

HUMAN RIGHTS IN BUSINESS

VARVITSIOTIS: Good morning everybody, ladies and gentlemen, it's a pleasure to be here with you today, and I would like to welcome you in this International virtual conference. Unfortunately, we couldn't be live together in the same room.

With the title Human Rights In Business, Prosperity through Diversity. This conference is organized by Enterprise Greece, the organization that promotes external foreign trade for Greece, and it's under the auspices of the Greek Chairmanship of the Council of Europe.

The issues related to the protection of human rights in working environment deserve our attention and must be in the front line of the endeavor of promote the protection of human rights in general.

As you know, Greece holds the Chairmanship of the Council of Europe, and as a main theme for this Chairmanship we have put protection of human rights, democracy and rule of law in time of a pandemic. Nevertheless, we have put together a Chairmanship that is trying to promote the idea that the pandemic should not be excuse to close our windows to the world. And that no one should be stigmatized or given an excuse to be marginalized, due to this pandemic.

This is definitely the case in the work environment, because stigma, marginalization, even denial to access to the market, to the labor market, because of diversity should not tolerated.

I would like you to know that an important judgment was issued on the 15th of June by the United States Supreme Court. The judgment in the case specified that firing a person on the base of sexual orientation of gender identity is unlawful. According to the judgment, the law providing for the ban of discrimination based on sex is applicable also to sexual orientation and gender equality.

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Therefore, I think that we have a basis in order to promote internationally what it has been widely agreed, but nevertheless it has been applicable with short forms, also in Europe.

This is why we believe that this judgment is a very strong message of support to all citizens who believe in a just society without discrimination.

The Greek Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe attaches special importance to social rights, related to the European Social charter discrimination and intolerance, hate rhetoric need to be adequately addressed.

Our societies and our European legal social tradition stand firm against it. But we have to look at this also challenges also in the light of this pandemic. What was the impact of the sanitary crisis on the society and the social rights? How were the fundamental freedoms and human rights protected? Did the most vulnerable social groups receive sufficient protection?

The Council of Europe is indeed the appropriate forum for such a discussion, and the Greek Chairmanship aims at promoting the values and principles lying in the core of the Council of Europe. We intend to make the Council of Europe's voice even stronger, and I'm very pleased to say that both Canada is related to the Council of Europe as well as Norway, that is definitely a member.

We are going to – through the coming months – we are going to organize a series of events dealing with the issue and through this e-chairmanship that we have put together because of the restrictions because of the Covid and the confinement, want to open a dialogue. A dialogue with the society, a dialogue with experts, a dialogue with political leaders in order to send a message for the younger generations. The younger generation have to become engaged democratic citizens and the questions that they bring they need answers.

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How can we best protect diversity in everyday life? How can we make sure that the person is not negatively charged or mistreated based on their sex or sexual orientation. In this constantly changing world we find ourselves at a turning point where homophobia, transphobia, hate speech and other forms of discrimination are threatening the democratic fabric of our society.

Ten years ago the committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted a recommendation to member states on measures to combat discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity. Today we all came together to take a step further by examining the matter from interconnected aspects: the Government, the business world and, of course, the society as a whole.

So far, various international and regional organizations have taken measures to ensure that all individuals enjoy all rights and freedoms without discrimination on any grounds such as sex, race, color, language, religion, political or other opinions and national origin.

As more and more people today have to express their confidence to themselves but also they must rise up to their expectations in guarantee that disparate treatment is a thing of the past.

Governments, by building inclusive and diverse societies, faithfully execute a duty assigned to them by the people and not for the benefit of some. Business, by implementing corporate social responsibility, ensure that they have to adapt to our changing society by guaranteeing that no person is treated worse or differently on the account of their sex or sexual orientation.

This is the way that they safeguard the person from the fundamental rights are safeguarded and provide ground for personal development.

Dear friends, with these small remarks, and a lot of question marks that I try to pose in my welcoming note, I would like to ask you to hear all together the

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message that our Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, who has been eager to participate in this teleconference, has sent us and we are ready to hear him.

ΜΗΤΣΟΤΑΚΗΣ: ΟΜΙΛΙΑ ΣΤΑ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΑ (0:08:08.4 - 0:15:33.9)

VARVITSIOTIS: Well I think that we are very pleased that we hear from our Prime Minister his determination on liberal values. I point out the distinction between citizens vs. people, and the way he presented this distinction, and I think we should comment and highlight his proposal for a special observatory for the human rights in business and the limitation of any anti-discrimination act. We come to the message to the Prime Minister of Kingdom of Norway, Mrs. Erna Solberg.

SOLBERG: Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, thank you to Prime Minister Mitsotakis and our Greek host for convening this important conference. This is a good opportunity to challenge each other on how to move forward to create truly inclusive societies. By raising the subject of human rights in business, Greece is setting an example for others to follow. Promoting inclusiveness and human rights is not just about do the right thing. Diversity, equality and inclusiveness are also strong drivers of economic growth.

Businesses today need to adapt and integrate values into their organisations and all their activities. Increasingly, values are becoming a competitive advantage in attracting the best employees.

We are expecting companies to comply with UN guiding principles and the OECD guidelines for multinational enterprises. It's essential for private sector to safeguard human rights and adhere to the principle of responsible business conduct.

In 2018 Norway adopted a new and comprehensive equality and antidiscrimination act. It prohibits direct and indirect discrimination and harassment based on sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

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We have drawn up compliance measures for the business sector and are following this up actively. Internationally the universal declaration of human rights is our moral compass. It sets human rights standards that all UN member states are obliged to fulfill, and during my lifetimes there have been major changes in the laws and general attitudes relating to sexual and gender minorities in Norway. In a positive direction. But there are still much to be done. Human rights are at the heart of Norwegian foreign policy. This includes a consistent commitment of equal rights regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. There's been progress in many countries, but discrimination and violence against sexual and gender minorities remain widespread throughout the world.

We are all born free and equal in dignity and in rights. All of us, governments, companies and private citizens alike, must show solidarity and stand up for human rights. After all, love is love. Thank you.

VARVITSIOTIS: Well, now we'll move forward because we are a little bit short of time, we move forward to Michelle Bachelet, High Commissioner for Human Rights of the United Nations, and it's a pleasure to have her message.

BACHELET: Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, excellencies, colleagues, I am pleased to greet you all in this conference and I hope you and your loved ones are safe and well. I welcome this important event convened by the Government of Greece under the auspices of Greek Chairmanship of the Council of Europe. The Covid-19 pandemic is a crisis of unprecedented economical social impact. Companies are faced with severe challenges complex dilemmas.

According to the international labor organization, lockdown measures have affected over 80% of the global work force. Businesses are losing revenue with job losses for millions. And the people who are being worst hit are those who are often exposed to multiple risks, women, people living in extreme poverty,

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indigenous people, migrants, IDPs and refugees, people with disabilities and members of the LGBTI community.

The private sector is essential to responding to and recovering from the pandemic, as ways to fighting the inequalities and discrimination exposed by this crisis.

Responsible leadership and commitment to international standards is urgently required. Worldwide, many businesses and their leaders have demonstrated their readiness to adapt to the new circumstances while continuing to adopt a principal space approach.

Placing people front and centre is crucial. This is a human crisis. Response and recovery efforts will only be effective with human rights at their core.

Companies should focus on the most vulnerable first. This is the [...] that businesses should apply to determine their action. It will mark the difference between how our economies have worked until now and how we need them to work going forward. Moreover, the pandemic has highlighted our interdependence, demonstrating the value of diversity and global solidarity. But it has also being used to divide, polarize and exclude populations. Businesses have become a critical force in support of cultural understanding, building bridges between cultures and people through economic opportunities.

Furthermore, the crisis has also demonstrated how tech companies, for instance, can support diversity and respect for human rights by contributing to bridging the digital gap in and amongst different communities.

Colleagues, in the past month we have seen of wave of massive protests against racial discrimination. As United Nation secretary Antonio Guterres said, “racism continues to be prevalent in our societies. We must all stand against it and all forms of discrimination.” I call on business leaders to address racism in all its forms, including structural racism, and place people at the centre of their

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business model. Diversity and inclusiveness at the workplace should guide this reflection and business decisions moving forward.

We must not go back on to how things were. While the Covid-19 virus itself does not discriminate, the impact of the pandemic has exposed deep existing inequalities in every society. It is clear to me that we must have two main purposes: to recover from this crisis and to build back better. For that to happen, governments, the private sector, civil society, academia and all of society must join efforts.

Only by working together can we reduce inequalities, strengthen social protection systems, eliminate all forms of discrimination and provide equal opportunities. I thank you and I wish you fruitful deliberations.

VARVITSIOTIS: We thank as well Michelle Bachelet for her message and we move forward to Margaritis Schinas, the Vice President of the European Commission for Promotion of the European Way of Life, which is what we believe the best place to live in earth.

SCHINAS: Excellencies, dear colleagues and friends, it is a real pleasure and an honor to join you today and to welcome on behalf of the European Commission this international conference on human rights in business.

Human rights, the rule of law and our fundamental values of equality, pluralism and freedom of expression are synonymous with the European Union. They constitute the essence of our European way of life. One that is revered the world over.

The European way of life is a mirror reflecting the openness, inclusiveness and non-discrimination that shape our societies. It is not static, but develops and expands as our societies themselves develop and expand. And being European today, means standing up for these values, for these rights, both at home and

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around the globe. With respect for all points of view, but with confidence in our principles.

Of course I would have personally very much hoped to hold this discussion in person and in my hometown of Thessaloniki, which, through initiatives like Euro Pride 2020, displays more clearly than ever its readiness and ambition to play a strategic leading role in the region as a centre and as a beacon of European values.

However, the coronavirus pandemic meant that we had to adapt our plans slightly. Though speaking on big screens and not in big rooms is arguably one of least disruptive ways in which our lives have changed over the past months.

The pandemic crisis has come at a great cost. Many battled and are still battling the virus and many have lost close relatives or friends. The pandemic has disproportionately affected the most vulnerable in our societies, including the elderly, Roma, people with disabilities and the LGBTI community, just to name a few.

The impact on the economy, businesses and employees is also very significant. The Commission, together with our member states, have acted swiftly to mitigate the worst effects of the lockdowns and to make sure our economies and our borders open up again as soon as possible. We put forward a major recovery plan of unprecedented scale and ambition. We are proposing to create a new recovery instrument in the order of €750 billion for a next-generation EU embedded within a powerful, modern and revamped long-term EU budget.

Building resilience and insuring cohesion are two of the main lessons we learned from this pandemic. The message we send with these proposals is that we can turn this crisis into an opportunity, and we are determined to do so. Next-generation EU must be different, safer and more resilient, greener and

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more digital, more inclusive and more prosperous. And always as the EU motto proudly proclaims “United in diversity”.

Prosperity through diversity is the central theme of today’s conference, and I really look forward to the conclusions and recommendations that will ensue from your exchanges today. Here in the Commission, we’re working on a number of different tracks to enhance Europe’s prosperity in a truly inclusive manner, creating opportunities for all.

Business is an essential partner and a central piece of this puzzle. We need to work together with businesses to end discrimination at the workplace, but also when people are looking for a job. Discrimination on any ground, including sex, race, color, religion or belief, disability, age, sexual orientation or gender identity, runs counter to everything the European Union stands for and is prohibited under the EU charter of fundamental rights. Making sure that these words do not just stand on paper but actually guide our day-to-day policy and business decision is our collective responsibility. We know there is still much work to be done. Before the end of this year, the Commission will present a new strategy for the implementation of the charter of fundamental rights, as well as a dedicated LGBTI equality strategy.

This will bring together various policy and financing tools within the EU competence to advance equality in practice, not only in words, and in key areas such as work, education, health, safety and social policy.

We also fully support the European diversity charters that now exist in 24 of our member states. More than 12,000 companies have signed up, covering over 16 million employees. Let us not forget, diversity management in the work place is not simply the ethical choice. It is also the smart business choice. It has been proven to deliver great benefits in terms of recruitment, creativity, problem-solving and customer engagement, and I’m particularly happy to see that

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although the Greek diversity charter was launched only a year ago, there are now already 150 companies that have signed up to it.

Dear friends, speaking to the European parliament last week, the President of the Commission sent a clear message on our readiness to fight relentlessly against all forms of discrimination. Visible discrimination of course, but also the more subtle forms – our own unconscious biases. To those belonging to a privileged majority, equality might often seem uncomfortable, as if implying an unnecessary complication, a loss of status or a step back for them. Let me be clear: it is not. It is, rather, a step forward for so many of our fellow citizens and an immense game for our society as a whole.

Prosperity through diversity should be our common goal, a major European goal. I wish you all a very fruitful discussion today so that you can bring us up one step closer to achieving it. Thank you.

VARVITSIOTIS: It's a pleasure now to introduce to you Robert Oliphant, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada, who has been online with us since the beginning. Dear Rob.

OLIPHANT: Thank you very much. It's a great pleasure to join you this morning. It's 5:30am in Canada and I'm watching the sun rise, so I say to all of you "kalimera". It is a wonderful pleasure to join the forum on human rights in business and to do so in what would have been Euro Pride 2020 in Thessaloniki and also in the birth place of Democracy, and I'm very pleased to bring you greetings from our Prime Minister, the Right Honorable Justin Trudeau. On June 1st 2016, Prime Minister Trudeau raised a Pride flag in front of Canada's parliament buildings, inaugurating Pride month in Canada and celebrating LGBTI Canadians.

And he's done that every year since. Last year he noted, and I quote, "In Canada we've moved forward in significant ways because respecting each

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other's rights is foundational to a country that understands that differences should and can always be a source of strength. Never a source of weakness. That we are stronger and more resilient when different identities, different communities come together around a shared vision of a stronger future, of a better neighborhood, of a better country for us all and that is truly what we are celebrating." As such, the Prime Minister, the Government of Canada, and the people of Canada salute Prime Minister Mitsotakis for both the real and symbolic action of today's historic event on human rights in business and wishes you the greater success to growing an even more prosperous Greece, more prosperous Europe to the recognition and celebration of diversity.

Now let's get this out of the way. Pride is political but it is also personally – deeply personal for me. I'm an openly gay man, growing up when it was not only unpopular, but often dangerous to be openly gay. And for me, Pride, Pride month is a time to celebrate how far we have come in many parts of the world, but it's also a call to extend those rights to everyone else. To every lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender person in Greece into the many, many allies who are making a difference in Greece, in Europe and around the world, I'd simply say I'm looking forward to the day when I can celebrate Pride with you in person in what is certainly the most beautiful place of the world.

Today, due to Covid-19 and the pandemic, we meet virtually, and Covid-19, as has been said, has changed everything, but one thing it cannot do is diminish our resolve to build a world that recognizes human rights as universal, as indivisible, as interdependent, as interconnected. A call for LGBTI rights and all human rights is only heightened by this pandemic, where people on the margins of society are more vulnerable, more at risk, and have much more to lose if we do not recognize their civil, environmental and social rights.

Fostering inclusive societies that respect diversity is a high priority for Canadians today. But this was not always the case. The early history of Canada

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involved the colonization of indigenous territory by European settlers, leaving a profound, damaging and lasting impact on indigenous people. Much still needs to be done, and our Government is totally committed to supporting indigenous people's self-determination improving services to them and advancing reconciliation.

Over the past half century Canada has adopted strong policies on bilingualism, multiculturalism, progressive immigration and refugee systems. It has adopted a charter of rights and freedom to protect basic rights and freedoms that are essential to keeping Canada free in Democratic society. But we are learning every day that we need to go deeper, tackling systemic discrimination and unconscious bias, including anti-black racism, upholding and reinforcing LGBTI rights.

This emphasis on inclusion is based on our values, but also, as Prime Minister Trudeau said, the recognition that we all prosper when we value diversity. Canada is committed to a human rights-based approach at home and abroad and through Canada's feminist foreign policy and our feminist international systems policy, Canada champions the rights of women, sexual minorities, refugees, displaced persons. Everyone should have access to justice, in full participation in a social, economic, cultural, and civic life.

Pride season reminds us that these rights extend to LGBTI individuals. No one should be denied safety, security, employment, or shelter due the discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or sex characteristics.

We will have to keep pushing to eliminate laws, policies and acts that discriminate against people based on these grounds. Our Governments have only a very limited ability to bring about social change. We politicians draft constitutions, pass laws, establish regulations, develop programs, but truly it's

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the private sector, civil society in all its manifestations, that brings about real and lasting change.

Through workplace programs promoting respect and dignity for minorities, business leaders will foster and protect human rights for all people, including LGBTI people.

