

Breakout Room 1.7  11:15 - 12:30**3*****SUPPORTING LGBTIQ+ EMPLOYEES  
IN CHALLENGING COUNTRIES******MODERATOR: CHARLENE LIU*** (She/Her)

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# **Supporting LGBTIQ+ Employees in Challenging Countries**

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**ING**



# Panel Questions

- What role do you each play on LGBTQ+ inclusion in your organization?
- To set the tone, can you tell us more about the legal and cultural setting in some of the challenging countries that you're operating in? What is the progress or barriers you encounter in these countries?
- Can you explain how DE&I global strategy has been implemented on the local level, regional or country specific? What are the initiatives you have implemented in challenging countries?
- How do you align DE&I goals with overall business objectives?
- Did you experience any pushbacks in the process of implementing LGBTQ+ inclusive policies, from within or outside your organization? What are factors that affect these pushbacks?
- How did you handle these pushbacks? How did you change the narrative to have a constructive conversation?
- Are there senior sponsors in your local organization supporting you? How do you get them onboard to support LGBTQ+ inclusion initiatives?
- What is some practical advice on how to move forward, promote LGBTQ+ inclusion at work in challenging countries?



# Group Discussion

- Assign note taker(s).
  - Assign spokesperson/spokespeople.
  - In 15 minutes, discuss the following.
1. What are the challenges, barriers, or pushbacks that you encounter when implementing LGBTIQ+ inclusive initiatives in your organization, from within or outside your organization?
  2. List three critical elements in balancing DE&I initiatives and business priorities.
  3. How do you enable senior leaders in your local organization to support LGBTIQ+ inclusion initiatives at work? How are they kept accountable and how do they keep others accountable?



# Report Back



# Key Takeaways

- Understand the legal and cultural obstacles and the complexity of advocating and implementing policies on LGBTIQ+ inclusion at work in challenging countries.
- Identify good practices to support LGBTIQ+ employees in challenging countries. DE&I practices are tied to business
- Leaders' commitment: Secure a senior sponsor for LGBTIQ+ activities by highlighting mutual benefits.
- Performance metrics and accountability: Align inclusion goals with business goals. Set measurable goals for LGBTIQ+ inclusion and track the progress. Link this to performance by incorporating LGBTIQ+ inclusion metrics into performance reviews and compensation structures for leaders and managers.



# Key Takeaways

- Global inclusive LGBTIQ+ policies are possible (example ING Poland). Nevertheless you have to take into account the legal and cultural barriers.
- You need allies and role models at all levels to make progress and impact.
- You need leadership and they have to understand why it is important. Create allies amongst your leaders.
- Walk the talk, invite management to your ERG events like webinars (example Amgen)
- Taking a stand, don't do business when they do not share your core values.
- Together you are stronger, connect with other organizations for joined initiatives so you can accelerate in the right direction.
- The base is respect to ALL employees.
- Use networks to connect and engage with other employees for a better understanding.
- Don't ask for permission, it's about respecting the law, human rights, we are legally entitled to stand up.



# Summary

- Advocacy for LGBT+ faces different challenges in different regions. For example, Poland is 42nd place, last in the EU, in terms of LGBT+ inclusion and there is no legal protection. However, more than 60% of the population support civil partnerships and DEI is high on the agenda of big companies. On the other hand, in Greece, it is not illegal to be LGBT+ and even though marriage equality was achieved in 2024, society is not on board.
- The role of the employers or companies is to fill the gaps between the needs of employees, such as safe space and equal benefits, and the legislature. Employers can also encourage employees to be role models. On the question of how companies protect employees once they are outside of work, we need to use the diversity angle to reach out to the markets we are targeting. When the message is done right, the volume of the targeted market has the potential to drive public opinion in our favor. Companies can be an influence to change what is difficult in their place of operations. Companies can create an ecosystem of inclusion that consist of their employees, customers/clients, and vendors/suppliers.
- On the topic of allyship, allies need support as well. They may not know everything, so we, companies and civil society organizations need to keep them updated and provide them information to better support their LGBT+ employees. Corporate leaders may not know that they can be allies, so we need to be courageous to ask them to advocate for us. One of the biggest ask for allies is that after all the rainbow festivities, they advocate respect for LGBT+ employees.

