.

### ▶ Equal Opportunities Film-club

Magyar Telekom organises for its employees an *Equal Opportunities Film-club* of documentary films on disadvantaged groups. The films are available for all employees via the intranet. The major objective of the film-club is to raise sympathy towards members of disadvantaged groups and provide better knowledge about them.

### ▶ Theatre presentations

*Theatre presentations held by people with disabilities* were organized for employees to raise awareness in relation to these groups.

### ▶ Survey on using atypical work forms

A *cross-company survey* was conducted to investigate *how atypical work forms could* be used to a greater extent. Information was gathered on jobs in which it would be possible to introduce atypical work practices in order to increase the number of disadvantaged people in these jobs. They plan to integrate in the set of performance expectations towards unit and department heads to employ larger number of people in atypical work patterns. Magyar Telekom plans to make this a recommendation and not a compulsory quota.

### ▶ Life After Maternity Leave—conference and HR roundtable discussion

This initiative aimed primarily to change the mentality and attitude of upper management toward women with small children in order to enhance their equal opportunity in employment.

### ▶ Balancing Family and Work—lectures and consultations

A series of lectures and consultations were organised for employees to inform them about the most recent research results on balancing work and family life, and provide the opportunity of professional consultations linked to typical challenges and problems occurring in families.

3. Human Resources Development Operative Program of the European Union.

- ▶ **Reorientation program for women on maternity leave**  
Women on maternity leave receive company news via the e-mail system, including invitations to various company events. After the maternity leave a one-day training program is offered to women. Furthermore flexible working hours are available upon request.
- ▶ **Employing people with disabilities**  
In the framework of a HEFOP<sup>3</sup> project, the company offered the opportunity to 28 people with disabilities or with changed working capacities to participate in *the “Integrated customer service assistant” training and employment project*.
- ▶ **The Digital Bridge (I): Achieving Equal Opportunities with the Internet**  
The program enables disadvantaged people or their civil organisations to use the benefits of the digital culture, for example through the usage of a free homepage design software.
- ▶ **The Digital Bridge (II): Internet for Small Locations**  
Managers and employees of Magyar Telekom, on a voluntary basis, visit small locations in disadvantaged regions and present the benefits of info communication technologies. Thus they get in direct contact with potential customers, and volunteers working together get to know each other better, as well. The target set is to visit 100 small locations by 2008.
- ▶ **Voluntary work**  
Magyar Telekom explicitly aims to increase *voluntary work* among employees. In order to support this objective they plan to re-allocate a certain amount of working time for this purpose. The company aims to connect those who are in need of voluntary work and those who provide it. This initiative aims to raise awareness and tolerance among employees towards disadvantaged groups.
- ▶ **Equal Opportunities Plan**  
Magyar Telekom aims to prepare their Equal Opportunities Plan by the end of summer 2007. Target groups to be included in the plan will be people living in the country-side, older employees (pre-pension age), people on maternity leave, people with three or more children. There has been vivid discussions on whether the Roma and GLBTs (Gays, Lesbians, Transsexuals) should be included, or not, among target groups, but finally the decision to leave them out has been made as the organisation was busy with lay-offs at that time and capacities to offer services was limited.
- ▶ **Equal Roma fresh graduates**  
Magyar Telekom is willing to participate in the joint project of the Hungarian Business Leaders Forum (HBLF) and the Roma Education Fund (REF) that aims *to support Roma fresh graduates in their labour market integration*.
- ▶ **Workplace Awards**  
In 2006, Magyar Telekom obtained first price in the large company category of the “*Inclusive Workplace Award*”, and first place on the *Accountability Rating Hungary* that was carried out the first time in Hungary. In 2007, Magyar Telekom won the Diversity Award among member companies of the Deutsche Telekom Group.
- ▶ **egalnet.hu, a community portal for NGOs**  
One of their newest initiatives is called *egalnet.hu, a community portal for NGOs*. The aim of the initiative is to provide a free communicational surface for NGOs representing various disadvantaged groups.
- ▶ **Diversity Workshop**  
In April 2007 Magyar Telekom organised a *Diversity Workshop* for representatives of governmental organisations, NGOs, and other companies. The aim was to enhance inter-company dialogue on issues of diversity.

## Problems Articulated

Magyar Telekom has not articulated any problems related to their diversity policy. They have rather expressed their contentedness related to the different innovative practices (film club, workshop, voluntary work etc.) related to raising awareness and changing attitudes, and their openness to engage in inter-company exchange of good practices.

