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# How inclusive and diverse are tech companies

## in Flanders and The Netherlands?

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# Glossary

## **(Fringe) benefits**

Indirect financial and nonfinancial payments employees receive for continuing their employment with the company (DESSLER, 2020)

## **Diversity**

The variety or multiplicity of demographic features that characterize a company's workforce, particularly in terms of race, culture, national origin, disability, age, religion, etc. (DESSLER, 2020)

## **Inclusion**

The feeling that you feel at home and that you are appreciated in an organization regardless of a certain diversity trait (RANSCHAERT & YASSIR, 2020)

## **Microaggression**

Everyday actions, verbal and non-verbal whether intentional or unintentional, that are hostile or derogatory against a specific person or group because of their identity, race, gender, disability and so on (ATCHESON, 2021)

## **Bias**

The tendency to allow individual differences such as age, race, and sex to affect hiring decisions, performance appraisals, promotion decisions, etc. (DESSLER, 2020)

## **Employee Assistance Program (EAP)**

A formal employer program for providing employees with counselling and/or treatment programs for problems such as stress (DESSLER, 2020)

## **Flexible benefits plan**

Individualized plans allowed by employers to accommodate employee preferences for benefits; also known as a cafeteria plan (DESSLER, 2020)

## **Onboarding or employee orientation**

The procedure for providing new employees with basic background information on the firm (DESSLER, 2020)

## **Cis(gender)**

A term for people whose gender identity matches the biological sex they were assigned at birth (SAAD, 2020)

## **Efficacy**

The ability, especially of a medicine or a method of achieving something, to produce the intended result (CAMBRIDGE, 2021)

## **Mentorship**

Advising, counselling, and guiding of employees (DESSLER, 2020)

## **Organisational culture**

The characteristics, values, traditions, and behaviours a company's employees share (DESSLER, 2020)

### **Positive discrimination or affirmative action**

The act of giving advantage to those groups in society that are often treated unfairly because of their race, sex, etc.

(CAMBRIDGE, 2021)

### **Referral programme**

A recruiting strategy in which employers encourage current employees, through rewards, to refer qualified candidates for jobs in their organisations

(SOCIETY OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT, N.D.)

### **Stakeholder**

A person such as an employee, customer, or citizen who is involved with an organisation, society, etc. and therefore has responsibilities towards it and an interest in its success

(CAMBRIDGE, 2021)

### **Tech/tech industry**

Broadly defined: firms and industries that either produce or utilize cutting-edge technology as part of their business model. More specifically defined: firms and industries that situate on the continuum between technology application and technology development

(HOOTON, 2018)

### **Privilege**

An advantage that only one person or group of people has of which they often are unaware

(CAMBRIDGE, 2021; SAAD, 2020)

### **Selection**

Identifying applicants who have the highest probability of attaining the performance standards set out by the organisation

(DESSLER, 2020)

### **Unconscious bias**

Attitudes and beliefs on an unconscious or implicit level. Those biases that exist without conscious knowledge, biases that manifest in our actions and reactions without us realizing it; also known as implicit bias (AGARWAL, 2020)

### **Recruitment**

Finding and/or attracting applicants for the employer's open positions

(DESSLER, 2020)

### **Sponsorship**

The kind of helping relationship in which senior, powerful people use their personal power and influence to talk up, advocate for and place a more junior person in a key role

(IBARRA, 2019)

### **STEM**

Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

### **Vacancy**

A job that no one is doing and is therefore available for someone new to do

(CAMBRIDGE, 2021)

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Tracy Chou

CEO Block Party,  
entrepreneur,  
software engineer and  
diversity advocate

**The quality, relevance, and impact of the products and services output by the technology sector can only be improved by having the people who are building them be demographically representative of the people who are using them.**

## Introduction

This survey is one of the first industry-wide measurements of inclusion and diversity (I&D) in the Flemish and Dutch tech industry. It is a significant step in gaining more insight into how diverse and inclusive the industry is as perceived by its stakeholders.

We asked CEOs, HR managers, employees, and managers to share their opinions and perceptions on I&D in the Flemish and Dutch tech industry. Each stakeholder (i.e., CEO, HR manager, employee, or managers) completed questions that were relevant for their perspective; the responding employees and managers received the same questions. In the following, the quantitative data as well as some of the qualitative content that respondents shared in the survey are discussed. This will hopefully make the data more concrete and highlight the relevance and importance of the quantitative observations.

This report aims at providing more information on the current state of I&D in the industry in order to raise awareness of the topic and help companies make the industry more inclusive and diverse. It also offers learnings for companies interested in organizing their own I&D data collection. Lastly, evidence-based

recommendations on how to get started on improving I&D in an organisation are shared.

In this report and in the survey, **diversity** is defined as “the variety or multiplicity of demographic features that characterize a company’s workforce, particularly in terms of race, culture, national origin, disability, age, religion, etc.” (Dessler, 2020). **Inclusion** is “the feeling that you feel at home and that you are appreciated in an organisation regardless of a certain diversity trait” (Ranschae-rt & Yassir, 2020).

## About Level IT out

### Improving Inclusion & Diversity (I&D) in tech

This survey was conducted in the context of the **European Social Fund** (ESF) project ‘**Level IT out – Improving I&D in tech**’. The aim of Level IT out is **to improve I&D** in the **tech industry** by undertaking three main actions.

Firstly, to **measure**, i.e., to map out, some primary goals: the stakeholders in the industry, the level of inclusion employees experience in the industry, the actions being taken to promote I&D, and so on. The survey conducted in this study serves as the main objective to find an answer to these questions.

The second aim is to **sensitize** organisations. Through several initiatives, the Level IT out project wants to demonstrate that I&D is key to a successful business. For example, a learning community has been set up, consisting of 10 tech companies who meet monthly to get inspired, learn from each other and share I&D best practices. Next to that, an Inspiration Day took place on 15 October 2021, during which the results of this survey were presented, and tech companies were motivated to increase their I&D commitment and motivation.

The third and last aim is to **take action**. After having been measured and sensitized, organisations of course need to get started on developing and implementing an I&D policy. To further assist them, the Level IT out project will develop an **online platform free to access by all stakeholders** (CEOs, (HR) managers and employees). It will **consist of tools and tips and tricks with which they can advance I&D in their organisation**. The platform will be made available by the end of 2022.

The Level IT out project is a **collaboration** between Belgian and international partners. To reach the best possible results, the promotor of this project, **Artevelde University of Applied Sciences**, has partnered up with Belgian partners **Agoria** and **Inclusion Now**, and with international partners **NLdigital** (the Netherlands) and **Tech Talent Charter** (the UK). Every partner is committed to work on improving I&D in the tech industry and has provided valuable support in creating this report.

## Executive summary

This report was prepared by Artevelde University of Applied Sciences in the context of the **European Social Fund** (ESF) project '**Level IT out - Improving I&D in tech**', an international collaboration with Agoria, Inclusion Now, NLdigital, and Tech Talent Charter. The aim of Level IT out is **to promote I&D in the tech industry** by undertaking three main actions: to measure, sensitize, and take actions to advance I&D in the tech sector. In total 393 CEOs, (HR) managers and employees responded to the online survey. 9% of the respondents are CEOs, 8% HR managers and the remaining 83% are employees or managers. The data were collected from March 2021 until June 2021.

Firstly, the data show that **all stakeholders consider I&D to be an important topic**. CEOs specifically state that I&D is a relevant



topic, not only for today but also for the future. Second, the **key reasons why companies invest in I&D** (according to all stakeholders) are (1) a lack of diverse talent, (2) more innovation through diverse thought, (3) better team performance, and (4) more inclusion in the workplace. Surprisingly enough, better financial results and better customer relations are not considered main reasons to invest in I&D. The data further indicate that several people in the organisation (such as the CEO, HR, the I&D department, and all employees) work on I&D, showing that **within most companies working on I&D is seen as a combined effort**. However, there are noticeable differences in **how often the topic is discussed in management meetings**. 24% of CEOs admit that the topic is never discussed, whereas 21% include I&D as a meeting topic quarterly.

