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DIVERSITY STATEMENT

Perspective

By virtue of being a person of Indian origin, "diversity" is a concept I have been familiar with since my childhood days. The physical, social, cultural, linguistic, religious, political, and ideological diversity among the people in India is tremendous and obvious. Yet, my culture and upbringing have familiarized me with the concept of *"Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" (The world is one family)* and enabled me to look beyond the apparent differences in people and treat them as equals. The experiences gained while working in IBM in Bangalore, India, a place with a language and culture vastly different from my own, pursuing my Ph.D. in Tennessee, USA, and my postdoc in Limerick, Ireland, have familiarized me with the complexity and multifacetedness of diversity. I have experienced being the only person at the table who doesn't speak a specific language with the others chatting among themselves in that language, and had random people hurling racial slurs at me in the streets, telling me to return to my country. On the other hand, I have had the rare opportunity to work with colleagues from different countries and cultures and had delightful cultural exchanges that significantly broadened my view and knowledge of the world. Diversity is also one of my areas of research, and delving deeper into the types and effects of diversity in software development teams has led me to appreciate its value in practical scenarios. These experiences have helped shape my value system that revolves around the central theme of "Unity in Diversity", going beyond just being tolerant of each others' differences towards the more holistic ideology of "unity without uniformity and diversity without fragmentation".

Actions

Unfortunately, tackling the problems with EDI (Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion) is often more complex than is apparent on the surface. The challenges are often systemic and initiatives to address the situation regularly invite harsh push-backs. Isolated instances featured as "Success Stories" often do more harm than good since they create a false impression that everything is fine. Therefore, to make actual progress on the issue, EDI must be implemented at a strategic level, with regular monitoring of progress using metrics that reflect the overall effect of the initiatives taken, rather than being a box-ticking exercise.

I have been serving as a member of the Diversity Committee at Lero since 2022, sharing the responsibility of championing EDI at Lero at a national level in Ireland. As a recipient of the Athena SWAN Bronze award, Lero has been working on addressing EDI issues for a long time, but the official Diversity committee was set up in 2022. As a new member, I have arranged an EDI training course for the committee members to form the same baseline understanding of our current standing on different EDI issues, and proposed appointing a member from the LGBTQ+ community to the diversity committee. We have developed the official Terms of Reference document for the committee, finalized norms for the composition, appointment, governance, and responsibilities of the committee, and are working on setting up a 5-point diversity action plan for the following year.