Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan of the Archives Portal Europe Foundation 2024-2026

Document information

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Introduction

This Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DE&I) plan represents the Archives Portal Europe Foundation's (APEF) commitment to achieving equal participation of individuals and organisations within all its activities irrespective of their gender and sexual identity, their ethnic and ethno-religious identity, their nationality, their age, their abilities, their social status and cultures. The cultural heritage we work with, present and make available is owned and shared by everyone, hence we want to be as diverse and inclusive as possible in everything we do.

Being a foundation under Dutch law operating in the cultural heritage sector and the digital humanities, APEF's DE&I plan draws inspiration from Diversity & Inclusion Code for the Dutch cultural sector on the one hand. Operating on the European stage and in the context of initiatives such as the common European data space for cultural heritage (funded by the European Commission's Digital Europe Programme) and the Cultural Heritage Cloud (funded by the European Commission's Horizon Europe Programme), this DE&I plan furthermore has been inspired by the report and recommendations of the Europeana Network Association's (ENA) Diversity and Inclusivity Task Force, the Europeana Initiative's Inclusive Engagement Guidelines,the European Commission's Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 and Horizon Europe's Guidance on Gender Equality Plans.

This DE&I plan for 2024 to 2026 has been approved by the APEF Governing Board (GB) on 1 February 2024 and is awaiting the approval by the APEF Assembly of Associates (AoA) during their next meeting in May 2024 in Brussels. It is published on the Archives Portal Europe's website in the section "About us > Who we are".

Once approved by the AoA, this DE&I plan will be communicated to the Archives Portal Europe's network of Country Managers and Ambassadors and will be referred to in all activities as appropriate. A progress report on the DE&I actions detailed in the following chapters will be presented to the AoA by the GB annually during one of their joint meetings, starting with the spring meeting 2025, which will be the first meeting after the AoA's approval of this current plan. A next iteration of this DE&I plan will be presented to the AoA by the GB at their autumn meeting 2026 and is expected to cover the following three years from 2027 to 2029.

Disclaimer

APEF in itself is a rather small organisation with limited direct staff (2.4 FTEs) and a limited budget. Around the foundation and the portal, however, exists a large network, over which APEF has more or less influence when it comes to initiating actions as described in this DE&I plan. These actions hence need to strike a balance between what APEF can influence, and what is out of APEF's control. They focus on what APEF can control directly or recommend upon, in an environment where we cannot, nor do we want to, collect and keep personal and sensitive data related to the individuals that work for APEF or within its network. This means that we will concentrate on characteristics such as gender[1], representation of European regions[2], and representation of organisations in terms of type and size[3].

Definitions

The following definitions are taken mainly from the Diversity & Inclusion Code (English version, for the definition of diversity and inclusion) and the report of the ENA Diversity and Inclusivity Task Force (for the definition of equity).

Diversity

Diversity is an indication "that people differ from and are similar to one another with regard to a range of visible and non-visible characteristics. Diversity is a given: people are different from one another. The differences hold significance for everyone's position in society and the opportunities available to them. Even though they influence our behaviour and our thinking, not everyone is always aware of this. Differences are never absolute or isolated, occurring in unique combinations to form what we know as identities. [...] Diversity in [an] organisation and in [the organisation's] work boils down to the extent to which the diversity of society is represented in four key elements: programme, audience, employees and partners."

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[1] It should be mentioned that non-binary and gender fluid persons have not been considered in this report yet.

[2] This refers to a subdivision into four broad regions (following EuroVoc, a multilingual thesaurus maintained by the Publications Office of the European Union, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/browse/eurovoc.html): Central and Eastern Europe (Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Georgia, Hungary, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine), Northern Europe (Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden), Southern Europe (Cyprus, Greece, Holy See, Italy, Malta, Portugal, San Marino, Spain, Turkey) and Western Europe (Andorra, Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco, Netherlands, Switzerland, United Kingdom).

[3] E.g. as expressed in the draft schema for the Encoded Archival Guide 3.0 for the description of institutions with archival holdings, element <repositoryType> (https://github.com/ArchivesPortalEurope Foundation/EAG2012/blob/MajorRevision_EAG3.0/eag3.0_draft.xsd), developed by the APEF Working Group on Standards : business archives, community archives, international archives, local archives, national archives, non-university educational archives, personal and family archives, regional archives, religious institutions archives, specialised government archives, specialised non-governmental archives, university archives.

