

Ethical guideline

The [Network of European Museum Organisations \(NEMO\)](#) has developed an Ethical guideline for LGBTQIA+ inclusion in European museums. Museum professionals and their institutions are encouraged to review these guidelines to ensure that all communities feel welcome in the museum, both as visitors and staff. The guideline builds on insights from interviews, materials shared by colleagues, and primary and secondary sources collected for NEMO's report '[LGBTQIA+ inclusion in European museums: An incomplete guideline](#)'.

Museums can play a unique role in fostering social cohesion, challenging stereotypes, and celebrating diversity. By advancing inclusion and ensuring welcoming spaces for one community, museums take a step towards enhancing inclusivity for all communities.

This Ethical guideline covers five pillars of museum practice:

1. Working with collections
2. Developing exhibitions and displays
3. Professional environments
4. Interacting with audiences
5. Engaging in partnerships with communities.

From each pillar derives a range of principles that can serve as guidance for museums who wish to foster LGBTQIA+ inclusion in Europe. These pillars were identified based on ICOM's museum definition and policies such as the [Dutch Code Diversity and Inclusion](#) that identifies programming, personnel, publics, and partnerships as guiding aspects in which cultural organisations should foster inclusion.

A prominent example of a similar guideline is [ICOM's Code of Ethics](#), which offers an overview of standards for professional practice in museums. Along similar lines, we aim to offer a range of standards for museums to avoid pitfalls and act responsibly as they foster LGBTQIA+ inclusion. We hope that they reflect specifically some of the daily questions and concerns these kinds of processes can raise. We encourage our colleagues to use this guideline in tandem with the ethical guidelines from [Trans-Inclusive Culture](#), which support 'good work' that maximises public benefit, builds public trust, and contributes to museums and heritage spaces making a positive impact in the world.

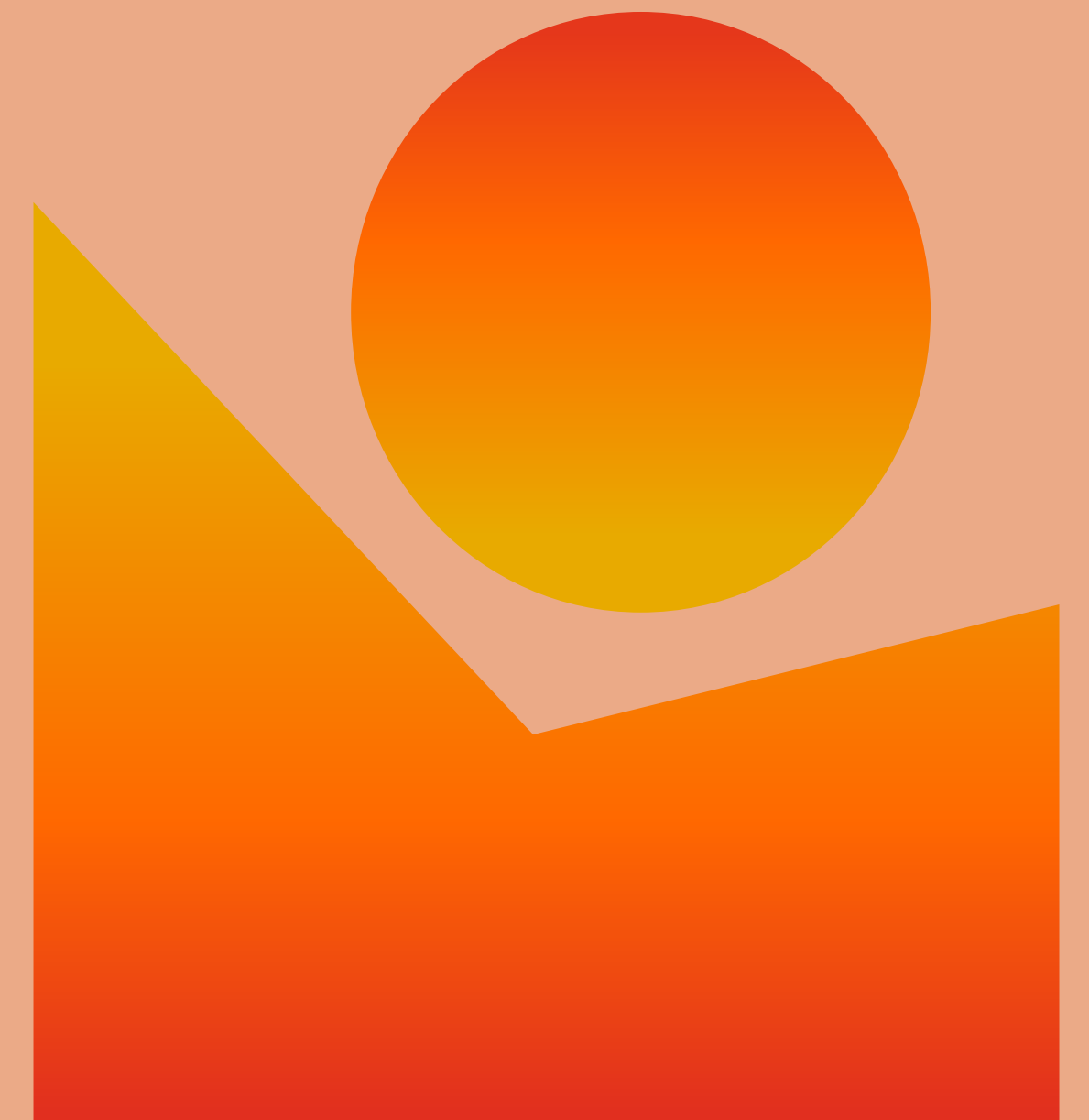
While not definitive or exhaustive, the guideline reflects the concerns of contributors from varied roles and contexts, providing a valuable reference for both daily practices and long-term decision making. We hope the Ethical guideline, together with the full report and [NEMO's other resources on diversity and inclusion](#), aids professionals in adapting inclusive practices to their unique contexts and reflecting on their own approaches.

