EASL Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Policy Statement

Introduction

The European Association for the Study of the Liver (EASL) aims to foster excellence in liver research, clinical practice, and education. Embracing diversity and supporting excellence across all dimensions of identity and experience, including but not limited to sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity/race, nationality, religion, disability, socio-economic background, neurodiversity, and age is crucial to EASL's mission of becoming the Home of Hepatology for everyone engaged in beating liver disease. EASL recognises that enhanced diversity and equitable representation improves creative thinking in science and education, facilitates cross-border collaborations, and ensures that all members of the global community see their liver health needs met.

EASL is committed to creating an inclusive environment that respects and values all members, including those from the LGBTQI+ community, underrepresented ethnic groups, and individuals from low- and middle-income countries. The association enforces a strict zero-tolerance policy towards discrimination, harassment, and/or exclusionary behaviour.

Policy Overview

The Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) policy spans both internal governance and external activities, shaping the framework for EASL's operations, events, and activities. In alignment with the EASL mission, the policy focuses on the following four pillars:

Education
- Bursaries: provide bursaries and educational opportunities that foster inclusivity in learning and professional growth.
- Inclusive learning: ensure diverse representation in educational programmes and mentorship initiatives.

Advocacy
- Advocacy: advocate for policy changes and publish position statements that address and reduce liver-health disparities across the globe.
- Recognition: showcase initiatives that demonstrate strong implementation of EASL's EDI principles, by endorsing them through an official "EASL EDI stamp".

Science
- Inclusive awards: promote fellowships and awards that are accessible to all members, ensuring selection processes are free from bias.
- Equitable events: organise scientific events that are inclusive in content, speaker diversity, accessibility, and location.

- Research focus: encourage research on disparities in health risks, access, and outcomes.
- Uphold diversity-focused editorial practices in EASL journals and clinical practice guidelines.

Leadership
- Equitable governance: ensure equitable representation in EASL's governance, including the Governing Board, Committees, Task Forces, and Working Groups.
- Diversity goals: apply gender diversity and geographic diversity requirements in leadership roles.
- Guidance: offer guidance on recognising and addressing bias, stigma, discrimination and inappropriate behaviour.
- Reduce barriers: ensure equitable opportunities for participation in EASL activities by reducing socio-economic barriers.
- Address policy violations: to uphold these principles, EASL has established clear procedures for addressing violations of this policy:
    - Reporting Mechanism: Members can confidentially report any incidents of discrimination, harassment, or policy violations via a dedicated EDI email (governance@easloffice.eu).
    - Oversight: A designated EDI Committee, comprising trained representatives, will review complaints, ensure impartiality, and oversee resolution.
    - Consequences: Violations may result in formal warnings, revocation of membership privileges, removal from leadership positions, or exclusion from events, depending on the severity of the breach.
    - Transparency: EASL is committed to transparent procedures to affected parties.

Current EDI practices

EASL already incorporates many EDI principles across its core areas of operation, including Governance, Events, Membership, and Education. These practices aim to ensure fair representation, accessibility, and inclusivity for all members, regardless of their backgrounds or career stages. By embedding EDI into these activities, EASL strives to create a professional environment that reflects the diversity of its community while fostering innovation and collaboration.

Governance

EASL's Articles of Association mandates key principles for the composition of the EASL Governing Board to ensure the breadth of European science. These principles include:
- **Sex and Gender Diversity:** Ensure that no single gender identity constitutes more than 2/3 of the Governing Bodies (including but not limited to: the

Scientific Committee, the Management Committee, the Education Committee, etc.).

- **Geographic Diversity:** The Scientific Committee consists of 8 members, all of whom should reside in a different European country. For all other Governing Bodies, positions should ideally be filled by individuals from a variety of European countries.
- **Parental Leave:** Age eligibility for the Governing Board, Committees, Task Forces and Working Groups account for parental leave, in line with European Commission standards (18 months per child for mothers and proportional time for fathers).

In addition to the principles applied to the EASL Governing Board, Committees, Task Forces and Working Groups, the diversity and equity principles extend to EASL office staff.

Events

EASL is committed to ensuring diversity and accessibility in its Congress, Summits and other EASL-organised events.

Participation and Accessibility
- **Family-Friendly facilities:** Provide lactation and breastfeeding rooms and on-site childcare to support working parents.
- **Religious inclusivity:** Ensure the availability of prayer rooms at event venues.
- **Socio-Economic inclusion:** Offer reduced registration fees for attendees from low- and middle-income countries minimising financial barriers for participation.
- **Career-stage diversity:** Offer reduced registration fees for undergraduate students, trainees & postgraduate students. Through bursaries support trainees & Postgraduate students, by providing them with free event registration, and financial travel and accommodation support.
- **Disability access:** Implement accessibility-focused facilities for all participants (e.g., language support, visual and physical accessibility at events).

