

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan 2022-2025

Estonian Business School

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Introduction

We are in the business of people. Education is about people. Learning and teaching are about people. Research is about people. Dissemination of knowledge is about people. Innovation is about people. Supporting students, faculty, and employees is about people. Collaborating with others is about people. Creating value is about people.

People are people, with all their commonalities and differences. We know that adapting to the realities of diversity and advancing inclusion will benefit us collectively as a community and each member of that community individually¹. Therefore, we strive for a more equitable, diverse, and inclusive working, learning and research environment.

Three core principles guide everything we do at the Estonian Business School (EBS): ethics, social responsibility, and sustainability. Furthermore, we value the independence and autonomy of our people, encourage collaboration and cooperation between different internal and external parties, and nurture creativity, curiosity, and innovation in all our people and endeavours.

This Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan (DEI Plan) is a strategic tool to develop, maintain, and monitor the building of a diverse and inclusive working, learning and research community.

Working definitions of the key terms

Diversity is all the ways in which people differ and understanding, accepting, and valuing those differences. People differ in a multitude of ways, for example, by primary characteristics, such as age, race, gender, ethnicity, mental and physical abilities, and sexual orientation; and by secondary characteristics, such as education, income, religion, work experience, language skills, geographic location, and family status to name a few². Some of these differences we can see; others become apparent as we interact with each other. Thus, diversity is about every single person.

¹ Sessler Bernstein, Salipante, and Weisinger (2021)

² List of characteristics from Williams (2013)

In the context of the DEI Plan, we focus on the identity aspects that could influence peoples' acceptance, performance, satisfaction, or progress³ at and with EBS and look for ways to organise and manage for more equity and inclusion in all our doings.

Equity is about fair and just treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people. Equity is closely related to equality, but they are not the same. Whereas equality refers to equal treatment, equity implies recognising and addressing structural inequalities that advantage some and disadvantage others. We can achieve equity only if everyone has equal access to opportunities.

Inclusion is respecting and valuing individuals' perspectives, ideas, and thoughts, fostering their sense of belonging, aiding their participation, and supporting them in achieving their potential. In a truly inclusive setting, various people have power, voice, and decision-making authority.

Gender signifies ideas about behaviour, actions, and roles a particular sex performs and the categories of masculinity and manhood and femininity and womanhood. Gender identity refers to a person's internal understanding and perception of their gender, being male, female or something outside the binary distinction (e.g. nonbinary, transgender, trans, gender nonconforming, or other).

Gender balance. Due to the current data collection practices, gender balance refers to situations "where both males and females have equal opportunities and access to matters"⁴ in the organisation, from job positions and career development to decision-making and research team set-up.

Sexual orientation refers to the continuum direction of sexual desire and preference for emotional and sexual relationships toward the same gender, opposite gender, or other genders. Some examples include but are not limited to heterosexual, bisexual, lesbian, gay, homosexual, pansexual, queer, asexual, demisexual, and graysexual.

Race denotes a social and political construct that artificially divides people into distinct groups based on characteristics such as physical appearance (particularly race), ancestral heritage, cultural affiliation, cultural history, ethnic classification, and the social, economic, and political needs of a society at a given period.

³ Hays-Thomas (2004)

⁴ Omotosho (2013, p. 1195)

Ethnicity refers to a group based on cultural criteria, such as language, customs, and shared history and other characteristics, such as values, behavioural patterns, political and economic interests, and ancestral geographical base.

Age is another common identity aspect that might influence peoples' acceptance, performance, satisfaction, or progress in organisations that could result in or derive from ageism – institutional, interpersonal, or self-directed “stereotypes (how we think), prejudice (how we feel) and discrimination (how we act) directed towards people on the basis of their age”⁵.

Notes on the concepts

We, as an organisation, strive to identify and eliminate inequities and barriers to personal and structural development at EBS. Therefore, we try to ensure that all community members can thrive without any part of their identity (like gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic) getting in the way. Consequently, we look for and implement fair and just practices and policies across the organisation. Accordingly, the DEI Plan guides us toward more impartial and unbiased practices that provide an equal possible outcome for every individual.

