

Diversity Officers in Think Tanks

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HOW TO HIRE FOR DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

SUGGESTIONS FOR GERMAN
THINK TANKS AND FOUNDATIONS

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WITH: CLAIRE LUZIA LEIFERT



FOREWORD

INTRODUCTION

This guide aims to provide suggestions and inspiration for more inclusive hiring practices in think tanks and foundations based on a qualitative lived-experiences approach. While diversity encompasses various dimensions and nuances, we focus in this text on young research professionals with migratory backgrounds as the main target group. However, some suggestions might be adaptable to different contexts or other groups. Our recommendations are directed at think tanks and foundations that want to become more inclusive workplaces. This guide covers the job posting process, candidate screening, interviewing, and the onboarding

phase. Our propositions for enhancing inclusive hiring efforts are grounded in the lived experiences of the authors and on interviews with research professionals working in think tanks and foundations in Germany, some of whom have faced hurdles linked to their background or are engaged in creating diversity policies and designing hiring processes. With this guide we want to contribute to the broader discussion of diversity and inclusion in research institutes and foundations. We hope to stimulate further exchanges and help ensure ongoing diversity policies are grounded in lived experiences.



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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Looking at many German think tank or foundation's websites, it is clear that our organizations fail to reflect the diversity of our society, let alone the societies we work with, research, and advise on. The apparent lack of diversity in think tanks and foundations raises questions about how our relative demographic homogeneity influences our perspectives on contemporary socio-political issues.

Many think tank and foundation leaders are becoming increasingly aware of the benefits of diversity and inclusion due to mounting evidence that more diverse workplaces have higher employee satisfaction and better-quality output. Having a greater diversity of staff across all levels of the organization also brings greater diversity of thought in policy research and in how think tanks operate. Since think tanks and foundations engaged in international affairs work with, write about, and advise on people and politics in other countries, bringing in diversity of thought, cultural background, and life experience through inclusive hiring practices should be an organizational priority to make sure our research and policy advice is high quality, contextual, and relevant.

The goal of this guide is to provide organizations with ideas about how to remove barriers in the hiring process for entry-level positions and contribute to a sense of belonging for people with diverse backgrounds who do not belong to the organization's demographic majority. **Some of the key questions we address in this guide include:**

1. How might we make the hiring process more inclusive, with a special focus on entry-level professionals with migratory backgrounds?
2. How might we make job advertisements attractive for people with migratory backgrounds and encourage them to apply?
3. How might we implement and communicate inclusive practices in the job screening, interview, and onboarding process?
4. What strategies might help professionals with migratory backgrounds?
5. How might we make sustainable policy changes in the organization to ensure it is hiring for diversity in the long-term?

INTRODUCTION



METHODOLOGY

METHODOLOGY

These recommendations are informed by an analysis that took place throughout the [Think Tank Lab Diversity Challenge](#) between September 2021 and January 2022. As part of the working group, participants discussed the state of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in the German think tank and foundations sector and developed practical solutions to foster DEI in our organizations.

The working group consisted of eight practitioners (two men and five women) working in German think tanks and foundations – some of them with a migratory background. Our analysis is based on the lived experiences of the authors, existing research on the topic, and stakeholder interviews with people affected by or working on diversity matters and hiring practices in German think tanks and foundations.

You can find more information on the make-up of this group and the methodology used [here](#).¹ The guide was developed to help address the obstacles professionals with migratory backgrounds and other non-majority backgrounds face when entering the think tank and foundations sector. It puts the burden of change on organizations and not candidates.

Because entry-level positions are a key talent pipeline for think tanks and foundations, we have focused on providing recommendations how to attract and retain young researchers with a greater diversity of ethnicities and countries of origin.² By doing so, we intend to help organizations achieve diversity goals along the vectors of ethnicity, countries of origin, and young age. This choice was made

1. The authors participated in the Think Tank Lab Diversity Challenge and produced this guide in their free time without receiving compensation.

2. While a debate on the scientific definition of terms is beyond the scope of this guide, we refer to people who have either migrated to Germany themselves, or whose parents have migrated to Germany, as well as people of ethnic origin that is different from Germany's White mainstream society.

