



# 9<sup>th</sup> EU Diversity Charters annual forum 'Diversity in Diverse Europe'

*Event report*

*Vienna House Andel's Prague Hotel, 15 October 2018*

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## Opening remarks

### Pavína Kalousová, chair, Czech Republic Diversity Charter

The forum opened with a message of optimism that acknowledges the challenges ahead, as all over Europe the diversity movement is increasing. “We’re here to celebrate diversity, respect and openness, things that are core to the EU’s values. I believe the Charters can support the fight for human dignity. We need to join with companies, governments, NGOs and the media to fight for the values we believe in,” said Ms Kalousová. “Today is an opportunity to discuss how we promote diversity and inclusion effectively across the EU, fight bias, reach others and tackle the challenges that lie ahead.”

The world is more connected than ever, a place where it’s possible to access any information instantly, yet is at the same time a place in which people feel abandoned by the fragmentation of society and polarisation of values. Attacks against human rights, and against ambassadors of human rights, are becoming part of mainstream thinking, supported by some political parties. Softer voices promoting diversity and inclusion are not heard. The address ended with a quote from Czech statesman Vaclav Havel: “I feel that the dormant goodwill in people needs to be stirred. People need to hear that it makes sense to behave decently or to help others, to place common interests above their own, to respect the elementary rules of human coexistence.”



### Věra Jourová, European Commissioner for justice, consumers & gender equality



The Commissioner began by welcoming representatives of the two new Charters launched this year: Romania and Lithuania, taking the total to 22. There are now more than 10,000 companies covering 15 million employees who have committed to promoting and protecting diversity and equality. “These figures show there are people and organisations who care about these fundamental values,” she said. “Employers are crucial in fostering diversity. To be successful in a global society we must meet the need for diversity. Innovation is created by bringing together diverse people, with each actively participating. It’s beneficial to everyone.” The challenge in a digital world, she said, is to ensure that

digitalisation contributes to more inclusive societies and workplaces. This requires committed, courageous leadership, with brave people at the political level, as speaking up in support of fundamental rights become less popular. Great leaders are willing to encourage open discussion even though it may be difficult.

### Jana Maláčová, Minister of labour & social affairs, Czech Republic

The minister described diversity as a crucial value at family, local, regional, national and global level. Diverse

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societies thrive more than uniform ones, and this applies in the workplace too. Contact with people from different backgrounds destroys prejudices. Without the goodwill of employers, diversity goals can't be reached. She thanked those who had already signed up to the Charter and presented four new signatories from the Czech Republic.



*From left to right: Jana Maláčová, Minister of labour & social affairs, Czech Republic, Věra Jourová, European Commissioner for justice, consumers & gender equality, Olga Marušová, HR manager, ICZ a.s., Dana Mašlová, MBA, Puls investiční s.r.o, HR manager; Denise Waddingham, Director, British Council, Dušan Savić, General Manager Czech Republic, Brown-Forman Czechia, s.r.o..*

## Keynote speech: Magda Vášáryová



Sociologist and diplomat Ms Vášáryová was the first female Slovak ambassador and presidential candidate, opening the door for many women to follow. She spoke of how her generation in Central and Eastern Europe imagined they would be able to make use of their experience of living under two totalitarian regimes and share this across Europe. However, she said, the generation who were able to do so are gone, with nobody to take their place. "Instead of being happy and open to the world, we opened the old dusty chest from the 19th century in the attic, pulling out old prejudices, myths and dangerous statements," she said. "When we're forced to listen to bald-headed fascists sitting in parliament in Slovakia, we see we are returning mentally, culturally and politically to the past."

While the picture she paints is not a happy one, she said it was also a great challenge to the next generation, and she called on them to use humour, humanity and kindness as their weapons. She spoke of shaking off the "victim mentality" that has coloured the region's history and take responsibility. "In our romantic memory, we are victims. We have to overcome this idea and become modern-thinking people. When we became part of the EU, we wanted to become like them and found that the comfort zone of being a victim didn't work anymore." She called for dialogue with the whole of Europe as an equal partner, to

tackle the brain drain that has seen Slovakia, Lithuania and Bulgaria lose millions of young people to migration in the past 10 years. "This is the danger: we are losing brains and people who have the energy to change this romantic myth and prejudice connected with romanticism. There is a lot of work to be done here."

