

EDI Strategy

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion at EMBL

2021

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Foreword



EMBL's journey in fostering Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) began over a decade ago through initiatives by the EDI Committee and Staff Association. Building on this foundation, we created new EDI governance structures in 2021 to focus on EDI as a guiding principle of our working culture.

At EMBL, fostering and championing diversity, inclusion, and equality is not only the right thing to do. We stand for and represent the European life science community, and as such have a duty of care towards all demographic groups. As an organisation, we recognise the value of diversity. And we want to make sure that the many voices of our community are heard. Ensuring everyone has a place to thrive means we can all ask the questions that really matter, produce innovative solutions to global challenges, and progress our careers.

You hold in your hands EMBL's first EDI Strategy. It provides us with four priority areas, and specific actions and targets for the coming five years. It targets the performance of the whole organisation, and we have ensured that it aligns with EMBL's Programme 'Molecules to Ecosystems'.

By embedding the EDI Strategy into everything we do, it becomes central to EMBL's ambitions. We want EDI to become part of everything we do, feel, and think as an organisation - now and in the future. Through its Action Plan, the strategy provides us with a vehicle to bring to life the values outlined as being core to EMBL in the Programme: openness, inclusion, integrity, transparency, and fairness.

Our plans for EDI are bold and ambitious. We are taking a proactive approach and will ensure that we measure and report on our progress, and hold ourselves accountable for delivering on what we have promised. As EMBL's Director General, I have made a personal commitment to driving change and progress towards a truly inclusive organisation.

Edith Heard – Director General

Vision

Our EDI vision is to create a more inclusive research and work culture that leverages diversity, in its broadest sense, to enhance EMBL's role as a leader in the life sciences in Europe and globally.



We will do so by addressing inequalities at EMBL and in science, and by creating initiatives across four strategic axes which focus on our people, internal processes and policies, our research culture and leadership, and our external engagement.

The EDI objectives at EMBL include:

1. Ensuring that all demographic groups are included, thrive, and develop a strong sense of belonging at EMBL
2. Empowering underrepresented groups at EMBL to have equal opportunity for progress and leadership
3. Encouraging equitable decision-making processes and policies based on EDI and EMBL values
4. Developing an inclusive research culture
5. Leveraging diversity as a source of excellence and innovation
6. Developing our EDI capital as a core part of EMBL's signature excellence
7. Sending EDI-aware leaders into the world, thereby creating ripple effects in science and societies
8. Holding ourselves accountable to EDI through data

Contexts

There are two main contexts which underpin EMBL's first EDI strategy.

EMBL's first EDI survey, findings and recommendations

This first EDI Strategy responds to the insights and gaps identified in the *Report into Perceptions and Experiences of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at EMBL* which followed EMBL's first EDI survey (March 2021) conducted by an independent external company, Advance HE. The first EDI survey enabled us to listen to the concerns, comments, and experiences of staff with regards to EDI culture and practices at EMBL and the Report provides an evidence-base for strategic directions and decision-making across: Practices and Policies, Initiatives and Activities, Training and Career Development.

We also listened and talked to the EMBL community through the EDI Forum, the EDI Network, the LGBTQ+ community, focus group discussions with many colleagues across all sites, and a brainstorming workshop at the EDI Forum facilitated by an external EDI consultant. We took time to ask questions and really understand our starting point. The four strategic axes, as well as the key initiatives that underpin each axis, emerged through those conversations.

EMBL's new Programme (2022–2026)

EMBL's EDI objectives must be aligned with, and central to, the organisation's objectives. The EDI Strategy is therefore designed as a key lever to support EMBL's missions and 2022–2026 Programme. By providing a roadmap that enables EMBL to draw on EDI best practices across its member states to create a unique model in the strategic management of diversity and inclusion, the ultimate aim of this EDI Strategy is to support the development of EMBL's position as an international role model for research institutions. The EDI Strategy's focus on people, process, inclusive leadership, research culture, and external engagement will be pivotal in the implementation of EMBL's 2022–2026 Programme. The EDI Strategy also leverages the opportunities that the Programme opens up to enhance the EDI agenda internally and beyond EMBL.

How will the EDI Strategy support EMBL?

People, values, brand

The EMBL 2022–2026 Programme emphasises that the success of EMBL’s science is contingent on EMBL’s greatest asset: its people. This is an optimal time for EMBL to acknowledge the increasingly diverse demographic profile of member states to include people with diversity characteristics, as defined in IP60, EMBL’s internal policy on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, and to factor in intersectionality.

