



# Diversity and inclusion in European museums

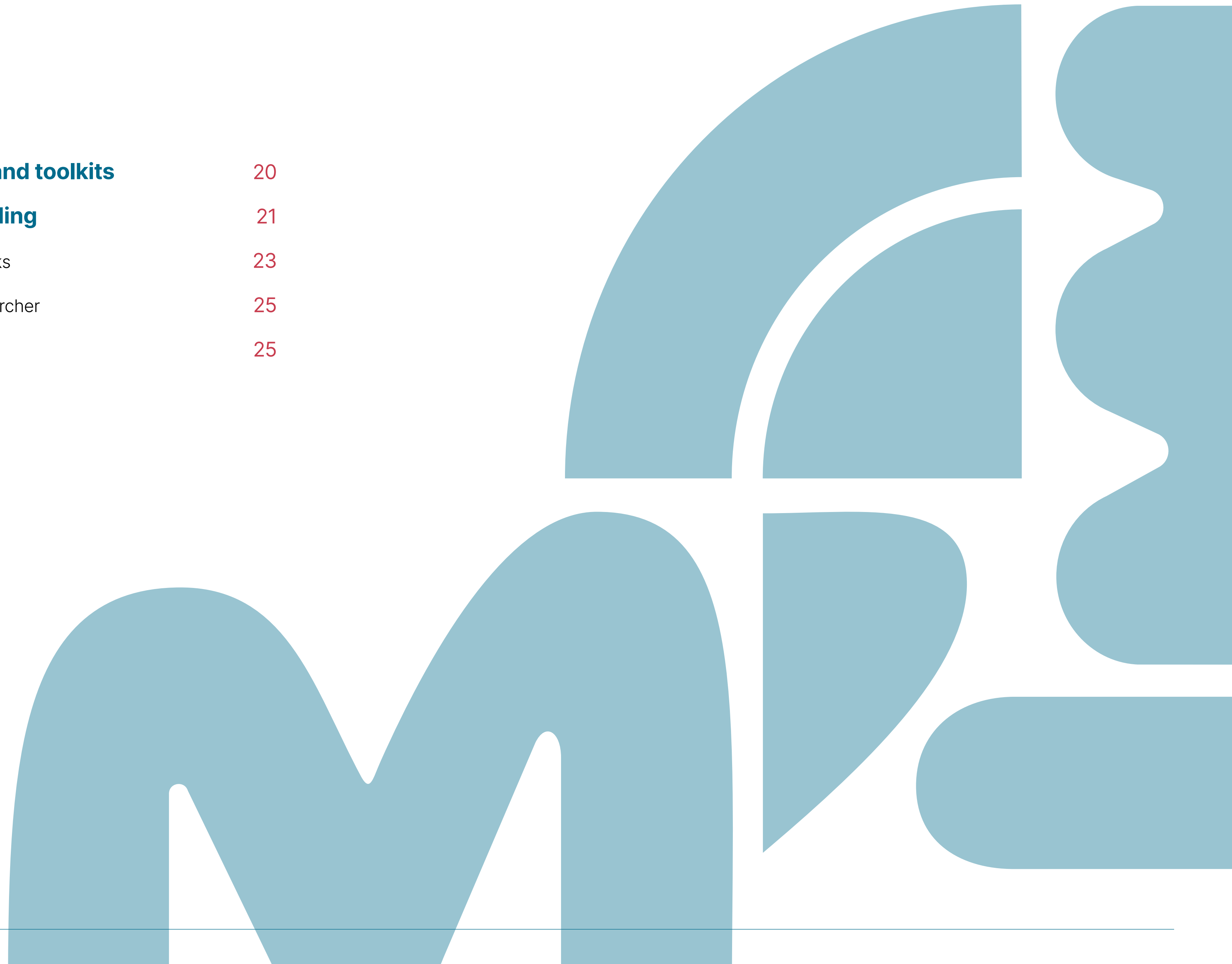
A report in collaboration with NEMO members

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Network of European  
Museum Organisations

# Table of contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Resources and toolkits</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>A short survey among NEMO members</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>Further reading</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Case studies across the network</b>	<b>8</b>	Footnotes/Works	23
Ethnicity	8	About the researcher	25
Spotlight: Inclusive language	10	Imprint	25
Gender	12		
Sexual orientation and identity	13		
Education level	14		
Physical ability	15		
Political engagement	15		
Religious beliefs	16		
Spotlight: Hiring a manager of diversity and inclusion at the Rijksmuseum	17		



## Network of European museum organisations

The Network of European Museum Organisations (NEMO) was founded in 1992 as an independent network of national museum organisations representing the museum community of the member states of the Council of Europe. Together, NEMO's members speak for over 30.000 museums in 40 countries across Europe.

## NEMO

- connects European museums and their national organisations to help ensure their place in the cultural development of Europe.
- promotes European policies that help museums to fulfil their role as keepers of cultural heritage by promoting their importance to European policy makers.
- believes in the benefits of fostering learning exchanges and providing training for museum professionals at every level through different activities and training opportunities at the European level.
- believes that museums are key players in safeguarding our cultural heritage and that they play a key role in helping towards a better understanding within Europe.

NEMO's vision is that museums are part of a good life and provide social well-being. They communicate with all generations and serve society at large. They strengthen the social fabric and serve as places for meeting and dialogue for different cultures and offer opportunities for individual growth. Moreover, museums help people develop as individuals and understand their place in the world. They are life-long learning environments, complementary to all other forms of education and they offer additional learning opportunities for all.

## NEMO working group LEM – The learning museum

The working groups of NEMO offer their members a European perspective on different topics that are important to museums. The Learning Museum (LEM) Working Group explores topics relating to the fields of museum education, audience development, intercultural dialogue and lifelong learning. It started out as a continuation of LEM - The Learning Museum, a network project funded by the EU and carried out between 2010 and 2013, in which NEMO was a partner. Collecting the legacy of LEM, the Working Group today supports the exchange of information and learning among museum professionals in Europe, through various study visits to different museums in Europe organised for its members, as well as through studies and reports produced by the group.



© Silk Worm Families workshop, Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library

# Introduction

## EU policies on diversity and inclusion

This report was commissioned by the NEMO Working group LEM with a specific focus on diversity and inclusion in museums. It is an attempt to capture the richness and variety of theories and practices that exist in this broad subject area. This publication draws primarily on the content provided by members of the NEMO Network and the Working Group LEM. There is no claim to completeness.

Currently museums in Europe face multiple challenges in a rapidly changing world; from climate change, decolonisation to cost of living crisis, challenged democracies as well as recovery from the recent Covid-19 pandemic. The sector is being asked to consider diversity and inclusion in both policy and practice. An essential question was raised in the initial stages of this report: what does diversity and inclusion mean?

According to the EU Platform of diversity charter created in 2010 diversity and inclusion means:

“...the organisation voluntarily commits to promote Diversity and equal opportunities in the workplace, regardless of, for example, age, disability, gender, race or ethnic origin, religion or sexual orientation.”<sup>1</sup>

The EU Commission considers equality and diversity central to its work across Member States. It strives to counteract discrimination and promote equality in societies resulting in several initiatives.

Twenty-six EU Member States have signed up to a diversity charter in which organisations commit to promoting diversity and equal opportunities for their staff. There is a European capitals of inclusion and diversity award established in 2022 and is derived from the EU anti-racism Action Plan 2020–2025 and LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020–2025.<sup>2</sup> The EU Work Plan for Culture 2023–2026 prioritises the promotion of cultural diversity and providing European added value.<sup>3</sup>

## Emerging recognition of diversity and inclusion in the museum sector

In 2015 UNESCO adopted the ‘2015 Recommendation’ which is the protection and promotion of museums and collections, their diversity and their role in society at its General Conference.<sup>4</sup>

It is a standard setting instrument for Member States which signed up to the recommendation, to assist museums and fulfil their role in society. This includes sustainable development, the safeguarding and protection of heritage, promotion of cultural diversity, transmission of scientific knowledge, development of educational policies and lifelong learning, fostering the creative economy and sustainable tourism.<sup>5</sup> These measures are aimed at museums on a global level and a questionnaire was issued in 2017 to capture and analyse how Member States, which signed up to this recommendation, comply with these measures.

