



Press Release

Workplace Pride appoints new co-chairs to further foster LGBTI-inclusion

Amsterdam, June 22 2020 – **Workplace Pride** – a nonprofit foundation dedicated to improving the lives of LGBTI-people in workplaces worldwide – announced two new co-chairs to its Foundation Board. Michiel Kolman (Senior Vice President at Elsevier) and Bianca Nijhof (Managing Director at Netherlands Water Partnership, NWP) are taking over the reins from Mark Emdin, who has chaired the Foundation for six years. Both have committed themselves to enhancing LGBTI rights as new co-chairs and to addressing LGBTI workplace inclusion – which is more relevant today than ever before.

In an historic ruling issued last week, the United States' Supreme Court decided that LGBTI people can no longer be formally discriminated against in the workplace. While this ruling has far-reaching implications for millions of American workers and opens the door to challenging other discriminatory practices, the state of affairs is not improving in many other countries and regions.

Limited priority for diversity and inclusion within organizations

An important task awaits the new co-chairs. Apart from the most distressing cases – such as the growing body of anti-LGBTI legislation in Poland and Hungary – discrimination and LGBTI-inclusion remains problematic in many regions and organizations. [A Berenschot research published last week](#) shows that for most companies in the Netherlands, diversity and inclusion are still not a priority: Only 20 percent of the surveyed companies pursue an active diversity policy and for most companies, diversity and inclusion were near the bottom of their priority list.

In addition, the current pandemic may be an incentive for governments and organizations to move diversity and inclusion further down their list of priorities. This is bad news not only for the LGBTI-community, but also for companies and governments, as an increasing body of literature shows that inclusion and diversity are strongly related to innovation and growth. Inclusion and diversity are not only a moral duties – they are assets, according to the new co-chairs.

About the new co-chairs of Workplace Pride: Michiel Kolman and Bianca Nijhof

During their careers, Michiel Kolman and Bianca Nijhof built up an extensive resumé when it comes to fostering LGBTI-inclusion in the workplace. In- and outside their respective organizations Elsevier and NWP, the two are recognised as prominent advocates of workplace inclusion. Both are already members of the Workplace Pride Board.

- **Michiel Kolman** is Senior Vice President Information Industry Relations at Elsevier and Special Envoy for Diversity and Inclusion at the International Publishers Association. At his employer, Kolman has been the driving force behind the coming about of [Elsevier Pride](#). In 2014 and 2015, he was included in the *OUTstanding 100*, a list of LGBTI business leaders composed by the *Financial Times*. *'The business case for LGBTI inclusion has never been more compelling. Emphasis on diversity and inclusion is strongly correlated to innovation and creativity. Inclusion does not only benefit members of the LGBTI community, it is an asset to organizations and their cultures'*, Kolman said regarding the announcement. During his time as co-chair, Kolman will commit to strengthening the academic pillar of the Foundation.

- **Bianca Nijhof** is Managing Director at Netherlands Water Partnership. At previous employers as a member of the D&I team and now as the director she strives for a diverse and inclusive working environment. She is also the coordinator for the SDG 6 Alliance of The Netherlands working closely with the other SDG coordinators to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. *‘I am proud to become co-chair together with Michiel for the Workplace Pride Foundation Board. Especially during these difficult times, when many existing norms are challenged, we need to think more intensively about implementing diversity and inclusion in its many forms. During my time as co-chair, I want to contribute to a world in which everyone has a say in the coming about of new standards’*, Nijhof commented on her announcement as co-chair.

- **END OF PRESS RELEASE –**

Note for the press

For questions or interview requests, please contact; David Pollard - Executive Director at Workplace Pride Foundation, via david@workplacepride.org or Simone Schuilwerve –Communication Advisor at Issuemakers, via s.schuilwerve@issuemakers.nl.

About Workplace Pride

Workplace Pride Foundation is the international, not for profit platform for the inclusion of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) people at work. Its many members employ more than 4.5 million people worldwide. Initiated in 2006 with 4 corporate members Workplace Pride has seen enormous membership growth over the last years, leading up to more than 70 members today. Diversity among the members has been increasing with corporates (e.g. IBM), governments (e.g. Dutch *Rijksoverheid*), academic institutions (e.g. Leiden University), NGOs (e.g. Oxfam Novib) currently among the Foundation’s members. In recent years the Foundation has seen a surge in international activities at the request of its members, attracting organizations and individuals from across the globe. The Foundation has organised activities in countries ranging from Nairobi to Manilla, and from Singapore to Moscow.

Workplace Pride’s important results

- In January 2017, Workplace Pride and Leiden University created the world’s first university professorship (Chair) dedicated exclusively to LGBTI workplace inclusion. The Workplace Pride Chair holder is Dr. Jozanneke van der Toorn. With the generous support of Foundation Member KPN, the 5-year duration of the Chair has taken this topic to a new level of scientific scrutiny, benefiting employers, employees, the academic world and the LGBTI community alike.
- As of today close to 30 members have signed the *Declaration of Amsterdam* spelling out their commitment in 10 areas to achieve LGBTI workplace inclusion.
- Around 40 members are participating annually in the Global Benchmark which will allow these organizations to see how they compare to others in 8 key areas of LGBTI workplace inclusion.
- In 2020, Workplace Pride launched its toolkit for the United Nations LGBT Standards of Conduct for Business. This practical and tested business tool helps organizations implement their LGBTI policies and practice across the globe. The Toolkit has received the endorsement of both the United Nations and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.