

Diversity Management in Romanian Organisations



ROMANIAN
DIVERSITY
CHARTER

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Continuing the Diversity Journey

A publication marking two years of Romanian Diversity Charter



The official launch of Romanian Diversity Charter took place on 18 April 2018, Romania thus becoming the 21st country in the European Union with a Diversity Charter and benefiting from the membership in the European Diversity Platform. Created by a local consortium after a consultation process and involving a wide range of stakeholders, inspired by the European diversity movement and endorsed by various types of organizations, the Charter seeks to establish a multi-stakeholders platform and provide a new framework for thinking about and addressing diversity and inclusion issues.

Today, Romanian Diversity Charter brings together 110 signatories, covering cca. 157,000 employees from companies, public institutions and NGOs, who have publicly assumed the principles of the Charter, so that diversity, equal opportunities and social inclusion become values acknowledged and respected in Romania. Signing the Charter represents a valuable starting point for organisations wishing to embark on their diversity journey and also provides a framework for companies to develop existing policies.

This publication is a collaborative effort of the Romanian Diversity Charter and our signatories and explores the concept of diversity management in the workplace, with particular emphasis on Romanian companies. Its main objective was to develop a more structured and conceptualised view of diversity initiatives in the Romanian working environment and to examine why business leaders perceive diversity management as being an important contributor to their competitive advantage in today's economic and social environment. It brings together key findings of the first local research on diversity management, diversity & inclusion initiatives in Romania, opinions and interviews with Romanian and international experts, as well as a series of messages of support by business and institutional leaders for promoting the principles of equality and non-discrimination in Romanian society.

With the goal to inspire, support, encourage and motivate organizations in their efforts to move forward the diversity and inclusion agenda, this publication offers at the same time a quick-to-read and practical guide based on successful initiatives implemented in diversity management by Romanian organisations. 15 D&I practical examples for achieving workforce diversity were selected from our signatories with the aim to inspire other organisations in their D&I efforts. We encourage all businesses, NGOs and public institutions to use the best practices highlighted in this publication as a starting point for developing their own D&I programmes.

According to the research presented in this publication, teams and organisations in all sectors of society perform better and make better decisions when they embrace diversity and inclusion in their culture and, particularly, among their leadership. Having a diverse workforce is increasingly being recognized as

instrumental in improving the company's performance, and also an imperative that organizations can no longer choose to ignore.

While most companies today recognize the critical importance of diversity and inclusion to their competitiveness, there are various stages of evolution to diversity and inclusion commitment. Therefore, it is important to understand the status of D&I work in Romania, in order to articulate what measures are necessary in order to close the gap between aspiration and reality.

The study, conducted by MKOR Research between August 2019 and December 2019, questioned 77 entrepreneurs, managers and HR specialists who are in charge with diversity and inclusion principles in Romanian organisations. The main aim of the study was to develop a first conceptualised view of diversity initiatives in the Romanian working environment while also establishing what the main driving forces behind these initiatives are. The study offers in our view valuable insights into how Romanian organizations relate to diversity and inclusion principles and how they measure their D&I progress.

Over the last years, more and more companies have already taken diversity on board as a social fact and as an asset in terms of their activities. More and more companies have developed diversity management strategies and have teamed up with other organisations to make diversity management part of their business strategy. But we must also acknowledge that other companies have still a long way to go. This publication also explores some key challenges to inclusion from an organizational diversity and inclusion perspective.

This project could not have been completed without the support of numerous other individuals. I wish to express my gratitude to all the colleagues who believed in the idea of this editorial effort — partners of this publication, researchers, signatories, ambassadors, the big family of the European Diversity Platform, and of course our enthusiastic editorialists and contributors. Although I cannot name each of the authors individually, I do want to acknowledge their efforts to contribute with perspectives that I believe are insightful, informative and forward looking. My gratitude is also directed to Eugen Crai, one of the Charter's ambassadors, for supporting and encouraging me in all states of this project. Thanks are also due to MKOR Consulting and the signatories for allowing us to include their D&I programmes in this publication.

Finally, I express gratitude to all those who work for a more diverse, inclusive and equal working environment, promoting actively the principles of equality and non-discrimination in the Romanian society.

Dana Oancea, Project Manager, Romanian Diversity Charter

The European Commission is committed to promoting diversity and inclusion

A cohesive society works towards the well-being of all its members, fights exclusion and marginalisation, creates a sense of belonging and contributes to maintaining long-term economic growth. Therefore diversity represents an opportunity that brings benefits to all – private and public organisations and for the society as a whole – but only when all the stakeholders work together.



Diversity is a core value of the European Union, it is an asset which Europe must foster to increase its competitiveness and encourage smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

The European Commission is well aware of the benefits of diversity at the workplace and has been actively combatting discrimination for more than a decade now through legislation allowing millions of people to fully achieve their potential and thousands of companies to benefit from their talents.

However legislation alone is not sufficient and that is why the European Commission promotes diversity and inclusion also through a variety of actions and initiatives including targeted policies, awarding funding, promoting good practice and high-level discussions. One of such initiatives is the EU Platform of Diversity Charters as they provide guidance in diversity management to thousands of companies. Diversity Charters are fundamental to promote the business case of diversity as they offer a recognised public trademark that demonstrates company's commitment to the promotion of equality and diversity. At the moment, there are 24 Diversity Charters with 12,000 signatories, representing over 16 million employees from across the EU.

We have welcomed the Romanian Diversity Charter into the EU Platform in 2018. In the last two years the Charter grew immensely and now has 110 signatories which in turn represent over 157.000 employees. That is a great achievement in such a short time. I applaud the work done within the Charter but also all the individual organisations in Romania that have signed up to the Romanian Diversity Charter and publicly declared their commitment to promote diversity and inclusion in the workplace. I am delighted to see examples of their work in this publication of best practices that showcases the immense commitment among the Charter's signatories.

I hope the Charter will keep growing and other companies and organisation will take inspiration from this publication and join us in creating more diverse, inclusive and equal workplaces and societies. Now more than ever, in the world impacted by the Coronavirus, we have to spread the message of the importance of an inclusive recovery and promote diversity as a possible solution to the upcoming economic and social challenges.

**Irena Moozová, Director for Equality and Union Citizenship
European Commission – Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers**

Each of our personal stories adds to our community story

It gives me great pride to be part of this endeavour and to be offered the opportunity to share some of my experience in working in diverse environments. Each of our personal stories contributes to our consolidated community story and the wider the spread of our personal backgrounds, the richer the community story. Similarly, the stronger the community, the better for each of its members.

I am very much aware of the “community power” because I was born in a place that always appreciated hard working and where respect for the others was one of the first things children are taught. Life is hard in an isolated place and, in order to survive, you need to grit your teeth, do the work and rely on your peers when in need. Therefore, respect for work and for your neighbours are essential values in the Danube Delta, where over a dozen nationalities live together in harmony. This is how I’ve learned that multiculturalism stands for richness.

Being an athlete I’ve recognised very early the importance of the team. Even in individual sports, like canoe, you rely on a vast network of people that support you in being your best self: from coaches to medics, sparring partners or cooks. Everyone has to be at the top of their game in their area for you to achieve greatness. When you’re on the podium you feel the debt of gratitude for them.

Another lesson learned from sport is the importance of being in solidarity with your opponents. The goal of the competition is not to destroy your adversaries, but to always better yourself. Also, you ought to compete a lot, to be exposed to all kinds of competitors, as diverse as they are, because you learn from each of them and this process gets you stronger.

These principles have been transposed in the work of our Association. Our team is formed of diverse people, with different backgrounds. We have created an environment in which we listen, challenge and help each other to raise our game in delivering our expertise.

Our projects have a strong educational component, because I understand perfectly the desperation of not having access to a proper future; to be limited by poor education and to be denied any real opportunities to grow. Luckily for me, I was born in a time when children from all backgrounds were encouraged and supported to excel in sports. This was my way out, back then. Nowadays, it is solely education that can be the vehicle for any child wishing to succeed. This is why our Association develops projects supporting equal access to education and sports for all children, with a special focus on those coming from disadvantaged milieus.

All my projects have started by failing. The fact I was persistent to the point of stubbornness was what kept me going and finally reaching success. This pattern has taught me resilience and tolerance. This is what we call, in our group “strategic patience”. In other words, good things come to those who wait (and act!). This is why I am confident the goals set by this project and other similar ones, of achieving a better understanding and embracing of the “otherness”, will be successful, as they rightfully should.

Ivan Patzaichin, Ambassador of Romanian Diversity Charter and President of “Ivan Patzaichin - Mila 23” Association



The world is diverse, and so are we

The world in which we live today is volatile, fast and unpredictable. In order to mirror this complexity and find the right answers for the manifold demands of our clients, we need the best people; the brightest minds who unite different perspectives and understand and reflect the diversity of our corporate environment.



We, at BCR, believe the best ideas arise where people with different backgrounds, experiences and skills work together. If we are equipped with a wider range of voices and views, we are better able to innovate, turn challenges into opportunities and live up to the transformative processes of our present and future.

Diversity makes us more resilient, strengthening our capacity to face the unexpected - which is a critical asset these days. I believe that we will be able to adapt sooner and recover more rapidly from the current crisis, if we have a wide range of perspectives to pull from and the means to choose the best ideas and act upon them.

Therefore, increasing diversity is not only a legal or moral imperative, but also a powerful catalyst for evolution and success. By signing the Romanian Diversity Charter in 2018, BCR publicly committed to encourage diversity, to contribute to a more equal, inclusive and sustainable economy and to promote a culture of openness to new ideas, where everyone can develop their inherent potential.

For us, an inclusive corporate culture means recognizing each and every employee in their individuality. We treat each other with appreciation and respect, so that everyone feels safe to speak their mind openly. We want to create an environment in which people can believe in themselves, develop themselves and bring out the very best in themselves.

We believe in our clients and our employees and their power to implement plans, make dreams come true and create prosperity. This is only possible if everyone can develop freely, unhindered by barriers such as discrimination or fear. Believe in yourself as you are and follow your own path - we try to live this attitude towards our customers and employees every day.

Sergiu Manea, CEO, Chairman of the Management Board BCR

Living Diversity

People are at the foundation of any business and it is my personal opinion that the best solution to grow is to always use the thinking of collective minds. In other words, the power of diversity sits in the diversity of ideas and creativity that help companies make better decisions.

In OMV Petrom, diversity goes from age, to nationalities and gender. We have four generations of people, from Baby Boomers to Generation Z, 38 nationalities, while women account for more than 22% of the organization and 26% at management level.

I believe it is up to each of us to contribute to having a more inclusive society, whether we speak of companies or individuals. In addition, companies can indeed contribute by fostering an inclusive and more collaborative organizational environment, where people are valued and motivated to deliver to their full potential.

At OMV Petrom, we believe our role goes beyond economic sustainability, to having a meaningful contribution to society. This ranges from supporting the immense potential of our diverse workforce, to our commitment and involvement in the life and development of the dozens of communities in which we operate.

In such challenging times, solidarity and humanity are crucial. Joint effort makes a difference and we have recently seen how people share and collaborate more than ever. I encourage everyone to join the Romanian Diversity Charter, to promote diversity.

Christina Verchere, CEO OMV Petrom



Building a world of inclusion



Vodafone Romania's commitment to diversity and inclusion is a belief, an attitude and an important pillar of our purpose, recognizing the transformative power of technology and digitalization, helping people improve their lives, businesses flourish and communities grow. We are committed to ensuring that the more vulnerable are not left behind, whether it is about children living in remote, rural areas, who can use *Scoala din Valiza* online platform to develop their digital skills by adopting interactive learning methods and digital content, or about old people left alone and who can get comfort, useful information and moral support by using the *Telephone Line for the Elderly*.

Equally, diversity and inclusion are at our core and driving principles sustaining a rich and vibrant workplace at Vodafone Romania. We strongly believe in this normality, of being ourselves in the workplace, no matter how different we are. Diversity is an engine for growth and innovation. It broadens perspectives, offers ideas that are more creative, a deeper understanding and ultimately higher-quality products and services, to the benefit of our customers and to the great satisfaction and fulfillment of all men and women inside who put their effort to this goal.

By fully embracing and living a culture that values diversity and inclusion, at Vodafone Romania we have a strong commitment, in particular, to support women's presence and representation at all organizational levels. I strongly believe that achieving greater gender parity sustains the dynamism of our organization, consolidates our top employer position and will significantly strengthen our company over time, by giving us an important competitive advantage. Today, women account for more than 44% of Vodafone Romania's executive management team and for over 33% of the leadership roles and this is also a result of all we have done along the years.

Beyond the specific initiatives developed within our organization aiming to increase gender equality, we also see the responsible act of contributing to women empowerment within the wider society and assuming an active role in the world's positive transformation. Women empowerment also means for us extending our internal support channel for domestic abuse victims to support the many victims that are outside of our company, with women being affected in a higher number.

I invite you all to embrace diversity around us in any form and to contribute together to building a world of inclusion, in which each person can find his place and reach his potential!

Murielle Lorilloux, CEO Vodafone Romania

Diversity for the world of tomorrow

At Raiffeisen Bank we have always looked at sustainability of business as a day-to-day duty we have towards society, towards our stakeholders and towards ourselves. We seek to live and work in a healthy and balanced environment and we know it is only up to us to achieve that. Diversity in the workplace is a key-factor in these efforts. By embracing diversity today we contribute to creating the world we want our children to live in.

Diversity at Raiffeisen Bank is something we value and encourage. We have a team of almost 5000 employees working in administrative offices and bank branches throughout Romania. The coming together of different backgrounds, skills, education, experience are proven to be a key driver for innovation and creativity and have a direct impact on all aspects of our activity. It generates more valuable debates, faster solving of problems and better risk management. It creates a friendly working environment where our colleagues feel their voices are heard and their opinions are valued. And ultimately, diversity generates better business results through better decision making.

Business leaders have known this instinctively for a long time and research in recent years has proved it - a Deloitte report on diversity concluded that organizations with inclusive cultures were six times more likely to be innovative and agile, eight times more likely to achieve better business outcomes, and twice as likely to meet or exceed financial targets.

We are taking the matter of diversity and inclusion very seriously within our organisation, not only because it is directly correlated with business results, but because it is in line with our values and vision. At Raiffeisen Bank, we now have a dedicated Diversity and Inclusion Officer whose job is to implement our vision of diversity into concrete measures from which our colleagues and clients and the business itself can benefit. I am glad to see that the Romanian business landscape is more and more preoccupied with the importance of diversity and inclusion.

Our journey continues, we have a great opportunity to act and make our contribution to a more open, diverse and inclusive society.

Steven van Groningen, President & CEO Raiffeisen Bank Romania



Empowering diversity

At Sanofi, inclusion and diversity are foundational to how we operate and are embedded in our culture and core values. We respect the diversity of our people and we work to create an inclusive workplace where every employee can be their true self and reach their full potential.



Our employees represent the diversity of our patients and customers, which enables us to understand, connect and meet their needs. In fact, we continuously have to ask ourselves: do we have a workforce that is reflective of the society we're living in? If we don't, why not and how can we succeed? That is our main driver. So the journey of diversity in Sanofi, as well as changing the way we perceive it and we integrating it in our lives, is strongly integrated in our Empowering Life vision: supporting people (patients, clients, partners, employees) to live life to its full potential.

For an employer such as Sanofi, committed to be a health journey partner together with more than 100.000 employees all over the world, I think it is our responsibility to promote and make diversity and inclusion a normality in and outside our organization. Equal opportunities are a goal towards which we strive and dedicate our efforts and programs. Gender equality in payment, opportunities and representation in the leadership team is an area on which we focus on around the globe. Initiatives such as Global Gender Balance Board and European Gender Balance Mentoring Program are part of our efforts to empowering women. And a real proof of this commitment is Sanofi Romania team, in which women represent more than half of the workforce and, more notably, of the Senior level.

I have more than 20 years in Sanofi, and as I have been taking on management responsibilities and regional roles, it became very clear that when you have different perspectives and challenges, diverse experiences, cultures and genders around the table, you can create a much more active debate with tangible benefits to performance. So, today's challenge when we speak about diversity is how to better encourage and develop it in order to enrich our teams, individuals and our society.

I encourage all of you to join this effort and contribute to a more inclusive, diverse and equitable world. Together.

Dr. Iulia Ionescu, Country Lead Sanofi Romania & Moldova

Viva la difference!

Viva l'Égalité!

From diversity, you always get the best outcome - and we definitely know this at Publicis Groupe. That is why even our motto is “Viva la Difference!” Diversity means more than gender, race and ethnicity. It is about employees with different education, socioeconomic backgrounds, sexual orientation, diverse religious and political beliefs, cultures and even disabilities. I am excited that in Romania companies are working more and more on Diversity & Inclusion and start to see the benefits and the positive aspects of it.

We celebrate difference and we value each individual for who they are, including their backgrounds, experiences, professional skills and potential. For decades, the Groupe, has fostered gender parity with good results, and concentrated on this more in the last years, in order to offer a suitable work environment for everyone. This means that Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) is part of the top management agenda globally.

Our strategy in Diversity & Inclusion concentrates more on the source and recruit diverse talents, equal pay between women, men, and attaining more women in top leadership positions. We want to cultivate a workplace where different points of view are welcome and employees feel encouraged to discuss tough issues at work.

Furthermore, we are implementing and expanding unconscious bias education and cultivating a workplace that supports open dialogue on the complex conversations surrounding diversity & inclusion.

Working in a creative field helps to have employees with different life experiences and thoughts, social background and of course different culture. In time, we understood that it is an achievement for our clients as well. Because building an organization that is as diverse and as varied as their consumers is, actually, the only way we can truly accompany our clients as they look to transform their marketing and business models.

Nonetheless, as a representative of the entire advertising industry via the activity of the Union of Romanian Advertising Agencies' (UAPR's), I am proud to say that our sector is and has been at the forefront of tackling this subject. Even the Unions' most recent study in terms of wages - Salary Survey - has shown that there is no negative salary gap between genders.

Viva la difference! Viva l'Égalité!

Ștefan Iordache, COO Publicis Groupe Romania



The first Diversity & Inclusion Survey in Romanian Organisations

Nowadays, there is a global hustle for multicultural teams and diverse employees. Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) are two popular terms already settled in corporations' and organisations' language and policies, while global diversity provides many opportunities for company growth.

For Romanian organisations, Diversity and Inclusion management is still in its infancy. D&I practices are mostly imported, through large, well known organisations' Human Resources departments. These policies are, of course, adjusted to Romanian legislation and to local culture and mentalities.

In this context, Romanian Diversity Charter approached MKOR Consulting to run the first study aimed at exploring how Romanian organisations assimilate Diversity and Inclusion principles.

Approach and Methodology

The research was conducted between August 2019 and December 2019, having as main objectives:

- How Romanian organisations relate to Diversity and Inclusion principles?
- How Diversity and Inclusion principles are approached by Romanian organisations?
- How do Romanian organisations measure their Diversity and Inclusion principles progress?

The study questioned 77 entrepreneurs, managers and HR specialists that are in charge of Diversity and Inclusion principles in Romanian organisations.

To collect data from the respondents, MKOR Consulting used, as a research method, an online survey (CAWI) with a duration of 15 minutes.

Key findings

Over 70% of Romanian organisations strongly believe that employee motivation and job satisfaction increase when the work environment is diverse and inclusive, while adopting and managing D&I practices have a large impact on business growth.

44% of the Romanian organisations support Diversity and Inclusion with equal opportunities for all employees, while 78% of them declare offering equal pay & benefits for equal work. Moreover, 69% of organisations consolidate the D&I principle in the recruitment process.

60% of large companies have D&I strategies, while almost 86% of the public institutions participating in the study have a targeted approach to Diversity and Inclusion practices.

47% of SMEs and 44% of micro-enterprises have a one-off approach to D&I practices.

In Romania, most organisations support Diversity and Inclusion, and stand for equal chances for all employees.



What does “Diversity and Inclusion” mean?

According to Global Diversity Practice, diversity stands for any dimension that can differentiate people from one another. More than that, diversity stands for empowering people by appreciating and respecting the essential features that make them different and unique.

Inclusion speaks about all the practices and policies thought to help people with different backgrounds and cultures to be socially and culturally accepted, welcome and equally treated.

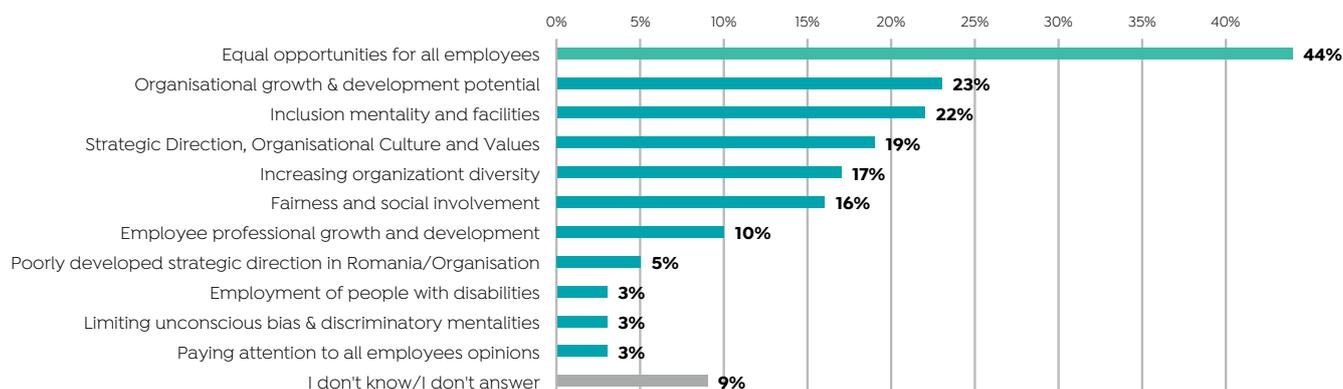
What does “Diversity and Inclusion” mean for Romanian Organisations?

According to the study, for most organisations in Romania, Diversity and Inclusion stand for equal chances for all employees.

The research revealed that 44% of the organisations participating in the study assimilate Diversity and Inclusion with equal opportunities for all employees, regardless of gender, age, religion, ethnicity, vulnerability or social environment.

Moreover, 78% of the organisations participating in the survey declared they offer equal pay for equal work. This policy is the main focus for the interviewed organisations, whether they are large or small, or public institutions.

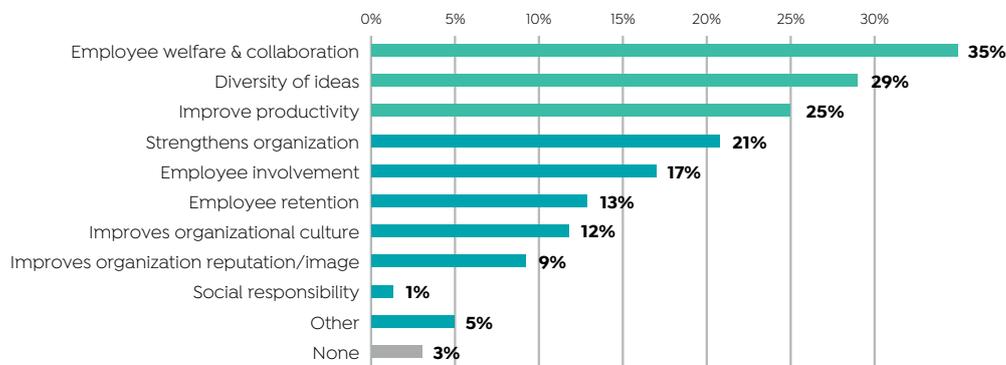
What do you think Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) means for your organization?



Also, higher positions within the company depend on well-established criteria that are communicated to all employees, ensuring equal opportunities for career growth without discrimination (61% of respondents).

The study also showed that 69% of organisations integrate the inclusion principle in the recruitment process.

In your opinion, what benefits does diversity management bring to an organization?



Diversity and Inclusion Management Benefits

Workplace diversity means an organisational ethos where people that are different (employees, clients, etc.) are understood, accepted and the differences valued.

But what are the benefits that come together with Diversity and Inclusion?

One benefit revealed by the study is employee wellbeing: 35% of respondents believe that Diversity and Inclusion management increases employee wellbeing by creating a collaborative environment.

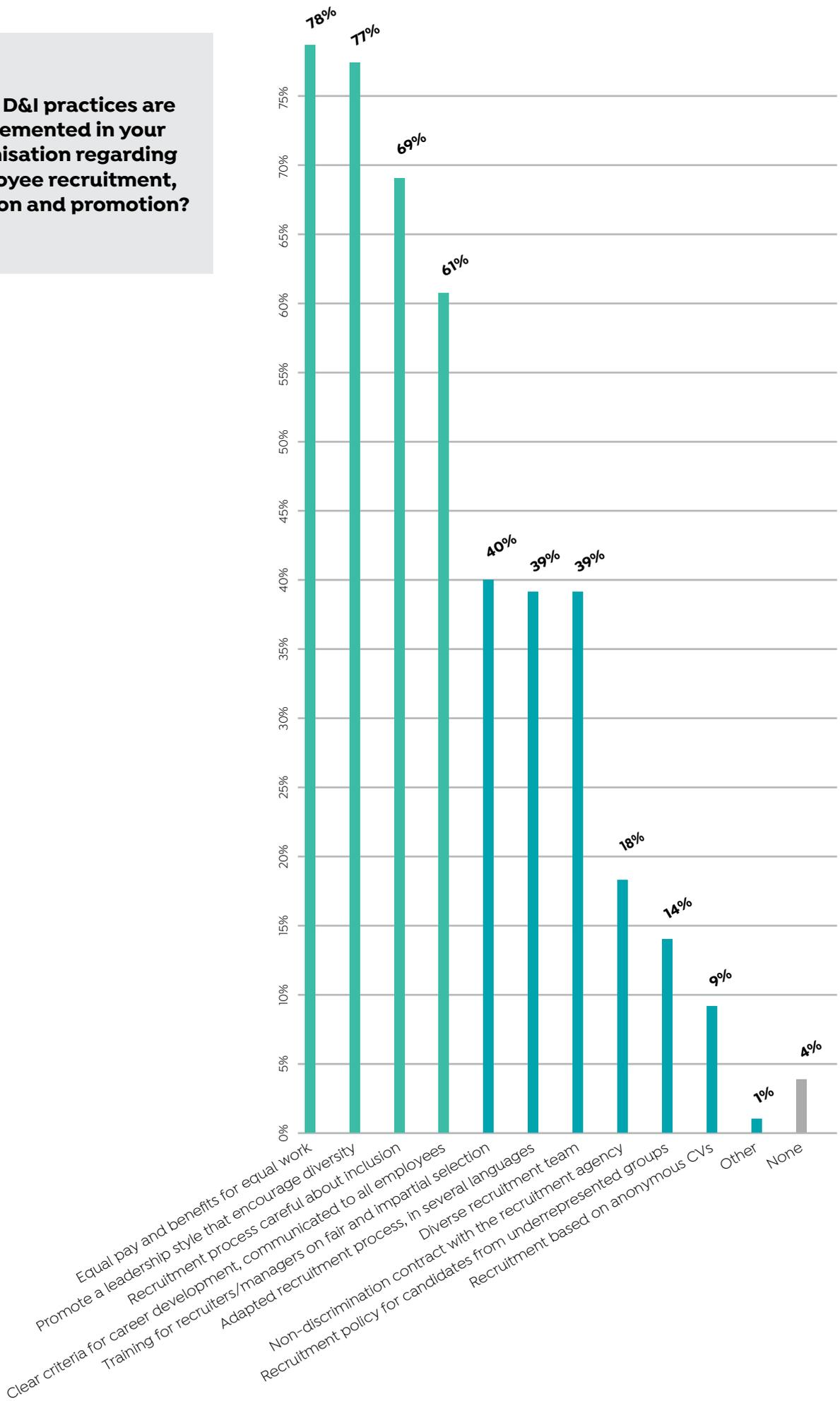
Another advantage is the growth potential for organisations: 29% of the respondents believe that diverse teams mean diversity in ideas and ways of thinking.

Employee motivation and job satisfaction also increase when the work environment is diverse and inclusive, for more than 70% of the respondents.

Diversity and Inclusion change people's lives more than we think: for 51% of the respondents, an inclusive environment has great benefits for their life, thus for their mental and physical condition.

For companies, Diversity and Inclusion drive business growth. By letting people know they are valued for being unique and empowered, they have the courage to come up with and sustain their ideas.

What D&I practices are implemented in your organisation regarding employee recruitment, selection and promotion?



Diversity and Inclusion practices in Romanian Organisations

We all know that just speaking about Diversity and Inclusion does not mean actually supporting these principles. The real endorsement comes when organisations establish rules and practices aimed to sustain them.

In Romania, the larger the companies, the more they tend to incorporate the Diversity and Inclusion principles into their strategies and core values, allocating more financial and human resources to implement D&I practices.

The study revealed that 60% of large companies have D&I strategies and 33% allocate annual budgets for them. On the other hand, 47% of SMEs and 44% of micro-enterprises have a one-off approach, and only 6% of SMEs allocate Diversity and Inclusion budgets. Furthermore, almost 86% of the public institutions participating in the study have a targeted approach to Diversity and Inclusion practices.

The most common practices that support Diversity and Inclusion in Romanian organisations consist in:

- Non-discrimination in recruitment, selection and promotion policies;
- Training and Development programs;
- Flexible hours;
- Employee Support.

Recruitment, Selection and Promotion

The research revealed that more than 3 out of 4 organisations that participated in the study provide equal opportunities for all employees, regardless of gender, age, religion, ethnicity, vulnerability or social environment.

Moreover, 61% of the respondents stated that promotion within their organisations is done according to clearly established criteria, which are communicated to all employees, ensuring equal opportunities for career growth without discrimination.

The leadership style in more than 3 out of 4 organisations offers models that foster Diversity and Inclusion. Additionally, inclusion is integrated into the recruitment process of more than two thirds of the organisations participating in the study.