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while being fully aware that diversity is a vast topic and involves other equally important characteristics like gender, sexual orientation and identities, physical (dis)abilities and neurodivergence, which in reality all intersect. This guide also focuses on entry-level hiring processes because we were able to collect evidence and experiences from our own careers and throughout the interview phase of the Diversity Challenge. We understand that there is a broad diversity of profiles, experiences, and biographies, even within this selected group. This is why we do not aim for these suggestions to work on a “one size fits all” basis, but rather to give organizations practical strategies that can be implemented in their efforts towards more equality and inclusion. We hope that these practical strategies will ease the obstacles and challenges that professionals with migratory backgrounds - in all their diversity - tend to face when entering the think tank and foundation sector.

While this guide primarily addresses the needs and experiences of research and project management staff, we are aware that other types of personnel including IT, communications, human resources (HR), or event management are equally important for organizations and should also benefit from inclusive recruiting and onboarding practices.



RECOMMENDATIONS

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The recruitment process is an essential building block for creating more inclusive practices in German think tanks and foundations. Different stages of the recruiting process can be made more inclusive, starting with the phrasing and criteria in job postings, candidate screening practices, how job interviews are conducted, and which onboarding strategies are implemented.

This guide includes recommendations for how each of these four stages can be made more inclusive. This non-exhaustive list should feed into a more inclusive everyday organizational culture.

1 - JOB POSTING

2 - CANDIDATE SCREENING

3 - INTERVIEWING

4 - ONBOARDING

RETAINING



To give feedback on this guide please write to: thinktanklab@dgap.org

1

Make job postings more inclusive

RECOMMENDATIONS

REMOVE LANGUAGE THAT BIASES TOWARDS CERTAIN BACKGROUNDS

Collecting professional experience in German think tanks and foundations is often particularly difficult for non-German candidates.³ Two key barriers to entry are language and visa requirements that non-German professionals have to meet if they want to do research or take up work in Germany. Candidates without German citizenship also have to provide evidence of a certain level of financial means that makes doing an unpaid - or even a low-paid - internship or traineeship unviable. This is especially true for many candidates who come from low-income countries.

In job requirements and selection criteria, think tanks and foundations should avoid references to “top-tier universities” and institutions that offer unpaid internships, such as the United Nations.⁴ Organizations should also avoid over-ambitious language such as “young entrepreneur” or “young leader”, because this gives the impression that any other job qualities including soft skills such as “finding compromise” are not appreciated. It paints a rather rigid picture of suitable skills and presupposes experience in leadership roles, which could be rather unappealing for some entry-level candidates.

Instead, internships or jobs at institutions that are less well-known as well as volunteering experience could be considered relevant for the required position. Encourage candidates to mention these experiences on their CVs and motivation letters within the job posting. In our experience, and those of our peers, we have noticed that in the context of applying for entry-level positions at German think

3. This section is particularly relevant for first-generation migrants and international candidates interested in moving to Germany.

4. See Harver, “6 Must-Know Tips for Writing Inclusive Job Descriptions”; Ongoing, “7 Tips for Using Inclusive Language in Job Descriptions”

tanks and foundations, a culture has developed where mentioning such work experiences in the application process is seen as unprofessional or irrelevant. However, we are convinced that through such engagements candidates can gain skills that are relevant and beneficial for later work in German think tanks and foundations.

ENSURE JOB DESCRIPTIONS USE INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

Job descriptions can be made more inclusive by replacing discriminatory phrases with explicitly inclusive language. There are different ways to approach this.

Firstly, a text module can be introduced in all job offers that states that applications from different backgrounds are especially welcome.

Secondly, clear statements such as the following can be used:

- » *“Throughout our hiring process we focus on the skills and analytical abilities you possess rather than the specific university you attended”*
- » *“International experiences encompass not only exchange programs or practice stays but also whole undergraduate or postgraduate programs abroad as well as studying in Germany as an international student or relevant volunteering commitments abroad”*
- » *“We encourage you to apply even if you feel you do not meet all the desirable criteria. Please include information about your relevant professional skills or other experiences that we may not have considered”*
- » *“During our hiring process, we take into account your growth potential, not just your prior achievements”*

To help staff members drafting job offers, consider preparing a template that uses inclusive language. For quality control purposes, HR departments should review any

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job descriptions written by think tank and foundation staff members to ensure they are inclusive and in line with legal requirements as stipulated, for instance in the General Act on Equal Treatment (Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz, AGG).

