

WORKSHOP PROPOSAL FOR EDI CONFERENCE

RIGHT-WING POLITICS AROUND THE GLOBE – IMPLICATIONS FOR EDI RESEARCH, TEACHING AND PRACTICE

Workshop organisers

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Introduction

According to Ng (2025, p. 1), EDI can also be broadly understood as “a **demographic reality** reflecting increasing diversity in society, a **political philosophy** focused on justice and fairness, a framework of **public policies and practices** (such as affirmative action) designed to ensure equal opportunities, and a **public discourse** that either supports or criticizes these elements”. In line with its focus on equitable outcomes for all, Ng (2025) identifies the following aims of EDI:

- highlighting advantage and disadvantage for social dominant and marginalised identities respectively,
- identifying and removing systemic barriers which limit marginalised groups,
- developing policies and practices to promote opportunities for people with marginalised identities,
- creating inclusive environments where all people to feel valued and respected.

Over time, EDI has become part of public discourse and despite its laudable aims, is increasingly characterised by contention, disagreement and backlash by conservative sectors of society. Most obvious of these are the reactions within the United States over the last weeks. During his inaugural address on 20 January 2025, US president Donald Trump rescinded executive orders promoting equity, diversity and inclusion in relation to race and gender: “This week, we will also end the government policy of trying to socially engineer race and gender into every aspect of public and private life. We will also forge a society that is colorblind, and merit based. As of today, it will hence forth be the official policy of the United States Government that there are only two genders, male and female” (CNN, Jan. 20, 2025). This was followed by an announcement which terminated all US Federal D.E.I efforts, and two days later, staff members overseeing DEI efforts within the administration were placed on paid leave, with plans for staff reductions by the end of January (New York Times. Jan. 22, 2025). The immediate response in Higher Education has been notable, with many universities

removing their diversity statements, and faculty hiring policies, for example, the University of Michigan, Michigan State University, MIT, and Harvard Arts and Sciences (Danowitz, 2025, personal communication).

Unfortunately, the US is not an outlier, and the last few years have seen the rise of right-wing politics in Europe as well, with governments in Italy (Brothers of Italy), the Netherlands (Party for Freedom) and Hungary (Fidesz). In other European countries, right wing movements have gained increasing support and significance in the political sphere, for example, the AfD in Germany, National Rally in France, and the Freedom Party in Austria. While there is considerable plurality within their approaches and they differ from President Trump in critical ways, they too are characterised by tough stances on immigrants and a call for traditional values, in opposition of LGBTQ rights (New York Times, Jan. 23, 2025). To date, these parties have been reluctant to give full expression to their right-wing beliefs, though fears have been raised as to what might happen in an environment, where, emboldened by the actions of President Trump, they may follow his more overt, hardline approach which could have significant consequences for EDI globally. With this background in mind, the aim of the workshop is to explore right-wing politics in multiple contexts and investigate the possible impact this may have on DEI politics and the consequences for research, teaching and practice.

Overall Goal

This workshop aims to a) explore the nature and dynamics of right wing politics in multiple locations in the US, Europe and Africa; b) consider the possible impact and consequences of right wing politics for EDI research, training and practice in multiple location across the globe, and c) develop a network of relationships to support the safeguarding and promotion of EDI efforts.

Participants will leave the session with a better knowledge of the multiple facets of right wing politics and their operation in different locations. Moreover, it will provide participants with the opportunity to reflect on the core values of EDI, the possible influence of right wing politics on these, and how they can be safeguarded and promoted going forward.

Target Audience

This workshop is appropriate for academics, educators and practitioners interested in supporting and safeguarding teaching, research and practice in the field of EDI.

Duration

We have designed the workshop to be held within a two hour period but would appreciate (if at all possible) an additional 30-60 minutes to obtain maximum benefit for ourselves and the participants.

Workshop layout:

The workshop will be interactive (See Table 1), with panel presentations, group discussions and a collaborative feedback session. Participants can exchange ideas, ask questions, and participate in a collaborative process of knowledge construction.

Table 1

Duration	Activities	Person responsible
10 min	Introduction	Anne Crafford / Regine Bendl
5-10 mins per panellist	Panel members presenting on the dynamics of their context.	Confirmed Eddy Ng (Queen's University, Canada) Regine Bendl (WU Vienna, Austria) Henriett Primecz (JKU Linz, Austria) Samantha Erskine (University of Massachusetts, US) Byron Adams (University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands) Anne Crafford (University of Pretoria, South Africa)
30 minutes (10 x 3)	Breakaway sessions	Split participants into three groups to discuss the implications of right wing politics on EDI in respect of 1. Research 2. Teaching 3. Practice The groups should make notes of their key observations.
30 minutes	Feedback and discussion	Small groups to provide feedback from their discussion.
10 mins	Wrap up and conclusion	All organisers

References

Ng., E.S. (2025). The war on wokeness. In E. King, M. Hebl, & Q. Roberson (Eds.), *Call to Action for Policymakers: Defending and Advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)*. Charlotte, NC: IAP