

DIVERSE EU VOICES

PLEDGE FOR INCLUSIVE CHOICES

Democracy thrives when barriers are removed to ensure the participation of people from diverse communities. The inclusion of diverse voices in the democratic process is fundamental. Without it, we cannot expect an equitable and inclusive policy-making process. At the Brussels Binder, we stand by the principle that all EU stakeholders need to step up to ensure a diverse range of voices are represented in policy debates.



With this manifesto, the Brussels Binder calls on EU stakeholders to pledge to organise and participate in policy debates that respect all individuals, along with their intersecting identities and lived experiences. With this, we also wish to send a powerful message to all European citizens and **encourage stronger participation in EU politics.**

We are calling upon the EU's political parties and MEPs, institutions, think tanks, private sector, event management organisations, civil society organisations, media, and other EU stakeholders **to pledge that events taking place ahead of and after the EU elections have a diverse speaker line-up**, including but not limited to gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, age, ability, and socio-economic background.

How can I contribute?

- Use the Brussels Binder [database](#) to find experts.
- Use the Brussels Binder [toolbox](#) for best practices in organising EU policy debates.
- Use the Brussels Binder as a [resource](#) to educate yourself on intersectionality.



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INDIVIDUAL

1

I pledge not to moderate or participate in panels that lack diversity, including but not limited to gender, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, ability, and socio-economic background.¹

2

When I cannot participate in a panel discussion I'm invited to, I will endeavour to nominate a speaker whose voice is often underrepresented in the given discussion to take my place.

3

I pledge to follow the best practices outlined in the Brussels Binder toolbox to improve representation of different views and backgrounds on all EU panel debates.



ORGANISATION

1

We pledge not to organise or endorse EU panel debates that lack diversity, including but not limited to gender, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, ability, and socio-economic background².

2

We pledge that our staff, when representing our organisation, will not moderate or participate in EU panel debates lacking diversity, helping to make diverse panel debates the norm in the EU Quarter.

3

We pledge to follow the best practices outlined in the Brussels Binder toolbox to improve the quality of our EU panel debates by inviting speakers and audiences from backgrounds that are underrepresented.



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Why this Manifesto?

At the Brussels Binder, we believe that effective policymaking is achieved through analysis that includes perspectives representative of the society it impacts. EU citizens must see themselves represented in EU policy debates to maintain trust in our democracy.

The Brussels Binder was launched in 2017, with the aim to advocate for greater gender equality in the EU Bubble. At the time, only a third of speakers at Brussels' events were women. In two-thirds of debates, the majority of the speakers were male and there were twice as many all-male panels as gender-equal ones.³ Aiming to bridge this gap, we created The Brussels Binder, a database for EU event organisers who seek to include expert women's voices in their policy debates.

Today, in 2023, gender is not the only facet of diversity that is still missing from EU policy debates, as was very aptly highlighted by the **#BrusselsSoWhite** movement, which denounced the lack of racial diversity in the EU institutions, formed in 2017.⁴ The Brussels Binder recognised the need to fight for other forms of diversity, broadening its focus from gender equality to gender and diversity,⁵ including, but not limited to gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, age, ability, and socio-economic background. The Brussels Binder believes that unwillingness or inability to look beyond the 'usual suspects' to speak should not be the norm. The EU will excel and advance with representational diversity in policy debates.

We believe **it is time to recognise and include all our intersecting identities and commit to ensuring truly diverse EU policy debates**. We trust that this manifesto will inspire you all to pledge for diverse representation.



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What is diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility (DEIA)?

Panels should strive to reflect **all** the people who would ultimately be affected by the policy under discussion. For example, a panel of six white, middle-aged men discussing women's reproductive rights is not reflective of the target group. Organisations need to have diverse and inclusive panels to have truly informative discussions.

Diversity

Diversity is about creating an environment that **includes and respects individuals**, their **identities**, and **experiences**. An inclusive and diverse environment is one where all individuals feel valued for who they are, their skills, and experiences. More than just a box-ticking exercise, this involves “authentic and empowered participation and a true sense of belonging.”⁶

During the 2019-2024 European Commission's leadership and the European Parliament have made significant headway in terms of achieving a greater gender balance, but a significant lack of representation remained. At least 10% of European Union citizens are from racial and ethnic minorities. Yet, just 4% of all MEPs in the previous legislature belonged to a racial or ethnic minority background.⁷



Inclusion

In its simplest form, **inclusion** refers to the idea of including everyone as part of a group, discussion or debate. Importantly, and particularly in the context of this manifesto, inclusion also refers to the idea that any existing barriers should be removed to ensure that everyone is able to use existing facilities, participate in the same activities and enjoy the same experiences, including those with a disability or a disadvantage.⁸