EXPAND YOUR DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS TO REACH DIVERSE AUDIENCES

Think tanks can widen the pool of candidates they attract by expanding the list of platforms through which job postings are distributed. This should help get open positions in front of more diverse audiences. A good starting point is the list of networks of initiatives on our website here.

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Prof. Amrita Narlikar, President, German Institute for Global & Area Studies (GIGA); Honorary Fellow, Darwin College, University of Cambridge; non-resident Senior Fellow, Observer Research Foundation
(Photo © Christina Sabrowsky - dpa)

2

Remove biases in candidate screening

RECOMMENDATIONS

CREATE A DIVERSE SELECTION PANEL

Before screening submissions, a selection committee should be created. A diverse selection panel may enhance the variety of perspectives involved in screening and help mitigate implicit biases in the hiring process. Furthermore, a diverse committee featuring people of different genders, nationalities, and age, may help young professionals with a migratory background feel more at ease during interviews and make the place of work more attractive and welcoming.

REVIEW THE SELECTION CRITERIA

In many cases, think tanks and foundations receive a vast number of applications for open roles and need handy criteria that enable a fast and effective way to initially screen suitable candidates. Some organizations even employ software that scans applications for specific keywords. Other employers use a scoring formula on candidate applications, by which a point is given for every important part of the job description. From the scoring process, a prioritized list of candidates emerges to take to the next stage. However, those criteria, scoring, and technologies can also be biased in favor of certain groups and put others at a disadvantage. Therefore, a structural review of the selection criteria may help to circumvent these biases while at the same time implementing useful methods to reduce the screening time.

The following questions may help HR departments identify biased criteria:

- » *What do we acknowledge as relevant professional or international experiences? Are we missing some categories?*
 - For example, non-EU students are, for a variety of reasons, not allowed to take part in certain kinds of exchange programs or are not allowed to

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do exchange semesters during their studies. It is therefore important that think tanks and foundations start to appreciate other kinds of international experiences in cases where this is a requirement for the job. Here are further questions that help to review this specific aspect and adapt the language in the job postings accordingly:

- » *What is the reason for asking for international experience? What is expected of a candidate who has lived/worked/studied abroad?*
- » *Do we favor prestigious academic institutions and what is considered a prestigious institution? Do we need to consider the precise academic institution a candidate attended?*
- » *Do we consider related academic backgrounds that may be relevant for the position? Do we consider comparable academic courses from other (under) graduate programs from other countries?*
- » *What counts as volunteering/community service?*
- » *Are high grades one of the decisive factors in accepting or rejecting a candidate?*

CONSIDER POSTING SALARY LEVELS

Salary levels might be a decisive factor for entry-level professionals deciding whether to apply for specific positions. However, many think tanks and foundations do not state the salary in their job postings. Taking unpaid or low-paid commitments is a privilege that many cannot afford. For instance, there are given salary ranges professionals applying for working visas in Germany must reach to get a positive reply to their application. It is not uncommon, that the salary ranges required by German immigration authorities exceed the entry-level salaries offered by a German think tanks or foundations. Thus, it would be helpful to display the corresponding salary range on the job posting and to ensure that the amount is above or equal to a living wage.

RECOMMENDATIONS

REMOVE PERSONAL INFORMATION DURING SCREENING TO MITIGATE UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

When screening initial applications, organizations can prevent unconscious biases by removing all personal information that could disclose the ethnic background, age, or other diversity dimension of a candidate. A colleague who is not part of the selection panel may remove a candidate's name, date of birth, nationality, headshot, or even the name of the university they attended, in order to avoid unconscious biases during the first screening process.

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Diversity in policy advice is important because it is impossible to proffer solutions that work to the complex challenges policymakers are facing without bringing in a multiplicity of voices and perspectives. The complex and interconnected nature of global challenges simply demands diversity”

Dr. Olumide Abimbola, Founder & Executive Director,
Africa Policy Research Institute (APRI)
(Photo © Olumide Abimbola)

3

Conduct more inclusive job interviews

RECOMMENDATIONS

STANDARDIZE JOB INTERVIEWS

The selection panel should have broad guidelines, standardized questions, and a clear time schedule for conducting interviews. We believe this would allow the committee to compare candidates more fairly and reduce the influence of potential biases that may come up during interviews. The panel should agree on a set of questions in advance, define the roles of each panel member, and reflect on potential biases before and after the interviews.

