



Europe Region

World Association  
of Girl Guides  
and Girl Scouts

# MAINSTREAMING CONCEPT

## DIVERSITY IN THE EUROPE REGION

Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting feels like a relevant movement where girl guides and girl scouts from different backgrounds and circumstances belong, are valued and gain inspiration to take action in the world. Diversity of context, culture, circumstances, economic frameworks, behaviours, talents and resources, beliefs, identities and futures find a home in WAGGGS Europe, where these are consistent with WAGGGS vision and values.

## GENDERED LEADERSHIP IN THE EUROPE REGION

WAGGGS Europe Region and its Members inspire, grow and influence a new generation of leaders with the confidence and competence to define leadership on their terms. This leadership will achieve constructive change in the world and bring the best out of each individual, regardless of their gender. WAGGGS and its Members review and shape organisational cultures, systems and processes around the needs of their members so that each leader is valued and enabled to fulfil their talents. WAGGGS Europe Region commits to continue its advocacy for equal rights of girls and young women, harnessing its accumulated expertise in the field and consistent with its mission.

## BACKGROUND AND STATUS

### Gender and diversity as strategic areas for Europe Region WAGGGS

Our mission pledges to allow girls and young women to develop to their fullest potential. Yet we still have a lot of work to do to help our MOs overcome the most fundamental restraints of gender and diversity barriers. Girls and boys around the globe are raised into gender and other stereotypical roles, which permit and in turn restrain us from expressing certain attitudes, feelings, looks, expressions, behaviors and activities.

Guiding and scouting does not operate within its own universe. It is embedded in society and therefore is not free from a cultural setting where gender- and diversity-related inequality prevails. Norms and stereotypes are transmitted everywhere - including in guiding and scouting even if there is no contentious intention to do it. Gender stereotypes prevail so strongly in our society that gender norms and barriers are transmitted into our activities and structures, even if that is not our intention. This is equally relevant for coeducational and single sex contexts. By understanding and acting on these tendencies, we can create a more equal setting for all.

Europe Region WAGGGS (ERW) aims to provide a development opportunity for everyone and views gender and cultural stereotypes as the root cause of limitations to , our access to feelings, activities, behaviors, looks etc. based on gender. Diversity is about valuing difference wherever it is found. WAGGGS has a unique position in not only being able to talk about gender and diversity, as most organizations, but to also walk the talk. Girl Guiding/ Girl Scouting impacts on the development of young people's identities from an early age, and therefore has this unique and crucial role in offering our members opportunities to develop personal identity on the basis of self-defined parameters, beyond social expectations and gender barriers. Diversity and gender work will take us closer to our vision, where "all girls and young women are valued and take action to change the world".

## Potential of working with diversity and gender

ERW especially sees a potential for growth in relation to diversity and gender. If we want to open up our movement to everyone sharing our values, we need to make sure that all girls and young women feel that Girl Guiding/Girl Scouting is for them. Ultimately to reach more members in many European contexts means to better understand and respond to the diversities girls and young women live with, the stereotypes surrounding them, their expectations, the opportunities available to different groups of girls, women, boys and men in Europe today and tomorrow and to reflect this understanding in all programmes, leadership, communications, and organizational practices.

There are four main arguments that explain why successful gender and diversity work has a great potential to strengthen our organisation:

- **The growth case:** Working on diversity and gender issues so that we are truly accessible to everyone will open up a significant growth potential, because it will reduce the barriers to members joining us – and staying with us.
- **The legal case:** There are international and national rules prohibiting discrimination. Sometimes the legislative framework has the power to compel compliance as it can be the case that legal sanctions and economic penalties are involved. We should anticipate this.
- **The ethical case.** Our values guide us to include everyone who might benefit from our movement. It is the right thing to do to treat everyone as an individual and make sure that nobody is experiencing discrimination
- **The reputational case.** Perhaps the most overlooked, but very important for an organisation like WAGGGS, which has a strong history and legacy to protect and which can serve as an asset in attracting diverse communities if deployed well.

## Analysis of the current situation in Guiding and Scouting

The scouting movement is originally a male organization with its methodology rooted in the military. Even a hundred years on, this heritage prevails in many aspects of the movement. Often ERW MOs focus on adventure, physical activity, competition and sometimes almost exclusively outdoor activities. Gender imbalances still prevail today in co-educational MOs often favoring men over women in decision making positions on all levels, as well as in recruitment and even more so in retention. In single-sex organisations, there is a great potential yet to be exploited to apply a gender perspective in allowing and supporting many different atypical roles, models, and behaviours, that are not necessarily part of the traditional image of a woman or a girl. In addition, a consultation with MOs has brought forward a feeling that the membership in several different countries remains mostly homogeneous, representing the mainstream population in each country, and that there are challenges to become fully inclusive.

