

People Strategy.  
Development of an inclusive  
organisational culture.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion  
(DEI) Strategy and Plan  
2026-2030

Estonian Business School

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# EBS DEI plan 2026-2030

<p><b><i>EBS is a community for growth and responsibility, turning knowledge into action and action into impact.</i></b></p>	
<p><b>Purpose</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The DEI plan is a supporting sub-strategy of the EBS Strategy 2026–2030, ensuring fair, responsible, and sustainable development.</li> <li>• DEI is not a separate topic, but a principle of leadership, quality, and organisational design. The plan strengthens the core elements of EBS Strategy (credibility, relevance and resilience).</li> </ul>	<p><b>Link to the EBS Strategy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Credibility</b> – management and operational processes aligned with international standards.</li> <li>• <b>Relevance</b> – an inclusive learning and working environment that reflects the needs of the community.</li> <li>• <b>Resilience</b> – talent retention, risk prevention, and long-term sustainability.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Vision 2030</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fair treatment, a sense of belonging, and psychological safety are measurable quality indicators.</li> <li>• Recruitment, evaluation, development, and compensation processes are transparent and equitable.</li> <li>• DEI is integrated into leadership, academic quality, and service design.</li> <li>• EBS is a trusted international partner in academic networks and development cooperation.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Principles</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Equality by design</b> – processes are designed to proactively prevent inequality.</li> <li>• <b>Leadership accountability</b> – DEI is a core competence and responsibility of leaders.</li> <li>• <b>Data-driven approach and privacy</b> – decisions are based on metrics and analysis.</li> <li>• <b>Zero tolerance</b> – for harassment and discrimination.</li> <li>• <b>Inclusion</b> – fostering a sense of belonging and opportunities to contribute.</li> </ul>

### Strategic Pillars

- **Leadership and accountability** – strengthening leaders’ DEI competence and performance alignment.
- **Fair processes** – recruitment, evaluation, promotion, and pay transparency.
- **Inclusive environment** – psychological safety, inclusive teaching, and accessibility.
- **Data and monitoring** – key metrics, reporting, and management insights.

### Roles and responsibilities

- **Management Board** – accountable for strategic goals and outcomes.
- **DEI sponsor** – ensures prioritisation, visibility, and resources.
- **DEI working group** – coordinates implementation and monitors progress.
- **Heads of units, Senate and students** – implement and shape solutions.

### Summary

EBS DEI plan 2026-2030 lays the foundation for an organisation where growth and responsibility go hand in hand. Integrating diversity, equity, and inclusion into leadership, the quality systems, and everyday practices ensures that the academic and societal impact is built on a fair and inclusive environment.

## Introduction

*EBS is a community for growth and responsibility, turning knowledge into action and action into impact.*

### Introduction and Purpose

The EBS Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan 2026–2030 (hereinafter the DEI Plan) is a supporting sub-strategy of the EBS Strategy 2026–2030. It ensures that the development and growth of EBS are fair, responsible, and sustainable, and aligned with international academic and ethical standards.

The DEI Plan treats diversity, equity, and inclusion not as a separate area, but as an integrated principle of leadership, quality, and organisational design. It provides a framework for strengthening the credibility, relevance, and resilience of EBS in a rapidly evolving international higher education and labour environment.

### Alignment with the EBS Strategy 2026–2030

#### **Alignment with the EBS strategy 2026–2030**

EBS strategy 2026–2030 sets out the aim of becoming a leading Northern European entrepreneurial university ecosystem, with a strong international reputation, clear societal impact, and a sustainable operating model. The DEI strategy supports this ambition on three levels:

- **Credibility.** By ensuring that EBS leadership practices, human resource (HR) processes, and the academic environment comply with international quality and compliance standards.
- **Relevance.** By shaping an inclusive learning and working environment that reflects the real needs of a diverse community and supports high-quality teaching, learning, and research.
- **Resilience.** By strengthening the organisation’s capacity to attract and develop talent, mitigate risks, and maintain trust, reliability, and long-term performance.

### Principles (EBS DEI standards)

The implementation of the DEI strategy is guided by the following principles (Figure 1: EBS DEI standards):

- **Equity by design.** Processes and systems are designed to prevent inequalities, including gender inequality.
- **Leadership accountability.** Diversity, equity, and inclusion are core competencies and responsibilities of leaders.
- **Data-driven approach and privacy.** Decisions are based on metrics and analysis, guided by principles of data protection and data minimisation.
- **Zero tolerance for harassment and discrimination.** Emphasis on prevention, clear procedures, and, where appropriate, restorative practices.
- **Inclusion as a quality indicator.** DEI, including gender equality, is integral to evaluating educational quality, employee experience, and organisational culture.



Made with Napkin

Figure 1: EBS DEI standards

# Current State of DEI at EBS

## Diversity in EBS Decision-Making Bodies

EBS governance is carried out by the Foundation's Management Board and Supervisory Board, as well as the EBS Board (hereinafter referred to as "the Senate") - Figure 2.

In 2025, women represented 25% and men 75% of the four-member Management Board, indicating a male majority in top leadership. The age of board members ranges from 42 to 56, suggesting a relatively diverse age profile. All members of the Management Board are Estonian.

The Supervisory Board consists of four members, all of whom are men. The age profile is relatively homogeneous, ranging from 46 to 54 years. Half of the Supervisory Board members have an international background.

In 2025, the Senate is composed of 40% women and 60% men. International members account for 25% of the Senate. The ages of Senate members range from 22 to 83, reflecting the inclusion of students at all levels of study as well as professors emeriti.

