

# DIVERSITY POLICY



THIS DOCUMENT SUMMARIZES THE MOST  
IMPORTANT MEASURES AND KIPS OF DIVERSITY  
MANAGEMENT AT AKQUINET

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## 0. Document Information

### 0.1. Distribution

This policy applies to all employees of akquinet GmbH and all its subsidiaries (collectively referred to as "AKQUINET"). Country-specific laws and regulations apply to subsidiaries that are not based in Germany. We are all committed to practices of continuous improvement in order to promote diversity and inclusion both in our recruitment processes and in our workplace environment. This document is therefore subject to regular reviews and updates.

### 0.2. Document Agreement

The information contained in this document is copyrighted. This document may not be published or amended without the prior approval of AKQUINET.

### 0.3. Content and Scope of this Document

This policy for diversity management aims to explain our corporate goals with respect to promoting diversity and inclusion. This document allows us to monitor diversity at AKQUINET and implement continuous improvement practices. It should be noted that there may be some minor differences depending on the individual company and/or location. However, these differences do not put at risk our goal of promoting diversity and inclusion.

## 1. Goals

At AKQUINET, we recognize and promote the diversity of our employees. We do so in order to achieve and strengthen diversity not just as an idea, but as an integral part of our corporate culture. We regard ourselves not just as a company, but as an active member of society. That is why we take responsibility for social issues and utilize our creative powers in areas where we are active. Our goal is to promote an inclusive and equal society.

In addition, thanks to our diverse teams, we collect different perspectives and ideas, which can lead to more creative solutions and innovation gains. Diversity can give us a broader perspective when it comes to analyzing challenges and promotes effective cooperation when it comes to searching for solutions. We also firmly believe that having a diverse workforce can help us tackle the various requirements of a diverse customer base. Furthermore, we want to strengthen employee retention and loyalty by fostering an inclusive culture and create a positive working environment in the face of the challenges posed by the skills shortage.

## 2. Legal and Compliant Conduct

We strictly comply with applicable laws and regulations in accordance with our code of conduct. For example, the General Act on Equal Treatment (AGG) is binding for all AKQUINET employees in Germany. The purpose of this act is to prevent or stop discrimination on the grounds of race or ethnic origin, gender, religion or belief, disability, age, or sexual orientation.

In addition to the above, AKQUINET also signed the Diversity Charter in 2019. As a signatory to this charter, we are committed to fostering an organizational culture characterized by mutual respect and appreciation. We create the conditions for ensuring that these values are recognized, shared, and practiced by both managers and employees alike. Managers are subject to a special obligation in this regard.

Incidents of violence, racism, antisemitism, discrimination, or harassment in the workplace, either directly or indirectly, will not be tolerated by AKQUINET employees. Anyone who witnesses or experiences an incident of this nature is encouraged to contact our Compliance Team immediately. This can also be done anonymously via our web-based whistleblower system. You can refer to AKQUINET's whistleblower policy for more information.

## 3. Definition of Diversity in the Company

Diversity includes a number of dimensions. To make the definition of diversity more tangible for everyone, we, as a signatory to the Diversity Charter, refer to the core dimensions of the Four Layers Model of Diversity developed by Lee Gardenswartz and Anita Rowe (1995). According to this model, the following seven core dimensions reflect the (almost) immutable characteristics of a person:

- I. Age
- II. Ethnic origin & nationality
- III. Gender & gender identity
- IV. Physical and intellectual abilities
- V. Religion & belief
- VI. Sexual orientation
- VII. Social background

There are also further characteristics that are considered more flexible and mutable. While we consider these to be equally important, this definition of diversity would significantly increase the complexity. As a result, we at AKQUINET will just refer to the core dimensions for now. More information about the model is available at: <https://www.charta-der-vielfalt.de/en/for-employers/diversity-dimensions/>

At AKQUINET, we speak of "diversity" when we consider all of these dimensions in equal measure. The German equivalent of this term would be "Vielfalt". We mainly use the term "inclusion" when we are talking about the dimension "physical and intellectual abilities".

## 4. Measures for Promoting Diversity

To further promote diversity within the AKQUINET Group, at AKQUINET we perform various activities, some of which we will explain in more detail in this section. As we have only recently (2023) added companies from non-Germany-speaking locations to our portfolio through further acquisitions, please note that most of these measures and activities still refer to the German-speaking area.

### 4.1. Open corporate culture

At AKQUINET, we understand the importance of having an open corporate culture. The opinions and views of all employees are important to us. This is evident through, among other things, our Teams channel “Frag das Management” (Ask the management), where all colleagues are invited to share their questions, wishes, or suggestions.

It is also important to us that we highlight the diversity of our workforce, both internally and externally, in order to demonstrate our acceptance and dispel any prejudices. Our very own career blog and AKQUINET podcast are examples of AKQUINET measures in the German labor market. People under the different diversity dimensions are regularly interviewed here. For example, there have already been contributions from employees who have returned to work after a period of burnout. Others, meanwhile, speak about why sexual orientation should not play a role in employment and about the obstacles facing women in IT that need to be removed.

