University of Amsterdam



Annual report 2025

From connection to embedding

Central Diversity Office

Table of contents

1. Foreword **2**

2. Policy advice **4**

3. Programmes **8**

4. Activities **14**

5. Activities by the Faculty Diversity Officers **19**

6. Finances and operations **27**

7. Communication **30**

8. 2026 Annual Plan **33**

9. The team **35**

Colofon 36

1. Foreword

In 2025, it had been ten years since the Maagdenhuis was occupied for a period by students and staff of our University of Amsterdam. Their main concerns were the limited democratic governance of the UvA, combined with the way financial decisions were made and the impact of those decisions on university policy. Students from the newly established University of Color also drew attention to decolonisation and diversity. This led, via a diversity commission, to the appointment of Diversity Officers in 2018 and a first Diversity Policy Document in 2019. This annual report covers activities and policy developments from the Central Diversity Office, so initiatives that were set in motion six to seven years ago.

The earliest CDO annual reports show that attention to and programmes for diversity and inclusion were still somewhat contested. Over the years, that has fortunately changed. The report published in 2024 focused on 'embedding and expanding': the embedding of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) across different parts of the university, and the broadening of the themes the CDO engaged with.

In 2025, I wrote about 'community and dialogue', looking back on a period in which our university community was deeply divided. At the CDO, we worked to keep the dialogue respectful and open. Our aim was this: if we are able to discuss complex and moral issues without simple solutions together, we can build mutual understanding.

Over the past year, we have explicitly positioned ourselves as a 'critical friend':

The Central Diversity Office works as a critical friend to advance diversity, inclusion, and equity at the UvA. We share our knowledge and experience through solicited and unsolicited advice and by organising activities. We seek connection and support everyone who wants to contribute to DEI.

This annual report describes a number of developments aimed at better embedding DEI activities within our institution and networks. That is why the title of this 2025 annual report is 'From Connection to Embedding': building on the connections we have made as a CDO with many partners across our campus, we are now working towards the further embedding of activities.

Embedding can take place through policy development or through a form of institutionalisation in which multiple departments share responsibility for activities. This makes DEI initiatives more resilient in a turbulent environment. That environment was quite turbulent for DEI activities in 2025, given the political and financial headwinds felt across our university as well. Nevertheless, the UvA maintained its commitment to DEI at a broadly consistent level, partly from the conviction that a future-proof university must necessarily be diverse and inclusive.

Although the CDO is not a policy department, we did contribute to policy development on several themes over the past year. This all worked in support of that embedding. Our project on Religious Observance was central to a number of meetings, and we provided advice on possible provisions and measures for students and colleagues who fast during Ramadan. We are also working on developing policy for the practical and financial support the university should provide to so-called 'identity networks'. And we are working step by step with Student Affairs on embedding the Mentoring Pathway. Where Get Ready was initially opened for first generation students, in 2025 we opened the programme to neurodivergent students and other underrepresented groups. We will continue this in 2026, when Get Ready becomes part of the Introduction Week.

Finally, I would like to mention the renewal of our Grassroots Fund, which students and staff can apply to. We have revised the conditions to encourage collaboration between different groups.

We will continue working on embedding in 2026. In fact, we will be completing a number of projects that contribute to this. Having previously developed an Inclusion Calendar, which covers a range of significant dates, we will shortly be presenting an Inclusive Language Guide. This too has been developed in collaboration with many colleagues and students, with room for new themes and further additions. On the topic of religion, we will publish advice that provides a framework within which space can be given to religious and spiritual activities, in line with the secular character of our university.

Since we consistently seek dialogue and collaboration with others, we are of course aware that opinions within our community differ on both of these topics of language and religion. Negative associations frequently play a role, such as fear of an activist language police or unease about religious interference in academic life. Yet such conflicts tend to arise precisely when the pluralism within our community is not acknowledged. By embedding that pluralism through initiatives like these, we create space to speak with one another about our differences and about what connects us.

Machiel Keestra
Photographer Marjon Melissen



What has remained constant across all annual reports is the commitment to working together: with our Faculty Diversity Officers, the participants of the University Diversity Sounding Board, the various communities, and the many students and colleagues who take part in our events. I therefore close with sincere thanks to everyone for their commitment and collaboration in strengthening diversity and inclusion at our university.

Centrale Diversity Officer,
Dr Machiel Keestra

2. Policy advice

2.1 Introduction

A memo from the CDO always arises from multiple sources. We collect input from student communities, Faculty Diversity Officers, the University Diversity Sounding Board and other colleagues involved. Sometimes we conduct additional research ourselves, such as short surveys or interviews. For each topic we carefully determine who the main target groups are and we tailor language and recommendations to them. Each memo is preceded by extensive discussions to gain a good understanding of support, feasibility and impact.

With documents such as a memo, our general aim is to make recommendations about specific facilities, working methods or (policy) measures. Depending on the topic, a memo can also have an informative or signalling function, for example by drawing attention to developments, bottlenecks or needs within the organisation.

2.2 Ramadan memo

To be an inclusive university that takes account of the diversity of students and staff, the CDO drew up a memo in 2025 on support for fasting students and staff during Ramadan. The memo was particularly relevant to the examination period that coincided with Ramadan, but is also useful for examination boards, programme directors, faculty boards and the CvB.

Core recommendations:

- Quiet and prayer rooms: set up (temporary) quiet and prayer rooms close to examination locations, with practical facilities such as nearby sanitary facilities for ablutions.
- Timetabling: where possible, take Ramadan and Eid al Fitr into account when scheduling examinations and resits, for example by scheduling examinations earlier in the day.
- Breaks during examinations: make short, clearly regulated breaks possible around sunset so that students can break their fast.
- Communication and information: communicate these facilities in good time and clearly via, among others, Canvas, email and information posters. Ensure that (facility) staff have basic information about the impact of Ramadan on study and work.

