

Challenges and Opportunities of Leading Different Generations – the Case of Slovenia

MARINA PAJIĆ IVANOVIĆ AND JANEZ KOLAR



Politics in Central Europe (ISSN 1801-3422)

Vol. 19, No. 15

DOI: 10.2478/pce-2023-0020

Abstract: *Leadership, as the most important function of management, involves dealing with people and interpersonal aspects through motivating, achieving better productivity, people's satisfaction, a favourable working climate and a balance of effectiveness and efficiency, with the aim of achieving the organization's goals in a changing environment. Now that in modern management the focus is on soft variables and people, their needs and desires, the question arises what are the challenges and opportunities of leading different generations in a business environment that differ from each other in their values, attitudes and behaviours? The authors will analyse the above through three components of leadership, motivation, leadership styles and communication. There are currently four generations in the working population: Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y and Generation Z. If the consideration is extended to top management at the national level and to political leadership, it is expected that the challenges and opportunities of leading different generations are even more complex, because the working population is joined by the Traditionalist generation, which is retired, but also by the Alpha generation, whose entry into the working population expected in a few years. Additionally, political leadership encompasses a nation's entire populace as well as all of its social issues in an indirect manner. In addition to generational differences, leadership is also faced with the challenge of a changing environment, which is quite unstable nowadays and thus poses an even greater challenge to leadership.*

Keywords: *leadership; motivation; leadership styles; communication; political leadership; generational differences.*

1. Introduction

The importance of leadership as a specific function of management can be drawn from the definition of management itself. According to Buble (2011: 5), management as a process can be defined through several essential characteristics, which is primarily work with others and with the help of others in a changing environment with a balance of effectiveness and efficiency in the use of limited resources, in order to achieve company goals. Other definitions of management also emphasize that it is human capital that is used and directed by management as an activity to fulfil certain goals of the organization, and the function that deals mostly with interpersonal aspects in the organization is leadership. With modern management, the focus is precisely on human capital, people in the organization, their knowledge, skills and abilities, so-called soft variables, and leadership includes motivation, leadership styles and communication (Šikić – Bahtijarević-Šiber 2004: 19, 77). In light of these circumstances, it stands to reason that one of the most crucial management tasks is to lead, where as other tasks, such as planning, organizing, and controlling, fall under the category of so-called “hard variables,” which were the subject of greater attention in the early stages of management. Leadership acquires this importance through motivation, leadership styles and approaches, and communication in order to satisfy the needs, wishes and desires of people, and again in order to contribute to the organization and the collective goals of the organization (Wehrich – Koontz 1994: 21).

Motivation is the first tool that leaders should utilize if leadership is seen as a process by which one works to attain the goals of the organization since motivation is what manifests as what challenges, directs, and maintains the behaviour of people that leaders need. Buble (2011: 119) states that individual characteristics, job characteristics and organizational characteristics are a group of factors that influence motivation. Generations with their attitudes, values and behaviours could be subsumed under individual characteristics. Without going too far into motivation theories, it is important to note that they can be content and process. Content theories are focused on individual needs and their meaning for work behaviour, while process theories include factors other than people’s needs, such as perceptions, expectations, values and their interactions (Buble 2011: 121). Another important component of leadership is leadership style, which are diverse, but located between two extremes, autocratic and democratic style. So, on the one hand, there is a style in which all power is concentrated in the hands of one person, and in such a style, the relationship is one-way, from top to bottom. On the other hand, the democratic style is what has developed in accordance with the trends that appear in the world, from the focus on human rights, interpersonal relations, self-care, etc. Sikavica and Bahtijarević Šiber (2004: 353) also conclude the same, although the autocratic style is sometimes proved to be successful, modern

management, which includes the management of modern companies with the use of high technology, diversification of production and decentralization of the organizational structure, still gives preference to a democratic leadership style. Between these two extremes, there are different theories that respect the upper and lower limits of leadership styles, but paying attention to the characteristics of the leader, the individual, and the situation (Theory "X" and Theory "Y", Life cycle theory of leadership, Fiedler's situational theory of leadership, Theory of the way to the goal etc.). It should be noted in connection with this topic that Fiedler's situational theory considers the relationship of the leader of the first group to be the most important dimension in leadership, while the Theory of the path to the goal is the achievement of group cohesion (Sikavica – Bahtijarević Šiber 2004). So everything tends to mutual understanding of the leader and the group that he leads. The last component of leadership that will be mentioned in this paper is communication, i.e. the process of transferring information from the leader to the employees. This component is applied in all phases of management, but is especially important for leadership and its purpose is to guide, direct, motivate and create a climate in which people they want to contribute to the organization (Weihrich – Koontz 1994: 537). The same authors state that a large number of situational and organizational factors affect the process of communication from educational, social, legal-political and economic, even the leader's free time, geographical distance, organizational structure, technology, etc. But can generational differences, as a product of different social and critical events, classified as one of the situational and organizational factors? Srića (2004: 64) states that communication strongly depends on attitudes, and given that it has been determined that generations differ in attitudes, it can be concluded that this component will be a good example of what challenges and opportunities different generations represent for leaders.