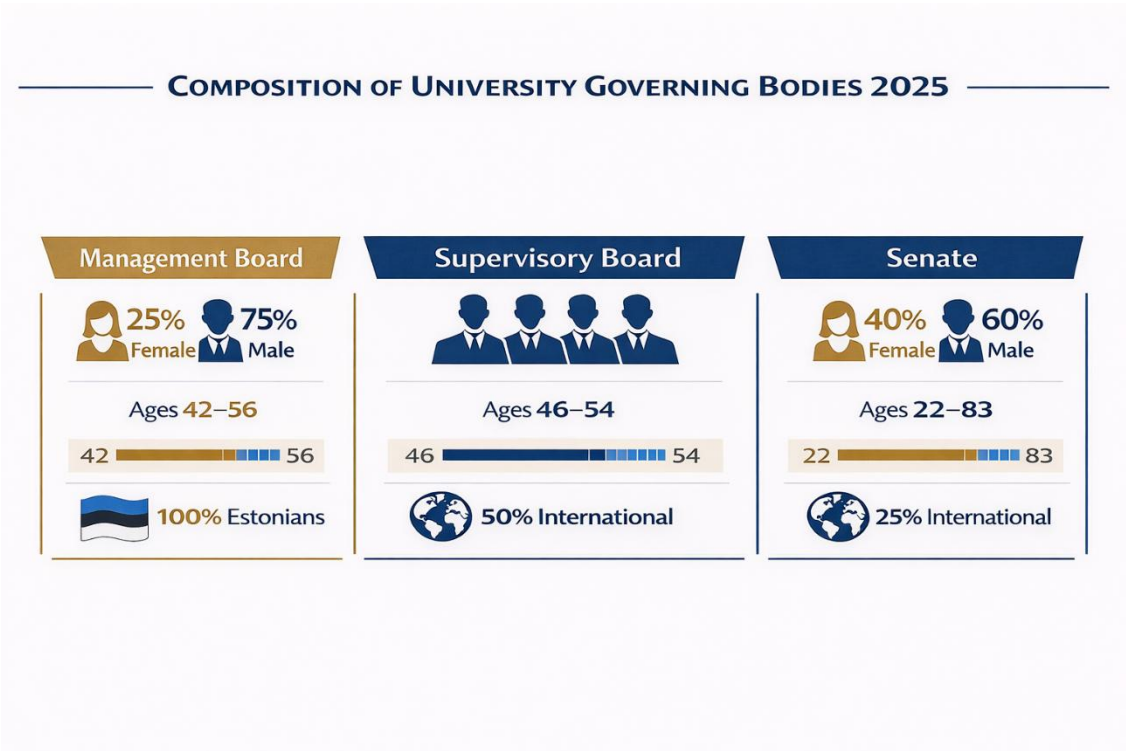


Figure 2: Diversity in EBS Decision-Making Bodies (December 2025)

## Diversity of Academic and Administrative Staff at EBS

The EBS workforce includes both academic and administrative staff. As of 2025, the distribution was 51% academic and 49% administrative staff (Figure 3). The proportion of academic and administrative staff has become more balanced.

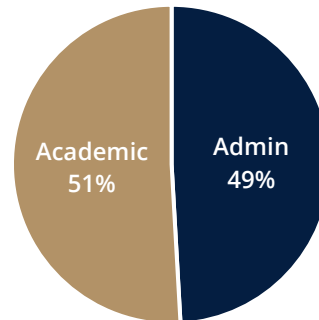
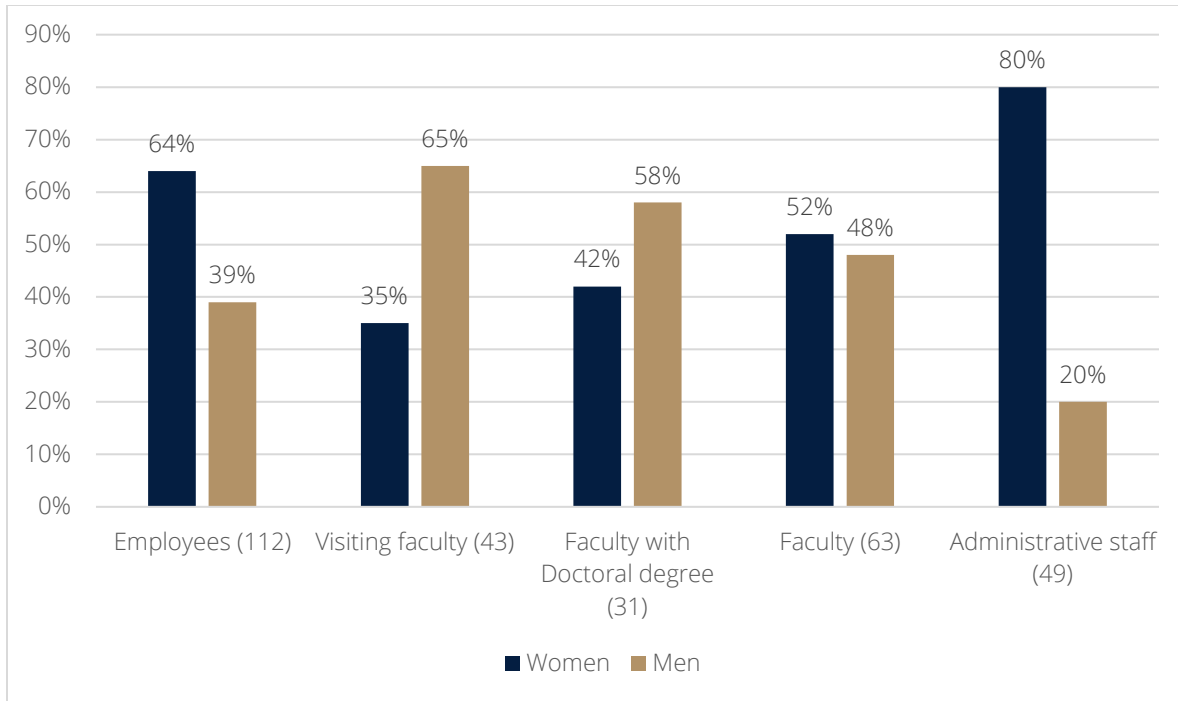


Figure 3. Distribution of EBS staff (December 2025)

The overall gender distribution of staff at EBS is skewed towards women. While in 2022 women accounted for 67% and men for 33% of all employees, by 2025 the distribution had become somewhat more balanced (64% women and 36% men), although a female majority persists.