Representation
- **Gender parity:** Ensure that no single gender identity constitutes more than 2/3 of speakers and chairs at EASL events.
- **Faculty database:** Maintain an inclusive faculty database to support diverse representation based on expertise, gender identity, ethnicity, and geographical background.
- **Underrepresented groups:** Actively include speakers and chairs from underrepresented groups, considering ethnicity, nationality, age, and other diversity dimensions.

Monitoring

- Document and report diversity and equity statistics for all events annually.
- Encourage satellite symposia, endorsed events, and consortia to adopt EASL's diversity guidelines.
- After each event, collect participant feedback regarding diversity, accessibility and inclusion efforts

Membership

- **Socio-Economic inclusion:** Offer reduced membership fees for attendees from low- and middle-income countries.
- **Career-stage diversity:** Offer reduced membership fees for undergraduate students, trainees & postgraduate students.
- **Interprofessional inclusion:** Offer reduced membership fees for nurses and allied health professionals.

Education:

- **Gender parity:** Ensure that no single gender identity constitutes more than 2/3 by speakers and chairs at EASL educational activities.
- **Faculty database:** Maintain an inclusive faculty database for educational activities to support diverse representation based on expertise, gender identity, ethnicity, and geographical background.
- **Parental leave:** Age eligibility for EASL Schools, Mentorship, Fellowship and Award programmes account for parental leave, in line with European Commission standards (18 months per child for mothers and proportional time for fathers).

Policy, Public Health, and Advocacy:

- Ensure that EASL policy statements integrate EDI, continue the support and publication of scientific papers focusing on inequities in healthcare and improving equitable practices in liver health. For example:
  - [EASL Policy Statement: Addressing the Liver Health Needs of Migrant Populations in Europe](#)

EASL recognises the importance of addressing both immediate and long-term objectives to enhance equity, diversity, and inclusion. Short-term goals are designed to be actionable and attainable in the near future, leveraging current resources and capacities. These initiatives lay the foundation for sustainable change. Conversely, long-term goals represent more ambitious aspirations that require ongoing effort, innovation, and commitment over time. Together, these objectives ensure continuous progress toward a fully inclusive environment.

Short-Term Goals

To ensure appropriate implementation of EASL's EDI policy, EASL is actively pursuing the following immediate goals:

1. Enhance diversity within EASL governance positions, ensuring inclusive and bias-free language in call applications.
2. Ensure inclusive representation among faculty at all EASL events, addressing gender, age, and country balance.
3. Strengthening financial support mechanisms (e.g., reduced membership and event fees) to individuals from low-income economies, trainees, nurses, allied health professionals, and underrepresented groups.
4. Implement systematic data collection on diversity metrics and gather member feedback through surveys to assess and improve inclusion efforts (KPIs for measuring diversity and inclusion).
5. Celebrate cultural heritage events such as Black History Month, Pride Month, and International Women's Day.
6. Dedicate resources to global advocacy for equitable liver disease treatment, especially in resource-limited regions.
7. Publish a yearly transparency report summarising progress, challenges, and key metrics related to the various EDI efforts.

Long-Term Goals (Sustained Progress)

To further its mission, EASL is committed to:
- Conducting workshops and training sessions on unconscious bias, cultural competence, and inclusive leadership.
- Developing educational resources addressing health disparities and inclusive care practices.
- Collaborating with global organisations targeting underrepresented populations.
- Establishing mentorship and leadership development programmes for underrepresented members.
- Regularly updating EDI strategies based on new research and member feedback.
- Highlighting success stories that demonstrate inclusivity within EASL.

EDI Working Group

EASL has established an EDI Working Group composed of diverse members representing different countries, ethnicities, genders, and sexual orientations. The group is tasked with:
- Reviewing and updating the EDI policy biennially.
- Ensuring all EASL activities and decisions align with EDI principles.

To ensure the appropriate implementation of its EDI policy, EASL monitors progress through systematic data collection, annual reporting, and feedback mechanisms. By gathering data on diversity metrics, such as gender representation and participation from underrepresented groups, the Working Group can assess whether the goals outlined in the policy are being met.

Additionally, regular member surveys provide valuable insights into the perceived inclusivity of EASL's activities, enabling continuous improvement. The Working Group is committed to transparency, with findings and updates shared openly to encourage accountability and engagement from all stakeholders.

EASL's commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion is a continuous effort. By fostering a culture of inclusivity, EASL aims to advance excellence in research, clinical practice, and education within hepatology.