

“Insights into diversity management as a pillar of sustainable development in Czech and Ukrainian universities”


AUTHORS

Martina Rašticová 



Nataliia Tkalenko 



Nataliia Versal 



Mariia Balytska 



Nataliia Kholiavko 



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Martina Rašticová, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Head of Department of Management, Faculty of Business and Economics, Mendel University in Brno, Czech Republic.

Nataliia Tkalenko, DSc, Professor, Department of Management and Administration, ESI of Business, Economics and Administration, Chernihiv Polytechnic National University, Ukraine; Assistant Professor, Department of Management, Faculty of Business and Economics, Mendel University in Brno, Czech Republic. (Corresponding author)

Nataliia Versal, DSc, Associate Professor, Department of Insurance, Banking and Risk Management, Faculty of Economics, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Ukraine; Assistant Professor, Department of Management, Faculty of Business and Economics, Mendel University in Brno, Czech Republic.

Mariia Balytska, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Department of Insurance, Banking and Risk Management, Faculty of Economics, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Ukraine.

Nataliia Kholiavko, DSc, Professor, Department of Finance, Banking and Insurance, ESI of Business, Economics and Administration, Chernihiv Polytechnic National University, Ukraine.



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Martina Rašticová (Czech Republic), Nataliia Tkalenko (Ukraine, Czech Republic), Nataliia Versal (Ukraine, Czech Republic), Mariia Balytska (Ukraine), Nataliia Kholiavko (Ukraine)

INSIGHTS INTO DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT AS A PILLAR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN CZECH AND UKRAINIAN UNIVERSITIES

Abstract

Diversity management encompasses dimensions such as gender and sexual orientation, age, disabilities, nationality, ethnicity, religion, and socio-economic status (SES) and is fundamental to sustainable development, enabling higher education institutions (HEIs) to foster inclusive, equitable, and resilient academic environments. This study examines diversity management practices in seven Czech and five Ukrainian HEIs recognized as leaders in the Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings. Data were obtained from university websites, SDG reports, or annual reports focusing on SDG 1, SDG 2, SDG 4, SDG 5, SDG 8, SDG 10, and SDG 16. The analysis shows that Czech universities demonstrate structured policies and stable resources, enabling them to offer comprehensive support for professional growth, gender equality, and inclusivity. Examples include sabbatical opportunities, gender-balanced organizational policies, and adaptive measures for individuals with disabilities. Conversely, Ukrainian universities exhibit remarkable resilience and adaptability, addressing challenges posed by the ongoing war. Key initiatives include supporting displaced students and veterans, restoring damaged infrastructure, and integrating inclusive education practices under wartime constraints. Despite differing contexts, both countries emphasize financial aid and scholarships as critical tools for ensuring equitable access to education. The findings underscore the importance of leveraging diversity dimensions to develop effective strategies for achieving SDGs while adapting to regional and institutional specificities.

Keywords sustainability, inclusion, justice, equality, university, academia

JEL Classification I24, Q56

INTRODUCTION

Diversity management refers to organizations' conscious efforts to create an inclusive environment that embraces and benefits from individuals' unique characteristics, perspectives, and backgrounds. In higher education institutions (HEIs), diversity management goes beyond administrative or organizational practices and serves as a fundamental pillar for raising awareness, promoting inclusivity, and embedding these values in education and research.

The formulation of the Millennium Development Goals in 2000 and their transformation into the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 established a universal framework for addressing global challenges and ensuring sustainable development. At its core, sustainable development aims to "meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Brundtland, 1987, p. 16). Incorporating diversity into a sustainable development framework shifts the focus from purely quanti-

tative growth to development that ensures equal opportunities for individuals regardless of gender, age, background, or socio-economic status.

Diversity management is vital within HEIs because they serve as engines of knowledge production and dissemination, shaping the values, mindsets, and skills of future generations. Education, as a fundamental output of HEIs, is crucial in embedding principles of inclusivity and equity in students' professional and personal identities. Understanding and implementing diversity management in HEIs is not just an operational necessity but a strategic imperative. It represents the first step in fostering broader societal awareness of diversity and in preparing students as future leaders to promote and uphold these values across industries and sectors.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of diversity management has undergone significant evolution over time. It began in the United States as a pragmatic response to address systemic discrimination, initially focusing on issues affecting African Americans (Genkova, 2019). Over the years, the dimensions of diversity in the US have expanded, with gender inclusion becoming a key focus (Köllen, 2021). Today, diversity is often described through the "Big Eight" framework (Plummer, 2003; Genkova, 2019), encompassing ethnicity, nationality, gender, organizational role, age, sexual orientation, physical or mental abilities, and religion. However, the "Big Eight" is not static. These dimensions evolve depending on the historical period, country, or organizational context (this adaptability highlights the dynamic nature of diversity management, which will be further explored in the context of HEIs). For instance, variations exist in how gender and sexual orientation are categorized or in the emphasis placed on race as a distinct dimension (Confetto et al., 2023).

The need for diversity management arises from its role as a strategic framework for fostering inclusivity and leveraging pluralism within organizations (Genkova, 2019). Importantly, diversity management extends beyond addressing equality and justice; it also delivers tangible benefits, particularly economic ones, that organizations can achieve through its implementation. Gilbert et al. (1999) argue that diversity management represents a new organizational paradigm that aligns ethical considerations with business advantages, making it a cornerstone for modern organizational success.

In the context of the intended outcomes of diversity management, a significant body of research

emphasizes its role in enhancing organizational productivity. Ashikali and Groeneveld (2015), Lančarič et al. (2015), Köllen (2021), Otaye-Ebede (2018), and Ohunakin et al. (2019) argue that diversity management represents a shift toward an inclusive approach to organizational practices. This approach focuses on creating a supportive environment where the diverse talents and abilities of employees are recognized and maximized to achieve organizational objectives effectively.

Another strand of research focuses on diversity management's potential to address inequality and discrimination. Urbancova et al. (2015) and George et al. (2017) highlight its role in ensuring equal access to education and employment, irrespective of factors like gender, race, religion, age, physical and mental abilities, or family status. This approach emphasizes eliminating barriers that limit opportunities and participation in these domains, fostering a more inclusive and equitable environment. A third perspective highlights diversity management's role in fostering favorable working conditions that prioritize trust, inclusivity, and proactive organizational cultures (Kim & Park, 2017; Shore et al., 2018; Sinicropi & Cortese, 2021; Yadav & Lenka, 2020). This approach emphasizes creating environments where employee diversity is not only valued but actively integrated into organizational practices. Inclusiveness and equitable treatment are central to this framework, ensuring that all employees feel respected and supported.

Diversity management has become a central theme in achieving sustainability within HEIs in recent years. The "Big Eight" dimensions in HEIs have been transformed into the following categories: gender, sexual orientation, age, (dis)abilities,

ethnicity, nationality, religion, and socio-economic status. Effective diversity management practices cannot be considered separately from the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Gender and sexual orientation diversity plays a crucial role in the sustainability practices of HEIs. The role of gender diversity within HEIs has been extensively studied, emphasizing its significance in creating inclusive academic environments. Research highlights that gender-balanced institutions foster equitable access to education, professional development opportunities, and work happiness (Mousa, 2021). They also improve institutional performance by drawing from diverse perspectives in decision-making and problem-solving (Hofstra et al., 2020). Universities that actively promote gender equality not only contribute to reducing structural inequalities (Flórez-Parra et al., 2024) but also align with global objectives such as the Sustainable Development Goals: SDG 4, Quality Education, (Lockmun-Bissessur et al., 2023), SDG 5, Gender Equality, (Parra-Martínez et al., 2021), and SDG 10, Reduced Inequalities, (Ellis, 2009; Garrido et al., 2021).

The integration of gender equality into university policies and practices is a central component of diversity management. The development of inclusive policies, such as gender-sensitive recruitment processes, family-friendly workplace practices, and mentorship programs for women in leadership, are crucial for addressing systemic barriers (Lin et al., 2016; Vidal et al., 2020; Windsor & Crawford, 2021).