The CDO offered support in the elaboration and asked for feedback so that these arrangements can be better embedded in future policy and planning. The aim is a more inclusive study and working climate in which religious practice and academic progress can be combined.



Photographer Bete van Meeuwen

2.3 Identity networks memo

In the most recent Diversity Memorandum, the UvA stated that communities play an important role in cultural change. The response by the Executive Board underlines this. The CDO therefore considers it important to continue supporting identity networks and communities.

According to theories of identity, social identity and the *spiral of silence*[1] theory, communities play an important role in an inclusive organisation. Participation can strengthen social safety and mental health and thus help to prevent unsafe situations.
An important development in 2025 was the commitment by the CvB that UvA Pride will receive structural support for board members (2 x 0.1 FTE) for five years. The CDO would also like to see this structural embedding for other communities. At the same time, there is still a lack of clear UvA wide guidelines on how this should be shaped.

The memo therefore makes recommendations on the structural and financial embedding and improvement of communities within the UvA. These recommendations are based on:

- Literature review;
- A survey among existing communities;
- *Best practices* at other universities and large companies.

---

1 The spiral of silence is the term for the tendency of people to remain silent when they feel that their opinion differs from the majority opinion on a topic. Source: https://masscommtheory.com/theory-overviews/spiral-of-silence/

2.4 Mentoring Pathway memo

The memo on the Mentoring Pathway aims to structurally embed the support of first generation students and students from vulnerable groups within the UvA, with sufficient and stable funding.

The Mentoring Pathway consists of three components:

- Get Ready;
- The Buddy System;
- Meet your Mentor.

The programme contributes to the UvA's strategic goals in the areas of diversity, inclusion, equal opportunities and social impact. The Pathway supports students before, during and after their studies and is in line with the institution wide DIG policy (diversity, inclusion and equity). The three pillars are:

1. Empowerment;
2. *Sense of belonging* (feeling at home);
3. Academic skills.

The Mentoring Pathway starts with information sessions at secondary schools by representative senior students. They inform pupils about the guidance chain at the UvA and promote:

- The Get Ready introduction programme;
- The Meet Ups in the first 100 days of the first year;
- The Buddy System;
- Meet your Mentor.

Pupils are invited to the Open Campus Days, the online session 'Boost your study start!', and the Open Campus Day. In this way they can get to know the UvA and the campus in an accessible way.

2.5 Fishbowl meeting on dealing with religion

In June 2025, the CDO organised an expert meeting on (non-)religious diversity at the university. In small and large discussion rounds, following the Fishbowl method, participants discussed two main questions:

1. Should a secular university make space for religious identity and practices?
2. What are the consequences if you do or do not do this?

Afterwards, participants discussed how religious holidays and practices can be properly

facilitated, using good examples from practice. Finally, there was a round for open reflection, sharing key insights and exploring possible next steps.

2.6 Inclusive Language Guide

In 2025, the CDO started developing an Inclusive Language Guide to help colleagues use inclusive language in internal and external communication. We will deliver the guide in 2026. The document is intended as a resource for everyone who wants to be mindful of language and word choices. The CDO is drawing up the document in close cooperation with the Communications Office, the communities and relevant stakeholders such as colleagues from HR and Academic Affairs.

Photographer Bete van Meeuwen



3. Programmes

3.1 Dialogues on campus

The CDO works towards an inclusive UvA community that has space for different identities, backgrounds and perspectives. For this it is important that students and staff recognise and value this diversity and learn from each other.

Dialogue is a suitable tool for this, provided a method is used that:

- Stimulates attentive listening,
- Distributes speaking time fairly,
- Offers space for (silent) reflection,
- Encourages joint reflection.

A dialogue is therefore more than an ordinary conversation. Because in recent years many conversations on campus have derailed and students and staff sometimes avoid discussion, the CDO has regularly organised dialogues on the various UvA campuses.

In addition to dialogue components at other events, the CDO organised monthly Campus Connection Dinners in 2025. We looked for a living room like setting, which is limited at the UvA. In Vox Pop, the creative space of the Faculty of Humanities, we found a welcoming location.

The Campus Connection Dinners are accessible living room meetings. Under guidance, students and staff have personal conversations there with conversation partners they do not know. There is a warm snack and there are dialogue questions, such as:

- ‘Have you ever experienced or made a painful joke (about yourself or someone else) at the university? What was that like at that moment, and how do you look back on it now?’
- ‘Have you ever hidden (part of) your identity from fellow students or colleagues? How did that feel? What do you need so that you no longer have to hide your identity?’
- ‘Have you recently felt ambivalent about a particular religious or cultural celebration? Were you able to find a suitable form for that?’

After a short contribution from a guest speaker on the topic, around 20 participants discussed these questions and there was a plenary reflection. A striking feature was the relatively large number of international students. They indicated that it is difficult to move beyond superficial contact with Dutch students. In this setting, they were able to do so.

3.2 Mentoring Pathway

With the completion of the Mentoring Pathway memo, we were able in 2025 to give practical and substantive shape to the new policy. We expanded Get Ready with support during the first 100 days of new students: the 100 day warm welcome trajectory. We organised the following:

- Introduction to their Buddy – a senior student who acts as mentor and contact point during the first hundred days;
- Faculty tours with FDOs;
- Community meet up with student communities, to get to know these identity networks in an accessible way;
- Dialogue meeting on study stress and resilience.

All participants of Get Ready were automatically given access to the Mentoring Pathway. After the programme, students rated their sense of belonging at the UvA at 7.7.

3.3 Get Ready

In 2025, 70 new students took part in the two day Get Ready programme before the start of the Intreeweek. In 2025, Get Ready was expanded for the first time to include students who are neurodivergent. They could get to know the UvA through this small scale programme in an accessible way. Six student mentors took part to guide the new students.

