

POLICY PAPER: INCLUSION AND ACCESSIBILITY AT THE STEDELIJK

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1. WHY DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION?

The Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam (SMA) pursues four core values: distinctive, accessible, engaged and accountable. Guided by these principles, we are committed to promoting diversity, inclusion and accessibility in the museum.

Thanks to the tireless efforts of artists and activists, diversity and inclusion are ever higher on the agenda of our cultural and creative sector. Over the years, the Stedelijk has implemented various noteworthy projects and initiatives aimed at cultivating diversity and inclusion – from the Blikopeners to the Inclusion and Accessibility Advisory Council*. Yet the change process is still in its early days, and we have a long way to go before these advances are structurally embedded.

Arts and culture in general and, of course, also the Stedelijk, are enriched by the presence of varied perspectives. To promote diversity and inclusion throughout our organization, it is critical that all staff at all levels understand our vision, how we aim to achieve it, why we believe it is important, and are given the support they need to be involved in the process.

Everyone is equal before the law but in practice, inequality and unconscious biases are entrenched in our society and in our museum as well. The Stedelijk has a rich history and an exceptional collection, yet both are also marked by subtle and not so subtle expressions of sexism, racism, ableism and other forms of exclusion. In the past, not everyone was equally represented or made to feel welcome at the Stedelijk. We shall continue working to reverse this, moving away from exclusion and towards inclusion. Moving away from physical and mental barriers, and towards accessibility. Moving away from discrimination, and towards equity.

As a socially responsible museum, we work consistently to ensure that everyone has equal access and opportunities at the Stedelijk. The Stedelijk aims to be a relevant and inspiring place for all artists, employees, partners and potential visitors from Amsterdam, the Netherlands and beyond, with all their different backgrounds, interests, needs and identities. We do our best to make sure that the museum is a space where everyone feels welcome, and a plurality of voices is heard. This is both a matter of fairness, and a condition for quality and relevance. After all, we decide, together, which artists and issues will be given a platform, the context in which they will be presented, and how we will involve audiences, artists and partners. A wide array of perspectives is a prerequisite for staging exhibitions and events that invite a broad and diverse audience to reflect and engage in debate.

Lastly, inclusion and diversity will also benefit the Stedelijk by attracting and retaining talent and responding more effectively to the needs and expectations of a diverse potential audience.

2. AIM OF THE POLICY PAPER

The principal goal of this policy is to work toward a more diverse and inclusive Stedelijk Museum. This policy document clarifies what we mean by diversity and inclusion, why we think it is important, and the steps we are taking to move in the right direction. We have drawn up goals and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to help us chart our progress and see if we are achieving the desired impact. These KPIs are not, of course, exhaustive. They serve as tools that guide our action during the upcoming policy period and help us to monitor our progress. Our KPIs are based on sub-domains identified in the Diversity and Inclusion Code: Program, Personnel, Public and Partners.

An organization-wide action plan on diversity and inclusion stems from the goals we set out in this policy paper. The directors are responsible for implementing this action plan, which specifies our goals, timelines, and responsibilities. Our principal aim is to anchor diversity policy in current and future tools and structures in a sustainable manner. We want to transition from an organization where diversity and inclusion are addressed on a project-by-project basis into one in which these themes are mainstream, and a continuous improvement process is fully integrated into standard management operations. This includes measures to monitor and evaluate our progress so we can chart our results and make the necessary adjustments.

The actions in this plan are formulated at different levels. We will carry out the plan together. All staff are actively invited and supported to help us reach our goal of making the Stedelijk more inclusive and diverse.

In a broader perspective, this policy paper aligns with the City of Amsterdam's goal of making the arts and culture sector a better reflection of the city. It also ties in with the activities and objectives of collaborations such as Musea Bekennen Kleur. From a global perspective, this action plan contributes to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals, particularly #4 quality education, #5 gender equality and #10 reducing inequality.

3. PRECONDITIONS

To ensure that the transition to a structurally more inclusive and diverse Stedelijk takes place responsibly and effectively, a number of preconditions need to be met.

AWARENESS, SUPPORT AND KNOWLEDGE

People can only contribute to creating an inclusive and diverse museum if they understand what we mean by this, are dedicated to it, and know what is required to make progress. To ensure sufficient support for the necessary changes, it is essential to be aware of the mechanisms and structures that hinder inclusion. Diversity and inclusion training programs are provided regularly to employees at all levels of the organization, and cover topics from bias-free hiring to welcoming visitors who are highly sensitive to stimuli. These courses provide staff with the expertise and resources to support the transition process. Building support for our diversity and inclusion vision throughout the organization means involving everyone in discussing the steps needed to bring about change, and defining what an inclusive Stedelijk looks like.

INTEGRATED APPROACH

Involving everyone in our transition to a more diverse and inclusive museum requires taking an integrated approach. This means always ensuring that our efforts to promote inclusiveness are closely coordinated across the museum. In the near future the mission, composition, and mandate of the Advisory Board will be

redefined, placing this integrated approach at the core of the strategy and working method. This integrated approach focuses on the different segments and layers of our organization and is critical to generating support for the steps that we intend to take.

