

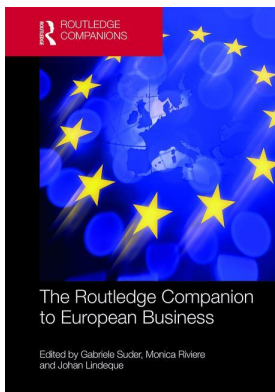
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EUROPE AND ITS DIVERSITY

Dealing with human resources management
in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine*Marina Latukha***Introduction**

Due to the ongoing process of world globalisation, the prevailing majority of the world's biggest multinational corporations (MNCs), including European ones, are opening subsidiaries in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which was created as a successor entity to the Soviet Union and comprises most of its ex-members. As successors, post-socialist states inherited not only rich resources and large territories, but also the need for transition from planned to open market economies (Altman 2009) that facilitate the interests of European companies in this region, as increasing involvement of European companies in CIS countries means having new markets, customers, labour force and, thus, business development opportunities. The increased economic integration along with the evolution of the important international economic and business organisations has led to a remarkable boost of the world's businesses. The step of expanding companies to the CIS might be considered an inevitable one: while the market niches in these regions are not occupied, the business strategy of market development seems reasonable.

Among other CIS countries, Belarus, Russia and Ukraine are the largest countries of the former Soviet republics strategically linking the fast-growing markets in the East and West. Surprisingly they have not been a very popular setting for management research, but are of high interest to European firms looking to do business in those countries. The best way for CIS countries to transition was to attract MNCs and foreign direct investments (FDI), create institutions that focused on attracting FDI and support the development of human resource management (HRM), needed to manage local employees effectively (Lee et al. 2010; Danilovich and Croucher 2015). However, MNCs faced and are still facing various complications in the adaptation of their management practices to host countries' contexts (Newman and Nollen 1996), due to a poor understanding of HRM specifics and cultural context.

According to recent studies, one of the key success factors for companies' growth is to learn how to manage human capital (Lengnick-Hall et al. 2009; Farndale et al. 2010; Schuler et al. 2011). Aghazadeh (2003) emphasised how important it is for managers to ensure that in the global business environment HRM policies and practices maintain a balance between consistency and the recognition of various differences that occur when doing business. As HRM means a set of managerial practices that aim to attract, develop and retain employees within

an organisation, we discuss the most relevant aspects of recruitment, employees' training and development, performance evaluation, motivation and compensation, and career development in Belarus, Ukraine and Russia. Among different well-proven European approaches to management practices, HRM is one of the most crucial elements of a MNC's competitive strategy (Schuler et al. 2002; Liu 2004). When European companies expand to the CIS region, they sometimes face the problem of implementing some of their particular core capabilities, including innovative HRM practices, due to the institutional, business and cultural contexts (Fey and Denison 2003, Novitskaya 2016). The majority of scholars claim that apart from the barriers that are common for underdeveloped countries, such as an unstable political and economic situation, crime and bureaucracy, the weak areas are human capital, in terms of managerial skills (Fey et al. 1999), and organisational structures in post-Soviet countries (Fey et al. 1999; Fey and Denison 2003).

Based on this, we study in this chapter the existing barriers and limitations of HRM in CIS countries related to current HRM conditions that are important to be considered by multinational firms seeking to transfer and adapt their HRM practices to different contexts and in particular here to CIS countries. The chapter discusses the specifics of HRM in Ukraine, Belarus and Russia and highlights both the historical background and the current trends for the implementation of HRM practices. We discuss specifics of HRM in the CIS context in general and in Belarus, Ukraine and Russia in particular, reflecting the main peculiarities of recruitment, training, development, performance management and motivation, allowing us to draw conclusions about HRM orientation and focus in CIS countries.