Get Ready
Photographer Marjon Melissen





Get Ready
Photographer Bete van Meeuwen

The programme consisted of, among other things:

- Welcome address by Rector Peter Paul Verbeek;
- A number of workshops, including:
  - ‘Social and Cultural Capital’, given by Glenpherd Martinus from ECHO;
  - ‘Planning your study material’, given by Student Services;
  - ‘Grip on your studies’, given by Student Services;
  - ‘Study choice and study competences’, given by Ibrahim Kamara on behalf of University Leaders.
- A *mystery guest* conversation with Khadija Arib;
- A shared evening meal.

The students rated the Get Ready programme at 7.2 and 85% of participants felt well prepared for their life at the UvA afterwards.

3.4 Meet your Mentor

In 2025, Meet your Mentor turned five. We celebrated this with a special lustrum meeting for former participants and mentors. This event was co funded by Alumni Relations and the Amsterdam University Fund.

UvA alumnus and all round creative Rakesh Kanhai told an open and honest story about his time at the UvA, during which he did not always feel at home. Discrimination, ethnic profiling by the police when leaving a library, and difficulties in finding a place in student

associations were all part of his experiences. In this way he underlined the importance of programmes such as Meet your Mentor, which were set up to combat discrimination in the labour market.

In 2026, the regular Meet your Mentor programme started again.

3.5 Grassroots Fund and Campus Connection Support

Since the start of the CDO, the Grassroots Fund has existed. With this fund we support ideas and initiatives that come from the UvA community itself, not from the administration or management. These initiatives often closely match the wishes of communities and marginalised groups and thus contribute to a more inclusive UvA.

In 2025 we started improving the application process for the Grassroots Fund, with clearer conditions, a stronger intersectional focus and an online form that is easier to complete. In March 2026 we started working with this new system.

Due to budget cuts and the increased number of applications, we had to reduce the maximum amount that can be applied for to €1,000. During the period of tensions on our campus we had set up the Campus Connection Support Fund. We have now abolished this, as with the changes to our Grassroots Fund there is no added value in keeping both funds.

Meet your Mentor
Photographer Tengbeh Kamara



In this way, in 2025 the Grassroots Fund enabled us to support, among others:

- The annual Iftar;
- The annual Chanoeka celebration;
- Activities of UvA Pride and Amsterdam United;
- An event by and access to online teaching materials by UvA's SignLab on Dutch Sign Language.

3.6 ECHO Awards

ECHO Expertise Centre for Diversity Policy organises the ECHO Awards every year. This prize recognises students with a non Western background in Dutch higher education who show leadership and are committed to a more just society.

Lecturers and FDOs nominate students. A jury assesses the entries and submits a selection to ECHO. Normally, colleagues from Academic Affairs (AcZ) guide this process. The CDO then watches along or sits on the jury. This year, due to circumstances, AcZ was unable to guide the procedure. The CDO therefore temporarily took over this role.

In 2025, five candidates from the UvA were nominated: three students in the university (WO) category and two students in the Current Affairs category. Ultimately, ECHO selected two of them as finalists: a Liberal Arts and Sciences bachelor student from Amsterdam University College and a medicine bachelor student. Although they did not win the prize, they are now part of the ECHO ambassadors network. In this network, finalists from across the country form a community in which they share experiences and learn from each other.

3.7 External networks

National

National Network of University Diversity Officers (LanDO)
Since 2024, CDO Machiel Keestra has been chair of LanDO – the Dutch platform of Diversity Officers in Academia, which includes not only the 14 Dutch universities but also organisations such as the Association of Universities of Applied Sciences, Universities of the Netherlands, NWO, LNVH, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW) and the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW). In this network, expertise and experiences are exchanged, CDOs coordinate their efforts where possible and they start joint projects.

At the beginning of 2025, the LanDO chair sent a letter to all affiliated organisations to warn about frequent risks to DEI at universities due to the prevailing political climate and announced budget cuts. He also called for support for the continuation and renewal of the

National Action Plan for Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education. Strengthened by the broad support received, LanDO has since been working on a renewed NAP that will have more impact on the entire sector.

In 2025, several working groups within LanDO have also been preparing recommendations on, among others: the legal and practical frameworks for various forms of data collection for DEI policy, and how policy on social safety can be better aligned with DEI policy, which are unfortunately often treated separately.

International

LERU (League of European Research Universities)
Machiel Keestra also takes part in the biannual meetings of the EDI (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion) Policy Group of LERU, a group of 24 European universities. They discuss various topics such as policy advice on European education and/or research policy and exchange best practices.

During the meeting in June at the University of Copenhagen, they discussed, among other things, how intersectionality can be practically supported in policy and advice on how the EU 'Union of Equality' could become more explicitly diverse and inclusive. In December, on the campus of Heidelberg University, they spoke with a representative of the international 'Knowledge Equity Network' about international cooperation and about the possible role of CDOs in a campus culture in which shared consent about contact is understood and supported by everyone.

EPICUR
EPICUR is a European university alliance that focuses, among other things, on strengthening mobility among European students, both online and offline. In autumn 2025, CDO Machiel Keestra, together with the Vice President for DIG of the University of Strasbourg, taught a course on 'Diversity Across Boundaries: Why it Matters': the first time that several universities developed a course especially for EPICUR. Around 20 students from different European countries took part in the weekly online seminars and also came together for a long course weekend at the University of Strasbourg. The differences between students proved to add an extra dimension to the discussion of topics such as sexually transgressive behaviour at the university, misuse of biological 'explanations' of racism and the Keti Koti dialogue table on experiences of exclusion at the university.

4. Activities

4.1 Commemoration of the earthquake in Turkey and Syria

According to the WHO, the earthquake of 6 February 2023 in southern Turkey and Syria was the worst European natural disaster of the last century. The affected area is about as large as the distance between Amsterdam and Paris. More than 50,000 people lost their lives.
The disaster has a major impact on staff and students with roots in the affected area. The CDO therefore considered it important to reflect on the loss and its lasting impact.