OPEN TO LEARNING

We hold ourselves accountable by reflecting critically on our own actions. We welcome both solicited and unsolicited feedback and are open to reconsidering current practices and accepting fresh insights. We understand that, as in all processes of change, we may encounter temporary difficulties and, if so, will seek advice from both within and outside the organization.

MEASURING PROGRESS AND IMPACT

A clear understanding of the nature and scale of the challenges we face in the area of diversity and inclusion is essential in order to set concrete objectives and measure progress effectively. We collect relevant data to monitor whether the intentions and actions we have defined are achieving their intended impact.

We continuously evaluate and monitor the direction set out in this policy plan, both within the organisation and in relation to our societal engagement with audiences and partners.

COMMUNICATION

Transparency about the progress of our objectives is essential. We therefore report on developments on a regular basis, including through our annual report. In addition, our inclusion webpage and this policy document provide further information on how the museum approaches diversity and inclusion, the goals that have been defined, and any adjustments that may be made along the way.

4. ACTION PLAN FOR THE COMING YEARS

Inclusion and diversity are never “finished”; they require sustained, long-term commitment. We intend to closely monitor this process of change. It must be clear which direction we aim to move in and how much progress we are making. For this reason, we define goals and KPIs for the medium term.

For the 2025–2028 strategic plan, we formulate the following objectives based on the four Ps of the Code Diversity & Inclusion.

PROGRAMME

We conduct research into social and artistic themes and perspectives that have historically been marginalised within the art world and within the Stedelijk. We actively integrate these themes and perspectives into our collection, exhibitions, publications, and other programming. In doing so, we listen to a diversity of voices, both from within and outside the organisation.

Programme KPIs

Acquisitions:

- At least 50% of the acquisitions budget will be spent on artists and designers from outside Western Europe or North America and/or artists and designers who identify as Black, of colour, and/or as part of an ethnic minority. Attention is also paid to intersecting

forms of exclusion, such as gender. (See Chapter 8 for definitions of terms.)

Collection Presentation:

- At least 40% of the works shown in the collection presentation are created by female or gender non-binary makers.

AUDIENCE

We are curious about the perspectives and experiences of visitors, especially those of people who are underrepresented in the art world. We actively engage with these audiences and seek to better understand their wishes, frustrations, and barriers, in order to create meaningful connections between their lived experiences and our programming.

Both new and returning visitors should feel welcome and recognised when they visit the museum. This begins with the way we communicate—online and offline—and how we welcome visitors on site.

We actively work to remove mental and physical barriers, ranging from wheelchair access to the use of accessible language.

Audience KPIs

Cultural Participation:

- Each year, programmes, tours, or other activities are organised that focus on hospitality towards new audiences and visitors with special needs, with a specific focus on deaf and hard-of-hearing visitors.

Accessible Language:

- By 2028, all gallery texts will be written at B1 language level, starting with the permanent collection.

Physical Accessibility:

- The physical accessibility of our building and exhibitions improves every year, in accordance with the guidelines of the De Zonnestraal association, starting with the permanent collection.

STAFF

We work towards an open, empathetic, and inclusive culture in which difference is celebrated and all employees feel valued. We support colleagues in developing this mindset. Attention is paid to both the recruitment and retention of staff with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and identities. Conscious and unconscious mechanisms of exclusion are actively addressed, so that all colleagues can contribute fully and equally to the Stedelijk's objectives.

Staff KPIs

Inclusion:

- The percentage of employees who experience exclusion based on illness, disability, gender, skin colour, background, sexual orientation, or age decreases compared to previous measurement

years. This is monitored through the biennial staff diversity and inclusion survey.

Diversity:

- Increasing diversity among staff. This is monitored through the biennial staff diversity and inclusion survey.

Development:

- Each year, trainings, workshops, and other learning activities related to diversity and inclusion are offered to all employees.

PARTNERS

In the coming period, we will continue to collaborate with—and create space for—partners who contribute to greater plurality of voices within the organisation and who support our commitment to advancing social justice in society. We prioritise equal and reciprocal relationships in which the autonomy of our partners is safeguarded. Within these collaborations, we make space for (smaller) Amsterdam-based partners and support their visibility.

Partner KPIs

Partnerships:

- Each year, an overview is made of the five to ten collaborations or partners that have contributed most significantly to the inclusion objectives, including an assessment of what has been achieved through these collaborations.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsibilities and roles within the organisation related to inclusive change shift depending on the phase of the change process.

Executive Board

Holds ultimate responsibility for the museum's inclusive direction and vision, the integration of this vision into policy, and overseeing its implementation by the management team.

Management Team

Responsible for departmental plans and budgets. Informs and manages staff within their departments. Ensures inclusive practices across all areas and commits to inclusive leadership. This means that managers actively safeguard a safe working culture in which there is no place for discrimination or other forms of exclusion.

Manager Education & Inclusion

Plays an active advisory role with regard to inclusion and accessibility across the organisation. Reports to the Executive Board. Leads the Education & Inclusion team, which takes a pioneering role in inclusive programming and knowledge sharing.