As I grew up in Canada, chartered banks were probably the most conservative institutions in society. And graduating with my business degree 40 years ago, the last place I would have worked was in a bank. Stuffy, risk-averse, little hope for advancement for women or for a gay man like me. But over my lifetime that has changed. Led by the Toronto Dominion Bank and its CEO Ed Clark, who was committed to diversity and particularly for full inclusion of their LGBTI employees, Canada's charter big banks, now trip over each other trying to be the pinkest, the most inclusive. We now watch to see which bank will spend the most money and have the flashiest float in Toronto's Pride parade.

Banks have increasingly recognized that their capacity to innovate, their cultural relevance, their creativity, their market share, their worker satisfaction and ultimately their profitability are linked to their commitment to human rights and their welcome of LGBTI communities. Other Canadian companies large and small have begun to follow their lead. The promotion of human rights is hard work, but its good work. It creates stable and sustainable business environments, it helps companies mitigate risks, become more competitive and strengthens their brand. It not only makes our lives better, it makes our livelihoods better. Thank you for the opportunity to join you today. I look forward to learning from all of you. Merci, ευχαριστώ.

VARVITSIOTIS: Dear Rob, thank you, and I think that your contribution, because of your personal statement as well, was very important and now we come to my friend Dunja Mijatovic, the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe.

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MIJATOVIC: Thank you very much Chairman. It's a pleasure and honor, as always, to join any conversation related to human rights during the Greek Chairmanship of the Council of Europe. It was extremely interesting to hear several points that were raised by your Prime Minister and many other distinguished speakers, I will offer my view as Commissioner for Human Rights on the issue of human rights and businesses. And I would say that human rights responsibilities of business are not a new topic.

But the way in which we see them is evolving and so are our expectations. For a long time the agenda has been linked to international development, supply chains, or charitable commitments. It is now increasingly about how the private sector respects human rights, fights discrimination, protects equality, and diversity, nurtures free speech, tackles modern slavery or environmental hazards, not just in faraway places, but in the global north as well.

The Council of Europe has not stood idly in the face of these challenges. In 2016, the Committee of Ministers adopted a recommendation on business and human rights with guidance on applying the UN guiding principles on human rights, and last year, a one-stop-shop online platform was set up containing national action plans and best country practices.

My office has also been active by highlighting human rights obligations of businesses in country visits or by focusing on specific topics, like the role of private actors in border security, policing, prisons and surveillance, human trafficking, or the right to privacy indeed.

Today I would like to share with you three thoughts on this theme, and I'll try to be brief because I know that the time is limited. One is about the role of the private sector in the field of artificial intelligence. This is an area in which I have been engaged since the start of my mandate. In my recommendation, "Unboxing artificial intelligence: 10 steps to protect human rights," published last year, I flagged the serious consequences that decisions based on flawed

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artificial intelligence can have for human rights – for example, access to healthcare, social security, employment, or in the area of crime prevention.

A key issue at stake is also a freedom of expression. I have raised concerns about the role of private companies in content moderation and in setting the boundaries of free speech in the digital sphere. And in some countries Governments compel telecommunication companies to shut down or to slow down the internet and the social media, restricting citizens' freedom of speech and assembly.

One element of response to this is to strengthen cooperation and dialogue on human rights between state actors, private companies, international organizations, and the civil society. And I found it very encouraging that many of the largest business players had already partnered with the Council of Europe as a part of the partnership with digital companies.

Today's conference is another excellent example of the much-needed multi-stakeholder dialogue.

My second remark has to do with the big debate about whether human rights in businesses should be left to self regulation or subjected to hard rule. My impression now is that the pendulum is swinging away from the voluntary towards the mandatory, and several Council of Europe member states, France, the Netherlands, the UK, have already passed laws on some of the key human rights responsibilities of businesses, as has the European Union.

I think that more hard rule in this area is just a matter of time, and I also believe that it is the interest of the businesses themselves to have a level playing field.

This is why I support the efforts to create binding international instrument to regulate business conduct, and I think the Council of Europe has much to contribute to this process.

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Third and last, I'd like to share a thought on how the global Covid pandemic is reshaping the human rights in business agenda. We have seen the inspiring example of many private businesses stepping in to help make available protective gear and lifesaving equipment and to ensure uninterrupted delivery of goods and services to the population, and I salute the humanity and dedication of all the people working in those companies.

But we have also see many companies struggling to keep afloat in the face of sudden downturn, leading to lay-offs and increasing the risk of poverty.

So despite the appearances of respite, the pandemic is not over yet. It will remain a difficult test, not just for the private actors' economic by ability, but also for their commitment to human rights and, no less importantly, their social license to operate. I wish you all great discussion throughout the day, at the base conference, and I'm sending you greetings from Strasbourg.

VARVITSIOTIS: Thank you Dunja, and it's always a pleasure that you [...] of Chairmanship and we appreciate your help [...].

And now we come to the final message, by Sanda Ojiambo, the CEO & Executive Director of the United Nations Global Compact.

OJIAMBO: Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, greetings from Nairobi Kenya. My name is Sanda Ojiambo, the new CEO & Executive Director of United Nations Global Compact. I would like to extend my gratitude to Greece, for the invitation to participate in this important event and to high Commissioner Bachelet, as well as the representatives from Greece, Norway, Canada, and the EU, for the insightful remarks.

I would also like to thank Mr. Dimitriadis for his participation in our recent UN Global Compact leader summit, which turned out to be the largest ever UN convening of Global business leaders, with more 23,000 participants.

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As the world's largest corporate sustainability initiative, with over 10,000 member companies, the UN Global compact provides a practical framework for the development, implementation and disclosure of SDG policies and practices that pertain to the ten principles of the compact and the 17 sustainable development goals.

By signing on to the UN Global Compact, companies commit at the CEO level to uphold the ten universally accepted principles, spanning human rights, labor, environment and anticorruption throughout their strategies and operations. They also commit to report annually on the progress in support of these efforts.

What I want to focus on today is the fact that human rights are front and centre to our mission, both in the ten principles of the compact and in the 2030 sustainable development agenda. In the ten principles, the emphasis on human rights is explicit. The first six principles are on human rights, including the four labor rights principles. When it comes to the 2030 agenda and the sustainable development goals, more than 90% of the 169 targets are linked to international human rights treaties and labor standards. This of course means that it is absolutely impossible for businesses or anyone else to deliver on the SDGs without taking action on human rights.

Simply put, respecting, promoting and supporting human rights is the most certain way to achieve the SDGs. But how does a company take meaningful action on human rights in practice?

The UN guiding principles are first and foremost the authoritative global standard outlining the corporate responsibility to respect human rights.

They clearly state that businesses should have a place for human rights, due diligence processes to identify, prevent, mitigate and account for how they address their impact on human rights, in addition to having a policy commitment in place, and a process for remedy. But unfortunately, the vast majority of

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businesses do not move past the policy commitments stage. In fact, recent studies show that there's a huge gap between aspirations and actions.

It's is high time that businesses start to consider human rights not as an afterthought or charitable contribution, but as the foundation for successful business operations. Companies need to take action to address human rights impacts through an ongoing human rights due diligence process.

In order to move the needle forward, businesses need to have a comprehensive understanding of their impacts. It's about finding opportunities to understand and positively affect the full human impact of business, including on those most marginalize,d and I welcome your particular focus on LGBTI+ people at this conference.

I look forward to following today's discussions and I wish you all a productive event. Thank you.

VARVITSIOTIS: Well, now we come to an end to our session, and I will pass the floor to Xenia Kounalaki, our Foreign Editor and Columnist for Kathimerini newspaper, who is going to introduce and moderate the discussion panel which is "Government: Building Inclusive and Diverse Societies". Thank you all for attending and I'm going to listen to you from my office now.

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MODERATOR: ... I'm from Kathimerini, an Athens-based daily, and I'm moderating the first discussion panel titled "Government: Building Inclusive and Diverse Societies". I want to briefly introduce the people who will join us today. Alex Patelis, Chief Economic Adviser to the Greek Prime Minister's Office; Robert Oliphant, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Canada; Janina Hasenson, Deputy Director, Legal Counsellor at the Unit for Human Rights Policy in the Ministry for foreign affairs of Finland; Ioannis Dimitrakopoulos, Scientific Adviser to the Director of the European Agency for

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Fundamental Rights; Irena Moozova, Director at the European Commission for Equality and Union Citizenship's in the department for Justice and Consumers; and Rolf Wenzel, Governor at the Council of Europe Development Bank.

So I think it means a lot for this country and the current Government that it not only initiated a debate on diversity during the Pride month. Bear in mind that, until recently, the conservative party wouldn't even take part in the gay Pride parade, but also asked many participants from other countries to state best practices in the fields so we can sit down and learn from you.

So I want to ask Alex right away, Alex – and don't pretend we don't know each other; we are close friends – you are one of the organizers of today's event. What made you think of putting it together and what do you expect to get out of it?

PATELIS: Good morning everybody, you can hear me okay? So there's a lot of people who've been involved in this project obviously and the original idea was to put a physical conference with the facilities of Euro Pride in Thessaloniki, but of course Covid came along and changed all that, so then we realized that this was a unique opportunity that we could bring together speakers from around the world, like Rob who's been so kind to be with us so early in the morning in Canada, and we're honored to have incredible speakers today with us. Some of them we've heard already, from opening remarks, some still to come.

Today's event has been the product of the hard work of a lot people, and I would like to highlight from the media company V and O, Mrs. Ria Tsouka and Natasa Krents, who've been very instrumental and of course the hard work of Alexandros Voudouris and Mahi Vani, with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and primarily Grigoris Dimitriadis, the General Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, without which we would not be here today.

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So back to Xenias question, why is this event taking place and what do we expect to get out of it. This is an important topic, human rights in business, and it's a topic that's not often debated in Greece, and for some reason sometimes people treat these things as something separate: some people are interested in human rights, some people interested in business, and maybe sometimes those two don't intersect. What we want to do today is to show that the best companies worldwide focus on diversity and on ensuring that their employees are respected and feel comfortable and valuable at their workplace, whatever their agenda, ethnic background, religion, or sexual orientation. And we want to spread, as Xenia said, best practices across the workplace, also here in Greece, and start a debate domestically.

So, why should companies support diversity? What's in it for them? And how do we protect human rights in business? We don't have to re-invent the wheel you know. We first have to accept here in Greece that we have a problem and then we can copy and learn from what other countries do, so that's what we want to do today. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Robert Oliphant, you said, and we already knew, Canada is considered one of the most gay-friendly countries in the world. Your country is one of the first to allow adoption of children by same sex couples, and a few years ago, Justin Trudeau issued a formal apology to members of the LGBT community. You said yourself, he puts the LGBT flag every Pride month. Which would you consider more important: a legal inclusive framework or symbolic gestures like the one you mentioned by your Prime Minister?

OLIPHANT: Thank you very much and thank you to all the organizers for this, and particularly Gregory for his active work.

I will think that they go hand in hand. That legal frameworks, wheter they are broad and inclusive, such as human rights declarations or human rights legal

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frameworks, and legislative activity that makes sure the discrimination is illegal and that there are penalties for it are absolutely essential.

Frameworks that allow for same-sex marriage or adoption or workplace safety are all critical. Sufficient? No, they are necessary but not sufficient. So then, the next step are symbolic actions and actions of inclusion. Our Government sometimes takes criticism because the Prime Minister has decided to have a gender equality in his cabinet for instance. That is both real, because women bring a different perspective than men do to the cabinet table, it's also symbolic and it gives hope and makes the aspirations of the young girls and women realizable and gives them the sense that they will be included. And the same goes with LGBTI people. One of the reasons I chose to say that I was openly gay was because I think it's important for politicians who are to do that, when it's safe. I don't pull other people out of the closet, but I think that when people feel safe and secure in environments, they should do that to give courage and to give hope to people who may aspire to be a politician one day when they thought it was never possible.

So those symbolic actions, the raising the flag, the welcome, the apologies, are important, but the apology needs to also go with restitution and looking at the ways that we do reconciliation with people, and that requires full and complete engagement. That applies the same. Governments can set frameworks and laws and do all of those things, but unless they're embraced by society it's not going to work.

When businesses step up and say, we're doing it not because it's part of the law, we're doing it because it's good for business, it's good for us, it's good for our reputation and it will keep us current, it will help us be marketable and profitable, then we're getting somewhere. So, it's hand in hand, both legal frameworks, symbolic activity and engagement with civil society, all are necessary.

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MODERATOR: Mrs. Hasenson, we were surprised to hear that there's a special unit for human rights in the Foreign Affairs Ministry of Finland. Can you explain this combination of human rights and diplomacy?

HASENSEN: Yes, thank you and many thanks also for inviting us to tell a little bit about the Finnish experience as regard to the human rights and LGBTI rights as part of Finland's Government policy.

We are very lucky now to have a very human-rights oriented Government program with over 30 I think mentioning of human rights and LGBTI rights are very much in the program, so it's easy for us to work at the moment in the Ministry human rights policy unit. Actually, we haven't always had a human rights policy unit. It was only established when Finland actually enjoyed the EU in the 1990s and things have come far from where we were let say 20, 30 years ago, and now actually we have two human rights units in the Foreign Ministry: one at the political department and one at the legal service, so we are very lucky at the moment.

Our job is to make sure that human rights are part of everything that the Foreign Service is doing, whether it's development trade, and traditional foreign and security policy. It's our job to make sure that our policy is coherent at all multilateral organization, the UN, the Council of Europe, the OSE and of course when we are dealing by literally with many, various countries. As I said, at the human rights policy unit we sometimes are like the Amnesty International of the diplomatic service. We are there to tell, yes, it's a good project but where are human rights, you need to take account that human rights point of view are there and LGBTIQ rights we all know it's not always easy for example. In some countries it's extremely easy. We're dealing with Canada, it's very easy to talk about LGBTIQ rights, but then there are other countries where it's much more difficult, and sometimes we have to be very sensitive, and understand how to bring things up. What we like to say always as the local community, if we're

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dealing with a country in Africa or Asia go to speak with the local NGOs there, how would they want us, the Finnish Government to help them? That's always the first thing to do, so we are sending these instructions to our embassies: Go and speak with the local community, ask what kind of help they need from us. What works in one place doesn't work always in another, so we have to be smart about it. But I think one policy should be clear to all Finnish diplomats. Finland stand in the frontline when protection and promotion of human rights is concerned, and we want that all diplomats remember this, that we are the ones that are speaking for human rights. Thank you, over to you now.

MODERATOR: Mr. Dimitrakopoulos, your agency recently published a survey on LGBT people in the EU with almost 140,000 participants, I think, there was also a Q research published today, I don't know if you saw that. Can you describe the main findings of the survey?

DIMITRAKOPOULOS: Yes, and again thank you very much for inviting the Fundamental Rights Agency to this important event.

In a nutshell, the heading of the report that accompanies the surveys is telling. The heading is "A long way to go for LGBTI equality". The results show relatively little progress in the EU over the past seven years. More people are open about being LGBTI - a good thing- but the majority still avoid expressing this, by example holding their partners hand in public.

And they may have very good reason to be discreet in this way, because amongst those who are very open about being LGBTI 40% said that they experienced harassment, different forms of harassment. Physical or sexual attacks also remain a concern; 1 in 10 of the survey participants say that they were targets of such violence in the 5 years before the survey.

Now, the percentage points are one thing, but if you translate them to real numbers they would translate to thousands of people across the EU who are

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still being subjected to experiences of discrimination, harassment as well as physical violence and abuse.

LGBTI individuals encounter problems on a daily basis both at work but also at school. At cafes, bars, nightclubs, when looking for housing, when accessing healthcare services, and this is especially true for two categories, trans people as well as for intersex people, for whom identification documents that specify particular sex can trigger even ridicule. Now, large-scale surveys, this is a second one, the first one was back in 2012, show over and over again that victims of discrimination but also victims of physical abuse are reluctant to report these incidents to the authorities, and LGBTI people are no exception.

Reporting rates are low especially so for the police, and this is another area where Governments need to focus more. The results make it clear, as I said before, that trans and intersex people face an even more uphill struggle.

What about the young? This time, in this survey, we decided to lower the age limit, so we allowed participants aged 15 to 18 years old also to give us their perspective. They experienced more harassment than their older peers. Yet, a lot of young people are saying that other individuals are standing up for them at school, in educational settings, and today they hear more about LGBTI issues than at the past.

Now, our survey covers the entire EU and two accession countries, and there are striking differences between countries. But whether people live in countries that did very well in the survey or countries where we see serious problems, the results underline that law and policy, as well as social behavior, as a speaker said before, and models of politicians, public figures, community leaders, can greatly affect their lives.

