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Workshop Documentation

From Inclusion to Belonging — BUA x BR50 Joint Strategy Workshop with Professor Kelly Hannah-Moffat (Vice President at the University of Toronto), October 23, 2024

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The "From Inclusion to Belonging" workshop, co-organized by the Berlin University Alliance (BUA) and Berlin Research 50 (BR50) on October 23, 2024, convened in Berlin to deepen the understanding and strategic implementation of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging (EDIB). This high-profile event brought together 42 academic leaders, strategists and policy stakeholders to discuss and formulate concrete actions that ensure EDIB becomes a foundation in Berlin's academic ecosystem.

Participants engaged with keynote insights from Prof. Kelly Hannah-Moffat of the University of Toronto, whose strategic perspective on embedding Belonging within institutional culture was a highlight of the event. Through case studies and collaborative group work, attendees identified persistent challenges and innovative solutions in selected cases. The workshop emphasized that the shift from inclusion to belonging is ongoing, involving a multi-dimensional commitment across leadership, policy, and community.

Key themes emerged, including the critical nature of leadership commitment and structural support. The need for adaptive strategies that include intersectional perspectives. And community engagement as an integral element for lasting EDIB impact is seen critical in moving forward and successfully implement of corresponding strategies.

We thank BR50 representative Anja Sommerfeld and BIH for hosting us and their extended support.

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1. Introductory Address by BUA President G. Ziegler

Prof. Günther Ziegler's introductory address as BUA speaker and President of the Freie Universität Berlin underscored the critical importance of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging (EDIB) as foundational to academic excellence. He emphasized that EDIB should be seen not as aspirational ideals but as essential conditions for a vibrant research environment. While acknowledging BUA's progress, Ziegler was clear that "pretty good" was not enough for the alliance's potential.

Ziegler highlighted Berlin's diversity as both an asset and a challenge. The city's rich cultural and global perspectives create a unique backdrop for embedding EDIB as a structural priority throughout academia. Integrating marginalized perspectives, he argued, is essential for true academic rigor and innovation.

A key theme of his speech was the importance of turning strategy into action. While strategy papers are a necessary starting point, genuine change requires consistent, action-oriented follow-through. He called for workshop engagement focused on actionable solutions to ensure sustainable outcomes. Ziegler candidly addressed gaps in current DEIB practices and encouraged viewing these challenges as opportunities for transformation. Referencing Leonard Cohen's line, "There is a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in," he reminded participants that recognizing flaws is the first step toward meaningful change.

In closing, Prof. Ziegler's speech was a call to action, urging participants to move beyond theory and commit to co-creating strategies that foster a culture of belonging across the academic community.

2. Keynote by Prof. Kelly Hannah-Moffat

Prof. Kelly Hannah-Moffat's keynote was the highlight of the workshop, presenting an in-depth exploration of DEIB strategies through the lens of her role as Vice President for People Strategy, Equity, and Culture at the University of Toronto. Her address provided participants with a robust framework for understanding how to embed the principles of belonging into academic institutions. She articulated that while fostering inclusion is a critical first step, nurturing a culture of belonging represents a deeper commitment that requires systemic changes, persistent effort, and collective responsibility.

Prof. Hannah-Moffat began by defining the essence of belonging as more than mere participation; it is about creating an environment where individuals feel truly seen, valued, and integral to their community. This sense of belonging emerges from policies and practices that do not just include people but actively engage and uplift them. She underscored that belonging transforms an institution from a place where diverse people are present to one where they feel represented, respected, and a part of a shared mission.

Central to her address was the strategic integration of DEIB across institutional layers. She stressed that successful implementation starts with data-driven insights. At the University of Toronto, regular demographic censuses are used to map diversity among students, faculty, and staff. This data informs decision-making and is shared through dashboards that give department heads a clear view of their diversity metrics, ensuring transparency and fostering accountability.

Prof. Hannah-Moffat detailed the importance of public commitments as tools for building trust and holding leadership accountable. These commitments, she explained, are made visible on institutional platforms, showcasing progress and allowing staff to report their contributions and achievements. This approach creates a cycle of transparency and shared responsibility, which is essential for maintaining momentum.

Leadership training emerged as another pivotal theme. Prof. Hannah-Moffat illustrated how the University of Toronto integrates DEIB training into mandatory leadership meetings to ensure that all deans and hiring committees understand and counteract structural biases. These sessions, she noted, foster an environment



where DEIB practices are not just seen as optional add-ons but as fundamental to the institution's operations.

