

Equality, diversity and inclusion policy

Introduction

HCWH Europe is committed to encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion in our team. Our goal is to ensure our team is truly representative of all sections of society and our members/stakeholders, and for each employee to feel respected and able to give their best.

HCWH actively promotes equality in all our internal workplace policies and practices, including recruitment, terms of employment, and office practices, among others.

We acknowledge that being inclusive is a process and as such we welcome feedback from staff on how we are managing inclusivity.

Legal Framework

In Belgium, the law forbids discrimination based on different so-called 'protected criteria'. This means that you are being discriminated against if you are less well treated than another person, in comparable circumstances, owing to your origin, a disability, your religion, your age, your sexual orientation, or other grounds.

The other grounds are also specific and include

- State of health
- Wealth
- Physical characteristics
- Civil status
- Household composition
- Political beliefs
- Trade union beliefs
- Birth
- Social Background

However, a difference in treatment is not discrimination if it can be objectively and reasonably justified. A full explanation of the law, of these criteria and of how they are applied can be found in English, French and Dutch [here](#).

You can find a full explanation of the law and our obligations as employees and as the employer in the section on harassment in our Work Regulations (specific reference).

Our policy's purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

1. Provide equality, fairness and respect for all in our employment, whether temporary, part-time or full-time.

2. Ensure we do not unlawfully discriminate as an employer.
3. Oppose and avoid all forms of unlawful discrimination, including in relation to:
 - pay and benefits
 - terms and conditions of employment
 - dealing with grievances and discipline
 - dismissal
 - leave for parents
 - requests for flexible working
 - selection for employment, promotion, training or other developmental opportunities

Our commitments

As an organisation we commit to:

1. Encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace, recognising this is good practice and in line with our organisational values.
2. Create a working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and the contributions of all staff are recognised and valued.

This commitment includes training managers and all other employees about their rights and responsibilities under the equality, diversity and inclusion policy. Responsibilities include staff conducting themselves to help the organisation provide equal opportunities in employment, and prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination.

All staff should understand they, as well as their employer, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their employment, against fellow employees, customers, suppliers and the public. You can find more details on what do to if you are the victim of bullying or harassment in our Staff Handbook.

3. Take seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, members, customers, suppliers, visitors, the public and any others in the course of the organisation's work activities.

Such acts will be dealt with as misconduct under the organisation's grievance and disciplinary procedures, contained in our Staff Handbook, which set out a specific set of procedures to follow in these cases. Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice. Further, sexual harassment is a criminal offence.

4. Make opportunities for training, development and progress available to all staff, who will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their talents and resources can be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the organisation. We welcome recent Belgian legislation in this respect that requires the employer to provide a training path for all employees and commit to implementing this in full by 2024.
5. Make decisions concerning staff being based on merit.
6. Review employment practices and procedures at regular intervals or as necessary to ensure fairness, and also update them and the policy to take account of changes in the law.
7. Monitor the make-up of the workforce regarding information such as age, sex, ethnic background, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability, and report these to our Board of Directors in order to encourage equality, diversity and inclusion, and to meet the aims and commitments set out in this policy.

Monitoring will also include assessing how this policy, and any supporting action plan, are working in practice, reviewing them annually, and considering and taking action to address any issues.

8. Ensuring that our approach to recruitment supports us to recruit a diverse workforce. In practice this means that candidates who are currently underrepresented in the HCWH workforce will be shortlisted as long as they meet the minimum criteria specified in the role description.
9. Our wellbeing policy and practice supports an inclusive workplace free of discrimination.

[Agreement to follow this policy](#)

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy is fully supported by the Executive Leadership Team and the Board of Directors and has been shared with all staff.

Definitions

Equality in the workplace means equal job opportunities and fairness for employees and job applicants.

You must not treat people unfairly because of reasons protected by discrimination law ('protected characteristics'). For example, because of a person's sex, age or race.

Diversity

Diversity is the range of people in your workforce. For example, this might mean people with different ages, religions, ethnicities, people with disabilities, and both men and women. It also means valuing those differences.

To avoid bullying, harassment or discrimination, you should make sure:

- your workforce and managers understand what is protected by discrimination law
- what's expected under discrimination law is actually happening in your workplace
- you make changes if what's expected is not happening, for example stepping up staff training
- your workforce and managers understand what the benefits can be of having a range of people with different backgrounds

Inclusion

An inclusive workplace means everyone feels valued at work. It lets all employees feel safe to:

- come up with different ideas
- raise issues and suggestions to managers, knowing this is encouraged
- try doing things differently to how they've been done before, with management approval

An inclusive workplace can help lower the risk of [bullying, harassment and discrimination](#).

Source: UNIA