It could be stated, that leadership is actually a creative process that requires certain characteristics from the person performing the leadership function, i.e. a combination of knowledge, skills and personality. While knowledge and skills are something that is acquired through education and experience, personality is what encourages that creativity and a good leader is one who manages to balance these characteristics and effectively apply them in practice. When a little consideration is given to the above characteristics, it can be noticed that the knowledge that a person acquires through education is a kind of constant in terms of its content, which of course can change with new scientific achievements, but basically most of the theoretical assumptions are quite immutable, aside from what volume a person has acquired some knowledge. The next trait is skill, which is learned through practice and experience. This trait is highly dependent on the environment in which these skills are learned whether through primary socialization (family) or secondary socialization (for example, the workplace). Traits are again an individual feature that is connected to

our personality and for which the myth “Leaders are born, not made” (Levicki 1998) is often mentioned. Srića (2004) states that leaders are created, but also born and that success is based on the balance of the above components. The reason why these characteristics are highlighted are skills, what is subject to external influence, such as the influence of a certain period of time that shapes generations and generational differences, or the influence of a certain culture that shapes different cultural dimensions. It can be concluded that as a result of being subject to one of the characteristics of leaders, they are also shaped in part by belonging to a certain generation or culture.

The challenges and opportunities faced by the leadership of the various generations to which the followers belong should be taken into consideration, but it should also be remembered that leaders are also individuals who may belong to various generations and carry some values, attitudes, and behaviour of their generation. If the modern approach to leadership is understood to consist of leaders, their followers, and specific situations related to leadership.

2. Leadership different generation

Leading people towards a goal does not only depend on the leader and his characteristics, but this relationship is certainly two-way and interactive, and the values, attitudes and behaviours of followers, employees, and people in general who are directed towards the goal through leadership are also important. The fact is that while respecting the individuality of each person as well as some situational factors, there are still certain common values, attitudes and behaviours of a group of people that have been shaped by the time in which people were born or grew up. Consequently, exposure to a certain period, which was shaped by some historical or social events, in these initial stages of a person's life shaped the generations (Shaie 1965). Generations are difficult to determine precisely on a global level, for the reason that not all people or areas are affected at the same time by certain social, economic or political situations, and there are also different cultures around the world, but there are no dilemmas about the order of generations, it is only questionable interval, so it is tentatively set. According to Zemke et al. (2000) the generation order is as follows: Traditionalists or silent generation (1925–1946), Baby boom generation (1946–1960), X generation (1960–1980), Y generation (1980–1995), Z generation (1995–2010) and Alpha generation (2010–). Bencsik et al. (2016) finds differences between generations in their thinking, attitudes, behaviour and value systems, their flexibility, but also technical knowledge, and considers them a possible source of conflict. The traditionalists, also known as the Silent generation, are a retired generation, while the Alpha generation is a generation that has not yet entered the working population, but their characteristics will still be presented for the purposes of further elaboration of the topic.

Silent generation was a generation who displays a loyalty to the company that places duty before pleasure and this is a generation, which survived The Great Depression and World War II. (Sujanski 2010). They were happy just with the fact that they are employed (Lanchester – Stillman 2002). Zemke (2010) systematizes the following characteristics for this generation: dedication, sacrifice, hard work, conformity, law and order, respect for authority, patience, duty before pleasure and honour. This generation highly respect family values. When it comes to business obligations, they are incompetent with ambiguity and to change, uncomfortable due to conflict and restrained when they disagree.

Baby boom generation is globally affected by the campaigns forward civil rights and movements toward Women's rights (Twenge et al 2010: 1120). They are recognized for being idealistic and upbeat people who believe they can transform the world of work by pursuing their goals. They have been labelled as workaholics. They expected to retire from the organisation, that first hired them and they tend to see training and development as good for organisation, but critical to their career advancement (Sujanski 2010). For this generation, Zemke (2010), systematizes the following characteristics: optimism, team orientation, personal gratification, personal growth, health and wellness, and work. The same authors also referred to this age as the "I" generation since they are unconcerned about the future and are self-centred. Even after reaching retirement age, they kept working (Lanchester – Stillman 2002).

X generation experienced the AIDS epidemic, economic uncertainty, and the fall of the Soviet Union (Twenge et al 2010: 1120). They often demonstrate independence and a strong orientation toward results but are also known for their scepticism. They are above all pragmatic workers who like to get things done and tend to see training first as a means for enhancing their skills and marketability, in addition to the benefits it provides to the organization. (Sujanski 2010). This generation is the first generation that was touched by globalization, but due to the bad financial and unfavourable economic situation, they could not take advantage of all the positive aspects of globalization. This generation saw the first changes in the form of communication, which throughout the following generations will be primarily based on computer-mediated communication (Fistrić 2018). Zemke (2010) this generation considers as the lost generation, because they are the shadow of the Baby boomers.

