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## SUMMARY

Municipal organizations increasingly recognise the importance of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI), yet many struggle to translate this awareness into a long-term, actionable strategy. This report offers **recommendations for setting up and implementing such a strategy in a sustainable way**. It starts by outlining the core challenges municipalities face and then proposes practical steps and solutions to address them, with examples from the DiGiN-participating municipalities Genoa, Ghent and Rotterdam and the Leiden University of Applied Sciences.

A central issue is that discrimination and exclusion, while present in municipal workplaces, often remain invisible or poorly understood. Harmful behaviours are underreported, cases are insufficiently investigated, and structural underrepresentation persists across teams and leadership levels. Because the problems are not always visible in day-to-day operations, they are often underestimated or dismissed. This makes it difficult for municipal organizations to fully grasp the urgency of DEI work and to mobilize the necessary resources.

Another challenge is that DEI is rarely treated as a true strategic priority. In many municipalities, commitment remains at the level of statements or symbolic gestures, without becoming embedded in operational plans, leadership expectations, or performance indicators. As a result, there is no long-term accountability, and DEI is approached as an isolated topic rather than as an integral part of organizational development. This disconnect between intention and structure means that even well meaning initiatives rarely lead to lasting solutions.

At the same time, many employees across municipalities genuinely want to contribute to creating more inclusive workplaces and services. They hold strong values and show goodwill, yet their efforts often fail to produce tangible or lasting outcomes. This leads to frustration and feelings of stagnation, especially among those who consistently advocate for change.

This report addresses several of these challenges by focusing on three core themes. First, it explains **what constitutes a real DEI strategy**. Beyond a list of intentions or isolated actions, a sustainable strategy requires clear, measurable goals and a concrete plan for tracking progress over time. It must be tied to organizational objectives and supported with tools, roles, and resources.

Subsequently, this report describes a **step-by-step approach for implementing** such a strategy within municipal structures. The approach recognizes that change is iterative and requires careful planning as well as flexibility and connection.



A third topic, specific to public organizations, is **navigating varying levels of political support**. Municipalities differ widely in the extent to which political leadership endorses or invests in DEI. When political backing is strong, strategic implementation becomes significantly easier. However, lack of support does not mean that meaningful progress is impossible. The report explores some “underground work”: connecting with allies, strengthening networks, and quietly building organizational power. It also touches on the emotional dimension of DEI work, addressing demoralization and the risk of burnout. By strengthening social support among empathetic colleagues and fostering collective action, organizations can sustain momentum even in difficult contexts. The longterm aim remains to gradually build active political support, which is essential for fully embedding DEI into organizational strategy.

These core themes are addressed throughout this report, which is divided into three parts:

1. **Introduction about strategy:** an exploration of strategic thinking in the context of DEI: what strategy means and how it enables long-term change.
2. **Stepwise approach:** the most comprehensive part of this report describes a practical roadmap for implementing DEI in municipal organizations, tailored to real-world constraints and supported by examples from the DiGiN-participating municipalities.
3. **Success principles - troubleshooting checklist:** Throughout the DiGiN project, we have been referring to 10 key principles that help organizations assess whether their approach is robust and oriented toward tangible impact. We conclude this report with a checklist that refers to the above stepwise approach in order to achieve each success principle.

## INTRODUCTION ABOUT STRATEGY

European municipalities increasingly recognize the importance of acting consciously with regard to the diversity of their population and staff members. There is a growing openness about the historical inequities that affect population groups in their access to municipal positions and their work experiences.

Many people in local authorities understand the logic that their workforce should reflect the diversity of their communities and that all employees, especially those from historically disadvantaged groups, must feel valued and included. This growing awareness is often driven by demographic changes, social movements, and the need to build trust with residents. As a result, we have seen a growing number of initiatives such as inclusive recruitment campaigns, cultural bias training, the set-up of working groups and community engagement projects. These efforts signal good intentions and - at least on behalf of some decision-makers - a genuine commitment to fairness.

However, most municipalities lack a **long-term, integrated strategy for DEI**. Sometimes there is no vision or support at all. Even when there is a well-formulated vision, the approach is often pragmatic. Actions are fragmented, project-based, or reactive - responding to specific incidents or political priorities rather than forming part of a coherent vision. If action is taken, such as an event, training or even a campaign, it is rarely clear whether it will lead to the desired sustainable change. If no action is taken, the advocating individuals become discouraged and sometimes leave the organization.

The absence of a strategic framework becomes apparent through the lack of measurable goals and clear accountability. Many municipalities do not collect disaggregated data on workforce composition or work experiences such as engagement or belonging, making it difficult to identify gaps or track progress. Leadership changes and political cycles further undermine continuity, as DEI efforts often depend on individual advocates rather than institutional commitment.

In short, many European municipalities are at a crossroads: the awareness and willingness to act are present in some, but the strategy for achieving lasting change is missing or inadequate. **Moving from intention to impact requires a strategic approach**, one that aligns vision, resources, and actions across departments, sets measurable objectives, and ensures sustainability beyond electoral terms. Without this, DEI remains an aspiration rather than a reality.

### So what exactly is strategy?

*"Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat" – Sun Tzu*

A strategy is more than a list of intentions: it involves setting goals and priorities, determining actions to achieve the goals (tactics), and mobilizing resources to execute the actions.<sup>1</sup> It can require extensive preparation and deliberation, but without it, you will lack the necessary focus and aligned effort to achieve your long-term goal.

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<sup>1</sup> Freedman, L., *Strategy. A History*, 2013

"Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory; tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat". This full quote, attributed to Chinese philosopher and military strategist Sun Tzu, means a grand plan (strategy) needs concrete actions (tactics) to succeed, while just doing things (tactics) without a goal leads to chaos and failure; you need both long-term vision and short-term execution for real success.

In the context of DEI, a strategy provides the framework that transforms good intentions into measurable impact. Without a strategy, DEI efforts risk becoming fragmented, reactive, or symbolic; initiatives that look good on paper but fail to create systemic change.

Municipalities operate in complex environments where policies, services, and community engagement intersect. This complexity means that DEI cannot be achieved through isolated projects or one-off training sessions. On the contrary, it requires DEI to be integrated into all these processes. A strategic approach will ensure coherence across departments, continuity over time, and accountability at every level. It answers critical questions: Where are we now? Where do we want to be? How will we get there? By defining objectives, indicators, and timelines, a strategy turns abstract commitments into actionable steps.

### **Why is a strategic approach necessary to achieve DEI in municipalities?**

A long-term DEI strategy is an important way to ensure that the workforce represents the diverse population and that everyone feels included. Why is this necessary? Because structural inequities require **structural solutions**. A DEI strategy embeds equity into governance, budgeting, and service delivery, making inclusion a core principle rather than an optional add-on. It also creates mechanisms for monitoring progress, learning from setbacks, and adapting to changing demographics or emerging challenges.

Moreover, a strategy fosters **shared ownership**. DEI is not the responsibility of one department or a single champion; it requires collaboration across teams and engagement with communities. A clear strategy communicates priorities, roles, and expectations, enabling employees and change agents to work toward common goals. It also signals commitment to residents: when municipalities articulate and publish a DEI strategy, they demonstrate transparency and accountability, building trust with diverse communities.

Finally, a strategic approach increases **sustainability**. In municipal reality, nothing is ever permanently acquired; political cycles and leadership changes can always initiate and withdraw initiatives. However, a well-anchored strategy provides the best chance of continuity. It reduces reliance on individual enthusiasm and helps making equity part of the organizational DNA.

**Table 1: Internal checklist: is our DEI strategy actually a strategy?**

Below is a short checklist that you can discuss within your organization. It is not intended as a scoring, but as a tool for insights and conversation. The core question is: is my municipality's DEI strategy actually a strategy?

Check: do the following <b>basic strategy elements</b> apply to my municipality's DEI strategy?	Yes, totally	To some extent	No
Does the municipality have well-defined strategic objectives?			
Are these objectives aligned with the municipality's mission and goals, as well as with the needs of stakeholders' groups?			
Does the municipal DEI strategy have outcomes that can be measured?			
Does it state what the actions are and who is responsible?			
Does it include a timeline?			
Does it contain clear expectations and allocation of roles per department or cluster?			
Is there a governance structure and a strategic taskforce specifically for DEI that meets regularly?			
Does the management committee periodically discuss the DEI strategy?			
Is there a consistent monitoring and evaluation process for DEI activities/interventions?			
Can the majority of the workforce tell the key focus areas of the DEI strategy?			
Is there a communications plan to bring the strategy to life both internally and externally?			

If the answer to most of the above questions is 'yes' or 'to some extent', then your strategy is your sound plan for progress. If the answer is mostly 'no', then you risk having nothing more than a list of intentions and spending a lot of resources with unclear outcomes. Again, this checklist is not a judgement but an incentive to do things efficiently.

In the following chapter, this report provides recommendations for setting up and implementing a strategy, in a stepwise approach. Yes, an action plan containing a list of interventions should be part of this. But we suggest zooming out: any action plan should be preceded by foundational steps such as an analysis of the situation, deliberation and the setting of objectives. It should also be followed by steps such as measuring the results and institutionalisation.

# STEPWISE APPROACH

## Methodology for development of the stepwise approach

To develop the approach presented in this report, we followed a methodology that combines established frameworks with insights from practitioners across several municipal organizations. The foundation for our work was an existing roadmap created by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE). Their publication "[Gender equality plans in academia and research: roadmap to effective implementation](#)" (2022) outlines a comprehensive sixstep process for designing, implementing, and sustaining gender equality plans. Although the original framework is tailored to the academic and research sectors, its logic and structure offer a strong basis for developing a broader Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) strategy implementation process.

The EIGE roadmap consists of six steps with accompanying sub-steps:

1. **Getting started** – establishing initial commitment
2. **Analyzing and assessing the status quo** – gathering data, identifying barriers, and understanding organizational realities
3. **Setting up a Gender Equality Plan (GEP)** – translating insights into clear objectives, actions, and responsibilities
4. **Implementing a GEP** – putting planned measures into practice and ensuring organizational engagement
5. **Monitoring progress and evaluating a GEP** – tracking developments and assessing and communicating impact
6. **What comes after a GEP?** – planning next policy cycles and ensuring sustainability through institutionalisation.

For the purposes of this report, these six steps were reinterpreted and adapted into a new stepwise model: specifically tailored to DEI in municipal organizations and therefore with a broader scope than just gender. The resulting approach retains the clarity and progression of the original roadmap while broadening its scope to address the wider range of inequalities and organizational dynamics present in municipal contexts.

One important dynamic in municipal contexts is the level of **political support for DEI**. This can vary over time and influence the design of the strategy in a favourable or unfavourable way. At some point, active political support will be an inevitable prerequisite for full implementation. That is why we have included it in two places in the stepwise approach as **accelerators**.