All stakeholders perceive a **lack of diversity concerning gender and ethnic/cultural diversity in their (middle) management teams**. Managers and employees differed in their opinion on the lack of diversity of their colleagues. According to some, there is already gender and/or ethnic/cultural diversity among peers, whereas others (strongly) disagree with this. All stakeholders do agree that there is **diversity in age** among (middle) management and peers.

The report also contains **information on the efficacy of already existing HR activities to improve I&D** within an organisation. Employees and managers were asked which HR practices could be improved to advance I&D. The respondents highlight equal pay policies, providing more equal career opportunities, equal training & development, implementing a neutral and objective selection procedure, and creating an open and inclusive organisational culture as practices that could be improved. The survey findings further indicate that **hardly any demographic data on I&D is currently being collected**, besides data on gender and age. CEOs and HR managers further share that they **do not focus on I&D-related KPIs**. The **main barriers** to working on I&D concerning

CEOs and HR managers are (1) insufficient knowledge and expertise, and (2) a shortage of time.

Furthermore, they **currently mostly resort to networks and LinkedIn** to work on I&D. **Resources they would like to consult** more in the future are **practical tools and learning communities**.

The second to last topic provides information on how included (HR) managers and employees feel in the workplace. **As inclusion and diversity are closely intertwined**, it is paramount to not only collect diversity data but also measure inclusion in the workplace. Employees and managers **mostly report high levels of inclusion in their organisation**. However, they do indicate that the organisation can still improve on **offering equal opportunities in multiple HR areas**. Lastly, some employees and managers say that **they are not aware of any current I&D activities within their organisation and/or have not participated in any activities**. Of the employees and managers that are aware of such activities and have participated in some, most mention **I&D events, participating in a survey and following a training** as the **most common I&D activities**.

Next to providing these results, **recommendations** for those companies eager to work on I&D are offered. However, it must be emphasized that there is **no absolute solution for every organisation**. When setting up an I&D policy, the organisational culture, strategy, and goals of that specific company have to be taken into account. The recommendations include tips on how to: **foster commitment of all stakeholders, collect I&D data, create and foster an inclusive organisational culture, and attract and select diverse talent**. Suggestions are also provided on the use of a **mentorship or sponsorship programme**, the importance of offering **equal pay**, the provision of **equal career opportunities**, and the development of a **more inclusive and accessible organisation** in general.

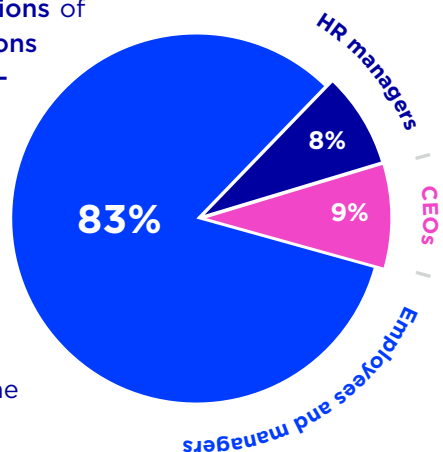
A **glossary** explaining some of the relevant terms is added in the beginning of this report, more detailed information on the **methodology** is included, as well as the **learnings** accumulated during this data collection. Furthermore, companies in search of more guidance on how to set up an I&D survey themselves will find some specific suggestions. Lastly, a **reference list** with links to interesting articles and books is also included.

## The sample

### General description of the sample

A total of **393 CEOs, (HR) managers and employees** responded to the online survey. 294 filled in the Flemish survey, 20 took part in the Dutch version and the remaining 79 respondents completed the English survey. The data were collected from March 2021 until June 2021. An overview of all the questions has been added to the platform [www.inclusionatwork.be](http://www.inclusionatwork.be); more detailed information on the methodology can be found below.

The respondents can be divided into three groups: 9% or 34 of the respondents are CEOs, 8% or 32 respondents are HR managers, 327 respondents (83%) are (business) managers or employees. **They either work for large organisations** of over 2,000 employees (22%), **small organisations** that employ 51-250 people (18%), or **micro-organisations** of maximum 25 employees (15%). Next to that, these organisations were either founded a while ago (44% 20 years ago, and 24% 16-20 years ago) or were established 0-5 years ago (24%). Furthermore, **most companies operate internationally** (73%) and have their headquarters in Western Europe (60%), Northern Europe (23%), or North America (11%). Lastly, they are operational in the



**consulting sector** (38%), **computer hardware & software** (27%) or **other sectors** (24%) such as government, industry, mobility, and security.

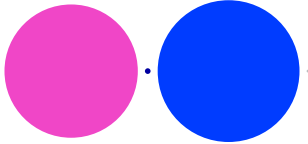
## Demographic data of the sample

Prior to the discussion of the findings, the demographics of all participants as well as those of the separate target groups (CEOs, HR managers, managers, and employees) are presented.

### Full sample

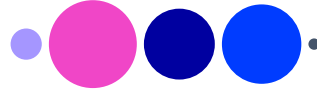
47% of the total group of respondents identify as women, 2% as non-binary and 50% as men. The participants are between 46-55 (31%), 26-35 (28%), or 36-45 years old (25%). The vast majority of respondents (93%) would describe their ethnicity as European. 2% of the respondents describe their ethnic origin as Asian, and an additional 1.5% as mixed/belonging to multiple ethnic groups. Most respondents (88%) have Dutch as their mother tongue, followed by French (6%) and English (2%). 61% of the respondents have children. Most of them have two children (54%), one child (22%) or three children (20%). The highest level of education of 56% of the respondents is a master's degree, followed by 26% with a bachelor's degree and 7% with an associate degree. Concerning their current role, **34% of the responding managers and employees are working in IT**, followed by sales (12%), research & development (11%), and other fields (13%) which include coaching, consulting, and communication. Lastly, a clear majority of 93% of the managers and employees work full-time.

## Gender identity



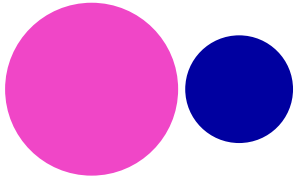
47% Women  
2% Non-binary  
50% Men  
1% Other

## Age



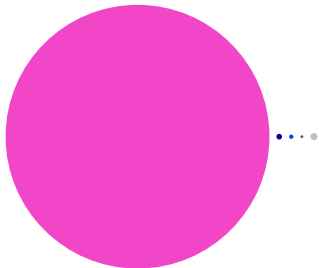
11% 56 - 65 years old  
31% 46 - 55 years old  
25% 36 - 45 years old  
28% 26 - 35 years old  
4% 18 - 25 years old

## Children



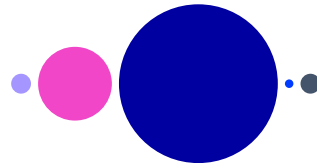
61% With children  
38% Without children  
1% Other

## Ethnicity



93% European  
2% Asian  
1.5% Mixed  
1% North African  
2.5% Other

## Education level



7% Secondary school  
26% Bachelor's degree  
56% Master's degree  
3% PhD  
7% Associate  
1% Other

## Demographics full sample and per stakeholder

In the tables<sup>1</sup> below, the demographic characteristics of the full sample and of the different stakeholders are listed.

