university of groningen

Action Plan (revised)
Diversity & Inclusion Office
January–December 2025

“Safeguarding Continuity”

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents **2**
Introduction **3**
Overview **3**
Completed Targets 3
Targets Requiring Completion in 2025 4
Targets Primarily in HR Remit 5
Recurring targets 6
New Target 6
Conclusion **6**

Introduction

The University of Groningen formulated the mandate for Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) at the end of 2021, based on the 2020 National Action Plan for Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education and Research. 2022 was a year of 'Setting Up,' establishing the D&I Office and the attendant infrastructure. 2023 was a year focussed on 'Quick Wins.'

2024, though intended to be a year of implementing more 'Strategic Change,' ended up being one in which strategic changes signalled the end of the diversity and inclusion office. Based on the Executive Board's decision (November 2024) to no longer continue with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion at the end of project period, the results of the 2025 strategic planning session (held in October 2024), and initial draft of the 2025 Action Plan, were put away.

While 2025 was intended to be a year of 'Structural Embedding,' it will instead be about closure, transfer and 'Safeguarding Continuity.' Accordingly this Revised Action Plan for 2025 is a closing and transition-oriented plan, focusing on ensuring that the targets of the original five year plan are met as we plan to bring the Office of Diversity and Inclusion to a close[1]. As of 2025, the Chief Diversity Officer is allocated 0,2 FTE (down from 0,4 FTE) which shifts the capacity for active coordination and oversight. This Revised 2025 Action Plan builds upon the 2024 Progress Report and provides an overview of the plans focussing on finalising the targets in the Appendix of the *Belonging in the University - University Action Plan Diversity and Inclusion 2021 - 2025*.

Overview

Of the targets set in the 2021-2025 Action Plan, 16 have been completed, although several require continued monitoring or form part of recurring annual activities. Two targets are largely complete, eight are in progress (one of has been modified), and two have yet to be initiated. In 2025, the focus will be on completing the remaining targets and safeguarding continuity following the cessation of the D&I Office. This will involve enabling the transition team (the two policy officers who will take responsibility for diversity and inclusion as a part of their tasks), maintaining the network of faculty diversity officers, implementing Diversity Atlas, and contributing to national coordination on diversity and inclusion through the LanDO steering group. In the spring, priorities will include the Dutch translation of the Inclusive Language Style Guide, finalisation of the Guidelines for Language Use, ECHO, and the *Developing across Differences* summer schools. In the autumn, activities will centre on Diversity Day, the Inclusive Teacher programme and the implementation of the LGBTQ+ action plan.

Completed Targets

The **16** targets that are **completed** at the end of 2024 include the eight targets achieved prior to the mid-term progress report[2] (March 2024) and an additional eight targets completed thereafter. The additional **eight** targets **completed** in 2024 include finalising and maintaining the network of decentralised diversity officers at the faculties, supporting of these officers in developing their own action plans, and sharing these action plans (facilitating alignment across faculties and promoting the exchange of effective practices), the organising of annual awareness-raising events, and developing protocols for student inclusion initiatives (Grassroots projects) and the nominations for ECHO, drafting the *Guidelines for Language Use*, organising a symposium to counterbalance the lack of representation in the Senaatzaal, monitoring the

[1] Update July 2025: at the meeting of the Executive Board with the University Council in February 2025, it was agreed that an improved proposal would be submitted for review.

[2] The eight targets completed before the mid-term progress report include the establishment of a D&I Office, the publication of a statement of commitment, the establishment of regular meeting with the internal and external advisory board, national and international representation of the UG, regular meetings with relevant stakeholders within the university, continued monitoring of the proportion of female professors, ongoing awareness-raising on privilege and bias, and the offering and/or endorsement of existing training on D&I issues. Several of these targets are of a recurring nature or require ongoing monitoring.

effectiveness of the protocol for the flying of the Progress Pride flag, and ensuring that no future depictions of 8. Zwarte Piet appear on campus.

As many of these completed targets are recurring (for example on an annual basis), or require continued monitoring, they remain a part of the 2025 Action Plan. Their inclusion serves three purposes: final delivery where applicable, identifying ways to make activities self-sustaining, and embedding responsibilities structurally elsewhere in the university. This approach is further elaborated in the section on recurring targets, with particular attention to developing clear guidelines and procedures for ongoing activities to ensure effective handover and continuity.