HRM practice adaptation: From Europe to CIS

Schuler et al. (2011) describe and provide a framework for understanding the linkages of HRM practices with company strategy at an international level. The authors emphasise that it is important to study international HRM in the context of changing economic and business conditions in different countries. In particular, it involves understanding the success factors of HRM practices' adaptation in another country and business environment (Newman and Nollen 1996; Myloni et al. 2004; Gilbert and Von Glinow 2015). Shen (2005) confirms this and adds that the country context is crucial as well. Additionally, Rosenzweig and Nohria (1994) study the effect of a number of factors for successful HRM affiliation with local companies.

Soviet management practices that transferred to a certain extent to CIS countries are described by Vlachoutsicos and Lawrence (1990) and can be considered as barriers for European HRM practices' adaptation. The authors discuss the heritage of collectivist practices in work relations, centralised leadership and hierarchical organisational structure. Additionally, according to May et al. (1998), typical HRM was limited to personnel administration and record-keeping, which was supported by a bureaucratic and exploitative approach used in personnel management comparing to European practices with a systematic and proactive approach to HRM and a focus on innovation. In general, European firms tend to give much more attention to strategic HRM than companies, for example, from Eastern and Central Europe (Mills 1998; Zupan and Kase 2005); in particular, some HRM practices were either weak or did not exist in the Soviet Union. There was no recruitment in Soviet states; in its place was staffing with poor labour mobility, governmental allocation of workers to jobs and the strong involvement of state authorities. Training and employee development were planned and controlled by the government and focused on increasing professional qualifications, without paying attention to the particular needs of employees (Mockler et al. 1996). Compensation management involved low salary differentiation, put high emphasis on non-monetary benefits (such as public

recognition), performance appraisals were mandatory, regulated and developed by the state and were considered a formality, which often resulted in a neglectful attitude (Minbaeva et al. 2007; Novitskaya and Davoine 2011). There was no development of organisational culture due to the communist ideology that was integrated into every part of Soviet life. All this resulted in a weak desire for reform and resistance to innovations in management. Many of these Soviet management peculiarities became deeply rooted in the minds of the people and turned out to be significant complications for the adaptation of European management practices in CIS countries.

European MNCs act as a crucial channel through which indigenous businesses tend to adopt new practices (Buck et al. 2003; Novitskaya and Davoine 2011). In some countries, subsidiaries of European MNCs selectively adopt practices or try to develop new ones, especially in training and development. Education and business in most CIS countries were separated and often had weak or no connection between each other (Bruneel et al. 2010; Kaymaz and Eryiğit 2011).

In CIS countries the majority of HR managers play a minor role in business (Croucher 2010). In particular, HRM specialists have a more functional approach and focus more on obtaining, hiring, disciplining and retaining workers. Additionally, widespread scarcity of resources for personal use and a strong communist bureaucratic apparatus made people search for alternative ways of gaining resources or achieving desirable goals and, thus, the role of personal connections increased. Eventually, this led to a rather widespread practice of *blat*, which is defined as the use of personal connections to evade formal bureaucracy. *Blat* is mostly dominant in state and indigenous companies and is used in recruiting, retaining and promoting the 'right' people to the right positions in the company (Wedel 2003).

We see that the adaptation of HRM practices in the CIS context, from one perspective, may serve as a knowledge transfer mechanism that definitely leads to the rise of CIS markets, promotes their growth and pushes the economic, political and social development of CIS countries to be more integrated with Europe. On the other hand, it may be limited by the existing barriers and problems in the HRM area, which need to be identified, noted and overcome in order to help both CIS and European countries to be more consolidated.

Context-related challenges and barriers for European practice adaptation: Current trends and future perspectives

Belarus

Belarus is an Eastern European country, located at the western border of Russia and formerly part of the Soviet Union. It declared independence in 1991 after the dissolution of the USSR. The Belarusian economy largely depends on its ties and links with Russia because of the strong trade and political partnership between the two countries. The overwhelming majority of Belarusian enterprises are (explicitly or implicitly) state-owned, with CEOs appointed by the state. The system of 'ideological control' in enterprises has grown much stronger in recent years, which reflects in HRM policies, which mostly aim to be operational and short term with quite low integration into business (Carragher and Carragher 2006).