Y generation is first digital generation, growing up with the Internet and big and quickly access to information (Twenge et al 2010: 1120). Sujanski (2010) explained that they are a techno-savvy generation for whom multitasking is second nature, supremely confident and possess high expectations for their own success. Bencsik et al. (2016) describe this generation like high

qualified in digital knowledge with unique ideas about their positions at the workplaces. For them it is important to work where they want and to do what they really enjoy doing. They are motivated by pushing, advancing and reaching success, and for them, the concept of success, career and money is of top priority and family remains at the background. Sujanski (2010) explained that they will most likely see training as a way to advance their career but there is need to show them how it fits into the target organisation.

Z generation. Šimunić Rod (2020) considers a generation of innovative entrepreneurs, because of their innovative ideas, IT literacy, but also the possibility of creating products and services that are unique on the market in terms of technology, but also different from the previous ones in terms of design or presentation. Like a Y generation they also born into the world of technology and because of that to most of time they are online on any technical device virtually and they are called like “Facebook generation”, “net generation” or “iGeneration” and because of that Z generation is the first real and complete global generation (Benscik et al. 2016: 93). Šimunić Rod (according to Han 2007) states that it is likely that this generation will be more environmentally conscious than previous generations and it is believed that the mentioned generation will be characterized by a high degree of mistrust towards corporations which is why they will be more inclined to change jobs.

Alpha generation is the youngest generation currently, not yet included in the working population, but from the aspect of leadership at the national level, this generation could be recognised through its education and the environment in which it grows up and try to predict its characteristics, in order to facilitate the introduction of this generation to the labour market. Technology follows them, shapes and marks them, they are growing up to be the most technologically “skilled” and most educated generation ever (Jukić – Škojo 2021). Due to all the circumstances in which they grow up, the Alpha generation is likely to grow up as a creative unconventional generation, and over time the need for achievement, autonomy, recognition, competitiveness, narcissism, intolerance of ambiguity, attention-seeking impulsiveness and risk-taking may emerge (Kumar Jha 2020). A generation that is so open and exposed to the world needs political support and direction in addition to primary socialization and parental guidance since it is a generation that represents the nation’s future. They might have approximately six different careers in their professional life (Yurtseven according to McCrindle – Wolfinger 2011).

Sujanski (2010) believes that managing a multigenerational force is a challenge for leaders all over the world, but with the understanding of generational differences and the implementation of strategies to address the needs of each individual generation, a good leader can create an effective and dynamic team of employees. It should certainly not be ignored that every person who is a member

of a certain generation still has individual characteristics, needs, desires and values that may differentiate him from other members of the same generation, but for the purposes of this work, the challenges and opportunities of leading different generations will be mostly look generalized at a generation as a group of people with the same values, attitudes and behaviours. It would be good to mention that the middle generations play a key role in understanding and harmony between generations (Končan 2011). Leaders should therefore identify the middle generation and establish a bridge between them that will alleviate the consequences of the generation gap.

Observation of the challenges and possibilities of leadership of different generations will be carried out in this work through motivation, communication and leadership styles. The values approach to motivation assumes that people will be motivated by activities and outcomes that they value (Twelge 2010). If the starting point is the fundamental theory of generational differences, in which generations differ according to values, needs, etc., then it is certainly important for leaders to know what motivates different generations and how to encourage their work engagement and task fulfilment.

The challenge is certainly to recognize what motivates each generation and to create a balance between all generations in order to obtain a multigenerational well-harmonized, productive and satisfied work environment. Bencsik and Machova (2016) describe the values and what motivates each working generation. So, Baby boomers advocate conscious carrier building, their goal is a solid existence, they are patient, have soft skills, respect tradition, hierarchy and hard work. Generation X has less respect for hierarchy in general, feels the need to prove themselves, is materialistic, and is not just content with having a job, but also wants to keep it. Generation Y has high expectations, they are rivals for leadership positions, they are flexible, and success-oriented, they want independence, they do not respect tradition, they tend to work from home as well as part-time work. The members of Generation Z prioritize living in the moment, resourceful but with a lack of thinking, especially consequential thinking. This shift is visible from the older generations who were more oriented towards organizations, more satisfied in their workplaces, but also constant and organizations as well as leaders did not care so much about their needs. Newer generations require additional involvement of managers, considering that loyalty to organizations is much weaker than before, Generation Y has turned to their needs and satisfying their appetites for advancement and fulfilment of their goals, and if they cannot achieve this in the organization, they are ready to leave it. Generation Z lives in the present and it is important for members of that generation to feel good now, to have a good work-life balance. Bencsik and Machova (2016) have systematized as follows what motivates each individual generation: Baby boomers – promotion, opportunity, a new path, fixed workplace, X generation – status, materialism, Y generation – individual freedom of

movement, an opportunity to make decisions, competition, self-realization and Z generation – immediate remuneration, freedom, non-commitment.

As the two ultimate leadership styles were explained earlier, it remains to be determined with regard to the characteristics of which leadership styles correspond to a particular generation. It can be said that generations follow the tendency of favouring styles from autocratic to democratic. Therefore, due to their preference for hierarchy, Baby Boomers are more devoted to a leadership style in which only a limited group of people make decisions., i.e. autocratic, while the newer generations are again less inclined to hierarchy, eager to participate in decision-making, respect their views, and are more suited to a democratic style of leadership. Here, the challenge for leaders is to balance leadership styles according to the multigenerational work environment, that is, to choose the best style while understanding and respecting generational differences.

