

The role of Green HR Management in German companies

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Abstract

In an era marked by geopolitical and economic turmoil, corporate sustainability must redefine its role to deliver tangible business value. To achieve this, companies need to move beyond treating sustainability as a siloed, reporting-driven function and instead embrace it as a company-wide transformation process.

The shift from sustainability as a reporting task to sustainability as a strategic option requires extensive changes in corporate structures, corporate processes, management systems, and ultimately in corporate culture. In this context, the human resources department can position itself as a central actor and driver of the ecological transformation. The intersection of sustainability - particularly its environmental dimension - and human resource management has been the focus of Green HRM research.

Despite growing interest in the international academic literature, Green HRM remains largely under-researched in Germany—particularly with regard to its practical application in German companies. The aim of this paper is to compare the results of a literature review with the findings of an empirical study based on a questionnaire completed by HR experts from German firms, in order to examine the extent to which the classification of Green HRM dimensions proposed in existing literature is reflected in actual practices within German companies. Furthermore, the study identifies specific areas of action that demonstrate both potential and a need for improvement in integrating environmental sustainability into existing HR functions.

Keywords: corporate culture; ecological transformation; environmental sustainability; HR functions; HR practices