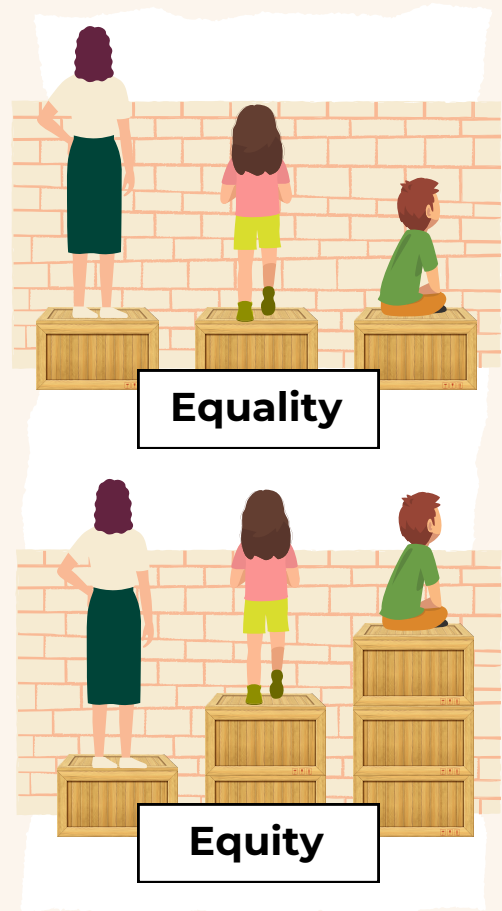
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Equality vs Equity

While the terms **equity** and **equality** may seem synonymous, emphasising one rather than the other can significantly impact outcomes for different groups of people. Equality refers to “being equal in rights, status, advantages, etc”.⁹ In other words, equality means everyone has access to the same resources or opportunities. Equity also recognises that each individual/group has different circumstances, and therefore ensures that the necessary resources/opportunities are allocated to achieve an equal outcome.¹⁰



During EU policy debates, it is crucial that all speakers have an equal opportunity to participate. For example, event organisers should ensure that all speakers have sufficient speaking time and that this time is being respected by the other panellists.

Accessibility

Accessibility within DEIA is the term with which people might be least familiar. Accessibility refers to meeting the needs of all people, including, and most importantly, those with disabilities, both visible and invisible. It means “the design, construction, development, and maintenance of facilities, information and communication technology, programs, and services so that all people, including people with disabilities, can fully and independently use them.”¹¹



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Accessibility within EU policy debates requires event organisers to pay special attention to ensure all stakeholders can meaningfully participate in the event. For example, organisers should ensure the venue is accessible for wheelchair users and that all videos shown contain subtitles for those who are hard of hearing.



What is intersectionality?

We all have intersecting identities, such as being a highly educated woman from a working-class background or a man who is black and gay. They can result in experiences of privilege or discrimination, depending on the context and situation. These intersecting identities shape our unique perspectives and experiences in life. It is vital that we acknowledge our privilege and fight against social prejudices.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is the network of connections between social categories such as race, class and gender. The term was coined by Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw to describe that two overlapping categories may result in additional disadvantage or discrimination. For example, the additional discrimination faced by women of colour or queer people with disabilities. Using an intersectional lens helps us to connect equality and equity.¹²

As we are entering a new mandate post-2024 elections, incorporating DEIA and using an intersectional lens in all our policy debates is the only acceptable way forward. Together we must strive for truly diverse voices to be heard in EU policy debates and pledge to making inclusive choices.



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ABOUT THE BRUSSELS BINDER

The Brussels Binder is a registered NGO which strives to improve the gender and diversity balance in European policy debates by providing a free database of expert women across various fields. By connecting event organisers with diverse voices, it aims to reshape debates and encourage inclusive decision-making. The Brussels Binder is a volunteer-run organisation and is registered in the EU's Transparency Register: 323604351472-19.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Moderators should not be seen as part of the diversity balance of the panel as they do not provide expert input in the discussion.

² Idem

³ De Castro Caldeirinha, C. & Horst, C. (2017) Women Leading the Way in Brussels. London: John Harper Publishing.

⁴ Politico (2017) Brussels is blind to diversity. Retrieved from: <https://www.politico.eu/article/brussels-blind-to-diversity-whiteout-european-parliament/>

⁵ Euractiv (2022) Diverse Women's Voices Still Unheard in the European Policy Debate. Retrieved from: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/opinion/diverse-womens-voices-still-unheard-in-the-european-policy-debate/>

⁶ The Annie E. Casey Foundation (2016). Deploying Casey's REI Framework: Lessons from the civic sites. Baltimore, MD: Annie E. Casey Foundation. Retrieved from: <https://www.aecf.org/resources/deploying-caseys-rei-framework>

⁷ ENAR (2019) ENAR's election analysis: ethnic minorities in the new European Parliament 2019-2025. Retrieved from: https://www.enar-eu.org/wp-content/uploads/2019_06-Racial-diversity-EU-Parliament-elected-MEPs.pdf

⁸ Cambridge dictionary, definition of inclusion. Retrieved on 23/11/2023 INCLUSION | English meaning - Cambridge Dictionary

⁹ Oxford Learners' Dictionary. Equality noun. Retrieved on 09/11/2023: <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/equality>

¹⁰ Milken Institute School of Public Health, the George Washington University (November 5, 2020) Equity vs. Equality: What's the difference? Retrieved from: <https://onlinepublichealth.gwu.edu/resources/equity-vs-equality/>

¹¹ The White House (June 15, 2021) Executive Order on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce. Retrieved from: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/06/25/executive-order-on-diversity-equity-inclusion-and-accessibility-in-the-federal-workforce/>

¹² Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary. Definition of Intersectionality noun. Retrieved on 09/11/2023: <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/intersectionalityies.com>



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