Equality, Diversity and Inclusiveness: 2021 strategy report

March 2021
PART 1: INTRODUCTION

As the Board of Directors, we are pleased to publish this strategy document on how the association is meeting its equality, diversity and inclusiveness responsibilities. It is our intention to publish this report every 12 months to scrutinise our EDI strategies and continually report on our objectives on an ongoing basis.

This strategy document highlights our approach following the member survey that was conducted in 2020. A separate report contains the full details of the survey results, this is our strategy document in response to the results. It is important that our initiatives and progress on EDI is embedded within our overall strategy and that this is kept under continual review. We want to develop an association that is dynamic and inclusive and offer services and programmes that promote equality, diversity and inclusiveness and more broadly, regardless of heritage, education, beliefs, ethnicity, religion, gender, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical or mental health, physical or cognitive capabilities, or socio-economic status.

The Board is committed to the diversity agenda and this is now reflected in all our Board discussions and within all our sub-committees. Diversity commitment is not just from our committees – it is shaped by all our members and we would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who gave their time to complete the EDI survey in 2020.

This report highlights our strategy and the start of this journey to meet our EDI objectives. As a Board we are committed to making sure iHEA encourages all health economists around the world to work together to have maximum impact so that change is positive, embedded and sustainable across all our activities.

In the immediate short term, we will be establishing an EDI Promotion and Monitoring Group who will take forward our strategy. We want to listen, reflect, learn and make changes to enhance our EDI and we welcome feedback from all our members. If you have any feedback on this report or on our EDI work more generally then please contact: ihea@healtheconomics.org.
PART 2: OUR EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVENESS OBJECTIVES

The following outlines our EDI objectives against which progress will be judged on an annual basis.

Effective Leadership:
- Actively review the structure of our Board and our committees to identify how we can improve EDI.
- Have in place EDI as an embedded objective in all committee activities.
- Work on our processes to attract new membership and health economics talent from all parts of the world and to retain a diverse and inclusive membership.

Active use of data to review policy and procedures:
- Develop data collection at point of joining the association, or membership renewal to measure EDI across our members, complying with data protection laws.
- To develop a culture where members are happy to provide data as it is very clear on how that data will be used to improve services.
- Development of guidance in supporting EDI at our main Congress meetings and any other iHEA-supported events.

Promotion and communication of our EDI commitment:
- Regularly report membership data with respect to EDI.
- Regularly report our progress towards achieving our EDI objectives.
- Continue building and embed our action plan to support early career researchers ensuring that we embrace EDI in all activities.
PART 3 ACTIONS/IMPROVEMENTS IN RESPONSE TO SURVEY

Priorities for the Board include ensuring EDI within all congress meetings and events, ECR activities, SIGs, webinars and within our prize and award schemes such as the student paper award and the Arrow award. We will be working to achieve these in a number of ways.

The insight from the survey is a key component of these plans, to ensure that we focus resources on areas that our members have told us we need to improve. The survey results provide us with an opportunity to work on these plans and we are committed to keeping members up to date on plans and actions as they develop.

The survey results provided us with insight, but our actions will drive change. We will continually seek views from the members to capture all suggestions on how we can improve our EDI strategy and use data to inform and report back on our progress.

The Board remain absolutely committed to following through on things that we can fix whether they came through in survey results, or from other forms of engagement with our members and in consultation with our committee members. We recognise that for some of the issues there is no ‘quick fix’ and some of the issues lie outside of our control, but feedback from our members is pivotal to helping us identify a series of actions to change the EDI across our association.
PART 4 OUR EQUALITY, DIVERSITY and INCLUSION ACTION PLAN

Short-Term Actions

AWARDS AND TRAINING
- All iHEA Board members and management team to have EDI or unconscious bias training.
- Undertake review of all iHEA award schemes to ensure promoting EDI, e.g., explore if these awards should be split by regional context.
- Promote Adam Wagstaff Award that targets members from LMIC’s.

CULTURE
- Review all our committee membership structures to ensure they meet our EDI objectives. iHEA has made changes to the Bylaws to ensure representation on the Board from every region and promote a gender and regional balance. Efforts have also been made on other committees, particularly the Student prize committee and increasingly, the Scientific committee. The member survey showed considerable concern about quotas and there was a preference for gradually ‘developing capacity’ and broadening networks from which committee members are drawn. In the short term, we will:
  o Broaden the Nominations committee to ensure regional representation and linking into new networks.
  o Broaden the pool drawn on for leading roles in iHEACongresses and on committees by considering open-call nominations from members to spotlight leading female health economists, LMIC researchers, persons of colour or other under-represented groups.
- Work with Scientific committee to promote EDI within the 2021 Congress meeting, especially with respect to:
  o choice of plenary speakers and topics. This has been highlighted by our member survey as particularly important. We will review plenary sessions in terms of selection of speakers and research topics to ensure draw on examples from different contexts and that content must be appropriate for an international audience.
- To make available the webinar series in more than language. Recently we have held bi-lingual webinars (English and French) and one webinar in English, French and Spanish, but this is costly. With AI translation development, cheaper alternatives are becoming available (captioning in different languages) that would allow access to a far wider range of languages – to be explored further and data collection to identify where the greatest need is.
- Avoid making assumptions about gender assignment within all iHEA activities.
- Make the use of pronouns standard across all iHEA activities.
- Draft guidance on best practice in relation to gender pronouns, and terminology around disability, race and country categories to be circulated to all members for use in all iHEA activities.

