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BUSINESS ORGANIZATION CREATIVITY – A KEY INDICATOR OF INNOVATION READINESS*

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Abstract. Organizational creativity is a key prerequisite for an effective company innovation policy. The overall innovation policy necessarily includes the attraction of creative employees to support the process of creating new products and services. At the same time, attracting and employing creative employees is a first but insufficient condition for obtaining a good level of organizational creativity. To be effective, these creative experts also have to be motivated, which now requires much deeper attention and overall policy from the organization's management. We studied the level of individual, team and organizational creativity among 384 employees that represent 71 companies in all economic sectors. Our findings clearly state that there is a difference between levels of individual, team and organizational creativity at the company. Employees do not reveal their full creative potential, as the main reason for that is lack of proper motivation and organizational support. Other barriers to creativity are also lack of good atmosphere, lack of confidence and transparency, lack of overall supportive organizational policy and excessive hierarchy and authoritarianism. At the same time, employees tend to define themselves as creative and the organizational management has to provide special and comprehensive policy to improve the level of organizational effectiveness of creativity.

Keywords: creativity; organizational creativity; competitive advantage; innovations

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1. Introduction

In today's highly competitive business world, creativity could be considered as a key prerequisite for a business organization's potential to be different, recognizable and offer goods and services tailored to the ever-increasing demands of its customers. On the other hand, creativity has many dimensions that are interrelated and are facilitated and/or hindered by the environment in which they develop: individual, team, and organizational. At the same time, we could explore creativity manifested in key management activities and functions - such as decision-making, tasks distribution between employees, organization and control, etc.

Our initial understanding is that creativity and the level of creativity of an organization is crucial to its competitiveness, providing various opportunities for its sustainable development. However, creativity is an exceptional characteristic of human intelligence, and in this sense, the potential of human resources in the organization, including creativity, is of critical importance.

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Defining the level of overall organizational creativity could support the proper understanding of the organizational potential for innovations, which is crucial for its overall competitiveness. According to the initial understanding of the author of the current research, creativity is explored in three general different levels: individual, team and organizational creativity (covering organization strategy, supporting environment, such as free expression of opinions, ideas, and recommendations; communication processes – following any communication along the hierarchy as well as horizontal communication; organizational leadership and its reflection and impact on the creativity).

Therefore, the aim of the current article is to define the level of creativity of different business organizations using specific methodology for this purpose and, based on the collected data and their analysis – to make reasonable comments and recommendations for further improvements.

2. Literature review

The role of creativity in education, business and economy is explored and interpreted in different aspects by researchers. One of the leading topics within creativity is its role in the development of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), which is undeniable for overall economic development. For instance, Rumanti, Rizana and Achmad (2023) explore organizational creativity, direct connection to open innovation and, as a result – the overall performance of the enterprise. Their findings prove that both organizational creativity and open innovation have a significant positive impact on the overall SME performance. According to the author, organizational creativity consists of individual and group creativity (a common understanding among scientists), as well as the internal environment and knowledge. The authors argue that organizational creativity, perceived precisely in these four aspects, possesses the power to enhance the overall SME performance (ibid). Nguyen, Mai and Le (2023) examine the relations in the line organizational strategy – creativity and financial results of the company. Their findings indicate that adopting an inside-out perspective enhances organizational creativity but detrimentally affects financial performance.

In contrast, the outside-in perspective positively influences both organizational creativity and financial performance. Authors argue that organizational creativity not only boosts financial performance but also mediates the relationship between both perspectives and financial performance (ibid). Budiman, Rakhmawati and Purwitasari (2024) admit that in hyperconnected heterogeneous social networks, sociotechnical platforms can authentically and collaboratively facilitate the exchange of ideas, information, and knowledge both within and beyond organizational boundaries.

Hemonnet-Goujot, Ivens and Pardo (2022) pay attention to network creativity and develop a special framework, presenting the specific characteristics of network creativity based on the different multi-actors. Puccio and Schwartz (2023) examined how organizational creativity influences individual-level variables, including job satisfaction, engagement, motivation, intention to leave, absenteeism, and coping mechanisms in response to traumatic events. In this line of consideration comes the research of Bousinakis and Halkos (2021). According to the findings of their study, creativity uniquely serves as a driving factor capable of reducing stress while simultaneously fostering success, development, and high levels of satisfaction. Among the various factors, job-related creativity and the utilization of skills exert the greatest influence on satisfaction, followed by the physical distance from work, autonomy in actions, and compensation and benefits (ibid). At the same time, Di Prima, Cepel, Kotaskova and Ferraris (2024) consider that employee training, organizational knowledge sharing, and recruitment and selection processes are positively correlated with organizational creativity. Additionally, they admit that the use of HR analytics enhances these positive relationships (ibid). Paliwal, Rajak, Kumar and Singh (2022) find the relation between creativity and motivation and entrepreneurial intention.

An interesting view on individual creativity in the context of organizational creativity is presented by Carnevale et al. (2021). They conducted several studies on the creative process of creative people in organizations and found out that creative individuals, compared to their less creative colleagues, exhibit a tendency to seek less assistance related to creativity and to offer more help in this topic. According to the authors, this behaviour is attributed to their heightened concerns about maintaining a creative reputation. They also admit that

these tendencies are further amplified when these individuals have previously received help from others (ibid). In light of the creative process within the organization, the topic of sharing and the risk of stealing creative ideas logically comes up. Here, Ellis (2022) proposes comprehensive research. The author examines the interpersonal repercussions of idea theft in contrast to monetary theft. Through a series of experiments, the findings of the study reveal that individuals who steal ideas are perceived as having poorer character compared to those who steal money, resulting in a reduced willingness among others to offer them support as co-workers. Furthermore, the researcher argues that individuals are judged more harshly for stealing creative ideas as opposed to practical ones. Collectively, these results indicate that idea theft has substantial negative interpersonal consequences, adversely affecting co-worker relationships (ibid).

The role of human resource practices in the level of organizational creativity is also the focus of the researchers. For instance, the study of El-Kassar et al. (2022) indicates that the impact of implemented human resource practices on task performance is mediated by several factors: employees' perception of organizational support for creativity, their tendencies to hide knowledge, their creative output, and their innovative work behaviour. Mihova, Ivanova and Angelov (2022) also provide ideas for improving creativity and overall enterprise performance through the help of digitization of HRM, while Nikolova (2023) pays attention to the role of human resources in the context of Industry 4.0.

Gao, Zhao, Xu and Ma (2021) analyze the transition and link between individual and organizational creativity. They share the opinion that the individual creativity of the entrepreneur and, respectively, the founder of the enterprise could be considered as a starting point for the overall organizational creativity, especially when creative enterprises are concerned. At the same time, Jaboob (2023) focuses on the relationship between leadership styles and the level of individual creativity within the organization. The author found that four styles of leadership have significant positive effects on the individual creativity of employees: democratic, strategic, transformational and transactional. Complementary to this research is the study of Hanaysha (2023), who explores two contrasting leadership styles and their reflection on the individual employee level of creativity, namely authoritarian and participative. Logically, the findings of the author confirm that the participative leadership style positively affects individual creativity while the authoritarian style has no impact on the individual creativity of the employees (ibid). Xu, Yaacob and Cao (2024) also explore the relation between transformational leadership and employee creativity. The findings from their multilevel analyses revealed that transformational leadership exerts a significant positive effect on the innovation climate within teams, as well as on team reflexivity, psychological capital, and the creativity of employees. Cai, Fan and Wang (2023) pay attention to visionary leadership and its influence on creativity at different levels, especially in the context of goal-related processes within the organization. They reveal two cross-level effects: team-level visionary leadership enhances the relationship between individual-level visionary leadership and leader-follower congruence, while team goal commitment amplifies the impact of leader-follower goal congruence on employee creativity (ibid).

