



In collaboration with:



Business Uniting Talents 2030

Company Action Towards Ethnic Diversity and Inclusion

Recommendations from the Employee Resource Group

1. Executive Summary

Building up on the feedback received at the Stakeholder Dialogues hosted on May 2021, partners of Business Uniting Talents 2030 (BUT2030) recognised the need to **give voice to people with non-EU origins to move forward with the project**. To this end, CSR Europe created a dedicated **Employee Resource Group** aimed at bringing together workers of participating companies with a non-EU background - born in Belgium or in other EU and non-EU countries – to facilitate a honest conversation about their professional challenges and needs.

Afterwards, at the meeting on 13th January 2022, seven employees from three participating companies met. After an ice-breaking introduction, participants were asked to answer three questions using a word or short sentence expressing the main obstacles related to their past, present, and future career path. An in-depth conversation followed suit, with participants sharing multiple challenges and potential solutions.

This paper summarises the **main outcomes of the Employee Resource Group discussion** and aims to **raise awareness within companies** about the difficulties faced by minority groups in the past, present, and foreseeable future, and ultimately to **inspire effective action**. Based on their personal experiences, attendees drew **10 practical recommendations to the taskforce** on top of issues faced by all people looking for a job or promotion. The suggestions reflect the heterogeneous composition of the Group, made up of individuals born in the EU with non-EU origins and others born outside of the EU. As such, the inputs summarised in this paper cannot be ascribed to all people with non-EU background.

Figure 1: Summary of the key 10 recommendations of the Employee Resource Group

MANAGEMENT PROCESS	
Go outside	
1.	Appoint ethnic diverse role models
2.	Organise job fairs beyond the usual network
3.	Organise job fairs beyond the usual network
Bring the outside in	
4.	Promote language inclusion by challenging assumptions and investing in upskilling programs
5.	Train hiring managers on work permits for non-EU nationals
6.	Raise awareness and implement companywide unconscious bias training
Work with the inside	
7.	Establish clear D&I policies, which includes trainings on other cultures, in order to fight misunderstanding
8.	Implement positive actions to foster ethnic diversity in the short term with clear KPIs and timeframe
9.	Collaborate with other companies for shared improvement
10.	Consult employees with non-EU background and professionals on D&I