To the blog: <https://karriereblog.akquinet.de/>

To the podcast: <https://open.spotify.com/show/6e5egYXcg3VcrdoB48lIY>

Personal exchange is also something very important to us. A so-called circle on the topic of “inclusion and health” has therefore been formed at the German-speaking locations. This circle allows colleagues to share their personal experiences, for example, with physical illnesses, ADHD, MS, or autism. These are intentionally organized as virtual events via Teams so that employees from all German locations can take part.

### 4.2. Recruiting and hiring

AKQUINET is committed to promoting equal opportunity and non-discrimination in its hiring processes. We endeavor to have in place a fair and inclusive selection process. To this end, we use inclusive language in our job advertisements in order to appeal to diverse applicants. In addition, we try to make our website and access to interviews as barrier-free as possible to ensure that our application process is accessible for everyone. If you require support or have any queries, our inclusion officer’s contact details are provided on our website (refer to Section 4.4 for more information).

As AKQUINET values diversity in our applicants, our HR department has created a list of tips to minimize prejudices and ensure objective evaluations, which can be found on the Intranet. Furthermore, this topic is also covered in our training course „Bewerbungsgespräche professionell führen” (Conducting job interviews professionally).

Another goal of our personnel marketing is to encourage applicants from diverse backgrounds to apply, which is why we make specific reference to various diversity dimensions. For example, we make sure that any photos that appear on the careers page are diverse and reflect an authentic image to the outside world.

### 4.3. Structure of Diversity Day

Every year we take the opportunity to increase awareness of the importance of diversity, both internally in our workforce and also externally, through the official Diversity Day of the Diversity Charter. This event does not have a top-down structure, but rather is organized in a participatory manner from within by employees. In the past, for example, we ran internal and external campaigns on the topic of “women in IT”, while on another occasion a crash course on sign language was given by a deaf colleague. For more information about our measures on Diversity Day:

<https://www.charta-der-vielfalt.de/en/diversity-charter-association/signatory-data-base/list/show/akquinet-ag-1/>

### 4.4. Focus topic: professional inclusion

We at AKQUINET, since its founding in 2002, have placed particular emphasis on the professional inclusion of people with disabilities. In accordance with our mission to offer these people long-term, qualified employment, the unique idea of running our data centers as inclusion companies emerged many years ago. Together with the Evangelische Stiftung Alsterdorf, an evangelical foundation based in Hamburg, AKQUINET set about establishing the first inclusion data center in Germany under akquinet outsourcing gGmbH. This has allowed a large number of people with disabilities to integrate into the labor market. We now operate four of these data centers

with a least 40 percent of the workforce made up of people with a disability or limitation of some kind. Such conditions include visual impairments, aftereffects of cancer, multiple sclerosis, and other physical or mental limitations.

akquinet outsourcing gGmbH created the permanent position of inclusion officer back in 2016. The main goal is to promote inclusion by providing comprehensive advisory services to severely disabled colleagues, as well as their superiors and other team members. The inclusion officer provides active support in application processes and during the onboarding phase. This person organizes the procurement of necessary resources by lodging applications with the responsible authorities and supports managers and their teams in the successful integration of new employees. Alongside these tasks, the inclusion officer also takes part in preventative occupational health management in order to protect and maintain the health of employees. They promote the visibility of the idea of inclusion to the outside world through targeted public relations work, including forging close ties with training providers, specialist services, employment agencies, associations, and various institutions. The goal is to communicate the profile of the company to suitable candidates and participate in events with a focus on including people with disabilities in the labor market. In their role as inclusion officer, this person contributes to the image of AKQUINET as an inclusive employer. This makes it easier to attract and hire interns and employees with disabilities. Another focus is on presenting to the outside world the idea of inclusion and how it can be implemented in business in order to encourage other companies to pursue inclusive structures of their own.

In further education management, AKQUINET places particular value on ensuring that all employees have access to training courses. When it comes to selecting new training areas, conscious care is therefore taken, where possible, to ensure that accessible and inclusive conference hotels are chosen so that all employees can benefit equally from the further education measures.

In order to further drive professional inclusion across the company, raise awareness for this among employees and managers, and ensure that everyone is singing from the same hymn sheet, AKQUINET has established a so-called Inclusion Team, made up of representatives from the HR department as well as our inclusion officer. This team can be reached via [inklusion@akquinet.de](mailto:inklusion@akquinet.de).

## 4.5. Promoting women in IT

In our corporate culture, we place particular value on equal opportunity, especially when it comes to promoting women in IT. Our goal is to create a working environment in which women are not only encouraged, but also consistently supported in their professional development.

In order to reach this goal, we have implemented targeted measures to recruit women for IT positions. In the past, we launched a number of different campaigns to make the IT sector more appealing to women, also via the option of lateral entry. As we believe that the path into IT should be paved at an early stage, we organize an annual Girls' Day, where we make a point of involving female role models from our company. With these measures we aim to continuously increase the percentage of women in our team and build a diverse workforce.