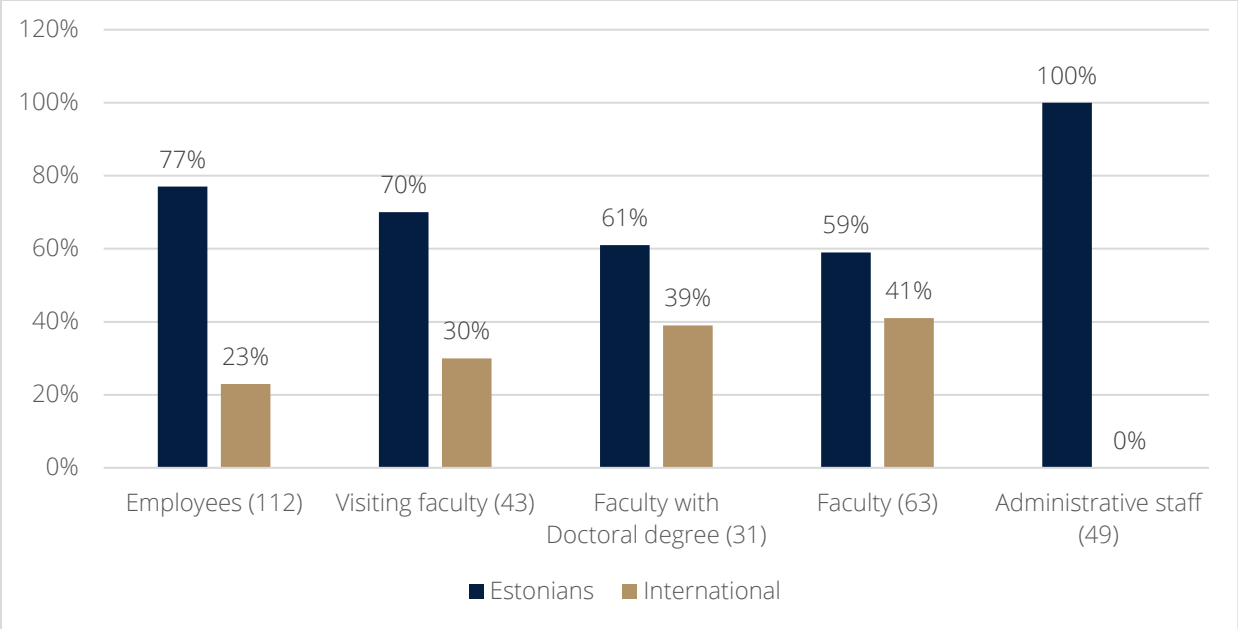
Figure 4 illustrates the gender distribution of EBS staff in 2025. Among academic staff, the gender balance is relatively strong. Among permanent academic staff, the female-to-male ratio was 56:44 in 2022 and 52:48 in 2025, indicating a moderate female majority. Among visiting faculty, the distribution was 46:54 in 2022 and 35:65 in 2025, showing a higher proportion of men in this group.

Among administrative staff, the gender imbalance is significantly skewed towards women. Women represent approximately 80% and men 20% of administrative employees. Notably, several departments (e.g. Academic Affairs, Marketing) consist entirely of female staff, which may reflect structural or historical factors.



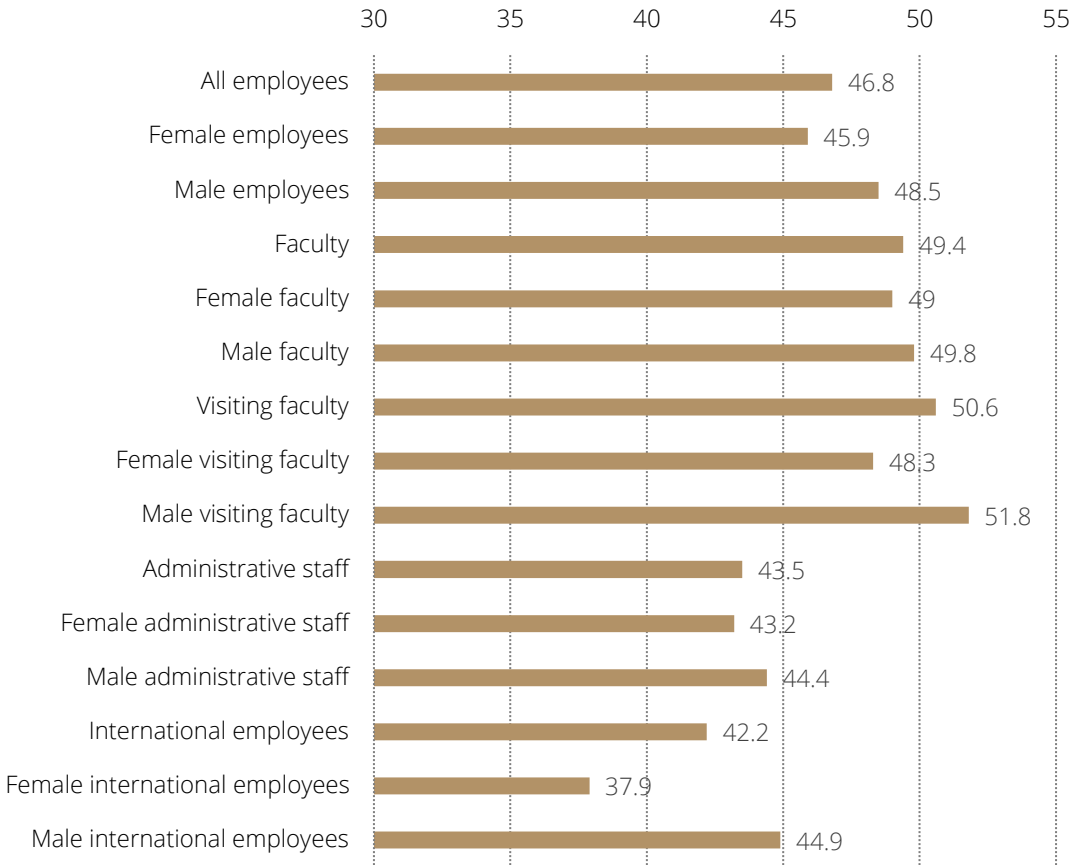
**Figure 4: Gender distribution of EBS staff (December 2025)**

