EuroFM Student Challenge 2025

Group 2 Research Plan

Picture 1: university Trondheim (www.pintrest.com)

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1 Introduction / Background

The EuroFM Student Challenge 2025, themed "Shaping the Future of Facility Management – A Focus on Social Sustainability", invites interdisciplinary student teams to explore how the concept of social sustainability can be integrated into Facility Management (FM) strategies and practices.
The challenge is based on the understanding that FM plays a crucial role in shaping environments that are not only functional and efficient but also inclusive, equitable, and supportive of human well-being.

The conference addresses critical themes such as:

- Social connection and sense of belonging in the workplace
- Social sustainability and circularity, including revitalization and regeneration
- Engagement and participatory approaches in FM
- Diversity and inclusiveness, including gender and neurodiversity
- Ethics and integrity, particularly around AI in FM
- Urban FM and placemaking solutions

Within this broader context, the EuroFM Student Challenge 2025 focuses specifically on the topic of Social Sustainability.
Participating student teams are invited to explore how one or multiple of the above themes can be embedded into FM strategies and practices. The process combines local research with international collaboration, culminating in a joint presentation and a visual deliverable at the Trondheim conference.

Each team was assigned up to two subtopics reflecting local and thematic relevance.
We have received the following:

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"Engagement and participatory approaches in FM" and
"Diversity and inclusiveness, including gender and neurodiversity."

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2 Our understanding of Social Sustainability

During our first group meeting, we talked about what social sustainability means for Facility Management (FM). For us, it focuses on the human side of sustainability – how buildings, workplaces, and services can make life better for people by improving well-being, fairness, and participation.

As a team, we agreed that social sustainability in FM means creating environments and ways of working that support equality, inclusion, and collaboration, and that offer long-term social value. In our view, socially sustainable FM makes sure that spaces are not only functional and efficient, but also safe, welcoming, and empowering for everyone who uses them. From our discussion, we identified four key ideas that describe our shared understanding:

Equity – > providing fair access to spaces, resources, and decision-making processes.

Inclusion – > recognising and valuing diversity, including gender and neurodiversity, in how spaces are designed and managed.

Engagement – > involving users and stakeholders in decisions that affect their environment.

Well-being – > supporting the physical, mental, and social health of building users.

We concluded that social sustainability in FM is achieved when spaces and processes create a sense of belonging and equality, while also helping communities and organisations become more resilient in the long term. This shared understanding forms the foundation of our project and connects directly to our assigned subtopic: Diversity and Inclusion in FM.

3 Research Focus and question

Our group chose "Diversity and Inclusion in Facility Management (FM)" as our main subtopic for the EuroFM Student Challenge 2025.

This focus reflects our shared understanding of social sustainability – that sustainable buildings and workplaces should not only be environmentally responsible but also socially fair, inclusive, and designed for everyone.

We understand inclusive Facility Management as an approach that aims to create environments where all people, regardless of gender, background, or neurodiversity, feel welcome, respected, and supported. Inclusive FM means providing equal access, promoting well-being, and ensuring that diverse user needs are considered in both design and operational decisions. In our view, participation is a key enabler of inclusion. By involving users in planning, design, and decision-making processes, FM can ensure that spaces and buildings truly reflect the people who use them.

To guide our research, we developed one main research question that captures the focus and purpose of our study. It connects our interest in inclusion with the exploration of successful real-world examples in FM.

3.1 Research questions

"What common factors can be identified across best practice examples of inclusive Facility Management – and what can be learned from them for future FM strategies?

Sub-questions:
1. How do FM professionals define and interpret "inclusion" and "diversity" in the context of workplace environments?
2. How can FM practices better accommodate gender diversity and neurodiversity in workplace design and management?
3. What indicators or measures can be used to assess inclusivity and belonging in FM-managed environments?
4. What challenges and success factors can be identified in best practice examples of inclusive Facility Management?

Within the framework of the EuroFM Student Challenge 2025, we aim to explore how inclusion is practiced in Facility Management and what can be learned from Best Practice buildings in different countries.
We focus on identifying key factors that make these examples successful and understanding how their ideas can be used in other contexts.

To identify such examples, we will conduct interviews with FM professionals and experts. These conversations will give us insights into how inclusion is put into practice in real projects and help us understand the key challenges and success factors behind existing Best Practice buildings. We will use a shared interview questionnaire to make sure that the answers are comparable across different countries. This common approach supports our goal of finding internationally transferable ideas for inclusive Facility Management.

Our study therefore combines local case studies, expert interviews, and cross-cultural comparisons to identify Best Practice buildings that can serve as role models for socially sustainable FM. These examples will help us demonstrate how inclusion can be strengthened through participatory and user-centered FM processes.

3.2 Research Objectives:

The objectives of this research are:

- Collect examples of inclusive buildings and FM projects from different countries.
- Identify key factors that make these examples successful.
- Summarize insights to show how inclusion can be improved in FM practice.

3.3 Scope of the research

In this research, we will focus on inclusivity within workplaces. Although the topic can be explored on multiple levels and could support a large-scale study, the one-month timeframe and additional tasks we must complete for EuroFM impose certain limitations. Therefore, we have chosen to concentrate specifically on how inclusiveness can be supported through the design and management of the built environment in workplace settings.