Recommendation 2015 proposes a reference framework which includes the social role of museums and how they can play a pivotal role in social cohesion, the building of citizenship and reflection on collective identities.<sup>6</sup>

One of these emerging issues for museums in society was acknowledged in May 2020. The International Council of Museums (ICOM) celebrated *Museums for Equality: Diversity and inclusion* as part of its International Museums Day. ICOM members were encouraged to promote the event throughout the campaign. More notably, museums were in the middle of a global lockdown in May 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic and had to find and offer alternative ways to engage with their audiences. Museum sites were closed to the public and financial streams of income disappeared overnight. The pandemic highlighted inequalities in society yet also served as a catalyst for museums to review their roles and place in society. Museums turned their physical spaces into virtual ones. ICOM encouraged its members to look at the power dynamics that can create disparities within museums and between museums and their visitors. They cited ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and identity, socioeconomic background, education level, physical ability, political affiliation and religious beliefs as their understanding of diversity and inclusion.<sup>7</sup>

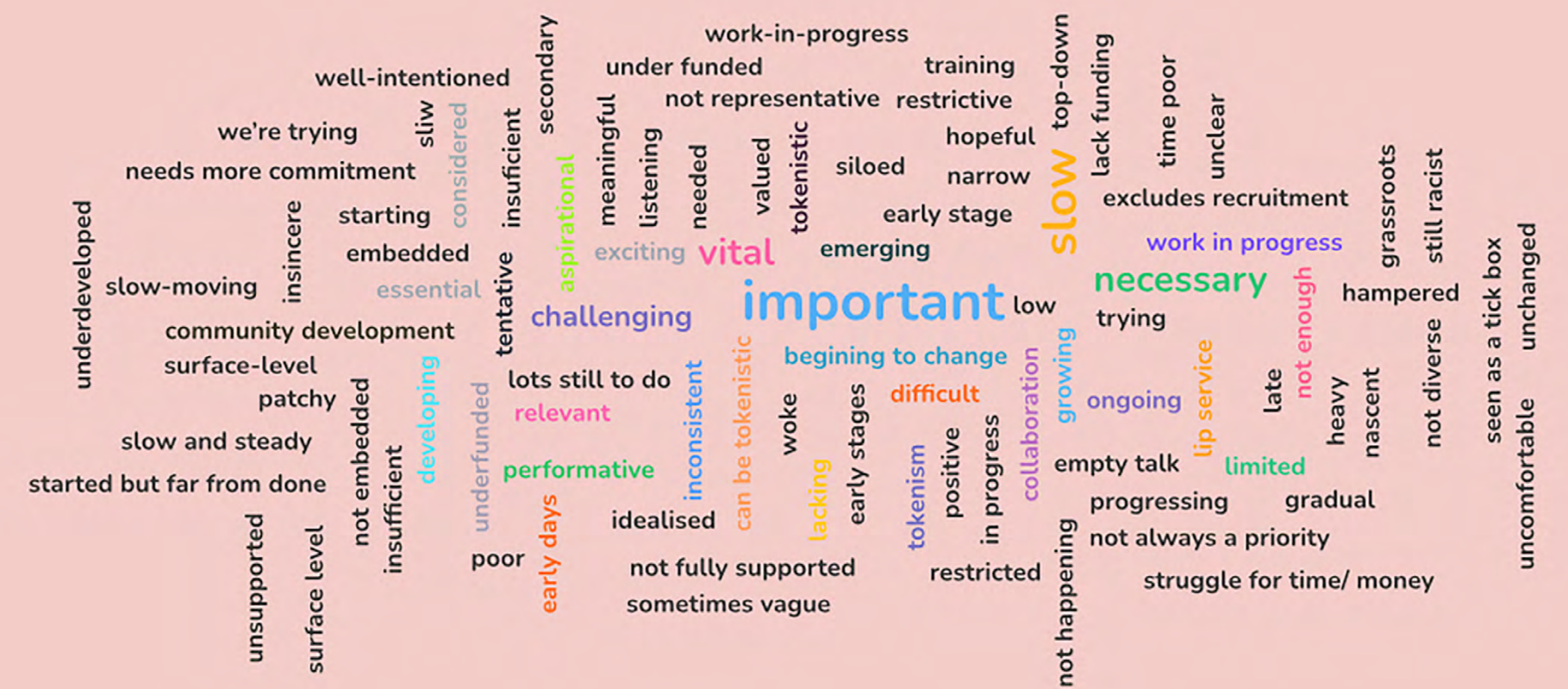
ICOM UK held an online webinar to celebrate the day and responded to themes in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. *Museums in a Covid World* focused on three core strands: museums responding to disability and access, how museums should respond to diversity and how museums should respond to digital technology.<sup>8</sup> Each theme

acknowledged the need to diversify and maintain engagement with audiences while at the same time address diversity and inclusion.

NEMO held an online webinar in May 2020 *Museum lives in post-pandemia* which looked at how museums pivoted from onsite to online engagement. Facilitator Sandro Debono presented his research on changes museums forecasted in the more immediate future of post-pandemic.<sup>9</sup> He referred to initial results gathered by NEMO in a research survey on the impact of the COVID-19 situation on European museums. Museums considered alternative services as a way to maintain contact with existing and new audiences through innovative practices leading many to reinvent their role as a result of the pandemic. In the recommendations, NEMO recognised the need for systems that required a review and restructure for future crises such as Covid-19. Museums also responded in solidarity and support for their community's mid-crisis.<sup>10</sup>

At the NEMO museum conference 16-19 November 2020, *Understanding Differences – Changing Perspectives* speakers in panel presentations and discussions looked at the transformation of traditional museums to a more inclusive one catering for a number of audiences including families, babies, people with disabilities and the role of museums of history and how they include multiple narratives of history including what it means to be a refugee and migrant. When presenting the German museum project Multaka (Meeting Point in Arabic), Salma Jreige, former project coordinator, spoke about the need for safe environments in museums to support intercultural dialogue and share their perspectives on history. Multaka is aimed at

## In a word or words describe the work around diversity and inclusion in our workforce



Word cloud describing Diversity and Inclusion in our workforce, live poll results GEM The Value of Learning conference, September 2024  
© Group for Education in Museums

Arabic-speaking newcomer communities who are trained as guides to provide tours of other Arabic-speaking audiences. The programme enables people of a refugee and migrant background to reclaim agency to talk about art and history.<sup>11</sup> A concluding remark of the panel discussion is the need to demonstrate empathy as well as ethical approach to vulnerable groups, their narratives and memories as well as have a coherent museum definition that includes diverse audiences and to move away from a traditional museum to one that reflects the 21st century.<sup>12</sup>

A cooperation partner of the NEMO, the Group for Education in Museums (GEM) UK, held a survey

in 2023 with its members across the network. It looked at the challenges and opportunities workers are experiencing including low pay, redundancy, the post-pandemic economy as well as the ability to experiment, innovate and foster peer support. Respondents expressed the need for training and support in diversity and inclusion among other areas.<sup>13</sup> The findings specific to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) state this work is key to the sector. Colleagues in the learning sector actively apply EDI in their work and programming. However, respondents did feedback that the workforce needs increased diverse leadership which in turn represents the communities they engage with.<sup>14</sup>

# A short survey among NEMO members

While researching and developing this report, it was noted a number of different terms and policies are currently in use among Working Group LEM members. These range from:

- Equality (or Equity), Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)
- Access and Inclusion
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Inclusion and Accessibility
- Disability and Inclusion
- Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, Inclusion (DEAI)

These policies and approaches reflect organisational aspects that facilitate the growing need to cater for different audiences as well as address a wider social agenda. It was observed the role tends to fall under human resources, public engagement or education and learning departments. However, there is an emerging shift in how this role is viewed by museums and is slowly being realised as a position that oversees EDI in the entire organisational structure, ethos and outlook.<sup>15</sup>

## How has this translated for members of the working group LEM?

A critical aspect of the findings in this report was to capture feedback from Working Group LEM members. In early discussions it was identified that feedback as well as insight of members' own practice, policy and their understanding of what diversity and inclusion means for them was essential in the development of this report. A survey was

designed and circulated to the network. Responses were collated in March and April 2024 with a follow-up online meeting for members in mid-April 2024. Initial findings were shared at the meeting which resulted in further responses to the survey. Respondents were anonymous to allow greater flexibility in potential responses to the questions. The survey captured responses from mostly staff members of museums both state and privately funded, umbrella organisations and a small number of individuals. It captured key areas of importance for this topic with the following questions:

1. Does your organisation have a diversity and inclusion policy?
2. Which department/staff member looks after diversity & inclusion in your organisation?
3. Does your organisational diversity & inclusion policy impact on your current practice?
  - If yes, please provide examples of how these impacts on your practice
  - If no, please provide examples of barriers to implementing the policy to your practice
4. Does your policy have a definition of diversity & inclusion?
5. Is your policy informed by similar national policies on diversity & inclusion?