MODERATOR: Miss Moozova, what does equality and diversity mean for the EU. We just heard the findings of the research published by the European

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Agency for Fundamental Rights. Why do we pursue these values across the Union and where does Greece stand? I want to hear it from you, too, Mr. Dimitrakopoulos, about the special findings in Greece.

MOOZOVA: Thank you very much Xenia and thank you for having me here. Dear colleagues and friends, I would as always much prefer to be at the Euro Pride at Thessaloniki, but I would like first of all to congratulate Alex and Gregory and all the colleagues, taking this opportunity and bringing equality of fundamental rights and values ahead in this very special and using this opportunity to bring all the top leaders in promoting the diversity.

Where we stand. So, we just heard from the vice President of the European Commission Margaritis where we stay, because the human rights the fundamental values and equality, these are the essence of the European way of life. You know that equality and indiscriminate they are already a basis of the EU, in the treaties and this is the treaties [...] to find a value of equality as basics, and this is from where the competence of the EU do combat discrimination based on sex, including gender identity, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age and sexual orientation. And these are also the treaties, which as the EU and Commission, as a guardian of the treaties to mainstream the non-discrimination and its policies processes and programs.

So we have built up very effectively on these foundations it was said I think by Rob, who said it was important to have legislation in place, we have robust legislation focusing on equal treatment, we have the right region policies which are progressing being implemented to advance equality for different groups at the European level but also at the National level, and we have the support of European funding, which I think is very important.

So this was our long road from the beginning of the European integration, but now under the leadership of the President von der Leyen, equality being one of the true priorities of this new Commission. For the first time ever, we have the

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female President of the European Commission, and for the first time ever we have a Commissioner for equality, who is supported by the specialized equality task force which combine colleagues from all the different departments of the EU Commission and enabling therefore so to mainstream equality and diversity into all policies of the European Commission .

I would like to stress as well, that we provide a support to civil society by various funding programs and we have a quite good and tangible results here. I would like to probably mention one project which I find very interesting, it was funded in Greece, it is called “Ethos project” on combatting homophobic, transphobic and bi-phobic stereotypes and prejudices through and by mainstream media.

This project put together colleagues from LGBTI communities from Greece, Croatia and Lithuania and was focusing on educating and raising awareness among students and professional journalists, and I’m sure that Xenia is aware about it, because they put together special toolkits and they engaged in discussing with the media associations in Greece and also whether political masters in Greece in order to reduce the harmful stereotypes against the LGBTI people in those countries.

I’d like to mention that in the past period we have, since 2015, put into use a list of actions to advance LGBTI equality, where we as a European Commission we strive through this list to support activities in member states in civil society organizations and businesses to effectively combat discrimination, hate speech and head crime. We supported the member states, through number of high level events in order to exchange best practices and ensure knowledge and conducting research, we support civil society organizations with important grants, €1.6 million on operation grants for the organization on the European level, and €2.1 million for the project grants for the national civil society organizations. And I should mention as well some 200 projects dealing with LGBTI equality which has been funded under the Erasmus+ project.

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However I think that two most important issues, the cooperation with the member states to encourage and to strengthen policies and legislation support civil society organization and work with the private sector to foster diversity management and make sure that the workplace remains inclusive and good place for everybody.

I hope that we will be able to support all these actors during the next program period. You know that the multiannual financial framework is now under negotiation and we hope to be adopted by the end of this year and we hope to have at least the same means in order to support LGBTI equality and fundamental rights in the Europe and abroad.

In terms of the where stands Greece, you mention, well, Greece is improving. It ranks, and I'm sure that Ioannis from the Fundamental Rights Agency can give you all the details about it, so Greece unfortunately is still the last in terms of equality index, improved mainly in the area of the work in terms of LGBTI equality under the latest random map produced by IJGA Europe indicates that Greece is on the 18th place and improving as well, but there is of course still a place for the improvement and not only in Greece but in the whole Europe, and I would say that we have lots to do together and I'm particularly happy that the conference, the one that we are participating today, is helping us to engage living politicians shared with practices and ideas and in more business community in order to improve. Thank you.

MODERATOR: I think that's why we are all here, to improve ourselves. So, Mr. Wenzel your Bank, the Council of Europe Development Bank has an exclusively social mandate. What does that mean in the terms of diversity and how do you accomplish at all?

WENZEL: Thank you, first of all, let me also like previous speakers comment the Greek authorities for having organized the conference, I was impressed and I'm still being impressed by the very rich and diverse list of speakers and participants and I think that adjusts very well to the relevance to the topic

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"Human rights in business" and I would just say who could be better a place than the public financial institution, to put words and declarations into actions. Now let me just, for those who do not so well know the Council of Europe Development Banks, who are they and what are they doing. I see Rob is looking in half his interest I guess, now the Council of Europe Development Bank was established in 1956 we are working with European countries, we were established by eight European countries including Greece by the way, today we have 42 member countries, the last country that joined just a couple of weeks ago, was the country Andorra, and I very much welcome the continued and increasing interest ... we have an indeed an exclusively social mandate that is unique when you compare across European financial institution, we have a very unique and exclusively social mandate, what does it mean today? Well, it means today what in meant in 1956 when we were established: supporting those who are the most vulnerable in society. In 1956 we do a helping countries with integration of refugees and internally displaced persons, victims of WW2, infrastructure was destroyed, cities were destroyed, and there was a clearly a need to help countries to rebuild the social infrastructure.

Then, more recently a decade ago, we had countries to cope with the impact and the aftermath of the big financial crisis and today it means to help countries to increase and to strengthen the social fabric, the social cohesion that has come under stress because so many people thanks to social media have become very outspoken and have clearly said, we have rights, even if you do not mainstream, we have rights, we are insistent ... supported by Governments. So our activity is to provide financing, our activity is also to provide expertise to Governments, to local authorities, city municipalities, to design projects that would broadly include all parts of our society and of course we are focusing on the most vulnerable and that is refugees and migrants, that are single parents, lots good workers, women victims of domestic violence, I would like to refer to the Istanbul convention but let me also say and I heard Rob saying, I didn't like banks so much but banks have changed. It didn't need to change, we always focused on these social issues but it needs two partners. We can offer our support our financing, but we need Governments who are prepared and ready to take our financing and to work with us to design the project that would address the social needs including diversity issues.

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We just heard earlier from the European Agency for Fundamental Rights that indeed the human rights situation across countries is very diverse. And that is our challenge that we have and this is why again I would like to comment the Greek authorities for putting this topic on the agenda, and I can only hope I can keep my fingers crossed that from this conference and from the Greek Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers for next month, comes a new impetus, a new momentum to move forward on this important issues. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Alex, the subtitle of today's event is prosperity through diversity, how do we prosper through being diverse, can you talk a bit more about this?

PATELIS: Of course, I'm an economist, I'm going to focus on the economic aspect of diversity, obviously there's always the issue of social justice as well, but let me put this aside for now.

I'm going to argue that diversity is not only good for companies, it's also good for an economy because it leads to prosperity and let me explain.

First at a very basic level, pure capitalism doesn't work without human rights. The foundation of capitalism, the core assumptions of the model is that we each have equal opportunities, we have the same starting point and then the best are rewarded, without the same starting point without access to equal opportunities and if there is discrimination, then an economy or a company cannot reach it's potential. You might notice that in the next panel we have quite a few representatives of multinational companies, many multinational companies have been found to be champions of diversity across different countries. Why is that? Because many have found that it makes a business sense, so because by operating in many different companies they have concluded that if they cannot attract the best and the brightest in each country, because people are persecuted or discriminated against, or simply don't feel comfortable or faced direct, or indirect prejudice they cannot maximize their profits and it really I think is that simple.

This also applies to the level of the country in Greece currently 60% of men are employed but just 43% of women, so you could literally have Greek GDP be 17% higher if women were as employed as men. We cannot achieve high rates

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of economic growth which is one of the objectives of the government if we do not create an inclusive society and if we do not involve all Greeks.

You know also this whole theory is backed by empirical evidence, it was the Wall street journal, the bastion of capitalism itself that ran an article in the recent issue publishing research that showed that ranked companies by diversity and showed that those that are better on diversity also had a higher profits. Diversity helps create long-term shareholder value and as a second argument in favor of diversity that I'm going to make today and that is a little bit more settle that it helps in decision making so if you put ten people in a room to make a decision and they all have the same background and they think the same way, unsurprisingly you're going to end up with group think but if you have ten diverse people they will each bring something different to the table and challenge the status quo and the decision you're going to get at the end is simply going to be a better decision so I think we really need this in Greece diverse decision making, diverse thinking and so these are the arguments that we're making today and we want the public debate to start on these topics. Thank you.

MODERATOR: It would be a good start if the Government puts more women in the crucial posts, because we have very few women in the current Government. So, Robert, you're also a Minister, you're openly gay you said, which is real rare phenomenon in Greece, I don't know if you know, some priests are very hostile to the LGBT community here and of them, bishop Amvrosios was also sentenced to, I think seven months for hate speech against gay people. What would you say to him if you confronted him?

OLIPHANT: It ran out my eye, this is the discussion I've heard most in my life and I find it interesting because for me the church, Christianity is fundamentally above human rights. It is fundamentally a place where we're meant to respect others and to be inclusive and there's been a perversion of that in the church broadly speaking for centuries but not always. I could spend hours arguing about the Bible and what it says or doesn't say, the ultimate point I have come into my life after having been ordained in a protestant church is that the church has a long way to grow around the world and the church has caused much pain in the world. The church has also offered much good in the world and I've always believed in dialogue, I've always believed that somehow it's not human rights for some, it's human rights for all, and there's a limit on that and the limit

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is hate speech but it's not on attitudes and I have spent my life starting where people are and trying to pull them into a different understanding and that included in my own church which went through a huge debate through the 1980's on whether or not they would ordain gay and lesbian people. Finally, in 1988 they decided to do it. Most churches are still not there. Most churches actually are still behind the times in this and are actually paying a huge price for that. And is not just somewhere to business, I would say, churches are becoming increasingly irrelevant, increasingly ineffective, and increasingly less powerful in helping the world adjust to what they would believe because people see them as hateful and people see them as exclusive and I would say to go back in time, pull back to the original thinking that is in Christianity that's my faith, but in every faith, in Islam, in Judaism, in Buddhism, go back to the core principles and they are about respect and I think that communities of faith need to be challenged. They need to be understood though as institutions that are trying to preserve something.

It's interesting I'm a storyteller because I'm a preacher but I was cleaning out my aunt's basement after she died, I was executor, and she had a lot of boxes of things and one box was labeled "pieces of string too small to save" and I thought that is like the church too much of the church is holding on to things that are not worth saving. What is worth saving are the big pictures and this relates to LGBTQI rights around the world. I spend a lot of time in Africa in the last number of years and when you go back to the roots of African cultures, they're not anti- LGBTQI, they were inclusive societies. Colonialists, imperialists that went to Africa brought that discrimination and hatred with them and have been posed colonial laws in countries that are not African. And as Africa becomes more African and as we help Africa de-colonize, we will see human rights absolutely expand because that is what is at the root of human beings.

I think it's tough because we're always are suspicious of minorities and differences, once we embrace them, we recognize that we have nothing to fear, what we have is everything to gain and it's whether it's, as Alex is saying around a table, a diversity of opinion or make better decisions. In the market place we'll have a broader appeal, in the church we will be relevant.

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I'm hosting my own district I represent to the Metropolitan of the Greek church in Canada and we have the Cathedral, we have a variety of the seminary and I engage in this discussion regularly with theologians and I think that the theologians understand it and the people in the pews understand it, it's trying to put it altogether and help us move and let go pieces of string that are too small to save.

MODERATOR: Your aunt was right. So Janina, Finland has one of the best education systems in the world, have you included sex education in the curriculum and do you believe that it's important to raise citizens with the tolerance vis à vis diversity?

HASENSON: Thank you so much for this question, very important, yes all children should have access to age specific sexuality education, for Finland this is a very important priority and also at our foreign development policies we promote this very much, not always easy but we do it.

In Finland already pre-school children start getting basic information about human body parts, pregnancy of course in a very child friendly manner and around 10-11 years old get really comprehensive sexuality education, my own daughter, a fifth grader, she's now 11, learned this year about sexuality and reproduction, she found it extremely embarrassing of course but she's a pre-teen, very normal but it was very important that they got this information.

I think girls, in general, know more but for boys it's very important, but if you think about Finnish children and I think at least children in Europe in general they embrace diversity they know about equal marriage, they see gay couples around them they see it in their lives, in TV, social media, it's really no brainer for many children actually, it's the middle ages, it's the senior citizens that are challenging how to reach this older generations, there are schools that would help, we need to be smart about it, how to do it, I think this is something we have to think together, we need a multi-stakeholder approach that's for sure, teachers, parents, like was mentioned by Rob, faith leaders, health workers, private sector actors, many others.

Diversity is something we all need to take seriously and we all need to put an effort together. So thanks, over to you now, thank you.

MODERATOR: Mr. Dimitrakopoulos has promised, we want to hear from you, the findings on Greece because we heard from Irena that we lack far behind in

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terms of LGBTQI equality and gender issues so if you can give us some actual numbers or stats, I don't know...

DIMITRAKOPOULOS: I wouldn't say lack in behind, I wouldn't agree with that, I think that there is some good news and there is some bad news. The reading of the results overall show that much more work is needed especially in particular areas and this is what is useful about large scale service such as these, usefulness for Government assigning, it's because they can go to detail and pick up exactly where they need to focus. So education I would highlight but also employment settings.

Overall, let me say the results are not strikingly different from the EU average. But I would first like to point out to some positive results. Perhaps the most interesting positive result is that the majority 57% believe that LGBTQI prejudice in tolerance has actually dropped in the last five years. And that compares with 40% for the EU average so many more people in Greece believe that the situation has improved. Also, more than the EU average 39% compared to 33% believe that their Government combats prejudice intolerance effectively. And thirdly fewer about 33% compared to 38% say that they were harassed during the year before the survey.

Now, on the other hand, one of the main problems that I would highlight and it's particular important for the Government is that only 22% compared to an EU average of 55% know that there is a law that forbids discrimination against someone because of their sexual orientation when applying for a job.

Now this is important because ignorance or non-awareness of the law of course has a very important impact and it is a responsibility of the Government to ensure that everybody is aware of the law. Another piece of bad news is that about half 43% compared to 26% EU average hide their LGBTQI identity when they are at work and again that speaks to what Mr. Patelis and others were saying about the importance of ensuring that businesses allow people to feel comfortable being who they are and expressing who they are.

I won't go and mention too many figures but I'll just focus on young people, and young people 15-17 who are in school because their future and if their feelings, their experiences are negative this will influence their future life. So 43% of young people aged 15-18 actually hide their identity, hide being LGBTQI at school and that compares to an EU average of 30% they're many more young

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people. 64% of teenagers say that their peers or teachers have often or always supported them at school however which is a good thing compared to an EU average of 60%.

So while we see young people still feeling constrained, having difficulties in expressing themselves and opening up, at the same time, we have an improvement in terms of the feeling that they have that they can be supported at school and that is another thing that Governments can take measures to improve even more.

So I will stop at this, we have an online data explorer, everyone can go to our website and go in detail and compare each individual country either with the EU average or with other countries and go into much more detail into a welfare evidence and I think that is very important for those public officials who are responsible for diversity but also within businesses for those who are working in this area, to see where it is specifically their country that they should target their efforts more. Back to you.

MODERATOR: For several issues for the Governments to address, Irena do you feel European values are being infringed by homophobic politicians like the one we see in Budapest or Warsaw, and what is the proper way to proceed, connection or offer incentives to bring them at the right inclusive path?

MOOZOVA: Well, as already said by Robert in the previous input zone, they are two signs of the coin. I said that the European Commission is the guardian of the treaties and we are trying to make sure that all the European member states implement the European nondiscrimination legislation and indeed you have to have always the commitment and enforcement so we are analyzing the situation we are always very welcome, because we contempt all the forms of discrimination and we have reacted on several occasions as far as the situation in some member states concerned. What I would like to say that we have engaged for example with the member states through the different tools I mentioned because we have different working groups where we share best practices we give some guidance and we are trying to address the specificities of particular themes of intolerance. We have engaged also I think this is very important add of 2020, of the European integration because we have engaged with the leading IT companies in May 2016, we have engaged with them in the form of contact which is a kind of voluntary engagement and will enter in

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commitment from those IT companies, with broadly positive progress in terms of countering the strait of legal hate speech online including all the homophobic and transphobic nature and we are very vigilant to ensure that LGBTQI persons and their families they endure the rights without destination in the whole European Union so we fill all closely developments in some member states, like Poland, Hungary, be very local, and we will not hesitate today action within the limits conferred to as to the Commission by the treaties, but at the same time it is very important to host a dialogue and exchange good practice with the member states on discrimination we are having bilateral meetings with the member states concerned we support as well the organizations working in the field of equality like equality bodies and we fund whenever it's possible non-discrimination projects in order to raise the awareness of the root public and Ioannis just said how important is the awareness of the root public as well.