1. How can museums take care of, and foster, LGBTQIA+ inclusive collections?

- By acknowledging that we have historically and violently omitted to collect and research LGBTQIA+ artists, queer stories, and queer agents in relation to our own collections.
- By acknowledging and researching in our collections the presence of LGBTQIA+ artists, LGBTQIA+ related stories, and the relationship of queer individuals and networks to these collections.
 - When researching LGBTQIA+ people and stories from the past, we should aim to understand how they identified themselves in their own historical and cultural contexts without forgetting the significance to queer communities of representation in the present.
 - When researching LGBTQIA+ perspectives in museums collections, we should take care to understand how experiences of being LGBTQIA+ can be compounded by other mechanisms of exclusion based on race, class, ability, and so on (i.e. intersectionality).
- By revising our collection strategies in accordance with our institutional mission statement with respect to LGBTQIA+ inclusion. In these strategies, we should set clear goals for researching LGBTQIA+ narratives and acquiring LGBTQIA+ objects by ethical and feasible means.
- By employing inclusive strategies for collection registration.
 - By employing and revising our terminology with consideration to self-identification, potential harm to contemporary communities, and accessibility.
- By taking care of our collections not for the LGBTQIA+ community but with the community.
 - By taking care to involve the communities that have created and owned objects in every aspect of the acquisition process, keeping in mind the museum's long-term collection strategies. Extractive means of acquiring objects, without engagement with the LGBTQIA+ community, should be avoided at all costs.
- By being transparent with regard to the research we conduct into our collections as well as our practices of acquisition for our collections.

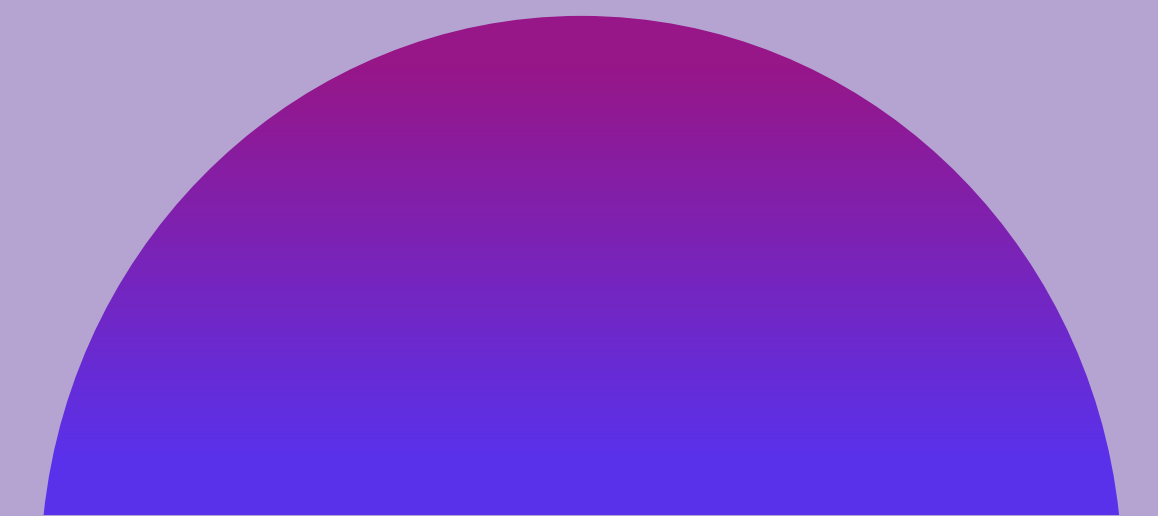
2. How can museums develop LGBTQIA+ inclusive exhibitions and displays?