4   Methodology

Our team's international composition allows us to cover multiple countries in our research. Two members are from the Netherlands and will leverage their personal networks to explore additional European cases. Another member is from Estonia and will focus on the Estonian context, while our Swiss member will concentrate on examples from Switzerland. This approach ensures that both national and international perspectives are well represented in our project.

4.1   Data collection

We will use two main sources of information:

1. **Interviews:**
   Each team member will conduct at least two interviews with FM professionals or experts who have experience with inclusion or participatory practices.
   These interviews will provide first-hand insights into how inclusive approaches are developed and implemented in real projects.
   - To ensure comparability, all group members use a shared interview questionnaire that will be developed together in the next project phase.

2. **Desk research:**
   In addition to interviews, we will collect publicly available information about inclusive FM projects to identify relevant examples in each country.

4.2   Collaboration

All collected data and documents will be stored and shared in Microsoft Teams, which serves as our central collaboration platform. We plan to meet online at least once per week to exchange updates, discuss progress, and coordinate our next steps. During these meetings, we also support each other by sharing feedback, helping with interviews, and ensuring that everyone stays aligned with the group's research goals. This collaborative approach helps us maintain a consistent workflow and ensures that our results reflect the international scope and teamwork spirit of the EuroFM Student Challenge.

4.3   Expected outcome

By the end of the project, we aim to deliver:

- A checklist for facility managers for inclusive aspects of workplaces with clear **overview of Best Practice examples** in inclusive FM.
- A **visual summary** of shared success factors.
- **Recommendations** for how inclusion can be better integrated into FM strategies in different countries.

5   Research

5.1   How do FM professionals define and interpret "inclusion" and "diversity" in the context of workplace environments?

Facilities management (FM) professionals view inclusion and diversity as central principles that guide how workplaces are designed, evaluated, and managed. Within this perspective, accessibility is understood not only as a technical or regulatory requirement but also as an indicator of whether an environment makes people feel included or excluded (Ahmad Zawawi et al., 2024).

The literature highlights that inclusion is a core value in any civil society. However, it is also a broad and sometimes vaguely defined concept. A society is considered inclusive when characteristics such as race, gender, class, disability, or geographic location do not limit an individual's opportunities. This understanding directly influences how buildings are planned and managed (Lau et al., 2011).

The literature also emphasizes that inclusive design goes beyond meeting minimum accessibility standards. It involves creating environments that feel welcoming and allow all users to navigate and use spaces independently and equally (Sawyer and Bright, 2014). To accomplish this, FM professionals are encouraged to focus on user abilities and to develop solutions that address a wide range of needs within a single design (Sawyer and Bright, 2014).

Furthermore, diversity within FM extends to the need of taking differences among users into account. These differences include gender, nationality, age, communication preferences, and work behaviours (Jankelová, 2020). As globalization continues to shape the field, FM professionals must balance international standards with local cultural expectations in their work (Amini Philips, 2020).

In practice, FM professionals often use the framework of universal design. This approach aims to create environments that can be used by as many people as possible without requiring later modifications or specialized solutions. Universal design is based on principles such as equitable use, flexibility, simplicity, clear communication, tolerance for error, low physical effort, and sufficient space for approach and use (Lau et al., 2011). One of the main challenges to achieving full inclusion is determining how accessible a facility actually is. As a result, access audits have become an important tool in FM, helping professionals identify barriers and evaluate the overall usability of a space (Lau et al., 2011; Ahmad Zawawi et al., 2024).

5.2   How can FM practices better accommodate gender diversity and neurodiversity in workplace design and management?

Facility management plays an important role in creating an inclusive work environment that recognizes and supports both gender diversity and neurodiversity. For gender diversity, this means providing accessible and safe facilities such as gender neutral restrooms, changing rooms, and lactation spaces (Sawyer, 2020). It is also important that workspaces support different work styles and body types. Think of adjustable desks and chairs and a mix of quiet and social work areas.

Neurodiversity requires extra attention to sensory and cognitive differences. Facility management can create low-stimulation zones, provide clear signage, and carefully adjust lighting, acoustics, and colours to prevent overstimulation (Nasland, 2023). Flexible work options such as quiet spaces or the possibility of working from home help employees who benefit from a calm or controlled environment.

In addition to physical adjustments, management practices are just as important. Actively involving employees in design and decision-making processes allows facility management to better respond to diverse needs. Training teams on diversity and inclusion ensures that workspaces are managed effectively. Regular feedback moments contribute to continuous improvement of facilities. Technological solutions such as smart lighting, climate control, and apps that support personal preferences also make the work environment more flexible and comfortable (Romansky, 2021).

A combination of inclusive design, participation, flexible management practices, and smart technology ensures that workplaces support both gender diversity and neurodiversity (Doyle, 2024). This creates an environment where everyone feels welcome, valued, and able to perform at their best.

5.3 What indicators or measures can be used to assess inclusivity and belonging in FM-managed environments?

To properly assess inclusivity and a sense of belonging within Facility Management (FM) environments, it is essential to combine different types of indicators such as physical, social and experiential. Together these provide a complete picture of how inclusive a workplace truly is.