## Panel discussion: Together for diverse Europe

Moderator: **Pavλίna Kalousová**, Czech Republic Diversity Charter



From left to right: Fiona Bartels-Ellis OBE, Magda Vášáryová, Rabin S Baldewsingh, Michael Dickstein, Pavλίna Kalousová

### Fiona Bartels-Ellis OBE, global head of equality, diversity & inclusion, British Council

Ms Bartels-Ellis spoke of the constant change we are confronted with, which can be confusing for people as societies and demographics shift. In Britain, she said, the referendum on leaving the EU raised the way in which prejudice is often just under the surface. She spoke of an absence of skills among leaders in dealing with diversity, in empathy, in harnessing facts, in demonstrating the ability to lead with independence, in inspiring trust. Populism may be short-termist, unhealthy, inappropriate and unsustainable, but there is a need to understand it, she said. People have legitimate questions about how much diversity they feel they can tolerate and how much can be managed; it's important to engage with but not indulge this sentiment. There is a human tendency towards unfairness, so businesses need to continue taking responsibility. There is lots to unravel, she said, and the Charters and their increasing membership are potent forces for good. When asked what people can do as individuals, she advised trying to unlearn unconscious biases. "Have the facts and learn to be challenged," she said. "Engage with your own prejudices. Learn how to stand up and say things that won't make you popular, and be an ally to other people. Empathy is important."

### Michael Dickstein, group director sustainability & community, Coca-Cola Hellenic

One of the root causes of the polarisation of values is social frustration, Mr Dickstein said, and this needs to be tackled. Gender and LGBT diversity are high on his company's agenda, but the upstream question is how to ensure sufficient diversity gets into work in the first place. He introduced the company's Youth Empowered programme, which aims to train 1 million young people by 2025 by providing workshops and training in basics such as presentation, CV writing and time management, in the 28 countries in which the company is active, focusing on those who are not in employment, education or training. Asked how companies can make a difference, Mr Dickstein said this was something he saw being questioned more and more. It's a paradigm shift, he said, with more being asked from companies not just to keep their own house in order but to take a stand on social issues. It doesn't come naturally to a business: many are adapting well, but many more need to make progress. While he believes his company can have an impact through its social programmes, it doesn't assume it has all the solutions: "We start something and get feedback from the people involved," he said. "If we see things that aren't effective, it's our responsibility to adjust it so we achieve what we want to."

### Rabin S Baldewsingh, former deputy mayor, The Hague, Netherlands

Mr Baldewsingh related an incident he experienced in Prague, in which a woman refused to let him sit beside her on the tram. "Was it because I'm a man or because I'm black? I was troubled by this," he said. "It's such a contradiction to the psyche of Europe." He emphasised the importance of connection between people and warned of the dangers of populism. Migration is an asset and we must recognise and accept it, he said, through strong leadership and through policies that are reflected in organisations' cultures. As a politician, he wants to see change happen more quickly, and said that in the Netherlands, the discussion about diversity had been happening for more than 40 years without real change.

## Workshop: Becoming a champion: What do we need from leaders?

Moderator: Pavlína Kalousová, Czech Republic Diversity Charter



Panel: Renata Mrázová, global head of HR, NN, Netherlands;

Giangiacomo Pierini, public affairs & communication director, Coca-Cola HBC Italy;

Vera Budway Strobach, diversity manager, Erste Group

### Key issues

- Countries have differing cultural and historical factors that affect corporate diversity, and even within the same country there are widely varying contexts and prejudices
- Social pressures can keep women out of higher positions, despite apparently supportive infrastructure allowing them to return to work after having children
- Companies are often scared to be a voice, as they fear the potential commercial impact,
- It can be challenging to promote some issues to blue-collar colleagues and may require creativity in communication
- Corporate programmes tend to be conceived centrally then rolled out at branches, but recent action to promote diversity has been a bottom-up movement
- In international companies it can be crucial to promote the same level of diversity and inclusion across different countries
- Ensuring diversity and inclusion is everyone's job
- Companies must remain vigilant and continue speaking up on diversity, as it takes very little for there to be a backlash and we should not take the progress to date for granted