**Table 1:** Gender identity - Breakdown for full sample, CEOs, HR managers, managers, and employees

Gender identity	Full sample	CEOs	HR managers	Managers	Employees
Woman	47%	21%	84%	38%	53%
Non-binary	2%	9%	3%	0%	1%
Man	50%	71%	10%	62%	44%

**Table 2:** Age - Breakdown for full sample, CEOs, HR managers, managers, and employees

Age	Full sample	CEOs	HR managers	Managers	Employees
18-25 years	4%	0%	0%	0%	8%
26-35 years	28%	6%	13%	20%	42%
36-45 years	25%	18%	32%	37%	19%
46-55 years	31%	56%	35%	35%	20%
56-65 years	11%	21%	16%	8%	11%

**Table 3:** Children - Breakdown for full sample, CEOs, HR managers, managers, and employees

Children	Full sample	CEOs	HR managers	Managers	Employees
Yes	61%	82%	84%	74%	45%
No	38%	18%	13%	25%	55%

1 - All percentages are rounded, and the data for the answer options "prefer not to say" and/or "prefer to describe myself" are not included. Not all questions were answered by all the participants. Therefore, some of the percentages do not add up to 100%.

**Table 4:** Ethnicity – Breakdown for full sample, CEOs, HR managers, managers, and employees

Ethnicity	Full sample	CEOs	HR managers	Managers	Employees
North African	1%	0%	0%	0%	2%
Sub-Saharan Africa	0,5%	3%	0%	0%	0,5%
European	93%	94%	97%	97%	89%
Asian	2%	0%	0%	2%	3%
Latin American	0,3%	0%	0%	0%	0,5%
North American	0,5%	3%	0%	1%	0%
Mixed	1,5%	0%	0%	0%	3%
Middle Eastern	0,3%	0%	0%	0%	0,5%

**Table 5:** Education level – Breakdown for full sample, CEOs, HR managers, managers, and employees

Education level	Full sample	CEOs	HR managers	Managers	Employees
Primary school	0,3%	0%	0%	0%	0,5%
Secondary school	7%	0%	0%	6%	9%
Bachelor’s degree	26%	15%	19%	23%	31%
Master’s degree	56%	76%	71%	58%	47%
PhD	3%	3%	0%	3%	3%
Associate	7%	6%	6%	8%	7%

It is important to note that **the above-mentioned sample** is most likely **not representative of the Flemish and Dutch tech industry**. Firstly, there is an **overrepresentation of women (34%) compared to the percentage of female employees and managers reported to be working in the ICT industry<sup>2</sup> (18%)** in Belgium and the Netherlands. Even when omitting the HR managers from the sample (who predominantly identify as women), women are still overrepresented. Shortly after the launch of the survey, female employees, managers, and CEOs showed a high interest in participating.

2 - Currently, Belgian data on diversity in tech are only available for the ICT industry specifically.

This **could mean** that the **topic of I&D** is **currently high(er)** on the **agenda for women** working in the **tech industry**. Secondly, there is **hardly any diversity** in the sample **concerning the respondents' ethnicity**. As the data on ethnicity of tech industry employees is currently non-existing in Belgium and the Netherlands, it remains unclear whether this is an accurate representation of the diversity status within the tech industry.

It is **recommended** that **more (anonymous) demographic data is collected** on the individuals working in tech organisations and in the industry in Belgium and the Netherlands in general. Collecting this data will make it possible **to set goals, monitor and evaluate progress**, and to **take specific actions**. Tech Talent Charter (TTC) is a good example of an initiative that currently tracks diversity in the technology industry across the UK.

This survey already provides some, albeit not fully representative, insight into the individuals that make out the Flemish and Dutch tech industry. For example, it shows that there is room for improvement in terms of having a truly diverse staff representing all the clients and users that the industry caters for.

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Respondent 1  
Employee

**At my previous workplace,  
I have had clients who, right after I  
introduced myself, asked if they could  
speak to a male colleague instead of  
me regarding technical difficulties  
they were facing.**



Throughout this report quotes made by the respondents will be shared in order to help visualize certain numbers and gain further insight. The quote above shows that the lack of diversity in tech can lead to certain employees always standing out, whether they wish to or not. Therefore, they might be treated differently by colleagues, managers, or clients. This can have a profound impact on their performance and well-being.

In what follows, the different survey topics are discussed more thoroughly. Furthermore, an overview of the respondents' views on I&D in tech are shared. Respondents were asked several questions in order to draw conclusions on how they perceive the current state of I&D in the industry.

**How important is I&D to the different stakeholders? Why might companies invest in I&D? Who works on I&D and how often is it discussed? Further, how diverse (in terms of gender, age, and ethnicity/culture) do the respondents think their current (management) team and peers are?**

Another topic uncovers the currently existing **HR activities** to improve I&D, and their efficacy according to HR managers. Next to that, the **effectiveness of the current HR practices as perceived by the employees and managers** is discussed. **How often and what kind of I&D data is collected**, and do they set **I&D-related KPIs**? Furthermore, **barriers** to working on I&D as well as the **tools** that, according to the stakeholders, may help them overcome these barriers are listed. The second to last topic focuses on an often overlooked but nevertheless relevant question: how much **inclusion** do (HR) managers and employees experience in the workplace? Lastly, the **I&D activities** managers and employees are aware of and have participated in are looked into.

## The results

### Importance of I&D according to different stakeholders

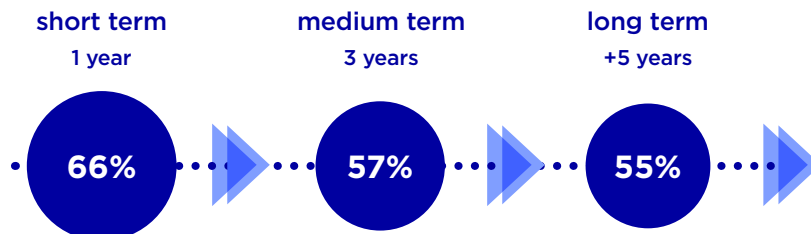
The results show that, to all respondents, **I&D is an important topic for the company:**

- 55% of CEOs consider I&D to be an important to top priority
- 46% of HR managers consider I&D to be an important to top priority
- 60% of employees and managers find I&D important to very important

Even though they might be somewhat expected, these numbers serve as a great starting point. Before you can take any specific actions, the importance of the issue should be shared by all stakeholders.

CEOs were also specifically asked how important they believe I&D will be in the short and long term. Of the 34 CEOs, 66% believe I&D will be as important within the year as it is now, 57% assume that this will still be the case in three years, and 55% assume that it will be even more important within 5+ years. **Interestingly, hardly any of the CEOs (less than 4%) believe that I&D will become less important in the short, medium, or long term.**

'I&D is an important to top priority in the...'



## What are the main reasons companies invest in I&D?

According to the data above, all stakeholders attach great importance to I&D. Why do they consider it to be so significant, and why would they invest in I&D?

The main reasons to invest in I&D appear to be: (1) being able to select more diverse talent, (2) more innovation through diversity in thoughts, and (3) better team performance. According to HR managers, employees, and managers specifically, another important reason to invest in I&D is to make sure that all employees feel like they belong in the organisation. A full overview of these results per stakeholder can be found in the table below.

**Table 6:** Reasons to invest in I&D according to CEOs, HR managers and employees & managers.

Reasons to invest in I&D <sup>3</sup>	CEOs	HR managers	Employees & managers
Being able to select more diverse talent	74%	86%	63%
More innovation through diversity in thought	68%	86%	61%
Better team performance	53%	50%	42%
All employees feel like they belong in the organisation	/	61%	53%
Better financial results	15%	18%	14%
Better customer relations	21%	14%	19%

From the interviews and (informal) talks carried out for this study, it is concluded that an important reason to the absence of I&D in the tech industry is a lack of diverse talent. This finding corresponds with the survey results which show that this is also **the key reason why companies invest in I&D**. This quote from a female employee perfectly illustrates that investing in, for example more inclusive job ads, can make a difference in attracting (diverse) talent.