Approximately one-quarter of EBS employees are from abroad. Figure 5 shows that the highest level of international representation is found in academic roles: international staff make up 39% of faculty with doctoral degrees and 41% of the faculty overall. This indicates relatively strong progress in increasing the internationalisation of academic staff. However, diversity is lower in other groups. Among all employees, 23% are international, and among visiting faculty, the share is 30%. There is no international representation among the administrative staff. At present, we have employees from 21 countries: the United States, Bangladesh, Belgium, Ghana, Spain, the Netherlands, India, Iran, Latvia, Nigeria, Pakistan, France, Sweden, Germany, Finland, Switzerland, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia.



**Figure 5: Distribution of EBS staff by nationality (December 2025)**

The comparison of data from the beginning of the organisation’s first Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) action plan period (2022–2025) and the end of 2025 shows that the average age of employees has decreased somewhat across several staff groups (Figure 6). The overall average age declined from 48.9 to 46.8 years. A similar trend can be observed among academic and administrative staff, indicating a moderate rejuvenation of the workforce. At the same time, differences emerge across staff groups. For example, among visiting faculty and international employees, the average age has increased slightly over the period, reflecting some diversification in the age structure.

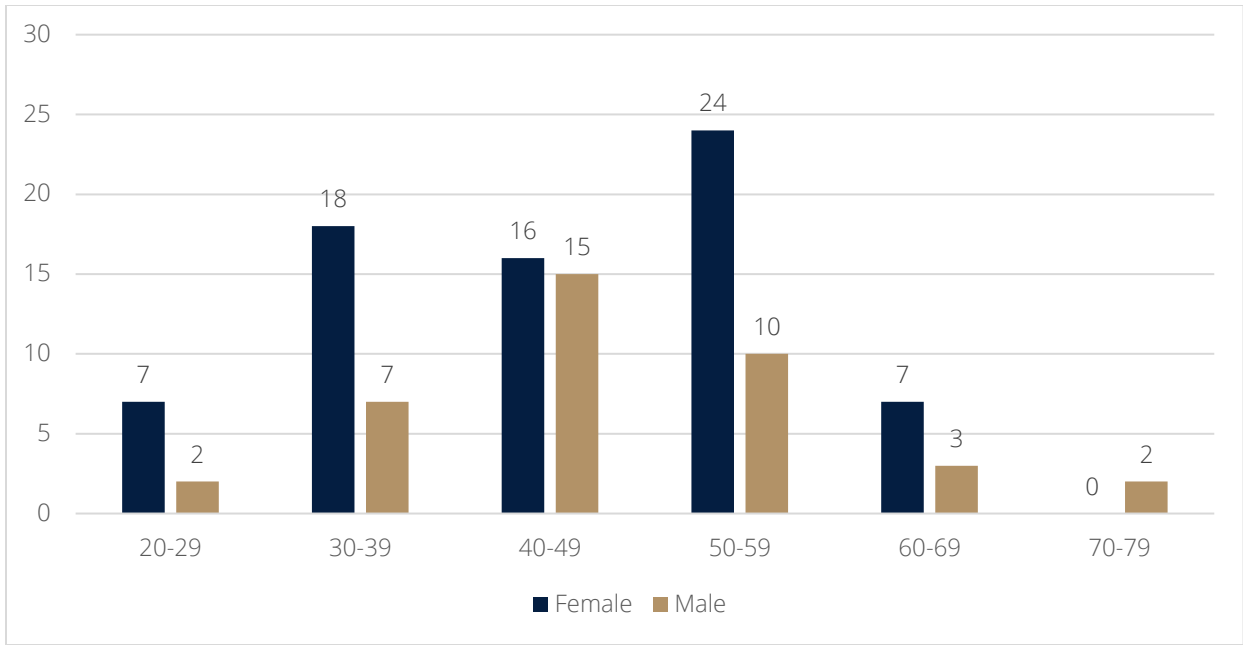


**Figure 6: EBS average workforce age by role, gender, and nationality (December 2025)**

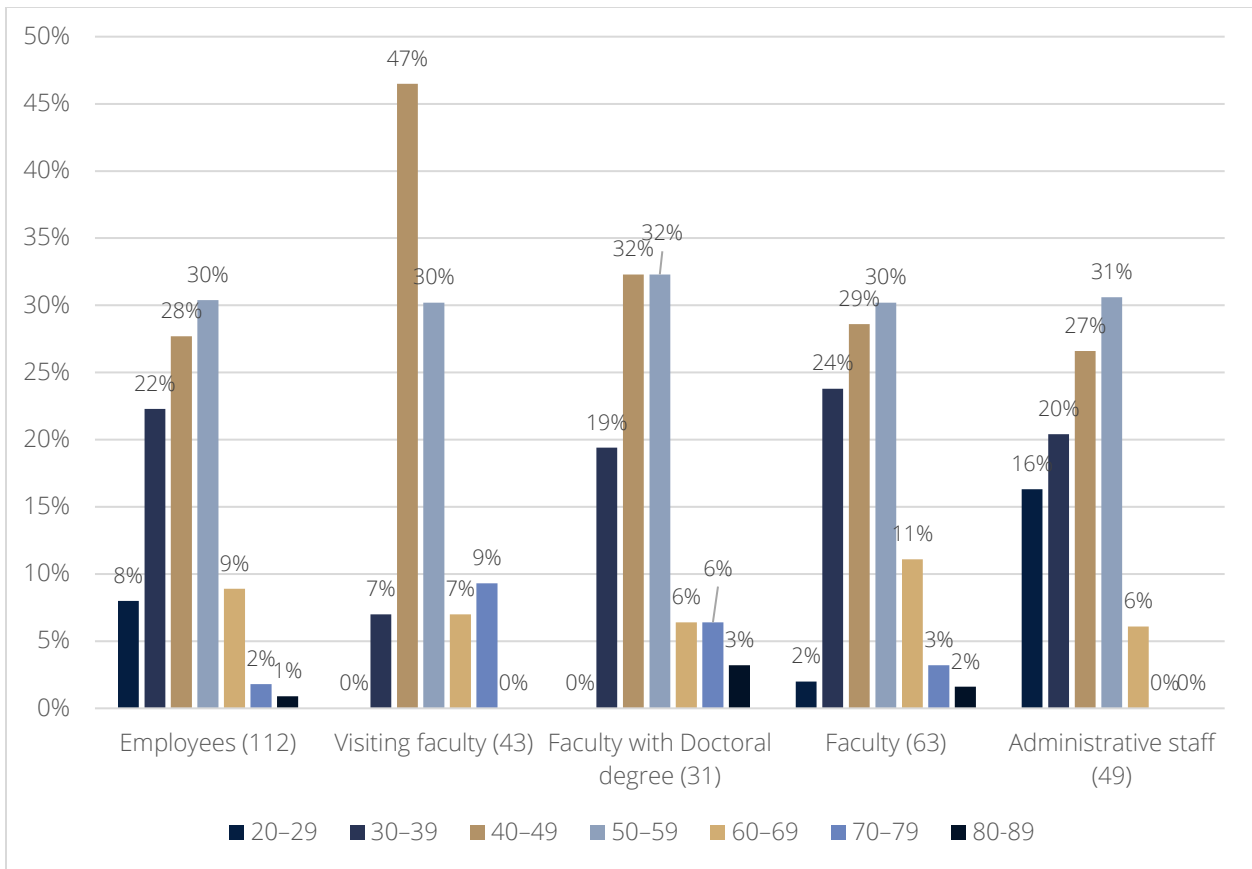
Figure 7 shows that the age distribution of employees is concentrated mainly in the middle age groups. The largest share is made up of employees aged 50–59 (30.4%), followed by those aged 40–49 (27.7%) and 30–39 (22.3%).