At EBS, inclusion ensures that everyone feels a sense of belonging in their working, learning and research environment. We aspire to ensure that our faculty, employees, students, and partners feel comfortable and supported by the organisation to be their authentic selves. Furthermore, we strive to have more diverse participation in decision-making processes and development opportunities at EBS.

In Estonia's current institutionalised reporting practice, gender is monitored statistically in terms of women and men, following the distinction indicated by Estonian personal identification numbers. Thus, at EBS and in this DEI Plan, we will follow the same practice until Estonia introduces a new non-binary reporting practice at the country level.

In all cases, a strict balance of 50:50 is unattainable and unrealistic. Therefore, EBS considers the ratio of at or better than 40:60 as an indicator of balance and the ratio at or worse than 30:70 as critical. When more diverse gender information

⁵ World Health Organization (2021)

collection is implemented, the gender balance definition and requirements will be reassessed accordingly.

Currently, there is no system for collecting data on race and ethnicity; therefore, in the DEI Plan, we use citizenships/nationalities as stated in the identity documents of our community members. Thus, for now, for national, racial, and ethnic diversity, we use the term “passport mix”. However, when more specific data collection principles and systems are in place nationally and internationally, these intricate details will be considered in monitoring.

Supporting legislation and standards

First and foremost, a general prohibition of any discrimination is laid down in Article 12 of the Estonian Constitution.

§ 12. Everyone is equal before the law. No one shall be discriminated against based on nationality, race, colour, sex, language, origin, religion, political or other beliefs, property or social status, or other grounds.

The incitement of national, racial, religious or political hatred, violence, or discrimination shall be prohibited and punishable by law. The incitement of hatred, violence or discrimination between social strata shall also be prohibited and punishable by law.

Different legal and policy frameworks promote and govern equality and equity nationally and internationally.

- Estonian Gender Equality Act, Equal Treatment Act and Employment Contracts Act
- European Union (EU) legislation on equality and anti-discrimination
- European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms
- UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- UN International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
- UN Convention concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation
- General Data Protection Regulation of European Union.

Furthermore, this DEI Plan is accompanied by the following Estonian Business School strategy documents and regulations:

- EBS Code of Academic Ethics

- EBS Harassment Policy
- EBS Development Plan for 2021–2025
- EBS Quality Assurance System
- Academic Regulations

Reader's guide to the DEI Plan

The DEI Plan is structured into two parts. The first part on fostering a diverse, equitable, and inclusive community will introduce the ideas and frameworks behind the plan and discusses the organisational embedding of diversity, equitability, and inclusiveness; describes the status of things and illustrates areas for improvement. The second part presents the development plan with responsible parties and organisational units with immediate and continuing development areas. You will find a short list of recommended reading materials at the very end.

Fostering diverse, equitable, and inclusive community

While diverse organisational membership is a step toward more inclusive organisations, performance gains from diversity require more than diverse representation.⁶

Studies⁷ show that organisations with more inclusive cultures and policies do better than others where it matters. For example, diverse and inclusive organisations are more creative, innovative, and productive; attract and retain more vital talent; have a better reputation, brand, and employer image; understand consumer interests and demands better. Moreover, diverse companies are more likely to outperform their peers financially⁸.

To achieve these benefits, it is not enough to promote diversity and equity; fostering a culture of inclusion is essential. The following subchapters will briefly discuss DEI organisational embedding and provide an overview of the status quo at EBS.

⁶ Sessler Bernstein et al. (2021, p. 8)

⁷ For example, ILO (2019, 2022), McKinsey & Co (Dixon-Fyle, Hunt, Dolan, and Prince, 2022)

⁸ McKinsey & Co (Dixon-Fyle et al., 2022)

Organisational embedding of diversity, equitability, and inclusiveness

There are many diversity and equity integration paradigms in organisational settings (culture, strategy, and tactics), but they all aim for the same thing – open and inclusive corporate culture development. EBS focuses on providing equal opportunity, ensuring compliance, celebrating differences to attract multicultural talent and serve diverse markets and segments, and valuing different approaches to work that produce continual learning and greater organisational effectiveness⁹.

