



LDIA

LEGAL DIVERSITY & INCLUSION ALLIANCE

MAGAZINE

ISSUE 4, DECEMBER 2021

DIVERSITY
IN
LAW
PG. 10

WORLD
REFUGEE
DAY
PG. 25

LDIA
LAB
KICK-OFF
PG. 39



WELCOME to the fourth edition of LDIA's magazine!

Our lives have changed significantly since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. We had hoped that 2021 would be the year of 'normalcy'. Unfortunately, we are not there yet. We will continue to face - and deal with - challenges, but we remain positive and determined.

Law firms may not have been ready for teleworking, but with the virus raging, and several lockdowns, we have had to accelerate our plans to implement a hybrid-working model. The pandemic has further exposed inequalities in areas ranging from healthcare to technology. The current situation has also once again proven how crucial it is to put mental health high on our agenda.

This fourth edition is again a must-read, with reports on inspiring events and relevant articles on the abovementioned topics. A big thank you to all amazing contributors. We look forward to a new year of meaningful actions to promote diversity, equality and inclusion within our offices and the wider legal community. Let us walk the talk!

Warmest wishes for a happy holiday season and a wonderful New Year!

Kat Van Nuffel

MISSION

"Members of the Legal Diversity & Inclusion Alliance (LDIA) commit to build a diverse and inclusive workplace in which everyone benefits from equal treatment and opportunities, irrespective of race, ethnic or social origin, gender or sexual orientation, age, disability, language, religion, political preference or any other grounds of personal discrimination."

Editor-in-Chief: Kat Van Nuffel

Editors: LDIA Board

Contributors: Ikram Ben Ahmed, Hakim Benichou, Fiona Carlin, Glen Deduytsche, Isabelle François, Lucy Friess, Jerry Gallagher, Rezzi Ingemarsson, Eva Jacobs, Sanja Janjic, Anne Ruwet, Alicja Klosok, Reinout Leys, Amaryllis Müller, ROW, Natalie Shürmann, Wout Van Doren, Sven Vandyck, Kat Van Nuffel, Misha Verdonck, Ana Sofia Walsh, Katy Webb, Jay Wetterau

Proofreaders: Nathalie Allain, Emma Broxham, Johanna Johnson, Anne Ruwet, Caroline Williams

Designer: Xavier Talboys

TABLE OF CONTENTS...

#IamRemarkable - 2nd Anniversary Celebration of LDIA	Pg. 4
International Women's Day: Let's all choose a challenge	Pg. 5
Mental health and the struggle of men	Pg. 6
Inclusion Starts With an I	Pg. 9
Diversity in Law	Pg. 10
The importance of Pride networks	Pg. 14
World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development	Pg. 17
World Refugee Day: Together we heal, learn and shine	Pg. 19
Cultural Diversity and the Changing Workplace of the Past 20 Months	Pg. 22
Rule of Women (ROW): united into D&I	Pg. 24
Sustainable Mental Health for our World and Workplace	Pg. 25
Caroline Flanagan is proud to be an imposter	Pg. 28
Do you want to become an inclusive leader?	Pg. 30
Build bridges, not walls	Pg. 31
Diversity and Legal Recruitment	Pg. 33
M/F/X? Why gender inclusive language is needed	Pg. 36
Human Rights Day	Pg. 38
LDIA Lab kick-off: Promoting socio-economic diversity	Pg. 39
Upcoming event: LDIA 3rd Anniversary Celebration	Pg. 40



2ND ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF LDIA

2 February 2021, Virtual Event

The Legal Diversity & Inclusion Alliance (LDIA) was launched in Brussels on January 31, 2019, with the pledge to eliminate discrimination in the workplace, to promote an inclusive organizational culture, and to take tangible actions to fulfil the goals outlined in its charter. LDIA now counts 50 members. To kick off the festivities, LDIA hosted an #IamRemarkable workshop.

#IamRemarkable is a Google initiative that aims at empowering women and other underrepresented groups to celebrate their achievements in the workplace and beyond. Many of us struggle to speak about our accomplishments, as cultural and gender modesty norms, as well as impostor syndrome, prevent us from acknowledging our achievements.

LDIA is grateful to all participants for having taking the time to attend the #IamRemarkable workshop in

the context of her second anniversary. It was a very interesting and inspiring experience.

A special thank you to keynote speaker **Agapi Patsa**, Legal Counsel for EU Affairs at Google, and **Chiara Garofoli**, Senior Counsel at Google, working in the International Litigation Team. Together, they co-lead the EMEA Legal team initiatives aimed at spreading #IamRemarkable within the legal world.

Stay Remarkable!

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

8 March 2021, Virtual Event

LDIA members proudly celebrated the 2021 INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY by organizing various events virtually.

International Women's Day is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. The day also marks a call to action for accelerating gender parity. Significant activity is witnessed worldwide as groups come together to celebrate women's achievements or rally for women's equality.

"A challenged world is an alert world and from challenge comes change. So, let's all choose to challenge.

How will you help forge a gender equal world? Celebrate women's achievement. Raise awareness against bias. Take action for equality."

The campaign theme for International Women's Day 2021 was 'Choose To Challenge' and reminded us that a challenged world is an alert world - and that from challenge comes change. So let's all #ChooseToChallenge.

The International Women's Day 2022 theme is #BreakTheBias.



MENTAL HEALTH AND THE STRUGGLE OF MEN

It is a common belief that men suffer less from mental health issues than women. Men, typically seen as strong and tough, are supposedly better equipped to control their emotions. They keep their emotions in check and move on more easily than women. But is this view based on fact or fiction? And also, does being a man have different implications for one's mental health?

The specifics of mental health and gender

The assumption that men have fewer mental health issues seems very persistent. One reason for this is that, as many studies have shown, women talk more about their problems and are more likely to ask for professional help in comparison to men. These findings, however, do not clarify whether women suffer from mental health problems to a greater extent than men.

In reality, men also have mental health problems though they tend to struggle with different issues

than women. Women suffer more from anxiety and depression, whereas men struggle with mental disorders, such as addiction, aggression, alcohol abuse, etc. An even more striking fact is that although women talk more about having suicidal thoughts, the actual suicide rate in Belgium is higher for men than women. In 2017, a study showed that in Flanders 71% percent of all deaths by suicide that year were men. The study in 2018 gave similar results and both studies reveal that men who committed suicide had not spoken of their struggles with someone close to them, let alone with a mental health professional.

Toxic masculinity

All of this might have a lot to do with the notion of "traditional" masculinity as a set of norms in society to which most men feel the need to conform. A study on the relationship between masculine norms and mental health showed that "in general, individuals

who conformed strongly to masculine norms tended to have poorer mental health and less favourable attitudes toward seeking psychological help, although the results differed depending on specific types of masculine norms". These were norms such as the need for emotional control, self-reliance, pursuit of status, and power over women. Feeling the need to control your emotions and rely on yourself can create the impression that you should keep your emotions in check, keep your struggles to yourself and resolve your issues alone. In fact, the research also demonstrated that the more men conformed to these norms, the less likely they were to seek out mental health support.

Big boys don't cry

Masculinity norms and their implied stereotypes can have a negative impact on how men feel they should behave. To illustrate, the expressions "boys don't cry" or "man up" suggest that men and boys should show neither their tears nor weaknesses. Instead, they are expected to suppress their emotions, under pressure to perform in a certain way that does not always reflect who they truly are.

Sadly, it seems that the impact of these stereotypes is still largely ignored within society and the feminist movement specifically. As women have been rethinking

and negotiating what it means to be a woman during the past decades, as part of the feminist endeavour toward emancipation, they have become more vocal about oppressive societal norms for women. Masculinity however has not yet really been subject to such a debate. Its stereotypes have, therefore, remained mostly unaddressed.

Men's emancipation

By addressing and critically reflecting on these stereotypes, we may open the discussion and hopefully move away from norms that feel narrowing and make it more difficult for men to express their emotions and find a healthy mental balance. As feminism has played a huge role carrying the debate forward for women, it has the potential to do the same for men. It can open up the playing field for men to redefine their own masculinity, leave behind what is ultimately bad for them, and help them to feel true to themselves on an emotional level. Feminism is, therefore, not just about emancipating women, but also liberating men from the societal norms that are the root cause for many of their mental health issues.

By Eva Jacobs, DLA Piper

Interesting articles/sources:

- » <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1060826518782980>
- » https://www.researchgate.net/publication/292890373_Men_masculinities_and_feminist_theory
- » <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/a-to-z/m/men-and-mental-health>
- » <https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-determinants/gender/activities/gender-and-non-communicable-diseases/gender-and-mental-health>
- » <https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-determinants/gender/activities/gender-and-non-communicable-diseases/gender-and-mental-health>
- » <https://www.meermanmag.com/sprekers>

For further support contact: CHS - Community Help Service (chsbelgium.org)

- » <https://www.preventionsuicide.be/>, <https://www.preventiezelfdoding.be/>
- » Zelfmoord1813: <https://www.zelfmoord1813.be/feiten-en-cijfers>
- » <https://1813.be/>



#INCLUSIONSTARTSWITHI

#INCLUSIONSTARTSWITHANI

1 April 2021, Virtual Event

A huge thank you to I&D Ambassadors **Sven Vandyck** and **Ikram Ben Ahmed** for conducting an inspiring workshop during our bi-monthly meeting. They provided insights on how they assist their clients to define an inclusion & diversity strategy, using a result-oriented approach. Areas of focus include, among others, gender, race/ethnicity, LGBT+, persons with disabilities and cross-cultural diversity.

Respect. Inclusion. A feeling of belonging. Only when we are free to be our true authentic self can we contribute our best and make a difference. We long for this environment in both our personal and professional lives—and only we can create it.

