

# **Ensuring the Equality and Non-discrimination of the Recruitment Process, Case: Ponsse Group**

**Minna Holm**

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<p><b>Abstract</b></p> <p>The purpose of the research was to explore and present proposals on how to ensure equality and non-discrimination in recruitment in the future at Ponsse Group in accordance with legislation, Ponsse Corporate Social Responsibility program and the code of conduct. The objectives of the study were to explain the personal views of Ponsse's Human Resources professionals about equality and non-discrimination and how it is applied in the recruitment process, as well as to analyze the similarities and differences between the given descriptions.</p> <p>Firstly, the legislation concerning equality and non-discrimination in employment of each country involved in the research – in addition to the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights - were explored. Furthermore, the theory of International Human Resource Management, Human Resource Planning, the Recruitment Process In Multinational Organizations and Culture in International Human Resource Management were explained to acquire elaborate understanding of the strategic value of HRM and the recruitment process in multinational companies.</p> <p>As far as the empirical part of the study is concerned, this qualitative research was implemented by Webropol survey tool. The questionnaire included practice based questions to achieve as accurate answers as possible. The results were gained through a content analysis of the responses using additionally the facts yielded through prior research.</p> <p>In conclusion, the results indicate that the HR professionals see equality and non-discrimination in different ways, some of them highlighting the external factors and some of them emphasizing the internal matters in the work environment. Values, such as team spirit and respect towards others, are appreciated by the HR professionals and they consider the recruitment policies important. In view of this, all of the HR professionals highlighted the matter of selecting the most competent candidate in the recruitment process. Moreover, the HR professionals regarded a diverse work environment as important.</p> <p>The core relations between prior research, theory and results were analysed thoroughly and the outcomes and proposals explicated in the research were consistent with the author's knowledge about the operations and practices of Ponsse. Based on the present research, further study could be conducted into multiple countries investigating the variety of cultures with legislative considerations.</p>			
<p><b>Keywords</b></p> <p>Equality, Non-discrimination, Ponsse, Human Resources, HR, Recruitment, Corporate Social Responsibility, CSR, Human Rights</p>			

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Appendix 1 (1): The questionnaire for the HR professionals

## 1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis research originated from Ponsse's internal equality and non-discrimination plans which were revised recently by the Ponsse Human Resources Management. After completing the equality and non-discrimination plan they noticed to lack official information about the personal viewpoints of equality and non-discrimination in recruitment process from their Human Resource professionals throughout the world in Ponsse subsidiaries. Additionally, the parent company Ponsse Plc was added to the research.

Ponsse Group is a Finnish forest machine manufacturer headquartered in Vieremä, Finland. It is a Multinational Enterprise (MNE) with approximately 1450 employees working around the world in 11 subsidiaries and headquarters in Finland. Ponsse operates actively in 40 countries. (Posti 2017.) As each country's legislation and regulations cannot be bypassed, it is relevant for the parent company to collect analyzed information to understand and develop this multifaceted and global subject more profoundly. In addition, due to the gathered information Ponsse is able to allocate its resources more effectively.

The objectives of the research included describing how the principles of equality and non-discrimination are understood and viewed by Human Resource Management within Ponsse Group and analyzing the similarities and differences between the given descriptions. In addition, the objective was to describe how equality and non-discrimination are regarded in the recruitment process. The aim was to discover and present development proposals on how to ensure the principle of equality and non-discrimination in the future by analyzing the responses of the questionnaire and reflecting those to prior research and literature framework. The proposals must be in accordance with *legislation, Ponsse Corporate Social Responsibility Program* and *Ponsse Code of Conduct*. In addition to the parent company Ponsse Plc in Finland, the subsidiaries included in the research were: Ponsse AB in Sweden, Ponsse North America Inc. in the USA, Ponsse Latin America in Brazil and Ponsse Uruguay S.A.

Theory part supporting the research begins in chapter two explaining the concepts of *equality, non-discrimination* and *human rights* with examination of *United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights* followed by each country's *legislation* concerning equality and non-discrimination in employment. In order to understand the connection between recruitment policies and equality and non-discrimination the third chapter explains *Human Resource Management* continuing with *International Human Resource Management, Human Resource Planning, Recruitment Process in Multinational Enterprises* and *Culture in International Human Resource Management*.

The chapter four provides information about Ponsse Group and its operations followed by *Ponsse Corporate Social Responsibility Program and Code of Conduct*. The chapter five explains *The Execution of the Research* including *The Selection of the Research and Data Collection Method, The Planning and Execution of the Questionnaire, Research Problem, Results of the Questionnaire, Analysis and Proposals Based on the Results and Validity and Reliability of the Research*. In chapter six *Conclusions* are explored. Finally in the end of the research the reader can find the *Thesis Process and Self-evaluation* as well as the *List of Abbreviations and Definitions*.

## 2 LEGISLATION AND REGULATIONS

As Human Resource Management is extremely attached to legislation and regulations, the following chapter will explore these matters concerning equality and non-discrimination, specifically in employment. *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* by United Nations defines the outline of how people should be treated in a society, while each nation's government regulates more specific standards, acts and laws and their additional human rights policy. Furthermore, MNEs compose their own corporate social responsibility programs and codes of conduct (see figure 1). It is crucial for the professionals to internalize these regulations when working in Human Resources Management in an organization.



FIGURE 1. Regulations and legislation in stages. (Created by the author 18 February 2018)

Each country in this research is a member of the United Nations. In this chapter *United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and *International Labor Organization* (ILO) are explained and additionally each country's central legislation and regulations considering equality and non-discrimination in recruitment and employment are introduced. Furthermore, the definitions of equality, non-discrimination and human rights are declared.

## 2.1 United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights and ILO

The human rights' foundation is the principle of non-discrimination. According to Unit for Human Right Policy of Finland (2015) non-discrimination is defined as: *“All human beings are born equal and they must be guaranteed the same rights and freedoms without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.”*

Human rights are indispensable for mankind and its dignity. Everyone – despite of the country or culture – are justified to human rights which are protected in international human rights conventions. Human rights encompass the rightness to life, personal exemption, a righteous and equitable judicial proceedings, efficient care as well as education. They additionally protect the right to honor personal life, home and correspondence, the liberty of thinking and practice religion, the liberty of utterance, convention and organization and the liberty of exercising. (Unit for Human Right Policy 2015.)

Countries that contribute to human rights conventions are obligated to honor, preserve and strengthen human rights for every human being equally, without discrimination. A fairer and safer world containing more human dignity is the goal Finland wants to achieve through human rights policy. International organizations have multiple policies and methods to endorse the promotion of human rights, the execution of human rights tools and monitoring the realization as well as infringements of human rights. (Unit for Human Right Policy 2015.)

The document of United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights is significant in the history of human rights. The document is composed by commissioners from all over the world with multilateral legal and cultural circumstances. United Nations' General Assembly decreed the declaration on 10 December 1948 in Paris as the general guidelines for every human being. The human rights are globally protected and translated into more than 500 languages. (United Nations.) There are altogether 30 articles in the declaration from which the most significant articles concerning equality and non-discrimination while seeking a job and work life are introduced below.

Article 1 declares that each human being is free and equal concerning dignity and rights. They are bestowed with fairness and conscience and should support each other in the spirit of freemasonry. Article 2 adds that everyone without an exception is entitled to aforementioned freedoms and rights without any discrimination on the grounds of gender,

language, race, religious orientation, political or other utterance, origin, property, birth or other status. Additionally, on the grounds of political, juridical or international position of the nation in which a person resides, any discrimination cannot be made. According to article 18 all human beings have the right to liberty of thought, moral sense and religion, including liberty to switch and practice religion. Article 19 declares that all people have the liberty of utterance and express them freely. Each individual has the right to search, accept and transmit information through any media. (United Nations.)

According to article 23 all people have the rightness to work, to free choice to be employed as well as to appropriate and pleasing work conditions. Everyone also have the right for the work and adequate compensation which can be supplemented by governmental social benefits, if necessary. All people have the right to constitute and enter a labor union to protect their own benefits. Article 24 announces that everyone must have rest days among reasonable working hours and regular paid holidays. Article 29 declares that an individual has obligations to the society and one's rights and freedoms can be limited solely legally and for the commonweal of the society. Additionally, aforementioned rights and freedoms cannot be used against the purposes and principles of the United Nations. (United Nations.)

*The International Labour Organization (ILO)* – which was founded in 1919 - supports social equity and internationally identified human and labour rights and strives its original objective: social equity is indispensable to global and sustainable peace. The ILO – United Nation's agency - unites governments, employers and advocates of workers from 187 member states, to specify the employment standards, promote practices and devise programmes supporting suitable work for all women and men. At present the ILO's Decent Work agenda strives to progress the economical and working conditions which provide all workers, employers and governments a part in sustainable peace, success and progression. (International Labour Organization 2017.) ILO has had a significant purpose in the past in improving the labour and employment conditions throughout the world. Today ILO's purpose focuses mainly on improving the labour conditions in developing countries.