When political backing is strong, strategic implementation becomes significantly easier but lack of support does not mean that meaningful progress is impossible. When political support is hesitant or passive, progress can still be made by building commitment and trust through connection and deliberation. That is why we have made this step, which was originally a part of step 3 'Setting up a GEP', into a separate step in order to highlight it further.

To contextualize this adapted model and test it against reality, we conducted a series of interviews with DEI professionals involved in the DiGiN project partnership. These conversations provided practical insights into their realities of DEI work within municipalities and educational institutions, and they helped us understand how the stepwise approach could be translated into daily organizational practice.

The following interviewees informed the development of the stepwise approach:

- **Yuri Piccione**, Organizational Wellbeing and Equal Opportunities Officer, Municipality of Genoa – interview conducted on 24 September 2025.
- **Sibel Saki**, DEI Manager, Municipality of Rotterdam – interview conducted on 2 October 2025.
- **Debbie Helaha**, Coordinator Diversity & Inclusion, Leiden University of Applied Sciences – interview conducted on 22 October 2025.
- Ongoing deliberation in Ghent with **Naomi Mike**, Coordinator Diversity & Inclusion, Municipality of Ghent.

These discussions allowed us to test the relevance, feasibility, and completeness of the adapted steps. They highlighted the practical challenges municipalities face, such as the varying levels of political support, organizational fragmentation, and the need for both formal structures and informal networks.

By combining EIGE's evidencebased roadmap with the lived experiences of DEI professionals in municipalities, this report offers a stepwise approach that is both theoretically grounded and practically applicable. It serves as a guide for municipal organizations seeking to move from intention to action, and ultimately toward long-term, sustainable progress in diversity, equity and inclusion.

## A stepwise approach for developing and implementing a long-term DEI strategy in municipal organizations

### Step 1: Building connection and capacity to advance DEI

- Familiarize yourself and the organization with the DEI concepts
- Identify and connect change agents
- Build capacity to advance DEI in your organization

*Accelerator: Passive or hesitant political support for DEI*

### Step 2: Analyzing and assessing the status quo

- Qualitative: investigate the concerns of employee groups
- Quantitative: collect and analyze data to map inequities
- Map stakeholders: identify who influences, experiences or enables change
- Review organizational settings and preconditions for strategy

### Step 3: Pre-strategy deliberation

- Engage stakeholders through participatory and co-design methods
- Get inspired by the efforts of other organizations

*Accelerator: Active political support for DEI*

### Step 4: Setting up a DEI strategy

- Decide on the clear strategic objectives
- Integrate objectives into department plans
- Select and design interventions
- Attribute resources and make responsibilities clear
- Expand your network of change agents

### Step 5: Implementing a DEI strategy

- Start to implement the interventions according to your strategic logic
- Collect relevant indicators continuously during your implementation work
- Make the implementation visible in your organization and beyond
- Involve all relevant stakeholders

### Step 6: Monitoring progress and evaluation<sup>2</sup>

- Make an evaluation action plan and decide on which indicators to measure
- Collect relevant indicators to measure overall progress
- Communicate the results regularly within your organization

### Step 7: Adjust & institutionalise

- Adjust your strategy where necessary
- Eventually eliminate the need for a separate DEI strategy
- Benchmark your activities and results against those of similar municipalities
- Adapt your DEI strategy to recent changes in the policy and legal frameworks

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<sup>2</sup> For guidance on this step, see report Deliverable 6.2 - Evaluation toolbox for DEI interventions

## Prior consideration: Understanding the level of political support as accelerator for DEI in municipalities

Municipalities are highly hierarchical and centralised organizations. As a result, the level of political will and leadership support plays a decisive role, either accelerating or obstructing progress on diversity, equity, and inclusion. In some contexts, political leaders articulate a clear vision and strong commitment; in others, the topic receives little to no attention.

As Yuri Piccione, Organizational Well-being and Equal Opportunities Officer in the Municipality of Genoa, explains: *“I have realised that political leverage is the most important. If there is a commitment to this topic, then you have automatically all the rest: you can set up your goals, your budget, and your timeline. Higher management has to follow the political direction. If there is engagement, the political and financial obstacles start to disappear.”* Since political support largely determines what is possible, it is important to assess the degree of backing in your municipality and tailor your approach accordingly.

Based on the experiences shared widely by DEI practitioners in municipalities, we distinguish three main scenarios: no support, passive or hesitant support and active support. There is no clear distinction between them, as there are always situational exceptions and the situation can vary over time. Nevertheless, you can roughly categorize your municipality into one of these three cases and act accordingly. This can help you save energy and resources by taking the right steps at the right time and being cautious about actions your organization is not yet ready for.

Below we list the different scenarios with their characteristics and some suggestions to act accordingly. We believe this is useful for ‘DEI change agents’, the individuals advocating for change, who exist at every level: among senior leaders, mid-level managers, frontline workers, and administrative staff.

### 1. No political support or attention for DEI

How to recognize this scenario: There is no DEI initiative, bottom up efforts are ignored or tightly controlled, and the topic does not appear on the political agenda.

What can you do? **Work underground: connect, build capacity, and build power.** Even without official support, small and strategic actions can lay the groundwork for future change:

- **Engage allies:** Seek out colleagues, department heads, or community partners who care about DEI. Grassroots coalitions often create the momentum that precedes political commitment. Build capacity, in terms of knowledge and skills, to advance DEI in your organization.
- **Leverage basic evidence:** Collect basic data on demographic trends, employee experiences, or community needs. Concrete information and meaningful stories can make inequities visible and harder to dismiss.
- **Connect change agents:** Connect the individuals who can catalyse change. Change agents exist at every level. They are the people who combine credibility, curiosity, and a genuine commitment to equity.

More details and examples about this groundwork can be found below in the stepwise approach, under Step 1 (Building connection and capacity).



In such situations, **maintaining personal and collective resilience** is essential. Addressing demoralisation and burnout is part of the work. Connecting with empathetic colleagues, protecting rest and finding joy, and cultivating collective action help sustain long-term engagement. Your role still matters, you can make a meaningful difference, even in restrictive conditions.

As Sibel Saki, DEI Manager of the Municipality of Rotterdam, emphasises: *“Major global changes start small, often with one pioneer and a few confidants. The masses can bring about much more change than just the rulers; change originates from the middle group. People who have been working on this issue for a long time can become tired and disappointed because progress is too slow. I try to take every step, even if tiny baby steps. Every little ripple counts. That way you can ensure that people don't give up.”*

## 2. Passive or hesitant political support for DEI

How to recognize this modest accelerator: Leaders express support in words but remain passive in actions. Their focus may rest mainly on visible diversity and the municipality's reputation, with little sense of urgency or systemic ambition for the well-being of all.

The goal here is to turn cautious interest into active commitment. Effective tactics include:

- **Start small but visible:** Implement low-cost, high-impact measures, such as accessibility improvements, inclusive recruitment practices or bias-awareness training, and track results. These demonstrate feasibility without requiring high profile political approval. Demonstrated success builds confidence and commitment.
- **Communicate clear benefits:** Use data and stories to show how DEI strengthens employee engagement, trust, and service quality.
- **Build a cross-departmental coalition:** Bringing together representatives from different departments distributes responsibility and reduces perceived political risk. This could take the form of a primary DEI working group, an employee network based on shared affinities, or an inclusivity panel including allies from across the organization.

More details and examples about this emerging work can be found below in the stepwise approach, under Step 3 (Pre-strategy deliberation), Step 4 (Setting up a DEI strategy) and Step 5 (Implementing a DEI strategy).

Yuri Piccione of the municipality of Genoa illustrates how incremental progress works in practice: *“Each year I put a goal that contributes to the final one. Let's say in 2028 I want to have created a network of change agents, in each area of the municipality. I want to connect each change agent, exchanging help and tips, to the personnel department and to the Joint Guarantee Committee for equal opportunities (CUG, 'Comitato Unico di Garanzia per le pari opportunità, la valorizzazione del benessere di chi lavora e contro le discriminazioni'). Then my intermediary goals are the identification of these change agents and connecting them across the municipality. Unfortunately, the office did not have much opportunity to shape longer-term goals. Up to now, it has always been a year-to-year goal.”*

Debbie Helaha, Coordinator Diversity & Inclusion at Leiden University of Applied Sciences, notes similar dynamics: *“We have started tackling inclusive recruitment and selection, internship discrimination, an event and newsletter. Then they see things are happening. But*

*speaking out remains difficult for many leaders. They articulate wishes, but when it gets difficult, it becomes tricky."*

She observes progress nonetheless: *"I do see change and more willingness to engage in difficult conversations, including at the Executive Board."* Debbie emphasises the importance of pacing organizational change: *"I believe that change must also respect what the organization can handle. What we do now should lay the foundation for a more strategic approach with KPIs."* Currently, the institution is in the early steps—working with an action plan rather than a fully articulated DEI strategy. While DEI is embedded implicitly in broader institutional documents, a clear framework is still lacking. Yet, she notes a positive cultural shift: *"Since I started, there is more openness to talk about it. I don't notice a decline here, as mentioned in the media."*

### 3. Active political support for DEI

How to recognize this essential accelerator: DEI receives consistent attention, investment, and structural integration. Leadership articulates a vision and adjusts policies accordingly.

At this stage, the organization acknowledges that a strong DEI strategy is essential to increase representation, fairness, and perceived inclusion in the municipal workforce. Public sector institutions carry a unique responsibility: they serve entire communities and must ensure that policies, services, and internal structures reflect diverse needs and realities. Addressing systemic inequities strengthens community trust and overall societal wellbeing.

This is the moment to embed DEI deeply into the organization's DNA:

- **Develop a comprehensive DEI strategy:** Define the objectives, responsibilities, timelines, and resources. Ensure alignment with municipal goals.
- **Invest in extensive capacity building:** Provide training for all staff, emphasising inclusive leadership, non-discriminatory behaviour, and practical tools for equitable decision making.
- **Institutionalise DEI:** Integrate equity impact assessments into policymaking, budgeting and HR processes. Embed DEI into leadership development and performance evaluations. This eventually eliminates the need for a separate DEI strategy and makes it part of the processes in each department.
- **Monitor and report progress:** Use indicators, and annual reports to ensure accountability and maintain political commitment.
- **Engage the community:** Co-create solutions with residents and civil society organizations, especially those from marginalised groups. Transparency strengthens legitimacy.

More details and examples of this work can be found below in the stepwise approach, under Step 4 (Setting up a DEI strategy), Step 5 (Implementing a DEI strategy), Step 6 (Monitoring progress and evaluation) and Step 7 (Adjust and institutionalise).