ENGAGEMENT
- Require SIG conveners to submit an annual report to document progress on driving forward our EDI plans.
- Add to SIG proposal requirements detail on how they are addressing EDI issues.
- Establish a calendar of events to promote conversations and network activity e.g., celebrating International Women’s Day; Mental Health Awareness Day; Global Accessibility Awareness Day; LGBT STEM day.
- Review means of communicating with members to ensure our EDI strategies are transparent and to invite suggestions from our members on how we can continually improve on our EDI strategies as an organisation. This may involve:
  - Re-structuring the website to make key opportunities more visible
  - Consider having a ‘did you know’ section within our Newsletter with information on activities in which members can participate and how iHEA is making progress towards EDI objectives.
  - Making better use of social media to communicate our activities.

**REVIEW**
- To develop an EDI Promotion and Monitoring Group that will be responsible for promoting EDI activities and monitoring progress on all EDI actions.
- Invite suggestions from all members on our action plan.
- In-depth review on an annual basis and an EDI report published to document our progress on all EDI actions.
- Regularly monitor how well each action is achieving its aims.
- Improve data collection:
  - For all new members to re-design the membership form to collect EDI data at the point of joining the association to enable annual review.
  - To invite existing members to update profile with EDI data to enable us to prepare an annual EDI report and monitor on progress towards our objectives.
  - To emphasise the reasons why we are collecting this data and how it will be used to monitor our progress.
  - To gather data on distribution of first language among our iHEA members for the purposes of exploring translation of all iHEA activities.
Medium-Longer Term Actions

AWARDS AND TRAINING
- Purposively recruit more diverse mentors in new capacity strengthening initiatives, critical to have mentors that have an understanding of diverse contexts and are sensitive to EDI issues.
- Embed EDI training webinars within our webinar programme.
- Explore possibility of group mentoring where we have one mentor assigned to a group of mentees who can meet as a group to facilitate peer-to-peer support, as well as receive mentor support.

CULTURE
- To continue to promote EDI within our Nomination committee activities
- Establish a balanced and informed Scientific committee to ensure that it can take a broad view that considers the needs of all members.
- Work with Scientific committee to promote EDI within future main Congress meetings, especially with respect to:
  o choice of plenary speakers and topics – as above within the short-term section.
  o choice of session chairs
  o choice of session discussants
  o ensure a balance of research topics that reflect the interests of our diverse membership.
  o ensure all Congress ECR activities, including any mentoring support, are organised with a focus on EDI and to purposively collect feedback from ECR participants to monitor progress on EDI (for Review)
  o appoint ECR champions to ensure the ‘ECR voice’ is heard.
  o to consider our members needs who have sensory impairment by seeking expert advice on actions to improve access.
- For future ‘hybrid events’ ensure ample networking opportunities for online participants.
- For future ‘in-person’ congress meetings to continue to have explicit EDI strategy in selecting future sites with a specific focus on:
  o ensuring access for members with mobility impairments – all facilities to be fully accessible (and equipped with accessible toilets); make sure venue maps are well signed. Consider offering free attendance for the carers of members with physical or sensory impairment who require one.
  o availability of a lactation room.
  o availability of a multi-faith prayer room
  o ensuring ample food options for members with dietary requirements.
  o ensure access for members with sensory impairments. Consider providing a quiet room for members who prefer not to be in crowded spaces who can watch a session from their computer for all hybrid events.
  o make the congress EDI policy visible, well in advance of the meeting. Explain the purpose of the EDI policy and invite feedback.
  o invest more in avoiding visa problems for members traveling from LMIC’s by ensuring local team requests government department responsible for international affairs to notify embassies and consulates of congress and request their co-operation in processing visa applications for congress. The Association Management team (Managing Matters) to get detailed information on what is required for visa support
letters for that particular country and ensure context specific letters are made available.
- consider having ‘alcohol-free zones’ at social events.

ENGAGEMENT
- Consider and develop strategies to encourage and promote more diversity in membership, particularly in light of income constraints within some LMIC’s and with some ECR’s.
- Work with regional associations to promote membership of iHEA.

REVIEW
- Annual EDI action plan reporting on progress
- Benchmark activity against other international associations which make EDI information public
- Report EDI data for all main congress activities.