Belarus is the only European country with obligatory placement after graduation, which means there are limited opportunities and incentives (Carragher and Carragher 2006; Latukha 2016). Recruitment in Belarus is mostly based on informal connections and networking (HR managers generally refute this statement) (Danilovich and Croucher 2015). Due to the fact that some Belarusian companies are regulated by the government, training provision for the employed workforce has been left, for the most part, in the hands of enterprise management, with governmental and presidential structures controlling only the fulfilment of minimal

requirements. This has recently resulted in state-controlled companies shrinking their training budgets to minimal levels and private companies abandoning training altogether to cut costs. Having Soviet heritage, meaning a weak focus on business development, some Belarusian companies still have a lack of business knowledge and language skills, which can explain peculiarities of the training and development system in Belarus (Carragher and Carragher 2006).

Employers are unwilling to support those who engage in full-time study and prefer to conduct in-house training (Danilovich and Croucher 2015), which in many instances brings employees very little or no benefit in terms of wage growth and no visible career progression. Rather than involving employees positively, there has been evidence of training being used as a disciplinary tool (Carragher and Carragher 2006). No company viewed training as a strategic management concern, which, combined with a cost-saving motive, resulted in the prevalence of a semi-informal mode of training: mentoring schemes, which may superficially appear to demonstrate a loosening of the Soviet-style state system of control but are in fact a pragmatic response that leaves some machinery used at less than full capacity (Danilovich and Croucher 2015).

However, European trends in HRM also influence Belarusian firms. The first HR standard for the country, based on an HRM international standard that consists of a balanced scorecard system, was developed in 2015. It includes all the functions of the HR department grouped according to each respective direction: recruitment, adaptation, training and personnel development, motivation, corporate culture, evaluation, development and HRM administration.

Belarus has an annual conference called 'HR-brand Award': awards are given to companies who have performed well in terms of their reputation as a future employer. This ceremony also represents a platform on which to share relevant ideas and projects in the field of HRM. The companies who receive an award simultaneously get recognition of their success in the business community as well as among experts, colleagues, applicants and clients. Each year the 'HR-brand Award' has a newly appointed jury, which gives the event at a high level of professionalism. While choosing the winners, the jury is guided by the following principles: relevance (for the company and the market), methods of implementation (modernity and optimality of selected tools) and efficiency (for business and target audience). The developing conference attracts new participants who in turn are motivated to improve HRM practices and, thus, raises the level of HRM standards in the country.

According to some studies (Carragher and Carragher 2006; Latukha 2016), conducted in several Belarusian companies, the labour market's lack of innovative HRM practices, which are more common in European countries, is the reason some problems may occur. First of all, managers are governmentally restricted concerning the number of benefits they can distribute among their employees. This leads to an inability to stimulate employees' performances through financial incentives. A very common way of hiring employees, for Belarusian companies, is through official job centres, though this method is mostly for low-skilled employees and the allocation of university graduates for internships, who rarely continue their career path at the company to which they have been allocated. Furthermore, recruitment is based on personal connections and relations, which leads to a significant loss of human resource potential (Latukha, 2016). This results in the problem of people who are much more suitable for a job, but are not successful in their application, not finding a way to apply their professional competencies in practice.

Ukraine

As we observed before using the case of Belarus, HRM in CIS countries, Ukraine among them, remains understudied in contemporary literature. Most of the scholars who focus on

this particular region identify the heritage of the Soviet Union as a factor that determines the peculiarities of local HRM systems in the most significant way (Vaiman and Holden 2011). In particular, these systems are claimed to be characterised by under-investment in human capital (Alas and Svetlik 2004), poor development of business education in the region and, consequently, a shortage of managers who possess the required managerial competences (Vaiman and Holden 2011); there is an unwillingness among managers to involve their subordinates in decision-making processes and managers perceive young specialists' proactivity as a threat to their own status and authority (Skuzza et al. 2015). All in all, this creates a reactive approach in HRM and an orientation towards the short term, where HRM practices are not linked with an organisational strategy.