In terms of gender distribution, women are more represented in both the younger and older middle-aged groups, particularly among those aged 30–39 and 50–59, while in the 40–49 age group the numbers of men and women are almost equal. The proportions of very young (20–29) and older (70+) employees in the organisation are relatively small.

Figure 8 also indicates that the EBS workforce is age-diverse, although the distribution varies across staff groups. The largest age groups are those aged 40–59, who make up the majority among both academic and administrative staff, while the shares of younger (20–29) and older (70+) employees are considerably smaller.



**Figure 7: Age and gender distribution of EBS staff (December 2025)**



**Figure 8: Age diversity among employees (December 2025)**

## Student Body

At the higher education level, our gender balance is 60:40, male to female (Figure 9). While male students are slightly overrepresented at the bachelor's and master's levels, the situation is reversed at the doctoral level (Table 1).

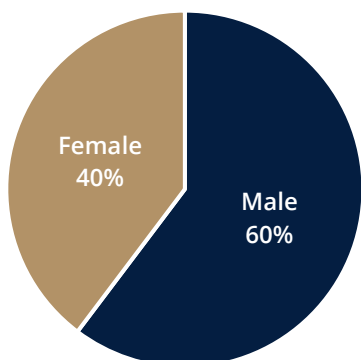


Figure 9. Gender distribution of students in EBS, academic year 2025/2026 (October 2025)

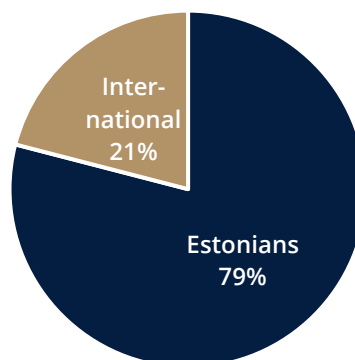


Figure 10. Distribution by nationality of the student body, academic year 2025/2026 (October 2025)

	Total student body	Bachelor's students	Master's students	Doctoral students
<b>Total</b>	100%	83%	11%	6%
<b>Female</b>	40%	39%	45%	56%
<b>Male</b>	60%	61%	55%	44%

Table 1. Gender distribution of the student body across study levels (October 2025)

One fifth (21%) of EBS students are international, while 79% are from Estonia (Figure 9). At present, we have students from 36 countries: the United States, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belgium, the Philippines, Ghana, Georgia, China, Spain, the Netherlands, Ireland, India, Indonesia, Iran, Italy, Japan, Cameroon, Qatar, Cyprus, South Korea, Latvia, Nepal, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Poland, France, Romania, Germany, Serbia, Finland, the United Kingdom, Turkey, Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia.

