



# Embracing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: Unlocking Success in European Asset Management

Sector maturity, regulatory landscape and how to move  
from strategic intent to tangible business practices

Executive summary



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This report provides an overview of the state of diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) in the European asset management industry, based on a survey of 30 senior DE&I and HR leaders in asset management organisations covering a significant cross-section of the industry, interviews with founding members of Diversity Project Europe, and a review of relevant regulations.

## There is strategic intent and a regulatory imperative on DE&I ...

European asset management companies recognise that diversity is good for business and have a strategic commitment to DE&I. Over two-thirds of respondents to our survey feel strongly or very strongly that DE&I is well integrated into their organisational strategy, based mainly on a recognition of the business benefits.



The business benefits of DE&I are widely recognised within **4 in 5** organisations.

Source: Survey of DE&I in European asset management companies, PwC and DPE, March–April 2024).

Moreover, an EU regulatory framework for DE&I is emerging and will help to anchor progress. EU legislation, including the Women on Board directive, EU Pay Transparency Directive (EU PTD) and Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD), is introducing new obligations for employers. Although they will require

a significant reporting effort, firms can get ahead of regulatory requirements in order to drive positive change within their organisations – helping to turn their strategic DE&I aspirations into reality.

## ... but this has not been fully translated into action

**However, operationalisation of DE&I by European asset management companies is lagging behind the strategic intent and regulatory imperative across key aspects of DE&I:**

**Resourcing and accountability.** Many organisations face challenges in resourcing, measuring, and mainstreaming their DE&I efforts. For instance, only one in three respondents to our survey strongly feel that they have sufficient staff to work towards their DE&I objectives, and even fewer say that leaders and people managers are held accountable for DE&I objectives in the same way as other business objectives.

## Only 14 %

of leaders and people managers are held accountable for DE&I objectives, and their rewards are tied to achieving those objectives.

Source: Survey, PwC and DPE, 2024

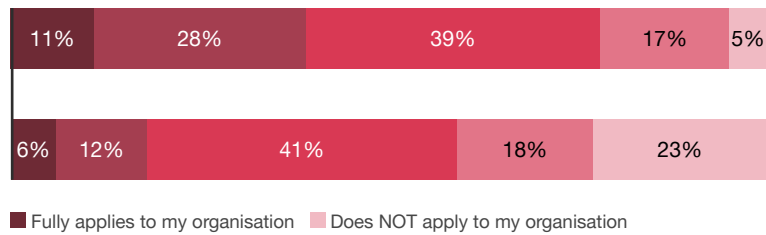


**Inclusive culture.** European asset management companies' efforts to embed their strategic commitment to DE&I will require building an inclusive work environment. At present, many organisations are falling short. Leaders must role model inclusive behaviours, but the survey suggests that many are failing to do so – which may be connected to a lack of inclusive leadership training. Only one in five survey respondents indicated that incentives are in place to reward and encourage inclusive behaviours.

**Figure 1. Inclusive leadership**  
 “To what extent are these statements applicable to your organisation?”<sup>1</sup>

Our C-suite leadership not only communicates the significance of inclusive leadership but actively demonstrates these behaviours, serving as role models for all people managers.