To achieve a diverse and inclusive working, learning and research environment, we rely on the cross-organisational integration of DEI principles and an open mindset in supporting community building. For this, we take a cue from McKinsey & Co¹⁰ and concentrate on the following:

- **Diversity.** Ensuring representation of diverse talent in all levels, departments, and academic units at EBS and valuing the variety of opinions and insights that come with it
- **Leadership.** Strengthening leadership accountability and capability for inclusion and diversity
- **Equity.** Enabling equal opportunities through fairness and transparency
- **Openness.** Encouraging openness and tackling discriminatory behaviours, from microaggressions to harassment
- **Belonging.** Fostering belonging through unequivocal support for multivariate¹¹ diversity, motivation for personal development and aid in work-life balance improvement

Operational model

EBS's Management Board is responsible for the implementation and success of this DEI Plan. Although fostering diverse and inclusive environment development and community building are facilitated by the top management, it is the responsibility of all the organisational agents and community members.

The management board is responsible for diversity, equity, and inclusion development work at the organisation level. Department heads and heads of the

⁹ Taken from Sessler Bernstein et al. (2021, p. 29) based on Thomas and Ely (1996)

¹⁰ Dixon-Fyle et al. (2022)

¹¹ Multivariate diversity means going beyond gender and ethnicity

academic units supported by the Senate implement the DEI Plan in their respective groups and focus fields. In addition, the Office of Academic Affairs and the Head of Student Experience discuss and collaborate on DEI matters with the students and student council representatives.

A designated DEI Officer rooted in the human resource office and closely collaborating with and supporting others in DEI-related matters will be appointed for successful integration, facilitation, and monitoring.

Current state

As mentioned in the introduction, some of the data is limited due to the standardised data collection principles on a national and organisational level. Nevertheless, the following four subchapters illustrate the DEI-related status quo at EBS in autumn 2022.

Management, career development, and income equality

We pride ourselves that in decision-making positions, we are close to the ideal women-to-men ratio when looking at the whole organisation. While men make up most of the 4-person management board (Figure 1), women are leading in administrative decision-making positions (Figure 2). Gender distribution in the Senate is also well-balanced; even though leaning towards men, the general ratio of 46:54 is very good (Figure 3).

Figure 1. Gender distribution in the Management Board at EBS, October 2022

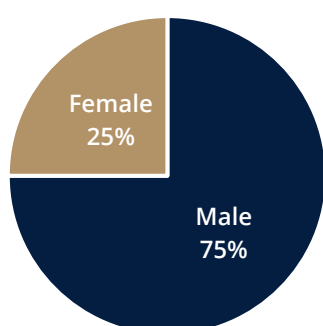


Figure 2. Gender distribution in administrative decision-making positions at EBS, October 2022

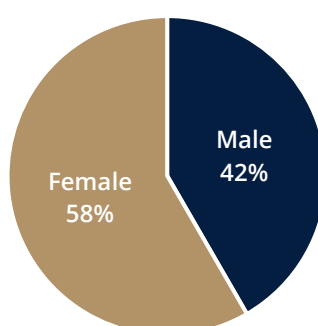
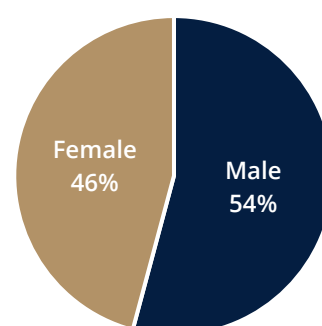


Figure 3. Gender distribution in the Senate at EBS, November 2022



We believe in merit-based career development and advancement. However, we acknowledge that this is more naturally occurring than a structured practice at EBS. We trust our people to make decisions on people that promote equity.

Checking if this is the actual reality, and not merely perceived, of the organisation will be further investigated.

In our case, general comparisons of people's backgrounds, demographic information, and pay levels are insufficient. Moreover, in small organisations like EBS, most people have interdisciplinary, therefore hard-to-compare, job descriptions. For example, a professor can also fill the duties of a head of an academic unit or a programme, and a Senate member all at the same time, which makes their position statistically hard to compare to another professor who doesn't have these additional or different tasks and responsibilities. EBS is in the process of fully adopting a contractual and remuneration system, which is increasingly standardised on the basis of colleagues' actual and objectively measurable contributions to the organisation on a meritocratic basis.