## Overview of the Employee Engagement and Satisfaction Survey

In 2025, EBS conducted an employee engagement and satisfaction survey, with a response rate of 85% (Figure 11). The survey covered employee engagement, the content and meaning of work, development opportunities, work organisation, collaboration, leadership, goal setting, feedback, compensation and recognition, equality, and mental well-being. The responses provided a comprehensive overview of how employees experience their work and work environment at EBS, as well as the organisation's key strengths and areas for development.

The results show that employees have a strong connection to their work and the organisation, and, in several areas, the EBS ratings are higher than those of comparable public-sector organisations. In particular, the content and meaning of work, development opportunities, and flexible work arrangements were highlighted. The findings indicate that employees consider their work meaningful, value flexibility, and perceive EBS as providing a supportive environment across several important aspects of working life.

At the same time, the survey highlights several areas that require more attention going forward. The most prominent issues relate to goal setting and monitoring progress, the quality of immediate supervision, collaboration, and support for mental well-being. This suggests that while the overall work experience at EBS is positive, employees would like more clarity in certain areas, more consistent feedback, improved information flow, and more proactive support for their well-being.

The survey shows that EBS strengths are primarily related to meaningful work, a development-supportive environment, and flexible work arrangements. Employees feel that their work has purpose and value the opportunity to perform their roles in a modern and flexible way. At the same time, the feedback indicates that future organisational development should focus on strengthening management quality, clarifying goals, improving collaboration and communication, and providing more systematic support for mental well-being.

Overall, it is encouraging that employee engagement and satisfaction at EBS are strong, and that the organisation has several clear strengths to build on. At the same time, the survey provides a solid basis for identifying areas where targeted development efforts could further enhance the employee experience and better support the organisation's strengths.

## EBS Employee satisfaction survey 2025

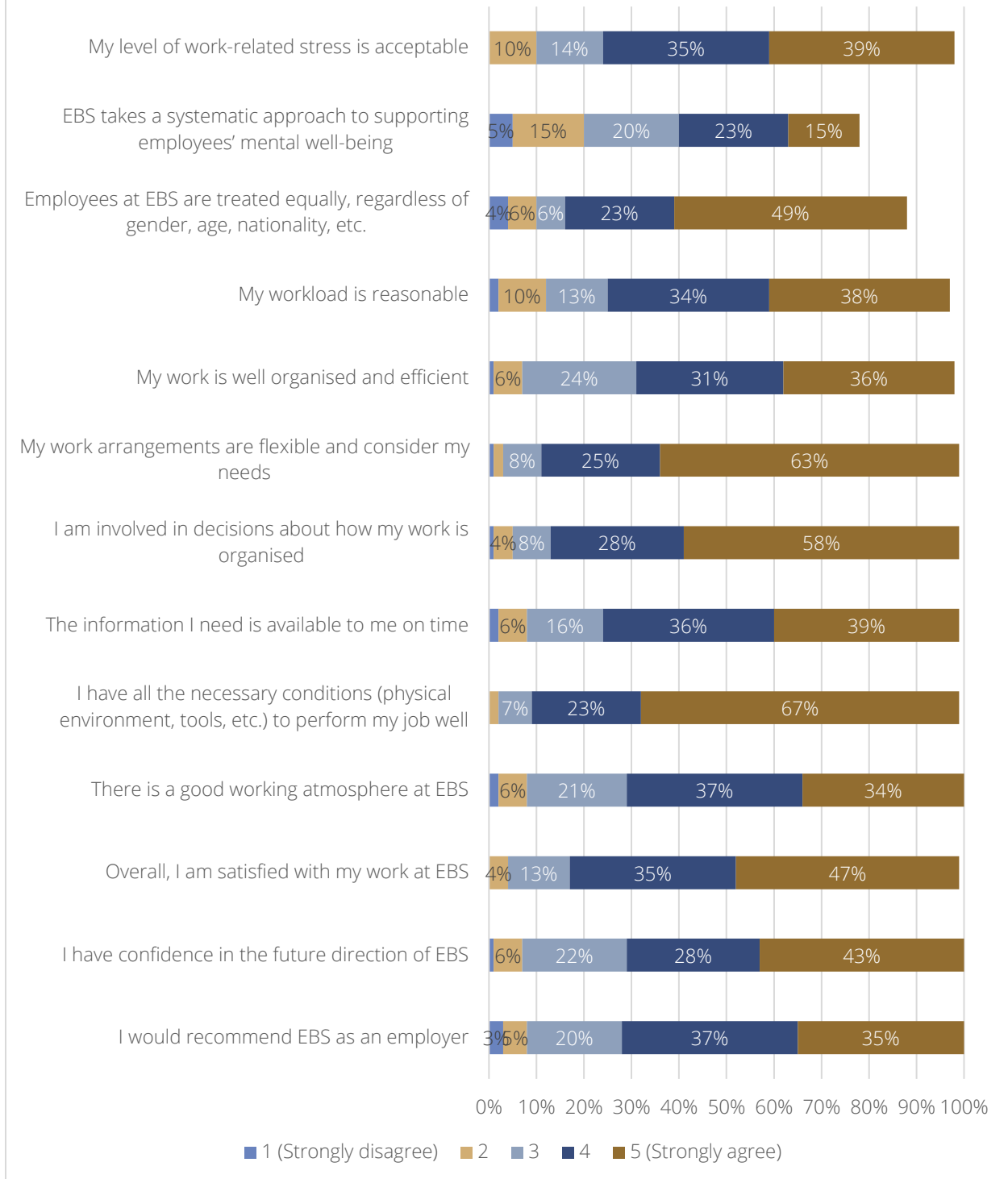


Figure 11. EBS Employee satisfaction survey 2025

## Where we are heading – Vision 2030

By 2030, EBS will be a learning and working environment where:

