

Gender Equality Plan NWO-I

1. Introduction

NWO facilitates world-class scientific research. This research has scientific and societal impact. In addition, NWO contributes in many different ways to the technology required to be able to do research as well. With its research institutes, NWO manages large infrastructures, but it also offers a strong base for the development of new instruments and techniques. These activities have scientific and societal impact. One aspect of this is encouraging an inclusive scientific and technological culture with an eye for diversity in the broadest sense of the term. In other words: diversity in cultural, ethnic and/or religious background, in gender, sexual orientation, ability to work/health, age, talents and qualities. It is important that science is conducted by people with different backgrounds and areas of experience. A diversity in perspectives ensures innovative and creative research. Furthermore, trust in science is increased if there is a better representation of society in research.

Gender equality, equal opportunities, academic freedom and social safety in science are important themes that are high on the agenda of the political and public debate in the Netherlands. The European Commission has also set itself the objective of facilitating gender equality in European research. For example, the European Commission has made gender equality plans compulsory for funding from Horizon Europe, the framework programme for research and innovation.

The responsibility and contribution of NWO towards improving diversity and inclusion (D&I) in science is twofold:

- ✓ NWO has the responsibility, position and means to exert influence on encouraging inclusion and diversity in the scientific community. By encouraging diversity and inclusion in the primary process of NWO, determining a clear own course and setting criteria for the scientific community, NWO can bring its weight to bear on improving diversity and inclusion in science. We do this with the so-called D&I granting policy of NWO. For the NWO granting policy, a separate GEP has been written, titled: Gender Equality Plan (GEP) NWO-D | NWO.
- ✓ At the same time, we have the D&I employer's policy by means of which NWO strives to be an inclusive organisation with a diverse workforce. Facilitating scientific research and increasing scientific and societal impact, in brief, the success of NWO, stands or falls with the deployment, quality, dedication and diversity of our employees. We strive to realise a work environment in which there is room for differences, everyone can be themselves, and everyone feels safe and valued.

2. Our approach

The theme diversity and inclusion has been high on the NWO agenda for many years. We adopt a positive approach for which we focus on the added value of diversity and inclusion. To achieve our ambitions, we have adopted an integral approach and work at the cultural, institutional and individual levels. The ultimate aim of this is to realise a sustainable embedding of diversity and inclusion within NWO.

The Implementation Plan Diversity Policy was approved in 2018. This integral plan contains objectives for the NWO and ZonMw granting policy, and for the NWO-D and NWO-I employer's policy. Many objectives from this plan have been realised in recent years. An updated plan is now being worked on with the aim of a) properly embedding the policy in the current organisation structure, and b) adapting the policy to internal and external developments. In doing so, the lessons learned from the past were, of course, incorporated. However, the finishing line is not yet in sight, even with this updated plan. In addition, all NWO institutes have their own GEP.

For NWO, diversity and inclusion are challenges that require ongoing attention and demand continuous development and monitoring of new initiatives, responding to changes in society and the scientific field. Monitoring at least takes place based on the data reported on, and based on the annual D&I plans.

NWO has made this commitment visible to society at large by signing the [Diversity Charter](#) of SER Diversity at Work in 2017 and the [Declaration of Amsterdam](#) in 2021. In 2020, the [National action plan for more diversity and inclusion in higher education](#) was launched in close collaboration with various parties, including NWO. Besides which, NWO is also a member of [Workplace Pride](#).

3. How does NWO-I promote gender equality?

3.1. Resources

NWO-I values diversity and inclusion in its own workforce. A coordinator has been appointed to steer the realisation of the policies by a workgroup in which P&O, communication and the D&I networks (LGBTI+) are represented. The D&I employers policy is safeguarded at the highest level within both the Executive Board and the directors' team of NWO-I.

The NWO Women In Science Excel (WISE) programme serves to encourage more women (scientists and engineers) at the NWO Institutes. Via this programme, the NWO Institutes have offered tenure track positions to 16 female researchers since 2016. The programme runs until the end of 2023, and a further 6 to 10 female scientists/engineers can still be appointed.