During this DEI Plan, we will also be looking into talent management practices to ensure that equity in opportunities and equality in pay is integrated into career development, advancement and hiring practices more strategically. Furthermore, a clearer talent management strategy will be put into place.

Selected descriptive statistics on faculty and staff

In general, the gender distribution of our staff altogether is skewed towards female employees (Figure 4). The faculty is well-balanced in both full-time academic staff and visiting faculty – with ratios of 56:44 and 46:54 female to male, respectively (Table 1). However, there is an imbalance skewed towards female employees in the administrative staff, with a ratio of 80:20 female to male employees. Interestingly, the Office of Academic Affairs is made up of only women, which merits a little extra investigation into the department's traditions. During this DEI Plan period, different equalising procedures will be developed. The focus is to keep the gender balance in the managerial and decision-making positions, midst the faculty, and among the researchers.

Having almost a fifth (Figure 5) of our people from abroad is a sound basis for growth. While increasing the internationality of permanent staff is more complicated and takes longer time, then now, we are focusing on improving the international staff amount in visiting faculty. Though constantly looking for ways to facilitate the increase of permanent international faculty and staff.

Figure 4. Gender distribution, all full-time employees, October 2022

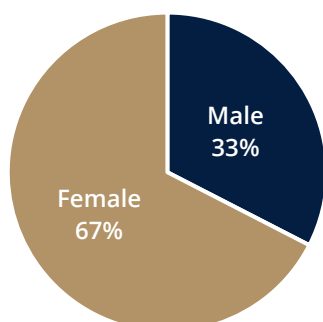


Figure 5. Internationality (Int.) distribution, all full-time employees, October 2022

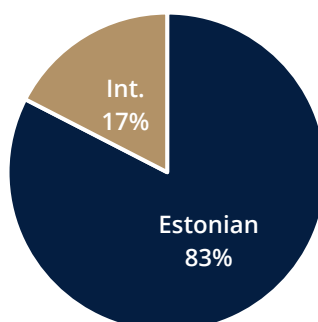


Figure 6. Faculty and admin proportions, all full-time employees, October 2022

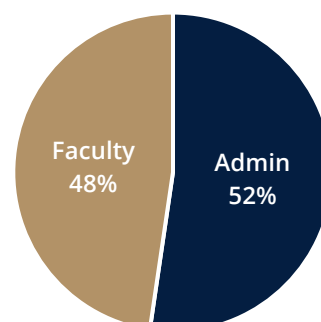


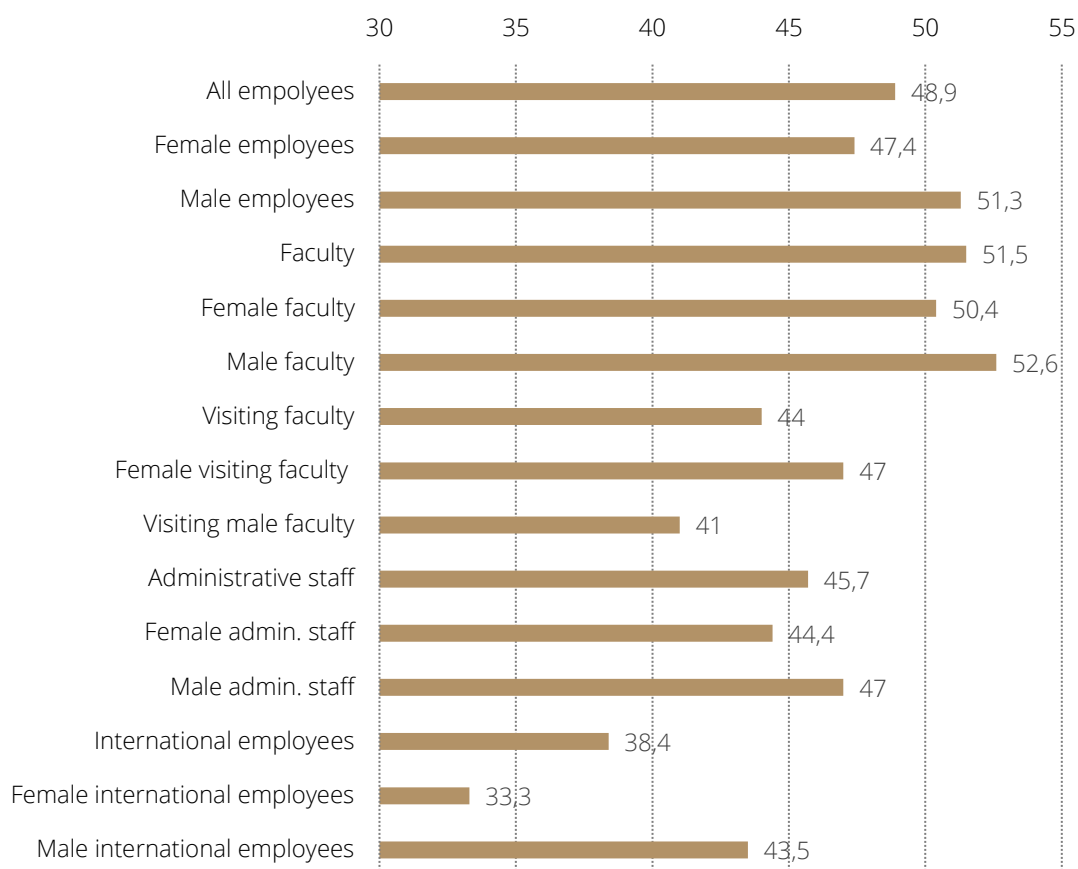
Table 1 shows a more detailed overview of the gender and internationality distribution of EBS staff, including visiting faculty.

