



UN-GGIM: Europe Vision Document on: Diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging

Background

The geospatial industry, like other industries, has recognised that it faces challenges relating to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI). We know that diverse and inclusive work environments contribute to a sense of identity and drive better business outcomes.

During the Thirteenth Session of the UN-GGIM Committee of Experts in 2023 a side event was held on the topic of ‘Inclusion and Diversity in geospatial information management’. This led to a [decision](#) by the Committee to *integrate the subjects of gender equality, inclusion and diversity into the Committee’s agenda items, and encouraged its functional groups and thematic networks to integrate this topic in their work plans.*

UN-GGIM: Europe has been working towards integrating DEI into its work plan and to take a diverse and inclusive approach to its activities. The Executive Committee of UN-GGIM: Europe is committed to finding solutions to these challenges, and is requesting that the Plenary discusses and considers the topic of DEI and identifies practical ways forward for our geospatial community.

Opportunity space

We recognise that many Member States and organisations are already looking at ways to address DEI challenges. We encourage those organisations to share their approaches so that we can learn from one another.

We also recognise that DEI isn’t just related to people. For example, biases can occur in data collection processes, there can be ethical considerations related to data collection, and machine learning algorithms can perpetuate societal biases.

We hope that this discussion may lead to a set of guiding principles that our UN-GGIM: Europe community can adopt and follow.

We encourage all parts of our UN-GGIM: Europe community to consider how to integrate DEI into their work plans. We should challenge biases and promote fairness, act as allies for underrepresented and marginalized communities so that together we can create positive change and contribute to a more equitable world.

Environment Social and Governance (ESG) and DEI

On November 28, 2022, the Council of the European Union adopted the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD), requiring companies to provide detailed

sustainability reports. Organisations are required to report in phases what their contribution is within the themes of Environment, Social and Governance (ESG).

Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) are crucial factors for organisations to consider in decision-making. In recent years, attention to ESG themes has increased with many organisations, especially in the business community, adopting sustainable practices to positively impact the environment, society and governance. Important elements which are also expected from stakeholders. ESG is an extension of the principles of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), which focuses more explicitly on the chains in which people participate (the interconnectedness of people, organisations and their impact). Although reporting is currently not an obligation, it is a transformative incentive for an inclusive approach. At a later moment this applies also to the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD), a European Union directive aiming at enhancing the protection of the environment and human rights both within the EU and beyond.

It sets obligations for companies to address actual and potential adverse impacts on human rights and the environment, including those related to their own operations, their subsidiaries, and – vitally – their suppliers.

Also a relation with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can be made. The SDGs are common, universal goals for member states of the United Nations to move the world towards a fairer, more prosperous and peaceful society in 2030. They balance the economic, social and ecological dimensions of sustainable development.

UN-GGIM: Europe: Diversity, Inclusion, Equity and Belonging

In this context UN-GGIM: Europe has committed to fostering an inclusive and balanced geospatial society since 2023. The objective is to cover all activities of UN-GGIM: Europe by taken into account the relevance of a diverse and inclusive approach. Furthermore, equity and the need to contribute to a safe place where everyone feels appreciated (the sense of belonging) is part of the new workplan.

Diversity, encompasses a range of human differences, including but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, social class, physical ability, neuro disabilities, religious or ethical value systems, national origin, and political views.

Equality is somewhat less one-sided than diversity or inclusion. You have equality (equal rights and opportunities) and **equity** (equal treatment). Equality does not mean equal treatment. For instance, while men and women are legally equal, equity addresses ongoing disparities like the gender pay gap.



Inclusion is involvement and empowerment, where the inherent worth and dignity of all people are recognised. An inclusive organization promotes and sustains a sense of belonging; it values and practices respect for the talents, beliefs, backgrounds, and ways of living of its employees. Diversity in the workplace is about the mix of different people in an organization, while inclusion is about whether or not people feel at home, feel heard and have a safe space to express themselves in an authentic way.

Belonging is the feeling of security, sense of acceptance, inclusion and one's own identity and recognition. To give people a sense of belonging, the environment must be designed to be a diverse and inclusive place.

UN-GGIM: Europe is by its Executive Committee committed to bring in its existing structure a gender, age and cultural balance. It raises awareness by promoting, also in the international context, realization of balanced working and expert groups. It is open for bringing together different minds, talents and roles, from every origin, background, age and situation.

