

The Value of Tolerance in Multinational Companies During the Covid Pandemic 19

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Motto: “*The Other is me.*” (Gad Elmaleh)

In a multicultural society, tolerance is a determining factor in human and professional relationships. The culturally pluralistic and at the same time plurilingual corporate environment, characterized by a conglomeration of activities and many employees, cannot be without the advantages of tolerance, especially since corporations often have departments located in different geographical areas—countries or even continents, which makes it necessary to reconsider communication and work practices, as well as to improve the organizational culture and internal regulations. Throughout this equation, tolerance intervenes not only as a universally valid human value that conditions human identity and behavior, but also in a paradigmatic form, ensuring collaboration between individuals and between professional groups. This paradigm of a type of assertive tolerance, created analogously according to the model of interculturality and impregnating human relations and professional actions is considered in relation to the Covid pandemic 19. The Covid health crisis has resized the entire way of corporate professional functioning at European and global level, with major inferences in the virtual work environment and has readapted the individual and group optics of multinationals not only from a professional point of view, but especially through the prism of a reconsideration of a humanistic approach at work. Beyond individual tolerance, the form of acceptance of extensive inter-human intervention is unpunished, and for this we propose in this article a perspective of tolerance following also Locke’s paradigm (1689), which established the form of tolerance towards groups and inter-group, of real use in today’s corporate environment.

Keywords: tolerance, corporations, pandemic, interculturality, Europe, humanism

Corporate Tolerance in a Multicultural, Intercultural and Pandemic Europe

The beginning of the 2020s places the human being at an international level in a real boost of personal adaptation, to resilience and resolve the Covid 19 health crisis at individual, group and societal level. In 2022, after two years of pandemic, individualism leaves more room for community spirit, even though we currently live, as Bauman points out, in a world homogenized by the globalist economic interest (Bauman, 2003), in which the individual he lost his gregariousness, freedom, cooperation and unity.

This article aims to show that, in an intercultural Europe, in which pluralistic values are recognized and

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make their presence felt, both formally and informally, on all levels—political, social, economic, linguistic, cultural, administrative and educational, Tolerance is a key concept on the rise in pandemic times in the business environment, re-impregnating the inter-professional relations of humanism, both after resizing the empathy between peers but also for administrative purposes, in order to improve the scheme and professional activity.

In the age of technology, economic progress and digital communication, multinational companies under the impact of globalization have revitalized the profile of their employees at all hierarchical levels, so that ethnic, linguistic and cultural plurality, as well as a mosaic of various national identities or regional are already considered a corporate emblem, beyond any scheme of professional skills. We find in Europe either multinationals based in one of the European states, or various outsourced departments of corporations that locate their administrative core in the geographical framework of other continents, but wherever they are multiculturalism and interculturalism are factual, and can even be considered a mirror of European societies, but also a situation determined by international migratory flows.

Linguistic and cultural plurality in the corporate environment highlights interculturalism—paradigmatic for the present article and which the Council of Europe defined: *“interculturalism is a political model aimed at ensuring equality and cohesion in culturally diverse societies. It encourages diversity and interaction between people from different backgrounds, cultures and backgrounds to build a collective identity that adheres to cultural pluralism, human rights, democracy, equality between women and men, and to non-discrimination. It is based on the simultaneous application of the principles of equal rights and opportunities, of diversity perceived as an advantage and of positive interaction as a means of bringing all the inhabitants to participate in the development of society. Interculturalism recognizes that cultural heritage and identity are dynamic and can overlap widely, and that the interaction between cultures in increasingly globalized and diverse societies is inevitable and desirable. He advocates for this change to be facilitated and sustained and for identity to be seen as chosen and an element of everyone’s personal development”* (Council of Europe, 2019).

Interculturality is situated in inter-tolerance like a reflection in a mirror, thus forming a binomial in which one element serves as a model but also as a support framework for the other element. Interculturality cannot remain harmonious without the precept of tolerance, and tolerance without the framework of expression allowed by interculturality remains just a bland concept. That is why this article places interculturality and tolerance together in a corporate, dynamic, multi-dimensional and high-performing professional world.