The EMBL Programme aspires to consistently promote intrinsic organisational values such as openness, inclusion, integrity, transparency, and fairness. These values underpin this EDI Strategy and, given the systemic approach adopted across people, processes, leadership, and public engagement, the Strategy will play a key role in introducing and embedding those values for staff in an efficient and sustainable manner.

This Strategy, through its inclusive practices, also builds EDI as part of the employer brand strategy which is integral to EMBL’s new Programme. Embedding EDI into EMBL’s processes and systems through collaboration with the COO’s Office is also designed to support EMBL’s transition to contemporary work practices.

EDI, research culture and leadership

This Strategy aims to generate a more inclusive research culture and work environment that encourages respectful collaboration across scientific and administrative staff, creates space for the recognition of all, prioritises work-life balance, and creates new role models from underrepresented groups in science who will exert their influence across the globe.

The EDI Strategy aims to enhance a research culture that creates inclusive professionals and leaders who will transfer EMBL’s signature excellence to member states and beyond while adding new dimensions to this concept. Diversity intelligence and inclusive leadership skills will enhance scientists’ ability to resolve future challenges in increasingly diverse contexts. For example, the synergy between the EDI Strategy and the new Programme is particularly relevant at a time when inequities in global health access and provision have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and when the disproportionately negative impact of climate crisis on populations with diversity characteristics is increasingly acknowledged. By including EDI considerations in human and planetary health research and approaches, EMBL is uniquely placed to positively influence policy-making.

Moreover, there is evidence that current scientific exploration is biased in terms of the topics which are researched (e.g., proportional underfunding of diseases which disproportionately affect some ethnicities) and bias in the design and interpretation of research which leaves some groups underserved by scientific progress¹. EMBL aims to address these shortcomings by considering, where relevant, the EDI impact of the research grants it puts forward, and the partner institutes it collaborates with.

EDI and innovation

One of EMBL's key aims is to support Europe's leadership in breakthrough innovations in the life sciences, health, and environmental sectors. This Strategy, by leveraging demographic diversity and the ensuing cognitive diversity, supports innovation at EMBL. Diversity and inclusion have been shown to enhance creativity and innovation across the scientific landscape, while also contributing to a richness in research culture². Teams composed of members from diverse backgrounds that approach complex scientific questions from diverse perspectives are more likely to expand the scope of research questions, approach them in different ways, and ask questions that are relevant to more diverse populations. Leveraging the diversity of talent at EMBL and across the alumni body will be key to helping the organisation deliver its current Programme on a European and global scale.

EMBL also seeks to foster an innovative culture through an entrepreneurial and risk-taking spirit that will require staff to feel empowered and equipped to be creative, collaborative, and innovative. An EDI-driven workplace will create a space that is psychologically safe for all staff, including those with diversity characteristics, and which will be conducive to achieving EMBL's objectives. There is also growing evidence that diversity leads to better decision-making. This EDI Strategy, therefore, promotes a virtuous circle of effective problem solving and innovation at EMBL. The Action Plan of this EDI Strategy will implement a number of new activities which seek to facilitate a mindset and culture change that will lead EMBL towards an innovative ecosystem and increased impact.

1. Caroline Criado Perez, *Invisible Women: Exposing Data Bias In A World Designed For Men* (2019)

2. Reports from the Royal Society (<https://royalsociety.org/topics-policy/diversity-in-science/>) and Nature (<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-018-05326-3>) highlight the importance of diverse backgrounds in bringing together teams to create impactful scientific advancements.

EDI and Learning and Development at EMBL

The EDI Learning and Development Plan is an enabler to both this Strategy and EMBL's 2022–2026 Programme. It supports EMBL's strategic objective of embedding EDI principles in its culture, practices, leadership, and external engagement by developing training opportunities that include, among others, EDI best practices, adapting EMBL's training needs to evolving scientific and technical aims, and generating awareness of EDI-related societal issues and expectations. The EDI Office will also play a role in creating awareness amongst staff of EMBL's global responsibilities in terms of research integrity, open science, and citizen science.

EDI and EMBL's external influence

EMBL's 2022–2026 Programme aims to expand the breadth and depth of direct engagement with audiences across the continent and globally, establishing mutually beneficial relationships and supporting European teachers and young learners. This EDI Strategy ensures that the policies and actions in EDI that advance the performance of EMBL also contribute to social good externally. It supports EMBL's Programme by embedding EDI in public engagement and external communications. Within five years, EMBL's growing EDI capital could play a key role in raising the visibility of the EMBL brand and serve to inspire, inform, and educate a range of audiences.

