



## **‘I AM INCLUSIVE’**

# **HOW TO COME TOGETHER to a widely supported concept and engagement**

### **Why the project ‘I am inclusive’?**

Companies focus mainly on the environment (E) and governance (G) aspects, but they often neglect the social and people (S) dimension. The project 'I'm inclusive' is essential for companies and organizations striving for greater sustainability.

- Lack of awareness: some companies may not fully grasp the importance of social and people-related issues in their sustainability efforts. They might be more familiar with environmental and governance concerns due to their direct impact on operations and regulations.
- Complexities in measurement: measuring environmental and governance metrics can be relatively more straightforward, as they often involve quantifiable data. In contrast, evaluating social and people aspects can be challenging, as they encompass diverse and qualitative factors like employee well-being, diversity, and community engagement.
- Short-term focus: many businesses tend to prioritize short-term gains and immediate returns, which can lead them to concentrate on easily measurable and quick-to-implement sustainability initiatives related to environment and governance.
- Resource constraints: companies may have limited resources and expertise to address all dimensions of sustainability adequately. As a result, they might opt for areas that seem more manageable, leaving social and people concerns overlooked.
- Lack of stakeholder pressure: external stakeholders, including investors, customers, and regulators, often emphasize environmental and governance issues because of their broader implications. The same level of pressure might not be present for social and people-related aspects.

## **Why the majority of companies and organizations does not achieve integration and inclusivity on the workforce?**

To achieve comprehensive sustainability, businesses must recognize the significance of the social and people dimension and actively integrate it into their overall strategies and practices. The 'I'm inclusive' project aims to address these gaps and encourage companies to adopt a more holistic approach to sustainability, encompassing environment, governance, social, and people concerns.

Promoting inclusivity requires a collective understanding within both management and all employees working towards a better environment and governance, can only be achieved through people. Consequently, companies and organizations must strive for integration and collaboration with all kinds of individuals, regardless of their education, background, ethnicity, color, and so on. However, only a minority of companies succeeds in achieving this level of inclusivity. Several factors contribute to this phenomenon.

- Unconscious prejudices can hinder the inclusive mindset within a company. These biases may lead to discriminatory practices in recruitment, promotions, and overall treatment of employees.
- Lack of diversity awareness: some companies may not fully grasp the benefits of diversity and inclusion. They might not be aware of the positive impact that diverse perspectives and backgrounds can have on creativity, innovation, and problem-solving.
- Leadership commitment: inclusive culture begins at the top. If company leadership is not fully committed to fostering diversity and inclusion, it becomes challenging to implement meaningful changes throughout the organization.
- Fear of change: embracing inclusivity may require significant changes in company culture, processes, and communication. Some businesses may be hesitant to undergo such transformations due to fear of disrupting the status quo.
- Resistance to training: providing diversity and inclusion training can be essential, but resistance from employees or management can impede its effectiveness.

## **How to overcome these challenges?**

In the project 'I am inclusive,' we aim to develop an inclusivity model that involves as many employees and management members as possible. Our goal is to address unconscious biases and preconceived notions that hinder inclusivity. By raising awareness about the benefits of diversity and its positive impact on creativity and innovation, we strive to create a workplace that values and embraces individual differences.

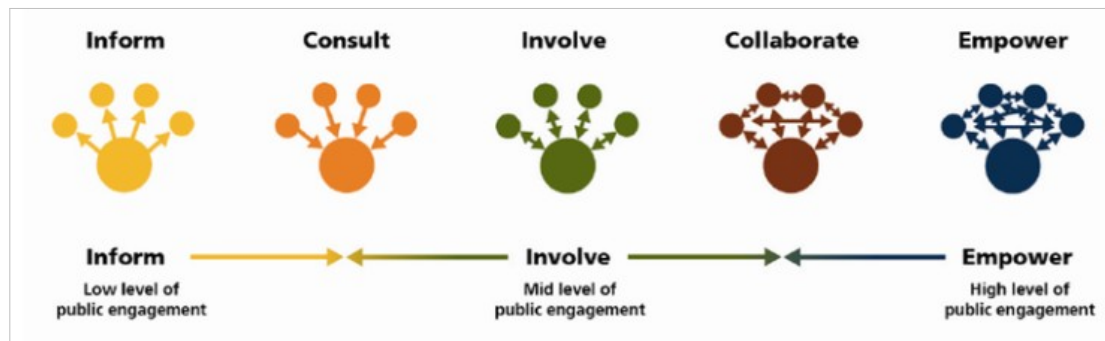
Through the implementation of clear and effective policies and practices, we aim to establish an inclusive work environment where everyone feels respected and valued. Leadership commitment is vital to driving meaningful change, and we seek to foster a culture that actively supports diversity and inclusion.

To overcome resistance to training and change, we designed comprehensive programs that educate employees and management about inclusivity and unconscious bias. By encouraging accountability at all levels of the organization, we ensure that everyone actively promotes inclusivity and challenges discriminatory behaviors.