Targets Requiring Completion in 2025

The following targets **require attention** in 2025 in order to be brought to completion; further elaboration is provided below for the targets in our remit. The university language policy, the LGBTQ+ action plan, and data collection have already been initiated and will be prioritised in 2025 to ensure completion. The inclusive education project is expected to be concluded in 2025, and the continuous channels for inclusive feedback will be formally closed. Remaining targets, specifically those that fall within the remit of HR or O&S, will be transferred to the transition team, which will report to the Chief Diversity Officer. The Chief Diversity Officer will monitor this transition to ensure that these and future targets continue to be addressed through a diversity and inclusion lens. One target, relating to committees, has thus far proven difficult to operationalise and will require renewed consideration in 2025.

University language policy: An Inclusive Language Style Guide (ILSG) has been developed and updated with feedback from the university community. In 2025, a Dutch version will be authored rather than translated, as the nuances of language use require contextual adaptation beyond direct translation.
A draft version of Guidelines for Language Use (GLU) has also been prepared. These guidelines provide practical recommendations for everyday language use and complement the official University Language Policy, which sets out legally binding obligations under Dutch law. In 2025, the GLU will complete the internal review process, including review by ABJZ. Following approval, a final version will be established and a Dutch-language version developed.

LGBTQ+ Inclusion Plan: Work is underway to consolidate existing university initiatives and recommendations into a single LGBTQ+ Action Plan, intended for implementation in 2025. The plan is conceived as a living document and currently includes an inventory of gender-neutral toilets; measures to ensure the collection and administration of data on sex and gender are legally compliant and limited to what is necessary; promotion of inclusive practices such as pronoun use; a review of leave policies; the development of dedicated pages in the knowledge bank; and a review of the *The Inclusive Teacher* programme for LGBTQ+ content. Where appropriate, responsibilities will be embedded within existing organisational structures to support sustainability beyond the Action Plan period.

Data collection: Data collection has been a continuous objective of the D&I Office. Initial efforts focussed on assessing how existing institutional data, such as the Staff Satisfaction Survey and the National Student Survey, could be used to gain insight into diversity and inclusion. The outcomes of this analysis are documented in the Measurement Report. At the national level, the mid-term evaluation of the National Action Plan has further elevated data collection as a priority.
The current phase focuses on preparation for the implementation of *Diversity Atlas*, including completion of the required Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA). In 2025, the intention is to proceed with implementation, subject to the outcomes of the DPIA, with full operationalisation expected in 2025, or where necessary, early 2026.

Inclusive Education Project: The inclusive education project, funded through a Comenius grant initiated by the previous Chief Diversity Officer, professor Gerry Wakker together with professor Jan Riezebos, professor in

educational innovation, has progressed towards its final phase. The project will conclude at the end of 2025 with the launch of an online module called *The Inclusive Teacher*.
In 2025, final contributions to the project will focus on initiating an inaugural cohort for the online modules and supporting further dissemination across the faculties. In addition, continued contributions will be made to the D&I Community of Practice of the Teaching Academy Groningen, and dedicated workshops on D&I in education will be delivered as part of the Education Festival and the Diversity Week.

Inclusive feedback: At present, several channels are used to collect feedback on diversity and inclusion matters. These include feedback from the faculties, input via the internal and external advisory boards, regular meetings with a group of stakeholders involved in Internationalisation, Diversity and Inclusion (IDI) policy, and the diversity inbox. In addition, diversity-related feedback has been collected through the Staff Satisfaction Survey. Experts within the university are regularly consulted on D&I matters.
In 2025, these feedback mechanisms will be reviewed and reorganised to align with existing institutional structures. Faculty level feedback will be routed to the relevant policy advisors who will assume responsibility for D&I, as will the responsibility for the diversity inbox. Faculty experts will be referred to these policy advisors as appropriate. The regular IDI policy meetings and the advisory boards will be discontinued. The dedicated collection of diversity-related feedback via the Staff Satisfaction Survey will be pursued for the 2026 collection and thereafter discontinued.

