

VVI Diversity and Inclusion Committee

Mission statement

Introduction and Background

The Van Vollenhoven Institute for Law, Governance and Society (VVI) established the first Diversity and Inclusion Committee (DVI) of Leiden Law School in November 2020. The purpose of the Committee is to provide a space to develop and strengthen VVI's research, teaching, and workplace culture in terms of justice, equity, and inclusion. The Committee catalyzes critical dialogues and supports the VVI in moving beyond buzzwords toward concrete action both within and outside our institution.

The DVI Committee circulated a survey to all staff members in March 2021 to gather their perspectives and understandings of diversity and inclusion, as well as their practices and concerns to three areas of work: teaching, research, and work environment. This mission statement reflects their responses and helped to define the DVI's mandate.

Core Principles

The VVI's namesake, Cornelis van Vollenhoven, was a Leiden law professor who contested Eurocentrism and supremacy despite the prevailing opinions of his time, but stopped short of opposing colonial authority. In reconsidering his legacy and its significance with regard to the Institute's commitment to pursuing socio-legal knowledge in the interest of social justice, the VVI approaches diversity and inclusion as core values to be integrated into our teaching, research, and contribution to Leiden Law School. This means respecting all staff, students and guests regardless of their countries of origin, religion, gender, language, sexual orientation, disability, age, skin color and political ideology. It also means taking seriously our role in larger institutions and societies that may not share our values.

Based on the survey responses, we identified several areas of work where the DVI Committee can take action; these are mainly related to teaching, research and work environment. The DVI Committee will work towards fostering an inclusive environment in all three areas where equality, equity, empathy and representation are our guiding principles. For matters beyond our level of responsibility, we see this committee as a facilitator who can listen to the VVI members' suggestions and concerns and communicate them to the Management Board.

Program of Work

In 2021-2022, the DVI is engaged in several projects aimed at deepening the conversation about diversity, equity, and inclusion at VVI. This includes: (1) A year-long symposium dedicated to critically exploring the role of socio-legal scholarship at Leiden Law School during the colonial period, as well as the meaning and value of socio-legal research with regard to the social justice "horizons" of diversity, decolonization, and development today; (2) Ongoing teaching meetings and trainings dedicated to addressing diversity and inclusion in the classroom; (3) Ongoing dialogues about developing policies to advance a more equitable workplace; and (4) An ongoing anonymous "suggestion box" that can be used to address issues that come up throughout the year.