Physical and spatial aspects form the foundation. This includes the accessibility of the building for a diverse group of users, wheelchair-friendly routes, gender-neutral restrooms, quiet workspaces and low-stimulation areas. Elements such as lighting, acoustics, climate control and ergonomics are also crucial, especially for neurodiverse employees. (Romansky, 2021)

Organizational and social factors also play a major role. It is important to consider whether the organization has a clear inclusion policy, whether users are involved in decisions about their work environment and whether there are facilities for reporting inappropriate behaviour. Diversity initiatives, FM staff training and collaboration with HR are additional indicators.

The third pillar focuses on experiential indicators, which reflect how people experience their work environment. These are often measured through surveys, interviews or focus groups. (Romansky, 2021) Questions typically address feelings of safety, equality, social connection and influence over one's own workspace. Employee satisfaction surveys and well-being assessments are commonly used tools.

Performance-based indicators can also be included, such as absenteeism, staff turnover, space utilization and the number of complaints. While these are indirect, they still provide valuable insights into the social quality of the workplace.

In short, an integrated approach is essential. By measuring the physical environment, organizational culture and user experience together, Facility Management can actively contribute to a socially sustainable and inclusive workplace.

5.4 What challenges and success factors can be identified in best practice examples of inclusive Facility Management?

In Switzerland, the best practice examples of inclusive FM are strongly influenced by accessibility standards. The core standard is "SIA 500 Hindernisfreie Bauten" (norm for Barrier-free buildings), which sets out specific requirements relating to step-free access, doors, lifts, and sanitary rooms. This standard explicitly applies to publicly accessible buildings, residential buildings and buildings that house workplaces (Hindernisfreie Architektur, 2018). While these rules provide a clear baseline for accessibility, they also present practical challenges for FM. Existing buildings are not always compliant, adaptations can be costly

and accessibility must be maintained throughout a facility's entire life cycle. Nevertheless, SIA 500 and Hindernisfreie Architektur's guidance are major success factors because they provide FM teams with recognised criteria with which to assess buildings, prioritise retrofitting measures, and advocate for investments in barrier-free workplaces.

Beyond the physical environment, the Federal Office of Switzerland for the Equality of People with Disabilities (EBGB) emphasises that vocational inclusion means equal participation of people with disabilities in working life, including career development and job changes. The EBGB's "Toolbox Inklusives Arbeitsumfeld"(toolbox Inclusive work environment) states that an inclusive work environment requires accessible workplaces, barrier-free work software, committed leadership and a sensitised team, and that such conditions support recruitment, retention, productivity and innovation (Eidgenössische Büro für die Gleichstellung von Menschen mit Behinderungen (EBGB), 2025).

SafeSpace, developed by EnableMe and listed in the EBGB toolbox, focuses on non-visible disabilities at work and so addresses an important challenge for inclusive FM. The project description estimates that about 15% of employees have a disability and that most of these are non-visible, so they are often not disclosed while many inclusion measures still concentrate on visible impairments. SafeSpace is an anonymous online tool that asks employees a set of questions and then gives clear, practical tips on whether and how they might disclose a non-visible disability, as well as strategies for dealing with their situation in the workplace. At the same time, the tool provides organisations with aggregated and anonymised results that show where typical barriers exist and how people with non-visible disabilities experience their work environment, so companies can plan targeted measures, monitor progress and align workplace and process changes with the real needs of their staff. (SafeSpace, 2025)

The Swiss multi-stakeholder project "Arbeit der Zukunft" (work of the future) looks at the modern world of work in general, not only at inclusion. In 2022/2023, companies, employee representatives and associations developed ten best practices on topics such as home office, remote work, health protection, digitalisation and flexible working time. Large industrial firms like ABB Schweiz, Geberit, Siemens and Hitachi Energy were directly involved, together with other companies and social partners. For FM, these best practices show both the challenges and the things that lead to success. One of the main challenges is to turn abstract ideas like flexibility, health and learning into real solutions. These could be things like making workplaces more comfortable and accessible for different people, or creating spaces where people can work together remotely. On the success side, Arbeit der Zukunft shows that inclusive, future-oriented solutions emerge when employers and employees develop measures together. (arbeitderzukunft, 2025)

Taken together, SIA 500, the EBGB toolbox with SafeSpace and the Arbeit der Zukunft best practices point to some common patterns in the Swiss context. They suggest that inclusive FM is shaped by a combination of clear technical standards, data-based tools and dialogue between employers and employees, and that both visible and non-visible barriers need to be addressed in buildings and in everyday work.

6 Timeplan

Phase	Task	Responsible	Deadline
1. Kick-off & Group Formation			
1.1. Kick-Off-Meeting		Group	
1.2. Group research plan	Develop a joint plan including objectives, methods, and task distribution.	Group	10. November
2. Local Research Phase (individual)			
2.1 Individual local research summary (inc. 2 interviews)	Local Research, searching for interviewpartners	Individual	
2.2 shared interview questionnaire developed	Shared interview questionnaire is developed	Group	
2.3 Interviews	Minimum of 2 Intervies per Person	Individual	
3. Group Synthesis & Conference Preparation			
3.1 Combine findings and perform cross-cultural analysis		Group	28-30 November
3.2 First group prototype / theoretical model		Group	30 November
4. Conference in Trondheim			
4.1 Prototype testing with participants	Test the prototype with at least 2 researchers and 2 practitioners, collect feedback, and refine the concept.	Group	1. December
6. Final Presentation			
6.1 Final infographic & group presentation	Present the final results visually during the wrap-up session; also submit a short article (250~300 words) for the EuroFM website.		2. December

Timeline columns: CW45 (3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9) | CW46 (10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16) | CW47 (17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23) | CW48 (24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30) | CW49 (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7)

Projektphasen

◆ Group Meetings online

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7.1 Interview 1. Dimitri Wolfisberg - Aicha Kubli

Aicha Kubli – Project Manager Workplacemanagement by Axa insurance Switzerland

1. **What do inclusion and diversity mean to you in the context of Facility Management?**

I am a project manager for Workplace and Construction at Zurich Insurance. I am mainly responsible for all construction-related topics and refurbishments in the area of interior architecture and office planning – for the company's own corporate buildings, not the investment properties.
My responsibility ranges from the headquarters in Oerlikon to the smallest general agency somewhere in Davos with three people – across all sites throughout Switzerland.