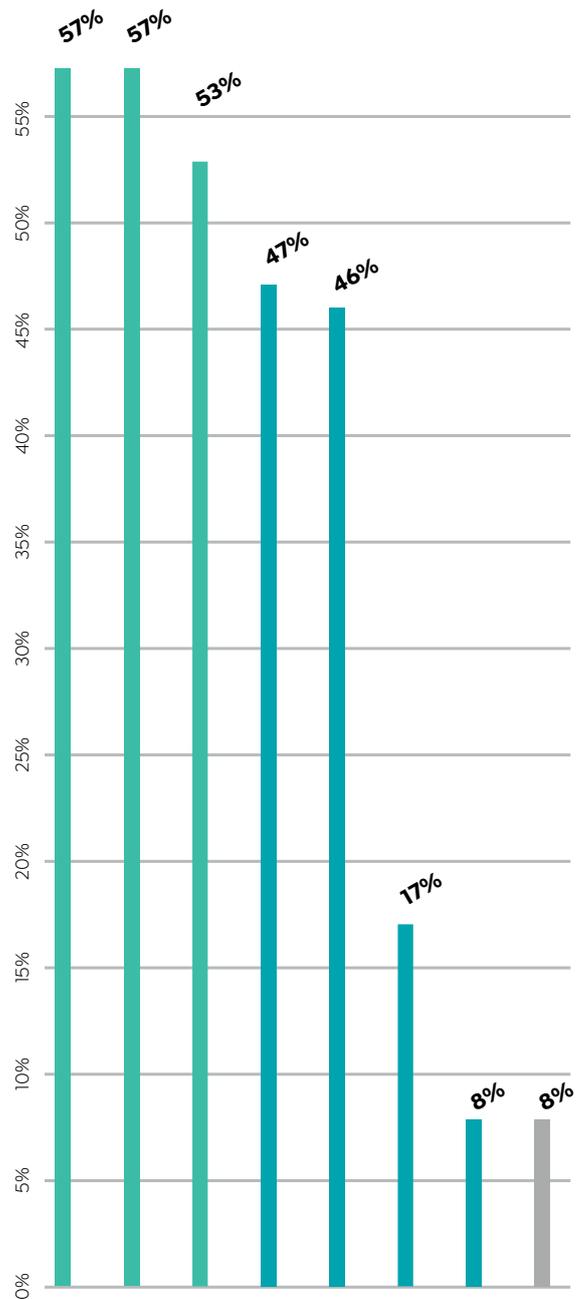
What D&I practices are implemented in your organisation related to employee development and training?

Training and Development programs

When it comes to training and development provided to employees, more than half of the Romanian organisations adopt practices aimed to develop empathy, reflection and self-appreciation, opening debates on stereotypes - that exist both for managers and for the rest of the employees.

At the same time, management training policies are being implemented so that they can identify the needs of employees and highlight the qualities of each individual. Meanwhile, they pay attention to the contribution provided by each individual to the overall results of teams and organisations (57% of the companies participating in the study).

Almost 1 out of 10 organisations do not apply training and staff development practices to raise awareness of the benefits of Diversity and Inclusion.



Development and practice "skills" like: empathy, self-appreciation, reflection
 Train managers to identify employees needs and highlight the qualities of each individual
 Workshops on thinking stereotypes, for both employees and managers
 Train managers to manage diversity of opinions
 Train managers to manage diversity cultural diversity
 Mentoring for underrepresented groups employees
 Other
 None

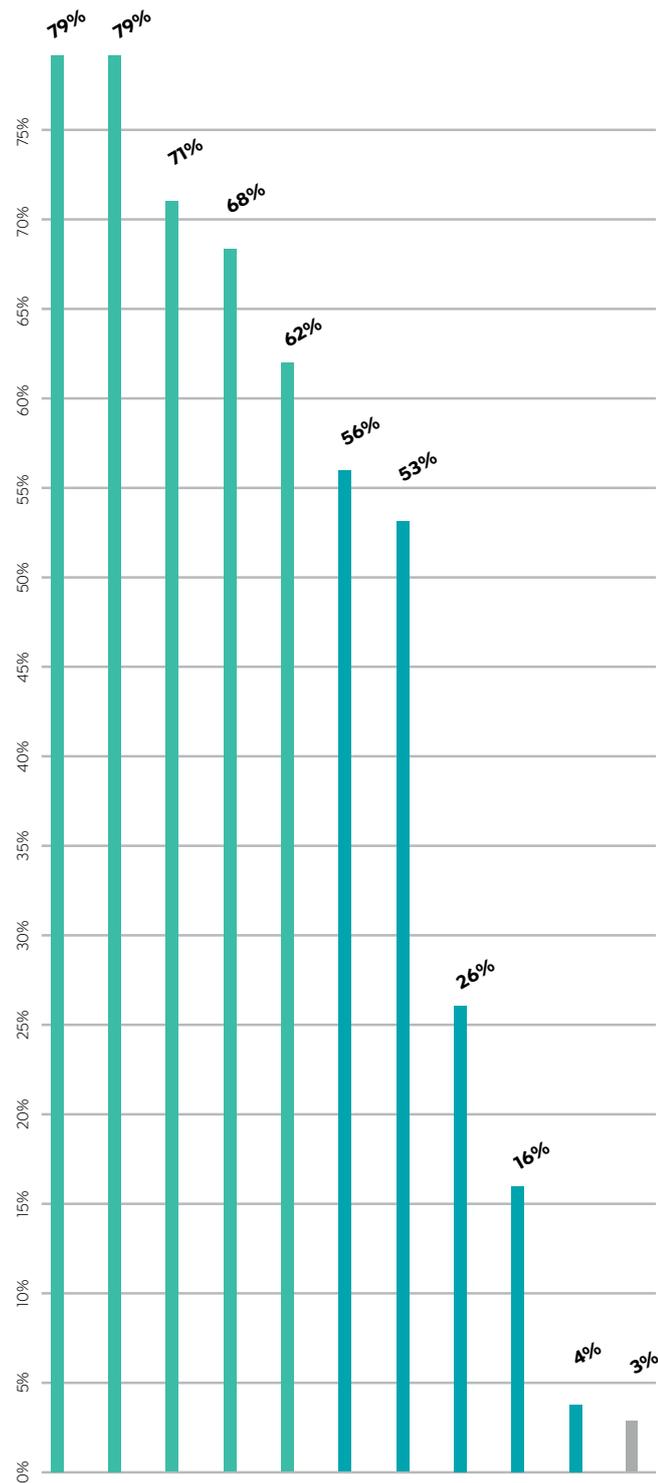
What D&I practices are implemented in your organisation regarding working hours flexibility?

Flexible hours

Most organisations participating in the study (79%) offer flexible working hours, reflecting in particular the possibility of choosing when to start and when to end. Also, they give time off when required, with the possibility of subsequent recovery.

At the same time, the possibility of working from home is another way of supporting employees, granted by 68% of responding organisations.

An interesting finding of the study was that 71% of the organisations participating in the study are also sensitive to employees' personal situations, granting additional days in situations such as death of a family member.



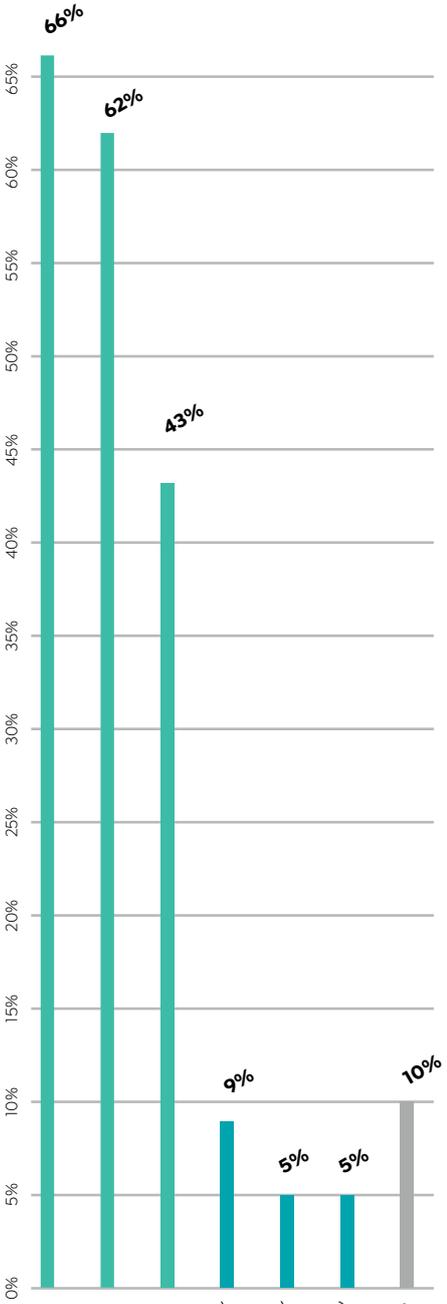
Possibility to choose working hours start and finish
 Spare time for emergency situations, and possibility to recover later
 Possibility of alternating office work with home work
 Free days according to the religion practiced
 Granting unpaid free days
 Part-time work
 Families day off
 Job-sharing
 Other
 None

What D&I practices are implemented in your organisation regarding employees support?

Employee support

9 out of 10 organisations participating in the study provide support to their employees through useful information and training programs designed to help them improve their quality of life, by managing stress, and finding a work-life balance, as well as optimize relationships with colleagues and lifestyle (more than 60%).

The research showed that more than 4 out of 10 organisations have a person designated to manage situations of intimidation or harassment.



Provide information about optimizing work-life balance, colleagues relationships
 Workshops on stress management, work-life balance
 Appointment of a responsible for recording and solving bullying/harassment situations
 Child care services for employees with children: nursery, kindergarten, after-school
 Free days according to the religion practiced
 Support for the elderly (employees and employees families)
 Other

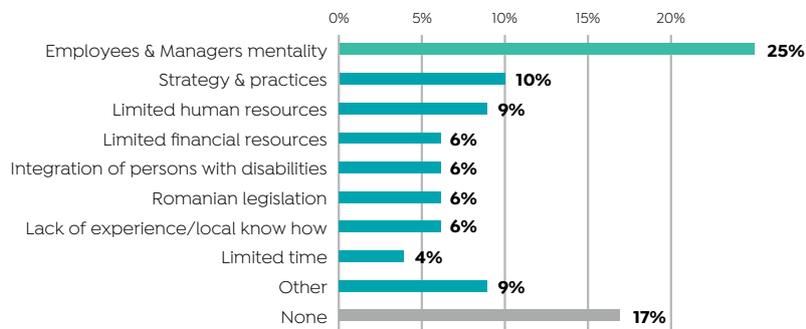
Difficulties in implementing the Diversity and Inclusion practices

Difficulties and barriers are met everywhere, in any organisation, regardless of the subject we talk about. If companies are eager to align with global principles of Diversity and Inclusion, some factors act as obstacles.

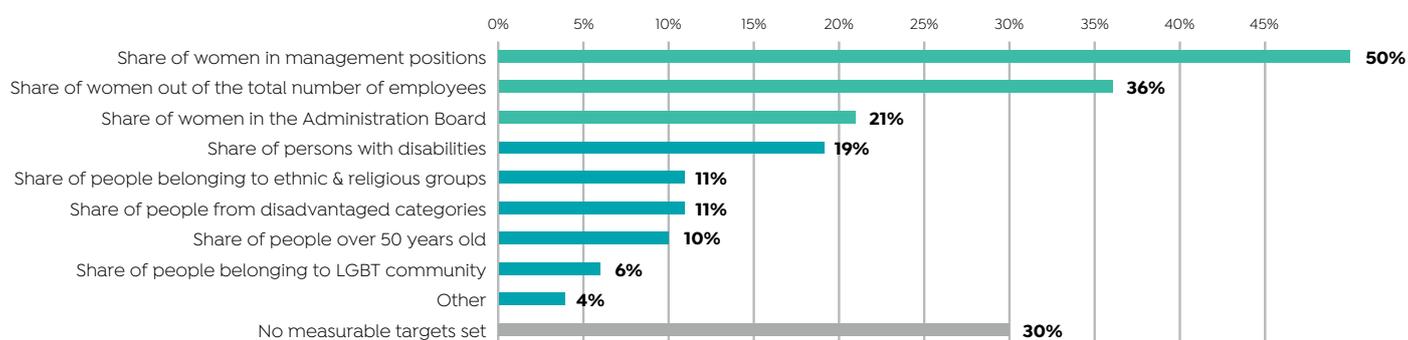
The study revealed that 1 out of 4 organisations participating in the study mention people's mentalities, culture, and prejudices - both of employees' and managers' - as the main barrier to implementing Diversity and Inclusion practices.

Lack of clear staff policies, procedures, and D&I strategies, together with limited human resources are two other important limitations for D&I implementation in Romanian organisations.

What do you consider to be the main difficulties your organisation faces in implementing D&I practices?



What measurable targets related to Diversity and Inclusion has your organisation set?



Main KPIs used to measure the Diversity and Inclusion practices

To keep a track of their efforts in Diversity and Inclusion practices implementation, Romanian organisations establish measurable KPIs.

According to the study, 70% of the participants have measurable targets to represent Diversity and Inclusion in their organisations. Most large companies have measurable targets (93%), while only 40% of micro-enterprises have D&I targets.

Women in management is a target for 50% of the Romanian organisations, set on average at 45% of all management positions. This is the main D&I target for large companies and SMEs. 36% of them aim to increase the overall share of women in the organisation, with an average target of 41%.

21% of the organisations participating in the study plan to have women represented on the Board of Directors, with an average target set at 47%.

However, even if they have set KPIs for D&I, 52% of organisations do not have the tools for monitoring their progress in this regard.

Organisations assessing the performance of D&I policies aim to achieve a gender balance in the share of employees, both in terms of total staff and in terms of management.

Although they have measurable KPIs for Diversity and Inclusion practices, more than half of the organisations do not use them to keep track of their results.

Communicating and promoting Diversity and Inclusion principles in Romanian organisations

Most Romanian organisations include Diversity and Inclusion principles in their brand communication strategy, the study shows.

Moreover, the study discovered that large companies include diversity in their external communication strategy, whether it is brand communication, recruitment materials or website. Internally, most of them organise and hold informative sessions and workshops on D&I themes.

If we speak about SMEs, top management representatives take the lead and communicate about Diversity and Inclusion in their organisations (25% of them).

More than 4 out of 10 organisations participating in the study include diversity issues in brand communication, their materials containing both dedicated themes and suggestive images of gender, ethnicity, age or social group diversity.

Around 3 out of 10 organisations include D&I elements in their recruitment materials or on their own websites.

Furthermore, organisations engage in concrete campaigns and actions to support diversity-promoting NGOs.

On the other hand, almost 2 out of 10 organisations do not communicate on D&I issues at all, either internally or externally.

Where do we stand when we talk about Diversity and Inclusion Study in Romanian Organisations

Diversity and Inclusion is a principle that stands for embracing different people for who they are - regardless of culture, sexual orientation, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, vulnerability or social environment.

Diversity and Inclusion does not just mean empowering people by appreciating and respecting what makes them different and unique, but this principle has a large positive effect on businesses, irrespective of their size, field of activity or geographical positioning.

The reason is simple: a diverse work environment means variety in approaching business problems, which support the organisational growth. So there is a win-win situation: people feeling included, secure and appreciated drives business growth.

The benefits of Diversity and Inclusion principles are numerous, and here are some of the most important:

- Increased employee wellbeing;
- More creative ideas and new ways of thinking;
- Diversity and Inclusion management has a direct impact on increasing motivation and satisfaction at work.

Authors:

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MKOR Consulting is one of the proud signatories of the Romanian Diversity Charter, ever since its launch, in 2018.

Partners in collecting data: HR Club, Exec-Edu, PWN Romania

Romania's unfinished inclusion agenda. A view from an organizational diversity and inclusion perspective

The National Council for Combating Discrimination has released in early 2019 a new barometer of public opinion on discrimination. Data showed a slow progress of the public opinion in Romania on a multitude of issues related to non-discrimination. A longitudinal analysis of the trends in non-discrimination reveal a steady progress when it comes to inclusion of Roma minority, of LGBT people or of people with disabilities over the last decade.

However, the progress of the inclusion agenda of Romania is slow and uneven and Romania continues to rank among the least inclusive EU Member States in many areas of inclusion and efforts need to be boosted in order to catch up with the diversity and inclusion targets in the European Union. Below there is a compilation of the key challenges to inclusion in Romania from an organizational diversity and inclusion perspective (occupation, employment, recruitment or promotion).

Challenges to gender inclusion in Romania¹

Romania's Gender Equality Index (2019) - 54,5 - is among the lowest compared to the rest of the EU Member States. Within EU-28, Romania ranks 25th with only Slovakia, Greece and Hungary having lower GEI scores. Between 2005 and 2017, Romania improved its GEI score, but it remained much lower than the EU's score in the same period. Romania's slower rate of improvement has led to an increasing gap with the EU over time. Although Romania's gender pay gap is the lowest in the EU (4%) and income distribution among women and among men became more equal between 2007 and 2017, the gender gap persists. The key challenges to gender inclusion are listed below:

Gender gaps in the economic field. Romania's score in the domain of money is 62.0, showing progress of 8.8 points since 2005 (+ 2.6 points since 2015), with improvements in the economic and financial situations of women and men. Despite increases in mean monthly earnings of both women (+ 70 %) and men (+ 65 %) from 2006 to 2014, the gender gap persists. Women still earn 5 % less than men. In couples with children, women earn 8 % less than men (11 % less in couples without children). The gender gap in earnings is also higher among people with lower levels of education. Romania's at risk of poverty rates for both women (23 %) and men (21 %) are among the highest in the EU and remained stable from 2007 to 2017. People facing the highest



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risk of poverty are those with low education (40 % of women and 41 % of men), young people aged 15-24 (33 % of both women and men) and lone parents (31 %).

Major inequalities in power distribution and representation between men and women persist. Romania's score in the domain of power is 38.8, with an 8.1-point increase since 2005 (+ 5.6 points since 2015). The increase is driven by improvements in the sub-domains of political and social power, while there is regression in the sub-domain of economic power. The domain of power has Romania's lowest score, standing 13.1 points below the EU's score. The share of women ministers increased from 12 % to 32 %, between 2005 and 2018. There are also more women members of parliament: 19 % compared to 11 % in 2005. The share of women on the boards of the largest publicly listed companies decreased from 13 % to 10 %, between 2005 and 2018. There has also been a decrease in the share of women on the board of the central bank, from 13 % to 11 %. While Romania ranks 23rd in the sub-domain of economic power, it has the fifth highest score for the sub-domain of social power. Women comprise 45 % of board members of research-funding organisations, 27 % of board members of publicly owned broadcasting organisations and only 12 % of the highest decision-making bodies of national Olympic sports organisations.

Big inequalities between men and women in balancing work, caring responsibilities and personal life. In the domain of time, Romania's score is 50.3, well below the EU's score of 65.7. Gender inequalities in the distribution of time spent on care activities have increased since 2005. Women are more likely to spend time caring for their family: 46 % of women, compared to 25 % of men, have daily care responsibilities for 1 hour or more. This is the widest gender gap (21 p.p.) in the EU. This gap is even bigger among women and men in couples with children (82 % and 52 %). More women (75 %) than men (41 %) do cooking and housework every day for at least one hour. The gender gap is wider in couples with children (79 % women and 42 % men) than in couples without children (78 % and 54 %). Romania has the lowest shares of women (6 %) and men (8 %) participating in sporting, cultural or leisure activities outside the home in the EU.

A new political speech where gender equality is contested. In the recent years a new political speech emerged contesting the gender equality and claiming that changing the traditional gender roles, that kept women under a dire op-

pression along the centuries, is wrong. Labelled as "illiberal", "populist" or "conservative", such emergent political speech has no valid scientific justification and, therefore, relies heavily on religious arguments. Although this is not the dominant political speech in Romania, it has contaminated a number of political forces and it affected several initiatives and efforts dedicated to advancing gender equality in Romania. While there is no scientific study in genetics or social sciences to support such a claim, the supporters of this new political speech try and justify that traditional gender roles is an imperative of genetics (women are predestined genetically to micro social roles, while men are predestined to macro social roles).

Challenges to disability inclusion in Romania

While the legislation of Romania is fairly compliant with the EU standards, when it comes to disability inclusion and non-discrimination, its enforcement remains however limited and a number of challenges persist in Romania. As such, among the barriers and challenges to disability inclusion the following are documented and outstanding:

Accessible public spaces continues to be a hope rather than a reality in the majority of localities in Romania. While there is no systematic monitoring of the progress on making public spaces accessible to persons with disabilities, an older research issued by the National Council for Combating Discrimination in 2013, conducted at national level, showed that "only in two bigger cities there was recorded some progress in marking with tactile floor the space of access in busses or other public transportation vehicles (Alba Iulia and Ploiesti Municipalities)". According to the same report, only four bigger cities were 100% compliant with the obligation to have all crossroads and traffic-lights made accessible for the persons with disabilities, while 18 cities were 0% compliant.

Reasonable accommodation should start with schools but the information released in 2018 by Centrul European pentru Drepturile Copiilor cu Dizabilități shows that "under 20% of the schools from bigger cities have been made accessible, in the sense that they have an entrance ramp". This does not include necessarily that in these schools upper floors, classrooms or toilets have been made accessible.

Paying budgetary contributions rather than employing people with disabilities. Legislation has been adopted to ensure the right of people

with disabilities to work in a non-discriminatory environment. This law, also known as Law 448/2006, cites that all institutions, private or public, with a minimum of 50 employees, must observe and fill a quota of 4% in terms of employing individuals with disability. If this percentage is not met, employers are mandated to pay the government a sum equal to 50% of the minimum wage for each of these assigned positions that are considered vacant. Thus far, however, most companies have preferred the latter option of paying a wage, to the detriment of inclusion. This was one of the conclusions of the Disability HR Summit 2018, in Bucharest. While the motivation for this is unclear, we must consider the prevailing discriminatory attitudes and misinformation prevalent in society. For some employers, the word 'disability' sounds like a burden that will impede productivity and slow down economic growth. Not only is this belief totally unfounded, but the International Labor Organization (ILO) has published a factsheet listing some of the business benefits that come with hiring people with disabilities. In fact, by creating an inclusive work environment, you not only improve your companies' reputation, but you may also increase teamwork and the general morale and wellbeing of your entire workforce.

Lack of awareness on disability, in general, and on mental disability, in particular. When it comes to reasonable accommodation at the workplace, it really matters to monitor how this is implemented in a disaggregated manner by the type of disability. The evidence collected by the National Councils for Combating Discrimination along the recent years shows big disparities between the inclusion of persons with physical disabilities and the inclusion of persons with mental disabilities. A research of 2012 conducted by Estuar Foundation investigating the aspects related to the reasonable accommodation at the workplace showed that „all of those who were employed in regular companies (not in protected units) reported that none of their employers did anything to allow their work to be conducted in optimal conditions” and considered that the major cause of doing so was the lack of employer's awareness on the issues related to mental health challenges.

People with disability represent an untapped resource of skills and talent. “For too long now, employers have shunned people with disabilities as potential employees without even knowing what they can bring to the table, focusing on their limits instead of their strengths. In Romania, people with

disabilities represent an overlooked market of approximately 800,000 people. Ignoring this market segment may mean not only losing the disabled consumer, but also their family and friends too. In an era where companies praise thinking outside the box, all voices ought to be included for greater diversity and creativity. People with disabilities represent an untapped resource of skills and talent, and thus their participation can benefit all parties involved”. This was another conclusion of the Disability HR Summit 2018.

Challenges to LGBT inclusion in Romania

In 2019, the Council of Europe's Commission against Racism and Intolerance issued its fifth monitoring report on Romania in which it highlighted both progress on advancing the equality and non-discrimination agenda and the unfinished agenda and the challenges and barriers to inclusion in the country. In the mentioned monitoring report, the Roma and LGBT communities were singled out in terms of vulnerabilities and the CoE urged the national authorities to adopt the National Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Diversity “without any further delay”. When it comes to LGBT inclusion the following challenges still persist in Romania:

Lack of monitoring data and invisibility of LGBT community. Romania does not have yet a system a system to collect data and produce statistics offering an integrated and consistent view of cases of racist and homo/transphobic hate speech and hate crime brought to the attention of the police and pursued through the courts and make this data available to the public.

Widespread hate and intolerant speech against LGBT community. Racist and intolerant hate speech in public discourse as well as on the internet is a widespread problem: the main targets are Roma, the Hungarian minority, LGBT persons and the Jewish community. Violent attacks against these groups or their property also occur sporadically. The 2018 referendum for the definition of marriage brought an incredible surge in the hate speech against LGBT community.

Widespread harassment against LGBT people. The most recent survey released in 2020 by the EU Fundamental Rights Agency revealed that 43% of LGBT persons in Romania have been harassed in the previous year, while 15% of LGBT people reported that they were assaulted in the previous 5 years. Only 4% of LGBT persons in Romania have reported to the police

a hate crime, as compared to 14% the EU average and 44% of LGBT people avoid certain places for fears of assault due to their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Persisting high levels of discrimination against LGBT people at work. While only 25% of LGBT people in Romania are open about their sexual orientation with those in their social proximity (as compared to a 47% average at the level of the entire European Union, 23% of the LGBT respondents from Romania of the EU FRA recent survey reported that they were discriminated against at work in the previous year. As discrimination against LGBT people at work increased in the European Union since 2012, FRA issues the following recommendation: To tackle more effectively discrimination in employment on grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics, EU Member States should consider developing comprehensive action plans. These should involve all necessary stakeholders, including labour inspectorates, trade unions, employers' organisations and civil society organisations. The action plans could include measures such as discrimination testing, diversity audits, diversity management training, and promoting adhering and committing to Diversity Charters. Member States should consider leading by example by applying these measures within their own public administrations.

Challenges to Roma inclusion in Romania

Although 89% of Romanians declare that they would accept a Roma person as a work colleague, 72% declare, at the same time, that they have little or no trust in a Roma person. (CNCD, IRES, 2019). Although significant steps were made on Roma inclusion in Romania, the road ahead to full equality is long and structural barriers to inclusion have to be removed. Below are some key challenges that need to be addressed:

Discrimination and segregation. Segregation and precarious housing conditions are crucial barriers for the access to the labour market of Roma, also affecting severely their social inclusion. A survey of FRA conducted in 11 Member States of the EU (Romania included) in 2011 revealed that 38% of the Roma respondents live in segregated neighbourhoods and that 20% live in shanty or ruined dwellings. Moreover, the survey noticed that persons of other ethnicity than Roma, living in Roma neighbourhoods have lower employment rates (31%) as compared to the rate of their peers living in neighbourhoods inhabited predominantly by the majority population (41%). Approximately 40% of the Roma in Romania declared that they were discriminated against along the previous 5 years while they were searching for a job and 10% declared that they were discriminated against most often at work, by employers or work colleagues (FRA², 2011).

Poverty and segregation. A survey at the level of the EU revealed that 80% of the European Roma surveyed and their children live with an income below the respective national at-risk-of-poverty threshold. In comparison, on average across the EU, 17% of the population was at risk of poverty

in 2014. In Romania 70% of Roma population covered by the survey had incomes below the national income poverty threshold. The rate was almost three times higher than that of the general population (25%). Income poverty seems to be related to the residential concentration of Roma. In most countries, the proportion of Roma at risk of poverty is highest in neighbourhoods that respondents assess to be populated by residents who are "all" or "most" of Roma background (FRA³, 2016). In 2018, while 93% of the employed Romanians worked in a full time job, only 54% of the employed Roma worked in full time jobs (a 10% increase since 2012). A share of 26% of the working Roma worked as day laborers (compared with 2% of Romanians working as day laborers. Only 60% of the working Roma had a labour contract as compared with 94% of the working Romanians. Yet, this share of 60% is a significant increase since 2012 when only 37% of working Roma had a labour contract (Agenția Împreună, IRES, 2019).

Lack of skills or lack of formal recognition of informally acquired skills. A research of 2011 showed that 38% of the employed Roma worked as unqualified workers, 32% worked in qualified jobs (qualified work, commerce, trade), 9% worked in agriculture and 13% work in Roma traditional jobs. In terms of occupation there exist significant gender gaps – Roma women work as unqualified workers in a larger share as compared to men, and are involved more frequently in care jobs for children or for vulnerable persons (e.g. school mediator or health mediator) (Fundatia Soros Romania⁴, 2012). When targeting Roma, organizations should also consider investing in on-the-job vocational training schemes or in schemes for the formal recognition of informally acquired skills.

¹ The data and analyses of this section are extracted from the EU GEI 2019 <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2019/RO>

² Sărăcia și ocuparea forței de muncă: situația romilor din 11 state membre ale UE, FRA, 2011, https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2014-roma-survey-dif-employment_ro.pdf

³ Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey | Roma – Selected findings, FRA, 2016, https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2016-eu-minorities-survey-roma-selected-findings_en.pdf

⁴ Situația romilor în România, 2011 Între incluziune socială și migrație. Fundația Soros România, 2012.

The **Other** Needs More Than Diversity Bubbles

We often take words too easily. Be it in the day to day life — at an individual level; in the social life — in inter-personal relationships; in the public space — in the way we share, join, and promote ideas, agendas, services and products, stances, initiatives meant to publicly position social, economic and political actors and influence decisions, groups, and/or the entire society, the words that define the *Other* can turn into a slippery pitfall.

They may sound good. That's why they gain adepts, turn viral in the social media, or successful in an economic context. But they are bad. Prone to inherited and unconscious biases, to fears and anxieties, to traditional or radical and extremist discourses, to market competition, and many other causes, the pitfall-words overlook the humanity of the *Other*, while creating or reinforcing an illusory superiority and certitude for their users. The pitfall-words deny the *Other's* unique human potential while seeming so undeniably familiar, that some of us fail to resist their charms. They limit the *Other's* freedom, by assigning him/her a social role and a course of action that was not his/her choice. They frame the *Other* into a script that s/he doesn't author, but which eventually has a strong (and painful) impact on his/her life.

I shall briefly look into three examples of public discourse dehumanizing the *Other*, relevant for the present context, to outline its intricacies in our society. I consider this exercise necessary: we shall better understand the challenges of promoting diversity and inclusion if we put them in a public space perspective. We are social beings, and we cannot live either isolated or in perfectly isolated bubbles. While every organisation observing the principles of Diversity Charter contributes to rehumanizing the *Other* within its premises and at a social level, doing so does not solve alone the problem in the society.

The radical political take on the *Other*

Firstly, with the recent years' raise in populism, nativism and illiberalism, even within the safe harbour of the European Union, the political discourse puts the highest risks to the *Other*. There is no new recipe and the approach is basic. Politicians use words to frame the *Other* as the enemy and the source of evil for the life, wellbeing and future of people and societies. They grab attention and engagement by fear-mongering. Hate and angriness are the



Oana Marinescu is an expert in Strategic Communication. Oana lives by the belief that proficient communication is based on empathy, values, and respect for citizens' rights and freedoms. As a former Secretary of State and Romania Government's Spokesperson (2005-2007), former General Director for Public Diplomacy with Romania's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2008-2010), and as a Managing Director of her company, OMA Vision (since 2010), Oana Marinescu has developed wide-scope strategic communication projects, with a strong impact in the society. In 2018, she was one of the initiators of the Respect Platform, set up by the civil society to defend human rights, in front of the ultra-conservative Referendum against gay marriage.