Equity

"Equity is the active commitment to justice, fairness and equality, ensuring that everyone receives fair treatment, including transparency to cause and effect, as well as managing and communicating everyone's expectations in terms of consequences and rewards."

Inclusion

Inclusion "refers to how you deal with differences and similarities. The power of diversity and its benefits are harnessed when the uniqueness of each individual is acknowledged, recognised and welcomed. Achieving this means learning to appreciate one another, not in spite of but because of our differences and similarities. It is essential that everyone is included in the decision-making process and has the opportunity to contribute ideas. Inclusion is the extent to which creators, producers, workers and audience members of all identities – visible or not – can be themselves and feel safe and respected."

Initial actions

Publication and official endorsement

Action 1 - Approval of the DE&I plan by the APEF Governing Board

Tasks	Deadline	Responsible	Status
1.1 - The draft DE&I plan is submitted to the APEF Governing Board for review and approval.	January 2024	APEF staff	Done
1.2 - The draft DE&I plan is adapted to the feedback provided by the APEF Governing Board.	February 2024	APEF staff	Done
1.3 - The DE&I plan is approved by the APEF Governing Board.	February 2024	APEF Governing Board	Done

Action 2 - Approval of the DE&I plan by the APEF Assembly of Associates

Tasks	Deadline	Responsible	Status
2.1 - The DE&I plan as approved by the APEF Governing Board is submitted to the APEF	May 2024	APEF Governing Board	In progress

Assembly of Associates for review and approval.			
2.2 - The DE&I plan is approved by the APEF Assembly of Associates.	May 2024	APEF Assembly of Associates	Not started yet

Action 3 - Publication and dissemination of the DE&I plan

Tasks	Deadline	Responsible	Status
3.1 - The DE&I plan as approved by the APEF Governing Board is published on the portal.	February 2024	APEF staff	Done
3.2 - The DE&I plan as approved by the APEF Assembly of Associates is communicated to the Archives Portal Europe's network.	May/June 2024	APEF staff	Not started yet (Communication channels: mailing lists for Country Managers and Ambassadors, Archives Portal Europe newsletter)

General actions

Actions related to Archives Portal Europe Foundation's organisational structure

Organisationally, APEF consists of three distinct bodies:

- the Assembly of Associates (AoA), the highest decision making body, to which each of the foundation's associates assigns one representative, mostly the directors or vice directors of the associate's organisation or another member of its senior level management;
- the Governing Board (GB), responsible for the foundation's strategic development, and appointed by the AoA upon suggestion by individual AoA members, being a member of that associate's senior level management;
- the staff, employed by the foundation and responsible for the foundation's operational business and hired by the GB.

Action 4 - Raising awareness of the topic of DE&I with the Assembly of Associates

As the appointment of representatives of their organisations to the AoA is in the sole discretion of each associate, APEF can mainly raise awareness of the topic with the AoA as a whole.

Tasks	Deadline	Responsible	Status
4.1 - The DE&I plan becomes a standing topic for at least one AoA meeting per year.	from February 2025 onwards	APEF Governing Board and APEF Assembly of Associates	Not started yet
4.2 - The DE&I plan is referred to as context for APEF's work every time a new associate joins or an associate assigns a new representative to the AoA.	from May 2024 onwards	APEF Governing Board and APEF Assembly of Associates	Not started yet

Action 5 - A balanced Governing Board

While it is individual associates suggesting members for the APEF GB based on their expertise in one of the areas of work that are essential to the foundation's activities (digitisation, standardisation, international cooperation, digital cultural heritage research, communication and engagement, etc.), new GB members are appointed by the AoA as a whole. In this context, aspects of gender balance or balance between the different European regions as represented in the AoA also within the GB could be taken into account additionally, in cases when there are several candidates with the necessary expertise.

Status quo (in January 2024): The APEF GB currently consists of six members. One of these is female, five are male. One member is from Southern Europe, two from Central and Eastern Europe, three from Western Europe. The AoA on the other hand has a similar number of members from Western (8), Central and Eastern (7) as well as Northern Europe (7) and a slightly smaller number of members from Southern Europe (4)[4].