### Tips & tricks

- Change requires leadership, belief, role models and persistence
- Young people can take the lead and put pressure on management, creating a movement that management must listen to
- People with a personal stake in the issue need to stand up and create an environment where they can bring the issue into open
- Having an infrastructure in companies is not enough; to continue changing attitudes, companies need ambassadors at senior levels who are active, authentic and engaged. A senior leader supporting the issue and acting as figurehead should lead to faster acceptance from other management figures
- Inclusive leadership training can help create the right atmosphere for change
- To make change, it's necessary to carry out research to establish the facts, lobby internally, make the business case, and go to leaders with sound arguments for why action is needed





## Workshop: Diversity & inclusion: Not just for show! Measuring the success of diversity

Moderator: Zuzana Cisternas, consultant, Mercuri Urval



Panel: Magdalena Dobisova, diversity & inclusion manager, Skanska Group;

Christian Berg, managing director, AllBright Foundation;

Sonia Malaspina, HR director South East Europe Early Life Nutrition & HR director Italy & Greece, Danone

### Key issues

- The proportion of women in executive management of the 30 largest companies on the stock exchange is lower than 25 %
- Many countries 'clone' their executives. The most common names at the highest levels in Germany, Poland and Czech Republic are variations of Thomas, while in the US and England it is John
- There should be an environment of mutual respect, trust and commitment in which everyone is given a fair opportunity to contribute to organisational results, based on their unique talents and background
- In several countries, many women leave their job after giving birth to their first child and a large proportion remain unemployed
- It is only by focusing on both diversity and inclusion that we will see the business benefits of diversity
- Moving from no female leaders to 30 % representation is associated with a 15 % increase in a company's revenue margin



### Tips & tricks

- Crucial factors for success with diversity include the CEO treating it as a priority, cultural change, internal targets, role models and involving men in the issue
- At all levels, people need to learn about others, check their own assumptions and attitudes, and change their strategies for interaction
- Conversations and sharing experiences can establish an inclusive and equitable culture
- Be open to different ideas and use active listening
- Connect to others' ideas, work through misunderstandings and speak up for others
- Establish communication channels during maternity leave to share information and be flexible with parents when their children begin nursery or school



## Workshop: Diversity drives innovation: How can innovation & economic models drive diversity?



*Moderator: Barbara Zupančič, development manager at Šentprima institute for rehabilitation & education and Slovenian Diversity Charter*

*Panel: Sarah Atkinson, vice-president, communications & social responsibility, CA Technologies;*

*Rikke Voldsgaard Risager, vice-president, human resources & internal services, Blue Ocean Robotics*

### Key issues

- Diversity needs to be addressed everywhere from the classroom to the boardroom
- Diversity – along with sustainability – must form an integral part of the new business models applied across companies
- One of the three pillars of sustainability is achieving social goals – good working conditions, health, quality education, a healthy community, culture, social justice – that are closely linked to diversity of employees and customers, be it in society, inclusion in decision-making or innovating new products
- Diverse boardrooms and leadership drive long-term success, demonstrated by a variety of global and country-focused research
- Diversity and inclusiveness make reskilling and returning to the workplace smoother and more effective; they also play a key role in employee engagement and satisfaction
- Diverse teams and leadership solve problems more quickly, they create a positive business impact and allow for equal opportunities and social justice
- Innovation, diversity and measuring are the bottom line
- Digital workplace transformation is not just about upgrading to better systems, it is about changing the culture of the workplace so that employees feel comfortable with new tools and are inspired to use them. Diversity management plays a great role in understanding and inclusion of employees who will use technologies
- 60 % of the work that the next generations will do has not yet been discovered; the education system cannot – objectively – prepare them for the workplace