Despite significant advancements, HEIs face persistent challenges in implementing gender diversity initiatives. Structural barriers, such as the underrepresentation of women in STEM fields or senior academic positions, remain prevalent (Cagáňová et al., 2012; Sheltzer & Smith, 2014; Wiczorek-Szymańska, 2020; Plath et al., 2024).

Age is another dimension of diversity management within HEIs (Phillipson & Ogg, 2010). Universities often represent multigenerational environments, encompassing young and older students (Morrow-Howell et al., 2022), mid-career professionals, and older faculty. The integration of multiple generations fosters a richer exchange of perspectives and experiences, which is particularly beneficial

in educational and research settings (Matějka & Kořán, 2024). Despite its potential benefits, age diversity presents significant challenges for HEIs. Barriers such as age-based stereotypes and generational divides can hinder effective collaboration. For example, younger faculty or students may face perceptions of inexperience (Crozier & Woolnough, 2020), while older staff may be viewed as less adaptable to technological advancements (Dias-Trindade et al., 2020; Rasticova et al., 2022; Inamorato Dos Santos et al., 2023). These biases can impede productivity and limit the institution's ability to fully leverage its multigenerational workforce (Viana & Helal, 2023). Moreover, addressing these issues requires proactive interventions, including lifelong learning initiatives and policies that promote equity, like the concept of an age-friendly university (Talmage et al., 2016; Earl et al., 2018; Montepare et al., 2020; Morrow-Howell et al., 2020; Whitbourne et al., 2024).

The inclusion of individuals with disabilities within HEIs reflects broader commitments to equity, accessibility, and social justice (Golden & Petty, 2022). This dimension focuses on creating an academic environment where individuals with physical, sensory, cognitive, and psychological disabilities are empowered to participate fully in education (Hill et al., 2022; Nieminen, 2023; Lyner-Cleophas et al., 2023), research (Dali & Charbonneau, 2024), and campus life (Hitches, 2024; O'Connor et al., 2024).

Addressing disability as part of diversity management goes beyond compliance with anti-discrimination laws; it is a proactive effort to ensure equity in access and opportunity. However, faculty and administrative staff often lack the training necessary to address the needs of individuals with disabilities effectively (Román-Graván et al., 2024; Svendby, 2024; Schreuer et al., 2024). These efforts align with the principles of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), emphasizing the role of HEIs in promoting inclusivity and reducing systemic disparities (Wolbring & Lillywhite, 2021).

The growing internationalization of HEIs has brought greater attention to the importance of nationality and ethnicity in shaping institutional

policies and practices. Ethnic and national diversity contributes to a dynamic academic environment where varied cultural perspectives foster education quality (Eiras, 2024), tolerance (Abdulai et al., 2021), and socializing effect (Urbanovska & Pleschová, 2024). Despite its benefits, managing nationality and ethnicity diversity in HEIs is not without challenges. Discrimination, cultural insensitivity, and systemic inequalities can create barriers to inclusion (Harwood et al., 2012; McGee, 2020; Lee et al., 2020). For instance, international students often face difficulties related particularly to language barriers (Elhami et al., 2024; Tavares, 2024) and cultural adjustment (Akanwa, 2015; Kaya, 2020; Liu et al., 2023; Li, 2024). Similarly, ethnic minorities within universities may experience marginalization or underrepresentation in leadership roles (Arday, 2018; Chen & Yang, 2019).

Institutional policies sometimes fail to adequately address these issues, resulting in gaps in support systems for international and minority students and staff. Research highlights the need for targeted interventions, such as language support programs, cultural competence training, and anti-discrimination policies, to mitigate these challenges (Worthington et al., 2008; Hong et al., 2023).

Religion represents the pluralistic societies they serve (Rockenbach & Mayhew, 2024). Effective management of religious diversity ensures that individuals from varied faiths feel included and respected, fostering an environment of coexistence through the creation of religious organizations (Aune et al., 2024) and mutual understanding (Dean & Means, 2023). Measures such as providing prayer rooms (Bobrowicz & Hilton Saggau, 2022) and addressing dietary restrictions (Navarro-Prado et al., 2017) ensure equitable participation for individuals of all faiths. These efforts align HEIs with the principles of SDG 16, Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, (Schliesser, 2023).

Socio-economic status (SES) encompasses disparities in income, education, and access to resources. Students from low-income backgrounds often face barriers such as limited financial resources, lack of preparatory education, and insufficient institutional support (Thomas, 2014; Gellisch et al., 2024; Walker et al., 2024). HEIs that prioritize socio-economic diversity benefit from enriched campus

environments where students from varied backgrounds bring unique perspectives. Moreover, supporting students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, especially first-generation students initiatives (Brosnan et al., 2016; Bharucha, 2021; Patfield et al., 2022; Grilo et al., 2024), contributes to societal progress by enhancing social mobility and reducing poverty. These measures align with SDG1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (No Hunger), SDG 4 (Quality Education), and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

Financial support is needed to reduce barriers for economically disadvantaged students (Bettinger et al., 2019; Anderson, 2020), as students from marginalized communities frequently lack the resources to compete for admission or succeed academically once enrolled.

The implementation of diversity management in HEIs requires significant organizational changes, as flexibility and adaptability are essential to meet diverse needs. The challenges are associated with transferring sustainability practices across different university contexts, noting that such processes often demand tailored strategies (Adomssent et al., 2007). These adaptive approaches are crucial for broader organizational change, particularly in addressing the complexities of diversity-related initiatives (Barth, 2013). However, resistance to change remains a major barrier, as institutions often face structural or cultural hurdles that impede progress. Strategies designed to overcome these obstacles have shown promise in reducing friction and advancing diversity goals (Akins et al., 2019).

The literature review highlights persistent challenges in implementing diversity management within HEIs, particularly across the identified dimensions. That is why the purpose of this study is to analyze diversity management practices in HEIs in the context of SDGs and to identify differences in these practices between Ukrainian and Czech universities.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-method approach, utilizing the descriptive analysis for data of Times Higher Education Impact Rankings, as well as case study methodology and comparative analysis to ex-

plore diversity management practices in Ukrainian and Czech HEIs. This combination allowed for an in-depth exploration of diversity management practices in Ukrainian and Czech HEIs. Two steps were carried out to conduct this analysis.

The first step involved forming a sample of universities using data from the THE Impact Rankings (2020–2024). Universities were selected based on two criteria. The first criterion was rank consistency, requiring placement in the top one to three positions in the THE Impact Rankings at least twice from 2020 to 2024. The second criterion was the availability of publicly accessible diversity-related information, including data on diversity management provided through university websites, SDG reports, or annual reports. Diversity management was analyzed within the framework of SDGs, specifically SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) (Appendix A).

The second step involved conducting an in-depth analysis of selected university case studies to identify diversity management practices. A comparative analysis was conducted to highlight similarities, differences, and unique practices in diversity management between Ukrainian and Czech HEIs.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Connecting SDGs to diversity management: A comparative focus on Czech and Ukrainian HEIs

The literature review identified the “Big Eight” dimensions of diversity management in HEIs: gender, sexual orientation, age, (dis)abilities, ethnicity, nationality, religion, and socio-economic status. These dimensions form the focus of analysis in this paper. However, recognizing that diversity management practices often exhibit characteristics of intersectionality makes it challenging to separate them into distinct dimensions. For this reason, they have been categorized and analyzed

into the following groups: gender/sexual orientation (GSO), age, (dis)abilities, ethnicity/nationality/religion (ENR), and socio-economic status (SES). Sustainable development requires diversity to be an integral component, even though it is not explicitly measured as a standalone indicator.

THE Impact Rankings incorporates metrics that account for diversity across students, faculty and staff, and the broader community (Figure 1):

- SDG 1 (Financial aid for poverty-affected students, University anti-poverty programs),
- SDG 2 (Student hunger),
- SDG 4 (Lifelong learning measures, Proportion of first-generation students),
- SDG 5 (Proportion of first-generation female students, Student access measures, Proportion of senior female academics, Proportion of women receiving degrees, Women’s progress measures),
- SDG 8 (Employment practices, Expenditure per employee, Proportion of employees on secure contracts),
- SDG 10 (First-generation students, Students from developing countries, Students and staff with disabilities),
- SDG 16 (University governance measures),
- SDG 17 (Relationships to support the goals, Education on SDGs) (THE, 2024).