Tasks	Deadline	Responsible	Status
5.1 - The AoA aims at a gender-balanced GB as part of the appointment process.	from May 2024 onwards	APEF Assembly of Associates	Not started yet (Depending on the candidates put forward)
5.2 - The AoA aims at balanced representation of the four European regions within the GB as part	from May 2024 onwards	APEF Assembly of Associates	Not started yet (Depending on the candidates put forward)

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[4] See https://www.archivesportaleurope.net/about-us/who-we-are with the anticipation of four new members joining the AoA in 2024.

of the appointment process.			

Action 6 - An open and inclusive working environment

Tasks	Deadline	Responsible	Status
6.1 - The foundation's daily operations are conducted in a flexible manner, with the aim of creating a welcoming environment for staff members and/or anyone in the network who may have responsibilities as a primary carer.	from May 2024 onwards	APEF Governing Board	Current

Action 7 - An open and transparent hiring process

Tasks	Deadline	Responsible	Status
7.1 - When hiring, the call for applications is open to anyone working within one of the three European time zones who fits the respective job profile.	from May 2024 onwards	APEF Governing Board	Current
7.2 - The initial selection process for invitation to be interviewed is anonymised where possible and suitable to avoid bias.	from May 2024 onwards	APEF Governing Board	Current
7.3 - A recruitment code of conduct is developed and applied to all hiring processes following its adoption by the APEF GB.	from May 2024 onwards	APEF staff and APEF Governing Board	Not started yet

The wider network with which the foundation interacts on a daily basis to conduct its activities includes:

- the Country Managers (CM) network, a group of country-level representatives who liaise between APEF and the institution(s) providing data to the portal (Content Providers);
- the Archives Portal Europe Ambassadors, volunteers who help APEF in its daily activities, from research to communication projects to data ingestion, and anything that can be done online and remotely.

Action 8 - Raising awareness of the topic of DE&I when appointing Country Managers

The CM is a volunteer role and the individuals fulfilling this role are selected independently by the associate of a country, or by each country's archival community, usually from one institution that acts as Content Provider. They are therefore the expression of the local archival community in each country and - similar to the members of the AoA - their effective appointment is not in APEF's remit. APEF can, however, raise awareness of the topic of DE&I with its network as a whole.

Tasks	Deadline	Responsible	Status
8.1 - The DE&I plan is referred to as context for APEF's work every time a new CM is to be appointed.	from May 2024 onwards	APEF staff and APEF Governing Board	Not started yet

Action 9 - Balanced representation in Working Groups

APEF has established dedicated Working Groups (WG) related to several of its areas of activity. Participation in a specific WG is open to Country Managers and Content Providers and is based on preference and interest, experience and expertise, as well as connections to one's own area of work. For an inclusive and diverse approach to these WGs, gender-balance, a balanced representation of the four European regions, and a balanced representation of different types of institutions across all WGs is desirable.

Status quo (in January 2024): Currently there are 34 CMs appointed from 33 countries[5]. 16 of these are male, 18 are female; 11 represent Central and Eastern European countries, 9 represent Western European countries, 8 represent Northern European countries and 5 represent Southern European countries. Across the three active WGs, a total of 11 CMs are involved. 8 of these are female, 3 are male; 5 represent Western European countries, 3 represent Central and Eastern European countries, 2 represent Northern European countries and 1 represents a Southern European country. At the time of writing (January 2024), no Content Providers are involved in any of the WGs, i.e. all but 1 of the current WG members represent national-level institutions.

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[5] See https://www.archivesportaleurope.net/about-us/who-we-are/?tab=country-managers

Tasks	Deadline	Responsible	Status
9.1 - APEF aims at gender-balance appropriate to the gender distribution within the CM network when extending participation in existing and new WGs.	from May 2024 onwards	APEF staff and APEF Governing Board	Not started yet (Depending on the candidates put forward)
9.2 - APEF aims at a balance between the European regions appropriate to the regional distribution within the CM network when extending participation in existing and new WGs.	from May 2024 onwards	APEF staff and APEF Governing Board	Not started yet (Depending on the candidates put forward)
9.3 - APEF promotes the option to participate in the WGs towards the wider network of Content Providers with the aim to increase representation of non-national-level institutions.	from May 2024 onwards	APEF staff and CM network	Not started yet (Depending on the candidates put forward)

