

Progress Report Diversity & Inclusion Office

February 2024

The University of Groningen formulated the mandate for Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) at the end of 2021. 2022 was a year of 'Setting Up,' establishing the D&I office and the attendant infrastructure. 2023 was a year of 'Quick Wins.' 2024 is intended to be the year of 'Strategic Change.' And 2025 a year of 'Structural Embedding.'

This progress report provides an overview of the progress made on the targets of the *Belonging in the University -University Action Plan Diversity and Inclusion 2021-2025* document. It is divided into a brief 1-page executive summary of the status of the targets and thereafter a more detailed overview of the priorities for the upcoming period. It is written for submission to the Board of Directors and exists alongside the D&I Office's annual reports and action plans (available upon request).

In the summary, the targets are clustered as completed, mostly completed, in progress, and to be started. A conclusion focusses on upcoming priorities.

The more detailed overview is organized topically by priorities. For planning purposes, there is an additional section at the end on the items that can be considered completed but are either regularly/annually occurring or need to be continually monitored.

Summary

Of the targets set in the 2021-2025 Action Plan, 8 are complete, 8 are mostly complete, 11 are in progress, (of which 1 is somewhat modified), and 2 are still to be started.

The 8 targets that are **complete** include the establishment of a D&I Office, the publication of a statement of commitment, the establishment of and regular meeting with the internal and external advisory boards^{1*}, the representation^{*} of the UG nationally and internationally, the regular meetings^{*} with relevant stakeholders within the University (e.g. confidential advisor, ombudsperson etc), the (continued) monitoring of the numbers of female professors^{*}, the (continued) creation of awareness about privilege and bias^{*}, and the offering and/or endorsing existing training on D&I issues^{*}. Some of these completed targets recur regularly or need continued monitoring.

An additional group of 8 targets is **mostly complete**. These include the establishment of the infrastructure at faculty level, the completion of 6 of the 8 quick wins (e.g. annual events^{*}, incentive fund^{*}, Zwarte Piet^{*}, Pride flag^{*}) and the drawing up a plan of approach to enable the RFF and AJC to form an active academic community.

^{1*} These targets that recur regularly or need continued monitoring have been set up in such a way that their monitoring or recurrence has been embedded in the regular tasks of the D&I Office and other parties involved.

A further 11 targets are **in progress**. These include the following:

- With the D&I in the faculties team, continue to support the development of faculty D&I strategic plans, and with its working group on measurement, continue the progress on data collection.
- A university wide inclusive language style guide in English is complete, a Dutch language version (more than translation) needs to be developed.
- Working with representatives to support the LGBTQ community.
- Though the creation of the inclusive feedback process through the internal advisory board can be considered complete (regularly occurring), that with the Social Safety team needs to be further developed. Reaching out to students and staff within the university who are studying or researching D&I issues continues to provide a valuable source of feedback.
- Annually revising the Gender Equality Plan. This should no longer be considered a 'quick win' but rather a fully fledged target with the introduction of the need for annual revision.
- With HR, relationships need to be further established to enable the monitoring of the tenure track system, the monitoring of the onboarding process, and the collection of data (about staff application, recruitment, salary and appraisal) and ensuring an open recruitment procedure with diverse BACs.
- Supporting the embedding of D&I in the curriculum, via existing projects like International Classroom, EQUiP, the TAG community of practice, and supporting the establishment of the Comenius initiative.
- One target that is still in progress was somewhat **modified**. Instead of setting up advocacy groups as a top-down process, supporting existing groups and initiatives in a bottom-up procedure. This was modified upon advice from the Faculty & Advisory Boards, and in line with advice from the Sociaal Economische Raad (SER). As such, it remains a target in progress.

Two targets remain and will be **started** in 2024: the document review and addressing the diversity of committees.

Broadly, the upcoming priorities lie in maintaining those ongoing targets already in progress, the targets that need to be started, and those that need to be completed. Emphasis will be on furthering the data collection to form a broader basis for evidence-based D&I (both analysing existing data and drawing on new sources of data), the annual update of the Gender Equality Plan, and working on joint projects with HR and Social Safety. These targets are generally in line with the intention to be a year focusing on Strategic Change.

Changes to the internal context of the D&I Office projected for 2024 move it towards a more strategic positioning, directly under the head of University Services (instead of only related to HR & Health.) In the context of structural embedding, Corporate Communications were to take over the function of the Communications Advisor, but they have indicated that they do not have the capacity to do so. This issue still needs to be resolved, as communication is essential for the visibility and functioning of the D&I Office. We draw the attention of the Board of the University to this point.

