



Module 1

Part 2 Need for European SMEs to Become Diverse and Inclusive (D&I) (Overcoming Challenges and Building Competences)



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Discover the DARE Modules Learning Pathway:

Enjoy our learning blocks designed to help SMEs build diverse, equitable and inclusive workplaces. Unlock the power of how DEI to drive the sustainable success of your company. Our practical and interactive Modules deliver real life insights and case studies from a European perspective – Join us in creating workplaces and communities where everyone can thrive!



Introduction DARE to Module 1

Unacceptable behavior is no longer acceptable in today's society and workplaces. There is a heightened awareness of inequality of opportunity related to people's background, identity, and circumstances this is especially evident in SME workplaces and communities. This module covers essential topics introducing European SMEs who would like to implement Diversity and Inclusion (D&I). It explains key learnings, including understanding and defining D&I in the European SME context, discovering the benefits, and opportunities, exploring different dimensions of D&I, recognising SME obstacles and challenges, understanding the seven DARE competency areas with examples of integration into SME strategies, and examining D&I from the perspective of VET educators, SMEs, and employees.

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Part 1

Part 2

YOU ARE HERE

The Need for European SME D&I Change

Understanding Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) in the **SME Context** (*Definitions, Key Concepts, Dimensions and the DARE Framework*)

Discover the **Different Dimensions of D&I** that Need to be Considered by SMEs

Discover the **Benefits, Positive Impact and Opportunities** of D&I for SMEs

Recognise the **D&I Obstacles and Challenges** SMEs Face

Develop an Understand the **Seven DARE Competency Areas** Combined (*with Examples of How to Integrate Competencies into SME Strategies*)

Explore D&I from the **Perspective of VET Educators, SMEs, and Employees**

Module 1 Part 2

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) play a crucial role in the European economy, yet many struggle to implement effective Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) strategies due to limited resources, organisational culture, or a lack of expertise. This section explores the key obstacles SMEs face, providing practical solutions to integrate D&I into business operations. Learners will gain insights into the Seven DARE Competency Areas, understanding how to apply them to drive meaningful change. Additionally, we will examine D&I from the perspectives of VET educators, SME leaders, and employees to highlight the collective impact of inclusive workplaces.

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Recognise the D&I **Obstacles and Challenges** SMEs Face

Develop an Understand the **Seven DARE Competency Areas** (*with Examples of How to Integrate*)

Explore D&I from the **Perspective of VET Educators, SMEs, and Employees**

Case Study: Signicat, Digital Identity, Norway
Competency 1 Executive Support Integrating DEI

Case Study: Klevu, Technology, Finland
Competency 2 Inclusive Human Resource Management

Case Study: Sidero, Global Logic, Ireland
Competency 3 Inclusive Leadership Management

Case Study: EOBA, Event Safety, Ireland
Competency 4 Diverse and Inclusive Cultural Engagement

Case Study: GSLS, Cash Logistics, Ireland
Competency 5 Diversity-Focused Internal Communication

Case Study: Bellamantia, Makeup, Ireland
Competency 6 Diversity and Inclusive-Centric Marketing

Case Study: Fairphone, Netherlands
Competency 7 Supporting Inclusion in Communities

Learning Objectives

- Recognize the **key obstacles and challenges** SMEs face in implementing D&I strategies.
- Develop an understanding of the **Seven DARE Competency Areas** and their role in fostering inclusion.
- Identify practical ways to **integrate DARE competencies** into SME business strategies.
- Analyze D&I from the **perspectives of VET educators, SMEs, and employees**.
- **Apply inclusive business practices** to create a diverse and equitable SME workplace.



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Recognise the D&I Obstacles and Challenges SMEs Face

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) often encounter unique obstacles and challenges when it comes to understanding, implementing and managing Diversity and Inclusion (D&I). This can be due to many diverse reasons, including but not limited to organisational culture, not enough resources, lack of understanding, experience and leadership. Here, we'll explore these challenges, provide examples, and suggest solutions.

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Recognise the D&I Obstacles and Challenges SMEs Face

01

Europe has a Diverse Workforce!

02

SME's Believe they are too Small to be Inclusive

03

Identification of SME's Main Issues and Plug Some Leaks

04

Too Small to Invest!

05

Lack of Awareness of the Benefits, Action Needed and Available Training

06

Resistance to Change

07

Difficulty in Measuring Impact

Europe has a Diverse Workforce!

Europe's diversity is multifaceted, encompassing cultural, linguistic, religious, and ethnic dimensions. Here are some key aspects that highlight Europe's rich diversity:

Europe is linguistically diverse, with over **200 languages spoken**.