By involving both employees and management in this process, we can collectively create a more inclusive and collaborative work environment where everyone's unique perspectives and contributions are valued and celebrated. Together, we will build an organization that truly embodies the principles of inclusivity and serves as a positive force for change in the broader community.

# I. OUR METHODOLOGY

To make the concept viable, we planned successive research phases that demonstrate a comprehensive and systematic approach to promoting workplace inclusivity.



1. **Delphi Method with heads of sector federations = CONSULT:** In this phase, the focus was on gathering insights from heads of sector federations who have experience in implementing inclusivity training for young and engaged employees. The Delphi method allowed for iterative feedback to identify common themes and best practices for promoting inclusivity in the workplace.
2. **Appreciative inquiry with labour market experts = INVOLVE:** the second phase utilized appreciative inquiry to tap into the expertise of labour market experts. This approach focused on exploring the strengths and positive aspects of inclusivity initiatives. By involving experts, we gained valuable insights on developing an engaging and attractive approach to foster inclusivity among employees.
3. **Panel with young employees = COLLABORATE:** The third phase involved engaging young employees in a panel setting to validate the findings from the Delphi method. By involving young employees, who are directly impacted by inclusivity initiatives, we ensured that their perspectives and preferences were considered in shaping the training approach.
4. **Co-creation with experts in inclusive business practices = EMPOWER:** In the last phase, we brought together experts with diverse backgrounds in inclusive business practices. Through co-creation, we harnessed collective knowledge and creativity to develop ideas that hold significance for various stakeholders, including the business community, government, employees, and society at large.

We think that our approach makes sense because it involves a systematic and inclusive process to promote workplace inclusivity. By gathering insights from heads of sector federations, young employees, labour market experts, and experts in inclusive business practices, it ensures a diverse range of perspectives are considered. The Delphi method and Appreciative Inquiry enable iterative feedback and exploration of strengths, facilitating the identification of best practices. Engaging young employees empowers them as stakeholders, ensuring their preferences are accounted for in the training approach. Co-creation with experts encourages collaboration and innovative ideas, leading to practical and feasible solutions.

# 1. Delphi method (CONSULT)

Firstly, **we did inform various stakeholders** who had an interest in promoting inclusivity in companies and organizations.

Afterwards, we **proceed with consultation**: conducting surveys using the Delphi method with around **12 federation leaders and executives** from different companies (12 is a representative number for qualitative research).

Why federation heads? Because they can organize programs and trainings for their members about inclusive entrepreneurship, because they can give advice their members about ESG and CSR.

The Delphi method is a structured and iterative approach to gather opinions from experts in a specific field. In this case, we used it to gain valuable insights and consensus from the selected federation leaders and executives. Through a series of questionnaires and feedback loops, we aimed to gather diverse perspectives and identify common themes related to inclusivity in the workplace.

By involving these stakeholders early in the research process, we ensured that the inclusivity model we develop aligns with their needs and expectations. Their input helps shape the model's design and implementation, making it more likely to be accepted and effective in real-world settings.

## 1.1. Practical approach

Here is a set of questions for consulting the heads of sector federations using the Delphi method.

Step I: Initial Interview Round (on line)

### 1. Introduction

- Briefly introduction of the purpose of the interview and the 'I'm inclusive' project.
- Explanation of the importance of creating an inclusive labour market and the role of sector federations in achieving this goal.

### 2. Current practices

- In your organization or sector, what efforts have been made to promote inclusivity in the labour market?
- How are diversity and inclusion currently addressed in recruitment, hiring, and workforce development strategies?
- What successful initiatives have been implemented to attract and retain diverse talents?

### 3. Challenges and barriers

- What are the main challenges and barriers faced by your sector in creating a more inclusive labour market?
- Are there any specific obstacles that prevent underrepresented groups from accessing opportunities within your sector?

#### 4. Key stakeholders

- Who are the key stakeholders in your sector that play a crucial role in promoting inclusivity? How do you collaborate with them?

#### 5. Future goals

- What are the desired outcomes and goals your sector wants to achieve regarding inclusivity in the labor market?
- How do you envision a more inclusive workforce and what impact do you believe it will have on your sector?

### Step II: Second interview round (Based on Delphi Method)

#### 6. Feedback on themes and priorities

- Based on the responses from the first round, we have identified certain themes and priorities. Please provide your feedback and rank their importance.

#### 7. Emerging best practices

- Have any new best practices or initiatives related to inclusivity emerged since the initial interview? Please share and elaborate on them.

#### 8. Collaborative efforts

- How do you see the possibility of collaboration among sector federations to promote inclusivity in the labour market?

#### 9. Overcoming challenges

- What strategies do you suggest for overcoming the challenges and barriers identified earlier and making the labour market more inclusive?

#### 10. Role of 'I'm Inclusive'

- How do you envision the 'I'm inclusive' project contributing to your sector's efforts in creating an inclusive labor market?
- How can 'I'm inclusive' support your organization or sector in implementing inclusive practices?