## 2.2 Finland

The baseline of the equality was expressed in 1919 in the Constitution of Finland that came into force: citizens are equal before the law. The significance of the Constitution law is that its regulations must be considered when decreeing laws. (Kuoppamäki 2008, 18-



19.) Today on the grounds of the constitution law of Finland no one can – without an appropriate reason - be put in a differing position based on sex, age, origin, language, religious orientation, utterance, health condition, invalidity or other reason related to the person. In addition the Constitution law is obligated to enhance gender equality in societal activity and in work life. (Tulkki.)

The Finnish Act on Equality between Women and Men (609/1986; Section 1 (1329/2014) states: *“The objectives of this Act are to prevent discrimination based on gender, to promote equality between women and men, and thus to improve the status of women, particularly in working life. Furthermore, it is the objective of this Act to prevent discrimination based on gender identity or gender expression.”* (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2014.)

The Finnish Act of Equality between Women and Men came into effect on 1 January 1987. (Kuoppamäki 2008, 38). The Act is applied broadly in societal activity and different aspects of life, yet personal life and religious practices have been left out. The statutes of enhancing the equality concerns public officers, education organizers and employers. In the practices of civil servants it is crucial to assess all actions in the viewpoint of different genders. It is considered as the mainstreaming of the gender viewpoint. Equality is enhanced additionally through contingents. (Tulkki.)

Equality between women and men is enhanced and executed with manifold of measures which forms the gender equality policy in Finland. The policy necessitates effective promotion and abolishment of discrimination based on gender, as well in circumstances in which it is connected to other modes of discrimination, such as age or ethnicity. The Equality Act, the 2010 Gender Equality Report of Government and Government guidelines determine the priorities of gender equality policy. The activities are performed in ministry departments and it is instituted by the Social Affairs and Health Ministry. The government is engaged to enhancing gender equality in all decisions made. (Raevaara.)

Tulkki explains that the main tool for enhancing equality in the institutions of education and in work life is equality planning. Public officers, education organizers and employers must preempt discrimination on the grounds of gender identity and expression. Discrimination on the grounds of gender is forbidden in all of its forms. It denotes putting a person in a differing position based on gender, pregnancy, childbirth, parenthood, family obligations, and gender identity or gender expression. Additionally, discrimination on the grounds of gender includes harassment, sexual ordering or retaliation appealing to rights.

Finland has gained one of the top positions of the countries in the world in promoting gender equality. Out of all women in the world, Finnish women were the first ones who were granted full political rights. Finland is willing to nourish that legacy. Gender equality has a position of social innovator which has created social regeneration and accomplishment with the collaboration and approachableness of both women and men. Finland aims to a worldwide commitment in gender equality. It is willing to characterize the perception of gender equality in an advanced way and give it the attention that it deserves. (Auvinen.)

The Non-discrimination Act disallows discrimination based on age, nationality, ethnicity, language, religious orientation, utterance, political or trade union action, family relationships, state of health, invalidity, sexual identity, or other reason related to the person. (Tulkki.) The Non-discrimination Act is applied in work life, when it is about grounds of recruitment, working conditions, labor agreements or progressing in career. The Non-discrimination Act concerns additionally imposition of selection criteria. The criteria related to professionalism and education cannot be discriminatory. (Kuoppamäki 2008, 38-39.)

### 2.3 Sweden

Sweden has established a Discrimination Act in its legislation which includes the aims for both equality and non-discrimination. The aim of the Discrimination Act is to fight against discrimination and to support equal rights and opportunities regardless of age, sexual orientation, nationality, religion or invalidity. It is prohibited to discriminate an individual who is an employee, job applicant, intern, temporary employee or represents borrowed workforce. An employee has to be equated with the employer if he decides on behalf of the employer matters concerning aforementioned persons. (Discrimination Act.)

The overall precept is that all people has the right to work and provide for themselves, to work-life balance as well as to live stable life without having a fear of abuse or violence. In addition to gender equality referring to equal distribution of men and women in all fields of society, it also implies to qualitative viewpoints verifying that both men's and women's knowledge and experience are applied to support the advancement in all aspects of society. In accordance with yearly Global Gender Gap Report – which assesses equality in the fields of economics, education, politics and health – Sweden has been ranked in top four since 2006 when the report was composed the first time. (Sweden 2017.)

Although Sweden has been supporting the equality between men and women for a long time now, pay differences has continued to remain and the number of women's top positions in the Swedish private sector is still low. According to the Discrimination Act all employers are obligated to actively strive to specific objectives to support the gender equality. It also obligates employers to research and take action to prevent any harassment. The law was extended in 2017 stating that the preventive actions strive to fight against harassment related to all aspects of discrimination: gender, nationality, religion, invalidity, sexual orientation and age. Furthermore, employers are prohibited to discriminate employees or job applicants by the reason of parental leave. The Swedish government pursues to verify that power and resources are divided impartially between the sexes and to engender circumstances that allow women and men equal power and opportunities. (Sweden 2017.)

#### 2.4 United States of America

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) in the U.S. is a federal department which was formed in 1964 and ensures by enforcing federal laws that no discrimination would occur on the following grounds: age, disability or genetic information, gender - including pregnancy, gender identity and sexual orientation -, nationality, race and religion. Furthermore, discrimination is not allowed towards a person who has complained about discrimination, applied for an indictment of discrimination or taken part in an employment discrimination examination or claim. The majority of employers with minimum of 15 employees, trade unions and employment offices are protected by EEOC laws. The laws concern each type of employment situations, such as: recruiting, dismissing, compensations, harassment and training. (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.)

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 forbids discrimination in employment on the grounds of race, religion, gender and origin. It is an act which was established to confirm the constitutional right to vote, to admit authority to the regional courtrooms of United States to arrange facilitation against discrimination in community housing, to empower the Attorney General to organize lawsuits to preserve basic rights in public places and public education, to broaden the Commission on Civil Rights, to hinder discrimination in federally assisted schemes as well as to found a Commission on Equal Employment Opportunity among other things. (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.) According to the research questionnaire the individual states have laws against discrimination on the

grounds of criminal record, honesty testing, military service, sexual orientation and gender identity, weight and height among other things.

## 2.5 Brazil

The laws of Brazil concerning equality and non-discrimination in employment and recruitment are included in the Constitution of Brazil. According to the article 5 everyone is equal in front of the law without any discrimination. All human beings can live in the country, people being assured of inviolable right to life, liberty, equality, security and possessions. Accordingly the terms secure that men and women have equal rights and obligations, no one can be required to do or prevent carrying out something except by the law and no one can be tortured or treated in inhumane or demoting manner. Brazilians are free to practice any work, trade or profession considering the established professional requirements by law. When essential for professional action, the use of information is guaranteed for everyone and the confidentiality of the source should be protected. (Chamber of Deputies 2010.)

In the article 7 there are mentioned the rights of urban and rural workers which focuses to develop their social conditions. The terms concerning employment equality and non-discrimination are included in this article. The labour market is protected for women with particular incentives. It is prohibited to pay differing wages for the performance of work tasks and set a differing wage in the employment agreement based on sex, age, colour, marital status or disability. The discrimination between manual, technical and intellectual work or among respective professionals is forbidden by the law. The workers with a permanent employment agreement and sporadic employees must have equal rights. (Chamber of Deputies 2010.)

## 2.6 Uruguay

The Constitution of Uruguay outlines the most important rights of their citizens. According to article 7 of the Constitution the citizens of Uruguay have the right to life, dignity, freedom, security, labor and property. The article 8 declares that everyone is equal in front of the law and no other differences are identified, except those with talent and virtue. Article guarantees a person's right to refuse to do matters against his will, except the requirements of the law and do not prohibit from doing anything that is legal. (Constitution of the Oriental Republic of Uruguay.)

People in Uruguay have the right to engage in work, agriculture, industry, commerce, career or other legitimate operation, except for the restraints appointed by general interest which the law may legislate in accordance with the article 36. Article 53 states that labor is protected by the law. It is the obligation of every citizen to use their intellectual or physical resources for the benefit of the community through which they have the opportunity to earn their subsistence. According to article 54 every employee has a right to independence of moral and civic consciousness, a just pay, limitation of the working hours, weekly rest day and physical and moral health. Especially the work of women and children under the age of eighteen is particularly regulated and restricted. The law can control the fair and equitable distribution of employment, states article 55. (Constitution of the Oriental Republic of Uruguay.)

According to the thesis questionnaire Uruguay has ratified conventions with International Labor Organization (ILO). Maternity Protection Convention was the first one for Uruguay to ratify in 1954. Equal Remuneration Convention was tied in 1989 concerning equal pay for men and women for equal work. Also Discrimination Convention implying to non-discrimination in employment and on the basis of occupation was ratified in 1989. Convention on Equal Opportunities and Treatment of Workers and Convention for Workers with Family Responsibilities was ratified in 1989.

