

EDITORIAL

ESAIC Mellin-Olsen declaration on diversity, equity and inclusion

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Introduction: building a culture of equity and inclusion

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) are not merely a matter of fairness and justice; these values are essential for fostering a dynamic, innovative and collaborative professional community. The United Nations and the European Commission emphasise the need for plans to

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increase diversity and sex equity.^{1,2} It is crucial to distinguish equality and equity: equality provides the same resources and opportunities to all, while equity tailors opportunities based on individual needs and circumstances.^{3,4} Figure 1 illustrates the various factors influencing equity, such as sex, race and socioeconomic background, which create differing levels of advantage and opportunity across individuals.

This global call for action resonates within the European Society of Anaesthesiology and Intensive Care (ESAIC), which can play a pivotal role in driving diversity and equity in anaesthesia and intensive care. To promote a truly inclusive environment, ESAIC is committed to

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Fig. 1 Key factors in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

recognising and celebrating diversity in all forms, ensuring equitable access and support, and fostering inclusion at every level. By prioritising diversity, equity and inclusion, the aim is to create an environment wherein everyone feels valued, respected and empowered to contribute their unique perspectives and skills.

Despite increased awareness and efforts, diversity, equity and inclusion remain elusive goals in anaesthesiology

and intensive care.^{5–7} A critical aspect of DEI in anaesthesiology is sex equity. Women and ethnic minorities remain underrepresented in the speciality's leadership positions, research and academic roles.^{8–16} Recent analyses of multiple anaesthesia journals reveal that women account for approximately 20 to 30% of first authors and authors in clinical and critical care guidelines despite equal career aspirations.¹⁷ In addition, cultural biases, stereotypes and the lack of supportive policies continue

to hinder progress towards gender equity in anaesthesiology.^{8,18}

DEI are not only ethical imperatives but have also proven benefits for patient care, innovation and organisational performance in healthcare.^{19,20} A diverse healthcare workforce enhances patient outcomes, particularly for racial and ethnic minorities, by fostering trust, improving communication and tailoring care to unique patient needs.^{19,21,22} This is especially vital in anaesthesiology and intensive care, wherein patient safety and communication are paramount.

Diverse teams drive innovation and adaptability by bringing varied perspectives that enhance problem-solving and decision-making.²³ Diversity encourages comprehensive approaches that improve patient outcomes in anaesthesiology, where challenges are complex and rapidly evolving.²⁴ Furthermore, DEI initiatives improve recruitment, retention and staff morale, helping mitigate burnout, a pressing concern in high-stress fields such as anaesthesiology and intensive care.²⁵

Research in healthcare and beyond clearly correlates diversity with organisational success. Studies have linked diversity in leadership to improved decision-making and financial outcomes. Organisations with diverse leadership are more likely to assess information objectively, fostering well considered decisions that support patient care and safety.²⁶ As ESAIC moves forward with its DEI initiatives, it is clear that DEI is essential for social responsibility, enhancing patient outcomes, driving innovation and supporting the field's growth.

The 2025 Mellin-Olsen Declaration builds on this mandate by setting out a comprehensive framework for promoting DEI within ESAIC, emphasising education, research, mentorship and inclusivity across all aspects of the organisation. Our goal is to set an example and empower individuals to become advocates of DEI within their own working environments. Although the declaration aims to foster a culture that welcomes individuals from diverse ethnicities, backgrounds, abilities and identities, our measurable focus is primarily on sex equity and representation from different countries. Signed by international experts, the declaration addresses current disparities in representation and advocates for a broader understanding of inclusivity within anaesthesiology and intensive care in Europe. The Mellin-Olsen Declaration provides a roadmap for achieving these goals through structured actions, ESAIC policies with set goals, benchmarks and a commitment to transparency and accountability.

We will comprehensively review existing policies to ensure that ESAIC's policies effectively align with DEI principles. This review will focus on identifying gaps and improvement opportunities to create a more inclusive and equitable environment. Our commitment includes monitoring leadership representation, educational programmes

and research initiatives to ensure they support our DEI objectives and reflect the diverse voices within our community. This proactive approach will help us continuously refine our strategies, foster a culture of inclusivity and belonging, adhere to merit-based nominations and avoid positive discrimination.

Declaration

ESAIC honours the legacy of Jannicke Mellin-Olsen, whose dedication to diversity, equity and inclusion shaped our shared values and commitment to a more inclusive future. In keeping with her vision, ESAIC upholds core values that all members, collaboration partners and employees are expected to adhere to. These values are as follows:

- **Excellence:** Inspiring and motivating others, maintaining high standards and demonstrating a strong commitment to quality.
- **Collaboration:** Promoting teamwork, empowerment and open communication.
- **Integrity:** Upholding accountability, honesty and ethical behaviour.
- **Trust:** Building confidence through consistent and transparent actions.
- **Inclusion:** Ensuring that individuals of all backgrounds, identities and abilities feel valued, respected and have equitable access to opportunities.