A total number of 55 responses were received.

## What were their responses?

### 1. Does your organisation have a diversity and inclusion policy?

The responses were almost equal i.e. 29.1% said their organisation does not have a policy whereas 35.4% said their organisation does have a policy. Other responses reflected how inclusion and diversity is in their strategic plan or falls under human resources.

The smaller percentages of responses were nuanced and related to individual organisational or members' own approaches to the question. These ranged from citing their organisational strategic plan, equality and non-discrimination plan, gender equality policy as well as safeguarding

policy of children, elderly and vulnerable groups. One response referred to diversity and inclusion as a key approach in the planning of programmes and exhibitions, while a number of other responses referred to it as an overarching practice in their institution albeit they may not have a written document, diversity and inclusion are taken for granted in the organisation. The diversity of language was cited as very important but not defined in a policy.

### 2. Which department/staff member looks after diversity and inclusion in your organisation?

There were 49 responses, and the roles of assigned staff members are diverse. They range from curators, education departments, management, marketing, foundation board members, human resources, specific collections departments and directors. One response identified a director of inclusion and belonging in their organisation.

### 3. Does your organisational diversity and inclusion policy impact on your current practice?

- ▶ If yes, please provide examples of how this impacts on your practice
- ▶ If no, please provide examples of barriers to implementing the policy to your practice

The overall response to diversity and inclusion is positive: 73.1% responded to say diversity and inclusion policy impacts on the current practice of their organisation. 26.9% said it does not have an effect on their work. 38 members replied that they are cognisant of diversity and inclusion in their practice especially when it comes to programming for different audiences and targeted groups, policy-making, exhibitions and special projects.

17 members fed back and said diversity and inclusion is not a priority for their organisation due to a number of factors including no buy-in from senior management and trustees to not having a policy to support the work or relevant staff to take the lead in this practice.

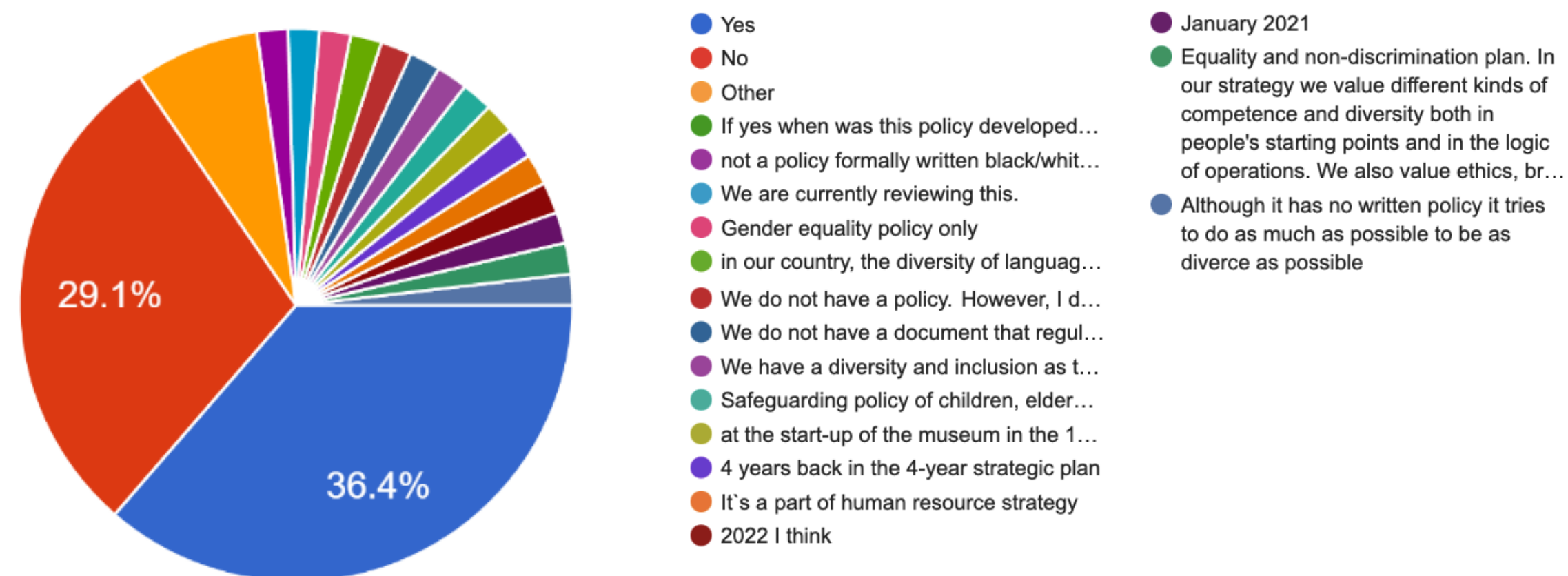
### 4. Does your organisation have a definition of diversity and inclusion?

This question proved to be very insightful for the network. Out of the 44 responses, the majority of members do not have a specific definition. Many of them base it on external policies of the relevant country or values that reflect the organisation's ethos.

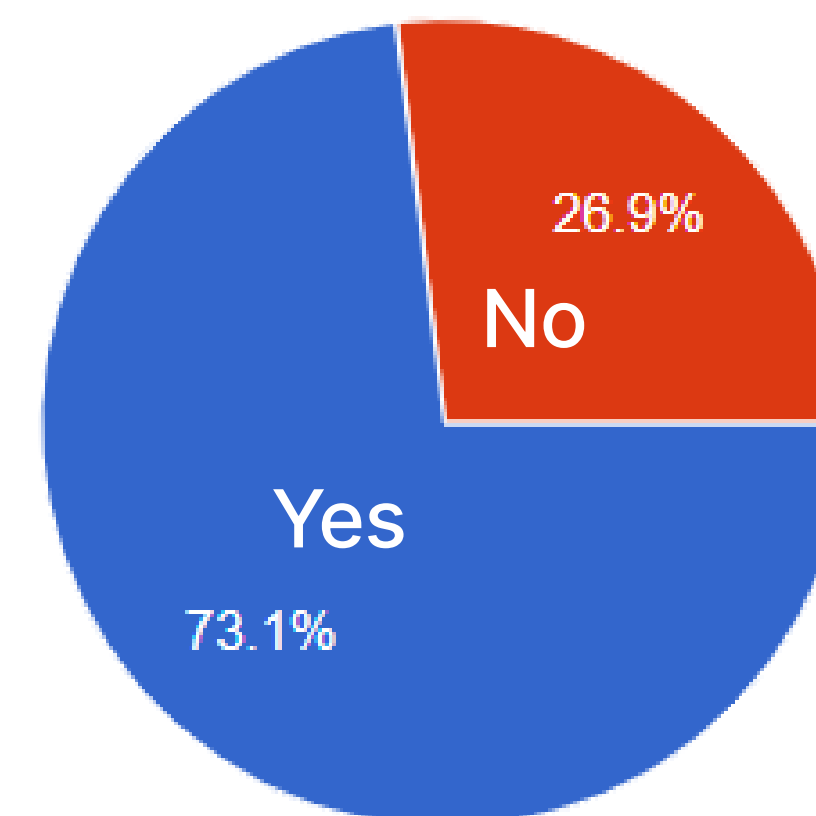
### 5. Is your policy informed by similar national policies on diversity and inclusion in your country? Can you provide examples below?

Out of the 41 respondents' feedback, a number of national governmental policies were cited as a point of reference that informs the work of some NEMO members. Other examples ranged from the ethos of a specific organisation which is inspired by an individual historical figure to the International Council of Museums most recent definition.