2. **What do inclusion and diversity mean to you in the context of Facility Management?**

Within our leadership team we have a dedicated role that monitors sustainability in all three dimensions: economic, ecological and social. We place strong emphasis on that.
Inclusion, however, is not yet at the same level. The social component is woven into many topics, but inclusion in the sense of neurodivergent people or people with psychological needs is not yet systematically addressed.
Partly this is because our work environment is very focused on computer-based work, cognitive tasks and teamwork, which simply doesn't suit everyone.

3. **What do inclusion and diversity mean to you in the context of Facility Management?**

To me, inclusion and diversity mean not designing for the "average person", but for the entire spectrum of people. It's about not planning everything around one standard user.
This does not only start with neurodivergent versus non-neurodivergent. It already starts with gender and everything in between.
Take restrooms in office buildings: we traditionally have male and female toilets and often no gender-neutral option. For some people that's irrelevant, but for others – for example, people in transition or those who don't clearly identify with one of the two options – it can be a daily source of stress.
The goal should be to create workplaces that don't force people to overcome avoidable hurdles every single day – especially when small adaptations on our side could prevent them.

4. **Do you have concrete measures or facilities that have been implemented to promote inclusion? Besides legal accessibility – for example sensory aspects, gender-neutral restrooms, quiet rooms and so on?**

To be honest, we don't yet have many explicit inclusion measures. We only recently discussed that this is something we should focus on more, also because demand is growing.
A lot happens as a side effect of other projects. For example, we have a building where the sun shading is not just driven by simple sensors that lower blinds. Instead, the glass panes themselves change – each pane has an IP address. This influences the light in the room, and the colours were chosen to be calm and not disturbing.
When we develop colour and material concepts, we also avoid everything being extremely bright

or flashy. But that is mainly for brand and atmosphere reasons, not explicitly labelled as "inclusion" or "sensory reduction". So inclusive effects appear more by accident than by intention – which is a bit of a pity.

5. Are users involved in decisions – for example regarding layout, design or services in the building?

Yes, but not every single person. At headquarters we have about 3000 employees registered, and up to 1600 can be in the building at the same time. Consulting everyone on every colour choice or design detail would slow everything down massively.
So we work with user representative groups. We develop a concept internally and then usually present option A and option B. Often it's down to nuances.
If there is strong resistance, we take that seriously and revisit the concept. We have a very diverse group of people, and we still often try to satisfy some kind of "average employee", even though we know that this is not truly inclusive.

6. What role does FM play in fostering a sense of belonging and wellbeing at the workplace – particularly from the FM team perspective?

When we talk about FM, we mainly mean building services and facility services – community management, contact persons for requests, events, complaints, plus the technical staff on site when something doesn't work.
We pay close attention to the interpersonal skills of our FM staff. We simply can't afford a grumpy technician who tells people, "No, that's not possible."
The first step is being able to approach people and listen – even on stressful days. Our team handles that impressively well, even though I know how high the workload can be.
Especially for inclusion, this makes a huge difference. Some people don't cope well with loud voices, some are more sensitive on bad days. We focus strongly on the human, relational side rather than only on infrastructure or digital tools.
Individual wishes can spread like wildfire. If we fulfilled every single personal preference, our small team would be overwhelmed. That's why we put so much emphasis on attitude, presence and interaction – that's what creates belonging.

7. What indicators or feedback mechanisms do you use to assess whether users feel welcome and supported? For example, surveys?

We run satisfaction surveys, either annually or semi-annually. For us this is the key performance indicator.
As an FM department – under Corporate Real Estate – we mostly generate costs and rarely direct revenue. So we can't measure our success in financial terms; we measure it through user satisfaction.
The results clearly show: it's the people who create the greatest value, not the "hard" services. Whether there is one or two coffee machines on a floor is less important than a friendly face at reception.
The colleagues who respond quickly, listen and are there for people – even for small issues – consistently get the best feedback scores.

8. In your view, what are the most important success factors for an inclusive work environment?

A major factor is broadening one's horizon. Many people don't realise that they are not inclusive enough because they are not personally affected. The classic mindset is: "It doesn't affect me, I don't know this problem."

That's not meant as criticism – it's great if someone can go through life without big obstacles. But you still need to be willing to expand your perspective.

Another factor is really listening. We tend to hear the loud complaints. Quieter voices, or those who don't dare to speak up, are easily overlooked. We need a broader awareness of our full user base.

At the same time, we shouldn't overengineer everything. Not every minor issue needs a big structural intervention. Common sense helps: "If I were affected, what would I want?" Then you can look for a middle ground that isn't just the average, but a fair compromise.