Creativity always comes with a high level of personal and team motivation. Some interesting research in this field in recent years has been proposed by Cui et al. (2024), who explore the role of knowledge sharing for motivation; Adeel et al. (2023), whose study is focused again on knowledge sharing and motivation, but this time in the context of the procrastination and creativity; Huang, Zhang and Zhu (2023), who explore the role of participating motivation in terms of idea sharing; Anguelov, Stoyanova & Tamosiuniene (2020), who pay attention on some important factors for motivation of creative persons. Wu and Zhang (2023) study the role of workplace fun on creativity. Scholars concluded, based on their findings, that workplace fun is positively associated with employees' creativity, with community embeddedness fully mediating the relationship between workplace fun and organizational embeddedness. Additionally, both community and organizational embeddedness serve as sequential mediators in the link between workplace fun and creativity (ibid). Yang and Chen (2023) also pay attention to the direct relationship between fun and the level of organizational creativity. Their findings support the positive impact of these two elements. The scholars argue that incorporating fun into the workplace can yield positive outcomes. However, according to them, managers should strive to cultivate an environment that not only encourages fun and creativity but also maintains high levels of productivity (ibid).

Some interesting researches are focused on the different approaches, methods and practices for enhancing individual and especially team creativity. For instance, Yang, Zhou and Yang (2024) find out that the use of humor by a leader was found to have a positive correlation with the team's ability to integrate knowledge effectively. She, Ma, Quan and Jiang (2024) explore the influence of the workaholicism of the leader on individual and team creativity. They argue that workaholic leaders have a dual impact on employee creativity, exhibiting both positive and negative effects. On one side, such leaders can stimulate employees to view challenges positively, thereby enhancing creativity. Conversely, they can also lead employees to perceive obstacles, which may hinder their creative potential (ibid). Multiple team membership and its relation to the team creativity is examined by Chen et al. (2024). According to their findings, multiple team membership has a dual impact on creativity. On the positive side, it fosters creativity by enhancing a sense of thriving at work. However, they also pointed out that it has a detrimental effect on creativity by contributing to increased emotional exhaustion. Marozzo et al. (2024) found that individuals of creative teams with STEM background education who are willing to watch science fiction could be more productive than their colleagues. Talat, Khan, Chaudary, and Neale (2023) focused especially on the creativity of ICT companies and the options for enhancing it. Their findings indicate that managers in knowledge-intensive industries should encourage cognitive diversity and autonomy to enhance team sensemaking, which may, in turn, foster creativity. Zhu, Bauman and Young (2023) explore the emotional aspects of unlocking the creative potential of employees. However, Betancourt, Chen and Zhou (2023) admit that low power can make individuals more open to social influences that promote creativity, such as diversity, thereby enhancing their sense of inspiration and their expression of creativity.

An interesting starting point for research is taken by Lin et al. (2023), who focused on the perfectionistic expectations both from parents and/ or direct manager (supervisor) and its impact on the employee's creativity and fear of failure. They reveal that the indirect influence of parents' perfectionistic expectations on creativity, mediated by fear of failure, is amplified when supervisors also have high perfectionistic expectations.

Finally, when the management of a company plans and initiates the evaluation of the level of organizational creativity, it has to consider its normal workflow and secure the execution of parallel activities at high-efficiency level (Popov, Anguelov & Popova, 2021).

As it became clear from the literature review, creativity at the individual and organizational level is directly dependent on many factors that have different intensities and are manifested in different ways for individual employees. Major factors that undoubtedly influence the individual and team level of creativity are related to the organizational climate, the opportunities and freedom to share knowledge and ideas, the openness of the organization itself to various networks, and, last but not least, inspirational leadership.

3. Methodology of the research

The study's major aim is to define the level of creativity of enterprises operating in different sectors of the economy. In order to reach this major goal, we implemented consecutively the following tasks:

- to review the scientific articles on the topic from the last few years, and on the basis of this analysis to identify the key elements that would help to precise the defining the level of organizational creativity;
- to come up with the specific methodology relevant for the study, having in mind the possibilities to secure accessing to the enterprises in representing different sectors of economy;
- to prepare and conduct an empirical study among representatives of different companies;
- to analyze the obtained result and to propose key elements for defining the level of creativity of the business organization.

The initial understanding of the author is that creativity is one of the basic characteristics of a successful business nowadays. Creativity is a prerequisite for innovation, but also when creativity is converted to the special policy of an enterprise, it will lead (sooner or later) to the entire improvement of the company's performance. At the same time, creativity is a fusion of a good environment and organizational climate, enhancing knowledge sharing, new ideas and teamwork. As a result, to be creative, an employee has to be motivated first

and find a sense of self-cultivation (here, it should be emphasized that this motivation is not necessarily to be sought only in financial and material rewards).

The first hypothesis is that business organizations do not efficiently reveal the full potential of the creativity of their staff and creative teams.

The second hypothesis is that at the individual level, most of the employees tend to define themselves as creative, but due to a lack of specific organizational policy and support, they are not motivated and cannot show their creative potential.

As a result of the implementation of the first task, several key elements for the emergence of creativity could be highlighted (Fig. 1 and Fig. 2). In terms of individual creativity, we could define four major groups – self-cultivation, motivation, a mix of personal characteristics and mix of professional characteristics. Here these four groups, we can conditionally divide them into two basic (personal and professional characteristics) and two upgrading ones (self-actualization and motivation). Every employee possesses some creativity and can be the author of a new idea, but in general context our good creator or creative employee will be good professional (with a relevant level of education, expertise and experience) and at the same time this employee has to possess specific personal characteristics such as: self-confidence, dreamers, faith of its own abilities, positiveness, curiosity, flexibility, adaptability, do not fit into the conventional, ambitious etc. On the next level of individual creativity comes the motivation and self-cultivation. It has already been said that creative people are also motivated colleagues by default. Here, we will not dwell in detail on the actual process of motivation of creative people since this is not the focus of the present study. Still, we will emphasize that in most cases, in creative persons, motivation is even more individually focused and, to a much lesser extent, is influenced by the general organizational policy related to standard monetary incentives or material rewards. At the same time, self-actualization could be considered as a key factor for understanding the motivation of creative people. This self-actualization, similar to Maslow's pyramid, leads to the fulfilment of specific personal needs, including self-respect, the possibility of discovering inner potential, etc.



Fig. 1. Key elements for the individual creativity



Fig. 2. Key elements for the organizational creativity

When we explore the key elements of organizational creativity, we can divide them into four major groups: freedom, teamwork, organizational climate, and specific organizational policy. Here, collaboration and any kind of relations and partnership are important to secure a good level of organizational creativity. The first and absolutely requested specifically is freedom – to express oneself, to propose new ideas (regardless of how crazy and even absurd they could be at first glance), and to share these new proposals with colleagues and managers without any negative consequences for the author. The next step is to secure a smooth team working – this, from one side, is connected to the good selection of proper people – complementary in terms of expertise, experience and background to guarantee different viewpoints. On the other side, the effective team working process is a complex and multi-level activity, which requires efforts from each team member, a symbiosis

between the professional and personal characteristics of these members and, even more importantly – the desire to work together for the organizational purpose. The synergy between creative team members could happen only when each member approaches the creative process with an open mind, free of egoistic emotions, and focused on creating something new. In fact, this is difficult to achieve in practice, and that is the reason that the level of effectiveness between different creative teams varies. Therefore, the organization's climate and the overall organizational policy are tools to secure, support, and feed the team's creativity.