SENSITIZE PANEL MEMBERS TO BIASED QUESTIONS

It may not always be obvious for some panel members what constitutes an inappropriate question. Aside from many questions that are illegal to ask around race, family planning, religion, personal care responsibilities, and other issues, here are some examples of other biased questions that should be avoided:

- » *How often do you travel back to your home country?*
- » *Where are you originally from?*
- » *Asking an international non-EU applicant: Why have you not done any exchange programs?*
- » *Why are you not a native English/French/German/other language speaker?*

EASE ADMINISTRATIVE HURDLES

Non-EU candidates, in particular, face a lot of administrative hurdles when beginning a job in a German think tank or foundation. Creating mechanisms that support the visa application process may encourage professionals with migratory backgrounds to apply and improve the diversity of think tanks and foundations.

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Applying for a working visa is not an easy task. The process requires time, money and help from HR teams. Many private companies take care of this whole process on behalf of international candidates. However, we have not found many employers who sponsor working visas for entry-level staff in the field of international affairs or in think tanks or foundations.

There are very specific requirements a candidate must meet to obtain a working visa in Germany. One of the main aspects - if not the most important one - is the duration of the candidate's work contract, as this determines the duration of the working visa to be granted. Thus, six- or twelve-month contracts, which are not uncommon in German think tanks and foundations, come with particularly high insecurity for international candidates, who must leave the country as soon as their contract expires.

Moreover, positions connected to third-party funded projects are often expected to be filled within a short time span of only several weeks after the job has been posted, since project schedules do not incorporate time for setting up the team before deliverables are due. For international candidates, this creates particular barriers as time is essential for visa processes to conclude. Starting a job within two weeks of signing the contract is in many cases impossible for such candidates. Be aware that visa processes take time and plan the vacancies schedule accordingly.

It is important to create a clear opportunity for the candidate to inform the HR team about whether they need a working visa or not, for example during the first interview or in the motivation letter.

HR teams should communicate their willingness to support such administrative procedures in job postings and during interviews. Doing so may also make positions and organizations more attractive to non-EU candidates.

4

Make onboarding more inclusive

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Inclusive practices do not end with a successful job interview but continue within daily institutional activities. Thus, we would like to offer some ideas for how think tanks and foundations can make onboarding processes more inclusive with regards to diversity in general and for entry-level professionals with migratory backgrounds, specifically. These efforts should feed into further inclusive practices that continue after the onboarding period ends.

SUPPORT PEER NETWORKS

Supporting the emergence of networks of people who are at a similar stage in their careers and may face similar challenges can help international candidates feel at home in your organization. Such networks can provide a safe space to share and validate their experiences, make it easier to bring their needs or problems to the attention of senior management and can provide valuable feedback on the hiring and onboarding process within the organization based on their own experiences.

Such groups may also be helpful for transferring knowledge between employees – especially those without prior experience in Germany – on matters such as navigating the organizational culture or relevant aspects of German employment law (e.g., work councils, maximum of ten working hours per day, etc.)

OFFER A MENTORING PROGRAM

Consider offering a mentoring program for entry-level professionals. HR departments could, together with experienced professionals and new staff, develop modules that cover the most pressing topics during the first year in a think tank or foundation. This might come in different forms. It could be a list of

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topics that have proven to be useful to be discussed in the first year. It might equally encompass specific activities for which the mentor-mentee pair can voluntarily sign-up, including networking events within or outside the institution. This would provide mentors and mentees with some inspiration about which issues or activities to cover during their mentoring relationship.

Mentoring a new colleague should be institutionally appreciated and incentivized by, for example, capturing it in the review of the year's events, in performance reviews, by organizing an annual event for mentors and mentees, or simply by inserting the information on the respective web profiles of the researchers. This might also increase the motivation for senior professionals to engage in these activities.

COLLECT DATA TO IDENTIFY PROBLEMS AND IMPROVEMENTS

Employees with migratory backgrounds may be less likely to speak their minds openly in case they experience problems during their onboarding. This may be due to fear of discrimination or stronger feelings of job and visa insecurity, for example. Annual anonymous employee feedback surveys are a helpful tool, even in smaller organizations, for management to get a more accurate picture of what needs to be improved. Questions can cover the candidates' experiences during the onboarding processes, the challenges in developing a feeling of belonging to the organization, the relationships with junior and senior colleagues, among others. This step may motivate employees with migratory backgrounds to speak out about their feelings and expectations.