The Intercultural Approach in Corporations—A Favorable Paradigm for Tolerance in the Covid Pandemic 19

Interculturality is abundantly found in the economic and business environment, especially in corporations, where we find a true corporate culture, to which each company of course assigns its own specificity and which is expressed and reproduced including in various internal regulations; this corporate culture places in the foreground a way of working and a professional profile that must not lack universal humanistic values, which we find in the above definition of interculturalism, namely equality, cooperation, respect for others, anti-discrimination, the support of plurilingualism (in fact, the use of several foreign languages is an important tool for carrying out professional activity in corporations) and intercultural tolerance. Organizational culture allows virtually every employee to maintain and even promote their own cultural heritage (for example by organizing pro-diversity events) but also to know and appreciate the others. Such steps in support of conciliation and tolerance have been of real use since 2020, with the beginning of the Covid 19 pandemic, when at the societal

and community level—including that of professional groups, the need for intense cooperation to overcome the moments was established medical, human, professional and economic crisis.

Tolerance—A Factor of Corporate Resilience in the Covid Pandemic 19

Tolerance acquired in the corporate space during the Covid 19 pandemic a unique way of manifestation, a new valorization, as well as the acquisition of a special dimension, that of counterbalancing the restrictive measures imposed in case of emergency, as derogations from the *Convention for the Protection of Human Rights. and the fundamental freedoms* of the Council of Europe, namely Article 15 (Council of Europe, [2020] 2022). Tolerance, as a concept, but especially as a practice, had to be quickly adapted to the European and international news imposed by the Covid health crisis. It has acquired various forms: tolerance regarding the acceptance of restrictions, tolerance towards the remote way of working, tolerance towards the particular situations of the employees, either directly affected from a medical point of view by Covid 19, or indirectly impacted—family, emotional, professional, economic, etc., of this sanitary crisis. We can also speak of a tolerance of leadership, given that remote work involves additional efforts to manage, coordinate and control professional activity, but also of a tolerance of employees towards a new leadership model, in terms of activity and communication exclusively virtual. We also refer to the revitalization of tolerance between the European departments of corporations and those on other continents, where the impact of Covid 19 was either more widespread or diminished than in Europe, but also to the tolerance between services established by corporations in various European countries, knowing that there were differences from one state to another regarding the management of the pandemic (for example, in Switzerland staying at home was only recommended, while in France there were important travel bans, and in Italy the restrictions were severe, harsh and dramatic in some cases). This unique tolerance went beyond the simple civic prerogative and condescension to otherness (lat. *Alter*), which “*designates the character of what is different*” (Liendle, 2012), entering the scope of an overall specific in terms of behavior and mentality, with connotations of resilience, the latter all the more valuable as the professional sphere was often found in critical moments due to the pandemic, although the professional was the one who had to subsist, so as not to bring the population into an economic vacuum difficult to overcome. We are not referring here to the slippages from the manifestations of tolerance, which can constitute a direction of analysis for a future article.

Starting from the consideration that we must not insist only on individual cultural singularities, because this would mean strengthening inter-human differentiation (Taylor, 2009), but it is necessary to emphasize unity in diversity, which entails increasing conciliation and acceptance of the other, we refer in an applied and analogous way to a form of tolerance in the Covid 19 pandemic that first concerns an inter-individual level (individuals with various situations from a medical / optical point of view of the disease and the measures taken by the authorities to manage the pandemic); secondly, this tolerance extends from person to group and from group to group, in a vision of the community experience of this health crisis. This is what happened in the corporate professional framework during the Covid 19 pandemic, because a human environment not only diverse, but especially numerous, in an urgent crisis, cannot find optimal solutions only based on inter-individual tolerance. Thus, we find ourselves in Locke’s (1689) perspective on tolerance (he had in mind religious tolerance, open to opportunities and bringing solutions for the authorization of churches), the one directed towards groups and / or inter-group. In corporations, we have such micro-communities (teams, departments, work cells, etc.) with practices loaded with various degrees of tolerance, so that the inferences of the Covid pandemic in the corporate environment are effectively managed, bringing value not only to work, but especially at the level of collaboration

between individuals and organizational culture, practices that can be transformed into measures included in internal regulations and serving in the future as a reference model.

Even the European Union and the Council of Europe support, both at the political-administrative level and at the communication level, the humanistic approaches, through the discourse promoted by its various forums; tolerance, as an active principle, comes in support of good communication, understanding, unity and collaboration, so necessary in the Covid medical crisis, but also in a general way at the corporate level, where beneficial inter-professional and inter-human relations can improve any action and discursive approach in a prompt and efficient manner. We offer in the sense of those mentioned in this paragraph some telling examples: 1. the tolerance of a professional work cell, towards the situation in which another such cell is impacted from the health point of view of Covid 19 and can no longer carry out its activity, so that the first mentioned cell must take over the professional tasks for an indefinite period, without being able to specify an exact term, hence an uncertainty that also implies, in turn, the activation of the principle of tolerance; 2. tolerance of a professional team towards the situation in which the persons with official leader status are unable to exercise their professional tasks and as such the respective team must self-manage itself; 3. the issue of organizing the professional activity for an entire department, given that key employees within it are considered suspicious of Covid and it is necessary to anticipate and implement a short-term professional action plan, if the suspicions of illness are confirmed and the respective employees can no longer assume their professional obligations; 4. tolerance of employees with Covid's illness towards the context and the group of other colleagues who take over their work tasks or towards the risk of losing their job, if the disease becomes long-term disability (tolerance towards the unknown and reconsideration of personal projects and professional for an unlimited period) etc.

