

TOWARDS SYSTEMIC CHANGE: DIVERSITY TRAINING MODULE FOR CULTURAL LEADERS





A Checklist-Based Guide for Cultural Leaders to Embed Equity and Inclusion of Artists and Cultural Professionals with Migratory Backgrounds



Welcome

Welcome to Towards Systemic Change: Diversity Training Module for Cultural Leaders—a practical and reflective guide designed to support arts and culture professionals committed to building a more equitable and inclusive sector.

This module was created in response to growing awareness across Europe that diversity must be more than a surface-level ambition—it must be a organizational commitment. While many cultural leaders recognize the importance of inclusion, translating intention into action remains a challenge. Artists and cultural professionals with migratory backgrounds continue to face barriers in accessing opportunities, resources, and recognition. This document addresses those barriers and provides actionable tools for dismantling them.

At the heart of this training is a comprehensive checklist, designed to help organizations assess their current practices and identify concrete steps for progress. Divided into foundational and advanced actions, the checklist allows institutions of all sizes and capacities to begin their inclusion journey or deepen their commitment to equity. It is not a one-time tool but a living resource to guide reflection, track impact, and foster accountability.

Developed through cross-border collaboration and informed by study visits, surveys, and research, this module offers more than recommendations—it offers a roadmap. Whether you're starting from scratch or building on existing work, you are invited to explore, adapt, and use this guide to shape long-term change in your organization and community.

Diversity is not just about representation. Inclusion is not just about policy. This guide invites cultural leaders to lead with intention, listen deeply, and act boldly.

Let's begin.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The arts and culture sector has the power to shape societies, challenge norms, and foster meaningful dialogue. However, artists with migration backgrounds continue to face systemic barriers that limit their access to opportunities, funding, and professional networks. These challenges are often reinforced by institutional structures, ingrained habits, and decision-making processes that fail to recognize the value of diverse artistic contributions. Cultural leaders acknowledge ongoing challenges related to inclusion in the arts. Many report regularly encountering artists who struggle to feel included, and all strongly support building systems to help these artists integrate into the local art community. They are committed to making diversity a long-term priority, not just a temporary initiative. Furthermore, all agree they have a role to play as agents of positive change in addressing these systemic barriers.

These systemic barriers manifest in many ways throughout the artistic and professional journey of artists. For instance, limited proficiency in the local language can hinder career advancement, and foreign qualifications are often undervalued or found to be difficult to assess, leading to a preference for locally obtained credentials. Economic hardship exacerbates these challenges -grants are difficult to obtain due to complex application processes, with key criteria often only available in the local language(s). Most of the time, grants are insufficient to cover basic living expenses, and a lack of transparency in decision-making further discourages applicants. Additionally, employment opportunities remain scarce. According to research conducted by Cupore (Center for Cultural Policy Research), the lack of diverse applicants to job openings is frequently linked to the limited use of multilingual communication, poor outreach strategies, few targeted recruitment initiatives, and the absence of institutional training on inclusive hiring practices—all of which further limit representation in the sector. Additionally, many artists with a migration background hesitate to apply due to perceived implicit biases in hiring, often assuming they won't be selected because of their language skills or cultural background. Name-based discrimination also plays a role.

Artists with a migration background navigate precarious working conditions, short-term contracts that offer limited opportunities for professional development. Without access to protective structures such as occupational healthcare or social security, they are more vulnerable to exploitation and burnout. Unpaid work is common, contributing to financial instability. These difficulties are further compounded by persistent gender inequalities, with income disparities between male and female artists being notably high in many European countries. In addition, workplace discrimination and harassment continue to be widespread concerns, with foreign-born professionals reporting inappropriate behavior. harassment, and structural discrimination. These challenges are often intensified by intersectionality, where factors such as ethnicity, gender, and language barriers intersect to increase vulnerability and exclusion. As a result, many artists struggle to afford basic living costs, and prolonged exclusion or marginalization can lead to significant health issues, including stress-related conditions.

Another key issue within the sector is the tendency to confuse diversity with inclusion. Many organizations strive for internationalization by showcasing artists from diverse backgrounds but struggle to create environments where these artists can fully participate in decision-making, career development, and institutional leadership. Diversity refers to representation—the presence of individuals from different backgrounds—while inclusion ensures that they have equitable access to opportunities, decision—making, and resources within the sector. Without inclusive structures, diversity remains superficial, often resulting in tokenistic representation rather than meaningful engagement.