“solutions” they provide for the social “problems” they define. Pitfall-words do their job: it is much easier to gain support with a political discourse that appeals to fear, than with a public policy discourse that appeals to reason. That’s the power of hate speech.

Who is the enemy? You name it! Each and any of us can become a target of such a discourse. We can all be framed as the enemy if we don’t fit their agenda or don’t submit. We can all be stigmatised and excluded as the undesirable *Other*. Those who think that they are protected from the political discourse or it is not their problem, for not being immigrants, Jews, black people, Roma, Asians, Eastern Europeans, women, gay, corporations, NGOs, young, old, ill, disabled, unemployed, poor, illiterate, etc, they should just dive deep into this list of “enemies” and give it a second thought. Its diversity and dynamism show the level of risk we all face to become the dehumanized *Other*.

For instance, the “hate referendum” in Romania, in 2018, which was supported by most political parties, officially aimed to prevent gay marriage, but it promoted, in fact, an ultraconservative agenda dehumanizing the *Other* on so many levels: LGBTQ, women, professional women, single-mothers, children raised by single parents, divorcees, men and women living in consensual relationships without marrying, all those who supported freedoms and human rights.

For some European citizens, even the European Union, a space of freedom and dignity and a source of prosperity, has become the enemy. In Hungary and Poland, this has been the official discourse for years. In Romania, between 2016-2019, the left-wing ruling party promoted an anti-European discourse. In all the Western-European countries radical and extremist movements gain influence and votes. In the UK, the anti-European discourse lasting for years successfully ended up with the “Leave” vote in 2016.

We cannot hide in our bubble and ignore politics. The political discourse has the strongest impact on the society, either by contaminating it with hate and anger - a radical political discourse leads to an increase in hate crimes, even in established democracies, as studies show - or by influencing the public policy in ways that deeply affect the *Other*.

With the COVID-19 crisis, the risks grow higher. In uncertainty, people seek the reassurance

of a strong leader. Some take authoritarianism as a proof of strength, and the hate speech as a legitimate acknowledgement of their own fears. The flourishing conspiracy theories, which dehumanize a wide and ever-growing category of “*Others*”, and the constant push of the Russian propaganda, which exploits the divisions in democratic societies and fights human rights, the challenges to diversity and inclusion grow bigger.

No matter what we do in our organisations to promote diversity and inclusion, it feels like sailing against the wind when the political discourse undermines diversity and inclusion. People who are framed as the negative “*Other*” have fewer opportunities to grow and express their potential, within their educational process and professional life. The stigma and the negative biases will make it harder for them to enjoy their freedoms, rights and talents, and even to get employed. This means that even an organisation promoting diversity and inclusion will face difficulty in recruiting people with a full-grown potential from such social categories.

The corporate discourse failing the *Other*

On the other hand, the companies’ public communication can contribute to dehumanizing the *Other*. I shall refer to two situations. The advertising campaigns can often rely on social biases with a stronghold in the society. They use them to convey their messages and sell products and services. But at the same time, they reinforce them, by their repetitive and memorable messages. They promote the old, traditional stereotypes as being socially desirable.

The traditional social roles of women and men are the most salient example. The way the advertisers can twist facts that go against the traditional roles and to mould them into the existing stereotypes is amazing.

A few years ago, while Romania was waking up in awe to the amazing victories and failures of the female tennis player Simona Halep, a pharmaceutical company promoted vitamins for boosting energy through a campaign portraying a beautiful young woman standing as a tennis player ready to hit the ball. But she was holding a pan instead of a tennis racket and was wearing a short kitchen apron, showing nice, long legs. Considered against the very strong stereotypes existing in Romania that “women’s place is in the kitchen” and that girls and women should be nice, good-looking and

good; a widespread but dissimulated misogyny; and the lack of trust and promotion of women in senior leadership positions, this campaign contributed to the negative framing of the female *Other*, while selling vitamins. No pitfall-words were used in the copywriting: the image created the pitfall-meaning.

The social responsibility strategies can also contribute to the dehumanization of the *Other*, by ignoring the issues the *Other* faces. It all depends on the criteria that ground them. At times, companies search for popular topics for their CSR. That's why, for instance, in Romania, where there is a strong anti-Roma racism, it is very difficult for NGOs dealing with Roma issues to raise funds from companies. This applies also to other types of *Others*, such as LGBTQ, victims of domestic violence, women, abused children, poor, disabled, etc. Not funding projects helping a dehumanized *Other* regain his/ her place in the society will contribute to the persistence of the problem and the reduced social and professional inclusion of the people coming from this social category.

The media against the *Other*

Thirdly, the media discourse can have a tremendous impact on dehumanizing the *Other*. They can do it in many ways, more or less explicitly. For instance, they amplify aggressive political discourse, because "it makes news". While informing is legitimate, not putting it in a critical perspective is not. They can effectively promote to large audiences racial, gender, economic stereotypes, even as they are subject to unconscious biases. Some of them can embrace a radical or ultraconservative agenda, attacking the *Others* and having an editorial policy to use heavy pitfall-words to frame them. They can promote only male opinion leaders or specialists, as it happens with Romanian televisions, thus confirming the stereotype that women are not able to be good professionals.

However, media outlets are also the ones which can uncover the dehumanization of the *Other* and actually help promote an inclusive agenda, based on freedoms, human rights and diversity. They can also get involved and take the initiative of awareness and education campaigns, with a positive impact on society.

The social platforms can double down both the negative and the positive media discourse. However, again, authoritarianist propaganda outlets and bots amplify the discourse dehumanizing the *Other*, as a source of division, fear and anger. And we are subject to it.

Conclusions

To sum up, promoting diversity and inclusion in such a difficult context, at the political, market, media level, and with such a strong stereotyping background is at the same time an affirmative action rehumanizing the *Other*, and a challenge to do more. While a company can for sure create a safe bubble by the diversity and inclusion steps it takes, it is not enough to protect its employees, whether they are from the vulnerable groups or not, from the aggressiveness they can face outside its premises. That's why keeping in mind the pressures coming from the political field, media and unconscious biases is a must for understanding the big-picture.

Other needs more than a bubble. And we are all the *Other* for someone else. We all need to feel protected and able to fulfil our potential wherever we are, or we do in the society, whatever gender, sexual orientation, religious, age, professional and educational background we may have. We cannot be safe in a society where some people are not safe or are simply dehumanized for being different, even if we work in a company promoting diversity and inclusion.

That's why we need to have the courage to promote diversity and inclusion not only in our organisations but also in our societies. And as we sometimes take words too easily, we ought to learn to take them seriously and start saying things for what they are. Diversity and inclusion are affirmative actions for promoting and giving concreteness to human rights. While some politicians or ultraconservative actors and media may reject the words "diversity" and "inclusion" for being "political correctness" language, each of us needs to learn that our basic human rights and liberties are at stake when what makes us different is used to dehumanize us or to deny our intrinsic value.

So, expanding the internal human resources policies with strategic directions in the external positioning of the companies, be it in public affairs, commercial, corporate and CSR communication, in a way that observes, and actively promotes human rights in the public space and the education for human rights will only improve the outcomes, extent and engagement of internal diversity and inclusion policies.

Diversity is a fact. Inclusion is a choice

Fiona Bartels Ellis, Head of Equality and Diversity in the British Council, talks to us about her vision and work on equality and diversity in a global environment.

What is your personal definition for diversity and inclusion?

There are numerous definitions. My personal ones connect to those we use at the British Council.

Diversity. Recognising that people are different and similar in many ways. For me it is important to focus not just on our differences and what separates us, but also on what we share and have in common. Valuing diversity involves adopting an intentional approach that responds to and values our human diversity but also the bio diversity that is so essential to the survival of the planet and the various species, humans included, that occupy it. The aim from an organisational perspective is for people to feel comfortable being themselves so that they are able and motivated to give of their best for the benefit of the organisation, but also beyond this, to support societies that are more harmonious.

Inclusion is the outcome we seek from investing in equality and diversity. It is about making people feel welcome and accepted and encouraged to participate, so that everyone feels valued and respected and, of course, included. Inclusion requires an active approach. This means involving people and empowering them, so they can play a full and active role in the workplace and society.

Can you tell us a bit more about your role as equality and diversity head in the British Council?

I set and drive the strategic direction of our work in EDI (equality, diversity and inclusion) across our global network of over 110 countries and territories. I provide the professional leadership and offer advice and guidance and make various contributions, to help ensure all our cultural relations work which covers arts, education and society and English and exams programmes and activities is informed by EDI.

What are the main pillars of your D&I strategy and how hard has it been to get here?

The pillars include the business, moral and legal dimensions and a particular focus on the areas of age, disability, gender, race/ethnicity, religion and belief and sexual orientation, as well as our organisational values. We have a diversity strategy with an ambitious vision and 3 key objectives – developing capability and leaders, fostering inclusion and measures, metrics and legal compliance.

It is always hard to ensure a balance between the attention given to and progress made against various elements. It is also hard to maintain momentum because of changing demands and a



changing external environment. For example, an Olympic year often highlights the challenges and prejudices faced by those with physical impairments, but this can wane in subsequent years. Rarely are those with learning disabilities, even in a Special Olympics year, provided with a space to highlight challenges and prejudices and support.

Some people respond to the business argument, or want to focus on legal compliance, others have a strong moral compass and for them doing the right thing is important and underpins how they approach their work and general life. Others take a compliance approach, so will comply with the law or something that is set out in a policy, but won't go beyond that.

This reality makes progressing a strategy or realising a vision hard, and so it is important to focus on achievements and acknowledge but not overstate them, especially as we so often focus on what is yet to be done, or what is wrong. I like the saying 'by an inch it's a cinch, by a yard it is hard'. This is saying Incremental, steady steps are important. And I would add – stark reminders too. I often remind people that even in the 1970s in my own and many, many other organisations and sectors, women who got married had to resign. You could not work as married woman not that long ago really.

It is important that leaders acknowledge their own bias and preferences?

It certainly is. Leaders have positional power and authority and access to resources and control over how they are used. They can use their power in a positive or negative way. Their biases and preferences can have a significant impact, so it is crucial they are aware of them and seek to reduce and control them. If they acknowledge them, they can encourage others to do so too.

How might leadership think more creatively about recruitment in organizations? Could you share with us a personal story?

In many countries there are laws governing recruitment but at the same time some adverts still ask for young or good looking people. Recruitment is important but so too is retention and progression.

I think creative approaches include what they call 'blind' applications forms. So, stripping out all the information that can lead to bias – age/date of birth, photos, gender identification etc. I also think it includes reaching out to a wider group of people and through different recruitment channels.

I worked with an organisation that decided to stop targeting people from what we call the Russell Group universities – the top ones. We appointed probably the most impressive and diverse (in all sorts of ways, including socio-economic background) group of graduates ever the first time we did so. So, nothing revolutionary, but a deliberate, intentional change.

Why it is important to have clear metrics for D&I?

What gets measured counts and what counts gets measured! How do you know if you are making progress if you don't have clear metrics? Without them things can be woolly. Metrics give focus and a way of measuring change and development and progress. They can provide reassurance, or signal a need for a change of direction. Why shouldn't D&I have metrics and track data when you can hardly find an area of work that doesn't? I believe in evidence-based practices and having metrics aligns with this belief, as well as my belief in using resources effectively and efficiently – which in order to do so, requires use of metrics and data.

In which way has the diversity and inclusion sector changed in the last years?

I think more organisations, especially progressive and socially responsible ones, are taking it seriously so there has been more buy-in from businesses, especially ones that put people before, or alongside profit and want to work internationally. Also, the sector is communicating the bottom line and other benefits of D&I more and highlighting the risks of ignoring D&I or getting it wrong, like

“Diversity is being invited to the party, Inclusion is being asked to dance.”

“We still have the battle of unlearning and learning in the D&I space.”

damage to the brand and reputation. They are not focusing solely on the moral and legal aspects but emphasizing that D&I is good for business.

There has also been more focus on the rights of gay and lesbian and transgender people, less so on intersex and bi-sexual people. Intersectionality is being given much more attention than before and increasing attention is being given to allyship.

The sector has professionalised and there are many more experts than there were before, some of them crucial to the business and with a seat at the top table.

In your opinion, what battles have been won and what are still on going?

The battle for inclusion and respect for and valuing of diversity is never won because progress can quickly unravel. All of us humans face challenges being fair, non-partisan or non-biased. We still have the battle of unlearning and learning in the D&I space.

Yes, there has been progress towards gender equality, but poverty remains feminised and women still don't have basic rights in many countries. Attitudes towards gay and lesbian people have improved but there is still a lot of work to do. Older adults are discriminated against in many, many ways and ageism is rife in the workplace, affecting young people too in instances. Older adult women face the double jeopardy of their age and their gender. Visible ethnic minorities, including those whose skin is not white face intense, brutal prejudice and discrimination. White is still seen as 'right' and superior. Religious persecution and discrimination is still a reality.

What do you say to critics who feel no real change can take place?

They have been proven wrong. There has been change and improvement and whilst things aren't perfect and there is still intolerance, the evidence from many parts of world shows that people from so called atypical backgrounds can contribute and be respected in ways that were not imaginable. Who would have thought the USA would have a African-American president – certainly not me, in my life time.

What advice would you give to Romanian organizations thinking to start their D&I journey?

Start with identifying and clarifying why you want to engage with EDI. What are your reasons? What are the key problems or issues you want to tackle or address? What is the outcome and results you are hoping for? Find out what others are doing - benchmark. Don't be over ambitious, or under ambitious. Hire help. Review and reflect as you go along. Mistakes are inevitable – learn and gain strength from them rather than being derailed by them. Work towards signing a Diversity Charter. Celebrate success but don't make too much out of too little. Enjoy the journey! It is a marathon not a sprint.

Interview by Dana Oancea, Romanian Diversity Charter

Vodafone Romania – Commitment to gender equality at all organizational levels

At Vodafone Romania we are focusing on gender balance as a key part of our strategy that contributes to achieving a better business performance and consolidating our best employer position in the industry. One of our D&I goals is to support women's presence and representation at all organizational levels in order to fully capitalize on their potential and value their great contribution to our company's activity. We have a strong commitment to diversity and women's empowerment both at global and local level and believe that achieving greater gender parity will strengthen our company significantly over time and, by extension, contribute to women empowerment within the wider society.



About Vodafone Romania

Vodafone Romania is a subsidiary of Vodafone Group, which is one of the world's leading telecoms and technology service providers, with extensive experience in connectivity, convergence and the Internet of Things, as well as championing mobile financial services and digital transformation in emerging markets. Vodafone is the company that implemented the first GSM network in Romania, in April 1997, and the first operator to launch 3G services on the Romanian market, in April 2005, and then the higher level of performance, HSDPA - 3G broadband. Also, Vodafone is the operator that launched the first 4G mobile network in Romania, in October 2012. Vodafone was also the first operator on the market and among the first in Europe to have launched a 5G network and the first 5G commercial services, in 2019.

In its more than 20 years of existence on the Romanian market, Vodafone has changed for the better people's lives through technology and encouraged them to follow their path with the help of innovation. It has equally accompanied businesses on their way to success, by enabling them to be more efficient, to increase productivity, to grow and develop, and ultimately to stay competitive.

The digitalization, as an enabler for the individual and society development, next to a responsible behaviour towards our Planet are our key priorities. We truly believe in an inclusive digital society, in which consumers of all ages and backgrounds must be able to draw maximum benefit from technology for a better life and way of working.

Diversity and inclusion issue(s) addressed

The need for gender equality in the workplace has been recognized as a critical issue for decades, at global level. Equality of opportunity between men and women is a key indicator of long-term social stability and economic prosperity. However, women still remain under-represented within many companies.

We believe that achieving greater gender equality strengthens our company significantly, giving us a better understanding of the needs of the women, men, families and businesses who rely on our services, and an important competitive advantage.

Planning & Objectives

The long-term target of Vodafone Group is to become an employer with such a strong record of accomplishments in attracting, retaining and developing talented women and that by 2025 it will be widely considered as the world's best employer for women. Following this direction, every year Vodafone launches various initiatives, both at Group and local market level, to support women at different stages of their professional or personal life and encourage them to build a successful career.

Activities implemented

Vodafone Romania has implemented a number of initiatives spread along several life stages in order to support women in different key moments of their professional and personal lives. We believe this approach will effectively support our objective and commitment to achieve diversity and gender balance

at all organizational levels.

One of those initiatives is Girls Up. The program represents a great opportunity for the young generation of Vodafone women on junior roles to grow personally and professionally by exchanging thoughts, knowledge and sharing experiences. Through this program, we aim to build a strong young female pipeline, support retention and facilitate the transition into future roles. The program consists of six facilitated sessions on personal strengths and unknown barriers to boost self-confidence, followed by learning sessions to discover other departments in Vodafone and to meet senior female managers who join to share and to inspire with their success story.

Through another initiative, we go further into a stage in which women with seniority in their roles might need a boost in their career. The Lean in Circle program is inspired and designed based on the Lean In global initiative that encourages women to pursue their ambitions and shifts the conversation from what we cannot do to what WOMEN CAN DO! This tailor-made peer-to-peer mentoring program empowers soft skills and enhances each person at her own pace, will and judgement. The goal is for women to grow together through collective wisdom. The Lean In Circle is a female development program having the purpose of mutual empowerment, while creating a supportive framework for personal growth. The circles are incorporated in small groups of women who meet regularly to develop new skills, network, and encourage and support each other. The program aims to create a supportive closed group with participants meeting on a monthly basis for a period of 6 months, where every woman can share ideas, opinions, experience on key issues that facilitate their growth at both professional and personal level, and advise other women to tackle different work-life situations. A circle integrates participants from Vodafone (senior managers) along with BWFR (Business Women Forum Romania) female members - SME owners, senior managers or NGO owners/Managers - targeting also leadership skills and tackling managerial situations.

Last but not least, we also have a global policy and a global program addressing domestic violence victims. In order to raise awareness, to reduce the frequency and impact of domestic violence and increase the safety and wellbeing of those affected employees and their families we have developed an entire program around three principles:

1. The principle of Prevention by raising awareness among our employees of domestic violence, through internal campaigns, workshops with external specialists etc; educating our employees & people managers to identify early signs of domestic violence and more vulnerable groups, and how to respond to domestic violence; encouraging a culture of openness and support.

2. The principle of Action by providing support to victims, assuring protection within the workplace; displaying 'zero tolerance' to any form of domestic violence at the workplace; enabling a safe and effective communication with the victims, proving safe tools of speak-ups.

3. The principle of Partnering by keeping Social Partners involved on the topic and working together for solutions; keeping in touch with NGOs, statutory agencies or any relevant body that can provide insights, best practices guidance, professional help and advice or any other relevant services; keeping in touch with Vodafone Foundation and local communities in order to join efforts against domestic violence.

Impact and outcomes

At the end of 2019, women represented almost 58% of about 3,000 employees working with Vodafone Romania and held more than 45% of middle management positions and 33% in top management roles. For female employees aged 26 and below, the percentage was 58% and in the new hire segment they were at 50%.

If we look at the tenure, women spend on average the same period of time in Vodafone Romania as men colleagues. Moreover, the exit rate for women is slightly lower than in case of men.

The annual promotion rate of women inside Vodafone Romania equals men's promotion rate, regardless of the position seniority. Also, women's promotion rate is similar among below and above 26 years old categories.

The initiatives are ongoing and, beyond numbers, we can already see their positive impact, reflecting in higher professional performance of most of the participants as compared to the previous year, as well as in personal growth, with all the participants recognizing a boost in self-confidence, higher motivation and improvement of their soft skills.

Lessons learned

We truly believe that the power to grow and to succeed, both on professional and personal level, lays within each and everyone. It just needs the proper context and the meaningful drivers that activate the strength within, enabling people to discover and realize their full potential. Through Girls Up and Lean in Circle initiatives, Vodafone Romania aimed at encouraging and creating the framework enabling participants to discover, each at their individual level, their strengths, abilities and aspirations leading to their personal and professional fulfillment.

The openness, transparency and vulnerability are key ingredients in establishing real connections between people and encourage participants to support each other in a genuine and altruistic way, thus being a model for their colleagues and for the entire organization. Real progress and greater satisfaction are seen when participants are not afraid of sharing their weaknesses, their fears and asking for guidance and support. They learn that to lean means to raise.

Another valuable lesson learned is that participants in the programs discover how powerful sharing personal experience is for creating empathy and genuine connections between people, which encourages them to strive for authenticity over general perfection in their path for success.

Kaufland–Disabilities integration program

Starting with 2019, Kaufland planned and implemented a program to ease the hiring of people with disabilities in Romania. To that extent, and keeping in mind the diverse employment needs required for this group, it has developed both a series of dedicated jobs available in every Kaufland location as well as a dedicated communication and recruitment pipeline to address both people with disabilities and all the stakeholders that could support this effort. Following the pilot program in 2019, the effort has now been scaled to include all Kaufland stores and facilities in Romania – more than 500 jobs for persons with disabilities are available throughout the country.



About Kaufland Romania

Kaufland is one of the largest retailers in Romania with 14.1% market share (in terms of sales) sales in 2018. The company is present in Romania since 2005 through Kaufland România S.C.S. (Kaufland Romania). The first Kaufland store opened in Bucharest, and now Kaufland Romania has expanded throughout the country, reaching 120 stores by the end of FY 2018. (currently 127 outlets as of December 2019). Kaufland's 2018 portfolio included over 70 private labels, mostly food (canned food, dairy, bakery products, processed meat, beverages, sweets etc.) and non-food products (electric home appliances, home care and paper products, stationery).

Kaufland is leader on the retail market in Romania and it is proud of its position because this has been achieved by respecting the principles of its organizational culture: performance, dynamism and fairness. These principles support Kaufland in achieving its most important goal, which is the satisfaction of its customers and employees.

Diversity and inclusion issue(s) addressed

Kaufland is one of very largest private employers in Romania, with over 15.000 employees spread over every county in the nation. However, the percentage of people with disabilities it employs was only 1 percent of total. Therefore, we decided that we had to redouble our efforts to be a disabled-friendly employer and workplace – both in practical terms as well as concerning the company's corporate culture.

Planning & Objectives

Strategically, we considered three areas that needed action and improvement when it came to including disabled persons in our workforce: job accessibility, job availability and program awareness.

Job accessibility meant creating jobs that could create the opportunity for people with various disabilities to be an accomplished and successful member of the Kaufland team. We have identified (or created) several positions that would be suitable, and would be included in the program: cashier, commercial worker, grill operator, commercial worker for the fresh produce section and security tag handler. A certain degree of customization was necessary for these job descriptions, to comply with the legal requirements – such as reduced hours or necessary supervision, but the work done would be the same as any of their colleagues.

Job availability meant making sure that these opportunities are open to all those who could benefit from them – as such, the program needed to be able to scale up to Kaufland's entire Romanian footprint. Jobs for persons with disabilities will need to be created in every Kaufland store, office and facility – of course, making sure that safety, security and work standards are maintained.

Availability also meant we needed to tailor and adapt our recruitment process to take into account the needs of those involved – from the description and communication of jobs, to the recruitment pipeline and the interview process specifics.

Unfortunately, many disabled persons are unable to find gainful employment for a variety of practical and cultural reasons – and as such, many (if not most) are not actively looking for a job as they see little chance of success. Additionally, many are hard to reach through traditional communication, because of their disabilities or just the degrees of social exclusion they are subjected to. Because of this, awareness and communications were of utmost importance.

We have also realized that the scale and importance of the issue meant we

could not achieve progress effectively by ourselves. We needed the expertise and experience of actors with a proven track record in the field – that is why we partnered with Motivation, one of the most important NGOs working with disabled persons, as well as the network of local authorities and other organizations.

Activities Implemented

The program debuted in October 2019 with a pilot phase that had a 6-months timeline. The jobs included in the pilot program were opened in retail locations – however, any opportunity was explored, including all Kaufland workspaces.

The first stage was a series of internal trainings for those involved in the coming pilot. Created in collaboration with Motivation, these were attended by HR and recruitment personnel as well as location managers and explored the challenges and specifics of communicating and working with disabled persons.

The first field test of the initiative was a series of recruiting events, held in 5 cities – Bucharest, Cluj, Craiova, Timișoara and Sibiu. Each city meant a local communication campaign, inviting the audience to join the event, as well as contact with our local partners as we created a national network of support.

The day before the event, trainings were held with the local Kaufland teams that would implement the event with help from the project team.

The event itself was not just an opportunity for the audience to apply for a job with Kaufland, but also to participate in a conversation with us about the program and help us understand much better their needs and requirements. The day following the event, the first interviews were held by local management with those who applied, supported by the recruitment and Motivation teams.

The program scaled up sooner than we had initially planned for – we publicly announced the general availability of the initiative on the 3rd of December, to correspond with the International Day for Persons with Disabilities. General availability also meant a sustained internal effort – the launch of an

internal digital training platform and the start of an comprehensive internal communication campaign that included our intranet, newsletters, posters, flyers and digital assets. Of particular interest was educating our teams on the specifics of dealing with various disabilities and also encouraging them to become part of communicating the program by reaching out to their circle of friends and family (the disabilities effort was included in the existing referral reward program).

Externally, this meant a sustain national communication campaign, in partnership with Motivation and the county Directorates of Public Health, and the opening of more than 500 jobs nationwide for persons with disabilities.

Currently, we are in the process of identifying more job profiles within Kaufland that can be included in the program, and how we can adapt them for best results – not just in our stores, but throughout all company departments. Crucially, we are also examining and implementing the changes necessary to make Kaufland an 100% accessible workspace – items like locker and facilities disabled access, spacing issues (such as standard corridor spaces or work areas behind the counters), and communication and teamwork improvements. It is safe to say that this program has revealed that even with the best of intentions, many things can be taken for granted in our day-to-day work activities.

We are also in the planning process of scaling up our communication campaign to gain national awareness with the general audience and use the generated word of mouth to reach our target groups. We are also extending our partnership efforts to include more NGOs and other organizations that could help with our goal of a person with disabilities employment figure of 4% of our total workforce.

Impact and Outcomes

Numbers wise, 50* (as of March 2020) persons with disabilities are now new Kaufland employees but we are still a way off from our final goal. We realize this is a long-term process that we are just starting and are enthusiastic about the changes we are

already seeing in our corporate culture and the awareness of our colleagues on the matter. What's more, we are encouraged by the emotional response and the commitment we are witnessing both from our colleagues as well as our partners, each of them essential to the success of this idea.

Lessons learned

One of the most dangerous things that could happen to any of us is for society to leave us aside. Persons with disabilities are often pushed to the edges of our communities, their involvement and interaction limited within narrow context. What we have found is that the vast majority of us, even with the best of intentions, are carrying a distorted perception on disability, created by a lack of direct contact – for most of us they are a form of “the other”. We were happy to see, however, that reticence doesn't last after the first human contact. As persons with disabilities joined, they quickly became a regular part of the team, accepted and encouraged in their work as any beginner would be. What's more, as they become part of the team, persons with disabilities have a wonderful effect on team morale and motivation, and often serve as an example of determination and drive for the others.

The program and its efforts also brought precious new insight for Kaufland as an employer. Many of the things that were never considered previously now came into focus – things like team communications or usability aspects (for example we have realized that the space behind the counter for our cashiers does not accommodate the standard size wheelchair, an issue that we are now addressing). We also had to accept limitations in our scope – some aspects of our jobs are simply outside the reach of some disabilities, so adaptation and flexibility are a must.

The inclusion of persons with disabilities, between the ideal and the reality

Almost two years ago I decided that it was worth the effort to see how Bucharest accepts a person with disabilities when it comes to taking a job. I know that it's an ambitious and almost impossible task. Of course, many of my acquaintances are those with disabilities who make their living in Bucharest. I had to find not only a job but also a home for myself and children - a perfectly usable home, with a parking space with the necessary parameters and always available, and these without the support of any relatives. I make the point because in the collective mind a person with a disability usually has someone who they may send to solve problems of any kind.

As the world has changed also the individual's need for independence is clearly outlined and even at a younger age. The need to live one's own life, one's own successes and failures often puts us on some difficult paths - sometimes spectacular ones.

My desire was doubled by the thought that in the largest city of the country I can hope to have access to a job that defines and satisfies me professionally. I had seen how it happened in my city: with condescension and tolerance, a kind of "let's give her something just to make her feel useful." Practically but profoundly altering the level of self-esteem, a state that reached its peak when, after finishing my second degree and a master's degree, a manager asked me if I could be a typist.

*

The law stipulates that persons with disabilities have the right to work according to their professional training. Statistically speaking, over 95% of people belonging to socially marginalized or socially excluded categories face significant difficulties in finding and retaining a job, about double the situation in other European countries.

One factor that hinders the connection between employers and potential employees in the disability category is the fact that there is no structured database that reflects their potential, or also an understanding of how this should be organized in order to absorb as much of this mass as possible.

There is a need for both sides and each is almost inaccessible to the other. I remember the first obstacle - the composition of the CV. Somewhere you have to point out that you have a certain disability, knowing that the tendency is for someone talking to a person with a physical disability to consider that the disability is doubled by a mental deficit. This impulse is extremely subtle, easy to confuse with the compassion, which also makes it treacherous because it will push the decision maker into an



"... A little alien" in Bucharest

attitude of false protection in which to refuse the disabled person on the grounds that the job is too demanding.

... I'm not saying this is a rule. I had the chance to meet a person at the interview who could ignore this impulse. The location was perfectly accessible, without any difference between the exterior and the interior ground floor, in a new building, with all necessary facilities already existing.

**

Times change, the world changes. In many countries the common perception no longer makes a difference in quality or competence between a person without and another with a disability. It is an evolution of the mindset that expands as related social behaviors become the norm.

On the other hand, as in many domains, physical reality determines a certain behavior. The accessibility of all kinds will make usual the presence of its users also in natural attitudes to their situation. A blind person will be able to easily find his route using the marking on the sidewalk and the acoustic signals found on all the streets, the wheelchair users will not need to ask help from other pedestrians at every crossing because the curbs will have the height lowered to all crosswalks and access routes. The ramps will have no more than 11 degrees inclination so a wheelchair user to be able to climb autonomously, the elevators will go down to the ground floor (not just to the first floor!) because the architects know that this is practically for everyone, either mothers with children or seniors. The coherence of spaces and routes transcends into social coherence. The flow of spaces will bring about improved communication between the social groups that use them. The presence of people with various disabilities makes understanding their needs and creating a real, mutually advantageous empathy, perfectly expressible. I was pleased to find that more and more people understand that it is enough to ask, "Is it something I could help you with?" It is sufficient but also necessary. There is no need to dive into seemingly life-saving actions that might embarrass or disturb, but it is necessary to dare to ask.