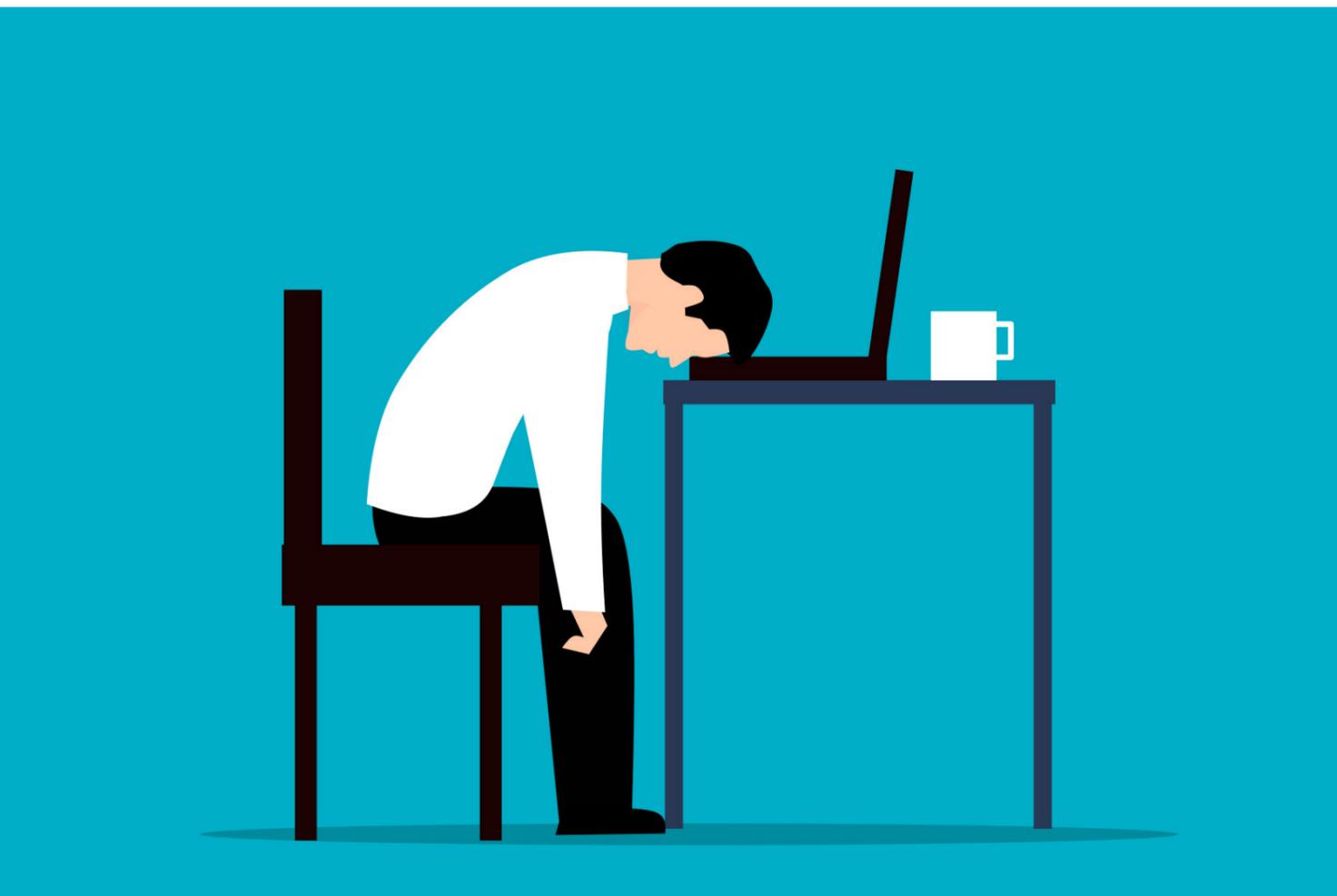
At Accenture, #InclusionStartsWithI began as a way to spark discussion with our people around our role in creating and fostering a positive, inclusive environment. Bias at work can be obvious—such as denying someone a promotion because of his or her sex, ethnicity or sexual orientation. It can also be subtle—such as expecting someone to work longer hours because they

don't have children. We all deserve the chance to be successful while being ourselves.

Our people represent a multitude of cultures, ethnicities and backgrounds across the globe and we are committed to each taking part in the effort to create a positive, inclusive work environment. At every level, we believe that a commitment to inclusion and diversity makes the company stronger, smarter and more innovative.

Inclusion and diversity is not just about gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, background, disability, culture, age and mental health. It's about you. It's about me. It's about all of us. It's about the choices we make every day.

By Accenture





DIVERSITY IN LAW

The Concept – Inspired by the 2020 Black Lives Matter movement, a number of lawyers at the Freshfields Brussels office decided to start a “Diversity in Law Workshop” building on Freshfields’ existing “Diversity in Law Programme”. Under this programme, volunteers give presentations about the law and the legal profession at various high schools in Brussels to encourage students from diverse ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds to study law and consider a career in the legal profession. The Diversity in Law Workshop goes one step further: it invites some of these high-school students, specifically those interested in studying law or pursuing a corporate career, for an afternoon visit to their office to give them interactive and practical insight into the profession. The goal of the Workshop is to demystify the corporate professional environment and encourage students who might otherwise self-select out of a legal or corporate occupation, to consider the profession.

The first edition of the Workshop in May 2021 – After a year of planning and preparation, building on connections with Brussels schools and in collaboration

with TADA, an organisation that coaches socially vulnerable teenagers in Brussels, Freshfields held their first workshop. Many Freshfields colleagues donated time to one or more Workshop sessions all with the support of Brussels senior management.

The Workshop was attended by 14 students from three Brussels schools, including some alumni from the TADA organisation and the programme was adapted to the preferred language of the students, i.e. French, with some English elements. Due to Covid restrictions, the Workshop took place virtually via Teams. Spending time introducing the presenters and getting to know the students before kicking off the presentations were great icebreakers. As a result, the students were happy to ask questions and get involved in the interactive aspects of the Workshop.

Topics – The Workshop consisted of the following programme:

Legal topics related to online platforms

This session discussed mergers between platforms,

privacy considerations and whether any of the platforms are misusing their strong market position. It included some interactive questions which sparked a lot of debate such as “True or false: everything I share on social media is protected by my privacy right”.

CVs, application letters and interviews

During this session the Freshfields HR manager used various examples of anonymised CVs to illustrate best practice. A number of students flagged this session as very useful in the immediate future, for example, when looking for student jobs.

Networking tips and tricks

Freshfields lawyers gave some practical information on what networking is and why it is so important.

Q&A

The Workshop concluded with two breakout question and answer sessions, where the students were split into smaller groups and had the opportunity to ask the lawyers all the questions they still had in relation to legal studies and a career in the legal field.

Future outlook – The Freshfields lawyers still hope to be able to meet this year’s Workshop participants in

person during an office visit and plan to continue the Workshop format and invite students to their office for the next edition in 2022. Freshfields is also evaluating whether it can further expand the Diversity in Law Programme by organising more tailored mentoring of students from diverse ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds who decide to study law, and also offer short-term internships.

The team – The success of the Freshfields Workshop was due to the passion and commitment of an entire team. They are introduced below with their personal comments about their particular roles and observations about the project.

Isabelle Francois, Executive Assistant to the Team: I was first involved in the project as the native French speaker of the team, originally in charge of translating the materials for the Legal Workshop from English into French. I gradually became involved in the project management itself and ended up being the main point of contact for French-speaking schools and students when it came to reaching out to school directors, sending the programme and teaser for the workshop and collecting registrations from students, etc. The experience was extremely rewarding. I realised how much still needs to be done for socially disadvantaged

students who want to go to university and embrace a career in law, or a career in general. I was very proud to see that our workshop attracted a lot of interest among students and I will be very happy to be part of the adventure again this academic year!

Lucy Friess, Community Impact Coordinator: Before pitching our concept for the Workshop to senior management, we connected with our other offices to learn about similar community impact initiatives: the Stephen Lawrence Scholarship in our London office specifically targets black male first year university students, the START legal workshops in our German-speaking offices support law students from immigrant backgrounds and our New York office participates in a Legal Outreach programme providing 8 high school students with a one week internship every summer. Talking to the project leads in these offices, we gained two very useful insights. Firstly, don't be afraid to make mistakes. The most important thing is to get a project up-and-running, to learn from experience. Secondly, it is often very useful to team up with outside organisations. Unlike the other offices we contacted, we have not yet identified a foundation to help us select candidates for our Workshop, making outreach to Brussels schools an essential element of our project though we are now cooperating with the TADA organisation (see above).

Rezzi Ingemarsson: The Diversity in Law Programme was launched in 2019 and has come a long way since then. It was initially set up as a community investment initiative, with the intention of presenting the law in an engaging and accessible way to senior high school students from a wide range of backgrounds. By going to visit the students in their schools in Brussels and offering them mentorship, we could demystify the experience of studying law, ideally at a point in their lives when they would be making important decisions about their careers.

I was inspired to propose the programme due to the wonderful diversity of Brussels that didn't seem adequately reflected in the corporate space, and the notion that some talented students may be self-selecting out of opportunities because of this. I had also noted the wonderful impact the Stephen Lawrence Scholarship Scheme was making in the firm's London office.

Despite joining the European Commission this year, I have continued to be involved in the programme and also participated in the workshop, shifting my contribution to highlight the interesting public sector opportunities also available through law!

Alicja Klosok: It's fair to say that doing something for the first time can be hard, but the Diversity in Law Workshop was well worth it. The ability to engage with fresh, young perspectives in the Workshop was a hugely rewarding experience for our team – not least because we could share our insights and tips on career opportunities in the legal field, but also because we got to hear some inspiring novel ideas from bright young minds. I was particularly involved in marketing the event and worked with the team to create an eye-catching brochure as well as the application form for students to fill in. It was great to see the smiles from the brochure translate into the real-life Workshop!

Reinout Leys: Getting to know young talent is always exciting. Particularly so in this case, as we had the opportunity to talk with high-school students (17 and 18-year-olds) outside the typical age range we usually discuss career opportunities with. Learning about their career goals and hearing the variety of fresh ideas they expressed (some of which were quite audacious) was reassuring and, frankly, inspiring. The energy of young people who dare to share their ambitions is quite contagious. Looking forward to hearing more from our participants in the years to come!

