Executive summary of the final report of the SEG Inclusion

SHAPING INCLUSION @UT
LEARNING TOGETHER TO BECOME MORE INCLUSIVE

This report presents the results and conclusions of the Shaping Expert Group (SEG) Inclusion at the University of Twente in the period September 2020 - September 2022. During these two years, marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, we have actively sought dialogue across the organization about inclusion, in person or online, to help raise awareness about the topic and facilitate discourse. More than 45 people have actively contributed to different roles as members of the SEG Inclusion and in total we have managed to reach more than 400 staff and students (see figure 1).
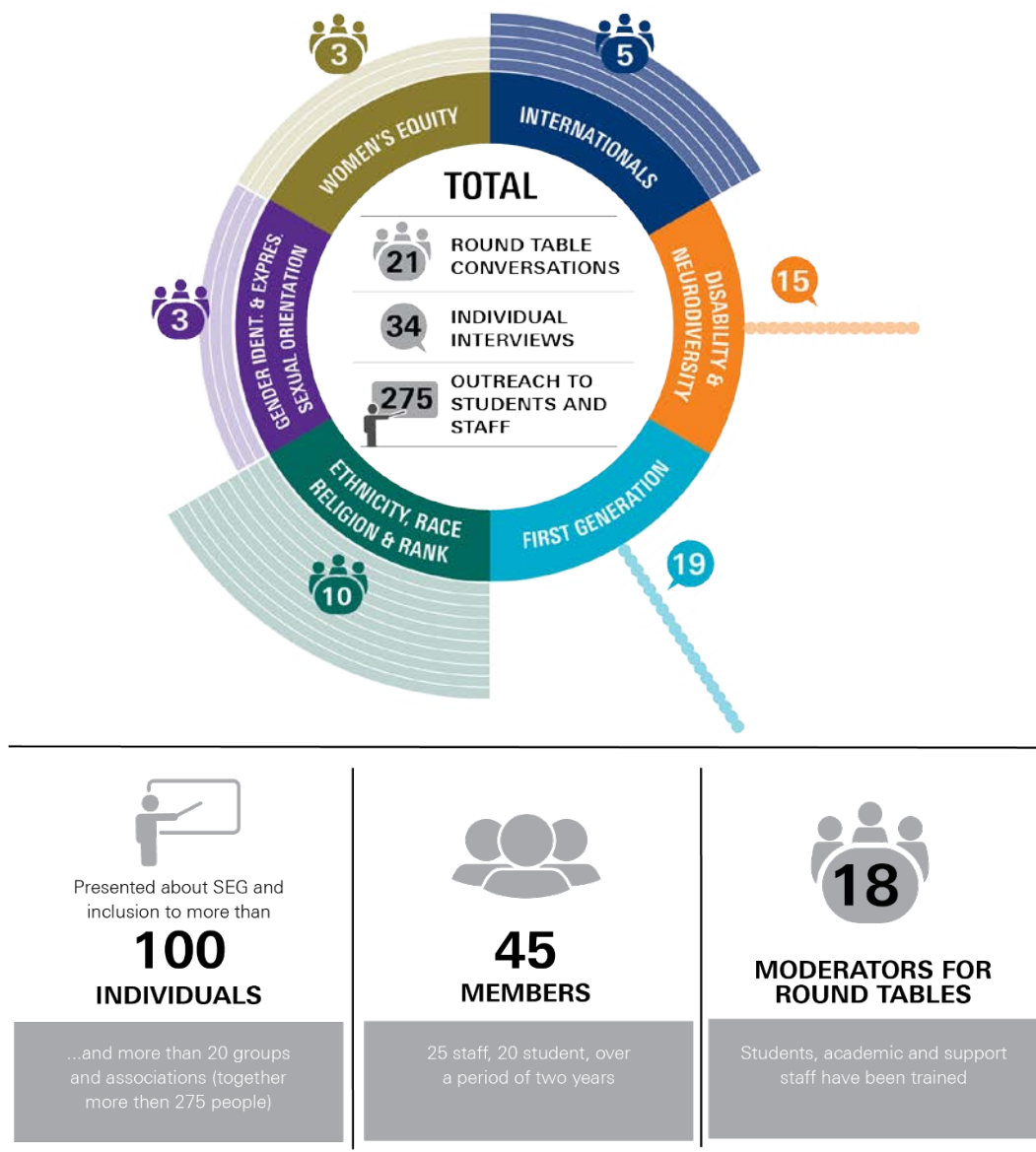

Fig. 1 Overview of outreach to UT community by the SEG inclusion 2020-2022

By holding space and listening to students, support and academic staff for two years, we learned what belonging means in everyday work/study and what we need to become a more inclusive university. The SEG has initiated a broad discussion on inclusion at all levels, on the work/study floor and at management level. We developed a method based on personal stories and succeeded in bridging polarizing conversations. We connected people and projects, sowed the seeds for new initiatives and made people aware of the importance of becoming an inclusive university.