Across all three scenarios, persistence is essential. DEI is not a one-time project but a long-term cultural transformation. Whether you begin with grassroots initiatives or systemic reforms, the key is to align DEI with the municipality's core mission: serving all residents fairly, respectfully and effectively.

**Table 2: Summary - political support as accelerator for DEI in municipalities**

Situation in your municipality?	No support or attention for DEI	Passive or hesitant political support for DEI	Active political support for DEI
Characteristics:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No top-down initiative</li> <li>• Bottom-up initiatives are ignored or blocked</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Top-down support in words, but not in actions</li> <li>• Urgency mainly for visible diversity and reputation</li> <li>• Little systemic ambition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing attention, deliberation and integration</li> </ul>
What can you do?	<p><b>Connect, build capacity and power</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage allies</li> <li>• Leverage basic evidence</li> <li>• Connect change agents</li> </ul>	<p><b>Convert cautious interest into active commitment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start small but visible</li> <li>• Communicate clear benefits</li> <li>• Build a cross-departmental coalition</li> </ul>	<p><b>Develop and implement a comprehensive DEI strategy</b></p>
Expected outcome:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growing support base</li> <li>• Generating sense-of-urgency</li> <li>• Maintaining personal and collective resilience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building trust and commitment</li> <li>• Collecting perspectives for strategy set up</li> <li>• Distributing responsibilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achieving DEI, fully visible and integrated</li> </ul>

## Step 1 – Building connection and capacity to advance DEI

The foundational first step towards setting up a lasting DEI strategy is building connection and creating awareness and skills to advance DEI. Through stories and lived experiences, we learn to understand the underlying causes that hinder an inclusive and truly diverse workplace. This phase is about getting a critical number of people aligned around what the problem is and why change matters now.

### Sub-steps:

#### 1.1 Familiarize yourself and the organization with the DEI concepts

Many municipalities begin their DEI efforts by organising activities that highlight diversity and increase awareness of conscious and unconscious discrimination. These initiatives often include cultural or celebratory events such as Pride activities or Iftar gatherings, as well as panel discussions on topics like physical or mental disabilities. The underlying assumption is that increased understanding and broader acknowledgement of inequality will eventually lead to meaningful change.

However, there is an important contradiction to recognise. While awareness is valuable, it is never enough on its own to generate sustainable organizational change. Nevertheless, isolated awareness raising activities tend to appear early, often before any long-term strategic framework exists. They typically arise in response to a specific incident, a societal moment, or the initiative of an enthusiastic stakeholder. Although they can increase visibility and spark conversations, they rarely lead to deeper structural shifts when they are not embedded in a broader plan. So it remains important to see this as a first step and a build-up to others.

This pattern is visible in many municipalities. Events may be organized because there is a clear demand or an opportunity, but not because they are part of a comprehensive DEI strategy. As a result, organizations may see a rise in awareness and visibility, but little direct impact on systems, processes, or organizational culture.

#### **Examples in municipalities:**

As Sibel Saki from the Municipality of Rotterdam observes: *“There have been initiatives to raise awareness, but they have been very fragmented. Those who are enthusiastic take action, but not in touch with those who think ‘this doesn’t concern me’.* We have now tried to broaden the scope of diversity to include neurodiversity, gender, etc.” Her reflection highlights both the value and the limitations of isolated activities: they mobilize those already engaged but may fail to reach others across the organization.

A similar situation is described by Debbie Helaha from Leiden University of Applied Sciences: *“We are still very much in the awareness-raising phase. Occasionally, activities are organized such as Iftar, Keti Koti gatherings, Pride groups, but all of this is still separate, not part of a framework.”* This illustrates how early-stage DEI efforts often consist of well-intentioned but disconnected initiatives.

A crucial lesson for municipalities is therefore to build awareness not only around diversity in a celebratory sense, but around the deeper organizational structures that shape inclusion or exclusion. It is important to get familiar with the concepts of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the broad, structural sense. DEI should not be framed as a problem that only affects minorities, nor as a charitable effort carried out by those considered “good people.” Instead, it should be understood as a matter of organizational culture and supporting structures. When connected to the city’s mission and the social role of a local government, such a narrative lays the groundwork for integrating DEI into long-term strategy, rather than limiting it to isolated events.

The concepts of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion as structural and measurable outcomes are thoroughly investigated in the book ‘*DEI Deconstructed*’ by Lily Zheng (2022). The author offers the following definitions, that are helpful in being specific about what we are trying to build:

- “*Equity* is the measured experience of individual, interpersonal, and organizational success and well-being across all stakeholder populations and the absence of discrimination, mistreatment, or abuse for all.
- *Diversity* is the achievement of a workforce composition that stakeholder populations trust and feel represented by on all levels.
- *Inclusion* is the achievement of a felt environment that stakeholder populations trust as respectful and accountable.
- Achieving any of these requires a strategy that dismantles historical inequities and meets people’s unique needs.”

## 1.2 Identify and connect change agents

Another foundational early step is identifying and connecting the individuals who can catalyse change. Change agents exist at every level: among senior leaders, mid-level managers, frontline workers, and administrative staff. They are the people who combine credibility, curiosity, and a genuine commitment to equity. Research from the Netherlands Inclusivity Monitor shows that roughly 20% of employees can be considered “champions”: those who not only hold a positive attitude toward inclusion but also demonstrate supportive behaviour in practice.<sup>3</sup>

In the early stages of DEI implementation, it is vital for these champions to find each other. Building these internal networks creates momentum and offers a foundation for collective learning and coordinated action. Doing so, it is also valuable for maintaining personal and collective resilience. People who are involved in collective action, are less susceptible for demoralisation and burnout, as stated above in situations of lacking political support.

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<sup>3</sup> Prevalence of support profiles, based on research among 13.441 employees from 27 organizations participating in the NIM, see Handout “From resistance to gain”, Utrecht University and SER Diversity at Work, october 2025, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/61f950abce7da8698c111d18/t/6937e74a7f17d7238630962c/1765271370934/Bokern+et+al.%2C+2025+Handout+From+Resistance+to+Gain+EN.pdf>

This sub-step therefore focuses on locating individuals across roles, teams and backgrounds who show potential to influence others. They might not have formal authority, but they often possess trust, relational capital, and lived experience: powerful resources for cultural change.

### **Examples in municipalities:**

Municipalities offer several examples of this approach in action. During the development of the *Strategic Framework for a Diverse and Inclusive HR Policy 2021–2025* in the Municipality of Ghent, connections were deliberately built across the entire administration. Consultations were held with the general management team, HR leadership, the office of the Alderman for Personnel, and an initial working group was set up with members from various departments and areas of expertise within the organization including Social Services, Care, Urban Development, Employment, Education, Welfare and Equal Opportunities, and the Internal Prevention Service. Bringing together individuals from such diverse domains ensured that the process was grounded in real organizational experiences and that some shared ownership was built.

As Yuri Piccione from the Municipality of Genoa describes, the initial phase is often informal: *“In the beginning, in an informal way: identifying people, knocking on doors, speaking with people. This kind of approach is the preferred one. Especially in other Italian municipalities, I would suggest it.”* This underscores the importance of personal outreach and relationship building before formal structures are put in place.

Priming employee networks, or Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), is another powerful way to support and connect change agents that share a certain characteristic. These groups foster belonging, reduce isolation, and provide safer spaces for colleagues to share experiences and insights. They can then later serve as advisory bodies (see step 3). In Ghent, three volunteer employee networks play this role:

- Link – colleagues with a migration background
- AHA – employees with a disability
- Roze Neuzekes – LGBTQIA+ colleagues

Rotterdam hosts several similar networks, including:

- R-Pride – LGBTQIA+ employees
- Neurodiversiteit – employees with neurodiverse profiles
- Jong'R – young professionals within the municipality
- Inclusivity Panel – intersectional network that gives advice to the organization

Such networks help individuals find community while contributing to broader organizational awareness and cultural change.

Identifying and connecting change agents, whether formally through ERGs and working groups or informally through personal outreach, is therefore a foundational step in any DEI strategy. It builds the relational infrastructure that allows DEI efforts to grow, endure, and eventually transform municipal organizations from within.

## 1.3 Build capacity to advance DEI in your organization

Capacity building refers to developing the skills, knowledge and resources needed for an organization (or a team, community, or leader) to meaningfully advance DEI goals in a sustainable way. In simple terms, it's the process of strengthening people and systems so DEI can become part of "how we work," not just a one-off training or initiative.

When change agents feel equipped and connected, they will have a better chance at becoming catalysts: amplifying the vision, strengthening engagement and ensuring the transformation is rooted in real, lived organizational dynamics.

### Examples in municipalities:

The [capacity-building modules](#) were developed by Yellow Window for the DiGIN project to respond to the needs, realities and challenges identified across participating municipalities. Each module provides ready-to-use materials — scripts, presentations, exercises and templates — that municipalities can use to train staff, support internal teams and enhance DEI transformation in a structured and sustainable way:

- Building inclusive workplaces: The role of allyship
- Institutional transformation towards mainstreaming Diversity, Equality and Inclusion: The role of participatory and co-creation techniques
- Strategic framing for change: Designing pathways to impact
- DEI Monitoring & Evaluation for sustainable change
- Persona Stories: Supporting Participatory Learning and Co-creation in Municipalities

## Step 2 - Analyzing and assessing the status quo

Understanding the state-of-play in your organization, including uncomfortable issues that may not have been investigated before, is a crucial step in shaping a DEI strategy that truly fits your municipal organization. This step focuses on deeply understanding existing dynamics: how policies, culture, structures and daily practices either support or hinder equitable participation. By combining qualitative insights, stories and experiences with quantitative data such as workforce composition and job satisfaction metrics, you reveal both strengths and systemic barriers. This analysis is not about judgment but about clarity. It provides a shared, evidencebased foundation for further decision-making, ensuring that future objectives and actions are relevant and grounded in the real needs of employees.

### Sub-steps:

#### 2.1 Qualitative: Investigate the concerns of employee groups

A meaningful DEI strategy requires more than numerical data (see next step), it must also reflect the lived experiences, concerns and needs of employees across the organization. Qualitative analysis plays a crucial role in this process. Through interviews, focus groups, dialogue sessions, and consultations with representative groups, municipalities can uncover nuances that quantitative data alone will never reveal. These insights will allow you to design interventions that resonate with employees and address real barriers they face.



### Examples in municipalities:

Many municipalities already engage in such work. For example, in 2022 the City of Ghent has conducted an internal qualitative research among employees with a migration background to explore their experiences with inclusion, workplace dynamics, and equal opportunities. Consulting employee networks or inclusivity panels, where they exist, offers another valuable channel for gathering insights.