Challenges were candidly addressed, particularly the resistance DEIB initiatives often face. Prof. Hannah-Moffat discussed the political and social hurdles that can derail well-intentioned policies. She highlighted that if institutions do not clearly define their DEIB work, external narratives can distort or undermine their efforts. To counter this, she recommended clear, adaptive communication strategies that resonate with both leadership and community members.

A significant part of her keynote was dedicated to trust-building within communities. Prof. Hannah-Moffat emphasized that belonging is not solely an outcome of top-down policies but requires authentic community engagement. The University of Toronto has implemented working groups that collect input from all corners of the university, ensuring that diverse voices influence policy-making. This participatory approach helps build trust, especially in times of social or political tension.

In illustrating practical applications, she shared initiatives designed to support underrepresented groups, such as Black and Indigenous PhD fellowships and targeted transitional programs that lower entry barriers without altering academic standards. These programs exemplify creative, targeted interventions that enhance access and representation.

Her keynote also offered a reflection on lessons learned:

- Prioritize Process Over Product: The path to sustainable DEIB work is more significant than the final outcome, as it allows for continuous learning and adaptation.
- Iterative Policy Review: DEIB policies should not be static. Regular feedback loops and updates ensure that practices remain relevant and responsive to emerging needs.
- Inclusive Leadership as a Catalyst: Leaders must not only endorse DEIB but actively embody its principles, modeling the behaviors and commitments they wish to see.

The Q&A session following the keynote brought further clarity to the application of her ideas. One question addressed how traditional metrics of excellence could exclude diverse candidates. Prof. Hannah-Moffat elaborated on the training provided to hiring committees to recognize and mitigate these biases. Another query focused on handling antisemitism and campus conflicts, to which she responded by outlining the importance of balancing academic freedom with respectful community discourse. Appointing advisers on civil dialogue and fostering safe, moderated spaces for discussion were among her recommendations.

Prof. Hannah-Moffat concluded by reinforcing that the journey toward belonging is ongoing. Institutions must be prepared to navigate discomfort and adapt strategies over time, ensuring that DEIB becomes a resilient, integral part of the academic culture.

3. Case Studies presented and Challenges identified

These case studies collectively exemplify the diverse approaches needed to embed belonging in academic institutions. Each initiative highlights specific challenges—whether related to scalability, resource allocation, or intersectional considerations—that are crucial to understanding the practical implementation of DEIB strategies.

Case Study 1: Robert Koch Institute (RKI) – Structuring a Welcome Office

Ulrike Schulz & Aurélie Rosso from Robert Koch Institute (RKI) presented the RIO (RKI International Office) project, which serves as a successor to the Partnership in Postgraduate Education (PPE) program. Building



on its previous experiences, RIO was developed to enhance the institute's capacity for supporting international researchers. The project aims to establish a structured welcome culture for guest researchers, focusing on providing logistical, technical, and personal support.

Key Objectives:

- Streamline support systems for visiting researchers through centralized coordination.
- Promote international academic exchange by awarding scholarships.
- Collaborate efficiently with external service providers for accommodation, transportation, and other essentials.

Identified Challenges:

- Balancing Support: One of the most significant challenges has been finding the right balance in
 providing support. There were instances of over- and under-serving guest researchers and hosting
 units, leading to varying levels of satisfaction. This raised the question of how best to cater to
 guests' diverse professional and cultural backgrounds.
- Complex Structures and Processes: Operating within a government agency, the RKI faces restrictions that impact procedural flexibility. This complexity poses difficulties in embedding RIO within existing frameworks.
- Scalability: As RIO looks to expand, determining which services to prioritize and how to scale its offerings sustainably is a pressing concern. Ensuring that services align with regulatory processes while maintaining quality is another hurdle.

This case underscores the theme of translating inclusion into belonging. By tackling issues of balance, complexity, and scale, RIO's work at the RKI reflects broader DEIB discussions focused on building comprehensive, adaptable structures that integrate newcomers into academic communities seamlessly.

Case Study 2: Max Planck Institute for Human Development (MPIB) – Diversity Audit Implementation

Daniela Petrosino presented MPIB's initiative to conduct a comprehensive diversity audit, supported by the Max Planck Society's Diversity Excellence Fund. This audit aimed to evaluate the current state of diversity and identify potential discriminatory structures, focusing on gender, ethnicity, religion, and disability.