In 2007 a law proposal supporting the equal rights and opportunities between men and women was enacted. It was the legitimate foundation of the First National Plan of Equal Opportunities and Rights through which several policies concerning equality were put forth. Additionally in 2007 the National Coordinator Council for Gender-Equity Public Policies was established which is governed by the Ministry of Social Development and under the Women National Institute surveillance. There were also various government agencies and other important stakeholders involved. The Council supervises the enactment of the equity law. The equal involvement of men and women in governmental activities was accepted lawfully in 2009. Due to the 2010-2015 Strategic Plan of the National Labor Division an agreement between the National Labor Division and the National Women Institute was established. The objective of the agreement is to decrease gender gaps in the private sector by rewarding the companies with an Equity Seal in the finalization of the process. Additionally, its aim is to support equality in employment opportunities, recruitment processes, wages, work-life balance, prevention and retribution of sexual harassment among others. (Universal Periodic Review Mechanism 2012.)

The National Human Rights Institution was founded legitimately in December 2008 in Uruguay. The Parliament assigned the members for it in May 2012 and the activities were started to implement. The Honorary Commission, which fights against discrimination, reinforced its activity in 2012, especially concerning the allegations of discrimination. There were 118 accusations so far in 2012, mainly involved with racism, sexual orientation and disability. A Commission - which involved three parties: employers, workers and Government – was established in 2012 to support racial equality in the employment field. (Universal Periodic Review Mechanism 2012.)

### 3 HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Beardwell & Claydon (2010, 4) refer that Human Resource Management (HRM) implies a set of policies used to structure the employment relationship and concentrates on managing work and people. The basic elements of HRM are: recruitment and selection, training and progression, performance evaluation, reward and acknowledgement, labor relations and contribution to organizational effectiveness (see figure 2) (Griffin & Pustay 2010, 576).

HRM can be applied as more modern term of personnel management. HRM includes two advantages that traditional managing practices lack. First, HRM is a more strategic approach as its policies are planned to support each other as well as endorse the company's business strategy. Second, properly planned and standardized HRM policies build an organizational environment in which employees are more driven and committed to reach the objectives of the company in cooperation with the management. (Beardwell & Claydon 2010, 4.)

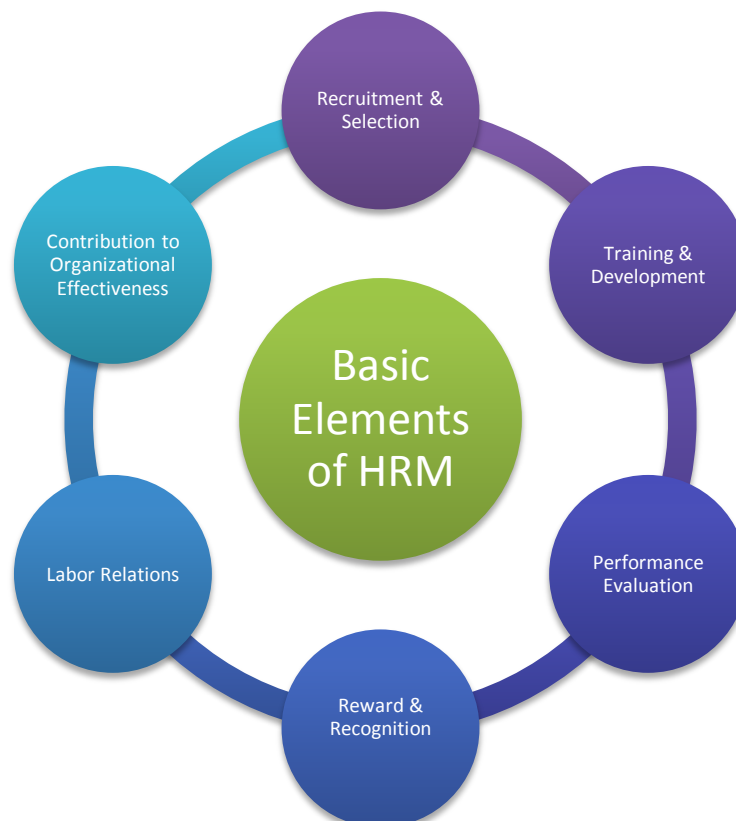


FIGURE 2. Basic Elements of HRM. (Created by the author 17 January 2018)

### 3.1 International Human Resource Management

In the last 50 years global economies have merged increasingly which has been achieved by multiple factors, such as: decreased trade barriers, reduced costs for operations in other countries, global communication through new technologies and increased travel and migration. HRM practices have required adaptation to the internationalization. (Tarique, Briscoe & Schuler 2016, 14-15.) Today the capabilities and the knowledge encompassed in HRM of the organization are the key to survival, performance and success of the organization. In multinational enterprises (MNEs) there is additional complexity concerning multicultural expectations about how employees should be managed. These divergent multicultural restrictions turn into crucial contributors to the changes of the success. (Brewster, Sparrow, Vernon & Houldsworth 2011, 8.)

HRM professionals confront internationalization in their work despite of whether they work in headquarters of an MNE, home country subsidiaries of foreign-owned organizations or domestic companies. Therefore they must understand and be competent in International Human Resource Management (IHRM) practices and issues in any case. HRM and IHRM differs in multiple ways. IHRM is responsible for more HR practices and functions, such as the management of expatriates including foreign work permits and foreign income. It requires more extensive expertise and knowledge about employment regulations and policies of foreign countries and cultural differences as well as more association with employees when relocating them and possibly their families to a foreign country. IHRM manages a broader mixture of workers with each demanding differing content of training and compensation package. IHRM covers more external aspects and forces, such as handling issues deriving from various countries' governments and currencies. In IHRM practices it is riskier to expose the MNE to problems and complications by making a mistake for example in legal compliance issues. Furthermore, geographic devolution, cross-culturalism, differing legal and social policies and border crossing movement of goods, services, financial assets and employees add a demand for responsiveness and sensitivity in an extent that does play part in domestic companies. (Tarique et al. 2016, 27-28.)

HRM professionals working in multinational organization comprehend an extensive number of concepts that are affected by the law of each country, such as: the use of employment agencies, temporary work, fixed-term contracts, unfair layoff, maternity leave, discrimination and equal opportunities, health and safety as well as recruitment regulations. Additionally, they understand the source of the law in certain country. The



source can be for instance the constitution law or a national agreement. (Brewster et al. 2011, 159-160.)

According to Brewster et al. (2011, 161) HR professionals in international organizations must recognize four specific differences between countries. First, the extent of labor legislation varies between each country. HR managers must be aware of whether the legislation indicate the employer's or employee's side, how recent the codification is and notice certain areas of deficiency in the behavior of individuals and organizations. Second, the character of labor market may vary from internal to external and from formal to informal depending on the country. The awareness of whether the labor market is associated to different levels of education is also important. Third, HR managers must notice the effective recruitment sources used to attract potential applicants in each country. Fourth, practically the recruitment procedures may vary from country to another, for instance whether the salary is mentioned in the job advertisement. It is important to use the specific methods which are competent in each country.

### 3.2 Human Resource Planning

A critical practice by the name of Human Resource Planning (HRP) is the first stage of recruitment process and assures that the organization engages the appropriate number of workers who are suitable and fit to produce a certain amount of output or services (Gómez-Mejía, Balkin & Cardy 2016, 178). In the international context, it additionally means staffing in subsidiaries of foreign countries and demanding procedure of relocating the employees abroad (Tarique et al. 2016, 221). HRP is adequate for MNEs to meet their future employment needs.

Today practices concerning work force planning are more complex than ever before. In addition to traditional practices – such as expatriate commissions as well as local parent company and foreign subsidiary staffing - it involves locating international work force to acquired companies or conventional foreign subsidiaries, joint enterprises, partnerships as well as local and global employing. The factors that influence the international HRP are: information availability, work force shortages and surpluses, immigration and emigration, brain drain and job exporting. (Tarique et al. 2016, 224.)

Lack of valid information about the work force – especially in less developed countries and emerging economic markets – is one of the greatest barriers of international HRP. Information for instance about unemployment and participation rates of countries and

regions, education quality and literacy, language proficiency and training of skills are crucial for IHR professionals to design the labor force of the local organization. Often the information given in emerging markets is incomplete or inaccurate due to political movements or lack of such governmental agencies. Thus IHR professionals have to acquire the information from independent sources. Adequate information can be found from organizations such as local chamber of commerce and embassies or other companies that have struggled with the same issues. (Tarique et al. 2016, 223-225.)

Usually labor demand increases as the demand for organization's products or services expand and the other way around. It is also possible that labor demand decreases due to increasing labor productivity. The reason can be for instance an introduction of new technology. Labor shortage and labor surplus causes more money consuming procedures. Labor shortage means that the organization has less employees than it needs and labor surplus proposes that they have employees over their necessities. The organization may need more employees than there are available. There are numerous approaches that the organization can use: training the existing employees, promoting and suggesting the vacant positions to the current workers, recruiting new employees from outside the organization, subcontracting, hiring temporary workers and paying for overtime work for current employees. (Gómez-Mejia et al. 2016, 178- 179.)