### Step III: Consensus and recommendations

#### 11. Building consensus

- Based on the feedback received, what are the areas where there is a consensus among sector federations regarding inclusivity in the labour market?

#### 12. Recommendations

- What specific recommendations or action points would you propose for the 'I'm inclusive' project to create a more inclusive labour market?

#### 13. Continued collaboration

- Would you be willing to participate in future discussions and collaborative efforts to advance inclusivity in the labour market?

#### 14. Closing remarks

- Is there anything else you would like to share or any additional insights you believe are important for the success of the 'I'm inclusive' project?

### **1.2. Results, conclusions and recommendations**

From this consultation round with heads of federations, we received the following results, conclusions, and recommendations.

#### Results

- Insights into existing inclusivity practices within their respective sectors or organizations.
- A clear understanding of the specific areas or topics where inclusivity training is most needed and desired.
- Consensus on the preferred format and delivery method for inclusivity training, such as in-person workshops or virtual sessions.
- Identification of common challenges and barriers faced in promoting inclusivity in their sectors.
- Sharing of successful inclusivity initiatives that have yielded positive results within their organizations.

#### Conclusions

- Recognizing the significance of inclusivity training as a crucial tool for fostering a diverse and inclusive workforce.
- Understanding how inclusivity training aligns with their organizations' objectives, including improved employee engagement and productivity.
- Acknowledgment of the need for customized training programs that address the unique requirements of their sectors.

## Recommendations

- Encouragement to foster collaboration among federations and organizations to develop a unified approach to inclusivity training.
- Promoting a culture of continuous learning and development, where inclusivity training becomes an ongoing and integrated aspect of professional growth.
- Suggesting the importance of evaluating the effectiveness of inclusivity training through feedback and measurable outcomes.
- Recommending that 'I'm inclusive' project provide resources and expertise to facilitate the implementation of inclusivity training within their sectors.
- Encouraging federations to advocate for inclusivity at various levels and demonstrate leadership in promoting diverse and inclusive workplaces.

## 2. Empathy via appreciative inquiry = INVOLVE

In the second phase, we cultivate empathy using the method of appreciative Inquiry. We invited a group of 9 labour market experts, members of Time4society.

Why labour market experts? Because they can give valuable advice and coach companies to become more inclusive.

Appreciative inquiry is a powerful approach to organizational development that focuses on exploring and understanding an organization's strengths, values, and positive aspects. By applying appreciative inquiry in this context, we seek to foster empathy among the labor market experts and encourage a constructive exploration of shared perspectives.

There are good reasons for choosing appreciative inquiry as a method.

- Appreciative inquiry centers on identifying and amplifying the positive aspects of a system, in this case, the labour market and workplace inclusivity. By focusing on strengths rather than weaknesses, we inspire constructive and collaborative discussions among the experts.
- It encourages participants to share personal experiences and perspectives, promoting a deeper understanding of one another's viewpoints. This process cultivates empathy and helps create a safe space for open dialogue.
- Through appreciative inquiry, we can surface common themes and shared values among the experts. This helps in finding areas of agreement and alignment, which can serve as a solid foundation for building consensus on promoting workplace inclusivity.
- This phase celebrates the diversity of perspectives within the group and encourages active listening. This promotes a culture of respect and openness, where differing viewpoints are valued and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities.



By utilizing appreciative inquiry in this second phase, we aim to create an environment where the labour market experts can authentically share their experiences, celebrate successes, and collectively envision a more inclusive future.

## **2.1. Practical approach**

For the round with labour market experts, we needed a specialized coach with the following competencies.

- In-depth knowledge of inclusivity
- He/ she is skilled in leading group discussions and facilitating meaningful conversations among experts, fostering a collaborative and constructive atmosphere.
- He/she has a strong appreciation for cultural differences and an ability to create a respectful and inclusive environment for all participants.
- He/she demonstrated empathy and actively listening to the experts' perspectives and he/she contributes to a productive and supportive exchange of ideas.
- He/she possesses leadership qualities to guide the experts effectively and influence their thinking towards constructive and actionable outcomes.

We found this coach in the founder of a sustainable and inclusive touristic organization. Having him as a coach ensured a well-organized and productive round with labour market experts, leading to valuable insights and actionable recommendations for the 'I'm inclusive' project.

## **2.2. Results, conclusions and recommendations**

### **Results**

- Identification of the clear need for an inclusivity training that caters to all levels of the organization, including management, HR, and practical-focused employees.
- Recognition of the importance of addressing inclusivity beyond traditional training approaches to accommodate diverse learning preferences.

### **Conclusions**

- The demand for inclusivity training is prevalent across all levels of the organization, indicating its significance in fostering an inclusive workplace culture.
- Training programs should be tailored to suit the varied needs and preferences of different employee groups, acknowledging the practical-focused employees' requirements.

### **Recommendations**

- Develop an inclusive training program that covers various aspects of inclusivity, addressing management, HR, and practical-focused employees.
- Incorporate diverse learning approaches, including interactive and hands-on elements, to engage all participants effectively.
- Emphasize the significance of inclusivity training for the entire workforce, promoting a collective commitment to creating an inclusive work environment.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the training program regularly, seeking feedback from participants to continuously improve and refine the training content.