One example: We discussed installing Braille on signage in a building that has no customer traffic and no people with visual impairments. It would make much more sense for our agencies that serve customers. Measures should make sense in context, not only be implemented to collect points in a certification.

9. What hurdles or challenges have you encountered when trying to implement inclusive FM measures?

I think the biggest hurdle is pushback. Almost every change comes with someone saying, "Why change something that has always worked?"

My internal answer is often: It worked for you – but maybe not for everyone.

I try to view all users equally, but sometimes I encounter attitudes where I think: "Please don't be so selfish; you're not alone in this office."

Another challenge is to avoid frustration when resistance arises, but also not to give in too quickly to the loudest critical voices. The louder the criticism, the higher the risk that we abandon good inclusive ideas too early.

I have ADHD myself, so I am part of a group that can be affected by inclusion measures. Yet inclusion is still hardly anchored in law – unlike accessibility. In accessible construction there are clear rules, like "a door must be 80 cm wide", and there's no debate.

For inclusion, such a binding framework or at least a standard is still missing.

10. How do you see the future of inclusion and diversity in facility management?

For the future of FM, I think it is crucial to keep talking to people and to stay open. We work for people, with people.

We must not cling to so-called "recipes for success". The world changes fast: when I was born, almost no one had a mobile phone. Today I can hardly live without mine, and that change took less than 30 years.

In the coming years and even months, the world will continue to change rapidly. FM has to evolve with it, stay innovative and not say, "This works, so we'll never change it again."

11. What kind of support, guidelines or tools would help you – and FM professionals in general – to work more inclusively?

I would love to have a tool where I could enter concrete user complaints or needs – physical or psychological – and get suggestions for possible measures.

Not ready-made concepts, but something like a knowledge base:

– "Here, you could work with colours,"

– "There, you could adjust lighting,"

– "In this case, a gender-neutral restroom would be very helpful."

It would be almost like a diagnostic handbook: I have a problem, a rough diagnosis, and some corresponding options.

That would be extremely useful because we simply do not know or fully understand many needs – especially invisible ones. Think of people on the autism spectrum who have learned to mask all their lives. I may never notice that they are overwhelmed, and they might never tell me. How am I supposed to address that?

A tool that translates such knowledge into practical guidance for structural and infrastructural decisions would be very valuable.

12. Finally: What message or advice would you give to students or future FM professionals who want to contribute to social sustainability?

My advice is: invest in your personal education – outside of your job description.

Go out and talk to people, listen to podcasts, watch videos, join discussions where people talk about their challenges, about social sustainability and inclusion.

Let these perspectives sink in before judging them as "first-world problems". You don't have to evaluate everything immediately. Simply listening already changes a lot. Whether you fully understand it is the next step.

Many people have only a vague idea of what "social sustainability" actually includes. Economic sustainability – that's about money. Ecological sustainability – about the planet. But what exactly belongs to the human and social dimension is much less clear. It's not just about individuals; it also includes groups, group dynamics and how they are managed.

In our area, group dynamics can make or break workplace change projects.

So: stay personally open to these topics and don't rely only on the polished corporate language inside companies. Talk to people informally – for example at the coffee machine – without even knowing which department they are from. That's how you gain real insights into different needs and realities.

7.2 Interview 2. Dimitri Wolfisberg - Michael Moser

1. What does inclusion and diversity mean to you in the context of Facility Management?

Inclusion and diversity mean creating learning and working environments where people with very different needs can participate—physically, cognitively, and psychologically. In schools especially, this includes supporting children with special educational needs and recognising that not everyone can use spaces in the same way. FM should help provide environments that enable participation, even when historical or listed buildings limit what can be fully achieved.

2. What specific measures or facilities have been implemented to promote inclusion?

The measures are highly specific to each user group. For example, in a special education centre I am currently designing a retreat room where children can go when they feel overwhelmed. The concept and

wording must ensure it is not perceived as punishment but as a supportive place to calm down. The room is designed to be safe, especially considering risks such as self-harm, but also welcoming and non-stigmatising.

3. How are users involved in decisions about the design or services within the building?

We involve users through small, structured working groups. Asking an entire teaching staff would not lead to results, so we form stakeholder groups with teachers, school leadership, facility services and administration. Because ownership is complex—Canton, municipality, taxpayers—all parties feel connected to the space. Top-down decisions do not work; we need to understand the real needs of users while keeping the process manageable.

4. What role does FM play in fostering a sense of belonging and well-being in the workplace?

FM plays a major role through the atmosphere created by spaces. In pedagogy, "the room is the third teacher"—meaning light, materials, plants, acoustics and furniture influence well-being and learning. When people feel comfortable in a space, it supports learning, focus and social interaction. FM therefore helps create environments that feel safe, welcoming and supportive.

5. What indicators, feedback mechanisms, or data do you use to assess whether users feel welcome and supported?

Feedback is difficult because perception is highly individual. What feels comfortable to one person may feel uncomfortable to another. In large buildings with many workplaces, it is impossible for everyone to feel the same. We receive formal and informal feedback and look for recurring patterns, but there is no single metric that measures well-being objectively.

6. What do you consider the key success factors in creating an inclusive work environment?

There is no universal recipe. Inclusion must be tailored to the situation. Providing a variety of spaces is essential: open zones for interaction and quiet zones for retreat and focused work. Basic accessibility standards lay the foundation, but true inclusion comes from offering choices and understanding that people work and experience space differently.