EDI data, accountability, and funding criteria

EMBL does not traditionally collect EDI data from and about its personnel. Doing so has now become imperative as EDI data collection will allow the organisation to develop a more accurate picture of its diversity, identify areas in which EMBL is succeeding and failing in terms of diversity, and therefore indicate areas suited to targeted interventions. EMBL's strategic approach to EDI data begins with the goal of establishing a baseline of data from which to build, and to which future data can be compared to examine the impact of initiatives and strategies, track whether they are effective, and identify areas which may require more specific intervention.

It is also necessary to collect EDI data as the funding trend indicates that future funding will be dependent on the existence and enforcement of equality plans. Currently some funders require organisations to write and implement gender equality plans as part of their funding submissions, and it is important for EMBL to pre-emptively begin collecting EDI data to support the creation of any other diversity plans which may be required in the

future. The point, however, is not to simply meet the diversity requirements from funding bodies. This would be a matter of compliance. Rather, the aspiration is to fulfil those requirements because they are underpinned by the values and culture that we want to build at EMBL and help to disseminate outside EMBL.

Approach and Principles

A holistic approach

This Strategy seeks to embed EDI values and practices across all key functions of EMBL from recruitment to research, external training, scientific services, leadership, and external engagement. While the focus of this EDI Strategy is internal – focussing on people and development, internal processes and policies, and inclusive leadership – this Strategy also leverages EMBL’s unique operational framework, its special position vis-à-vis the public, and its potential to drive certain changes in societal norms through its alumni body. For example, EMBL’s role in training scientists at all levels means that EMBL alumni populate roles in both academia and industry throughout Europe and the world, often taking leadership positions. This vast network has a major impact on the scientific community, and often brings EMBL’s ‘open science, collaborative culture’ with it. By training our scientists in EDI awareness and best practices, EMBL alumni could also bring a culture of ‘EDI awareness’ to their next positions, thereby helping to bring about a change in EDI activities in European science. We should therefore strive to broaden our ‘EMBL culture’ beyond open science to include open thinking and understanding of EDI issues.

EMBL’s commitment to internal EDI is thus planned and implemented in tandem with its external engagement in its role as leader in the European life sciences and as a standard-setter and champion of best practice.

The principles

Positive action

Positive action recognises the bias that places certain groups at a disadvantage and takes steps to address this inequality and ensure equity of opportunity. Doing diversity by design and taking informed targeted positive action, backed by the evidence base of the *Report into Perceptions and Experiences of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion* at EMBL, will enable us to close a number of attainment gaps faster.

Allyship and collaboration

EDI benefits the organisation as a whole, beyond various traditionally disadvantaged groups. The responsibility to address and redress any form of discrimination should not be the sole responsibility of underrepresented groups. Our approach is a non-polarising one,

by which all EMBL staff, including the majority groups, take responsibility to achieve equity. Every member of personnel is a stakeholder in the creation of an EDI vision for EMBL and its implementation. Collaboration and mutual support across scientific and administrative staff are key principles of this Strategy. Working in partnership as one EMBL across six sites will enable us to deliver change more efficiently, both internally and externally.

Transparency

We can only measure our progress in terms of EDI if we have regularly updated data. Our first EDI survey gave us an initial snapshot of the diversity profile of EMBL. EMBL now commits to gathering a baseline and regularly collecting diversity data for monitoring, transparency, and accountability purposes. When EDI data is analysed to create a report, this will first be made available internally before decisions are made as to whether this data is to be shared externally.

Scope

The conversations that took place helped to define the scope of the EDI Strategy. The question was posed as to whether this first Strategy would benefit from a focus initially on one or two demographics. Given EMBL's relatively small but complex population and the legitimate urgency for change felt by different demographics, it was established that all diversity groups should be included. The Strategy therefore focuses on inclusion in general and takes a holistic and intersectional understanding of minority experiences. While embedding EDI into the organisation requires a long-term commitment from EMBL, this Strategy also delivers on short term goals, in tandem with the longer-term goals, which will help drive the momentum without compromising delivery of the overarching vision.



Strategic axes

Axis 1.

Attract, develop, support, and promote underrepresented groups at EMBL (objectives 1 and 2)

Focus areas

- Identify opportunities to support inclusive recruitment and progress
- High profile action targeting underrepresented groups
- Internal engagement
- Visibility and celebration of diversity

Image: Attendees at an EMBL course collaborate. Credits: CCO EMBL



Axis 2.