### **3. Panel with final target group = COLLABORATE**

In the third phase, we engaged six young employees who have been in the workforce for less than two years and demonstrate a keen interest in promoting improved workplace inclusivity. For this purpose, we adopted the methodology of a panel.

There are good reasons for choosing a panel approach with young employees.

- **Diverse perspectives:** young employees often bring fresh perspectives and innovative ideas to the table. By involving a diverse group, we gain insights from individuals with different backgrounds, experiences, and viewpoints, enriching the discussion on workplace inclusivity.
- **Representative voices:** young employees may have unique perspectives on inclusivity, as they have recently entered the workforce and can provide insights into current challenges and opportunities faced by new entrants.
- **Targeted engagement:** by focusing on young employees, we address specific concerns and barriers they encounter regarding workplace inclusivity. This targeted engagement ensures that the inclusivity model we develop addresses the needs of this particular group.
- **Empowerment and ownership:** involving young employees in a panel setting empowers them to share their thoughts and experiences, fostering a sense of ownership in the inclusivity initiative. This participation encourages active engagement and commitment to driving positive change.
- **Real-life insights:** the panel discussions provide real-life insights into the day-to-day experiences of young employees in the workplace. These insights can help identify specific areas where inclusivity can be improved and guide the development of practical solutions.

By utilizing the panel methodology with young employees, we ensure that their voices are heard and valued in the process of shaping the inclusivity model. This approach strengthens the connection between young employees and the initiative, ultimately leading to more effective and relevant strategies to promote workplace inclusivity for all employees, including those who are starting their careers.

#### **3.1. Practical approach**

When conducting a panel with young and engaged employees (working less than 2 years) for the 'I'm inclusive' project, we focused on their preferences for specific

practical training to create an inclusive labour market. (This was based on the conclusions from phase 1 + 2).

We invited and found these young employees using WhatsApp, SMS, and e-mail.



We only found six young employees willing to participate in our panel. Next time, we have to recruit in more alternative ways (see below II. Monitoring).

Here are the questions we discussed.

### 1. Introduction

- Can you briefly introduce yourself and your role in the company/organization?
- How would you describe your experience working in the current labour market as a young and engaged employee?

### 2. Understanding inclusivity

- In your opinion, what does an inclusive labour market mean to you?

- How do you think inclusivity can positively impact your career and work experience?
3. Training preferences
- What type of specific practical training do you feel would be most beneficial in fostering inclusivity in the workplace?
  - Are there any particular areas or topics related to inclusivity that you would like the training to cover?
4. Format and delivery
- Do you prefer in-person training, virtual workshops, or a blend of both for the inclusivity training?
  - How much time and frequency do you think is suitable for the training sessions?
5. Interactive approach
- How important is it for the training to be interactive and engaging? What interactive elements would you like to see incorporated?
6. Inclusive learning environment
- What factors do you believe are essential to creating an inclusive learning environment during the training sessions?
7. Real-life scenarios
- Would you like the training to include real-life scenarios and case studies to help you apply inclusivity principles in your workplace?
8. Measurement of impact
- How do you think the effectiveness of the inclusivity training should be measured? What indicators would you consider important?
9. Role of 'I'm Inclusive'
- How do you envision the 'I'm inclusive' project contributing to providing the specific practical training you desire?
  - What support or resources do you believe 'I'm inclusive' could offer to enhance the impact of the training?
10. Sustaining inclusivity
- Besides training, what other initiatives or practices do you think could sustain inclusivity in the workplace in the long term?
11. Closing remarks

- Is there anything else you would like to add or any additional insights you believe are crucial for the success of the inclusivity training?

### **3.2. Results, conclusions and recommendations**

#### Results

- The panel emphasized the importance of inclusivity and a welcoming workplace for all.
- Specific concerns and challenges related to hiring individuals with disabilities were recognized.
- Employees need better training, support and communication to foster inclusivity in the workplace.
- Inclusivity requires open communication and engagement at all levels.
- The panel suggested practical ways to promote inclusivity in the workplace.

#### Conclusions

- Effective communication and coaching can address uncertainties in hiring individuals with disabilities.
- Tailored job profiles that match individual talents facilitate smoother integration.
- Practical strategies can enhance inclusivity and employee engagement.

#### Recommendations

- Develop and implement an inclusive communication strategy throughout the organization.
- Develop and provide training for HR and managers to address biases and support inclusivity.
- Develop a welcoming training for young employees where inclusivity plays an important role.
- Implement anonymous job applications to eliminate bias in the hiring process.
- Promote role models to inspire inclusivity and diversity.
- Avoid exclusionary language in job postings and create an inclusive work environment.

## 4. Collaborating via co-creation = EMPOWER

In the fourth phase, we opt for co-creation to foster collaboration. We brought together eight experts in inclusive business practices to develop ideas that hold significance for the business community, government, and society at large.