Challenges that may arise in communication in relation to generational differences can be derived from obstacles in communication, which are divided by Buble (2011: 235) into obstacles at the individual and organizational level. These barriers at the individual level that may be elevated to the generational level that are interesting to the subject. Consequently, one group of obstacles would be related to interpersonal dynamics and emotions, prejudices and different perceptions in interpersonal communication. The author mentions prejudices about different ages, genders, colours, and prejudices against different generations should certainly be included, especially the most extreme ones, among which the generation gap is the biggest. Another obstacle in which generational differences could be seen as a challenge is the group of communication channels or media. Older generations were born and grew up in the period before digitalization and globalization, so they are more inclined to non-digitalized ways of communicating, such as live meetings, while the latest generations are more inclined to the virtual world and communicating through digital channels. Global connectivity and communication speed have undoubtedly increased as a result of digitization and globalization, but according to Bubble (2011), the challenge with this type of communication is infusing it with emotion.

Weihrich and Koontz (1994) mentions another obstacle that is closely related to the influence of attitude, and considering the differences in attitudes between generations, this obstacle can be imposed as another challenge that should be kept in mind when leading different generations. It is a matter of selective perception, in which people have a harder time perceiving what contradicts their views and cannot objectively listen to what is being said.

Other challenges are linked in all three components, which is the generation to which the leader belongs and the attitudes, values and needs as well as the behaviours he carries from his generation and how not to put such values in the foreground and start from them, considering all other values, needs and expectations as unrealistic. The same applies if the leader was a member of the

Baby Boomer generation and would lead, among other things, Generation Z, and if it were the reverse situation. A good leader should set aside his values, attitudes and behaviours, both individual and generational, and give importance to the values of each individual generation, then the individual people they lead.

By going through all three components, it is evident that generational differences are definitely a challenge for leaders of modern management, but also present a source of various opportunities that, with proper organization, could enable leaders to perform their functions as good as possible. First of all, generational differences offer a range of diversity, a combination of experience, loyalty, diligence and work offered by older generations, a bridge to connect and minimize the generation gap of middle generations and innovation, openness offered by younger generations. When forming teams, leaders, taking into account generational differences, can create a dynamic team that will bring effectiveness and efficiency to the organization. A practical benefit of generational classification is that it allows leaders to identify attitudes, values, and needs by generational groups more quickly than they would need to do for each individual. Certainly, this does not mean that we should ignore what each individual carries, but in situations in which, for example, a leader needs to quickly adapt to a new work environment, whether it is a new or a reorganized work environment, meeting needs, values by groups with motivating to fulfil tasks and goals of the organization as quickly as possible would certainly be of great benefit.

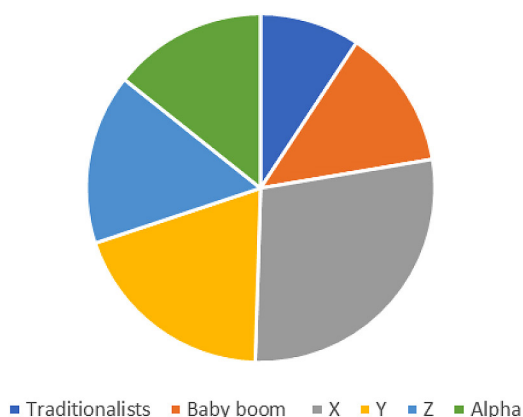
3. Political leadership – The case of Croatia

After defining leadership as one of the roles of management in organizations, the notion of political leadership is introduced by bringing the discussion to the national level and focusing on social leadership through the management of all social activities (Tomić – Glavač 2019). Some authors investigate political leadership as a multidimensional phenomenon, which from local, through national and even global level is actually a subspecies of human social leadership and that for its understanding, explanation or prediction patterns and arrive at normative prescriptions for proper implementation, inquirers need to analyse the beliefs, values, characters, power relations, and ethical/unethical values, attitudes and actions of leaders and followers, as well as their historical situation and cultural-institutional context (Masciulli 2009 according to Nye 2008).

Political leadership does not differ in type or character from leadership in other organizations, but it is, at least apparently, more important and more publicly exposed and affects a larger number of people and causes greater public attention (Blondel 1987). Without going too far into the theory of political leadership, it will be observed what are the challenges and possibilities of political leadership with a specific goal in relation to the Republic of Croatia.

According to The Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in the Republic of Croatia from 2021¹, the Republic of Croatia has about 3.87 million inhabitants, and according to the tentative intervals mentioned earlier, the graph shows the tentative distribution of generations for the territory of the Republic of Croatia. Although the Traditionalists are already retired, and even part of the Baby Boomers, and Alpha has not yet entered the working population, all generations in this chapter are taken into account, considering that political leadership affects all residents of a country. The largest relative share is Generation X with 28.14%, followed by Generation Y with 19.40%, Generation Z 15.82%, Alpha 14.28%, Baby Boomers 13.07% and Traditionalists 9.28%.

