

Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan 2021-2025



EUROPEAN
COURT
OF AUDITORS

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I. Preparation for the action plan

The plan's objectives and actions emerged from a large-scale preparatory project consisting of six modules. We have reported separately on the results for each module.

- Statistical analysis of Human Resources (HR) equal opportunities data to examine how the ECA's working conditions affect different staff demographics;
- Follow-up of the ECA's equal opportunities action plan 2018 – 2020;
- Benchmarking to compare equal opportunities measures across six organisations: an international organisation, a private company, the ECA and three other EU institutions;
- A survey in partnership with the Internal Audit Service to measure staff perceptions of both equal opportunities in the workplace and the ECA as an equal opportunities employer;
- Interviews with a sample of ECA staff members across all ECA departments, function groups and job types;
- Workshops to stimulate discussion among staff on issues relating to equal opportunities, including our current strengths and weaknesses and potential future actions.

The preparatory work provided comprehensive feedback on previous outcomes, current actions and the ECA's performance as an equal opportunity employer. The goals and actions listed below build on the strengths of the previous action plan and were identified following widespread consultation with ECA staff: 65% of all staff took part in the survey (and sent full or partial replies), 31 staff members were interviewed and 99 attended the workshops.

II. ECA D&I policy and action plan – key ECA stakeholders



* Equality team and working groups on: dignity at work, wellbeing, inclusive language and communication, physical and digital accessibility, gender sensitive and inclusive reports.

III. Goals and actions for 2021-2025



Goal 1. MOBILISE

Promote D&I among management

- Strengthen commitment among managers and participation for all staff:
 - (a) Engage the ECA's Members in D&I: it is top management's role to drive the D&I process and lead the way in reshaping both the ECA's work culture and working environment. Continue to publish statements and personal experiences of D&I (e.g. videos) from Members and other senior stakeholders.
 - (b) Engage the Members as 'D&I ambassadors': encourage Members and other senior stakeholders to become D&I ambassadors for a defined term (e.g. 12 months). Introduce and define the concept of 'ambassador'. For example, ambassadors could host events, publish articles, etc.
 - (c) Sign the [Diversity Charter Lëtzebuerg](#) to commit to diversity promotion and diversity management through specific actions that exceed legal obligations. The ECA is already a member of the "Inspiring More Sustainability" (IMS) network. This network spearheads the project that underpins the Diversity Charter Lëtzebuerg. Explore additional possibilities for collaborative work with the IMS and other stakeholders (e.g. the [Luxembourg Ministry of Equality between Women and Men](#)).
 - (d) As necessary, update the Internal Guide to reflect D&I developments, with a special focus on the COVID-19 crisis and its consequences. Consider extending the document by adding a paragraph on LGBTQ+ ethnicity, religion, geographical origin, culture, etc.
 - (e) Promote the Internal Guide among managers. Send a reminder about the guide to managers.
- Survey staff to assess how they perceive the management involvement in promoting D&I.
- Provide compulsory training for managers on non-discrimination, equal opportunities and D&I-related objectives.



- Implement a voluntary D&I assessment for managers. The assessment should include questions on the way in which they promote D&I and how they address related issues within their teams.

Goal 2. INFORM AND ENGAGE

Promote D&I among all staff



- Establish a comprehensive communication plan, taking all stakeholders into account.
- Continue regular and frequent communication on D&I issues.
- Set up a group to provide guidance on using gender-neutral language, in addition to more inclusive language and graphics generally. The group could comprise translators, auditors and graphic design experts.
- Appoint a 'D&I contact point in each directorate to ensure continuous dialogue on D&I issues. Define a role for the D&I contact points.
- Maintain an open internal network in order to promote D&I. Continue the work of the equality team and any other open groups or networks that may be created by 2025. Assign representatives for potential areas in the field of diversity (e.g. LGBTQ+, parents, disabilities, ethnic minorities, inclusive language).
- Review and update the D&I content of training material for new staff.
- Update Decision No 26-2017 and continue to provide training for the ECA's confidential counsellors:
 - (a) Update Decision No. 26-2017 on the policy to maintain a satisfactory working environment and combat psychological and sexual harassment.
 - (b) Participate in the Commission's benchmark study on harassment prevention policies at the ECA, other EU institutions and other public organisations.
 - (c) Continue to provide training for the ECA's confidential counsellors.
 - (d) Cooperate with confidential counsellors from other EU institutions and agencies and create an interinstitutional network. Maintain and continue collaboration with network participants. Exchange experiences and learn from each other.

