

International human resource management (IHRM) is a clearly defined area of scientific research and management practice.¹ The broad scope of subject matter encompassed by IHRM may be expressed by three main thematic areas, specifically: human resource management in international companies, comparative IHRM, and cross-cultural HRM.² Currently, it is under the influence of many factors, including modern information technology, globalization, the growing share of foreign direct investment in the whole of worldwide investment, the growing similarity between global and local business, the development of “born global” enterprises,³ political conflict, population migration and its impact on international labor markets, as well as the most recent crisis on the financial markets and its effects in the sphere of real-world economy, including the work environment. The growing complexity and variability of the business environment on international markets and its related uncertainty justify questions regarding paradigms that are currently obligatory in human resource management and the quest for new ways of managing organizations, including implementation of the HR function.⁴

The theory and practice of human resource management, subject to a complex, variable, and risk-saturated environment, are standing before a series of challenges, including the following matters:

1 See, among others, Dowling P. J., Festing M., and Engle A. D. (2008), *International Human Resource Management*, London, Thomson Learning; Brewster C. and Mayrhofer W. (2012), Editors, *Handbook of Research on Comparative Human Resource Management*, Cheltenham (UK), Northampton (USA), Edward Elgar Publishing Limited; Stor M. (2011), *Strategiczne międzynarodowe ZZL* [Strategic International HRM], EU Publication, Wrocław.

2 Pocztownski A. (2012), “From the Editor,” *Human Resource Management*, No. 6 (89).

3 Przybylska K. (2013), *Born global. Nowa generacja małych przedsiębiorstw* [Born global: A new generation of small enterprises], Cracow, Cracow University of Economics Foundation.

4 Reilly P. and Williams T. (2012), *Global HR: Challenges Facing the Function*, Farnham Gower Publishing Limited.

- The adding of value for stakeholders on international markets;
- Labor mobility on international markets;
- Convergence vs. divergence in IHRM;
- Diversity management;
- Generation management;
- Global talent management;
- International assignments and expatriation;
- The ethical and environmental aspects of IHRM.

The above-listed questions make up the subject of studies undertaken in various countries as well as discussions at scientific conferences. An example of the latter is the 13th International Human Resource Management Conference held on June 24–27, 2014 in Cracow. A total of 160 people from thirty-three countries participated. This fostered the formation of a broad platform for the exchange of views on current research streams and development tendencies in various areas of international human resource management.⁵

In this issue of *Human Resource Management*, we are presenting articles developed on the basis of carefully selected papers prepared and presented at the above-mentioned conference. The issue opens with a study by Marzena Stor devoted to strategic international human resource management in the context of the building of sustainable competitive advantage. In it, the author presents proposals for an integrated strategic international human resource management model developed on the basis of analysis of existing concepts and research currents within the framework of strategic human resource management as well as international human resource management. In a successive article, Łukasz Sienkiewicz takes up the question of the strategic importance of human resource management in knowledge intensive services. He identifies the difference in approach to human resource management in knowledge intensive services on the basis of empirical studies. Moreover, he indicates the implications of international human resource management with respect to the transfer of HR practices. Questions of knowledge management in the context of organizational development (OD) are considered in the next study. Its authors, Martina Lučkaničová and Victor Oltra, defined challenges linked with management and the sharing of knowledge during implementation of OD programs on the basis of a case study analysis. A key problem in the area of international management, including human resource management, is the transfer of defined solution from

5 *Uncertainty in a Flattening World: Challenges for IHRM, Book of Abstracts*, 13th International Human Resource Management Conference, June 24–27, 2014, Cracow University of Economics and *Symposium Cracoviense*, Cracow, 2014.

headquarters to branches of international corporations. This matter was presented in the article of Michał Bartoszewicz and Katarzyna Susabowska entitled “The Transfer of Corporate Human Resource Routines in International Companies: An ERP Implementation Example.” On the basis of a case study, the authors discuss the role of cultural artifacts in the development of organizational routines—their transfer from the head office to a branch in this specific case. In the successive article, Sylwia Przytuła looks at the matter of the functioning of expatriates in Polish branches of international corporations. The analysis was conducted from the perspective of expatriates as perceived by managers from the host country, Poland in this case. The scope of research included expatriate competencies, interpersonal relations between expatriates and local workers, communication, and the preparing of Polish successors. The question that is the subject of the next article by Malgorzata Striker is of universal importance in human resource management. It involves the matter of absenteeism and presenteeism. The author takes up the challenge of answering two questions: “What cultural factors influence employee absenteeism?” and “How can it be managed in a multicultural work environment?” In-depth studies into topical literature served as the basis for reflection and conclusions. The next article, entitled “Polish and UK Experience in Managing an Aging Workforce,” by Bogusława Urbaniak, took up the matter of the influence of institutional solutions linked to demographic changes on human resource management practice in the two countries. The article also discusses the results of research into employer attitude with respect to the employment of pre-retirement and retirement age workers. The question of age management is continued in the next article in which Beata Radzka and Renata Trochimiuk present the results of research on challenges in the area of human resource management in connection with the leaving and re-employment of older people in small- and medium-sized enterprises. The last article delves into the employment of the disabled in Poland against a backdrop of European Union solutions. In it, on the basis of empirical studies, Magdalena Pancewicz and Joanna Kotzian present the dilemmas standing before companies and they indicate the differences in approach to employing disabled people in large and small companies.

The above-presented articles, in spite of the fact that they pertain to selected questions, confirm the fact that international human resource management encompasses a broad scope of problems examined from various perspectives and that it has a place in the broader context of organizational management and the situation on labor markets. Hope may be expressed that the works found in this issue of *Human Resource Management* shall serve as inspiration for discussion and further research as well as playing a role in improving practice in this field.

It is with great sadness and an immense sense of loss that we bid farewell to Professor Henryk Król, a longtime associate, colleague, and friend. It was from the very beginnings of our periodical that Professor Król worked on the Editorial College and had significant impact on the shaping of the profile of the publication, including by participating in editorial discussions and reviewing articles submitted for publication.

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