We understand the importance of flexible working conditions and offer women in IT the opportunity to balance career and family life. These include flexible working hours or the option of working from home. Furthermore, within AKQUINET various network programs have been formed in the subsidiaries in order to strengthen the exchange and cooperation of women in IT. This not only presents employees with a professional opportunity, it also promotes a strong sense of community within the company.

In AKQUINET's further education management, we make a conscious effort to also attract trainers for our internal and external training courses. Our training courses are open to everyone. Special courses just for women were offered, but failed to materialize due to low demand. We continuously check our training needs and adjust our offering accordingly. We actively encourage our employees to give feedback and participate in decision-making processes. This open communication style promotes a culture of diversity and inclusion, which is crucial to us as a company.

The targeted promotion of women in leading positions is a long-term goal to which we feel duty-bound. While we have managed to increase the percentage of women at a departmental management level, we still face some challenges at an executive and group management board level owing to a lack of applications from women. Nevertheless, increasing the percentage of women remains an important goal over the coming years. Here we need to recognize and promote potential talents to ensure that women are adequately represented across all hierarchy levels.

## 4.6. Age

When it comes to age, here too at AKQUINET we have a very mixed workforce. On December 31, 2023, the average age was 41. It is very important to us that we create an inclusive and non-discriminatory working environment for employees of all ages. In this policy, we reiterate our clear rejection of all forms of discrimination on the basis of age. This applies in particular to recruitment, promotions, training, and other professional matters.

Our employees are motivated to appreciate the diversity of the experiences and perspectives that different age groups bring to the table, and respectful conduct toward one another is encouraged. We also offer training and development opportunities that match the different requirements of different age groups in order to support lifelong learning.

Our flexible working hours also allow us to meet the different needs of employees as they navigate different stages of their lives, whether it be for young parents or older colleagues. On top of that, we also give many employees the chance to continue working beyond the standard retirement age if they wish to do so.

## 4.7. Nationalities

At AKQUINET we have employees from many nations. As our main presence traditionally has been in the German market and the official language of many of our customers is German, the official language at AKQUINET is also German. If necessary, AKQUINET has therefore offered some colleagues accompanying German courses. Given the fact that we added locations in Poland, the UK, Belgium, and the Czech Republic to our portfolio through the acquisition of companies in 2023, the plan going forward is to make more documents and communication content available in English. In addition, we also want to increase our focus on the topic of cultural awareness in the coming years. We know that this is a continuous process, which we will need to actively drive in order to overcome stereotypes and prejudices. To achieve these goals, in our training campus we will be offering training courses, workshops, and information materials that cover in particular intercultural skills, raise awareness for diversity, and contribute to an inclusive working environment.

## 5. Reporting

In order to check the success of our measures internally and provide information to our external stakeholders, we collect diversity KPIs on an annual basis. Such KPIs include: percentage of women, percentage of disabled people, number of nationalities represented, and average age. In addition, if actions are brought, for example, before the labor court in relation to discrimination or if concerns are reported by employees via our web-based whistleblowing tool or, for example, in the context of our psychological risk assessment, this data will also be reported to management and analyzed. This comprehensive evaluation allows us to continuously check whether our measures are having the desired effect and whether we are still on course to achieving our goal of creating a diverse company.

## 6. Awards, Memberships, and Partnerships

Diversity is important to us. That is why we signed the Diversity Charter in 2019. In addition, we are a partner organization of klischee-frei.

AKQUINET has already been recognized as one of the best employers for women and we are particularly proud of the fact that we received the Hamburg Senate's Inclusion Award for our commitment in the area of professional inclusion.

Further information:

- [https://www.klischee-frei.de/de/klischeefrei\\_92804.php](https://www.klischee-frei.de/de/klischeefrei_92804.php)
- <https://www.charta-der-vielfalt.de/en/diversity-charter-association/signatory-data-base/list/show/akquinet-ag-1/>
- <https://www.pressebox.de/pressemitteilung/akquinet-ag/AKQUINET-gehoert-zu-den-besten-Arbeitgebern-fuer-Frauen-2019/boxid/974509>
- <https://www.hamburg.de/skbm/13327074/hamburger-inklusionspreis-2019/>

We have also forged various partnerships in order to further strengthen our social responsibility for greater diversity. For example, we have been working with Atelier Lichtzeichen, an art gallery based in Hamburg, for many years. The pictures you see in our offices were painted by people with disabilities and chosen by AKQUINET colleagues.

## 7. Summary and Contact

With this Diversity Policy, we acknowledge the importance of diversity and integration for the success and identity of our company. Our commitment to equal opportunity and respect for the uniqueness of each individual is the basis of our corporate values. The contents are binding for all AKQUINET employees.

Please contact our Inclusion Team if you have any further questions about this policy: [inklusion@akquinet.de](mailto:inklusion@akquinet.de)

**akquinet GmbH**, Hamburg, 30.01.2024

Michael Knopp, Thomas Tauer, Thomas Muszal (Management)