On 8 February 2025, project manager Meltem Halaceli, who herself comes from the area, organised a memorial service in the Doelenzaal of the University Library. The programme consisted of::

- 65 seconds of silence (the duration of the quake);
- A panel discussion on humanitarian aid and making projects more sustainable, with Emine Yilmaz (Oxfam), Aysel Sabahoğlu (Solidarity Kitchen), Leyla van der Waarde (Architectural Recovery Team) and Sytske Post (VNGi);
- Stories from young people in the affected area, collected by young people from partner organisation TAAKB;
- Musical accompaniment by the Göksel Yilmaz Ensemble.

During the commemoration, attendees could donate for children in vulnerable positions, for example to support their educational opportunities. The proceeds supported two schools: Didem Koban Dance School and Ipek Yolu Çok Programlı Okulu, for pupils with disabilities who were injured in the earthquake.

4.2 International Women's Day

On International Women's Day, the CDO organised the meeting 'In conversation about gender and diversity' at Science Park 904. The programme consisted of:

- A shared lunch;
- An opening speech by the CDO;
- Personal reflections by moderators;
- Two rounds of discussions in which students and staff entered into dialogue about gender, identity, support networks and careers in academia.

Diletta Martinelli, board member of Women in Faculty of Science (WiF), gave a speech on the influence of gender and other identity characteristics on her academic and professional career. She shared challenges, successes and lessons.

The programme concluded with a joint reflection and advice for the future, followed by informal networking moments.

4.3 Week Against Racism

Due to the great interest in previous years and the desire to work with partners in the city, the CDO again organised two guided tours at The Black Archives in Amsterdam Zuidoost. Participants learned about:

- The impact of racism on society;
- The importance of Black archives;
- The visible history of exclusion;
- The less visible structures that maintain discrimination.

Under the guidance of Mitchell Esajas (founder of The Black Archives), participants learned about the history of Amsterdam Zuidoost and the ongoing effects of exclusion in daily life in the district.

Photographer Tengbeh Kamara





Iftar
Photographer Bete van Meeuwen

4.4 Iftar

The 2025 Iftar brought Muslims and non Muslims together to reflect on the experiences of Muslim students and staff at the UvA. The evening focused on solidarity and awareness of religious diversity on campus.

Former CvB chair Edith Hooge opened the evening and emphasised the importance of celebrations that reflect the cultural and religious diversity within the UvA.
Central to the evening was a sharp but constructive discussion of the Plan of Action against discrimination of Muslims by the municipality of Amsterdam (late 2024). Speakers were:

- Leila Idaassi (svMUSA),
- Stefana Feciuc (CSR),
- Boy Menist (FDO FNWI),
- Arjen Berkvens (coordinator of the network of confidential advisers).

The central question was: to what extent is the municipality's plan relevant for the UvA, and what can the university do to support Muslims and to tackle discrimination and exclusion?

After the adhaan (call to prayer), the fast was broken together with dates and a buffet. The evening, organised by the CDO in cooperation with student association svMUSA, offered space for in depth discussion and encounters and strengthened the connection between Muslims and non Muslims on campus. The CDO supported the event with funding, communication and programming.

4.5 Keti Koti

On 1 July, the CDO organised a morning programme on the abolition of slavery by the Netherlands in 1863.

The programme consisted of:

- A presentation by Maartje Duin and Peggy Bouva, makers of the podcast 'The plantation of our ancestors', on the slavery past of their white and Black ancestors respectively;
- A Keti Koti Table, led by Machiel Keestra and Soumia Akachar on behalf of the CDO, with the theme 'Family history and division.'

The Keti Koti Table is a dialogue method that offers a safe space to talk about sensitive topics around the shared history of slavery. Participants responded, among other things, to these questions:

- Share a story, event or person that has caused division or tension in your family. How did that affect you emotionally?
- How do you hope that you yourself or your (grand)children will deal with such tensions in the future? What do you need for that, and what emotions are linked to that hope?

The meeting began with a shared opening ritual and was framed by a Surinamese vocal ensemble that sang former plantation songs. Afterwards, participants could attend the national commemoration and celebration at the Slavery Monument in the Oosterpark.

Keti Koti
Photographer Bete van Meeuwen



The CDO worked together with CREA (cultural organisation of UvA/HvA) and SuConnect (organisation for study success of students from or in Suriname). The Amsterdam University Fund contributed to the costs.

4.6 International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

On 9 December, in the context of the Orange the World campaign, the CDO organised a meeting in the Surgical Theatre of the University Library. Participants discussed, among other things:

- The difference between policy on paper and the daily experience of (un)safety at the university;
- Clear and accessible reporting points;
- Fair handling of power imbalances;
- A culture of care, responsibility and listening.

They discussed how incidents can be handled in a restorative way, focusing on impact and behavioural change rather than just finding fault.
The main recommendations concerned:

- Better accountability,
- More attention to social safety in recruitment and selection,
- Creating safe and brave spaces for open dialogue.

4.7 Chanoeka

Chanoeka, the Jewish festival of lights, has become a regular inclusive religious celebration at the UvA after four years. Jewish and Israeli students and staff took the initiative, with practical and financial support from the CDO. It is important that they feel seen and that others can get to know the celebration and the community in an accessible way.

Despite tensions and incidents on campus since the war in Gaza/Israel (since October 2023), the Chanoeka celebration again proceeded calmly and brought people together this year. Around 100 students and staff came together in the P.C. Hoofthuis to light the candles of the eight branch candelabrum.

Rector Peter Paul Verbeek gave a welcome speech, followed by informative presentations on the meaning, history and variants of Chanoeka by Professor Emile Schrijver and a student. Finally, the Rector and other attendees, guided by master's student and rabbi Yanki Jacobs, each lit a candle.