By bringing some structure, a set of principles, provide a basis from which diversity, equity, and inclusion can be shaped. These principles are the basis for building a related strategy and plan of action.

Principles

1. Bias

Bias in the workplace is holding opinions, beliefs, or attributes about an individual or group of people based on certain characteristics, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or age, that impact how you think about or perceive them.

Bias can be unconscious or conscious. Unconscious bias involves stereotypes and assumptions that individuals form outside their (conscious) awareness, such as favouring men for leadership positions despite equal qualifications of women in the candidate pool.

Bias in the workplace is not limited to people themselves, but also makes its way into the data we use. Data can also harbour prejudice and algorithms can, both knowingly and unknowingly, favour certain outcomes. The result of this will spill over into our decision making, weakening both the quality and effectiveness of new policies where certain groups will not be taken into consideration.

Conscious bias refers to intentional prejudices held toward individuals or groups that affect judgement and decisions. Bias touches every area of work, from the language used in job descriptions to compensation and who is hired. And as all employees hold some

form of bias, this is all the more reason to make combatting bias an integral principle of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI) efforts.

If allowed to go unchecked, bias can lead to unfair treatment, favourability, and discrimination. This impacts relevant decision-making, including hiring, career progression and development, and budget allocation. The result is an organisation that is underrepresented and marginalized.

2. Transparency

Workplace transparency involves being open and candid, such as sharing salary ranges and company goals, fostering trust and empowering employees.

Transparency also needs to be applied when choosing and using data. Our choice in data sources determines the outcome of our work. By being open concerning the data we use, we can identify weaknesses and make sure all relevant parties are involved.

Transparency impacts DEI by creating a culture of trust and openness while empowering employees with relevant information to help them stay informed about the organisation and careers. Without transparency, a culture of mistrust and miscommunication can occur, which impacts employee performance, morale, and productivity.

3. Accountability

Accountability in the workplace relates to taking responsibility for your actions and understanding that your actions are answerable. Accountability also means accepting the consequences—whether positive or negative.

By following accountability as a guiding principle for DEI, organisations show their commitment to creating a culture where employees are held responsible for their actions which help create an environment that drives meaningful change.

4. Empathy

Empathy in the workplace means understanding and relating to others' experiences and emotions, fostering compassionate and unbiased interactions. Furthermore, empathy also means respecting and taking into account the views and beliefs of communities outside those represented in the decision-making process. An example of this can be found in the beliefs of indigenous communities regarding land rights and use.

5. Accessibility

Accessibility in the workplace refers to creating an environment that prioritizes equal opportunities and inclusivity for all employees, including those with disabilities, neurodivergent people, and other needs. Accessibility involves removing barriers and

providing accommodations to ensure individuals can fully participate in work-related activities, programs, and facilities. This is not limited to physical impediments, but also related to barriers to use certain data sources and the skills to process them. In removing these barriers, we can empower all employees to be part of the participatory decision-making processes and provide new insights. Without this kind of accessibility, information and decision-making is limited to a limited number of people and parties, which is not desirable from a DEI perspective.

6. Intersectionality

Intersectionality is the recognition and examination of the interconnected nature of different social identities, such as race, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, and other dimensions of diversity. It acknowledges that individuals possess multiple identities that can intersect and influence their experiences of privilege or oppression (acknowledging the complex and unique challenges faced by individuals).

Intersectionality recognises that individuals have multiple dimensions of identity that interact and intersect. It goes beyond viewing diversity as a singular characteristic and acknowledges the complexity of human experiences. By considering how different identities intersect, organisations gain a more comprehensive understanding of diversity and the unique challenges faced by individuals with intersecting identities.

Areas for consideration during Eleventh Plenary of UN-GGIM: Europe

UN-GGIM: Europe is committed to these principles and supports a hands-on approach when talking about and implementing DEI in all its activities. Alignment with relevant national frameworks and European policies (such as the ESG and CSRD directives) is encouraged.

This paper requests that European Member States considers how the topic of DEI could be taken forward by UN-GGIM: Europe and encourages the Executive Committee to continue to work on this topic outside of Plenary meetings.

In order to structure the conversation three areas of consideration can be identified:

- How could the Working Groups and Thematic networks consider the different aspects of DEI in their working methods and work programme.
- What DEI initiatives are currently in place within Member States, how can we learn from one another.
- How can UN-GGIM: Europe demonstrate leadership in DEI conversations and how can we use our convening power to widen the discussion as far as possible.