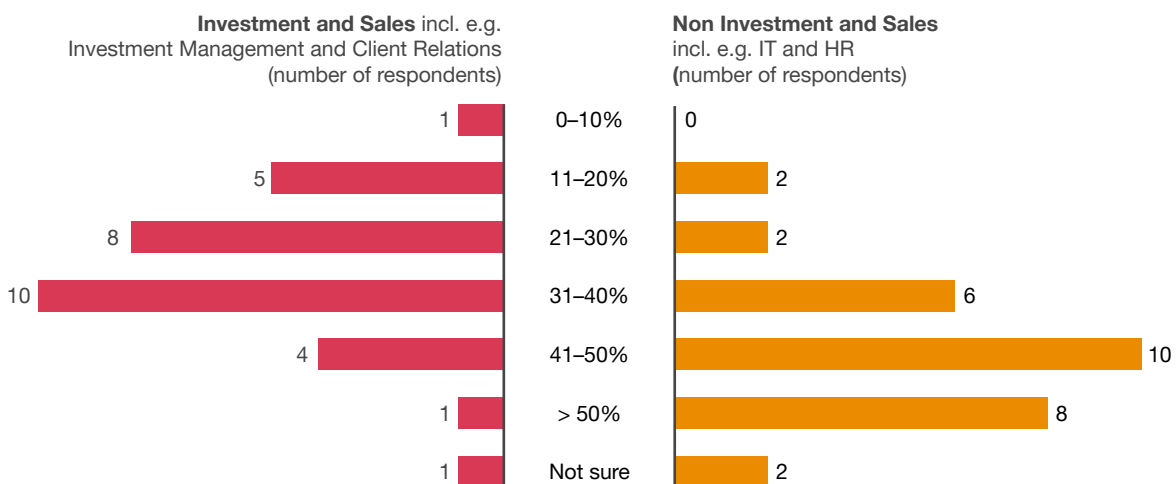
Incentives are in place to reward positive and inclusive leadership, encouraging managers to actively engage in the right behaviours.



Source: Survey of DE&I in European asset management companies, PwC and DPE, March–April 2024

**Gender equality.** Progress by European asset management companies in operationalising their strategic intent on DE&I has so far focused primarily on gender diversity. However, female representation falls with seniority, and there is a major gap between core business areas and support functions. Measures to reduce the gap are increasingly in place – in the form of measurable gender-specific goals, for instance. However, there is still work to do. Only a minority of companies strategically attract women in underrepresented roles, offer targeted mentorship programmes or embed incentives for inclusive behaviours.

**Figure 2. Representation of women by business function**  
 “What is the current representation of women by business function in your organisation?”

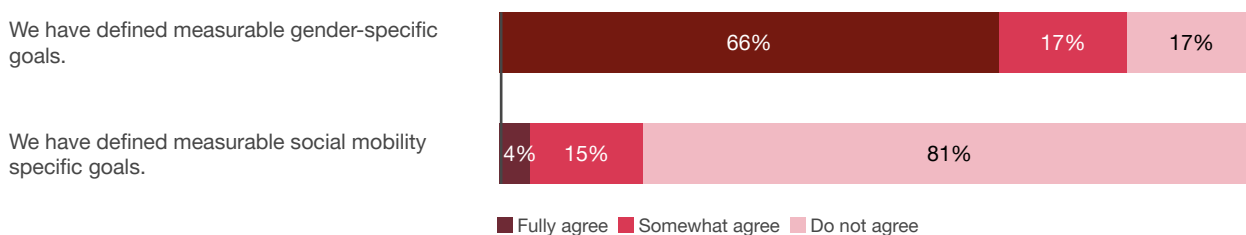


Source: Survey of DE&I in European asset management companies, PwC and DPE, March–April 2024

<sup>1</sup> Question phrased as follows: ‘To what extent is this statement applicable to your organisation? 1 = Does NOT apply at all to my organisation. 5 = Fully applies to my organisation.’ Response options 1-5 and ‘not sure’

**Social mobility.** Social mobility is another important aspect of diversity for European asset management companies to address, as it opens up the conversation to a broader understanding of many other aspects of identity. Nevertheless, social mobility has received less attention in European asset management than gender, due to the complexity of the topic and the varying interpretations and issues across countries. For instance, only one in five organisations collects data on social mobility. This is partly due to GDPR concerns, although these are not insurmountable, and this lack of data is also reflected in their approach to goal-setting.