Given that diversity dimensions often exhibit intersectionality (e.g., gender and socio-economic status or gender and age), examining them through the lens of SDGs helps avoid excessive fragmentation and isolation of individual aspects of diversity. The conceptual framework of SDGs at HEIs, with a specific focus on diversity management, is illustrated in Figure 2. This concept is built around four core aspects: education centered on SDGs, research aligned with the SDGs, the establishment of sustainable campuses, and the implementation of sustainable governance practices. It integrates key elements from the aforementioned SDGs.

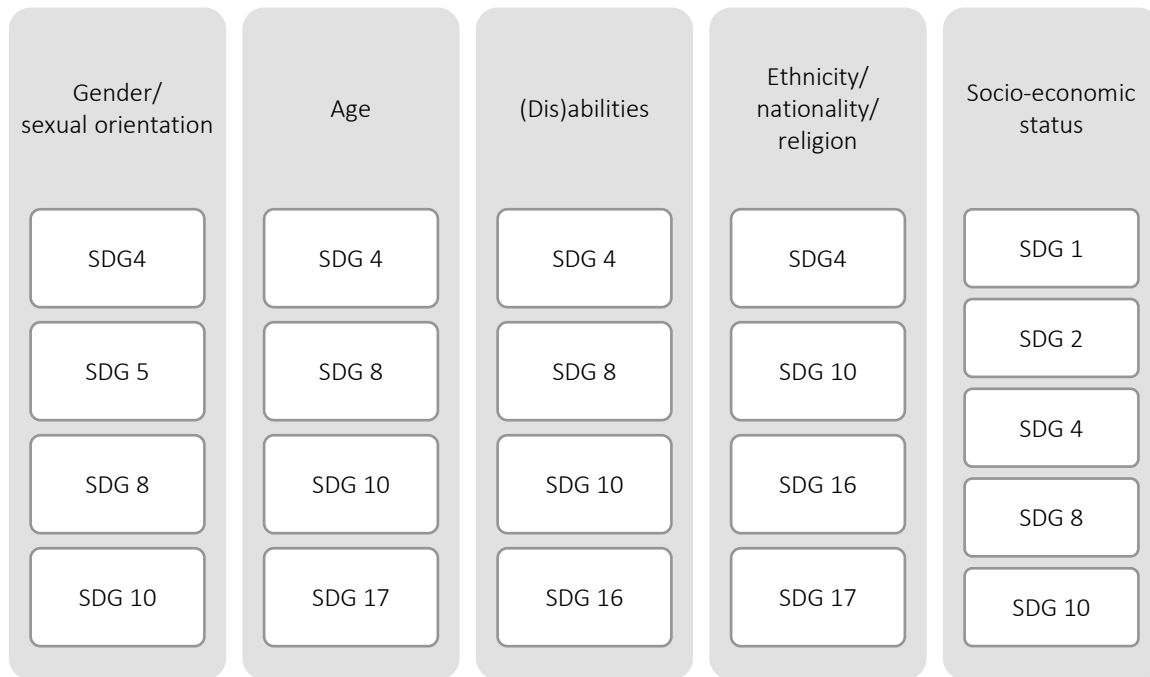


Figure 1. Correspondence between diversity dimensions and SDGs within HEIs

Initially, analysis is conducted based on THE Impact Rankings. Given that study focuses on a comparative analysis of the number of universities from both countries in the rankings, it is important to provide general statistics on the total number of universities in each country. This is necessary because only a small proportion of universities from each country are included in THE Impact Rankings, and the general statistics will help contextualize the comparison. The statistics on the number of universities in Ukraine and the Czech Republic from 2020 to 2024 highlight significant shifts in the higher education landscape of both countries, reflecting broader trends and challenges. In Ukraine, the number of HEIs decreased dramatically, from 515 in 2020 to 314 in 2024 (State Statistics Service of Ukraine, 2024). This sharp decline can be attributed to reforms in the education sector, aimed at optimizing resources and improving the quality of education. In contrast, the Czech Republic experienced a more modest decrease, from 57 universities in 2020 to 54 in 2024 (Czech Statistical Office, n.d.), indicating a relatively stable higher education system with minor adjustments over time.

This study examines the dynamics and disparities in the performance of Czech and Ukrainian universities in the THE Impact Rankings. The analysis is conducted in two stages. First, the

study focuses on the score dynamics within each country to track progress over time. Second, annual cross-country comparisons are performed by calculating the gap between the maximum scores of Czech and Ukrainian universities for each year. Each SDG includes indicators reflecting aspects of diversity management, alongside other unrelated indicators. In this study, the indicators relevant to diversity management are identified. However, the analysis is conducted across the entire SDG framework, as isolating indicators specifically related to diversity management is not feasible.

SDG 1 and SDG 2 are closely interconnected, as hunger often accompanies poverty. THE Impact Rankings evaluate specific sub-questions within SDG 1, such as the proportion of students receiving financial aid due to poverty, opportunities for students from the poorest families and low-income countries, and within SDG 2, the availability of programs that ensure access to healthy, balanced meals and initiatives aimed at combating hunger among students.

Universities' alignment with these indicators facilitates the inclusion of representatives from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, particularly those facing poverty and hunger. By addressing these challenges, universities provide access to