There may be, on the other hand, more employees than the organization can afford. Again, for these circumstances there are various procedures for the management to adhere: pay cuts, reducing the working hours as well as work sharing. These procedures may save jobs. The management may also eliminate work positions through certain measures, for instance: early retirement incentives, severance pay and outright layoffs. In the most favorable situation, as the labor supply meets the demand, the organization can recruit new employees or promote current ones replacing the ones who quit or perished. (Gómez-Mejia et al. 2016, 180.)

Due to the globalization growth, advanced technology and global communication in the international job market, educated and skilled people from different nations and cultures are available across the globe. Diversity of labor groups is increasing rapidly. Migration and labor mobility occurs in larger extent than ever before, thus it needs to be paid attention to as international organizations are planning their work forces. (Tarique et al. 2016, 226- 227.)

“Brain drain” is a term used by many emerging countries from which their skilled and educated employees move to developed countries due to a greater pay. On the other

hand, after organizations in developed countries have spent on their employees' training, they do not want them to move to another country and lose the skills they have trained. A solution for this brain drain is to export the jobs from developed countries to emerging countries through subsidiaries, joint enterprises, outsourcing and offshoring. The solution benefits both parties: the company obtains top talent with reduced costs while the emerging country retains its highly capable talent and gains jobs and income through the corporation. Job exporting has become increasingly popular by multinational organizations. (Tarique et al. 2016, 227-228.)

### 3.3 Recruitment Process in Multinational Organizations

Recruitment process is crucial for business effectiveness and success. Endowing the organization with top talent is the most critical job of management, otherwise they may harm the organization thoroughly. (Gómez-Mejía, Balkin & Cardy 2016, 178.) Recruitment is described as the process of seeking and attracting competent candidates which is due to gather a pool of applicants for vacancies. It is immensely dependent on the HRP. Recruiting can begin after the work force needs of the organization are defined. (Tarique et al. 2016, 248.)

When the organization's current employment resources are incomplete, recruitment and selection of new employees is one of the potential options to process. The need for new employees may appear through existing or expected growth, replacing left or absent employees or other factors. Additionally, less operational reasons – such as talent availability - can be valid for the organization to hire new employees. (Wapshott & Mallett 2016, 49-50.)

In addition to completing the present and future employment needs, the purpose of recruitment is to attract as many as possible applicants at minimal cost. It is important to increase the possibility of subsequent retention and set a realistic job advertisement. HRM is liable for meeting the legal and social responsibilities concerning recruitment. Furthermore, HRM needs to assess the different labor divisions in order to recruit more employees. The aim is to increase the organizational as well as individual capability and effectiveness. The recruitment practices vary depending on what type and level of employee the organization is seeking for and it differs also between countries. (Brewster et al. 2011, 158.) The HR professionals need to define the requirements and characteristics of the employee who they are seeking for.

Once the HRM has defined how many, which type and the quality of employees they are seeking, the decision about the employee markets has to be made. Management need to determine which labor markets will provide the needed candidates. The phase of finding the candidates is named sourcing and organizations have two main recruitment sources to use: internal and external recruitment sources. In the recruitment process it is recommended to use multiple sources to increase the applicant pool. (Tarique et al. 2016, 249.)

Internal recruitment sources concentrate on finding global applicants within the company. Global talent management inventories comprise electronic records with professional information of employees from all through the company. They may include information such as their knowledge, skills and education. Information about former and current expatriates as well as attendants participated in organization's internal leadership programs can be available for the HRM to examine. Additionally, the recommendations from former or current managers are one of the internal sources. A job advertisement can be released in a system – typically in organization's intranet – which is viewed exclusively for current employees. Employees interested in international positions are expected to search for these postings and apply for an interesting position. There can be arranged organization's internal programs which are planned to prepare potential employees for international assignments. Internal recruitment sources are often preferred due to lower costs, reverence towards the practice on behalf of both employees and employers as well as reputation improvement of the company. On the other hand, internal sources can restrain the pool of candidates and embolden infighting. (Tarique et al. 2016, 249.)

External recruitment sources strive to find the appropriate applicants from outside the company. External sources include recommendations from present employees or expatriates and job events in which managers and candidates are able to meet. The organization can publish a job advertisement on the company web site which is visible for everyone outside the organization. Subsidiaries often have their own career websites. There are recruitment companies with global networks and contacts that focus on specific types of candidates, jobs and industries, which are valuable for international organizations. Professional networks, such as LinkedIn, may result in finding a potential applicant. Public global leadership programs - which often are arranged by consulting companies or universities – train students who are close to graduation. (Tarique et al. 2016, 249-250.)

In the selection stage management decides whether to hire each employee for the position. It involves comparing the characteristics and qualities of the candidate to the

required ones which were determined in the beginning of the process. The decision is made on the grounds of the impression candidate has made in the interview and test results - such as personality tests - and competences profile. When assembling the competences profile there is often defined a cut score which is the limit the candidate must surpass to proceed in the process. After the selection is made, it is important to socialize the employee with the organization and the working environment with its personnel. The socialization stage is crucial concerning the newcomer's feeling of being an outsider or part of the group. (Gómez-Mejia et al. 2016, 183.)

### 3.4 Culture in International Human Resource Management

The concept of culture is hard to define for its complexity and multiple layers of meaning. A definition describing culture with concepts such as values, beliefs, attitudes, norms, significance of language and foundational behaviors is relevant in this context. Culture can be characterized with descriptions as: it is shared among society, transmitted from generation to generation, based on symbols and it is learned. (Samovar, Porter, McDaniel & Roy 2017, 39-43.) Each country varies from others somehow, such as in history, government, laws and behavior. Multinational operations bring more complexity to the business activities due to the various cultures of the countries. It is ordinary today for multinational organizations to conduct business with its customers and other companies in multiple countries. People's beliefs, values and behavior patterns vary depending on the country, which are crucial for international business professionals and managers to recognize and act according to them. (Tarique et al. 2016, 122.)

Deresky (2011, 105) introduces cultural sensitivity as an awareness and genuine interest in another culture. It requires comprehension of the perspective of people living in another community and desire to put oneself in another's position. Managers can benefit from cultural awareness in multiple ways in business, such as culture's effects on work and organizational process. It enables them to build business policies and specify the manners to plan, organize, manage and control in a designated foreign environment. It is necessary to adapt to the environment in order to gain well-operating strategy. Additionally it enables the managers to interplay and communicate with the diverse workforce more effectively.

It is important to have competency in a second language while working – especially in management - in a MNE. Either working abroad or in a multinational workgroup it brings multiple benefits. Second language competence combined with cultural awareness contribute to understand the meanings of expressions when the direct translation does

not apply. Furthermore, it helps the progress of cultural adaptation and integration as well as lowers the considerable uncertainty in a new environment. (Samovar et al. 2017, 354.)

Often MNEs are proud of their organizational culture and eager to bring it forth but it may clash with the national culture of the country. Many MNEs prioritize their organizational culture over the national culture, when they conflict. Situations such as hiring a woman in a management position can be extremely rare in certain cultures, but crucial for Scandinavian MNEs in terms of equality in the work environment. Scandinavians may also favor egalitarian and participative management style in a country where locals have a differing point of view. (Tarique et al. 2016, 138.) In some cases, it is extremely challenging to find a pleasing solution for everyone.

### 3.5 Prior Research about Equality and Non-Discrimination in Recruitment

Discrimination in recruitment can be direct or indirect. Discrimination is direct when an individual is treated more unfavorably than the other in a corresponding situation, for instance when the employer announces publicly not to hire a person from certain ethnic origin. Discrimination is indirect when an order, instruction or policy seeming unbiased leads to a situation where an individual ends up in unfavorable position in front of others. An example situation would be requiring proficient skills in a specific language in recruitment when it is not necessary for the job performance. The definitions of Aalto, Larja & Liebkind (2017, 11) are based on the website of Työsuojeluhallinto (2009) and the annual report of Vähemmistövaltuutettu (2008).

Studies related to recruitment discrimination have focused on mainly reporting the results of Euro barometers as they are solely singular studies which examine the attitudes related to minorities simultaneously in multiple countries. Euro barometers can be compared with each other as the exploratory individuals have been selected similarly despite of the country and they have been asked the same questions. It turns out from the Euro barometer material collected in 2008 that in European Union area people assess unequal treatment on the grounds of age, ethnic origin and disability being quite common. Additionally, the results reveal that managers evaluate discrimination being more common compared to the other population. The results of Euro barometer can be regarded as reliable indicator of discrimination due to the question formation. The questions are formed in a way in which the respondent is asked to evaluate the amount of discrimination in general instead of asking whether they would discriminate the minorities in question. (Aalto et al. 2017, 36-37.)