It is easy to distinguish between two approaches to HRM that have predominated in Ukraine during different periods: Soviet and post-Soviet. The first approach treated human resources as a source of additional cost for the firm rather than a source of competitive advantage (Fey et al. 1999). According to Gurkov et al. (2012), this model first emerged in Russia in the 1970s and later expanded to most Eastern Europe countries (Gurkov et al. 2012). Its core characteristics were: maintenance of zero-level unemployment due to excessive employment creation by the government; low differentiation of salaries with an emphasis on a basic salary; and an active use of non-financial rewards. Dirani et al. (2015) notice that for companies of that period it was not typical to have any kind of strategy with respect to HRM; moreover, the duties of HRM specialists were traditionally limited to paperwork (Dirani et al. 2015).

Despite being very close to CEE countries in its early-1990s HRM-related development, Ukraine did not follow the general trends of the region in later periods. While some European countries, especially the former Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland, received huge investments from foreign companies and adopted a West European approach to managing people (Child and Czegledy 1996), Ukraine resembled Russia, more than any other country, in terms of its HRM systems' evolutionary path. The post-Soviet approach to HRM formed in the 2000s, when employment relationships were finally legitimised and new psychological contracts between workers and managers were settled. HRM departments did not significantly differ in terms of structure and tasks in companies with a different competitiveness level and development strategy; at the same time, non-monetary motivation techniques remain underdeveloped (Talaylo 2010). The labour market faced an increasing shortage of highly skilled workers, mostly due to a decrease in the quality of education and a mass brain drain phenomena (Fey et al. 1999). According to Lazorenko (2008), practices that local managers use for managing employees vary depending on the size of the company they work in. For big companies, an autocratic leadership style is typical: managers tend to make decisions on their own without consulting employees and they provide tasks for employees in the form of indisputable orders (Lazorenko 2008). Managers of medium-sized and small businesses, on the contrary, are mostly characterised by a democratic leadership style. An analysis of companies with different ownership structures showed that private entities in Ukraine have more resources for building efficient motivation programmes; at the same time, workers of such companies are less protected with respect to job security compared to those employed by a state-owned company.

Dorofeeva (2012) points out some current problems existing in Ukrainian organisations that substantially influence HRM systems. These are, for example: a mismatch between the organisational structure of companies and their strategic goals and needs; outdated labour-regulating documentation or its complete absence; inefficient motivation systems; and underdevelopment of control systems. Talaylo (2010) emphasises the prevalence of negative-based motivation techniques, e.g. threats, reprimands, penalties, over positive-based approaches (Talaylo 2010). Additionally, Croucher (2010) finds that due to limited business studies on both the country

context and language barriers, headquarters of foreign MNCs have significant control over subsidiaries in Ukraine. Thus, they select HRM practices that are specific to the particular subsidiary and track the adaptation process of those practices (Croucher 2010). The author highlights that, among other HRM practices, Ukrainian companies focus on selection methods and have a combination of financial and psychological approaches to motivation. Novitskaya and Davoine (2011) find subsidiaries that are rather more autonomous from headquarters' control had the lowest levels of adaptation of HRM practices and were more exposed to national context effects (Novitskaya and Davoine 2011). Companies in which HRM practices were adapted with the assistance of local experts had fewer difficulties with the integration of practices.

A number of researchers (Croucher 2010; Novitskaya and Davoine 2011) highlight the following most common problems, which exist in the majority of companies with Ukrainian origin: a mismatch between the companies' goals and vision and its organisational structure; an absence of modern methods of HRM; an absence of a proper motivational system and performance appraisal system; and the presence of negative motivational methods, such as penalties and threats, which eliminate any possibility of the development of employees' loyalty to a company.