Key Objectives:

- Assess the status quo of diversity within MPIB.
- Highlight structural biases and suggest improvements.
- Engage stakeholders through workshops, interviews, and focus groups to gather comprehensive data.

Identified Challenges:

- Leadership Engagement: Gaining the full participation and buy-in from leadership has been challenging, as competing priorities often push DEI efforts to the background.
- Sustaining Collective Responsibility: Inspiring ongoing participation and creating a shared sense of responsibility proved difficult, particularly given time constraints and other pressing tasks.
- Implementation Uncertainty: The process for ensuring that audit findings translate into actionable post-audit initiatives remains unclear, exacerbated by staff turnover.
- Intersectionality: Maintaining an intersectional perspective is complex, as there is no universal approach to tackling multiple, overlapping forms of discrimination.



MPIB's audit aligns with the workshop's emphasis on actionable DEIB strategies that move beyond surface-level diversity. By addressing leadership involvement and sustainable action plans, this project echoes the necessity for systemic change rooted in transparent evaluation and committed follow-through.

Case Study 3: Max Planck Institute for the History of Science (MPIWG) – Public Communication Strategy

Stephanie Hood introduced MPIWG's project aimed at developing an inclusive public communication strategy, backed by the Diversity Excellence Fund. The project's primary goal was to create communication practices that represent diverse voices and perspectives, ensuring that research in the humanities reaches a broader audience.

Key Objectives:

- Design an inclusive public communications strategy that can serve as a model for other Max Planck Institutes.
- Run pilot programs internally to build DEIB initiatives and develop a roadmap for long-term strategy implementation.

Identified Challenges:

- Resource Limitations: With a small core communications team and limited additional staff, the scope of the project is constrained. This challenge is amplified by the need for content to be multilingual and accessible to people with disabilities.
- Balancing DEIB and Institutional Communication: Managing simultaneous DEIB measures alongside regular communication responsibilities presents an imbalance that requires strategic planning.
- Internal Decision-Making: Establishing effective internal dialogue and decision-making structures, such as advisory boards and feedback systems, is essential but challenging.
- External Collaborations: Securing partnerships with consultants and forming external advisory boards to support the initiative adds complexity to the project.

MPIWG's initiative reflects on how DEIB efforts must extend beyond internal practices to influence external communication. The project's focus on inclusive representation aligns with the goal of not just including diverse voices but amplifying them to shape public discourse.

4. Working Group Output: Solutions & General Conclusions

Reverse Brainstorming Methodology

During the workshop, participants engaged in a reverse brainstorming session aimed at deeply understanding DEIB challenges related to their assigned case studies. This method involved first amplifying the problems to see how they could worsen its effects, followed by a shift to solution-oriented thinking on the inflated problems. This dual approach allowed each group to explore potential solutions with a heightened awareness of the stakes. The results were shared in a gallery walk, facilitating cross-group learning and fostering a collaborative environment.

Working Group 1: RKI Case Study – Structuring a Welcome Office

The RKI working group tackled the complexities of developing the RIO (RKI International Office) to support international guest researchers. Key issues included balancing levels of support and ensuring services were culturally attuned yet equitable.



Challenges Explored:

- Inconsistent Support Across Units: Participants noted variability in support, leading to perceived inequities that could impact guest researchers' experiences.
- Regulatory Constraints: The RKI's status as a government agency imposes procedural restrictions that make embedding DEIB policies more difficult.
- Scaling Services: Determining which services should be prioritized when scaling the RIO Welcome Office while maintaining quality and resource management was a central challenge.

Key Solutions Proposed:

- Implementing a tiered service model (light, medium, full) to tailor support to guest researchers' specific needs.
- Leveraging guest feedback and testimonials to demonstrate the importance of the welcome office and refine its services.
- Aligning training and workshops with regulatory guidelines to ease policy implementation.

Working Group 2: MPIB Case Study – Implementing a Diversity Audit

The MPIB team examined their diversity audit initiative, which aimed to evaluate existing DEIB structures and identify discriminatory practices. The focus was on ensuring leadership commitment and maintaining momentum through implementation.

Challenges Discussed:

- Leadership Engagement: Securing full participation from leaders was a challenge due to competing institutional priorities, which diluted DEIB focus.
- Documentation and Continuity: The lack of systematic documentation risked losing progress, particularly during staff changes.
- Collective Responsibility: Creating a culture where DEIB was seen as a shared responsibility, not just an added task, was challenging, especially given time constraints.