After three weeks of commuting between Campina and Bucharest, I found the perfect apartment. After extensive searches and hilarious or deeply disturbing events, I accepted a place far away from the workplace and quite expensive.

If the job is near the home of the disabled person, this makes the debate simpler. An accessible parking space is enough. The parking space marked with the sign of the wheelchair user is intended for the disabled with motor disability; the reason being that in order to be able to descend or climb from or into the vehicle, the car door must be fully opened. Let us understand: not every disability certificate entitles you to use a special parking space if the disability does not imply a necessity as described!

... So a person with disabilities can drive an adapted vehicle and will need a special parking space that he can always find available. A sheltered place so that in winter he does not fall in the snow or gets soaked by torrential rain that gathers in the seat. Is this too complicated to arrange? I have been in a wheelchair for 23 years. I have removed the wheels and climbed the frame in the car tens of thousands of times. I have removed the wheel (left first!), then the seat itself, placed the wheel, then removed the right wheel and fixed it in the frame, tens of thousands of times. And it was a joy when the weather was not rainy and the wheels were not full of mud and the seat was not dirty, or upholstery or my hands and clothes. Is it difficult and complicated? Maybe. But if it were up to me, I would set up five such places at each institution and make sure they were available to the right people. One task, compared to the effort a wheelchair user makes daily. In the absence of a personal means of transport, the commute to the service should be discussed from the beginning and a solution agreed by both parties should be established. The conditions of public transport, together with the quality of the access roads are difficult to use so that a user of a wheelchair or mobile frame can move in time and safely between two points.

What else should be considered when hiring a person with disabilities? For people with disabilities employed at home, the transport to and from home of the raw materials and materials required in the activity, as well as of the finished products made, must be ensured. The employer must offer the employee with disabilities a probationary period of employment, paid, of at least 45 working days; a paid notice, of at least 30 working days, granted at the termination of the individual employment contract on the initiative of the employer for reasons not attributable to him; the possibility to work less than 8 hours per day, according to the law, if they benefit from the recommendation of the evaluation commission in this regard.

Is this too much or too complicated? Let's balance it! In addition to the need for workforce, employers benefit from a suite of financial benefits that should motivate them. From the calculation of the taxable profit, the expenses incurred for the adaptation of the work place, the expenses incurred for the purchase of the equipment and equipment used in the production process by the disabled person, the expenses incurred for the transportation of the disabled persons from home to the workplace, for the transport of raw materials and finished products to and from the home of the disabled person employed for work at home and also the specific expenses of training and vocational orientation and employment are all deductible. At the same time, if the employer is not required by law to employ persons with disabilities, he will receive for a year the minimum wage in the economy, monthly, for each disabled person employed, provided if he is kept at least 2 years and employers who work indefinitely for graduates from persons with disabilities are exempted from paying

unemployment insurance and receive monthly, for 1.5 years, 1 gross minimum basic wage in the country for graduates of lower secondary school or schools of arts and crafts; 1.2 minimum gross basic salaries in the country, for graduates of upper secondary education or post-secondary education; 1.5 gross basic salaries in the country, for graduates of higher education.

I would say this does not sound bad for the employer.

The mentality must change in both camps. On the one hand, members of a vulnerable group need to understand that the workforce they represent is valuable and that they can do remarkable things. The concept of inclusion is often misunderstood or half understood. Reporting on this goal must be balanced so that people in vulnerable groups and society understand that the benefits are equal in the case of finding a working solution together. In order to compensate for the shortage of the labor force by the absorption of people with disabilities, it is absolutely necessary that, according to the model of other European countries, the labor mediation services integrate the specialized services.

Assisted employment was first developed in the United States where it became the main form of employment for persons with disabilities. Subsequently, the concept was taken over by other states with individual placement on the labor market with initial or continuous support. In the United Kingdom, it includes individual placement programs with employment assistance, as well as financial subsidies for employers. (full stop.) In Norway, employment assistance is provided for 3 years, in the Netherlands, a disabled employee receives an additional social benefit for income. from the salary, and the costs of assisting the workplace are subsidized.

In the absence of this working model, there is a lack of cohesion between the general program of the authorities and the disparate initiatives, the distance that persons with disabilities lose. Therefore, employers can take important steps towards building a common language for demand and supply and a system of codes to mark the accessibility of available positions. The accessibility specifications should be specified at the opening of all positions to make them available and attractive to people with various disabilities. Employers should move to an integrated way of defining requirements in a manner that considers to what extent they may be covered by candidates with certain functional constraints.

In a recent survey, significant differences were observed between self-assessed work capacity and officially certified work capacity. Moreover, a much stronger correlation was observed between employment and self-rated work capacity. The state does not currently have the necessary tools to determine who and how much it can work. Such a decision must belong to the person who, in turn, he must

be able to understand how accessible the job is for him.

I am not suspicious by nature, but I have found that employers often call a person with disabilities to interview as a last resort, instead of being as smart as I would like. We are talking about a stable resource. The comfort of an accessible workplace from all points of view represents 45-48% of the motivation of a person who has certain constraints related to personal space. When what he has to deliver is superimposed on the skills he masters, nothing prevents him from being more involved and dedicated than many who consider the job a formality or only an income source. Statistics and studies have shown that people with disabilities have not only equal productivity or sometimes even better than colleagues without disabilities but also fewer work accidents, better compliance with the work program and, very important at present, greater stability in the workplace and a positive impact on the workplace climate.

The Kaufland approach, which prepares in addition to the salary increases and a pilot project that wants to employ and include people with disabilities, is to be recommended. In order to provide a chance to work and a normal life for as many people as possible, the company has recently launched a program of inclusion in the field of work, creating more than 500 positions which have been adapted to different types of disabilities.

Yes, officially I'm fine.

After a few months spent in the company I felt like the world around me was slowly changing its behavior. Colleagues from the project and from other departments, previously known only by sight, have become more alert and made small gestures of care for me when entering the building, in the elevator, or in the cafeteria. I find availability, openness, patience.

In the team the psychological moment was exceeded. Each understood what the other is able to perform and the reluctance disappeared completely. In the following months, friends were linked. Not once did anyone say to me "When I feel tired and I have no disposition for the job, I think of you ..." I smile and think that I have fulfilled my purpose twice that day.

Beyond socio-economic plans and theories, there is a great truth to keep in mind when meeting someone with any kind of disability: each individual is spiritually integral.

This essential aspect is the source of our equality. The person with the disability, however severe, is not a percentage of the human being, but a complete being, unique and uniquely gifted, truth valid for all people.

Generation Balance+ @ Societe Generale European Business Services

Generation Balance is one of diversity & inclusion programs of Societe Generale European Business Services which aims to foster an inclusive multigenerational workplace culture - more specifically to attract, retain and develop employees of all ages and to combat ageism in the workplace. At company level, there is development around active anti-discrimination policy concerning all aspects of diversity: gender equality, balance between generations, nationality diversity, social inclusion and disability. Beyond the ethical and social issues, our conviction consists in the fact that innovation and global performance start with the sharing of ideas between people of varied profiles or with diverse background and experiences, hence contribution of 45+ age colleagues will represent in the future a competitive advantage in a company like ours.



European Business Services

About SG EBS

Societe Generale European Business Services (SG EBS) was founded in 2011 to be the shared service center for Societe Generale Group based in Bucharest, Romania. Our company delivers high added value services in various fields of interest for worldwide entities of the Group (finance/ accounting, procurement, human resources, IT or administrative back office banking activities). SG EBS' activity has grown substantially over the past years; diversifying from only one vertical specialized in financial services in 2011, to reaching a wide range of activities in numerous domains, becoming a cornerstone of the Societe Generale Group's strategy. Now, SG EBS is a global shared service center counting 2,500+ employees for multiple entities of the Group, serving all the major business lines of Societe Generale in 35 countries and partnering with other solution centers around the globe (Bangalore & Chennai, India) in sustaining the strategy of our banking group.

Diversity and inclusion issue(s) addressed

"We want to change the perception that after 45 years old it is harder to get hired. At SG EBS we have a strong ambition to transform positively the work environment to welcome all generations, no matter the age, sexual orientation, religion or nationality. We are doing this because each of us has the right to equal chances, but also because multigenerational diversity brings new experience in and stability in the teams. We want to have an open work environment rewarding and fulfilling for all generations." - says Catalina

Măgui, Head of SSC HR and member of the Executive Committee of SG EBS, promoter and supporter of Hire 45+ program.

Planning & Objectives

For 2020, SG EBS plans to increase the number of 45+ employees (end of March current figures: 100 employees with 45+ age) which will require a transformation of several internal processes with a primary focus on recruitment - identify new channels of communication with our 45+ candidates, redefine the manner in which discussions are performed so that SG EBS becomes an employer of choice on the local labor market. However, generation diversity will not become instrumental and reach its full potential and benefits without making sure our new colleagues are truly welcome in our teams. In this sense, flexibility is key as we know that a custom approach is needed. We are currently reviewing several other internal processes for ensuring specific needs are met, paying attention, in the same time, of not discriminating other representative groups in the organization. Amongst the above-mentioned processes, we will (re)consider onboarding, performance management and learning & development, as well as an alignment of the compensation & benefits package (e.g. retirement counseling) to the realities of 45+ employees.

Activities implemented

We started on raising internal and external awareness on this sensitive topic and we gathered forces with Great HRs Community and their manifesto against age discrimination on the Romanian labor market: Angajez 45+.

In late November 2019, the kick-off event was launched together with an external media campaign – showing that SG EBS supports and commits to Angajez 45+ initiative. The research study conducted by Great HRs Community (March - September 2019, <https://www.angajez45plus.com/studiul-de-piata>) revealed that 59% of the active population with 45+ age have difficulties in finding a new job, top 3 reasons for rejections being overbudget, overqualified or irrelevant experience (however, most of the times the reasons are not communicated - 46% of the cases); 97% of candidates would accept offers that would need learning new competencies, but only 33% invested in professional upskilling in the last year; 30% of the candidates age 45+ didn't apply to job openings in the last 5 years – an indicator of stability.

The call for change at SG EBS brought together approximately 20 volunteers who agreed to contribute to further developing the program, considered to have long term impact. We gathered the team for a full day brainstorming session, in February 2020, to analyze the actual situation and project the target, which led to more than 30 concrete actions to put in place together with the recruitment team, HR business partners, learning & development, but also with the management team and staff (At SG EBS, we strongly believe that diversity and inclusion is everybody's responsibility, rather than a mission of few people.).

As mentioned, attracting new talent is an important aspect in reaching our business objectives. A pilot partnership emerged with Happy Recruiter for the use of Dora, the virtual recruiter assistant (chat-bot), which is using social media platforms to target suitable candidates.

Additionally, continuous enhancements are brought to the recruitment process, such as the development of a specific pipeline dedicated to 45+ talent which will help fill-in roles as quickly as possible. Overall experience will be discussed during interviews, not only the professional background relevant for the job opening. This will help redirect a specific 45+ individual to a business

line suitable to the person's capabilities and career expectations. Moreover, being part of Angajez 45+ initiative and all related media campaigns helps us increase our pipeline even further.

We have reviewed our company website and social media accounts in order to ensure generationally age friendly information. Testimonials of employees working with us reached social media, having as purpose not only attracting future colleagues but also raising awareness within our organization on generation diversity.

"My journey at SG EBS started in the summer of 2019 when I have decided to use my expertise, the courage and perseverance in another type of company than I have previously worked for. What can I say about these months? Every day brings new information which increase my knowledge, the spirit of youth and the friendly environment are an advantage, the openness towards innovation and technology is a mission, sharing best practices within the team is the regular way in which we function and cherry on the top, you can help by being a volunteer for many social causes that SG EBS sustains in our local community" – says Simona Iliescu, Senior Project Manager.

Impact and outcomes

Meeting the needs of a multigenerational and multicultural team can be quite demanding. Our company's ability to retain its diversified talent base will depend on the ability to relate and to communicate to all our employees the value proposition of staying and growing with us. Strategies to challenge existent stereotypes against ageing workforce include bias awareness sessions for the entire staff. SG EBS is at the beginning of this transformation journey, but first seeds already started to arise especially within recruitment team, where more than 30% recruiters started recognizing and reducing biases (especially unconscious ones) when it comes to 45+ candidates. Enhancements brought to the recruitment process will top up changes to L&D opportunities and onboarding process, as to manage the multigenerational work force and keep the teams working harmoniously within SG EBS.

Ageism in the workplace cuts both ways and we are also working on a reverse mentoring exercise with students from schools and universities in order to build the capacity to better embrace the future.

Lessons learned

Within SG EBS we will rely heavily on our internal referral policy, encouraging our colleagues to recommend us 45+ talents. As a new joiner in the company, it can be difficult to understand the complex ecosystem of a shared service center of a systemic bank. However, increased mentorship and guidance for first months can help new comers understand the business and become fully productive faster than usual. Working with a young team or manager can bring a generation gap issue, nevertheless this can be also closed efficiently through reverse mentoring exercises, for example a millennial can show to a Baby Boomer latest tech apps or how to increase presence on social media, while a Baby Boomer can shape the perspective on the organization or the industry. This could solve inclusion issues as well – youngsters interacting seniors can improve the implicit beliefs, decreasing negative attitudes. There's the adage that you won't fully understand a person until you walk in his/her shoes.

Ageism might be a rising concern in society, but it doesn't have to be in the SGEBS workplace.

IBM – a culture of inclusion and belonging

Global workforce diversity is the cornerstone of IBM's strategy that differentiates us as one of the world's great companies. We recognize and value a culture of diversity and inclusiveness as an essential part of how we operate, and are able to attract and retain the best talent.

While our commitment to diversity in the past 100 years remains constant, how we execute against that commitment has enabled us to become – and remain – one of the world's leading globally integrated enterprises. For more than a century, we've viewed the diversity of cultures, people, thoughts and ideas as an imperative to successfully delivering innovative, superior technologies to the marketplace.



Our history reflects our values.

In 1899 IBM hired three women and our first black employee, 20 years before women were given the right to vote and 36 years after the Emancipation Proclamation. In 1914 IBM hired its first disabled employee and 39 years later, in 1953, the company wrote its first Equal Opportunity Policy. In 1984 IBM included sexual orientation in its equal opportunity policy and then in 2002, orientation, gender identity and expression have been added to the global Equal Opportunity policy. Since 2006 IBM allows employees to self-identify as LGBT on a voluntary basis and since 2003, for 16 consecutive years IBM receives a perfect 100% score on HRC's Corporate Equality Index.

For more than 100 years, IBM has been creating accessible solutions designed to adapt to the abilities of all individuals, including people with disabilities; the aging population; novice technology users; and, people with language, learning and literacy challenges; or any individual facing a situational impairment while using a device—can make a greater impact in school, at work or through life. Some early innovations include a Braille printer, a talking typewriter, and the first commercially-viable screen reader.

We have a rich history and therefore we feel responsible to share with others what we learned in our 100+ years of experience in building a culture of diversity and inclusion, because we know that only together, with the extended community of NGOs, Academia, Commercial Enterprises and Governmental organizations we can advance workplace equality in Romania and create a society where human rights are not negotiable.

IBM Diversity & Inclusion programs challenge stereotypes, fight bias and broaden perceptions at all levels. Here are few examples.

Diversity and Inclusion Business Forum

Organized by IBM in Romania in partnership with NGOs, Academia, Commercial Enterprises and Governmental organizations, this Forum brings together a diverse range of local and international specialists and leaders to openly discuss the latest challenges and trends for creating an inclusive and diverse working environment. It aims to raise awareness and share best practices for achieving workplace equality. The purpose is to promote the adaptation and implementation of diversity and inclusion policies in business throughout Romania. The Forum provides a great opportunity for key stakeholders to connect and help facilitate the advancement of workplace equality and human rights into the future for Romanian employees and citizens. The content of the Business Forum is structured around 4 key focus areas: 1/ Gender equality in the workplace; 2/ Leading Practices on Disability Inclusion; 3/ Advancing workplace equality for LGBT+ employees; 4/ Ethnic minorities inclusion in communities and workplace;

IBM Out Role Model Program

In 2016, IBM launched the *Out Role Model* program, with the goal of identifying employees in growth markets, who are out as LGBT+ and serve as role models in advancing equality and improving IBM's brand in locations where we operate around the globe. The program offers development opportunities such as roundtables, stretch projects and mentoring. In June 2017, expanded the program to include the United States and Canada. Having LGBT+ leaders who are able to be themselves in the workplace provides a clear indication that others are encouraged to be themselves too.

IBM 365 Ally program

Our global 365 Ally program offers education and engagement activities to allies across the world with the aim of creating a more inclusive IBM. The Becoming an LGBT+ Ally course is the main requirement to become a certified ally at IBM and is focused on helping employees develop their understanding of the LGBT+

community, and then providing opportunities to actively engage. Building on the theme of active engagement 365 days a year, IBM introduced the LGBT+ Ally Championship badge in 2018 for those who have gone further and been actively involved in supporting the LGBT+ community.

IBM Business Resource Groups

Business Resource Groups (BRGs) are volunteer employee-led communities formed around a common interests, issues and/or bond or background. They are based on enhancing career development, promoting an inclusive work environment, and generating business value through internal and external initiatives. The Business Resource Groups strongly support IBM's culture of inclusion by promoting an environment where all individuals can "bring their whole selves to work". BRGs play a crucial part in securing this by serving as platforms for establishing relations across the organization, creating "safe spaces", and exchanging ideas.

IBM BRG constituencies: Asian, Black, Cross-Cultural, Cross-Generational, Hispanics, LGBT+, Men, Native Americans, New Hires, People with Disabilities, Veterans, Women, Work/Life Integration etc.

More than 50,000 employees are part of one of IBM's 250+ BRGs. There are BRGs in more than 50 countries.

Eagle Romania BRG — Employee Alliance for LGBT Empowerment

EAGLE Romania is an active internal group with the ability to connect externally and to provide valuable opportunities by engaging and networking with IBM clients, partners and other constituent organizations with established relationships. The group assists in connecting all employees at IBM in Romania, while fostering knowledge share/transfer, accelerating professional development of its members and advancing the careers of our talent, making sure that all IBMers feel welcome, valued and supported to achieve their maximum potential. Through its internal and external activities, Eagle Romania fosters and demonstrates diversity of thought, innovation, employee engagement and IBM's commitment of being an Employer of Choice for diverse and minority groups.

Neurodiversity@IBM BRG

With 1,300+ allies, being an active team that promotes the benefits of hiring neurodiverse employees. Advocating for neurodiverse-friendly hiring strategies and spreads knowledge on acceptance and awareness. They formed the Actually Autistic Work Group and created a safe environment for neurodiverse individuals to discuss issues, develop best practices, and serve as an advisory council to collect viewpoints of neurodiverse people.

With their help and guidance, IBM made big strides in 2019. We started neurodiverse hiring efforts in several countries which we continue to expand. And during the World Economic Forum 2020, IBM joined the Valuable 500 campaign, the global movement putting disability on the business leadership agenda.

IBM Diversity and Inclusion Council in IBM Romania

The Council is a perfect example of intrapreneurship. Over thirty IBMers are volunteering their time to create programs and events that speak about diversity and inclusion and open real discussions about representation and social issues in the face of bias, discrimination and exclusion. We encourage

IBMers to embrace discussions about mental health and work life balance.

IBM's framework for Helping Transgender Employees Make the Transition at Work

IBM's workplace transition framework is designed to be an accessible resource for employees and managers and an integral part of IBM's existing, holistic LGBT+ inclusion learning collection of offerings.

In 2017 a whitepaper was developed in conjunction with the Human Rights Campaign with the focus on Supporting Employees through a Gender Transition in the Global Workplace. This whitepaper came to fruition as it became apparent that comprehensive guidance for global organizations to support employees through their transition did not exist. IBM wanted to not only create the whitepaper for our own employees but also as a resource for other global organizations, we are all working towards a common goal of being more inclusive. The white paper is available here:

https://www.ibm.com/employment/inclusion/downloads/IBM_Gender_Transition_in_the_global_workplace.pdf

Impact and Outcomes

IBMers around the world work in an environment where diversity — including diversity of thought — is the norm. This in turn, yields a commitment to creating client innovation in every part of our business.

Our success in creating an open and welcoming environment has allowed us to attract and retain the best talent.

The benefits for the organization is huge since people perform much better when they can be themselves at work.

IBM thinks about diversity the way we think about innovation—both are essential to the success of our business. When we innovate, technology becomes smarter for clients and creates new opportunities for growth. When we incorporate diversity into our business, we create better innovations and outcomes.

In IBM diversity goes beyond hiring practices and protection for our employee constituents and encompasses how those disparate pieces fit together to create an innovative, integrated whole through inclusion. What that means to us as a company is that while our differences shape who we are as individual IBMers, our shared corporate culture and company values remain central to our mutual success.

"This is a company of human beings not machines, personalities not products, people not real estate." Thomas Watson, Jr., CEO IBM (1956-1971)

Diverse and inclusive organizations are proven to achieve better business outcomes and more innovative solutions

Dr. Julia Valsky is Group Diversity Manager at Erste Group, being responsible for advancing and implementing Erste's diversity strategy and guidelines. Before joining Erste Group's Brand Management & Company Transformation department in January 2018, she was Chief of Staff in the Federal Ministry of Education and at the Austrian Mission to the OECD in Paris responsible for education and gender issues. In this interview, she offers us an insight into the D&I journey of Erste Bank and discusses with us what needs to be tackled to ensure the banking industry can become a more diverse place.

Could you share with us some key milestones in the D&I journey of Erste Bank?

First and foremost, a key milestone for diversity and inclusion was set in our founding document of 1819: to grant everybody access to prosperity, regardless of age, gender, social background or geographical origin. Diversity is rooted in the DNA of our company and an integral part of our purpose. Other milestones were the creation of the function of a Group Diversity Manager back in 2013, committing to a Group-wide target for women in top management positions and pursuing local diversity agendas led by the diversity managers in the CEE countries we operate in. We have successfully established business resource groups in some entities, such as ErsteColours with a focus on LGBTIQ+ people & friends and Erste Women's Hub, and are continuing to further expand these initiatives throughout the Group.

A lot of attention has been given in the last years to reach the target of 35% women in top management and 35% on supervisory boards. Which are the key measures undertaken to support female leadership?

It was very important to set this target for 2019 as a joint and clear declaration of our commitment. We missed this target with a current Group-average of 27% women in top management positions, and we are certainly not happy about that. What is important now is to analyze why we didn't reach it, and what we ought to do in order to attain gender balance in leadership positions. We need to break down targets into individual responsibilities and ensure that the according measures are communicated and tracked. Focus areas will include the compatibility of personal life and a managerial career, transparent career advancement and unbiased promotion processes.



In 2013, Erste Group formally established diversity management in the organization and the function of Group Diversity manager. Was this an additional step to place D&I on a more strategic level?

Definitely. Visibility and joint force is required to push diversity and inclusion agendas forward. As of November 2019, Group Diversity Management has become a staff unit in the division of Erste Group CEO Bernd Spalt, which further pushed the topic to a Group-wide strategic level. Together, we are dedicated to advance and promote diversity and inclusion in a data- and evidence-driven way.

What business benefits do you see as a result of increasing D&I?

We live in a rapidly transforming and unpredictable world. In order to stay successful, innovative and forerunning, we need to constantly find answers to this complexity and meet the manifold demands of our clients. And in order to do so, we need the best people with diverse perspectives, skills and mindsets. Diverse and inclusive organizations are proven to achieve better business outcomes and more innovative solutions – a fact that has also become a matter of interest to our investors and regulators.

How do you assess the importance of indicators in the diversity journey?

Indicators are indeed crucial for diversity management. We see that facts and challenges in this area are frequently debated in a very emotional, value-driven manner. I believe we should alter that. Put bluntly: If you can't measure it, you can't manage it. To manage diversity and inclusion strategically and to advance the according processes, we have to generate valid decision-making criteria for our management, based on facts, data tracking and evidence.

What are the biggest challenges faced by the banking sector in creating a diverse and inclusive workforce? And where do you see D&I in banking heading in the next years?

One of the challenges is to overcome the traditional 'male white collar' image of the banking sector which is still very common around the globe. Also, we need to bring change to the long-learned working culture of imminent office presence in order to optimize our attractiveness as employers. As large companies we are not only responsible for putting this awareness on the agenda, but we also have the transformational power to lead the way forward in creating flexible workplaces for women and men alike. I am convinced that in doing so, we will become more innovative and robust in a business environment that currently demands transformational power in many different forms.

Do you see some distinct patterns to Diversity and Inclusion effort in Eastern Europe?

Each country has its individual focal topics, which is good and important. Eastern European countries are quite ahead in some fields – take for example BCR exceeding our Group-wide target 2019 with a 41%-share of women in top management positions. Some diversity areas, such as LGBTIQ+ rights, are subject to indeed sensitive discussions in some Eastern European countries, but also here, debates evolve and new formats are being founded. Overall, the development and implementation of local initiatives is on-going and very positive.

Do you think that the newly COVID-19 pandemic will challenge the usual business perspectives on the role of D&I in the workplace? What will you expect to be different in the D&I sector after this period?

In times of crises, we always face a weighting of priorities. Some may say that diversity and inclusion topics have become less relevant in times when business continuity has top priority, others worry that diversity agendas could now be set back for years, especially the area of gender equality. I believe in a continuous and nuanced view on diversity and inclusion especially now, as the COVID-19 crisis demonstrates the utter importance of being prepared for transformational processes. New contexts for discussion in any field including diversity will arise due to this pandemic, and this will impact our agendas and require adaptability and proper action.

What advice would you give to Romanian organizations starting taking roles in equality and diversity sector?

I'm not a big fan of giving advice from abroad; I'd rather share experience and give support. It is indeed great that Romanian organizations are increasingly taking a stake in diversity topics. According to our learnings, I would strongly recommend to follow an analytical approach: what is your starting situation, what are the main challenges? What data is available, what data still needs to be generated? To me, a thorough research base is always a starting point from where you take the matter strategically and develop a tailor-made approach. And: Do not be afraid of making mistakes, they are always a source for learning. Lastly, we found it best to take one step after another, engage in an iterative approach and evaluate and recalibrate measures on a regular basis.

Interview by Dana Oancea, Romanian Diversity Charter

We can do the greatest things in our workplaces but that's not enough. Employees need to be protected not just in the workplace but in society in general

In dialogue with Marijn Pijnenburg, Global Business Development Executive and Workforce Diversity and LGBT Markets, and Gabriella Pacso, Marketing Director, Europe Marketing Services Center and D&I Champion, IBM Romania



IBM has a long history of actively supporting diversity and inclusion. Could you share with us some key milestones in the long D&I journey of IBM?

Marijn Pijnenburg:

Over the 109 years history at IBM, we have been able to set some ground-breaking achievements. The journey started with representation and equity: hiring first black employee in 1899, people with disabilities from 1916, paying women the same as men for doing the same job from 1935, publicly announcing equal policies when segregation was the law in some US states in 1953, adding sexual orientation to our non-discrimination policy in 1984, gender identity and expression (2002), starting same gender partner benefits in 1996. Adaptable workplaces for disabled employees globally in 2010, first female CEO in 2012, to adapting our corporate logo to support diversity from 2017. Placing ads in newspapers in Texas supporting our transgender employees against proposed discriminatory bills in 2018 or testifying in US congress in support of LGBT+ equal rights legislation in 2019. Important is to see it as a transformational journey. That takes leadership, hard work, and brave decision making at times.

What were the key ingredients for IBM success in leading in Diversity & Inclusion over 100 years?

Gabriella Pacso:

I believe the key to success is how IBM has approached Diversity & Inclusion since its beginning. At IBM, inclusion has always been part of our culture, aligning with the deeply-held personal and corporate values we all share IBM-ers. Diversity and inclusion are part of our DNA. Our policy of inclusion goes beyond employment practices and protections to celebrate the diversity of our workforce. As a company, we understand that to attract the best talent from around the world, we have to create and nurture a culture where employees can bring their authentic selves to work every day. This culture is critical to our ability to drive world leading progress and innovation.

How has your understanding of D&I changed over time?

Gabriella Pacso:

Being an IBM-er for many years I have had the great opportunity to be engaged in driving a culture of Diversity and Inclusion within the company, contributing and leading different initiatives, activities that supported creating an open and welcoming environment where employees feel appreciated and can be authentic regardless of race or ethnic origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Over time I realized that local organizations and companies are at very different stages of embracing Diversity and Inclusion, therefore I felt the need to shift focus and energy on sharing best practices from IBM's long experience and expertise. For the past few years we have been partnering with different NGOs, Commercial Enterprises, Academia and Governmental organizations to raise awareness and promote the adaption and implementation of diversity inclusion policies in business throughout Romania.

We can do the greatest things in our workplaces but that's not enough. Employees need to be protected not just in the workplace but in society in general. Only together, joining forces, we can create an open society where human rights are respected and all citizens are provided with equal opportunities. We have a lot to be proud of, with advocates and leaders within IBM continuing to act as leading voices in the push for diversity and inclusion across our communities.

Marijn Pijnenburg:

We have always asked ourselves what we could do better for our company, for our employees, and for the world. We have learned that D&I needs an innovative approach, and continuous attention. It is an important part of leadership. We found that creating a structure, programs and making D&I an integral part of the transformation processes are essential to drive progress. When I engage with customers, talking about D&I deepens our relationship, create trust and credibility and makes the conversations more personal.

Even being in an external D&I role for almost a decade, I learn every day. Keeping on the forefront of developments is both a challenge, but also rewarding looking back on all that was achieved.

What business benefits do you see for IBM as a result of increasing D&I?

Gabriella Pacso:

When people are free to be themselves they are more productive, they can develop better relationships with their colleagues and with clients, and that accelerates innovation and business performance. IBM works with people all over the world. Having learned how to solve things together and accepting differences in thought, creativity and experience, has positively distinguished our company as one of the world's leading globally integrated enterprises and made us a 'magnet' for the most talented people in the world. We have always been at the forefront of diversity and inclusion and our policies and strategies directly support our business objectives, values and practices. In IBM we value the attributes of our diverse employee mosaic to fuel innovation and reflect the multicultural character of our customers across the globe.



Do you see some distinct patterns to Diversity and Inclusion effort in Eastern Europe?

Gabriella Pacso:

We can see more and more companies, institutions across Eastern Europe are joining forces to make a difference in their communities, building an open society. There are many examples of joint initiatives to learn from. One recent example is coming from Czech Republic, where last year 18 companies, including IBM, have signed an open letter sent to the Prime Minister in support of equal marriage rights. Also I believe that the establishment of the Diversity Charters in Eastern European countries (24 in Europe out of which 5 in Central and Eastern Europe) helped to accelerate workplace equality adoption being a powerful network which offers tools and know-how on how to enhance diversity management, all the signatories benefiting from the common knowledge and the pool of good practices from all countries that are on board.