All in all, as in most of the other CIS countries, Ukraine lags behind in its level of HRM development; most companies do not have any opportunity to be competitive due to the absence of proper motivational tools and incentives. This is why adaption to modern HRM practices is an issue of severe necessity and needs to be solved in order to increase productivity.

Russia

Among the CIS states, Russia has received special attention from scholars. Due to Russia's vast natural resources, a large, well-educated population, various business opportunities and the availability of any kind of business, the country is very attractive for different kinds of foreign companies, which means more room for HRM experience and its adaptation. According to Fey et al. (1999), traditionally the Russian attitude towards HRM was: employees were treated as a cost rather than a useful resource; education was considered to be the acquisition of fundamental knowledge rather than the development of skills; limited career progression decreased incentives to work hard; and limited attention was given to motivating employees. As in other CIS countries, the Russian government put a strong emphasis on attracting FDI and, hence, foreign MNCs (Fey and Denison 2003).

Some authors have studied the effects of US and European HRM practices on firms' performance in Russia on the use of major influencing factors such as internal communication, knowledge transfer, employee motivation, training, and job security and so on, and have analysed the adaptability of European HRM (Fey et al. 2000, 2003, 2009; Björkman et al. 2000, 2007). Several works emphasise cultural aspects, considering them as a distinct branch of corporate external environments that came with the managerial tradition of the Soviet organisational system, e.g. strong collectivism, group orientation instead of an individual approach (Fey and Denison 2003), low integration of top management in the development and implementation of an HRM system and a limited stock of executives and HR managers in the labour market in the transition period (Bjoerkman and Ehrnrooth 2000).

Among other barriers is the historically rooted confidentiality, which hinders interactions and coordination between headquarters and subsidiaries (Fey et al. 2000). Attempts to transfer management concepts to Russia that do not take into account Russian managers' values have little chance of success. Previous studies proved the importance of HRM in Russia (Puffer 1993; Fey et al. 1999; Fey et al. 2000) and, compared with HRM practices in other CIS countries, we may see nowadays less of a gap in HRM knowledge in both Russian companies and

subsidiaries of European companies operating in the Russian market. The reason is linked to the faster development of the Russian economy, when compared to the economies of Ukraine and Belarus, attracting more FDI from European companies. It is important to mention that in the past and still to a much lesser extent now, many Russian companies have had authoritarian and bureaucratic leadership styles that have limited the responsibility for decision-making, limited employee involvement in decision-making processes. Russian companies have thus been oriented to short-term rather than long-term thinking, affecting the strategic orientation in organisational development, have had a slow rate of innovation and limited initiative taking (Skuzza et al. 2013). This can be explained by past experience during Soviet times when managerial education was not of high priority (Holden and Vaiman 2013). Some experts note that most Russians today still lack high-class business experience, which in part may be explained by the relatively young age of Russian business culture and the educational system (Fey 2008; Puffer and McCarthy 2011; Fey and Shekshnia 2011).

Some researchers discuss the key influences on MNC's HRM practices in their foreign branches and identified the following: host country effects, country-of-origin effects, dominance effects and pressures for international integration (Edwards et al. 2010). Novitskaya (2016) discusses host and home country effects during the adaptation of European management practices to Russian and Ukrainian contexts, among them are: transferral of HRM practices from headquarters to subsidiary, management style, control, task fragmentation, delegation, employee discretion, employer–employee interdependence, trade unions and worker–manager separation (Novitskaya 2016). Based on this we can argue that HRM adaptation should happen with the proper monitoring of both host country and country-of-origin effects.

Conclusion

The differences between CIS (illustrated here by Ukraine, Belarus and Russia) and European countries in the HRM area are presented in Table 19.1, which shows the possible challenges in implementing European HRM practices in the CIS context.

We can conclude that, today, HRM practices in CIS countries are in transition from being Soviet-style to European in nature. The major 'providers' of these practices are European MNCs, which, on the one hand, transfer knowledge to CIS countries and, on the other, meet context-related challenges including historical development, norms, traditions, cultures and behaviour. The barriers to European HRM practice adaptation can be divided into three areas: traditional barriers, such as bureaucracy and an unstable political and economic situation; specific post-Soviet barriers – language problems, lack of business education and orientation, authoritarian management style and low integration to global economy; and environmental barriers – aging population, low rate of knowledge transfer and readiness for change in CIS countries.