Chart 1: Approximate Representation of generations in Croatia



Source: The Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in the Republic of Croatia from 2021

As for political leadership, state power in the Republic of Croatia is organized on the principle of separation of powers into legislative, executive and judicial powers, and is limited by the constitutionally guaranteed right to local and regional self-government (Article 4. of the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia NN 56/90, 135 /97, 08/98, 113/00, 124/00, 28/01, 41/01, 55/01, 76/10, 85/10, 05/14). Articles 129a and 129b of The Republic of Croatia's Constitution mandates that local and regional self-government entities carry out within their purview duties that directly address the needs of citizens, including those related to education, culture, social welfare, economic growth, etc. The holder of legislative power is the Croatian Parliament as a representative body of citizens (Article 71 of the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia) and, among other things, that body decides on the adoption and amendment of the Constitution,

¹ Croatian Bureau of Statistics, https://podaci.dzs.hr/media/l2wkiv1a/croinfig_2022.pdf, 25. 04. 2023.

passes laws, acts expressing the policy of the Croatian Parliament, etc. (Article 81 of the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia). The Government of the Republic of Croatia is the holder of executive power (Article 107 of the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia) and it is the body that proposes laws and other acts to the Croatian Parliament, conducts foreign and domestic policy, directs and supervises the work of the state administration, etc. (Article 110 of the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia). The main person who represents and represents the Republic of Croatia at home and abroad, who is responsible for defending the independence and territorial integrity of the Republic of Croatia and, among other things, cooperates with the Government in shaping and implementing foreign policy is the President of the Republic of Croatia (Articles 94. and 98. of the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia).

Given that the topic of the work is oriented at the national level, political leadership carried out by the executive body and its members, i.e. the Prime Minister and members of the Government, i.e. the ministers who coordinate the work of the ministries and take care of the implementation of the Government's program, will be considered (Article 10. Law on Government of the Republic of Croatia, NN 150/11, 119/14, 93/16, 116/18, 80/22). Political leadership could be analysed through this topic in two areas, direct political leadership of ministers through directing and supervising the work of the state administration and employees and through indirect political leadership in relation to the entire population of the Republic of Croatia through directing and harmonizing the implementation of policies and programs for the purpose of propose and adopt different strategies, guidelines, propose laws, etc. (Article 1. of the Law on the Government of the Republic of Croatia).

Before stating the challenges and opportunities related to generational differences, it will be stated the challenges that affect political leadership through the changing environment would also be highlighted. First of all, there is the COVID-19 pandemic, which since 2020, when it appeared, has affected political leadership, emphasizing management in crisis conditions, adaptability, new ways of working from home, which is quite asocial, which is in contradiction to man as a social being. In addition, the world continues to suffer globally from the economic consequences caused by this pandemic over the course of two years. During the pandemic, pressure was also exerted on the health care system, numerous shortcomings of the system and the need for reform were observed. In addition, the geopolitical tension and war between Russia and Ukraine causes tension globally between world superpowers such as the USA, China and Russia, which creates the need for new management strategies in such complex geopolitical situations. Furthermore, the influx of migrants and refugees due to social global inequality, poverty, environment affect the need to develop strategies for the humane acceptance of such individuals into the national society, their implementation in the work system, culture, etc. It is also common knowledge

that the world is globally struggling with climate change and more expressed policies and initiatives that support actions aimed at environmental protection. And, finally, we should definitely mention digitization and technological progress, which increases the digital vulnerability of an increasing number of people, because with the development of digitalization, new forms of crime appear, and it is necessary to develop a policy in terms of protecting the privacy of citizens. As far as the Republic of Croatia is concerned, in addition to the before mentioned challenges at the global level, we should mention some other challenges that have been imposed on the political leadership at the national level. With the beginning of 2023. The Republic of Croatia joined the eurozone, as well as the introduction of the euro, and this required certain political intervention and coordination, as well as strong political leadership in the implementation of everything that this entry imposed. A series of earthquakes in City of Zagreb, and later in Sisak and Petrinja, imposed a new challenge on political leadership due to the threatened safety of citizens, as well as their housing, in order to realize reconstruction as soon as possible, but also to develop a strategy in case of future earthquakes. This is yet another challenge for Croatia's political leadership, as evidenced by the fact that, according to research conducted by the German association Transparency International Croatia, Croatia, with 50 points, is on the cusp between corrupt and non-corrupt states and that it is 14 points below the average of the European Union as a whole. These challenges could be classified as external, while intergenerational differences could be called internal, which come from people.