### Does your organisation have a diversity and inclusion policy?



### Does your organisational diversity and inclusion policy impact your current practice?



# Case studies across the network

As reflected in the survey, there is a broad understanding of what diversity and inclusion means to each Working Group LEM member, their organisation as well as relevant policy and practice in the member country. According to ICOM, inclusion and diversity is interpreted to include ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and identity, socioeconomic background, educational level, physical ability, political affiliation and religious beliefs. A number of case studies have been selected, although not exhaustive, to illustrate the breadth of practice and approaches within the NEMO network.

## Ethnicity

### The Pockets Project Ireland

- Title of project: **The Pockets Project (2023)**
- Name of organisation: **National Gallery of Ireland**

In 2023 the National Gallery of Ireland's Community Education Programme collaborated with a number of partners including the following: Galway Roscommon Education and Training Board, Galway Rural Development, Galway Traveller Movement, and community artist and educator, Helen Monaghan to work on The Pockets Project. The initiative responded to the National Gallery of Ireland's major exhibition *Lavinia Fontana: Trailblazer, Rule Breaker*. The approach combined inclusive and accessible art historical learning, practical and



The Pockets Project, © The National Gallery of Ireland



sustainable sewing techniques as well as diverse community work.

Over the course of twelve weeks participants, including women from both Traveller<sup>16</sup> and non-Traveller communities, learned about the life and work of Italian Renaissance artist Lavinia Fontana, while reviving traditional techniques and customs from Traveller heritage. Participants created pockets in one of two styles: the *saccoccia* style pockets are pear shaped, and were a tie-on pocket worn by women in sixteenth-century Italy. They are among the earliest examples of this decorative item of clothing. The second style are square-shaped handmade items made and worn by Traveller women known as *beady* pockets. These are worn around the waist and are used in a similar way to a modern handbag, carrying the wearer's personal items. They were decorated with embroidery, buttons and other trinkets which were exchanged between Traveller women. When a keepsake was exchanged, it was stitched onto the pocket so that each item told a story of a person, time, and place. Twenty-nine women from the project visited the Gallery and Fontana exhibition, where they presented their pockets. The pieces were displayed in the Gallery Shop window for the duration of the exhibition.<sup>17</sup>

## Shelter – Climate, Migrations, Heritage Poland

- Title of project: **Shelter – Climate, Migrations, Heritage** (2021–2023) project co-financed under the European Economic Area Financial Mechanism 2014–2021 and by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage within the framework of the Programme “Culture”, Outcome 2 “Access to culture and art improved”.
- Name of contributor: **Ethnographic Collection of the National Museum in Gdańsk.**
- Project partners: Oslo School of Environmental Humanities University in Oslo (Norway), Arctic University of Norway in Tromsø Norway, The Norwegian House-Regional Museum of Snæfellsnes Iceland, Trøndelag Bildende Kunstnere in Trondheim Norway, The Multicultural Council of Akureyri Iceland, Icelandic Human Rights Centre in Reykjavik Iceland, Miejski Teatr Miniatura (‘Miniatura’ City Theatre) in Gdańsk, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań.

Shelter was a multidisciplinary research, educational and artistic project. The project involved field studies in Poland, Norway and Iceland, collecting traditions of local communities and various ethnic groups, recording generational memory of climate change, past adaptation processes, community use of resources, and good management practices drawn from the experience of previous generations. The research focused on cultural diversity and integration strategies of immigrants

using their cultural resources, networking of institutions dealing with immigrants in Poland, Iceland and Norway, and cooperation for the sake of multiculturalism. The Shelter project also created strategies for inclusion of immigrants and ethnic and national minorities into cultural life and contributed to increasing access to culture and art, especially groups that are excluded or uninvolved.

Its primary theme looked at the impact of climate change on cultural heritage, social change and migration processes. The aim of the project was to bring together the artistic community, folk artists and museum workers and academia, i.e.

climatologists, ethnologists and cultural anthropologists. Activities included pro-ecological and artistic workshops for schools and kindergartens, gardening, handicraft inspired by tradition, intercultural cooking and dancing, movement, vocal, stop-motion animation creation and workshops aimed at university students, podcasts on environmental issues, lesson scenarios for teachers, a theatrical tour for families with children, art therapy workshops to include people with disabilities, memory work for seniors, for museum employees, concerts of classical, folk and improvised music, the publication *Shelters. Essays for a Time of Crisis*.<sup>18</sup>



© National Museum in Gdańsk

## Spotlight:

# Inclusive language

## Museum detox

Museum Detox is a UK-based organisation of practitioners of black, Asian and minorities (BAME) working in the museum, libraries, galleries, archives and heritage sector. It was established in 2014 and has over 400 members. The network supports fair representation as well as inclusion of cultural, intellectual, and creative contributions of culturally diverse individuals and communities. A critical aspect of their work is to empower members of culturally diverse employees working within museum structures that may have challenging narratives that impact on colonial histories and the communities affected by these legacies. Their core values are solidarity, support, activism and empowerment.

## The problem with diversity

Shaz Hussain is a museum professional based in the UK. In 2017, she shared her reflection on a diversity traineeship for minorities at the Museum Next conference and Museum Detox website. During her time at the Norfolk Museum, Shaz looked at the use of terminology around diversity and inclusion developed by museum professionals. She decided to look at the community and spaces she worked in at the time, and how, as a person from the BAME community, can help change perceptions of what this means when engaging with people in museums. She developed a community tour for BAME, and utilised terminology used by the museum sector including diversity, creating spaces, audiences, hidden stories and giving voice to. When Shaz unpicked the meaning of each term, she decided to change them as they have different meanings and connotations for targeted groups:

### Diversity → representation

Diversity is a term used throughout the English-speaking Museum sector. It differentiates between the majority of museum visitors i.e. white and middle class with those from the BAME communities. Shaz wanted to create a sense of inclusion and changed the term to representation.

### Creating spaces → inclusion

Creating spaces gives the impression of a small space cordoned off for a single activity. This was changed to Inclusion to promote access for the museum as a whole.

### Audiences → partnerships

Audiences tend to passively sit, watch, observe, and generally do not participate. Shaz wanted it to be a collaboration between them and the group and changed audiences to partnerships in her promotional material.

### Hidden stories → whole story

Shaz questioned who this story of the region was hidden from? The local community knows the story of the area. She changed it to the whole story as this made it more inclusive for those who may not be familiar with the story of Norfolk where she was working at the time.

### Giving a voice to → having a conversation with

'Giving a voice to' may come across as patronising. In order to make people feel a part of an activity, this was changed to 'having a conversation with'.<sup>19</sup>

[www.museumdetox.org](http://www.museumdetox.org)

## “Barvalo, Roma, Sinti, Gitans, Manouches, Voyageurs”, France

- Title of project: **Exhibition Barvalo** (2023)
- Name of organisation: **MUCEM**

In Romani, barvalo means “rich” and, by extension, “proud”. This term has multiple meanings and was the title of an exhibition at the Mucem in 2023 dedicated to the history and diversity of



“Barvalo, Roma, Sinti, Gitans, Manouches, Voyageurs”,

© Mucem Museum, Nantes, France, 2023

Europe’s Romani populations. Mucem invited a group of contemporary Romani artists to reflect on prolonged stereotypes, racial discrimination and violence against Romani communities. They worked with intellectuals, scholars and curators who specialise in Romani art and history to develop this exhibition.

