

Ljubljana, 10th of December 2020

Signing ceremony with a round table

“Diversity against pandemic”

Traditionally, on the occasion of the International Human Rights Day, Diversity Charter Slovenia, organized fourth signing ceremony with a round table "Diversity against the pandemic". On this occasion we welcomed new signatories of Diversity Charter Slovenia, today the community gathers 153 slovenian organizations. The event was in English, you can watch it here: [Diversity against Pandemic](#)



Virtual event was opened by the *Human Rights Ombudsman of the Republic of Slovenia*, Mr. Peter Svetina who concluded: »Let us be humane to each and every human being, especially in these times when the dignity of each of us is being tested. In our actions, let us be guided and encouraged by: solidarity, mutual respect and an awareness that human rights are the rights of all people.« Guests from Sweden, Poland, Austria, USA and Slovenia.



Sonja Šmuc, general manager, Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia emphasized that the epidemic is likely to affect the space and the way of working in the future, which will affect companies. She noted that consideration is likely to be given to the right of employees to establish a boundary between work and privacy, and that remote management of employees will certainly be a challenge.



Mirjana Dimc Perko (Managers Association Slovenia) pointed out that women's leadership during Covid 19 showed greater success in curbing the epidemic. The compassion of leaders, addressed to all residents, not just voters, connecting, accessible, open and direct communication, were key components of a successful containment of the epidemic, especially in the northern EU countries.

Saša Mrak Hendrickson (ambassador of DC Slovenia) pointed out the strong pressure of American society on corporations and Biden administration, for more diversity and inclusion, not only in the supervisory boards of corporations, but also in society in general. Biden's election gave hope and a strong message that the values of diversity and inclusion are key to advancing and curbing American disunity.

Gabriella Wiiala (President at Diversity Charter Sweden) highlighted the strong potential of young migrants in Sweden, who demand more social inclusion. She emphasized the desire of companies to employ this group, which brings great entrepreneurial potential. At the same time, she pointed out that companies in communication departments need to include more diversity, which is the only way to address this group of potential employees. She also said that the difference between speaking and acting in companies can lead to a communication crisis, which can have lasting consequences for companies and society in general.

Good practices from global companies Volvo and Coca Cola were presented (**Liza Shybanova, HR Poland, Coca Cola; Katarina Matson, Director of Culture and Diversity, Volvo Cars**). They pointed out that Covid-19 brought about changes in communication with employees and their customers. During Covid-19, they responded with a number of solidarity actions such as contribution of safety health equipment, the sharing of emergency transport cars in key sectors. They have put the safety of their employees at the forefront. They found that the epidemic brought employees together on a more personal level. Through training, they supported managers to make it easier to guide their employees and help them overcome adversity. **Marzena Sterzlack (DC Poland)** pointed out the growing activity of young people in Poland, who, like all over the world, demand more equality for all and represent a great energy from the bottom and call for social change. She added that the epidemic has accelerated reflection on the strong interconnectedness of social, environmental and economic issues.

Sara Preuschoff (The Vienna Chamber of Commerce, DC Austria) emphasized that young people in Austria responded proactively and optimistically to the challenges of the epidemic. They want to contribute to overcoming the crisis with many business ideas, but the financial resources currently intended to solve the crisis are inaccessible to young people. At the moment, talks are under way in Austria on how to ensure that funds are also available to young people, as they will bear the burden of the epidemic.

Barbara Zupančič, Head of the Slovenia Diversity Charter, who moderated the round table, concluded: "The impact of COVID-19 on social bias and discrimination only exacerbates previously challenging times in terms of diversity and inclusion. It is in these times, it would be good to stop, connect and step together. Asking questions is essential, not only for learning about ourselves, but for facing all the challenges that life brings us." She concluded the round table with the following questions: "What will the new reality bring to companies and people? Will managers be able to steer a ship across wild waters under a starless sky? Is the integration of the values of diversity and inclusion the first answer to the current crisis? Is the willingness to accept help from others our medicine?"



Thanks to **Barbara Kozelj**, a **Slovenian mezzo-soprano** who lives and works in the Netherlands, an exceptional soloist who impresses the audience of the world's leading stages with her excellent performances. She donated 2 songs for the Diversity Charter event, *Bailero Canteloube* & *Black is the color of my true love's hair*.