Sibel Saki from the Municipality of Rotterdam describes how multiple internal “listening systems” are used to detect employee needs: *“We have multiple channels: signals from HR advisors, our Integrity Office where reports often come in, even if they are not always personal reports. We also have the Inclusivity Panel, which functions as our eyes and ears, and the employee networks. And we consult our ambassadors. I see myself as an octopus with many tentacles.”*

Similarly, Yuri Piccione from the Municipality of Genoa emphasises the importance of connecting with specific departments and formal bodies such as the CUG (Committee for Equal Opportunities): *“By getting in touch with departments and the CUG, we can obtain data and information about concerns of employee groups—where inequality is perceived.”* He provides an example from the technical department, which is predominantly male but includes women as well. Employees in this department have reported perceived differences in the allocation of tasks, workplace relationships, and communication styles - insights that numerical data alone would not reveal.

Yuri also highlights the role of trusted counsellors: *“The counsellor can explain what people experience. We have periodic meetings every three to four months. She tells us how many people came to her and about which topics, while maintaining anonymity.”* This regular, structured exchange ensures that employee concerns are systematically heard and can be integrated into DEI planning.

## 2.2 Quantitative: collect and analyze data to map inequities

Quantitative data is essential for identifying where inequities arise across the employee lifecycle. By examining measurable patterns in recruitment, promotion, retention, pay and well-being metrics, municipalities can move from assumptions to evidence. This step helps uncover structural disparities that may otherwise remain invisible. Before beginning, it is important to decide which indicators you want to focus on. The most commonly used quantitative metrics concern workforce representation and demographics:

- Representation of different demographic groups across departments and levels (e.g., gender, age, migration background, disability)
- Diversity in applicant pools
- Hiring, promotion and advancement rates by demographic group
- Retention and turnover patterns, especially where specific groups leave at higher rates

Additional metrics require more profound research but can reveal inequities that are an important daily reality for many people:

#### Equity & Pay

- Pay equity analyzes comparing compensation across demographic groups



- Equity in access to training, development and internal mobility opportunities

#### Employee Experience & Inclusion

- Sentiment and belonging indicators from surveys, that can be supplemented with focus groups and qualitative feedback (see previous step: qualitative data)
- Measures of psychological safety, fairness perceptions and inclusion scores across teams

#### Equity Accountability & Community-Facing Metrics

- City-level equity performance indicators used to track progress on equity goals in public services and policies (e.g., access, outcomes, community participation)

#### Examples in municipalities:

Municipalities offer practical examples of how these metrics are used. Debbie Helaha from Leiden University of Applied Sciences describes ongoing efforts: *“Researcher and lecturer Saniye Celik has conducted extensive research into how inclusive the University of Applied Sciences is. The composition of lecturers and students is fairly homogeneous, and the population in our region is fairly white, but this is changing. You can search by age, gender, and place of birth. We also have student and employee satisfaction surveys, containing questions like ‘Can you be yourself?’ or ‘Have you ever encountered harassment?’ It could go deeper, but this is what we are measuring now.”*

In Genoa, Yuri Piccione highlights the value of workforce surveys focused on wellbeing: *“We conduct surveys in offices about work-related stress. Among these questions, there is a dimension of treatment, and inequalities between men and women emerged. We knew this already, but the survey helped make it visible. The same survey has been carried out regularly since 2015, according to the administrations’ decision administration; the last was in 2024. It focuses on stress but is closely related.”*

Once data is collected, thorough analysis becomes crucial. This can be challenging in the early stages, as it requires time, expertise and organizational capacity. However, without careful analysis, the data cannot drive meaningful change.

## 2.3 Map stakeholders: identify who influences, experiences or enables change

By identifying the individuals and groups who influence change, experience its impact, or enable its implementation, you can later create clarity around roles, expectations and opportunities for collaboration. This step helps ensure that the right people will be engaged at the right time, and that no critical perspective is overlooked.

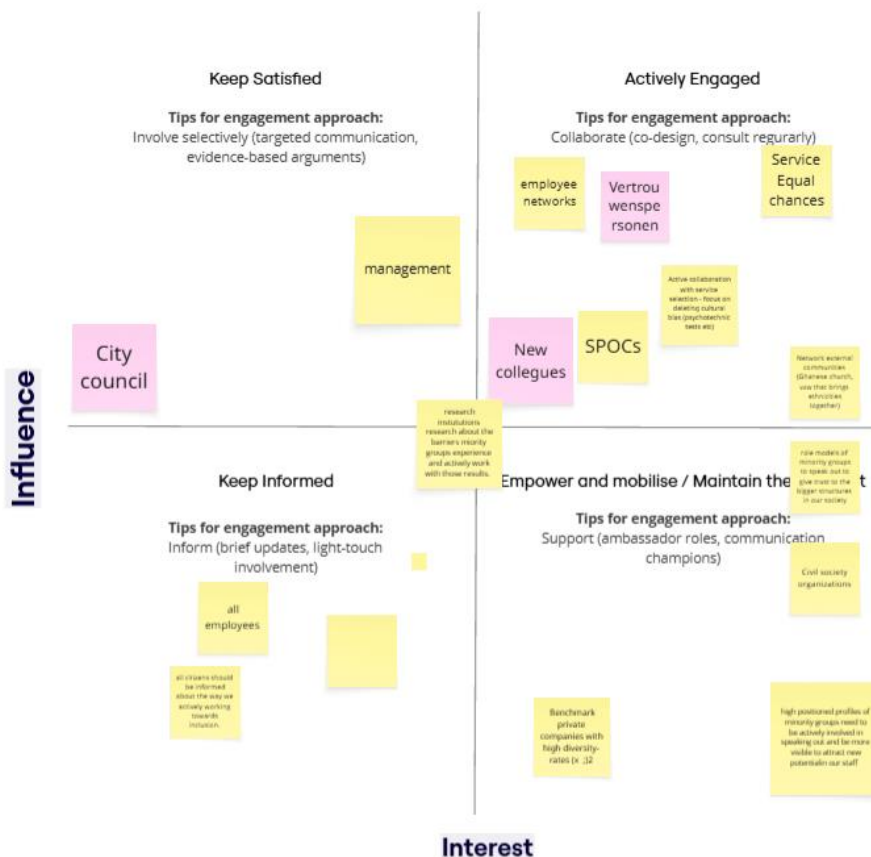
A widely used tool for this purpose is the **power-interest grid**, which maps stakeholders according to two key dimensions:

- **Level of power or influence:** their ability to shape decisions, resources, or organizational priorities.
- **Level of interest or commitment:** their motivation, readiness, or willingness to engage with DEI.

This quadrant analysis helps determine which stakeholders need close collaboration, which require regular communication, and which should be monitored or activated later in the process.

Once stakeholders are mapped, you can later define their concrete roles within each intervention or project (see step 4). A practical tool for this is the RASCI model, which will clarify responsibilities and improve coordination. RASCI distinguishes between who is Responsible, Accountable, Supporting, Consulted or Informed. We will discuss this in more detail below, but mapping stakeholders is an important preparatory task.

**Figure 1: example of Stakeholder mapping**



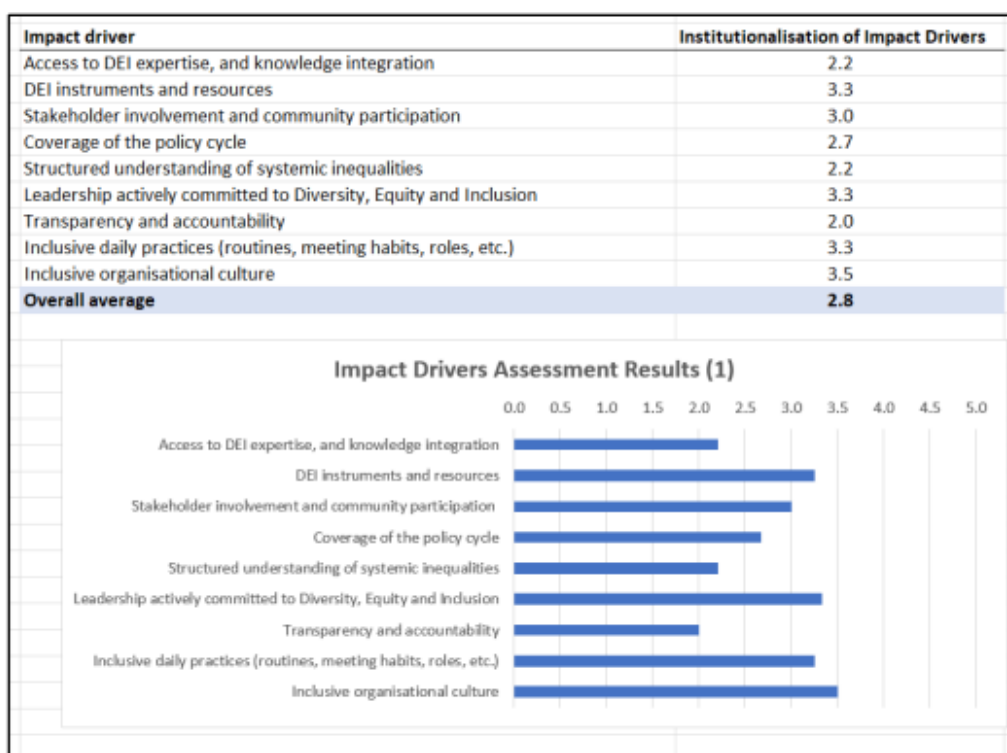
## 2.4 Review organizational settings and preconditions for strategy

In this step you take a closer look at the structures, resources, leadership commitment and existing policies to understand what enables or limits progress. By clarifying these conditions early, you will be able to design actions that are feasible, aligned and capable of generating lasting systemic change.

The [Assessment Tool for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Mainstreaming Capacity in Municipalities](#) is designed to help municipalities evaluate their progress on institutional DEI mainstreaming<sup>4</sup>. By assessing 9 core “Impact Drivers” necessary for change, the tool allows your organization to identify both strengths and areas for improvement. By answering a series of questions in the assessment, the tool generates a detailed report with insights and feedback on key areas of your municipality’s DEI capacities.