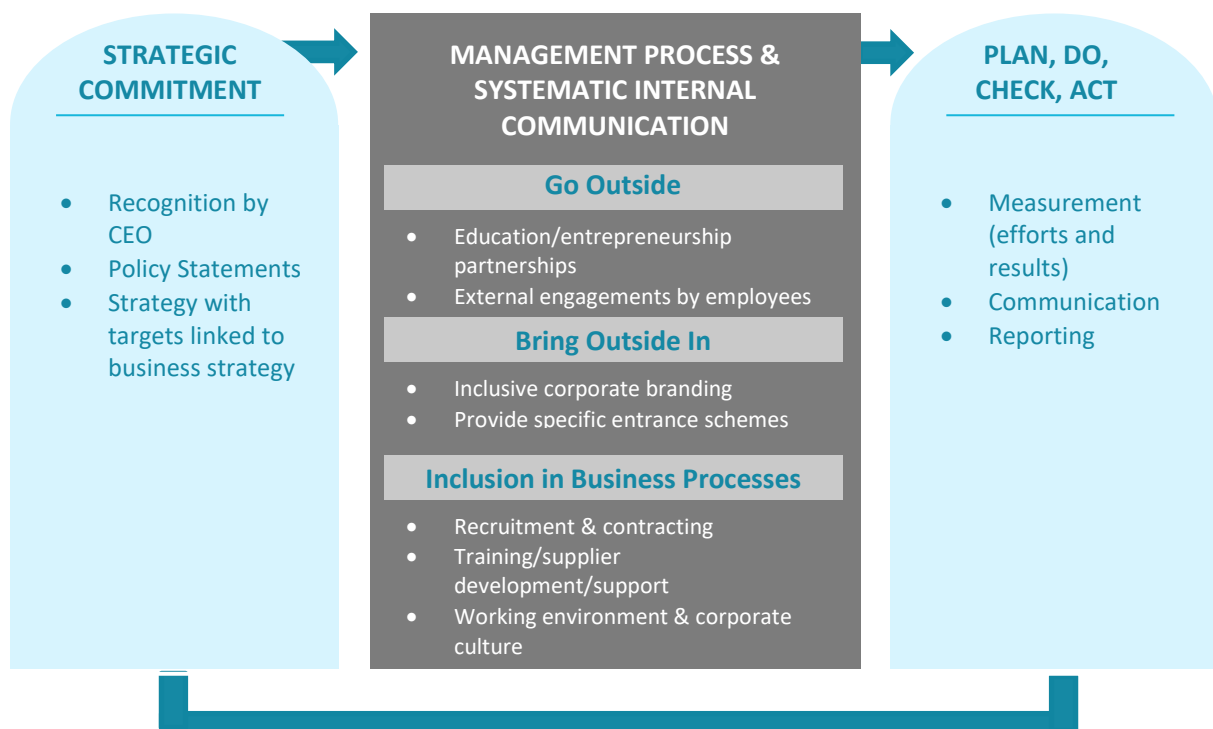


2. Challenges & Recommendations

This paper presents the challenges identified by the Employee Resource Group and its recommendations following the framework of the **BUT2030's Business Model for ethnic diversity and inclusion** (see Figure 2), which defines what a company should do to be an inclusive employer. The model is based on **three pillars** - strategic commitment, management processes, measurement & monitoring - and provides an overview of all the **internal and external business operations that should be considered whilst drafting an Ethnic D&I strategy**.

The recommendations are divided according to the three directions in which companies should move within their management processes. By **going outside**, companies are encouraged to create partnerships with external organisations, engage with ethnic diverse groups and facilitate employees' participation in volunteering opportunities to improve the business understanding of ethnic diversity at the local and regional level. Afterwards, the establishment of policies to institutionalise fair entrance schemes can allow companies to **bring the outside in**. Finally, businesses should **work with the inside**, by providing trainings and support to the workforce, ensuring an equal working environment, and promoting a truly inclusive corporate culture.

Figure 2: The BUT2030 Business Model for ethnic diversity & inclusion



2.1 Go Outside

2.1.1 Representative role models

The difficulties encountered by people of non-EU origins starts with their personal environment. Due to their family's or their own's migration, they often lack role models within their network to build an educational and professional career. Parents and relatives engaged in specific job sectors typically known for high presence of employees with non-EU origins, such as agriculture, services, or industry, they become their own role models. This initial difficulty significantly impacts their future opportunities, compared with national counterparts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. *To inspire young generations with non-EU origins, companies could make sure that diversity is represented in **job fairs and recruiting teams**.*
2. *From the company's perspective, appointing internal **role models** coming from ethnic minority groups could increase the **inclusive employer brand** of the business and facilitate the attraction of a new pool of talents.*
3. *From the point of view of potential candidates, having the chance to **talk with employees with non-EU origins** would boost their interest and engagement, since they would be able to reflect their experience in the core values of the corporate.*

2.1.2 Knowledge of job opportunities & possibilities

Directly linked to the first identified challenge, the lack of role models often translates into the unawareness of people with non-EU origins on job opportunities. They miss support and guidance from senior figures, which could properly introduce them to the employment environment in Europe and show the possibilities available to grow professionally. This could allow to gain a clear view on what could be achieved, encouraging them to aim high, and be proactive. The absence of role models within personal networks and the lack of knowledge on job opportunities and career growth are worsened by the difficulties in gaining professional experience due to their ethnic origins.

RECOMMENDATION

4. *Only by opening up the company to a new public, it would be possible to enhance ethnic diversity in the corporate's workforce. While higher education is given and acquired, **access to knowledge about available internships, job offers, and other opportunities is not present enough**. Therefore, companies should have systems/strategies in place to efficiently reach potential candidates from ethnically diverse groups. Organising job fairs in overlooked educational institutions, such as universities and "haute école / Hogeschool"- known to host high rates of people with non-EU origins - is key to ensure equal access to job opportunities. If the business wants to recruit from different pools, it must **go beyond its usual networks** with the help of employees and expert advisors.*



5. An in-depth **review of skills requirements** should be considered before opening a job position. Due to the difficulties in gaining professional experience, candidates' soft skills should acquire higher value than technical capacities. People with non-EU origins often showcase strong personal motivation, flexibility, and adaptability. If an individual has potential, businesses should be able to support this person in acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills to build a successful career path.

2.2 Bring the outside in

2.2.1 Looking different than the employer

One of the main challenges shared by participants of the Employee Resource Group is that companies and hiring managers have the tendency to hire someone who looks/acts like them. As a result, candidates with different cultural backgrounds are often exposed to discriminatory recruitment practices, which not only demotivates them but provide the picture of a closed off company, unable to welcome different cultures, customs, and beliefs.