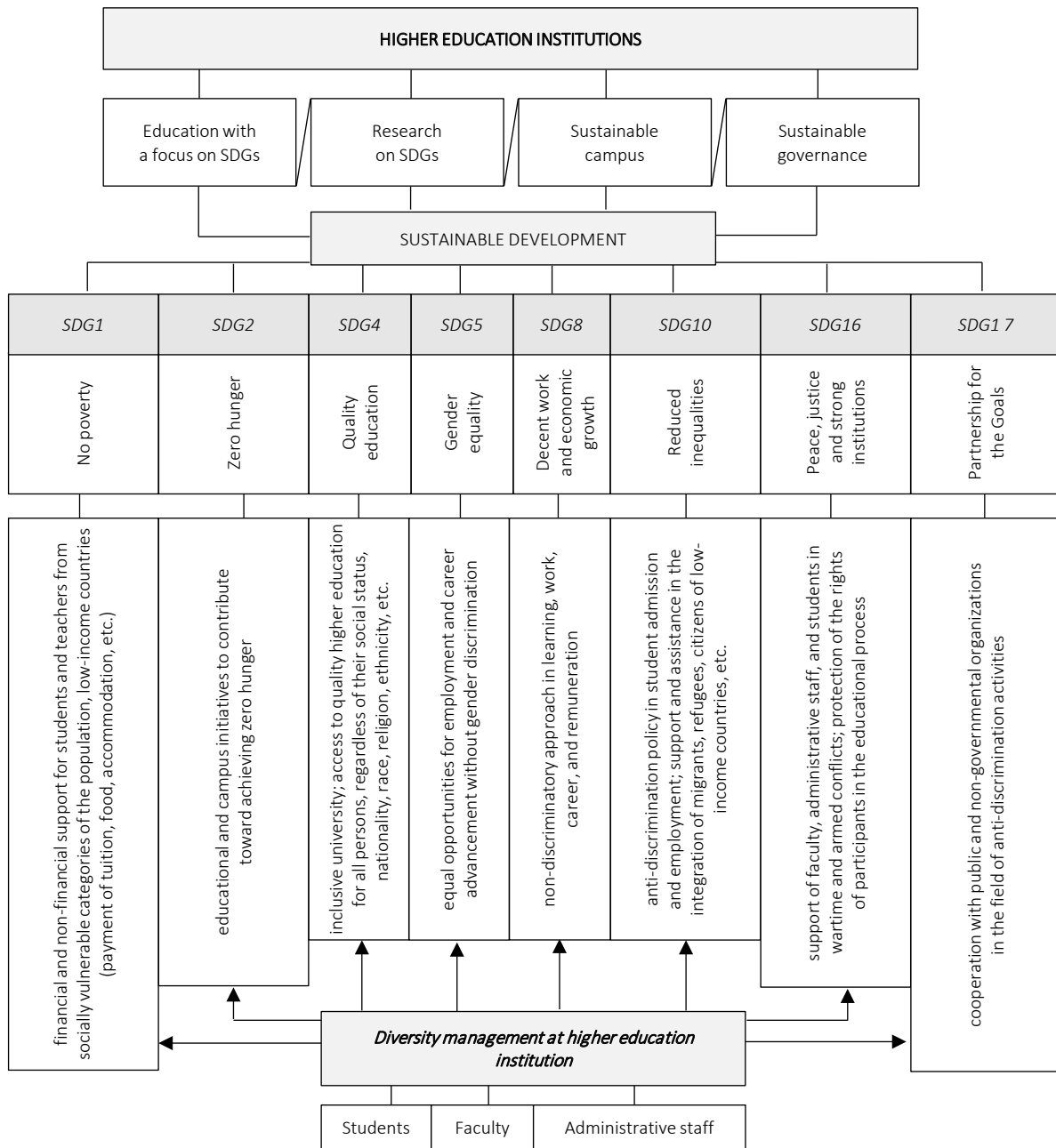


Figure 2. Conceptual scheme of activation of diversity management at HEIs through sustainable development

education for students from low-income families and countries and create conditions to overcome social barriers associated with inequality.

Ukrainian and Czech universities' involvement in achieving SDG 1 is growing year over year (Table 1). For example, in 2020, only two universities from each country were included in the SDG 1 ranking, which evaluates efforts to reduce poverty (THE, 2020). By 2024, the representation of Ukrainian universities in this ranking grew ten-

fold to 22, while Czech universities maintained modest growth in this area (THE, 2024). The proportion of universities included in these rankings relative to the total number of universities also underscores this trend. In Ukraine, only about 0.39% of HEIs were represented in the SDG 1 ranking in 2020, but by 2024, this figure rose to approximately 7.01%. In the Czech Republic, while the absolute numbers are smaller, the percentage of HEIs represented in the SDG 1 ranking grew from about 3.51% in 2020 to 5.56% in 2024 (THE, 2020, 2024).

In addition to analyzing the number of universities in the rankings, a comparative analysis of their performance in achieving the SDGs was conducted using the weighted group maximum score (WGMS). This metric represents the weighted average of maximum scores across predefined groups of universities, where weights correspond to the number of institutions in each group. The maximum score for each SDG is 100 points.

Analyzing the gaps in WGMS (2024 vs. 2020), Ukrainian HEIs showed a modest yet positive improvement despite their increased presence in the rankings compared to 2020. In contrast, Czech HEIs experienced a decline in their WGMS by 34.7% over the same period.

It is also crucial to highlight the gap between the WGMS for Ukrainian and Czech universities. In 2020, this gap amounted to 14.4 points in favor of Czech universities. However, by 2024, the situation reversed, resulting in a 1.54-point advantage for Ukrainian universities (Table 1).

Similar trends are evident in the SDG 2 ranking, focusing on initiatives to end hunger (Table 2). In 2020, only one university from Ukraine and one from the Czech Republic were ranked (THE, 2020). By 2024, Ukraine’s presence expanded sig-

nificantly to 16 universities (the weighted share grew up from 0.19% to 5.10%), while the Czech Republic’s increased to three (proportion grew up from 1.75% to 5.56%) (THE, 2024).

When examining the achievement of SDG 2, a slight improvement in the performance of Ukrainian universities is observed over the analyzed period. In contrast, Czech universities demonstrated a decline in WGMS by nearly 30%. Over the study period, the gap between Ukrainian and Czech universities narrowed by more than three times.

Two blocks are important for diversity management in SDG 4. The first is lifelong learning measures (THE, 2024), which include vocational training, career-oriented programs, and learning opportunities tailored to older individuals. This aspect of diversity is vital because it fosters interaction between generations, each bringing unique experiences and perspectives to the learning environment. Combining these different worlds gives one a broader perspective on understanding society, its needs, and values. In addition, it allows for overcoming a number of stereotypes (Balytska et al., 2023). The second measure is the proportion of students who are the first in their family to attend university (THE, 2024). This demographic adds

Table 1. Distribution of universities by ranking and count in Ukraine and the Czech Republic, SDG 1

Source: THE Impact Rankings data.

Year	SDG1, range of scores	Number of Ukrainian HEIs in the range of scores	WGMS	Number of Czech HEIs in the range of scores	WGMS	Gap UA/ CZ HEIs
2020	5.4–30.6	2	30.60	–	45.00	–14.40
	30.7–45.0	–		2		
2021	4.1–37.8	3	41.45	1	37.80	3.65
	45.7–52.4	1		–		
2022	4.4–33.9	11	37.75	2	33.90	3.85
	34.1–47.4	2		–		
	53.9–60.8	1		–		
2023	5.8–23.2	8	33.05	2	31.93	1.11
	23.3–38.1	7		–		
	38.2–49.4	1		1		
	54.5–60.1	1		–		
2024	4.8–22.3	11	30.90	2	29.37	1.54
	22.4–34.6	7		–		
	34.7–43.5	2		1		
	43.6–52.7	2		–		

Note: A gradient fill visually represents the gradation, with darker shades indicating higher values and lighter shades representing lower values.

Table 2. Distribution of universities by ranking and count in Ukraine and the Czech Republic, SDG 2

Source: THE Impact Rankings data.

Year	SDG2, range of scores	Number of Ukrainian HEIs in the range of scores	WGMS	Number of Czech HEIs in the range of scores	WGMS	Gap UA/ CZ HEIs
2020	1.1–36.2	1	36.20		63.70	–27.50
	63.7	–		1		
2021	2.6–15.5	1	28.37		59.20	–30.83
	16.0–34.8	2				
2022	47.7–59.2	–	38.35	1	33.30	5.05
	1.8–33.3	8		–		
2023	33.4–44.8	2	37.78	–	54.95	–17.17
	55.2–65.8	1		–		
2024	2.2–15.2	3	36.29	–	44.53	–8.25
	15.3–38.3	4		1		
2023	38.4–48.2	1	36.29	–	44.53	–8.25
	48.3–56.2	3		1		
2024	71.6	–	36.29	2	44.53	–8.25
	2.5–30.9	11		–		
2024	31.1–46.6	4	36.29	–	44.53	–8.25
	46.9–54.3	1		–		
2024	61.6–71.8	–	36.29	1	44.53	–8.25

Note: A gradient fill visually represents the gradation, with darker shades indicating higher values and lighter shades representing lower values.

another layer of diversity, representing a critical step in breaking generational cycles of educational disadvantage. Such efforts align with the broader trends observed in Ukrainian and Czech universities, where measurable progress has been made in promoting quality education and inclusivity.

Table 3 highlights these achievements, showing a steady increase in the number of universities recognized in SDG 4-related rankings and their improving performance over time. In 2020, the proportion of Ukrainian universities in the THE Impact Rankings was 2.14%, which increased to 13.06% by 2024. For Czech universities, the proportion rose from 8.77% in 2020 to 16.67% in 2024. Regarding WGMS, Ukrainian universities improved their position by 8.8% over the analyzed period, while Czech universities achieved a more significant increase of 31.7%. Overall, there was a small gap in WGMS between Czech and Ukrainian universities in 2020, the situation shifted unfavorably for Ukrainian HEIs by 2024, with a gap of minus 10.52 points.

Diversity in SDG 5 is reflected through indicators such as the proportion of female students among the overall student population, the per-

centage of senior women in leadership positions and academia as a whole, and the support provided to women for their professional and academic advancement.