Marijn Pijnenburg:

We see countries move at a difference pace on the various diversity topics. The clear link between economical and human business case is not always recognized or pursued. D&I is about building a more inclusive society which everyone will benefit from. You can see younger generations favoring more diverse and inclusive societies, also for their working environments. We see them even moving to other countries which provide that. Often LGBT+ seems the more difficult topic, in comparison to, for example, countries where equal marriage is legalized. The ILGA map of Europe provides comprehensive measurements of LGBT+ inclusive legislation for all countries in Europe: <https://www.ilga-europe.org/rainboweurope/2020> while the LGBT+ survey by European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights shows the perception of LGBT+ people: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2020/eu-lgbti-survey-results>

What are main challenges LGBTI people faces in the workplace and what can employers do to support LGBTI employees? Do you see significant differences in approach between Romania and other countries in Europe?

Gabriella Pacso:

There are different global reports, studies published showing that each day LGBTI employees are experiencing verbal bullying from colleagues, customers or service users because of their sexual orientation, in the workplace. When they witness homophobic bullying in the workplace, majority of them do not feel confident reporting it. Large population of transgender people are not living permanently in their preferred gender role because they fear it might threaten their employment status. A staggering double digit % of millennial LGBT graduates go back into the closet about their sexuality when they start their first job.

I believe employers should implement non-discrimination workplace policies consistent with basic human rights,

invest resources in building a culture in which diversity remains central to their company and create a community of allies championing workplace equality, not just one day of the year but three-six-five. LGBT+ people are in a minority and they need support of their employers and their colleagues to create an inclusive culture, where they can be out, can be authentic and focus on performing to the best of their abilities.

Marijn Pijnenburg:

LGBT+ people will always ask themselves if it is safe to be visible and come out in their workplace: will they be bullied, will they have equal opportunities, benefits, support for transitioning in the workplace or will it harm their career? Companies can learn a lot from their own employees, valuing feedback from diversity network groups, or individuals. You see in many countries that companies are participating in Pride, or have LGBT+ people in advertisements. Those are not just commercial statements of support, but are a way to spark the conversation in their internal organization. And show they walk the talk. I've also seen situation where people felt safe to be out at work, but were facing more difficult situations at home, with their family and friends. Sometimes work is the safer and more inclusive place. With less visible diversity topics such as LGBT+ it takes longer to generate full understanding. Raising awareness and respect is a process. Some countries have seen LGBT+ inclusion campaigns for several decades. For Romania those developments seem more recent.

Could you share with us some lessons learned by IBM in the last years regarding inclusion of LGBTI employees?

Marijn Pijnenburg:

We continue to grow our legacy of inclusion through ever-evolving education and enablement for our employees. Recently we conducted sexual harassment and bullying prevention training for all IBMers, which allowed us to reinforce standards for a harassment-free workplace and further enable a culture of upstanders vs. bystanders. We have digital education and tools available around bias mitigation, allyship, covering and more, consistently refreshed in order to enable IBMers to do their part in fostering a culture of belonging. Some of these offerings, like the LGBT+ Ally Championship Badge, are commercially available, helping others to activate their workforces in the name of equality. We have extended our Out Executive Program with Out Role Models building on the next generation of LGBT+ leaders. Also we learned that it remains important to be vocal about our company's policies, and to publish our support for our LGBT+ employees in different aspects like endorsing equal marriage.

Do you think that the newly COVID-19 pandemic will challenge the usual business perspectives on the role of D&I in the workplace? What will you expect to be different in the D&I sector after this period?

Marijn Pijnenburg:

With people working from home, promoting an inclusive working culture needs additional measures. It requires

understanding of individual needs, and support for the situation employees find themselves in. I see it as a moment of truth for the inclusive corporate culture. Do employees feel more engaged, or less? Do companies support remote working? Are they able to have flexible working hours to support employees' family members? Can their employees remain productive, while addressing fast changes in the marketplace? Companies that adapt to the new reality seem to be the more successful ones. Including the ones using technology to support business functions, but also the human connections. In my view the difference between personal and professional life will become smaller. A higher need for work-life balance and much more personal working relationships push for a more diverse and inclusive way of working.

Gabriella Pacso:

The COVID-19 is changing every aspect of our societies, revealing inequalities and highlighting that continuous focus and work on inclusion is imperative. A recent guidance published by United Nations Human Rights (Office of the High Commissioner) talk about the significant impact of COVID-19's on the work of LGBTI, people with disabilities and other minority groups. They may be particularly vulnerable during the COVID-19 pandemic due to de-prioritization of required health services, access to work and livelihood, and other attitudinal, environmental and institutional barriers.

I believe in today's highly challenged business landscape, companies, institutions need more than ever before all of their employees fully engaged and productive on the job. Workplaces infused with cultural competency and awareness around diversity and inclusion will not only solidify their commitment to fairness, but also build loyalty and productivity within their ranks.

What advice would you give to Romanian organizations starting taking roles in equality and diversity sector?

Gabriella Pacso:

Embed diversity and inclusion into the business strategy of the company. If diversity and inclusion is approached as a stand-alone initiative, it is not going to have the traction and sustainability needed for success. The diversity strategy of the company should mirror the business goals so that going forward everything you do in diversity is tied to moving the business forward. Last but not least do not forget you are not alone in

this journey. Share your challenges, achievements with other companies, institutions, partner for success and be open to learn from others.

Marijn Pijnenburg:

My advice would be to learn from best practices of other organizations. Work with the Diversity Charter and local NGO's to gain insights, engage in conversations and get inspiration. And foremost, help to drive the transformation your organization and your employees need. Lots to be done. It needs perseverance, and endurance, but it is not just the right things to do, it is something that will bring much joy and pride along the way.

What was the most formative experience in terms of diversity for you personally?

Gabriella Pacso:

The experience of working for 20 years in the most diverse company from the world, working each day with so many brilliant, smart people from different countries, cultural, racial, and ethnic groups. IBM helped me understand what diversity and inclusion means and treasure it each day.

Marijn Pijnenburg:

I learned most from several out executives I have worked with. I learned I had allies when I did not expect it. I experienced that being fully authentic and out at work does not just help me being successful in my job, it helps many others, and the organization as well. The essence is to be intentionally inclusive, for everyone, ALL the time.

Interview by Dana Oancea, Romanian Diversity Charter

Gender diversity, a key HR approach at Michelin Romania

In Michelin, it is possible for a process engineer to continue its career in the Shared Service Center, for a Polish to work in Romania, for a Romanian to become a manager in Germany or for a woman to become a plant manager. We value diversity and we value collaboration and so we are working with our employees to create amazing career paths for each one, based on their aptitudes and skills and not on their gender.

Diversity is one of our six Human Resource Policies in place at Michelin and it has several directions such as gender diversity, disability, age and cultural mix (nationalities). Out of all these directions, we added gender diversity at the top of the list since practice proved that an industrial environment is not always a woman's first choice.

We support and encourage women in Michelin to reach their full potential, regardless of the department they want to work in and our recruitment process is as well geared towards encouraging women to work in an industrial site, in sales, or to occupy management positions, if they have the abilities and a passion for a specific line of work.



About Michelin Romania

In Michelin Romania work over 4000 people of 18 different nationalities, speaking 24 languages, covering 300 types of jobs. The Headquarters for all activities carried out by Michelin in 20 countries in Central Europe is located in Bucharest, from industry to sales, as well as a Shared Services Center providing support services for various Michelin entities. Production facilities are based in three plants, one in Florești (Prahova) and two in Zalău. All in all, we are a diverse organization managing sales, industry and services.

Diversity and inclusion issue(s) addressed

In Michelin, D&I fundamental principles are established at Group level and then in each country the local network translates them through actions relevant to a specific situation. In Romania we've created a Regional Diversity Network, with correspondents in each site who share experience and engage employees in actions.

We value gender diversity and we consider it to be a key element in ensuring added value within the teams

and the organization. Giving equal chances in promotion, recruitment & selection are very important for us. We encourage and monitor our gender diversity actions by having in place the following indicators: feminization ratio in industry (blue and white collars), ratio in management, ratio in new recruitments. We encourage female colleagues to access sales, industry, management, top management positions. We believe that we provide the proper trainings, so they can develop their abilities into amazing competencies that will bring them success in any role.

We are managing our business in a tense market, with a very high migration rate, which means that recruiting talents sometimes is quite a challenge, so considering addressing to more than 50% of the labor market creates good opportunities both for the company and the candidates.

Planning & Objectives

Our objectives are to increase the percentage of female representatives in sales, industry and management positions. Our female candidates,

internal or external, should pursue the career they consider fit in any of these fields, having the certainty that they will receive the necessary support for integration, adaptation and advancement. We have several success stories in our organization and we want all our female candidates and employees to feel welcomed in any of the above-mentioned domains.

Activities implemented

“Women who inspire us” - a beautiful celebration of diversity

In 2019, on the 80th anniversary of Victoria factory, a milestone for Michelin's presence in Romania, we launched a project designed to celebrate women and diversity.

We selected 19 of our female colleagues working in the plant, passionate about the tire industry. We found out their stories, extracted learning from their career paths, we organized a photo session for each of them and the result was a great publication meant to inspire all women who chose Michelin for their professional development - “Women who inspire us”.

At the same time, we considered it to be a good tool to inspire new generations of women who are in the pursuit of a career in the industrial environment.

And this project is starting to grow into a tradition.

In 2020, to mark the International Women Day, the project was relaunched. We chose for the second time 16 of the exceptional women working at Victoria plant and we organized a full day of great experiences. Once again, we talked about their lives, their careers, and their day to day work. We took them to a remote place, we photographed them and we organized an interesting talk with Cristiana Oprea, a rally pilot focusing on promoted women in motorsport and a Michelin ambassador.

The common key point was working in a field of activity dominated by men. Cristiana shared their struggles in working her way up in motorsport, while the ladies talked about their own challenges and their own passions outside the professional life.

So, the second edition of the publication “Women who inspire us” is now available for all our colleagues to enjoy and for new recruiters to hold as a daily inspiration.

Collaboration for the education of female pupils

In 2020 we joined Capital filles, a project started in France and developed in Romania through a public – private partnership. The objectives of the project are to connect the educational system with the corporate business environment, to encourage equal access of lady students to any field of activity/job within Romanian society, to provide mentoring to young women lacking access to proper education or coming from an economically challenged environment.

Such a project came hand in hand with our diversity encouragement strategies and as well with one of our CSR pillars, education.

Even though our journey started this year, we already managed to get acquainted with 15 young students. A group of Michelin volunteers welcomed them to our headquarters and discussed about choosing a career, following a passion, skills necessary for a future job in our organization. We are looking forward to the next steps of the projects and to many more lady students’ visits at our headquarters.

Female Ambassadors for the win

Some of our employer branding actions focus on attracting female candidates to our production facilities, so we wanted to make sure that we chose representatives who can set a good example and answer any questions of our potential candidates from a professional and also personal perspective.

The women, part of our recruitment teams and other teams, are empowered to represent the company and encouraged to share their working experience in a field traditionally known as “men’s territory”. They hold technical presentations, they are the main driver of the company’s presence at a job fair, and they are part of all the processes necessary to design and implement the recruitment and employer branding strategies.

possible from our company when deploying these projects because they state it makes them feel more motivated, they have a stronger sense of belonging and are happy to have the opportunity to demonstrate a commitment to an idea that goes beyond their daily professional lives.

The outcomes we see translate into an increasing trend of female employment and hence an improved balance between the female and male ratio according to business needs.

Today, almost one third of the newly recruited colleagues between the managers and existent employees in Romania are female.

These facts make us believe that we are on the right path and we can expect even better results in the future. We do believe that if we keep the same state of mind and openness towards D&I projects, if we will continue translating our ideas and values into actions, our objectives will soon be reached.

Lessons learned

Challenge ourselves - we have to continue challenging ourselves with different D&I projects to obtain specific results. This is our main learning. We search continuous improvement, we never give up, and we are ready to go the extra mile for what we believe in. Empowering women to follow their career paths requires engagement, involvement, a strong collaboration, inside and outside of our organization. Our teams are diverse and we need to value all the ideas and new perspectives they have, because all our products and services are meant to bring added value to our society. These are the factors that we learnt are of the utmost importance and that we believe will lead us to progress.

Impact and outcomes

Our diversity programs have had a great impact, both internally and externally. We involve as many teams as

Writing about anonymous heroes who have something important to give, not to ask, is a part of constructive journalism

Many times, as editor-in-chief of *Avantaje* magazine, for 20 years, I have written or commissioned inspiring stories and reportages about people who, although prisoners in their wheelchair, are perhaps much more down to earth than most others, the privileged who stand on our own feet and complain about everything. They are among the most honest, humble and dignified people I know, although their physical verticality is hardly put to the test. I brought them in the media spotlight, I put them on the cover of the magazine, and I awarded them at the Woman of the Year Gala Event, in category Initiatives in Support of People, for being such amazing role models. It was very difficult to overcome the reluctance of those around — team and readership: there were no precedents, the public was not used to read and see such stories. It was always the voice that said „what if?! ...”, „but what will they think about?”.

I was lucky to have the support of most of my team and some open-minded publishers. It was a courageous experiment, which opened a new perspective on the way that people with disabilities are viewed — the perspective of normality, of an example of constructive journalism, „with a touch of glamor” that a glossy magazine can give, but also the chance to become a voice for their peers going through similar situations. There are some names that have become the voice of their community — Monica Radu, Lilia Mîndru, Ecaterina Ani Jager, Adriana Elena Boruna, Magda Coman. And the names of some celebrities who chose to get involved in our approach and develop it — Andreea Marin, Iuliana Tudor, Irina Păcurariu.

Another premiere was to write about the survivors of the national issue called domestic violence and another shadowy enemy — breast cancer. Often they go hand in hand. And we wrote responsibly, with real names and photos of some brave anonymous heroines who understood that their example can be useful to show that there is hope for those who go through the same physical and emotional suffering.

The most complex approach was the first

testimonial of domestic violence written by a reader of the magazine, which was later published by Amaltea Publishing House. „The story of a survivor”, written by Eleonora Pokola, from Cluj Napoca, tells the story of getting out of the hell of domestic violence, while fighting at the same time with the experience of a breast cancer.

These people with disabilities are among the most courageous, tenacious, smart, independent, wise and positive — and so obviously beautiful! — people I know. Whenever I find it difficult, I think about them and tell myself that if they can face life’s challenges with such dignity and gratitude, then I have to do the same. Once you know them, complaining about petty matters becomes ridiculous. I never cease to admire their inner strength, their ability to re-design their lives, to reinvent themselves from the ground after some of the toughest experiences.

In a European country, such as Romania, it often happens that such people are ignored or discriminated against. Few of them manage to overcome the phase of pity, move up to a higher level of compassion and activate their ability to see them as people who have something important to offer, not to ask. Hope comes from civil society, the responsible media, NGOs, influencers, decision-makers and employers and entrepreneurs with a high degree of civic awareness. The inclusive models promoted show people who care, who are genuinely involved beyond the statutes, internal regulations, quotas and other imposed figures.

I also speak from the perspective of being former editor-in-chief of *Cariere Magazine*, where for two years I wrote daily about leadership, the human face of business, social innovators and how civic involvement can change the world for the better. About the talent crisis, the staff turnover reaching its maximum and the staff retention problems in organisations. About a human resource still untapped to its true potential — that of people with disabilities — and their strengths: respon-

sibility, dedication, desire for confirmation, loyalty, determination, and empathy. About the transformational skills of people with disabilities. The most valuable resources in human resources today, under the VUCAD empire — volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity and digitalization — are not graduate schools, diplomas and masters, but the skills of transformation, lifelong learning and resilience.

I wrote about good practices in organisations regarding the inclusion of people with disabilities, about obstacles, challenges encountered in implementing the integration of these people in the workplace. In the selection, recruitment and interview process, it is important to know how to look at the candidate's past in order to identify those elements that can predict a transformational attitude in the future. Or be able to identify if that person has proven transformational skills in the past. And this does not depend on the professional level of the person, because these skills can be expressed in any context — the person can act transformatively as an individual contributor, as a leader, as a pupil, as a student, or in personal life.

They are also important soft skills, vital for these times of transformation. As the jobs of the future will be more and more different from what we knew and we will change our job dozens of times, these soft skills will become more and more important.

It is up to us to make these talented people be seen, valued, have professional successes, enjoy the appreciation of those around them, feel useful. For all this they need the encouragement of the media and the support of responsible journalists.

Their abilities are enhanced by the will and understanding of those around them. So, if you are a journalist, put them in the right light. If you are their colleague, neighbour, simple passer-by, open your mind and heart and show them compassion not mercy. If you are an employer, open your mind and the doors of the organisation to them. You have so much to learn from them! If you are part of the family, encourage them to be independent and work so that they can support themselves. If you are a decision maker in an institution, apply the law on accessibility, and if you are even above, as law generator, parliamentarian, politician, pay attention to what NGOs promote and develop legislative initiatives to transform the lives of these people for the better.

I invite you to look at those with disabilities differently than we did before — with mercy, indulgence and condescension. Change your perspective and turn your attention to what they can do, to their capabilities, not to what sets them apart, look at what they have to offer and not what you think you can offer — they are role models not beggars to be avoided.



Daniela Palade Teodorescu

Journalist, trainer, social activist, co-author of oral history books, editorial director for Tudor Communication, editorialist for CARIERE magazine, member of INACO (Initiative for Competitiveness), ambassador of Romanian Diversity Charter. After 20 years of glossy women's press (Avantaj magazine, the first Romanian glossy magazine for women) and two years of leadership press (CARIERE magazine), I wanted to see what the reality is from the PR perspective. Some call it „the other side of the barricade”, I see it as just another, extremely complex side of the entire communication process. After 25 years of journalism 2.0, 3.0, 4.0, I have learned that the fundamental axis of communication, PR and personal branding is authenticity. And many lessons about authenticity I have learned directly from people with disabilities and their amazing inner strength.

Citi Women's Network Bucharest – Advancing the Gender-Balanced Leadership



Citi Women's Network Bucharest is the local chapter of Citi's global Citi Women platform. Launched in Romania in 2013, the platform focuses on championing gender equality and driving the conversations about pay equity, recruiting goals and representation goals. The platform provides a broad umbrella to support initiatives and engage all Citi employees on themes such as professional and personal development, networking as well as advancing economic progress of women and their families in the broader society through charitable and fundraising initiatives. Through its agenda, it enhances connectivity between women across Citi globally by sharing best practices and further building an inclusive culture.

About Citi

Citi, one of the top global banks, has been present in Romania since 1996, where it is the leading partner for large local companies and multinationals, public sector, as well as mid-sized local companies from dynamic sectors like IT, ecommerce and service centers. Citi is offering in Romania a wide range of products and services: lending, cash management services with state-of-the-art online banking solutions, trade finance, foreign exchange, derivatives, hedging and custody services.

Diversity and Inclusion issue(s) addressed

In an industry still dominated by unequal representation of men and women, especially in leadership roles, Citi believes that diversity of thinking and a culture of inclusion in its workforce are critical to its growth and innovation as a global organization. The bank strives to treat all employees fairly and with respect, giving them equal opportunities to grow and succeed.

The start of 2017 saw the launch of Citi's new global Diversity Strategy, firmly placing ownership and accountability for the achievement of diversity results with business leaders.

In 2018, Citi announced the introduction of a global gender goal, to increase the representation of women in senior roles (AVPs through MDs) globally to at least 40%. Mike Corbat

said, "Beginning this year, we, as well as our product, function and regional leaders will be measured on our progress against these goals, alongside our other business priorities."

Planning & Objectives

Recognizing the economic value that women bring as a key business differentiator and to fully leverage this, Citi has implemented a robust gender strategy, which focuses on the three key levers, with associated targets.

First of all, 'Hire More'. Citi is managing and monitoring the diverse interview slates and panels: all recruitment processes at Director and Managing Director level should include a gender diverse candidate slate and interviewer panel and these feed into the managers' scorecards. The bank is working on securing gender balance by recruiting equal numbers of men and women into its graduate programs. It has also introduced a policy to drive diverse and inclusive behavior amongst recruitment agencies and other core third party recruitment partners.

Secondly, 'Promote More'. The firm has built robust succession and talent management processes led by senior leadership and early identification of promotion candidates, while strengthening the pipeline of emerging talent through Vice President and Director development programs.

And thirdly, 'Retain More'. Citi

focuses proactively on the retention of high performing talent, with clear aims around career management and mobility opportunities. Here, an essential focus is on providing a wide range of support to parents to ensure that they are able to find the balance they need between work and life.

Within this framework, Citi Women's Networks act as the on-the-ground voice of the employee providing insight into the lived experience and challenges of women in the firm, which informs the goals and objectives of the strategy globally. Citi Women's Network Bucharest is one of the 20 Women's Networks in EMEA, being open to all employees and providing mentoring and career support, both internal and external networking opportunities, and local community involvement opportunities.

Activities implemented

The local network is sponsored by Citi Romania CEO Ivan Vrhel and is managed by a Steering Committee, who designs and executes an annual agenda of events and initiatives, on a voluntary basis. The Steering Committee is formed by two Co-Chairs and other ten members of different seniority levels and experience profiles, who are covering responsibilities across the following pillars: professional development (mentoring, coaching, targeted events); personal development

and lifestyle (events supporting wellbeing and balance at work: books sharing, fitness, corporate discounts, massage, yoga); community outreach (covering charity and fundraising events complementing the bank's formal corporate social responsibility agenda); membership and communication (ensuring effective communication, reporting and coordination with other Citi networks); as well as budget management and secretariat.

The monthly events range from in-house speaking engagements with Citi local, regional or global executives or external leaders in the market, to soft-skills workshops and trainings, or facilitating mentoring relationships, from family events to charitable & fundraising initiatives supporting NGOs that look after women at risk together with their children and families.

2019 was a very active year for Citi Women's Network Bucharest. On the professional development pillar, the team tapped into Citi's alumni network and engaged with two former Citi Romania employees who have moved on to other roles in the entrepreneurial and corporate worlds. The Network invited them on two separate sessions with the bank's employees, where they shared their experience and lessons learned throughout their career progression. One of them has also become a certified Solutions Focused Coach, so she has held two practical Solution Talk workshops, during which participants explored a personal/professional challenge in a structured way through the respective model. At the core of this model is the focus on helping the coachee find solutions rather than problems, building on strengths rather than weaknesses and finding positive ways forward rather than examining barriers. The coach asked questions focused on the present and the future, which reflects the basic belief that problems are best solved by focusing on what is already working and how the coachee would like their life to be, rather than focusing on the past and the origins of problems.

Within the same pillar, the agenda included a series of 'Meet Your Senior' events, where Citi Women's Network committee leveraged on the business visits of EMEA-level regional executives from different business areas. They were invited to meet the bank's employees in

Romania and share their professional journeys, pieces of advice on how they manage work and personal life, as well as the ways through which they support gender-balance in their roles and within their teams.

Looking outside of the organization, in the community that we serve, the Network decided to focus a part of its efforts and resources towards helping women and families at risk, and therefore supporting address an important social problem. Over the past four years, part of the annual agenda of events, the committee organized creative and engaging fundraising events to support Touched Foundation's Casa Agar, a local social center protecting underprivileged women against domestic violence and child abandonment.

Moreover, two of the Steering Committee Members were personally involved with Touched Foundation, having delivered a group mentoring session for 20 mothers at risk. During the meeting, they facilitated difficult discussions on emotional, physical and financial challenges, supporting mothers find solutions and make the best decisions for themselves and their children. Also, part of a reversed mentoring activity, some of the mothers from the center have visited us at Citi Romania for a workshop where they taught bank's employees how to create hand-made jewelry. Apart from helping with the mothers' integration, jewelry creation and selling is one of the ways the center supports itself financially.

International Women's Day, which the Network drives every year, is another opportunity to promote the importance of diversity and inclusion and engage employees across the organisation. In 2020, the network organized a series of events involving internal and external speakers, on the 'Each for Equal' global theme. One initiative was that of inviting a human rights and non-discrimination legal consultant, with the aim of offering Citi employees some perspectives on discrimination in Romania and on how they can start unpacking the cultural baggage and support equality.

Impact and outcomes

Citi Romania has made it a priority to foster a culture of inclusion where the best people want to work, where people are promoted on their merits, where

the bank values and demands respect for others and where opportunities to develop are widely available to all.

Since the launch of Citi Women's Network Bucharest back in 2013, more than 70 events were organized at Citi offering employees with valuable opportunities for diverse thinking, challenging bias, coming together as a team to support inclusion both within and outside the organization.

Citi Romania's culture, working environment and focus on equal opportunities, which Citi Women's Network Bucharest is helping foster, has led to a high level of women representation, across all levels. Currently, out of its total employee base, 65% are women, and at the management team level, there are 54% women.

In Citi Romania's annual Voice of Employee survey, which measures the satisfaction of all its employees on different indices related to the working environment, leadership and team cooperation, the bank is also evaluating the satisfaction on the diversity index. Employees are being asked about how Citi addresses diversity, to what extent it is offering equal opportunities and supporting collaboration. Every year the diversity index is 90% or above.

Lessons learned

Innovation thrives on diverse thinking. Diverse teams challenge each other more, and contribute with broader perspectives and experiences, leading to more innovative and informed solutions.

As with any culture change efforts, promoting gender equality is continuous work and its progress is measured on the long-term. It requires commitment and accountability at the highest level of the organization and it needs to be embedded in the entire organizational mindset - in all recruitment efforts, compensation programs and managers' scorecards, in training and development at all levels of the firm, as well as employee engagement platforms and networks.

It takes time and perseverance to create understanding that a Women's Employee Network is not just for and about women. It's about engaging everyone so that collectively we can do our part towards a gender equal world, both for our generation and for the ones to come.

Voices for Hands: the first Video Remote Interpreting solution in Romania

The project was inspired by a major need of the Romanian deaf community: the need for remote sign language interpretation, essential for being included in a world where people with no auditory disabilities represent a majority. There are about 21.000 deaf or hard-of-hearing people in Romania using mainly sign language for communication and interacting with hearing people daily. Because hearing people are not always ready to provide the best conditions for a proper dialogue with a deaf person, that has a different native language, with its own grammar rules (like every foreign language) sometimes it is necessary the presence of an interpreter who can facilitate short, but important conversations. Sadly, this is not always possible and “Voices for hands” comes to fill the gap.

Fundația 

About Romanian National Association of the Deaf & Orange Foundation Romania

The Romanian National Association of the Deaf (R.N.A.D.), founded in 1919, is an independent, non-governmental organization with the mission to support, defend and promote the rights and interests of hearing impaired people (deaf or hard-of-hearing), in order to facilitate their educational, social, professional and cultural integration. The association has 37 branches, covering most of the Romanian territory.

Orange Romania Foundation is a non-profit organization that gets involved in the community by offering support to charitable projects meant to bring positive change in the lives of disadvantaged persons. Since 2012, Orange Foundation has invested over 6.5 millions euro by means of 4 programs that support vulnerable communities and people by promoting technology and digital methods integrated in projects developed in areas like health, education, culture, mobility and social inclusion.

Diversity and inclusion issue(s) addressed

Constantly providing sign language interpretation for the deaf community represents a basic condition for proper social, professional and cultural inclusion of the hearing impaired.

“Voices for Hands” is an assistive digital solution that offers live sign language interpretation when a deaf / person with hearing loss needs to communicate with typical persons in different environments / situations: in a pharmacy, police station, bank, at the city hall etc.

Until 2018, when such an innovative solution was created for the 1st time in Romania, the services for interpretation in sign language were not always accessible on the spot due to different barriers such as the distance from the sign language interpretation services provider or the unavailability of the interpreter specialized in a specific area.

By developing the solution, any distance barrier was

easily overcome. As long as there is no specific request for the interpreter to be physically present for signing or handing over documents, this type of interpretation represents an efficient alternative to the “classical” face-to-face interpretation. “Voices for Hands” offers a simple and efficient video interpretation that guarantees that all the interpreters are authorized for this activity.

Total value of the project was 195.655 lei and 89,5% was sponsored by Orange Foundation Romania through the “The World Through Color and Sound”, one of the most important national financing program dedicated to visually impaired and deaf people in Romania. From the 1st edition of the program in 2012, Orange Foundation Romania invested more than 2 million euros to finance 41 projects with around 600.000 indirect and direct beneficiaries.

Planning & Objectives

The main goal of the project was to improve the sign language interpretation services for the Romanian deaf community by ensuring the functionality of a regulated system of video remote interpreting (V.R.I.).

The system is based on a platform that offers V.R.I. services for hearing impaired citizens, using an application program that can be accessed by any sign language user that requests specialized interpreting services. Also, a mobile version (Android and iOS) of the application was developed, offering the possibility to provide a significantly higher number of calls by supporting people „on the move”.

Building partnerships with institutions all around the country was another important objective, supporting the systemic long term impact of the project. “Voices for Hands” is being promoted as the standard communication procedure with the hearing-impaired people in Romania, a benefit building trust and offering access to equal opportunities.

Activities implemented

In order to properly answer the Romanian Deaf community's need for quality video remote interpreting services, the R.N.A.D. collaborated with a software provider delivering a web platform meeting all the requirements for a nationwide network of sign language interpreters and deaf or hard-of-hearing persons.

Accounts for deaf/ hard hearing persons and sign language interpreters are free of any charge and are created after being checked and approved by R.N.A.D, keeping so a clear track of the beneficiaries. In a simple and intuitive way, a beneficiary can make a video call as long as his / her device is connected to the internet. The first sign language interpreter available will answer the call.

Launching the platform required activities like R&D, registration of beneficiaries (1500 in the beginning, members of R.N.A.D from all around Romania, with no maximum age restriction), registration of sign language interpreters (40 accounts were created, specialists working for R.N.A.D or collaborators sharing the same goals and principles), platform optimization, service implementation and quality assessment.

Voices for hands was launched in June 2018, in Bucharest, within a press conference: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=155866190443390>

Impact and outcomes

The project was implemented on a national level, reaching beneficiaries from all over the country. Implementing "Voices for hands" led to a better social recognition of sign language as a major element of the deaf culture and community and increased awareness of the necessity of sign language interpreting for the members of this vulnerable community. Providing sign language interpretation services more frequently and more swiftly will determine, on a long term, important changes in the lives of individuals, increasing the overall quality of life.

„This is a real help for the ones who can't communicate verbally with typical people. I benefited from a sign language live translation service using the web, when I went to a hospital and I was more than satisfied.”, said Marinela Axinte, one of the beneficiaries.