In addition to the challenges and opportunities faced by political leadership through the management of entire ministries, which have already been mentioned earlier in the text, it is necessary to see what the challenges of political leadership are in relation to the entire population of the Republic of Croatia, made up of different generations. The values, attitudes and behaviours of younger generations, such as the tendency to change employers more often and instant satisfaction, represent one of the challenges of political leadership. Newer generations are not patriarchally oriented towards the state and it is not a big problem for them eventually to leave the country in search of a better life. This is supported by the fact that the population of the Republic of Croatia is decreasing, so in the last ten years the population has decreased by 9.64% compared to 2011. That is why one of the challenges is certainly emigration from the country, but also settlement in larger cities, such as the City of Zagreb, and the abandonment of rural areas that have lost 20% of their population in the past ten-year period, such as Vukovar-Srijem County and Sisak-Moslavina County. Here shall take into account that these two counties were additionally affected also by natural disasters, i.e. Vukovar-Srijem County by the flood in 2014, and Sisak-Moslavina by the earthquake in 2020. But despite this, the fact that younger generations are more daring, less attached to their jobs and

more ready for big changes should not be overlooked. Motivate younger generations to settle in rural and abandoned areas. The government tried through a demographic measure from 2021 called "I choose Croatia" to motivate and encourage those who were employed for two years in a member of the European Union to return in the amount of HRK 50,000, and the same as well as to settle rural areas with financial support for self-employment. In addition, local and regional governments offer such amounts, housing, etc. to increase demographic figures.

Communication both at the level of organizations and at the national level in the sphere of political leadership can also be a challenge for leaders, because the way in which leaders act towards the public affects all generations and their actions must inspire the trust of citizens in what they communicate about. That is why every leader should take into account the diversity of generations and their characteristics when addressing the public. The challenge that is additionally created for them is digitization, which has made it possible for their appearances in public to remain recorded, so additional caution is needed when making promises to the public.

The last component of leadership is the leadership style that follows the political system and the way of decision-making. According to Jakopović (2002), the Republic of Croatia faced a very difficult transition from an authoritarian regime to a democratic system due to the state of war and was often the target of reports by international organizations due to the lack of basic elements of democracy. However, some authors express concern about the state of contemporary democracy and point out that at the beginning of the 21 century, post-democracy is happening as a state and process of moving away from democratic ideals and principles, and the interests of powerful minorities through power concentrated in the hands of professional politicians and real economic and political power in the hands business circles, become more important than the interests of a large part of the population (Flinders 2017). It will certainly be a challenge for the leaders in the Republic of Croatia to adapt their leadership style to all generations in order not to lose the trust of the citizens and new votes in the next elections. We should also resist situations that can cause rebellions of the population, and already in some countries such conflicts and riots arise due to political decisions, such as, for example, in France due to the new pension law and the raising of the retirement age from 62 to 64 years.

According to Tomić and Glavač (2019), the cultural environment is crucial for understanding and defining political leadership. Masciulli et al. (2009) state that leadership is a symbolic activity mediated by culture, and also that in defining political leadership, among other things, general culture and political culture should be taken into account. Given that political leadership shows the need to analyse the culture to which both leaders and followers belong, it would be interesting to examine the correlation between cultural and generational

differences. For the study of cultural differences, it would be interesting to use Geert Hofstede's "national cultures" model, which defines culture as a collective programming of the mind that distinguishes one group or category of people from another, and its characteristics are that it is collective, not individual, but again not common to all people, already for the majority, learned through the process of socialization, manifested in the behaviour of the individual and its core is formed by values (Jeknić 2011 according to Hofstede 2005). Hofstede's cultural dimensions are therefore focused on the differences between national cultures, while generations are related to certain groups of people born in a certain period that was affected by some critical and important social events. Rajh et al. (2015) conducted research based on Hofstede's measurement methodology called Dimension of national culture as a determinant of the business climate in Croatia, in which five dimensions of national culture were analysed: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism vs. collectivism, masculinity vs. femininity and the time horizon of goals. The richness of the cultural diversity of the wider region, in which Croatia is located, can be perceived also through comparing Hofstede's cultural dimensions in the Danube region, which consists of 14 countries and whose diversity is one of the largest in the world (Kolar 2020). Jeknić (2011) states that the mentioned dimensions are a framework for developing different hypotheses in multicultural organizational studies, and with regard to globalization, there is also an increasing number of such organizations that are, in addition to multicultural, multigenerational. The main conclusions of the previously mentioned research are that Croatian society can be characterized as a society that does not recognize differences between members of society, does not consider it important to keep a distance from power or recognize differences in the distribution of power, authority, rights and responsibilities. Extremely high dimensions of uncertainty avoidance and to a greater extent inclined to value individual achievements and efforts of individuals as opposed to collective spirit and teamwork. Femininity prevails, that is, decision-making by reaching consensus is preferred, as well as the values of general well-being and solidarity. As for the last dimension, the short-term time horizon of achieving goals prevails, and in the system of social values, the long-term orientation to achieving goals is less pronounced (Rajh et al. 2015: 42). Without going further into the core of this methodology, it is evident that Hofstede's cultural dimensions are related to place (country), and generational differences are related to time. If belonging to a certain culture and generational group mostly shapes the values, attitudes and behaviours of individuals, the question arises as to how these two components can influence each other. Will generational differences be less pronounced in cultures that are characterized by individualism as opposed to those that have a higher level of collectivism? Furthermore, generational differences are manifested in various events, whether technical, economic or even cultural in nature, and on the other hand, different

cultures can change under the influence of time. Therefore, although cultural and generational differences refer to different components, that is, place and time, the collision of such components in certain organizations, as well as in countries, requires knowledge of both values, attitudes and behaviours, which will facilitate both leadership in organizations and political leadership on the level of the whole country. Especially because due to own brain drain, immigration from other regions, mostly from the direction of south east, and refugee crises, other cultures have settled in the Republic of Croatia and imposed the growing challenge of leading a diverse multicultural population.