- Promote the guide to promoting equal opportunities to all staff:
 - (a) Send a reminder of the guide to all staff.
 - (b) Present the guide to newcomers as part of their initial training package.
- Organise a campaign to combat sexism:
 - (a) Campaign preparation: organise a webinar with the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) to present EIGE's Handbook on combating sexism in the workplace. Circulate the handbook within the ECA.
 - (b) Communicate regularly on related issues throughout the campaign (publish messages on ECANet, organise a webinar, etc.).
 - (c) Organise a training course for managers, based on the EIGE handbook (combine with action 1.3).
- Raise awareness of the different cultures, ethnicities, religions and other aspects of diversity present at the ECA:
 - (a) Provide training in cross-cultural communication to raise awareness of cultural similarities and differences (as well as stereotypes) and increase mutual understanding of different values and principles. This training should be accessible to all, with staff strongly encouraged to attend.
 - (b) Organise awareness-raising events (e.g. Luxembourg Diversity Day, sessions on cultural similarities and differences and a multicultural food event).
- Promote staff wellbeing:
 - (a) Set up a wellbeing team to centralise all wellbeing actions and function as a contact point for discussing work-life balance issues.
 - (b) Promote activities contributing to health and wellbeing. Continue actions introduced during the previous action plan, but centralise all efforts with the wellbeing team.
 - (c) Make all staff aware of the services provided by occupational psychologists who work with the ECA.
 - (d) Provide access to a social worker who can support ECA staff who may be in need of assistance.

- Raise awareness of the LGBTQ+ community:
 - (a) Organise awareness-raising events, workshops and conferences and publish communications.
 - (b) Exchange information and good practices with other EU institutions and international organisations, and with International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA).
- Continue to organise meetings for the working group on dignity at work. Involve the working group in implementing this action plan.
- Set up a suggestions box in a discreet but easily accessible location for staff to express their ideas anonymously.

Goal 3. ATTRACT

Provide equal opportunities and enhance D&I in the recruitment process

- Continue to ensure that competition selection boards include both women and men.
- Anonymise case study papers for internal selection procedures.
- Assess candidates' perceptions of equal opportunities and D&I during the selection process. After selection interviews, get feedback from candidates on their interview experiences.
- Share/publish statistics on recruitment and selection.
- Give guidance for recruitment panel members:
 - (a) Update the interview guidelines (from 2015) using information from EPSO and other relevant sources.
 - (b) Prepare a handbook on overcoming unconscious bias during the recruitment process.
 - (c) Distribute the updated guidelines and the handbook to recruitment panel members upon their appointment.
 - (d) Continue to provide training on unconscious bias to recruitment panel members.
- Aim to attract/encourage a diverse pool of applicants and achieve a fair representation of all EU nationalities among ECA staff:
 - (a) Review vacancy notices to ensure they attract/encourage a diverse range of applicants by gender, age, disability, etc.
 - (b) Work with EPSO, in cooperation with Member States, on the project to develop an equality and diversity monitoring tool for recruitment.
 - (c) Discuss with the ECA Members from under-represented countries how best to attract/encourage applications and obtain a more diverse pool of staff.



- (d) Publish information on geographical representation in the annual social balance sheet. Present a breakdown by nationality for all staff, managers and assistants.

Goal 4. INTEGRATE

Mainstream equal opportunities and D&I in performance management, evaluation, certification and promotion

- Analyse the annual promotion procedure ex post, to ensure there has been no bias linked to maternity or parental leave, part-time working or any other staff demographic (e.g. age, nationality, contract type).
- Encourage men to take parental leave: organise a session where men who have taken parental leave can share their experiences, or ask for volunteers to be a contact point for men seeking advice on the topic.
- In the Compass Guide, add the promotion of D&I as a criterion to be considered in the annual appraisal and promotion procedure for principal managers and directors. Assessment should take into account whether managers have actively promoted D&I, whether management practices have reinforced D&I and whether managers have implemented the action plan as appropriate.
- Establish a coaching programme whereby 'coachees' are provided with advice, support, help and encouragement from a more experienced colleague who has been trained as an internal coach.
- Continue to offer training on conflict management for managers and all staff. Managers should be encouraged to attend in order to improve the wellbeing of their teams and above all, to ensure that conflicts are dealt with quickly and effectively.



Goal 5. PROMOTE

Promote gender equality in the selection of heads of task

- Encourage female auditors to become heads of task, contacting qualified women to motivate them to apply for head of task positions:
 - (a) Continue the Secretary-General's practice of regularly sending an email to directors and principal managers to encourage female auditors to become heads of task.
 - (b) Conduct interviews or anonymous surveys with female staff members (AD 9 and above) who are hesitant about taking a leadership role, in order to understand their reasons and propose alternative solutions (e.g. two officials sharing the role of head of task).
- Provide specific training for heads of task:
 - (a) Continue to provide specific training for heads of task. Advise new heads of task on the courses available to them.
 - (b) Organise informal sessions at which experienced female heads of task can share their knowledge.
- Provide half-yearly updates on the relative share of female and male heads of task:
 - (a) Arrange for directors to report to their chambers on the share of female and male heads of task every six months, with onward reporting to the Secretariat-General.
 - (b) Present half-yearly updates from the Secretary-General to the Administrative Committee.



