

"Leave no one behind“: Sylvia Hofer-Jendros on diversity as part of sustainability at Porsche

30/10/2024 Sylvia Hofer-Jendros is the Project Manager for diversity and inclusion at Porsche and explains the importance of different perspectives and equal opportunities for a livable future. She describes how Porsche can benefit from different viewpoints and how the company aims to promote values such as tolerance, openness, and inclusion both within its workforce and in society.

Sylvia, what does diversity of perspectives mean to you, and how does it connect to sustainability?

Sylvia Hofer-Jendros: For me, sustainability is about giving people a real chance for a livable future. No one should be left out – true to the motto 'Leave no one behind.' We are facing societal and environmental challenges that will affect people in all parts of the world. To tackle them successfully, we need to stick together and act as a community. This is where diversity comes into play, as it is an immense strength: people from different backgrounds bring various perspectives, talents, and experiences, which together can generate even better ideas and solutions. If we harness this potential

more effectively, we can overcome challenges together and drive positive change.

What professional and personal experiences have you had with this topic? What conclusions were you able to draw from them for yourself personally?

Hofer-Jendros: In my career so far, I have repeatedly dealt with topics such as communication and ethics, and in doing so, I've learned a lot about the different perspectives, obstacles, and needs of various stakeholder groups. After studying philosophy and spending a few years in advertising and digital business, I helped build and lead the communications department at a German sustainability consultancy for several years. Additionally, for the past few years, I've had the opportunity to share my knowledge of sustainability communication and the changes in attitudes and behavior as a freelance lecturer at the University of Ulm. I've learned to meet people where they are and guide them on a path of continuous development. Through this experience, I've increasingly felt the desire to advocate for those who are structurally disadvantaged. That's why I'm very happy to have had the opportunity to do so since early 2022 as Project Manager for Diversity and Inclusion at Porsche.

How can Porsche benefit from a variety of different perspectives, and what contribution can you and your colleagues make to that?

Hofer-Jendros: In my previous roles, I have consistently recognised that 'inclusion'—a culture in which all individuals feel valued in their uniqueness and encouraged to share their perspectives – positively impacts collaboration. This approach can make companies more resilient, innovative, and attractive. We aim to strengthen this mindset at Porsche as well. My responsibility is to create offerings that help our leaders and employees develop the necessary skills for this. Through this, I want to raise awareness of the opportunities associated with diversity and inclusion across the entire organisation.

What is Porsche doing specifically to promote diversity within the company?

Hofer-Jendros: To foster an inclusive culture and establish a deep awareness of diversity across all Porsche entities, we are focusing on several key areas. This includes our commitment to increase the proportion of women in our workforce. We also want to consciously form mixed teams and thereby bring together different personalities, strengths, and competencies. We also care about promoting diverse backgrounds, collaboration between generations within our workforce, and the inclusion of employees with disabilities. We advocate for and aim to empower the LGBTQIA+ community. Within these areas, we set strategic goals in the Diversity Team that we aim to achieve through specific projects throughout the year and beyond.

How can you integrate these topics into everyday work at Porsche?

Hofer-Jendros: We achieve this in various ways: During onboarding, at internal employee events, and during our so-called Diversity Days, we raise awareness of our topics and bring them closer to the participants. We also do this through our regular training and mentoring programs for our employees and leading managers. Currently, we are focusing on issues like internationality and women in

leadership positions. For instance, we have provided our leading managers with target metrics to promote a more balanced gender ratio in senior management and to create more international teams. Additionally, we recently initiated a diversity check on a regular basis with our top management regarding the variety of perspectives and equal opportunities within their areas of responsibility. With the diversity check, we aim to uncover development potential and facilitate practical and effective solutions. Our goal is not only to promote an open community within the company but also to advocate for a collaborative environment in society within our capabilities. Especially in times when society threatens to drift further apart, it is essential to take a stand, live our values, and particularly advocate for minorities.

Why is Porsche committed to supporting minorities, and how do you take action?

Hofer-Jendros: In society, some people fall outside the group that defines our “norms”. Due to that, they have an increased risk of being marginalised and treated worse due to systemic and structural disadvantages. We want to counteract this: We raise awareness among our colleagues about prejudices and discriminatory behavior and take concrete actions based. One good example: last year we launched a comprehensive inclusion project aimed at providing greater safety and equitable working conditions for everyone in our facilities. We specifically looked at how we can make our buildings more accessible, alongside addressing challenges related to digitalisation. For instance, we plan to mark escape routes with Braille in our facilities in the future. Additionally, in recent weeks and months, our board, works council, and other voices from Porsche have clearly positioned themselves publicly: 'Diversity is our strength!'"

How can you involve your fellow Porsche employees in these topics?

Hofer-Jendros: There are many opportunities for colleagues to get involved. For example, by participating in events like the “Christopher Street Day” in Stuttgart, where we at Porsche actively show our support and promote mutual encouragement within our workforce. Recently, over 150 employees joined in 2024. Another project is the 'Porsche helps' initiative, where employees volunteered at the Inclusion Game Day organised by the German first-tier basketball team MHP Riesen Ludwigsburg, committing themselves for tolerance and acceptance in basketball, sports, and society.

What wish do you generally have for a more sustainable future?

Hofer-Jendros:I am convinced that diversity and inclusion help us overcome barriers, build bridges, and collaboratively create a future where every individual can reach their full potential. We should be open to others, respect everyone as they are, and value their uniqueness. Navigating diversity is a learning process for all of us. It also involves making mistakes along the way. Ultimately, we are all human. If we keep this in mind and strive to grow beyond ourselves, we can meet the challenges of the future and provide a livable world for current and future generations. The hope that we will succeed in this is my drive.

Info

In the interview series "Perspectives on Sustainability", Porsche employees talk about their specialist subject areas. The interview with Sylvia Hofer-Jendros is part 13 of the series.

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