

# WW2, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVITY

Stichting Musea en  
Herinneringscentra

40

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## Improving museum Education

KWIE

WW2, Diversity and Inclusivity is a translated extract of a Dutch publication produced during the two-year programme Improving Museum Education (KWIE, 2018-2020). In this programme fourteen WW2 museums worked together to improve the overall quality of museum education in organisations that deal with the Second World War. Improving Museum Education is an initiative of the Museums and Memorial Centres 40-45 Foundation (SMH).

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# WHY IS DIVERSITY RELEVANT FOR ORGANISATIONS DEALING WITH THE HISTORY OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR?

How do we, as organisations who deal with the history of the Second World War, remain relevant in the future? This is a question that was posed countless times in meetings during the two-year programme Improving Museum Education (KWIE, 2018-2020). Our society is diverse, but some of our potential visitors do not feel involved or connected with our field, either as visitors or as employees. How can memorial centres and museums on the Second World War change that and evolve with their diverse society?

According to Code Diversity & Inclusivity<sup>1</sup>, which is supported by the Dutch Museum Association, this means that museums have to react to the diversity in society. This can be done by making work, products, services and organisations available to everyone; a necessary step to safeguard the relevance, meaning and support of organisations.

Inclusivity is an essential part of the social function of WW2 organisations. The Dutch organisations connected to the Museums and Memorial Centres 40-45 Foundation (SMH) are part of the larger museum world and should put the Code Diversity & Inclusivity central in their plans and policies.

Every day, WW2 museums work to reach visitors and inform and move them with stories, objects and places that deal with WW2 heritage and (de)colonisation. Their goal is, amongst others, to:

- give insight in how processes of exclusion, prejudice and stereotyping work;
- stimulate a critical and open attitude towards different perspectives;
- help to reflect on people's own identity and responsibility in making choices;
- to connect and to enrich.

<sup>1</sup> <https://codedi.nl/>

This document is an abbreviated version of a Dutch publication. It will touch on themes of diversity and inclusivity and give examples of how Dutch WW2 museums tackle these issues. Important to note is that this document is, and will remain, a work-in progress. The WW2 museums, and with them many organisations, are right in the middle of improving their policies on inclusivity and want to keep learning and improving from these and other developments.

# DEFINITIONS

## 1. Diversity

Diversity is a given: it is a reflection of society. People are alike or differ based on visible and invisible characteristics. All of these characteristics together form someone's identity. At the same time, differences can impact someone's position and opportunities in society and subconsciously influence their way of thinking and acting.

Differences exist based on:

- Ethnicity (cultural diversity)
- Gender (sex and gender diversity)
- Special needs (hearing or visual impairments, psychological issues, war trauma's etc.)
- Sexual orientation
- Religion and ideology
- Social economic status (material means, skills, capacities and knowledge, social network, status, and power)
- Education
- Age
- Nationality

What does this mean for WW2 organisations? That means that diversity should be represented in the four different P's of the museum:

<b>Personnel</b>	management, employees, board
<b>Partners</b>	people and organisations that work with the museum and receive assignments
<b>Programme</b>	events, exhibitions and productions
<b>Public</b>	visitors and users

## CASE

In which ways can the museum be made more accessible to people with a hearing or visual impairment?

**Resistance Museum Amsterdam** has won the Raak Stimuleringsprijs during the preparations for their new exhibition. In 2022 the Resistance Museum wants to be the most accessible museum in the Netherlands for **visitors with a hearing or visual impairments**. The museum focuses on people who are able to visit the museum without assistance. Their goal is to offer **a complete museum experience**. Visitors with a visual impairment will be aided by **a guiding line past authentic historical objects that can be touched, such as a typewriter, a mechanically powered flashlight, and components for a printing press used for illegal press**. There will be a **special audio tour** which narrates what is on show. The design of the exhibition will include many contrast colours to make visits easier for visitors with decreased visual ability. For visitors with hearing impairments there will be a **multimedia tour accompanied by an interpreter**. In addition, an audio induction loop will be installed. Finally, the exhibition will include **personal stories of people (in the resistance) who had special needs**.