5. Activities by the Faculty Diversity Officers

The Faculty Diversity Officers (FDOs) work within their own faculty and services on projects relating to diversity, inclusion and equal opportunities. Where possible, they work together with the CDO. Below is a brief overview by faculty/service.

5.1 Economics and Business – Siri Boe Lillegraven

Attracting and retaining women academics
At the Dean's request, a working group 'Attracting and Retaining Women Academics' (ARWA) produced two sets of recommendations for the faculty board. The working group consisted of a tenure tracker, a senior staff member, the Director of Operations, the Head of HR and the Faculty Diversity Officer.

The first set of recommendations concerned the tenure track. It focused on:

- Transparency and good access to information;
- Equal treatment within and between the schools;
- Space for personal circumstances;
- Attention to the challenges and achievements of new mothers in the tenure track.

The second set of recommendations concerned senior academics. The main points were:

- A more inclusive working culture;
- Transparency in recruitment and selection;
- Trying out new recruitment practices;
- Discussions on how quality is defined and measured.

As a concrete measure, mothers on the tenure track can now receive an extension of 18 months of their assessment period (9 months for fathers). Mothers with tenure receive a 12 month extension of the 5 year period used to determine research time. These measures are in line with the practice of the Dutch Research Council (NWO).

Student driven projects
In spring 2025, four new student driven diversity projects were completed and presented to interested staff:

1. 'Assessing D&I knowledge among EB Students/Faculty' by Scarlett Soyka, supervised by Martina Cossu.

2. ‘International First Generation Students and the Hidden Curriculum’ by Suren Avedov, supervised by Pushpika Vishwanathan.
3. ‘Integrating Student Associations and the EB’ by Kristina Lazarova, supervised by Andrea Weihrauch.
4. ‘Belonging to the EB? The Role of Belonging in Student Performance & Wellbeing’ by Filip Valocky, supervised by Marten Stienstra.

These projects, initiated by the EB Diversity Committee and coordinated by Andrea Weihrauch, highlight students’ experiences and link them to the ‘owners’ of the problems in the faculty.

Communication and knowledge sharing
The EB communications team has paid more attention to diversity in newsletters and social media. As a result, the separate Instagram account ‘EB Diversity’ has stopped. The faculty continued to take part in and promote:

- Get Ready;
- Meet your Mentor.

At the invitation of central HR specialists, Tanja Hentschel (Amsterdam Business School) and the FDO contributed to online training material on inclusive recruitment and selection.

Photographer Tengbeh Kamara



Organisational changes
As of 1 January 2025, the School of Economics has added a member with a diversity portfolio (Monique de Haan) to the management team.

At the end of August 2025, after nearly six years, Siri Boe Lillegraven stepped down as Faculty Diversity Officer. The position remained vacant until early 2026, when Willemijn van Dolen was appointed.

The main priority for the coming years is attracting and retaining female academics. The new FDO will support this with concrete plans and by creating support within the organisation. In addition, the FDO will focus on supporting first generation students in finding their place within their study programme and the university.

5.2 Faculty of Humanities – Krisine Johansson

In 2024–2025, the Diversity Office (DO) of the Faculty of Humanities continued to work on structurally embedding diversity and inclusion in the faculty culture. Following a Diversity Day event on accessibility, accessibility became the central priority in the DO's new annual plan. This fits with the UvA wide focus on accessibility, especially in education.

The FDO proposed a restructuring of the voluntary Sounding Board. A Compensated Core (SBCC) was created: a group of nine staff and students who receive hours (staff) or a fee (students) for their work on DO projects and policy. SBCC members are divided into working groups on:

- Accessible education;
- Internal outreach;
- PhD funding for underrepresented students.

In March 2025, the DO annual plan was discussed with the representative bodies (DB, programme directors, Research Council, department chairs, works council, faculty student council and staff council). The plan sets out priorities in the core domains:

- Education;
- Research;
- HR;
- Communication.

The plan received positive feedback and useful critical comments. It led to discussions about secularity and religion and about decolonising the curriculum. Because the CDO organised an event on secularity and religion in June 2025, the Faculty of Humanities postponed its own event on this topic to the new academic year. In June 2025, the DO did organise the workshop 'What do we talk about when we talk about decolonisation?' This workshop, intended for and

led by lecturers, focused on the meaning of colonial education and decolonising the curriculum within the Faculty of Humanities.
Throughout the year, the DO organised and supported a wide range of activities, including:

- A workshop with Dilan Yurdakul on family history;
- A linocut workshop on accessibility;
- A screening of the film *Aut There* on intersectional neurodivergence;
- An iftar during Ramadan.

Finally, the DO's new Initiatives Fund supported staff and students with ideas to contribute to the faculty's diversity and inclusion.

5.3 Faculty of Medicine – Martin Verloop

Student involvement
The Faculty of Medicine has appointed Student Diversity Officers and works with a student taskforce. Lunch meetings were organised on themes such as:

- Religion in healthcare;
- Language barriers and cultural differences in healthcare.

Two students were nominated by the UvA jury for the ECHO university (WO) Award 2025.

Baanbrekers
In 2025, Baanbrekers started, an extracurricular programme for first generation students. Its aim is to create an inclusive environment in which:

- Self confidence and social skills are strengthened;
- Peer and professional networks are built;
- Accessible coaching is provided by (medical) professionals with a first generation background.

The 2025 pilot was very successful. The faculty is exploring how the programme can be continued in 2026–2027.

Professional development of lecturers
The Faculty of Medicine TLC Expertise Group Social Safety – Diversity & Inclusion supports lecturers and staff with:

- Workshops on inclusive course design;
- Workshops on inclusive workplace learning;
- Training on unconscious bias.

The expertise group serves as a central point for knowledge sharing, cooperation and coordination of initiatives within and outside the faculty.