7. What obstacles or challenges have you encountered while implementing inclusive FM measures?

Space is one of the biggest challenges. Retreat rooms or quiet spaces require additional area, and if that space does not exist, extensions or conversions are necessary—which quickly becomes expensive. Financial limitations are therefore a major hurdle. Heritage protection and technical requirements (e.g., fire safety) also make it difficult to adapt old buildings to inclusive standards.

8. How do you see the future of inclusion and diversity within FM?

In schools, the limits of inclusion are being widely discussed. After years of pushing for full integration, there is now more debate about partially separate settings to ensure targeted support. Unlimited inclusion can overwhelm systems. For FM, the future will require realistic, well-reflected approaches that consider organisational capacity and define meaningful, achievable roles for people with different abilities.

9. What kind of support, guidelines, or tools would help FM professionals to work in a more inclusive way?

Continuous exchange with different stakeholders would be most helpful. Inclusion requires understanding and dialogue, not only technical tools. It would also help to have a clearer overview of which tools already

exist and how they can be applied. Guidelines are useful, but they cannot replace ongoing learning and reflection.

10. Finally, what message or advice would you like to give to students or future FM professionals who want to contribute to social sustainability?

Stay open and curious. Every person has different expectations of space, work and learning. Exposure to different workplace cultures and design concepts is essential. Be willing to question assumptions, learn from diverse environments and take inspiration from how spaces are designed around the world. That openness is key to designing socially sustainable and inclusive environments.

7.3 Interview 1. Elyne Rip – Nancy Den Hollander

1. What does inclusion and diversity mean to you in the context of Facility Management?

Inclusion and diversity mean that everyone feels welcome and safe in the building, regardless of their background, disability, or how they identify themselves. Creating a pleasant atmosphere where everyone feels at home is very important to us.

2. What specific measures or facilities have been implemented to promote inclusion?

We have wheelchair-accessible entrances, adjustable desks, and clear signage for people with visual impairments.

3. How are users involved in decisions about the design or services within the building?

We regularly send out surveys to ask colleagues about their experiences and opinions, usually every few months. They can also always contact HR if they have suggestions for improvement.

4. What role does FM play in fostering a sense of belonging and well-being in the workplace?

We aim to create a comfortable and accessible environment for everyone. We also see that this has a positive impact on employee well-being.

5. What indicators, feedback mechanisms, or data do you use to assess whether users feel welcome and supported?

Since we're not a very large company, we communicate everything directly with employees. We inform them when changes are coming, and they let us know in the same way if they disagree with something.

6. What do you consider the key success factors in creating an inclusive work environment?

Employee involvement is very important, and getting positive feedback from them is always great.

7. What obstacles or challenges have you encountered while implementing inclusive FM measures?

It's very difficult to realize all wishes within the budget. There needs to be enough funding and space to make changes.

8. How do you see the future of inclusion and diversity within FM?

This is a topic you can't ignore anymore. I think a lot will change. Maybe we'll all become much more digital, but we'll definitely keep up with trends.

9. What kind of support, guidelines, or tools would help FM professionals to work in a more inclusive way?

I think the most important thing is to maintain enough knowledge about what inclusive work really means. There are constant changes and opportunities to improve, so it's important to keep learning.

10. Finally, what message or advice would you like to give to students or future FM professionals who want to contribute to social sustainability?

Stay curious, say yes to opportunities, and don't be afraid to ask questions.

7.4 Interview 2. Elyne Rip – Shudes Fransisca

1. What does inclusion and diversity mean to you in the context of Facility Management?

For us, it's about having a work environment where everyone feels valued and no one feels excluded. We always try to think along and treat everyone equally.

2. What specific measures or facilities have been implemented to promote inclusion?

There are gender-neutral restrooms, quiet and prayer rooms, and we pay attention to lighting and avoid overly busy environments to reduce sensory overload.

3. How are users involved in decisions about the design or services within the building?

About twice a year, we organize a meeting for employees who want to attend, where they can share any improvement ideas or concerns they have.

4. What role does FM play in fostering a sense of belonging and well-being in the workplace?

Facility Management plays a major role in promoting connectedness and well-being at work because it shapes the environment where people work every day. It's important to have spaces that encourage collaboration and comfort. People should feel good in their surroundings, with areas for social interaction as well as spaces to relax. How FM chooses to design these spaces is crucial.

5. What indicators, feedback mechanisms, or data do you use to assess whether users feel welcome and supported?

We send out surveys from time to time. In addition, everyone has a quarterly meeting with their department manager, where they are asked how things are going and if they see any areas for improvement. It's also a moment for employees to give and receive feedback.

6. What do you consider the key success factors in creating an inclusive work environment?

Collaboration and engagement with employees are crucial. Without the information we get from them, we can't do anything. Their participation in surveys and evaluation meetings provides valuable insights and makes them feel heard.

7. What obstacles or challenges have you encountered while implementing inclusive FM measures?

The challenge we face is that other issues often take priority, and inclusivity isn't always at the top of management's list. Since we already have many things in place, smaller improvements tend to take longer.

Of course, there also needs to be budget, but if employees have suggestions, they are always considered and discussed. So sometimes it takes time, but it's never ignored.