The Access, Advocacy, and Active Inclusion - Pathways to increasing Diversity in the Arts and Culture Field (AAA) project was launched to address those systemic barriers and to create lasting change by equipping cultural organizations with tools to foster inclusion, advocate for policy reforms, and recognize the value of diverse artistic contributions. As part of this initiative, a diversity training module was developed to serve as a practical guide for cultural organizations, policymakers, and arts professionals committed to creating a more inclusive and equitable sector. The diversity training module highlights gaps in current structures, identifies key challen-

ges faced by artists with migration backgrounds, and provides concrete strategies to address discrimination, bias, and exclusion.

Developed in collaboration with cultural professionals from Finland, France, and Denmark, this training module brings together insights from surveys, existing research, and firsthand experiences to support leaders in implementing sustainable change. Two surveys were conducted as part of the process: the first survey (Feb 2025), provided critical input on institutional challenges and DEI priorities and is referenced throughout this training module. The second survey (April 2025) aimed to test the first draft of the checklist with leaders from Finland, Denmark, and France. While its results are not analyzed in depth, the low engagement led to a useful redesign of the checklist into a more practical Essentials and Advanced format.

At its core, this diversity training module asks: **How can we create a cultural sector where artists and cultural workers of all backgrounds have equal opportunities to thrive?** The following sections will explore this question by offering:

- A research-based overview of the barriers faced by artists with migration backgrounds
- Practical steps organizations can take to build inclusive structures
- Strategies for advocating systemic change at local, national, and international levels
- Tools for self-assessment, reflection, and policy implementation

Why Is This Training Module Needed

Findings from cultural leaders highlight both the urgency and complexity of building more inclusive environments in the arts. Despite growing awareness, many institutions face significant barriers—from limited resources and fear around addressing diversity issues to a lack of

data, clear frameworks, and strategic guidance. According to the first survey

results, while there is a strong commitment to equity, efforts often remain fragmented and under-resourced:

- 60% of organizations report having taken no concrete steps to ensure equal access to job opportunities for artists with migration backgrounds. Some have begun individual initiatives such as anonymous or blind recruitment, inclusive hiring practices, mentorship programs, inclusive events, job practice opportunities, and reforms toward more transparent decision-making processes. Additionally, all respondents report partnering with cultural organizations to support integration and networking within the local cultural scene. Other emerging efforts include peer review reform, cultural safety training, positive discrimination, and embedding inclusion into internal policy and data systems. While promising, these initiatives are largely isolated and lack sector-wide coordination.
- 80% of cultural leaders acknowledge that inclusion remains a significant challenge, yet most lack structured frameworks to measure and monitor progress. This hinders the transition from intent to action.
- All the respondents expressed desire to support for integrating artists with migration backgrounds into the local art community, yet many lack clarity on how to ensure genuine inclusion beyond symbolic gestures.
- Although most cultural professionals stated that they treat international qualifications and experience on par with local credentials, some expressed uncertainty. This inconsistency underscores the need for clearer policies and institutional processes to recognize and integrate qualifications earned abroad—especially within hiring and funding structures.

These findings reveal a persistent gap between awareness and implementation. While there is evident goodwill and a willingness to act, the absence of strategic direction, expert support, and long-term planning has made it difficult for institutions to move beyond isolated initiatives. Without coordinated, systemic approaches, inclusion risks remain as such—rather than a transformative shift toward equity across the cultural sector.

Despite these challenges, promising practices are already emerging. For example, initiatives such as the Diversity Agents program in Finland offer cultural diversity training to municipalities and institutions, supported by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Likewise, Luckan Integration and IMMART provide crucial language support and intercultural dialogue platforms that help artists navigate local systems and access professional networks. These examples underscore the importance of cross-sector collaboration and publicly supported infrastructure to drive long-term inclusion across the arts sector

Moving from Recognition to Action

The diversity training module incorporates before mentioned insights, urging cultural leaders to move beyond symbolic diversity efforts and adopt systemic strategies for inclusion. The need for leadership in developing policies that foster transparency, accountability, and better evaluation of diversity initiatives is clear. The findings show a need for stronger commitments in the following areas:

- Leadership Representation: People from cultural and ethnic backgrounds remain significantly underrepresented in leadership and decision-making roles.
- Equitable Hiring Practices: While some organizations implement blind recruitment, widespread structural changes are still lacking. Institutions must develop and implement concrete non-discrimination and equity plans. This includes providing mandatory diversity and anti-racism training for staff, encouraging anonymous recruitment, and exploring targeted strategies to actively increase representation where disparities persist.
- Accessibility and Cultural Belonging: Culture belongs to everyone, yet
 many still face barriers to access. Organizations must improve
 multilingual communication and services, offer cultural programming in
 minority and non-dominant languages, and foster a sense of cultural
 belonging through inclusive practices.