## 2. Accessibility

Inclusivity means accessibility for everyone. Not just access to the museum's building, but in programming, products, and presentation as well. These base principles for accessibility, personal autonomy, and complete participation are included in the European Convention on Human Rights which was ratified in January 2017.

Accessibility includes:

- Physical accessibility: such as offering seating and being able to access all facilities and exhibition spaces.
- Information accessibility: the manner in which everyone has access to the same information through guides, texts, and interactives as well as instructions on routing, distances and time.
- Social accessibility: feeling welcome and respected and being able to afford participating.

## CASE

How do you make sure people with functional illiteracy have access to the information the museum has to offer?

**Herinneringscentrum Kamp Westerbork** receives many visitors who are not used to visiting museums and for whom the extensive museum texts are a challenge and make understanding the stories more difficult. With support from the **Royal Library**, Herinneringscentrum Kamp Westerbork is working on **a separate layer of information for those with functional illiteracy**. In this way, the memorial centre takes care that its collection, stories and especially the location of Kamp Westerbork is accessible to all. Special attention is paid to the way in which this layer is advertised and communicated so visitors do not feel stigmatised when making use of it.

*#accessibility #texts*

### 3. Inclusivity

Being inclusive is a choice. Inclusivity is how you choose to deal with differences and similarities. It is essential that differences are embraced. In an inclusive organisation everyone is able to be themselves; they feel safe, respected, represented and appreciated.

How? By testing diversity and accessibility in the organisation and comparing a current and an ideal situation. Visualise your current diversity representation for all four P's. Try to formulate goals that the organisation wants to achieve in the next years.

Museums and memorial centres have the 'authority' to construct an institutional 'truth'. However, the way history is written and commemorated changes and is different for every individual. It is important to realise that the past –which is represented in museums and memorial centres– is not inclusive. In order to tell a story with multiple perspectives and show more inclusive collections, it is essential to include the groups involved in this history and to give them a voice. This means that existing structures as well as artistic and content norms and relationships need to be broken to realise change.

#### **Making it work: cooperation, participation and co-creation**

Inclusion means using diversity and sharing the stage.

Cooperation, participation and co-creation on the basis of reciprocity is crucial in this process. It means that everyone is allowed to share ideas and join in the decision making. In this way a community's vision can be included in all kinds of ways in the organisation, for instance, in policy and collection

strategies, exhibitions, programming and product development (relevant themes or speakers), communication (language and tone) and the way in which facilities are offered. Eventually, this will create a shared authority, which prevents exclusion as much as possible.

Inclusion is a structural process of change. An inclusive organisation is an organisation in which everyone makes an effort and takes responsibility to think and act inclusively. Investing in inclusivity is the only way to make inclusivity possible and to stay relevant for a broad audience in the long run.

## CASE

How do you ensure the visibility of stories of different groups connected to a place or a shared history?

**The Indisch Herinneringscentrum (IHC)** works closely with international partners such as Komunitas Salihara in Jakarta, DutchCulture, artists, and scholars in the **co-creation project My Story, Shared History**. From the perspective of the younger generation, the IHC tells stories about the past and the present on colonialism, the Second World War, and migration. It shows how **the past continues into the present** by making the **diverse history** of the Netherlands and Indonesia visible through **personal** and **family stories** of young writers, performers, visual artists, and photographers from the Netherlands (with a Dutch East Indies family history) and Indonesia. During a workshop week they listened to each other's stories and got to know each other's perspectives before getting to work. These **multidisciplinary co-creations** were on show in the Netherlands and Indonesia and formed a starting point for conversations with the audience. In My Story, Shared History the partners want to increase the knowledge about a many-sided history, offer insight in each other's perspectives, and start a productive debate. New perspectives are included in the development of a semi-permanent exhibition that will be available to a broad audience.