At the same time, the external context in which the D&I Office operates brings with it new challenges. The socio-political climate comes with an increase of reported discrimination, reflected in the 2023 publication of the National Programme against Discrimination and Racism. The 2023 midterm review of National Action Plan for more Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education and Research calls for urgency in its pursuance, recalibrating priorities and concretizing targets. In all, the professionalization of the D&I function, as is taking place at all the major Universities, brings greater structure to this complex and somewhat sensitive field.

Detailed Overview

This more detailed overview discusses the priorities for the upcoming period. It is arranged topically, and includes a further elaboration of results already obtained. Sequence reflects priority.

Generally, the primary upcoming priorities are to monitor diversity and inclusion, to support the Faculty developments, to further develop strategic collaborations, to revise the Gender Equality Plan, alongside a number of less strategic priorities. For planning purposes, at the end, there is an additional overview of the items that can be considered completed, but are either regularly/annually occurring and those that need to be continually monitored.

Monitoring Diversity and Inclusion

Monitoring Diversity and Inclusion is a broad, complex target. In line with the 2023 midterm evaluation of the National Action Plan for more diversity and inclusion in higher education and research (NAP), the goal of monitoring diversity and inclusion is given the highest priority in the upcoming period. The 2020 NAP target was to 'improve and broaden monitoring of diversity in teaching and research' specifically the longitudinal monitoring of the inflow, throughput and outflow of staff and students, and where possible, other areas such as (perceived) inclusion in the working and learning environment and the content of research and education.

The 2023 midterm evaluation of the NAP summarises progress to date as 'Data collection and monitoring of diversity has always been a priority of the advisory committee. However, due to the complexity of the issues, many sensitivities and privacy requirements, progress to date has been limited' and concludes that this target should be given the highest priority. In its analysis it ascertains that 'when it comes to measurement, targets and monitoring, the focus is still on gender equality. Therefore, an intersectional perspective, and consideration of all diversity factors (e.g. cultural diversity, lgbtq+ community, first generation students, and physical/mental ability) should be a focus in the implementation of the National Action Plan.'

Data collection as mentioned in the targets articulated in the 2021 UG D&I mandate focus on data collection to perform an (unsolicited) inventory of the state of D&I issues across the institution (1.iii) and to monitor D&I issues to prevent discrimination (LT1), with some of the issues specified being: for staff about application, recruitment, salary and appraisal, and for students about application,

recruitment, progress, grading and career. Data collection about well-being is collected in the context of the wellbeing project.

Based on both the NAP and the 2021 UG mandate, the D&I Office has divided the data collection mandate into the following domains: Diversity data, Data about (perceived) inclusion, other data.

To address the collection of data, distinction is made between two approaches: where possible using data already collected and where necessary generating new data. In 2023, the year of Quick Wins, the D&I Office delved into data already collected elsewhere within the University.

Diversity Data²

At the UG, for *gender* as a diversity domain, with a focus on *staff*, collection of diversity data is quite advanced: data is collected, targets are set, a central budget is available, accountability is clear – the D&I office discusses it regularly with the Rector Magnificus, HR sees it as a priority and collects relevant data, it is regularly on the *Bestuurlijk Overleg* agenda between Board of Directors and the Faculty Boards, and numbers are reported as a part of the university's annual report (2017-2022). Based on the ability to monitor trends, it is possible to ascertain whether the University is on track to meet its targets, and to propose new initiatives when necessary. For example, in 2023 it became clear that the University would not reach its 2025 gender equality targets and HR submitted a revised proposal to the Board of Directors which has been approved and is being implemented.

The D&I Office applauds the successful embedding of these processes, monitors their continued success, and encourages next steps – whether it be the required monitoring of throughput and outflow (developing a strategy to implement data collection at the departure of a faculty member), a more qualitative analysis of the (in)effectiveness of the initiatives taken to meet the targets (including an understanding of why, despite efforts to recruit more female academics, the university is not reaching its target and why there is a 34% departure rate of Rosalind Franklin Fellows) or whether it is to broaden the scope of this monitoring from gender diversity in the academic pipeline to include women in academic management functions (deans, programme directors and/or department heads), or to encourage the collection of data on pay equity across genders.