CULTIVATE FEEDBACK LOOPS

Receiving regular feedback is important for anyone starting a new job. But it can be especially relevant for first generation migrants who may be adapting to a new working culture. Here are some ideas that have had a positive impact in the past, to improve or establish a healthy two-sided feedback culture:

- » Establish regular check-in meetings within the team or with your supervisor that explicitly create space for talking about topics such as diversity and belonging;
- » Help team leaders understand the need for regular check-in meetings with their staff;
- » Build psychological safety and encourage new hires to talk openly about their experiences and feelings during onboarding; and
- » Show that feedback is an explicit leadership priority, during onboarding and throughout, by offering the opportunity to give bottom-up feedback and acting on it.

COMMUNICATE ABOUT INCLUSION

Communicate internally and externally that inclusion is a priority area. Describe the concrete steps and initiatives your organization takes to ensure that this is the case. Invite critical feedback and suggestions on DEI measures. You can, for example:

- » Introduce informal groups (e.g., working groups or safe spaces) that you have set up;
- » Circulate your diversity strategy or action plan if you have one;
- » List your past and active DEI initiatives and talk about them openly, reflecting on both successes and failures;
- » Offer diversity training to both new and old employees; and
- » Specify contact points such as equality/diversity officers.

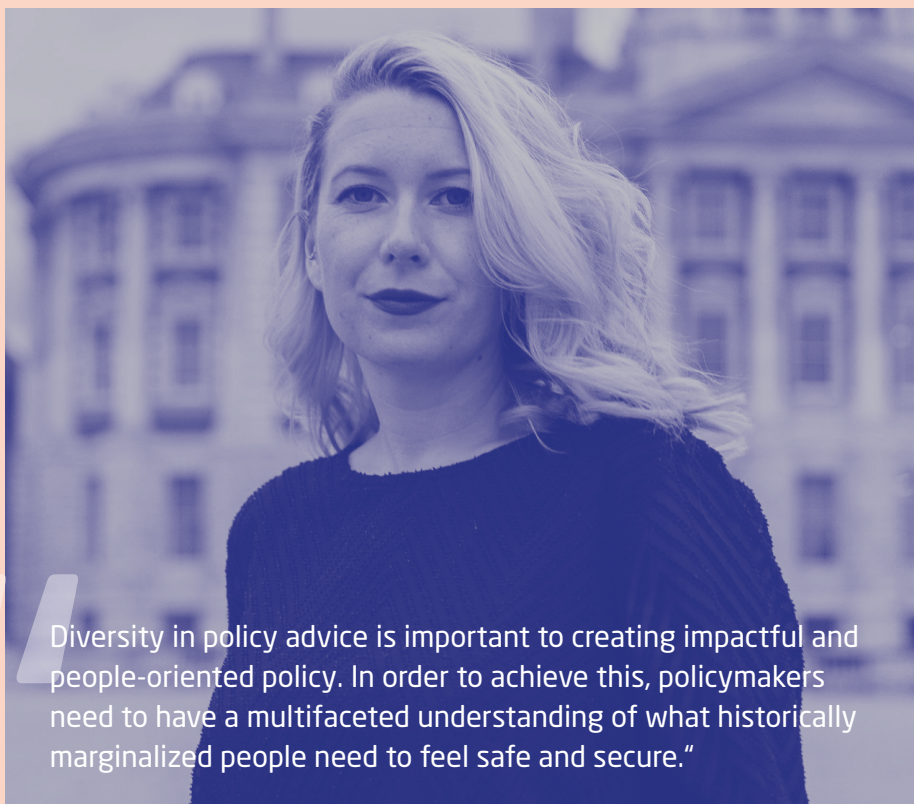
RECOMMENDATIONS

ENCOURAGE NEW EMPLOYEES TO ENGAGE IN INSTITUTIONAL DISCUSSIONS

Entry-level professionals with migratory backgrounds may shy away from engaging in broader initiatives due to power dynamics between junior and senior researchers. However, there are a range of ways in which new employees could be encouraged to participate in institution-wide discussions:

- » Give employees the tools and authority to create and circulate surveys according to their needs and challenges;
- » Invite employees to participate in established task forces or working groups on institutional topics such as diversity, new projects, or digitalization;
- » Give newer employees the opportunity to see how working groups/task forces/committees consult with leadership; and
- » Establish an internal think piece series on institutional challenges. Employees can write short think pieces to stimulate or contribute to institutional discussions on a specific topic. This could also be done anonymously for especially sensitive issues.