From the information we have collected in different events such as the Event on Gender Equality focusing on the Role of Boys and Men, Volunteers Meetings, country visits, conferences etc.; volunteers and staff of the Europe Region WAGGGS observed that gender is not high on the agenda of the MOs. Even if several remarkable initiatives have been developed in some MOs (booklet *Him 'n Her* in Sweden, *Go Mix* in EEuDF France, etc.); the initiatives remain punctual activities while gender is not being mainstreamed into the core activities and structures of the MOs.

The consultation process on diversity has shown that even though half of the consulted MOs have diversity as a part of their overall strategy, only a few MOs seem to have taken serious steps to put strategy into action on an organizational level. As in the case of gender work, the initiatives on diversity are also mainly taking the shape of small local initiatives or projects with limited reach.

## WAGGGS EUROPE REGION'S APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING GENDER AND DIVERSITY

### Norms as key concept in relation to inclusion and exclusion

Norms are unwritten rules of our communities, things that we tend to take for granted. Like standing in line or greeting someone with a handshake. Norms are rules we usually don't speak about, we just "know them". Whether a norm is easy or rather hard to follow depends on who you are. You might experience some norms as practical, like not standing too close when we speak to people, while others might be more challenging for you like using door handles that are at an inconvenient height. As a guiding and scouting community we nurture norms that are unique to our movement. Some of these norms might be experienced as restrictive by those who would like to join us, but even by our own members who as a result might decide to leave after some time. It is important to talk about our norms and their effects on our current and potential members as well as the societies we live in, so that we can update them and remain relevant to youth today and tomorrow.

People and groups breaking the norms are often punished in different ways. If your skin is dark, you know that a bandage will never be skin coloured for you, and if you are left-handed, you know that you have to go find your own special scissors. The extent of inconvenience you experience and how you respond to it depends on the degree of the norm break and on whether or not you have alternatives to work around it.

As nothing is permanent, also norms change with time and context. They were not the same 200 or twenty years ago as they are today. Norms are also not the same in different cultural or age groups. We can choose, change and develop the system of norms in our communities, and since we live in a mobile and global world, regular changes are natural and necessary.

In Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting, this means being proud of all that is fun and inclusive, and brave enough to question the norms limiting each of us from developing to our fullest potential.

### Understanding barriers as part of society rather than the individual

The social model defines difference as consisting of elements in both the individual and the surrounding society. It has been widely used in e.g. the disability field. In this model, a mobility disability is seen as a combination of a physical condition in the body and a society that relies on stairs to access buildings. A mental health issue becomes a social problem when social contexts are dominated by features that might be hard to handle for the person living with it, for example large crowds or lots of alcohol. The social model has replaced a medical model, where the disability was seen as something within the individual themselves. By applying the social model in the wider field of diversity, ERW recognizes that differences are not only linked to individuals but just as much to the way we have built our society.

## TOOLS OF THE WAGGGS EUROPE REGION TO OVERCOME GENDER AND DIVERSITY BARRIERS

### Norm review as a way to break down diversity and gender barriers

ERW work on diversity and gender will embrace a norm review approach in order to foster a reality where norms are reviewed and everyone feels free to be themselves. The norm review approach puts the focus back on the norm and the power. This often means putting the focus back on ourselves and on how we act and how we plan and do Scouting and Guiding. How norms create and uphold inequalities and how we can turn them so that we create inclusion and equality instead of differences.

ERW proposes to overcome a tolerance approach where the focus is put in creating tolerance for someone that keeps being considered as "the other" because of its differences. The message given from a tolerance approach would be "I don't mind you being here, even though you are strange". It is proposed to go beyond this approach because it doesn't bring about change, it only gives the mainstream actors the chance to feel good about themselves.

## Categorization as a means of norm review - but also something to overcome

The categorizing approach understands diversity as inclusion of specific minority groups such as children with disabilities, migrants or sexual minorities. The general idea is that members should reflect the population in terms of the categories of minority groups. This approach also relates to the concept of anti-discrimination. This approach is based on treating people on the basis of their common values, rights and responsibilities first. It allows us to then identify structural barriers to equality across the board. The categorisation approach is useful when it comes to identify barriers and to monitoring, and makes life easier when we are looking to set quotas, targets and benchmarks. Therefore, this approach might be useful when developing a norm review and when fostering empowerment of changemakers.

