

VIC Virtual Incubator – Creative Industries

EQUAL & DIVERSITY STATEMENT



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Introduction

Besides being a personal undertaking, commitment to equal opportunities provides a quality assurance indicator for staff and clients. Furthermore, this is a legal requirement in most European countries. VIC partners are committed to making equality and diversity fundamental themes which run through each aspect of the project.

Whilst the organisations that make up the partnership have different levels of legal obligation and commitment to the concept, it's important that as a group, we have a shared understanding of what 'equality' means, and integrate that awareness into our work strategy, communication, services and products. During a recent partnership discussion, several key terms were proposed and agreed as offering a significant guide to our collective work. Those terms were: parity, accessibility, open-mindedness, inclusion, welcoming diversity, and encouraging participation.

It was established that by focussing on four distinct areas of the project, partners can provide a non-discriminatory service that embraces the diverse group of European creative entrepreneurs that the project is designed to serve.

1. Equality and diversity are promoted on the VIC project website, and mentioned in those of each partner organisation
2. Equality and diversity are reflected in the training materials we produce, and the training methods used with facilitators and mentors
3. Other websites that we signpost for our creative entrepreneurs will be monitored to avoid discriminatory attitudes and language
4. The benefits derived from a commitment to diversity and equality are explained to all the creative entrepreneurs and local partners we work with

VIC Equality Statement

VIC partners are committed to providing equality for all, encouraging mutual respect, and promoting the benefits of diversity. No entrepreneur, trainer, learner or colleague will be discriminated against on grounds of their gender, disability, race, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief. The materials produced and learning methods promoted will be monitored and reviewed regularly by all partner organisations.

Code of Practice

Training Materials

All the materials we produce, and others we offer hypertext links to, should be checked to ensure they are not discriminatory. This also means that we make materials as inclusive as possible, drawing on a wide range of cultural backgrounds for any examples and case studies we introduce.

Training Methods for Facilitators and Mentors

The training manual we produce as a guide to participating on the VIC incubator portal, and any on-line training materials that are published, should take into account the concept of equality and diversity, and strive to both avoid discrimination, therefore making everyone feel included.

Signposting

Before recommending other websites to our creative entrepreneurs, project partners will review the site, checking that the language used is not discriminatory, thereby offending potential users; and that information and multimedia presentations provided are representative of diverse cultures and types of ability.

Monitoring for Equality and Diversity

Whilst obviously not being exhaustive, the following list suggests the type of prompt questions partners will use to monitor for equality and diversity.

- Does text use 'he/she', or alternate between the two pronouns?
- Do multi-media materials illustrate both genders, people from different cultures and ethnic backgrounds, and people with different levels of (dis)ability?
- Are materials available in different formats, or subtitled, therefore being accessible to people with visual or hearing difficulties?
- In selecting creative entrepreneurs to participate in this pilot project, have we attempted to invite a range of different entrepreneurs and small businesses, from a variety backgrounds?
- Are there any references, however general, to age?
- Are there any attempts at humour that will make some groups feel insulted or excluded?

- Are different religions or belief systems represented both textually and visually?
- Do the training methods take into account the fact that people learn in different ways, without making invalid assumptions about the characteristics of the entrepreneurs we are working with?
- Are VIC facilitators aware of, and committed to the project's equality and diversity statement?
- Is the project publicised to a wide-ranging audience, using different media (newspapers, radio, street posters, visits to community groups etc.), thus inviting all types of entrepreneur to participate and benefit from visiting the VIC incubator portal?

Promoting Equality and Diversity in Creative Enterprises

In offering guidance and support to our creative entrepreneurs, we will make them fully aware of their legal obligations in terms of equality and diversity, and how they might produce their own equality policies and actions plans, which are implemented, monitored and reviewed regularly.

Benefits for Creative Entrepreneurs

The commercial benefits for enterprises striving towards the goals of parity, accessibility and participation will also be highlighted. Examples could include:

- demonstrating an openness which will appeal to potential clients
- the possibility of establishing a niche in the market
- creating a favourable image which will satisfy the requirements of future funding agencies
- competitive advantage over rival enterprises that don't demonstrate such a commitment
- the likelihood of attracting a committed workforce should the business expand