Goal 6. ADAPT

Enhance flexibility at work

- Expand the options for teleworking.
- Once the COVID-19 crisis is over, analyse the impact of teleworking during the crisis. Conduct a survey to understand how it has affected ECA staff and how lessons learnt can be used in the future.
- To improve support for part-time working, put in place a headcount system to compensate teams and chambers for the loss of full-time equivalents (FTEs) resulting from part-time working and all extended staff absences (e.g. maternity leave, leave on personal grounds, extended sick leave, reassignment to another function). Compensate for this loss in the services most affected.
- Develop a reintegration strategy following the COVID-19 crisis and for staff returning to work after an extended absence.
- Inform women about their right to flexible working arrangements, should they wish to breastfeed.
- Promote a healthy work-life balance, encouraging a move towards a cultural and organisational focus on results rather than the number of hours of work and physical presence, where hybrid teams can perform effectively within a flexible environment.
- Optimise the physical working environment by providing ergonomic work stations. Implement plans to renovate the K2 building, including the creation of 'meditation rooms'. Advertise the meditation rooms as a space for relaxation. Provide privacy screens in the meditation rooms so that breastfeeding mothers can use them to pump milk if required.



Goal 7. ENABLE

Create an inclusive environment for staff members with a disability

- Raise awareness about disability issues:
 - (a) Organise physical and virtual training courses, workshops and discussions to raise awareness and inform staff about disability matters. Staff should be strongly encouraged to attend these sessions. Representatives of the ECA departments with disabilities-related responsibilities (buildings, security, fire marshals, HR, DIWI, etc.) should also attend.
 - (b) Launch a staff survey on disability to identify potential needs of people with a disability (whether visible or invisible).
- Under the coordination of the D&I officer, create a disability network to inform and support staff with a disability, and be the contact point for every person with a specific need. The network could create partnerships with disability associations to encourage applications to the ECA. It could also work on improving digital and physical accessibility (buildings, websites, communication tools, etc.).
- Update the ECA guide on traineeships to cater for the needs of people with a disability. Offer traineeships to people with disabilities.
- Adopt a decision and guidelines on 'reasonable accommodation' for staff members with a disability. Implementing the guidelines could help staff members whose difficulties were previously unknown. It would also serve as a statement and could attract applications from people with a disability.
- As part of the K2030 project, improve the accessibility of ECA buildings for people with a disability (staff and visitors), assisted by an external consultant with expertise in accessibility diagnostics. When renovating the buildings, plan to eliminate physical barriers (heavy doors, etc.) and improve accessibility (e.g. by means of signalling for blind people) from the outset.



Goal 8. PROTECT

Acknowledge, understand and address the ageing of ECA staff

- With input from active seniors (ECA retirees) where possible, look into the strengths and experience that older staff members can contribute and also the challenges they face, in order to identify the best way to address their needs.
- Promote lifelong learning (including compulsory training) and launch experience-sharing initiatives (e.g. 'share and connect' sessions) to ensure that senior staff members can continue to develop their skills and younger colleagues can benefit from their experience and knowledge.

As part of these initiatives, encourage cross-generational social exchange and mentoring to facilitate mutual learning and growth, and invite newcomers to participate.

- Facilitate exchange between active seniors and staff members close to retirement.



Goal 9. ENCOURAGE

Encourage women to embark upon the path towards management

- Organise training, coaching and advice for female staff, provided both by career experts and by other women who can serve as role models.
- Interview female participants in the Leadership Development Programme, produce a reflection paper with information about their motivations and constraints, and offer support measures such as mentoring and coaching. Explore existing support initiatives, such as the Commission's Female Talent Development Programme.
- Conduct exit interviews with people leaving the ECA, including questions to clarify why women are leaving, and produce a document summarising what the interviews reveal. Analyse all exit interviews once a year and discuss the lessons learnt with the relevant departments.



Goal 10. MEASURE

Evaluate D&I progress

- Publish statistics on gender balance, for example:
 - the share of women in head of task positions,
 - the share of women in senior and other management posts, and
 - the number of training days by age group and gender.



Support the statistics with background information, and assess why and how they are significant and what they reveal about the general situation.

- Conduct surveys to gather and analyse staff perceptions of the degree to which senior management values and promotes D&I, whether staff are treated respectfully and fairly, and how well D&I is reflected in HR policy. Repeat the surveys every two years.
- Establish performance indicators for measuring D&I initiatives. Publish data on the many different aspects of equal opportunities and D&I (gender, age, disability, participation in training, knowledge-sharing, mentoring, geographical representation, etc.).
- Report annually on the implementation of this action plan.

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