3 - Respondents could indicate multiple options, therefore the sum of the options exceeds 100%.

---

Respondent 2  
Employee

## The vacancy that I applied for was intentionally written in an inclusive manner which really appealed to me.

Taking into account **all stakeholders, better financial results and better customer relations** are **not seen** as a **main reason to invest in I&D**. Considering that there is quite some evidence (i.e., Bersin, 2015; Lorenzo et al., 2017; McKinsey & Company, 2020) to suggest that inclusive organisations have better financial results and customer relations, this is an interesting observation. Some respondents might not know about or be convinced of these advantages, others may have other reasons to believe against them.

In any case, there seems to be plenty of room to emphasize the financial benefits at a much larger scale and/or more convincingly. By doing so, the respondents will most likely acknowledge the relevance and benefits of investing in I&D in the future.

### I&D, only a matter for HR?

In order to answer this question, two things need to be addressed. Firstly, who are the people working on I&D within the organisation? Secondly, is I&D discussed regularly in management meetings?

According to the CEOs, people who work on I&D the most are the **CEO, HR, and the I&D department**. **Other people** involved in working on I&D appear to be **team leaders** and all **employees**. By selecting multiple answer options, most surveyed CEOs confirm that I&D is a topic focused on by everyone in the company. Following this, CEOs were asked how often I&D is discussed in management meetings. Interestingly, **24% of CEOs admit that this never happens**. 21% of CEOs admit that I&D is discussed quarterly

or yearly, while 15% confirm that I&D is discussed every 6 months. In other words, there seem to be **large differences** in how **frequently I&D is discussed formally in meetings**. Of course, there is no fixed number of management meetings that should be dedicated to the issue.

Most best practices suggest making I&D an ongoing conversation; a part of the culture and strategy. The quote below provided by a CEO shows some companies have already and successfully moved on from seeing I&D as a topic to considering it a mindset.

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Respondent 3  
CEO

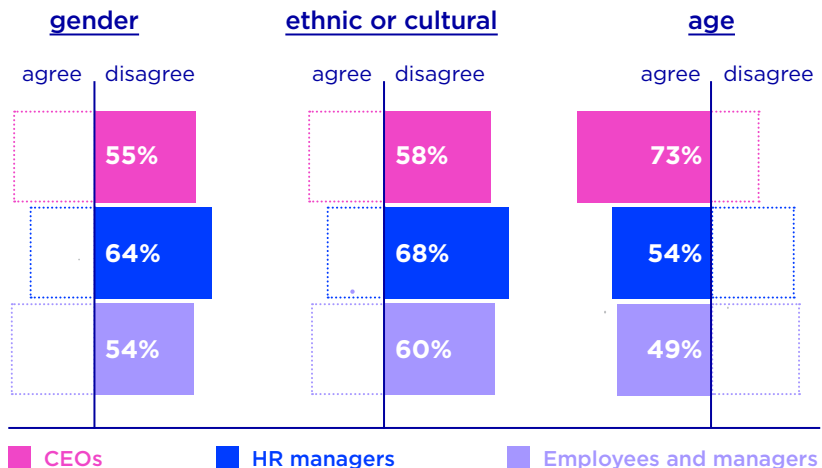
**As an SME we're always looking for talented people. We don't have a specific policy for this, it's just a mindset, a culture, an evolving matter. It wasn't until we had a colleague who (for the first time) wanted to breastfeed and needed to express her milk during the daytime that we realized we don't have an adequate space for this, but then we just solve this. Same thing for a colleague who needed a prayer room. As a company you continuously evolve.**

## The current state of diversity in Flemish and Dutch tech

To find out more about how diverse the industry currently is, all respondents were asked to share how diverse they perceived their managers and peers or colleagues to be.

When it comes to **the diversity of the (middle) management**, several conclusions can be drawn. CEOs (55%), HR managers (64%), and employees and managers (54%) all (strongly) disagree that there is a lot of gender diversity in their (middle) management team. CEOs (58%), HR managers (68%), and employees and managers (60%) also (strongly) disagree that there is a lot of ethnic/cultural diversity in their (middle) management team. However, concerning the age of (middle) management teams CEOs (73%), HR managers (54%), and employees and managers (49%) (strongly) agree that there currently is a lot of diversity in age in these management teams.

“There is diversity in the (middle) management of my organisation.”

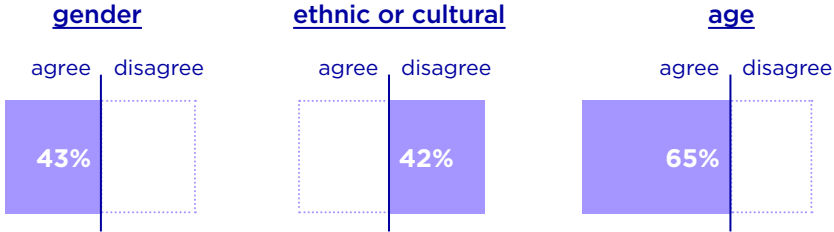


The respondents seem to be divided on **the diversity of their colleagues' backgrounds**. 43% of employees/managers (strongly) agree that there is diversity in gender among their colleagues, while 41% (strongly) disagree. 38% of the employees/managers (strongly) agree that there is ethnic and/or cultural diversity among their peers, yet 42% (strongly) disagree. Over 65% of the employees/managers (strongly) agree that there is diversity in age among their colleagues.

Upon closer inspection of the data on gender and ethnic/cultural diversity among peers, it becomes clear that **the perceived lack of diversity is reported across company size**. Even though there is a slightly higher perceived lack of diversity in smaller companies ( $\leq 250$  employees), respondents report a lack of gender and ethnic/cultural diversity regardless of the company size. The same applies when comparing the perception of the lack of diversity among colleagues as seen by female or male employees. Both groups equally **(strongly) disagree with having a lot of gender or ethnic/cultural diversity among their colleagues**.

Although these data are solely based on perceptions, they do lead to the assumption that the tech industry can still improve in terms of having diverse staff that represent all users and customers.

“There is diversity in the peers of my organisation.”



## Commonly used HR practices and their efficacy

For this part, the 32 participating HR managers were asked whether they had already implemented certain I&D-related HR practices and activities. On top of that, they had to determine whether or not these practices were successful<sup>4</sup>.

Firstly, the **currently existing and efficient I&D-related HR practices within the organisation** according to HR managers are:

- implementing a flexible working policy for employees (85%)
- creating a policy and safe process for employees to call out bias and unacceptable behaviour (65%)
- offering training & development opportunities to enable employees to move into technical roles (70%)
- creating transparent processes for pay, promotion, etc. (68%)
- extending leave policies including parental leave (64%)
- enabling and advertising part-time work (50%)
- organizing unconscious bias trainings for recruiters and assessors (40%)
- interviewers, assessors for hiring decisions comprise diverse individuals who belong to various minority groups (32%)

Following the **HR managers**, these activities are **activities that they do not organize (yet)**, but which they **believe might improve I&D** in the company:

- people belonging to minority groups are represented at all levels of leadership (69%)
- leaders and managers have I&D objectives and KPIs (54%)
- organizing unconscious bias trainings for recruiters and assessors (40%)
- interviewers and assessors that are involved in hiring decisions are from different minority groups (32%)

<sup>4</sup> - HR managers could indicate multiple HR activities, therefore the sum of the options exceeds 100%.