The exhibition traces the history of Romani migration and persecutions in Europe, their representations in culture and folklore and how they express themselves throughout the community. Visitors are offered a reflection on belonging and identity and questions the role of the ethnography museum as a disseminator of a “truth”. There is a gallery of portraits of well-known members of the Romani community contributing to the cultural diversity of European societies in order to affirm, loud and clear, barvalo! There is a display of four virtual guides from four distinct Romani groups. They share personal stories which resonate with a broader and shared European history. The exhibition brings together 200 works and documents (printed, video and sound) from French and European public and private collections.<sup>20</sup>

## Photographic exhibition of every-day life of the Indian community of Rethymno Crete, Greece



Title of project: **Photographic exhibition of every-day life of the Indian community of Rethymno**, in the Temporary Exhibition of the Archaeological Museum of Rethymno (2021)

Name of organisation: **Ephorate of Antiquities of Rethymno, Crete / Hellenic Ministry of Culture**

In 2021, the annual European Heritage Days celebrated All-Inclusive Heritage. The Ephorate of Antiquities of Rethymno, Crete, welcomed local members of the Indian community in the Temporary Exhibition of the Archaeological Museum of Rethymno. An exhibition of photographs depicting daily activities and religious celebrations of the community was displayed in the Temporary Exhibition of the museum. The photographs were taken by archaeologists Anastasia Tzigounaki, director of the Ephorate of Antiquities of Rethymno, and Maria Zouridaki. The event included a culinary exchange of Indian and Greek cuisine, where participants tasted a selection of traditional dishes prepared by both groups. Archaeologists of the Ephorate offered community members a guided tour of the Temporary Exhibition in the Archaeological Museum of Rethymno. Greek and Indian community members were provided the space to meet each other, share their experience on archaeological, photographic and culinary issues as well as gain knowledge from each other’s culture.<sup>21</sup>

© Ephorate of Antiquities of Rethymno, Crete / Hellenic Ministry of Culture



Sanctuary Ambassadors, workshop, Chester Beatty 2023 © Places of Sanctuary Ireland

## Places of Sanctuary Ireland

- Title of project: **Places of Sanctuary** (2023)
- Name of organisation: **Network Places of Sanctuary**

This is a network of groups and local communities which share objectives of promoting a culture of welcome and inclusiveness across every sphere and sector of society in Ireland. Places of Sanctu-

ary Ireland is supported in Irish libraries, schools, health care sector, universities, churches, local councils, nature and heritage and more recently in museums. The Chester Beatty Dublin works in collaboration to support Sanctuary Ambassadors, schools as well as universities through hosting workshops, away days and tours.<sup>22</sup>

# Gender

## Dialogues engagés – Committed dialogues France

- Title of project: **Dialogues engagés – Committed Dialogues** (since 2022)
- Name of organisation: **Musée d'Orsay et de l'Orangerie**

Since 2022, the Musée d'Orsay and the Musée de l'Orangerie have worked with the Puissance de Femmes collective, which works to give visibility to women who keep associations alive in priority

neighbourhoods. This collaboration was celebrated by signing a partnership in 2023, in recognition of International Women's Day celebrated on the 8 March. Participants have forged links between their daily struggles and our collections through visits, workshops and discussions. In a series of videos filmed at Musée d'Orsay, the women in this collective speak out about the work they have done together. Through their encounters with the museum, they share their commitment and the importance of emancipation through culture. Engaged dialogues is a series of interviews with members from Puissance de Femmes. They discuss a number of themes while exploring paintings and sculptures from the Musée d'Orsay collection. They include violence against women; financial emancipation; prostitution of minors and racism and discrimination. The videos were broadcasted in the museum the same week as International Women's Day in recognition of women's rights.<sup>23</sup>

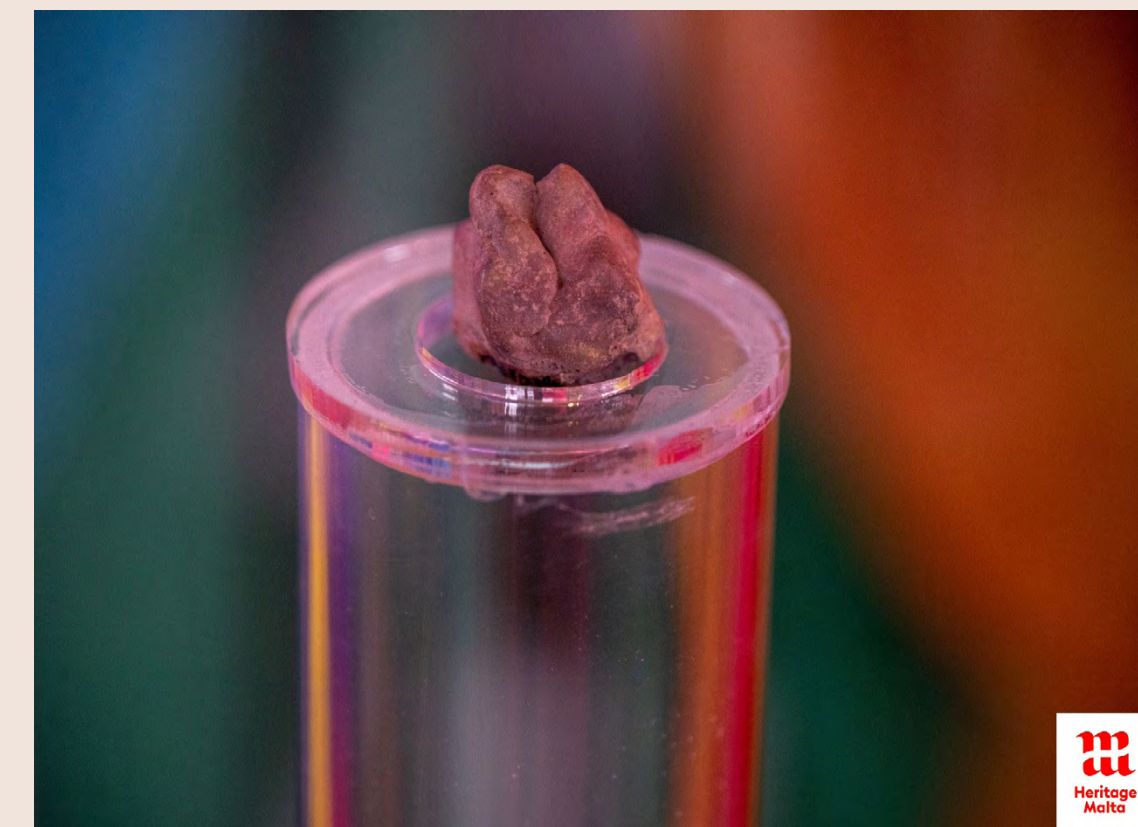


Dialogues engagés– Committed Dialogues. Puissance de Femmes collective  
Musée d'Orsay and de l'Orangerie © Musée d'Orsay

# Sexual orientation and identity

## [BE]Loved Malta: Stories of Sexual and Gender Identity, Malta

- Title of project: **[BE]Loved Malta: Stories of Sexual and Gender Identity** (2023)
- Name of organisation: **Heritage Malta**



The Embracing Couple, Neolithic statuette, c. 3800-2500 BC, clay housed at the National Museum of Archaeology in Valletta, Malta. This artefact reflects the notion that love is genderless and timeless. © Heritage Malta

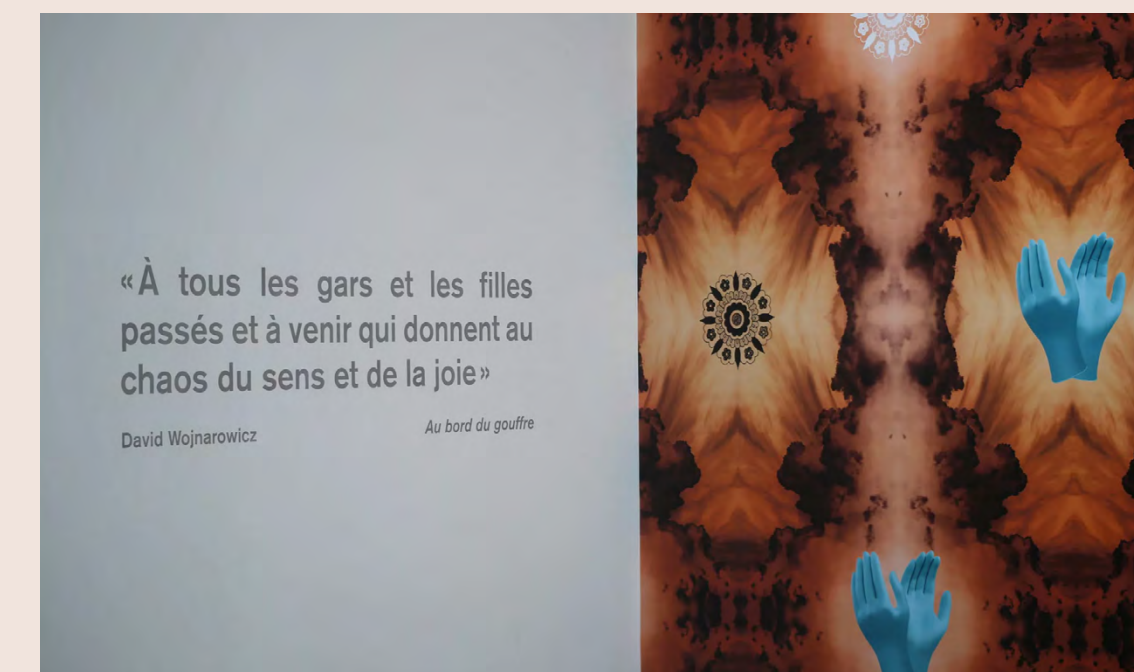
Heritage Malta, the national agency for museums, conservation practice and cultural heritage, works with both tangible and intangible heritage. Sexuality orientation, identity, and gender are intangible themes by nature. The exhibition [BE] Loved Malta: Stories of Sexual and Gender Identity was developed and launched in parallel with the first EuroPride and the 50th anniversary of the decriminalisation of homosexual acts in Malta. The exhibition incorporated the intangible heritage of the LGBTIQ+ community through an immersive and audiovisual experience. Ten stories were told through an audiovisual narration, each featuring central protagonists, and played a central focus in the exhibition.