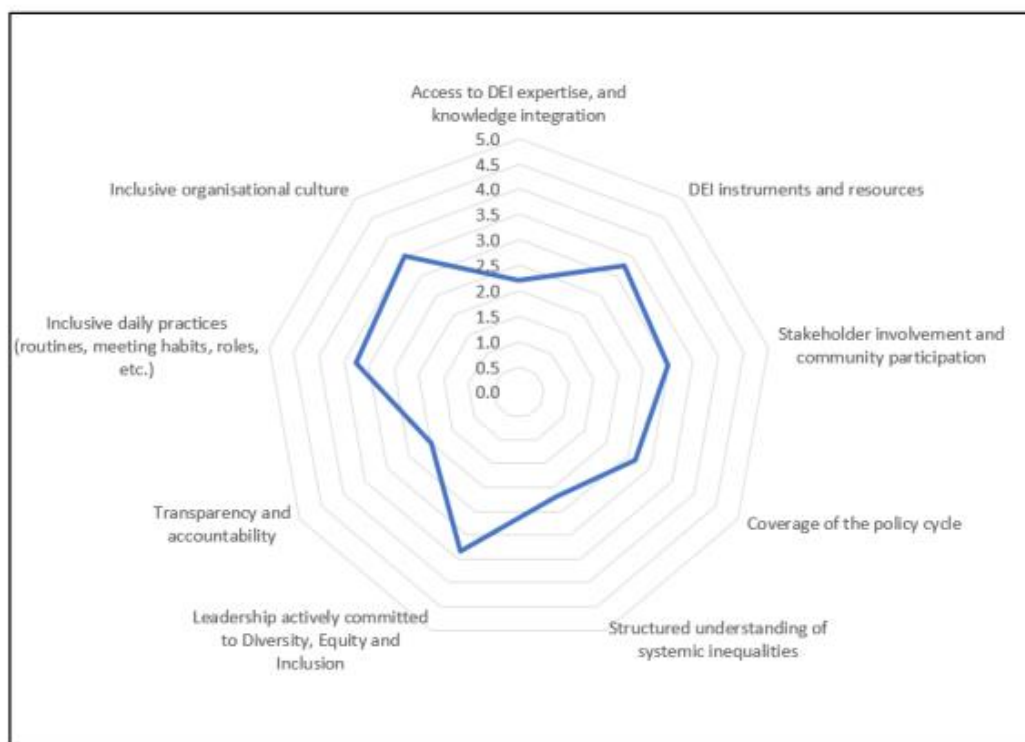
### Examples in municipalities:

Figure 2: example of results Impact Drivers Model



<sup>4</sup> Mergaert, L., Forest, M., & Polykarpou, P. (2024). *Diversity, equity, and inclusion impact drivers model for municipalities*. Yellow Window.

**Figure 3: example of graphic representation of results Impact Drivers Model**



### Step 3 – Pre-strategy deliberation

Thoughtful deliberation is a crucial yet often underestimated step in shaping an effective DEI strategy. To highlight its importance and examine it more closely, we have chosen to make this a separate step.

Before any long-term plans or recurring initiatives are launched, organizations benefit from creating intentional space to listen, reflect and understand the diverse perspectives and lived experiences of their people (see previous step). Then comes the time to consciously discuss this further and determine the direction.

The process of **deliberating** means carefully and collectively considering or discussing something in order to decide. This may no longer be very common in contemporary fast-paced organizational cultures. When skipped however, organizations risk implementing strategies that are misaligned with real needs, lack ownership among employees, or inadvertently reinforce existing gaps. Deliberation takes time, but it creates the clarity and shared purpose needed for DEI work to be meaningful and sustainable. The strategy will be implemented a lot more smoothly later on, making things easier for everyone.

## Sub-steps:

### 3.1 Engage stakeholders through participatory and co-design methods

At this stage, we recommend a **“pre-strategy” deliberation phase**, where employees, management, and - when relevant – citizens or potential employees take part in articulating the DEI vision and defining the priorities. This broad participation helps ensure that goals are aligned with lived experiences rather than assumptions.

Importantly, many solutions already exist within the organization. Deliberation helps surface these existing ideas and empowers changemakers, whether they hold formal leadership positions or not. Stakeholders mapped in the previous step should be deliberately engaged here: senior managers, middle managers, employee networks, and groups that experience disadvantage all bring unique insights that enrich the process.

#### **Examples in municipalities:**

Municipalities offer valuable examples of how deliberation can work in practice. In the development of the *Strategic Framework for a Diverse and Inclusive HR Policy 2021–2025*, the City of Ghent emphasised inclusive dialogue: *“Because we prioritise a diverse and inclusive workplace across all departments, and in order to understand the different needs of target groups, various opportunities for dialogue and exchange were organized with both internal and external partners.”* This broad and systematic engagement ensured that perspectives from across the organization helped shape the framework's foundations.

Naomi Mike from the Municipality of Ghent describes a similar approach in preparing the new strategic framework: extensive interviews with department heads, combined with ongoing consultations with stakeholder groups such as employee networks and single points of contact (SPOCs) in various departments. These frequent and structured interactions ensure that the strategy will reflect real concerns, aspirations, and opportunities already present within the organization.

Also the municipality of Rotterdam set up a 'DEI core team', made up of people from the different clusters, who lobbied to draw up an action plan by the end of 2023.

By engaging stakeholders early and meaningfully, municipalities can co-create DEI strategies that are credible, grounded in experience, and supported by the people who will ultimately bring them to life.

### 3.2 Get inspired by the efforts of other organizations

Observing how others have approached similar challenges broadens your perspective and helps you refine your own roadmap. This allows you to avoid reinventing the wheel and to build on proven practices.



### Examples in municipalities:

The current DiGIN project is, of course, intended to provide this inspiration. The cross-sector collaboration in the different work packages leads to a [set of inspiring practices and resources](#).

Another example comes from the Municipality of Bologna, often regarded as one of the most advanced Italian cities in the field of DEI. Bologna has established a dedicated diversity team of five people, working across themes such as migration, accessible tourism, and the inclusion of people with disabilities.

A noteworthy recommendation (in Dutch) is “*Van woorden naar daden – een gids voor een inclusieve organisatie*” by Semiha Denktaş of Erasmus University Rotterdam. This book offers an overview of their approach for translating DEI ambitions into real organizational change.

By exploring such examples and connecting with them, municipalities can gain new insights, strengthen their strategic direction, and build a more impactful, future-proof DEI approach.

## STEP 4 - Setting up a DEI strategy

Based on the preceding analyzes and extensive deliberations about the state-of-play in your municipality, you can proceed to formalizing your long-term DEI strategy. The intentional preparation ensures that every subsequent step is informed, collaborative and responsive to the lived realities of employees and the organization. Now it is time to effectively agree on where the organization wants to go and what that will look like in concrete terms. This is a crucial tipping point in achieving DEI, so we will elaborate extensively on it below.

### Sub-steps:

#### 4.1 Decide on the clear strategic objectives of the DEI strategy

Deciding on clear strategic objectives is a defining moment in shaping an effective DEI strategy. This step translates the stakeholder perspectives and organizational ambitions into a focused set of priorities that will guide action. Strong objectives are **specific, measurable and aligned with the organization's broader mission**, ensuring DEI becomes part of core decisionmaking rather than a separate initiative. By articulating what success looks like - whether in representation, equity of opportunity, or everyday inclusion - you create direction and accountability. If, on the contrary, you have not defined your success, how can you know whether you are making any progress at all, and whether all the investments are paying off?

It may be useful here to make the distinction between your DEI *vision*, which can be seen as the most audacious but also a bit vague destination, and the *strategic objectives* serving to translate it into concrete commitments. Your strategy will need both. Most municipalities only have the vision, often on paper and little well-known, and only to a limited extent the concrete objectives.

The DEI **vision** describes the *future you aspire to create*. It is inspirational, long-term and value driven. Your vision articulates what an equitable, inclusive municipal organization looks and feels like once transformation has taken root. It guides intention and direction without prescribing specific actions.

**Examples of the vision in municipalities:**

Genoa: "Removal of all obstacles, and principle of solidarity and equal opportunities"

- removal of all obstacles for persons with a disability
- inter-generational inclusion

Ghent: "Being a reflection of diverse Ghent society"

- representation of the diverse population
- being an organization in which every employee can develop and flourish

Rotterdam: "Rotterdam represents Rotterdam"

- bringing in and keeping in different perspectives
- an open and safe working culture in which everyone participates and feels seen

**Strategic objectives** translate that vision into *concrete commitments*. They are specific, measurable and timebound goals that outline what exactly the organization intends to achieve to move toward the vision. Objectives help prioritize actions, allocate resources and define what success looks like in practice. The vision expresses your desired destination; the strategic objectives map the milestones that will get you there.

**Examples of strategic objectives in municipalities:**

The **municipality of Rotterdam** has adopted its first DEI Action Plan ('Intern actieplan Diversiteit, Inclusie, Gelijkwaardigheid (DIG)'). It was drafted in 2023 and agreed in December of that year. It contains 11 *breakthroughs*: key actions that are predefined but still require elaboration. The action plan was drawn up by a working group, 'DEI core team', made up of people from the different clusters who lobbied for it.

Sibel Saki, DEI Manager of the Municipality of Rotterdam: "We have 11 breakthroughs but we can't do them all at once, we defined 3-4 breakthroughs as essential:

1. Every manager acquires within three years the skills of inclusive leadership. *This is essential because positioning this makes or breaks your organization: letting colleagues take a stand, actively asking "what do you think about this," and also psychological safety within a team, otherwise you cannot consolidate D&I. Our behavioral standards ('gedragsnormen') have been rewritten, and a prominent reporting point ('meldpunt') has been provided so that colleagues have a direct channel for reporting discomfort;*
2. Objective recruitment and selection is standard - *We transformed this into conscious recruitment and selection, bringing diversity of voices at the table and a more structured application process. Selection remains based on a conversation between people, but everyone is treated the same way;*
3. Inclusivity Panel and other DEI employee networks are the conscience of the organization - *We facilitate employee networks in terms of time/money and positioning/ambassadorship: JongR, R-Pride, and Neurodiversity; we organize the municipality in such a way that they also feel welcome.*
4. A central DEI Office for advice and decision-making – *the structure of a DEI Office ('DIG Bureau'), which organizes and facilitates all this.*



*We have clear targets for managerial positions and bicultural backgrounds: by 2030, 29% of employees in scale 14 and above will have a bicultural background. We are currently seeing a shortage from scale 11 onwards."*

The **municipality of Ghent** has two targets numbers about diversity in the strategic framework 2021-2025, in order to represent the diverse population:

- 30% of new employees are people who have a foreign origin. This means that they have a non-Belgian (birth) nationality, or that at least one of their parents has a non-Belgian birth nationality;
- 2% of staff, expressed in full-time equivalents (FTE), are persons with a disability.

Real-life examples of measurable objectives also include the **gender quotas applied by law in Belgium**, not for municipalities but for top management in federal institutions and for the boards of directors of listed companies:

- Belgian federal government: since 2012, a maximum of two-thirds of senior federal civil servants (first two levels of a federal institution) may be of the same sex.
- Boards of directors: for listed companies, the Act of 28 July 2011 requires that at least one-third of the members of the board of directors be of a different gender than the other members.

#### **Other suggestions for strategic objectives:**

We recommend that the strategic objectives should not be limited to representation – or 'visible' diversity as is often the case – , but should certainly, and perhaps even more importantly, extend to measured experiences of inclusion and equity among the defined populations.