Amaryllis Müller: My decision to take action in relation to Diversity and Inclusion was triggered by the Black Lives Matter protests in Brussels (as cliché as it may sound). I thought to myself that if the protesters needed to go to this extent to be heard in our society, there is something fundamentally wrong. It pained me to realise that the country that had given me every opportunity to grow and thrive might not have given others the same chance. I wanted to do something, something more than posting a black square on social media, something to enhance equal opportunities in our society, something to help increase representation of all backgrounds in corporate and decision-making functions in Belgium.

By Isabelle François, Lucy Friess, Rezzi Ingemarsson, Alicja Klosok, Reinout Leys, Amaryllis Müller (all Freshfields)



THE IMPORTANCE OF A PRIDE NETWORK

Why is it so important to have a Pride Network in your company or organisation? A question I receive a lot as Chair of Open@Work, a network of more than 25 companies and government organisations that choose to underline the importance of the LGBT+ topic. Open@Work primarily focuses on 3 objectives:

- » Build a cross-company network focusing on 'Out in the workplace'.
- » Join forces in creating an inclusive work environment for the LGBT+ community.
- » Exchange good practices on LGBT+ and ally company networks.

To manage your expectations, let me start by saying that what I will try to explain to you should not be rocket science. You might ask yourself now, if it is as simple as that, why are so many companies and organisations struggling with creating one and/or

keeping a Pride Network alive and kicking.

Let us start at the beginning with the definition of networking. One of the interesting definitions is 'Business Networking'.

- » Business networking is the process of establishing a mutually beneficial relationship with other business people and potential clients or customers. Business networking benefits are the intangible gains made by communicating with other professionals in or relating to your industry.
- » Often, it is the networking efforts of a business owner that yield the most results in small businesses. There are many other advantages to networking—of the many potential gains to be made, the sharing of knowledge is the most beneficial.

- » To reap the rewards of a network, it is important to understand what business networking benefits you can gain and how they can help your business to boost sales, increase efficiency and morale, and build awareness of your brand.

In this definition you find a few key elements that make or break the success and importance of a Pride Network:

- » Mutually beneficial relationship: it is very obvious that when an organisation or company decides to establish a LGBT+ network or chooses to officialise/support an existing employee network, it should be beneficial for everybody.
1. Beneficial in a sense of creating a support network, a structure people can go to when they are in need of support and/or information.
 2. Beneficial for the visibility of the topic in an organisation. I always recommend companies to do 3 things:
- » Make sure your policies and benefits are neutral and equal

- » Create awareness and visibility on different LGBT+ topics and
- » External communication.

Having a network in your organisation will create further visibility on what the organisation wants to support, do, establish in this domain. People sometimes will find it easier to go to their fellow LGBT+ person to ask for advice than directly reaching out to HR and asking which benefits they can get, for instance as a transperson. On the other hand, HR persons who openly show that they are supportive or part of the network will increase accessibility for these topics.

- » Small business/successes: we all dream of big networks, which have a huge impact, get a lot of money, etc. Open@Work chooses the approach of growing in an organic way and focusing on the impact, the sharing of knowledge, small wins and for sure not the money. We are convinced that small wins will eventually lead to a long-term effect and impact. I recommend Pride Networks to start in a similar way. Define a reasonable and manageable objective and start small.

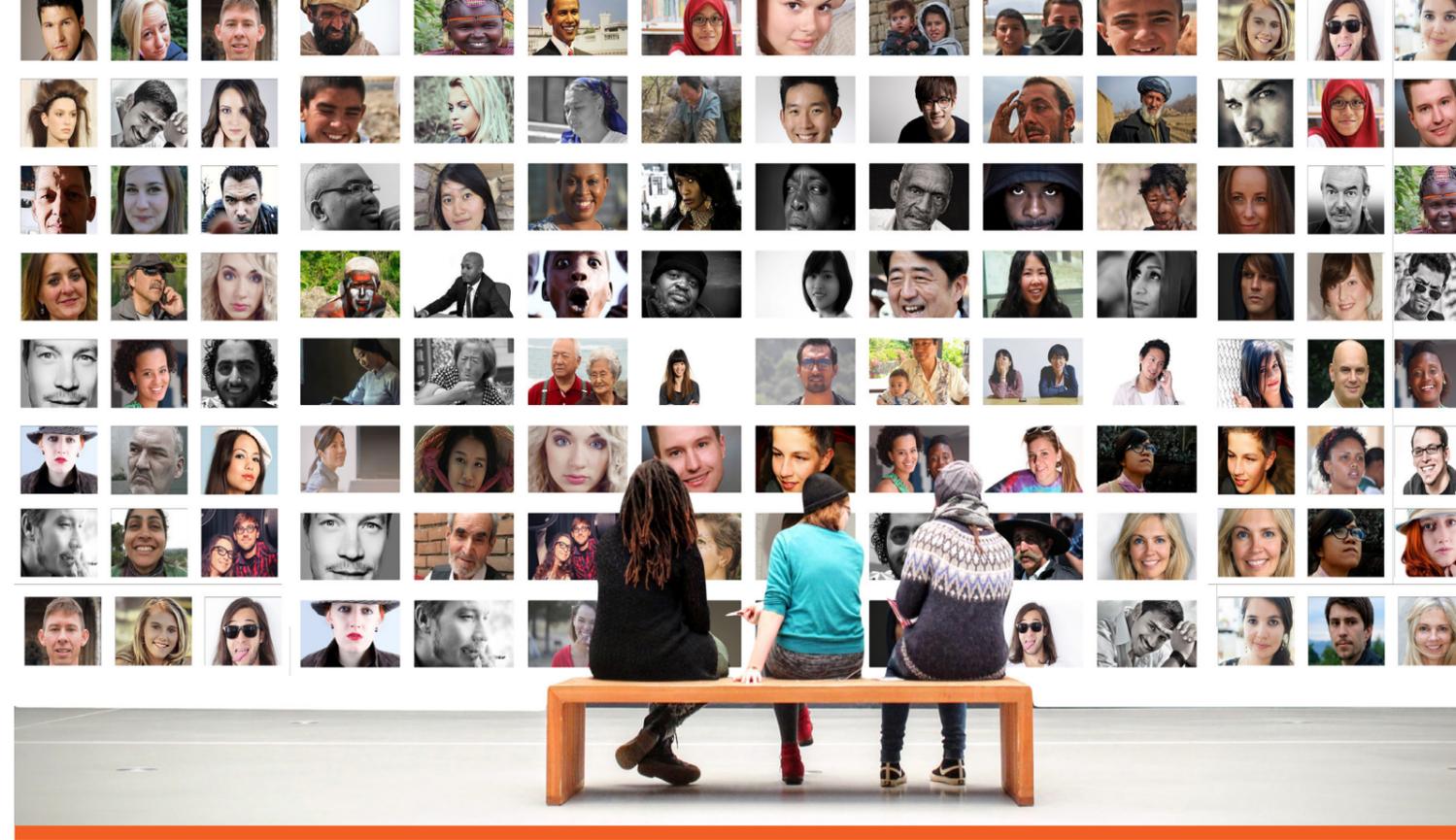
» Knowledge is key of any success. Networks will have an impact on the knowledge of a company or organisation in the domain of LGBT+, that is something we all know. Bringing together people, establishing an exchange of information will be beneficial for all of us including those who are not yet educated on this topic. What I have noticed is that such a network is also interesting for 'straight allies/friends' who feel that being part allows them to visibly/verbally/... support their colleagues and gives them access to information to stand up/raise awareness in their daily personal life.

The attentive reader will by now be asking about the 'usual statistics' we often need when building a business case for creating a network and obtaining the support from their leadership to do so. Well, I'm sorry that I'm not an expert in numbers. I do admit that there are many numbers and statistics which you can use to underline the importance. There are many studies available that you can use to impress your boss as you will often face a situation where all arguments provided in this article are not enough for some of our business leaders to agree with supporting a network. And that is simply a pity.

Let us try to turn it around and ask ourselves why those business leaders don't ask similar questions on statistics and trends when their 'buddy cycling' club decides to buy similar outfits for all members, giving them a unique feeling, a common objective, visibility and a sense of belonging ...

A network in the end comes down to a feeling of belonging to a group of people who are like minded, give you support and want to do this in a more structured and visible way. So, I'm not inviting you to establish your own cycling team, I'm just advising you that you don't always need rocket science but simple and logic thinking when looking for reasons of why it is so important to have these LGBT+ networks in your company or organisation.

By Sven Vandyck, Open@Work



WORLD DAY FOR CULTURAL DIVERSITY FOR DIALOGUE & DEVELOPMENT

21 May 2021, Virtual Event



Van Bael & Bellis hosted a virtual webinar & Roundtable discussion on Multicultural Inclusion.

Speakers:

- » **Claire Godding**, Senior Expert in DEI and Societal needs in the financial sector in Belgium at Febelfin.
- » **Isabelle Van Damme**, Partner at VBB
- » **Reshad Forbes**, Senior Counsel at VBB
- » **Adriana Pérez-Gil**, Associate at VBB
- » **Thomas de Visser**, Associate at VBB

Claire shared her expertise in the financial sector by highlighting the results of a survey that she conducted on Multicultural Inclusion. Multicultural diversity in a team makes our discussions richer, our decisions better, expands our comfort zone and develops our empathy, the most essential skill to be inclusive leaders.

The participants exchanged very interesting personal views and experiences on varied aspects of both inclusion and discrimination in a very informative and meaningful discussion.

Thank you to the Saouta Trio for ending the event with a wonderful musical performance.

All of them shared their personal views and experiences during the Roundtable Discussion on Multicultural Inclusion today.



WORLD REFUGEE DAY

17 June 2021, Virtual Event

On the occasion of World Refugee Day, [LDIA](#) and [Fragomen LLP](#) Brussels co-organized a panel centered around the theme “[Together we heal, learn and shine](#)”, reminding us that people who have been forced to flee often struggle to find a doctor when they are sick, schools for their children or even a place for them to run around and play. While the theme also highlights access to education (learn!) and sports and culture (shine!), we found it fitting - in the midst of a global pandemic - to focus on access to health care for refugees (together we heal!).