A number of artefacts were carefully selected to complement the narratives including a 19<sup>th</sup>-century statue of a hermaphrodite; a Neolithic sculpture of an 'embracing couple' discovered at the Hal Tarxien Prehistoric Complex; the medical report about Rosaria Mifsud, whose case is the earliest found so far of an intersex individual in Malta dating back to 1774; and two dresses owned by Katya Saunders, one of the most prominent trans women from the 1970s until the 2000s who had an impact on the queer community in Malta.<sup>24</sup>

## Aux temps du SIDA. Œuvres, récits et entrelacs, France

- Title of project: **Exhibition Aux temps du SIDA. Œuvres, récits et entrelacs** (2023/2024)
- Name of organisation: **MAMCS – musée d'art moderne et contemporain de Strasbourg**

The exhibition Aux temps du sida (In the time of AIDS) explores the last forty years of the AIDS epidemic which still exists despite major medical advances. As a multi-disciplinary exhibition, it presents four decades of creative work in which the visual arts, literature, music, film and dance meet scientific research, popular culture and the decisive action of associations. It welcomes different voices and narratives - artistic, sociological, scientific and invites audiences to engage through thinking and feeling throughout the exhibition. This period has seen moments of fear, mourning,



Aux temps du SIDA. Œuvres, récits et entrelacs. © musée d'art moderne et contemporain de Strasbourg

courage, solidarity and hope intertwined, all backed by forms of creativity whose power remains inspiring for our time.

The exhibition visualises how the AIDS epidemic has shaped and influenced society. It is accompanied by an area at the back of the exhibition known as La Permanence. Visitors talked with representatives from the health and solidarity sectors, prevention specialists and volunteers from a range of associations, all within the confines of the museum, emphasising its civic role within the city of Strasbourg.<sup>25, 26</sup>

## Gender diversities and the Sustainable Development Goals Italy

- Title of project: **Exhibition Gender diversities and the Sustainable Development Goals.** (2023)
- Name of organisation: **Museo Civico di Scienze Naturali e Archeologia di Montebelluna**

The project Futuro Agenda 2030 is a permanent display consisting of six areas and addresses a number of key Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Area number six focuses on SDG number five - gender equity. The exhibition showcases objects of natural history and archaeology. It aims to disrupt gender binaries and stereotypes, investigating gender from a non-binary and fluid



© Museo di Scienze Naturali e Archeologia di Montebelluna

perspective. In addition to highlighting the cultural origins of the concept of gender, many nuances of the sexual sphere in nature and humans to overcome the limitations of a binary male/female vision from a queer perspective are addressed. The narrative concludes with a reference to current European legislation on LGBTQ+ rights. Many school children aged 5-18 years from the Veneto Region visited the exhibition. The project aims to support gender equity and LGBTQ+ issues, referencing contemporary debates and issues.<sup>27</sup>

## LGBTQIA+ inclusion in European museums Europe

- Title of project: **LGBTQIA+ inclusion in European museums: An incomplete guideline'** (2024)
- Name of organisation: **NEMO**

At the NEMO European Museum Conference 2024, NEMO launched its new resource 'LGBTQIA+ inclusion in European museums: An incomplete guideline'. Next to an overview of relevant policies, the guide presents scenarios and practical tips for making museums more respectful and welcoming places for LGBTQIA+ people, cultures, and history.

NEMO's guideline, authored by Arent Boon, addresses the critical issue of ensuring that all communities feel welcome in the museum, both as visitors and staff, by implementing LGBTQIA+ inclusive policies. Museums can play a unique role in fostering social cohesion, challenging stereotypes, and celebrating diversity. By advancing inclusion and ensuring welcoming spaces for one community, museums take a step towards enhancing inclusivity for all communities.



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The guideline addresses the pressing need for museums to ensure all visitors and staff members feel welcome. By implementing LGBTQIA+ inclusive policies, museums can act as agents of social cohesion, challenge harmful stereotypes, and celebrate diversity. Importantly, advancing inclusivity for one community contributes to broader inclusivity across all groups. This resource builds on insights from museum professionals across Europe, offering tools to support institutions in their journey toward greater inclusiveness.<sup>28</sup>

# Education level

## Your Gallery at School Ireland

- Title of project: **Your Gallery at School** (2024–2026)
- Name of organisation: **National Gallery of Ireland**



Your Gallery at School project, © The National Gallery of Ireland

Your Gallery at School is an ambitious outreach programme that brings the National Gallery of Ireland directly into classrooms and education settings around the country. Kindly supported by SMBC Aviation Capital, the initiative builds on the success of the Gallery's established schools programme to develop relationships and spark creativity beyond the Gallery walls. Children and young people have an opportunity to connect with the Gallery collection through offsite art-making projects designed to complement the education curriculum and responsive to the unique needs of the particular group. Your Gallery at School aims to address three key barriers to accessing culture and the arts as identified in growing up in Ireland, the national longitudinal study of children and young people, a joint project of the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and the Central Statistics Office. This ongoing study finds that geography, gender, and socio-economic status are the main barriers to accessing the arts and so addressing these obstacles, and supporting children and young people to overcome them, is at the core of Your Gallery at School programme.<sup>29</sup>

# Physical ability

## Blue Artism Bosnia and Herzegovina

- Title of project: **Blue Artism** (2018/19 and 2022/23)
- Name of organisation: **National Gallery of Bosnia and Herzegovina**



Blue Artism project, © The National Gallery of Bosnia and Herzegovina

In 2018, the National Gallery of Bosnia and Herzegovina created a museum-educational methodology to address the needs of people with developmental disabilities. Blue Artism has an established structure consisting of breathing exercises in motion, speech-language adapted discussion about selected artworks, sensory exercises, creative-manual work with different art materials, and emotional self-evaluation. Repeated weekly throughout the programme, this type of solid structure provides participants with predictability, which is crucial for their self-regulation. The initial part of the programme includes identifying education, sensory, speech-language, and other needs through questionnaires disseminated to participant's parents/caregivers. The programme ran for six months with an exhibition of selected artworks created during the museum-educational process to destigmatise this group in the public. The goal of the programme is to offer people with developmental disabilities new opportunities for social inclusion through additional educational activities in the museum. The specific goals are to use the art museum collection as a cognitive bridge in a clearer understanding of the world that surrounds these people, their emotions, and the emotions of other people. The methods used by the programme aim to develop social, speech, and language skills and self-confidence.<sup>30</sup>

# Political Engagement

## Polish aid for Ukrainian museums, Poland

- Title of project: **Polish aid for Ukrainian museums** (2022-ongoing)
- Name of organisation: **National Institute for Museums**

In response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, National Institute for Museums, Polish museums and museum professionals commenced various activities aimed