„The first VRI solution in Romania, „Voices for hands” offers an answer to a burning issue for the Romanian deaf community. We are excited to prove once again, how technology represents a valuable resource for the social inclusion of deaf/ hearing impaired people”, declared Amalia Fodor, Director, Orange Foundation Romania.

Implementing this project increased awareness of the necessity of sign language interpretation services in general. Considering the deaf culture as part of the national, wider culture, sign language must obtain a better statute in society as a first language for the members of the deaf community.

Consequently, the project generated on a longer term, much more interest towards the profession of a sign language interpreter, as more and more institutions and hearing persons will begin to recognize the interpreter's important contribution for the social and professional integration of the deaf and hard-of-hearing. Unfortunately, Romania faces a high shortage of professional sign language interpreters. For example, there are 12 counties in the country with no authorized interpreters available.

In the same time, implementing the project may get older

sign language users to be more interested in new technology (smartphones, tablets, laptops etc.), since learning how to use such devices will give them the possibility to benefit from sign language interpretation services without effort. For example, R.N.D.A Bucharest Branch, around 75% of the members are over 55, including a significant number over 70 years old).

Since June 2018, the app version for Android has over 1000 downloads, 50 public institutions have enrolled (city halls, hospitals and sanatoriums, National Authority for People with Disabilities, Authority for Social Assistance, National Agency for Fiscal Administration) and over 500 calls have been initiated (mainly by young and medium age beneficiaries, up to 45 years), the most popular contexts of interaction being bank, hospital, and family doctor.

Also, the „Voices for Hands” application has been proposed as a public policy within a project co-financed by the European Social Fund. Implementing this system in all public institution is regarded as an active measure to improve the social inclusion of the deaf and hard of hearing. Moreover, in March 2020, Romanian Sign Language was officially recognized by law as the native language of the Romanian Deaf Community. On the long term, all public institutions in Romania will have to comply to this new law and provide Sign Language interpretation services to people with hearing loss, when requested. In this context, the app „Voices for Hands” represents an excellent opportunity in terms of accessibility and coverage.

Lessons learned

„Voices for Hands” had, as all things, small beginnings. We were aware of the fact that there were no other similar platforms or apps available in our country which created a great opportunity. Still, given that sign language interpreting in general has not yet reached the highest recognition deserved in Romania, another step further with video interpreting could have been seen as „a good idea five years too early”. We found out that some interpreters had their doubts about implementing such a project, especially regarding collaboration with our institutions.

The sign up procedure for direct beneficiaries has shown room for improvement, but was directly influenced by the limited personnel available for implementation. Our commitment to remove any spam accounts has led us to use a system in which only an administrator can open new accounts after receiving signed requests. We have the goal to create, in the near future, a less technical, more direct procedure, while also complying with all legal requirements.

„In the end, we are aware of the great potential that is still ahead. Some other clear objectives are to have interpreters available at any given day or hour, to increase our reach in rural areas, to have a closer contact with beneficiaries, to increase their number and the number of institutions or companies contracted. Reaching them will require working as a team, the same and only strategy that brought us on this challenging, but very rewarding path”, declares Bogdan Anicescu, Project Manager „Voices for Hands”.

European Gender Balance Mentoring Program



About Sanofi

Sanofi is a global biopharmaceutical company focused on human health, dedicated to supporting people through their health challenges. We prevent illness with vaccines, provide innovative treatments to fight pain and ease suffering. We stand by the few who suffer from rare diseases and the millions with long-term chronic conditions. With more than 100,000 people in 100 countries, Sanofi is transforming scientific innovation into healthcare solutions around the globe.

Sanofi Romania is one of the leaders of the local pharmaceutical industry, having one of the most diversified offers on the market: general medicines (diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and mature medicines), specialty care (Sanofi Genzyme - rare diseases, multiple sclerosis, oncology, immunology), vaccines (Sanofi Pasteur), over the counter drugs and food supplements (Consumer HealthCare). We bring science and innovation closer to patients in Romania, being with them throughout the entire health journey - from prevention to therapy and support in maintaining the general state of health. Our team of more than 250 people is fully committed to fulfill our mission: Empowering Life.

Diversity and inclusion issue(s) addressed

We see diversity as representing all facets of every individual and embrace it as means to empower them to fulfil their full potential. Promoting diversity is an opportunity for employees for self-realization, but also essential for the community we serve, and business viewed in a wider sense. We commit to creating an inclusive work environment through equal opportunities and

Promoting gender balance is an important topic on the company's top leadership agenda. Among many other initiatives, we have launched, under the sponsorship of Europe Gender Balance Network, a development program to identify mentors among senior leaders and mentees to become future women leaders at Sanofi. For a period of 9 months, mentors and mentees are part of a mutually beneficial program, which challenges the mentor to gain insights into their own leadership skills and the mentee to understand different approaches and behaviors. The goal is to ensure that our many talented women employees gain leadership skills and exposure to match their potential to rise to the top.

treatment and prohibiting all forms of discrimination so that we enable all employees to develop and perform to their full potential.

Gender gaps in society remain a major barrier in the world today impeding social advancement and hampering economic growth. Studies suggest a strong correlation between economic performance and a balanced proportion of women and men within an organization.

Our goal is supporting a stronger gender balance by developing a highly inclusive work environment. Today, gender issues do include the right to work and jobs discrimination against women, but we have a wider view of the challenges and difficulties. Giving birth and raising children or taking care of elderly relatives, for example, pose a real challenge in their careers, especially for women in Romania, and need to be addressed if we want them to have equal opportunities.

By these means we expect to generate a real force for driving innovation and imagining tomorrow's healthcare solutions together.

Planning & Objectives

In the last few years, Sanofi has widened its perspective and hardened its determination to make gender balance a way of life. However, we are aware of the long road and challenges that stand before us. Although at global level women represent 46% of our overall workforce and bringing us close to overall parity, only 36% of them hold senior management positions.

Moreover, taking a global perspective into account, we see that women make only 35% of all students in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics and account for less than

30% of researchers worldwide. The barriers go even deeper as UNESCO estimates that 130 million girls between the age of six and 17 worldwide are not in school.

Our objective is to achieve a balance between men and women at the top of our organization among our senior leaders by 2025. In other words, the company's 1900 senior leaders will include as many women as men.

In order to foster accelerated learning and enrich the Women Pipeline for the future generation of leaders, among other development projects, we implemented the European Gender Balance Mentoring Program. By facilitating a mentoring relationship that will offer guidance, advice and career support, we are in fact putting our women talents on the path to becoming future leaders.

Activities implemented

The mentoring program is an exchange between a mentor and a mentee, with the aim to support and advise the mentee for improving and developing her competencies.

The initiative involves motivated women who are aware of the importance of playing an active role in their professional development. The coordination team developed a toolkit to enable easy adaptation of the program in other locations. The program is a great way to break siloes by peering people from different organizations and provides additional way for leaders to act as "people developers".

First phase of the program is peering mentors with mentees. The peering condition is that both of them to be from different countries and even from different businesses or functions, in order to gain a wider perspective of the

organization. There are three reasons as to why this would help mentees gain more relevant experience in the hope of becoming future global and regional leaders.

First, it increases cross-functional, cross-country and institutional knowledge. Secondly, it facilitates the understanding of different cultures, approaches and behaviors to develop influencing skills. And third, it gives young women an early access to a wider network, helping them to navigate their role and career.

Second phase of the program includes the collaborative part. In the frame of a 9 months period the two of them will partake in a series of meetings in order to build their professional relationship and share personal insights.

The first meeting is truly important as it sets the stage for the mentor and mentee to meet personally, define their objectives and expectations and decide if the relationship is compatible with both sides.

Moreover, this meeting also sets out the principles and certain rules that will govern their relationship in the following months. Another step is agreeing on confidentiality limits, ground rules and the management of time and schedule in order to make their work together as meaningful and relevant for personal and professional development. All of the aforementioned are defining moments for building up a trustful relationship.

In the following months to come, clear objectives will be set for every meeting and an action plan will be drawn for the learning process to be as efficient as possible. Building a partnership is crucial in preparing future leaders.

With years of experience behind them, mentors aid mentees in their mission to identify strengths and areas to be further developed, seek and prevail new challenges.

The final phase is the closing of the program, meaning collecting feedbacks about the program and inspiring the mentees to go further with their development plans.

Impact and outcomes

More than an usual development program, we see these initiative as an opportunity for both parties. Mentors gain an improved understanding of a different generation and a better

understanding of other functions or businesses and areas in the organization. Not to mention of the huge satisfaction of valorizing one own's long life experience in order to see someone else grow.

For the mentee, this program provides accelerated growth and development by learning from the experience of others, expands professional network and understanding of the organization, receives practical advice, encouragement and support on overall development and increases ability to contribute to the function's needs and business goals. Mentees spoke enthusiastically about the quality of the exchanges, underlining the added value of these regular contacts allowing them to step out of their daily work to reflect on their career. The program opens possibilities "to dare" and to gain self-confidence.

At the same time, we should not ignore the tremendous benefits for the company itself. We embrace this model of programs as a way for strengthening senior management capabilities, enhancing transversal collaboration thus overcoming silo thinking and acting and contributing to the Company's knowledge capital – the collaborative knowledge that helps us to innovate and be competitive. Although Romania has been facing a workforce deficit on the market, especially in what regards highly qualified personnel given the soaring brain drain, Sanofi Romania didn't feel it so much, strengthening its image and reputation of an Employer of Choice.

Furthermore, Sanofi Romania also stands when it comes to gender balance, even in comparison to other Sanofi offices from different countries. 69% of all senior management of Sanofi Romania is made up by women, a percentage that stays almost the at middle and even top management layers.

This is the result of long years of building reputation and valuing our employees for their hard work. With sustained efforts, we have built a work environment for which we are proud, that not only does it manage to attract talents from outside, but also to retain talent in the company, respecting the diversity of our employees and giving them the opportunity to progress and realize their desired career plans.

Lessons learned

Women that went through the program stated that they now have a clearer image of the path they want to follow in their career. After months of one to one meetings, mentees gain a better recognition of their value and manage to boost their self-confidence.

The advice from past "graduates" is for the mentees to be open, sincere and clear in regard to their career plans and other aspirations. The first meeting is regarded as the most important as it sets the future framework of the mentorship. The goals should also be decided as early as possible so that mentors can guide them in the direct direction from the beginning.

If the mentors and mentees are compatible, then chances are the relationship is built to last. And, as this may not come as a surprise, many of our mentees are still in touch with their former mentors, asking for advice or guidance in difficult or challenging situations.

"The mentorship program was one of my best life experiences. The 9 months journey open different doors to myself, through in-depth analysis and self-discovering discussions that helped me to be more daring and determined in my career plans. Not far after the program ended, I got promoted to a manager position. In addition, even today when I feel the need, I can call my mentor who is in Spain, continuing with the mentoring sessions beyond the program", said Raluca Coman, Brand & CSR Communication Manager, Sanofi Romania.

"Mentoring a colleague is one of the most challenging and rewarding experience you may have as a senior leader. Challenging because you need to find the needed time, the needed mindset, to adapt to a different personality, culture and life experience. Finally, you need to refrain from giving solution, finding instead the right question leading your mentee to find it herself. Rewarding because there is no better use of the long hours spent on duty but to share with a younger teammate, your challenges, the ways you succeeded or when you failed, keep going further and daring, anyway! And last but not least, very often you discover that you have built a long-term relationship!" – Roxana Ciltea, Country HR Head, Sanofi Romania and Moldova.

Diversity Week

For over a decade, the Diversity Week festival run by the British Council in Romania has been promoting diversity and encouraging social inclusion through events held in conjunction with the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (December 3). In addition to traditional events, the 2019 edition brought a strong internal focus, and proposed a series of meetings or individual exercises run in partnership with local NGOs, aiming to bring more insight and grow empathy towards various vulnerable groups. The staff offer included two sections, the Diversity Week Agenda, encompassing a series of events from 2-6 December designed to take staff on an exciting, inspiring and sometimes humbling journey through the world of diversity in all its forms, as well as an Inspiration Corner, covering carefully curated reads and videos from across the web for anyone curious to learn more about diversity.



About The British Council

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We create friendly knowledge and understanding between the people of the UK and other countries. We work with over 100 countries across the world in the fields of arts and culture, English language, education and civil society. Each year we reach over 80 million people directly and more than 791 million people overall, including online, broadcasts and publications. We have been in Romania since 1938. Every year, work with thousands of students, educators, policymakers, academics, researchers, creatives and entrepreneurs in Romania.

Diversity and inclusion issue(s) addressed

At the British Council we put Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) at the core of our work. EDI training is a mandatory part of the induction of every new colleague, so that s/he is aware of the values we promote.

In addition, the teachers teaching at our Teaching Centre regularly attend specific training on working with children with special education needs.

We are also trying to engage staff from different departments in EDI learning, encouraging them to attend different projects and activities we are organising on this topic. For example, we celebrated the International Day of Sign Language on 28 September 2019 in our Library in Bucharest, in the presence of some of our staff, students from special education schools and mainstream schools. Colleagues were able to visit a painting exhibition of a deaf artist, that we displayed in our Library for a month and attend a sign language workshop delivered by a trainer with hearing impairments. Making use of international celebrations to engage with diversity at work is a very easy idea, that any organisation could use.

In 2019, over 70 colleagues out of our 130+ staff also volunteered for a project designed and organised by our staff, with the specific aim to engage with disadvantaged children and offer them the opportunity to attend creative and educational workshops free of charge: "The Creative Life Skills project". This is entirely a volunteering initiative and is not part of our standard offer. Basically teaching and non-teaching staff wanted to do something deliberately in the benefit of disadvantaged children. The involvement of British Council staff from all the departments has driven a culture of cohesion, solidarity and self-betterment. The high level of involvement of the staff provided them with real and relevant learning opportunities about different aspects of diversity by directly engaging with children with different backgrounds (Roma children, refugees, children with autism etc). We strongly believe these are learning opportunities that are sometimes even more meaningful than formal face to face training.

In 2019, we also organised Diversity Week, which was a way to engage our staff with different aspects of diversity such as: intellectual disabilities, deaf-blindness, autism, visual impairments, ethnicity, refugees, LGBTQ+, gender equality etc. This is the good practice we would like to particularly highlight, as it is very easy to organise by any organisation.

Planning & Objectives

Between 2-6 December 2019 our staff organized and attended Diversity Week.

The aim was to raise awareness amongst our colleagues about different aspects of diversity and to contribute to their learning and development in the field of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI).

In the previous years, we organized a Diversity Week annually, but the focus was on raising awareness amongst the general public about different

aspects related to diversity, by inviting children with special education needs and children from mainstream schools attend workshops together, building on the abilities they all had. But this time, we decided to have an internal focus and to offer our staff a menu of activities, from sensory experiences and living libraries to workshops, movies and webinars, all meant to enrich their experience of diversity.

In preparation of Diversity Week 2019, we had an all staff meeting and asked colleagues to contribute with ideas about what aspects of diversity they would like to learn more about. We also asked colleagues to volunteer to own each activity and work together to make it happen. Colleagues had to liaise with different NGOs and people with disabilities or with a diversity-related background and organize activities together. The engagement of the staff had to be direct and deliberate. It was not an activity offered by our EDI coordinator, but staff had actually to co-create the activities.

Activities implemented

The activities colleagues organized for Diversity Week 2019 were:

An art exhibition with works of artists with disabilities (paintings, drawing, photos), in the presence of the artists, who came to the British Council venue and presented their works. Most of our colleagues visited the exhibition as it was displayed for a month in the main hall of our venue in Bucharest.

Colleagues could attend activities online, for example: a webinar on Unconscious Bias; a webinar on “Diversity, Inclusion, and Intersectionality in the Workplace” etc.

On Monday 2 of December 2020, we organized a workshop called “Attitude is everything! How to make your cultural event more accessible”. The workshop was delivered by a Romanian NGO working with people with intellectual disabilities called “Superheroes amongst us”. It was open to our staff involved in organising cultural events, but also to other cultural practitioners and event organisers from partner organisations.

On the 3rd of December it was the International Day of People with Disabilities, and we celebrated it by organising a workshop for our staff on deaf blindness. It was delivered by the staff of an NGO working with deaf blind children and youth, called Sense

International. The workshop included sensory activities and inspirational stories of people with deaf blindness who accomplished amazing things.

For half of the week, starting with December 3, we installed a sensory tent in our Library, where staff could enter and take the time to explore the experience of a person with deaf blindness (hearing and visual impairment), together with the Sense International guides, feeling an unique sensory experience based only on touch, smell and taste. Many of our staff visited the tent during Diversity Week. Some of our teachers from the Teaching Centre also brought their students.

On Wednesday the 4th of December staff could watch a one hour British documentary (Women in Sink) about Arab and Jewish women who share their differences and views on politics, history and love. We screened the film during the lunch break so staff could attend.

On Wednesday the 4th of December, we organised a Living Library, where staff had the opportunity to meet and hear the life stories of:

A professor from the Romanian Academy of Economic Studies living with Asperger’s

A Syrian refugee young woman who fled the war and arrived in Romania. She is now studying in a Romanian university and works for Save the Children NGO to offer counselling for other refugees

A young and successful IT engineer who was born blind

One of the well-known performance artists in the independent cultural sector, who is also a member and an advocate of the LGBTQ+ community.

On Thursday 5th December, one of our colleagues, Cristiana Tautu, Head of Arts and co-founder of an NGO working for the rights of women “Vagenta”, held an open talk with colleagues about the history of feminism and the colleagues’ experiences related to gender equality.

On Friday 6 December, during the lunch break we held another movie screening for colleagues: the British documentary “The Stranger on the Bridge”, a film about simple human interaction and how one man’s kind gesture has had a huge butterfly effect. It was a film about empathy and being human, which we considered very fit to end this week with.

On Friday 13 December, one week

after Diversity Week, colleagues were invited to get together in a Diversity Lunch. We ate pizza and we had 6 or 7 tables in a room, each with a EDI topic that we covered during the Diversity Week. Colleagues spent 10-15 minutes at each table, and then rotated, to share their insights gained during Diversity week (what impressed them, what they learned new etc). It was a very successful gathering, people were indeed very engaged in the discussions and had meaningful contributions.

Impact and outcomes

It was the first time when we organized a Diversity Week with a full internal focus, where colleagues were involved in the conception, organization and a large part of them attended the activities. Staff who attended the event reported having increased awareness of diversity areas and challenges, being more open and understanding of vulnerable activities, as well as an increased willingness to participate in activities actively supporting inclusion and equal opportunities, such as volunteer work.

Lessons learned

The Diversity Week edition aimed at raising awareness and engagement among staff has proven that there is always room for improvement when it comes to a better understanding of EDI, and has helped once again highlight the crucial role the NGO sector plays in connecting communities. With a long tradition in Equal Opportunity and Diversity policies, the British Council has always fostered an inclusive and diverse work environment, but such events show the true power of human connections – and the value of engaging staff in the development of such an event. Colleagues who were already aware and engaged found new ways to learn and celebrate diversity, were moved by personal experiences and by their opportunity to be a close part of them, and who became more willing to become active promoters of good practices and support EDI initiatives with their time and resources.

Journey to performance through Age Diversity

Our OMV Petrom Group is utmost diverse in terms of equipment, tools, products, sites, geographic location, technologies, processes. However, all of the above could be effectively functioning only when involving our greatest asset, our OMV Petrom Group people. People are the greatest source of our energy, bringing up a breadth of diversity in terms of age, gender, experience working styles, and internationality.

On OMV Petrom Diversity, as mentioned above, one of the focus is on age diversity, thus, this matter is especially important since the average age in OMV Petrom Group is 48.3 years, considering the challenge of the new generation of losing appetite for oil and gas industry.



About OMV Petrom

OMV Petrom is the largest energy company in Southeastern Europe with the headquarters in Romania, one of the top oil producing countries in the world. OMV Petrom produces and supplies energy in all its forms - fuels, gas, and electricity - safely, securely, responsibly and in a sustainable way. By successfully applying innovation and technical expertise, we have continued to create value and improve the quality of life for millions of people, producing and supplying the energy needed for their comfort, their need for mobility and their passion to travel. Our products form the basis for a variety of plastics and high-end petrochemical products used daily by different industries and people. The company is the largest taxpayer and private investor, as well as one of the top five employers in Romania.

Planning, Objectives, Activities

OMV Petrom addresses age diversity by initiating various programs dedicated to students and fresh graduates. Over the years, we have associated Diversity to the company brand, we learned from our previous experience and we put in place diverse programs that address the young generation's employees' needs, also seeking to contain the wealth of know-how gathered by our experienced people, who consciously served the company however preparing for retirement.

Today's workforce is represented by four generations of people who are pertaining to different groups: Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials and Generation Z. In OMV Petrom Group

level, the ratio of these generations is: 20.47% Baby Boomers, 68.23 % Generation X, 10.68% Millennials and 0.62% Generation Z. Refreshing the workforce with young and capable enthusiasts is a must for a company looking forward to a sustainable future.

Therefore, we are proud to present below some initiatives related to attraction and retention of new talent we performed in 2019.

Thus, we have developed comprehensive scholarship packages, working visits in OMV international locations, career opportunities in OMV locally and internationally; we also had mentoring by experts of various disciplines, supporting dual VET education for the future blue collars.

OMV Petrom is focused on providing knowledge transfer programs and building a robust talent pipeline through cooperation with key universities. This does not only fuel the talent pipeline of the company, but also creates a bridge between generations and ensures the effective transfer of knowledge between generations.

As concrete examples, we brought our contribution in 2019 as well to Romanian young talent pool by investing in young students and professionals through complex internship and scholarship programs:

- *Open4U* and *BeFirst* are internship programs, through which, around 90 students year by year were selected for a two up to six months paid internship.

- *The program for Students and Fresh Graduates* is a scholarship program and it offers students the opportunity to focus on studies and link between theory and practice. In 2019, 45 students

from targeted universities were awarded scholarships.

- *FRESH initiative*, another important tool focused on attracting young generation and prepare them for the next jobs.

- *The Oilmen's School* is an education program through which we created within national special dual system some classes in three high schools in Romania for three years professional education.

These programs, creating a sustainable development environment and leading to as many young well-trained specialists who choose to stay in the company and bring added value as much as possible, will be detailed below.

The FRESH initiatives have two components: on one hand, recruiting young graduates for the company and, on the other hand, training and retaining them as employees. Moreover, the company's various components and areas of activity require tailored recruitment approaches, so FRESH programs differ in terms of training, number of graduates and duration in our Upstream, Downstream Divisions or Global Solutions.

Fresh graduates from universities or vocational schools have a unique chance to work in one of the top companies in Romania by entering the FRESH programs, which offer the young graduates the opportunity to put into practice the knowledge accumulated during their studies, to gain experience by working with some of the best business professionals, to join the OMV Petrom family, while bringing new energy and enthusiasm into the company).

UPSTREAM Division (focused on oil and gas extraction and operation) brings consistent efforts in developing fresh programs

When it comes to FRESH initiatives, and depending on needs, the Division's management decides on an annual number of young people who can be recruited in the program with different specializations.

During the three years of the program, under a supervision of a mentor for their soft skills, they are involved, together with more senior employees, in various projects, and after completing the program, based on a performance evaluation, they are offered the opportunity to continue their career with OMV Petrom.

Also for the future workers in Upstream, three high schools in Romania for professional education of three years are supported by our company in Târgoviște, Moinești and Pitești so their graduates will get oil and gas qualification (well operators and park operators). Through the program, our company offers monthly scholarships, "on site"/practical experience in our company, as well as personal development sessions. An update of educational curriculum and school laboratory upgrades were supported as well. The program started in 2016 and we already have the second generation of oilmen graduated in 2019.

DOWNSTREAM oil, expanding the pool of qualified personnel

There are two work force rejuvenation initiatives in Petrobrazi Refinery: "Fresh Graduates" and "Junior Operators".

Through "Fresh Graduates", a program developed in cooperation with the Oil Gas University in Ploiești and the Polytechnic Institute in Bucharest, around 10 young graduates are annually recruited. This program lasts for a year, and it targets chemical, petroleum, mechanical engineers, automatists or any other specialization of interest in the refining process. "

The other program at Petrobrazi, "Junior Operators", is permanently open since five years and seeks to attract young chemists, graduates of vocational schools.

OMV Petrom Global Solutions, efforts to attract the most valuable graduates

Being a service company OMV Petrom, OMV PETROM Global Solutions has human resources needs that are complementary to Upstream

or Downstream. The fluctuation of the staff is much higher. It's another dynamic of the workforce, recruiting all the time, because there are over 30 countries in OMV Group. In Romania there are under management of areas such as IT, finance, expatriate management, training, assets management or travel.

Once selected in the "Fresh Graduates" program, the young professionals are assigned a mentor, take part in different activities and projects, are evaluated, and finally can choose to stay in the company or no. It is a nice, challenge, but also risky process.

Collaboration with educational institutions

Partnership with universities is helping the identification of talent early and that is important for us, given the highly competitive environment where most of the companies initiate their recruitment process from faculty or even high school. Thus, OMV Petrom works closely with Oil and Gas University in Ploiești, Polytechnic Institute in Bucharest, as well with the Academy of Economic Studies in Bucharest. We have a specialized team that manages the relationship with universities and collaborates on a regular basis with those responsible for the FRESH initiatives in the Divisions.

OMV Petrom actively participates in the training of its future or potential specialists by upgrading certain laboratories. For example, at the Chemistry Faculty of Polytechnic Institute, the company built a miniature refinery so that students can operate and see the processes on a small scale. The largest amphitheater of the Cybernetics Faculty at the Academy of Economic Studies was equipped with technology that made this room unique in Romania.

Another method that can improve the recruitment rate is the direct contact of the students with the company. Petrobrazi refinery managers often deliver presentations to Oil and Gas University in Ploiești, thus encouraging students to join the company in refinery after graduating from the faculty.

Another successful initiative was "Be Manager for a Day", when two series of students from the Academy of Economic Studies spent a day at Petrom City headquarters, accompanying a manager in his daily routine. The students had

the opportunity to get a glimpse of what working in OMV Petrom is like, such as working environment and colleagues, facilities and also received information about the company.

Impact and outcomes

We always put employees first, as this is the basis of a solid company. We are constantly focused on maintaining the workforce balance, increasing the value of existing workforce, but also bringing added value to teams by development and welcoming new employees.

That is why all recruitment programs solve typical aspects such as identifying and attracting competitive candidates according to our own strategy, but also respecting the legislation in the field regarding equal employment opportunities and correcting existing discriminatory practices or some imbalances.

We embracing age diversity, we concurrently sustain the richness that relies in the diversity of perspectives, ideas and experiences harnessed to create business value.

"Teamwork is very important for us. I believe in the power of the collective minds. With teamwork comes transparency, and with them you get the results proposed" - Christina Verchere, CEO OMV Petrom.

Lessons learned

The role of diversity in the workplace has evolved from wishful thinking to a necessity to support the achievement of business objectives, a differentiator, a competitive advantage needed on the global market.

Talent aging is a global reality. Contextually, two categories are more prone to possible discrimination: the youngest, new entries on the labor market and the ones near to retirement.

OMV Petrom, understood that smart people strategies that ensure the good health qualitative conditions of the workplace of are key factors to ensure a high performance for employees of all ages contributing to being competitive and sustainable.

It is already a long-term objective for us to foster an inclusive working environment, in which employees feel welcome, at one of the most desired Employer.

Paving the Way for Diversity & Inclusion Success: The Role of D&I Officer

Recent analysis showed that there is a growing need for a leader to spearhead the diversity and inclusion (D&I) function and align that function with overall business strategy. But how does the daily job life look like in those roles? To get an idea of this, we talked to Oana Savin, Diversity & Inclusion Officer at Raiffeisen Bank Romania.

Today, the number of diversity officers is globally on the rise. In Romania, there are just a few diversity officers. What was the main argument for Raiffeisen Bank Romania to have one?

Being part of our organization for over 10 years now, I know for fact that Raiffeisen Bank Romania has taken very seriously the commitments of being a responsible banker and a committed corporate citizen, which reflects our position as a correct partner in the business world that runs a sustainable and responsible corporate management towards the society and the environment. We know it only depends on ourselves to create the society we want for the next generation and it is our duty today to work for this. This means, being a fair partner to all our stakeholders and joining efforts with them - clients, suppliers, the communities where we run our business and, of course, our employees. In this context, the legislative requirement to assume its duties in the field of D&I was only a pretext for Raiffeisen Bank Romania to outline and create a position dedicated to this role.

Diversity is an important value for Raiffeisen Bank. We know that differences in gender, culture, education and experience of our team members can only add more value to our organization.

What does a Diversity Officer do on a daily basis?

As the position states :), it can be a very diverse job: from collecting feedbacks through surveys on wellbeing & diversity, to implementing concrete measures, outlining specific policies, identifying relevant KPIs and establishing action plans to support the proposed objectives.

An important part of the job is the education/awareness on the discrimination phenomena, based on unconscious stereotypes. We are preoccupied to create a healthy work environment based on collaboration and non-discrimination, values deep embedded in our DNA. Thus, we now have dedicated training courses on diversity and inclusion, where we explain, using practical examples the importance of these values for our organization and for the personal development of each of us.



What skills/experience do you consider important for your role?

I think that first of all you have to be a flexible person, with a mindset opened for change, you have to like people and care about their worries, show empathy and keep enthusiasm, aspirations and passion all along your way.

Of course, the specific legislation and the best practices of some countries and organizations with more experience in the D&I area are an important resource for this job, in which things are shaped as you approach them, the field being a very dynamic one.

Before you started in your current role, what was the situation in your organisation regarding diversity? What needed to change?

Even though there was no dedicated position for D&I before last year, Raiffeisen Bank Romania has constantly shown social responsibility, care for the environment and especially increased attention to its employees, which are our company's most important asset. Luckily, I started my work as D&I Officer in a very favorable climate here, as the company has also been preoccupied by offering a friendly work environment, where differences are encouraged and treated as a driver for innovation. All employees benefit from equal opportunities, regardless of gender, nationality, age, family status, language, religion, political views, disability or sexual orientation. Starting with 2018, Raiffeisen Bank is also one of the signatories of the Romanian Diversity Charter.

Certainly, my role and the signing the Romanian Diversity Charter will lead to accelerating the implementation of tangible policies and measures to support our proposed D&I objectives.

What measures have you taken so far to increase diversity?