Here are a few examples of how these objectives can be defined in concrete terms. The figures and percentages are fictitious and must be determined in deliberation. The examples serve to illustrate the clarity created by setting concrete objectives:

*Equity (Fairness) - strategic objective examples:*

- "By June 2028, at least 85% of employees in each department will report in the annual employee survey that 'Decisions are made fairly in my organization' (procedural fairness) and that 'Personal characteristics do not influence fair treatment'."
- "By the end of 2029, 100% of managers will have completed mandatory training on DEI competencies (knowledge and skills), with a post-training evaluation of at least 80% satisfaction with the skills learned."

Indicators here can be the degree of participation in training registered in the HR system; Post-training evaluation  $\geq$  80% satisfaction with learning objectives; or a practical assignment or case study as part of training.

- "From 2026 onwards, the DEI competence of each manager will be evaluated annually via 360° feedback and included in the performance review."  
Indicators here can be feedback from team members on inclusive attitude and behaviour; self-reflection and action plan on inclusion; score on DEI competence  $\geq$  4 out of 5 in evaluation form.

*Inclusion - strategic objective examples:*



- “By June 2028, at least 85% of employees in each department will report in the annual employee survey that ‘Personal characteristics do not influence how comfortable people feel in the department’ and that ‘Everyone is given the space to be themselves, regardless of their personal characteristics’.”
- “Within 12 months of joining the organization, every new employee will have access to a mentor as part of an inclusive onboarding programme, with an annual satisfaction rating of at least 80% positive feedback.”

*Diversity* – strategic objective examples:

- “By the end of 2028, the municipality will increase the proportion of employees with a migrant background at A- and B-level by 25% compared to 2025, as measured by available statistical data on place of birth and origin (birth nationality of employee or a parent).”
- “By the end of 2028, the municipality will increase the proportion of employees with a migrant background in managerial positions by 15% compared to 2025, as measured by available statistical data on place of birth and origin (birth nationality of employee or a parent).”
- “At least 30% of candidates invited for interviews for A- and B-level positions will have a diverse background (migration background, disability, age), as monitored through anonymous diversity monitoring.”

## 4.2 Integrate objectives into department plans

Integrating DEI objectives into department plans ensures that the strategy becomes part of everyday operations rather than a standalone initiative. DEI should not be considered as a ‘toy from HR’. This integration translates the organizational strategic objectives into concrete, context specific actions that each team and each head of department can influence. By working with departments to align goals, define responsibilities and embed DEI into existing processes, such as recruitment, service delivery and team development, you create shared ownership across the organization. This integration also supports accountability, making progress visible and measurable at every level.

During the development process of each departments annual or multiannual plan, consider how to connect it to the DEI strategy to foster the sustainable institutionalisation of DEI.

### Examples in municipalities:

Examples of municipalities that have fully integrated DEI into departmental plans are still relatively rare. The most advanced organizations are currently in the process of embedding this.

Sibel Saki from the Municipality of Rotterdam describes this ongoing work: *“we need KPIs in annual plans for all departments; otherwise, the commitments remain nonbinding. The approach may differ between clusters, because each one starts from a different position. Some are further along than others. We aim to integrate knowledge across departments so that we can learn from each other. For shared indicators, we want to include KPIs, but these are still being developed. People now look to me for answers, but I try to turn this around: What can you do? KPIs should come from the organizational units themselves. If they develop their own KPIs based on their ownership and needs, you avoid resistance. I can advise them, but the responsibility should remain with them.”*

Similarly, Naomi Mike from the Municipality of Ghent highlights the challenge of embedding DEI at the right strategic level: *“We are advocating to include DEI objectives in the Strategic Goals and Operational Goals of the departments. The Departmental Action Plans are still too operational; Heads of departments tend to be very action-oriented and work with fewer KPIs or strategic indicators.”*

## 4.3 Select & design interventions

Selecting and designing interventions is the moment where your strategic objectives translate into tangible actions like trainings, new feedback processes, participation structures, infrastructure modifications, selection procedures and so on. This step requires making deliberate choices based on your data, stakeholder input and organizational priorities.

Effective interventions are tailored to specific inequities, based on detected needs, aligned with departmental realities and designed to shift both systems and everyday behaviors. By cocreating interventions with those affected, testing ideas on a small scale and refining them through feedback, you build interventions that are feasible, credible and impactful - ultimately embedding DEI into the fabric of the municipal organization.

For an overview of ongoing interventions in DiGiN partner municipalities: see report D5.1 – Assessment and Analysis of DEI interventions. Interventions are usually set up in the following **domains**:

- Inclusive working climate or organizational culture
- Talent management
- Accessibility
- Leadership

The most common **interventions** are:

- Inclusive leadership trainings
- Objectivising recruitment & selection procedures
- Assigning a Discrimination reporting officer
- Adjusting accessibility of buildings and digital services
- Setting up Employee networks or Employee Resource Groups
- Setting up an Inclusivity Panel

Designing interventions through a **theory of change** ensures that every action in your DEI strategy is purposeful and grounded in a clear logic of how transformation happens. This step connects your longterm goals to the specific conditions, behaviours and structures that must shift within the organization. This approach avoids scattershot efforts and builds a coherent, evidenceinformed portfolio of actions (see report Deliverable 6.2 for more explanation about Theory of change).

When designing and developing the interventions, it is ultimately important to **include indicators and an evaluation action plan** per intervention (see next step and report Deliverable 6.2 for more explanation about which indicators can be included).

**Examples in municipalities:**

**Figure 4: Comprehensive approach containing all actions from the DIG Action Plan 2024 of the municipality of Rotterdam**

ROTTERDAM REPRESENTEERT ROTTERDAM									
Dat betekent: binnenbrengen en binnenhouden van verschillende perspectieven in de organisatie en die laten (door)werken in de organisatie met een open en veilige werkcultuur waarin iedereen meedoet, zich gezien voelt, zichzelf kan zijn en talenten kan ontplooiën. Om daarmee aansluiting te creëren met de stad, het vertrouwen in onze ambtenaren te vergroten, de behoeften en wensen van Rotterdammers te begrijpen en te vertalen naar oplossingen. Dat is goed werkgeverschap en goed overheidsbeleid in een superdiverse stad.									
AMBITIE									
DOELEN	Professioneel, inzichtelijk en betrouwbaar werkgeverschap DIG		Gelijkwaardige en veilige werkcultuur	Inclusieve en toegankelijke werkomgeving	Divers zoals Rotterdam	Meerstemmigheid productief voor de stad			
DADEN	DIG ontwikkeling versnellen, expertise bevorderen en duurzaam borgen in de organisatie	DIG netwerk waarderen, inspraak geven, succesverhalen en pijnpunten delen	(C)OR in positie om de voortgang van DIG in de gemeentelijke organisatie te volgen	Aanscherping protocollen door concrete normen, consequenties en ondersteuning betrokkenen van o.a. discriminatie	Binnen 3 jaar voldoen alle leidinggevenden competentie van inclusief leider (in or out)	Inclusief denken en handelen door alle medewerkers – ten aanzien van alle vormen van diversiteit	Leidinggevenden en collega's van fsk13+ zijn in cultureel opzicht een afspiegeling van de stad	DIG borgen in beleidscyclus	
	DIG Office instellen voor verdere uitwerkingen, advisering en coördinatie	Meetbare deelresultaten invoeren en verantwoordelijk. <i>Comply or explain.</i>	DIG netwerk ondersteunen met tijd, budget, bijeenkomsten, waardering en rugdekking	Normen communiceren en veilig gesprek faciliteren over zorgen en wensen van collega's	Prioritering van inclusief leiderschap in het Rotterdamse Leiderschapsprofiel	DIG borgen in de medewerkersreis zodat (nieuwe) medewerkers kennisnemen en worden ondersteund	Inclusieve werving management en fsk 13+ (2024). Daarna alle vacatures (2026)	Onderzoek naar discriminerende effecten van gemeentelijk handelen	
	Jaarlijkse DIG-rapportage met stroefcijfers, discriminatiemeldingen, MTO en voortgang van acties	Communiceren over interne adviesrapporten en opvolgen met nader onderzoek	Toolkit met instrumenten en voorbeeldgedrag hoe te acteren bij discriminatie	Protocol toetsen door RADAR, recente adviesrapporten en interne ervaringsdeskundigen	Iedere manager en fsk13+ trainen op inclusief leiderschap, veiligheid en meerstemmigheid	Inclusie als competentie voor elke functie opnemen en ontwikkelaanbod daarop aanbieden.	Nieuw vacature format met gemoderniseerde definitie van kwaliteit (2024)	Toetsing DIG als vaste paragraaf in directienotities	
	CD laat zich spiegelen door een externe procesbegeleider DIG	Ieder DIG project goed opdrachtgeverschap, afspraken over doelen, middelen en evaluatie	'Spiegelfunctie' / checks and balances vanuit het DIG-netwerk (zoals Inclusiviteitspanel).	Melden van discriminatie en ander ongewenst gedrag structureel onder de aandacht en analyseren.	Dialogotafels (die duiden wat een inclusieve en toegankelijke werkomgeving is) opvolging geven	Iedere afdeling neemt jaarlijks deel aan een training of dialoog over DIG op de werkvloer	Monitoring diversiteit per afdeling. Onderdeel van verantwoordings-gesprekken.	Deskundigheidsbevordering inclusieve participatietrajecten	

### 4.4 Attribute resources and make responsibilities clear

Logically, every intervention should be supported by the time capacity, budget, expertise and authority needed to succeed. It involves identifying accountable leaders, defining clear roles across departments and establishing coordination structures for every intervention. By making responsibilities explicit and aligning them with the organization's decisionmaking processes, you create ownership at multiple levels. When people know



what they are responsible for, and are equipped to act, DEI efforts become both effective and sustainable.

### **Examples in municipalities:**

Many municipalities have established a DEI Steering Group with representatives from various departments, and a DEI Office for daily implementation of the actions. We recommend that roles be allocated at departmental level as well, so that interventions can be applied more broadly as described above.

A 'RASCI' matrix can be a very useful tool for agreeing on clear staff responsibilities for each measure. It helps you clarify who is Responsible, Accountable, Supporting, Consulted, and Informed for each DEI intervention or action. In DEI work, where responsibilities often span multiple departments and levels, this clarity prevents overlap, gaps and ambiguity. It also strengthens accountability by making ownership explicit and visible.

## 4.5 Expand your network of change agents

Expanding the network of change agents is helpful for embedding DEI deeply across the organization. This step focuses on identifying employees at all levels who demonstrate influence, motivation and credibility, and inviting them into the transformation process. By broadening this network, you strengthen cross-department collaboration and reduce dependency on a small core group. An expanded coalition also increases resilience: when more people carry the vision, momentum continues even during leadership shifts or operational pressures.