In 2020, Ukrainian universities represented 1.17% of institutions included in the THE Impact Rankings, increasing their share to 10.19% by 2024. Czech universities also improved their representation, rising from 5.26% in 2020 to 14.81% in 2024 (Table 4). Regarding WGMS, Ukrainian universities faced a decline of 8.1% over the analyzed period, while Czech universities demonstrated a substantial increase of 18.5%. In 2020, Ukrainian HEIs benefited from a favorable gap of 8.23 points compared to Czech HEIs; however, by 2024, this advantage shifted, resulting in an unfavorable gap of minus 2.59 points.

In the context of SDG 8, diversity is under consideration across several dimensions. Firstly, employment practices within universities are a critical area where diversity can be advanced, particularly through inclusive recruitment policies that address the representation of marginalized groups among both faculty and administrative staff. Secondly, when viewed through the lens of

Table 3. Distribution of universities by ranking and count in Ukraine and the Czech Republic, SDG 4

Source: THE Impact Rankings data.

Year	SDG4, range of scores	Number of Ukrainian HEIs in the range of scores	WGMS	Number of Czech HEIs in the range of scores	WGMS	Gap UA/CZ HEIs
2020	2.9–22.9	1	41.19	1	42.02	-0.83
	23.0–40.5	8		2		
	40.7–48.6	1		1		
	48.7–57.6	1		1		
2021	5.7–31.6	10	38.29	1	50.74	-12.45
	31.7–42.0	4		2		
	42.1–52.5	–		2		
	52.6–58.0	1		–		
	58.1–63.9	–		1		
2022	64.0–70.7	1	38.95	1	55.77	-16.82
	2.9–33.6	13		1		
	33.7–41.6	10		2		
	41.7–49.7	1		–		
	49.8–58.0	3		–		
	62.0–67.6	–		1		
	67.7–73.1	–		1		
2023	77.1	–	40.53	1	47.66	-7.13
	2.8–35.7	19		3		
	35.8–43.5	10		2		
	51.0–58.6	2		–		
	58.7–62.5	–		1		
	62.6–66.5	1		1		
2024	66.6–73.0	–	44.82	1	55.34	-10.52
	4.0–25.6	5		–		
	25.7–44.1	26		4		
	44.2–49.9	5		1		
	56.3–62.0	4		1		
	62.1–65.6	1		1		
	65.7–69.2	–		1		
	75	–		1		

Note: A gradient fill visually represents the gradation, with darker shades indicating higher values and lighter shades representing lower values.

diversity, expenditure per employee reflects the extent to which universities prioritize equitable pay for all staff. Competitive remuneration is critical to improving the well-being of university staff. By investing in equitable remuneration, universities improve the financial stability of their workforce and contribute to broader institutional sustainability. Thirdly, providing secure employment opportunities further supports diversity by creating stable career pathways for individuals from diverse backgrounds, contributing to an inclusive work environment.

In 2020, Ukrainian universities accounted for 1.75% of institutions included in the THE Impact Rankings, increasing their share to 10.19% by 2024. Czech universities also improved their representa-

tion, rising from 0.05% in 2020 to 12.96% in 2024 (Table 5). Regarding maximum scores, Ukrainian universities achieved a notable growth of 18.00% over the analyzed period, while Czech universities demonstrated a smaller increase of 6.08%. In 2020, Ukrainian HEIs faced an unfavorable gap of minus 19.62 points compared to Czech HEIs; however, by 2024, this gap was minus 15.72 points.

Ukrainian universities consistently demonstrate high performance in diversity management across SDG 8, which focuses on promoting decent work and economic growth. The basis for these results is well-developed and detailed legislation regulating the employment of faculty (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2014). The legal framework clearly

Table 4. Distribution of universities by ranking and count in Ukraine and the Czech Republic, SDG 5

Source: THE Impact Rankings data.

Year	SDG5, range of scores	Number of Ukrainian HEIs in the range of scores	WGMS	Number of Czech HEIs in the range of scores	WGMS	Gap UA/CZ HEIs
2020	3.2–32.3	–	46.40	1	38.17	8.23
	32.5–41.1	3		2		
	41.3–51.7	3		–		
2021	6.0–32.2	6	37.80	2	35.83	1.97
	32.3–43.1	2		1		
	43.2–49.3	2		–		
2022	3.9–28.5	5	40.35	1	40.47	–0.11
	28.7–39.5	7		1		
	39.6–48.3	–		–		
2023	48.4–53.4	5	40.18	1	41.07	–0.88
	5.0–21.9	1		1		
	22.1–34.3	10		1		
2024	34.4–43.6	8	42.63	2	45.23	–2.59
	43.7–51.5	3		2		
	51.6–56.0	1		–		
	2.2–35.2	11		2		
	35.3–42.0	12		4		
	42.1–48.1	5		–		
	48.2–55.2	2		1		
55.3–59.1	1	–				
59.2–63.0	1	–				
63.1–68.2	–	1	1			

Note: A gradient fill visually represents the gradation, with darker shades indicating higher values and lighter shades representing lower values.

defines the rights and responsibilities of employees and employers, fostering fair working conditions and minimizing risks of discrimination or labor rights violations. A transparent wage system is critical in ensuring faculty and staff stability and motivation. Explicit criteria for determining salaries, including mandatory allowances for academic degrees, teaching experience, and additional workload, contribute to financial security and encourage professional development (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2016).

SDG 10 is directly linked to diversity as it encompasses key areas such as access to higher education for first-generation students, the inclusion of students from developing countries, ensuring educational opportunities for students with disabilities, creating employment opportunities for faculty and staff with disabilities, and implementing anti-discrimination activities.

In 2020, Ukrainian universities accounted for 1.17% of institutions included in the THE Impact Rankings, increasing their share to 10.19% by 2024.

Similarly, Czech universities improved their representation, rising from 3.51% in 2020 to 12.96% in 2024 (Table 6). Regarding WGMS, Ukrainian HEIs got minus 1.91%, Czech HEIs showed minus 11.01%. Notably, the gap between them shortened by 40% but still Czech HEIs were leaders.

Ukrainian universities have achieved high scores under SDG 10, driven by the implementation of advanced practices and proactive initiatives. Before the war, they actively attracted students from developing countries. As of January 1, 2024, 34,462 international students were enrolled in higher education programs at Ukrainian HEIs. Prior to February 24, 2022, more than 84,000 foreign nationals pursued higher education in Ukraine. The largest groups of international students originated from China, India, Azerbaijan, Morocco, Nigeria, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Georgia, Russia, and Israel (Osvita.UA, 2024). To adapt to new realities, HEIs have begun offering expanded opportunities for distance learning, enabling students to continue their education regardless of geographical or security challenges.

Table 5. Distribution of universities by ranking and count in Ukraine and the Czech Republic, SDG 8

Source: THE Impact Rankings data.

Year	SDG 8, range of scores	Number of Ukrainian HEIs in the range of scores	WGMS	Number of Czech HEIs in the range of scores	WGMS	Gap UA/CZ HEIs
2020	4.6–33.9	4	42.84	–	62.47	–19.62
	34.0–47.2	3		–		
	47.3–54.2	2		1		
	54.5–64.9			1		
	68.3			1		
2021	3.5–32.9	1	51.12		56.80	–5.68
	33.0–48.5	5		1		
	48.6–55.2	1		2		
	55.3–61.2	1				
	61.3–68.3	1		1		
2022	4.2–24.9	7	43.18		62.30	–19.12
	25.0–44.9	7		1		
	45.0–55.2	2				
	55.3–59.5	1		1		
	59.6–64.6	1		1		
	64.7–70.2	1		1		
	70.3	1		–		
	72.3	–		1		
2023	1.4–35.6	9	47.70	1	58.75	–11.05
	35.7–48.3	10		1		
	48.4–57.7	2		1		
	57.8–62.2	1		1		
	62.4–66.3	1				
	66.4–71.5	1		1		
	73.6	1				
	77.2			1		
2024	1.4–30.6	7	50.55		66.27	–15.72
	30.7–43.0	7		1		
	43.1–52.7	6				
	52.8–61.1	5		1		
	61.2–65.1	2				
	65.2–69.2	4		2		
	69.3–73.8	1		3		

Note: A gradient fill visually represents the gradation, with darker shades indicating higher values and lighter shades representing lower values.