## COMPARISON OF THE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND DIVERSITY POLICY OF HUNGARIAN POST AND MAGYAR TELEKOM

A major and determining factor of differentiation between the two companies lies in the fact that Hungarian Post is a state owned company, while Magyar Telekom is in foreign private ownership. The initial driving force to implement an equal opportunities policy at Hungarian Post was that of *legal compliance*, for Magyar Telekom it was linked to meeting the *expectations held by the foreign owners*. Hungarian Post clearly follows the more traditional approach of putting the issue of *equal opportunities* to the centre of focus, while for Magyar Telekom *diversity management*, the approach adopted typically by multinational companies, is more dominant. The difference in approach also leads to variations in practices: Hungarian Post puts, for example, smaller emphasis on linking business strategy and equal opportunities policy, similarly, business benefits linked to the various practices are less markedly sought for. Linked to the equal opportunities approach followed by Hungarian Post, the most important area of its activity was *the formulation of the equal opportunities plan and its implementation*. The target groups receiving special attention are those of young people, school-leavers and fresh graduates, and women on maternity leave. Both groups belong clearly to the younger generation that can be in relation with their wider human resource policy, too. Target groups identified by Magyar Telekom were more diverse in terms of age implied. A rather innovative choice was to include people living in the countryside as a target group in the equal opportunities plan under preparation. However, one can state that neither of the companies has set groups subject to heavy prejudices (as people with disabilities, the Roma, homosexuals, etc.) as target groups for the equal opportunities plan. On the other hand, Hungarian Post follows more and more a deliberate communication strategy both externally and internally. A truly innovative idea was to announce *an internal equal opportunities award* for which different units within Hungarian Post could hand in a tender. This initiative is a good example of how an organisation can raise awareness internally of its equal opportunities policy. At Magyar Telekom the biggest emphasis, coherently with its diversity management approach adopted is put on changing attitudes, and increasing tolerance towards diversity. Interestingly, the focus on responsibility towards external constituents is more reflected in Magyar Telekom's practices. They are much more active in building cooperation with and among NGOs, as well as sharing good practices and knowledge with external parties. Encouraging *voluntary work* among employees is nowadays extremely rare at companies. Magyar Telekom uses it as both a means to demonstrate responsible behaviour within the community, and internally as a means to achieve change in attitudes related to increased tolerance. The focus on both external and internal stakeholders by Magyar Telekom is a good proof of deliberately integrating diversity management and corporate social responsibility strategy. In fact, a similarity between the two companies is that the equal opportunities/diversity strategy is conceptually closely *linked to the more general corporate social responsibility strategy*, as a matter of fact, both companies agreed that it formed an integral part of it. (See Table 4.)

**TABLE 4**

*Comparison of the equal opportunities and diversity policy at Magyar Telekom and Hungarian Post*

	<b>Hungarian Post</b>	<b>Magyar Telekom</b>
<b>Impact of training</b>	Acceleration and intensification of the process	Acceleration and intensification of the process
<b>Approach</b>	Equal opportunities policy	Diversity management
<b>Strategy</b>	Pursuing the implementation of a professionally sound equal opportunities policy, spreading the image of an <i>equal opportunity employer</i> both internally and externally	To become a company referred to as representing <i>best practice in diversity management</i> both in Hungary and on an international level.
<b>Priority areas of the initiatives</b>	Equal Opportunities Plan	Raising awareness and nurturing tolerance towards diversity both inside and outside of the company, supporting a change in attitudes, increasing equal opportunities in accessing info-communication
<b>Target groups</b>	School-leavers and fresh graduates, women on maternity leave	Villagers, pre-pensioners, women on maternity leave, parents with three or more children
<b>Internal communication of equal opportunities and diversity initiatives</b>	Under development	Important
<b>External communication and evaluation of equal opportunities and diversity initiatives (Participation in award winning competitions)</b>	Gaining importance	Important
<b>Building relationships with NGOs</b>	Not important	Important
<b>Knowledge sharing with other companies</b>	Not important	Important
<b>Focus on achieving the business case of equal opportunities/diversity</b>	Not important (managing costs is more focused on)	Rather important
<b>The relationship of corporate social responsibility and equal opportunities/diversity initiatives</b>	Conceptually equal opportunities policy is integral part of the CSR policy, explicit CSR policy is under development	Conceptually equal opportunities policy is integral part of the CSR policy
<b>Intention to link business strategy and equal opportunities/diversity policy</b>	Not important, but target groups specified in the equal opportunities plan might be conducive to achieve a workforce composition with a lower average age.	There is a clear business case for implementing the digital bridge for disadvantaged groups

## CONCLUSIONS

To summarise, we can clearly assert that both companies represent in their own category (Hungarian Post among state-owned companies, Magyar Telekom among foreign owned companies) a flagship in introducing exemplary, innovative practices in the field of equal opportunities/diversity management. An important sign of commitment to the topic was the fact that these two companies had applied first in Hungary to participate in the ILO's "*For an Inclusive and Diverse Workforce*" training program. The impact study has demonstrated that the two-days training has significantly contributed to the process of designing and rethinking an explicit policy, as well as to the implementation of new initiatives. Turning training participants to a well-established team with common objectives was considered by both organisations as a great additional benefit of the training. No doubt, the original motivation and commitment of both companies to improve their level of equal opportunities/diversity policy was a strong contributing factor to the success of the training.

It would be illusionary to think that a short, two-days training program could fundamentally change deeply entrenched social processes of discrimination in employment. Nevertheless, the example of the two studied companies has shown that in the struggle against discrimination in employment the company-based training could be an effective method to enhance *awareness and commitment, systems thinking, and effectiveness of process design* in relation to equal opportunities/diversity policies. As a matter of fact, all three stated factors are fundamentally important to be able to achieve long-term success in reinforcing social inclusion at the workplace.