Despite progress in DEI initiatives, the medical community still faces challenges, particularly leadership representation. Biases and stereotypes persist, underscoring the need for supportive policies to foster inclusivity.

Research suggests that organisations championing DEI are more productive, innovative and successful.^{19,20} However, beyond these tangible benefits, the true measure of success is cultivating a work environment wherein diverse voices and perspectives are indisputably valued and respected.

This document seeks to define and set a standard for ESAIC's work on DEI. It describes how ESAIC can and will include this standard in all areas of the organisation.

Defining diversity, equity and inclusion

- **Diversity:** The presence and appreciation of differences in backgrounds, identities and experiences (such as variability of races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, religions and disabilities).
- **Equity:** Ensuring fair treatment by removing barriers to resources and opportunities that disproportionately affect certain groups.
- **Inclusion:** Creating an environment where all individuals feel valued, respected and belong.
- Recognising the impact of DEI on patient care and professional growth, ESAIC is dedicated to advancing these principles.

Six key areas of focus

(1) Leadership and Governance

ESAIC aims to reflect the diversity of its members in its leadership and staff. The organisation seeks balanced representation across nationalities and sexes through strategic recruitment and support, promoting inclusivity and merit-based leadership.

(2) Inclusive Education and Research

ESAIC integrates DEI into education, research, conferences and board representation. Educational programmes and research initiatives prioritise equitable access and diverse perspectives. Conference themes should include global perspectives, health-care disparities, culturally competent care and core scientific topics.

(3) Family-Friendly and Accessible Conferences

ESAIC aspires to make conferences and official meetings inclusive and truly engage its members. Therefore, ESAIC will continue supporting conference participants with accessibility needs and/or family responsibilities. This includes the possibility of virtual attendance at conferences, accessible venues, lactation rooms, and, if possible, childcare options.

(4) Awareness and Advocacy

A culture of DEI requires ongoing education and advocacy. ESAIC encourages committees to implement the DEI values presented in this declaration in their natural activities. DEI status should be reported alongside each committee's usual annual activity report. ESAIC will also advocate for DEI policies in collaboration with other societies and partners.

(5) Monitoring and Accountability

ESAIC aspires to be transparent in DEI progress. Therefore, it is crucial that different committees within the association report annually on DEI initiatives to the Board. The Board will annually review ESAIC's DEI status in leadership, education and research participation.

(6) Ongoing Evaluation and Future Goals

ESAIC aspires to periodically reassess its DEI declaration to address new challenges and align with best practices. This ensures that the Mellin-Olsen Declaration remains effective and forward-looking.

Conclusion: the path forward

The 2025 Mellin-Olsen Declaration is a bold step towards creating a more inclusive, equitable and diverse ESAIC. By committing to this plan, ESAIC will strengthen its leadership and contribute to a broader movement within the medical profession that values diversity as a core principle of excellence. This initiative is not just about addressing the disparities of the present but about creating a future where everyone, regardless of sex, ethnicity or background, has the opportunity to thrive and contribute to the field of anaesthesiology and intensive care.

In closing, the 2025 Mellin-Olsen Declaration reflects the values of fairness, innovation and collaboration essential to advancing anaesthesiology in the twenty-first century. By adopting these measures, ESAIC will position itself as a leader in promoting DEI, inspiring other professional societies to follow suit, and ultimately improving patient care through a more diverse and inclusive workforce.

We look forward to working together to make this vision come true and create a stronger, more inclusive, merit-based ESAIC for future generations.

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VISUAL ABSTRACT

A guideline from



European Society of Anaesthesiology and Intensive Care

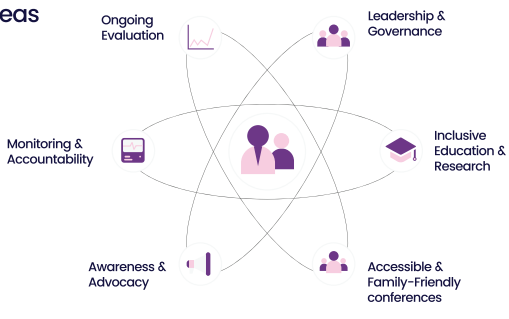
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Graphic Abstract

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) are not merely a matter of fairness and justice—these values are essential for fostering a dynamic, innovative, and collaborative professional community.

Six key areas of focus



What does DEI stand for?

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Diversity: Embracing differences in identity, background, and experience

Equity: Providing fair access to opportunities by removing barriers.

Inclusion: Fostering a sense of belonging and respect for all.

Leadership & Governance	Ensuring diverse and balanced representation in leadership through strategic recruitment
Education & Research	Embedding DEI in education, research, and conferences, with a focus on equity and global perspectives
Accessible Conferences	Providing inclusive events with virtual options, accessible venues, and family support
Awareness & Advocacy	Promoting DEI through education, reporting, and collaboration with other organizations
Monitoring & Accountability	Tracking and reviewing DEI progress annually to ensure transparency and improvement
Ongoing Evaluation	Regularly updating DEI strategies to address new challenges and best practices

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