Committees: The objective of this target is to ensure that committees reflect the diversity of the staff and student populations they serve, so that a broad range of perspectives is represented in decision-making processes. Fair representation in committees can contribute to a more inclusive institutional environment and improve the quality and legitimacy of decisions.
To date, the target has proven difficult to operationalise. Committee appointments are often organised informally, and there is limited central oversight of composition, making it challenging to define clear criteria or implement a uniform approach. While related signals exist, such as the upcoming LNVH inventory of gender distribution in academic leadership positions and requests from the Ombudsperson to address discrimination in task allocation, these have not yet translated into an actionable framework for committee composition.
In 2025, this target will require renewed consideration to determine whether a feasible approach can be developed. This may include exploring options for improved transparency around committee appointments, alignment with existing data and governance structures and assessing how responsibility for the issue can be more firmly embedded at HR.

Targets Primarily in HR Remit

A number of targets originally included in the Action Plan fall primarily within the **remit of Human Resources**. These include programmes and processes related to recruitment and selection procedures, on and offboarding, the tenure track system, and the review of existing HR-related policy documents. While the D&I Office has provided input on several of these areas, implementation responsibility lies with HR. In 2025, targets that fall within HR's remit will be addressed by HR. Where relevant, the Chief Diversity Officer will monitor progress at a strategic level to ensure that these and future targets continue to be addressed through a diversity and inclusion lens, and will engage with HR to support alignment with the university's diversity and inclusion objectives.

Developments in 2023-2024 highlighted challenges in collaboration with HR. Whereas early cooperation was strong, it gradually diminished due to competing priorities and procedural constraints. Productive collaboration was observed when roles and tasks were clearly defined, as with the Inclusive Recruitment Guide, although follow-up remained HR's responsibility.

At the institutional level, HR did not provide feedback on the 2024 Action Plan, and treated its endorsement as falling within HR remit, ultimately choosing not to endorse the plan. Formal responsibility for diversity and inclusion, however,

rests with the Rector. In addition, HR initiated an evaluation focused on the positioning and responsibilities of the D&I Office. In parallel, several initiatives that required close collaboration (such as recruitment practices, onboarding, monitoring of the tenure track system, and strategies to analyse staff in and outflow) could not be advanced, despite repeated efforts by the D&I Office to engage on content and monitoring approaches. In some cases, including on boarding tenure track related projects, the D&I Office could not gain access to relevant processes or materials.

Experiences in 2024 underline that effective collaboration on diversity and inclusion within HR-led domains required clearly defined roles, responsibilities, and project base cooperation. Where such conditions were in place, collaboration proved more productive, as illustrated by the development of the inclusive recruitment guide, for which the D&I Office provided extensive feedback. However, follow up on this input remained within an HR's responsibility and was not implemented during the Action Plan period.

Recurring targets

Several completed targets are recurring or require ongoing monitoring, including the faculty diversity officers and activities aimed at raising awareness of privilege and bias (such as the *Developing across Differences* summer schools, and the Diversity Day and/or Diversity Week), ECHO, and the Grassroots subsidies. Their continued inclusion supports final delivery, self-sustainability, and embedding responsibilities elsewhere.

In 2025, faculty diversity officers will be empowered to become self-sustaining, *Developing across Differences* will be embedded within an existing unit. Diversity Day/Week will fall under the two policy officers, and ECHO and the Grassroots subsidy scheme will be managed by the O&S policy officer. Clear guidelines and procedures will support handover and continuity.

New Target

In 2025 a **new target** has been added for 2025: strengthening understanding of Diversity and Inclusion at the national level. This will be pursued through participation in the steering group of the National Association of University Diversity Officers (LanDO) and participation in two working groups focused on embedding D&I and its measurement.

Conclusion

This Revised Action Plan for 2025 marks the final phase of the University of Groningen's 2021-2025 Diversity and Inclusion programme. Its primary purpose is to ensure outstanding targets are completed, recurring activities are transferred responsibly, and knowledge, tools, and practices are embedded in existing institutional structures. While the D&I Office will close at the end of the Action Plan period, responsibility for diversity and inclusion continues through policy ownership, governance oversight, and national coordination. The focus in 2025 is on consolidation, accountability, and continuity: ensuring diversity and inclusion remain integral to the university of organisation, culture, and decision-making processes.