*#internationalcooperation #voices #multiperspective #sharedhistory #cocreation*

## CASE

How do you ensure the visibility of stories of different groups connected to a place or a shared history?

**Airborne Museum at Hartenstein** tells the story of the Battle of Arnhem as part of Operation Market Garden. The goal of this operation was to conquer the important bridges over Dutch rivers and canals by British, American, and Polish airlanding troops so ground troops could advance over these bridges. Unfortunately, the operation failed. The efforts of

the Polish troops are often neglected. To give much deserved attention to the efforts of the Polish Brigade the museum worked together with Stichting Driel-Polen. They also interviewed veterans and worked with documentary maker Geert-Jan Lassche (EO) who made a documentary about the Polish during Operation Market Garden. Moreover, the Polish Embassy was asked for advice and research was done in the archives of the Polish Institute and the Sikorski Museum. Finally, the museum's audio tour is also available in Polish to make the information accessible to Polish visitors.

*#voices #multiperspective*



# CHALLENGES

The process of creating a more inclusive field of Second World War museums has been ongoing for a while. The organisations have a dedicated following of eyewitnesses (civilians and veterans) of the Second World War and the colonial war, as well as children, grandchildren and interested parties. At the same time, they aim to be relevant for a broad and diverse audience and are working to recruit diverse personnel as well.

Many organisations are working on new exhibitions and projects and programming are developed with new audiences and partners. During these processes organisations try to be mindful of diversity, inclusivity and accessibility. The level of cooperation differs per organisation and project, ranging from response groups, platforms or co-creation.

This poses a couple challenges as well.

## 1. Integration

The challenge is in changing thoughts, behaviour and action in everyone in the organisation; ranging from people who work the floors to decisionmakers in management. This is not just an extra step that needs to be made, but an indispensable part of the day to day operations that needs to be present in every layer of the organisation. Right now, education employees are often made responsible for the organisation being inclusive. It is often seen as an 'educational project'. However, an inclusive organisation is an organisation in which every employee takes personal action and responsibility to act and think more inclusively. This means a structural change that needs to be instituted top to bottom.

## 2. Investing in change

Working towards a more inclusive organisation means that you need to structurally invest time, budget and people to realise it, especially at the start. This is necessary to realise projects that try out and test new partnerships, audiences and working methods. Based on evaluations, you can make follow up decisions. It offers institutions the possibility to explore how they can create a more inclusive organisation and get support from within and outside of the organisation. This remains a challenge for small and medium size Second World War organisations. However, inclusion is a choice.

### 3. Connecting to current events

As a result of globalisation and migration people, cultures, and thoughts travel at a completely new speed. The Second World War organisations are faced with the challenge to make a meaningful connection between local and individual WW2 experiences and stories and events on a global scale. Second World War history has plenty of starting points to discuss important themes in the present such as identity, freedom (or lack thereof), and exclusion. While making these connections, it is important not to lose sight of the historical complexity of the Second World War, the Holocaust and (de)colonisation. At the same time, it offers opportunities to connect with audiences.

#### CASE

How do you show the current relevance of significantly important WW2 locations?

Within the two-year programme Improving Museum Education (KWIE), the memorial centres Vught, Westerbork, and Amersfoort, the [Indisch Herinneringscentrum \(IHC\)](#), and the National Holocaust Museum created the educational programme [Plekken met een verhaal \(locations with a story\)](#). This project was realised in cooperation with teachers and students from post-secondary vocational education who are taking citizenship education. Through stories from eyewitnesses, multiperspective approaches, dilemma's and choices, and other interactive assignments, the students gain knowledge of historical locations and what they mean to them. At the IHC [identity is the central theme](#) and this is used as an introduction to the current diversity in our society. Students learn about the role of identity in [the Dutch East Indies](#), explore the origins of the [multicultural society of the Netherlands](#) and the way [media shaped the representation](#) of the over 300.000 people who migrated to the Netherlands from the Dutch East Indies after the war. How do you as a student relate to this 75-year-old history, is one of the central questions of this programme. Together with photographer Armando Ello an exercise has been developed about identity, representation, and choices.