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Diversity in policy advice is important to creating impactful and people-oriented policy. In order to achieve this, policymakers need to have a multifaceted understanding of what historically marginalized people need to feel safe and secure.”

Marissa Conway, CEO at United Nations Association UK and Co-Founder of the Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy
(Photo © Leo Gomes)



COMMUNICATIONS

COMMUNICATIONS

Whilst the main recommendations focus on hiring and onboarding processes, inclusive external communications may also make the institution more attractive for entry-level professionals with a migratory background. These ideas for inclusive outward communication should not be used as window-dressing but should portray concrete inclusive practices within your organization and your commitment to implement self-defined diversity goals.

BE TRANSPARENT ABOUT DIVERSITY

Representing the diversity of staff members via interviews with employees published on the website and in social media, images of the team, or by publishing metrics showing the current demographic make-up of the think tank may encourage a more diverse set of qualified people to apply. Being transparent about diversity statistics and long-term goals indicates a think tank or foundation's willingness to engage with DEI issues, which may make it more attractive for entry-level professionals with migratory backgrounds and attract a more diverse range of profiles in general.⁵

If your organization is just starting to implement a diversity policy, mention in job openings and communications that the organization is interested in improving such statistics. Knowing that an organization is transparent and open about its diversity goals and takes these social aspects into account may be attractive for a greater diversity of potential candidates.

5. See SCRIPTS Berlin "Faces of SCRIPTS"; Goldhammer, Hilary, et al. "Organizational Strategies and Inclusive Language to Build Culturally Responsive Health Care Environments for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer People." *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved*, vol. 32 no. 1, 2021, p. 18-29. Project MUSE, p.20-21 Brookings Institution, "[Inclusion and Diversity](#)".

OPENLY SHARE INFORMATION ABOUT DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION GOALS AND INITIATIVES

Beyond a diversity statement, research organizations can make their equality and inclusion efforts visible to the public. By showcasing their internal processes and goals to foster an inclusive environment (e.g., diversity and inclusion task forces/committees, regular rotation of leadership positions, 360° feedback loops, internal guidelines for inclusive language or event planning, employee feedback surveys, diversity training, fair remuneration for internships), they can attract a wider range of early career applicants. This may also help bring think tanks together to exchange best practices and support one another with those initiatives.

ENSURE DIVERSE PANELS FOR EVENTS

Actions speak louder than words in think tank and foundations' communications. So, consider that think tanks and foundations also communicate their attitude towards diversity, equity and inclusion through the diversity of speakers at their public events. Panel events should feature a diverse set of experts, including people of different ages, gender orientation, or ethnicity. More and more databases are emerging that help think tanks identify and get in touch with a variety of experts, including [Brussels Binder](#), [POC Experts](#), and [WoX Network](#). Moreover, researchers can try to aim for a diverse audience when inviting participants to closed events. Beyond that, the following measures contribute to more inclusive events:⁶

- » Make sure that moderators are familiar with the correct pronunciation of

6. See Better Think Tanking "[Better Think Tanking #6 - Women to the top](#)"; The Brussels Binder Beyond Toolbox "[On the road to excellence: Why diversity at your events matters](#)".

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- all names before the start of the event by confirming with the speakers in advance, if needed.
- » Stress professional qualifications rather than personal details of the speakers in introductions, and do not comment on their name(s) and identifiers.
 - » Closely watch the speaking time of each panelist to offer the same speaking opportunities to all. Pay attention to speaking order and switch it up.
 - » During Q&As, proactively look for non-white, non-male, young audience members to ask the first question to encourage diverse participation. Consider stating that you are looking for diverse perspectives and encourage people to raise their hands. But make sure to use neutral language when pointing at members of the audience who want to ask a question and treat everybody equally. To reduce barriers to participation, consider providing a short break after the panel and ask people to discuss what they have heard with the person sitting next to them before proceeding to the Q&A.
 - » Since barriers to participation are often intersectional, consider organizing your event during kindergarten and school hours and provide clear and realistic timeframes to make it easier for parents to speak at your event. Many parents, single-parents, or people with childcare duties may struggle to attend events otherwise. Alternatively, offer to cover child-care costs for the duration of the event or consider offering child-care on-site.
 - » For out-of-town speakers at your organization's events or for external speaking engagements of your own staff, make sure to offer, apart from accommodation, the possibility to come with a companion who can offer child-care during the event.