As a result of the second task, considering the major purpose of the study, the developed methodology of the study is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Methodology of the study

N	Activity
1.	Preparation of the first draft of the questionnaire, covering key elements of individual and organizational creativity characteristics.
2.	Testing the first draft of the questionnaire with the specific focus group (2 groups of 5 persons, both employees and managers)
3.	Revision of the questionnaire according to the achieved recommendations and proposals from the focus groups
4.	The empirical study will be conducted among different companies (different sectors, sizes, finance resources, etc.).
5.	Data collection and analysis
6.	Identification of main findings from the empirical study
7.	Making a conclusion and proposal for assessment of the level of organizational creativity

The final version of the questionnaire contains 65 questions and statements in total, divided into four parts: Part A: Demographic characteristics of the responders; Part B: Questions collecting information for the self-assessment of the individual creativity of the responders; Part C: Question collecting information on the team creativity; Part D: Questions collecting information for the organizational creativity.

The first draft of the questionnaire was tested using 2 focus groups (each consisting of 5 persons). As a result of the proposals, the number of questions grew significantly, which predetermined the choice of the method of distribution of the questionnaire - not through the Internet (the risk of not filling out the questionnaire due to its size was serious), but through direct interviews with experts, managers and owners of enterprises. As a result of this major decision, the time for collection of primary information was expanded from the initially planned 3 to 8 months in real (from November 2023 until June 2024).

With specific planning (including using different experts and managers in practice as interviewers), the questionnaire was completed by a total of 384 respondents, representatives of a total of 71 enterprises located in the European Union. The profile of the companies entering the study is presented in Table 2 and Fig. 3, while the demographic characteristics of responders are in Table 3.

Table 2. Profile of the companies, entering in the research

Size of the company (by number of employees)	Micro	9	Small	24	Medium	21	Large	17
Years of existing	New company (less than 1 year)	6	Between 2 and 5 years	25	Between 6 and 10 years	26	Over 10 years	14
Main capital	Own	15	Foreign	18	Mixed financing	32	Public company	6

As can be seen from the Table 2 above, the major part of the companies that are entering this research are small enterprises (defined only by a number of their employees), followed by medium (21 enterprises) and large (17 companies). Micro enterprises are only 9.

Therefore, it could be said that the research covers all types of companies, but the results will be more applicable to small, medium and large companies rather than micro-enterprises. At the same time, in terms of years of existence, the companies are divided into 2 almost equal groups – between 6 and 10 years of experience (26 companies) and between 2 and 5 years of experience (25 enterprises). 14 enterprises have been established for over 10 years, while 6 are absolutely new – less than one year. The majority of the companies (32) have mixed financing (both their own and foreign); 18 of them are founded and operate only with foreign capital, which is almost equal to 15 companies that are founded with their own financial resources. Only 6 of the enterprises are with public financing – which means that they are total property of the government or municipality.

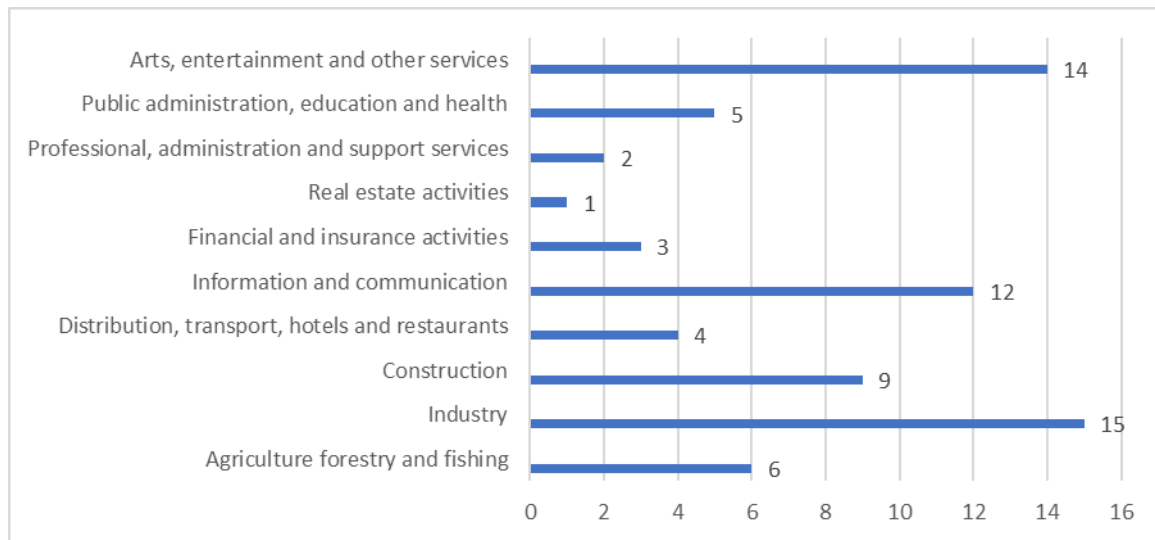


Fig. 3. Distribution of companies by economic sector, NACE classification (in number)

Companies entering the research cover all spectrum of NACE classification, even if their participation in the study is not equal. The smallest group, composed of only one representative, is the companies involved in real estate activities. At the same time, the industry sector has the largest number of representative firms (15), closely followed by enterprises in arts and entertainment (14). The third group is composed by the companies in the ICT sector (12) and the construction companies (9). This distribution was difficult to achieve due to the fact that in some sectors, the author has good relations with companies developed through the ears (creative business, construction, industry, ICT sector), while some sectors are less represented precisely because of the lack of a close relationship established so far. On the other side, companies in the financial sector were difficult to convince to participate in the study.

Table 3. Profile of the responders (in number)

Position of the company	High-level manager / owner of the business	42	Middle-level manager	117	Expert employee	225		
Age	From 18 to 30	96	From 31 to 40	87	From 41 to 50	138	Over 51	63
Gender of responders	Male	163	Female	210	I don't want to tell	11		
Years of experience within the company	Less than 1 year	54	Between 1 and 5 years	172	Between 6 and 10 years	76	Over 10 years	82
Last degree of achieved education	Secondary education	63	Bachelor degree	164	Master degree	132	PhD	25

As can be seen, most of the respondents are experts within the companies (225 or 59%), followed by representatives of the management teams (30%). Logically, the smallest group here are the high-level managers or the owners of the company (42 in total or 11%). This characteristic of the responders represents the actual logic of organizational structure. It could be considered a good base for the obtained results, covering all points of view within the company. Regarding the age of the responders, the principal group is formed by people between 41 and 50 (138 respondents or 36%), followed by the youngest group (96 people or 25% of respondents are employees between 18 and 30 years old). The third place is for people between 31 and 40 years (87 or 23%), and the last is for people over 51 years – 63 or 16%. The representation includes all groups (in terms of their age) and will secure the opinion of all working-age generations. Here, it is curious that the group of people over 50 years old is the smallest one – this is not the actual situation within the company. Still, maybe their small number is due to their lack of willingness to participate in the survey. However, the study was carried out voluntarily, and all participants were informed that the collected data would be used for scientific purposes only.