- Career Development Support: Many artists struggle to access funding, find stable employment, and professional networks. The recognition of international qualifications and skills is essential for inclusion. Expanding language learning opportunities within arts institutions and workplaces, providing mentorship, and building networking platforms can help support career advancement for artists and professionals. Cultural organizations must prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion and integrate these goals into their policies, funding criteria, and evaluation frameworks.
- Anti-Racism and Safer Spaces: Cultural institutions must establish safer space guidelines and actively challenge racialization and harmful stereotypes in cultural narratives. This includes addressing discriminatory practices when they arise and curating programs that reflect and respect the full diversity of society.
- Peer Review and Recognition of Cultural Backgrounds: Peer review systems must be designed to fairly evaluate the work of artists from different cultural and migratory backgrounds. This means recognizing diverse artistic expressions, practices, and career paths that may not align with traditional or mainstream standards.
- Tracking Diversity Progress: Guidance is needed on how to measure and evaluate inclusion efforts while complying with the European data privacy laws.
- **Structural Reforms:** Information on policy development, transparent complaint mechanisms, and accountability frameworks would help organizations create lasting structural change.

In Finland, France and Denmark, while the population is becoming increasingly diverse, cultural policies, funding structures, and recruitment practices have not kept pace. By fostering long-term intercultural exchange, revising institutional practices, and advocating for structural change, cultural leaders can help build a dynamic, resilient, and truly inclusive arts ecosystem. This diversity training module serves as a roadmap, offering cultural professionals the guidance, tools, and concrete steps needed to move from good intentions to meaningful action.

Glossary

Accountability: Taking responsibility for progress and outcomes. In DEI work, it means setting goals, tracking them, and being transparent about successes and areas for growth.

Anti-Discrimination Policies: Formal rules that prohibit unfair treatment based on race, ethnicity, gender, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or other identities. These policies help ensure everyone is treated fairly and with respect.

Bias (Unconscious/Implicit Bias): Judgments we make automatically based on stereotypes, often without realizing it. These can influence decisions and behavior in ways that disadvantage some groups.

Bias Training: Training that helps people identify and reduce unconscious bias in decision-making. In hiring, for example, it promotes fair evaluation of all candidates, including those with international or nontraditional backgrounds.

Cultural Awareness: Understanding that people have different cultural backgrounds, beliefs, and communication styles. It's about noticing those differences and being respectful of them.

Cultural Competency: The ability to interact respectfully and effectively with people from different cultures. It includes communication, empathy, and sensitivity in cross-cultural situations.

Cultural Competency in Recruitment: Using cultural understanding to make fair hiring decisions—for example, recognizing international experience, valuing multilingual skills, and avoiding bias.

Cultural Competency Training: Workshops or programs that teach staff how to navigate cultural differences and work inclusively with people from various backgrounds.

DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion): An umbrella term for creating environments that are representative of a variety of backgrounds and identities (diversity), fair (equity), and welcoming (inclusion).

Diversity: All the ways people differ—such as race, gender, age, disability, culture, language, sexual orientation, or socio-economic background. Diversity in teams brings broader perspectives and innovation.

Equity: Providing people with what they need to succeed—which might mean different kinds of support depending on each person's situation or barriers.

Foreign Qualifications/International Credentials: Degrees or work experience earned outside the local country. These are often undervalued, so recognizing them fairly helps expand access to opportunities.

Inclusive Hiring Practices: Recruitment methods that actively remove barriers for underrepresented groups—for example, using clear job criteria, valuing diverse experience, and advertising in multiple networks.

Inclusion: Creating a culture where everyone feels they belong, is respected, and can fully contribute—not just being invited in, but feeling welcome and supported.

Intersectionality: A concept that recognizes how different aspects of identity (like gender, race, disability, migration status, etc.) overlap and affect people's experiences—especially when it comes to discrimination.

KPI (Key Performance Indicators): Specific metrics used to track progress in DEI work—such as the diversity of new hires, participation in training, or employee feedback on inclusion.

Language Inclusivity: Making sure people who don't speak the main local language fluently can still participate—by using translations, simple language, or offering language support.

Safer Spaces: Workplaces or communities that actively try to be respectful, inclusive, and free from harassment or discrimination—and where people can speak up without fear.

Transparent Selection Criteria: Clear, objective requirements for jobs, grants, or residencies. This helps reduce bias and ensures fair evaluation—especially for people from diverse or international backgrounds.

A Formal DEI Strategy: A structured plan that outlines how an organization will promote diversity, equity, and inclusion. It includes clear goals, timelines, and ways to measure success—and is integrated into daily work and values.