Table 1. Gender and internationality distribution of EBS employees, October 2022

	People	Female	Male	Estonian	Int.
All employees	86	67%	33%	83%	17%
Administrative staff, total	45	80%	20%	93%	7%
Rector's Office	5	40%	60%	100%	-
Rector's Secretariat	9	90%	10%	100%	-
Office of Academic Affairs	9	100%	-	100%	-
Office of IT	5	40%	60%	100%	-
Marketing and Communications	5	50%	50%	75%	25%
Accounting	4	75%	25%	100%	-
Library	3	100%	-	100%	-
Centre for Free Economic Thought	1	-	100%	-	100%
Faculty, full-time, total	41	56%	44%	73%	27%
Department of Management	9	33%	67%	89%	11%
Department of Marketing and Communication	4	50%	50%	75%	25%
Department of Economics and Finance	7	43%	57%	86%	14%
Language Centre	5	100%	-	100%	-
Research, Development, and Innovation Unit	16	50%	50%	66%	44%
Faculty members holding PhD	21	50%	50%	71%	29%
Visiting academic staff, total	42	46%	54%	61%	39%
Management Board	4	25%	75%	100%	-
Senate	24	46%	54%	75%	25%
People in administrative decision-making positions	12	58%	42%	92%	8%

The average age of EBS employees is 48,6 years. Figure 7 illustrates the average ages across different types of EBS community members.

Figure 7. The average age of EBS staff, October 2022



Student body

We pride ourselves on being the most international university in Estonia. More than a third of our students are from abroad (Figure 8). Our students come from a multitude of different countries. Currently¹², we have students from 38 countries: Bangladesh, Belgium, Belorussia, Canada, China, Egypt, Finland, France, Georgia, Ghana, India, Iran, Italia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Russia, Serbia, South Korea, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States, Vietnam.

¹² Autumn 2022

Figure 8. Distribution of local and international students at EBS, October 2022.

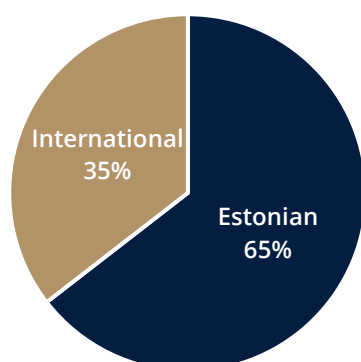
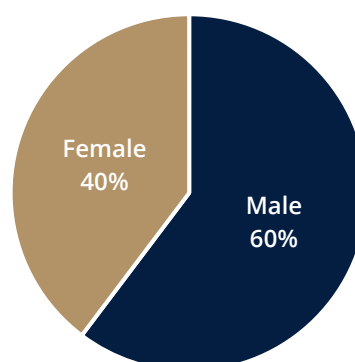


Figure 9. Distribution of female and male university students at EBS, October 2022.