4. Analysis and discussion of the collected data

The first core part of the questionnaire (besides the part considering the profile of the responders and the company) collects information on the self-assessment of the responders for their creativity. This part is divided into 2 parts. The first one contains 10 statements, and the responders were asked to assess these statements through the 5-point Likert scale. The statements have a more general meaning, containing some phrases such as "sometimes", "very often", "most colleagues", etc., which purposely are rest for the responders to interpret according to their understanding. The results are visualized in Fig. 4.

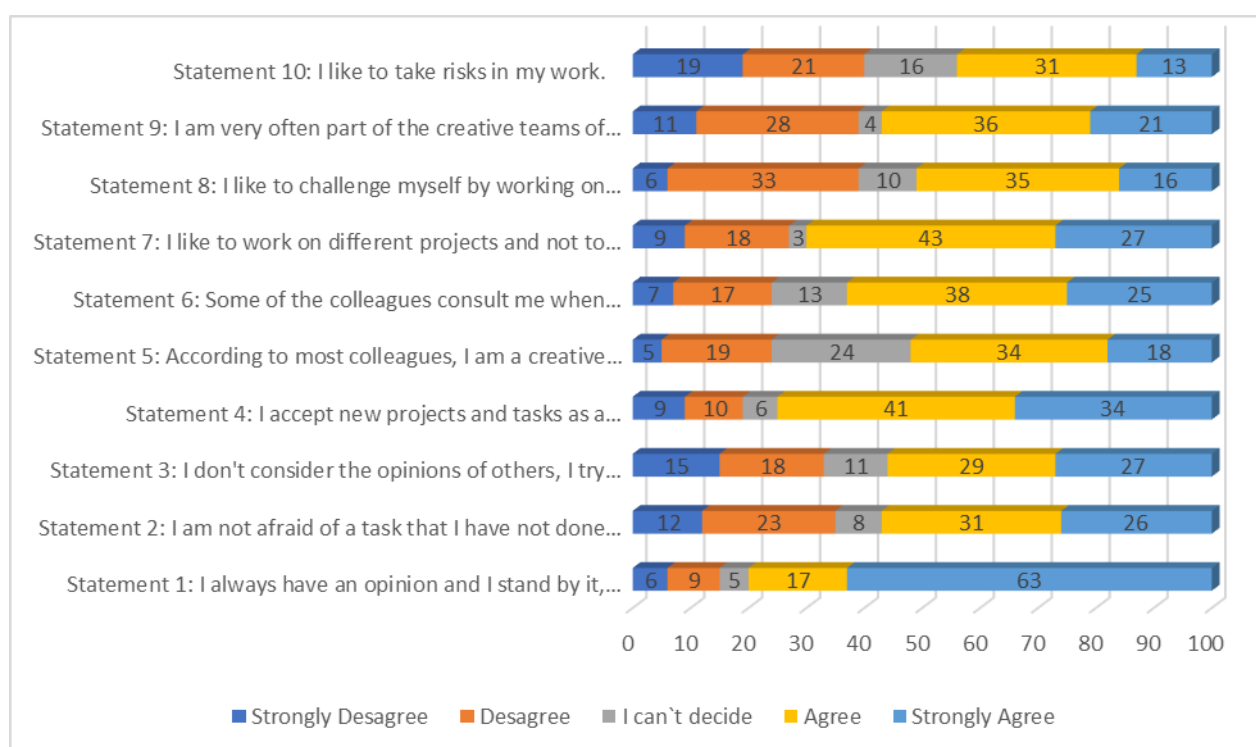


Fig. 4. Self-assessment on the individual creativity (in %, the total number of 384 answers)

Statement 1: I always have an opinion and stand by it, regardless of the consequences. This statement accumulates the most significant share of approval compared to the rest of this section of the questionnaire, with an impressive 80% in total, whereas 63% are strongly agreed upon. Another interesting thing here is connected to the relatively big share of uncertainty – 17% of respondents are not sure about their opinion.

Statement 2: I am not afraid of a task I have not done before. Here, the majority of respondents are in the agreement field of the scale, but this time, the group of people who have chosen only "agree" (31%) instead of

"Strongly agree" (26%) is bigger. At the same time, the group of people who directly disagreed with the statement increased (23%), especially compared to the previous statement.

Statement 3: I don't consider the opinions of others; I try to explain mine. At first glance, this statement could be interpreted as almost the same as Statement 1, and the difference in the accumulated answers could be surprising. However, this statement has other meanings on closer exploration and could be interpreted in two major ways. The first one is the emphasis on the second part of the statement – the effort to explain the individual opinion, and the second is the emphasis on the first part of the statement – that the responder is not so interested in the other's opinion but rather than his own. In this line of consideration, a relatively significant share of the people who disagree with this statement (33% in total) and those who cannot decide (another 11%) are answerable.

Statement 4: I accept new projects and tasks as a challenge to my professionalism. There are several statements in this sense of the questionnaire due to the fact that one of the leading characteristics of creative people is their eagerness to do totally new and different tasks. Here, the impressive part of our responders admit that they are open to new projects and tasks (75%), and only 19% respond negatively to this question. Another critical finding is the small share of responders who could not decide (only 6%).

Statement 5: According to most colleagues, I am a creative person. Here, the results are interesting – most respondents are still on the positive spectrum of answers. Still, their share seriously decreases, especially considering the answers to the previous questions. Here, the share of people who are not sure achieves the highest rate for all the sections (24%). In fact, this could be explained by the specifics of the question – responders were asked to present what their colleagues think of themselves. Some of the respondents may not have thought about this question before. It is possible that the environment in others does not tolerate expressing personal opinions, so the respondent is not familiar with this issue. On the other hand, it is also possible that the respondent feels undervalued in the company and has not revealed his potential, which is why his colleagues are unaware of his capabilities.

Statement 6: Some of my colleagues consult me when they are in an unfamiliar situation and do not know how to work it out. Again, similar to the previous answers, the majority of the answers were positive (63% in total), and 24% responded negatively. The critical understanding here is from one side, which is the internal organizational climate and policy of sharing, and from the other, it is the personal qualities of the responders. The presence of a creative person is not the only sufficient circumstance for having consultation between colleagues. Here comes the willingness of these creative people to give advice, recommendations, and opinions when requested by another colleague. On the other hand, here we have to consider the general meaning of the question – "sometimes" for some responders could be interpreted as usual activity, which is not very often, while for others, this could be just a sporadic event when a colleague asked for help.

Statement 7: I like to work on different projects and not do the same activities. This statement is similar to Statements 4 and 2, and it is not surprising that the results are similar. The focus in Statement 2 is on the new tasks at work and how they are perceived by the responders (as a threat or possibility); the accent of Statement 4 is put on the professionalism of responders, while here, the idea is to show the responders opinion on the trivial working activities. Again, most respondents had positive answers, confirming that they preferred to work on different and various tasks and projects (70% in total). Here, the share of unsure people is the smallest within this part of the questionnaire (only 3%).