Within the framework of HEIs, SDG 16 highlights the fundamental importance of diversity in promoting inclusive societies and strengthening resilient, equitable, and just institutional structures. By ensuring equitable representation, HEIs can actively promote diversity as a cornerstone of effective governance and community-building. Faculty, staff, and students should be meaningfully involved in decision-making processes, bringing insights from their varied backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. Moreover, the goal of Building Peaceful Societies within the framework of SDG 16

aligns closely with the mission of HEIs to bring together individuals from diverse cultural, ethnic, and social backgrounds. Such interactions foster mutual understanding, reduce prejudice, and create an academic environment conducive to collaboration and innovation.

In 2020, Ukrainian universities represented 1.17% of the institutions included in the THE Impact Rankings, with their share increasing to 10.83% by 2024. Czech universities, meanwhile, expanded their presence in the rankings, growing from 5.26% in 2020 to 11.11% in 2024 (Table 7).

Table 6. Distribution of universities by ranking and count in Ukraine and the Czech Republic, SDG 10

Source: THE Impact Rankings data.

Year	SDG 10, range of scores	Number of Ukrainian HEIs in the range of scores	WGMS	Number of Czech HEIs in the range of scores	WGMS	Gap UA/CZ HEIs
2020	6.7–25.3	1	45.78		61.6	-15.82
	25.5–38.6	2				
	38.7–49.0	1				
2021	49.2–61.6	2	48.79	2	49.5	-0.71
	25.2–42.9	3				
	43.0–49.5	2		2		
2022	49.8–56.9	2	47.57		48.7	-1.13
	5.2–35.5	4		1		
	35.7–48.2	7		1		
2023	48.3–54.7	2	45.10	1	41.95	3.15
	55.1–62.4	2				
	3.9–25.5	4		2		
	25.6–39.9	5				
	40.0–51.7	6		1		
2024	51.8–57.5	2	44.91	–	54.82	-9.91
	57.6–65.1	2		1		
	2.4–23.6	2		–		
	23.8–36.9	8		2		
	37.0–47.1	12		–		
	47.2–56.4	7		1		
56.5–62.1	1	–				
62.2–68.7	–	–	1			
68.8–75.2	–	–	1			

Note: A gradient fill visually represents the gradation, with darker shades indicating higher values and lighter shades representing lower values.

Ukrainian HEIs achieved the highest score among evaluated SDGs in 2020, reaching 81.9 points. However, this score declined to 79.6 points over the analyzed period. Overall, WGMS declined by minus 5.83%. In contrast, Czech universities experienced an increase of 3.31% during the same timeframe. Consequently, while Ukrainian universities had a 2.92-point advantage in 2020, the gap shifted by 2024, resulting in a 2.22-point lead for Czech universities.

SDG 17 highlights the pivotal role of partnerships in achieving SDGs, with diversity in HEIs manifesting across multiple dimensions. One significant area is the strengthening of global partnerships through collaborations between institutions from varied cultural, social, and economic contexts. For instance, partnerships between universities in high-income and low-income countries facilitate knowledge exchange and capacity-build-

ing, addressing global inequalities and fostering a more inclusive academic landscape.

Cultural exchange is another essential facet of enriching academic environments through interactions among students, faculty, and staff from diverse backgrounds. Such exchanges promote mutual understanding and prepare students for global citizenship by fostering tolerance and empathy – key values for sustainable development.

Additionally, capacity-building initiatives that respond to local needs in developing regions serve as a vital contribution to social and economic development. These efforts not only address disparities in access to higher education and research but also embed principles of inclusivity into the broader goals of sustainable development. By integrating diversity into their partnerships, HEIs exemplify the transformative potential of SDG 17 in advanc-

Table 7. Distribution of universities by ranking and count in Ukraine and the Czech Republic, SDG 16

Source: THE Impact Rankings data.

Year	SDG 16, range of scores	Number of Ukrainian HEIs in the range of scores	WGMS	Number of Czech HEIs in the range of scores	WGMS	Gap UA/CZ HEIs
2020	11.6–33.4	1	57.22		54.30	2.92
	33.5–49.9	3				
	50.1–63.1			2		
	78.3	1		1		
2021	81.9	1	49.71		57.10	-7.39
	4.7–21.5	2				
	21.6–47.3	5		1		
	47.4–55.1	1		1		
	55.2–63.0	3		2		
2022	63.1–72.9	1	54.41	–	61.68	-7.28
	13.0–40.3	6		1		
	40.4–56.1	9		2		
	56.2–63.9	2		1		
	64.0–71.2	3		1		
2023	82.5	–	48.37	1	54.36	-5.99
	2.5–29.0	8		2		
	29.1–45.0	8		1		
	45.2–58.6	7		2		
	58.7–63.6	3		1		
	63.7–69.9	3		1		
2024	81.2	–	53.88	1	56.10	-2.22
	2.8–23.6	–		2		
	23.7–39.3	10				
	39.6–51.2	12		1		
	51.3–61.8	4		2		
	61.9–66.8	3		1		
	67.0–72.6	3		–		
	72.7–79.6	2		–		
79.9	–	1				
	80.1	–	1			

Note: A gradient fill visually represents the gradation, with darker shades indicating higher values and lighter shades representing lower values.

ing equity and resilience within and beyond academic communities.

SDG 17, which emphasizes strengthening partnerships for sustainable development, acts as a cornerstone for achieving the broader SDG agenda. Within the framework of this goal, it is challenging to identify unique practices specifically tied to diversity, as universities work in close collaboration with each other, governments, and communities. However, it is worth noting that Ukrainian universities, for a long time, lacked extensive access to international programs and collaborations. Since 2022, significant changes have occurred, as evidenced by improved scores and the growing number of Ukrainian universities included in global rankings.

In 2020, Ukrainian universities accounted for 2.14% of the institutions included in the THE Impact Rankings, increasing their share to 14.33% by 2024. Czech universities also expanded their representation, rising from 10.53% in 2020 to 18.52% in 2024 (Table 8).

Ukrainian HEIs reached the highest score among evaluated SDGs in 2024, achieving 84.8-90.0 points. Regarding WGMS, however, there was a decrease of 11.28%. Czech universities demonstrated growth of 45.07% during the same period. In 2020, Ukrainian universities held an 11.59-point advantage over their Czech counterparts; however, by 2024, this advantage disappeared, resulting in minus 13.27 point gap.

Table 8. Distribution of universities by ranking and count in Ukraine and the Czech Republic, SDG 17

Source: THE Impact Rankings data.

Year	SDG 17, range of scores	Number of UKR universities in the range of scores	WGMS	Number of CZ universities in the range of scores	WGMS	Gap UKR/CZ HEIs
2020	4.1–37.7	2	53.39	5	41.80	11.59
	37.8–54.2	7				
	54.3–62.3	1		1		
	62.4–70.2	1		–		
2021	1.7–22.4	7	31.44	2	39.93	–8.49
	22.7–33.2	7				
	33.3–44.7	2		4		
	44.8–55.9	1		1		
2022	1.6–41.4	17	48.35	1	69.74	–21.39
	41.5–50.1	5		1		
	50.2–58.7	3		–		
	58.8–70.2	2		1		
	70.3–76.6	–		3		
	76.7–83.0	1		–		
2023	96.7	–	49.00	1	61.85	–12.85
	1.5–45.2	25		3		
	45.3–53.3	7		–		
	53.4–61.0	1		1		
	61.1–70.5	–		2		
	70.6–75.5	2		1		
2024	75.6–81.7		47.37	1	60.64	–13.27
	1.7–36.8	23		2		
	36.9–52.8	13		2		
	52.9–59.7	4		1		
	59.9–67.4	1		3		
	67.5–75.3	1		1		
	75.4–80.0	2				
84.8–90.0	1	1				

Note: A gradient fill visually represents the gradation, with darker shades indicating higher values and lighter shades representing lower values.

This comparison underscores the progress and challenges faced by HEIs in both nations in achieving SDGs.