Personal Experience: Sanja

Our first panellist, **Sanja Janjic**, Senior Manager at Fragomen, talked about her life as a refugee and about some of the difficulties she encountered and struggles she had to overcome. She was made a refugee by the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, specifically Bosnia and Herzegovina, where her family was forced to leave behind their home and family. She, her parents and her sister spent 5 years moving around several European countries before finally being offered permanent residence in Australia where they settled.

Whilst living and surviving in an active war zone is one of most difficult and traumatic things to overcome, living as a refugee in a “safe country” is not as easy as you might think. You must first find a country to accept you as a refugee, and grant you residence rights and work rights so that you and your family are able to integrate and be part of society. You must be given the opportunity to find housing that is not just a temporary home set up for refugees, where you have no privacy, no autonomy and no chance for a “normal” childhood. Then comes the access to health care and education, this year’s focus of World Refugee Day, which was a crucial topic for Sanja.

Access to health care is critical. Everybody should be granted access to health care – and in most countries, they are. However, an important aspect that is overlooked is whether the access to health care is

fair for all. An example that Sanja provided was the number of times she had to accompany her parents to the doctor to translate for them, as her parents did not speak the language well enough to visit the doctor on their own. Children around the world are forced into such situations that are beyond their maturity levels. They must learn to act as interpreters, sometimes discussing things that children should not know or be privy to. Sanja mentioned the example of accompanying her mother to the gynecologist to talk about contraception, or her father to get his prostate exam.

When assisting refugees, or any foreigner that is not familiar with the local language, some accommodations are needed to address the language gap. It is not fair or right to rely on children to fill this gap.

Another central topic for Sanja was education and the struggles she faced due to her refugee status. Sanja’s strengths have always lain in her knowledge of languages and the fact that she was a good student. She would study hard and get good grades. This was not always appreciated, as it was not accepted that a refugee, a non-native speaker, would be one of the best students in the class. There was almost an adversarial approach to this with a general belief that refugees could not be good students, that they could not really learn the language. Sanja’s own experiences led her to form the opinion that even when refugees succeeded, they were attacked and held back. When Sanja was in Germany and the time came to move to high school, despite being among the top students in her class, she did not get a place at grammar school. Regardless of her academic achievements and future goals, the grammar school felt that Sanja, a refugee who had been in Germany for less than 4 years, could not possibly keep up with grammar school requirements. It took the intervention of several teachers and community leaders for Sanja to be awarded her rightful school place.

Sanja faced a similar situation in Australia, where

despite scoring the highest mark in English in her entire grade of over 130 students, teachers told her she could not study the highest level of English for her high school diploma as she had only been in Australia for 3 years. There was even a suggestion she took the “English as a Second Language” course. After Sanja insisted on studying “Advanced English”, her teacher consistently failed her on all her assignments and exams, until external examiners intervened and suddenly Sanja’s marks were corrected to 87%.

Education is an important aspect of life and everybody should have access to education. Students should be judged not on their passport, their residence status nor time spent in a particular country, but rather on their achievements. Students should be encouraged to strive for the highest level of education and should be supported in their choices. This is not an “us vs. them” situation. Refugees succeeding does not mean other students failing, but rather that education systems and teachers are successful and disadvantaged children achieve their best and integrate into society. This benefits all!

View on the Ground: Lea, Doctors of the World

Our second panellist, **Lea Horvat**, brought the unique perspective of [Doctors of the World](#), a humanitarian organization that enables excluded people to access healthcare around the world. Lea works on the ground in Bosnia, where there have been significant migrant arrivals in recent years, and her session focused on the mental health impact of being a refugee.

The Doctors of the World programs focus on providing counselling to individuals and establishing psychosocial services that promote mental health through education and community empowerment.

You can read more about their activities in Bosnia in their May 2020 publication “[Doctors of the World’s testimony of migrants and refugees’ mental health in their path through Bosnia and Herzegovina with an overview of COVID-19 crisis impact](#)”.

Doctors of the World have numerous projects in place in Belgium (e.g. [MOBIVAX](#), a vaccination campaign for the homeless, undocumented and other individuals) and [abroad](#). Read more about their programs and

missions [here](#) and donate to their organization [here](#).

Legal Perspective: Wout

The last panellist, **Wout Van Doren**, an Associate at Fragomen, focused on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on asylum seekers and refugees and on this group’s access to healthcare. His contribution was based on research and policy briefs by the OECD, EASO, Fedasil, JRS, and Medimmigrant.

The JRS report, “[From Bad to Worse: Covid-19 aggravates existing gaps in the reception of asylum seekers](#)”, demonstrated the impact of COVID-19 on the (access to) shelter for asylum seekers in Europe. The report concluded that the large-scale collective reception centers were a recipe for disaster in the COVID-19 context and added to the list of arguments for stepping away from this reception model. The report noted increased homelessness and destitution among (rejected) asylum seekers, due to longer application process times, government closures and rejection decisions resulting in eviction from shelter or housing still being handed down in some Member States. Secondly, the report showed that measures taken in reception centers to contain the virus spreading included excessively strict quarantine, isolation and transfers between centers resulting in separation of families, among other actions often not in line with fundamental rights.

A study published by the OECD, “[What is the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on immigrants and their children?](#)”, noted that the COVID-19 crisis is likely to have a disproportionate impact on immigrants (including asylum seekers and refugees) and their children in terms of health, jobs and education.

- » **Health:** due to a range of vulnerabilities such as higher incidence of poverty, overcrowded housing conditions, and high concentration in jobs where physical distancing is difficult, immigrants are at much higher risk of COVID-19 infection.
- » **Employment:** immigrants are potentially in a more vulnerable position on the labour market due to their generally less stable employment conditions and lower seniority on the job. The negative impact on immigrants’ labour market outcomes is

increased further by the fact that they are strongly overrepresented in those sectors most affected by the pandemic to date – for example, in the particularly hard-hit hospitality industry.

- » **Education:** school closures and distance learning measures implemented to slow the spread of COVID-19 put children of immigrants at a disadvantage, in several ways: parents generally have fewer resources than native-born parents to help children in their homework and do not speak the host-country language at home; such children are also less likely to have access to a computer and an internet connection at home or to a quiet place for study.

A final topic tackled concerned the inclusiveness of COVID-19 vaccination campaigns. We cited an EASO report titled “[COVID-19 vaccination for applicants and beneficiaries of international protection](#)”. The report confirms that in all EU countries, vaccination is provided free of charge and on a voluntary basis to applicants and beneficiaries of international protection. In principle, the vaccination of asylum seekers follows the general priorities set for the population (mainly by age groups, medical conditions, etc.), based on a risk management strategy. However, applicants for international protection may be prioritized due to the collective reception setting. Six EU+ countries have launched targeted information campaigns for asylum seekers (including Belgium). While the EASO report cited only concerns registered applicants and beneficiaries of international protection, a [report by Medimmigrant](#) confirms that – at least in Belgium – vaccination is also possible for unregistered persons through mobile teams (MOBIVAX) of organizations active in the field (Médecins Sans Frontières, Doctors of the World, Red Cross and Samusocial).

How can law firms get involved?

Fragomen also used the opportunity of the panel discussion to appeal to the lawyers in the (virtual) room to get (more) involved in pro bono work. We encourage attorneys to register with the legal assistance bureau of their Bar association to get cases assigned (even after completing their traineeship). Fragomen attorneys and

staff, for example, participated in the coordinated legal aid effort aimed at [undocumented migrants on hunger strike in several locations in Brussels](#), by providing first-line legal advice and taking on several individual cases. To assure quality legal aid, we invited attorneys to follow training sessions on immigration law offered by civil society organizations such as [Agentschap Integratie en Inburgering](#), [Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen](#), [Ciré](#), [Association pour le Droit des Etrangers \(ADDE\)](#), or to request a tailor made Fragomen training on immigration law for their attorneys and staff.

By Ana Sofia Walsh, Sanja Janjic, Wout Van Doren (all Fragomen)



CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND THE CHANGING WORKPLACE OF THE PAST 20 MONTHS

We all are too aware that the events of the last 20 months have changed - and continue to change - the way we work. There have been huge shifts in working practices due to the pandemic, but also huge shifts in culture due to the increased focus on anti-racism. In September, Fieldfisher took the opportunity to hold our first virtual international client event to compare and contrast how different organisations in different jurisdictions have handles the changes. Jay Wetterau, Head of Inclusiveness and Diversity at Fieldfisher and based in London, moderated a discussion with client panellists from Ireland, Germany, and Belgium. Over 80 clients and colleagues from across Europe joined the discussion on cultural diversity.

The panellists were:

Rima Farhat, from Accenture in Brussels. Rima is Managing Director and Technology Resources Industry Lead at Accenture, where she joined in 2006. Rima was recognised as the ICT woman of the year in 2021.

Melissa Bosch, from EY. Melissa is the Diversity and Inclusion Lead for Ireland. She also serves on the board of the national mental health charity "Suicide or Survive" and is a strategic HR and inclusion consultant for the Board of the charity "Trocaire", which has been challenging injustice around the world and providing support to people living with its effects.

Francisco (Paco) Javier Padilla Borrallo, a Director and Counsel for Data Protection and Privacy at Eaton. In his role he is responsible for Eaton's data protection and privacy as well as records and information management programs along with a team located in Hungary, India and the United States. Additionally, Paco is part of the EMEA Law Inclusion and Diversity team and acts as Valuing Inclusion and Diversity trainer in German and English.

The panellists shared their organisational experiences

of the pandemic, comparing, contrasting, and learning from the ways individuals and organisations from different countries and cultures have adapted to the events. They also discussed shifts in their workplaces with respect to the anti-racism conversations that started in the US in the Spring on 2019 and then spread globally.

Some common themes emerged during the discussion.

With respect to working practices, one of the main discussion points focussed on whether the changes to flexible working and working from home would be here to stay, or whether we would shift back to the expectation that people attend the office as a default post-pandemic. There was a sense that some cultures - for example Ireland the UK - were more likely to shift to permanent hybrid working, but also that some form of home working would exist everywhere, despite some of the reticence to allow it pre-lockdown.

