

WRITE-UP

IFCCI Mumbai
Webinar, 28.01.2022

Webinar : II Edition : LGBTQIA - Social Responsibility and Inclusion at the Workplace'



Indo-French Chamber of Commerce and Industry in collaboration with Societe Generale organised the second edition of the LGBTQIA event on Social Responsibility and Inclusion at the Workplace on Friday, 28th January 2022.

The second edition of the 'LGBTQIA - Social Responsibility and Inclusion at the Workplace'; event emerged as a participatory and interactive discussion bringing together personalities and companies to discuss the integration of the LGBTQIA community at the workplace. The event aimed at increasing awareness with an open discussion on often suppressed and silenced issues to understand the ground reality within organisation and society.

Ms. Payal S Kanwar, Director General, IFCCI introduced Mr. Philippe Gabulon and welcomed distinguished panellist and moderators from varied backgrounds including corporate heads and social activists to diplomats who voiced their opinions on LGBTQIA. She addressed it stating *“Diverse workforce with an inclusive culture has become a business imperative”*

Mr. Philippe Gabulon, CEO for Societe Generale Global Solution Centre in Romania, Deputy CEO for SG GSC in India opened the session and shared his insights on the topic highlighting inclusivity at the workplace. While speaking of prominent transformations as scrapping of the section 377 legislation, decriminalization of the consensual sex between 2 adults of the same gender: he affirmed that *“This change greatly contributed to the recognition and the full decriminalization of the LGBTQ+ community in India and the radical changes have been taken place both socially and also in the corporate spaces in becoming more open and inclusive”*

Mr Parmesh Shahani, Author, Public Speaker, Culture Curator and LGBTQIA inclusion advocate moderated the session on **‘LGBTQIA: Transformation towards social acceptance’** During the course of this discussion, **Ms. Nandita Das**, Actress, Director and Social Activist firmly interrogated *“If not now, then when?”* while addressing this issue as the need of the hour. Speaking of acceptance, she expressed *“People who are liberal, who want a more powerful loving world, who want to live and let live, that’s a community in a larger sense”*

Mr. Sami Bouzakaze, Consul, Deputy Head of Mission, Consulate General of France in Mumbai: *“Diplomacy is about changing others perspective. Its important and its a constant struggle because many people think that its a lifestyle that is a choice and therefore it is something that could be changed you know that’s the mindset. And since its not a lifestyle, a choice or a phase people need to understand and get over it and accept it. I mean it’s who you are and we cannot change that”*

Mr. Keshav Suri, Executive Director, The Lalit Suri Hospitality & Founder Keshav Suri Foundation firmly said: *“We are not going anywhere, we are here, we are queer, we get used to it.*

As far as societal acceptance goes its zero or its below zero. Why is it that a small little hospitality chain like mine supposedly has the largest number of trans people working for them? Why have the other hospitality chains not done the same? Why is it that the options given to trans people in this country still is either sex work or on the street and begging? Why is it that they are repertoire of options and skills based training just on those two? Yes, we should have workplace equality index and we should talk about it. It’s important to have queer inclusion in the companies”

On expressing his thoughts on social acceptance and its importance.

Furthermore, **Mr. Mahesh Bhatija**, Managing Director - Head Central Functions IT & Operations – SG GSC India & Romania & Data CoE and CSR/ESG Sponsor – SG GSC India & Romania expressed his views while summing up the first panel discussion: *“What gives us hope is the next generation. The generations accept it we can go beyond these prejudices. There is a lot of hope ahead of us.*

We are changing and we need to accelerate the pace of change”

Heading to the second panel discussion, **Mr. Ravin Mirchandani**, Chairman and MD, Ador Powertron and Vice Chairman, IFCCI Pune Chapter, moderated the Panel discussion on **“Equal Opportunity and Inclusion of the LGBTQIA community in the Workspace”** wherein we had 4 dynamic personalities from the corporate sector who highlighted that the companies should take positions, promote engagements and should follow a code of conduct for these inclusions. These LGBTQ leaders engaged in a panel discussion that put across their outlook on the topic of inclusivity and illustrated the steps taken that brings in diversity.

Ms. Shyamala Jhaveri, Site Managing Director - IS&T Bangalore, IS&T Business Partner Director – Asia, Pacific & China, D&I Champion - APAC, Alstom : *“Is LGBTQ right relevant to workplace, absolutely yes, biological sex of a child is something that is assigned at birth, gender identity is a psychological sense of self, expression is how a person chooses to express his gender while orientation is who one is attracted to”* on acceptance and making it relevant and inclusive.

Ms. Yamini Adya Goyal, Head – Human Resources, Moët Hennessy: *“Diversity leads to better business results. Built it and it will come”* explicitly inviting diversity at workplace in quest of real talent.

Ms. Trinetri Arora, Tech Tribe Head & LGBTQ+ Lead, Societe Generale Solution Global Centre, India: *“Progress has been made through policies and implementation of laws. An ally is a friend to the entire community”* on understanding and encouraging the global transformation towards inclusion

Ms. Anubhuti Banerjee, Manager IT Co-ordination & Improvement, Tata Steel Limited: *“Respect the law of the land and to create possibilities for their own workforce”* on promoting LGBTQ in business and industry.

The interaction focussed on the social responsibility for the people within the LGBT Community & shed light on what organizations are doing to help foster more visibly welcoming, safer, supportive, and promising environment for every individual to be themselves and feel inclusive in their space. It evoked new ideas and innovative thoughts on a range of opportunities and policies that companies can adopt for the LGBTQIA community.

Mr. Toby Lawson, Chief Executive and Chief Country Officer, Societe Generale India stated *“I think at the workplace with Societe Generale, I would say is that you know we take it very seriously. We see the challenges that have existed around the world being a global company. We’ve implemented DNI strategies with a sensitivity around the*

location to try to draw upon our staff to change minds to change culture and to bring about what I hope one day to be a conversation where it really isn't the topic that we just talk as we say as people and not as different genders or different identities. And what we have and what we are just as people living and working and collaborating together" (On Societe Generale and its policies and work culture)

He further shared his views on transformation and affirmed that *"The key stories on transformation were true about the hardship and the journey if you will. Dating back from 25years and going forward to think that we still have a long way to go because transformation stories reflect strongly"*

Mr. Lawson expressed his gratitude towards all the distinguished speakers and participants for adding to their valuable inputs to the topic and discussion. **Mr. Bruno Bronquard**, Regional Director, IFCCI closed the session and thanked the co-partner and sponsor for this event Societe Generale.

The session was very interactive and was appreciated by all.

About Indo-French Chamber of Commerce & Industry (IFCCI)

Established in 1977, the Indo-French Chamber of Commerce belongs to a worldwide network of 120 French Chambers (CCIFI) in 90 countries with over 33,000 companies. One of the most active bilateral chambers in India, the Indo-French Chamber is a private association that promotes mutually beneficial trade relations between India & France and caters for its members' needs and interests. The Chamber has four offices in Mumbai, New Delhi, Chennai, Bangalore and two representations in Chandigarh and Pune. For more information, please visit <https://www.ifcci.org.in/>

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