Lastly, the **HR managers** consider the following HR activities as **activities they do not organize**, and **which they believe will not improve I&D** in the organisation:

- KPIs for leaders and managers (54%)
- interviewers, assessors for hiring decisions comprise diverse individuals who belong to various minority groups (32%)

Some HR managers **positively perceive** these practices, whereas others **doubt their efficacy**. In other words, the findings show **mixed opinions** on the **efficacy of setting KPIs** and of **having diverse individuals** in the **selection team**.

Furthermore, 40% of HR managers (half of which already organize part-time work) think that part-time work does not have a positive effect on I&D. 31% of HR managers think that extended leave policies are not beneficial to improving I&D.

Of course, there is no obvious solution for HR managers to determine efficient actions. Some HR managers are torn between the different possible implementations and the requests of certain employees.

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Respondent 4  
HR manager

**Sometimes it's difficult to make certain decisions. What should you do when an employee asks for a prayer room for example?**

Later in this report, **some evidence-based recommendations** on I&D-practises that companies can implement (including some HR practises) are listed. Again, there is **no absolute solution for every company**.

Before determining the HR practises for a specific company, the broader organisational context, culture, strategy, and goals should be taken into account.

## How do employees and managers perceive HR practices on I&D?

After having gained more insight into the (quality of) practices HR managers find (or do not find) within their company, the question remains which HR practices the employees and managers feel their organisation could still improve upon.

37% of the surveyed **employees and managers**<sup>5</sup> believe that the **organisation can still improve on offering an equal pay policy** for all employees. 28% state that the company can give more **equal career opportunities**. The quote below illustrates the negative perceptions some employees have concerning career opportunities and the lack thereof:

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Respondent 5  
Employee

**I was disadvantaged during performance appraisals because I was on maternity leave. Only my performance of the past year was considered and not of the years before that. This can lead to a lack of women in management due to the glass ceiling.**

Furthermore, 27% of the employees and managers believe that the company can give **even more equal opportunities concerning training & development**. 25% think that the company can still improve on offering a **neutral and objective recruitment & selection policy**. The quote below shows how even though a company can have all the best intentions when hiring for a position, the procedure still might not be neutral.

---

Respondent 6  
HR manager

**In the team too much focus is on ‘the ideal employee’ which leads to the same people with the same profile being considered for hiring or promotion.**

Some specific tips on how to recruit and select diverse talent are provided in the recommendations section.

Lastly, 24% of the respondents confirm that their company can improve on **creating an open and inclusive organisational culture**.

This last observation raises the importance of not just focusing on attracting and maintaining diversity, but on creating a culture that makes all employees feel like they belong. Diversity cannot exist without inclusion, so fostering a culture that promotes, encourages and rewards inclusion is a crucial aspect of any I&D policy. The topic of inclusion is discussed in more detail later in this report.

## What gets measured, gets done – Data collection and setting KPIs

A **good starting point for any policy on I&D** is to **collect data**. Through the survey, the CEOs and HR managers mentioned how regularly this is done within their organisation.

36% of the HR managers admit that **I&D data** are **never** collected in their company, 21% confirm that they are collected yearly. The most collected demographic data on I&D are related to **gender** (100%) and **age** (94%). I&D demographic data that are rarely collected are related to the disabilities of employees (17%) and to their ethnic/cultural background (28%).

When collecting I&D data<sup>6</sup>, 47% of the HR managers mostly resort to **surveys**. 30% of companies use **internal or commercial tools** to collect I&D data.

Concerning the use of **I&D KPIs** for (HR) managers, **almost 80% of CEOs say that their managers do not have I&D-related KPIs**. The same amount of HR managers confirm that they do not have I&D-related KPIs.

In conclusion, setting I&D-related KPIs is currently not a widespread practice. This is also reflected in the above findings concerning the use and perceived efficacy of setting KPIs for managers. 54% of HR managers share that they do not set KPIs, nor do they think this would work.

## Barriers to working on I&D and tools to help

According to the CEOs and HR managers, the **main barriers** for working on I&D are (1) insufficient knowledge or expertise, (2) a shortage of time, and – to a lesser extent – (3) lack of necessity. Interestingly enough, a lack of budget was not considered a decisive obstacle to working on I&D in the organisation. In the table below you can find a more specific breakdown of which barriers CEOs and HR managers encounter when working on I&D.

**Table 7:** Barriers experienced to working on I&D according to CEOs and HR managers

Barrier <sup>7</sup>	CEOs	HR managers
Lack of knowledge or expertise	29%	50%
Lack of time	29%	32%
Lack of necessity	18%	18%
No support base	9%	18%
Lack of budget	9%	4%

Even though a shortage of time was not mentioned by HR managers as the main barrier that impedes working on I&D, it does often coincide with the most important reason why companies feel they cannot work on I&D, namely insufficient knowledge or expertise. Managers faced with a lack of expertise in the area often do not have the time to immerse themselves in the matter or to pursue extra training.

The quote below illustrates how a lack of knowledge or understanding can be a main source to prevent progress.

7 - CEOs and HR managers could indicate multiple options, therefore the sum of the options exceeds 100%.

---

Respondent 7  
Manager

**A lot of misunderstanding of what I&D means, no willingness to try to actually do something about it because 'it takes too much effort'.**



**A toolbox to implement I&D policy**

When focusing on what **might help to improve I&D** in the organisation, CEOs share that they could use (1) a toolbox to implement an I&D policy (45%), (2) more guidance or coaching (34%) and, (3) a greater support base (24%). Other things that CEOs could use to implement an I&D policy are a larger inflow of diverse talent, more awareness about I&D, and sharing best practices.



**More guidance or coaching**



**A greater support base**

Something that became evident via the open responses in the survey and the many interviews and conversations with leadership in tech companies, is that most managers and leaders genuinely intend to make their company more inclusive. However, at the same time, quite a few are unsure about how to do so, which again highlights the **lack of expertise in I&D**. The quote below illustrates that some companies want to make a change, but do not know how to do so.

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Respondent 8  
Employee

**There is some effort in communicating our Diversity & Inclusion stance on the company website and in job postings, but without the desired result so far. There is discussion on how this could be improved.**

As companies are looking for more ways to (proactively) work on their I&D policy, a relevant question is which resources these companies currently already turn to when working on I&D, and which ones they would like to consult in the future.

**Table 8:** Resources that CEOs and HR managers currently consult and would like to consult in the future

Consult now <sup>8</sup>	Like to consult in the future
Networks	Practical tools
LinkedIn	Learning communities
Blogs (CEOs)	Academic research
HR magazines (HR managers)	Newsletters (HR managers)
Webinars (HR managers)	

Currently, **CEOs and HR managers mostly turn to** their networks (52%; 44%) and LinkedIn (42%; 48%). Next to that, CEOs consult blogs (39%), while HR managers additionally read HR magazines (59%) and watch webinars on I&D (59%).

The **resources CEOs and HR managers would like to consult**, are (1) practical tools (53%; 62%), (2) learning communities in which they can share knowledge and practices (57%; 46%), and (3) academic research (37%; 42%). HR managers (62%) would like to consult newsletters on I&D as well.

**Inclusion at work – Feeling like you (do not) belong in tech**

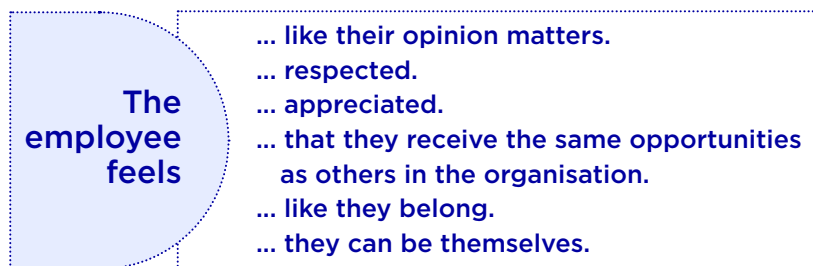
Most of the numbers above deal with (a lack of) diversity and opinions on how to increase I&D in a company. However, it is vital to specifically collect data on feelings of inclusion, next to gathering information on diversity. **Inclusion and diversity are closely intertwined.** Without inclusion, diversity can never be sustained.