On the grounds of the research results it seems that men experience discrimination as applying a job typical for women and the other way around. It is considerable that women experience discrimination especially when applying for high status positions. The conclusions of Aalto et al. (2017, 41) are based on a wide variety of researches made in the 2000s.

The study results indicate that the applicants with typical names of majority receives the invitation to a job interview more often than the applicants with names typical for ethnic minorities. The same result has been achieved by analyzing the internet-based job application material. The results refer that representatives of ethnic minorities face discrimination in recruitment despite of the industry or field. (Aalto et al. 2017, 41).

Aalto et al. (2017, 46-47) refer in their book "Syrjintä työhönottotilanteissa – tutkimuskatsaus" that results on recruitment discrimination related to age are contradictory. Some studies reveal that the older applicants are evaluated more negatively than the younger ones, and some of the studies indicate the opposite. The research related to age is challenging as it may cause genuine differences between the applicants and therefore act as a reason to hire an applicant of different age. For instance, the older applicant may have more work experience whereas the younger applicant may be physically stronger for certain positions.

Additionally, the study results of recruitment discrimination related to disabilities are conflicting. In some studies there were no discrimination observed while in some the disabled people were evaluated even more positive than non-handicapped. The most influential reason seems to be the impacts of disablement's variety considering that in the studies disablement can be anything from diabetes to cerebral palsy. (Aalto et al. 2017, 49). Based on the book "Exploring the Impact of Applicants' Gender and Religion on Principals' Screening Decision for Assistant Principal Applicants" (2009) by Bon there are hardly any researches on the significance of religion, utterance or sexuality on recruitment discrimination, Aalto et al. (2017, 51-53) states.

#### 4 PONSSE GROUP

The client organization of this thesis research is Ponsse Group which was founded in 1970 and today belongs to the top of its industry, as one of the most well-known forest machine manufacturers for the cut-to-length method in the world. Ponsse started its operations as the founder Einari Vidgren was not satisfied with the forest machines manufactured by other companies and therefore decided to create operations that met his demands. Shortly the demand for Ponsse's highly durable forest machines started to grow considerably hence they founded Ponsse Plc. (Ponsse.)

The registered office of Ponsse is located in Vieremä, Finland, where it was founded originally. Ponsse is a family company as Vidgren's family is still committed to the daily operations of the company. The shares of Ponsse are listed in the NASDAQ OMX Nordic List. Ponsse Plc is the parent company of the Ponsse Group in which are contained the subsidiaries: Ponsse AB in Sweden, Ponsse AS in Norway, Ponssé S.A.S. in France, Ponsse UK Ltd. in the UK, Ponsse North America Inc. in the USA, Ponsse Latin America in Brazil, OOO Ponsse in Russia, Ponsse Asia-Pacific Ltd in Hong Kong, Ponsse China Ltd in China, Ponsse Uruguay S.A. in Uruguay and Epec Oy in Finland. (Ponsse.)



IMAGE 3. Ponsse headquarters and subsidiaries on the world map. (Modified by the author from Pixabay 2017).



In the image 3 each of the Ponsse subsidiaries and the headquarters are placed on the world map to illustrate the wideness and extent of multiculturalism of Ponsse Group.

#### 4.1 Ponsse Corporate Social Responsibility Program

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a concept that engages the organizations being liable for their influence on society. CSR has an impact on sustainability, competitiveness and innovation of organizations within the European Union and its economy. Organizations are responsible for obeying the law which is one of the aspects, but corporate social responsibility reaches beyond that. It creates interests for risk management, cost savings and customer relationships among other things. (European Commission 2017.)

CSR should be led by the organizations themselves. They should incorporate social, environmental, ethical, consumer and human rights issues into their long-term business plans and operations. European Commission supports and encourages the organizations to follow the international principles and guidance by developing the CSR to be more discernible, expanding good methods and enhancing as well as elevating trust in business among other things. (European Commission 2017.)

Ponsse comprehends CSR as a continuum, in which its value-based operations are the solid foundation continuing to sustainable development, both playing a critical role. From the beginning of its history Ponsse has had strong values, which have led the employees towards honest work appreciating and cooperating with other people as well as endeavoring to develop the company's operations and the surrounding society. Sustainable development has enabled the emergence of innovative product, service and operational practices that promote to protect the nature and sustain natural resources. Moreover, Ponsse has consistently supported the spirit of local society by operating a long-term financial management, investing in operations and facilities as well as offering jobs and collaboration possibilities. (Posti 2017.)

On the ground of these values, Ponsse's CSR efforts and targets center on: honest and ethical policies, supporting welfare and constant learning, operations and R&D activities which are sustainable, inventive and saving natural resources as well as continuous business and financial management, sustaining stake holder continuance. Ponsse is active at monitoring the changes in requirements and they are involved in development

work. Ponsse views change as an opportunity that is part of continuing development. The CSR work aims to improve the transparency of their operations and objectives. (Posti 2017.)

#### 4.2 Ponsse Code of Conduct

The Ponsse Code of Conduct – which was accepted at the end of 2016 by the Company Board - outlines for CSR aspirations. The Code of Conduct comprehends subjects such as compliance with laws, human and employee rights, equality and non-discrimination along with health and safety. The meaning of the code of Conduct is to support coherent standards and policies throughout the Ponsse Group as well as develop the operations. (Posti.)

Ponsse is dedicated to implement its business operations in sustainable and accountable manner. Ponsse Code of Conduct is endorsed by their strong business values: honesty, innovativeness, Ponsse spirit and close customer relationships. The code guides Ponsse in their duties and liabilities in their business environment, with their employees, business associates and surrounding community and it is completed with specific ground rules and principles which concern the whole Ponsse Group. Their business operations are guided by high ethical standards and they are convinced that their exceptional reputation lead them to business success. Ponsse hopes their stakeholders to act according to the guidelines declared in their Code of Conduct. (Ponsse 2016.)

In the Code of Conduct Ponsse refers to social responsibility by stating that they honor and follow the guidelines declared in the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Ponsse does not approve child labor nor other conformation of hard labor and they endorse the freedom of organization as well as Ponsse workers have the right to join a labor union and negotiate collectively. Ponsse follows strictly the manner of treating its workers and job candidates in non-discriminatory way in reference to sex, origin, religion, race, age, invalidity, sexual identity, political utterance, association with union or social origin. They aim to build and sustain a high quality work environment in which workers are considered with equal respect and dignity. Moreover, Ponsse supports equal opportunities and diversity of employees. They prohibit harassment and bullying of any kind at work. (Ponsse 2016.)



## 5 EXECUTION OF THE RESEARCH

The meeting with the work life instructor was arranged on 9<sup>th</sup> of June in 2017 at Ponsse headquarters in Vieremä, Finland. There was one hour reserved for the meeting and the purpose was to plan how to start and proceed in the thesis process. At the meeting Ponsse desired to include six subsidiaries in addition to the parent company in the research but later they wanted to cut out two of them, hence there were four subsidiaries and the parent company involved with the research. The main focus of this meeting was in planning the questionnaire: forming the questions, choosing the respondents and deciding the schedule.

During the summer and autumn 2017 the theory part was written and afterwards the analyzing part was executed. Webropol survey program was found to be the most practical means to execute the questionnaire. The responses were analyzed through a content analysis and the proposals were achieved reflecting the prior research to the results. The schedule of the thesis process delayed for three and a half months for many reasons.

### 5.1 The Selection of the Research and Data Collection Method

Qualitative and quantitative data collection methods both have their strengths. Qualitative method is based on observations and focuses on the meaning of them. It allows the topics of the research to develop during the process. Qualitative method also considers other interpretations and viewpoints as well as can accumulate depth and detail on a set of factors that are associated with the topic. Quantitative method, on the other hand, can test presumptions on a wide range of variables and uses standardized measures for questions and answers. It can concern results of a larger group of people. Quantitative method creates predesigned changes and tests results and counts on studies executed by other researchers. It focuses on key factors while controlling the other variables. (Morgan 2014, 51-52.)

As Ponsse desired to receive HR professionals' own views and opinions, it was adequate to choose qualitative data collection method. When the answers are not readily exposed to the respondents in multiple choice fashion, the replies come from their personal point of view. The gathered information is thus more analytical and subjective. Additionally, qualitative method allows to analyze the subject on the grounds of observations and other viewpoints.

## 5.2 The Planning and Execution of the Questionnaire

At the meeting with the work life instructor the planning and the formation of the questionnaire was prioritized because it was planned that the theory part of the thesis would be written meanwhile waiting for the answers for the questionnaire as the original schedule for the process was fairly short. The schedule for the whole process delayed for three and a half months for many reasons. In the end, the link to the questionnaire was sent to the respondents in the beginning of October and all the answers were received by the end of January 2018.