Statement 8: I like challenging myself by working on pioneering projects. A supplement to the previous statement is this. Compared to Statement 7, here, the proportion of people answering positively is severely reduced (from 70% for Statement 7 to 51% for Statement 8). At the same time, the share of people who disagree increased significantly, from 21% overall for statement 7 to 39% for statement 8. This result is curious since creative people usually agree to work on a pioneering project (whether they are new, for the company, etc.). On the other hand, these projects are typically associated with a high level of risk, and here, this risk can

be seen as a burden and a threat to the safety of the work position. This may be one of the explanations why the rate of disagreement is highest for this part of the study.

Statement 9: I am very often part of the creative teams of my organization. 57% responded that they agree with this statement, 36% agree, and 21% strongly agree. This means that almost half of the people participating in our survey admit that their managers and colleagues assess them as creative. 39% in total claim disagreement – this could be interpreted in two significant lines of consideration. The first one could be the fact that the person has not shown the potential of his capabilities so far in the company - this may be due to objective factors such as insufficient experience in the relevant company, but also to circumstances such as a lack of a sufficiently supportive environment and ineffectiveness of the direct supervisor. At the same time, the second line of consideration comes from personal perception and interpretation of the "very often". Some people's participation could be considered insufficient due to individual goals and ambitions.

Statement 10: I like to take risks in my work. This general claim confirms the results already achieved in Statement 8 concerning working on pioneer projects. Here, the conservatism of the responders is the strongest – only 44% agree with the statement, and only 13% strongly agree. On the opposite side are people who strongly disagree – an impressive 19% of the responders. Combining the other 21% who disagree, here we have 40% of disagreement. At the same time, 16% of responders are not sure of their answer. This result could be interpreted as conservative and could be the result of associating the risk with the fear of job loss.

The next part of the questionnaire is again dedicated to individual creativity. Still, this time, responders have initially defined 10 qualities that are typical for creative people (based on the analysis of the scientific literature). Responders are asked firstly – to arrange them according to their own understanding (from most important, rated with 10, to the less critical quality for the effectiveness of the creative colleague – rated with 1) and secondly – to arrange them according to their assessment of the level they possess and exhibit these characteristics at the workplace. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Transformation of positions of individual creative qualities, assessed by an understanding of their contribution to work efficiency and their real possession and exhibition among the respondents

First Assessment:			Second Assessment:			Transformation			
Individual creative qualities according to the understanding of their contribution to work efficiency			Individual creative qualities according to their real possession and exhibition among the responders			Quality	First Assessment position	Second Assessment Position	Change
N	Quality	Score	N	Quality	Score				
1.	Rich Imagination	8,43	1.	Intuition	7,56	Rich Imagination	1	7	-6
2.	Workaholics	8,38	2.	Ambitious	7,51	Workaholics	2	8	-6
3.	Communicability	7,69	3.	Sense of humor	7,08	Communicability	3	5	-2
4.	Ambitious	7,14	4.	Sense of self/irony	6,58	Ambitious	4	2	+2
5.	Intuition	6,52	5.	Communicability	6,12	Intuition	5	1	+4
6.	Flexibility	6,18	6.	Curiosity	4,79	Flexibility	6	9	-3
7.	Curiosity	6,05	7.	Rich Imagination	4,23	Curiosity	7	6	+1
8.	Intransigence	5,27	8.	Workaholics	3,94	Intransigence	8	10	-2
9.	Sense of humor	4,33	9.	Flexibility	3,86	Sense of humor	9	3	+6
10.	Sense of self/irony	3,08	10	Intransigence	2,42	Sense of self/irony	10	4	+6

Several interesting findings need to be further discussed and analyzed here. The general conclusion that could be made is that there are serious differences between the basic understanding of important qualities of a creative person at work and the real possession and the level of exhibition of the same quality in real working life. No one quality keeps its place according to these two different assessments. Something more – top 3 qualities are different. In the top 5, we already have 2 matches – for communicability and intuition, but they are put in another position.

Table 4 shows four of the 10 qualities have changed with a maximum difference (6 steps) in their initial position. Rich Imagination and Workaholics, which were in the first and second places of the ranking in the previous assessment, came in seventh and eighth positions in the second assessment. Therefore, their deviation is - 6. On the other hand, two other qualities, at the first assessment, occupy lower places in the ranking sense of humour (9 position) and sense of self/ irony (10 position), in the second assessment for the actual quality implementation of a working environment, came on the third and four places (change + 6). The slightest change was made by quality curiosity – only 1 step difference between these two assessments. This part of the questionnaire reveals one exciting finding. There is a severe discrepancy between our understanding of the importance of the qualities a creative person should possess and what qualities manifest. It is quite another question whether, for example, the difference, especially in the positions of qualities such as rich imagination and workaholism, should not be nurtured purposefully by managers and the overall organizational policy to achieve better results among creative collaborators.

The next part of the questionnaire (Part C) collects information on the team's creativity. This part contains 20 statements, and the responders are asked to answer all of these statements using a 5-point Likert scale, focusing on the intensity of the claiming frequency. The results are presented in Fig. 5.

Statement 1: My team successfully generates new and creative ideas. The biggest group of responders chose "sometimes" as the most relevant option for their answer (35%), while the other 28% claimed "often". On the opposite side, 26% of people reported "always," and only 3 % said "never". This first statement for the team creativity section of the questionnaire gives an initial understanding of the overall process within each creative team – the creation of new ideas and proposals.

Statement 2: The creative proposals that the team makes are perceived positively by the assignor of the task. This statement speaks to the effectiveness and efficiency of the creative team. Here, the picture is slightly different from the first statement. For instance, the share of people with the answer "always" decreases from 26% for the first case to 13% for the second case. The share responders with answer "often" increases significantly (44%), while the group of people answering "sometimes" decreases from 35% to 31%. At the same time, the share of people who claim "rarely" remains the same.

Statement 3: My team encourages sharing non-traditional or innovative solutions. Here, only 20% in total reported negatively (8% for never and 12 for rarely), while the remaining 80% are distributed between sometimes (24%), often (37%, which is the biggest group for this statement) and always (19%). The results are not surprising because the central purpose of one creative team is to propose new and unconventional ideas. On the other hand, 20% of people answering "never" and "rarely" pose a question for further consideration – what are the criteria for a creative team to succeed? Obviously, in these 20% of people, their teams do not sufficiently secure the sharing and encouragement of generation new ideas.

Statement 4: The team I work in encourages the adoption of new and non-standard ideas. This statement is quite similar to the previous one. Therefore, the results are also identical, with slight differences, but the proportion between different groups remains the same as the last statement (6% claim never; 15% - rarely; 26% sometimes; 35% often and 18% - always).

Statement 5: My ideas and suggestions are taken into consideration. This statement collects information on the proper contribution of the concrete responders to the overall teamwork. The findings here deserve closer analysis. The majority (almost half of the responders – 43%) admit that the other members of the creative teams

partly recognize their efforts. 32% (20% for often and 12% consistently) claim positively in this statement. Conversely, 25% (12% – never and 13% - rarely) report negatively. In general, this means that approximately 20-25% (also having the answers to the previous statement in mind) of the creative teams are not functioning correctly.

Statement 6: The team atmosphere is open and supportive in discussing new ideas. The majority of responses focus on "sometimes" (38%), followed by a group of people answering "often" (25%). The same share of 14% possess the groups answering with "always" and "rarely". 9% of responders claim that the team atmosphere was never open and supportive. Again, 23% of the total respondents who responded with "never" and "rarely" could be considered indicators of inefficiency and low levels of effectiveness of the creative teams they work in.