### Tips & tricks

- Creating employee communities of interest helps internally as well as in HR marketing
- Reverse mentoring programmes may support acceptance in respect to ethnicity, age, sexuality and other issues
- Minor steps pay off, such as establishing internal rules about not emailing employees outside working hours
- Communication sustains an environment where everyone is valued; this brings critical people on board
- Technology cannot be ignored, but cultural issues must remain on top
- Don't underestimate the arts and humanities: the combination of divergent and convergent thinkers brings more creativity and innovative potential than homogeneous teams
- Companies need to continually verify whether their teams are diverse enough to make their products and services accessible to everyone
- Understand that diversity is a journey that should be reflected in the corporate culture; appreciating this brings positive results



## Workshop: From exclusion to inclusion: Minorities in the workplace

Moderator: Alice Odé, Dutch Diversity Charter

Panel: Cinzia Prometti, senior corporate social responsibility officer, European Investment Bank; Amber Lingmont, inclusion & diversity lead, Accenture; Terence Guiamo, head of diversity & inclusion, PricewaterhouseCoopers, and chair of Agora Network



Ms Lingmont presented [a video](#) by Accenture about diversity and inclusion. The company's motto is 'diversity and inclusion ignite innovation', and this is part of its core values. It has established a number of programmes for groups of employees including women, young people, LGBT people, people with disabilities and older people.

Similarly, diversity and inclusion are part of EIB's commitment and core values, Ms Prometti said. The organisation has set clear targets for the end of 2021, including having 33 % women in management (the current figure is 27 %), 40 % women at senior officer level (up from 28 % today), and improving recruitment of candidates with disabilities.

Mr Guiamo presented highlights from PwC's Global Annual Review of Diversity and Inclusion, part of its company-wide strategy to establish an inclusive environment focusing on



all dimensions of diversity. Globally, PwC firms' female partner admissions across the network have increased from 23 % in 2013 to 30 % in 2018. Female representation in the partnerships has gradually increased from 13 % in 2006 to 20 % in 2018. This year, 51 % of graduate hires and 46 % of experienced hires globally were female. In 2017, there was a gender balance on the company's global leadership team for the first time; however, there is still work to be done to achieve a gender balance across the network leadership team and strategy council, which is composed of the senior partners of the network's 21 largest firms.



During smaller group discussion, participants considered the importance of mentoring programmes, measuring tools and other instruments that can support diversity and inclusion. These included training activities focusing on various disadvantaged groups, seminars and better internal communication on the topic.

## Panel discussion: The power of communication

*Moderator: Cristina Muntean, founder Media Education CEE, consultant, trainer & former journalist*

### Karina Govindji, head of diversity & inclusion, Vodafone Group Services



Having had the same leader in place for 10 years, with a strong focus on making the company a place where all employees can thrive and belong, Vodafone has seen clear progress on diversity and inclusion. The company has a global maternity policy, regardless of country, with a set amount of leave, and five days' pay for a four-day week for new mothers. This is a talent pool that the company wants to retain. There are a series of programmes and initiatives in place, but the most important thing is to ensure there is a culture where everyone feels they belong, though the company's specific context is, admittedly, hard to replicate.

As a business, it's important to prioritise your approach and get your own house in order first. Before looking at externally influencing a social agenda, ensure that diversity is part of the company's DNA and understood by all employees. Leaders must show proof of progress, not just actions. However large or small a company, it has influence through advertising, for example, and we all have a responsibility to break down stereotypes wherever we can.

Many organisations are still trapped in proving there's a business case for diversity, Ms Govindji said, but having leaders with an authentic voice talking about human rights helps to move the company forward in a way that a business case might not. Vodafone operates in a number of countries where homosexuality is illegal and punishable in the extreme. By focusing on the human rights case, the company has been able to bring some countries such as Kenya on a journey. While there is an argument for targeted treatment of each country in which a company operates, businesses should consider being bolder than this and clearly state their beliefs and principles regardless of the market. Companies with global power should use this power to make a difference.