[#MBO](#) [#diversity](#) [#citizenship](#) [#image](#)

# STEPS TO INCLUSIVITY

Many tips and tricks were mentioned during expert meetings, work visits, and conversations with education specialists. This can help to make your organisation more inclusive. Find more advice below.

## 1. Form a project group

Form a project group with employees and volunteers who would like to represent the different branches within the museum (or get someone from every branch). The project group starts with formulating a vision, a policy, and a work plan to improve on diversity and inclusivity. The project group also aims to get support from others within and outside of the organisation. They explore partnerships and evaluate what the organisation needs to be more inclusive.

### CASE

How do you make sure inclusivity is implemented in the museum?

The **Fries Verzetsmuseum** is part of the Fries Museum. Within the museum a **project group** was organised to discuss how to **implement the Code Diversity & Inclusion** and total accessibility. Every department sent a representative to the project group.

*#projectgroup #implementation #diversity #inclusion*

## 2. Start with a baseline

Where is the organisation at right now? What are strong points and what could be improved upon? What are blind spots in regards to representation and diversity? A baseline can make clear if the organisation is making progress.

How can you do this?

- By following the visitors' journey (the visitor's route inside and outside the museum). By following their journey you gain insight into the strong and weaker points of the organisation (a quick scan). To do this, make use of a mystery guest or try to immerse yourself in one of the target audiences. When immersing yourself in groups with impairments, try to block senses they lack to really do this exercise effectively. Choose a weekly subject to do a quick scan on. What do you encounter and which things do you miss? What can you improve upon immediately?
- Training unconscious bias. Unconscious prejudices influence your thinking and acting and contribute to a

lack of accessibility and representation of diversity in the organisation. Make these unconscious prejudices visible. The Dutch platform for inclusion, Studio i, connects museums and trainers to discuss unconscious bias and privilege. Train the members of your project group and management to inspire change in the entire organisation.

### 3. Set goals

Let the project team formulate a vision, a mission, and goals for diversity and inclusivity in the organisation. Describe the process to make results concrete for the four P's: personnel, partners, programming and public. Stay aware of the region and context in which your organisation operates. Determine the most relevant perspectives and changes. What is the desired situation? What needs to change to make that happen? Which perspectives are missing or are neglected? Test this vision with the board, management and colleagues. Share your blind spots. Every department should make a concrete plan to implement change. This can be met with resistance from within and outside the museum. Keep talking about the process and the emotions this could call up. And most importantly: start. We learn by doing.

#### Personnel

Is the organisation accessible for diversity in society? Which steps need to be taken to reach this diversity? Research which facilities are needed to make the organisation accessible for different groups. Involve your personnel and the audience in the decision making process, and be sure to train your personnel as well. They need to gain more knowledge and skills to be more inclusive.

#### Partnerships

Do your current partners share your vision on diversity and inclusivity? Discover which partners and networks can broaden the perspective of the organisation and want to share in your organisation's vision. For example:

- Decide how you want to work. Make a plan with your target audience and involve them from the start. Make sure you have feedback meetings throughout the different phases of making a new programming or products. Make programming or products *with* this group rather than *about* them.
- Make sure your partnership is durable. Do not put too much

effort in one-time partnerships. Instead, try to develop programming throughout the year in which you work together. Make sure partners and networks feel welcome year-round and feel connected to the museum's other efforts as well.

- Try different approaches to partnerships. Try to use intersections as a starting point for working together and do so with different disciplines, cultures and generations.

### **Programming**

Include more perspectives in your programming by working with a diverse project team, response group and partners. Response groups and partners who have experience and connections in your target audience, can offer new insights, perspectives and themes that can be taken into account during the process of making an exhibition. They can also contribute at decision moments and fill in possible blind spots the project team might have. It is important, as exhibition maker, to keep reflecting on your own thoughts and actions, blind spots, and (unconscious) prejudices. Evaluate the programme and find out how it was received by partners and the public.

