

PRESS RELEASE

Employees, Companies and Employer Federations Explore the Way Forward to Foster Ethnic Diversity and Inclusion in the Workplace

Brussels, 16 March 2022 - Today, employees, Belgian companies, and employer federations taking part in the project [Business Uniting Talents \(BUT\) 2030](#) – initiated by the Prince Philippe Fund with the support of the King Baudouin Foundation and CSR Europe – came together for the **high-level roundtable “Promoting business action on Ethnic Diversity” in the presence of His Majesty the King of the Belgians**. The event took place between 9:30 and 10:45 CET at the Royal Palace in Brussels.

The King’s continued interest and engagement towards the project – demonstrated through meetings with companies – has been a key driver for the advancement of BUT2030.

During this event, the participants shared their experience in promoting ethnic diversity and the next steps to take, including how employer **federations will play a key role in encouraging more companies to initiate practical actions towards racial equality**. This was expressed in the Way Forward Statement here attached.

Spokespersons of the BUT2030 Employee Resource Group presented their recommendations to foster ethnic diversity and inclusion in the workplace to the CEOs of **AXA Belgium, Janssen Pharmaceutica, Engie Belgium, Port of Antwerp, Telenet, L’Oréal Benelux, Solvay, AGC Glass Europe** and representatives of **Federgon, Comeos, Febelfin, Agoria, VBO, Unisoc, Unia, Essenscia, VOKA, and UWE**.

The King’s openness to host this high-level roundtable highlighted the social and economic relevance of BUT2030 and the learnings developed by project partners. It showed the strong willingness to act concretely to address the national labour shortage by advancing cultural inclusion.

Ilham Kadri, CEO Solvay S.A., said:

If we want to make a difference, we must consider ethnic diversity and inclusion with the same sense of urgency as climate change. Transforming the culture requires strong collaboration with other companies, NGOs, associations and our employees. Let’s bond together to make it happen.

Stefan Crets, Executive Director of CSR Europe, said:

The promotion of ethnic diversity is our common challenge: it is beneficial to businesses to enlarge the pool of talents they have access to, and it is good for our society to thrive on a joint and inclusive social and economic development. BUT2030 provides companies with a unique framework and methodology



to improve the management of diversity and an action-driven framework to engage with its employees and stakeholders.

Monica De Jonghe, Director-General at VBO-FEB, said:

FEB and its member federations play a key role in raising awareness of the importance of diversity and inclusion (D&I) among employers. Since every sector faces different challenges, it are the professionals in a given sector who are best placed to assess what steps are needed to promote and enhance D&I in their own industry. FEB wants to further expand these good practices and inspire all sectors to work on D&I.

About Business Uniting Talents 2030

BUT2030 aims to reduce inequalities in the access to employment opportunities and build inclusive business models by developing a practical management approach for companies. This pilot project was initiated by the **Prince Philippe Fund** with the support of the **King Baudouin Foundation** and **CSR Europe** between October 2020 and March 2022. This project is in line with the European Commission's "[Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027](#)".

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Employer Federations Way Forward towards Ethnic D&I

While the market is experiencing a worrying labour shortage, the gap between EU and non-EU individuals on access to employment is widening in Belgium. 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 Ethnic Diversity and Cultural Inclusion, to support a structured and sustainable change, shaping the companies of tomorrow.

To efficiently tackle these challenges, promote equal treatment and foster opportunities among our members, we commit to:

1. Raise awareness on the importance of ethnic D&I for business growth

By running research and analyse the latest trends and findings drawn by stakeholders, we promote the economic and social value of ethnic diverse workspaces and the benefits that inclusion can bring to the labour market and local community.

2. Integrate ethnic D&I in the annual work programme

We commit to actively integrate ethnic D&I in our core annual strategy, becoming role models to our members. More specifically, we will further encourage companies in establishing a structured agenda on the topic by providing reliable information and inspiring concrete action. This could include activities such as the organisation of related webinars or meetings, best practice sharing, content writing through newsletter and articles or stakeholders engagement.

3. Go outside and walk the talk

We commit to foster our engagement with external actors across society, and promote our members' willingness to make a change. After gaining an in-depth understanding of the issues faced by local communities, we will report stakeholders' expectations and propose practical sustainable solutions across our network.

4. Become ambassador of this change, internally and externally

We want to be key player of this needed national labour market transformation. We are willing to become ambassadors of ethnic diversity and promote inclusion beyond our corporate networks and throughout the wider Belgian society. We will do so by sharing best practices and testimonials of cultural inclusion in external online and offline events, representing a symbol of non-discrimination and solidarity in our engagement with external stakeholders.

*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.