Statement 7: The team I work with often experiments with new approaches and work methods, especially in generating non-traditional ideas. At first glance, this statement is similar to statement 1, but the accent is put on the new approaches and methods of generating new ideas. Almost 30% in total (12% for never and 17% for rarely) report in the negative zone of the answers.

This could be a testimonial that some of the creative teams (especially those with permanent staff) could elaborate and have their own rules and specific procedures for generating new ideas. On the other hand, the major group here claims sometimes (30%), followed by the group of people answering often (28%) and 13% of people who constantly use new approaches. Therefore, it could be concluded (based also on the answers to the other statements) that approximately 10-15% of creative teams are proactive and open. At the same time, the rest prefer, in general, working more conventionally.

Statement 8: My team adapts quickly and implements new ideas. Here, the focus is on the team's adaptability, which is one of the leading characteristics of the creative team. The majority of responses again are for "sometimes" (37%), followed by a group of often (22%) and people answering always (19%). At the same time, 16% of responders admit that their team is rarely adaptive, and another 6% claim never. The fact that most answers are focused on the neutral to positive perspective indicates these teams' readiness to be creative.

Statement 9: The creative team I work with usually has enough time to perform its task efficiently and effectively. It is not surprising that the impressive part of the respondents here (59% in total) is focused on the answers "never" (31%) and rarely (28%).

This statement accumulated the second largest number of people to answer negatively (see results for statement 16). In this context, only 5% report always and 11% choose the answer "often". This distribution of the answers between 5 options could be explained in two lines: first – time usually is the most deficient resource for the creative team, and second – time could be sufficient, but the time management within the creative team, including internal deadlines, tasks distribution etc. could be inefficient and to lead to the lack of enough time in general.



Fig. 5. Response distribution on the statement for the team creativity (in %)

Statement 10: The creative team I work with usually enjoys sufficient trust and, support and understanding from the organization's management. This statement collects information about the relationship between the creative team and the company's management. The majority of answers again are concentrated on the option "sometimes" (31%), followed by rarely (23%). The next group consists of people choosing the answer "always" (14%), and the last position is for people answering "never" (11%). This heterogeneous result indicates that the relationship between the line company's management and creative team has to be the focus of special attention, and the management has to put additional effort into securing a good and supportive working environment for the creative teams to show their best potential.

Statement 11: The creative team members in which I work support each other and approach each other with understanding and respect. The positive finding here is that most answers are "often". Adding to them the share of people who choose "always" (16%), we will have 52% in total, which is clear evidence that the relations between members generally are correct and professional. This consideration is additionally confirmed by the results achieved for the following statement.

Statement 12: Professional disputes are part of the daily work of the creative team in which I work. The major part of responses here is "often" (38%), followed by people claiming always (32%). The common share of these two groups is precisely 70%, which could be considered good evidence and proof of the professional relations established and developed between members of creative teams.

Statement 13: I feel free enough and professionally prepared to pitch my idea to other colleagues on the creative team. Almost 40% (39% precisely) of responders claim they often feel professionally prepared to propose their ideas to the other team members. Other 23% claimed always, while 28% said "sometimes". On the other hand, people responded negatively to this statement 10% in total, of which 3% chose "never" and 7% - rarely. This 10% could be considered as the creative teams' unrevealed potential to improve their efficiency and effectiveness. The organization's management should react and do all it needs to integrate these colleagues to present their real creative potential. At the same time, it is possible that some persons among these 10% are misgauged in the first place, and their inclusion in the creative teams could be considered as not a correct management decision.

Statement 14: I don't feel anxiety or fear when I make mistakes. The results of this question are curious because a supportive atmosphere is one of the essential characteristics of the efficient generation of new ideas. A good finding is that more than half of responders (in total 61%) choose "often" (31%) and always (30%). It could be considered that they have a stable position and a good environment with no additional burdens for self-expression and creation. 24% of responders admit that they only sometimes feel anxiety and fear when they make mistakes with the work of the creative team. These people must be further encouraged, including with practice examples, that mistakes in creative work are often a phenomenon and are usually part of everyday activities. Still, creating a really good final product (based on a good combination of all initial proposals) is necessary. 15% or all responders report negatively to this statement, which means that if they feel anxious and fearful, they are not in a condition to reveal the total capacity of their creative potential. Therefore, further efforts are needed to reduce the share of these people in creative teams.

Statement 15: The team encourages different perspectives and diversity of thought. The major group of responders here is concentrated on the answer "sometimes" (32%), followed by the group with "often" (28%) as a response. 17% of people choose "always", but on the other side, 23% in total (11% - never, 12% - rarely) consider that the team is not sufficiently supportive. One of the conclusions from this statement is that ¼ of the creative team members do not feel a supportive environment, which could be considered a severe barrier in front of the overall effective creative work.

Statement 16: We have sufficient resources (human, financial, time, etc.) to work efficiently and qualitatively on the creative tasks and projects assigned to the team. This statement is similar to Statement 9, but here we explore all types of resources. At the same time, in Statement 9, our interest was focused on time as one of the leading and important resources for the creative teams. Here, the situation is quite similar and even more clearly expressed. 35% of responders claim they never had a perfect situation where all requested resources were sufficient. Other 27% admit that such situations rarely happen at real work. 25% of responders reported "sometimes," and only 13% in total (11% often and 2% - always) were positive about the resources the team needed to do its tasks. Here we have again two lines of consideration – the first one – is that this is a typical managerial problem (secure effective resource planning and management), but on the other hand, it could be the problem within the creative teams – the way they work could be too much chaotic without paying attention to the important this such as deadlines and client's opinion.

Statement 17: Mutual trust is one of the main qualities of the team in which I work. This statement is complementary to Statement 15, and the results are similar. 34%, which is the biggest group of respondents, chose "sometimes", followed by the group claiming "often" (31%). These two groups comprise the majority of the respondents. The next group consists of people who believe their team always possesses mutual trust (18%). They are of the opposite opinion to the 17% of responders, who choose "never" (5%) and rarely (12%).

Statement 18: Communication in the team between colleagues is open and direct, and if misunderstandings arise, they are resolved. Regarding the quality of communication within the creative teams, we have 39% sometimes claiming, followed by 25% with the answer "often", and the other 19% with maximum positive, choosing the answer "always". At the same time, responses of 17% are negative – 6% are sure that they never happen to them such type of communication, and the other 11 report "rarely".

Statement 19: The team atmosphere is supportive and I feel motivated to give my best. On this direct statement again, 21% of respondents expressed their negative opinion (7% never, 14% rarely). The rest of the answers were distributed between sometimes (31%, this is the major group of responders in this statement), 28% often and 20% - always.

Statement 20: I prefer to work together with other people than alone. This section of the questionnaire concludes with the statement, collecting information for the personal preferences of the creative teams' members – to work alone or with colleagues. Here, the strong individualists are 11% (choosing always as the answer), supported by others and 17%, claiming often. 32% preferred to be balanced in their response, selecting the option "sometimes". I am totally sure that their preference is on teamwork is 12% (very close to the share of people on the contrary opposite opinion), and the other 28% claim rarely.