2.TRAINING MODULE

Profile of Participants

This training module is designed for funders, cultural leaders, decision-makers, and gatekeepers in the arts and cultural sector who have the power to shape policies, allocate resources, and influence industry practices. Participants may include directors of cultural institutions, arts managers, program officers, curators, policymakers, and funding bodies responsible for supporting artists and artistic initiatives.

By engaging those in leadership positions, the training aims to equip key stakeholders with the knowledge and tools to foster inclusive environments, challenge systemic barriers, and create equitable opportunities for artists with migration backgrounds. Through reflection, practical guidance, and strategic action, participants will be empowered to implement meaningful change within their organizations and the wider arts ecosystem.

Format and Structure

The following checklist is designed as a practical, self-guided tool that cultural leaders can use at their own pace, regardless of organization size or structure. It serves as both a reflection guide and an action-oriented resource, offering flexibility while promoting meaningful, ongoing progress. As a living resource, it is intended to evolve alongside your organization's DEI journey.

The checklist is divided into two categories:

Essentials (Foundational Actions): For organizations beginning their DEI journey. These are clear, manageable steps that address the most immediate and common barriers to inclusion.

Advanced (Systemic Actions): For organizations ready to embed DEI more deeply into their structures and strategy. These actions require a higher level of planning, coordination, and long-term commitment.

Each category is organized thematically (e.g., Leadership and Commitment, Language and Accessibility, Inclusive Hiring), allowing organizations to focus on specific areas relevant to their current needs or priorities.

This structure allows users to begin with foundational actions and build toward more systemic change over time. Leaders are encouraged to start where they are, take achievable steps, and revisit the checklist regularly as their capacity and context evolve. The checklist is delivered as a downloadable, self-guided PDF. Users can read through the guide at their own pace, digitally mark progress using tools like Adobe, or print it out to track progress manually.

No formal training is required. Instead, the checklist supports leaders in reflecting, acting, and adapting strategies to suit their specific organizational realities and DEI goals.

How To Use This Checklist

Self-Assess: Reflect on current practices, track progress, and identify gaps.

Prioritize: Focus on realistic, high-impact actions based on your leadership capacity.

Take Action: Apply strategies at the individual, team, or organizational level.

Monitor and Improve: Regularly evaluate your impact and refine your DEI efforts.

Tips Based on Organizational Size

Solo Leaders: Begin with self-education, set small and achievable goals, and integrate inclusive practices into everyday decisions.

Small Teams: Assign roles, encourage peer-learning, and incorporate diversity goals into regular team check-ins.

Larger Organizations: Develop formal DEI policies, embed inclusion metrics into performance reviews, and build systems for accountability at every level.

By following this flexible format, cultural leaders can take clear, measurable steps toward building inclusive environments, regardless of their starting point. This is a living resource, designed to evolve alongside your organization's DEI journey.

Checklist

Essentials (Foundational Actions)

These are clear and simple steps for organizations that are beginning to work on key diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) challenges.

✓ Check the areas your organization is currently addressing, and plan to revisit the checklist regularly to track progress and identify new priorities.

	Leadership and Commitment
\bigcirc	Ensure leadership commitment to diversity and inclusion.
\bigcirc	Designate a specific anti-harassment person in your organization.
\bigcirc	Promote success stories to inspire broader inclusion.
\bigcirc	Foster an organization-wide DEI culture, ensuring all staff engage with cultural competency.
	Language and Accessibility
\bigcirc	Translate event invitations, policies, and key materials into multiple languages.
\bigcirc	Use inclusive language in job postings, grant calls, and communications.
0	Create a language-inclusive work environment where non-native speakers feel supported in both their career growth and language-learning journey (for instance, language training).
\bigcirc	Collect feedback from artists and staff on language challenges and address barriers.
	Inclusive Hiring and Fair Evaluation
	Recognize international degrees, portfolio, and work experience as equal to

local credentials.

\bigcirc	Implement bias training for hiring committees and ensure fair evaluation of international credentials.
\bigcirc	Feature migrant artists in exhibitions, public projects, and media campaigns.
\bigcirc	Promote job postings in diverse networks to reach migrant artists.
\bigcirc	Offer resources on how foreign qualifications are assessed.
\bigcirc	Ensure diverse hiring practices with transparent guidelines.
	Workplace Culture and Safety
\bigcirc	Introduce safer space guidelines to create an inclusive work environment.
\bigcirc	Encourage open dialogue about discrimination to foster awareness and trust.
\bigcirc	Conduct an initial assessment of workplace discrimination and DEI challenges.
\bigcirc	Develop clear guidelines for addressing cultural misunderstandings.
	Data, Feedback and Inclusion Support
\bigcirc	Begin collecting diversity and inclusion data using anonymous surveys.
\bigcirc	Establish mentorship programs and workshops on job market navigation, grants, and professional development.
\bigcirc	Organize networking events to help migrant artists build connections.
\bigcirc	Ensure equal access to grants, studio spaces, and residencies.
\bigcirc	Develop partnerships with local cultural organizations to expand access for migrant artists.