All the panellists shared examples of the discussions around inclusiveness, diversity and anti-racism that their organisations have been engaging in. One of the common themes that emerged is that the changed working conditions during the lockdowns have actually helped foster these conversations. For many of the discussions, people have felt able to more open talking about these topics virtually from their own homes (as opposed to being in a large room crowded with people).

One of the other main topics that all agreed upon is that the virtual panel format is a great way to bring people together from various offices in different countries within an organisation (as evidenced by this event). Even after we all return to "normal", we should all plan to still hold a number of events in this format, because it is the most inclusive way to embrace cultural diversity across an international organisation.

By Jay Wetterau, Fieldfisher



RULE OF WOMEN: UNITED IN DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

On September 16, LDIA's Co-Chair Kat Van Nuffel was invited to speak about Equality, Diversity & Inclusion at ROW's meeting. LDIA applauds this initiative to set up #RuleOfWomen. We know that combining efforts greatly aids progress towards achieving our goals. But who/what is ROW?

Since March 2020, the world has been experiencing an unprecedented global emergency. Covid19 has put pressure on all of us, regardless of our ethnicity, nationality or religion. During the pandemic, women have nevertheless shown their strength and resilience. Rule of women (ROW) was launched at the start of the first lockdown in Italy. It is a project born directly from the hearts and minds of the women at CBA (an independent tax and law firm), and it aims to share ideas with international colleagues by adopting a problem-solving approach. From May to October 2020, in eight online meetings, ROW teams composed of participants from CBA, Altius, Wolf Thies, Roca Junyent, Alrud, GSK and Fidal discussed eight main topics. These topics were subsequently transformed into a Manifesto of 'no longer postponable priorities' for action around engagement, work life balance, diversity and inclusion, legal design thinking, community, sustainability, leadership and talent development.

ROW benefitted from the cross-pollination of ideas from different cultures, experiences and environmental contexts and the outcome in 2020 was a decision to rethink and reshape the role of women in law firms based on the common ground that unites female lawyers across different countries. In 2021, the project moved on to focus on one of the most urgent priorities: diversity & inclusion. This was pushed to the forefront in the Manifesto's statement "Diversity is richness; inclusion in daily practical policies ensures each person's uniqueness as a common value".

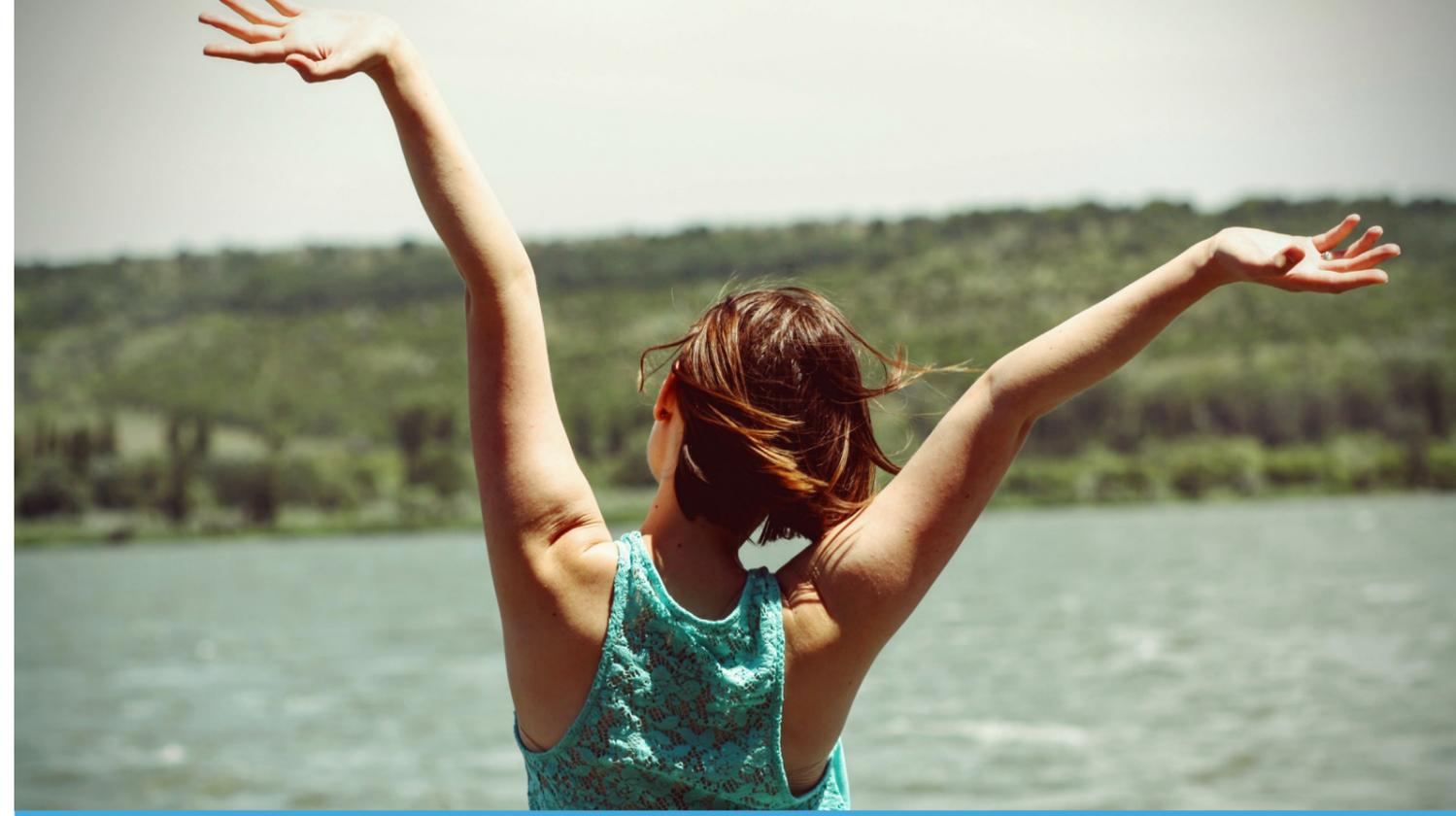
Throughout its monthly meetings this year, ROW has discussed this topic from several angles revealing the different approaches of participating firms and, more

generally, respective national legal industries in which each operates. ROW's discussions have been enriched over the months by contributions from keynote speakers with different backgrounds and experiences. These include, Kat Van Nuffel with her D&I Officer perspective; Cristiana Scelza, CEO of a multinational corporation with her client-orientated approach; and 4Clegal, a service provider leader in the Italian legal market. 4Clegal highlighted its own experience of promoting D&I (as part of ESG policies) in profiling law firms when arranging 'beauty contests' for corporations.

The richness of ROW's debate has demonstrated the need to promote D&I policies on a daily basis, from raising awareness, to fighting unconscious bias and promoting practical steps to apply throughout recruitment, education, career development and leadership.

As members of ROW, what we have learnt is that by sharing our experiences, we are united in confronting D&I discrimination and also in becoming stronger to promote greater parity within our industry.

By ROW



SUSTAINABLE MENTAL HEALTH FOR OUR WORLD AND WORKPLACE

21 September 2021, Virtual Event

Many of us have started thinking about our everyday life and work in terms of "pre" and "post" Covid. In some ways the world will never be the same again.

Although change is part of life and cognitively we know this, when we experience sudden or unexpected or 'traumatic' change, such change still has the potential to unsettle most of us.

The effect of psychological or emotional trauma on people has been extensively researched for decades. Recent neuroscience research into stress neurobiology and knowledge of the brain at the macroscopic, microscopic, biochemical, and molecular levels all indicates that (emotional) trauma can damage our mental health.

If we were to plot the 'experience of trauma' along

a continuum, we would notice that it manifests at differing levels of intensity, depending on who is experiencing the trauma and the exact nature of the trauma. Not all types of trauma are necessarily of an extreme nature, but trauma is still trauma if we experience it as such.

In other words, trauma has an objective and a subjective element to it. It is a combination of exposure to an actual event (which objectively happened) with the perception of it as traumatic on the subjective level (how we perceive it) (Jaksic et al., 2012). Moreover, emotional, or psychological trauma can be caused by a single one-off event (a threat) or by ongoing stressors. Trauma can lead to poor mental health in the form of increased anxiety or depression but also to a sense of loss or other forms of stress-related mental and physical health challenges.



The intensity of the impact of a potentially traumatic event may be related to the mental and or physical health of a person, their past (traumatic experiences), their level of coping skills or resilience and the level of social and emotional support around them at the time of the potentially traumatic event or ongoing events.

Traumatic events/experiences which might often be overlooked or considered as less 'threatening' compared to more extreme trauma like abuse (emotional /physical) include divorce or separation from a significant relationship, job loss, illness/disability, ongoing stress at work or bullying and the experience of discrimination or exclusion/isolation at the workplace.

Each of us has felt at many levels, and to a greater or lesser extent, the collective trauma of the pandemic. This collective trauma has fundamentally transformed our workplace and the way we work and has led to a form of collective anxiety while simultaneously wakening a collective consciousness. This collective consciousness has led many of us to an awareness and a need to refocus our attention on the here and now, on the beauty of life. Above all, a collective sense of humanity has developed, with empathy as well as a deeper commitment to supporting each other.

These are all fundamental ingredients for creating psychological safety. Psychological safety means that I experience my environment as a place where I can be my unique authentic self with my strengths and vulnerabilities. It also means that my voice matters. I can express my views, thoughts, and ideas without fear of being judged. Psychological safety and mental health in the workplace go hand in hand because they foster optimal conditions for acceptance, empathy, tolerance, diversity, and inclusion.

In the last decades, attention has increasingly focused on a phenomenon that occurs after an experience of hardship: Post Traumatic Growth or "PT". PTG holds that people who endure psychological struggle following adversity can often see positive growth afterward. (Tedeschi, 1995)

PTG refers to what can happen when we experience a traumatic event that challenges our core beliefs, creates psychological struggle and then ultimately provides us with a deep sense of personal growth & transformation.

