

# Commitment to DE&I Requires ‘Tangible Proofs’ of Progress



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During the pandemic, there was a noticeable shift in attitudes towards Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DE&I) linked to an organization’s commitment.

It was an unprecedented moment where you could sense that all the most important stakeholder groups – including existing and potential employees, customers, business partners and investors – were demanding that their organization, regardless of size or location, show commitment to the values of DE&I.

While it is true, as I have written previously, that [DE&I is in danger of becoming irreversibly politicized](#), and that recent political conversations relating to the topic have undoubtedly had a negative impact, today I am sensing that the tide is once again shifting in our favour.

Organizations and their stakeholders are becoming more enthusiastic about demonstrating their commitment to the values and benefits that DE&I deliver. They want to see organizations who they work for, or are invested in, visibly, credibly and genuinely embrace an equitable and inclusive workplace.

This is especially true of ‘new’ talent; Gen Zs are looking for ‘tangible proofs’ of commitment, action and results and need to be assured that their

potential employer is an employer where their talent will be allowed to flourish, and their contribution and skills appreciated.

In the news recently was [a report from the European Union’s securities watchdog \(the ESMA\)](#) that mandated that a fund that has any environmental, social or governance (ESG) related words in its name must have at least 80% of assets that meet ESG objectives in accordance with the binding elements of its stated investment strategy.

“The objective of the guidelines is to ensure that investors are protected against unsubstantiated or exaggerated sustainability claims in fund names, and to provide asset managers with clear and measurable criteria to assess their ability to use ESG or sustainability-related terms in fund names,” ESMA said in a statement.

In simple terms, it is a protection against greenwashing, and for both investors and market regulators, ESG remains an important focus. DE&I is of course an important component of the ‘S’ within ESG. Now there is a movement where, because of the increasing interest of all the stakeholders, there is an increasing need to go from self-reporting towards ‘limited assurance’ or even ‘independently verified’ claims on where a company stands on DE&I.

I think that now, more than any other time since the pandemic, is the moment for companies to restate why they are committed, what they are doing to honour their commitment, and how they can prove that their commitment is being translated into actions that are making a meaningful difference.

This return to a DE&I mindset is being driven by the younger generation, by market regulators and by sustainability minded investors. In looking for commitment, they are also looking for organizations whose claims can be substantiated, which is where certain voluntary market-based instruments – such as EDGE Certification® – can give visible proof of credible progress. They are also the instruments that prove to be the most effective at the intersection between business and society because they bring objective measurements and standards and independent verification in areas that are not traditionally seen as very 'special'.

My mentor and colleague Simona Scarpaleggia, CEO of Ikea Switzerland from 2010 until 2019 and independent Board Member of a number of leading publicly listed companies, sums up the current trend succinctly: 'to demonstrate commitment you have to mean it, you have to do it, you have to measure it and then you have to talk about it!'

With the business case for DE&I long-since proven, organizations needed to provide tangible, visible proofs that they not only believe in DE&I, but that they were making progress in closing the equity gap.

**We're here to support you on this important journey.**

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