8 – CEOs and HR managers could indicate multiple options, therefore the sum of the options exceeds 100%.

Companies should actively work on **creating a culture of inclusion**. **Collecting data on the employees' experiences of inclusion can be a part of that.**

In this survey, several aspects of inclusion were shared through the following statements:

## Inclusion:



**The employee feels**

- ... like their opinion matters.
- ... respected.
- ... appreciated.
- ... that they receive the same opportunities as others in the organisation.
- ... like they belong.
- ... they can be themselves.

The data generally show a **positive picture of feelings of inclusion**. At least 60% of the employees and (HR) managers (strongly) feel that their opinion matters, that they are respected and appreciated, that they belong, and that they can be themselves within their organisation. However, 21% of employees and managers are neutral about the statement that they receive the same opportunities as other employees, and 10% (strongly) disagree with it. This reflects the previously discussed finding: according to employees and managers, organisations can still improve on offering equal opportunities in terms of pay, career progression, and training and development.

Unfortunately, some of the quotes received illustrate **feelings of a lack of inclusion**. Some of the employees state that people in their organisation have used microaggressions against them and/or others in the form of sexist, homophobic or racist comments, by talking over them, by excluding them from certain activities, etc.



This lack of inclusion can have a significant impact on the employee and often results in them leaving the organisation or industry.

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Respondent 9  
Employee

**Not on the level of straight-out racism but unfortunately like in our society there is still micro racism on various levels (gender, religion, sexuality,...) People do not always understand the effect.**

Therefore, it is of significant importance that an organisation not only creates and fosters a culture of inclusion, but also actively prevents and deals with unacceptable behaviour.

Let's get to work – I&D activities employees and managers have participated in

The following chapter includes the **I&D activities** that employees and managers are already **aware of** and the activities they have **already participated in**. It is insightful to learn which I&D activities companies have been organising, and how these activities are perceived by employees and managers.

A first interesting observation is that **37% of employees and managers do not know if I&D activities are organised** by their company. Contradictory, CEOs and HR managers utter that they have already put some activities in place, such as organizing events, creating awareness, introducing role models, and offering training.

The lack of awareness of these activities could indicate that companies need to find better ways to get this information to their employees in order to motivate them to participate in the activities provided.

Of the employees and managers that are **aware of I&D activities**<sup>9</sup> in their organisation, 31% know that I&D is one of their company's **strategic goals**, 30% know that their organisation offers **trainings** (e.g. training concerning bias), and 26% of employees and managers are aware of their organisation's **mentor- or sponsorship programme**. Other I&D activities that employees and managers know of are **organizing coaching** and **creating work groups** on I&D.

Another interesting aspect to research is whether employees and managers **have participated in any of the I&D activities** their company has organised. 38% of the employees and managers have participated in I&D **training**, 33% in a **survey** concerning I&D, and 29% in I&D **events**. **26% of the responding employees and managers however have never participated in any of their organisation's I&D activities**. The latter statement is quite remarkable and might of course be related to the lack of communication regarding these I&D activities between the organisation and the employees and managers.

As improving I&D in the organisation is a collaborative effort of all stakeholders, it is essential to **motivate employees and managers to participate in such activities**. 39% of employees and managers need **more awareness** of I&D in order to focus more on the topic. 28% of employees and managers prefer to receive a **clear set goal**, while 26% of them require **more information about I&D activities**. Lastly, 26% of the responding employees and managers believe that they would be motivated to work on I&D if the organisation created an **open organisational culture**. This is an important recurring aspect that will be discussed more thoroughly in the recommendations below.

In short, most employees are motivated to work on I&D if this is done in a constructive, sustainable, and respectful manner.

The quote below illustrates this:

Respondent 10  
Manager

**The start of a Diversity and Inclusion programme shows that the company takes this topic seriously. Our company values were also reworked to reflect this.**

In the next chapter, some evidence-based tips are shared in order to help companies who want to work on their I&D focus and activities.

## Recommendations

As mentioned before, it is important to note that there is **no absolute solution for every company**. Organisations can try different approaches to advance I&D and evaluate which practices work best for their organisation.

### 1. Stakeholder awareness and commitment to I&D

As a first recommendation, **all stakeholders should be convinced of the importance of I&D** in the organisation. Several studies (e.g. Bersin, 2015; Lorenzo et al., 2017; McKinsey & Company, 2020) have shown that being an inclusive organisation can help to improve financial performance, attract diverse talent, improve team performance, deliver better customer service, create more innovative products and services, etc. No real change can occur without

making sure that all stakeholders are aware of the advantages of working on I&D. It is relevant to emphasize that, ultimately, all employees benefit from an increased focus on inclusion and diversity, and not only specific groups.

Once stakeholders are **convinced of the benefits of I&D, clear goals or KPIs towards I&D can be incorporated in the organisation's strategy**. Formulating goals makes the strategic importance of I&D clear to all employees and managers, and it allows organisations to track and monitor progress. Next to clearly setting goals and formulating I&D-specific KPIs, it is also necessary to **hold managers and leadership accountable** whenever they are (not) reaching these goals.

## 2. Collecting I&D data

As for any other area in business, it is impossible to improve on I&D if you do not know what your starting point or current situation is. Therefore, it is meaningful to **regularly collect data on I&D**, such as demographic data of employees, feelings of inclusion, progression towards I&D goals, etc. As collecting such anonymous data can be a challenge, the Learnings of this survey list more advice on how to tackle this based on the learnings from the survey.

The survey carried out in this study was one of the first industry-wide attempts to collect I&D data in the Flemish and Dutch tech industry, showing that currently little data is available. It is recommended to frequently repeat such an industry-wide survey in the future, so companies can **benchmark their data compared to similar competitors**. Such an initiative already exists in the UK and is spearheaded by project partner Tech Talent Charter (TTC). Agoria will regularly organize an industry-wide survey on I&D in the tech industry in Belgium, as will NLdigital in the Netherlands.

### 3. Creating an inclusive organisational culture

Organisations trying to create an inclusive culture should take several aspects into account. Firstly, **leadership** should be **selected and trained** to be open-minded and to help create and maintain an **inclusive culture**. Secondly, employees and managers should **respond and react to microaggressions and unacceptable behaviour** (e.g., “jokes”, sexist, homophobic or racist remarks, etc.) towards other employees. Organisations should have open conversations about the privileges that some employees enjoy and that others do not, and how this impacts the company culture.

A common misconception about I&D is that it focuses on ‘positive discrimination’ and that it only gives opportunities to some employees and not others. In fact, an I&D policy is about eliminating the hurdles certain employees face, and about creating more opportunities for all employees. In other words, it benefits the entire organisation.

The quote below from one of the respondents from the survey poignantly shows the significance and necessity of having an organisational culture that is truly inclusive.

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Respondent 11  
Manager

**Educate yourself on what it actually means. It’s more than just adding people to the team with a different profile. It’s also about actively questioning the position and power dynamics of those who are there now, white, and cis male. Adding more**

diverse profiles without actually letting their difference influence the organisation, culture, type of work, ... may help you reach I&D numeric goals, but does not really address the I part of I&D. As long as that is not understood, no real change will happen.

#### 4. Recruiting and selecting diverse talent

A widespread problem in recruiting diverse talent in tech is the **lack of inflow of such talent**. Next to the actions that should be taken in (STEM) education, companies can try to reach underrepresented groups at an early age by showing the possibilities of a career in tech. For example, companies could organise company visits, be a guest speaker at a school, organize a (science/tech) fair, etc.