In essence, we turn the experience of hardship into a transformative learning opportunity. Post Traumatic Growth is a process that takes time and will radically transform what we believe in, how we think, act, live or feel. People who experience PTG will change how

they interact with their world and lead to a better more fulfilled version of themselves. What makes this PTG phenomenon unique is the sustainable and transformative nature of it. At its core lies the question: What have we learned from this; how will we be a better version of ourselves?

We need to capitalize on the Post Traumatic Growth opportunity this post pandemic era offers for the world and the workplace. What have we learned from all this? How can we keep being supportive and empathetic, present for each other, curious about each other's uniqueness, encouraging of the value each of our diverse strengths bring?

This is our chance never to fall back into the 'bad habits' of the pre-pandemic times, where diversity and inclusion and mental health in the workplace were 'topics' to be 'think about' versus a must have foundation for thriving, equality driven, engaged, inspired and fulfilling workplaces.

How can we create psychological safety at work for our colleagues, peers, bosses and direct reports? How do we do this, not because 'it is required to be or become a socially responsible workplace' but because we consider each other's mental well-being and happiness at work to be fundamental to our own mental well-being? There

is no such thing as my or your mental health we need to care collectively.

Ultimately, it is all about sustainability. If we want to keep existing on this planet, then fostering optimal conditions for acceptance, empathy, tolerance, diversity, and inclusion will need to become our permanent Post Traumatic Growth way of being and interacting and outside the workplace.

By Natalie Schürmann, MSc, PCC, Badiliko

LDIA would like to thank Natalie Schürmann, MSc, PCC for her very interesting and enlightening workshop how to manage mental health in our post-Covid workplace. Natalie guided us through scientific materials, explaining the different mindsets and the power of everyone to make changes. LDIA members were given the opportunity to share their personal experiences in a breakout session.



CAROLINE FLANAGAN IS PROUD TO BE AN IMPOSTER

Black History Month is celebrated every year in October throughout the UK, and to recognize this occasion, LDIA member Sidley Austin sponsors a number of events to empower Black professionals and promote a sense of inclusion among everyone at the firm and beyond. Sidley's European Black and Minority Ethnic Networking group hosted the flagship event and this year invited Caroline Flanagan, an author, consultant, coach, and lawyer as a keynote speaker. The session was moderated by Fatema Orjela, a private equity partner at Sidley's London office, who was named "Woman Solicitor of the Year" at The Law Society Awards in 2021.

Confidence in Adversity

The focus of Caroline's talk was imposter syndrome, and she declared herself "proud to be an imposter." Growing up on a council estate in Birmingham, Caroline was one of the few Black students at Cambridge University at the time. She recalled the micro-aggressions and racist comments that reminded her that she was the only Black person in the classroom.

The feeling of isolation continued through to her law career, as she found that she was usually the only person of color in meetings. With her new philosophy, accepting the 'imposter' label gave Caroline the courage to step into any room without hesitation, revelling in the opportunity to change people's prejudgments and misconceptions. This positive mindset can encourage us, as lawyers and professionals, to believe in our value and focus on demonstrating our potential by working at our highest level.

Engaging with the Audience

Both presenters spoke on topics from the audience, including tackling self-doubt, the progression of Black lawyers, and the Black Lives Matter movement.

A highlight was when Caroline shared her feelings about being unable to shake her Imposter Syndrome. She said even the idea of 'luck', which some may associate as being positive, has the negative connotation of being out of our control or as if certain opportunities would

not normally be afforded to us. Often the techniques used to overcome self-doubt in ourselves are only temporary in their effectiveness; whereas focusing on a mindset shift can actively address doubt when it arises and can lead to long term transformation.

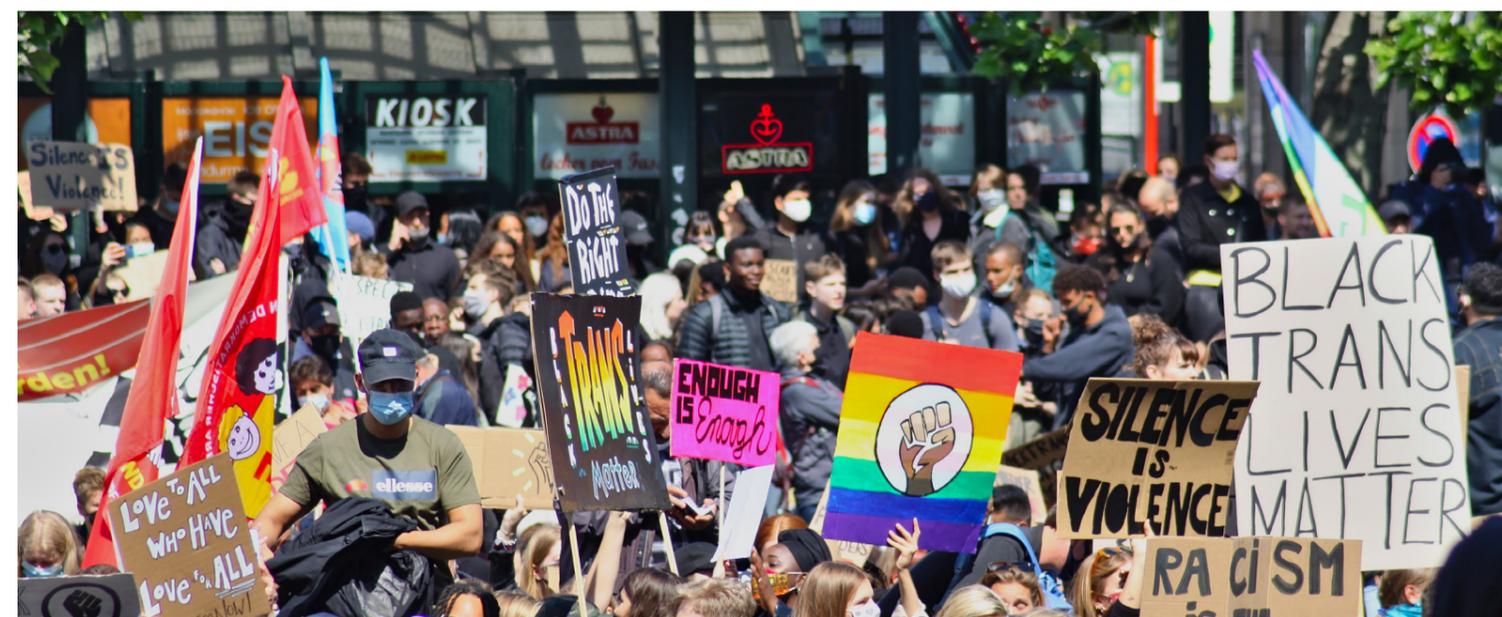
Fatema shared how she has built a toolkit of positive experiences to overshadow the experience of self-doubt. She told the audience how she visualizes successful times in her life to put her in a positive headspace. In the same way one might develop any other skillset, the speakers recommended strengthening your resilience until this process becomes second nature.

In response to questions surrounding the Black Lives Matter movement and George Floyd's death, Caroline spoke about putting her work on hold to process the painful impact these events had on her, particularly from her perspective as a mother of four Black sons. When writing her book, "Be The First", she struggled to share the message that people of color have an important role to play in their own success, a message which risks being misconstrued as a suggestion that Black people should fix themselves. Ultimately, Caroline said that she feels the most effective way to create change is through action on both an individual and an institutional level.

Be the First

Ending on a positive note, Fatema brought up the evolution of diversity in law firms, from being originally a tick-box exercise, to today's deeper understanding and a recognition of diversity's importance at management level. Caroline shared that she hoped her impact would be to showcase the link between racial inequality and imposter syndrome, and contribute a practical strategy for creating change. Caroline finished with a final uplifting message: "Don't be the only one in the room, be the first."

By Jerry Gallagher & Katy Webb, Sidley Austin LLP



DO YOU WANT TO BECOME AN INCLUSIVE LEADER?

25 October 2021, Virtual Event

Hakim Benichou, CEO of the Belgian consultancy firm Teamspeler, specialized in inclusive organizational development, inspired LDIA members to become inclusive leaders during an interactive workshop in October. He gave us all much food for thought and action!

The key point is that becoming an inclusive leader is a choice we make to lift the whole essence of leadership up to a higher level for our teams, our firms and ourselves. The quality of our decision to become an inclusive leader will have an impact on our success in the long run.

I ensured all the workshop participants fully grasped this powerful message by engaging them in a series of thought-provoking interactive questions and answers. The first questions centered around the essence of leadership in general and inclusive leadership in particular. LDIA members learnt that moving from one to the other requires better quality decision making. This can be achieved by developing our listening and questioning skills, showing the courage to admit our mistakes, cultivating awareness of personal and institutional bias and committing to change at a systemic level with the creation of diverse-thinking teams and a culture of belonging in which everyone can thrive.

Of course, knowing why inclusive leadership is beneficial is important, but I firmly believe that to become an inclusive leader we must decide to become one. The quality of our individual decision to become an inclusive leader depends on our mindset and behaviour. It means, for example, that we understand why it is problematic to say: 'I don't care if you are black, white or purple – I will hire the best person for the job.' Or that we reflect on how to interact with someone who says 'that people need to stop being so sensitive.' It also means that our behaviour is aligned with our mindset. That we speak up when others show non-inclusive

behaviours and we actively seek out contributions of others to overcome personal limitations.

I hope, thanks to the workshop, LDIA members learned that becoming an inclusive leader is not about perfection, but about the courage to accept responsibility and model the behaviour we want others to see and copy. It is about setting goals and working towards them. It is about forming coalitions and alliances (like LDIA) to tackle institutional bias and discrimination. It is about ensuring that everyone can occupy positions of influence and power in our firms. It is about being proud to be an inclusive leader so that our organizations can attract and retain all kinds of talented people, can generate innovation and unlock new markets and clients. This is what inclusive organizations do.