Europe is home to a rich tapestry of cultures, languages, and religions. The European Union is composed of **27 member countries**, each with its own unique cultural identity.

The European Commission's Eurobarometer survey (2020) found that **91% of Europeans believe that diversity (in terms of race, ethnicity, and religion) is a positive aspect for society**. This statistic underscores the acceptance and value placed on diversity within European countries. ([Source](#))

EC Report - SMEs Believe they Are Too Small to be Inclusive

Many Operate Locally with Fewer than 10 Employees

In a survey of **1,200 SMEs** across **27 European countries**, the EC report found that a number of practical obstacles stand in the way of SMEs developing formal D&I approaches. Among the most frequently reported are **too small, low levels of staff time, few financial resources, economic insecurity** and the **absence of a formal HR management process**.

For a start, SMEs are mostly **local and operate regionally**, often engaging in cross-border trade. However, since COVID the need for online trading and e-commerce has grown. Most employ fewer than 10 people (often family members only), making them too small to incorporate a range of individuals with diverse backgrounds.

The pandemic forced many SMEs to rethink the way they do business especially being available online. Digital change is rapid and constant, the need for investment is greater than ever. SMEs must be agile and open to innovation. 50% have invested in their online presence highlighting a need for diversity in how to do business and deal with customers. Source [Tipping Point](#)

Source [AB SMEs and the Inclusivity Challenge](#)

SMEs Believe they are too Small to be Inclusive But...SMEs Are the Largest Employers in Europe

Let's start with the size of a business or who is the bigger employer. Statistically, when we look at organisations, SMEs are in greater number in comparison to bigger companies and as a result, employ more people vis-a-vis larger businesses.

If we look at **Ireland**, SMEs make up 99% of all Irish businesses. In 2023, there were approximately 1.17 million people employed by SMEs in Ireland, Micro-sized enterprises (0-9) employed 420,603 people, small-sized businesses (10-49) employed 414,983 people, while medium ones (50-249 employees) employed around 334,046. ([Source](#))

Polish SMEs generated 67.1% of total employment in the Polish economy in 2018, similar to the EU average. Polish SMEs employed approx 3.5m people, compared with the EU average of 3.9m In 2014-2018, overall SME value added increased by 26.3%, while in large firms the rise was 23.2%.

“We are a micro or SME and cannot afford to implement change for diversity like bigger companies.” (Source)

DARE Attends the Need that SMEs Need a Different Kind of D&I Approach to Larger Companies

The kind of diversity championed by listed public and large private companies is not relevant for the vast majority of SMEs.



Let's Try and Identify The Main Issues and Plug Some Leaks

- **No Policies (Not Considered = No D&I Policy)** When SMEs don't consider other diversities, they lack policies of inclusion. With no policy, there is no system, process and values in place to give guidance on how to recruit, onboard or integrate new team members successfully.
- **No Documentation (No Guidance = No Understanding)** When there is no policy or procedure manual there is no D&I information to circulate among management and staff. There are no standards of communication streamlined into offices or workrooms on how to manage D&I like you would have safety procedures or policies on sexual harassment.
- **Lack of Experience (Lack of Knowledge = HR Not Meeting Legal Obligations)** Human resources might be unfamiliar with the concept of D&I and the now more common neurodiversity; as a result, they don't know how to provide training to management and team members, and they lack the understanding to be able to provide reasonable accommodations and to ensure they meet business legal requirements.

Source [Joseph Muskat Neurodiversity Consulting](#)

- **Being Binary: (No Flexibility to Work Approaches = Unproductivity)** Business owners and managers tend to be very binary; they have a zero-tolerance approach towards any behaviour outside their understanding. When individuals think or work differently, they see this as unproductive and unacceptable behaviour instead of being open to diversity and being flexible and welcoming to a different ways of thinking and doing things better.
- **Generalist: (Not Focusing on Employee's Strengths = Not Getting the Best From Employees)** Businesses tend to hire first a 'Jack of all trades', or a candidate for one profession but are expected to go above and beyond their skill set and a master of none. This is challenging e.g., for neurodiverse, who are highest functioning specialising in an area based on their strengths, how they think, perform, and manage tasks. Employers or managers often reprimand or resent them for not doing everything and they end up being stressed, overloaded and often leave.
- **Reasonable accommodations: (Costs too Much = Often No Investment Needed)** Employers often assume it is too expensive to provide the tools for diverse people to perform well at their jobs. It often costs nothing. Many diverse individuals have the tools they need and just require permission to use those tools on the job. Often it is not about investing in tools but investing in creating the conditions they need, such as a quiet room to de-stress, being flexible with breaks or being able to delegate some tasks so they can specialize in what they are good at.