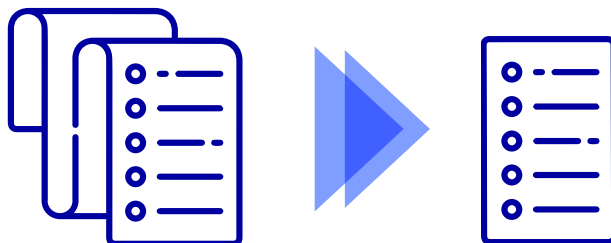
The industry should collaborate with (higher) education in trying to reach underrepresented groups at an early age to ensure a higher inflow of diverse talent in the future.

Next to the problem of inflow of diverse talent, there is the **problem of discrimination in every phase of the recruitment & selection process**. Therefore, it is essential to put the utmost effort into removing this from each part of the process.

- 1 Firstly, recruiters should be trained to **be aware of their own unconscious biases** to be able to recruit more diverse talent.
- 2 Secondly, **job descriptions and job ads should be formulated in a more inclusive manner**. Most of the current descriptions and ads exclude certain applicants through their wording. Using gender-neutral wording, avoiding excessive jargon and potentially omitting certain less important job requirements will make ads more inclusive.
- 3 Thirdly, recruiters should **make use of recruitment channels and partners that can actively help them attract more diverse talent**. Examples of such channels and partners in Belgium are Molengeek, BeCode, etc.
- 4 Furthermore, organisations should **recruit and promote internally before looking for someone new externally**. Organizing a mentor- or sponsorship programme (as elaborated upon [below](#)) can also be helpful in setting up career tracks for underrepresented groups.
- 5 Lastly, when using referral programmes, recruiters should **not be blind to their disadvantages**. Using referral programmes when the company is not that diverse yet can lead to the company consistently hiring the same employees and thus impeding diversity in the staff.

Throughout the **selection** process, recruiters and hiring managers should again be professionally trained to be aware of their unconscious biases. Companies can **form diverse selection teams** consisting of multiple people and at least some members of underrepresented groups to be more objective and to avoid personal bias. When setting the requirements candidates should have for a vacancy, it is relevant to evaluate **which requirements are nice to have and which are essential** for that position. Certain suitable job candidates (e.g., female candidates, ‘younger’

candidates, candidates with a disability, etc.) might refrain from applying when seeing an extensive list of requirements that are not all necessary. Bear in mind that some requirements can still be trained after a person is hired.



Next, think about the **selection tests** that are currently used in selection procedures. Some selection tests score high on bias against certain groups, emphasizing the importance of carefully examining these tests.

A good selection test measures the critical competencies for that position without focusing on unnecessary characteristics.

When interviewing applicants, structured interviews help recruiters to be more objective in assessing candidates. Interviewers should again focus on the skills and motivation of applicants, use objective scoring keys, and discuss and argue hiring decisions with multiple people.

---

Respondent 12  
Employee

**Take an active position. Actively look for more diverse profiles. Don't be passive. Understand that it is a problem in Belgium.**



The quote above perfectly summarizes this fourth recommendation: the recruitment and selection of diverse talent often demands an **active** search to reach certain underrepresented groups and an active effort to make this entire process more inclusive.

## 5. Training – Mentorship & sponsorship

Having an inclusive and diverse organisation means that during the **onboarding** process, it should be clear to all new employees and managers that **I&D is a strategic goal and that discriminatory behaviour is not tolerated**. Companies should pay attention to this when designing the onboarding of new employees.

Moreover, all employees should receive **equal training and development opportunities**. Making the training & development policy clear and transparent for all employees is a crucial part of that. It is also vital to **identify potential barriers** that prevent certain employees from taking on training and development opportunities. When managers identify talent in their team, they should talk to their employees to find out what is holding them back to take certain opportunities and how this can be avoided. Lastly, companies can set up **mentorship and sponsorship programmes** to actively help employees of underrepresented groups with their career progression within the organisation.

## 6. The importance of equal pay

To maintain diverse talent, it is important to have a transparent compensation and benefits plan, and to stick to this plan. Companies should avoid allowing the most verbal employees to receive pay raises and should instead install a **clear pay policy** that **applies to all employees**. Employees who do the **same job**, with the **same responsibilities** and who have the **same experience** should receive the **same pay**. When **promoting or hiring** someone new,

the **salary** of this person should be evaluated in terms of fairness compared to their colleagues.

Furthermore, companies should consider offering **benefits** that promote **inclusion** such as allowing employees to work from home, offering flexible work hours, setting up an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), etc. Companies can install a **flexible benefits plan** to allow employees to individually choose which benefits best suit them.

## 7. Providing equal career opportunities

It is necessary to examine if the **company's performance appraisal process** is **fair and objective** for all employees. Managers should be trained to accurately assess performance, objective and clear criteria should be used, and the focus in performance appraisal should be on the employee's performance and behaviour and not on other characteristics.

Companies should actively try to **identify which barriers stop employees of underrepresented groups from advancing in their careers**. There should be a **clear and transparent policy for promotion and other career opportunities**. Promotion decisions should not be made based solely on performance in the past year, as this can negatively impact certain groups such as pregnant people, employees with disabilities and/or (chronic) illnesses, etc.

---

Respondent 13  
Employee

**When I see diversity in our organisation, it seems to be in the lower roles in the hierarchy. Hopefully this means that these roles will grow in time into management roles; but as an**

example for women, these senior roles tend to be in HR, Marketing, and the support functions such as Finance, Legal etc. It would be great to see a more diverse group in our core deliverable, which is Technology, or to see more diversity supported through the succession planning through to key management roles. If the diverse graduates aren't there, build them from within in a way that allows these groups to succeed.

This quote from a respondent highlights the importance of giving all employees a chance to advance in the organisation and to actively keep working on I&D in the organisation, however limited the efforts might have been thus far.

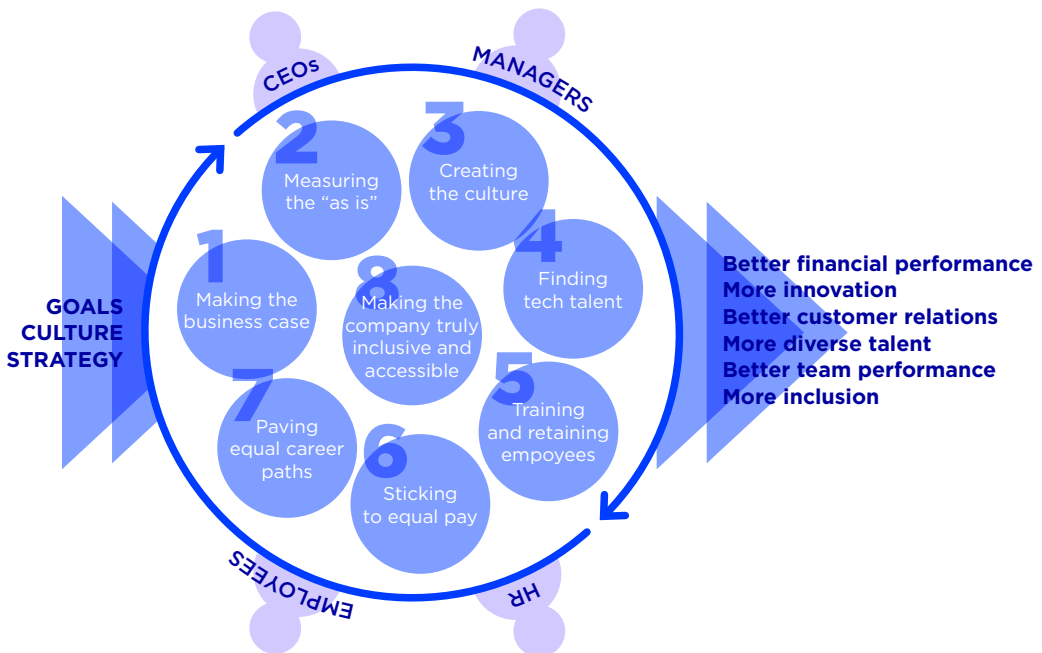
#### 8. Making the workplace inclusive and accessible for all employees

First and foremost, all employees should be able to **access the entire workplace** and **execute their job without obstacles**. Companies should consider going beyond the legal requirements to make a building accessible and to proactively implement certain adjustments that might make it easier for (future) employees who have a disability to work there.