And last but not least I would like to mention and I think that Margaritis mentioned it already at this opening remarks that we are preparing ambitious all LGBTQI equality strategy for the end of the year for we would like to raise strong commitment of the Commission to act within the limits of our competence and we will also call on the member states and the society in businesses to step up for the LGBTQI equality and I think that precisely conference like that that you are organizing the common knowledge will help us to add and apply the best tools in order to progress with LGBTQI in Europe and worldwide.

MODERATOR: Mr. Wenzel your mission is trying to integrate the most vulnerable citizens you said, in what ways does the bank advance social integration in Europe?

WENZEL: Thank you very much, in what way, well our ways and our activities depend very much on the situation and the challenges at hand, we have a very unique and exclusive social mandate and ten years ago, a decade ago, it was about supporting employment, maintaining jobs after the financial crisis that hit so many countries very hard, now 2015 and after that it was heading country with integration of migrants and refugees and again it was about jobs, it was also then about education and today it's about looking forward, it's about helping countries to create a social infrastructure that give access for example to the most vulnerable parts of the society, access to the health sector, access to education, so building up and financing educational festivities, financing the

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health sector making sure that people have access, low income, mostly vulnerable parts of the society have access to at least a minimum of our medical services but also creating and working with creating jobs in the small and medium size business sectors for example, by providing financing and law financial terms to micro-Lenders not to commercial banks but because commercial banks that are not experienced very often do not have the interest of supporting entrepreneurs, startups, women who are creating a business, we know that women always need protect, we have strong and empirical evidence that they submit a strong business case in a strong economic sense to support micro, small and medium businesses and that is what we are doing because we know if we do not address these weaknesses in a society, then the social fabric, the social cohesion of a society will come under stress, we will see people protesting against what we are leaving behind and social media and other issues as I said earlier providing a platform for people rightly so, to express their views. Sometimes it goes also too far to the other side of the spectrum but it provides a platform for expressing one's feelings and views on issues that are not being addressed by Governments.

I think Governments and financial institution, public connection institution as ourselves, are well placed and well-advised to meet these changes head-on and to respond to them. So that is what we are doing, writing financing for this kind of projects that help the integration through education and social infrastructure, schools, hospitals, and environmentally friendly projects. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Alex you gave an interview recently and decided to come out, that was the first for Greek standards, what do you make of their reactions, do you think it's important to have visibility in our country?

PATELIS: Thank you, of course it is important to have visibility, I don't particularly like talking about myself but it was a great reaction to the interview, I think I was quite overwhelmed I would say, and probably the only negative reaction I got bizarrely was from some members of the LGBTQI community themselves who thought that it was not appropriate for me to be talking on their behalf, but probably the most optimistic comment I saw was that some people thought that I came out in order to become a Minister which in itself shows that things have moved forward, obviously I have no interest in becoming a Minister

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but I thought it was a good sign that the country is actually deep down more progressive than what we think and sometimes small changes can have a big effect.

MODERATOR: Robert you are a member of the liberal party, is there a difference in the LGBTQI issues between your party and the conservative one, because in Greece we are still debating if feminism, LGBTQI rights etc. are exclusive agenda of the leftist parties or not.

OLIPHANT: Everything is in flux, when I was first elected in 2008, we were in opposition and I found that in my own party and liberal party the majority were inclusive and welcoming but there was a significant minority and sometimes focal that we are only partway along the journey I would say, they were still exclusive and they were still struggling and still difficult for me.

In 12 years, that opinion is virtually gone, it is never heard, I would say there is unanimous consent within our carcass and broadly within our party.

The conservative party which had been in Government and is now in opposition has struggled more on that, they still have two factions, there are some very strong supporters at LGBTQI rights in the conservative part in Canada, there are some fierce advocates, who are challenging their own party and there are people who are extremely right-wing. Some of them for religious reasons, but some of them for political reasons and they find that they have a base of support if they promote those opinions. What I am increasingly, the difference I see is that in the conservative party that is still tolerated in Canada which surprises me, there is a leadership race going on right now where one of the candidates believes in conversion therapy is still extremely homophobic and anti-LGBTQI, one of the candidates still refer to, there are bill protecting transgender rights as the bathroom bill, which would simply not be tolerated in our party.

And so what I try to do is support the light-minded people in the conservative party and I know that as history progresses, they will come along. They have to, they will not be seen as a viable governing alternative in Canada if they do not embrace difference and that is what they'll have to do and it is a struggle.

So, I'm patient, mostly patient, attempting to show them that inclusion will help them as a political party, it won't hurt them and young people, and not even young people, I get you know, 85 year old men and women who just are so pleased to see the progress that is happening in society until it doesn't, it

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crosses age barriers but we're not there yet in Canada, it takes time and we also see a resurgence of populism that has been mentioned, none of that's named, we recognize it, we see it in Hungary, we see it in Poland, we see it in other places around the world and ours is always to simply say everyone will be better off when human rights are respected for all.

MODERATOR: Thank you, what about you, Janina in Finland, how is it? Does respect to LGBTQI rights run across the political spectrum or is it like a privilege of elected center left parties?

HASENSEN: I would say that also in Finland things have come far from where they were still some years ago, we still have parties in the Parliament who are not maybe anti-LGBTQI per se but when you hear them listening, that's what they are, but both in leftist and in conservative parties you have very vocal LGBTQI rights promoters vocal promoters so I think Finland has come a long way since where we were still some years back but of course and the legal basis, you know, country's very good, non-discrimination acts are very good but of course there's always things we can do more as regards implementation and how to really make sure that it's all this good acts are put into place and into action For example, also talking about companies and business life, many businesses nowadays take part in Health Pride and all the other Prides that we have in Finland, this still didn't happen in Finland let's say ten years ago, it's quite a new thing in Finland very very positive but still we would also have to make sure that LGBTQI rights are protected every day in the business life not just during Pride weeks once a year, we want to see this happening every day and I think there are still things we can do together Governments and the business sector and of course NGOs and local activists, all together. The path is there and together we can really accomplish still much more, thank you.

MODERATOR: Unfortunately, we're running out of time so there's no time for the other speakers, I'm so sorry, thank you all, hope to actually, not only virtually see you here and host you in Athens. We can now proceed to the second discussion panel, titled "Business: Corporate Responsibility and Opportunities in Promoting Diversity and Human Rights". Thank you.

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MODERATOR: Hello everyone, welcome to the second special panel this afternoon and it would be very interesting panel because the part of the conference is human rights in business and we have a spec of business leaders who are at the best place to talk about the topic. If you allow me a few minutes, if I could just mention a few words on the stand of Bloomberg on this issue because we are a company and we are a big company, June as was mentioned before marks the LGBTQI+ causes of the world where we live and work and being recognized this globally and although Pride may look different this year and we will hear more about Pride and especially after this one, Bloomberg is encouraged by the unity and strengthen of a community of LGBTQI colleagues and friends and for those who identify as part of the community, these moments reflect on the progress made and be part of the continued movement for great inclusion and equality.

And Bloomberg supports LGBTQI+ causes and the company's LGBTQI+ employees has always come from Bloomberg leaders down to the organization, to our employees groups and has supported our system policies and benefits and implemented by engagement in communities in which we operate in partnership with Bloomberg philanthropy. Now if I can introduce a distinguished panel today, beginning with Peggy Antonakou, who's based in Athens she's a General Manager for Google in Southeast Europe, and she was previously CEO of Microsoft Greece, Cyprus and Malta. And in 2017 Peggy was honored as "Woman of the year" in the category "Manager" at the BEAUTE magazine award ceremony for her contributions during 2016.

Haris Broumidis, is an international business leader of a proven track record in building and managing a high performing organization in the telecommunication and MSDG sector and since 2002 has worked for Vodafone and is currently a Chairman and CEO of Vodafone Greece. And has also held other senior positions at the company including CEO of Vodafone Albania, commercial director for Europe in Vodafone group and CEO of Vodafone Ghana.

Theodosis Michalopoulos, has as strong, long successful career in the technology industry including Microsoft and as another CEO for Microsoft of Greece, Cyprus & Malta. Previously enterprise business and public sector are to refer to the same market, Microsoft credits him for overseeing significant commercial success in his country.

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Nieves Delgado, joined IBM in 1998, and is IBM's Vice President of Enterprise Sales and previous positions she held at the company include head of systems of the technology groups for Spain, Portugal, Greece, Israel and Turkey. And since 2018, she's responsible for the business partnership between IBM and Spain's Kutxabank.

Vassilios Psaltis, joined Greece's Alpha Bank in 2007 and has held the position of Chief Financial Manager and General Manager since January, since 2009 is Alpha Bank Chief Executive officer and last year he was also voted best CEO in Greece by institutional investors analysis in the EXPO International survey.

Irene Nikolopoulou, is currently the Co-chief Executive Officer of Wunderman Thompson Greece and Vice President of the board, she's successfully alleviated this transition in Greece following the global merger of Wunderman Thompson and really is a long term advocate for gender equality and diversity European networking to help, and empower women to break through in the creative and business industry in a country unfortunately with a very low level women executives.

If I could start off with the first question, to Peggy, you might get this question asked a lot but you're a person, woman in a very serious position, high-level position and you've also worked in Microsoft, what do you think is your relationship between general equality, LGBTQI equality, how do you think we could improve on this in Greece and what do you think the situation, in general, is in Greece today?

ANTONAKOU: Thank you so much for inviting me to be part of this esteemed panel, it's truly a pleasure and an honor to be part of this discussion and I'm very pleased that this is part of the agenda in Greece these days.

I would start by saying that the business case for diversity has been made a long time ago and it still stands and I would even dare to say that in crisis right now when diversity someone would say, would be at risk, because the company is in a way now shifted the resources and the focus on managing the crisis so inclusion and diversity could be at risk but I think that are more critical now for business recovery resilience and imagination, so it's really important that we have a business discussion even now in the context of the post Covid era.

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Now, women are in the middle of a big transformation as the businesses are going through big transformation and they need to be skilled and mobile and be able to adapt to this new world so technology can play a big role in this and talking specifically about Google, Google's mission is to organize a watch information and make it universally accessible and useful and to do that you need to represent everyone. And to do that you need to have a work that represents everyone so this is a clear conscious effort that the company's is making to do that as you mentioned I've only joined Google recently a few months ago, I was very impressed to find out that Google issued the first diversity report in 2014 so quite some time ago and a lot has changed in the past six years, there has been a lot of progress the underrepresented groups have been growing faster than the growth of the company so they have a high representation. Still if I look at the numbers, if I look at specifically a general presentation 32% of the workforce are women and of these women of a total workforce 26,7% are in the senior leadership positions so I would say this is still working progress, there's plenty to be done, it's really important that we will stay conscious about this, we continue to focus and going to your question about Greece, what is the situation in Greece and me being one of the few women that are in positions like this, of course it's by now I'm used to being the only female in panels, in discussions, in meetings and I can tell you that this is something that I wouldn't see change, in a sense you know, you feel a little bit privileged, you feel that you 've done something right to be there, but that's not necessarily the case, this is about opportunity, this is about inclusiveness, and this is also about personal responsibility. This is something that in total we need the industry the business, the Government, the NGOs but also the personal responsibility of each one of us to change this.

In multinationals like the ones that I'm part of, we take a specific training that is called an unconscious bias training, I think it would a fantastic idea if every employee even of the Government would take this training eventually, of every company because we are people, we are human beings and potentially we could have unconscious bias, so it's really important that diversity is one thing, how you get representation from groups or, not just gender, there's a whole list of things, it's a long list but I think it's worth mentioning, there's race, there's ethnicity, there's social background, there's religion, there's age, disability,

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sexual orientation, national origin the list could go on top of gender, so there's a question of not only how you put KPIs and how you get representation for each one of them, but also how you're being inclusive, that's why it's not just only called diversity but also inclusiveness.

And inclusivity is based on policy and how you make sure that the system becomes more inclusive but also how do each one of us become more inclusive in our everyday lives and in our everyday interactions. How do we come allies for the underrepresented groups, how we are not biased others on things that we see that needs to change, so I think this is an invitation and this discussion today is an invitation for each one of us to take action individually?

MODERATOR: Question for Haris, on Vodafone Greece's website there's a message when you are yourself your energy and inspiration are multiplied and the site shows how Vodafone has created an LGBTQI+ network for employees and community, for Vodafone how does the company's prosperity come through diversity and what does that mean for you as a CEO.

BROUMIDIS: Good afternoon everyone, I'm really glad to be here today and share my own experience in the experience that we have in Vodafone in driving a diversity and inclusion agenda.

The first point I want to establish is that when we talk about diversity and inclusion it's not just about fairness is not about just respecting the human rights but at the end of the day it's not just about democracy, in Vodafone we have a fundamental belief, and the fundamental belief is that when we drive an inclusive environment, when we drive a diverse environment, eventually we will become a better company a better organization and eventually we're going to have better results at the end of the day.

There are many studies that indicate that the more the companies diverse than inclusive the better the returns for shareholders for people for customers.

And if you ask why this is happening I think it's quite easy to narrate and quite easy to understand, first our customers out there, the society practically is diverse, is different, our stakeholders out there are different, customers are different so we need to mirror this diversity in our internal operations and environment because if we do that, we're going to have higher probability of making better products of taking better decisions, because every day we're trying to make decisions that are complex, the more angles we have in trying

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to identify a challenge and trying to find a way to proceed, diversity does really help and this is fundamental.

The second that we all agree I think, everybody agrees on that, when you feel good, in the workplace, the better you perform, the more you feel free in your environment, the more motivated you are. So fundamentally being yourself in the workplace, delivers better performance, better results.

And the third one is about when we fight discrimination, then we expand our horizons and empower our talent pool. Because when you discriminate, you restrict your ability to retain and to attract good people so for these three reasons I think we have to agree on this fundamental belief that yes, driving diversity and inclusion will eventually bring better results.

I'm proud because in Vodafone it's not just us preaching about those beliefs it's not about putting wallpapers but we have driven a culture where diversity and inclusion is organically adapted and adopted in that culture. It requires sponsors, I truly believe that sponsoring comes across the organization but it's fundamental for the CEO for the senior leadership team to be there and champion this idea which is not only about human rights it's far more beyond that about driving effective organizations. Over to you Paul.

MODERATOR: Thank you. Theodosis, Microsoft has a strong stand going back years on diversity globally and in 2020 this year and last year in 2019 Microsoft received a 100th stand rating in the corporate equality index of the human rights campaign foundation and that's based in the US and it rates the workplaces of US companies, including Fortune 500 companies, on their LGBTQI equality.

And interestingly the results of the latest survey were presented at the world economic forum in Davos which shows the importance being ... by businesses. Given the strong record, the strong tech-record of Microsoft why is this stand important from a business perspective in Microsoft and how the office in Greece, here in Greece, compared to other offices of Microsoft around the world.

MICHALOPOULOS: Hi Paul and thank you for being part of this panel, I have to admit that speaking after Vodafone and after Peggy, I have worked for both, and actually with Peggy I learned a lot about the women leadership, so getting back into your questions.

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So, Satya, our CEO said that if we're going to serve the planet as our mission states, we need first of all to reflect the planet and we need to do that from all kind of business perspectives from product design, marketing, communication, all of the aspects that we need to align with diversity principles. And as Hari said, when your employees feel free to express themselves then their talent, their productivity, their passion and their potentials thrive so there is a clear correlation on the business outcast.

On top, apart from, it's proven that diverse teams increase the engagement index which is so important in today's business world but on top it reduces the turn over cost which in technology for example this is a huge issue today. So it makes sense businesswise.

As part of Microsoft and as you said, I would like to state an example that comes from a neighboring country, in a country near us, we had an example of someone that joined Microsoft and actually came out while he was in Microsoft, in the business world but most interestingly he actually came out fully also in the social life because exactly he felt so belonging in the business which is also a difficult place to come out. And actually, he is leading our partner ecosystem business and he's doing that very effectively and also the rest of the team is very engaged, so what a better example to understand there is value on that and we need to focus on that more.