The Skills Lab (Skills Education) of the Faculty of Medicine organised a session on gender together with the Gender Dysphoria Expertise Centre. In 2025, preparations also started for the Faculty of Medicine Education Day 2026. This took place in April 2026, with the theme 'I belong – a learning community with space for everyone' and included various workshops on inclusion.

Inclusive recruitment
The Faculty of Medicine has committed itself to inclusive recruitment. In 2026 this will be further embedded in selection and appointment procedures.

5.4 Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences – Barbara Schouten

In 2025, the FGw [FMG in Dutch] continued to work on diversity, inclusion and equity in recruitment and promotion. Key focus points were:

- Gender equality in (senior) staff positions;
- Social safety as part of diversity and inclusion;
- Monitoring of staff diversity;
- Curriculum checks on themes such as decolonising literature and inclusive language use.

Under Recommendation 2 (accessibility and study success for all students) of the UvA Diversity Action Plan 2019, the Dreamers pilot project was implemented and evaluated. Four undocumented people gained access to Open UvA courses at the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences. During the Get Ready/Mentoring Pathway programme, a faculty tour was organised for first generation students and the four Dreamers students. They were paired with Buddies for additional support and social connection.

Under Recommendation 5 (sharing good practices and exchanging knowledge), the FDO:

- Monitored diversity, inclusion and equity activities within the faculty;
- Held regular consultations with the diversity chairs of the seven departments and the Dean;
- Acted as the first point of contact for students and staff on D&I issues, for example through discussions with student associations and the works council;
- Promoted awareness, among other things through the faculty symposium 'Showcasing diversity, inclusion and equity at FMG: lessons learned and ways forward';
- Represented the faculty in CDO work, such as the Mentoring Pathway, the Religious Observance project (in which a second quiet room was opened structurally during Ramadan in building B) and the UvA Diversity Sounding Board.



Photographer Tengbeh Kamara

5.5 Faculty of Science – Boy Menist

- **Queer**: At Science Park, a rainbow fence was placed as a visible gesture towards the queer community. In addition, a pub quiz was organised on Purple Friday.
- **Neurodivergence**: Two documentary evenings were organised, an AMPA games day and a pub quiz on Neurodiversity Pride Day.
- **First generation students**: As every year, the faculty took part in the Get Ready programme.
- **Religion**: An iftar with a panel discussion was organised and a first workshop on religious practices (religious observance).
- **Other**: An overview board was created with all diversity related associations. In addition, we:
    - Gave a workshop on what it means to belong at the university;
    - Supported various grassroots proposals;
    - Organised activities around Diversity Day (speed dating session);
    - Screened a film on gender differences in the workplace;
    - Held a workshop on the Global South.

5.6 Faculty of Law – Claudia Santana

The Amsterdam Law School continues to strengthen its commitment to diversity, equality and inclusion in both education and organisation. In 2025–2026, the Faculty's Diversity Committee, in close cooperation with faculty services and UvA wide partners, focused on embedding inclusive practices in teaching, student support, community building and faculty wide procedures.

Key contributions in this academic year were:

- **Inclusive Legal Education Training**: The committee completed a first pilot of the Inclusive Legal Education programme. This programme helped lecturers to review teaching methods, assessment and course design through an inclusive and just lens. The pilot resulted in a digital toolbox with shared materials and a peer community of lecturers who advise on curriculum revision.
- **Supporting first generation students**: A special Canvas community page has been created for first generation law students, where information and opportunities are centrally available. On the basis of student feedback, DEG study days were set up: quiet, supervised study sessions before examination periods.
- **Community, connection and wellbeing**: The committee organised film screenings around Neurodiversity Pride, LGBTQIA+ initiatives (Queer Craft Circle, Purple Friday), activities for staff wellbeing and a careers event with targeted outreach to diversity networks.
- **Research and communication**: In cooperation with the Amsterdam Law Library, a new DEI research guide was developed to support intersectional legal research. The committee also worked on campaigns for the Week Against Racism, Orange the World and International Women's Day.

Together, these initiatives contribute to a more inclusive, fair and supportive academic environment within the Faculty of Law.

5.7 Faculty of Dentistry (Academic Centre for Dentistry Amsterdam) – Oriana van der Sande

In spring 2025, ACTA appointed a new Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Officer, supported by an assistant. This was an important step in structurally embedding diversity and inclusion within the faculty again after a period without a permanent DEI lead. After a break of more than a year, ACTA once again took part in the monthly DEI meetings of the University of Amsterdam (UvA). Through these meetings, ACTA connects with UvA wide guidelines and initiatives on DEI. ACTA also joined recurring DEI meetings within VU Amsterdam, which aim to strengthen cooperation between faculties around diversity and inclusion.

A key priority in 2025 was creating oversight and structure in existing DEI activities. Ongoing initiatives and materials from previous years were inventoried and reorganised. In this context, the diversity pages on the ACTA website were revised and sharpened, with the aim of increasing clarity of communication and accessibility of information.

In addition, work started on the first draft of a new strategic DEI plan. This plan focuses on more firmly embedding diversity and inclusion in ACTA's policy, work processes and organisational culture. Increasing internal involvement and support for DEI was an important focus point.

The DEI advisory group was restructured. This group provides a platform for dialogue, feedback and reflection from different perspectives within the ACTA community. Throughout the year, as in previous years, a diversity calendar was actively used to make students and staff aware of important cultural and social moments such as Ramadan and Pride. This initiative helps to create a better informed and more culturally sensitive academic community. In cooperation with the Communications department, information was shared at several times about important diversity related days.

In 2025, the use and experience of the quiet room opened in 2024 were also evaluated. This evaluation examined accessibility, frequency of use and the extent to which the room meets the need for an inclusive space for rest and reflection within ACTA.

5.8 ICT Services (ICTS) – Chrystal Jawar and Joeri Knevel

Within ICTS, diversity and inclusion is one of the service's eight promises. As an ICT organisation, ICTS plays an important role in an inclusive working environment and accessible services for all users.