**Figure 3. Goal-setting**  
**“To what extent are these statements applicable to your organisation?”**

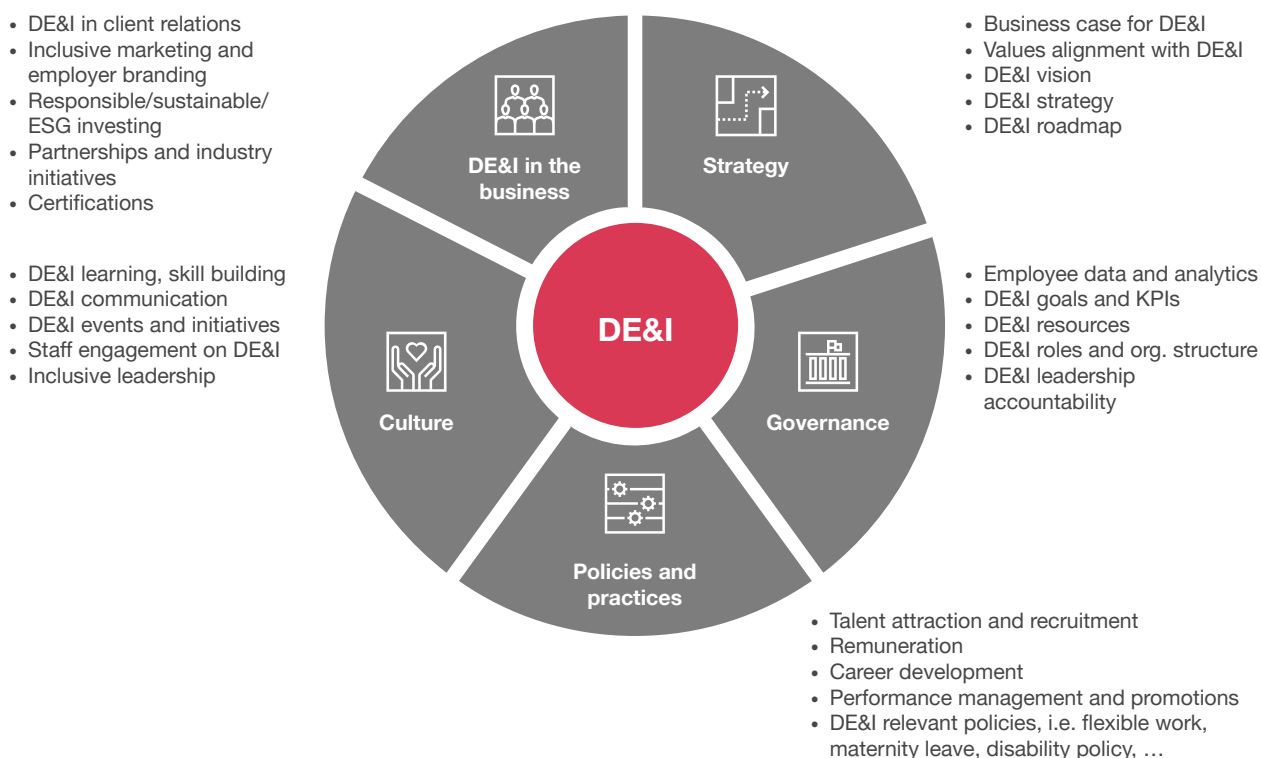


Source: Survey of DE&I in European asset management companies, PwC and DPE, March–April 2024

## Maturity assessment

The picture that emerges from responses to the survey is supported by the maturity assessment of DE&I in the sector. The survey was based on PwC’s DE&I Maturity Model, which is based on five pillars: Strategy, Governance, HR Policies and Processes, Culture, and DE&I in the Business. Organisations are assessed on five levels of DE&I maturity.