On your question about Greece, we have started 1,5 years ago focusing very much on this topic as well, we have worked on establishing the chapter and we have initiated various activities in order to create awareness and actually we have a list of allies that are supporting this cause and I think we have a good future in front of us.

MODERATOR: Thank you very much. Now if we could, for the last two questions ... IBM of course is another company with a lot history of developing diversity and as far back as 1984 I believe IBM incorporates its sexual orientation into its nondiscrimination policy.

What other best practices can you share with us, for your role in IBM?

DELGADO: Good day to all of you, first of all thank you for inviting IBM on inviting myself to take part of this panel, I think and I also congratulate you because the quality of all the speakers has been fantastic. My role as you said, I have a lot of business responsibilities but for many years, more than ten,

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again, as well as the LGBTQI+ executive sponsored for the market with I operate which is Spain, Portugal, Greece and Israel. So, you know, this like another, my second job that I have carried for many years and I'm very proud to have been done and I'm a queer she/hers person just making a point on gender identity which is very important these days.

Look, on the heritage of IBM all of the companies before me, I mean, large corporations I think all of them show best practices possibly many of what we do, we share and we all do similar things, I think you know, we are at 109 years old company so to save to IBM is how we have managed to brainbend ourselves many times but this point of the equal rights, not only LGBTQI but across the board, all the different equality points is been in the company since very early, we hired the first black person and woman in 1899. In 1935 we announced that women could have not only a job but the same career paths than men, that was a million step forward for the advancement of women in the company.

In 1953, our CEO, announced an equal pay regardless of breed, race, gender. That was another milestone. And as you said, in 1984 we added this policy, the sexual orientation and in 2002 the gender identity, so I hope we have contributed a little bit to this healthiness of corporate policies around diversity. Best practices and many of them have been sent as well, we need to believe that is a business case, and it's proven and in business like IT where we need to have such a good talent and we need to be at the frontier of innovation, this is not possible without the diverse policy for recruiting and retaining and talking to your customers so that's one that is done.

The other one that is very important I think is a sponsorship from the top, the kind of role I have, try to put together the top executive management with the local communities, and insure that we foster an environment that is safe and that is good for the people so the local businesses or groups can flourish, that's what we like, in Greece in fact we have in the last year, the business group has done a lot of initiatives was for example the first corporate company to participate in Pride and also to have this policy, a non-discrimination policy.

Sometimes I feel all of this that we do that are of course involves mentoring, it involves no tolerance, zero tolerance for our managers and our leaders regarding these points. I understand that this is sometimes not so easy to

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execute for a smaller companies and I think part of the objective of the conference was how to create this new culture, this transformation for the Greek companies and this is something that is, we have more resources because we are larger and for some companies this is more difficult, I would say one of this best practices is a sponsorship from the top. I mean you need to be leaded, you need to walk the talk and you need to live by example and then the rest of the practices and the things can go together and collaboration, collaboration with other companies, and with other enterprises and with other regions in the economy.

MODERATOR: Thank you. Now for the turn to Vasilios who is in slightly more different position as you are the only purely Greek company represented on the panel and what's more, you're the CEO of a bank which generally is seen as the conservative organization and you operate in Greece, but it still attaches importance to the subtle conditional value. Why do you think Greece is still behind when it comes to diversity rights in a workplace and what you're doing as a bank to develop such rights for your employees?

PSALTIS: Well Paul thank you very much and good afternoon to everyone, we're sitting at a panel surrounded or represented for major technology companies and coming forward in representing a bank [...] the one that argue has been the epitome of conservative and prudent thinking but I believe at least there are couple of things which I share with my co-panelists. On the one hand, it is the desire to provide all the services to our customers and on the other hand through co-recourses, responsibility projects and continuous development of our world culture it is actually to provide a working environment that is characterized by tolerance, equal opportunities and diversity. An environment that recognizes talent and attracts the best regardless of beliefs, choices and origins and this I would think is probably the reason why all of a sudden, this panel today.

Now, one might argue that Greece has been left behind in terms of diversity issues. I would argue that the Greek society is changing, it is becoming more open, diverse, more tolerant.

Alpha Bank as one of the oldest in Greece in the cooperate space has been very successfully accompanying Greeks in the financial needs that are needed and they have successfully doing that because it has one cooperate secret that

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we keep and this is to be open to change, this was too also as far as diversity is concerned. This starts from the very top.

The bank is stipulated in its group of effort in its group of Government statement and its cooperated responsibility report, a big commitment in its diversity policy which has been endured by its group of directors which interestingly enough actually it comprises mostly by non-Greeks.

Diversity in normalness is the way that people are both different and similar and it has many dimensions that intersect in a variety of way. However, it's not just enough to reflect diversity, because of the conclusion, which really unlocks the true value of organization's diversity.

If one looks specifically what we're doing here at Alpha Bank, let me go one by one very briefly on mentioning what we're doing in a number of diversities of identity factors, being gender, age, disability, education, sexual orientation.

Now starting all with gender equality, I can happily say that we've made a lot of progress with that. Actually today, 55% of our employees are women, but we have also gone beyond the numbers. We are promoting women's empowerment, the non-discrimination policy on salaries, on promotions and on opportunities.

We're extremely generous also policies as far as maternity is concerned. This is covering completely related cost and childcare up to the age of 6. And on top of that, we have started also breaking the glass ceiling. Since I took over a CEO last year, I've proposed to the group of directors and they have accepted to bring in or to promote three more women in the senior leadership team so we have increased their participation from 6% into 25% in our leadership team right now and this is also one of the many reasons that they have included as for the second consecutive year the Bloomberg gender equality index.

Now moving on to age discrimination, we have embraced a non-discrimination age policy, since we believe that every age has a lot to contribute. We do care about people that are middle aged and above and they actually constitute 20% of our workforce, we have honored also people that no longer been there, we have an eco-system that includes also pensioners and keeps them close to us. In addition, for our people with disabilities, we have developed a special inclusion policies and practices with the 2% of our employees and we are trying to capitalize on their talents as well. From education we are systematically

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supporting members of the Greek society, who are facing difficulties, covering full their tuition fees and giving them the opportunity to use their talents and we do that without any condition, discrimination or restrictions.

Furthermore, we are also promoting innovation in our organization by organizing annually a special challenge given that this manner allows people that are outside of the hierarchical which is a more rigid way of promoting coming forward with their ideas.

Now let me have a few words also on corporate diversity which is diversity in thoughts, ideas and perspectives, that is something which does not lend itself to tolerance but it's no less important.

Research we understand shows that our older policy on diversity as an issue of representation of fairness while its millennials tend to view only the diversity as essential for a diverse and inclusive organization. The power of diversity in our workplace, is the power which will harvest to be more inclusive and collaborative for our people will feel empowered to be open about who they are. The need to remove prejudice and practices to prevent the people from proving their worth, and achieving maximum potential is important to us. However, there is no doubt that we must broaden the scope of our diversity and inclusion policy. For example, issues of sexual orientation and responding to the needs of the members of the LGBT community and certain ideas that we need to further develop. Through that, we will also follow in closely what other more mature organizations or mature banks are doing in this field.

I therefore see my participation in this channel as an opportunity to reflect upon our achievements and goals on how we want to be in the future. I also see as a very good occasion to underpin [...] and not hesitate to take the necessary steps to further enhance this diversion in any inclusion policies.

MODERATOR: Thank you Vasilios. If I can stand up to Irene, in 2019, Wunderman Thompson in the UK and I pledged to support LGBTQI employees focusing on inclusion within its culture policies and infrastructure with 6 pledges. Is that something that can be done in Greece at one assumption and the country in general can happen given that in Greece most companies are not corporate, they are SMEs.

NIKOLOPOULOU: Thank you Paul, happy to be part of this important conference and part of this panel. Yes, as you mentioned Wunderman

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Thompson in the UK launched the last year, a new diversity initiative with six pledges. In partnership with LGBTQI charity the Stonewall organization which is the largest organization for LGBTQI rights in Europe. The new Wunderman Thompson includes a University strategy, sees the business embark upon an ambitious program to review culture and policies and to ensure each and every one of our employees feel valued included of the day regardless of their background gender or sexuality. Why we are doing this, because we believe that LGBTQI issues shouldn't be something we pay service to once a year around Pride month so at Wunderman Thompson we are committed to bring a catalyst for change and this change must be holistic, sustainable and long term. So around this commitment we have built as a global network our inclusion and diversity strategy and our principles with a number of initiatives in place so answering to your question, yes at your local agency of Wunderman Thompson is asked to apply the strategy and these initiatives and yes Wunderman Thompson Greece is going to apply this also.

So it's not a matter of company size, UK office will employ 600 people while in Greece 150. So what it is important is the commitment from leadership, accountability and the Government structure and of course a plan.

This strategy includes, provides first of all that we will have a global inclusion of diversity office and we're also setting up inclusion ports at global and local level, we also introduce the new initiative called "Safe room" which it covers a series of initiatives that provide the forum and that right now starting from the states all this that they're experiencing it's a process that will enable people to share thoughts, fears and reactions that discuss actions and also includes a platform where people can share their fears and concerns keeping and protecting the anonymity which is very important to know that people encourage to speak freely. So in relations to the other person who said if we can apply this as a country, yes I believe we can do this as a country, actually in the Stonewall list in the top 100 employers in UK there are already 9 city and country councils, the ministry of justice, the home office, the house of lords and the Government legal department, yes there are in place processes and consultants that can help countries to achieve this but the first step I believe to be taken is to acknowledge that even in 2020 there's problem and it's a systemic one and that it will remain so unless we face it and deal with it and empowering a positive

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system of change. 2020 will be remembered by two major events, the health crisis and the crisis in human rights so, the moment we expect that it is not just about racism or inequality but it is about human rights, then we will have ignited this change and really we're very proud that our Government in Greece has done exactly this. Thank you over to you.

MODERATOR: Thank you Irene, Peggy at Google you have a chief diversity officer and in your company 2020 annual diversity report she said that Google made the workforce more representative of the users and a workplace that creates a sense of belonging for everyone. Why is that important to Google and can you apply that position to Greece?

ANTONAKOU: I mentioned earlier this report and I think the word transparency is really important here, I think it's really important that we measure what we want to achieve, we are transparent about the situation that we're facing and how and if we are improving it and going back to the point of transparency and making commitments there has been recently very much on top the case for the racial crisis based on the "Black lives matter" movement and Bloomberg CEO made the commitment about an equity program office so this is just on top of the diversity report and what I will say is that the transparency piece is important because we need a society of companies and a business community where things are visible.

I was reading yesterday the fact that NASA is naming their headquarters after the "Hidden Figures" movie we have seen it, out of Mary Jackson she was the main character in the movie, and if you think about it, the term hidden figures is the exact opposite of transparency. And if I may take the liberty to refer to Mr. Alex Patelis that was earlier in one of the panels, it was mentioned that he recently gave an interview where, if I'm quoting him correctly and Mr. Patelis forgive me if I forget some words, but I thought it was really striking what he said that in Greece we don't have really the symbol of the figure of what it means to be gay and successful, gay and a soccer player or a middle aged lesbian in a village in Greece, we don't have that figure. We don't have that vision so it's really important that transparency is there, that we have role models, we see these figures and they're not hidden, so that is one thing, transparency is in one hand and this working progress. Diversity of course has different dimensions in different countries you know, depending on where you

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are there are different issues that need to be inclusive about, but I would say that the most important thing is that also we create measurement and we provide commitments so you know, what is the commitment in Greece for example from an industry prospective just to use an example, a general Council of SEV was recently announced 10 out of 90 were women, as opportunity for improvement is there a commitment on that one, is there a commitment to include more women in the Government? I have to say that I'm very happy and proud to have the first female president in Greece, I think this is a clear you know, a clear figure that is not hidden anymore is there for us to still inspire, education place, fantastic all in this one. If you can visualize can the mask appear at the bottom you would have the educational system, the support system, childcare for example for females and then you have employment and then you have meaningful employment and then you have the general purpose. So if I could summarize it, I'd say transparency, this is what this diversity report, you know, is there to do to make sure that we stay true to the focus, we measure, we commit, we deliver and we do it in a very transparent way as also to inspire and motivate others and then commitment to make sure that we get there. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you Peggy, Haris given that Vodafone has a LGBTQI+ employee network, how does that work in factors, especially here in Greece, are your employees comfortable when making done their identity, how do you translate into the higher prospect and do you have any education programs or processes within the company for other employees who are non LGBTQI to show against possible harassment or discrimination or basic abuse understanding.

BROUMIDIS: Yes, indeed in Vodafone Greece we have a very vibrant, active and extremely enthusiastic network of more than 250 people LGBTQI+ network and friends that basically the purpose of that network of LGBTQI and friends, is to connect and to support our people and influence also our culture when it comes to diversity and inclusion things. Obviously people are free to declare or not their identity and on the other hand belonging to this network, internal network in Vodafone Greece, does not imply anything in respect to sexual orientation and we have done quite of a journey in having this network in Vodafone Greece in the last few years but more importantly is to brake some

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of the stereotypes and creating a culture which is more open and more tolerating.

Now when it comes to your question regarding hiring, of course, we do all the right things as I'm sure many other companies are doing as well. So we have changed the way we raise questions you know in the hiring process, we make sure that we avoid any questions that can intimidate people when it comes to any kind of diversity and of course we talk a lot because we want to be an attractive employer, we talk a lot about our culture, our values, what we do in having people express themselves in the workplace.

But again this is the base line, these are the right things that all companies they should be doing again, when it comes to hiring but not just hiring, when it comes to hiring, to promotions, to identifying potential of the people, even when do performance management, we need to establish the notion on our people that being different is a plus and not a minus. And if we reach that level of being different because I was talking before, why it is a plus, then we can be more optimistic about all of our processes hiring, promotions, potential, performance evaluation.

Training again, with all the right things I want to mention just two areas that we focus on, we train a lot our frontline people, the people that come in close contact with our customers, in both retail and customer operations and we train them to the whole spectrum of diversity and inclusion parameters that they need to be aware of in order to treat and serve our customers better and we have a lot of content in what we call Vodafone University and internal education platform with a lot of content speaking about the diversity.

I want to close by saying something that has been raised by many speakers up to now, I think all of us in this panel, we need to accept, even us, that we do have very many biases that we are unconscious about. So this is fundamental because unconscious bias is what I believe is the next level of driving a real and pragmatic diversity agenda in any organization.

In Vodafone all of our leaders, have gone through a seminar workshop, training exercise, and during this exercise - I have been through this two times - and in that particular exercise you understand, you may preach about diversity but at the end of the day, what is in the surface is not what is happening underneath.

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MODERATOR: Theodosia at Microsoft you have an employee resource group for LGBTQI+ employees called GLEAM, one of the roles of GLEAM I believe is help attract the talent and develop LGBTQI people, can you tell how GLEAM applies within the company and how Microsoft uses it to attract and keep LGBTQI+ employees and does GLEAM apply in Greece?

MICHALOPOULOS: Yes, so GLEAM first of all stands for Gay and Lesbian Employees at Microsoft, but apparently there is place for all sexual and gender minorities. We have been trying for a lot of years to build awareness and moving people from apathy to advocacy.

And we do that with events, newsletters, training programs, and also we are honoring the Pride which is this month, virtual this year, to donate and we are donating 250 [...] specific NGOs around Pride that the GLEAM members select. So what we are doing in Greece, as I told you we started the community one and a half years ago and as always, we start with simple things. Most of us we first of all had the curiosity to learn and so we started with what LGBTQI stands for, and what are the different flags representing and slowly we moved to the next steps and I feel all the people today in the panel it seems that there's so many things other companies doing around LGBTQI that probably it's the right time to work closer together, and probably address for me the biggest issue that is in education.

Personally raising in Greece and seeing what happens in education is probably the one place that we need to make a difference and as an example of what we do currently in Microsoft in Greece earlier this week we had one of the founders of Pride Greece and he was talking to the full employees about how we can together bring change and I'm confident that this kind of activities will attract and retain LGBTQI employees for us.

And as a closure, I think that one of the interesting things that I'm always reflecting on is that if we are not actively included then probably we are excluded. Back to you Paul.

MODERATOR: Thank you Theodosia, Nieves, now you're spread around the world as a company that is very well known and given that you operate in different countries, I'm assuming that those countries are in different pages of including LGBTQI equality in the workplace, what challenges, or problems or issues do you face around the world, what do you do to overcome them, given

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the differences between different countries? And what advice would you give to a country like Greece?

DELGADO: Okay, yes there are a lot of issues around the globe on this because it started from the legal environment is extremely different in many countries, let's not forget I am coming back to the human rights point that in some countries being gay, lesbian is penalty of death, this is massive.