Action 10 - An open and inclusive environment for volunteers

Tasks	Deadline	Responsible	Status
10.1 - The position of an ambassador is open to anyone.	from May 2024 onwards	APEF staff	Current
10.2 - The position of an ambassador is advertised as extensively as possible via the foundation's digital	from May 2024 onwards	APEF staff	Current

and local communication channels.			
10.3 - The position of an ambassador is informal with an open and rolling onboarding process, allowing anyone to contribute in their own time within an agreed flexible time frame.	from May 2024 onwards	APEF staff	Current

Actions related to Archives Portal Europe's activities

Action 11 - An accessible web application

Tasks	Deadline	Responsible	Status
11.1 - The Archives Portal Europe is maintained and developed according to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) of the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C).	from May 2024 onwards	APEF staff	In progress

Action 12 - Addressing bias in the data presented on the portal

Tasks	Deadline	Responsible	Status
12.1 - Archives Portal Europe includes a transparent way for users to report data that they experience as harmful and/or offensive.	from May 2024 onwards	APEF staff	In progress
12.2 - Archives Portal Europe makes use of the tool developed within the DE-BIAS project, wherein APEF	from January 2025 onwards	APEF staff	Not started yet

is a partner, to generally review its data set with regard to potentially harmful and/or offensive language and to raise awareness about this with the Content Providers			

Action 13 - An open and inclusive application and selection process for the APEF Grants

Since 2021, APEF offers an annual Digitisation Grant to current and prospective Content Providers to support them in digitisation and/or metadata creation and improvement tasks. In 2023, this offer was extended by two Research Grants and one Creative Grant per year awarded to individuals to help them with activities related to archival research.

Tasks	Deadline	Responsible	Status
13.1 - The APEF Digitisation, Research and Creative Grants are open to anyone.	from May 2024 onwards	APEF staff	Current
13.2 - APEF aims at a balance between different types of institutions appropriate to their distribution within its network when awarding the Digitisation Grants over a period of 5 consecutive years.	from May 2024 onwards	APEF staff and APEF Governing Board	In progress
13.3 - APEF aims at a gender-balance when awarding the Research and Creative Grants over a period of 5 consecutive years.	from May 2024 onwards	APEF staff and APEF Governing Board	In progress
13.4 - APEF aims at a balance between the European regions when awarding the Digitisation, Research	from May 2024 onwards	APEF staff and APEF Governing Board	In progress

and Creative Grants over a period of 5 consecutive years.			
13.5 - With its Grants, APEF aims to promote projects (whether for research or digitisation) based on collections that give voice to underrepresented and understudied communities and that can contribute to diversify predominant historical narratives	from May 2024 onwards	APEF staff and APEF Governing Board	In progress

Action 14 - A diverse and inclusive approach to dissemination and research

Tasks	Deadline	Responsible	Status
14.1 - When preparing online exhibitions, campaigns and other research and dissemination activities based on the data available in the portal, APEF aims at an as diverse and inclusive presentation as possible.	from May 2024 onwards	APEF staff	Current
14.2 - APEF aims to establish a set roster of topics to be addressed in online exhibitions, campaigns and other research and dissemination activities highlighting data about underrepresented communities and from underrepresented types of institutions and European regions	from May 2024 onwards	APEF staff	Not started yet

compared to the data available on the portal.			

Action 15 - An open and inclusive approach to engagement

Tasks	Deadline	Responsible	Status
15.1 - APEF applies the Inclusive Engagement Guidelines of the Europeana Initiative.	from May 2024 onwards	APEF staff	In progress

Actions related to resources, training, and monitoring

Action 16 - Use of resources

Tasks	Deadline	Responsible	Status
16.1 - The GB enables and supports the foundation staff to work on the above actions as required.	from May 2024 onwards	APEF Governing Board	Not started yet

Action 17 - Opportunities for training

Tasks	Deadline	Responsible	Status
17.1 - The GB seeks suitable training opportunities for its members and for the foundation staff on unconscious biases.	from May 2024 onwards	APEF Governing Board	Not started yet

Action 18 - Monitoring

Tasks	Deadline	Responsible	Status
18.1 - APEF regularly gathers data relevant to show progress and success towards the above actions.	from May 2024 onwards	APEF staff, APEF Governing Board	Not started yet

18.2 - The GB reviews the status of this DE&I plan every six months during one of their monthly meetings.	from May 2024 onwards	APEF Governing Board	Not started yet
18.3 - The AoA is updated on the status of this DE&I plan once a year.	from May 2024 onwards	APEF Governing Board	Not started yet

Signature Certificate

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