RECOMMENDATION

6. This challenge must be tackled in multiple directions. As the participants pointed out, **it is not enough to work at HR-level**: even if recruiting teams would offer the position to candidates with non-EU origins coming from minority groups, the final decision will always depend on managers. This is the reason why businesses should work internally, to **fight (un)conscious bias**. The workforce must be aware of the latent prejudices they might have towards other cultures and be able to access the right tools to confront these shortcomings.
7. Externally, it is key to work on the **corporate identity**: inviting people of non-EU origins with different ethnic backgrounds to job fairs and providing an inclusive view of the company's brand.
8. Finally, **collaboration** should be enhanced: since companies work with people with different perspectives, they might be able to propose innovative solutions to tackle some of the issues related to discriminatory behaviours.

2.2.2 Language(s) appreciation

The ability to master multiple languages is an asset for companies in today's globalized world. It can allow to access new networks, new markets, and contexts. At the same time, a less good understanding of certain languages can hamper people's integration in the workspace. Therefore, receiving the support from colleagues and management is key to facilitate the comprehension and learning of the local language.



RECOMMENDATION

9. *Companies tend to recruit people who reflect their own customs and ways of working. This comfort zone comprehends the ability to talk the same language(s), even if not strictly related to the offered position. To achieve language inclusion, managers must be challenged in reassessing the necessary **levels of fluency needed to fulfill daily tasks**.*
10. **Transparency and flexibility** are key words in this review: what are the languages that an employee must be able to understand, and which ones must they speak or write professionally? Recognising this difference is the first step to avoid discrimination and promote inclusion.
11. *Aware of the fact that a language can be learned, businesses are encouraged to **offer free courses and invest in workforce upskilling**. At the same time, they should recognise that languages can be acquired at different levels related to the function within the company.*
12. *Finally, companies should recognise the **value of hiring employees with other language skills**, as they will bring a new understanding of a different group of people, potential new markets, or overlooked business partners.*

2.2.3 Work permits

Often, neither the individuals nor the companies' HR officers are aware of the **requirements and rules to hire people born in a non-EU country**. The lack of understanding over the necessary procedures to obtain the right work permits is a huge barrier hiring and integrating people born outside the EU.

RECOMMENDATION

13. *Invest in the **upskilling of HR managers** and departments is key to overcome this challenge. Receiving a specific training on the topic can allow to gain a better understanding of the procedure internally, and consequently inform the wider public on job opportunities opened for non-EU citizens.*
14. *This knowledge can be obtained with the help of **external consultants and experts**, which should be involved in the conversation*



2.3 Work with the inside

2.3.1 Misunderstanding and misconceptions

Discussions on cultural differences can lead to uncomfortable feelings as well as misunderstandings and misconceptions between colleagues. The lack of knowledge on non-European traditions is worsened by populist discourses and fake news, which do not leave space for an informed conversation on multicultural respect.

RECOMMENDATION

15. *Promoting related **D&I policies** is key to solve this challenge. Companies must be able to create a safe space, based on mutual respect between employees. To do that, they could launch different types of initiatives.*
16. *For example, they could establish **specific trainings** related to soft skills development (to enhance respect and empathy, but also adaptability and flexibility); vocabulary courses (to clarify what is allowed and not allowed to ask); basic culture information sessions (which could inform the workers on the basics of other cultures and traditions, especially when the job requires collaboration with foreign countries).*

2.3.2 Career evolution

The introduction of quotas and targets to reach diversity balance (in terms of gender, ethnicity or other types of diversity) has a twofold impact. On one side it can help promoting equality and minority groups' representation. On the other, it might impair the credibility of promotional or recruiting procedures. More transparency is required to justify career growth based on skills rather than personal profile.

RECOMMENDATION

17. ***Positive action mechanisms**, such as the introduction of quotas, should have clear KPIs and a specific timeframe. Facilitating the entrance of diversity is the first step, however, much more needs to be done to shift the company's mindset.*
18. *Breaking the glass ceiling and promoting **upward mobility** is fundamental to ensure equality, empowerment, and inclusion of minority groups. All business units should reflect the multiculturalism of the local context and insert D&I at the core of business operations.*
19. ***Transparent communication** on the reasons behind a promotion or a rejection must be enhanced.*



2.3.3 Lack of participation in companies' initiatives on ethnic D&I

Most of the participants indicated that even if there are ongoing initiatives at corporate level, these do not collect much participation from the workforce. More efforts should be made to ensure **buy-in at all levels to boost impact**. **Cultural inclusion is a topic which should not only interest HR or sustainability departments but should be recognised as a key feature of every business level.**

RECOMMENDATION

20. *Consulting employees with non-EU origins could improve the company's views on the workforce needs and priorities.*
21. *However, involving external experts from civil society is a must. Their experiences and knowledge of the topic can support the development of effective programs, scaling up business efforts.*

Figure 3: Key recommendations of BUT2030's Employee Resource Group