So yes, we face issues safety of employees always come first but we manage this in having a very clear global strategy and making it local in every country making it local execution that is why it's so important that all executives in the company, the local executives support all the business resource groups.

There is one thing I think that has been a lot of advancing in Greece and a lot of it has been shared in this conference but my advice is where were the diversity networks, I think we have had a lot of good experiences in Spain working with the diversity networks, learning about the issues, seeing diversity and inclusion as an opportunity for transformation and in doing this you can raise businesses schools we have a very successful story in Spain with the institute of Empresa, you can embrace public sector which is a large employer in Greece, and all the networking we can do within companies, we create an environment for transformation and we'll ensure that even respecting the global policies you still are grounded in the real issues and possibilities in the country and in this advancement and for IBM we would be more than happy of participating in any of these initiatives in Greece.

MODERATOR: Thank you Nieves. Vasilios, in your previous answer you mentioned how you stated how the Greek society is changing and is more welcoming of diversity, I'm just wondering whether you as a bank at any point you would ever consider a specific mapping campaign to product services to members of LGBTQI community, I think some of that's done sometimes outside of Greece but for example what's your policy if a same sex couple walks into one of your branches asking for mortgage, are you treating the same way as a man-woman couple?

PSALTIS: On further there is a general close of non-discrimination in our constitution, in general there has been a delay in the recognition of LGBTQI rights in Greece, however delays in the recognition of LGBTQI rights in the workplace, I think this is a global observation. And we have seen this supreme

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court of the US that recognized sexual orientation and gender identity as a non acceptable basis of discrimination for workplace just a few weeks ago and that just because when it comes to discrimination, there is not only a matter of legislation, but is a matter of social understanding and we have to be honest, there is a significant part in the Greek public opinion that remains skeptical towards diversity and especially LGBTQI rights. Therefore, I strongly believe that our try for change should not be guided through the bad marketing initiatives, it is principally a matter of equality, social and civil rights for all our customers.

Our main goal is to empower employees, by promoting diversity, creating collaborative supportive and respectful environment that increases participation and contribution of all employees. The inclusion removes all barriers, discrimination and intolerance and when applied properly in the workplace it is natural for everyone to feel included and supported.

And you're right, there is a win-win situation. Employees, on the one hand, they will feel safer to bring their whole self at work, feeling more valued, companies win as the employees spend their energy in being constructive, innovative and not trying to hide who they are, and as a result society becomes more progressive as employees become more open minded as persons and as citizens outside of a working part.

Now, coming back to your question regarding products and mortgages for example, as you know the civil union between two persons of the same sex has been only recently adopted here. So yes, we do offer not only mortgage loan but practically all of our services to all of our customers. But there is a lot to be done. I acknowledge that this is not just the matter of legislation and the relevant framework, it is above all, a matter of culture and daily practice and in this sense our first priority is to cultivate this new culture. The means achieving these goals can be developed by updating our diversity and inclusion program, while the initiatives presenters by an improvement of my co-panelist when speaking about the diversity inclusion progress there are crucial in inspiring companies like ours but by nature are more pragmatic walking towards the future with smaller and rather steady steps.

We're examining the possibility of adopting some of the best practices followed by banks but also some of my fellow peers that have been mentioned here

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before. Raising awareness and engagement towards diversity inclusion by educating our employees on how to work with people from different backgrounds and helping them see them with their eyes someone from a different age, gender, race, sexual orientation, then is the introduction of unconscious bias that is indeed a very important element.

Creating on top of that an independent complaint mechanism which will example allegation of discrimination is also something which is important and finally launch a diversity inclusion all in compass improvement aiming attacking discrimination at the workplace and empowering the diversity of our own employees including LGBTQI community is important as well.

So diversity should become an integral part of the whole value chain of our banking process but on top of that, Hari mentioned that also before, as well as in recruitment performance in leadership assessments and also training procedures.

Our goal should be that in the years to come, Alpha Bank will have a workplace equally diverse if not more than any other of a Greek banking peers.

We believe that if we get the diversity and inclusion right in the workplace so that everyone can be themselves will get it right with the rest of our stakeholders as well. Back to you Paul.

MODERATOR: Thank you Vasilios. Irene, once a company has taken steps to introduce inclusion policies, what they need to do once they're implied to ensure to legit visions to suspend diversity and human rights in the workplace? What needs to be put in place to ensure that the guidelines have been followed?

NIKOLOPOULOU: I believe that what is needed is to establish a set of diversity targets to work towards to and also auditing the measuring results because what is happening right now is, we have targets at least in a global level like women to hold 40% of some of the positions, in Greece we walk the talk with this percentage, it's 50% with women in senior positions, also Wunderman Thompson is being always a strong advocate for women who can ... programs and training, the other target is to have at least 15% of people in leadership positions to be from non-white backgrounds and at least 25% of entry level recruits to be of black Asian minority ethnicity backgrounds. We need to also to set target for LGBTQI community and obviously we have more to do on this area. And I also talked about measuring results, why? Because what it gets

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measured gets done. Just by sticking a quick fix we become tokenistic or a thick box exercise. It's much more than putting a logo on our website during the Pride month or posting on our Instagram account, we need to create sustainable change by setting achievable and measurable long-term targets for each organization. And organization should set up Governments, to track this progress, hold themselves accountable and building objectives for inclusion and diversity at all levels, that's the only way and we also need specialist knowledge, we cannot do that alone, and we need someone to help us on this side, so we need help from independent networks like Stonewall for instance or other to help us as organizations and as countries and businesses to invent diversity and change and finally, because I'm coming from the communications, I have to say, we need more brave brands through communication we can affect change we can start social dialogue, we can change old stereotypes via communication, build new ones and they reflect better in a just way today's reality and inspire people so we have seen many brands following this, it's a good thing but we need more, we can be the change and one last thing if I may, I would like to send a message to the LGBT community, please continue to speak up and we will continue to listen and act because we believe LGBT lives matter. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you very much Irene and indeed thank you very much to all our speakers this afternoon for extremely interesting discussion, unfortunately, we've reached our time limit, but thank you all again, and we have implemented a lot of stuff today indeed. For our listeners and watchers please stay with us for the next session which is on Guaranteeing a Safe and Enabling Civil Society for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights. Thank you very much.

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MODERATOR: Hello and welcome to the third discussion panel today's conference human rights in business. I am Dimitris Theodoropoulos, Culture & Strategy Advisor of the Onassis Foundation and is efficient that if I can sum up our mission, in a nutshell, is that it creates the conditions, explore the ideas, and trigger spot discussions that create a safe society. So I think we're in the right place.

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Today I'm honored to moderate the panel with the title "Guaranteeing a Safe and Enabling Civil Society for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights." As you might have understood from the way 2020 is unfolding, we live in interesting times which is not always good. It may seem as a blessing but the expression is used ironically as a curse, life sometimes is better in uninteresting times, but is it really? We live in times where freedom of expression, information, thought and belief are struggling. In an era where surveillance, online monitoring and data collection is a challenging reality. We live in times where populism, racism, discrimination are a disturbing reality. But at the same time, we live in times where more than ever, these problems cannot be ignored anymore, we live in time where the Black Lives Matter, and the LGBTQI movement are not an exception, but a strong loud reality that pushes for essential reforms. On this panel we'll talk about the new tools that we need in order to support human equality and dignity, we will discuss about the visibility and the quality of humans without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, sex, gender identity or expression, sex orientation, disability and Aids.

We will try to find ways on how to better contribute to the cultivation of the diverse culture in all aspects of private and public life.

I would like to introduce the panelists that today will discuss views from their respective fields and suggest possible future practical collaborations and initiatives to enhance the equal rights agenda.

Today we have with us Kristine Garina, the President European Pride Organizers Association, Evangelos Chouliaras, the organizer of Thessaloniki Pride, Lars Henriksen, the Chair of Copenhagen Pride, Salah Hussein, from Business for Social Responsibility, Fabrice Houdart, Managing Director for Global Equality Initiatives and Out Leadership and Dr. Andreas I. Pottakis, The Greek Ombudsman.

Before we start the conversation, we would like to hear the message that Marcus Beyrer, the Director of General Business Europe has already sent to us for today's subject.

BEYRER: My name is Marcus Beyrer and I'm the Director of General Business Europe, the voice of European business at European level. We are all hit by the

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deepest crisis since the last World War and it's important that we come out of it rapidly without scarring the overall society and our economic fabric.

Business Europe, therefore, very much supports an ambitious recovery package. Because we need to come out of this crisis rapidly and we need to show solidarity. We need an ambitious investment package to kick start our economy and there's no time to waste. But we also need ambitious structure reforms, because only this will bring us aboard convergence across our continent so we need to link this investment offensive to the right structural reforms.

Specifically, in the labor markets. And the right labor market reforms will also be the basis for inclusive labor markets. And business Europe and all its members, support, inclusiveness in labor markets. And we also support and encourage all our member companies to take advantage of all the talents available in global markets, irrespective of their gender, of their race, of their sexual orientation or their religion, which is very important.

I wish you a very interesting and successful conference.

MODERATOR: So we heard the message that Mark Beyrer, Director of General Business Europe has already sent. It was very interesting and now I would like to start our first round of questions, I would like to start with Mrs. Kristine Garina, the President of the European Pride Organizers Association.

Hello, I would like for the first question to be, what is the landscape for LGBTQI rights in the workplace across Europe today and how can countries that are kind of behind, of a spectrum, probably also Greece, can learn from those countries with greater equality.

GARINA: Yes, thank you for your question. First of all, thank you for having me and my colleagues here. I'm very glad to be able to take part in this. If we talk about Europe, in general, as was many things in Europe I think we're still quite ... in LGBTQI rights and in human rights in general.

We all know there is a directive in place, for more than ten years already, that prohibits discrimination at workplace. But that is pretty straightforward; it prohibits unfair treatment based on sexual orientation in many ways and unlike other areas of rights, workplace and employment, it is ahead in terms of European wide approach of how we need to deal with that. But what it means

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for LGBTQI people in different parts of Europe is a completely different story and it's already been mentioned in the previous panel that legislation isn't everything. If people are not out, if people find themselves in homophobic environments, also if social acceptance towards LGBTQI people is low, then people are extremely hesitant to use the laws that are in place to protect them. And in some cases, it's even difficult to recognize discrimination, to report it, because we're so used to it and take it as normal, that you're, I don't know, skipped for promotion or you're a target of office jokes. So, as long as other people in companies and workplaces are accepting it and considering it normal usual practice, it is extremely difficult for LGBTQI colleagues to come forward and fight this.

We see this everywhere in Europe -to different extents of course- but the more advanced LGBTQI acceptance is in the society, the better access there is to actually using the protections that we have in place. So to me, I think the solution is obvious: it's just changing the hearts and minds of the majority of the society and I know it's not an easy task but sadly the latest cross survey showed we are not doing great on LGBTQI people still feeling unsafe in big part of Europe. Here I see a big role for business, committing back to the theme of the conference, it's a big role for management, for leadership and mentorship, because same as with politicians, business leaders are also more, have more influence on society's opinions and maybe other people. And encouraging and supporting LGBTQI employees and making sure that they can talk about their concerns and not taking it for granted that everything is fine just cause your employees are not telling you, but actually actively seeking open communication and obviously creating an environment that would promote that open communication. There are almost always some issues and if no one's telling you anything that may be a sign of a bigger problem rather than success, so I see there's a big role for business, a duty to actually make sure that LGBTQI employees feel like they can raise their concerns, and building their environment to where other colleagues would not accept any kind of discrimination bullying based on sexual orientation. It is sadly still a European right problem that directly corresponds this attitude towards LGBTQI people in general.

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MODERATOR: Thank you Kristine, I really think that this should be an easy equation about we said that how would change people's minds, unfortunately it's not that easy, I really hope we're contributing through this conference also. I would like to ask Mr. Chouliara, Evangelos Chouliaras who is a business group, Thessaloniki Pride, like to raise the next question.

Mr. Chouliaras, if things were different and we didn't have to face the Covid-19 challenge, Europe Pride 2020 would have been held ... and probably would have met in person but it's not. Can you tell us what you see about the role of Pride globally and also in particularly as related to Greece being part of the Balkans?

CHOULIARAS: Thank you Mr. Theodoropoulos and thank you for having me in the conference. Well, as Mr. Patelis has said earlier and I partially agree that in Greece we don't have many diverse figures in the public sphere, I think this summarizes best the role of the Pride movement in the Balkans and in Greece and its whole purpose. Actually, Pride is the realization of the right of the LGBTQI+ people to go out in public space and take part in public discourse with this identity of theirs. Therefore, Pride is at first place visibility to make the society accustomed to same sex relations and non-heteronormative gender expressions.

The LGBTQI+ community gets the floor to show that being different is not at all bad or shameful and through that to advocate for our rights. You know, Southwest Europe and especially the Balkans are often considered still in the same context with all the connotations of the past. The region specialist since the 1990s has been associated with animosities, instability and hatred inflicted disputes.

With regard to LGBTQI issues it has been perceived to as being a hostile environment to sexual and gender diversity lacking behind the European average and heavily affected by the influence of conservatism, homophobia and transphobia. LGBTQI people in Greece and in the Balkans have by and large the same needs and face the same prejudice as in the rest of Europe if not the world. In this world connected with the European movement and many times it is leading it. As a region it constitutes one of the focal points of the

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movement as it is reflected by the decision of the board members to allocate Europe Pride 2020 to Thessaloniki.

In particular, the role of Pride in Greece as well as in the entire Balkan region is to show to people that the LGBTQI+ issues are not an imported thing from the West, it's part of our tradition, it's marked our culture, it existed throughout our history. Contrary to the widespread beliefs that it's a new trend.

And this is one of the few of the reasons of, why we have the vision to create ... actually, because we want to show to the people that support to the Balkan LGBTQI+ community comes from within the region not only from the far away fellow Europeans or Americans, who are perceived to be somewhat different. Back to you Mr. Theodoropoulos. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you Mr. Chouliaras, very interesting talent and we hope we will see you soon in Balkan Pride. I would like to address the next question to Mr. Lars Henriksen, the Chair of Copenhagen Pride. Mr. Henriksen, we want to take some lessons from you, we want to ask what can Greece learn from Denmark's experience with human rights in the world place, because you're in account that the spectrum is much more progressive for many years so we would like to follow up.

HENRIKSEN: Well thank you first of all for inviting me to be part of this conference, this is super appreciated and I only wish I could've been in Greece with you all and have this conversation physically, let's hope it can happen in the future.

I also want to say that while I talk about the Danish experience that is unnecessarily work in great context, I know too little about Greece and the Greek labor market to bring up suggestions but I can talk about what I think has worked here, and then you will have to take away from it what you can use.

I think there is a downside, first of all to the fact that we are a very progressive country. Namely that this also creates a national myth around LGBTQI issues that we are very close to being at the goal and that Denmark is this very accepting and inclusive society where we don't really need to do anything in order to achieve full inclusivity of all identities and that sometimes makes it even more difficult to engage politicians, decision makers, businesses and so on in doing something and taking this seriously because it is perceived as something

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that just exists as sort of a, part of the Danish DNA that we are inclusive and accepting – which of course is not the case.

I can very much relate to what you said Evangelos about the lack of public figures, as a very important steppingstone in this. I grew up in the 1980s and we didn't have back then any or very many public figures that were out and proud in Denmark either. We do now and that has of course benefited us immensely because suddenly not only LGBTQI people had role members to mirror ourselves in but it become sort of more mainstream that people come out whether it'd be as business leaders, as politicians or in areas of sports for example. I can tell you that in the previous Government, in the current Government we have one open LGBTQI Minister, in the previous one we had I think three and out of the nine parties currently in Parliament, four of them have open LGBTQI identify people as highly chairpersons.

So it has become very much part of the mainstream political picture as well.

I think there are two important things that have worked very well in the last ten years here, one of them is that businesses have recognized diversity as simply good business good for the revenue of the company that more diverse thoughts and experiences bring more into the company and that it's important when you recruit that you have a profile as a company or as a business of being inclusive and diverse because you will recruit a more interesting and attractive group of people as employees but also that when you employ somebody and you pay him a full salary, and you expect them to put down 100% of their creativity and thought process and timing your business is they spend 20% of their time coming up with excuses for where they were on Saturday and trying to remember the lie they told last week to this colleague, what they said to that colleague, you suddenly actually not getting your investment returned to you because you're paying people 100% but you're only getting 80% of your capacity because you're expecting them to suddenly spend time staying in the closet. So, it's just bad for business generally.