### Friso Roscam Abbing, head of fundamental rights promotion, EU Agency for Fundamental Rights

Mr Abbing presented a study he and his team had carried out, which resulted in a list of 10 keys to facilitate more effective communication about human rights. The study involved epistemologists, linguists, neurologists and communication professionals. One of the main recommendations is authenticity: the need to find authentic messengers and not just institutional leaders. When talking about Roma, for example, let Roma people themselves speak about the issues. He advises against using combative language such as 'fight', as this suggests an enemy. Finding common ground is crucial, as is relating to things people are concerned about and showing a genuine interest in the people you're talking to and about.



He called for more investment in civic education, in teaching children about what it means to be a citizen in a democratic society. Part of empowering people to know their rights and responsibilities is media literacy: when we are surrounded by 24-hour news, it's important people know how to deal with this and assess sources. Diversity in recruitment will be much easier and smoother if from an early age we understand that diversity is normal. Business cannot replace politics but it can have an enormous positive impact, he said, and it's possible to build an important partnership between organisations like his own and the corporate sector. Businesses must play their role in improving social cohesion. He also noted the re-emergence of investigative journalism, data journalism and constructive journalism, partly as a result of the UK's vote to leave the EU and the election of Donald Trump as US president, which he sees as turning points for social discourse.

**Salim Murad, lecturer at New York University in Prague & University of South Bohemia**



Mr Murad spoke of fearmongering, of harsh political rhetoric in the Czech Republic, with local politicians building campaigns on hate. While Central Europe is entering a new chapter in its political history, the region's history means there is an uncomfortable attitude towards those seen as outsiders. Travelling between his two institutions, he sees a lot of provincialism outside the cosmopolitan capital; of his 2,000 students, only 60 each year travel abroad under the Erasmus scheme. Meeting people from other cultures is a chance to challenge one's convictions, but he sees no desire for such rational communication about diversity among local politicians.

Academia and corporations should be allies, he argues. Corporations have a major responsibility in the way they communicate. In Central Europe, advertisements often fall back on sexism, racism and xenophobia, painting whole groups as 'the other'. "In Western Europe there have been pro-refugee campaigns, but companies don't dare to do this in Central and Eastern Europe as they know they would lose customers," he said. "We see this attitude in everyday situations like gender equality, the gender pay gap, in the way minorities are depicted. I would like to see less localisation."

**Gabriella Wiiala, business director, Spoon content agency, Stockholm, Sweden**

While Spoon is a small consultancy, most of its clients are global. Ms Wiiala spoke of how the staff's own biases affect what they create for clients, so the first challenge is to recognise your own prejudices. The other challenge is to help clients understand what biases they have when they talk about their target groups. When asked how to reach those who aren't convinced of the importance of diversity and inclusion, she talked of the importance of communication to talk about good role models and show good examples, shifting the focus from stories that endorse bias to those that confront it. It's important to count heads in your communications and ensure that people of all groups are represented fairly. To bring truth into your communication, pinpoint who is missing and commit to spending time identifying new experts and case studies, and be prepared to fight within your company as others will have differing opinions.



**Closing remarks**

**Szabolcs Schmidt, head of unit non-discrimination & Roma co-ordination, DG Justice & Consumers, European Commission**

Mr Schmidt quoted the founder of Honda: "If you hire only those you understand, the company will never get people better than you are. You often find outstanding people among those you do not particularly like." While the European Commission is primarily concerned with human rights, he said, the economic dimension had been clearly highlighted during the day's discussions. It is diversity that has made Europe so strong, inclusive and attractive over the decades, and that is what must be maintained. It's time for the voice of business to be louder and to spell out to politicians what society's expectations are.

**Jana Skalková, HR project manager, Byznys pro společnost/Czech Diversity Charter**

Closing the forum, Ms Skalková said: "I strongly believe diversity is a journey, even if it's a long one. It's crucial for a modern Europe. It's a value and belief that each of us as a person has unique gifts and skills and are able to build and change the world. Each of us is a very important part of the world's puzzle. Thank you for supporting and building this important world. Thank you for celebrating diversity. Every small action is important."