3.2. Case studies

3.2.1. Ukrainian HEIs

If considering the gender/sexual orientation dimension of diversity management, Sumy State University (Ukraine) incorporates key elements of diversity management into its practices. These efforts are reflected in ensuring equal rights and opportunities during the enrolment process, implementing a non-discrimination policy for women and transgender individuals, and supporting students with children. A notable example is the establishment of the educational space “Student Stork,” located in the university’s central building,

which provides a dedicated area for the children of students and staff (SSU, n.d.). The mentioned policies help the university to create common conditions in educational and extracurricular activities for all persons, regardless of gender. For example, Kyiv National Economic University (Ukraine) partnered with the University of Konstanz (Germany) on the project “Fostering Leadership and Advancement of Women in Germany and Ukraine” (FLAMINGU). The project’s objectives included the development of foundational documents to support gender equality and initiatives to advance and empower women on their path to leadership roles (KNEU, n.d.).

The Center for Legal Studies of Gender Equality operates at the LPNU. The Center’s activities aimed to form a youth gender-sensitive space. This Center has developed a reminder for women

to cross the border safely, which has become especially valuable for Ukrainian women and girls who have become vulnerable to various forms of violence in war conditions (LPNU, n.d.), including abroad, due to forced migration.

More Ukrainian HEIs are currently engaging in project-based work that involves developing courses and workshops to reach the widest possible audience. These initiatives take into account not just one but multiple or even all dimensions of diversity management, such as gender/sexual orientation (GSO), age, (dis)abilities, ethnicity/nationality/religion (ENR), and socio-economic status (SES). As mentioned earlier, this approach is explained by the concept of intersectionality. For example, Poltava V.G. Korolenko National Pedagogical University (PNPU) offers a variety of courses funded by international organizations and implemented on a volunteer basis like “MultiEd/Developing the Capacity for Teacher Training in Foreign Languages to Support Ukraine’s Path Toward Multilingual Education and European Integration” project (PNPU, n.d.). The National University of Ostroh Academy, achieving the highest results in SDG 4 among Ukrainian universities in 2023 and 2024, offers a diverse range of educational programs, activities, and projects to promote quality education. One notable initiative is the Visegrad Fund grant project, “A Resilient Approach to Teacher Training in Ukraine and the Visegrad Four Countries.” As part of this project, students at Ostroh Academy can take the course “Resilience in Education: Ukrainian-Slovak-Polish-Czech Experience,” which introduces best practices from universities as psychological resilience hubs during wartime (National University of Ostroh Academy, n.d.). In addition, Ostroh Academy hosts the School of Educational Innovations, an innovative training and methodological center for professional development. This center focuses on equipping educators and academic staff with competencies to enhance effective interactions with all participants in the educational process (National University of Ostroh Academy, 2023). Lviv Polytechnic National University’s “European Union, European Security, and Global Governance (EU-ES-GG)” project under the Erasmus+ Jean Monnet Module for 2023–2026 aims to provide participants with a comprehensive education on the European Union, re-

gional security, and global governance. It seeks to raise public and governmental awareness of governance risks and integrate European expertise into Ukraine’s approach to security and governance (LPNU, n.d.).

If SES and ENR dimensions of diversity management are mentioned, the practice of establishing student associations has also been implemented to support international students. These associations provide a sense of community and offer resources to help students adapt to their new academic and cultural environment (KhNU, n.d.b).

The LPNU has particularly focused on creating favorable conditions for students from low-income countries. However, with the onset of the full-scale war, a significant number of international students left Ukraine (LPNU, n.d.). Furthermore, in 2017, LPNU established the Service for Access to Learning Opportunities “Without Limits,” guided by the motto: Adjust the environment, not the person. This initiative aims to transform LPNU into a barrier-free learning space, ensuring genuine access to educational opportunities for individuals with disabilities and chronic illnesses. Its efforts include supporting students with disabilities, addressing their educational and employment needs, providing necessary resources, and engaging a wide range of stakeholders in resolving these challenges. In 2022, the Service, in collaboration with its partners, created a database of students with disabilities and identified their actual needs through a survey. Based on the findings, the range of inclusive services was expanded. Additionally, in March 2022, with the support of philanthropists, the Service implemented a project to provide food assistance to individuals with disabilities in active combat zones in Ukraine (LPNU, n.d.).

After 2022, Ukrainian universities have been shifting their focus toward supporting veterans, making it a key area of their efforts. HEIs can serve as pivotal contributors to this initiative through the establishment of dedicated veteran hubs. For instance, Lviv Polytechnic National University (Ukraine) has launched an inclusive space called the “Veteran Service” Hub, which can help veterans socialize, integrate into the educational process, and access necessary psychological support (LPNU, n.d.).

Still, university initiatives in Ukraine to ensure access to education regardless of SES largely depend on state funding. This funding supports widely adopted practices, such as providing financial aid to students (Kapustian & Petlenko, 2021). In addition, corporations and government authorities may also provide scholarships and awards to the most talented students, ensuring that socioeconomic background does not hinder access to academic opportunities. Examples include funding for scholarships or introducing programs that subsidize meals in university canteens. LPNU, for example, provides monthly allowances for food and clothing to orphaned students (LPNU, n.d.). SSU, situated in a region bordering the Russian Federation, experienced the immediate impact of enemy attacks in the early days of the full-scale war. During the first days of the war, students residing in dormitories were provided essential supplies, including drinking water, food, and other necessities (SSU, n.d.). KhNU, also located near the border with the Russian Federation, faced severe challenges during the daily missile attacks. University buildings and the homes of faculty, staff, and students were damaged or destroyed. To address these issues, the university's trade union organization allocated funds to partially or fully restore the affected properties (KhNU, n.d.a). Thus, universities in Ukraine during wartime are focused on such challenges as supporting orphaned students and internally displaced students from the occupied territories or territories where direct military operations are taking place and restoring buildings damaged by missile attacks. It is worth noting that Czech universities have supported both teachers and students who have become displaced due to the war in Ukraine.

3.2.2. Czech HEIs

Gender, sexual orientation (GSO), and other forms of equality are significant in Czech universities. There is a growing emphasis on fostering inclusive education and developing inclusive environments. For instance, West Bohemia University has highlighted the importance of developing spaces that are “We believe that generational, cultural, religious, gender, and ability diversity contributes to the creation of innovative and different ideas and perspectives” (University of West Bohemia, n.d.).

Charles University actively supports the principles of equality, non-discrimination, and equal opportunity, as outlined in its Equal Opportunities Plan 2022–2024. To evaluate the current state of these principles within the institution, an external audit was conducted by experts from the Institute of Psychology of the Czech Academy of Sciences and the Gender Information Centre NORA, with over 2,500 university employees participating in the survey (Charles University, 2022). The findings highlighted key areas for improvement, including achieving a more balanced representation of women and men at all levels, fostering a supportive work environment, promoting work-life balance with special attention to parental support and employee benefits, advancing career development, and ensuring equal pay. Planned initiatives include establishing an award for contributing to equal opportunities at Charles University, implementing measures to prevent bullying and sexual harassment, and introducing a new application to monitor hiring processes, particularly for management positions, with a focus on gender representation (Charles University, 2022). Additionally, creating a university-wide ombudsperson position reflects a proactive approach to fostering a culture of equity and safeguarding the rights of all members of the university community (Charles University, 2024).

Since April 2023, Masaryk University's first ombudsperson has also been responsible for safeguarding the rights of students and employees and implementing measures to address harassment, inappropriate behavior, and gender-based violence. In addition to handling crises, the ombudsperson is tasked with promoting prevention and raising awareness in these areas (Masaryk University, n.d.). Masaryk University has introduced and made a new Code of Ethics publicly available for employees and students. This document outlines the institution's commitment to fundamental moral values and ethical principles that shape its academic community. Emphasizing core ideals such as freedom, accountability, and moral integrity, the Code also highlights the importance of mutual respect and inclusivity. It specifically advocates for the support and inclusion of minority groups, ad-

dressing factors such as “ethnicity, religion, age, gender identity, sexual orientation, political beliefs or disabilities” (Masaryk University, n.d.).