Inclusion Officer

Has the core task of fostering inclusive awareness and knowledge within the organisation. This role may be both advisory and operational. Organises internal

trainings and reports to the Manager Education & Inclusion, while also informing the Executive Board.

All Employees

In addition to the exemplary role of the positions listed above, all other Stedelijk employees are also responsible for contributing to this process of change.

6. RISKS

Reputation

In order to grow, we must do things differently from how we are used to. Trying new approaches inevitably involves making mistakes. As a public institution, these mistakes—and our inclusive direction more broadly—may become part of public debate. While this can be uncomfortable, it is important not to shy away from it. Continuing to show vulnerability and ambition will require courage.

Workload

Making progress on inclusion requires time, resources, and knowledge from staff. These responsibilities must be structurally embedded, with sufficient time and attention, and must be maintained when other “regular” priorities arise.

Resistance

Inclusion is a topic that many people within the organisation feel strongly connected to, but it is also a subject that can evoke explicit or implicit resistance. We must continue to engage in dialogue about this, even when it is complex or uncomfortable. Inclusion also means making space for different perspectives. If these perspectives are not actively explored and discussed, resistance and confusion remain beneath the surface, preventing the development of shared foundations and ambitions. This applies not only to staff, but also to visitors, donors, and other stakeholders.

7. SOURCES CONSULTED

- Museums and the Sustainable Development Goals (2019)
- Key Frameworks for Arts and Culture 2021–2024
- Art & Culture – Zwart Manifest
- Code Diversity & Inclusion
- Knowledge Platform Integration & Society (2019). Inclusive Workplace Policy: Factors Contributing to an Inclusive Work Environment
- The Dutch Constitution, Article 1: Equal Treatment and Prohibition of Discrimination
- Diversiteit in Bedrijf – Knowledge Platform
- Guidelines on Values for a New Language, Code Diversity & Inclusion
- Zwart Manifest – Glossary

8. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

To facilitate meaningful conversations about inclusion and accessibility within and beyond the organisation, we align where possible with broadly accepted definitions, such as those formulated by the Code Diversity & Inclusion. This is not because these are the only valid definitions, but because shared terminology supports dialogue. Terms such as equality, justice, and plurality of voices are also frequently used in this context. For clarity, only the most commonly used terms are briefly explained below.

Diversity

(Definition based on the Code Diversity & Inclusion)

We use the term diversity to indicate that people differ from—and resemble—one another across a wide range of visible and invisible characteristics. Diversity is a given: people are different. These differences influence people's position in society and the opportunities they receive. They shape behaviour and ways of thinking, often unconsciously. Differences always operate in relation to one another, and identity is formed through a unique combination of these characteristics.

The Code Diversity & Inclusion originally focuses on cultural diversity, while also acknowledging other forms of difference, such as gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion, socio-economic status, education level, and age. At the Stedelijk, diversity concerns the extent to which societal diversity is represented across the four Ps: Programme, Audience, Staff, and Partners.

Inclusion

(Definition based on the Code Diversity & Inclusion)

Inclusion refers to how differences and similarities are approached. The strength and benefits of diversity are realised when the uniqueness of each individual is recognised and welcomed. This requires learning to value one another not despite, but because of differences and similarities. It is essential that everyone has the opportunity to contribute ideas. Inclusion describes the extent to which makers, producers, employees, and audiences of all identities—visible or invisible—can be themselves and feel safe and respected.

Accessibility

(Definition based on the Code Diversity & Inclusion)

In this context, accessibility is understood broadly and includes:

- Physical accessibility
- Accessibility of facilities and locations
- Informational accessibility
- Digital accessibility
- Social accessibility
- Financial accessibility

Discrimination

(Definition based on the Zwart Manifest)

Discrimination is the unequal treatment, disadvantage, or exclusion of people based on personal characteristics. These characteristics are referred to as protected grounds. Equal treatment legislation prohibits discrimination based on:

- Religion or belief
- Political orientation
- Race
- Gender
- Nationality
- Sexual orientation
- Marital status
- Mental or physical disability or chronic illness
- Age
- Working hours (full-time or part-time)
- Type of contract (permanent or temporary)

Exclusion

(Definition based on the Zwart Manifest)

Exclusion refers to the omission or exclusion of a group or individual based on their characteristics. Through stereotypical perceptions, people distinguish their own group (“us”) from those who are perceived as outsiders (“them”). Based on these socially constructed boundaries, people often prefer interaction within their own group and exclude “others”.

Western Europe and North America

To operationalise our KPI on acquisitions, the concept of Western Europe must be specified through a list of countries. Any definition has advantages and limitations. The chosen definition must be unambiguous to enable reliable analysis and comparison, and it must align with the intent behind this KPI when it was formulated in 2020. Ideally, the definition is also widely accepted beyond the museum context. However, commonly used definitions—such as those of Statistics Netherlands (CBS)—do not sufficiently reflect our intentions.

After considering several options, we have chosen to base our definition on UNESCO’s Group I (Western Europe and North America), with a small number of adjustments. For our purposes, Turkey is excluded and Liechtenstein is included.

The country list applied for this KPI is as follows:

Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States.