8. How do you see the future of inclusion and diversity within FM?

Inclusivity will no longer be limited to people with disabilities; cultural diversity, gender identity, and neurodiversity will also play a role. FM can respond by creating flexible, adaptive workplaces. Data analysis will also become important, as we'll want to continuously improve.

9. What kind of support, guidelines, or tools would help FM professionals to work in a more inclusive way?

It all starts with knowledge and awareness. Training and workshops can help increase this understanding. Data analysis could also help, allowing employees to provide feedback easily.

10. Finally, what message or advice would you like to give to students or future FM professionals who want to contribute to social sustainability?

Don't see inclusivity as an extra task; treat it as a core value in everything you do. It's more important to many people than you might think.

7.5 Interview 1. Kadi Matla – Diana Tserkassov

1. What do inclusion and diversity mean to you in the context of Facility Management?

Inclusion means involving different stakeholders in various tasks and topics in general. For example, if as a facility manager you start making changes or renovations together with the owner, you also involve the building's tenants — or all tenants — so they can give their opinions and suggestions. In other words, you include several parties: the manager, the owner, the tenants, all working toward a common goal.

Diversity: perhaps it means that as a facility manager, you represent the owner and act in the owner's interests; you must be technically knowledgeable, legally competent, able to solve different issues, and a good communicator. You need to know a bit of everything.

Gender or age differences are not something I consider — it doesn't matter to me whether I work with a man or a woman; the goal is to get things done as well as possible. Often women are more perceptive in certain things and can think more broadly than men. With older vs younger people, older individuals have experience, but younger ones have ideas that older ones may not. In my work, I don't choose "sides."

2. What measures or solutions have been implemented in the buildings you manage to promote inclusion (e.g., physical accessibility, sensory environment, gender-neutral rooms, quiet areas, etc.)?

For example, in the buildings I previously managed, the shared meeting rooms and common areas were accessible to everyone at all times. They could be used for anything — team events, meetings, etc.

For quiet spaces, people use small booths or small separate rooms.

3. How are users included in decisions about building design or services (participation)?

In terms of design, users may be included through surveys — the same applies to services. Surveys are conducted to gather feedback about what users prefer or what suits them best.

In apartment associations, decisions are often made at general meetings where everyone can express their ideas and jointly decide what services to purchase or what changes to make.

4. What role does Facility Management play in promoting a sense of belonging and well-being in the workplace?

Facility management exists to maintain the work environment. This includes office cleaning, maintaining proper temperatures, and ensuring that all systems function properly. Thanks to this, the building maintains comfortable temperatures, usually 21–22°C.

FM makes sure everything works, is cleaned, and is in order — which makes people feel good coming to work.

5. What indicators, feedback mechanisms, or data do you use to assess whether users feel welcomed and supported?

One thing used in shopping centers is a customer counter — this helps understand how many people visit the building. This data is useful and we also use it in commercial buildings.

Satisfaction surveys can be carried out among tenants to gather a lot of feedback.

Building automation is useful because it shows whether everything is functioning well — temperatures, airflow, ventilation, etc.

But the most important is daily communication — through that, you get a lot of feedback about how users and tenants feel.

Whenever we change, update, or renovate something, we ask the end users how satisfied they are, whether they like the change, and whether it works. We do that for everything — it's the best way to know whether we did a good job.

6. What do you think are the key success factors in creating an inclusive work environment?

I'm not sure — but feedback is essential for everything. You always need feedback to understand whether something is good or not. Otherwise, I don't really know how to answer.

7. What obstacles or challenges have you encountered when implementing inclusive FM measures?

For example, when we involve building users in decisions out of good intentions to get their input, sometimes you get negative feedback instead — questions like "Why is this necessary?"

Often, you want to improve or upgrade something for the tenants' benefit, but it comes with costs. The cost is passed on to the tenants. In the end, everything comes down to the contract. If tenants have to pay for

something, they often question why the expense was necessary or say they didn't agree to it. I have faced this many times.

The topic of costs is always very sensitive. As tenants, people constantly check what they are paying for, and if costs are high, they naturally start asking questions, feel dissatisfied, and don't want to agree to additional expenses. It's an everyday issue.

8. How do you see the future of inclusion and diversity in Facility Management?

I see it mostly positively. As owners, we want to be transparent and always ask and check before doing anything — we never want to carry out changes against tenants' wishes. Our goal is for tenants to be satisfied — the less negative feedback, the better.

Inclusion and diversity could become more visible in the future, helping owners be more transparent. Owners should communicate a lot with their tenants.

If owners are transparent about what is happening in the building, it builds trust. Otherwise, tenants may start leaving, and negative stories may spread, making the building unattractive.

Positive feedback about the owner is important — transparency is the key word.

9. What support, guidelines, or tools would help FM specialists work more inclusively?

For example, a platform — in residential real estate there are many systems where management announcements are posted, and tenants can communicate with the manager. Something similar for commercial real estate would help a lot.

Such platforms would help deliver information, allow tenants to respond, and overall make FM work more inclusive.

10. What message or advice would you give to students or future FM specialists who want to contribute to social sustainability?

I would say it's always good to be open and transparent about everything — it builds trust and reduces unnecessary questions, misunderstandings, and confusion. That's one important piece of advice.

Also, you need to be very good at communication and communicate a lot. Regular surveys and even simple phone calls help gather feedback. I can't think of more right now.

