

# Diversity Statement

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The importance of inclusion and equity as means to a diverse and fertile environment is undoubted. Combining different opinions, different backgrounds, and different perspectives is the only way to solve hard problems in any domain, technical or not, innovate, and advance the state of the art. As an individual that is part of different social groups and as a potential influence on my students and mentees I am committed to supporting diversity. My approach to the topic is that awareness is the top priority. Understanding the problem is the first step towards its solution, a solution that I believe should come organically through individual actions in a small scale starting from our immediate circles.

I've been part of different diverse groups of people working for a common goal since my undergrad studies. I've seen first-hand the benefits on an individual level of being part of such groups and realized the impact of the group composition on the group dynamics and the efficacy towards the goal. As an undergrad at NTUA I was part of the Electrical Engineering Students' European Association (eestec), a student organisation that promotes the exchange of ideas and skills (both soft and hard) among electrical engineering students through workshops and exchanges in a European level. During those workshops, that have a specific technical or non-technical topic, 10-15 participants with different backgrounds from all over Europe gather in a European city. They attend lectures, they build prototypes, they discuss, but also take part in cultural activities organised by the local committee. Thus, eestec effortlessly encourages equity and inclusion, since participants already feel connected due to their common interests. Also, during my 4th year of my undergrad studies I was on the board of the IEEE NTUA student branch. The goal of the student branch was to broadly inform students on topics related to electrical engineering, ranging from career opportunities, research disciplines, entrepreneurship, etc. Note that undergraduate education in Greece works quite in isolation from the professional world and has a more theoretical focus. So, activities that are taken for granted in other universities elsewhere, such as job fairs, were quite challenging to organise inside Greek universities. The IEEE student branch and eestec had a key role in breaking those barriers. The other activity that has helped me form my current approach towards diversity and inclusion is the Panhellenic Conference of Electrical Engineering Students (ECESCON). ECESCON is a conference organised by students targeting students that works as a place where students can present and talk about their work. Despite not being purely scientific, the quality of presented work is very high. ECESCON is extremely beneficial to young undergrads as it opens up the potential paths they could follow, enhances collaboration, and brings students closer. I was part of the organising committee for ECESCON 6 in Athens.

As a graduate student, I tried to have a smaller scale but more targeted impact towards inclusion in my immediate circles. The organisation of the systems reading group helped many younger students integrate better to EPFL since they felt they belonged to a group with common interests. The group policy of asking at least one question per session despite informally and awkwardly enforced at the beginning significantly accelerated the bonding of the group. Moreover, my door has always been open to all students both for technical and non-technical advice, while I also had two female students. Although the ratio is low, unfortunately it reflects the ratio of male female students in CS at EPFL.

However, being a white male coming from a middle-class family and raised with equity ideals (both my sisters are engineers) it is easy to ignore my privileges and also take things for granted. As a faculty member I want to stop taking things for granted and actively push for inclusion and diversity. My first goal is to create a welcoming and inclusive lab culture and help my students evolve not only technically but also as human beings by raising their awareness and helping them fight their unconscious biases. I plan to promote this healthy lab culture through lab activities, such as retreats, that will give all students the feeling that they are part of the group. I strongly believe in the importance of role models and I want to create an environment where underrepresented groups feel welcome and empowered to evolved to the role models we are looking for and are missing today. Having such a bottom up approach and by actively looking for opportunities to promote inclusion is our only hope to have a long lasting and increasing impact at the level of our research groups, our departments, and eventually our societies.