At the same time, at the UG, there is a dearth of similar collection and analysis of longitudinal data on female students, nor is there such for other diversity domains (e.g. cultural diversity, lgbtq+ community, first generation students, and physical/mental ability). Additional data is collected by CBS on (students with a) migration background (no budget), at the UG (both staff and students) by registration of nationality as a possible proxy for cultural diversity and the LNVH intends to administer an intersectional monitor focussing on cultural diversity among academics, by CIT on X as gender registration and registration of preferred pronouns in Brightspace (both as proxy for legal/expressed gender identity). The possibility to use these sources of data for additional analysis

² A more detailed analysis of the measurement of diversity and inclusion (initial version 2022, updated regularly) is available from the D&I Office.

of diversity data, as well as the possibility to collect self-reported diversity characteristics, will receive further attention in 2024, the year of strategic change.

Data on (perceived) inclusion

Data on (perceived) inclusion was collected in the Staff Satisfaction Survey (SSS) and the National Student Enquete (NSE), both indicate that there are differences between groups in perceived inclusion.

The D&I Office contributed to the formulation of the D&I questions in the 2023 Staff Satisfaction Survey. For its analysis, useful for our purposes, it is possible to segment groups by gender and/or by nationality. Currently, additional of this data at the Faculty level is currently being done, though this is hindered by the lack of access to data with small sample sizes. In conclusion, with the mean below 3.5 and a very highly significant difference ($p=0.001$), both women and internationals have less the feeling that there is sufficient attention to diversity within the University than do men and Dutch nationals. This difference is greater when considered intersectionally (international women compared to Dutch men). This supports general findings in the diversity literature that issues of diversity are often not sufficiently seen and recognized by the dominant group decision makers.

In addition, though the means on the freedom to express a differing opinion (women), and the feeling of belonging (internationals) are above the 3.5 threshold, they do indicate a very highly significantly lower score than that of the majority group.

Useful for our purposes, in the NSE data is collected in such a way that it is possible compare the results by nationality (Dutch-International). Both the 2022 and the 2023 annual NSE results indicated that international students scored significantly lower on many of the items in comparison to Dutch students. This was also so on the specific item "I experience equal treatment of students" (2022 and 2023), a part of the Equal Treatment theme score, which in its entirety, in 2023 was rated significantly lower by international students in comparison to Dutch students. This will be further addressed with qualitative discussions with the Groningen International Students Platform.

In conclusion, data already collected indicates a lesser sense of (perceived) inclusion by women and by international staff and students. Data on perceived inclusion as experienced by other diversity groups, e.g. female students, members of the lgbtq+ community, first generation, physical/mental ability) is still missing.

Additional data

There are two additional domains of D&I Issues for which data is already available, discrimination and intercultural competence.

The midterm review of the National Action Plan brought attention to the need to monitor **discrimination**. Though discrimination falls under social safety, it is also relevant to Diversity and Inclusion as it is a loss of social safety due to belonging to a marginalised group. The numbers from the Confidential Advisor over 2022 indicate that 14 reports of discrimination were made by students (on a population of 35k, 0,01%) and 5 by staff (on a population of 4300, 0.1%). The Staff Satisfaction

Survey indicates for the UG that 3% have experienced discrimination, but breaking down this number to the faculties indicates that there are a number in which about 10% indicate to have experienced discrimination. When this information is further broken down by group, women experience discrimination more than men (4.2% compared to 4%), and, though in some faculties this is reversed, internationals experience more discrimination than Dutch nationals (5.1% compared to 1.7%). This difference is even more clear when considered intersectionally - non-Dutch women experience discrimination more than Dutch men (4.4% compared to 0.9%). This supports once again, the general findings in the diversity literature that issues of diversity are often not sufficiently seen and recognised by the dominant group decision makers.

Intercultural competence is another domain in which data is already available. In the context of the internal UG trainings delivered to develop intercultural competence, a psychometrically validated instrument (the Intercultural Development Inventory IDI) is used to determine the intercultural competence level of the participants. Numbers collected during those trainings indicate that 65% of RUG faculty/staff are in “minimisation” (a worldview that underestimates the complexity of culture and its impact on attitudes, interactions and performance, and instead —erroneously— assumes universal values and behaviours) and, disturbingly, 22% have “polarisation” as a worldview (characterised as an ethnocentric, us-them perspective). Only 5% accept culture’s significant role and have an understanding of the nuances by which it influences interactions and an even smaller number is able to structurally adapt their behaviour when it is necessary to do so in this multicultural environments, to constructively address cultural misunderstandings and to take a proactive role to create a culture open to cultural differences (2%).

These numbers indicate that there is still a way to go to develop the competence necessary to navigate the complexities that come with an international university. In addition, IC development training and coaching sessions are one of the few ways that polarisation, which is antithetical to the University’s strategic ambitions and policies and can result in a socially and pedagogically unsafe international environment, is effectively addressed at the individual level. Those holding such perspectives are held accountable in group and private 1:1 sessions, where they are encouraged to and supported in developing their awareness and competence to more constructive perspectives. These trainings equally help those who are already open to working more effectively and appropriately with diversity to do so by providing them with research-based frameworks, strategies, tools and spaces in which to practice.