### **Examples in municipalities:**

Sibel Saki from the Municipality of Rotterdam: *"The DEI plan was drawn up roughly two years ago. We needed a DEI office to turn it from paper into action. Our DEI office currently has five FTEs, which is not enough to bring about cultural change on its own. But I believe in a ripple effect, where clusters take responsibility for contributing in their own way, so that together we form a large mosaic for cultural change. Of course, I have certain mandates, but there are also 'indirect' leaders: ambassadors who encourage their colleagues to take action."* Her reflection underscores how essential it is to distribute DEI leadership widely across the organization.

Similarly, Yuri Piccione from the Municipality of Genoa highlights the potential impact of creating an Inclusivity Panel or a structured change agent network: *"The most tangible implementation for us would be the establishment of an Inclusivity Panel or change agent network. If we succeed in bringing them on board, we will have motivated and aware people who form the basis of building DEI, people who create a buzz. In my view, they are the key. Until now, concepts such as change agents or an inclusivity panel were not well known; this is new for us."*

These examples show that strengthening the network of change agents is not merely a supplementary activity: it is a foundational step in creating lasting, organizationwide cultural change. When more employees feel empowered to contribute, DEI becomes a shared responsibility rather than a specialised task, paving the way for a more resilient and inclusive municipal organization.

## STEP 5 - Implementing a DEI strategy

This is the ongoing phase where the objectives become visible action across teams, processes and services. It requires coordination according to the strategic logic, clear communication and steady follow through to ensure interventions are executed consistently. It also involves monitoring early signals, addressing barriers quickly and celebrating progress to maintain momentum.

### Sub-steps:

#### 5.1 Start to implement the interventions according to your strategic logic

Having set up the DEI strategy (see previous step), you are ready to start implementing it. Most municipalities will not be starting from scratch here, of course, as they probably previously carried out one-off trainings or stand-alone events in an initial phase. Now that a detailed strategy with objectives is in place, it is important to further develop the actions that contribute to the objectives.

This phase involves deliberately activating the actions you've designed, following the pathways outlined in your theory of change (see previous step). By aligning each intervention with its intended mechanism of impact, you ensure coherence and prevent scattered efforts. Implementation should be iterative: monitoring early outcomes, adjusting based on feedback and removing practical barriers as they emerge. It also requires coordinated communication and visible leadership support so teams understand the purpose behind each activity. When interventions are launched thoughtfully and strategically, they build momentum and demonstrate credible progress toward longterm organizational change.

#### 5.2 Collect relevant indicators continuously during your implementation work

Collecting indicators continuously ensures your DEI strategy remains evidence driven and responsive. This requires some discipline, developing the habit of gathering data for each intervention as it unfolds, allowing you to understand what is working, where resistance appears and which adjustments are needed. By monitoring indicators in real time - both quantitative and qualitative - you build a clear picture of progress and emerging gaps.

For additional guidance, see step 6 below and Deliverable D6.2 – Evaluation toolbox for DEI interventions.



### Examples in municipalities:

Sibel Saki from the Municipality of Rotterdam gives an example of how evaluations are integrated into training sessions for inclusive leadership: *"We have a three-year inclusive leadership programme with initial and final measurements, monitoring the growth curve on inclusive and ethical leadership. For example: How did leaders gather feedback from employees? Can we see this reflected in 360degree feedback?"*

This illustrates how continuous indicators - linked to specific interventions - enable municipalities to track behavioural change, measure impact, and refine their approach. With consistent data collection, DEI becomes not just a set of intentions but a measurable, evolving, and accountable organizational effort.

## 5.3 Make the implementation visible in your organization and beyond

This step focuses on openly communicating progress, highlighting concrete actions and illustrating how interventions are taking shape in daily work. By sharing stories, data and examples across internal channels, you reinforce that DEI is an active, evolving priority.

Externally, showcasing your efforts strengthens credibility and positions the municipal organization as a committed, learning oriented actor. Visibility also fuels engagement: when people can clearly see change happening, they are more likely to participate, contribute and sustain the long-term transformation.

Involve the communications department of your organization in this task. It can actually have an important role in DEI structural change.

### Examples in municipalities:

Debbie Helaha of the Leiden University of Applied Sciences: *"I publish a newsletter every three months with internal and external news. I started a series of interviews with students who want to contribute something, and events such as Ketu Koti and iftar, Pride initiatives, are very well received. I was also present at the introduction week for first-year students to show that we want everyone to be treated equally."*

## 5.4 Involve all relevant stakeholders

Organize regular meetings with the stakeholders responsible for the implementation of the DEI strategy. These meetings are important not only to design and plan activities in a participatory way (see previous steps), but also to discuss the progress, main achievements and aspects that can be improved. This will allow for identifying possible problems and acting proactively on them.

### Examples in municipalities:

Sibel Saki from the Municipality of Rotterdam explains the importance of shared responsibility: *“We do have commitment and support. Each management team within the organization shows clearly that they support this. If they embrace DEI as a priority, it helps the layers below them understand its importance. We provide guidance on what they can consider.”*

She describes how the Rotterdam governance structure integrates DEI into regular leadership routines: *“The municipal secretary, as the highest authority, meets every four months with the directors of the clusters in a structured management meeting ('sturingsgesprek'). During these sessions, a range of topics, including complaints, operational issues, and DEI are discussed. DEI has been explicitly added as a standing item, requiring cluster directors to account for their progress.”*

Sample questions used in these meetings include:

Quarter 1:

*Which of the 11 breakthroughs within the cluster have been prioritised, and why?*

*Is there resistance within the cluster to one or more breakthroughs?*

*a. If so, which breakthrough is affected, and why?*

*b. What could help address this resistance?*

Quarter 2:

*What concrete and measurable results has the focus on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in your cluster yielded so far, both in terms of awareness and a demonstrably more diverse and inclusive composition of the workforce?*

*Describe which breakthroughs have contributed most, how these have been embedded in work processes, and what next steps are needed to realize the ambition of ‘Rotterdam represents Rotterdam’*

These structured reflections ensure that DEI remains on the leadership agenda, that managers are accountable for advancing DEI within their clusters, and that progress will be continuously monitored and discussed.

## STEP 6 - Monitoring progress and evaluation

Monitoring progress and evaluating your DEI strategy is essential for ensuring that your efforts lead to meaningful, sustainable change. This step focuses on systematically reviewing the selected indicators, assessing the effectiveness of interventions and understanding how they influence behaviours, structures and outcomes across the organization – or not.

It also strengthens accountability, as departments and leaders can clearly see where progress is being made and where additional effort is needed. By embedding continuous learning into the process, your municipal organization remains adaptive, transparent and aligned with its longterm DEI goals.

For additional guidance, in Work package 6 we take a closer look at monitoring and evaluation practices. We refer to Deliverable D6.2 – Evaluation toolbox for DEI interventions.

## Sub-steps:

### 6.1 Make an evaluation action plan and decide on which indicators to measure

After clarifying what success should look like, as explained in sub-step 4.1 (Decide on the clear strategic objectives of the DEI strategy), it will be necessary to develop an evaluation action plan to measure the actual achievement of objectives. This step focuses on selecting a balanced set of quantitative and qualitative indicators that reflect the organization's goals, such as representation at different levels, hiring and promotion patterns, pay equity analyzes, inclusion survey results, or participation in learning initiatives (see step 2 and 4). The evaluation plan should contain a clear overview of the data to be collected and the persons involved in this process.

### 6.2 Collect relevant indicators to measure overall progress

Collecting these selected indicators allows measuring overall progress and ensuring your DEI strategy remains aligned with the long-term goals. By tracking these measures consistently, you gain insight into systemic patterns, identify where interventions are generating change and reveal areas needing additional attention.

#### **Examples in municipalities:**

Sibel Saki from the Municipality of Rotterdam explains: *"Ultimately, you need to have steering and monitoring tools in place. We use the employee satisfaction survey to measure experienced inclusion. We also track visible diversity based on CBS data, such as bicultural diversity."*

In addition to these recurring measures, Rotterdam has introduced a quarterly survey initiated by the municipal secretary: *"Every quarter, the municipal secretary conducts a survey focusing on DEI. What are the successes? Are there any questions? This can also be done per department or cluster."*

These combined tools - employee surveys, demographic metrics, and regular leadership level monitoring - ensure that DEI progress is evaluated consistently across the organization. When indicators are collected and reviewed systematically, they help maintain strategic direction and ensure that DEI remains a visible, measurable priority throughout the municipality.

### 6.3 Communicate the results regularly within your organization

Ensure that progress is visible and understandable. By sharing the data and concrete examples across teams and channels, you help employees see how their efforts contribute to broader change. Transparent communication also creates space for dialogue, invites feedback and strengthens accountability at all levels. When people understand both the achievements and the challenges ahead, they remain motivated and aligned.

We recommend reporting about the progress towards DEI in your organization on a regular basis (according to the monitoring moments established in the DEI strategy) and through a range of channels tailored to different target groups and DEI maturity. The monitoring

exercises will provide insightful information about the progress achieved by the organization. Share key messages about these findings with the organization's community and provide online access to the full reporting publications and/or data.

## STEP 7 - Adjust & institutionalise

Adapting and institutionalising your interventions is the moment when change becomes a permanent part of the organization's DNA. This step focuses on ensuring that successful DEI efforts are integrated into daily practices, policies, and decision-making so they endure beyond individual projects or leadership cycles.

### Sub-steps:

#### 7.1 Adjust your strategy where necessary

Society will inevitably continue to change, and so will the needs within the municipality organization. Every so often, the state-of-play assessment from step 2 will have to be revisited. Has the strategy proved effective, or does it need refinement? Are we satisfied with the goals achieved, or is it time to raise the bar?

This stage involves critically examining progress, listening to stakeholder feedback, and recognising contextual shifts that may require new priorities or methods. Adjustments should always be intentional and evidence-based: reinforcing what works while reshaping what doesn't. Treating the strategy as a living framework, rather than a fixed plan, creates the flexibility needed to respond to new challenges and insights. With this adaptive mindset, your DEI approach remains impactful, sustainable, and deeply rooted in the organization over time.

#### 7.2 Eventually eliminate the need for a separate DEI strategy

Institutionalising DEI means weaving it so firmly into the municipal organization's structures, processes, and culture that it becomes inseparable from how decisions are made and services are delivered. The objective is to build durable systems - clear roles, measurable objectives, and continuous learning loops - that keep DEI resilient despite political cycles, staff turnover, or shifting agendas. This ensures a municipality that consistently advances fairness, access, and belonging for all.