### **Quick wins**

- Organise a *Board of Inspiration* with experts from diverse backgrounds and your target audience who advise on diversity, inclusivity, and representation during projects.
- Use emotion networking. Including multiple interpretations, perspectives and visions on a story or an historical object create a more rounded narrative. Using emotion networking you can visualise which interpretations and visions are currently told in the exhibition, for instance, about gender or ethnicity. Using this method, all stakeholders and emotions that are involved can be visualised. Make goals quantifiable: what standards does the next exhibition need to meet? Which and how many different perspectives need to be included?

### **Public**

Find out which groups are visiting the museum. Investigate how accessible the programming and the organisation are and how this affects potential audiences.

### Quick wins:

- Make informed decisions on language, terminology, and tone. Have an advisory group proofread your texts at an early stage. Evaluate your current texts and change them if your feedback shows you need to.
- Train your personnel to have a pro-active attitude. In an ideal world, personnel on the floor can discover if a visitor has special needs. Not every visitor likes to talk about their limitations at the start of a museum visit. Inform the visitor about the size of the museum, if there is an outdoor space, if and when they need to use stairs, where the elevator is, and where possible aids can be found. This can help the visitor plan their own visit.
- Invest in subtitles for (online) audio-visuals. Many exhibitions show audio or video material. Make these sources available for people with hearing impairments. Subtitle video material and write out audio fragments.
- Offer tailor-made programming. Examples are shorter texts for people who have trouble reading or processing large amounts of information, texts for people who are only interested in one theme or programmes suited to people with visual or hearing impairments.

### CASE

How can an organisation work with tailor-made programming?

**Oorlogsmuseum Overloon** wants to offer every visitor a **meaningful experience**. Visitors should have a fun day out and take away an important message. The museum wants to be relevant in our current society. To achieve this, every visitor gets a tailor-made programme and every different element is tested. This included programmes for the visually impaired, transportation for those with physical disabilities, re-enactments or the event *Museum in the Dark*. **We go for experience**. This means we can include a broader audience than a more strict museum space.

*#tailormade #experience*

- Adjust the height at which texts and objects are placed. Make sure that short visitors and those in wheelchairs also have an ideal experience. Do this in an exhibition, but throughout the rest of the museum as well: the height of the information desk, signing, guestbooks etc. should all be accessible.
- Make sure to offer information in a variety of places. Information could be offered at the entrance, but should be available at other points in the museum as well. This way,

the visitor does not only have to rely on the volunteer at the front desk for information. During a visit new questions on accessibility can arise, as well as questions about exhibitions and collection.

#### 4. Evaluate and share

Be prepared to make mistakes and make sure to reflect on the process. Inclusivity is something which is constantly changing and developing. You will encounter things that go wrong that you did not or could not prepare for. Be aware of this and make sure management is as well. Evaluate what went well and what could be improved upon. Decide which steps need to be taken next and discuss them with your team.

Share your experiences in your organisation and with others. Before making changes, make sure to have a baseline. This will make any progress visible. What is your organisation already doing about being more inclusive? Sharing quick wins and projects that were successful will get you more support. However, without putting things down on paper, gained knowledge, networks and ways of working are lost. Structural change and an inclusive organisation and society can only be created if we keep building on progress and experience of the past.

# COLOPHON

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AIRBORNE  
MUSEUM  
HARTENSTEIN



Bevrijdingsmuseum Zeeland



nationaal  
onderduikmuseum  
aalten

museum  
ROTTERDAM | 1940  
1945  
NU



Nationaal Monument  
Kamp Amersfoort

VERZETS  
RESISTANCE  
MUSEUM

HERINNERINGSCENTRUM  
KAMP WESTERBORK



joods  
cultureel  
kwartier



NATIONAAL  
MONUMENT  
KAMP  
VUGHT

FRIES  
VERZETS  
MUSEUM

MUSEON

VRIJHEIDSMUSEUM

Indisch Herinneringscentrum  
DEN HAAG