If, in 2023, the year of Quick Wins, the D&I Office delved into data already collected, in 2024, intended to be the year of Strategic Change, the D&I Office will:

- continue to monitor the data collected via existing instruments,
- will pursue a better understanding of those results via qualitative means,
- will determine the data that is structurally needed,
- will look into the various ways this can be collected, and, where necessary,
- will generate new data to enable data-driven D&I, preferably in line with that collected by other universities.

Diversity and Inclusion in the Faculties

The second priority will be supporting the D&I developments in the Faculties. In accordance with performance indicators agreed upon with the Faculty Boards on Diversity and Inclusion, there is a D&I contact person within all faculty boards, and, as of early 2023, most large UG faculties (and UMCG) have appointed their own faculty diversity and inclusion representatives, and a few midsized faculties send a representative from a D&I committee. These staff members are current academic or support staff members who dedicate (part of) their time to D&I matters within the faculties. Their tasks are to assess the state of diversity and inclusion in their own faculties, to determine the D&I needs and prioritize what has to be tackled within their faculties or at a central level, to implement D&I programming suggested by the D&I office. During the monthly meetings they share best practices, materials developed, resources and use the time to learn from one another.

Topics addressed in 2023 can be divided into two types - strategic and programming. Strategic topics addressed questions such as domain definitions (D&I, Social Safety, Wellbeing), developments at LanDO (e.g. role descriptions and positioning of the Faculty D&I Officer), developing and sharing Faculty Action Plans, evaluation of the Faculty D&I office, sharing relevant vacancies for distribution, establishing working groups and their mandates, sharing relevant resources (the mid-term evaluation of the National Action Plan, gender pay equity, yarn wellbeing presentation e.g., white paper & umcg experience, guest speakers (social safety, hr), feedback on the GEP, involvement in 2 NWO research projects (FEB on Disrupting Sameness, UMCG on quotas based on ethnicity). Programming topics include collaborative programming for diversity week in October, sharing resources, (e.g. activities organised at one faculty open for others, upcoming conferences [e.g. Noorderlink, Idea], workshop activities, suggestions for speakers, resources for students with various limitations, and approaches (e.g. to Keti Koti and Roze Zaterdag), shared questions and concerns (tenure track, onboarding, pronouns policy, request for an inventory of BAC composition), disseminating initiatives from/via the Central D&I Office (from: Echo award, Inclusive Language Style Guide, Grassroots Subsidy; via: LCGBTQ network, transbuddies, CIT study on gender/sex registration, weekly update on news related to D&I), collecting faculty input on questions arising from/via the central D&I Office (GISP, Provincie Fryslan), and sharing faculty specific initiatives (e.g. Law: IC training for Faculty Board, FSE CLT Safe Space and Empathy Session, FSE Safe and Pleasant Working Environment, FEB Successful Scholars, Peaceful Parents, UMCG Gender pay gap analysis, FEB roll out of inclusive recruitment training (and questions about follow up).

In the fall of 2023, the D&I in the Faculties started distributing the work further amongst working groups (diversity week, measurement, gender equality plan, D&I function, IC network).

In 2024 the focus with the D&I in the faculties will be on a full inventory of the state of D&I in the institution using a (validated) benchmarked instrument, developing an approach to enable the smaller faculties (who do not have a D&I representative) to benefit from the D&I progress made at other faculties, and continuing to support the faculties to develop and implement their action plans. These are all in line with the 2024 focus on an overarching goal of strategic change.

Developing Strategic Collaborations

Also in line with the focus on strategic change, 2024 will be the year to further the collaboration with adjacent fields, HR and the Social Safety programme, as an HR advisor was assigned to work with the D&I Office in the fall of 2023 and the SS programme was approved in the fall of 2023.

Many staff-related D&I processes are embedded within HR. Of targets set in the 2021-2025 Action Plan, 5 belong primarily to the HR domain: staff recruitment, the onboarding process, tenure track, compensation (including the monitoring of the gender pay gap), appraisal and career progression. The purpose of this collaboration is to bring a D&I lens to these HR processes, to enable the relevant HR departments to account for the D&I dimensions to their processes that will then be monitored by the D&I Office.

Until the fall of 2023, collaboration with HR was hindered by organisational changes within HR. In the Fall of 2023, an HR D&I strategic policy advisor was appointed as liaison between the D&I office and HR. Since then, it has been possible to better include the HR-related targets to the D&I Office's strategic planning.