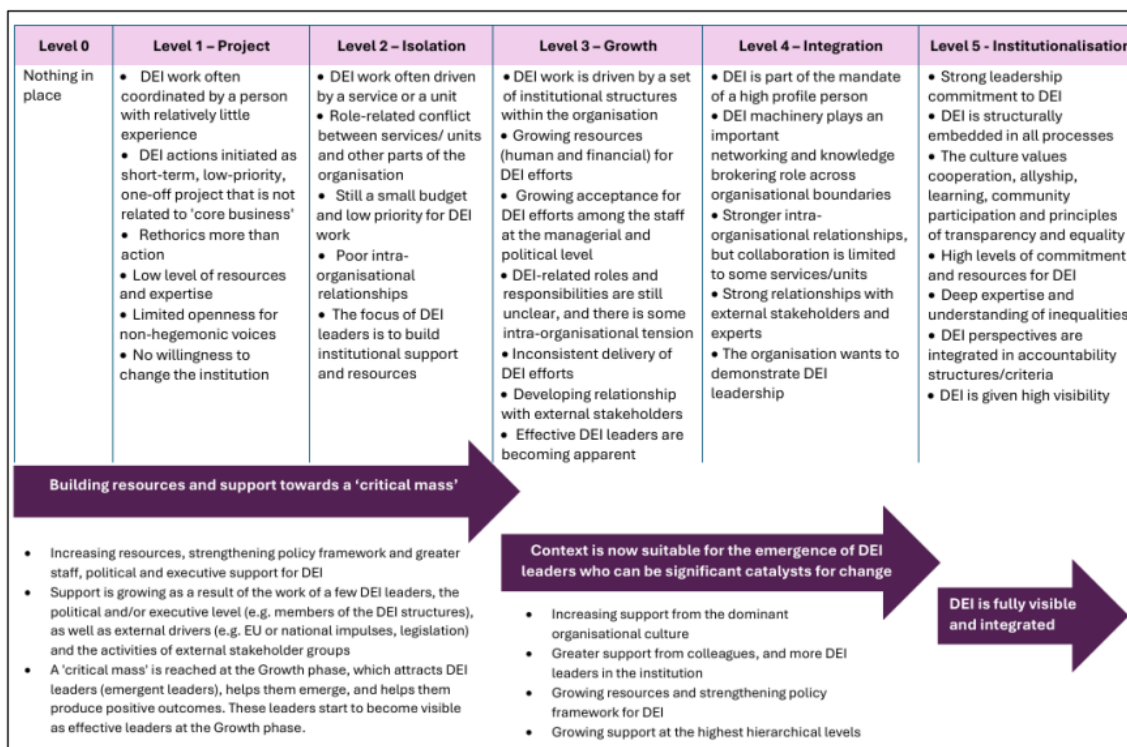
Sibel Saki of the municipality of Rotterdam explains: "You actually need to make sure the DEI office dissolves as quickly as possible - temporarily accelerating progress, but eventually phasing out and integrating everything within a few years. We've moved from mere acknowledgment of its importance to seeing real responsibility being taken, driven from the highest levels."

Ultimately, when DEI is fully visible and integrated, there may no longer be a need to refer to DEI as separate concepts. We also find this reflected in the model of DEI institutionalisation levels below.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Yellow Window, 2024, DEI Institutionalisation levels (based on Mergaert and Wuiame (2013). Report on Institutional Capacity for Gender Mainstreaming in the European Commission, Report from a study for the European Institute for Gender Equality. Unpublished work.

**Figure 5 – DEI Institutionalisation levels**



## 7.3 Benchmark your activities and results against those of similar municipalities

Although it risks being pushed to the back by daily urgencies, we recommend continuing engaging with other municipalities. You are not operating in isolation. By examining how peers design policy, measure impact, and maintain momentum, you can gain clarity on your own strengths and areas for growth. This comparative perspective inspires fresh thinking and helps set realistic yet ambitious goals. Benchmarking ensures your municipality evolves alongside the field, continually raising the bar for equitable and inclusive employee experience and public service.

## 7.4 Adapt your DEI strategy to recent changes in the policy and legal frameworks

Keeping your DEI strategy aligned with evolving policy and legal frameworks ensures that your municipality remains compliant, credible, and forward-thinking. Proactively integrating new standards strengthens organizational legitimacy, reduces risks, and creates more equitable outcomes.

A DEI strategy is never static. It may need revision due to organizational changes - such as new senior leadership - or the introduction of new legislation, sector-wide policies and other social developments. Priorities may also shift over the lifespan of the strategy. Monitor such changes closely and discuss with your team how the strategy should adapt. As people responsible for DEI deepen their expertise, new insights may also emerge that warrant further adjustment.

## Success principles - troubleshooting checklist

Our DiGiN project has been using the 10 principles of success to explain the conditions of DEI policy for positive impact. These 10 principles are based on a broad selection of scientific research and are presented in a report by the Dutch Social-Economic Council (SER), an advisory body that among other responsibilities advises the government and parliament on socio-economic policy (2019, 138)<sup>6</sup>.

In our Research Report on DEI interventions (deliverable 6.1) the 10 principles are presented and expanded upon. In report 5.1 we analyzed the gaps that we can identify at first sight in the municipalities.

### Success principles:

1. Formulate a DEI vision for the organization
2. Formulate SMART goals
3. Ensure a support base
4. Use effective tools and instruments to realize the goals
5. Leadership is essential
6. Create an inclusive organizational climate
7. Monitor and evaluate results
8. Communicate internally and externally on DEI
9. Increase knowledge and skills on DEI
10. Monitor and evaluate progress and results of the overall DEI plan

To conclude, the table below provides an overview of the 10 success principles with some common gaps or shortcomings. As a tool, in the right-hand column we refer to the sub-steps in the above report which may provide the solution at the right moment.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ser.nl/-/media/ser/downloads/adviezen/2019/diversiteit-in-de-top-analyse.pdf>

**Table 3 – Troubleshooting table for 10 success principles**

Common problems or shortcomings per success principle:	Solutions in stepwise approach above:
<p><b>1. Formulate a DEI vision for the organization</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does this vision meet the needs of different stakeholder groups?</li> <li>Is this vision clear to the entire organization?</li> </ul>	<p>2.1 Qualitative: investigate the concerns of employee groups            3.1 Engage stakeholders through participatory and co-design methods            4.1 Decide on the clear strategic objectives            5.3 Make the implementation visible</p>
<p><b>2. Formulate SMART goals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are your objectives specific, measurable and time-bound?</li> </ul>	<p>4.1 Decide on the clear strategic objectives</p>
<p><b>3. Ensure a support base</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there coalition building across organizational levels or departments?</li> <li>Is it clear who has which role or responsibilities?</li> </ul>	<p>1.2 Identify and connect change agents            3.1 Engage stakeholders through participatory and co-design methods            4.5 Expand your network of change agents            5.4 Involve all relevant stakeholders            4.4 Attribute resources and make responsibilities clear</p>
<p><b>4. Use effective tools and instruments to realize the goals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there a large consensus on terminology and what is effectively needed?</li> <li>Are some initiatives in place that are promising but not yet sufficiently developed?</li> </ul>	<p>1.1 Familiarize yourself and the organization with the DEI concepts            1.3 Build capacity to advance DEI in your organization            4.1 Decide on the clear strategic objectives            4.3 Select and design interventions</p>
<p><b>5. Leadership is essential</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are the municipality's leaders involved?</li> <li>Is there accountability at the management level?</li> </ul>	<p>2.3 Map stakeholders: identify who influences, experiences, or enables change            3.1 Engage stakeholders through participatory and co-design methods            4.2 Integrate objectives into department plans            4.4 Attribute resources and make responsibilities clear</p>



<p><b>6. Create an inclusive organizational climate</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are the concrete skills and behaviour needed to avoid discrimination in work relationships in place?</li> <li>• Does each department pay specific attention to inclusion issues?</li> </ul>	<p>1.3 Build capacity to advance DEI in your organization 4.3 Select and design interventions 4.2 Integrate objectives into department plans</p>
<p><b>7. Monitor and evaluate results (of interventions)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there a practice of monitoring, evaluating and accordingly adjusting interventions?</li> </ul>	<p>5.2 Collect your indicators continuously during your implementation work 6.1 Make an evaluation action plan and decide on which indicators to measure</p>
<p><b>8. Communicate internally and externally on DEI</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is DEI regularly mentioned and progress celebrated in our internal communications?</li> <li>• Is DEI progress regularly reported?</li> </ul>	<p>5.3 Make the implementation visible 6.3 Communicate the results regularly within your organization 6.3 Communicate the results regularly within your organization</p>
<p><b>9. Increase knowledge and skills on DEI</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are structural causes and origins of social inequities such as sexism, racism and ableism sufficiently known?</li> <li>• Are skills for non-discriminatory behaviour developed by all employees</li> </ul>	<p>1.1 Familiarize yourself and the organization with the DEI concepts 2.1 Qualitative: investigate the concerns of employee groups 4.3 Select and design interventions</p>
<p><b>10. Monitor and evaluate progress and results of the overall DEI plan</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does my organization have figures on the composition of our workforce and employee experiences?</li> <li>• Is there in-depth collection and analysis of results?</li> </ul>	<p>2.1 Qualitative: investigate the concerns of employee groups 2.2 Quantitative: collect and analyze data to map inequalities 6.2 Collect relevant indicators to measure overall progress 7.1 Adjust your strategy where necessary</p>



# REFERENCES

## Online tools:

EIGE (European Institute for Gender Equality) (2022), "Gender equality plans in academia and research: roadmap to effective implementation", <https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/publications/gender-equality-plans-academia-and-research-roadmap-effective-implementation>

GEAR tool (Gender Equality in Academia and Research): step-by-step guide for research funding bodies, <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/toolkits/gear>

From resistance to gain – Handout for building support and engagement for diversity and inclusion policies among managers and employees – Utrecht University and SER Diversity in Business, [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/61f950abce7da8698c111d18/t/6937e74a7f17d7238630962c/1765271370934/Bokern+et+al.%2C+2025\\_Handout+From+Resistance+to+Gain\\_EN.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/61f950abce7da8698c111d18/t/6937e74a7f17d7238630962c/1765271370934/Bokern+et+al.%2C+2025_Handout+From+Resistance+to+Gain_EN.pdf)

## Books:

"Van woorden naar daden – een gids voor een inclusieve organisatie" - Semiha Denktaş, Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam, 2025

"Dei Deconstructed: Your No-Nonsense Guide to Doing the Work and Doing It Right" – Lily Zheng, 2022

"De inclusiemarathon" - Kauthar Bouchallikht, Zoe Papaikonomou, 2021

## Work sessions:

Training session "A "Simulation room" for the new DEI Strategic Framework" – Ghent municipality 27 oktober 2025