## Activity

- Some of the points made during the activity of how best to implement DEI and engage senior leaders :
  - - DEI should be the core culture of the company.
  - - In some countries where implementing DEI can be a crime, localizing to the language and culture context is important.
  - - When there is lack of awareness in senior leadership, we need to be courageous to bring the conversation to the senior leaders about inclusion being good for business and that with power comes privilege.
  - - Inclusion should not be a trade-off. It can be added as KPIs such as climate surveys and benchmarking the future generation.





# Wrap-Up



①. RESOURCES (MONEY)  
PEOPLE

• GEOGRAPHICAL WIDTH

→ DIFFERENT LEGAL CONTEXTS IN COUNTRIES

→ RELIGION / CULTURE

SUPPORT ← → SAFETY

• DATA & SELF-IDING (MEASURING IMPACT)

• WIDESPREAD ALLY ENGAGEMENT  
→ INCL. MANAGEMENT SUPPORT

1. a) legal/criminal law → employee safety  
b) values "saving face"

2. a) Finding the right point of entry & language  
↳ code of conduct

- b)  
3. a) DEI Goals & objectives decided annually → STIs

- b) DEI Commitment for Sr. leaders  
↳ mandatory  
c) Mandatory Training



## Group I

Q1

- a) Hesitation about openly supporting + communicating support on LGBT Q+
  - ↳ for fear of commercial impact
- b) unwillingness to engage in this 'social issue' as companies are 'just doing business'
  - + lack of awareness as to why it is necessary
- c) lack of self-awareness and differing opinions
  - ↳ 'we're already there'
  - ↳ advocating for for ex. trans people is 'too far' and will hinder LGBT progress

Q2

- a) flip the tables, → big companies HAVE power. there is still fear of losing business BUT statistics don't lie: supporting LGBT+ is GOOD FOR BUSINESS
- b) Make it part of business priority & sales policy. Everyone can & should be your customer.
- c) business & inclusion are not separate things.
- d) more diverse companies are more profitable
  - ↳ Stats support this

Q3

- a) Creating awareness & showing stats (on personal + business impact)

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- o KPIs : INTERNAL SURVEY / EXTERNAL BENCHMARK
- REVERSE MENTORING
- INVOLVEMENT IN THE ERG EVENTS / INITIATIVES



Questions


① - Legislative / Regulations  
 - Lack of awareness - in the C-suite  
 education  
 - Organizational Culture / origin of company

② ← Nature of the job

- Strategic perspective that people and inclusion are a vital element in a successful operation.
- Education and Awareness (grassroots)
- It does not have to go from up to down but also otherwise

3 - Legal framework

- Recognition
- DEI KPI



②

- UNDERSTANDING THAT CREATING DEI INITIATIVES IMPACTS BIZ PERFORMANCE
- MEETING FUTURE CANDIDATES EXPECTATIONS (GEN Z)  
 → BECOMING A FUTURE-PROOF EMPLOYER
- EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT & MOTIVATION

⑥

① HOW TO SET THE AGENDA OUTSIDE THE ORGANIZATION IN LESS MATURE COUNTRIES / AREAS

HOW TO ADAPT TO THE LOCAL LAWS & CULTURE

② → OVERALL, THEY SHOULD BE ALIGNED

- I BUDGET SHOULD BE THERE & BUSINESS SHOULD BE IN THE SAME LINE
- II STAND WITH YOUR VALUES, BUT UNDERSTAND LOCAL REALITY → PUSH BOUNDARIES BIT BY BIT
- III INITIATIVES SHOULD BE BACKED UP BY COMPANY POLICIES

③ WE SHOULD APPOINT SPONSORS IN ALL ORGANIZATIONS LOCALLY (WHO ARE PART OF SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAMS) AND OTHERS

↳ ASK THEM TO BE MORE BOLD, COURAGEOUS