In the HR domain of recruitment, collaboration will be with the two new HR recruiters. These recruiters have the mandate to address the issues that the University encounters emergent from labour market shortages. Improving our recruitment processes from a D&I perspective gives the University access to a larger, more diverse labour market. In addition, attention will be paid to requirements for the ATS, improving the recruitment processes, and updating the recruitment guide to better address D&I concerns. Similar projects still need to be developed around the other HR topics.

Social safety is a necessary part of, but unto itself is not sufficient for, a climate of inclusion. The D&I Office will further collaborate with the Social Safety project to enable dialogue tables on the social safety of the most marginalized, and therefore the most vulnerable, students and staff (particularly students and staff of colour, with a disability, or of the LGBTQIA+ community), hereby creating an additional inclusive feedback process.

Gender Equality Plan

The University's Gender Equality Plan (GEP) was written in 2021 as the European Commission EC was making GEPs a precondition for Horizon funding. In the years since this implementation, the EC has been further refining the instruments at their disposal to encourage gender equality, and in the course of 2023, the annual revision of the GEPs was encouraged. A task group has been formed for the 2024 revision of the University's Gender Equality Plan.

Communications

Communications remains crucial for the effectiveness of the D&I Office. Communications is explicitly mentioned in the 2021-2025 Action plan as a core part of the D&I infrastructure ("supported by a programme coordinator and a communications officer"). In 2023, the communications officer was

responsible for the development of the Inclusive Language Style Guide (English). A number of remaining tasks fall directly under communications (e.g. launch and further development of the D&I website that should include [a range of] resources). The desired further development of the website includes developing it as a resource to raise awareness (e.g. about what is inclusive and exclusive behaviour, what to do about it/how to speak up, how to tackle exclusionary behaviour, recognising your own exclusionary behaviour and practising being an ally, understanding the range of exclusionary behavior from micro-aggressions to more serious unwarranted behaviour [from Action Plan 2021-2025].) Further, the visibility of most other tasks is only possible with the support of communication. This will be compromised in the near future as Corporate Communications has indicated that they cannot honor the commitment to have D&I communication tasks allocated there after August 2024.

Other (less strategic) priorities

Two targets from the 2021-2025 Action plan come together in the 2023 Inclusive Language Style Guide (ILSG) - to raise awareness about the use of inclusive vocabulary and to support the LGBTQ+ community. In 2024, a Dutch version will be produced and workshops will be offered within the University. Further, specific attention has been requested by the LGBTQ community to raise awareness about use of pronouns, in the classrooms, in general communications and in software programmes that collect diversity data. This will receive more attention in 2024 building on the Quick wins of 2023. A more strategic plan of approach will be developed together with this target group.

Two targets that haven't been started, but will get attention in 2024 are that of document review and the diversity of committees. A new target has been added, responsibility for the Diversity & Inclusion Network in Task 5.3 of Enlight 2.0.

Regularly Occurring

A number of activities have become part of the regular tasks of the D&I Office.

In the context of *programming*, these include: the annual coordination of the ECHO award, the Grassroots incentive fund, organizing the annual Developing across Differences summer schools in July and the Diversity Week in October; the latter two to offer training by which to create awareness, give information and share experiences, also about privilege and bias.

In the context of organization/infrastructure these regular tasks include extensive communication tasks involved in monitoring or disseminating D&I activities (amongst which the target of updating the website to serve as an awareness-raising resource), the weekly meetings of the team, the monthly meetings with the D&I in the Faculties, the 6-weekly meetings with the IDI policy advisors and the national meeting of University Diversity Officers, the quarterly meetings with the internal advisory board, the rector, and the Coimbra D&I working group, the bi-annual meetings with the external advisory board and the annual meetings with the Faculty Boards.

Conclusion

The D&I Office has a double mandate - realizing its own D&I targets while at the same time encouraging the decentralized faculties to formulate and realize their own. Since the start of the D&I Office in 2022 much has been accomplished, and until the end of its mandate in December 2025, much still remains to be done. This takes place in a changing context where, alongside existing targets, increasingly, additional demands are made of the D&I expertise. Looking forward, the 2024 mid-term evaluation of the D&I office belongs in the year of 'Strategic Change,' setting it up for its final year, 2025, as a year of 'Structural Embedding.' The D&I office is a central hub in a network; it connects many stakeholders, drives activities and tries to be a knowledge base. In doing so, the D&I office offers much that is not (yet) secured "in the line."