- fair treatment, including gender equality, a sense of belonging, and psychological safety, are measurable and managed quality indicators;
- recruitment, evaluation, development, and compensation processes are transparent and designed in line with the principle of equality;
- diversity, equity, and inclusion are integrated into leadership, teaching quality, and service design;
- EBS is a trusted international partner in academic networks, research projects, and development cooperation.

This DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) action plan supports the organisation's strategic priority to establish clear leadership principles, shared expectations for leadership roles, and a positive employee experience. A strong and inclusive organisational culture requires transparent management practices, clearly defined goals, and effective collaboration at all levels.

The action plan focuses on the systematic development of leadership and work environment principles to ensure that employees have clarity about expectations, receive regular and constructive feedback, and feel valued within the organisation. To support this, a common framework will be established for setting goals, monitoring their achievement, and providing feedback between employees and managers. Clear expectations for the leadership role will also be defined to support employee development, effective collaboration, and open communication.

An important part of the action plan is also clarifying internal communication and collaboration principles to increase transparency in goals and decision-making processes and to strengthen cooperation across units. In addition, attention is given to employees' mental well-being and the development of a supportive work environment by establishing systematic practices that help sustain a positive organisational culture and support employee well-being and inclusion.

Such a holistic approach helps create a work environment where leadership is clear and consistent, employees feel included, and the organisation is better able to support the development of its people and the achievement of shared goals.

## Action plan 2026-2030

### Leadership and accountability. *Credibility*

The aim is to make DEI an integral part of EBS leadership culture. The role of leaders is to create an environment where fair treatment and inclusive behaviour are part of everyday practice.

Focus areas:

- Systematic development of DEI competencies among leaders.
- Integration of DEI into leadership performance reviews and development objectives.

Key activities:

- DEI policy package (2026): principles of equal treatment and non-discrimination (for employees and students); prevention and handling of harassment, bullying and hate-related incidents; standards for inclusive language and communication.
- Minimum DEI standard for leaders (2026–2027): mandatory training, case-based learning, and inclusive recruitment and feedback practices.
- Inclusive meeting culture and decision-making (2027): accessible formats, participation guidelines, and a channel for anonymous input.
- Inclusion pulse survey (from Q4 2026): conducted twice a year.

KPIs:

- Policy access and awareness (% of employees/students who know where to find them and where to turn for support).
- Training completion rate (leadership/leadership-target group 90%+).
- Inclusion index (annual trend).

### Fair and Transparent Processes. *Credibility & Resilience*.

The aim is to ensure that processes related to human resource management and academic work support equality and trust.

Focus areas:

- Standardisation of recruitment, evaluation, and promotion processes.
- Clear and transparent role and salary structures.
- Implementation of the requirements of the EU Pay Transparency Directive.

Key activities:

- Recruitment standard (2026): competency-based job descriptions, structured interviews, an evaluation matrix, and a diverse selection panel (where possible).

- Role and job family framework (2026–2027): logic for role and pay levels, transparent criteria, and documented decisions (in preparation for the requirements effective 7 June 2026).
- Pay equity audit (2027, 2029): by gender and other risk characteristics (where data can be lawfully processed), with a corrective action plan.
- Development and promotion process (2027): transparent career framework for academic and support roles, including a mentoring programme (also for international employees).

KPIs:

- Diversity of candidate shortlists (process metrics).
- Trend in pay disparities (gender pay gap/comparison of equivalent roles), aligned with the objectives of the Directive.
- Retention of employees in at-risk groups (reported anonymously/in aggregate).

## Inclusive learning and working environment. *Relevance.*

The aim is to support learning, teaching, and working in an environment where community members feel valued and included.

Focus areas:

- Strengthening psychological safety.
- Development of inclusive teaching and supervision practices.
- Systematic improvement of physical and digital accessibility.

Key activities:

- Accessibility audit of admissions and teaching (2026): support for students with special needs, assessment methods, accessibility of e-learning, and the clarity and language of study information.
- Student support model (2027): early alert signals, referral pathways to counselling, and “landing” support for international students.
- Inclusive assessment framework (2027–2028): alternative forms of assessment in justified cases; alignment of academic integrity and AI use principles with an equity perspective.
- Monitoring of inclusion and experiences of discrimination (from Q4 2026): student survey once a year.
- Faculty development programme (2026–2027): inclusive classroom practices, handling conflicts and sensitive topics, and bias in assessment.
- DEI review of curricula (2027–2028): diversity of cases and literature, international balance of examples, and ethics.

- Research ethics and fieldwork standards (2027): protection of research participants, equal treatment, and safe processes.

KPIs:

- Trends in dropout rate (reported in aggregate).
- Satisfaction of international students.
- Number and impact of accessibility improvements.
- Proportion of trained faculty.
- Number of curriculum reviews and implemented improvements

### Data, Monitoring, and a Learning Organisation. *Resilience.*

The objective is to make DEI development visible and manageable. DEI progress at EBS is monitored systematically, and decisions are based on reliable data and regular feedback mechanisms. Data collection and analysis enable understanding of the organisation's strengths and areas for development, assessment of the impact of implemented activities, and support for continuous organisational learning.