In this co-creation session, we give these experts the lead in developing ideas and concepts around inclusivity and diversity, which is very important for our go-to-market strategy.



### 4.1. Practical approach

Why did we choose for co-creation and empowerment with these kinds of experts?

- They possess a wide range of knowledge and expertise in different aspects of inclusivity. By collaborating with them, we can draw from various perspectives, ensuring a comprehensive and well-rounded approach to the inclusivity model.

- By facilitating open discussions and brainstorming sessions among the experts, we can generate novel and practical ideas that may not have emerged in individual efforts.
- Inclusivity is a multifaceted challenge that requires input from various fields and sectors. Co-creation with experts from different backgrounds allowed us to develop interdisciplinary solutions that cater to the needs of both businesses and society.
- By involving the experts in the co-creation process, we fostered a sense of shared ownership and commitment to the outcomes. This increases the likelihood of successful implementation and sustainability of the proposed strategies.

## **4.2. Results, conclusions and recommendations**

### 4.2.1. Competence center

The co-creation session with sustainability experts highlighted the need for a Competence Center on inclusivity that provides a practical training program for engaged employees (never ex-cathedra). The center will focus on hands-on activities rather than traditional lectures, offering initiatives like Time4YourTalent (internships with a mission in ngo's), Time2grow (digital tool around resilience) etc.

Additionally, the center will organize leadership development programs, such as "Leaders on the Road" trips, to enhance inclusivity practices.

Key points to consider for the competence center's offerings are tailored learning solutions to address the specific needs and challenges of different organizations and industries.

The competence center offers also an overview of measures and practices that businesses can adopt to foster inclusivity in the workplace, referencing resources like in Welcome2Work.be.

By focusing on practical activities and customized learning approaches, the Competence Center will effectively support organizations in promoting inclusivity, empowering their employees, and creating an inclusive and diverse workplace.

### 4.2.2. Inclusivity trainings

In this context, comprehensive training programs are being developed to cater to various target groups, including management, HR personnel, and young or /and engaged employees. These training initiatives aim to promote inclusivity in the workplace and create a more diverse and welcoming environment for all employees. The programs are designed to be practical and hands-on, focusing on experiential learning and active participation.

Key components of the training programs

#### 1. Management training

- Inclusive leadership to develop leadership skills that foster inclusivity, empathy, and understanding in decision-making and team management.
- Creating inclusive policies or a training for managers to design and implement policies that promote diversity and inclusivity throughout the organization.
- Leading by example: encouraging managers to be role models in creating an inclusive culture and promoting diversity within their teams.

## 2. HR training

- Unconscious bias awareness: providing HR personnel with tools to recognize and address unconscious biases in recruitment, hiring, and talent management.
- Inclusive recruitment practices or training for HR teams on inclusive recruitment strategies to attract and retain diverse talent.
- Employee support or equipping HR with resources to provide support and guidance for employees from diverse backgrounds.

## 3. Young and / or engaged employees training

- Raising inclusivity awareness among employees about the value of inclusivity and its impact on personal and professional growth.
- Building inclusive teams or promoting collaboration and teamwork among employees, emphasizing the importance of a diverse and inclusive workforce.
- Inclusive communication or training communicate effectively in a diverse environment, promoting active listening and understanding different perspectives.

These training programs are aimed at creating a holistic approach to inclusivity, where all levels of the organization play an active role in fostering an inclusive workplace. By empowering management, HR personnel, and young engaged employees with the necessary knowledge and skills, the organization can make significant strides towards achieving its inclusivity goals.

### 4.2.3. Inclusivity via CEOs4Society

CEOs4Society aims to establish a learning network for Ceo's and executives who prioritize sustainable business practices and emphasize engagement for 'people'. The network will serve as a platform for leaders to form a shared societal vision, inspire each other, and engage in peer-to-peer learning by exchanging experiences and projects. By leading by example, these executives will champion inclusivity and sustainable HR practices within their organizations.

Members of CEOs4Society pay a membership fee and, in return, they gain access to various benefits.

- Engaged network: this membership offers access to an engaged network of like-minded leaders who prioritize sustainability and inclusivity in their business strategies.



- Work visits: Ceo's and executives will have the opportunity to participate in work visits to companies that have successfully implemented inclusive and sustainable HR practices, such as Abattoir and Volvo.
- Link to social balance and training obligations: the network establishes a connection to social balance and training obligations, fostering a more comprehensive approach to corporate social responsibility.
- International engagement: CEOs4Society organizes opportunities for leaders to engage in international experiences through initiatives like 'Leaders on the Road'.

Moreover, the financial contributions from CEOs4Society members would help fund the operations and activities of the competence center, enabling it to continue offering valuable services and support for inclusive and sustainable business practices.

By involving top executives and providing them with a compelling package of benefits and opportunities, CEOs4Society will encourage a collective commitment to sustainable and inclusive leadership, ultimately driving positive change across various organizations and industries.