3.2. Data collection and monitoring

Information about diversity and inclusion within NWO is collected and reported on in various ways.

[Annual external reports](#)

As an employer, NWO annually reports on the male-female ratios of its own workforce and governance positions in the social annual report. For all organisation units, the aim is to have at least 25% women in all layers of the organisation.

[Internal reports](#)

Attention for diversity is also safeguarded in the reporting of the planning & control cycle at all levels. The recurring employee satisfaction survey is an important benchmark moment for the measurement of inclusion, well-being and social safety of employees.

Ahead of the signing of the Declaration of Amsterdam, NWO already completed the benchmark of Workplace Pride in spring 2021 to gain more insight into the quality of the organisation's LGBTI+ policy. The benchmark proposes practical improvements and provides insight into how the organisation scores compared to similar organisations. One of the points for improvement that emerged from this is the strengthening and supporting of structures that contribute to the inclusion of LGBTI+ employees on the work floor. In addition, it will be investigated whether the employment conditions are inclusive for all groups of employees.

All of these figures will ensure a better insight into diversity and therefore provide valuable information for targeted initiatives to increase diversity and inclusion.

3.3. Training and capacity building

To facilitate diversity and improve the inclusivity experienced in the organisation, it is important that all employees are involved in the process. Awareness will be increased by involving many employees in the projects and campaigns. By devoting attention to implicit bias and training employees to recognise this, everybody becomes more aware of their own prejudices and this enables employees to help each other in this

regard. This process has two pillars as well, namely the employer's policy and the granting policy. In recent years, many results have already been achieved. The current overview can be read on the [NWO diversity and inclusion webpage](#).

Several recent and impactful changes/interventions that tackle implicit bias have been highlighted below:

- As an employer, NWO-I will introduce an inclusive approach to recruitment and selection. For this, a method for inclusive recruitment and selection has been developed that provides many opportunities for realising a diverse and inclusive NWO. We want to be able to reach everybody on the labour market and ensure that everybody feels welcome to apply for jobs and contribute to the results achieved by the NWO Institutes. Furthermore, we will actively search for people and talents that can complement the current workforce. Reducing implicit bias is particularly important in the recruitment process. Everyone involved in recruiting and selecting new employees is trained, starting with the P&O team. In line with this, the language used to recruit new personnel on the labour market is also being examined.
- Line managers play an important role in the culture within the organisation by creating a safe and stimulating working environment for all employees and by setting a good example. NWO-I intends to start a leadership programme in which line managers can work together on their development. One of the objectives is to give managers tools for creating and/or maintaining a safe and inclusive work environment at all levels of the organisation, and between the different levels of the organisation.
- The inclusive '[NWO celebrates ...](#)' calendar is an initiative to increase the involvement and awareness of all employees in the area of D&I. It is a calendar that lists all national and international special days: days we can celebrate together as NWO employees. We hope this will help us get to know each other better and acquire more knowledge about (festive) days that we ourselves are not used to celebrating so that we can open up the conversation about which (festive) days are special for us and why.
- We try to organise all NWO events as inclusively as possible. We do that, for example, are devoting attention to inclusive visual material, a balance in speakers from different backgrounds and physical accessibility for everybody. In addition, the theme D&I also takes centre stage during several employees' events.
- At NWO-I, we strive to provide employees and visitors with the [resources and facilities](#) they need, Examples are wheelchair accessibility, milk expressing/breastfeeding rooms or the hiring of an interpreter, if required.
- More attention has been accorded to the LGBTI+ community at NWO in recent years. This has mainly taken shape in the LGBTI+ contact persons' consultation, joining Workplace Pride (with the organisation of a [Tech@Workplaceprideconference](#) in the autumn of 2021 at NWO-I institute DIFFER in Eindhoven), network meetings and attention for Coming Out Day and Diversity Day. In the coming years, the network function will be expanded, and we will work towards a more inclusive culture and mitigating barriers in expressing your LGBTI+ identity. At the institutes and the office of NWO-I, it will be investigated whether it is possible to realise at least one gender-neutral toilet or block of toilets at a comfortable walking distance from the workstation.