On the higher education level, we have a gender balance of 60:40, males to females, respectively (Figure 9). While male students are a little more dominant on the bachelor's and master's levels, on the doctoral level, the situation is reversed (Table 2).

Table 2. Gender distribution in the university student body across study levels, the academic year 2021/22.

	Total student body	Bachelor's students	Master's students	Doctoral students
Total	100%	80%	15%	5%
Female	40%	37%	48%	56%
Male	60%	63%	52%	44%

Insights from a short employee survey

In October 2021, the Senate ethics committee ran a quick general survey about gender equality at EBS in-house with a response rate of 39%¹³. People were asked about gender discrimination experiences, work-life balance, and family considerateness of the organisation. The final sample was heavily inclined towards women (72%¹⁴), and the results are skewed towards female experiences. Nevertheless, it resulted in some valuable insights on DEI topics at EBS. Here are the general results; contact the human resource office for a more detailed overview.

While the majority (95%) of respondents have not experienced gender-related discrimination, few have gone through that. Even though the organisational

¹³ 51 out of 129 people who were sent the questionnaire responded

¹⁴ 37 out of the 51 respondents were female

culture is generally open-minded and respectful, from the open comments, we can see that we need to work on microaggressions (e.g. so-called jokes by older male colleagues) and enforced stereotypes of women (e.g. expecting women to take assisting/secretarial roles in meetings and other settings).

78% of the respondents believe their gender doesn't influence their profession. Still, as there was no further investigation, we do not know if the rest think it affects their work positively or negatively. This will be introduced in future inquiries. A fifth of the respondents feel they are or have been treated differently because of their gender. Again, further research is required to understand if the difference was positive or negative.

Almost three-quarters (73%) of responding employees feel they have achieved work-life balance. From the open comments, we see that people praise the organisational culture and support, and flexibility towards work. The same applies when inquired about family considerateness of EBS. Most (88%) think that EBS is a family-considerate organisation. However, rest feel that some organising should consider different family dynamics and timetables. Surprisingly, when asked how EBS could be more family-friendly, 15 people shared their ideas, ranging from 6-hour workdays to taking students with special needs and feeling valued at work. All the responses were analysed by the human resource office and are considered for talent management activities.

It is encouraging that gender equality issues at EBS seem to be in a much better state than at many other academic and research institutions. Nevertheless, after analysing the open-field answers on how EBS could do better in terms of gender equality at the workplace and open comments on other questions, we can see that some microaggressions, generation-based gender stereotypes, and general confusion on gender as such remain present. All these will continue to be considered while developing and implementing talent management plans and continually assessed in future surveys (e.g. included as part of the annual employee satisfaction survey) and personal development talks.

Development areas

Sustainable inclusion involves practices and policies comprising an inclusive culture that provides the opportunity, supports the motivation, and enhances the ability of all

organisational members to integrate their perspectives into key decisions and work processes.¹⁵

We strive for practice-based and evidence-informed actions for leveraging diversity. We understand that building an inclusive environment is a never-ending process; thus, most of the activities listed in the DEI Plan are introduced without deadlines, as they are things that we have done and continue to improve on continuously. Furthermore, the actions listed in the DEI Plan are deliberately broad, leaving the development of individual strategic and tactical plans with deadlines for the responsible departments and organisational agents.

Tasks related to the DEI Plan

Here's a list of activities that ensure the finalisation of the DEI Plan and the appointment of a designated DEI officer to help follow through with the rest of the actions.

- Development and finalisation of the DEI plan – Management Board, heads of units and Head of Design (Autumn 2022)
- Endorsement of the DEI Plan by EBS Senate (Autumn 2022)
- Confirmation of the DEI Plan by the Management Board (Autumn 2022)
- Publication of the DEI Plan (Autumn 2022)
- Cross-organisational communication of the DEI Plan – Office of Marketing and Communication, Human resource specialists, Management Board, heads of units (Autumn 2022 onwards)
- Appointment of the DEI Officer – Human resource specialists and Management Board (Winter 2022/23).

