

# **Diversity in an international context. Connotations and practices of diversity initiatives and policies from an international perspective.**

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## **Track Description**

While ‘Diversity Management’ (DM) is a legitimated management / business concept in the United States responding to the challenges of managing diversity in the U.S. work context, in Europe and elsewhere, the notion of diversity remains embryonic and much less developed.

For example, considering that Europe’s business world has frequently looked to US management concepts and ideas as an influential benchmark, the limited number of European-based organizations with well established DM policies and programs might come as a surprise – in particular when considering the demographic challenges and other aspects and developments influencing the increasingly diverse nature of Europe’s workforce.

One of the reasons for this ‘embryonic’ approach towards developing initiatives for managing workforce diversity outside of North America may be the lack of consensus around the term ‘diversity’, how it is used, what it means, what reactions it solicits, when it is discussed etc. across different regions and countries. In trying to understand this complexity, it is also important to take into account the historical context. For example, what if any events or social triggers have highlighted the need to take diversity issues into account in a country? Are such events necessary in order to initiate and to give sense to DM policies? How have such events formulated the meaning of diversity? What are the legal frameworks and constraints that impact the visibility of different types of diversity issues? How do constitutional definitions of national identity affect the meaning attached to diversity by stakeholders?

Recent literature on global diversity management has highlighted the importance of a “situated” approach to implementing diversity policies across countries. Studies which address this point focus either on case studies of particular firms and their diversity practices across countries, or are country-specific and describe the implementation of diversity practices across firms in a particular country. While both types of studies contribute to a better understanding of the challenges facing the implementation of global diversity policies, they do not address the more sociological aspect of diversity management as a practice embedded in a social and cultural context in which understanding meanings becomes critical to successful cross-cultural implementation of management practices.

For this track we invite papers which explore (variances of) connotations of the term diversity, and describe their implications for organizations and their approach to diversity management and DM initiatives. We would like to generate a discussion

that focuses on what the term diversity encompasses, what it includes and excludes, when it is used, and what issues and situations are evoked by it – so that we can better understand and predict the impact of diversity initiatives in different national cultural settings. We welcome studies using both qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate these issues.

Papers could address the following types of issues:

1. Context specific case studies and other qualitative and quantitative research on diversity management practices.
2. Studies investigating the impact of discriminatory practices in particular contexts and their impact on individuals and groups for example, from an identity perspective. How does the context affect reactions to such practices and who are the actors?
3. Comparative studies of diversity management, discrimination, equal opportunity and other diversity-related issues.
4. Myths and reality concerning diversity and diversity management. What is the role of politically correct corporate behavior in implementing diversity practices? Is diversity a passing fad? The institutionalization of diversity in management, and the impact of the financial crisis on diversity activities in firms.
5. Diversity management as intercultural management.

### **Track Organizers**

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### **References:**

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