CONTEXT, GOALS AND METHOD

The SEG inclusion needed to operate at the interface between global movements (#Metoo, Pride and Black Lives Matter), and local debates and local actions. Historically, the UT was a small, local university, consisting mainly of men from the region. In that context, attention to diversity meant attention to gender (women) diversity. With an increasingly diverse population of students and staff, more inclusive practices and awareness beyond discrimination against women are needed.

This report aims to provide insight into the perceptions, practices and experiences of inclusion by UT employees and students. To this end, we have made an overview of initiatives (Chapter 3) based on conversations with share- and stakeholders. In addition, we also conducted personal interviews and storytelling roundtables over a year and a half (chapters 4-9). This qualitative research took place in two phases (see Figure 2). The first phase focused on preventing discrimination and exclusion and the second at promoting a sense of belonging.
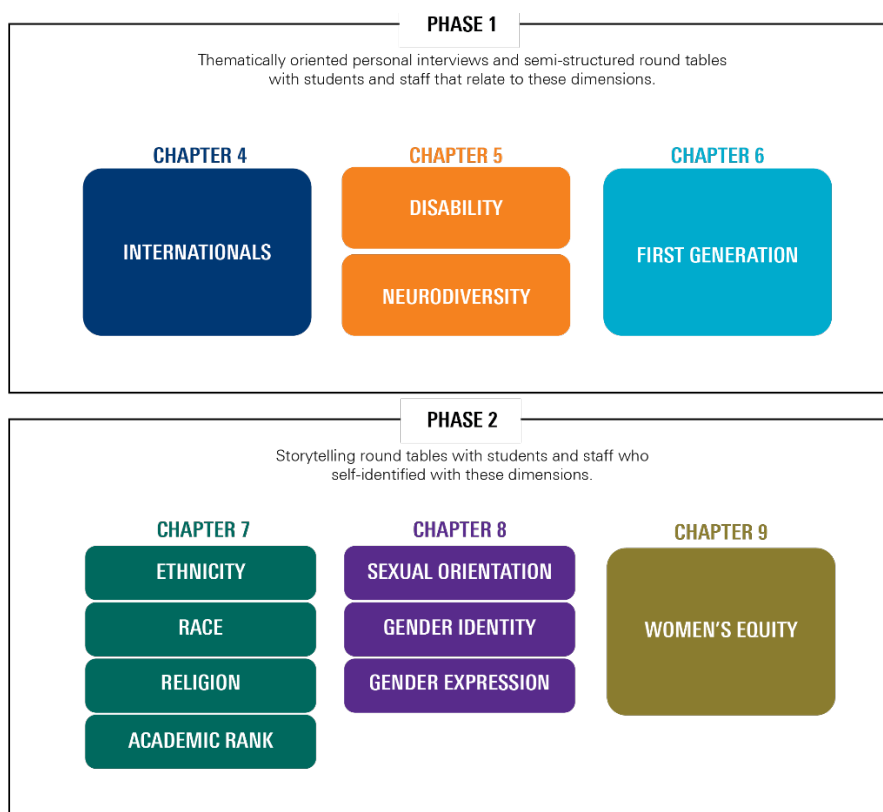
PHASE 1

Thematically oriented personal interviews and semi-structured round tables with students and staff that relate to these dimensions.

CHAPTER 4	CHAPTER 5	CHAPTER 6
INTERNATIONALS	DISABILITY / NEURODIVERSITY	FIRST GENERATION

PHASE 2

Storytelling round tables with students and staff who self-identified with these dimensions.

CHAPTER 7	CHAPTER 8	CHAPTER 9
ETHNICITY / RACE / RELIGION / ACADEMIC RANK	SEXUAL ORIENTATION / GENDER IDENTITY / GENDER EXPRESSION	WOMEN'S EQUITY

Fig. 2 The data collection of the qualitative research took place in two phases

OUR VISION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Our report underlines the need to continue working on awareness, ownership and accountability based on a sense of shared responsibility. We noticed that UT staff is perceived as well-meaning and friendly. However, good intentions are not enough. Overreliance on the good will, courage and efforts of individuals can lead to arbitrariness and hinders the recognition that there is implicit and explicit bias, leading to (unintentional) harm.

Students and staff most affected by exclusion and discrimination in daily interactions were Muslim students and staff. This was most notable in repeated questions to explain themselves or defend their culture, usually from an uninformed and prejudiced perspective of religious customs and practices. Students and staff with a non-EU background (or a name or appearance suggesting non-EU background) also faced discrimination in education and career development. Discrimination and exclusion in HR and educational processes and structures were reported more broadly also for the other groups (e.g., disability, gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation), for example in UT-flex, the onboarding process, and in traditional family arrangements and names mentioned on diplomas.

Our vision is that we need an integral approach, fostering inclusion practices and belonging, while celebrating diversity and preventing discrimination and exclusion. Our vision on inclusion is in line with an integral approach to inclusion that

goes beyond a fixation on equality and diversity that expects marginalized individuals and groups in need of help to conform to the norm employee/student (in the UT context we found this to be a male, white, heterosexual, able-bodied, assertive EU citizen with a PhD Degree). An integral approach means that the entire organization is involved, so that marginalized and dominant groups together learn how to act and speak inclusively. Integral also means structural integration of diversity and inclusion at all levels of the organization, personal, professional, structural and cultural.