- By integrating LGBTQIA+ perspectives into our long-term exhibition strategies, including permanent collection displays, major exhibitions, and smaller-scale interventions, in alignment with our institutional mission statement with regard to LGBTQIA+ inclusion.
- By using our exhibitions to highlight LGBTQIA+ related themes, objects and stories.
 - By creating exhibitions that centre representations of queer joy and affirmation.
 - By being careful not to display images or objects that reproduce stereotypes or enact harm or offence in any other way to the community.
- By being transparent in our exhibitions about our collections and objects, their histories and provenance.
- By addressing people in our exhibition communications (e.g. wall texts) by their own names and pronouns.
- By actively collaborating with LGBTQIA+ communities in our exhibitions and displays from their conception and research phase to their execution.
- By developing interactive displays, such as audio tours, to spotlight LGBTQIA+ related stories and objects in our collection displays and temporary exhibitions.



3. How can museums become LGBTQIA+ inclusive organisations?

- By developing a mission statement that announces our aim to be LGBTQIA+ inclusive in an accessible and concrete way, permeating our museum policies in all respects.
- By a leadership and management that communicate their mission to be inclusive and expect their colleagues to follow this mission.
- By creating an open professional atmosphere for dialogue and critical reflection.
- By organising internal training and meetings for our colleagues on issues regarding LGBTQIA+ inclusion, based on lived experience, to guide collective learning.
- By allowing everyone time and grace to make mistakes while learning to accept what might be entirely foreign concepts.
- By developing inclusive hiring procedures.
- By developing objective and safe procedures for reporting discriminative and unsafe behaviour.
- By fostering LGBTQIA+ employee resource groups to stimulate the exchange of best practice and deliver strategic recommendations to management and leadership.
- By respecting the pronouns and names of our LGBTQIA+ colleagues, both in contracts, writing, and daily face-to-face communication.
- By providing all-gender bathrooms where all colleagues and visitors feel safe and welcome.
- By developing sustainable, long-term professional relationships with our colleagues, including those who are hired freelance.
- By offering fair and equitable compensation for our colleagues, particularly for those from the LGBTQIA+ community.
- By clearly communicating our allyship, for instance through, but not limited to, using pronoun badges and celebrating the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT) and our local Pride events.
- By using and sharing ethical guidelines such as Trans-Inclusive Culture and this guide to support the LGBTQIA+ community and stimulate critical reflection.
- By acknowledging and researching in our collections the presence of LGBTQIA+ artists, LGBTQIA+ related stories, and the relationship of queer individuals and networks to these collections.
- When researching LGBTQIA+ people and stories from the past, we should aim to understand how they identified themselves in their own historical and cultural contexts without forgetting the significance to queer communities of representation in the present.
- When researching LGBTQIA+ perspectives in museums collections, we should take care to understand how experiences of being LGBTQIA+ can be compounded by other mechanisms of exclusion based on race, class, ability, and so on (i.e. intersectionality).
- By revising our collection strategies in accordance with our institutional mission statement with respect to LGBTQIA+ inclusion. In these strategies, we should set clear goals for researching LGBTQIA+ narratives and acquiring LGBTQIA+ objects by ethical and feasible means.
- By employing inclusive strategies for collection registration.
- By employing and revising our terminology with consideration to self-identification, potential harm to contemporary communities, and accessibility.
- By taking care of our collections not for the LGBTQIA+ community but with the community.
- By taking care to involve the communities that have created and owned objects in every aspect of the acquisition process, keeping in mind the museum's long-term collection strategies. Extractive means of acquiring objects, without engagement with the LGBTQIA+ community, should be avoided at all costs.
- By being transparent with regard to the research we conduct into our collections as well as our practices of acquisition for our collections.



4. How can museums welcoming LGBTQIA+ audiences?

- By organising events for the LGBTQIA+ community where we ensure that they are always made to feel welcome and safe.
 - By organising events specifically tailored to LGBTQIA+ children and youth to make them feel welcome and safe.
- By developing guided tours through our collection displays and exhibitions, highlighting LGBTQIA+ related perspectives on our displays and fostering debates and reflections.
- By providing all-gender bathrooms and communicating clearly what facilities are available.
- By communicating our active allyship, e.g. through displaying the trans flags, wearing pronoun badges or commemorating days like the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT) and our local Pride events.
- By ensuring that security is always present and briefed at various spaces in our museum and is available in the case of unsafe situations.



5. How can museums develop fruitful partnerships with LGBTQIA+ communities?

- By developing partnerships not for, but with the community, involving them in every step of the way in our projects from conception to execution.
 - By avoiding tokenism, the ad-hoc, cosmetic involvement of community skills and expertise that often remains unpaid or uncompensated.
- By reflecting carefully on experiences of the LGBTQIA+ community and how these can be compounded by discrimination based on other factors, such as race, class, or ability (cf. intersectionality).
- By developing sustainable, long-term professional relationships with LGBTQIA+ communities.
- By offering LGBTQIA+ communities fair and equitable compensation for their work.
- By involving the community with their full and complete consent in how they are represented in internal and external communications, for instance in contracts, press releases, and images.
- By being prepared to stand in solidarity with the community, responding clearly and defiantly to negative responses, discrimination, hate speech, or violence.