In 2025, Chrystal Jawar and Joeri Knevel took on the role of Diversity Officer. They started work with a working group to make this ambition concrete. In a joint brainstorming session, they identified the main opportunities and points for attention, such as:

- Making goals for diversity, equity and inclusion (DGI) measurable;
- Creating inclusive (work)spaces;
- Mental health;
- Gender inequality.

Based on impact and feasibility, three short term goals for 2026 were chosen:

1. A central point within ICTS for all information on diversity, equity and inclusion, and as a place where staff can share ideas and needs.
2. More awareness of and knowledge about neurodiversity within teams, because this is an important theme within ICTS.
3. Organising a quarterly meeting at ICTS with diversity and inclusion as the theme.

In parallel, HR has focused on inclusive recruitment and selection. The entire management team has completed training, which contributes to more inclusive HR processes within ICTS.

6. Finances and operations

6.1 Finances, budget cuts and consequences

The budget cuts at the central administration have also affected the CDO. Like other units, the CDO had to cut 8% of its budget. Halfway through 2025, the CDO said goodbye to student assistant Ibrahim Kamara when his contract ended. The flexible budget was halved to 50,000 euros in 2025. The cuts caused concern but also had some positive effects.

- Since 2024, the CDO has been working with temporary staff. In 2025, there was an intern from the Communication Science programme and three temporary colleagues.
- Two of these colleagues were in reintegration to their old or a new position within the UvA.
- One colleague came from outside and found a new job in February 2026.

These temporary colleagues and interns, with their fresh perspective and motivation to work on diversity and inclusion, have made important theoretical and practical contributions. The CDO will continue to actively welcome reintegration candidates and interns.

The second part of the budget is intended for programmes and activities that promote inclusion, equity and dialogue skills. In 2025, the CDO formulated more sharply what the core of the work is:

- Drawing attention to staff and students who feel (partly) at the margins of the UvA community;
- Making visible what they need;
- Increasing awareness of (potential) exclusion through policy advice, programmes and activities;
- Supporting emerging communities with advice and a limited budget.

When communities and activities become more established, the CDO believes that they should be embraced by the UvA organisation as a whole. This means: embedding them in policy, programmes, curriculum, facilities and employment conditions. One example is the possibility to exchange Good Friday for another day off that better suits personal circumstances. This is partly an elaboration of the Inclusion Calendar.

In 2025, the CDO mapped out which events and programmes are ready to be embedded in regular work processes and associated budgets, instead of being paid from the CDO budget. A start has been made on this.

An important example is Get Ready, part of the Mentoring Pathway for first generation students. The CDO has long argued for this programme to be transferred to Student Services, especially now that it is part of the Intreeweek and communication partly sits with Student Services. Nonetheless, in 2025 the costs again fell on the CDO.

Bright spots:

- For the first time in 2025, a participant contribution of 22 euros was charged for Get Ready. This partly covered costs and also reduced no shows.
- For Meet your Mentor, a grant application was submitted for the first time to the Amsterdam University Fund (AUF). This contribution covered the most expensive parts of the lustrum celebration (catering and guest speaker). The meeting marked the five year anniversary, with a contribution by Rakesh Kanhai and attention to the community of students and alumni.

In recent years, the CDO has also provided financial support for inclusive celebrations such as Chanoeka, the Iftar and Keti Koti. In 2025, preparations started to embed these structurally within the organisation.

By transferring these established activities to other parts of the organisation, the CDO can use staff capacity and budget for:

- New themes in diversity and inclusion;
- Policy advice, programmes and activities;
- Support for grassroots initiatives and emerging communities.

In 2025, this allowed us to focus on Orange the World for the first time with a striking event on gender related violence, in cooperation with the Teaching & Learning Centre.

The CDO is also actively seeking external funding. In 2025, this was successful for, among others:

- The Keti Koti Table (contribution from the Amsterdam University Fund);
- The Meet your Mentor lustrum celebration (also AUF).

In 2026, the CDO will continue to apply for external funds, but will at the same time emphasise that the UvA itself must show that inclusion and equity are priorities by making sufficient internal budget available.

Financial administration was further tightened in 2025. In close contact with the controller and finance department, the CDO receives a quarterly overview of recorded expenses. These are reviewed together.

6.2 Operations

The current CDO team has been working in this composition since the end of 2023/ beginning of 2024. The year 2025 was the second full year. After a first learning year in 2024, in 2025 the focus was on sharpening and streamlining, including in operations.

A joint project based working training in 2024 led to concrete agreements on:

- How projects are set up;
- How tasks and roles are divided;
- How results are recorded.

This is important because the CDO is led by a Central Diversity Officer with an appointment of up to six years. By documenting the work properly, a future CDO will have a solid basis and will not have to start from scratch each time.

Photographer Sezen Betaubun



7. Communication

7.1 Strategic positioning of the CDO

In 2025, the CDO continued to work on its positioning as a critical friend within the UvA. This means: engaged, constructive and sharp, with an eye for both opportunities and bottlenecks. Examples include:

- The University Diversity Sounding Board;
- The Ramadan memo, in which the CDO thinks along about practical solutions.

In addition, general communication materials were updated, such as:

- Materials for fairs and open days;
- Materials for programmes such as Meet your Mentor and Get Ready;
- Promotional materials for events.

At the beginning of 2025, we also used the UvA panel to measure support for the CDO among staff and students. In both groups, there was an increase in the number of people who knew about the CDO (9% among students, 7% among staff). There was also a larger group of people who felt that the CDO has a positive impact: an increase of 6% among staff and 13% among students.

7.2 CDO communication

In 2025, the CDO strongly focused on communication around events and activities:

- Monthly newsletter (to more than 800 recipients, around 25% growth compared to 2024);
- UvA wide narrowcasting (slides on large screens in UvA buildings);
- Contributions to central and faculty communication channels, such as newsletters and student and staff websites.