#### 4.2.4. Impact measurement

To effectively measure the impact of both the competence center and CEOs4Society, We will use a self-assessment approach or the **SDG-challenge** from the book 'Travel to sustainable entrepreneurship, with the SDGs as your compass' (Authors Bob Elsen & Nathalie Bekx) will be used.

We also need to develop a measurement bases on the **Inner Development Goals (IDGs)** that promote 5 core values: **wellbeing, thinking, relating, collaborating, and acting for 'People'**. These values serve as the foundation for the sustainable journey of both CEOs4Society and Go2learn, providing a framework for evaluation and continuous improvement.

The impact measurement through self-assessment leads to follow these steps that we have to take in account.

1. Identify specific metrics and indicators for each of the IDGs to assess the progress and impact of the competence center and CEOs4Society. For example, metrics related to employee well-being, diversity and inclusion initiatives, learning outcomes, and community engagement.
2. Gather data from various sources, including participant feedback, employee surveys, workshop evaluations, and performance indicators related to inclusivity and sustainability efforts.
3. Analyze the collected data to assess the extent to which the IDGs are being achieved and to identify areas for improvement.
4. Use the insights gained from the evaluation to make informed decisions and implement necessary changes or enhancements in the programs and activities of both CEOs4Society and the competence center.

5. Regularly repeat the self-assessment process to track progress over time and ensure that the initiatives align with the IDGs and contribute to the overall sustainability journey.
6. Communicate the findings of the impact assessment to stakeholders, including CEOs4Society members, participants, and relevant partners, to maintain transparency and accountability.

By using the **SDG-challenge (self-assessment) and the IDGs-metrics**, both the competence center and CEOs4Society will have a structured and comprehensive approach to measuring their impact on fostering wellbeing, diversity, inclusion, collaboration, and sustainable practices. This data-driven approach will enable them to adapt and continuously improve their initiatives, ensuring they align with their core values and contribute positively to society and the business community.

## **II. Monitoring the research strategy**

### **1. Complementary research**

When we look back to our research project, we are happy with the results. Nevertheless, we could have obtained better results with a combination of four alternative research methods to complement the existing phases, focusing on the target groups of Ceo's, young employees, management and experts.

1. Individual Interviews with Ceo's: Conducting in-depth interviews with Ceo's, as complementary to the interviews with sector federations heads, could provide valuable qualitative insights into their views on inclusivity, sustainability, and their experiences in implementing such initiatives. By understanding their motivations, challenges, and successes, we can gain a deeper understanding of the leadership's role in driving inclusivity and sustainability efforts. These interviews can be audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis.
2. Focus group discussions with young and / or employees to explore their perceptions, experiences, and expectations regarding inclusivity in the workplace. By creating a safe and open space for dialogue, we could uncover unique perspectives on the impact of inclusivity initiatives on their work experience, career growth, and overall job satisfaction. The focus group discussions must be moderated by skilled facilitators and the discussions recorded for later analysis.
3. In-depth case studies of exemplary inclusive organizations: by examining these cases, we can identify the best practices, challenges faced, and lessons learned in implementing inclusivity initiatives. These case studies can provide practical recommendations that can be applied in real-world scenarios. This complementary step can involve interviews with HR personnel, employees,

and management, as well as analysis of relevant documents and company reports like a sustainability report.

4. Surveys for labour market experts to gather quantitative data on their perceptions of inclusivity in the labor market and recommendations for improvement. This survey can include Likert-scale questions, multiple-choice questions, and open-ended questions. The quantitative data obtained can complement the qualitative insights gathered from other methods and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the experts' viewpoints.

By strategically combining these four alternative methods with the existing phases, the research outcomes will be enriched, providing a more comprehensive understanding of inclusivity and sustainability in the workplace and offering actionable recommendations for creating more inclusive and sustainable organizations.

The only problem here is budget. If we want to use these complementary research methods, we need the double amount in money and collaborators.

## **2. Alternative research method**

After analyzing our methodology, we think we should be able to structure our research in a better way by involving more stakeholders in every phase.

1. Our Delphi method could involve larger and more diverse groups of heads of sector federations and experts in the field of inclusivity and sustainability. This can provide a broader range of perspectives and increase the validity of the consensus reached.
2. We should conduct multiple appreciative inquiry sessions with various groups of young employees, management, and labour market experts separately. This approach allows for deeper exploration of their positive experiences, best practices, and suggestions for fostering inclusivity in the workplace.
3. Next time we will form multiple panels with diverse representation of young employees, management and labour market experts. This will enable a richer exchange of views, experiences, and perspectives on inclusivity, leading to more comprehensive findings.
4. Furtheron we should organize multiple co-creation sessions with different groups, such as CEOs, HR managers, and experts, to generate a wider range of ideas and solutions for building the competence center and promoting inclusivity and sustainability in organizations.

While combining research methods can offer a more comprehensive approach, focusing on each phase separately can still yield valuable insights. The key is to ensure diversity and representation within each phase to capture a variety of perspectives and experiences. For example, we could involve people from the academic world or from cultural organizations and ask them to provide us with inclusivity and diversity cases from their environment.