Focus areas:

- Development of key metrics and datasets for both staff and students.
- Regular reporting and internal evaluation.
- Use of DEI-related management information in decision-making.

Key activities:

- Short inclusion pulse surveys and an employee satisfaction survey (from Q4 2026): measuring employee engagement, psychological safety, and sense of organisational belonging through brief quarterly pulse surveys and one comprehensive employee satisfaction survey conducted annually in the autumn.
- Student engagement and discrimination experience survey (from Q4 2026): monitoring students' learning and community experience, as well as any experiences of unequal treatment, conducted once per year.
- Pay equity audit (2027, 2029): analysis of pay gaps by gender and other relevant characteristics (where data processing is lawful), and preparation of a corrective action plan if needed.
- Monitoring DEI indicators in HR processes (from 2026): recruitment, promotion, and employee retention to identify potential patterns of inequality.
- Monitoring accessibility and inclusion in the learning environment (from 2026): tracking the impact of accessibility audits and improvements, and analysing student feedback.

- DEI reporting and organisational learning (from 2027): regular reporting of key DEI indicators to management and using the results in development planning

KPIs:

- Inclusion index and psychological safety indicators (annual trend).
- Survey participation rate (% of employees and students).
- Gender pay gap and salary differences in comparable roles (trend).
- Diversity of candidate shortlists and recruitment process indicators.
- Employee retention trends overall and across risk groups.
- Student satisfaction and sense of belonging indicators.
- Number of accessibility audits and implemented improvements.

## Roles and Responsibilities

### **Management Board**

The Management Board is responsible for setting DEI strategic objectives, supporting their implementation, and monitoring outcomes at the organisational level. The Management Board ensures that DEI principles are integrated into strategic decision-making, management practices, and resource planning.

At the executive level, the Rector serves as the sponsor of the DEI area, ensuring its priority, visibility, and access to resources.

### **DEI Sponsor**

The Rector, as the DEI sponsor, represents the topic at the executive level and leads strategic discussions and priorities related to DEI. The sponsor supports the integration of DEI principles into organisational development objectives, management practices, and decision-making processes.

The sponsor also helps ensure that DEI topics are visible within the organisation, addressed systematically, and that key initiatives receive the necessary attention and support at the leadership level.

### **DEI Working Group**

The DEI Working Group supports the implementation of the strategy and action plan across the organisation. Its role is to coordinate DEI-related activities, support units and managers in implementing them, and collect and analyse data on progress.

The Working Group monitors the achievement of agreed objectives and indicators, shares good practices, and, where necessary, proposes adjustments to activities. It provides the

Management Board with regular updates on progress, impact, and potential areas for development.

### **Heads of Units**

Heads of units are responsible for implementing DEI principles within their areas of responsibility and integrating them into everyday work processes and management practices.

They ensure that recruitment, development support, feedback, and decision-making processes are transparent and fairly conducted, and that they support an inclusive work environment. They also play a key role in creating a psychologically safe workplace where employees feel valued and can express their views safely.

### **Senate and Students**

The Senate and students are key partners in DEI development activities and in shaping organisational culture. Their role is to bring the perspective of the academic community to discussions, provide feedback on planned and implemented activities, and participate in the development of solutions.

The involvement of students and the Senate helps ensure that DEI principles are also reflected in teaching and the learning environment, supporting an open, respectful, and inclusive academic community.

## DEI Focus Themes for Academic Years 2026-2030

### 2025-2026

#### Pay Transparency

The pay transparency focus theme assesses the organisation's readiness to establish fairer, more transparent compensation principles in line with the EU Pay Transparency Directive. Within the DEI action plan, this means a deliberate move towards better clarity on how compensation is structured and on what basis it is determined. At EBS, this topic has already been addressed: a career model and salary grades have been developed to support role clarity and more consistent compensation principles. In 2025–2026, the focus is on introducing these principles to employees and supporting their understanding to strengthen the sense of fairness, trust, and equal treatment within the organisation.

2026-2027

## Nonviolent Communication

The focus on nonviolent communication addresses the organisation's readiness to shape a communication culture based on respect, empathy, and mutual understanding. Within the DEI action plan, this means a deliberate shift towards non-judgmental, non-blaming communication, where individuals are supported in expressing their thoughts and feelings honestly while also considering others' needs and perspectives. Such an approach helps create a psychologically safe environment where people feel confident speaking up, making mistakes, and learning.

2027-2028

## Neurodiversity

The neurodiversity focus theme addresses the organisation's readiness to recognise and support different cognitive and neurological profiles (e.g. ADHD, autism, dyslexia). Within the DEI action plan, this involves creating an inclusive and accessible environment where differences are not seen as barriers but as part of diversity that enriches collaboration and performance.

2028-2029

## Multidimensional Inclusion / Intersecting Identities / Intersectionality

The intersectionality focus theme is based on the understanding that people's workplace experiences are not one-dimensional but are shaped by the multidimensional interplay among different identities, backgrounds, and social positions. Within the DEI action plan, this means creating an inclusive, fair, and accessible environment that recognises how barriers and opportunities may appear differently at the intersection of various factors.

2029-2030

## DEI Mindset

The DEI mindset focus theme addresses the organisation's readiness to value diversity, ensure equal opportunities, and create an inclusive environment where everyone feels a sense of belonging. Within the DEI action plan, this involves making conscious choices and adopting practices that consider people's diverse backgrounds, experiences, and identities, while reducing systemic and invisible barriers. Such an approach supports fairer treatment, strengthens the sense of belonging, and creates the conditions for effective collaboration and better outcomes.