4. Conclusions

In order for leadership to exist, there must be a group that will be led, but the definition of leadership as a process does not only include traits or characteristics, i.e. the attitudes, values and behaviours of the leader, but it is a transactional event that is mutual and occurs between the leader and the followers (Northouse 2007). At the same time, followers have their own individual values, needs and attitudes, as well as generational characteristics. Due to their diversity, generations and their mutually different characteristics could represent several leadership related challenges in organizations. That challenges may arise in a form of poor communication, especially organisational silence and misunderstanding, the appearance of conflicts, lack of motivation and the appearance of Quiet Quitting², all of which can reduce the work engagement of individuals or the entire generation, endanger the fulfilment of tasks and goals of organizations in general. Leaders as the main motivational drivers and guides towards the goal with their motivation, communication and leadership style must understand generational differences, appreciate their existence, but also objectively observe these differences without competing with the characteristics of their generation and those of individuals. Often mentioned in the literature is the tendency to define global generations (Edmunds – Turner 2005) which digitalization has led to the fact that younger generations, such as the Alpha generation, are affected by the same critical events almost at the same time due to the great connectedness through social platforms. The question is how much is possible, given that not all regions of the world are equally affected by digitization. It would be interesting to investigate the influence of the cultural differences of individual countries on generational differences and see if these cultural and generational differences with different focuses, i.e. time and place, can be correlated, given that both terms mark the values, attitudes and behav-

2 Quiet quitting – completing one's minimum work requirements without going above and beyond or bringing work home after hours (Ellis-Knight, N. (2022) What is quiet quitting and how does it impact businesses?, <https://www.netigate.net/articles/human-resources/what-is-quiet-quitting-and-how-does-it-impact-business/>, 26. 04. 2023.

jour of a group of people. By observing the political leadership in relation to the Republic of Croatia while respecting the environmental changes that this country is affected by, the main challenge is certainly the mass emigration of young people and urbanization and the underutilization of rural territorial parts as a result of the greater daring of the younger generations and the desire for instant gratification, given that, for example, the generation Z is known for her characteristic of living for “what is today”. Finally, at the level of the organization, but also at the national level in the case of political leadership, the leadership opportunities of different generations offer a variety of diverse groups of people, which with proper leadership can offer a handful of potential that you just have to know how to use well for the benefit of both the organization and the entire country.

References

- Aksu, B. (2013): Situational Leadership in Change Management for Different Generations. In *Chaos, Complexity and Leadership 2012*, Chapter 44, 339–353.
- Bahtijarević-Šiber, F. – Sikavica, P. (2004): *Teorija menadžmenta i veliko empirijsko istraživanje u Hrvatskoj*. Masmedia.
- Bencsik, A. – Machova, R. (2016): Knowledge Sharing Problems from the Viewpoint of Intergeneration Management. In *ICMLG2016 – 4th International Conference on Management, Leadership and Governance: ICMLG2016*, Academic Conferences and publishing limited, 46.
- Bencsik, A. – Horvath-Csikos, G. – Juhasz, T. (2016): Y and Z Generations at Workplaces. *Journal of Competitiveness*, 8(3): 90–106.
- Blondel, J. (1987): *Political leadership Towards a General Analysis*. SAGE Publications.
- Buble, M. (2011): *Poslovno vođenje*. M.E.P. d.o.o.
- Croatian Bureau of Statistics (2023): available at: https://podaci.dzs.hr/media/l2wkiv1a/croinfo_fig_2022.pdf (25. 04. 2023).
- Državni zavod za statistiku (2023): available at: <https://dzs.gov.hr/vijesti/objavljeni-konacni-rezultati-popisa-2021/1270> (26. 04. 2023).
- Državni zavod za statistiku (2022): *Hrvatska u brojkama 2022 Croatia in figures*. Zagreb
- Edmunds, J. – Turner, B. (2005): Global generations: social change in the twentieth century. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 56(4): 559–577.
- Ellis-Knight, N. (2022): *What is quiet quitting and how does it impact businesses?*, <https://www.netigate.net/articles/human-resources/what-is-quiet-quitting-and-how-does-it-impact-business/> (26. 04. 2023).
- Fistrić, M. (2018): Utjecaj digitalizacije na generacijski jaz – od bejbibumersa do generacije Z. *Communication management review* 4 (2019).