Additionally, we must gather feedback from participants in each phase to understand their experiences and areas for improvement, ensuring that subsequent iterations of the research are more effective.

### **3. Targeting on young employees**

While labor market experts and other stakeholders are valuable contributors to research, involving young employees at every phase ensures that the research remains grounded in the lived experiences of those directly impacted by inclusivity initiatives. It empowers young employees to be active participants in shaping their work environment and promotes a more inclusive and forward-thinking organizational culture.

Involving young employees in practical every research phase is essential.

- Young employees bring fresh perspectives and real-world experiences to the research process. Their firsthand knowledge of the workplace dynamics and challenges can provide valuable insights that might be overlooked by experts or higher-level management.
- Including young employees ensures representation from the target group for whom the research is primarily intended. Their involvement helps to capture the specific needs, aspirations, and concerns of this demographic, leading to more relevant and actionable outcomes.
- Incorporating young employees in every research phase aligns with the principles of inclusivity and diversity, promoting an environment where all voices are heard and valued.
- Young employees tend to be more adaptable to change and open to innovative approaches. Their participation can drive creativity in problem-solving and lead to novel solutions for promoting inclusivity in the workplace.
- When young employees are involved in every stage of the research process, they are more likely to embrace the outcomes and actively participate in the implementation of recommendations. This increases the chances of successful execution and sustained impact.

In the end, we should share the results of the research with older employees with more experience and ask to reflect on the ideas from the young employees to enrich the diversity and inclusion strategy.

### **4. Recruitment via social media**

We recruited the young employees by using WhatsApp and SMS. But we only could convince 6 young employees for our panel. The other problem was that the group was not diverse enough.

Next time, we need to recruit with better content and using more social media platforms, especially because we want to involve young employees in most research phases.

Here are five examples of popular social media platforms we should use for diverse employee recruitment.

#### 1. LinkedIn

- We will use LinkedIn to target professionals and job seekers from various industries.
- We can create a company page that highlights our commitment to diversity and inclusion.
- We can join and engage in diversity-focused LinkedIn groups to connect with potential candidates.

#### 2. Instagram

- We can use Instagram to showcase our organization's diverse and inclusive culture visually.
- We can share employee stories, events, and initiatives that celebrate diversity and inclusion.
- Interesting are also Instagram Stories and IGTV (Instagram TV) to share behind-the-scenes glimpses of our workplace diversity efforts.
- We can collaborate with diversity influencers or content creators to expand our reach to diverse communities.
- We will use Instagram Insights to track engagement and identify the success of our diversity-focused content.

#### 3. Twitter / X

- We will engage with a diverse audience on Twitter/ X through real-time conversations and trending topics.
- We will tweet /X about our organization's diversity initiatives, events, and job opportunities.
- We will use relevant hashtags such as #DiversityandInclusion, #InclusiveWorkplace, and #EqualOpportunity in our tweets.
- Important is retweeting and responding to content from diverse users to build connections and trust.
- We can run Twitter polls to gather feedback and insights on diversity-related topics.

#### 4. Facebook

- With Facebook we will reach a broad and diverse audience, including potential job seekers and passive candidates.
- We will share posts and videos that highlight our commitment to diversity and inclusivity.

- We can create a Facebook's Group or join diversity-focused communities and engage with members.
- Another idea is Facebook Ads Manager (management of the advertising you put on Facebook) to target diverse demographics, interests, and behaviors for your recruitment campaigns.

## 5. TikTok

- We can tap into TikTok's younger and diverse user base by creating engaging and creative recruitment content.
- Use short videos to showcase our organization's diversity and inclusion initiatives.
- We can collaborate with employee ambassadors to create authentic and relatable content.
- Participate in diversity challenges or create our own to engage with the TikTok community.
- We can use TikTok's advertising options to target specific demographics and interests relevant to recruitment goals.

Of course, we have to tailor our content and approach for each platform, keeping in mind the preferences and behaviors of young employees.

Additionally, we should use social media analytics to measure the effectiveness of our efforts and make adjustments as needed to optimize a diverse employee recruitment strategy.

## **5. Tips and Tricks**

### **General remarks for all research phases and target groups**

- Prioritize inclusivity and diversity throughout the research process, ensuring that all voices are heard and represented.
- Offer incentives or rewards to encourage active participation and engagement from all target groups.
- Keep communication channels open and provide regular updates on the research progress to maintain interest and involvement.
- Collaborate with external experts or advisors to gain additional insights and feedback.
- Use a combination of qualitative and quantitative data analysis methods for a comprehensive understanding of the research findings.
- Emphasize the importance of the research's potential impact on creating more inclusive and sustainable workplaces.
- A lot of attention must be paid to the strategy in which you choose your stakeholders (who should you only inform? Who should you consult, etc.) and of course it is important not only to question the usual suspects.

By implementing these options, we can improve the research process and ensure that we consult the necessary and engaged stakeholders and that the obtained results are relevant and actionable for promoting inclusivity and sustainability in organizations.