Secondly, companies should make **accessibility and inclusion** a **part** of the **organisational culture** so that it is **reflected** in **all aspects of the workplace**. Overt problems of accessibility and inclusion as well as small actions should be taken into account. Through all of these actions, the company can ensure that the entire organisation reflects its inclusive character. For example, employers can offer a variety of food options, floating religious holidays, gender-neutral inclusive bathrooms, events with diverse speakers, etc. In short:

Respondent 14  
Employee

**I&D should be so evident in an organisation that this isn't an issue anymore.**



## Methodology

A total of 393 people responded to the anonymous online survey. More specifically, 294 filled in the Flemish survey, 20 took part in the Dutch version and the remaining 79 respondents completed the English survey. 34 CEOs, 32 HR managers, 327 employees and managers<sup>10</sup> completed the survey. As not all questions were mandatory, not every question was answered by every respondent.

The data were collected from March 2021 until June 2021. An overview of all the questions can be found on the platform [www.inclusionatwork.be](http://www.inclusionatwork.be). The survey was designed and distributed via Qualtrics. Respondents could click on an anonymous link that they received via one of the channels described below.

The survey was launched via the LinkedIn page of this project. Several calls to participate were made on this LinkedIn page and multiple stakeholders in the industry shared the call to participate in their networks. Furthermore, the survey was shared with the members of the Learning Community of the Level IT out project. In this Learning Community, around 10 tech companies participate in a monthly meeting with project partner Inclusion Now to share their experiences and to work on I&D in their company. The partners of the Level IT out project were also asked to share the survey in their networks. Agoria firstly distributed the survey to their members via their newsletters. They sent a reminder to their members after two weeks and personally contacted CEOs and managers to ask for their participation. Additionally, Agoria members were asked to complete the survey during an online event on 26 May 2021. Secondly, Inclusion Now shared the survey via LinkedIn with their network. NLdigital lastly shared a call to participate via their newsletter and on their LinkedIn page.

10 - Of the 327 employees and managers, 116 indicated that they are managers, 187 indicated that they are employees, and 24 respondents didn't indicate if they are a manager or an employee.

## Learnings

### How to organise a survey about I&D

Several CEOs and managers in the industry shared that launching a **data collection on I&D** is rather daunting for them. Therefore, some findings and advice regarding the design and distribution of such a collection is shared below.

1

A first important thing to take into account is making the **survey anonymous** and emphasizing that the **data** will not only be collected but also **processed anonymously**. Specifically, underrepresented groups in organisations might be worried about disclosing personal information and/or their opinions on sensitive issues, so go above and beyond to ensure anonymity. If this is not feasible, consider using an external agency and/or buy or build a tool to collect data.

2

Secondly, think about the **language** in which the survey is offered. If you can only offer the survey in one language, English might be the best option because of the industry's target group. Since the common language for communication in most tech companies is English, this language would be most suitable. However, if possible, try to offer the survey in multiple languages so that everyone can complete the survey in the language they feel most comfortable with, or preferably in their native language.

3

When offering **response options**, make sure your options are as **exhaustive** and as **inclusive** as possible. For this survey, we asked the respondents what their mother tongue was. A language that is commonly used in a population group was not offered as a response option. Not including response options that are relevant for certain groups can be hurtful and seen as overlooking that particular group.

Similarly, this should be considered when asking questions concerning gender (identity). Read up on the **correct terminology** or **consult sources** that can help you with the wording of these questions. You can find a useful resource (in Dutch) to consult in that regard [here](#).

Also make sure that the order in which you present the **response options does not point to favouritism or a priority over other response options**. You can, for example, list all your response options in alphabetical order to avoid this.

4

**Allow respondents to answer questions themselves** by adding a textbox to certain questions. Especially for questions concerning the identity of participants, it is relevant to provide the option to describe something themselves. Next to that, it is recommended to not make any or all questions mandatory. As surveys on I&D are often about opinions and sharing personal information, this can mean that certain respondents can be wary to share certain details. **Not making every question mandatory** means that respondents can skip the questions they do not feel comfortable with, which can increase the general response rate of the survey.

5

Consider the **multiple stakeholders** that might participate in the survey and think about **relevant questions** for every stakeholder. The general demographic questions in this survey were the same for all respondents, but we adapted the other questions to best suit our specific stakeholders (namely CEOs, (HR) managers or employees).

6

Before launching the survey, make sure to **test** it on a **diverse group of stakeholders**. They can determine whether you have forgotten any relevant response options, if anything is unclear, and if the wording is accurate and appropriate for each stakeholder.

7

Check and reread your survey multiple times to make sure all the **wording is inclusive, clear, and relevant**. Try to avoid gendered language (for example, use “they” when talking about people in general), make sure the survey can be understood by everyone (avoid using jargon), that it is accessible for people with reading disabilities or visual impairments, that you use appropriate and respectful wording when referring to people’s identities, etc.

8

Make sure that the **communication** about the survey is **inclusive** as well to **motivate** as many people as possible to **complete** the survey. Moreover, try to **engage different stakeholders** before launching the survey so they can help motivate people to complete the survey. Another tip is to use **role models** to launch the campaign for the survey and to encourage people to participate. Lastly, it is important to **announce** beforehand **why** you are conducting the survey and what you intend on **doing with the results** of the survey. People are more motivated to participate in a survey when they know there will be follow-up and accountability for whatever the results may indicate.

9

If possible, try to **combine surveys** with **interviews with employees, for example from underrepresented groups**. Surveys mostly give a general quantitative overview of opinions and observations whereas in interviews you can dig deeper to gather a better understanding of certain topics. Collecting both **quantitative** (i.e., surveys) and **qualitative** (i.e., interviews) **data** will ensure that you have general and specific info that will help you set up a **holistic I&D policy**.



10

There are **validated questionnaires** on I&D available that you can use to design your survey. **Academic research** has a (limited) number of validated scales on inclusion, for example: via Google Scholar (free), ResearchGate (free) or Web of Science (subscription). Look for keywords such as *inclusion & diversity, survey, questionnaire*, etc. Stay in contact with or follow (academic) researchers on LinkedIn to be up to date on their research, or participate with your organisation in a study concerning I&D.

You can find a full overview of the questions used in this survey in on the platform [www.inclusionatwork.be](http://www.inclusionatwork.be). However, make sure to always **adapt the questions to the specific context of your organisation**.

11

Lastly, if the budget allows it, consider using an external consultancy agency to conduct a company-specific I&D survey. Advantages of doing so are:

- **neutrality,**
- the data are often perceived as more **anonymous** by employees,
- an agency has extensive **knowledge and expertise** in the area,
- you have the option to **receive advice** on future steps and concrete actions.

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This is one of the first industry-wide surveys on inclusion and diversity in tech and therefore a crucial step in working on I&D in tech. Agoria will repeat this initiative in the future, so we can track and monitor the progression made in the Belgian tech industry concerning I&D.

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