From the stories and discussions, a pattern emerged in terms of five aspects that characterize the personal, group, and organizational response needed for an inclusive organization: Awareness, Empowerment, Support, Action structures and Cultural change. This vision on inclusion should be the basis for the implementation of our recommendations as depicted in Figure 3.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

👁 **Create a long-term overarching vision** and coordinated effort. This should start with mapping which of the five aspects of inclusive response are already addressed with existing initiatives and which new tools should be developed (or existing ones improved).

🔧 **Develop an Inclusion Toolbox:** This toolbox is a dynamic collection of trainings, materials and activities tailored to various needs to help achieve our DE&I goals. There should be a set of tools for every different aspect of inclusive response

🔍 **Inclusion Monitoring & Reflection:** Establish a baseline of how inclusive the UT is and monitor development of inclusion over time with a reflection tool. A reflection tool that helps individuals and groups to become aware of what inclusion means.

👥 **Organizing community support:** Supporting dedicated persons in faculty/service departments with a bottom-up approach and strengthening of the current DE&I team that will be guiding the implementation of inclusion to achieve our goals for 2030.
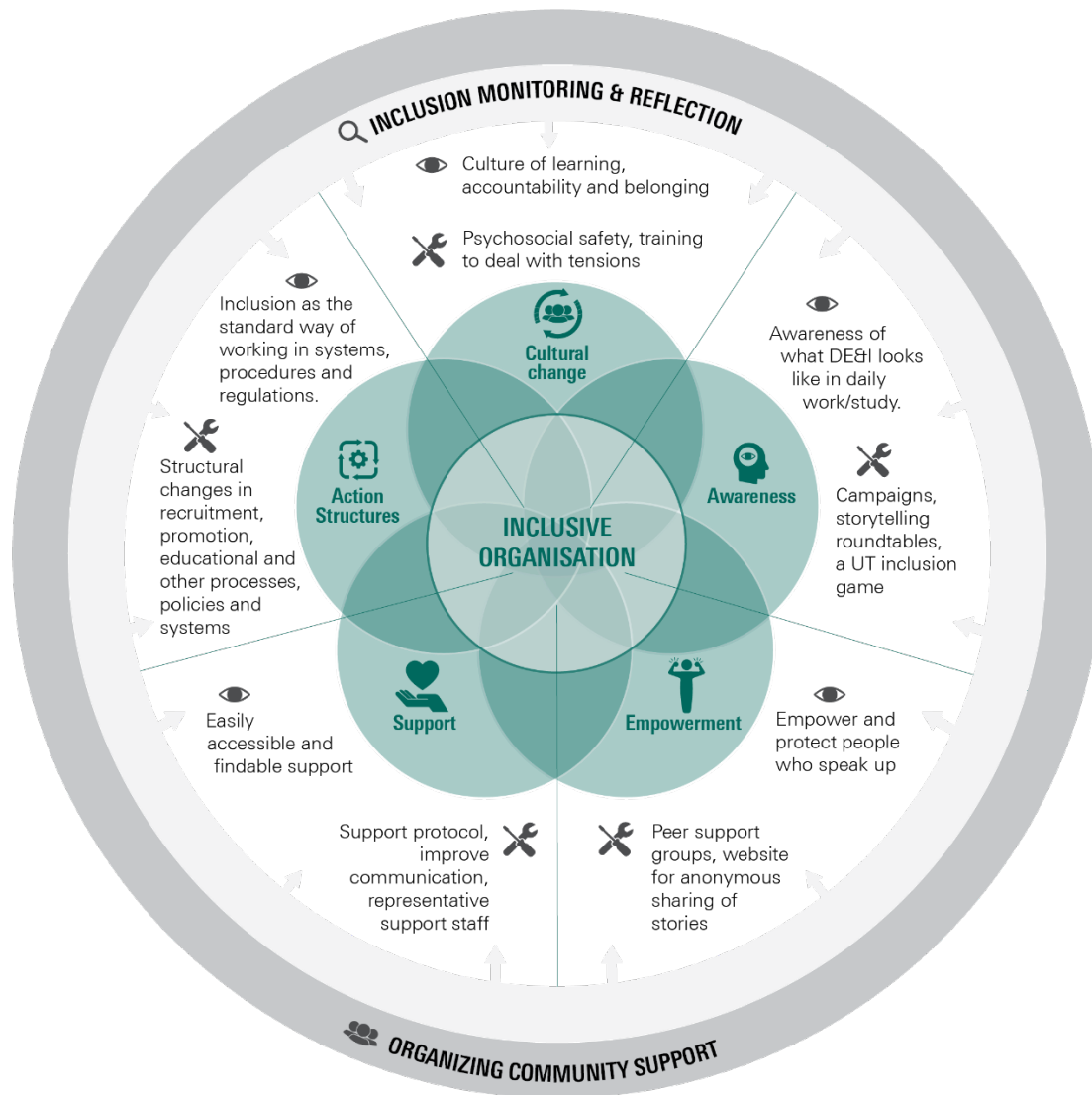

Fig. 3 Final conclusions and recommendations