"I go into the world and stay. Paintings by Jacek Malczewski from the collection of the Lviv National Art Gallery. © Borys Woźnicki", photo. Sonia Bober

to help Ukrainian museums and their employees. The National Institute for Museums organised a contact point and a reference centre for many such initiatives. The first phase was entirely spontaneous, focused on humanitarian aid and for Ukrainian refugees, many of whom are museum professionals. Educational programmes for child refugees, special exhibitions in Ukrainian or courses teaching Polish language were organised by participating Polish museums. The National Institute for Museums documented nearly 400 various initiatives by Polish museums aimed at aiding Ukrainian museums and its citizens. The National Institute for Museums launched an online training course for Ukrainian museums professionals to help them adjust to work in Polish museums but also helping those still working in Ukraine to develop their professional skills (nearly 300 participants so far). Polish and Ukrainian museums co-developed a system of long-term loans that allowed preparation of temporary exhibitions in Poland. This approach allowed significant artworks to find refuge in Poland and neighbouring countries for extended exhibition periods. The National Institute for Museums worked with Ukrainian museum professionals to use their recent experience for development of recommendations for Polish museums on acting in times of crisis and war. These guidelines have been translated into English and are available to museums in similar crises.<sup>31</sup>



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## Who is afraid of Decolonisation? UK

- Title of initiative: **Who is afraid of Decolonisation? NEMO Training on Decolonisation in museums** (2022)
- Name of organisation: **NEMO in cooperation with the Museums association** (MA) UK

In September 2022 NEMO invited Dr Roshi Naidoo, Decolonising Programme Officer of the Museums Association UK, to facilitate decolonisation in museums for network members. The training took place in Bristol, UK. According to the Museums Association, decolonisation in museums can range from repatriation of objects, reframing objects and how they are catalogued to diver-

sifying the museum workforce. The most recent call for decolonisation in museums emerged out of the Black Lives Matter protests and movement in 2020, when protestors highlighted the legacy of racism in heritage. Participants were provided the space to reflect what decolonisation means to them in their work and experiences.

Naidoo emphasised the importance of this work and the relevance it makes to the museum as well as the wider communities it serves, providing a sense of shared humanity. As the training session took place in Bristol UK, participants were introduced to the Museum Association's Guide Supporting Decolonisation in Museums which addresses the legacy of the British Empire. The Empire was heavily involved in the trans-Atlantic slave trade as well as the colonisation and development of plantations in the Caribbean.<sup>32</sup>

# Religious beliefs

## Faiths in Focus Ireland

- Title of project: **Faiths in Focus** (2023)
- Name of organisation: **Chester Beatty**

The Chester Beatty's collections have been described as the finest collection of manuscripts and books assembled by a private collector in the 20th century. They originate from across Asia, the Middle East, North Africa and Europe and are central to the museum's vision and mission which encourages visitors to compare, contrast and explore the historical, cultural, scientific and religious aspects of its collections

Access to the Chester Beatty collections is a key priority; it allows for a better understanding of contemporary faith based in Ireland; empowers faith-based communities of diverse cultures to access museum collections; share voices with museum professionals in the interpretation and display of objects; counteracts misunderstanding of newer faiths now present in Ireland through meaningful, thoughtful and respectful dialogue for our audiences and lead towards tolerance, understanding of newcomer communities in Ireland today. Faiths in Focus is a collaboration between the Chester Beatty and Dublin City Interfaith Forum (DCIF). This faith-based organisation has members from the Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Bahà'í, Hindu, Sikh and Buddhist communities present in Dublin. The objects selected from the Chester Beatty collections sparked insightful conversations amongst DCIF members about what their faith means to them in Ireland today.<sup>33</sup>



Members of Dublin City Interfaith Forum on a gallery tour, Faiths in Focus project. © Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library



**Spotlight:**

# Hiring a Manager of Diversity and Inclusion at the Rijksmuseum

Shivan Shazad,  
Manager of Diversity and Inclusion Rijksmuseum, The Netherlands

In July 2024 Shivan Shazad facilitated an on-line module for early career museum practitioners participating in the European Museum Academy Summer School for students of the Erasmus Mundus Master Education in Museums and Heritage hosted by the Rijksmuseum 1-12 July 2024. One of the sessions was broadcasted online. The Rijksmuseum commenced its diversity policy in 2016 by setting up a working group on cultural diversity. It has since made diversity and inclusion a focus alongside sustainability and accessibility. However, at the time, changing the Eurocentric national historical perspective was not a goal for the museum. This took place after extensive research into the history of Dutch colonialism and slavery by the History Department in preparation for the Slavery exhibition which opened in 2021. This research

was integrated in the main collection by changing the object labels.<sup>34</sup>

The Rijksmuseum worked in partnership with Vrije University to establish a baseline and appointed its first Diversity Manager in 2019. The museum established a working group of diversity and inclusion ambassadors. They also organised 'More Colour on Top' leadership training and signed the European Diversity Charter in 2022 and established a Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) action plan. The museum created a steering group consisting of heads of departments and the business director in 2022. They have yet to formulate new proposals for D&I policies. The steering group has recently completed new diversity and inclusion objectives for 2024–2028.

**“It is always assumed, if someone has a different skin colour or cultural identity from the dominant group, that they automatically bring with them different norms and values, but of course that doesn't have to be the case at all.”<sup>35</sup>**

As diversity and inclusion Manager, Shazad is aware that identity goes beyond the colour of someone's skin, cultural identity or gender. Identity is more dynamic, multiple as well as contextual. Often policies aimed at underrepresented groups do not go deep enough yet at the same time these same groups tend to be viewed with a number of assumptions which can be both limiting as well as hinder diversity and inclusion efforts.

**“In this role, I think it’s important to make our organisation aware of the opportunities and risks that certain policy choices entail and also to raise awareness that you really need to select on the basis of skills, talents and competences. But that also means that you may have to recalibrate what you as an organisation see as “quality” and that you have to redesign the selection process. That takes time.”<sup>36</sup>**

Shazad highlighted two major exhibitions curated by the Rijksmuseum that reflect their current policy and practice: The Slavery (2021) and Point of View exhibitions (2024) are the two examples provided:

**Slavery exhibition 2021:** The Rijksmuseum opened an exhibition entitled Slavery in 2021. It presented personal and real-life stories from Brazil, Suriname, the Caribbean, South Africa and Asia. The exhibition team shared the stories of 10 people either enslaved or benefitted from slavery and used objects from the museum collection during the colonial era of The Netherlands. It is important to take into account the bias of written, visual and oral sources. Historical oral sources reflect the ideas of not one but many throughout time.<sup>37</sup>

**Point of View exhibition 2024:** As part of the Women of Rijksmuseum research project, in the summer of 2024, the Rijksmuseum presented Point of View, an exhibition exploring ideas around gender in Western Europe from 116th to the 21st century through 150 works in the Rijksmuseum’s collection.<sup>38</sup>

There is a tendency for many museums to assign diversity and inclusion to Human Resources (HR) or to education and learning departments. This confines and limits the potential of a more holistic approach across the institution and leverages the benefits of diversity. Find here a number of recommendations by Shivan Shazad, diversity and inclusion Manager of the Rijksmuseum, as well as resources shared by members of the Working Group LEM to embed diversity and inclusion in museums:

1. **Embed the organisation’s perspective on diversity (diversity paradigm) in the general vision mission and goals of the organisation**
2. **Set up a base-line measurement on what the organisation sees as diversity and inclusion**
3. **Employ a diversity and inclusion Manager steering group or board to create support for D&I policies in the organisation that serves across the museum with a more integrated approach rather than siphon the role off to a specific department such as HR or education**
4. **Strive to leverage different perspectives in museum workforce, policy and procedures**
5. **Strive to leverage differences of all employees**
6. **Make sure to pay attention to visible and invisible characteristics of diversity (competences, values and norms, personality)**
7. **Focus on individual employees and organisational change**
8. **Interventions: inclusive leadership, learning culture, selecting on competences not superficial diversity characteristics**

## Diversity Paradigms in the Rijksmuseum

The Rijksmuseum applies a diversity paradigm in their organisation with learning and integration effectiveness at the core of their work.<sup>39</sup> The paradigm goes beyond the frequent assumption of hiring staff that affiliates with sub-groups e.g. people from an Afro-Caribbean group only work with people similar to their background.<sup>40</sup> This approach often hinders and limits rather than supports and grows diversity and inclusion in an organisation.<sup>41</sup> The diversity paradigm has three key areas for organisations to gauge whether they are being inclusive or not. They include discrimination and fairness; access and legitimacy; learning and effectiveness.<sup>42</sup>

## Inclusive language

Terms, terminology and use of inclusive language are important in the work of diversity and inclusion in museums. The Rijksmuseum established a terminology working group and a key recommendation by Shivan Shazad is to start with the history of the terms. An example of this includes the preparation for the Point of View exhibition where the working group used guidelines on gender. Gender as a word has changed and is considered more of a category leading gender to become gender identity.



