

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion event

Drop a step to fill the IAHR bucket:

Understanding Privilege and Equity in the Water Sector

Convened by IAHR's DEI task force, EPD Committee, and both the Local Organising Committee of the Congress and the YPD

This event addresses a topic that affects us all. We would like to reach out to the full spectrum of our members and encourage them to engage with the issue of equity in the water sector. It is not just about (in)equality in the distribution of water, but also about the opportunities and chances to engage with the subject in depth – opportunities that can vary greatly depending on which part of the world we live in, our gender, our age, or our educational background.

This event is open to all attendees and aims to offer a supportive and inclusive space towards a more equitable, innovative, and effective water research and practice.

Description

The IAHR community brings together diverse expertise in fluvial and coastal hydraulics, eco-bio-morphodynamics, aquatic ecosystems, habitat modelling and water management. Yet, like many technical fields, water sciences continue to face persistent challenges related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) across research teams, fieldwork practices, education, and professional experiences.

Building on the DEI session introduced at River Flow 2026 (Thessaloniki), and at ISE 2026 (Lausanne) the IAHR DEI and EPD Committees, along with the Conference Organisers, invite all attendees to engage in a participatory and reflective event that deepens this ongoing dialogue. Using guided walking activities (inspired by the *Privilege Walk method*), the event will create space for participants to explore how personal backgrounds, institutional structures, and professional cultures influence access, opportunity, and belonging in water science.

Participants will collectively examine who is mostly represented, whose knowledge and perspectives are valued, and how power and decision-making shape outcomes for water systems

and the communities connected to them. The event is designed to help participants see structural and cultural barriers, reflect on their own professional contexts, and identify ways to actively overcome exclusionary practices in their working environment.

Moving beyond reflection, the event links to professional practice. Topics include inclusive approaches to fieldwork and laboratory environments, collaboration across cultures and geographies, engagement with local communities, and equitable career development within the water sector. Through this, we aim to facilitate peer exchange across career stages and the development of diversity, equity and inclusion concepts.

How the event will run

The event runs for 90 minutes and brings together a group of around 30-40 participants. It combines a physical walking activity, inspired by the *Privilege Walk* method, with facilitated small-group discussions. No prior DEI experience or preparation is needed – facilitators from the IAHR DEI and EPD will guide the whole session and set clear ground rules for respect and confidentiality at the start as follows:

Welcome – facilitators will introduce the session's purpose, the Privilege Walk method, and the ground rules.

Privilege Walk activity – participants line up together in the session space (indoors or in an accessible outdoor area) and step forward or backward in response to a series of statements related to access, opportunity, and belonging to their careers. A seated or observer role is always available for anyone who prefers not to walk.

Small-group debrief – participants split into small groups to reflect on what they noticed during the walk and connect it to their own professional context, fieldwork, and institutions.

Plenary share-back & closing – groups share key insights, and facilitators help translate the discussion into concrete ideas participants can bring back to their teams and institutions.

What to bring? Just come as you are. No special equipment is required. Participants are welcome to step in and out of the physical activity at any point, and children attending with a parent or guardian can take part in an adapted, age-appropriate way.

Who is this event for? For everyone, at any career stage, who is interested in fair and equitable treatment and working practices within the water sector. No matter whether you are new to DEI

conversations or have been actively engaged in such work for some time. It is designed for researchers, practitioners, leaders, students, and organizers who want to better understand how inclusive practices strengthen our professional community.

Participants are especially welcome to attend along with their children.

We are looking forward to seeing you in the event.

Prof. Orazio Giustolisi
President of the Organizing Committee
42° IAHR World Congress – Bari 2027