By Hakim Benichou, Teamspeler

Hakim and his team are specialized in a unique way, in guiding their clients towards becoming inclusive organizations thanks to their vast experience in organizational development, their different backgrounds and know-how in asking the right people the right questions at the right time. If you want more advice on how to become an inclusive leader, contact Hakim at Teamspeler: hakim.benichou@teamspeler.be



BUILD BRIDGES, NOT WALLS

How internships can turn the law into fun

As a TADA (ToekomstATELIERdelAvenir*) alumnus and first-year law student, Soulimane secured a two-week internship in the Brussels office of an international law firm (Allen & Overy "A&O"). In this interview, he shares with us why he chose a legal career, what he experienced in his two weeks at the heart of an international law firm, and his views on how law firms can have an impact in some of the more disadvantaged neighbourhoods of Brussels.

Where did your interest in the legal field start?

Soulimane: In our school I regularly attended TADA sessions, which brought us in contact with a whole range of professionals, including lawyers from A&O. To be honest, until I turned 18, I was convinced that I wanted to become a doctor, but in the end, I knew I didn't have enough hours of maths in school to realistically go for it. At that time, I didn't think studying law would be anything for me, but a picture of me in a toga from an old TADA session and some good memories from that day convinced me to go to the

info-session and explore the law courses nonetheless. There, I immediately realized that this was the right direction for me, and this internship has only strengthened that feeling!

How did you experience the internship at Allen & Overy?

Soulimane: It was simply amazing. I got a chance to join meetings, discover the different departments, analyse memos, ask questions, speak to all the lawyers, and really get to know what goes on every day in a law firm. The most inspirational part was actually talking to the lawyers during lunch breaks and seeing how passionately they talk about their specialised fields! Hearing their first-hand accounts really revealed how captivating and interesting their work can be and how much they love what they are doing every day.

From the start, I had two buddies who made sure that I was involved in as many things as possible, and they took the time to explain certain complicated topics. It is truly admirable how in no time at all they can help you understand abstract legal concepts, which had never

really been clear to me from classes. During this kind of internship, you hear about and see a lot of examples, which makes legal concepts much more fun, and really helps you to understand the theory better.

Did anything surprise you during your internship?

Soulaimane: I was fully convinced that I wouldn't like corporate law at all, but it took me completely by surprise, and I ended up enjoying it a lot! There's a huge difference between the rather dry books at university and the emotion and adrenaline that goes with these files in real life. Corporate law is actually a lot of fun once you get to experience it from this side!

Also, more generally, I think that a lot of people don't realise that behind the more theoretical studies, there's a job out there where it becomes far livelier and more fun than they could ever have imagined. This kind of internship can make a huge difference in helping you discover this and can be a true motivator for young people.

Did this internship change the way you look at law firms and the legal field?

Soulaimane: Yes, it completely changed the image I had of day-to-day life in a law firm. I pictured it the old-school way of getting up and doing the same repetitive tasks every day, but I discovered it's actually much livelier and more exciting! Every day is a different day with a different case and different approach and this really gets your adrenaline running at times.

What could law firms do more or better to attract people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods?

Soulaimane: There are parts of Brussels where people with higher degrees, doctors, lawyers, directors, etc. simply don't live. This means that the kids in these neighbourhoods have no role models to look up to or be inspired by. That's exactly where organizations like TADA (<https://www.tada.brussel>), Nakama (<https://www.nakamavzw.eu/>) or Capital (<https://www.collibrifoundation.org/en/project/capital-vzw-hub-brussels-youth>) play a crucial role, by showing these kids that they can shape their future and become anything they want. I encourage law firms to reach out to these types of organizations and try to collaborate on a regular basis to make a difference.

What advice would you give to other kids with similar ambitions?

Soulaimane: First of all, the only thing that limits you is yourself. People will try to put limits on you, but you can choose to set your own goals. You may fail but that doesn't mean you have lost, it's just a matter of continuing and trying to get up every time. Second, make as many connections as you can with people from different cultures and backgrounds. In the words of Martin Luther King, "build bridges, not walls". It's so important for everyone to do this, it really has the power to inspire people and to change peoples' views on life.

For law firms, building bridges starts with reaching out to the local initiatives I referred to previously (TADA, Nakama, Capital, etc.). Participating in these initiatives absolutely inspires and motivates young people, and helps de-mystify the wonderful world of law!

By Glenn Deduytsche, Allen & Overy

* TADA (<https://www.tada.brussels>) is a network that involves citizens, civil society and businesses in the integration and emancipation of Brussels' most socially vulnerable teenagers. In Brussels, TADA supports more or less 1300 teenagers through a network that provides intensive coaching. At TADA's weekend schools, teenagers discover themselves and society thanks to fun practical lessons from enthusiastic professionals, for example from judges, lawyers, nurses, cooks or mechanics. Through subjects such as an introduction to law, medicine or mechanics, these teenagers get an insight into what 'later' has in store every Saturday – for three years. In this way, they better understand the relevance of learning and 'doing your best, for later' while developing themselves into motivated young people, full of motivation to contribute to our society later on.



DIVERSITY AND LEGAL RECRUITMENT

A corporate, education and law firm perspective

22 November 2021, Hybrid event

The many inequalities noticeable in society are reflected in the workplace. The legal environment is no exception. First of all, the elitist image attached to law firms and other professional services organizations such as executive search companies can turn off a large segment of the population. If we want to alleviate some of the hardships of society, it is important to make our working environment more diverse and inclusive. How can this be achieved?

In a virtual session held on 22 November 2021, a panel of six committed professionals addressed the topic: Diversity and Legal Recruitment – a corporate, education and law firm perspective.

The panellists included:

- » **Dr. Tatjana Parac-Vogt** (KU Leuven),
- » **Sabine Stute** (AbbVie)
- » **Cindy Yip** (Google)
- » **An Winters** (Russell Reynolds)
- » **Fiona Carlin** (Baker McKenzie).
- » The session was moderated by **Charlotte Ryckman** of AbbVie.

In the past decade, the efforts towards more diversity and inclusion have been focused on gender and ethnicity. The debate must now go well beyond that.



A holistic approach is required. It should encompass all underrepresented groups, also known as URGs, because discrimination results from multiple factors such as gender, sexual identity or orientation, ethnicity, culture, disability and socio-economic background. Often those traits are not visible and several may be combined in one single person.

If we want more diverse and inclusive organizations, we must start with recruitment, and well before that with the education system at large. Unlike in Anglo-Saxon countries, in Belgium access to excellent universities is broad. This is confirmed by Tatjana Parac-Vogt of KU Leuven. Academic researches reveal that the Belgian academic population is diverse if we consider gender, home language, financial means, etc. Many universities are already making huge efforts to be more inclusive and to attract and support students from URGs. Universities acknowledge that every student brings a different backpack, and that beyond their differences, all students deserve equal opportunities.

Our first challenge is to reach the targeted population without any stigmatization, so as to give everyone a chance in the recruitment process. We should start as early as possible. All participants agree that the involvement of schools and universities, but also of

parents' associations is paramount. In any event, concrete actions are needed. Some of our organizations already visit schools and give presentations to 16-17-year-old students. In impoverished areas, youngsters often feel that they have no place in services companies. If we invite them to spend half a day in our offices, they may picture themselves in that kind of environment and get an insight into the kind of career paths available.

Those valuable initiatives demonstrate that if we want to be successful, we have to join forces with the other actors in the field. We can reach out to the charities and working organizations already engaged in less-favoured neighbourhoods. Mentoring programs giving support to first-year students are very rewarding, in particular for those who must work on the side to cover their living costs and tuition fees. Further concrete actions are workshops dedicated to the drafting of CVs and to job interviews. We can also offer summer internships or a first work experience opportunity for talented students from URGs on the model of what already exists in big organizations. Equally important are networking events.

When it comes to recruitment, one of the major pitfalls is unconscious bias. Unconscious biases

happen out of our control. They trigger judgments and assessments of people and situations under the influence of our background, cultural environment and personal experiences. We must develop strategies to remedy this drawback. Some law firms have already implemented in-house training and application review programs including blind recruitment whereby CVs are anonymous. However, blank CVs are but a first and easy filter in the early stage of selection. They lack contextualization. At the interview stage, the recruiter will have to deal with unconscious bias.

Sophisticated tools prove quite helpful to contextualize applications. They consider many factors revealing a candidate's socio-economic background. An algorithm will supply a performance indicator, so even candidates with comparatively low academic grades might still emerge as bright performers because they come from a disadvantaged neighbourhood.

Job descriptions should also be made more inclusive. In order to achieve this, companies might have to relax some of the traditional selection criteria, for instance look beyond pure academic grades or not be too demanding about experience in a specific sector. Nowadays recruiters tend to consider atypical profiles, candidates who do not check all the boxes of a job

description. They talk of "out-of-spec" candidates. This approach is paying off: often the selected candidate brings in more innovative ideas.

In Belgium and in most of continental Europe we might not have such advanced tools as are available in Anglo-Saxon countries, but we can act at our level and take modest steps with immediate effect towards being more consciously inclusive. Every one of us is influential at a particular point in the recruitment pipeline. If we work together and collaborate across that pipeline, we can make a more qualitative difference.

Later on, another challenge will be to keep those individuals within the organization and to foster their careers.

All panellists welcome a noticeable change in trend. Today the demand for more diversity and inclusiveness comes from our clients. They want to be presented with a diverse pool of candidates. That message is undoubtedly encouraging. But we have to sustain our efforts. We are at the beginning of a long process.

By Anne Ruwet, Steptoe

M/F/X? WHY GENDER INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE IS NEEDED

Slowly but surely, our society is moving towards trans-inclusion. More visibility, relaxed laws, and yet...

People who exist in the middle or outside of the gender spectrum still feel resistance. An 'x' on your passport is not (yet) possible and someone like Ruby Rose, who has become the face of gender fluidity since their performance in Orange is the New Black, is invariably addressed as 'she'. Even to buy a ticket for a play about gender fluidity you have to choose between 'sir' or 'madam'. Unless you are a professor, then you can just use your title.

Language reflects our environment. By looking at which words we use, and exactly how often we use them, we can find out how far we have come as a society. This is because we often do not consciously pay attention to our choice of words and do not realize how deeply rooted some words are. Subconscious, unguarded statements often reveal how we as a society view the world around us and what - and who - we label as 'different' (and therefore 'inferior').