Another thing that has been very helpful here and I don't know if that's the same in Greece but we have a high membership percentage of unions in Denmark, I think over 85% of Danish employees are union members and over the last ten years it has suddenly dawned on the unions that working with LGBTQI+

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inclusion and conditions in the workplace is very much part of the obligation of the union movement and that the safety and comfort of employees that unions work for is not only about salaries and holidays but also about feeling safe and knowing that you can grow as a colleague. And this has led to first of all to [...] from various different unions over the last ten years, some years even up to three or four different unions having conference due to the Pride week but more importantly they've been actually made extensive surveys amongst their members on LGBTQI+ inclusion in various areas of the Danish labor market and one of the things that really surprised many I think here given the fact that we often perceived as you start up by saying as a very inclusive and liberal country was that regardless of sector all the surveys showed that about 40% of LGBTQI+ identified, employees didn't feel comfortable being open about their identities in the Danish labor market and that actually came as quite a shock to many because it also challenged this national myth of inclusivity and the Danish society being so open and welcoming.

And this has led of course to some self-reflection within the sectors and in the unions but also to initiatives been taken by sectors in business but also sectors within the union on working with educational programs, LGBTQI certification of local union chapters and other things, in order to make sure that this is dealt with because and when then asked why are you not open, it was very much about theory of it being handprint to your career possibilities or concerns about being left outside of the collegial social community that people felt unsafe and it showed that there are structures in place, even in a liberal country like Denmark, that limits people's ability to take part on a level playing field.

MODERATOR: Thank you Mr. Henriksen that very interesting viewings on the way that society works, I would like to travel to the United States now for the next question to Salah Hussein, from BSR, Mr. Hussein, you're part of cross industry group called Human Rights Working Group can you tell us a bit more about this initiative and share with us some of your main conclusions as differently applied in the case of a country like Greece.

HUSSEINI: Sure, happy to and thank you very much for having me as part of this panel, and the conference.

So first I'll start maybe with maybe BSR and then talk about the working group.

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BSR is a membership organization and sustainability consultancy, we have a network of multinational companies primarily in the US, Western Europe, Japan and a few other regions around the world, and one of our key kind of features is to develop what we call collaborative initiatives which are initiatives that we believe relate to sustainability matters, that companies cannot tackle individually. They range from environmental topics to women's empowerment issues to human rights issues and the human rights working group that you mentioned is one of these collaborator initiatives. We set this up about 10 years ago now, we're coming up on ten years ago in response to the publication of the UN guiding principles on business in human rights which created the foundational principles of the business in human rights community and the initial intention of the working group was to help companies operationalize these guiding principles, so helping companies establish and run human rights [...] diligences develop ... mechanism around human rights issues and generally integrate human rights considerations into their operations their business relationships their products and services and effectively all aspects of how businesses operate in the world and in the communities in which they exist.

We have about 45 member companies across industries in this working group and it is created a network of business in human rights practitioners, exploring all of these various topics that affect business in human rights.

Some examples that I wanted to highlight quickly include things like regulatory trends, particularly looking at Europe and the trends around mandatory business human rights [...] diligence that are emerging both at the country level as well as the EU wide level we also look at things like the intersection between states duty to protect human rights and the corporate responsibility to respect human rights. So how did those two expectations complement one another and how do companies fill gaps where they maybe gaps and enforcement from Governments in the areas of operation as well as in Satellite operations. So those are the types of issues that we focus on as a working group and in terms of how this supplies in the Greek context, I would say generally speaking multinationals tend to receive the bulk of the attention when it comes to these broad human rights issues as the impact or impacted by the private sector. But in the guiding principles sort of framework there is a role to play for all types of

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companies, large, small, regional players, local players etc., it runs the ... So this would certainly apply in the sectors that are traditionally associated with Greece like shipping, agriculture tourism but it also highlights a really important role that any company of any size can play in addressing some of the issues that we've been talking about today like the diversity in inclusion in Greece elevating the visibility and acceptability of LGBTQI communities tackling the rise of far right parties tackling the rights of anti-refugeeing and anti-migrant parties, the guiding principles outline a role and responsibilities of the how the private sector can be a positive force to address these potentially negative occurrence in the communities in which we're operating in the cultures you're operating in and the various context in which your companies have a hand.

That's a really important piece to highlight in terms of how the human rights working group is relevant in the Greek context, some of the lessons that we can take away for this context.

MODERATOR: Thank you Mr. Hussein, very interesting stuff and the thing that we in Greece we have some recent examples of how companies recently are starting to raise in both values, more and more companies.

So the next question let addressed to Mr. Fabrice Houdart the Manager of Global Equality Initiatives, Mr. Houdart Out Leadership is the oldest and the largest global LGBTQI business advisory team collaborating with the world's most inflation companies. We would like to describe us what you do, how you cultivate LGBTQI equality through which collaboration and if you would like to elaborate on your sole belief that LGBTQI inclusion positively helps business results and possible idea of return on equality.

HOUDART: Thank you very much for your question, you know, as you know in the United States we are having a gigantic conversation on the topic of rights and black lives matter in the past few weeks. And what was the most fascinating aspect of this conversation is how the private sector can have [...]stage, making announcements and whether they're going to change and how much money they're going to give to organization to fight systemic racism in the Unites States and truly that shows a trend, particularly in normal access countries in which companies increasingly are under pressure from employees from consumers and from shareholders to show that they're contributing to a better world and I

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think that the reason is that people do not find **agency** in the democratic process honored as much as **agencies** are used to find but now they find **agencies** they were all as employee consumer or shareholder.

Now on the other side of the equation, companies have understood that there is a gigantic mistrust against capitalism and the private sector and that has very negative consequences for them, whether it's in terms of regulation or whether it's in terms of not being able to attract the talent that they work. So on one hand the general public is putting pressure on the private sector sure that they are doing more than just making profit and on the other hand companies have a desire to show that are contributing to a better world. And in my opinion, this is changing capitalism for the better. So what we do is that we accompany among our firms on this journey to try to showcase our contributing to social values particularly when it comes to LGBTQI inclusion.

Now something that Dimitris said which was, that Evangelos said which was fascinating is that we have a lot of companies that will do very well in the United States and the United Kingdom, and will be completely silent in part of Europe where the topic is more difficult.

And, you know, as a French man an example that comes to mind is the French conglomerate[...] which is a gigantic company which has 100% on the demand campaign, the human rights campaign in the United States. But doesn't talk at all about LGBTQI issues in France because it's more difficult.

In my opinion companies in Europe, are going to have to come around, to be more vocal about the fact that they support LGBTQI people and they are going to have the same pressure to showcase how they're living the values that the public want them to live and we have been seeing in Europe a bit of change, very often it tends to be companies that are supportive that have a lot of business in the United States, or lot of employees global that then can start living the values at home, whether that's in France, in Spain, in Italy or in Greece.

But I think companies are going to change and capitalism is going to change and you know something that I love to tell companies when I come to Europe is that change is not mandatory because survival is optional.

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The only company that will survive are the companies that will show that they are doing something to contribute to a better world.

MODERATOR: Thank you Fabrice, I totally agree, we have to evolve we have to change in order to survive. And that's a good thing, so we now have to return to Greece, to Mr. Andreas Pottakis, who is the Greek Ombudsman.

Mr. Pottakis you seek the center of reality, you're coming in contact with the real life cases of our relations of human rights in your work base in Greece, you have a difficult job, very interesting, can you give some examples of what is going on and we would like to hear your views to what we should be doing as a society in order to change things in progress.

POTTAKIS: First of all I have to thank you for the invite, I think it's an excellent opportunity for all the participants in all three panels to share experiences and ideas and opinions on how to better enhance a promotion in the protection of human rights in the business environment.

Let me first explain a bit what you actually said about our role; indeed, the Greek Ombudsman also serves as the equality body in Greece. So we are not just mandated to advocates, towards advocacy, in favor of the LGBTQI+ community but we are also receiving, we are the independent complaints mechanism that was mentioned in the previous panel by the representative of business and we are also under the presence of a statutory framework that we operate, we also have the right and the possibility to advance, to recommend, to suggest, to propose if I may changes, amendments in the existing legislation with a view to further enhancing the protection of the rights of old people, including of course those who belong to the LGBTQI+ community.

Now what is some of the real life in Greece, I will start with a slight comment, I think that what Mr. Chouliaras mentioned earlier is striking. Being Greek and living in Greece at present I couldn't but highlight even further, I just wanted to make sure the rest of the members of the panel have realized that Mr. Chouliaras identified Greece, more or so as a country in the Balkans rather in the Europe or the South of Europe. And this is I think a telling of the actual cultural situation, the predominant cultural situation in Greece so it is quite conservative and not as a sort of advanced in many other countries in the North of Europe in particular or the central part of Europe.

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Having said that, let me just quickly get into some indicative sort of cases that we have been angling both as individual complaints, but also as complaints that are coming to us through the civil society organizations and particular the LGBTQI+ groups with which we are in close contact, hopefully we will be in even closer contact in the near future, we value immensely their work and the collaboration that we have established in the course of the last few years.

I would like to highlight one such a case because I think it is indicative of the present situation in Greece, now, in Greece there has been a lot of development, a lot of progress in the legislative sort of area in the course of the last few years when it comes to protecting of creating a safer environment for LGBTQI members in the labor markets, but there are still pockets of resistance if I may call them as such, so they are specialized business of legislation that are applicable to specific areas on the labor market where they have not been completely streamlined with the sort of the generic pieces of legislation that are horizontally applied to all the areas of the labor market in the business market, in the business area.

One such example that we have come across and we have been trying to sort out for the last couple of years I have to say, I admit we are insistent and persistent in our endeavors, we had the privilege of being so, was a case that we identified in recruitment process for the police academy of Greece.

Now, in the police academy there was in the contest for entering the police academy in Greece there was a specific reference to the so-called gender identity disorder that was characterized or fell under the category of psycho-sexual disorders. Now, such sort of characterization clearly does not exist under the WHO sort of criteria for mental disorders or behavior or neurological disorders or of any sort of disorders to cut it short, however, in the police academy the sort of the call for the contests to enter the police academy included such a disorder, it was called gender limited disorder and we've been trying [...] two years now already to convince both the police force and the other security forces and agencies in Greece to completely scrap it clearly as it falls clearly outside the permissible – if I may put it this way – sort of restrictions to entering any security agency in any security force in Greece.

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There are areas of resistance; one such clear area of resistance is the security forces in Greece. Now, when it comes to individual complaints, we are receiving quite a significant number, not a lot, and I will return to that, quite a significant number though of complaints for harassment in the labor sort of environment both on grounds of sexual preference, sexual orientation but also on grounds of gender identity.

I mentioned that we do receive several complaints, but we are not quite happy about the actual figures of the complaints that come to our office and request, demand our intervention and our mediation in order to be resolved because - just to give an indication again- the actual statistic of such cases does not exceed on an annual basis one or two percent of the overall cases of discrimination that our office, our authority deals with.

So, clearly here there is to our understanding an indication that a lot of people who are being harassed a lot of people who are facing problems in the sort of labor environment are reluctant to disclose such, both their identity their sexual orientation or their agenda identity or the fact that they're being harassed of fear of repercussions. There are things that can be done both at the legislative level in order to remedy the situation and in order to afford that people who are facing such difficulties in their daily lives better protection and I can perhaps share with you, in the course of our discussion, some ideas that we have here, the Greek Ombudsman office however there a lot of things that need to be done.

One final part I would like to raise, is that what we are witnessing in the Greek Ombudsman through the complaints that we are receiving is that there is clearly a lot of instances a lot of cases of harassment in the actual working environment -so for people who are actually working- and what we find even more alarming and even more sort of distressing are the problems that people identify themselves or belonging to the LGBTQI community have to access the labor markets so there are a lot of hardness, a lot of stumbling blocks, a lot of problems involving crucially the administrative services that are not being as cooperative and as open to people belonging to the LGBTQI community when it comes for instance to having to change their identification papers, if such need is the case, so a clear sort of center of problems, a clear case that we are having to deal with is trying to resolve tons of administrative sort of problems

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that have to do, that sort of create problems to people belonging to the LGBTQI community and when it comes to their right to access the labor market rather than when they are actually already working and being employed and having to deal with harassment either by their employers or by their colleagues. And I will leave you to that at this moment.

MODERATOR: Thank you Mr. Pottakis, it's very clear, we said it before, we have a very interesting and very difficult **job** to do here in Greece but hence is interesting, and lets go back to Mrs. Garina the President of the European Pride Organizers Association. I would like to ask you a question about the movement of Pride, you know Pride as a protest as a reaction and it has unfolded in the years also exactly the last ten years things have been very different. How do you think that Pride as an organization is going to develop in the next ten years?

GARINA: Yes, thanks for the question, it is a great question, I feel that the transformation of Pride already begun before we went into this global pandemic crisis that obviously will push us forward in even bigger change this year, but the process had already started them and the most important thing to me is giving Pride back to its roots and kind of letting the community the LGBTQI community to decide where it needs to go from here.

And I think we're finally moving away from our purely basic discussions of why there is a Pride and we're transforming this in to a more of a quality discussion, what form should it take and it's extremely important to me personally that there is no one right way to do Pride so all we can do is listen what is it, where community wants to take it and as Pride organizers and community leaders and spokespeople, we are not here to make decisions on behalf of the community reproach. No, we are just here to make decisions with the community and it can go in many different directions and as Pride organizers, we just provide the framework that the local community groups can fill with the content that is important to stand up this time so I feel that it's quite unpredictable at this point, but all we need to do is listen and give that to people.

I see a lot of conversations happening about inclusional groups within our community specially groups that are already marginalized making sure that they have space in Pride and make sure we listen what this space need to look like and how we can ensure that every group can participate and is welcome and

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feels included. But if we talk about commercial involvement, and corporate involvement in Pride, it's also extremely important every conversation around Pride touches that so there will be some change there as well, half of not being a part of any conversation around Pride in the last years where this hasn't been discussed so it's very important there are a lot of questions, there are lots of concerns around that and it was already mentioned during this panel, the commercial influence on Pride and obviously all those concerns are really valid but what we as Pride organizers are not particularly good at is communicating what it costs to organize a Pride and what it takes to keep Pride free for the community to attend. And these things need to be communicated much clearer and I hope we find a better way to have this conversation with the community making sure there is understanding why we do this and why it's important to keep Pride free and we're really seeing that in a lot of countries our partnerships are changing, our partnerships with business, our partnerships with organizations, we are moving from marketing departments towards diversifying inclusion and social responsibility budgets and departments, we are moving from sponsorship towards kind of mentorship and support LGBTQI employees.

And all that based on actual values of the company rather than selling advertising space on floats we already are moving towards that more sustainable corporation as business that will not be dependent on the classic return and investment models but rather the company's values model and this year actually is a great test for that. We don't have physical floats we don't have that much visibility in public so how will this change our relationship now when almost all Prides are struggling because of no events and because there's no income and is the corporate social responsibility still here to support us through this really difficult time for all the organizations and I feel this is a chance to properly switch the relationship models that so many Prides currently have and just change that corporate sponsorship approach to more on turn investment into the community and into NGOs and into Pride movement and into the civil society rather than seeing Pride as marketing soul and I think this is basically what I'm really looking forward to, and what Fabrice already mentioned, when he spoke that it should be values based, we're talking about values of the

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companies, we're not talking anymore about return of investment on advertisement on a float so I'm looking forward to that change a lot.

MODERATOR: Thank you Kristine, I think the advice listen to community is something that we should also all reflect. I would like to go back to Greece to Mr. Chouliaras the Organizer of Thessaloniki Pride, and I have a single question about the overall idea of the progress of the LGBTQI group and rad movement in Greece through the last decade and what is your biggest risk for the future, how would think things will work from now.

CHOULIARAS: Thank you for your question. Well, generally, there has been considerable progress but it only applies to the more homonormative members of the community. If you're a minority within the minority like the trans people the non-binary people, the agender people or even feminine gay people or masculine lesbian women, you still face considerable discrimination and social exclusion, often humiliation. Besides, in Greece everybody's cool with the LGBTQI people as far as they are not theirs. Usually parents are okay but wish that their children are not LGBTQI.

Political parties are in some cases supportive but they often don't have in their higher ranks open LGBTQI politicians. Companies on the other hand, are supportive of our causes but often when an employee of theirs comes out it is often frowned upon by their peers or faces intrusive questions and commenting. You know, I'm not going to list the claims of the Pride movement in general, they are more or less known, we voice them actually in every Pride, we advocate for them at national and European level, what is more important to stress here is that our biggest wish would that we are listened to by the politicians and other state condors. Because often and this is the biggest sort of mistake of the decision makers, they think that they know what is best for us. In most of the cases the intentions are good of course, but they end up having an opposite effect.