Key Solutions Proposed:

- Establishing transparent communication channels for continuous dialogue, recognizing that sustained discussions often lead to deeper understanding and solutions.
- Using AI tools for efficient documentation and dissemination of findings to key stakeholders, ensuring continuity and accessibility.
- Setting SMART targets and forming dedicated working groups to oversee these goals, enhancing collective responsibility and accountability.

Working Group 3: MPIWG Case Study – Public Communication Strategy

The MPIWG group focused on creating an inclusive public communication strategy to amplify diverse voices and perspectives within the field of humanities and social sciences.

Key Challenges Identified:

- Resource Constraints: The team highlighted the limited size and diversity of the communications staff, complicating the execution of comprehensive strategies.
- Simultaneous DEIB Implementation: Balancing the roll-out of internal DEIB measures with public communication duties was seen as a significant hurdle.



• Decision-Making Structures: Establishing effective internal dialogue and decision-making processes, such as advisory boards, was necessary but complex.

Key Solutions Proposed

- Developing mentoring programs and networking opportunities to empower diverse staff and ensure their representation in communication efforts.
- Forming external advisory boards with DEIB consultants to provide guidance and accountability in strategy development.
- Prioritizing the use of inclusive language and culturally adaptive content to reach broader, more diverse audiences.

General Conclusions of the Working Groups

The collective findings from the working groups emphasized that successful DEIB policy implementation relies on strategic, sustained efforts and proactive leadership. Prof. Kelly Hannah-Moffat underscored that belonging requires ongoing engagement, adaptability, and shared responsibility across institutional levels, aligning with the groups' solutions.

- Leadership Commitment: All groups highlighted the importance of leadership buy-in. Prof. Hannah-Moffat stressed visible support and modeling of DEIB practices, echoed by MPIB's struggles with leadership engagement and the need for accountability structures like public commitments and transparent reporting.
- Process Over Product: The discussions showed that continuous dialogue and iterative strategies are as important as outcomes. Maintaining adaptable approaches through workshops and strategic documentation was seen as crucial for long-term change.
- Community Engagement: Trust-building, highlighted by Prof. Hannah-Moffat, was reflected in the RKI group's use of guest feedback and transparent communication to move from inclusion to belonging.
- Resource and Structural Barriers: The MPIWG group's resource limitations illustrated the importance of creative use of existing assets and building partnerships, supporting Hannah-Moffat's view on leveraging external collaboration to strengthen DEIB initiatives.

In conclusion, the working groups demonstrated that adaptive strategies, committed leadership, and continuous engagement are key to overcoming policy challenges. Prof. Hannah-Moffat's main message reinforced this: sustainable DEIB requires a culture of belonging, with active participation from all members.

5. Access the presentations

Due to size, the presentations can be accessed by contacting DiGENet@berlin-university-alliance.de

If you did not (yet) participate in the evaluation of our workshop, we'd encourage you to do so by following this QR or following this link.



Thank you for making our workshop and events better! We appreciate your participation and commitment and thank you for contributing to the success of this workshop. Stay tuned for more!

This documentation was prepared by Christian Richter for BUA DiGENet (<u>DiGENet@berlin-university-alliance.de</u>). For any inquiries or further information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Annex

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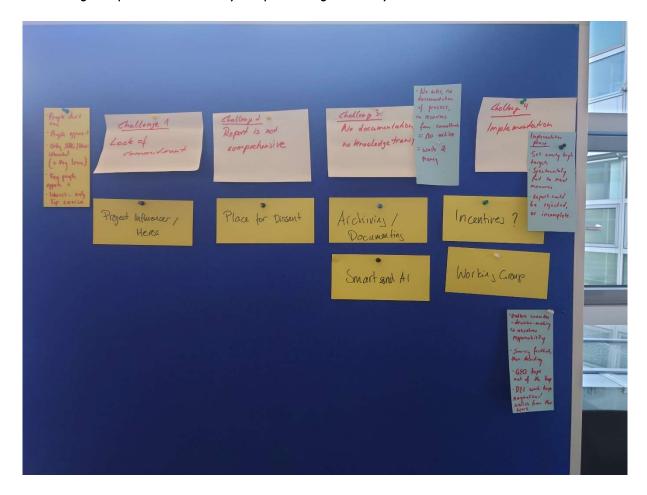
Annex

2a Working Group 1: RKI Case Study – Structuring a Welcome Office



Annex

2b Working Group 2: MPIB Case Study – Implementing a Diversity Audit



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2c Working Group 3: MPIWG Case Study – Public Communication Strategy