Ensure that EDI principles are built into all internal processes, systems and policies (objective 3)

Focus areas

- Review of recruitment processes at EMBL to ensure that these are debiased and inclusive to all groups
- Review of internal policies through an EDI lens
- Alignment of EMBL communication with current EDI best practices
- Built environment and access
- Incidence reporting system

Image: Attendees at a training session with Scientific Training Coordinator, Sarah Morgan.

Credits: Jeff Dowling/EMBL



Axis 3.

Develop a model of inclusive leadership in science and our services (objectives 4, 5 and 6)

Focus areas

- Encourage and expect inclusive and respectful behaviours from all leaders
- Make leaders central to eliminating discrimination against underrepresented groups
- Encourage inclusive and diversity-responsive science at EMBL

Image: EMBL Director General, Edith Heard stands with staff in front of the EMBL Pride flag in Heidelberg.
Credits: Photo organised by the EMBL LGBTQ+ group, and taken by Kinga Lubowiecka/EMBL



Axis 4.

Engage with and influence our environment (objectives 6 and 7)

Focus areas

- Foster regional engagement
- Promote collaboration and partnerships

Image: Conference attendees network at a conference in the ATC, Heidelberg. Credit: CCO EMBL

The EDI Action Plan

Access and review

The EDI Action Plan is a living document that provides details of initiatives with progress measures and timelines to support each axis and is internally available to all EMBL. Given that EDI is a fast-evolving discipline, we will review our EDI Action Plan on an annual basis.

EDI Action Plan and communication

We aim to be open and transparent in developing and implementing the EDI Action Plan and will communicate regularly with all EMBL. This will include:

- Regular communication so that people are familiarised with and understand the EDI Strategy and its main objectives
- Communicating planned changes early and demonstrating how these are connected with organisational goals
- Publication of the EDI annual report

EDI Action Plan and data

The impact of the initiatives of the Action Plan will be monitored and evaluated, and areas which may require more specific intervention will be identified through EMBL's strategic approach to EDI data (objective 8).

Enablers

EDI structures, including Working Groups and Task Forces, will support and facilitate the implementation of the strategic axes with expertise, knowledge and design .

EDI training will be embedded into existing training covering the fundamental aspects of EDI and bespoke stand-alone EDI modules will target specific audiences.

Internal communication will play a key role in ensuring that all staff understand the importance of this EDI Strategy for EMBL as well as their responsibilities. Communication will also showcase our efforts in EDI externally.

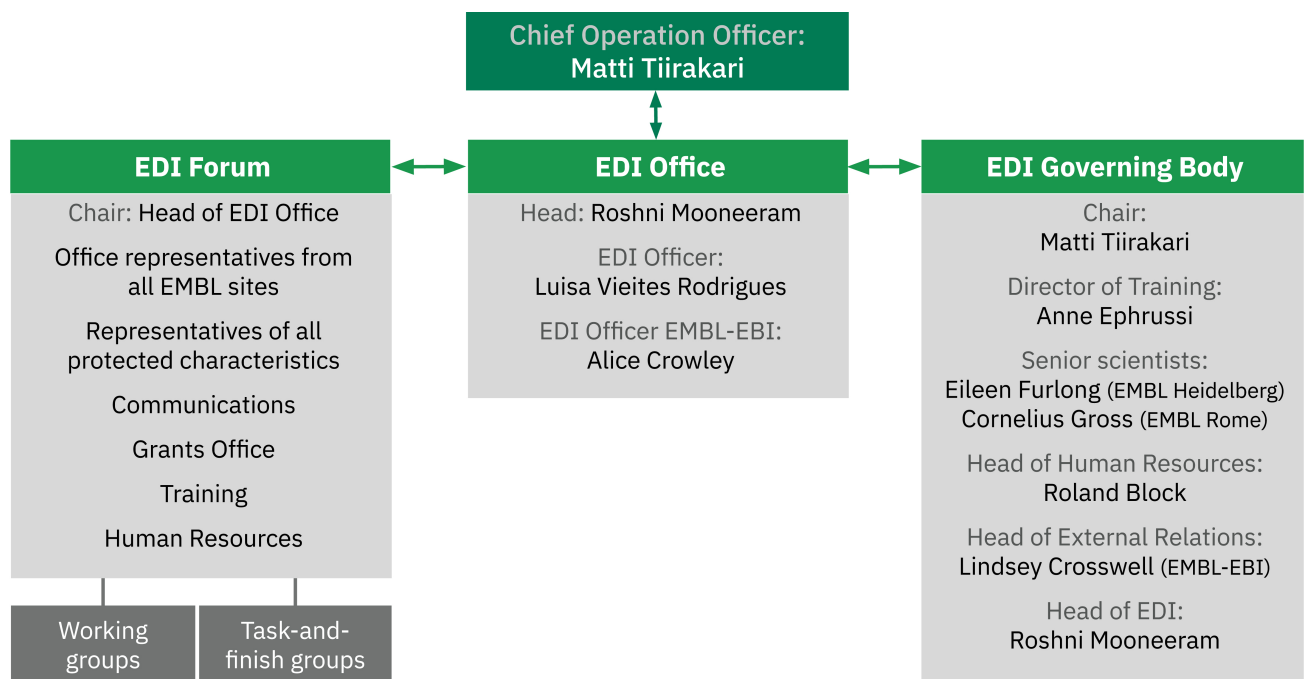
Data and reporting will enable us to track our progress, demonstrate transparency, and accountability.