The generalizing approach recognises that valuing people for who they are, and addressing any existing or future societal or systematic obstacles to their equality. This approach understands diversity as something connected to being human, and sees all humans as different. As per this approach the idea is that guiding and scouting should teach members to respect and be open to other human beings in spite of differences, in order to build a community where we can all live together in peace. In long term this approach is more ideal than the categorizing approach, because it allows everyone to be themselves and not labeled as part of a minority group..

## Diversity and gender mainstreaming

Mainstreaming an inclusive perspective is the process of assessing the implications for different types of individuals (based on discrimination grounds) of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in all areas and at all levels.

Inclusive mainstreaming in guiding and scouting means that we need to think on WHO is being considered and reached when planning our activities: new program (and training, governance etc.) but even before that we need to consider who is recruited to the group and analyze the needs and challenges of our guides and scouts face, etc. The following questions will guide the analysis.

**#1. WHO DO WE REACH - AND WHO LEAVES?**

**#2. WHO STEPS IN THROUGH THE DOOR - AND WHO LEAVES?**

**#3. WHO STAYS- AND WHO LEAVES?**

**#4. WHO HAS INFLUENCE- AND WHO LEAVES?**

**#5. WHO IS APPOINTED TO MAKE THIS ANALYSIS? WHO DO YOU ASK? WHO ARE YOU IN THIS ROOM?**

## Empowerment as a complementary approach

Complementary to the norm review approach, ERW will use an 'empowering change-makers' approach. The focus is on strengthening the group that faces special barriers. This step is necessary to be able to keep on going in the work for change, making the daily commitment bearable and fun for the ones otherwise being left out or not having a voice, but it doesn't really serve to change the order of things.



## GUIDING AND SCOUTING PRINCIPLES WE BUILD OUR WORK ON

### Intercultural approach to diversity and gender work

An overarching intercultural approach to diversity and inclusion would mean that rather than seeing the context of diversity as something that exists in a distinct state in individual countries, (on a sliding scale from this who are highly advanced in policy and practice to those where diversity is barely recognised) WAGGGS would recognise the cultural context in which diversity is recognised in each country. Having said that, the prohibition on discrimination as stated in the European Convention on Human Rights, as well as in our Magenta Sky, needs to be respected.

WAGGGS will also employ intercultural dialogue methodologies, content and practice in order to facilitate greater understanding and respect for difference across boundaries. This would not take the approach of seeking to impose viewpoints on a 'one size fits all' basis, but rather to facilitate dialogue and the appreciation of cultural differences across all of the areas of inclusion and diversity.

### PRINCIPLES FOR OUR WORK

- Gender and diversity work is one of our strongest tools to reach our Mission – to reach our fullest potential
- We have a unique position to really make a difference. Where others can only talk, we can walk the talk in the work with our members
- Gender and diversity work is one of if not the strongest growth potential
- Gender work aims to change the root cause of the problems that are limiting our access to feelings, activities, behaviors, looks etc. based on gender – gender stereotyped limitations. This is a complement to all other WAGGGS initiatives addressing gender based issues affecting girls and young women
- Gender equality implies that resources and power are shared and that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration and that each individual is free to choose how to develop as human being, being able to go beyond gender considerations
- Gender equality is not a women's issue. Boys and men are limited by gender structures and gain by gender equality. Only when men engage and feel they have something to gain will we see any real difference since society is based on all genders
- Gender work is needed in co-educational as well as single sex MOs
- Diversity is all about change: Working with diversity is daring to change how we do things, opening Scouting and Guiding up to more people. It is not about ticking of a box, it is about changing our mindset
- Diversity is about what kind of association we want to be. What are our values? What do we stand up for? Who do we want to be? The basics should always be about the values and the joint culture that we are creating

- We work inclusively. We always respect and make room for each other, regardless of “sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status
- Furthermore, we will take an intersectional approach recognizing that gender inequalities are also linked to social categories such as race, class, disability, and sexual orientation
- There isn’t a right or a wrong way, we are just doing Girl Guiding/ Girl Scouting in different ways: Scouting and Guiding can be done in thousands of ways, the thing in common being our values and the guiding and scouting method. In the variations lies the possibility of creating a programme that works for everyone, depending on context and possibility
- We acknowledge the differences around Europe: We all have equal value, always, but are different. In our own societies, organisations and around Europe we have varied opinions and perspectives. We find ways to make each other stronger
- It is ok to go little by little: No one can do everything at the same time. And “everything” can mean different things for different people and organizations
- Gender and diversity work cannot be an isolated activity, it has to be mainstreamed throughout the organization to have any real impact. We need to address history and identity, program and training, democratic structures and daily activities