3.4. Work-life balance and the culture within the organisation.

NWO believes it is important that all employees can do their work in a motivated manner during their entire career and, therefore, in various stages of their lives. Every NWO-I employee should enjoy their work. We call this 'sustainable deployability'. To our mind, a good work-life balance is an important condition to achieve this. We offer a wide range of possibilities for realising a work-life balance in different situations or stages of life.

Depending on individual circumstances ('stages of life'), employees can have a greater need for more time for their private lives. Schemes have been included in the collective labour agreement (CAO) for the temporary or more long-term adjustment of working hours. In addition, the CAO contains various forms of special leave for specific events, including paid parental leave for parents, foster parents and adoptive parents. In the preparations for the next CAO, paid leave has been included for transgender persons who undergo the operations and treatments they need.

If a business trip must be made, the employer will reimburse incidental childcare costs. There is paid care leave for colleagues who need to care for a sick relative. It is also possible to temporarily fulfil a less demanding position if somebody's circumstances necessitate that.

For older employees, we have the Generation Plan Scheme, which offers employees who are less than five years from their state pension age the possibility to work for one or two days less per week (with the partial preservation of salary). In addition, the ABP pension scheme gives the possibility to fully or partially retire from the age of 60 years onwards.

Attention for employees' work-life balance consists not just of schemes but is also embedded in our way of working and culture. Examples of this are the recurring employee survey, the leadership programme and the interviews that are part of the Performance and Appraisal cycle.

Just like many other organisations, NWO has developed a model for hybrid working. Principles have been formulated that form a basis for making work agreements about hybrid working. As a result of hybrid working, work and private life will increasingly overlap. This can ensure a better balance in all of a person's responsibilities. At the same time, it is also the responsibility of NWO/NWO-I as an employer, and of each employee, to make good agreements so that all employees can do their work as well as possible, depending on the circumstances.

3.5. Gender equality in leadership and decision-making

The aim is to increase the percentage of women in leadership positions to realise more gender equality in leadership and decision-making. There is also a focus on inclusive leadership, as a result of which female characteristics will be better appreciated and deployed.

3.6. Gender equality in recruitment and career development.

Research has revealed that, though organisations claim that they want to select the best candidate, in reality, preference is often given to the person with whom they (unconsciously) experience 'the best click'. In this way, candidates from underrepresented groups often do not get the benefit of the doubt because a 'click' is more likely felt with candidates similar to ourselves. In the section Training, it has already been explained that NWO is introducing a method for the inclusive recruitment and selection of new colleagues. P&O takes those involved, including line managers and recruitment committee members, through all stages of the process. The aim is to realise a more inclusive workforce by:

- removing implicit bias from the entire recruitment and selection process;
- ensuring an inclusive recruitment by means of inclusive vacancy texts;
- making the recruitment process as structured and therefore as objective as possible;
- ensuring that NWO is as accessible as possible in terms of facilities.

For several years now, NWO has organised the biannual career event Insight Out for women in the natural and engineering sciences, with the help of input from the Dutch Network of Women Professors (LNVH), the Expertise Centre Diversity Policy (ECHO), the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW), the Young Academy, the PhD Network Netherlands (PNN), POSTDOCNL and the Young Academy Europe.

Through the WISE programme, NWO-I gives institutes who appoint a female scientist or engineer extra financial support.

3.7. Measures against gender-related violence, including sexual intimidation

NWO wants to be an inclusive and diverse organisation, which is only possible if we create an open, safe and positive working environment with each other.

If a form of undesirable behaviour is experienced, then there are various ways to make this undesirable behaviour known. These ways can be thought of in terms of an escalation ladder: direct feedback is given as much as possible and, if that is not possible, the incident can be discussed with a line manager, P&O, or an independent confidential adviser. There is always the possibility to submit a formal complaint, see [NWO Implementing Regulation 12](#). The board receives an annual report about notifications of undesirable behaviour. These data are collected by an external confidential adviser via the internal confidential advisers of the institutes.

Finally, in the previously mentioned employee satisfaction survey, attention will also be devoted to signalling undesirable behaviour in its various forms. Line managers will be equipped to make this theme discussable in their teams.