In the current existential and professional framework, strongly globalized, tolerance is erected in a human trait indispensable for globalism (Benet-Martinez, 2012), which comes to insert in the corporate professional space a humanistic *modus vivendi*, given that, so as Bauman points out, society fluidizes and homogenizes, man becomes individualistic and the economic factor prevails in all spheres of life (Bauman, 2003).

Corporate tolerance is not passive, but in the Covid 19 pandemic it becomes assertive, because it represents a lever through which professional activity can be maintained, and relations between employees and between professional groups are maintained in a form of reasonable balance for the given situation and it does not deteriorate irreparably. Tolerance is thus an increased value in the organizational culture and can be integrated into a professional identity that must consider not only work skills and competencies, but also an improved personality profile, in order to better manage problematic contexts of any type, so including medical. Tolerance reshapes the path to the acquisition and practice of an entire arsenal of European and universal humanistic values, which can be compatible with the corporate professional framework under the destabilizing element of Covid 19, so that each employee or professional group to perceive and value resonantly notes common to those of colleagues or other working groups and to establish an empathic way of professional action and management of the inferences of the health crisis in the professional space.

Conclusions

In this article, we wanted to shed light on tolerance, a universal value that relocates humanism in the sphere of diverse Europe and enhances unity at the human and professional level, by emerging in both human and professional relations and business.

In the Covid 19 pandemic, it acquired a real role of resilience but also a form of active and assertive

manifestation, by the fact that it improved and allowed the maintenance of the professional framework and collaboration, the consolidation of relations between employees and the saving of the economic factor. The valences of tolerance are not only practical, by virtue of resilience and assertiveness, but also theoretical, because they reformat the identity sphere, restructure the organizational culture and allow adaptations of the conditioning of internal regulations in corporations; therefore, this approach of ours is a special one and full of meaning and significance, both from an explanatory and epistemological point of view, but especially of its degree of applicability in the fields of current life.

Addressing inter-individual and inter-group tolerance in corporations using the paradigm of interculturality, we offered an original model of analysis and intervention for the applicability of universal values so necessary in pluralistic Europe, which needs more than ever to maintain unity, stability and good functioning, as well as good tracing of the directions of evolution and intervention in any type of extended crisis—medical, economic, political, etc., so that we conclude that the implications of the proposed model are valuable to be able to contribute together to a European future. and globally successful, which does not lack practical humanism, expressed by universally valid values such as tolerance.

Although we can mention as limits of the paper the fact that we did not use a scientific methodology of practical research and we did not refer to the slippages from the manifestations of tolerance or to the human category professionally involved in corporations that, by virtue of a blockage induced by living the status of Covid refuses the manifestations of tolerance, we consider that they can be interesting directions of analysis for a future article.

The “interculturality versus inter-tolerance” model can be a functional standard in which tolerance and cultural plurality intertwine: tolerance is necessary for the interculturalist vision, and the diversity of cultures is found as an impact factor on the malleability and level of tolerance, especially in socio-professional contexts where diversified existence is a defining note, as it happens in the corporate environment. Employees of corporations and corporate groups can have as a source of inspiration the way of structuring and carrying out tolerance in the case of multiculturalism, to apply it adapted in the Covid 19 pandemic but also in other similar situations.

Diversity in corporations and society is not only cultural, but it is also found in the configuration of individual and group cases related to experiencing a typical medical situation, such as that associated with Covid 19. Corporate tolerance in the Covid pandemic positions group structures and individuals in a role of accepting the differences, crises, difficulties, in order to later allow the identification of the strategies to face and to intervene, in view of the resolutions and / or the contextual improvement. We insist that in the corporate environment, the concept of tolerance, following the Covid pandemic, can improve its significance and applicability, through an assertive form of implementation, which allows the revitalization of corporate identity, valorization at a higher level of organizational culture and of the corporate administrative sphere, but also a better management of the local sanitary crisis, as well as clarifications, positivizations and resolutions of the overall professional activities.”

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