## Remarks for each phase and target group

1. Delphi Method with heads of sector federations (and Ceo's)
  - Tips
    - Ensure a diverse representation of heads of sector federations and experts to capture a wide range of perspectives.
    - Provide clear and concise instructions for each round of the Delphi method to maintain focus and consistency.
    - Use a structured questionnaire with well-defined questions to gather specific insights on inclusivity and sustainability.
  - Tricks
    - Foster open communication and encourage participants to express their views freely.
    - Use anonymous feedback in the initial rounds to minimize potential bias and encourage candid responses.
    - Share aggregated results and feedback with participants to maintain transparency and encourage further engagement.
  
2. Appreciative Inquiry with young employees, management and experts
  - Tips
    - Create a safe and inclusive space for participants to share positive experiences and insights related to inclusivity.
    - Use storytelling and real-life examples to highlight successful inclusivity initiatives and their impact.
    - Encourage active listening and empathy among participants to build a supportive atmosphere.
  - Tricks
    - Incorporate interactive activities and group exercises to foster engagement and creativity.
    - Identify common themes and patterns from the appreciative inquiry sessions to guide future strategies.
    - Involve representatives from each target group in co-designing action plans based on the inquiry's outcomes.
  
3. Panels with young employees
  - Tips
    - Ensure diversity among the young employee panel participants in terms of backgrounds, roles, and experiences.

- Facilitate open discussions and encourage participants to voice their perspectives and needs.
    - Utilize visual aids, such as charts and graphs, to enhance understanding and engagement.
  - Tricks
    - Employ active listening techniques to show genuine interest in the participants' views and opinions.
    - Use a mix of structured and open-ended questions to gain both quantitative and qualitative insights.
    - Summarize key takeaways from the panel discussions and share them with the participants for validation.
4. Co-creation session with experts
- Tips
    - Carefully select experts who have a deep understanding of inclusivity and sustainability in the workplace.
    - Use brainstorming and ideation techniques to generate innovative and actionable ideas (f.e. design thinking).
    - Provide an online platform for experts to collaborate and build upon each other's suggestions.
  - Tricks
    - Facilitate breakout groups to encourage in-depth discussions and maximize idea generation.
    - Use visual tools, such as whiteboards or digital collaboration tools, to capture and organize ideas in real-time.
    - Prioritize and refine the most promising ideas during the co-creation session to ensure feasibility and impact.

## 6. Conclusions

### 1. The worthiness of our research efforts

**We learned that** we must formulate the factors below, to be able to judge the worthiness of the research and identify areas for improvement or further exploration.

- We must reflect on whether the research objectives were clearly defined and whether the research addressed the intended questions and goals effectively.
- Evaluation of the potential impact of the research outcomes. Did the findings provide valuable insights and recommendations that can lead to positive changes in the workplace or contribute to the broader field of inclusivity and sustainability?
- Consideration whether the research process itself was inclusive and involved a diverse range of perspectives, including young employees and other stakeholders.



- We must discuss the feasibility and practicality of implementing the recommendations from the research. Are the proposed solutions achievable and likely to make a difference?
- During the all-research process, we have to identify the lessons learned by gathering feedback from the participants and stakeholders involved. Their input can provide valuable insights into the effectiveness and impact of the research.
- Did the research add new knowledge to the existing body of knowledge on inclusivity and sustainability in the workplace?

## 2. The need of inclusivity and diversity research

Belgium (including Flanders), being a laggard in Europe regarding inclusion and diversity in the workplace could be attributed to various factors, including historical norms, cultural attitudes, and institutional barriers that have hindered progress in these areas. Additionally, some companies might face challenges in translating research findings into concrete actions or may not have fully embraced evidence-based practices to drive change.

However, research can undoubtedly play a crucial role in addressing this issue. By conducting in-depth studies and analyzing data, organizations can gain a deeper understanding of the barriers and challenges faced by underrepresented groups in the workforce. Research can also highlight the benefits of diverse and inclusive workplaces, demonstrating the positive impact on productivity, innovation, and employee satisfaction.

Furthermore, research can help in formulating specific goals and objectives for promoting inclusion and diversity. Data-driven insights can inform the development of targeted strategies and policies that foster a more equitable and inclusive work environment. Moreover, by continuously monitoring progress through research and impact assessments, organizations can track their performance, identify areas for improvement, and refine their approaches to achieve desired outcomes.

**The most important thing, however, is that we can get all the right stakeholders around the table. Finally, you should not start from compartmentalised thinking, but we should make the effort to think more out of the box in all phases.**

In conclusion: research, especially in areas like inclusivity and sustainability, plays a crucial role in fostering positive change and creating more equitable and progressive workplaces. We should also note that a study can only be meaningful if we can involve and connect the right and engaged stakeholders.

By leveraging evidence-based practices, companies and institutions can set meaningful goals, implement effective strategies, and foster a culture that values diversity and inclusion. Such concerted efforts can contribute to narrowing the gap

and improving Belgium's standing in the realm of workplace inclusivity and diversity within Europe.