Advanced (Systemic Actions)

Leadership and Commitment

For organizations ready to embed DEI more deeply into structures and strategy.

✓ Check the areas your organization is currently addressing, and plan to revisit the checklist regularly to track progress and identify new priorities.

\bigcirc	Develop a formal DEI strategy with clear goals, accountability, and tracking mechanisms.
\bigcirc	Create pathways for diverse candidates to move into leadership roles.
\bigcirc	Integrate DEI principles into core organizational values.
	Language and Accessibility
\bigcirc	Regularly update multilingual materials to maintain accessibility.
\bigcirc	Ensure funding applications and opportunities remain accessible, including multilingual resources.
	Inclusive Hiring and Fair Evaluation
\bigcirc	Inclusive Hiring and Fair Evaluation Implement inclusive hiring practices with transparent selection criteria and active outreach to migrant artists.
OO	Implement inclusive hiring practices with transparent selection criteria and
OOO	Implement inclusive hiring practices with transparent selection criteria and active outreach to migrant artists. Implement policies preventing bias against foreign qualifications in hiring
	Implement inclusive hiring practices with transparent selection criteria and active outreach to migrant artists. Implement policies preventing bias against foreign qualifications in hiring and funding decisions. Establish clear criteria for assessing foreign qualifications and provide

\bigcup	Regularly assess and improve bias reduction efforts in hiring and promotions.
\bigcirc	Embed cultural competency in recruitment training permanently.
	Training and Awareness
\bigcirc	Implement cultural awareness training for leadership and staff.
\bigcirc	Implement cultural competency training for leadership and staff.
\bigcirc	Introduce cultural competency in recruitment, language and communication courses, and diversity/inclusion seminars.
\bigcirc	Offer ongoing cultural awareness workshops once or twice a year to enhance cross-cultural communication.
\bigcirc	Provide continuous DEI learning opportunities through tailored workshops, shared resources, and role-specific training.
	Organizational Accountability
\bigcirc	Define key performance indicators (KPIs) for measuring diversity progress.
\bigcirc	Use demographic data, feedback mechanisms, and structured evaluations to assess progress.
\bigcirc	Develop long-term systems to track and adjust DEI strategies based on collected data.
	conected data.
\bigcirc	Establish regular reporting on inclusion efforts.
O	
	Establish regular reporting on inclusion efforts.
	Establish regular reporting on inclusion efforts. Establish benchmarks and annual reviews for tracking improvements.
	Establish regular reporting on inclusion efforts. Establish benchmarks and annual reviews for tracking improvements. Maintain continuous monitoring and improvement of DEI efforts.

3.EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP

To ensure lasting impact, evaluation and follow-up must be embedded into the diversity and inclusion (DEI) journey right from the start. Participants are encouraged to use the self-assessment checklist not as a one-time tool but as part of a structured, ongoing evaluation cycle. Institutions should revisit their progress regularly—every six months and annually—using demographic data, anonymous surveys, and structured feedback loops to track meaningful change.

Effective evaluation should include both qualitative and quantitative methods. Key performance indicators (KPIs), such as changes in hiring diversity, retention of migrant artists, or participation in mentorship programs, offer measurable insights, while staff reflections and community feedback help capture lived experiences.

Organizations are also encouraged to establish peer review mechanisms and engage in cross-sector learning networks. These collaborations can help identify blind spots, benchmark progress, and share best practices. By making evaluation routine and responsive, institutions can refine their DEI strategies based on evidence, not assumption.

Ultimately, evaluation should not be about checking boxes. It should drive a deeper cultural shift: from symbolic gestures to embedded inclusion. By making space for reflection, adapting strategies, and holding themselves accountable, cultural leaders and gatekeepers can ensure their DEI efforts are sustained, evolving, and impactful.

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Access, Advocacy And Active Inclusion – Pathways to Increasing Diversity in the Arts and Culture Field (AAA)

AAA is an Erasmus+ project lead by **IMMART** in partnership with **Globe Art Point** in Finland and **Fresh Arts Coalition Europe** in France.

The project is dedicated to empowering the European arts and culture community to reshape their approach toward artists with migration backgrounds and cultural workers.

Learn More:

https://www.aaa-pathways.eu/