The last part of the questionnaire is devoted to organizational creativity. For this purpose, we have 10 statements again and collect the opinion of the responders in the 5-point Likert scale of agreement (Fig. 6). As a general observation in terms of the distribution of answers between the 5 possible options, here responders are more reluctant and critical for the level of organizational creativity, especially comparing to the team and even more expressed – comparing to the individual creativity. Organizational management could increase the organizational infrastructure (in all its different aspects) for creativity.

Statement 1: My organization has a clear development strategy that includes innovations. The positive finding is that over 50% of responders believe their organization has such a strategy (34% - Agree; 22% - Strongly agree). Only 25% of responders claim the two levels of disagreement – (9% Strongly Disagree and 16% - Disagree). At the same time, 19% are not sure in their opinion. This result is positive, based on the finding that most companies have a clear idea of their development, including innovations.

Statement 2: My organization has clearly set goals for its strategic development, which I fully accept and share. This statement, in fact, is complementary to the previous one; this time, the focus is put on the acceptance and sharing of these organizational goals. Here, the results are not as enthusiastic as those in the previous statement. However, 35% of respondents (23% – Agree and 12% – Strongly Agree) agree. On the other hand, 46% of responders react negatively (18% strongly disagree and 28% disagree). The differences in responses between these two statements clearly state that almost half of people do not share the goals developed in the organizational strategy. This means that organizational management has to make specific efforts in two major lines – firstly – to involve as many employees as possible in the preparation and elaboration process of the company's development strategy. This will guarantee a higher level of acceptance because all involved people will be part of the process in elaborating the strategic document. They will understand the overall logic of the strategy deeply (being part of the team for the creation of the strategy, on the other hand, will lead to an increase in the level of effort put into its implementation). Secondly, the management has to pay additional attention to explaining the logic and overall understanding behind developing the organization's strategy.

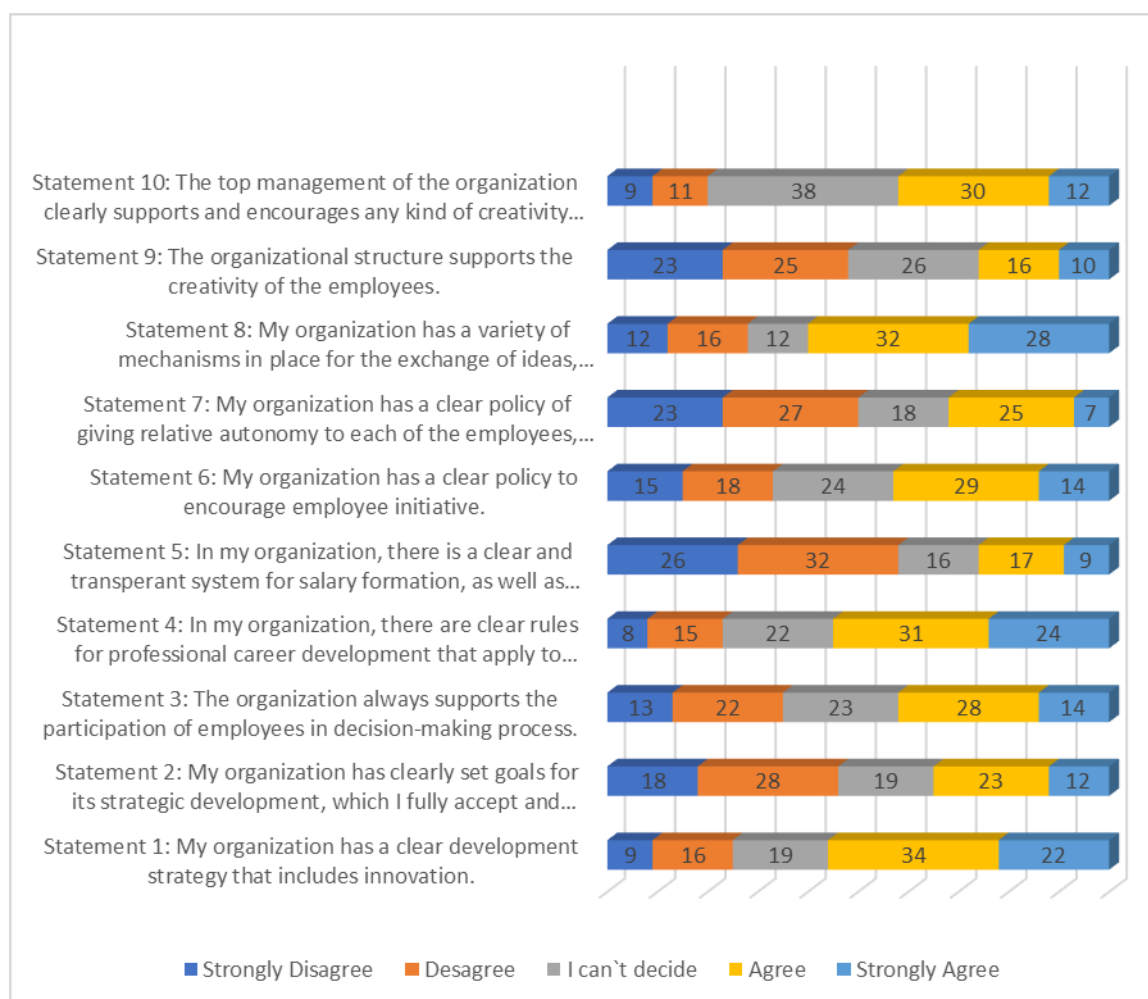


Fig. 6. Response distribution on the statement for the organizational creativity (in %)

Statement 3: The organization always supports the participation of employees in the decision-making process. The results here are similar to the results in the previous statement. 42% of agreement (28% - Agree and 14% - Fully Agree) and 35% are negative (13% Strongly Disagree and 22% Disagree). Here the share of people who are not sure is bigger than the previous statement – from 19% to 23%. This uncertainty could be found in the presence of “always” in the statement – it is possible that employees feel only sometimes the support of management in decision-making process.

Statement 4: In my organization, there are clear rules for professional career development that apply to everyone. Here, the statement's acceptance level is higher than the previous statement. We have % of responders who agree with this statement (31% - Agree; 24% - strongly agree). This finding is crucial for securing a transparent career development policy. Therefore, the motivation of employees will improve, knowing that all employees have equal chances and opportunities for hierarchical development in the organization. At the same time 23% express disagreement (8% - Strongly Disagree and 15% - Disagree). These people are challenged to be involved effectively in any creative activities due to their sense of inequity. Whether they have a right or not is another matter entirely. As a result, however, they will not put enough effort into creative activities, and the company management will have to overcome this problem effectively.

Statement 5: In the organization, there is a clear and transparent system for salary formation, as well as bonuses, which applies equally to everyone. When we analyze the result of this statement, we have to consider that the primary focus here is on the presence of a clear and transparent system in the company, which is obligatory for everyone within the organization. Here, we did not ask for approval for this system. Here, the majority's opinion is expectedly negative – 58% in total (26% Strongly Disagree, 32% - Disagree) against only 26% who

agree (17% - Agree, 9% - Strongly Agree). At the same time, 16% are not sure in their response. Considering this result, most companies have to provide a more transparent and proactive policy for explaining the overall system and policy for material and non-material staff stimulation.

Statement 6: My organization has a clear policy to encourage employee initiative. Here, the results are balanced, especially compared to the previous statement. 43% of responders agree with this statement (29% - Agree; 14% - Strongly Agree). 24% remain unsure, while another 33% disagree (15% Strongly Disagree and 18% - Disagree). This relatively high level of uncertainty could be transformed in a positive with specific activities initiated by management. At the same time, the part of employees who report negatively to this statement has to be further persuaded, including with particular internal policy.