Partnerships and collaborations (e.g., with EDIS, Euroforum) are essential for the exchange of best practices and to enhance EMBL's external impact in EDI.

Governance and Reporting

EMBL's first important step towards EDI was to develop EDI governance structures in March 2021. These include a dedicated [EDI Office](#), composed of full-time EDI specialists, with a new [Governing Body](#) to support strategic decision making, as well as a very dynamic and active [EDI Forum](#).

The EDI Office is an independent entity within the Chief Operating Officer's (COO) Office. It provides expert EDI advice and is responsible for ownership of the EDI Strategy, which has been developed in consultation with key stakeholders (e.g. EDI Forum, EDI Governing Body, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with key stakeholders at EMBL). The EDI Office works closely with the senior leaders of EMBL, the COO, the Human Resources team, the EDI Forum, other colleagues, and networks towards the implementation of the EDI Strategy.



The EDI Forum, comprising staff from all sites, across scientific and administrative functions, as well as representatives of all protected characteristics, plays a key role in advocacy, consultation, and support to specific staff groups. The EDI Governing Body is chaired by the COO and its other members include the Head of HR, the Head of External Relations at EMBL-EBI, and three senior scientists.

The EDI Governing Body is responsible for approving the EDI Strategy and the associated progress indicators. Placing EDI accountability with senior leaders ensures that EDI is

central to organisational strategy and planning and is embedded under EMBL's key functions as employer, and as a research and training institution of global excellence.

Progress in the detailed actions set out in the Action Plan with specific measures of progress and timelines will be reported annually to the EDI Governing Body and included in EMBL's annual report. This will ensure that there is regular scrutiny and transparent communication of EDI activity at EMBL.

Definition of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and related terms in organisations

Equality – No individual is treated differently or less favourably in an organisation due to their diversity characteristics. Diversity characteristics include age, disability, gender identity, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation³.

Diversity – An organisation's ability to attract individuals from all demographic groups and characteristics at all levels of seniority and across all functions.

Inclusion – Inclusion requires organisational adaptation to integrate all individuals in the workplace while allowing their differences to coexist in a mutually beneficial way. Inclusion requires procedures that ensure that individuals from all demographic groups participate in decision-making, are able to share their opinions and thoughts without hesitation, feel recognised, respected, valued, and have a sense of belonging.

Equity – Equity recognises that each individual has a different set of needs based on their circumstances and allocates resources and opportunities to people in order to achieve equal outcomes. For EMBL, to develop an equal workplace this may often require equitable approaches rather than equal approaches.

Intersectionality – The complex way in which multiple forms of discrimination intersect or overlap to affect people with multiple marginalised identities. Intersectional analysis considers how all factors overlap to affect an individual, rather than examining each factor in isolation.

Underrepresented groups – Groups which are less represented in one area than the general population. In STEM fields, this can refer to groups which are not represented in STEM professions in equal proportion to white and/or male STEM workers. At EMBL, when referring to underrepresented groups, we are referring to age, disability, neurodiversity, ethnicity, gender, LGBTQ+, religion and belief, and socio-economic status.

3. The UK uses the term 'protected characteristics' under the Equality Act of 2010, referring to age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. Some EU organisations also use the term 'protected characteristic'. At EMBL, we have chosen the term 'diversity characteristic' as an umbrella term that is not restricted to any member state or to the characteristics listed under their legislature.

For more information about EDI at EMBL, visit our webpage:

<https://www.embl.org/about/info/equality-diversity/>

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