Cross-organisational embedding

These are the development areas and actions that aid in the organisational embedding of DEI principles, countering the potential sexism, ageism, racism, and other discriminations, increasing DEI leadership capacity, and developing staff and career policy:

- DEI awareness-raising plan and implementation – Office of Marketing and Communication, human resource specialists, DEI Officer
- DEI mindset integration plan and implementation – DEI Officer, Office of Marketing & Communication, human resource specialists

¹⁵ Sessler Bernstein et al. (2021, p. 12)

- Inclusive communication principles – Office of Marketing & Communication
- DEI violation reporting processes mapping and guidelines (processes for reporting and tools for preventing inappropriate conduct) – human resource specialists, Ethics Committee of the Senate, Management Board, DEI Officer
- DEI integration in research – Head of Development and Innovation, Vice Rector for Research, Head of Design, DEI officer
- DEI integration in teaching – Vice Rector for Studies, heads of units, heads of programs, faculty members, DEI Officer
- DEI integration in administration – human resource specialists, management, Chancellor, DEI Officer
- DEI integration in management and decision-making – Management Board, chancellor, human resource specialists
- General accessibility – Management Board, Chancellor
- Digital accessibility – Office of IT

Talent management

To ensure organisational embedding, the in-house talent needs support. Here are actions for DEI-related ongoing talent management:

- DEI training plan and implementation – human resource specialists, DEI Officer
- DEI competencies development plan and implementation – human resource specialists and Management Board, DEI Officer
- DEI practices for recruitment and onboarding – human resource specialists, DEI officer
- Work-life balance support to include DEI-related topics – human resource specialists, DEI officer
- DEI integration to mentoring and support in career development – human resource specialists, Management Board, heads of units, DEI Officer
- Increase diversity in faculty (focus on “passport mix”) – Vice Rector for Studies, heads of units, heads of programs, human resource specialists
- Diversity integration in leadership and decision-making – Management Board, human resource specialists

Student development

DEI topics, activities and support will be continuously integrated into student experience and touchpoints:

- EDI review of the learning environment – Vice Rector for Studies, heads of academic units, faculty, study department, student council, DEI Officer
- Integration of inclusive teaching, supervising, and learning practices – Vice Rector for Studies, heads of academic units, faculty, Office of Academic Affairs, DEI Officer
- Attracting diverse students – Office of Marketing and Communication, Office of Academic Affairs, Head of Student Experience, DEI Officer
- DEI and well-being support collaboration with student council – DEI Officer, Office of Academic Affairs

Continuous monitoring

To see how we are doing with DEI integration, we will start monitoring the state of things more systematically.

- Key metrics definition and monitoring – Management Board, human resource specialists, DEI Officer, Office of IT
- Strengthening DEI data and analytics – human resource specialists, Office of Academic Affairs, DEI Officer
- Continuous progress monitoring and bi-annual DEI audits – DEI officer, human resource specialists, Office of Academic Affairs
- Possible DEI dashboard development – human resource specialists, DEI Officer, Office of IT

Recommended reading and references

Here is a list of books, articles and reports on diversity, equity, and inclusion in organisations. These have served as input for some of the ideas in the DEI Plan (references marked in the footnotes).

Dixon-Fyle, S., Hunt, V., Dolan, K., and Prince, S. 2022. *Diversity wins: How inclusion matters*. McKinsey & Company.

Hays-Thomas, R. 2004. Why now? The contemporary focus on managing diversity. In: M. S. Stockdale and F. J. Crosby, eds. *The psychology and management of workplace diversity*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, pp.3–30.

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Kanter, R. M. 1977. Some Effects of Proportions on Group Life. In: P. P. Rieker and E. Carmen, eds. *The Gender Gap in Psychotherapy*. Boston, MA: Springer US, pp.53–78.

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Thomas, D. A. and Ely, R. J. 1996. Making Differences Matter: A New Paradigm for Managing Diversity. *Harvard Business Review*, 74 (5), pp. 79–90.

Williams, D. A. 2013. *Strategic diversity leadership: activating change and transformation in higher education*. First edition. Sterling, Virginia: Stylus Publishing.

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<https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/340205> (28.10.2022).