7.3 Cooperation with the Communications Office and other departments

Cooperation with the Communications Office and other communication colleagues is essential to create broad visibility and reach students and staff for programmes and events.

The CDO attended UvA wide communication meetings monthly. In addition to communication on the Diversity Memorandum, the CDO also handled communication on the ECHO Awards.



Photographer Rogier Alleblas

Around the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (25 November), the CDO deliberately linked up with UvA wide communication on social safety. This fits with the UvA's strategic profile as a good employer and educational institution. In this way, UvA communication and CDO communication reinforce each other.

The CDO also worked closely with colleagues from HR, Academic Affairs, the Teaching & Learning Centre, Learning & Development and the faculties.

7.4 Supporting communities and FDOs

The CDO has monthly contact with student communities and Faculty Diversity Officers (FDOs). This allows activities of these networks to be well integrated into CDO communication. We produced various flyers that networks could use at open days, among others. Networks regularly provided news and content for the CDO newsletter. This cooperation will continue in 2026.

7.5 Advice on inclusive language

In 2025, the CDO gave various recommendations on inclusive language use, for example on terms such as:

- Dutch Sign Language Interpreter;
- All gender toilets.

The CDO spoke at the Internal Communication Conference in Bussum about inclusive language in a university context. By actively participating in various meetings, colleagues are increasingly able to find the CDO. This led to around ten formal and informal advisory processes.

To make inclusive language more accessible and provide knowledge on this theme proactively, the CDO has started work on an Inclusive Language Guide.

7.6 Inclusion Calendar

The Inclusion Calendar started in 2024 as a collaboration between the CDO and HR. The implementation is now entirely with the CDO. In 2025, we switched from calendar year to academic year: the calendar now runs from September 2025 to August 2026.

Each month, a special day is highlighted. Readers receive more background information and the Grassroots Fund is brought to their attention.

Due to financial constraints, the printed version has been discontinued. However, the following are available:

- A designed online version;
- An Outlook version (which can be linked to the calendar);
- A text to speech version for staff and students with a visual impairment.

In 2025, about 15 new days were suggested; these will be added in the next edition.

8. 2026 Annual Plan

In 2024, Machiel Keestra was reappointed as Central Diversity Officer for a further three-year term. His term ends at the beginning of 2028. Now that the department is fully staffed, we have deliberately chosen to draw up a two-year plan that runs until the end of his term.
This two-year plan, structured using the OGSM (objectives, goals, strategy, measures) model, identifies eight objectives that we, together with relevant colleagues, FDOs, departments and stakeholders, will work on in this period:

1. **Knowledge sharing**: DEI knowledge and expertise are durably embedded and visible within the UvA.
    i. Inclusion calendar
    ii. Inclusive language guide
    iii. University Diversity Sounding Board
    iv. DEI expertise database

2. **Increasing dialogue capacity**: To promote mutual respect, understanding and empathy, we want the UvA in two years' time to be known as a dialogical university, with the skills needed to support this.
    i. Dialogue tables
    ii. Dialogue factsheet
    iii. Knowledge session for lecturers
    iv. Making dialogue part of the social safety training for managers

3. **Embedding the Mentoring Pathway**: For the Mentoring Pathway plan, which is currently hosted and funded by the CDO, we will seek stable embedding in appropriate departments elsewhere in the UvA.

4. **Strengthening communities**: The position of communities (for staff as well as students) is anchored in governance and policy.
    i. New design of the Grassroots Fund
    ii. Community meeting on intersectionality
    iii. Memo, in collaboration with LanDO, on the funding of communities
    iv. Networking meeting for communities and colleagues

5. **Normalising the approach to religion**: We aim for culture change and institutional embedding in how the UvA deals with religion.
    i. Memo on the approach to religion, based on faculty activities
    ii. Study of the relationship between quiet rooms and the campus population

6. **Decolonisation**: Decolonisation becomes an embedded theme in thinking and practice within the UvA.
    i. Continued CDO involvement in the UvA Decolonisation Project
    ii. Attention to decolonisation in educational innovation
    iii. Encouraging sub-projects within faculties

7. **Social safety**: The DEI perspective is structurally integrated into social safety policy.
    i. Public Campus Connection Dinner on the theme of social safety
    ii. Dialogue session (peer consultation) for confidential advisers
    iii. Increased diversity among confidential advisers, study advisers and student counsellors

8. **External collaborations**: We streven naar cultuurverandering en institutionele verankering hoe de UvA omgaat met religie.
    a. Objective 1: Strengthening DEI perspectives in policy at national and international level.
        i. Active LanDO role in the National Action Plan for DEI in Higher Education
        ii. Delivery of the LanDO report on the relationship between social safety and DEI
        iii. Knowledge session on the LanDO social safety report with UvA policy departments
    b. Objective 2: Strengthening CDO expertise through information exchange with colleagues in the Netherlands and abroad.

Photographer Bete van Meeuwen



8. The team

In 2025, the Central Diversity Office consisted of:



Machiel Keestra
Central Diversity Officer



Soumia Akachar
Project manager



Meltem Halaceli
Project manager



Marjon Melissen
Communications adviser



Anna Zanger
Management assistant



Ibrahim Kamara
Student assistant (until mid 2025)

The team worked closely with Faculty Diversity Officers, student communities, identity networks and colleagues from central services, including HR, Academic Affairs, the Teaching & Learning Centre, Facility Services and many more.

We would therefore like to thank everyone who has worked over the past year to make the UvA more inclusive, accessible and equitable.

Colofon

Cover image: photographer Bete van Meeuwen

© University of Amsterdam 2026
No rights may be derived from the contents of this document.

Questions or remarks?
Please contact us via diversity@uva.nl.
More information on www.uva.nl/diversiteit.

Coordination and content: Marjon Melissen
Design: April Design