So, our biggest wish is that they hear us out, that they include us, that they pay attention, that they attend our Prides, that they create an institutional channel of communication and that we find ways to work together. Ad hoc working groups are a thing of course, but they are not a permanent solution.

I think personally decision makers should establish a concrete and visible relationship between us, simply society members and them, the Government.

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Create the institutional channels so that we get a better chance in advocating for our rights.

To wrap things up, I would like to finally express my joy for hearing our Prime Minister being so committed to the values of equality and human rights so I close the statement with the hope that he creates the institutional means and that he carries out the long awaited reformance we all want to see. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you Mr. Chouliaras, at this point I would like to say that this conversation is very interesting it can go on for many hours but unfortunately we have a tight schedule, we still have about ten minutes, so I'd like to finish the second round of questions but we have to be, and I'm really sorry about, to be a bit shorter answers, I would like to go to Mr. Henriksen, I hope I'm not pressuring you with the time, but we have to restrict some minutes, I would like to ask you what is your most cherished memory of the Pride Mr. Henriksen.

HENRIKSEN: I think I can bring two and they're both linked to private individuals who have attended Pride, almost every year, because Copenhagen Pride is very openness air, we don't block off the spectators from the marchers, and every year we get emails that sound something like this "I never thought I would have the courage to attend Pride, my friends were marching but I decided to stand on the curve and because I felt the warmth and the support of the people around me, when my friends past and they waved at me and said "come on", I took that very important step just off the curve, into the group and into the community and I felt impelled and stronger for it." And if Pride can help give people that feeling of belonging and strength in numbers and in solidarity I think we have achieved so much and it's on a very individual level, last year in Copenhagen Pride because we're working right now very strongly as a community to make sure that we have legal identity change also for individuals under the age of 18 so we put the national association for families of trans children at the front of the parade and I was marching behind them the entire time and one of the kids ten year old Alex said this is the first time I met so many people who are like me and he was high fiving everybody along the road and he was stronger for it going back.

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So I think we change lives and every time I hear these very personal subjective stories about people's lives been changed by understanding that they have backing and support and solidarity from their community, we have saved lives.

MODERATOR: Thank you Lars, I hope I didn't stress you out with the time. Let's go to Mr. **Husseini**, back to the states, I would like a brief comment from Mr. **Husseini** about the fact that at the same time as we celebrate Pride month, the US Pride crowd are mastered protests under "Black lives matter", and do you believe that these two causes are connected and if so, how?

HUSSEINI: Certainly, Dimitris you rightful recognized that Pride, the origins of Pride were riots against police brutality against the trans community in New York and that emerged into the gay rights movement. Very similarly the "Black lives" movement is a protest against police brutality and really an indignation of the system that continues to oppress black people in this country and the structures that have been really entrenched in this country since the time of slavery and have just evolved as opposed to been broken and so the connection between the two is very much about targeting the systems and the structures that continue to oppress vulnerable populations whether they're black or brown or LGBTQI both in the US and around the world.

And one thing I would like to highlight in terms of bringing Kristine's very helpful comments into this question is that one of the things BSR is doing is we have launched an organization called "The Partnership for Global LGBTQI Equality", this builds off UN standards that were launched in 2017 called the UN standards of conduct for business tackling LGBTQI, discrimination against LGBTQI people, which my friend Fabrice was into developing and disseminating.

The structures of these standards is very much about integrating respect for LGBTQI communities into business operations and the DNA of companies as opposed to just being a marketing campaign. So if you're multinational that has Pride flags up on your website but are continuing to do business with the Government of Saudi Arabia looking at the other way as the Saudi Government oppresses LGBTQI communities and creates laws that are repressive and discriminatory that's a tension that needs to be addressed and these human frameworks present a plan and a path for companies to follow in order to first identify where these contradictions exist and the partnership is meant to help companies address and mitigate those tensions.

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In some cases we want to acknowledge that companies maybe unaware of those tensions but in many cases that might not be the case but is important to have a framework in which we can identify those systemic issues both when it comes to LGBTQI inclusivity as well as the oppression of black people in the United States and others and change the corporate structures and systems that are perpetuating that discrimination and oppression not just within the private sector but also within the legal structures around the world as well.

So, I encourage Greek companies that are part of this movement to check out those UN standards of conduct for discrimination against LGBTQI people or tackling discrimination against LGBTQI people and lend your name in support of those standards and begin to integrate those principals into your own businesses as well.

MODERATOR: Thank you Mr. Husseini, very interesting, let's go to Mr. Houdart, [...] experienced as the [...] for global equality initiatives, could you share with us, but a bit shortly, I'm sorry for that, about how do national forms could built an elevated awareness for human rights offence of LGBTQI people?

HOUDART: Yes, I'm going to be very brief Dimitris, I promise, you know, I tell you I worked for 20 years at the World Bank and the United nation, the two of my best years, you know though that really big temples of patriarchy and conservatism, the United States was kind of the driving motor for the engagement on the LGBTQI issues and as you know the United States is nowhere to be seen when it comes to human rights today, in fact you can say that they're one of the biggest bottleneck to human rights. So, you know, I'm not really waiting for the United Nation or the World Bank to improve the life of LGBTQI people. Today I'm focusing on the private sector which seems to have a vestal interest in improving the life of LGBTQI people, we think the world of the company but also outside of the world which is an amazing development. I attend international forms but I try to attend international forms that are fighting patriarchy that are fighting conservative values when it comes to race, LGBTQI issues or gender equality, I go to the women's forum I go to south by southwest I go to Midwest, I go to some places where I see the future has been developed and I avoid the ones that are incurred in the past. And I will end here.

MODERATOR: Thank you very much Mr. Houdart and I hope that you should soon come to Greece also and speak about this in person. Let's go to conclude

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this conversation with the last person Mr. Pottakis, the Greek Ombudsman, Mr. Pottakis can you name us like in a list the most important three elements that need to change as soon as possible in the Greek culture in order to transform society?

POTTAKIS: Clearly changing culture is a quite complex matter and it requires changing mentality for each and every one of us and the way that we approach the matters and I think it has been raised already, I think it's a sort of an agreed point by most of the interlocutors in the course of this discussion but education and building up the appropriate role models and public figures so they're all as well of the media in this instance is quite vital also training, offering training, especially when it comes to the labor market it's extremely vital not just for the public sector but also for the private sector and I'm very happy that my office has been involved in all these areas, we have been involved in educating in courses for school we have been involved in making sure that public figures and media coverage of LGBTQI sort of role models is being portrayed in the way that the right messages are being somehow communicated.

I'm also very happy that we have been extremely supportive I think we are the first public authority that we have been supportive of the Prides in Greece, the organization of Pride events, and I would like however to close with two points that relate to one other element that clearly has an effect on transforming the culture of the society, the sort of the approach of the society has and this has to do, I return to the point of the issue of legislation and the less set of framework. I do see that there are some points that need to be addressed still, although as I mentioned in my first intervention, many important steps have been taken in the course of the last few years for instance in Greece in the course of the last few years, we managed and again we feel that we contributed towards that success, we managed to have a legislation pass for the recognition of the gender identity which was a huge success I think for Greek standards.

Now, I think two more points need to be addressed perhaps in order to improve the protection of people of LGBTQI people in the labor market, one, as I mentioned in my first intervention, there's a significant number of people who are hesitant in a sort of filing complaints, in actually sharing their cases, their experiences of harassment in the labor market, and I do see the possibility of having enhanced legislation, enhanced provisions similar to those that apply to

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whistle blowers that could also protect those people and somehow not make them feel somehow stressed as to the possible potential or precautions that they may face either by their colleagues or by their employers when they do have to open in publicly somehow finally complain and so share also their sexual identity, one is this and the other one given the fact that in particular the previous panel was composed of representatives of big corporations, I do see an issue there when it comes to the recruitment processes I think it has been highlighted by all the council of Europe, the office of the Commission for human rights of the council of Europe that addressed at this event earlier this morning, but also the European Union I note and I share with my fellow interlocutors that just before the spread of the pandemic anyhow there was this white paper on artificial intelligence that was published by the European Commission and there one of the issues that were raised was on recruitment processes and the use of algorithms and the ... of corporate biases that algorithms may contain that include also biases, vis-a-vis, preference in sexual orientation or even gender identity for applicants.

I do urge therefore for stronger, actually there is none, so I do urge for legislation in not just ethical sort of codes on algorithmic transparency and accountability.

MODERATOR: Very interesting point, I really hope that we had more time, it was very interesting conversation, it was so interesting that could go on for little more hours and still be interesting, but we have some time limitations, we have to conclude the meeting, I will like to thank you all for your participation, I really hope next year that we could do this in person and meet in person, and I would like to pass the floor to Mr. Gregory Dimitriadis, the Secretary General for International Economic Affairs, who will have some closing remarks on this summit. Thank you all.

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DIMITRIADIS: Ladies and gentlemen, allow me to preface on a personal note. At the end of our four-hour conference, I'm deeply moved. Your inspirational proposals, your direct way in defending human rights and diversity, your open-mindedness that implies spirits without prejudice, makes me confident and optimistic about the future of our society.

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For me the message of today's conference is clear, an open democratic society is not a utopia. It can be achieved, societies casting out all kinds of discrimination and pressing all citizens can be reality. I feel it is my duty as one of the co-organizers to convey this message to all decision makers and non-citizens across the world. For those who unjust experiencing prejudice in the work place and at daily lives. For those who turn a blind eye to discrimination believing strongly that it does not concern them.

Fighting discrimination is not easy; we have to fight deeply rooted long lasting prejudice and stereotypes that are nurtured by unscientific views, irrationality, anti-human spirit and anachronistic conservatism.

Fighting discrimination requires actions and initiatives at national and international level, but especially in the social field. As Robert Oliphant, the Parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada mentioned, regulations and legislation, only have a limited impact on social attitudes. That's why it is essential not to waste today's efforts, we will establish an international working group to pave the way forward.

We hope that it's interventions will be constructive, and impact full. Our aim is to produce a meaningful roadmap that will ignite change. The Greek Prime Minister Mr. Kyriakos Mitsotakis presented two key proposals today, to establish a new institutional role for monitoring and observing human rights in business at a European level and to set up a specific agenda emphasizing on the rights of LGBTQI community.

Erna Solberg, Norway's Prime Minister, pointed out that inclusiveness is not just doing the right thing, it has economic value for businesses creating a competitive advantage to attract the best employees.

Sanda Ojiambo, CEO & Executive Director of the United Nations Global Compact, stressed that there is huge gap between aspirations and actions. There is a long way from policy making to concrete actions and I think she's right. That's why we are here today. Alex Patelis, the Chief Economic Advisor of the Greek Prime Minister mentioned that including decision makers from diverse backgrounds leads a company to better decisions. Irene Nikolopoulou, the CEO of Wunderman Thompson in Greece stressed that it is needed to set targets for the LGBTQI community and she said that we need to create sustainable change more than posting on Instagram.

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Vasilios Psaltis the CEO of Alpha Bank stressed that diversity should become an integral part of the whole value chain of the banking system and Kristine Garina, the President of European Pride Organizers Association highlighted the fact that sometimes it is difficult for the LGBTQI people to even recognize discrimination at work with such, as they are so used to being marginalized.

Evangelos Chouliaras, the Communication Officer of Thessaloniki Pride, agreed with Alex Patelis that there is lack of public figures openly gay both in Greece and the Balkans.

Overall, it was a fruitful day. And I think, I am not exaggerated when I say it can be described as historic. Its success will not be the same without you here, you added value, not only through your personal gravitas but mainly through your de profundis statements remembering Oscar Wilde, a famous victim of discrimination.

As one Greek diplomat told me yesterday, Greece comes out of the closet and proudly defends human rights in the workplace bringing prosperity to our businesses and society. Following this initiative, we're aspired to form a wider coalition for human rights in the region. Thank you very much everyone for the honor to have you with us today.

Now I would like to pass the floor to the Secretary General of Justice and human rights of the Ministry of Justice Mr. Panos Alexandris. Thank you.

ALEXANDRIS: Firstly, on behalf of the Ministry of Justice and the General Secretary of Justice and human rights, I would like to thank all participants and speakers who very willingly agreed to take part in our initiative to hold an international conference on human rights in business environments.

Today it was a very important day. Every company in every industry sector has human rights impacts and responsibilities. Companies can impact the entire range of human rights issues positively or negatively.

Relating to the issues of sexual harassment, health and safety, freedom of association to the case of rape, torture, freedom of expression, privacy, poverty, food and water, education, and housing.

Some historically maintain that human rights standards were only applicable to Governments not the private sector. Some companies have claimed that their sole obligation was to respect national laws, even when those laws failed to meet international human rights standards. However, the preamble to the

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universal declaration of human rights concern every individual and every organ of society to promote and respect human rights, every individual and every organ of society excludes no one, no company, no market, no cyber space. The universal declaration applies to them all.

The UN working group on business and human rights encourages Governments to adopt national action plans on businesses and human rights as a very important need to promote the state duty to protect human rights. As chair of the national council against racism and intolerance we are currently crafting a national action plan which will be completed in the next couple of months. The main objective of the project is to develop a comprehensive strategy against racism and intolerance. They promoting the right of victims and relevant crimes. Concluding my brief remarks, I would like to underline that as Mr. Oliphant from Canada stressed, the legal framework goes hand in hand with symbolic gestures and engagement with civil society. The adoption of policies, the preferential of voluntary initiatives and the recognition that companies have a responsibility to respect human rights undoubtedly represent progress but they have not resulted in full respect for human rights per companies. Great scrutiny, transparency, remedies for victims and other mechanism are undoubtedly are still needed in the fight against human rights violations which still exist worldwide.

Human rights after all, are universal, they're connected individual and should be adhered, promoted, respected, and protected. This is also why of the most important issues which relate to the rule of law. I have to confirm that it was a very fruitful with sayings of use, a very fruitful visual conference, and all the presentations and all the conclusions were extremely interesting.

Closing my intervention, I will pass the floor to the Secretary General for Family Policy and Gender Equality to Ministry of Labor & Social Affairs, Mrs. Syrengela who will make her own conclusions. Thank you very much.

SYRENGELA: The discussion about human rights is always on the agenda of a society that really wants to progress and [...] the participation of all the society members as required which is not possible when some of them are marginalized due to their gender or due to their sexual orientation.

And because discrimination against them occurs in all aspects of their life we must address it at every level. No one should be left out. State, businesses and

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society together open an umbrella of protection, of all those who are discriminated. Our Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, set the tone, respecting diversity is unquestionable. Inclusion is the key to success. Since rights exist and expand as [...] to set human rights a priority.

Alex Patelis, the Chief Economical Advisor of the Prime Ministers Office, rightly stressed the need for diverse decision making and thinking and as from a business point of view, Mr. Patelis was very clear, you don't have to reinvent the wheel, you must have to accept that there is a problem and then you learn from other successful strategies and apply them in our businesses. So it is necessary for businesses to adapt access [...] environment or in Greece, who's personal lives are respected and play absolutely no role in the behaviors reserved of them by superiors and by their colleagues. And walking on this path, the workplace will acquire the meaning of a safe heaven and not an agreeing house if I may say, of violence. And what does this mean, unemployed workers for example because of their gender, because of their nationality, or sexual orientation are more likely to experience some form of violence when sometimes they will not report.

A work environment where such behaviors are not accepted become safe and within its employees can be professionally evolving which is obviously beneficial for the business itself. And finally, the catalyst if I can say is our effort to change the culture and to fight against stereotypes, and at this point both the civil society and the state are taking action.

Undoubtedly, the institutional changes are the first big step in securing rights. But that alone cannot work. This is also made clear by the example of gender based in the domestic violence, yes, the legal framework is very strict, but it is not enough just to eliminate the phenomenon. The perpetrators are not prevented. So, the solution ... the solution lies in awareness, and in appropriate occasion. The consolidation of equality by society as a whole is the key. The General Secretary Act for Family policy and gender equality works in order to eliminate gender discrimination and inequalities.

We support women and we support vulnerable social groups that still suffer from inequalities at home and at work. It sometimes seems impossible to compete with a man, you can't race against him because he's given a head start. But this event today is very promising it gives us hope.

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Women rights are human rights. LGBTQI rights are human rights and fighting for them is definitely worth fighting and we will achieve our goal if we work all together.

Summing up, the international virtual conference, human rights in business I would like to thank all the participants and delegates for their input and their contribution to this conference. It has certainly been a very interesting and productive event. Thank you very much.