Statement 7: My organization has a clear policy of giving relative autonomy to each employee within the limits of their competencies. Exact 50% of responses are negative – 23% Strongly Disagree, and 27% disagree. On the opposite opinion, only 32% - 25% Agree, and 7% Strongly Agree. At the same time, 18% can not decide. This result clearly states the employees' opinions and self-assessment of their work autonomy. The sense of freedom is a crucial element of any creative activity. Those employees who suffer from excessive control from their direct supervisors cannot perform at their best and reveal their true potential, mainly if the management aims to generate radically different solutions and proposals.

Statement 8: My organization has a variety of mechanisms in place for the exchange of ideas, including formal and informal ones. Results indicate that 60% of responders agree with the statement (32% - Agree and 28% - Strongly Agree). The share of disagreement here is 28% (12% - Strongly Disagree and 16% - Disagree). We observe a relatively low share of uncertainty here – 12%. This result proves that the central part of the organization has built a culture of sharing and is accepted by the employees.

Statement 9: The organizational structure supports the creativity of the employees. In contrast to the responses to the previous statement, here, most responders react negatively – 48% in total (in which 23% Strongly Disagree and 25% - Disagree). On the opposite opinion are only 26% (16% Agree and 10% Strongly Agree), while the share of hesitant here is 26%. Several reasons could explain this result. Firstly, the organizational structure is usually the top management's priority, and employees are primarily expected to be familiar with and comply with it. Therefore, it is logical that one part of the respondents do not have an opinion on this – this issue is not on their agenda at all; they have not thought about it before. Secondly, almost half of the respondents admit that the organizational structure is not convenient for employees' creativity, which is central to the overall efficiency level. More importantly, the organizational structure, by default, has to support the usual staff activities. If this staff does not feel such support, then the management has to initiate changes in this line.

Statement 10: The organization's top management clearly supports and encourages creativity in the workplace. Here, the share of hesitant people is the largest for the entire questionnaire section (38%). At the same time, disagreement with the statement is expressed by 20% of respondents (9 – Strongly Disagree and 11 - Disagree), while on the opposite side are 42% (30% Agree and 12% - Strongly Agree). The definiteness of the statement itself could explain this impressive number of people who are unsure in their response. Terms like "clearly supports" and "any kind of creativity" could be considered restrictive or confusing for responders.

Finally, the questionnaire contains three identically questions – we asked responders to assess the level of their creativity, the team creativity they work in and the level of organizational creativity, using the same evaluation scale – from 1 to 10, where 1 is the lowest level of creativity, and 10 is the highest level of creativity. Results are graphically presented in Fig. 7.

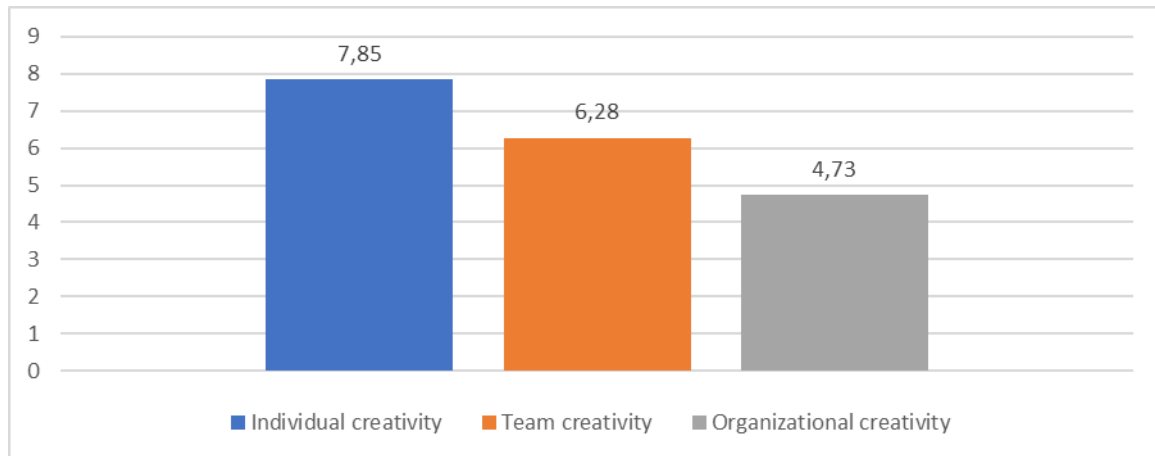


Fig. 7. Assessment of the different types of creativity (average score, scale from 1 to 10)

As can be seen from the figure above, the highest average score is achieved by Individual creativity (7,85), followed by Team creativity (6,28). In contrast, Organizational creativity is evaluated below half of the scale – 4,73. These assessments are indicators for several essential considerations. Above all, according to employees, organizational creativity is rated much lower than individual and even team creativity. In most cases, this means that organizational management fails to reveal the real individual and even team creativity potential. Therefore, our first hypothesis is confirmed by the study results - that business organizations do not efficiently reveal the full potential of creativity of their staff and teams. Comparing to the assessment of the individual creativity, the organizational creativity recedes significantly. The synergy effect between team members does not happen on the desired level. This situation could be overcome through the parallel implementation of several strategic activities for the organization: better strategic planning and allocation of resources, providing the possibility for creative teams to have reasonable time to ensure quality performance of the assigned tasks; improved policy for defining strategic organizational goals, by involving as many employees as possible; better policy for creative team formation, securing entering different people with diverse vision and expertise; better relation between direct manager and employees – to know and understand their motivation, needs and personal objectives.



Fig. 8. Rate of barriers to work creativity (average score, scale from 1 to 10)

The last question of the study is devoted to the barriers that could affect the effectiveness of an employee's creative tasks in an organization. The responders were asked to rate each of the initially defined barriers on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is the lowest and 10 is the highest. The results are presented in Fig. 8.

The responders were asked to rate these barriers not in general but according to their current situation at work. As seen from Figure 10, the most important barrier is employees' lack of motivation to fully reveal their individual capacity (with an average score of 8,84). No other barrier exceeds a score of 8, which indicates the importance of motivation and the overall policy to motivate employees. With this finding our second hypothesis is also confirmed. At the same time, the top 5 barriers to work creativity are a lack of a good atmosphere, confidence and transparency, a lack of overall supportive organizational policy and Excessive hierarchy and authoritarianism.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

Organizational creativity is a crucial prerequisite for an effective company innovation policy. The overall innovation policy necessarily includes attracting creative employees to support the creation of new products and services. At the same time, attracting and employing creative employees is a first but insufficient condition for obtaining a good level of organizational creativity. To be effective, these creative experts must also be motivated, which requires much deeper attention and overall policy from the organization's management.

We studied the level of individual, team and organizational creativity among 384 employees representing 71 companies in all economic sectors. Our findings clearly state that there is a difference between levels of individual, team and organizational creativity at the company. Employees do not reveal their full creative potential; the main reason is the lack of proper motivation and organizational support. Other barriers to creativity are a lack of a good atmosphere, a lack of confidence and transparency, a lack of overall supportive organizational policy, excessive hierarchy, and authoritarianism. At the same time, employees tend to define themselves as creative, and organizational management must provide particular and comprehensive policies to improve organizational effectiveness in creativity.

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