LAUNCH DEDICATED FELLOWSHIPS

Early career fellowships for people with migratory backgrounds offer an opportunity to clearly communicate a research institution's commitment to introduce inclusive practices and to build a more diverse set of staff members. The [Brookings Institution's David M. Rubenstein Fellowship](#), the [MERICS European China Talent Program](#) for young female, non-binary and transwomen researchers, and the [SCRIPTS Research Training Fellowships for international PhD students from the Global South](#) are good examples of existing fellowships for under-represented groups.

Make sure the requirements for these programs are as inclusive as possible. Sometimes, these opportunities exclude non-mobile foreign students (*Bildungsinländer:innen*) and are limited to people who have studied in the Global South. Although this group of non-mobile foreign students might have comparable qualifications to German students, since they both studied in the German context, they also suffer discrimination in the labor market and are more likely to be rejected for jobs. Be aware to also include this group for this type of program.



CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

While both analysis and recommendations are shaped by the perspectives of professionals with various backgrounds working in Germany, we hope many of this guide's insights and recommendations are transferable to other target groups, institutions, and contexts.

These recommendations are by no means exclusive and aim to contribute to a broader conversation as the industry improves its standards. As such, we welcome any feedback on this guide. We particularly want to hear whether these suggestions resonate with your experiences, whether you already have had good experiences with similar strategies, and whether you found our suggestions helpful and practical to implement in your workplace.

Thanks for reading and engaging with this guide. If you have constructive feedback or collaboration ideas, please contact us via: thinktanklab@dgap.org



THREE TIPS FOR YOUNG PROFESSIONALS WITH MIGRATORY BACKGROUNDS WHO WANT TO START A CAREER AT A GERMAN THINK TANK OR FOUNDATION

While our guide How to Hire for Diversity and Inclusion puts the burden on the organizations to attract and retain diverse talent, we want to share three tips for the affected individuals, with a focus on entry-level professionals with migratory backgrounds who want to start a career in the German think tank and foundation sector. The following suggestions are based on the lived experiences of the authors as well as interviews with stakeholders working in German think tanks and foundations carried out in the framework of the [Think Tank Lab Diversity Challenge](#). More information about our methodology can be found [here](#).



WRITE SPECULATIVE APPLICATIONS

If you want to work for a German think tank or foundation, consider writing proactively to the team or department that you are interested in, even if there is no active job offer. Do not shy away from taking the initiative, not only for internships or traineeships but also for regular positions. If you have an interesting profile, the organization may come back to you and look for a way to create a new position together.



USE JOB INTERVIEWS STRATEGICALLY

A job interview is a two-way process. A think tank or foundation is not only evaluating your candidacy, you are also evaluating whether they are the kind of organization you would want to work for. Consider asking questions that give you an idea about the inclusivity of the workplace culture and awareness regarding matters of diversity,

equity, and inclusion. One way to do so is asking about diversity-related initiatives underway at the organization.

Here are some questions you could ask:

- » *What is the commitment of the institution regarding diversity and how is this shown?*
- » *Does the organization have a diversity and inclusion policy? If yes, what does it entail? If no, why not?*
- » *Is there a diversity officer leading the institution's efforts toward equity and inclusion?*
- » *Is there any kind of mentoring program between senior and entry-level professionals?*
- » *What career development opportunities exist in the think tank?*

When offered a job, do not shy away from negotiating salaries. A good starting point are the pay grades of the German federal public administration (*Tarifvertrag öffentlicher Dienst, TVöD Bund*), as these serve as orientation for pay grades in many organizations in the German non-profit sector as well.



BUILD STRATEGIC ALLIANCES

When you have started your job, you might want to raise your colleagues' attention to a diversity issue relevant to you. It can be difficult to bring up diversity and inclusion issues in an organization, especially if you are new. Do not shy away from building alliances with people who share your challenges or support you. It is always useful to get at least one respected senior researcher involved, as this helps to take advantage of the existing power dynamics in favor of a good cause.

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