**Figure 4. PwC’s DE&I Maturity Model**



Source: PwC Switzerland

**Figure 5. Levels of DE&I maturity**

High-level description	Maturity score
The organisation is taking its first steps towards DE&I at the workplace. Efforts are informal and ad hoc, or in response to external stakeholder demand.	1 Emerging
There is awareness of the importance of DE&I at the workplace and the organisation has put first measures in place to promote and communicate about it.	2 Developing
DE&I is part of the organisation’s people strategy and embedded in policies and practices. Analyses of representation and the outcomes of key HR processes are performed.	3 Established
The organisation has a clear view regarding the future state of DE&I that includes ambitious objectives and a detailed roadmap. Roles and responsibilities are defined and employees engaged through grass-root initiatives.	4 Differentiated
DE&I is integral to the organisation’s purpose. Principles of diversity and inclusion are applied beyond the workforce in all operations and partnerships. Objectives are actively monitored, managers are accountable and employees are engaged.	5 Distinctive

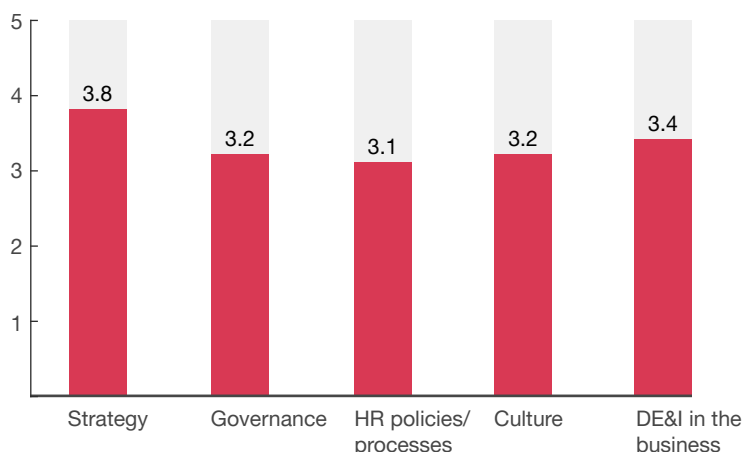
European asset management companies have an overall average ranking of 3.3, or **at the lower end of established maturity**. While there has been some progress on addressing DE&I, the sector is still a long way from the best practice represented by a maturity score of 5. There are important variations between the pillars:

- **The strongest pillar is Strategy** (average score of 3.8). This reflects the strategic intent with regard to DE&I, based on awareness of the business benefits that it can bring.
- In line with this, the area that has seen the strongest operationalisation of the strategic commitment to DE&I is DE&I in the Business (3.4).

- Scores are lower for Governance (3.2), Culture (3.2), and HR Policies and Processes (3.1), suggesting that the strategic intent with regard to DE&I and its **prioritisation in externally facing aspects of the business are not fully reflected in internal reality**.

This underscores the importance of transforming awareness of the business importance of DE&I into tangible practices in order to enhance the industry’s overall maturity and effectiveness.

**Figure 6. Average maturity scores for European asset management companies**



Source: Survey of DE&I in European asset management companies, PwC and DPE, March–April 2024

## Conclusion – a call to action

Overall, although there has been important progress, European asset management organisations still have a long way to go to achieve their stated DE&I ambitions – particularly since progress so far has been very focused on gender, and considerably less on other aspects of diversity. There are a range of actions outlined in this report that organisations can take to embed DE&I throughout their operations, learning from best practice within the sector and beyond.

By implementing these recommendations, companies in the European asset management sector can meet the demands of their increasingly diverse investors, comply with the emerging EU regulatory framework for DE&I, access more diverse talent and gain a competitive edge. For the sector to thrive in the future, it must embrace and leverage the power of DE&I.



#### About the Diversity Project Europe

The Diversity Project Europe (DPE) is a cross-border, cross-company initiative championing a diverse, equitable and inclusive European asset management industry. The DPE's initial focus is on Europe's key asset management markets and the three themes of gender equality, social mobility and inclusive culture, seeking to facilitate change through voluntary collaboration and knowledge sharing. We believe that – acting together – there is an immense opportunity to move the dial and shape an industry that better reflects both society at large and its clients, ultimately securing a more sustainable future for our sector.

Find out more: [diversityprojecteurope.com](https://diversityprojecteurope.com)



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