In 2021, University of Chemistry and Technology Prague (the Czech Republic) adopted its Gender Equality Plan for 2022–2026, focusing on fostering an inclusive and equitable environment. The plan emphasizes work-life balance and the promotion of a gender-balanced organizational culture. Key priorities include achieving balanced representation in leadership and decision-making roles, ensuring equal opportunities for men and women in hiring and career progression within academic and scientific fields, integrating gender perspectives into research, development, and teaching activities, and actively preventing sexual and gender-based harassment (University of Chemistry and Technology Prague, 2021).

As for age and SES dimensions of diversity management, Charles University fosters professional growth and sustainable academic careers through sabbatical opportunities, as governed by the Employee Handbook. This policy allows academics to take a fully paid six-month sabbatical every seven years, enabling them to focus on research, innovation, and international collaboration. These basic rules aim to streamline the approval process and provide a clear frame-

work for funding sabbaticals, ensuring transparency and consistency in their administration. Such initiatives enhance individual expertise, promote knowledge exchange, and contribute to the university’s global competitiveness while supporting decent work conditions and professional development (Charles University, 2021). In addition, Palacký University offers the University of the Third Age (U3A), providing senior citizens with access to university-level courses focused on personal development and lifelong learning. Additionally, the university established a dedicated NGO to deliver educational programs for schools and the broader public, with the goal of raising awareness about various contemporary issues (UP, 2023).

In 2023, the Czech University of Life Sciences (CZU) held Health Days, dedicated to raising awareness about cancer prevention. Additionally, a Healthy Nutrition Week was organized in the university canteen (Healthy Refectory), promoting balanced eating habits. University employees benefit from access to free training courses in selected subjects and receive meal subsidies. Opportunities for part-time employment and remote work are also provided, facilitating the inclusion of vulnerable groups in the labor market, such as students, pre-retirement individuals, and parents on parental leave (CZU, n.d.).

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to analyze diversity management practices in higher education institutions by comparing their implementation in Ukrainian and Czech universities, which were selected based on their performance in the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Ukrainian universities have significantly progressed in participating in the THE Impact Rankings in 2020–2024. Strong results are observed in SDG 1, SDG 2, SDG 4, and SDG 8, where Ukrainian universities increased their representation and improved their weighted group maximum scores. Czech universities maintain leadership and stability, particularly in SDG 4, SDG 5, SDG 16, and SDG 17.

Comparative analysis shows a gradual reduction in the WGMS gap between the two countries for most SDGs. This trend is particularly evident in SDG 1, SDG 2, and SDG 10, where Ukrainian universities are catching up with and sometimes surpassing Czech universities. This indicates growing competitiveness among Ukrainian higher education institutions. Despite overall leadership, the decline in WGMS for SDG 1, SDG 2, and SDG 10 among Czech universities points to certain challenges in ensuring stable growth in the effectiveness of their programs and initiatives in these areas.

Mixed results were indicated for both countries in SDG 5 and SDG 16. Ukrainian universities, which had a strong starting position in 2020, have lost momentum, whereas Czech universities improved their scores.

Eventually, both countries demonstrated progress in achieving the SDGs but with different priorities and paces. Ukrainian universities are characterized by rapid growth in participation and dynamic improvements in results, while Czech HEIs maintain stable positions with a focus on the quality of educational and social projects.

The comparative analysis of diversity management practices in Czech and Ukrainian universities by diversity dimensions shows such results. Firstly, in the gender and sexual orientation dimension, Czech and Ukrainian universities prioritize gender equality through non-discrimination policies that ensure equal opportunities for students and faculty, including women and transgender individuals. The age dimension shows issues for Czech and Ukrainian universities, but Czech universities provide many more possibilities for older students and faculty, like sabbatical opportunities for academic staff. Inclusive education is a shared priority for Czech and Ukrainian HEIs, primarily through adapting learning environments to accommodate students with disabilities. HEIs in both countries support cultural integration and diversity. Czech universities foster inclusivity through research and cultural events, while Ukrainian HEIs adapt programs to support international students displaced by war. Regarding SES, financial aid and scholarships are critical in both countries.

HEIs in both Ukraine and the Czech Republic have made notable progress in diversity management; however, they are not yet recognized as leaders in this field. To advance further, it is essential to adopt targeted strategies and enhance transparency through standardized reporting practices. Highlighting distinct achievements while avoiding overly generalized information will strengthen their efforts in diversity management.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Conceptualization: Martina Rašticová, Nataliia Tkalenko, Nataliia Versal.

Data curation: Nataliia Versal, Mariia Balytska.

Formal analysis: Nataliia Versal, Mariia Balytska.

Investigation: Nataliia Tkalenko, Nataliia Versal.

Methodology: Martina Rašticová, Nataliia Tkalenko, Nataliia Versal.

Project administration: Nataliia Tkalenko.

Resources: Martina Rašticová, Nataliia Tkalenko.

Supervision: Martina Rašticová.

Validation: Mariia Balytska, Nataliia Kholiavko.

Visualization: Mariia Balytska, Nataliia Kholiavko.

Writing – original draft: Martina Rašticová, Nataliia Versal, Mariia Balytska, Nataliia Kholiavko.

Writing – review & editing: Nataliia Tkalenko, Nataliia Versal, Mariia Balytska, Nataliia Kholiavko.

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APPENDIX A

Table A1. Selected universities in THE Impact Rankings (2020–2024) by SDGs

SDGs	Selected HEIs		Source
SDG1	UKR	Lviv Polytechnic National University (LPNU)	LPNU (n.d.)
	UKR	Sumy State University (SSU)	SSU (n.d.)
	UKR	V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University (KhNU)	KhNU (n.d.a), KhNU (n.d.b)
	CZ	Czech University of Life Sciences Prague (CZU)	CZU (n.d.)
SDG2	UKR	Lviv Polytechnic National University (LPNU)	LPNU (n.d.)
	UKR	Sumy State University (SSU)	SSU (n.d.)
	UKR	Kyiv National Economic University (KNEU)	KNEU (n.d.)
	CZ	Czech University of Life Sciences Prague (CZU)	CZU (n.d.)
SDG4	UKR	The National University of Ostroh Academy	National University of Ostroh Academy (2023), National University of Ostroh Academy (n.d.)
	UKR	Lviv Polytechnic National University (LPNU)	LPNU (n.d.)
	UKR	Kyiv National Economic University (KNEU)	KNEU (n.d.)
	UKR	Sumy State University (SSU)	SSU (n.d.)
	CZ	Czech University of Life Sciences Prague (CZU)	CZU (n.d.)
	CZ	Palacký University Olomouc (UP)	UP (2023)
	CZ	VSB - Technical University of Ostrava	VSB-TUO (n.d.)
	CZ	Masaryk University	Masaryk University (n.d.)
	CZ	Charles University	Charles University (2023)
SDG 5/SDG 8/ SDG10	UKR	Kyiv National Economic University (KNEU)	KNEU (n.d.)
	UKR	Sumy State University (SSU)	SSU (n.d.)
	CZ	West Bohemia University	University of West Bohemia (n.d.)
	CZ	Charles University	Charles University (2022)
	CZ	Masaryk University	Masaryk University (n.d.)
	CZ	University of Chemistry and Technology Prague	University of Chemistry and Technology Prague (2021)
SDG16	UKR	Lviv Polytechnic National University (LPNU)	LPNU (n.d.)
	UKR	Sumy State University (SSU)	SSU (n.d.)
	CZ	Masaryk University	Masaryk University (n.d.)
	CZ	Charles University	Charles University (2023)
SDG17	UKR	Lviv Polytechnic National University (LPNU)	LPNU (n.d.)
	UKR	Sumy State University (SSU)	SSU (n.d.)
	UKR	V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University (KhNU)	KhNU (n.d.a), KhNU (n.d.b)
	CZ	Masaryk University	Masaryk University (n.d.)
	CZ	Charles University	Charles University (2023)