Our discussion contributes to the previously described factors of adaptation of HRM practices to other contexts (Björkman and Ehrnrooth 2000; Fey and Denison 2003, Novitskaya 2016). By providing analysis of HRM practices in Ukraine, Belarus and Russia we extend the knowledge of HRM in CIS countries, which confirms the former roles of Soviet management practices, organisational culture and norms that are rather strongly rooted in the minds and practices of both managers and employees.

Adaptation of European HRM practices and transition from Soviet management thinking has led to various understandings of HRM practices among managers and may lead to the improper application of those practices. We argue that the specifics of HRM in Belarus, Russia and Ukraine has logically resulted from their Soviet past while some of the practices are a natural response to the economic and political situation in each country. As for upcoming trends

Table 19.1 Comparison between CIS and European HRM practices

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>CIS context</i>	<i>European companies</i>
<i>Approach</i>	Reactive approach that supports more operational and short-term orientation and perspective	Systematic and proactive approach to HRM; building functions based on the strategy used for long-term motivation system
<i>Aim</i>	HRM practice realisation and adaptation of European experience	To contribute to organisational success and provide new innovative approaches to HRM
<i>HRM as a system</i>	Attempts to build HRM system embracing different HRM practices	Interconnection between HRM practices allowing HRM to act as a system
<i>Strategic orientation of HRM</i>	Low integration with business strategy (Russia is an exception because of its more sophisticated experience compared with Belarus and Ukraine)	HRM is integrated in a firm's business strategy
<i>Perception of employees</i>	Cost and investment, human resources for short-term realisation of operational plans and tasks	Investment, human capital for strategic organisational development
<i>Recruitment</i>	Use of personal network, based on professional expertise, sometimes informal	Formal, standardised, based on professional competence
<i>Career development</i>	Depending on position, sometimes informal, based on performance results and usually exists in MNC	Act as a system, linked with training and development, based on performance results
<i>Training and development</i>	Lack of business knowledge and language skills In Russian companies greater attention to training and development compared to Ukrainian and Belarusian firms	Standardisation of training and development programmes, focus on mentoring, feedback, communication and development sessions
<i>Performance management</i>	Formal, based on blurred criteria and sometimes doesn't rely on performance results	Based on feedback and development discussions, performance linked to KPIs
<i>Motivation</i>	Based on short-term tasks, sometimes linked to a position, not competences or results, financial	Based on long-term strategic goals, linked to performance, supporting loyalty and involvement

Source: Developed by the author.

that will form Ukrainian and Belarusian labour markets and, consequently, HRM practices adopted by companies, the most important ones will be a high unemployment rate; an increasing popularity of freelance, remote work and shadow employment (Carragher and Carragher 2006; Novitskaya 2016); a change in the characteristics that companies will require from candidates; and an increase of the minimum salary rate, which will negatively affect small and medium-sized businesses. As for Russia, despite the fact that in many Russian companies HRM is considered a functional area, some of these organisations are now at the stage of transition from a functional approach to one that values partnership with HR departments. The transition is a particularly difficult process, but market trends have forced a move in this direction. The reasons are very similar to those that have led to the surge in interest in HRM: demographic crisis,

increasing demand for workers, aging skilled employees, globalisation and inevitable competition with European companies that have more developed HRM practices. We argue that HRM in Russian companies is a step ahead of other CIS countries due to faster economic development and integration with the global environment that in many cases, today, are reflected in well-established and sometimes innovative HRM approaches in Russian companies. But the attitude towards HR practitioners as business partners is still an agenda that can be realised with the help of the adaptation of European HRM practices, especially in Belarus and Ukraine.

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PART F

Functional and sectorial perspectives

