



Work & Organizational Psychology

Attitudes towards DEI initiatives: Current trends and future directions

EVENT

22-23 January 2026

Utrecht

Thematic Group Meeting

In conclusion of our NWO-funded research project, *"It's All in the Frame: Framing Diversity Policies to Reduce Attitudinal Resistance Toward Gender Quotas and Their Beneficiaries,"* we invite you to a two-day thematic group meeting at the Open University of the Netherlands in Utrecht on January 22nd and 23rd, 2026.

Attitudes towards DEI initiatives

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives have been evolving globally, shaped by social movements, policy changes, and corporate strategies. Organizations are expanding their DEI efforts by incorporating transparency in hiring, promoting pay equity, and fostering leadership diversity. However, DEI initiatives also face challenges due to political shifts and economic pressures. Governments and organizations worldwide are implementing or revising DEI-related policies, while some have scaled back these efforts, citing political and financial concerns.

Increased academic interest in understanding employee reactions to DEI initiatives has led to insightful recent findings. However, there are also gaps in theoretical development, as well as challenges in effectively implementing these insights in practice. Understanding psychological reactions, particularly employee attitudes toward DEI initiatives, is crucial as broad support is a key factor in policy development and effectiveness.

Meeting goals

Interdisciplinary collaboration fosters novel ideas by integrating diverse methodologies and theories. We aim to encourage collaboration among researchers from various disciplines, enabling them to exchange perspectives and build strong professional networks. This thematic meeting will bring together scholars to discuss current trends and future directions in studying attitudes toward DEI policies. Our primary goals are to provide ample opportunities for researchers to (1) present their latest findings; (2) network, and (3) provide

a platform for initiating collaborative research activities. We facilitate participants to team up with existing and new collaborators and plan future lines of research, which will be collected and documented at the end of the meeting for further realization.

Program

The program covers two full days. We are pleased to announce that prof. Jojanneke van der Toorn will give the opening keynote lecture. The project presentation will be given by the organizers, dr. Jill Knapen and dr. Miriam Engels. Other program details include oral presentations, a poster session, and networking and brainstorming opportunities.

Location

The meeting will take place at the Open University in Utrecht (Study Centre). Utrecht is a historic city in the Netherlands, known for its medieval old town, canals, and the iconic Dom Tower. It's a vibrant cultural hub with a rich history, offering a mix of modern and traditional attractions. The city is just a 30 minute train ride from Schiphol airport.

Registration

As this meeting is sponsored by NWO, there will be no registration fee, and the two-day attendance including lunch and coffee breaks will be covered by the host institute. A group dinner will be arranged on Thursday evening. Participants are responsible for the dinner, travel and accommodation costs. Participation is open to researchers worldwide, and we aim to bring together a diverse international group of scholars from different career stages and scientific fields. We especially encourage scholars from disadvantaged backgrounds to apply.

We welcome submissions for oral and/or poster presentations from researchers at all levels (postgraduate, early career, and senior) in Psychology, Business, Social Sciences, and related fields, with a focus on attitudes toward DEI initiatives. Although our project concerns gender quotas, we aim for a broad focus that includes all possible beneficiaries. Registration is also possible without presenting; however, due to limited availability, priority will be given to participants who are presenting (either an oral presentation or a poster presentation). Acceptance for presentations will be based on the quality and relevance of the research. Abstracts for ongoing research projects are welcome. The maximum length for abstracts is 500 words, including references.

All abstracts must be submitted via this link: [registration form](#)

For more information our questions, you can reach us at thematic-meeting@ou.nl

Key details

- Application deadline: 1st August 2025
- Admission decisions: Announced by 1st October 2025
- Registration fee: free (not including travel and accommodation)
- Event: 22-23 January 2026



Keynote speaker

Jojanneke van der Toorn is professor of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Workplace Inclusion at Leiden University, and associate professor of Social and Organizational psychology at Utrecht University. She earned M.A. degrees in Psychology (2003) and Cultural Anthropology (2005, cum laude) from the Free University Amsterdam and a Ph.D. in Social Psychology from New York University (2010). She has held positions at Yale and Leiden. Professor van der Toorn's research examines the social psychological mechanisms that drive

resistance to, support for, and participation in progressive social change. She explores individuals' motivations to challenge or maintain the status quo, analyzing structural influences, psychological forces, and their societal consequences. Her work highlights how both advantaged and disadvantaged groups contribute to sustaining social and economic inequalities.

Specializing in intergroup relations and social justice, she focuses on diversity and inclusion in the workplace, particularly concerning LGBTQ+ employees. Her research investigates organizational blind spots in diversity policies, their impact on job seekers and employees, and ways to address these challenges. Additionally, she studies psychological processes that reinforce group-based inequalities. Committed to bridging science and practice, she co-developed the Netherlands Inclusivity Monitor to assess and improve diversity policies. She also consults for organizations and government agencies and leads an executive masterclass on effective diversity and inclusion strategies.

Project presentation

Results of the NWO-funded research project *"It's All in the Frame: Framing Diversity Policies to Reduce Attitudinal Resistance Toward Gender Quotas and Their Beneficiaries"* will be presented by Jill Knapen and Miriam Engels. To address the systematic underrepresentation of women in top leadership positions, some governments and organizations are introducing gender quotas (GQ). Despite their effectiveness, GQ are controversial and generally perceived negatively. With three experimental studies and a Free Association Task, we aimed to design strategic frames of communication that organizations can use to reduce attitudinal resistance of GQ. This research addresses the challenge of communicating GQ in a positive way for all employees and contributes to the social sciences by investigating how policy information should be framed to influence public perceptions. Lastly, it informs practitioners about the best ways to implement GQ.



Jill Knapen obtained her PhD in Social and Organizational Psychology at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (2017). She has since worked as Assistant professor at the University of Amsterdam and as a researcher at the Netherlands Institute for Health Services Research. She currently works as an Assistant professor at the department of Work and Organizational Psychology at the Open University, where she is also the university lead for the social inequality and diversity sector plan theme. With her research, she aims to contribute to equalizing opportunities for underrepresented groups in a societal context, specifically to diversity and inclusion in the workplace. Her research interests include behavior and experiences of individuals from minority groups in society, specifically work settings, workplace diversity, interpersonal perception, self-perception, and physical features (height).



Miriam Engels obtained her M.Sc. degree from Maastricht University, with a research stay at Sussex University in the UK, and her doctorate in Public Health at the Heinrich-Heine-University in Düsseldorf, Germany (2022), studying gendered work-family trajectories and their impact on mental health. She has since worked as an Assistant professor at the department of Work and Organizational Psychology at the Open University of the Netherlands. Her research focuses on working conditions that promote inclusivity and well-being at work, including research questions on psychological safety, boundary management fit and implementation of stress prevention interventions at individual and organizational level.