## Concluding thoughts

The case studies as well as the results of the survey reflect the breadth of diversity and inclusion work across the European LEM network. However, the survey demonstrates inconsistency of where it sits in the core function of the museum. Embedding diversity and inclusion is an organisation-wide effort. It is complex and ideally should not be confined to one department. As recommended by Shivan Shazad, museums need to ensure diversity and inclusion impacts on all aspects of museum ethos, planning, policies and the message they deliver for their audiences. At the Group for Education in Museums (GEM) conference Bristol 11-13 September 2024, it was said museums are still super serving the narrow few.<sup>43</sup> Some of the lessons learned demonstrate the need for museums to apply a fluid, dynamic and community-centred approach throughout our institutions and not leave it to the responsibility of an individual or department. Diversity and inclusion will undoubtedly be applied to the current and more long-term challenges we face as a global community today.

# Resources and Toolkits

These are examples of resources and toolkits either submitted by NEMO (especially Working Group LEM) members or identified during the period of research. They are not exhaustive but provide an idea of resources available.

## **Accessibility and Diversity checklist for museums, Culture for All Finland and ICOM Finland**

The checklist, published by Culture for All Service and ICOM Finland, can be used to independently assess and develop accessibility and diversity in museums. The aim of the resource is to make museums pleasant and meaningful places for as many people as possible. The checklist supports the review of different aspects of accessibility. It serves as a to-do-list, a tool to support the development of ideas in the daily life of a museum. Museums may adapt it to their own needs, such as exhibition planning, communications development, notes for customer service desks, training material, etc. <https://www.kulttuuriakaille.fi/>

## **Cards for inclusion**

This resource combines play with identifying barriers through play. The cards are aimed at arts organisations and use three simple questions: what is the initiative e.g. is it an event, art or item; where is this taking place and what is the barrier? Teams work together using these cards and are encouraged to continue group discussions with a more in-depth exploration of the environment where this art, item or event is taking place, and identify what are the negative attitudes and inter-

nalised barriers. <https://weareunlimited.org.uk/resource/cards-for-inclusion/>

## **Decolonisation Guide**

The Museums Association UK launched its Decolonisation in Museum guidance in 2019. The working group drafted and published Supporting Decolonisation in Museums that same year and it includes how to provide spaces and resources for different kinds of experiences and encounters as well as building meaningful collaboration with individuals and groups outside the museum sector. [Supporting Decolonisation in Museums](#)

## **Cultural Heritage without Borders**

A toolkit for museums working towards inclusion. Based on content developed during projects and workshops run by the Western Balkans Museum Network, the toolkit had been designed to support museums to be more accessible and welcoming especially for people with disabilities. It can be used by anyone who wishes to develop inclusive practices in museums. <https://www.bmuseums.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/English-Toolkit-2.pdf>

## **The Diversity Inclusion Code**

The Diversity Inclusion Code in the Netherlands is a code of conduct aimed at employers and employees in the cultural and creative sector. There are five main principles in a step-by-step plan and focuses on behaviour, attitudes, mindsets

and actions. The Dutch government awards subsidies to organisations including museums that can demonstrate they incorporate this code to create a more inclusive environment. There are tools within the Diversity Inclusion Code for organisations to access. The code is available in Dutch and English <https://codedi.nl/> and there are a number of tools available including a diversity and inclusion training guide <https://codedi.nl/artikel-training/training-swijzer-diversiteit-en-inclusie/> and guidelines for monitoring discussion on the Diversity and Inclusion Code <https://codedi.nl/artikel-training/handreiking-monitorgesprek-code-diversiteit-inclusie/>. Both are currently in Dutch.

### “Start with yourself” Diversity Plan

This plan, developed as an internal plan at FARO, Belgium, can serve as inspiration for preparing organisations to work on and with Diversity. “Begin bij jezelf.” Diversiteitsplan 2022-2027 (“Start with yourself.” Diversity Plan, published in Dutch), FARO. Vlaams steunpunt voor cultureel erfgoed/Flemish Institution for Cultural Heritage <https://faro.be/publicaties/begin-bij-jezelf-diversiteitsplan-faro-2022-2027>

### Multaka Toolbox Museum of Islamic Art Berlin

The topic of migration is often seen negatively. Multaka project facilitates schools and young people to counteract this through a specially designed interactive toolbox. People can learn, for example, that their perspective is one of many and can be broadened with the help of a critical but appreciative

culture of discussion. It is aimed at schools and youth facilities in Berlin and is available onsite <https://multaka.de/en/shared-future-now/>. The toolbox motivates an appreciative togetherness. To ensure the success of a lively and yet thoughtful exchange, young people (12+ years) are assisted by Multaka guides. The toolbox is aimed at schools and youth facilities in Berlin and is available onsite <https://multaka.de/en/shared-future-now/>

### Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit, The Arts Council Ireland

This toolkit supports organisations in implementing policy measures to promote equality of opportunity, access and outcomes for all those living in Ireland regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, civil or family status, religion, age, disability, race or membership of the Traveller community as identified under the nine protected characteristics under the Equal Status Acts 2000–2018 in Ireland. [https://www.artscouncil.ie/uploadedFiles/wwwartscouncilie/Content/About/Equality,\\_Human\\_Rights\\_and\\_Diversity/EDI%20Toolkit%20Final\\_Eng.pdf](https://www.artscouncil.ie/uploadedFiles/wwwartscouncilie/Content/About/Equality,_Human_Rights_and_Diversity/EDI%20Toolkit%20Final_Eng.pdf)

### Inclusivity - Lavazza Group

This is an online resource from Italy showcasing partner museums and their work towards creating more inclusive environments. There are examples of exhibitions that cater for the visually impaired, guided tours led by people with disabilities, workshops for adults living with dementia as well as activities for parents and their newborn

babies. <https://www.lavazzagroup.com/en/our-stories/projects/art-and-culture/Incluvisity.html>

## Further reading

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## NEMO reports and updates

For further updates please check [www.ne-mo.org](http://www.ne-mo.org) for reports, initiatives, webinars and ongoing updates on publications and research.

# Footnotes/Works

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- 5 Ibid. p.5
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- 7 ICOM 2020 Museums for Equality: Diversity and Inclusion <https://imd.icom.museum/past-editions/2020-museums-for-equality-Diversity-and-Inclusion/>
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# About the researcher

Jenny Siung is Head of Education at the Chester Beatty, Dublin. She has worked in museum education for over 28 years and has developed the first intercultural learning programme in an Irish museum. Her work involves engaging with the Islamic, Asian, North African, East Asian and European collections of the Chester Beatty, devising numerous programmes including intercultural projects for schools, cultural festivals, and creating links with local multi-ethnic communities. She has developed and edited museum-based learning resources with local and international partners. Jenny has been involved in a number of EU-funded projects looking at how museums can engage with creativity, critical thinking, collaboration and communication especially when working with teachers and schools. She regularly presents and writes about museums and learning, cultural diversity, national identity, interfaith dialogue, creativity and innovation. Jenny is Canadian-born, Irish Trinidadian and is a descendant of Chinese migrants. Her ancestors moved from South China and Hong Kong to British Guiana in the mid-to-late 19<sup>th</sup> century to work on sugar and coffee plantations as free and indentured labourers.

## The Chester Beatty

The Chester Beatty is a pre-eminent Irish museum promoting the appreciation and understanding of world cultures with holdings of manuscripts, rare books, and other treasures from Europe, the Middle East, North Africa and Asia. An engaging and welcoming space, visitors from Ireland and overseas will find permanent and temporary displays, an intercultural learning programme and a broad variety of activities for all ages and backgrounds.

Once the private library of Sir Alfred Chester Beatty (1875-1968), a successful American mining engineer, collector and philanthropist, the Chester Beatty is also today a research library for scholars from all over the world. [www.chesterbeatty.ie](http://www.chesterbeatty.ie)



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