7.6 Interview 2. Kadi Matla – Karl-Joosep Lüüs

1. What do inclusion and diversity mean to you in the context of Facility Management?

For a person providing a management service, inclusion means that the management of a property involves not only the facility manager but also the owner — in other words, collaboration between the owner and the manager.

Diversity: if someone has a condition or disorder, such as ADHD or something else, it is often noticeable — they tend to be very active communicators, and small problems can become big ones. For example, it may be difficult for them to understand that not everything depends on the owner or the manager. Sometimes it is still good to communicate with such individuals, because they can see problems that you yourself may not notice.

2. What specific measures or solutions have been implemented to promote inclusion (e.g., physical accessibility, sensory environment, gender-neutral rooms, quiet areas, etc.)?

First, in a medical building, especially when psychological services are provided, the practitioners are very sensitive because of their profession. They need rooms with very good sound insulation and excellent indoor climate conditions — for example, if the room feels cold, one must be able to prove that the temperature is within the normal range.

For such individuals, it could also be helpful to organize a measurement and then provide a report confirming that everything is normal — for example, that air quality is fine.

Another solution is to visit the site in person and communicate face-to-face — this solves many issues because people feel you are genuinely interested.

And finally, there is a kind of "pseudo-psychological" aspect: if you want things to go well with the owner, you need a person-to-person connection so that cooperation runs smoothly — the same applies with tenants.

3. How are users included in decisions about building design or services (participation)?

In management, things go smoothly when you dedicate enough time. For example, doing a walkthrough of the site to check everything. This also relates to maintenance and cleaning.

From the owner's side, some owners leave everything to the manager, but sometimes, if the owner is included in the CC (communication chain), they will also visit the site with the manager. When both sides are involved, things progress faster, and if the owner is on-site, it is easier for them to quickly call a contractor, instead of the manager having to return to the office to write to them.

4. What role does Facility Management play in promoting a sense of belonging and well-being in the workplace?

The golden rule is to respond to tenant requests within 24 hours — even if the problem cannot be solved immediately or a full answer is not yet available. There should still be a response so the tenant feels heard and knows the issue is being handled.

You must immediately explain what steps the manager is taking to ensure customer satisfaction. There are also management software tools that help provide higher-quality service.

5. What indicators, feedback mechanisms, or data do you use to assess whether users feel welcomed and supported?

Facility management satisfaction surveys — measuring how satisfied both owners and tenants are. In large buildings, the results can differ greatly: one person may give a rating of 1 and another 10. If 50% is positive, it means the job has been done well.

If you don't know what to improve, you can directly ask the owner or tenant what can be done better. Communication is the foundation of everything.

6. What do you think are the key success factors in creating an inclusive work environment?

The first is active communication with the owner and the tenants.

The second is taking initiative — if you see a problem, don't stay silent; notify the owner. Offer solutions yourself. It might not be something to fix immediately, but it can be recorded in the maintenance report — for example, repairing a façade element, cleaning a room, etc., so that the property always looks good.

7. What obstacles or challenges have you encountered in implementing inclusive FM measures?

There are many challenges — for example, involving tenants in fire safety is very difficult today. They tend to store items in evacuation routes, fire doors must remain closed, but people keep them open or do things they shouldn't.

Short-term fixes are made, but in the long run people return to doing whatever is most convenient.

8. How do you see the future of inclusion and diversity in the Facility Management field?

Ideally, the future would be one where everyone is actively involved in property management and maintenance through a management program such as Hausing or Gramlund. This applies to maintenance, but the problem is that maintenance staff often do not follow the program schedule.

Work efficiency would improve if all reports were uploaded online — this would also greatly improve owner satisfaction.

Regarding tenants: in commercial property management, people are usually well-educated and know how to behave in and maintain a building. But there are still exceptions — for example, during an inspection, beer and whiskey bottles were found on leased premises.

Tenants need to understand that the experience begins not only at their office door but from the moment they enter the building.

9. What support, guidelines, or tools would help FM specialists act more inclusively?

In the future, there could be an AI-robot that replies to emails and independently sorts them by urgency — what needs immediate attention and what can wait — and assigns deadlines automatically.

It would also be necessary for maintenance workers to become more active users of management software.

In Estonia, there is little competition, so companies with many clients can provide poor service and refuse cooperation because competition is weak, and managers must work according to the management company's habits.

A manager should visit every property once a week.

10. What message or advice would you give students or future FM specialists who want to contribute to social sustainability?

Facility management is not an easy job at all. Every field has its own responsibilities, but as a manager, you are responsible for many things — for example, fire safety and maintenance that must be completed on time.

Another recommendation is to learn financial planning, because especially during an economic downturn, you will deal with it a lot. All possible expenses must be planned ahead.

You must be prepared for things to go wrong — accidents, insurance cases, equipment errors.

Choose reliable maintenance partners for your property. A good recommendation is to talk to colleagues who have been in management for many years and can suggest good service providers.

During the first month of managing a new property, it's important to meet all maintenance contractors — good service starts with forming a strong working relationship.

11. Lastly:

There may be a need to see a psychologist, because even within two years you can burn out, especially if you don't know how to plan your time or if you work while studying.

You need to think about what workload to take, with whom you work, and how. If burnout occurs, you must immediately seek professional help — the quality of your work depends on it.