- Jeknić, R. (2011): *Kulture i organizacije: Organizacijske kulture Geerta Hofsteda*, in Zbornik radova Pravnog fakulteta u Splitu, Vol. 48, 103–123.
- Jakopović, D. (2002): *Demokratizacija u Hrvatskoj – pogled izvana, Diskrepancija*, Vol. III, 5–6.
- Jukić, R. – Škojo, T. (2021): *The educational Need of the Alpha Generation*, in Croatian Society for Information, Communication and Electronic Technology – MIPRO, 2021, 616–621
- Kolar, J. (2020): *Social aspects of technology diffusion: Danube region HPC case*. Doctoral Dissertation.
- Končan, U. (2011): Kako generacije doživljaju druga drugo. *Kakovostna starost*, 14(2): 27–36.
- Kumar J.A. (2020): *Understanding Generation Alpha*, available at: <https://osf.io/d2e8g/download>, (19. 04. 2023).
- Lancaster L.C – Stillman, D. (2002): *When generations collide. Who they are. Why they clash. How to solve the generational puzzle at work*. Collins Business.
- Levicki, C. (1998): *The Leadership Gene; Financial Times*. Pitman Publishing.
- Masciulli, J. – Molchanov, M.A. – Knight, W.A. (2009): Political Leadership in Context, in *The Ashgate research companion to Political Leadership*, available at: https://www.academia.edu/22206512/Political_Leadership_in_Context (22. 04. 2023).
- Ministarstvo prostornog uređenja, graditeljstva i državne imovine (2023): available at: <https://mpgi.gov.hr/vijesti-8/godinu-dana-od-potresa-u-zagrebu/11657> (26. 04. 2023).
- Northouse, P. G. (2007): *Leadership: Theory and Practice*. 4th Edition. Sage.
- Rajh, E. – Anić, I.D. – Budak, J. (2015): *Dimenzije nacionalne kulture kao odrednice poslovne klime u Hrvatskoj*. Klub ekonomskog instituta.
- Schaie, K.W. (1965): A general model for the study of development problems. *Psychological Bulletin*, 64, 92–107.
- Srića, V. (2004): *Biblija modernog vođe*. Znanje.
- Sujanski, J.G (2010): *Leading across generations*. In B. Elaine (ed.), *The ASTD leadership handbook* (chap. 27), ASTD Press.
- Šimunić Rod, V. (2020): Nova generacija poduzetnika; Generacija Z. *Obrazovanje za poduzetništvo/ Education for entrepreneurship*, 10(1).
- Tomić, Z. – Glavač, K. (2019): Političko vodstvo / Political leadership. *South Eastern European Journal of Communication*, 1(1).
- Transparency International Hrvatska (2023): available at: <https://transparency.hr/hr/novost/hrvatska-napredovala-za-3-boda-nalazi-se-na-57.-mjestu-s-50-bodova-1037> (26. 04. 2023).
- Twenge, J.M. – Campbell, S.M. – Hoffman, B.J. – Lance, C.E. (2010): Generational Differences in Work Values: Leisure and Extrinsic Valuea Increasing, Social and Intrinsic Values Decreasing. *Journal of Management*, 36(5): 1117–1142.
- Udovčić, A. – Požega, Ž. – Crnković, B. (2014): Analysis of leadership styles in Croatia. *Ekonomski vjesnik: Review of Contemporary Entrepreneurship, Business, and Economic Issues*, 27, 71–80.
- Ustav Republike Hrvatske, NN 56/90, 135/97, 08/98, 113/00, 124/00, 28/01, 41/01, 55/01, 76/10, 85/10, 05/14, 24. 04. 2023.

- Večernji list /2023): available at: <https://www.vecernji.hr/vijesti/zestoki-prosvjedi-u-francuskoj-uhiceno-217-ljudi-tijekom-nereda-u-parizu-1664907> (26. 04. 2023).
- Vlada Republike Hrvatske (2023a): available at: <https://vlada.gov.hr/vijesti/clanstvom-u-eurozoni-ulazimo-u-krug-ekonomski-najrazvijenijih-zemalja-europe/35952> (26. 04. 2023).
- Vlada Republike Hrvatske (2023b): available at <https://vlada.gov.hr/vijesti/zelimo-motivirati-povratak-iseljenika-ohrabriti-ih-za-pokretanje-posla-u-domovini-te-potaknuti-populacijsku-obnovu/33614> (26. 04. 2023).
- Weirich, H. – Koontz, H. (1994): *Menedžment Deseto izdanje*, Biblioteka Gospodarska misao.
- Yurtseven, N. – Karadeniz, S. (2020): *An overview of Generation Alpha, The Techer of Generation Alpha*. Peter Lang.
- Zemke, R. – Raines, C. – Filipczak, B. (2000): *Generations at Work, Managing the Cash of Veterans, Boomers, Xers, and Nexters in Your Workplace*. American Management Association, AMACOM.
- Zakon o Vladi Republike Hrvatske, NN 150/11, 119/14, 93/16, 116/18, 80/22, 24. 04. 2023.

Marina Pajić Ivanović is a PhD candidate at the School of Advanced Social Studies in Slovenia. Her research interest covers the generations and their influence in the business environment. E-mail: marinapajicivanovic@gmail.com.

Janez Kolar is Scientific Associate at Rudolfovo – Science and Technology Centre Novo mesto/Slovenia and assistant professor at the School of Advanced Social Studies Nova Gorica/Slovenia and Faculty of Information Studies in Novo Mesto/Slovenia. E-mail: janez.kolar@rudolfovo.eu; janez.kolar@fis.unm.si