



## Diversity and Inclusion

*The Question of improving diversity and inclusion in the UK's IP profession remains a key commitment of this organisation. Last year we planted a flag committing the IP Federation to do more in this area, and now we are making good on that commitment.*

Last year in *The IP Federation Review* we pointed to the dangers of the Covid-19 pandemic worsening accessibility to the IP profession and having an adverse impact on the number of available jobs. The likelihood was that this would particularly affect black, Asian and ethnic minority people who were suffering more from the impact of the pandemic and who are disproportionately over-represented in the poorer communities.

School closures and classroom restrictions have had a very serious impact on the education of a generation of children, but especially those from under-privileged areas where additional support, which has been available to the better off, has been sadly lacking. This means that in the coming years more is going to have to be done to ensure that the huge talent pool which exists in under-privileged communities is not lost to industry and the IP world.

As one of its founding members, the IP Federation has a longstanding association with IP Inclusive – the organisation created by Andrea Brewster to promote the cause of diversity and inclusion in the IP professions. In 2021, members of the IP Inclusive Management Board (IPIM), including the IP Federation, agreed to a reconstitution of IPIM with individual rather than organisational members in order to give IP Inclusive greater autonomy to achieve its objectives. However, this change does not mean that the link between the IP Federation and IP Inclusive is now any less strong. The IP Federation continues to be a critical friend and to provide related support to IP Inclusive.

The IP Federation has now also created an internal working group dedicated to the furtherance of diversity and inclusion initiatives amongst its members. The working group, chaired by Gordon Harris (IPIM and Gowling WLG), also comprises IP Federation President, Sonia Cooper, Vikki Townsend (Rolls-Royce), Ruth Wright (BT), Julie Browne (Shell), Julie Dunnett (policy advisor, IPIM and formerly GKN), and Suzanne Oliver (policy advisor and formerly Arm). Several of the working group's first members are either individual members of the reconstituted IPIM or the advisory board that has recently been created. The connection between the organisations therefore remains at the heart of the IP Federation's work in this area. Employees of IP Federation members are also involved in various IP Inclusive committees.

The working group members who are active in IP Inclusive are going to be working towards creating a version of the IP Inclusive's Charter that underpins its activities and which allows IP Federation members to be able to sign up with confidence.

A key object in getting IP Federation members signed up to the IP Inclusive Charter, as well as encouraging strong diversity policies within our member companies, is to enable them to use their leverage with professional firms that they instruct to drive diversity and inclusion metrics across the whole of the IP profession. As instructors of IP professionals – patent attorneys, solicitors or barristers

– IP Federation members are in a strong position to require positive diversity and inclusion policies in the firms they instruct and to require sight of key metrics to assess performance. The working group will develop this proposal and possible methods of implementation through the year.

One of the projects run by IP Inclusive is called "Careers in Ideas" (<https://careersinideas.org.uk/>). The objective of Careers in Ideas is to use mentoring and encouragement to open up the possibilities for careers in IP to people at all stages of their educational development, from school-children to post-graduate students. The IP Federation is a keen supporter of the work of the Careers in Ideas initiative through provision of funding for specific projects and IP Federation members also being involved in the Careers in Ideas task force. There will be continued discussions between the two organisations about how IP professionals from within the membership of the IP Federation can continue to be involved in Careers in Ideas and provide an insight into the in-house IP role in industry.

There is no such thing as "too early" when it comes to raising awareness of IP as a career path. In2scienceUK (<https://in2scienceuk.org/>) is an outreach organisation that aims to provide young people from low-income and disadvantaged backgrounds with an opportunity to gain practical insight into the STEM sector as well as the knowledge and confidence to progress to university. This year, the IP Federation has supported the excellent work of In2scienceUK not only through sponsorship of a number of students participating in the In2scienceUK STEM programme, but also by IP Federation members conducting a workshop on Intellectual Property and careers in IP called "*Intellectual Property, what's that got to do with me?*" as part of In2scienceUK's summer workshop program. Our working group will continue to explore what additional opportunities there may be for involvement with social mobility and STEM outreach bodies in the future.

Of course, giving presentations and mentoring requires resources – it makes no sense to reinvent the wheel every time someone has an opportunity to present. We are looking at formal resource sharing arrangements with IP Inclusive to help create a bank of slides, props and other materials to support anyone getting involved in projects to encourage young people into the IP professions.

When she was our President, Suzanne Oliver set out a series of objectives which the IP Federation wants to take forward, and this will be the task of the working group. It is worth restating those objectives (in an abbreviated form) here:

- 1) Improve the image that we project to people
- 2) Reach new people and places, widening the range of educational and training establishments we engage with, including targeting students before they make career-limiting choices.
- 3) Recruit more fairly, both on advertising/outreach and objective decision making.
- 4) Address financial barriers to entry and progression – finding ways to offer financial support.
- 5) Explore bold systemic changes to entry requirements, for example apprenticeship.
- 6) Collect data to help targeting outreach work.
- 7) Work together as a sector, including with government agencies, to make the measures we take more effective.
- 8) Work with outreach charities and organisations to enable us to reach the right people.

Those are inspiring goals, and it will be the objective of the D&I working group to use them as a guide for its work in this vitally important area.

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