This is precisely why discussions about word choices are so important. It shows not only how we can better respect the people around us, but also how much effort we are willing to put into this, because adapting our language use is not easy. Just to give one example, as a person with no physical disabilities, even after three years I am still working on eliminating ableist words from my daily language.

2 become 3

By making your language gender-inclusive as a cis/it person, you welcome non-binary people into your world. You are literally talking an opening into the proverbial bubble around your world and you are inviting others to go and stand there too, to build friendships, and to love and live. By ostentatiously

using 'those/their' pronouns when someone asks, you acknowledge them as a person.

It is therefore not a ban on gendered words; "men and women", "girls and boys" will continue to exist, as will the words that refer to them. You're just creating space for people who don't feel addressed by these words. Non-binary people don't want M/F to be removed, they're just asking for a third option to be added: M/F/X.

In practice, however, less so than English, Dutch seems to be a very rigid language when it comes to gender-inclusive vocabulary. For example, we do not have a Dutch word for 'sibling' like in English or a 'hän' (pronoun) as in Finnish. So, what do you say to a person who does not fit into the M or F category?

Company seeks m/f/x

It is very irritating to go through an existential crisis every time you want to subscribe to a simple newsletter as a non-binary person. Sir, Madam and certainly the exasperating Miss. It all feels so limiting. Why is it so important for others to know what's in your pants? You just want to be kept up to date with the latest cookbook from Jeroen Meus.

When you're walking down the street and pass a temp agency, there's always a moment of tension: does the agency use gender-inclusive language? Do they explicitly welcome us 'x's into this company? These are small things, but they make a world of difference. You know that a company looking for a 'Logistics Employee (m/f/x)' is already aware of your existence, even if it is only in theory.

Another little thing that makes a world of difference is the signature at the bottom of your emails. When you broach the subject at work, you're sometimes told that gender-free wording for positions reduces the visibility

of women and is therefore not a good thing. This may be true.

Gender-neutral language in a society where (cis) men are the norm, mostly comes down to masculine words for masculine functions, just as gender-neutral clothing often means pants and a T-shirt, certainly not a skirt and bikini top.

Gender-neutral language, however, does not mean that female colleagues cannot describe themselves as 'Director of Data Management'. If you identify as a woman, you have the right to demand a female title. Just as non-binary people are allowed to demand a title that matches their gender identity. Moreover, a gender-inclusive alternative should not be complicated; think of 'ombudsperson' instead of the clumsy slash usage of 'ombudsman ombudswoman'.

Language (r)evolution

You can also add pronouns to the bottom of your email. This is not only an advantage for trans people who are comfortable with the label woman or man (they can clearly indicate their gender). It's also practical for the reader of the email if he or she is not sure whether Sam is a man, a woman or neither.

When it comes to pronouns, 'those/their' are also a simple, logical solution. Non-binary people pretty much unanimously agree that 'he/she' not only sounds uncomfortable and a bit clumsy, but also that it excludes us. It still implies a binarity to which we do not belong. Language purists like to suggest that the pronouns 'those/their' are 'not grammatical'. To them, I can only say: long live the language error! Because, as Kees van Kooten so beautifully put it, today's language error is tomorrow's cliché and next week's language rule. A living language like Dutch evolves. The world view of language purists had better evolve along with it.

Queer

We can also pay attention to diversity within our own LGBT+ community to tell a more inclusive story. If you only talk about relationships that are not heterosexual, the acronym 'LGBT' ('holebi') is what you're looking for. Not only do you explicitly acknowledge lesbian relationships, you also avoid 'bi erasure'. A bisexual

person in a monogamous relationship is still bisexual, and some bisexuals find it important that their bisexuality remains visible - even within a monogamous relationship.

If you go broader and want to talk about the community in general, you can use the word 'queer', one of the few words that was originally seen as neutral but moved to negative and yet we have managed to recapture it.

The word 'queer' can refer to both gender and sexuality and does not require any further interpretation. So, it also embraces people who cannot or do not want to say exactly what makes them not cis/it, as well as people who do not need a well-defined identity. It also gives a name to intersexual people (who do not always identify as trans) and asexual and/or aromantic people; after all, they are part of our family too.

It is clear that language evolves. Let's (r)evolve with it.

By Misha Verdonck, Zizo (<https://zizomag.be/>)

Looking for gender inclusive communication training? Contact Kliq at info@kliqzw.be



Designed by Valérie Van Den Eynden

KLIQ



PROMOTING SOCIO-ECONOMIC DIVERSITY

LDIA Lab Kick-off Meeting

22 November 2021, Hybrid Event

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

10 December 2021, Virtual (Apart Together) Event

LDIA members were invited to celebrate the HUMAN RIGHTS DAY by organizing various hybrid events.

“Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home -- so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. [...] Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world.”, Eleanor Roosevelt

Human Rights Day is observed every year on 10 December - the day the United Nations General Assembly adopted, in 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The UDHR is a milestone document, which proclaims the inalienable rights that everyone is entitled to as a human being - regardless of race, colour, religion, sex, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Available in more than 500 languages, it is

the most translated document in the world.

2021 Theme: EQUALITY - Reducing inequalities, advancing human rights

This year’s Human Rights Day theme relates to ‘Equality and Article 1 of the UDHR – “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.”

Rebuild better, fairer, greener!

In May 2021, we asked LDIA members for topics that could be the subject of a LDIA Lab, a concept likened to a think tank with defined work streams and working groups in which LDIA members would come together (potentially with other third parties) to drive the DEI change agenda.

LDIA members are asked to commit to the success of the Lab and to nominate volunteers who are willing to actively participate. Law firms are invited to encourage associate participation (and to consider communicating that a block of dedicated LDIA Lab hours (to be set at each firm’s discretion) will be treated as equivalent to billable hours for yearend review/bonus purposes). We will strive to achieve a good gender balance in the volunteer cohort.

The topic of diversity and inclusion has been discussed in corporates and law firms with more or less conviction for the last decade. Traditionally, the focus has been on gender, since gender bias was (and remains) tangible in the legal profession and progress has been slow. In the aftermath of George Floyd’s death, the focus has shifted to racial and ethnic inequalities, especially in US law firms that are under pressure from their clients to change. Our societies are increasingly polarized, with different minority groups pitted against one another in often hostile debate fuelled by social media. There are deep inequalities in our societies that we ignore at our peril.

In this context, we are aware that the legal profession is not only immensely privileged, but also influential. We are busy professionals, not politicians. We cannot change the world, but we can contribute to a fairer

society, and that starts with diversifying the legal profession so that it is a better reflection of society.

In the past, we have idealized the concept of meritocracy - the belief that anyone can make it regardless of their background. However, experience shows that the system does not work that way. Access to the profession of law remains limited and exclusive. Although there is broad access to university and from there to the legal profession in Belgium, the drop-out rate is high among disadvantaged students who often lack the support, the tools, and the social codes that are implicitly needed to succeed.



The LDIA Lab will comprise volunteers with a strong personal commitment to action. Law firm leadership should be represented but it will be important to involve a gender-balanced mix of lawyers and business professionals from different age groups/levels of seniority.

The topic of socio-economic diversity is broad. There is a consensus on the following principles:

- » We should focus on young people and their journey

from their final years of high school, through university and finding their first job

- » We should partner with our clients in this initiative and the bar associations
- » We should be inclusive, not just focusing on potential lawyers of the future, but demonstrating to young people the wide range of other professional opportunities associated with the law (and other businesses (marketing, HR, etc.))

- » We should not be overly ambitious but make early progress on some clearly defined objectives to build momentum.

We don't as yet have a set roadmap. In January 2022, we will have a further scoping session with our volunteers and agree a few key priorities. At the six-month mark, we will assess and report on progress.

Time to WALK THE TALK! More to come!

By Fiona Carlin, Baker McKenzie & Kat Van Nuffel, Steptoe



Founders:

The Legal Diversity & Inclusion Alliance is a joint initiative of Steptoe and Van Bael & Bellis.

Co-founding Members:

- » ALTIUS
- » Ashurst
- » Baker Botts LLP
- » Baker McKenzie
- » Bignon De Keyser
- » Cazimir
- » Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP
- » Clifford Chance
- » CMS
- » Covington & Burling LLP
- » Crowell & Moring LLP
- » De Brauw Blackstone Westbroek N.V
- » DLA Piper
- » Eubelius
- » Fieldfisher
- » Herbert Smith Freehills LLP
- » Hogan Lovells
- » HOYNG ROKH MONEGIER
- » K&L Gates
- » Liedekerke Wolters Waelbroeck Kirkpatrick
- » Linklaters
- » Loyens & Loeff
- » Lydian
- » Mayer Brown
- » Morrison & Foerster LLP
- » NautaDutilh
- » Osborne Clarke
- » Simont Braun
- » Shearman & Sterling LLP
- » Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP
- » Slaughter and May
- » Stibbe
- » Taylor Wessing
- » Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati LLP

ANNOUNCEMENT: 3RD ANNIVERSARY

On January 31, 2022, unless the pandemic prevents us from doing so, LDIA will be organizing a panel discussion: **DEI IN THE LEGAL PROFESSION**

Programme

- » 6.30 pm: Doors open + Cocktail reception
- » 7 pm: Welcome Speech
- » 7.15 pm: Panel discussion 'DEI in the legal profession'
- » 8.30 pm: closing panel discussion
- » Networking

Panel members

Micro Focus Belux, InBev, Google, Chambers and Partners, BAT, AbbVie

3 pillars will serve as a basis for the discussion:

1. Initial Engagement & Commitments
2. Diverse Recruitment
3. Inclusion (what are you doing to be inclusive once people are hired)

Members:

- » Allen & Overy
- » Bird & Bird
- » Cooley
- » Deloitte Legal
- » Dentons
- » Fragomen
- » Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer LLP
- » Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP
- » Monard Law
- » Sidley Austin LLP
- » STRELIA
- » Van Olmen & Wynant
- » White & Case
- » younity

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

- Vernā Myers



www.legaldiversityalliance.be

Email: info@legaldiversityalliance.be