A series of important measures were already in place upon me taking the role as Diversity and Inclusion Officer. Employees can opt for flexible work schedules or work from home, days off for colleagues that celebrate certain holidays differently than national holidays in Romania, regular surveys are conducted with all employees to evaluate the level of satisfaction and what could be improved and everyone at Raiffeisen Bank follows a strict code of conduct with clear anti-discrimination and anti-harassment measures. We are now in the process of implementing the diversity policy and the policy against discrimination and harassment in the workplace. We have a clear procedure, a dedicated channel and a confidential approach regarding notifying and solving any incidents of discrimination or harassment. There is also a disciplinary liability applicable to cases of discrimination and harassment, Raiffeisen Bank Romania promoting zero tolerance for such conducts.

We considered a set of indicators specific to the organization, along with measures that can support these KPIs, in order to monitor and explain the trends.

We also launched courses on the bank's online platform, to explain the discrimination and harassment phenomenon and the forms it can take, addressing unconscious thinking stereotypes, as discrimination's precursors.

How do you define an inclusive workplace?

I like very much the saying that diversity is a fact, while inclusion is a choice, thus I consider that an inclusive environment is one in which all people, however different they may be, can work and collaborate in the most efficient and creative way, bringing their own contribution and experience and thus helping the organization to be more valuable. Strong organizations are based on diversity, which they have managed to integrate into all their processes; in fact, there are many studies showing that companies who incorporate D&I values in their business model are more profitable. Diversity is a driver for innovation.

What about the wider banking community? Is here a place for more diversity?

I think in Romania we just started to be aware of the importance of such measures and there are certainly many aspects we can work on together. I'm happy to see more preoccupation for diversity and inclusion topics and businesses are starting to realise the immense value it can bring to their activity.

What piece of advice would you give to colleagues willing to embrace a similar career path?

To have the courage to be one step ahead of the time. To have patience because sometimes it is about changing mentalities and it may take longer to make one's voice heard, but also confidence that it is a career path that can bring immense satisfaction and personal fulfillment.

Interview by Dana Oancea, Romanian Diversity Charter

Equal chances, equal salary at Philip Morris Romania

Everyone agrees that women should be paid the same as men for equal work. We have heard it even from the singer Beyoncé, amongst other female powerful voices – “Equality will be achieved when men and women are granted equal pay and equal respect.” But, unfortunately, that is not the reality for many women in the world today. We, Philip Morris Romania, wanted a credible, independent verification that our actual pay practices matched our commitment to equality in all countries where we operate around the world. And we did this by seeking global EQUAL-SALARY certification by a third-party, which means that the company is undergoing both a quantitative analysis of salary data and a qualitative audit of management commitment to equal pay principles and of our people policies, practices and processes to identify any potential gender blind spots. This certification advances our efforts to achieve gender balance and close the gender pay gap, essential ingredients for our business transformation as we strive to create a smoke-free world.

About Philip Morris Romania

Philip Morris Romania is a Philip Morris International affiliate, a company that is currently leading a transformation in the tobacco industry. We are engaged in building a future on a new category of smoke-free products that, while addictive and not risk free, are a much better choice than continuing to smoke. Through world-class multidisciplinary capabilities in product development and scientific substantiation, as well as state-of-the-art R&D facilities, Philip Morris International aims to ensure that its smoke-free products meet adult consumer preferences and rigorous regulatory requirements.

Diversity and Inclusion issue(s) addressed

As a company, we see strength in diversity. We’re committed to building an inclusive, diverse workplace where talented women and men can contribute their best and support each other. By doing so, and uniting behind our vision to create positive change for smokers and society, we know we can achieve a smoke-free world.

Treating everyone with fairness, respect and equality is part of our core values at Philip Morris Romania. And, it’s also good for business: diversity of thought and skills can deliver the innovation, creativity and disruption needed to help us reach our ambitious goal. That’s why we’re focused on creating an environment where everyone has an equal opportunity to participate, use their skills, share their ideas and perspectives, and feels valued – regardless of how they look, their origins, how they speak, who they love, or their beliefs. Only by doing so can we unlock the true power of our diversity.

Planning & Objectives

To build an inclusive culture means embedding capabilities mindsets and behaviors into our leadership and learning curriculum. These include: breaking down hierarchy, making sure different voices are heard, ensuring leadership styles adapt to the needs of different employees, showing empathy and care, building psychological safety, coaching, and understanding how bias may impact decisions and the views of others.

Our second priority is to focus on the area where we can have the greatest immediate impact on our diversity: closing the gender talent gap. Because it is not enough to have an equal number of women and men in a company, they should be treated equally and paid the same. Women make up half the world’s intelligence and influence 60-70% of today’s consumer spend. Equal pay for equal work means that men and women in the same job must receive the same pay. It influences the gender pay gap, which is a measure of the difference between the average income of men and women across an organization or in the labor market. If you have more men at higher levels, it automatically creates a gap between average salaries of men and women. The gender pay gap is a talent gap. It is broader and more complex than equal pay for equal work.

As we transform our company to be competitive in this rapidly changing 21st century, we know from multiple studies that organizations with diverse teams and an inclusive culture are more innovative and successful. It’s essential that we commit to this aspect of our transformation, and we’re tackling gender gap first.

At international level, 42 percent of the company’s employees are women. Women make up 36 percent of management roles—an increase of 6 percentage points since year end 2014. The company has made clear its ambition to increase



PHILIP MORRIS
ROMÂNIA

the representation of women in management roles across the organization to 40 percent by 2022, based on evidence that shows that companies with diversity in the workplace achieve better results and have more satisfied employees at every level. We need a better balance of diverse, talented women and men to achieve a smoke-free world. In Romania, almost 30 percent of the company's employees are women (the factory in Otopeni is included), while almost 29 percent of management roles are held by women.

Activities implemented

To meet our targets and close our gender talent gap, we're concentrating on recruitment, promotion, retention, and training and interventions to remove unconscious gender bias.

We start with the recruitment process and review job ads to remove gendered language, require balance in the number of men and women in short lists and interview panels. Then, when it comes to promotions, we provide equal learning opportunities for all, personalized development plans with coaching for women and men, networking opportunities offering women peer support to help them succeed, and showcasing female role models. Plus, our retention programs offer flexible working arrangements for all and parent support programs.

Last, but not least, we do trainings and interventions to remove unconscious gender bias across the employee journey.

Besides this, we have implemented and continue to work on a range of other programs to improve gender balance management in Philip Morris Romania. Some of these programs are tracking and publishing progress on the gender balance of our management populations, because what gets measured and is visible gets done; having personalized career and development plans for senior women leaders and recruiting top external female talent; removing or reducing subjective judgment, bias and stereotypes in recruitment, evaluation and talent management decisions; identifying and addressing gender bias in our talent assessments – whether in recruitment, performance management or opportunities for promotions; developing female talent through women's networks across the company – offering opportunities for women to build valuable connections for support, learning and mentoring. Moreover, we offer flexible working arrangements that enable women, and all employees, to succeed both at work and at home and parental support programs to support employees in being great parents and great professionals.

On top of all these, we take opportunities to celebrate our top female talent as role models for other women and we can say we are good at doing this. We are not inspired only by our female colleagues, but we search for inspiration outside the company, too. In 2019, we were very pleased to welcome Andreea Braga, Director of FILIA – Center for Curricular Development and Gender Studies, to an open discussion with our employees around gender equality, inclusion and equal payment. The discussion with Andreea was followed by the Diversity Day @ The Office, at our headquarters, in which we were trying to find the best ways to express different mindsets and beliefs, to laugh, as this is the best form of therapy, and to discover unity by mixing up the diversity. This year, as

well, we had the second edition of Diversity Day @ The Office, when we were able to explore the unsurmountable complexity of communication as a parent, but also as a social figure who interacts with people, on a daily basis, in different contexts.

Impact and outcomes

As a result of our efforts made in order to mitigate the gender gap in Philip Morris Romania and following the analysis conducted by Equal Salary Foundation, we were pleased to receive the Equal Salary certification in 2019.

Equal-Salary certification is a third-party verification, conducted by Equal Salary Foundation, recognized by European Commission that confirms that Philip Morris Romania pays men and women equally for equal work. The certification comprises a comprehensive quantitative comparison of our salary data and a qualitative audit of our management's commitment to gender equality, of our talent management and development policies and practices, and of employee perceptions of that commitment and of HR policies and practices to identify any potential gender blind spots in order to recommend actions to mitigate them.

Paying men and women equally for equal work is the very minimum standard of equality. It is a basic human right. The Equal-Salary certification confirms this. Further, the qualitative part of the Equal-Salary certification process helps to identify improvement opportunities in our efforts to address the broader challenge of closing our gender talent gap – whether that's challenging subjectivity and stereotypes in the way we assess performance and potential, or accommodating more flexible attitudes to where and when work is done.

We consider that the Equal-Salary certification will boost Philip Morris Romania's attractiveness as an employer of choice, and increase employee engagement and pride knowing that they work for a forward-looking, fair organization.

And that's not all: we believe that the certification process can focus internal attention and catalyze further actions toward achieving gender balance and a more inclusive workplace at Philip Morris Romania. This supports our efforts to successfully transform our culture, talent management and, crucially, completely transform our business to become a smoke-free technology leader on the path to creating a smoke-free world.

Lessons learned

“Even though we are well aware of the fact that this certification represents a huge progress on the Inclusion & Diversity topic we are not going to stop here. What we could get from all the activities and projects we have implemented around diversity in Philip Morris Romania is that it has a beneficial impact on our employees, therefore we have committed to this path - to build a more inclusive workplace, target initiatives to foster our new hires, refine our local policy to further promote flexible work arrangement and wellbeing programs, target initiatives to promote female talent and leadership and try to create an inclusive workspace in order to empower all of our employees to take action and be a part of the company's transformation.” — Luminița Florea, People & Culture Director, Philip Morris Romania

Next Level D&I: From good to great to future proof

When a company has completed more than 15 years of D&I work – in all aspects and areas – they ask us which higher level they could reach. For every D&I practitioner, staying relevant is key. Here is the latest guidance.

Imagine you have all your processes aligned to D&I, an open culture created and inclusive behaviours developed on all levels. Your internal and external communications reflect D&I and your participation in rankings and awards is regularly successful, also because your various metrics underpin continuous progress. Leading companies on that level sometimes feel as if maintenance was the main thing they should focus on.

Our analyses show, however, that there is a next level D&I which will also overcome some current problematic reactions (from mainstream / majority perspectives) and some persisting disconnects (e.g. from digital transformation, globalisation or agility). Altogether five changes can make D&I a future proof concept that delivers more robust business benefits at the same time.

1. Redefine Diversity to make everyone feel included and belonging

To include all individuals has been the proclaimed ambition of D&I for many years. But critical reactions as well as substantial backlash clearly show that D&I concepts and messages to date have not conveyed the aspired inclusion in a credible way. Considering the (non-discrimination) roots and (quota) development of D&I over time, this is no surprise. However, analyses show that one of the few ways to optimise D&I and make it future proof is to make sure mainstream or majority groups feel to be included and to benefit from D&I as well. As disadvantages for some groups persist and need to be addressed, there is no easy solution how to achieve this. Removing micro messages and mechanisms suggesting that dominant groups are ‘the problem’ is a first step that still needs to be accomplished.

2. Align D&I goals and strategies to reflect the value-chain and lead to business benefits

Consistent with the first element mentioned before, most D&I storylines could be improved in order to describe a business-focused approach. Most understandably, the focus to date has been lying on the reflection of talent markets, fairness and the best possible utilisation of resources. Related messages highlighted diversity (or specific dimensions thereof) while the business case was described on a higher level. Taking D&I to the next level requires drawing a more comprehensive picture that puts business priorities and challenges in the centre and describes the



Michael Stuber is the European D&I Engineer. He pioneered EMEA level Diversity concepts in the late 1990s. Since then, he has worked for dozens of leading corporate clients on four continents and in most European countries. He has designed and delivered unique D&I research, both primary and secondary. Michael shares his insight on the DiversityMine.eu knowledge blog that features more than 1,900 individually edited articles from two decades. Stuber's company has been a social enterprise since before this label existed. In the public sphere, he served as the deputy project manager during the first years of the EU-level Diversity Charter Platform and authored the EU Diversity Implementation Checklist.

elements required to add value to these priorities. Such revamped storylines will not only be more accurate, they will also be more accepted and more effective in explaining further changes needed.

3. Create metrics that check for persisting biases in your culture or processes

Narrowly defined metrics have been one major source for so-called misperceptions of D&I. A focus on few quantitative KPIs and often only on gender and maybe nationality, has not helped in creating a broad business-based understanding of D&I, nor to enlist buy-in from mainstream groups. More holistic sets of KPIs are not only more adequate to evaluate the D&I value-creation process, they will also find a lot more acceptance. Such comprehensive D&I success measurement covers the perceived openness or other relevant values of the corporate culture as well as the inclusiveness of processes and behaviours.

4. Use critical thinking of all stakeholders to identify untapped opportunities

Research confirms that a large part of the corporate D&I agenda is determined through peer comparison processes. Contrary to this swarm comfort-and-safety approach, companies strive to develop their own specific frameworks in most business and HR/people/leadership fields. Similarly, they are more likely to reach their next level of D&I by critically reflecting their particular situations in order to identify related room for improvement. High levels of specificity can be expected in the area of corporate culture and leadership as these are rooted in the organisation's history, industry and other contexts. Consequently, current D&I strategies focus on culture and leadership. In this context, critical thinking creates forward leaps by challenging assumptions.

5. Embed D&I (visibly!) in business and leadership processes and tools

While the evidence for the business benefits of well-managed D&I has become overwhelming, the reality of tangible and measurable business benefits created through D&I has remained occasional. The talent and CSR foci of recent years have most likely contributed to this. At the same time, the success stories of D&I being utilised as a propeller for the business are significant. What appears to be lacking – and hence serves as an impetus to get to the next level – is the scaling of both the evidence for the business case and the positive anecdotal experiences. In order to achieve this, D&I will have to be embedded more explicitly in business processes and leadership models and tools.

D&I has to change to become future proof

D&I practitioners love to explain the need for change to their audiences. The time has come when they can prove their own ability to adapt to the new landscape and rethink paradigms (and assumptions...) that were successful in the past. Globalisation has been a driver for D&I in recent years and the alignment of the two is still ongoing. In the meantime, the rules of the digital transformation and the backlash from populist and post-truth campaigns have changed the context for D&I in a way that a fundamental revision is required. Companies that have mature D&I agendas in place find an opportunity to take their framework to the next level. Everybody else can integrate the new thinking into continuous development of their D&I paradigms.

Usefull links:

<http://european-diversity.com/what-is-diversity/inclusion-for-all/>

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/what-blackrock-heidi-klum-head-hunters-have-common-michael-stuber>

<http://en.diversitymine.eu/measuring-the-success-of-di-the-what-and-the-how/>

<http://en.diversitymine.eu/research-says-without-the-right-mind-set-targets-dont-work/>



L'Oréal-UNESCO Scholarship Programme for Women In Science

Launched in Romania in 2009, L'Oréal-UNESCO For Women In Science has so far supported 25 young researchers, with scholarships surpassing 1 million lei. The scientific results of the projects that were supported by the programme opened up new research areas on a national and international level, generated new methods of diagnosis and treatment for rare diseases, led to the creation of new laboratories and departments, and managed to attract European funds for new research projects. The programme targets researchers up to 35 years old, who are either PhD students or were granted the scientific title of doctor and are currently following a postgraduate training program in Romania.

Short description of organization

L'Oréal Romania, part of the L'Oréal group - which has been dedicated to beauty for over 105 years - has a history of over 22 years on the local market. With its unique portfolio of 23 diverse and complementary international brands, L'Oréal Romania is a leader in the local cosmetics market, and is present in all distribution channels: mass-market, shops, pharmacies and drugstores, salons, travel retail and branded retail.

The Romanian National Commission for UNESCO was established in 1957 and is a public institution under the coordination of the Ministry of National Education, ensuring Romania's connection with UNESCO, based on the collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Culture, the Romanian Academy and other central institutions and bodies.

Diversity and inclusion issue(s) addressed

According to some studies, less than one third of the world's scientists are women. Although we tend to consider that equal opportunities between women and men are no longer a major problem for modern society, in fact, the access of women in scientific fields is still slowed down by many barriers, and the progress of many female researchers is blocked by obstacles that are often caused by gender inequality.

The programme intends to radically change this situation, encouraging girls

from schools or colleges to dedicate themselves to a research career and to develop their full potential. At the same time, by supporting the careers of young talents, this programme contributes to the development of inspirational models for future generations.

Planning & Objectives

Research and science are among the pillars on which L'Oréal was built more than 100 years ago, as the group was founded by a researcher. This is why L'Oréal supports innovation, research and those who build a better and safer future through science.

L'Oréal-UNESCO For Women In Science is a display of L'Oréal's appreciation and support for young Romanian researchers who bring their contribution to progress in the field of scientific research and education.

Throughout all editions, the main concern was to recognize, support and celebrate the young women in science, as well as to increase the attractiveness of this field among young women who could be a part of the project, and among the girls who are considering a scientific career.

While in our country there is almost no conversation about science, research and the perspectives offered by these fields, there are some Romanian women that were not discouraged by this and have managed to put Romania on the international research map, through their work and dedication.

These women spend long hours in

the laboratory, and have the courage to change the world through their passion and perseverance. Their inspiring stories were put in the spotlight, year after year, by L'Oréal-UNESCO For Women In Science, a programme that has been in Romania for ten years now, and for several years at an international level.

Activities implemented

In 2019, 10 years after the start of the programme, we celebrated both the winners of the tenth edition and those from previous editions.

The content we created around the 2019 edition was meant to support the direction we had announced in the previous year, which was to inspire young women in Romania to make steps towards a scientific career.

The tenth local edition of the programme took place between July and October 2019 and brought together 72 application files that were registered in the competition.

The campaign launched via press release, where we announced the means of enrolment in the programme. The information was communicated both via press release - which was shared by many relevant publications, and via L'Oréal Romania and UNESCO's own communication channels.

The second phase of the campaign focused on amplification. During this phase, we sent a second press release announcing the time limit and other conditions for entering the competition, the results of the programme up to that moment and winners' most successful stories.

We also referred to our previous research, focusing on young women's preferences in terms of career choices. As the company was concerned about the small number of Romanian women in technical and scientific fields, L'Oréal Romania analysed the future prospects for the scientific field, and showed what young women expect when it comes to their future career and to what extent

they are interested in a career in science or even in scientific research.

According to the study, two out of ten respondents considered pursuing a career in science, but only 1.5% were interested in having a career in scientific research. They would be willing to choose this field due to their desire to contribute to development and progress, due to their interest in discovering interesting things and the stable future that the scientific field can offer women. On the other hand, they would not choose a scientific career because they fear intense work and continuous study and training.

At the same time, during the second stage of the campaign, we also shared a series of Facebook posts on L'Oréal Group's page, referring to competition terms, entry conditions, but also to the success stories from the programme's previous editions.

In the third phase of the campaign, we started a series of posts on Social Media, called #10thoughts. What we did was to share a series of ten illustrations with the messages of previous winners for young female scientists who are at the beginning of their career or who for girls who are considering a scientific career. The visuals were shared one at a time and they were boosted in social media in order to achieve relevant results.

At the same time, during this phase, we developed a special editorial project in partnership with Life.ro. Together with the journalists, we started a series of interviews with the four winners of the tenth edition. These articles offered a personal and authentic touch to their life stories – the winners shared what it means to be a scientist as a woman working in Romania, which were the joys and sorrows across their career paths and their thoughts and wishes for young women considering a career in science.

The last phase of the campaign was the Awards Gala for L'Oréal-UNESCO For Women In Science, where we awarded and celebrated the four winners.

The gala took place at ARCUB and brought together journalists, influencers and members of the scientific community. The first part of the Gala was hosted by Paula Herlo, and the second by Amalia Enache

- she hosted a live talk show on stage and centred their conversation on the balance between professional and personal life, the myths around scientific careers, but also on the need for new talents in this interesting and provocative field.

The stories of the four winners were intensely shared by the press, in various forms, both articles about the programme, as well as interviews about the outstanding activity of the four women scientists.

After the Awards Gala we sent a press release about the four new winners and the projects they signed up for.

Sensitive gas sensors with reduced environmental impact, bone implants reducing the risk of tumor recurrence, a research on the reasons why some patients become resistant to liver cancer treatment, and a deeper analysis on infertility causes, aiming to increase the chances of successful IVF are the research projects of the winners of L'Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science 2019.

Impact and outcomes

L'Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science was born out of the desire to support women in the field of research. For over 20 years at international level and for 10 years in Romania, L'Oréal and UNESCO have aimed and succeeded to offer recognition and support to women scientists who have brought a significant contribution to scientific progress and in the society.

Until now, Romania awarded 25 women researchers for which the scholarship was an incentive to go forward with the same passion and dedication. The projects that were funded allowed some researchers to continue their groundwork during a difficult period by making it possible to switch from a national project to an international one funded by the European Research Council. Since 2009, over 400 application files were submitted by more than 50 educational institutions, which have been evaluated by renowned researchers in over 500 hours in total. The total value of the scholarships that were offered in Romania reached 1,050,000 lei.

Over the past 20 years, L'Oréal Foundation and UNESCO have

supported 3,200 young women scientists around the world through this scholarship programme. L'Oréal - UNESCO For Women in Science scholarships are awarded annually, at a national or regional level, in ceremonies that are organized in 117 countries.

Internationally, 275 young women benefit from national or regional scholarship programmes every year. Out of these, the most promising 15 scientists are selected in the International Rising Talents program. Every year, five scientists receive the L'Oréal - UNESCO For Women in Science Award in their field of activity and each winner receives a prize worth 100,000 euros.

Each year, L'Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science gathers over 9000 applications; more than 260 talented young women scientists are supported to pursue promising research projects; 54 national and regional programs covering 118 countries; 50 prestigious partners among the highest scientific authorities in their countries; over 500 international scientists participated in selecting the National and Regional Young Talents.

Lessons learned

Two out of ten young women are considering a career in science, but only 1.5% are interested in a career in scientific research, according to L'Oréal Romania's research. Mostly influenced by their parents, most girls tend to choose a medical or economical career, or go towards areas such as psychology, sociology, or communication, marketing and political studies.

L'Oréal's work has shown that there is a need to intervene and inspire future generations to consider a scientific career. We learned that we can achieve this by bringing role models into the spotlight, by praising and supporting their work and by telling inspiring stories to those who are willing to look at this field in a more profound way; especially now, when it becomes clearer and clearer that women researchers can have a major impact on society and a better future.

Diversity and inclusion are not only the right direction, but also a vital necessity for businesses

What is your personal definition of diversity and how or why do you think diversity is important?

Diversity is a mosaic of individualities, experiences, visions, is an intercultural, dialogue that forms the human community. Diversity is not about how we differ, but about embracing one another's uniqueness. They who are different from us do not challenge us - they enrich us and we should be convinced that strength lies in differences, not in similarities. If you've built a door that's only fit for a certain type of person, logic says that you'll only ever get certain types of people walking through your door. The idea of "diversity" implies both acceptance and mutual respect, it involves the recognition of differences and the aspiration for better, the development of the spirit of tolerance, dignity and human solidarity, continuous development and combating ignorance through morals and cultural diversity.

Diversity and inclusion are not only the right direction, but also a vital necessity for businesses. It is as well very important not only in terms of economic growth, but also as a means of leading an intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual life.

What has your experience been in the journey of diversity and inclusion (D&I) in Sanofi Romania in recent years?

The journey of diversity and inclusion in Sanofi Romania is a continuous, endless one. We are striving on a daily basis to enhance and further develop the culture of diversity and inclusion, encouraging all our colleagues to be active and especially proactive in this regard, to share with us their challenges, to come with solution, to dare to challenge the status quo. We value a lot the projects driven bottom up, developed at employee proposals, project team members being assigned on voluntary basis, of course sponsored by senior leaders in the company.

Like this, we have implemented lots of initiatives such as flexible working schedule, home office policy and the „Buddy program“, we are very proud of - an onboarding and knowledge sharing method meant to orient new employees.

Induction is all about making our new employees “feel at home” in a quick process, to be One Sanofi. Along the way, that also means helping them understand our organizational values, company culture and the safety rules and others here, „Buddy“ program being a great tool to assist in these objectives.



Roxana Cîlțea, Head of HR Romania and Moldova, Sanofi Romania

A “Buddy” is one who partners with a new employee during their first 3 months of employment and offers advice and guidance to help foster and support the professional inclusion of a new employee in initial days.

The role of the Buddy is to allow for a comfortable, more informal environment in which the employee can ask and receive necessary guidance on the organizational operational details, culture and norms every day.

Which D&I measures have been implemented in the company?

At Sanofi, diversity and inclusion is foundational to how we operate and is embedded in our Core Values. We respect the diversity of our people, their backgrounds and experiences. We recognize to truly tap into the richness diversity brings, we must lead with inclusion and have a workplace where those differences can thrive and be leveraged to empower the lives of our employees, patients and customers.

In today’s world, demographic, social, and human challenges affect diversity in the workplace. Gender equality continues to be a challenge with women still under-represented at most senior levels in organizations. Balance and equality in the workplace among people of different gender and sexual orientation is far from being the norm. More notably, 80% of disabilities are invisible. And, by the end of this year, 35% of the global workforce will be comprised of millennials.

At Sanofi, we see these challenges as opportunities to make genuine improvements. We take constant action to ensure we are a truly diverse organization that engages all in an inclusive culture. This makes Sanofi resilient and adaptable. It inspires us to innovate in the fast-paced healthcare environments we operate in globally.

There is a very broad panel of measures, initiatives, policies, actually at varying degrees of implementation and maturity worldwide within Sanofi. Some of them becoming a daily routine already, others in development phase, others newly drafted, as proof of company’s constant focus and D&I commitment.

Listing only few of them, Global Gender Balance Board was set up by Sanofi Executive Committee Council to focus on driving gender parity within the organization. Elevate is an example of female talent development program, building the pipeline of talent at our most senior levels. The same “Women Pipeline” for the future generation of Executives is given importance through the Individual Leadership Development

Programs, meant to increase nominations to leadership positions.

Inclusive recruitments represents an unbiased processes through behavioral interventions in our HR practices by applying the recruitment inclusion nudges, such as quick, direct and timely mental pushes that prompt to check for biases and ensure that inclusive hiring practices are the default in our recruitment processes.

Flexible at work is Sanofi’s way of building a company of the future to attract and retain top talents by creating flexible and inclusive work practices. These practices empower our employees allowing them to effectively integrate their work and personal life while fostering respect and fairness by supporting the different lifestyles and experiences diversity brings. Similarly, Gender Neutral Paid Parental Leave is a program that establishes a framework for a global flexible work approach and expanded family leave including paternity leave, caregiver leave and adoption leave. All male employees having a baby may apply to a paid paternity leave.

Another impactful measure is the Effective Engagement Campaign that engages communication around company’s efforts and initiatives on Gender Balance, connecting the community. One of these initiatives was joining the European Gender Balance Mentoring Program. Its purpose is mentoring relationships that will offer guidance, advice and career support, so that we are putting our women talents on the path to becoming future leaders.

Our efforts worldwide to create a diverse and inclusive work environment have been recognized and awarded. Examples can be found on all continents. Sanofi Japan, for example, was one of the 1% companies in 2017 that were recognized by the Minister of Health under the Act on Promotion of Women’s Participation and Advancement in the Workplace with the highest grade for supporting women in managerial positions

On the other side of the Pacific, Sanofi Brazil was the only pharmaceutical company to be recognized in 2016 at the fifth edition of the “Pro-Gender & Racial Equality Program” for the company’s pro-gender management and its pro-diversity corporate policy.

In Africa and the Middle East we implemented Elle Women’s Initiative, a program that focuses on engaging and retaining female talent with career pathways in non-traditional roles. While at the same time Sanofi India successfully implemented the EMPOWER

development program with a “Diversity Initiative for Women in Sales” designed to support women working in a male dominated sales industry.

What are you particularly proud of?

At Sanofi we are people, managers, employees, patients, parents, caregivers, researchers, etc. Together, we are a healthcare organization dedicated to improving the lives of people worldwide. Our teams work with passion and commitment to understand and solve everyone’s healthcare needs. We transform scientific innovation into healthcare solutions, accept challenges and challenge the accepted. We have the courage to fight for equal opportunity and to speak out against discrimination. We believe that better health begins with education. At Sanofi, we express this purpose in two words: Empowering Life!

Therefore I am proud of each and every day of the almost 30 years I’m working in Sanofi.

I am proud because we are a health journey partner for Romanian patients since over 50 years.

I am proud Sanofi is certified as Global Top Employer for the second consecutive time and as European Top Employer for the third time. This great achievement reflects excellence, robustness and consistency in our HR policies, in the benefit of both the company and people. I am proud of our over 250 employees’ team in Romania, with 4 years average seniority, 69% women, 40 years age average and 39% millennials.

Every day, all these 250 employees work hard to offer timely access to high-quality medicines and healthcare solutions that are helping millions of Romanians to have a better life.

How does Sanofi benefit from D&I?

Being socially responsible while creating sustainable added value for the company.

Motivating each individual and improving our overall business performance.

Attracting, developing and retaining best talents in an inclusive organization. Fostering innovation through an inclusive culture, enriching competencies and constructive challenges.

Reflecting our market place: patients, customers, communities and stakeholders.

Understanding international cross cultural diversity: behaviors, stereotypes, values and benefits.

Enhancing image and reputation.

What is the most challenging part of your job in terms of Diversity & Inclusion?

Everything in terms of Diversity and Inclusion is challenging, all the time, everywhere and for anybody I think. Daring, to propose and implement innovative approaches, to ensure managers buy in, to build the trust of the employees that this is possible, to build a bi-directional feedback culture, to encourage people to speak up, to stand on for their opinion, to challenge the status quo.....and the listing may continue.

Where and to what extent do you see a need for future action?

Further collective and consistent actions have to be taken at civil society level, in order to embed the principle of Diversity and Inclusion, broadly in its DNA. To have all its members committed to concretely promote non-discrimination, inclusion and equal opportunities for all the citizens!

And when we talk about diversity and inclusion, we also talk about hiring people with disabilities or those with other sexual orientations, as well as the flexibility of the economic agents, authorities and public institutions to adapt to the diversity of employees’ needs. Continuously raising awareness, sharing best practice and consistent education are critical to foster an understanding among all stakeholders that diversity is an essential driver for a healthy society.

Interview by Dana Oancea, Romanian Diversity Charter

Enel Diversity Program



For us, diversity is an asset that can drive innovation in programs and processes. Enel's goal is not only to manage diversity, but to seek out the super powers that lie in individual differences, promoting dialogue and not competition, allowing space and recognizing the value of different ways of working and different attitudes.