The instructions by the work life instructor for the questionnaire declared that the questions must be practice based as there lies a concern of respondents replying to the questions "by the book". Ponsse needed subjective information from its HR professionals and the respondents were chosen by Ponsse. The method for the questionnaire was chosen to be Webropol survey program for its user-friendliness and facility. The formation of the questionnaire with the program was effortless and yet easy to modify when necessary. Additionally Webropol allowed the respondents to answer the questionnaire anonymously.

The author and the purpose of the research were introduced and the instructions were given in the preface of the questionnaire. According to the instructions there were reserved one hour for the respondents to answer the questionnaire. The HR professionals were given the option to answer the questions by themselves or together in a team. Ponsse wanted as much views and information as possible and occasionally group work enhance the information flow. On the other hand, Ponsse was aware of the busy schedules of the HR professionals and therefore they gave the option to answer the questionnaire individually. The questionnaire was sent to the Ponsse subsidiaries of Sweden, United States, Brazil and Uruguay in addition to headquarters in Finland, hence there were five countries included in the research.

## 5.3 Research Problem

The purpose of the research was to collect information about the views and understanding about equality and non-discrimination in Human Resources network of Ponsse Group and how the given concepts are applied in recruitment process. The aim was to describe the

differences and similarities of the views between the countries. In addition to the parent company Ponsse Plc in Finland, the subsidiaries included in the research were: Ponsse AB in Sweden, Ponsse North America Inc. in the USA, Ponsse Latin America in Brazil and Ponsse Uruguay S.A. The purpose was to create and develop proposals for the future to ensure equality and non-discrimination in Ponsse recruitment process.

It is important to research this subject as Ponsse needs information about the personal views and opinions of equality and non-discrimination because of their multifaceted nature depending on the country where the subsidiary is placed. The subject can be interpreted in multilateral manners in many circumstances as the cultures differ from each other, sometimes considerably. Ponsse desired to have this information to develop and understand the subject more profoundly.

Central research questions were:

1. What is the description about the principle of equality and non-discrimination in general, in the organization and in recruitment process?
2. Which are the most important qualities of a competent job applicant?
3. When is it challenging to follow the principle of equality and non-discrimination?
4. Is the viewpoint of equality and non-discrimination part of the decision making conversation in recruitment process?
5. Is the principle of equality and non-discrimination important point of view to consider in the recruitment process and why?

#### 5.4 Results of the Questionnaire

The results of the questionnaire are imparted based on the answers for the questionnaire in the following sub chapters. The questions are divided in themes and the answers are joint as entities. To illustrate the results of the questionnaire, anonymous quotes from the answers are presented. The participating subsidiaries in the research were from: Sweden, USA, Brazil, Uruguay and Finland. There were one to three respondents from one subsidiary and headquarters of Ponsse answering the questionnaire.

*Describing the principle of equality and non-discrimination in general, in the organization and in recruitment process*

All of the answers about the description of equality and non-discrimination indicated that the HR professionals have internalized the subject. According to the answers, the HR professionals include to the principle of equality and non-discrimination elements, such as: respect, integration, diversity and tolerance. One of the respondents quoted their handbook: *"We are committed to providing a work environment that is free of discrimination, harassment and bullying"*. Important elements were also: being equal in front of the law and promoting the good of all, reducing the social inequalities, promoting better education for everyone and ensuring the fundamental rights of all people. There was an answer which stated that people have equal opportunities in the society regardless of their gender, nationality, religion, race, age and political opinion among others while human rights are applied. The same respondent added that and people are treated with equal respect and dignity. One respondent emphasized the principle of equality and non-discrimination meaning not to treat anyone differently from anyone else. The respondent added that the HR professionals are updated about the rules and laws concerning these subjects and they have annual systematic audits to see if and how the HR personnel follow the principles.

As asked about the equality and non-discrimination realization in the organization, the answers varied from respondent to respondent. They included striving for teamwork and respect for one another, although there is some joking around and teasing from time to time. There was an indication that everyone is a unique individual but everyone has something to contribute to the team. One of the respondents stated: *"I think it is something that is internalized in every member of the company, so it is something that happens naturally"*. There was one answer which stated that Ponsse have defined the principles and guidelines in the Code of Conduct and expect everybody to act accordingly. Additionally, the company would take immediate action if any breach would be brought to their attention while they promote a culture of open communication and people engagement. Furthermore, the company do not tolerate any kind of harassment or bullying in work. There was also mentioned the invitations to trainings and activities even when the subject is targeted for a particular audience, for instance breast cancer events. From one of the countries the response stated that they have a written policy on how to treat each other in the company and instructions how to act if someone offends it. All newcomers are informed about these policies and their importance. The respondents imparted having conversations with employees who are misbehaving according to the policies.

The question about equality and non-discrimination in recruitment process gathered answers which were fairly similar. The answers stated that Ponsse follows a recruitment and selection policy as well as the Code of Conduct which prohibits discrimination and that everyone fit in accordance with the job description are part of the selection process. One of the respondents answered: *“We look for team players. We want individuals that are open to new ideas and are willing to participate in sharing new ideas”*. Based on the answers it was strongly emphasized that the HR professionals select the best candidate for the position. One respondent admitted that they do struggle with their stereotypes sometimes and the professionals have conversations during the recruitment process not to let the stereotypes affect their choice. They often hire an external company to manage the recruitment. The respondent continued the selection being discrimination-free in case of outsourcing. Additionally, there was an answer that stated: *“One way to avoid possible individual biases is to involve several people in the recruitment process and decision making.”*

#### *Describing the most important qualities of a competent job applicant*

According to one of the HR professionals' answers a competent applicant is: honest, hard-working team player with family-values. The respondent stated accordingly: *“With these characteristics, we get respect for one another and know that we are all equal members of the team”*. There was also an indication that the competencies of the applicant must match with the requirements of the position. Several answers stated the most significant qualities of the applicant to be: aptitude including both job specific and general workplace skills, attitude, honesty, match between the candidate's and company values as well as the desire and capability to develop. There were also mentioned qualities, such as: right qualifications, personality to match the team and education.

#### *Examples of challenging situations concerning equality and non-discrimination*

The respondents mainly did not have experiences of situations where it would have been challenging to follow the principle of equality and non-discrimination at Ponsse. Couple of the respondents indicated that some of the positions require considerably physical strength and very few females can perform the job in question and therefore cannot be hired. One of the respondents admitted that although they are convinced that there are many strong immigrant applicants, they cannot hire them because of the language barrier. The training for the job would be too difficult for both parties without a mutual language.



There was also a mention about recruiters having sometimes differing interpretations about equality.

*Decision making conversations and importance of equality and non-discrimination*

The answers to question of whether equality and non-discrimination are part of the decision making conversations, revealed differing opinions. Some of the answers revealed that the HR professionals do not go through a specific conversation about equality and non-discrimination when making decisions in recruitment process or there hasn't been need for that. One of them stated that the positions in the organization are male dominated and they have not received a female application yet. However, the respondent declares it to be important when there is a need for such conversation. Few professionals stated that they sometimes have conversations during the recruitment process ensuring that they treat the applicants equally, for example in a situation when there appears to be strong preferences in the beginning of the process. Some of the companies would like to hire more women to the company for its majority of men, but do not if she is not the best candidate. They want to attract female applicants by hiring female models for the advertisement pictures and they have noticed that it works. One of the respondents had hired a representative of sexual minority, because he was the best candidate and had the required skills.

All of the professionals regarded the viewpoint of equality and non-discrimination as important factors during the recruitment process. One of the professionals indicated that they cannot lose good applicants and employees because of selecting a representative of a certain race or gender. One respondent stated equality and non-discrimination to be important because: *"it contributes in many ways to generating a better organizational culture, an integrative and diversified work environment that allows the growth and enrichment of the person and his environment"*. There was an indication from one of the countries that although Ponsse regards equality and non-discrimination as important factors and has incorporated them in their company values, it does not represent the generality in that certain country. One of the responses stated that in their country there have been laws against discrimination for a long time and they have passed the most intensive times of discrimination, although the respondent believes it still exists at some level. They highlighted the fact that only 10% of the personnel in that subsidiary are women and the respondent has not experienced discrimination on the grounds of gender. They believe that when people are respectful for one another, equality and non-discrimination happen naturally. One respondent stated equality and non-discrimination

being important as the HR professionals should not let their prejudices to affect the decision of hiring the most competent candidate and they should stay open minded. One respondent referred to the values perspective and the commitments that they have made through Code of Conduct. Additionally, it enhances the development of a diverse work community.

## 5.5 Analysis and Proposals Based on the Results

The analysis is based on the answers of the questionnaire and information provided by the client company. Analyzing method used was content analysis, in which the answers were divided in themes, in this case countries. The similarities and differences were extracted from the themes and the most significant improvement points were analyzed to development proposals (see figure 4). The presented proposals are based on the analysis, prior research and Ponsse's internal equality and non-discrimination plans. The purpose was to present practical suggestions on how to ensure equality and non-discrimination of the recruitment processes in the future at Ponsse Group.

