

PRESS RELEASE

39 Industry Representatives United to Boost Multicultural Diversity & Inclusion in Workplace in Belgium

- On 28 May, representatives of 30 Belgian Companies and 9 Employer Federations met with the King of the Belgians at the high-level roundtable, marking the conclusion of the “Business Uniting Talent (BUT) 2030” project.
- This initiative, led by CSR Europe and funded by the Prince Philippe Fund in collaboration with the King Baudouin Foundation, facilitated dialogue between employees and executives.
- The project culminated with the adoption of the Way Forward Statement, aiming to advance MD&I practices in the workplace of participating companies.

Brussels, 28 May 2024 – Today, 39 industry representatives participating in the [Business Uniting Talents 2030 project](#) convened for a high-level roundtable on multicultural diversity & inclusion (MD&I) in the workplace with His Majesty the King of the Belgians at the Palace of Laeken in Brussels, between 16:00 to 18:00 CET.

The event, co-organised by CSR Europe, the Prince Philippe Fund and the King Baudouin Foundation, aimed at bringing together representatives of 30 Belgian companies and 9 employer federations - VBO-FEB, Agoria, Assuralia, Comeos, Denuo, Embuild, Essenscia, Febelfin, and Federgon – to discuss the outcomes of the Multicultural Diversity & Inclusion Assessment conducted between 2020 and 2024.

The Assessment aimed at identifying and addressing current gaps in corporate DEI practices that hindered the employment of individuals with non-EU backgrounds in the Belgian labour market. The event opened with the CEO Roundtable, in which employees of the **BUT2030 Employee Sounding Board** shared their workplace experiences and gave feedback to participating CEOs and Executive Directors. Amongst the top challenges and priorities identified to advance corporate efforts on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) were:

- ensuring the DEI is integrated as strategic priority.
- providing cultural education for HR and leadership, and ensuring clarity and equity in HR processes and career progression.
- setting up effective measurement practices to track DEI progress and assess the effectiveness of initiatives.

In response, Executives identified the potential solutions and provided examples of how they adopted new practices related to the BUT2030 project. In the second session, the multistakeholder dialogue widened to include employer federations, who highlighted the current strengths and weaknesses of their sectors in terms of Multicultural Diversity & Inclusion and outlined their plans to further support member companies in advancing racial equality via the adopted **Way Forward Statement**.



Overall, the event underscored the critical social and economic relevance of projects like BUT2030 to **advance cultural inclusion and National labour shortages.**

ABOUT BUSINESS UNITING TALENTS (BUT) 2030

[Business Uniting Talents 2030 \(BUT2030\)](#) has been initiated by the [Prince Philippe Fund](#) with the support of the [King Baudouin Foundation](#) and [CSR Europe](#) to reduce inequalities in access to employment opportunities in the Belgian labour market and build inclusive business models by developing practical management approaches for companies. After a successful pilot project between October 2020 - March 2022, the initiative expanded to collaborate with sector federations and their member companies. CSR Europe enhanced the impact of the project's methodology by extending the assessment to more companies across various sectors, forming Sectoral Working Groups for collaborative problem-solving and idea exchange, and establishing an Employee Sounding Board to gather employee feedback. The ultimate goal is to leverage these sectoral insights for continuous improvement and contribute to the development of an equal labour market in Belgium by 2030.

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Business Uniting Talents 2030

SECTOR FEDERATIONS

Business Uniting Talents 2030

Way Forward Statement 2024

While the market is experiencing a worrying labour shortage, Belgium is witnessing a widening gap between individuals of EU and non-EU backgrounds in accessing employment opportunities. At the same time, our society is becoming increasingly diverse, requiring businesses to find new talents to face this transformation.

Together, we want to recognise the importance of Multicultural Diversity and Cultural Inclusion with a particular focus on the employment of workers with a non-EU background, as to encourage a sustainable change, shaping the companies of tomorrow.

Following a first phase with leading companies, a methodology to improve multicultural diversity and inclusion was developed and shared with sector federations in a second phase.

Thanks to the proactive commitment of 9 sector federations, **as companies**, we agree to do our best efforts to tackle the identified weaknesses, promote equitable treatment and foster equal opportunities by pledging to:

1. Consider Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) a strategic priority

Continue to ensure that diversity, equity and inclusion are a part of the company's strategic vision, endorsed by the top management and reflected in annual reporting.

2. Support Multicultural Diversity, Equity and inclusion (DEI) through cultural education of everyone but specifically HR and top management

Allocate resources towards DEI training and education for all staff, with a particular focus on HR and leadership teams. This investment aims to cultivate a culture of learning and inclusion, utilizing initiatives to promote organization-wide diversity awareness. Assign clear roles and responsibilities to each manager and establish a reporting process that ensures employees feel secure in reporting instances of exclusion. Additionally, provide guidance on where employees can seek support and assistance when needed.

3. Ensure clarity, equity and engagement in HR processes and Career Progression

Provide development opportunities, bring clarity on leadership skills and support employees in their career ambitions. Encourage continuous lifelong learning to foster growth. Bring awareness on biases, promote inclusivity, and ensure equity throughout the talent management process, from attracting and hiring, to advancing, retaining, and recognizing employees.

4. Consider implementing effective measurement practices and ensure accountability

Explore comprehensive measurement practices to track progress such as qualitative data collection, while acknowledging its inherent limitations. In addition, consider assessing DEI initiatives for effectiveness and adjust as necessary.

As Sector Federations, we pledge to assist our member companies in implementing the developed methodology by actively supporting the actions outlined above. This support may involve facilitating network and peer-to-peer activities, sharing and creating tools, and consistently raising awareness of the importance of this topic in both external and internal strategic meetings.

*This document refers to *diversity* in terms of ethnicity and intends *inclusion* as all the practices and policies established to provide equal access to opportunity and resources for people coming from cultural and ethnic minorities, who might otherwise be excluded or marginalised.