About Enel in Romania

Enel Group operates in more than 30 countries all over the world and it enjoys the confidence of more than 68,000 employees worldwide. Enel Group in Romania is one of the largest private investors in the energy industry, carrying on operations in the fields of electricity distribution, supply, and production of renewable energy, as well as in the field of advanced energy solutions. The Group entered the Romanian market in 2005, and it provides services to 3 million clients. It has around 3,100 employees in Romania, and their cooperation is based on the Open Power values: responsibility, innovation, trust and proactive initiatives. It is an extraordinary opportunity to work in the energy field in this age of the energy transition, and together we have the chance to contribute in Romania to goals such as decarbonisation through green energy, electrical mobility, energy efficiency, circular economy, innovation, digitalization, all these complying with the principle of creating shared value, together with the communities which we serve.

Diversity and inclusion issue(s) addressed

At Enel Group, diversity and inclusion are among the parameters by which we measure our performance in terms of sustainability – they are monitored as dictated by the 2019-2021 Sustainability Plan. We started out in 2013 with the publication of our Human Rights Policy and continued in 2015 by committing to the Women's Empowerment Principles,

promoted by UN Global Compact and UN Women. That was also the year when we published our Diversity and Inclusion Policy. This translates our philosophy of inclusion and fostering diversity into principles, setting out a set of specific actions that refer in particular to gender, age, nationality and disability diversity and the culture of inclusion at all levels and in all organizational contexts. We went a step further in 2016 with the setting up of our People Care and Diversity Management global unit, which steers and supervises the adoption of the Policy, using a specific budget to promote initiatives and projects.

In terms of gender equal opportunities, we want to remove all workplace obstacles to having children and provide specific programs for new parents to help achieve a good work/life balance. We also work with schools and universities to encourage girls to choose technical and scientific careers through initiatives such as Women in Tech. Lastly, we are aiming to guarantee equal gender representation in our internal and external selection processes.

In Romania, our Diversity Program started in 2017 and has three pillars: the parental program, Diversity Talks and the work/life balance component. The program aims at making our work environment a more inclusive one by putting differences amongst individuals in the spotlight. The peak of this program is „diversity week”, celebrated every year in November.

We think that providing training in inclusive behaviours can give participants a taste of the richness that

can be unleashed by simply changing perspective. We have two NGO partners, La Primul Bebe (parenting education nonprofit) and Centrul FILIA (feminist action and research center). We document our actions (testimonials, video) and integrate these internal activities in our digital communication (websites and social media), to create awareness for these topics even for external audiences. Sessions dedicated to diversity have been integrated in our onboarding HR events.

Planning & Objectives

The Parental Program aims to empower parents by teaching them new skills, to create a professional and psychological bridge between parenthood experience and the return to the workplace, to involve future parents as well as their supervisors and HR Business Partners in the journey. Diversity Talks aims at involving our employees in discussions around topics like equal chances, gender equality, prejudices, stereotypes, discrimination. The Work-Life Balance Program aims at opening conversations and teaching skills related to mental health and wellbeing habits.

Activities implemented

PARENTAL PROGRAM: Safety for newborns: Thinking of all the questions and fears that this new journey brings, this is a one-day training event for new/future parents, which gives them advice and informs them of their rights and about returning to work with confidence in the future. It is created to offer them support and information in

their newest life adventure. The course is named „Prepare to be a Parent”.

Recent studies have disclosed the powerful effects exerted by young babies upon their parents. In this 1 day in class training, we discuss different topics of interest regarding parental care and child care: steps of prenatal growth, development path of the baby in his/her first year of life (physical, brain and kinaesthetic development), safety measures to implement, cognitive development of the child, learning, ways to stimulate the development of the baby through play.

Mothers: Designed with practicality in mind, this event focuses on developing the skills and strategies that mothers need to manage and direct their careers during pregnancy, as they leave and return from family leave, and as they settle into their new lives as working parents. It is an interactive workshop for mothers, packed with practical strategies that helps feel effective at work and at home, with the aim to build confidence as a parent that is juggling between career, care responsibilities and time for herself.

Fathers: It is an event that emphasizes the important role of the father in the family, from his needs, the needs of the partner, to the impact on the life of the children. The aim of this event is to create awareness and active involvement of fathers in child care and speak out about the challenges of fatherhood, and how he is now considered to be an important factor in a child's overall social competence, social maturity and the capacity to relate to others.

DIVERSITY TALKS: LGBT: The workshop „Transgender people, the road to self” was held by trans activist Patrick Brăila and aimed to establish a common vocabulary regarding transgender people, to identify and explore some of the prejudices and the stereotypes about them, to exemplify the difficulties they have to go through, giving greater attention to family situations that trans people often face.

We rediscovered the fact that it is important to be more sensitive to the differences of the people we work with and to show empathy. We promoted openness and acceptance at work,

removing obstacles to full participation of all employees regardless of gender or orientation. Knowledge about this topic and open discussion can help reduce potential discrimination.

The participants confessed that they were sceptical towards the topic, but were helped by the personal approach and the storytelling, and motivated to show respect for the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons. We heartedly embrace Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein's, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, saying: „If we are to achieve faster global progress towards equality for lesbian, gay, bi, trans and intersex people, businesses will not only have to meet their human rights responsibilities, they must become active agents of change”.

Stop violence against women: November 25th was named The International Day for the elimination of violence against women by the United Nations. Violence against women is a serious public health concern, with costs at multiple levels of society. Although violence is a threat to everyone, women and children are particularly susceptible to become victims because they often lack appropriate means of protection. We held a workshop where our guest speakers presented an overview of the issue and explored the burden of violence against women and children in Romania.

The workshop focused on what is known about violence against women and children, on prevention, the legislation in Romania which defends the women who are part of domestic abuses, what the victims can do to defend themselves and identification of the pathology of the aggressor. Violence against women is an obstacle to constructing inclusive and sustainable societies. It is impossible for a society to blossom if people live in fear of being assaulted.

Accessibility for people with disabilities: Studies show that employees with disabilities have equivalent job performance ratings as employees without disabilities. We organized a dedicated event with the aim of creating awareness, changing the mindset and focusing on how society can thrive if people with disabilities are

feeling included. A healthy organization should acknowledge the value and talent they bring to the workplace.

We discussed the barriers preventing people with disabilities from full participation in society, recognizing stereotypes applied to people with disabilities and our own attitudes towards them, becoming more aware of access issues for people with disabilities. The powerful impact of the event made participants question what we generally call „normality”.

WORK LIFE BALANCE: Burnout risk: Burnout is a state of emotional, mental and physical exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress. It occurs when one feels overwhelmed and unable to meet constant demands. As the stress continues, one begins to lose the interest or motivation that led them to take on a certain role in the first place. The aim of our project, which translated into a training course, was to prevent burnout at work and understand the factors that lead to the feeling of burnout, as well as improve resilience.

We talked about recognizing the warning signs of burnout, taking steps to regain balance and to adopt habits for a balanced life, improving working conditions and people's satisfaction at work. The attendees left the session with several building blocks to draw up an effective action plan for stress prevention, management and how to get assistance.

Impact and outcomes, lessons learned

Together with spreading the diversity conversation throughout the year, we are paying attention to how our colleagues receive these initiatives. Each diversity initiative is followed by a feedback survey in order to get the pulse on how the colleagues feel about our workshops, their perceptions and the impact of the programs in their lives. The feedback is crucial in order to improve overall employee experience, adjust our actions to their needs and keep them relevant in an inclusive manner.

Disability shall not disable employment

I live in Romania, a country in the European Union. It is a country where we have many issues and challenges. We also have good practice examples in many fields. Romania has moved slowly with the adoption of inclusion measures for persons with disabilities. However, one of the good things is that us citizens can still take initiative and get involved whenever possible. I work in the social sector in the Ministry of Labour, but more than anything I consider myself a community organizer. I say this because it is not enough to give bureaucratic solutions and it is always a good thing to take part in grass root activities so that issues can be sorted.

In 2006, Romania ratified the UNCRPD, the United Nations Convention for the rights of persons with disabilities. By this Romania and many other states that signed this convention engaged in providing methods of integration of persons with disabilities in everyday activities.

One of the fields taken into consideration is employment and active participation in the labour market. A person with disabilities should be able to work wherever they wish as per their education and possibilities.

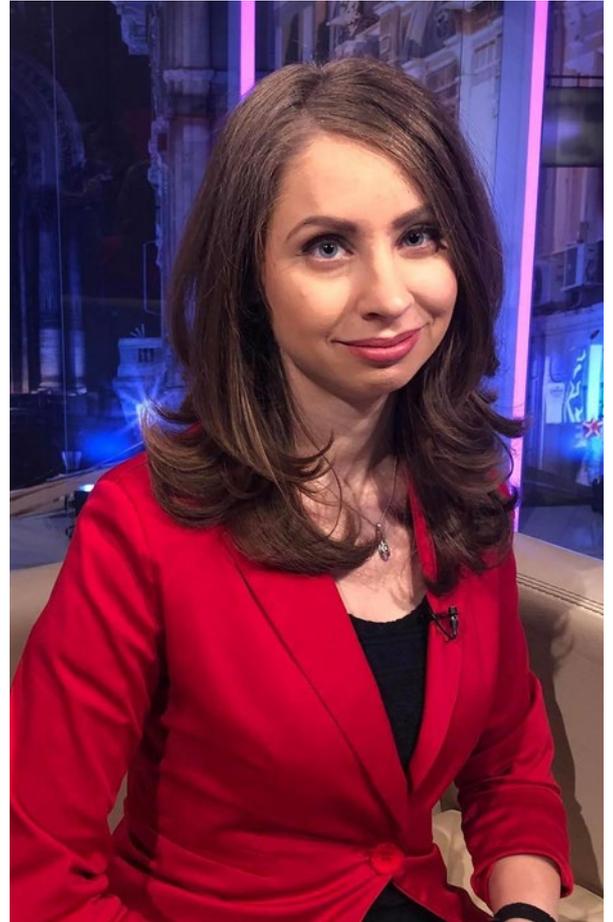
This in theory may sound well enough. However, I identified two main challenges that need to be pointed out and obviously some solutions have to be applied:

Change in mentality

Some employers and company owners, both public and private, scare away from hiring persons with disabilities because of fear of the unknown, of responsibilities or extra costs. In my opinion, persons with disabilities should not be considered as a burden or people that should be feared. For this, however, open discussions and one to one meetings between potential employers and employees are very much recommended. Another good practical experience can consist in facilitating trial work periods or job shadowing for persons who want to learn and experience a working environment together. Thus courage and acceptance can grow through mutual learning and understanding.

Resource management

Maybe some employers have come across the concept of reasonable accommodation. It means that a working environment has to be adapted to the needs of the person with disabilities who is the employee. As a company owner or recruiter, many questions come to mind when thinking about this concept: whether it is really possible to adapt the environment to the employee; how to do it so as not to cause positive discrimination. Some employers may even think about the costs involved.



Petra Iuliana Pintelei is a 26 year-old public servant and community organizer in Romania working for and with people with disabilities. Although she is visually challenged herself, she sees it as an opportunity to be more considerate to the needs of those around her bringing her the drive to be more determined to support herself and her peers in this amazing journey called life. She likes diversity and involvement and she enjoys every single moment of being active.

Persons with disabilities nowadays are very receptive to talking and openly sharing their needs, lobbying for the best solution as well as compromising when possible. In other words, nobody has to bend over backwards to secure a suitable working climate, but the needs can be met through mutual cooperation. Many persons just want to be involved, so they come up with creative ideas for their needed adjustments.

The main thing is to treat the possible employees with equity. It is an important concept meaning providing an equal but adapted treatment in order to make sure that everyone leads a normal happy life according to her/his own hopes and expectations.

In my opinion, it is a step forward to communicate with leaders or persons directly informed from inside the community and to accommodate trial periods, so that the employers see that persons with disabilities can be important and productive for their companies and for the state. As we might be complaining that we have to stop people from living without activity at the mercy of the state it is just as important to find a means of integration and bringing opportunities to the table.

The state can also get involved by supporting job fairs for persons with disabilities and companies can show they are interested by accepting peers from the community even if for a short interview or for a small period of time as a trial worker.

Nothing can be done without practical involvement. There may be a lot of legal measures but it might not be enough as at the end of the day the practical example is the most important.

I am one of those who managed to integrate in a full time job even though I am visually challenged. It is a constant hard work and I also needed to adapt my working pace, my communication skills and learn how to better use assistive technology. However, I gained a place in community, an income and most importantly a conventional working environment where I am an employee with dignity just like everyone else. This makes me want to expand the range of opportunities for all those like me who want to be active and independent, so I see it helpful to contribute as much as possible by encouraging every employer I know to hire without

second thoughts and by providing information and moral support for those who want to find a job and their place in society.

It is a constant process, a long road ahead, however, the pace is steady and hopefully it will even grow in speed. I hope that in a few years, the number of persons with disabilities who lead a life according to their dreams may grow substantially and I hope that all the ones who are integrated to get united and provide even more chances and opportunities to those like us.

A personal experience overview

It would be an amazing opportunity to outline the positive aspects that I have encountered in my country regarding building a career and finding a place in the world.

Fortunately, as Romania ratified the UNCRPD on the rights of persons with disabilities, legally a child or young adult with such challenges may pursue any educational institution as per their liking. Although we have special education as well, mainstream schools are more varied in options for future careers. I also studied in a mainstream high school since I wanted to further go for political sciences and foreign languages. A good thing about this is that I was introduced in the community of teenagers and teachers who never interacted with any student with special needs. Being a very open kind of person helped me overcome my anxiety related to the change in environment.

I am talking about education because it is the main pillar of starting and building a career or simply having a job. So during high school I had the chance to engage in many volunteering and extracurricular activities.

In Romania, especially in Bucharest, many high schools and even universities encourage youth to involve in volunteering and civic initiative based activities mostly with NGOs or other kind of bodies. It is a good way to make contacts for references, but also to grow not only by learning things from textbooks but also by being active and doing something productive for those around us.

The volunteering experiences helped me have better communication skills so that when I started university I became very confident with what I wanted to pursue.

The university is a mostly academic environment as we all know. We do not have a program yet that is related to career coaching, but teachers may give suggestions and help out when something is on our mind.

As a student with special needs I also searched for job opportunities and I went on some conferences with NGO representatives to talk to employers in a variety of fields about what it is like to work with a person with disabilities from a social perspective.

I was happy to go on some corporate interviews on my own and simply have an experience of what it is like to be interviewed, how is a recruiter like and also how it looks like to be around people working at a fast pace in a multinational company.

I chose the governmental job because it is closer to my field of studies and this made me feel very lucky because very few of us have the chance to have the job that they wish for.

I saw this luck as also a chance to try and build opportunities or open doors for my peers albeit through an encouragement or some help with a suggestion in their CV or, if it ever becomes possible, maybe even with referring them to potential employers.

Employees need peer support from someone like them who tried before and who might have settled in a job. Employers, although they might seem self-confident enough, might also need support in order to integrate a person with special needs in their work environment.

The primary rejection or apparent back step is not something to be blamed of the employers who have no knowledge of working with person with special challenges or with a difference.

One of the good things is that persons with disabilities themselves are starting to come forward and talk about their needs and expectations as well as what they can offer at work.

One more good aspect is that our country is also growing in diversity nowadays and people are starting to become more open about themselves.

To put it simply, everybody has, if not a

disability, some special need or some kind of particularity or maybe they come from a different background.

The key to integration is learning. The more we learn about a person the more we can accept their needs and uniqueness. I also found many curious things about people and even for me maybe at times it might have been a bit hard to understand things at first. But as long as we have an open mind and most importantly if we can rely on peer to peer help and support, I think we are building solid steps forward in terms of integrating persons with special needs, challenges or even from diverse backgrounds in any working environment.

My C4Mentor

For over 4 years in Carrefour we set off on a keen journey to become an organization that is continuously learning and calls for the same learning responsibility in all members. Our desire is to spread learning programs available to everyone, for as many colleagues in the most inclusive way. The core mentality we use in designing our programs is: “teach them how to fish” through which we guide people in acquiring the knowledge on how to learn while we set up the necessary resources and the proper framework for them to have at hand at any time.



About Carrefour Romania

Carrefour is one of the biggest employers in Romania, having over 300 stores in the country: hypermarkets, supermarkets, proximity stores, discounters. We have created local jobs since 1999 and have provided a wealth of opportunities for professional development and internal promotion. Along with our 18,000 colleagues in Romania, we support diversity, equal opportunities and we are against all forms of discrimination.

Diversity and inclusion issues addressed

One of our business objectives is the promotion of an open culture for innovation alongside clients and employees towards expansion through our omnichannel.

My C4Mentor is a program for developing leadership skills, dissolving hierarchical barriers inside the organization by offering an active bidirectional learning experience. Our plan is based on the collaboration of an unconditioned mix of generations, experiences, and genders and we aimed for all functions: from headquarter managers to the cashier in stores.

Through this program we firstly support an approach which we grow in Carrefour Romania, that of collaborative work, based on collective intelligence, regardless of age, gender, experience or the hierarchical level that people have. We find inspiration from each other and discover new perspectives to continuously evolve in our activity. We support the “TakeGiveGrow” movement by

encouraging the participants of paying forward their acquired knowledge through their learning curve. In fact, we learn to learn from each other so that learning can reach as many of us as possible: mentors share from their experience, mentees share with others what they have learned from mentors. A continuous expanding share circle of information and knowledge.

Planning & Objectives

The main business need, this cultural paradigm change started from the desire to increase customer proximity and operational efficiency, in an industry where excellent logistics and communication between departments for a company that has a considerable number of employees, as is Carrefour, is crucial. That is why decentralization, autonomy, transversal work and quick decisions must be combined with proactivity in shops alongside with feedback from our customers. This feedback needs to be constantly transmitted to the organization.

Changes in the market level of the trade, the aggressiveness of the proximity trade, the integration with Billa, and the changes in the daily shopping basket, have led to the always proactive positioning on the market of Carrefour Romania. The innovations and the responsibility of new thinking had to be encouraged like desired outbursts and outbreaks that would not only light a fire in the market but completely light up the sky with fireworks of positive changes with a soon as possible effect. That is why, a program like mentoring was a natural

choice for us. Evolving can take place with the meeting of many minds and interactions.

“My C4Mentor” program makes full use of mentoring and transforms this process into a development strategy for those involved, making it a best practice for all those who want to implement such a program in their organization.

The objectives pursued in the implementation of this program are: exchange of professional experience between generations and different levels of business knowledge, fluidization of communication between colleagues, access to new learning methods, and last but not least, employee retention through development programs, mentoring and coaching.

This program represents an organizational practice in which the mentoring relationship is learned and assumed at all levels. This encourages normalcy in mentoring, in creating this vital open context in which people seek to be mentored, and mentors deciding to support those who proactively come towards them. It is an active culture through which we develop, with the help of our people, the leadership ability.

Activities implemented

In 2019 the program was in its second edition and was comprised of two stages: the period of organizing the action plan and the period of mentoring and supporting the created community.

With the beginning of spring we set up the foundation of creating and implementing the communication plan inside the organization: from the

creation of our visual identity, tone of voice, promotional materials to specific communication tools inside the organization (for example, the internal communication platform C4 Connect, dedicated emails per target or specific point activations in various social environments).

The communication plan was created around the Asian myth of “The red thread of destiny” and was subsequently presented and reiterated in all the interactions and communications inside the organization.

The mentors were chosen by their own colleagues inside the organization, as we choose the leaders - through the 360 Development platform. An opinion poll was sent to about 200 colleagues in the organization asking them to nominate as mentor six names of possible mentors from Carrefour Romania based on criteria of hard and soft skills. After all the votes were recorded, those who received a minimum number of 2 votes were chosen for the shortlist.

The 49 voted mentors received the invitation to enter the mentoring program after the collective recognition of their abilities. To show them what being a mentor meant we made a series of videos that went viral in the organization, with a very high emotional impact.

The invitation was accepted with enthusiasm and wholeheartedness by 40 directors and managers and these results that were beyond our initial expectations.

An immediate next step was represented by the “Experience Journey” endeavor to discover the specific profile of each mentor in an attractive, interesting, authentic and clear way. Because our subjects are very busy and well anchored in their business dynamics we’ve outlined an approach with several contact points: What does this mean in a practical way? The experiences we used to portray the mentors were chosen in a manner to show them in the most transparent, relaxed and friendly light so that the mentees could choose the mentors rightfully, based on strengths, qualities, common values, experience and same interests.

The mentors training stage scored a

100% presence value, a sign of visible commitment, which gave the program a strong positive boost. In this process they benefited from personalized training on the specific needs for a mentor, this program was designed after collecting feedback received from the first edition. We touched on: mentoring skills upgrading, coaching, in depth problem solving in and fine tuning. A special focus fell on goals for the process and session stage. We encouraged the development of mentees competitions through listening, questions and feedback from mentors.

In June 2019 we held a series of mentees training sessions, both face-to-face and remote (we had mentees were from all over the country involved in the project, their training on specific objectives and also tips & tricks to manage their own process but also the relationship with the mentor.

In July we began the mentor-mentees meetings and we launched the creation of a community in which we supported their learning and transformation process. Sharing of information and resources between them and others in the organization was encouraged by exercise sessions and activities, self-knowledge, goal settings, training, sent books and informative materials and resource sharing inside the organization.

Impact and outcomes

This program is now at its 3rd edition and since the 1st one, the number of mentors and mentees has increased greatly showing the involvement, commitment and willingness to improve inside the program. We encourage both the mentors and the mentees to gain as much knowledge, understanding, and experience through these valuable exchanges that are aimed for the professionals.

For the previous edition our initial goal was to attract 60 individuals, yet we decided to implicate 112. This means we had reached an objective stage of 185%; we had 46 women mentees from a total of 74 between the ages of 25 to 45 years old. This fact alone is here to show our large range of project acceptance. During the 6-month mentoring period, 314 mentoring sessions were registered,

and 9 of the mentors decided to make job changes as a result of this program.

We believe that different people can define workplace diversity and inclusion. In short, our program can be summarized to the core value of accepting and valuing employees from all backgrounds and creating an environment where everyone feels recognized and accepted.

Lessons learned

Our mental positioning for this project was: developing a leadership ability using an action learning method. For this method of action learning, we have created a framework in which leaders can use their skills - or develop them - seemingly shortening the operational stakes - (not mentoring the direct team, but someone cross-sectional) and also through this framework, we helped experts develop their personal leadership ability by becoming more organized, more knowledgeable, making faster decisions and understanding aspects at another level. All this because we know and understand that a mentoring development experience that is combined with coaching skills disciplines the mind and offers new perspectives.

From this perspective, we believe in the uniqueness of the program. It is self-governing and a proof, with concrete and tangible results, that the future of learning: autonomy, assuming, relating, proactivity, is for us, Carrefour, Here, Today.

Designing a different development process with a maximum efficiency for each type of interaction was a real challenge for us. From how to develop the right framework for getting to know each other to how to facilitate the building of relationships as well as their encouragement to be honest and open to get the best out of this mutual learning and development experience.

The large number of mentors and mentees was managed with minimal resources, and the decisive step in the success of the project was represented by the well pairing of the mentors with their mentees. This testifies for the effects of the program - the evolution of mentees within the organization and their fruitful career development.

Electrician Apprenticeship Program

The formation of the future generation of professionals in the energy field represents the core mission of the Electrician Apprenticeship program, initiated by Distribuție Oltenia. The project offers a complete learning experience for students, focused on theoretical and practical contact with the electrician profession, as well as participation to non-formal education activities. The diversity and inclusion component is also cultivated within the program, by exposing students to a diverse group of specialists in the field and contributing to a learning environment that values the participation of each individual.



About Distribuție Oltenia

Distribuție Oltenia brings electricity to more than 3.4 million people in Romania, across 7 counties in the South-Western part of the country (Dolj, Olt, Gorj, Valcea, Mehedinți and Teleorman counties). Through its development strategy, Distribuție Oltenia aims to improve the level of safety in electricity distribution and to reduce energy loss. Other objectives are to improve the level of operational safety of power grids with reduced maintenance costs and repairs, while acting as a reliable partner to its external and internal stakeholders.

Diversity and inclusion issues addressed

With over 100 electricians that need to be recruited annually by the company in order to support its operations, Distribuție Oltenia created the Electrician Apprenticeship program as a response to its own increasing need for human resources, combined with the annual decrease in available workforce. The limited talent pool of specialists in the field is also strengthened by an acute gender imbalance in the energy sector, with an increasing need to channel more girls towards a career in the field by designing inclusive educational opportunities.

In the current context, the commitment to intervene in the formation of the future generations of electricians also became imperative due the following identified trends: a global population of 8.5 billion people by 2030, estimated by The United Nations, which entails a higher level of energy consumption and, implicitly, a greater need for specialists in the field; the positioning of Romania in the top three countries facing a crisis of trained professionals (according to a 2017 Manpower study), with 40% of 42.000 employers questioned for the study admitting that they have difficulties in recruiting qualified staff; the need to cover a deficit of about 100 persons per

year, especially for the job of electricians and sector specialists, according to the company's retirement plans for the next 5 years, and the positioning of Romania in 2015 as the country with the highest percentage of students following social sciences and law (49%), but with the lowest in science, mathematics and computer science (5.2%) in the EU.

Planning and objectives

Electrician Apprenticeship focuses on the training of the future generations of electricians, by improving the quality of the formation opportunities addressed to young people interested in a career in the field of energy. The program delivers a well-rounded, inclusive educational system that combines theoretical formation, internship hours, as well as non-formal education activities focused on personal development.

The educational support is strengthened by the company's investment in school infrastructure, through refurbishing and equipping electrical laboratories, as well as by the performance scholarships offered to the 5 top students in each class, in addition to the financial help received from the Government.

The project started in 2016 alongside two partner high schools from Argeș and Dolj counties, and continued to expand annually, both geographically (in 2017 in Gorj county, in 2018 in Teleorman county and in 2019 in Mehedinți county), as well as within each partner high school by forming new classrooms every year. Through this gradual expansion, in 2019, the program welcomed its first generation of graduates, allowing 24 out of the 33 students that graduated the 3-year study period to complete a 6-month paid internship initiated by Distribuție Oltenia and its partners, and become part of the company, as full time employees. During the internship, students expanded their knowledge in the field by learning from experienced

specialists, while also having direct contact with the company's activity.

Moreover, by 2021, the program is expected to cover the entire operational area of the company, through partnerships with high schools in Valcea and Olt counties.

Activities implemented

One of the main activities included in the program is represented by internship hours within the company, where students visit Distribuție Oltenia transformation stations, witness daily interventions performed by professional electricians, and they become acquainted with the specialized equipment. Both the internship hours in the field, as well as students' access to an electric laboratory within their school, represent an important first contact with the practical side of the profession, leading to a well-rounded learning experience.

Another standard activity is represented by non-formal education workshops for personal development, through the partnership with the ROI Association and Noi Orizonturi Foundation. These meetings represent one of the main benefits of the program that materializes every year into changing attitudes and mentalities and improving students' academic performance. Considering their positive impact on students' development, the company decided to increase the number of workshops organized during a school year, from 4 to 9. These activities bring students closer to the profile of an electrician, by focusing on: understanding the importance of moral values (collaboration, respect, trust) in students' personal and professional development, appropriating an ethical behavior in relation to others, as well as developing teamwork skills.

In 2019, the list of activities of the program also included 4 initiatives dedicated to students' personal development and familiarisation with the organizational culture of the company: students' involvement as volunteers in the company's annual tree planting event, as an opportunity to practice team work outside the classroom and leave a positive mark on the environment; visits at the company's main offices during „Saptamana Altfel” – these activities

allowed students to interact with a diverse range of DEO employees and imagine themselves in their shoes; dedicated competitions – the Electrician Apprentice's Trophy - where students can test their theoretical and practical knowledge in the field and manage to get an insight of the challenges faced by a professional in the energy sector; summer camp for the students with the best academic results – organized by the Noi Orizonturi Foundation, and with a positive impact on personal development. Starting from the concept of experiential learning, all the activities were designed to encourage students in taking responsibility for their actions, learning to accept different perspectives, or overcoming different challenges through collaboration.

Impacts and outcomes

In 2016, 48 students began their journey as Electrician Apprentices in the pilot edition of the program, the number increasing to 88 in the second year of implementation. The number of girls enrolled in the project also increased, from 1 to 6 as a result of redesigning the communication campaign to offer more potential models for girls to identify with – from including them in the communication materials to offering more visibility to female employees in the company. In the 2018-2019 school year, the number of girls subscribing to the program increased to 13, respectively 22 in the 2019-2020 school year. Moreover, we noticed that the girls also have an excellent academic performance, with results that position them in the top 5 of their class.

The diversity and inclusion component is an important part of the annual communication campaign focused on encouraging the enrollment in the program. In 2019, together with the partners from One World Romania at School, we launched the Electric Superhero Caravan in 4 counties from the program's area of implementation, which sparked young people's interest for a career in the energy field through the documentary film. The film screenings were followed by open discussions with middle school students that covered their future plans, the significance that they attach to having a profession, as

well as addressing the misconceptions that keep certain groups out of technical careers. Moreover, another initiative was offering vocational tests to potential candidates that revealed students' cognitive and non-cognitive abilities, vocational interests, as well as their values. As a result, students could become more self-aware and better identify a suitable educational journey and vocational profile for the future.

Once enrolled in the program, the students take part in non-formal education activities that allow them to learn more about themselves and their community, about the importance of respect and taking responsibility for one's actions. The proposed activities and exercises are also designed to bring into light the role of equality and diversity in technical professions and debunk the biases associated with them.

Lessons learned

According to the students, one of the most successful components of the program is represented by the personal development workshops, as an alternative, informal form of education, followed by the opportunities that allows them to interact with professionals in the field and better understand the daily challenges of being an electrician.

As the program continues to extend geographically, diversity will remain a priority, by putting potential and current students in contact with a diverse set of professionals in the field. By sharing their experiences of working in the field, we aim to provide more and more role models for girls, that can begin to imagine themselves following a technical career. Since the energy industry is still predominantly male-centric, the program will continue its mission to design an inclusive environment that brings together diverse voices and allows all students to thrive towards a career in the field.

By combining all these activities, Electrician Apprentice aims to inspire students to prepare for a successful career and to get actively involved in redefining the profile of the future electrician.



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ROMANIAN DIVERSITY CHARTER

Romanian Diversity Charter

The official launch of the Romanian Diversity Charter took place on 18 April 2018, Romania thus becoming the 21st country in the European Union with a Diversity Charter and benefiting from the membership in the European Diversity Platform. The Romanian Diversity Charter brings together 110 signatories, covering approx. 157,000 employees from companies, public institutions and NGOs, who have publicly assumed the principles of the Charter, so that diversity, equal opportunities and social inclusion become values acknowledged and respected in Romania. More details at www.cartadiversitatii.ro

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