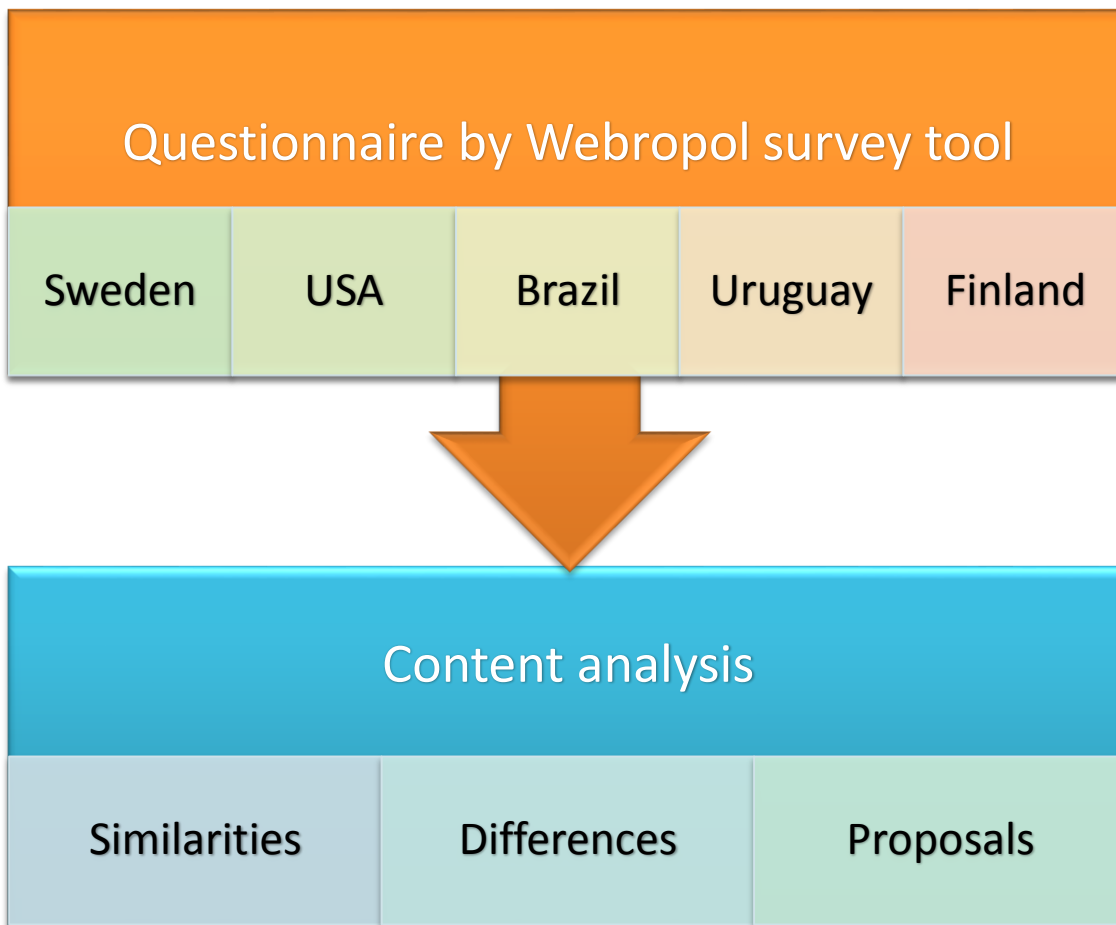


FIGURE 4. Phases of the research. (Created by the author 18 February 2018)

According to the answers it seems that the HR-professionals have internalized important values which they require from the applicants too. Especially terms such as team spirit and respect towards others were emphasized in several answers by some respondents. When the applicant has similar values with the organization, the adaptation to the work environment is more effortless and it contributes to the outcomes of the whole organization. After the selection for the position is made, it is crucial to socialize the employee with the organization and its personnel. The socialization is a critical stage which defines how the newcomer feels about the work environment. (Gómez-Mejía et al. 2016, 183.)

All HR professionals experience equality and non-discrimination individually, highlighting differing matters in their organization. According to the responses some stress the equality and non-discrimination being something that occurs within the organizational culture while some experience it by having or receiving external affairs from the management, such as training and allowance to participate in the events. Finally some trust the people in the work environment high enough to let equality and non-discrimination happen naturally. Trust is a crucial element in an organizational culture, as long as important factors which need development are paid attention to. The explanation behind these viewpoints could simply be that the subject is extremely multilateral and it depends from which viewpoint the respondent sees the concept.

When the HR policies are properly planned and standardized, they form an organizational environment where the personnel is highly driven and committed to achieve the objectives of the company (Beardwell & Claydon 2010, 4.) According to the answers it seems that the HR professionals comply with the organizational HR policies and instructions in the recruitment process and they regard them important. All of the responses included the importance of selecting the best and the most competent applicant for the position which supports the principle of equality and non-discrimination. The focus of Ponsse HR professionals is in the characteristics and skills of the applicant they are seeking for which is the essential factor in selecting the appropriate candidate. In the selection stage HR professionals compare the characteristics and competences of the candidate to the required ones. The decision is made based on the impression candidate has made in the interview and test results - such as personality tests - and competences profile. (Gómez-Mejía et al. 2016, 183.)

Most of the responses referred that there have not been occasions where it would have been difficult to follow the guidelines of equality and non-discrimination. It is a desirable situation that these challenges have not occurred. Couple of respondents mentioned that

very few females have the required physical strength for certain positions. One respondent highlighted that although immigrants are highly valued and appreciated work force, typically they cannot be hired because of the language barrier. The training of the immigrants can be extremely difficult if there is no mutual language. As in the non-discrimination plan of Ponsse in section 3.3 it is explained that the national language skills are not a must-have if it is not a necessity for the job performance, there is no strict rule for this matter (Ponsse, 3). Ponsse arranges language courses, which could support immigrants' learning of the national language or other mainly spoken language in the country. Similarly, supervisors and trainers can use these benefits to strengthen their language skills to have fluent communication with the immigrants.

Some of the professionals regarded diverse work environment as crucial factor in the organization and having added value through it for everyone in the company which generates a better organizational culture. According to the prior research (Aalto et al. 2017, 41) women experience discrimination in recruitment when applying to a male-dominated industry. To increase the amount of female employees, some of the Ponsse subsidiaries attempt to attract female applicants by advertisement which includes female models in the pictures. This refers to an effort to reduce the gender gap in job positions in practical means. In Ponsse's equality plan there is a mention in the section 3.1 that the company must operate in a way that both male and female can apply for the jobs and the requirements should be applicable for both genders. (Ponsse, 1).

The aforementioned method could be extended into a diversity and equality oriented marketing. Ponsse could emphasize diversity and equality in their marketing and recruitment campaigns in pictures. These pictures could show men and women from different ethnic backgrounds performing jobs which are not typical for their gender among more typical pictures. Diversity and equality could be highlighted as a strong value of the company for example in the job advertisements. Internal job exchange within Ponsse Group could bring diversity to the work environments and bring new viewpoints to the operations from another country. There could be workers promoting Ponsse in recruitment events or schools and telling about their choice of Ponsse career. For instance a female welder telling young people about her job and how she winded up to choose the field as her future career along advertising Ponsse career and its benefits to the worker.

As referred in theory part (see p. 22), company values can sometimes surpass the national ones in a foreign country. The principle of equality and non-discrimination is a crucial part of global and individual progress, national cultures, business operations, politics and other aspects throughout the world. According to the answers, in certain national cultures the

concepts of equality and non-discrimination are not paid enough attention to. Although the progress may be slower in some parts of the world, equality and non-discrimination is still equally everyone's right. Ponsse's effort in the matter of equality and non-discrimination shows an excellent example for national cultures globally as well as other multinational and local companies. The matter of equality and non-discrimination should be made as transparent and visible as possible in Ponsse's business operations and its strategy. The methods used could include social media advertising and participating – for example financially - in events dealing with the topic.

The most significant differences between the responses related to the written policies and instructions, regular audits, using external recruitment firms and letting the equality and non-discrimination happen naturally. Some respondents highlighted the written policies and updated laws as well as the regular audits on human resource management concerning equality and non-discrimination more than others. Some of the answers mentioned the outsourcing of the recruitment in their subsidiary and in the same context referred the recruitment to be discrimination-free. On the other hand, some respondents seem to rely on the respect towards other people to let the equality and non-discrimination happen automatically.

## 5.6 Validity and Reliability of the Research

Validity is a synonym for truth (Silverman 2010, 275). Validity concerns the reality whether the researchers see what they think they see. In the research three errors may take place, which are: to see a relation between matters that are not accurate, to dismiss a relation between matters that is correct and to ask the wrong questions. The problem in evaluating the validity in qualitative study is how to define the connection between the relations studied and interpretation that the researcher is providing. (Flick 2006, 371.)

A measurement is reliable to the extent that it provides consistent conclusions and outcomes. Reliability is an essential contributor to validity but is not a proficient term for it. If a measurement is not valid it does not make a difference if it is reliable. Validity is more important for the research than reliability, but reliability is easier to evaluate. Reliability is concerned with estimations of the extent to which a measure is free of random or erratic error. Reliable tools can be used relying on that temporary and circumstantial elements are not interfering. Reliable tools are steady and strong; they function well under differing circumstances at different times. (Cooper & Schindler 2011, 283.)

The central relations between prior research, theory and results were analyzed thoroughly and the outcomes were consistent in the research according to the author's knowledge about the operations and practices of Ponsse. The answers were written clear enough to make the right conclusions in the analysis. The answers were analyzed through a content analysis method.

According to the appropriate research policy the respondents were explained the purpose and instructions of the research in addition to the introduction of the author. Each of the respondents participated in the research according to their working hours. The tool used for the questionnaire was Webropol which allows to execute the questionnaire process anonymously. However, the questionnaire was not completely anonymous as the respondents who worked for the client company received the questionnaire by e-mail from the work life instructor. In addition, the author was informed about the needs for clarifications concerning the questionnaire by e-mail, when the names of these persons were exposed to the author. In order to ensure the confidentiality the countries are not mentioned by name in the results, analysis nor the proposals. There were no occasions where the names of the respondents could have been revealed to a larger audience.

The concern of not receiving answers based on the respondents' own viewpoints was internalized as forming the questionnaire. The risk was minimized by asking questions based on the HR professionals' experiences and opinions about the subject. Managing human resources can be sensitive and even vulnerable because of its target of people. Additionally the written text could be misinterpreted. There was also a small risk of respondents not to give possible unpleasant answers. There could be a fear of having a reprimand or feeling less professional.

As going through the responses of the questionnaire it was noticeable that answering to the questions was challenging for the HR professionals. It seems that one reason was simply the language barrier. It turned out that some of the respondents had difficulties to understand the English completely. On the other hand, the subject is extensive and multidimensional and it can be hard to understand what the motive or meaning behind the questions is. It would have been relevant to expose the aim the research a bit more and form the questions less academically. It may be also that in some parts of the world some groups of people – for example women – are not used to express their critical opinion concerning business or politics due to the inequalities in the society.

## 6 CONCLUSION

The starting point of the thesis was Ponsse's desire to gain more knowledge about the personal views and understanding about the principles of equality and non-discrimination of HR professionals in the organization. In addition, they wanted information about how the principles are applied to the recruitment process. The objectives involved in the research were to explain the understanding of the equality and non-discrimination of HR professionals and analyze the similarities and differences of the responses between the countries. The purpose of the research was to find and present proposals on how to ensure equality and non-discrimination of the recruitment in the future of Ponsse Group.

This qualitative research was decided to found on a questionnaire which was sent to the respondents chosen by Ponsse. The questions were formed in practical manner, as there lied a concern of not receiving personal opinions and experiences. The respondents were given basic information about the author and the purpose of the research. The questionnaire was not completely anonymous as the respondents work for the client company. Although some of the respondents' names were exposed to the author during the process, there were no occasions in which they could have revealed to a greater public and the respondents cannot be connected to the answers in the research. It turned out during the questionnaire process that some of the respondents had difficulties to understand the English and the reasoning of the questionnaire. Based on this information it would have been relevant to expose the aim the research a bit more and form the questions less academically.

The responses of the questionnaire were analyzed with a method of content analysis in order to find the similarities and differences between the answers and reflect them to the theoretical framework. The proposals were presented on the grounds of the analysis and prior research. The subject was important to research in order to understand and develop this global and multifaceted topic. Ponsse considers principles of equality and non-discrimination as crucial elements in their work environment and recruitment. In modern world the subject is urgent and topical and it does not lose its importance.

It turned out from the results of the research that all of the HR professionals of Ponsse considered equality and non-discrimination as crucial elements in both work environment and recruitment, although they emphasized different factors within the concepts. Furthermore all HR professionals highlighted the importance of selecting the best and the most competent candidate for the position. Values such as team spirit and respect towards others were appreciated and the written policies and instructions were regarded

important. Although many of the respondents stated that there have not been occasions where it would have been difficult to follow the principles of equality and non-discrimination, there was one indication that immigrants cannot be hired typically because of the language barrier. The proposal stated that trainees with as multilateral language skills as possible and working instructions in several languages could facilitate the problem. There was also a mention about the positions which require considerably physical strength which females rarely fulfill.

According to the prior research women experience discrimination as applying for positions in a male-dominated industry. Additionally, some of the responses highlighted the importance of diverse working environment which generates a better organizational culture. The presented proposals included diversity and equality oriented marketing in pictures, internal job exchange and workers promoting Ponsse in educational events or schools.

Occasionally the national culture where the subsidiary is located and the organizational culture and the values of the company collide. Equality and non-discrimination are crucial elements for the people regardless of their national culture. Ponsse shows excellent example for the other companies and societies around the world. Therefore the concepts of equality and non-discrimination should be made as transparent and visible as possible in the corporate operations and its strategy. The methods proposed were social media marketing and participating – for instance as a financial investor – to occasions dealing with the theme.

The relations between the matters in the research were connected and explored coherently and the outcomes suggested according to the provided information by the client company. The research was extremely interesting to execute and it provided a great experience of learning about international human resources and the concepts of equality and non-discrimination. Completing the thesis process strengthened the idea of pursuing to work in human resources sector in the future. There is an opportunity for further studies on the grounds of the research. The study could be expanded to more countries and more specific examinations of the cultures and legislations.



*Thesis process and self-evaluation*

The thesis process was started with a meeting with the work life instructor at Ponsse in Vieremä. The meeting included mainly the planning and forming the questionnaire for the respondents to answer. There was a concern not to receive HR professionals' personal views and experiences and therefore the questions were formed in practical manner. However, as the examination phase of the research was ongoing, it turned out that the questions were hard to understand for some of the respondents. Based on this information it would have been adequate to compose the questions in clearer English and open the purpose of the research a bit more to the respondents. The benefit of starting the thesis process with compiling the questionnaire was that the theory part was written meanwhile waiting for the answers from the respondents. On the other hand, the questions may have been formed more clarified way in the later phase of the process as understanding of the research came more distinct to the author through writing the theory part.

Mostly the literature was fairly effortless to find. However, there were few difficulties to find information about the legislations of some countries. Furthermore, the original objectives included the exploration of the cultural backgrounds of the responses. The decision to focus less on the cultural aspects was made in the final stage of the process, as the thesis would have reached too wide framework and therefore the limitation of the subject was accurate. Additionally, there should have been questions leading to the subject of cultures in the questionnaire. Nevertheless, there is potential to study the aspects of legislation and cultures more specifically in the further studies. The subject of the study was fascinating and the author did not lose interest along the process. Finally I would like to thank Ponsse Plc for the given opportunity to research this diversely interesting topic as well as the cooperation with the Ponsse subsidiaries of Sweden, United States, Brazil and Uruguay.

*List of Abbreviations and Definitions*

Code of Conduct = A set of rules to guide behavior and decisions in an organization

CSR = Corporate Social Responsibility

EEOC = Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in the U.S.

HRM = Human Resource Management

HRP = Human Resource Planning

IHRM = International Human Resource Management

ILO = International Labor Organization

MNE = Multinational Enterprise

United Nations = An international alliance, founded in 1945

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**APPENDIX 1 (1)**

*Questionnaire for Ponsse Human Resource professionals*

Equality and Non-discrimination in Recruitment Process

The following questionnaire concerns the principles of equality and non-discrimination in recruitment process. As this subject is very global and multifaceted, Ponsse wants to collect information about it from its HR-network.

The author of this thesis research is Minna Holm, a 32-year-old student from Savonia University of Applied Sciences, Kuopio, Finland, This questionnaire is the main part of the research and I am convinced that you can help me complete this research.

Please answer the questions either on your own or together with your team. There are 11 questions to be answered and it takes about one hour. Marked questions are compulsory. Thank you for your participation!

1. Please mention the country you are operating in.
2. Please mention how many people are there answering the following questions.
3. Please write your description about the principles of equality and non-discrimination. Define the 3-5 most important elements.
4. Please describe how is the principles of equality and non-discrimination realized in your organization in general?
5. Please describe how is the principles of equality and non-discrimination realized in the recruitment process in your organization?
6. Please define the 3-5 most important qualities when recruiting a job applicant?
7. Please give an example of a situation where you found it challenging to follow the principles of equality and non-discrimination?
8. Is the viewpoint of equality and non-discrimination part of the decision making conversation in recruitment process? Please describe an example.
9. In your opinion, is the principles of equality and non-discrimination important point of view to consider in the recruitment process and why? Please share all views in your group.
10. Please list the laws and acts of your country concerning the concepts of equality and non-discrimination. Additionally describe shortly each content.
11. Feel free to share your views about the principles of equality and non-discrimination.