- **Awareness & Skills development: (No Skills or Understanding = Default to Remain Binary)** With no direct company D&I policy, documentation and lack of experience from human resources, then it is understandable that, by default, businesses are very binary. The D&I policy and manual create **awareness; spread the message**, and set the **tone, culture and standards** of how to implement and the skills and training needed at all levels. How to manage teams and how employees and fellow team members can work together.

How to Start Plugging the Leaks!

- **(Employees First = Customers Follow and Business Grows)** One of the best ways to grow a business is by putting your employees first. They will be more effective in their job when they feel included, heard, upskilled and valued. Employees deal with your clients, they feel and see this, and in return, they want to continue to do business with a business that cares about their employees which ultimately reflects how they care about their customers.
- Follow this section as a road map to becoming inclusive by starting with a D&I policy, this will allow your employees to feel safe, able to express ideas and values, and focus on their strengths. Hire new talent that may potentially think outside the box, they may have overcome barriers in other jobs. As a result, productivity and innovation increase, which of course means that your potential for profits increasing is greater.



Challenges

Too Small To Invest in D&I

SMEs say they are too small, have no or a lack of dedicated D&I HR to manage and promote D&I. Have a lack of time, resources and budgets compared. Have a short-term focus prioritizing survival, profitability and growth and believe it is not impactful as the workforce is not diverse enough.

Impacts

'A commitment to D&I fosters a positive work environment, increasing employee satisfaction and retention. Lower turnover rates reduce recruitment and training costs, and a high-performance culture, contributing to overall cost savings and resource optimisation'. ([DUJA Consulting](#))

Solutions

- Leverage **external resources** such as grants and funding.
- Engage with **consultants and experts** who specialise and tailor strategies for small businesses.
- **Online training** is often affordable and free to educate a company and its employees about D&I.
- **Encourage volunteers, interns or employees** to form a D&I group.



Challenges

Impacts

Solutions

Lack of Awareness of the Benefits, Action Needed & Training

SMEs are not fully aware of the benefits of D&I or how to implement it effectively. According to a survey by the [Society for Human Resource Management \(SHRM\)](#), only 20% of SMEs provide D&I training compared to 60% of large corporations. 65% of Businesses Say DEI is Vital, but 63% Allocate Little to No Resources for It

About 27% of employees have experienced racial bias within the past two years. A quarter (25%) say their employees have experienced bias against older workers within the past two years and (28%) say their employees have experienced gender bias within the past two years. ([Source](#))

- Implement D&I training programs, resources, guides like DARE
- Collaborate with organisations like DiversityInc or the National Diversity Council for support, knowledge and partnership.
- Encourage employees to join or form groups that support diversity, such as women in tech or LGBTQ+ groups.
- Implement existing free government programs and supports.



Challenges

Impacts

Solutions

Resistance to Change

SMEs' existing company culture may resist changes needed to foster a more inclusive environment. They may see a lack of relevance as they don't have huge exposure to diverse cultures. Fear of disruption due to a tight-knit team and current team dynamics. Do not have the expertise or knowledge to effectively implement D&I cultural change.

Resistance means SMEs limit their talent pool missing out on diverse skills and perspectives. This leads to a lack of innovation, growth and agility e.g., operating in a narrow rather than diverse marketplace. *Diverse companies are 73% more likely to reap innovation revenue, 70% more likely to capture new markets, 50% likely to make better decisions and 36% have above-average profitability (Harvard Business).*

- Start small with manageable D&I projects to demonstrate immediate benefits and build momentum e.g., create inclusive job descriptions.
- Demonstrate inclusive leadership by implementing policies, procedures and programs that promote inclusivity, such as flexible working arrangements and anti-discrimination policies.
- Involve employees in D&I development by first conducting anonymous surveys to gather feedback and areas for improvement.



Challenges

Problems Caused

Solutions

Difficulty in Measuring Impact

Some SMEs find it challenging to measure the impact of D&I initiatives. *Deloitte reports* only 22% of companies are confident in their ability to measure D&I outcomes. Employees will be positively impacted. "Employees who feel their voice is heard are 4.6 times more likely to feel empowered to perform their best work." *Salesforce*.

Businesses that fail to implement D&I practices may develop a negative reputation among customers, potential employees, and partners. This can lead to loss of business opportunities, difficulties in attracting top talent, and a negative public image. *76% of job seekers consider workplace diversity an important factor when considering employment opportunities* (*Glassdoor*).

To measure the effectiveness of your D&I initiatives, you must first establish clear objectives and metrics. What do you want to achieve with your D&I initiatives? Examples: reducing bias and discrimination and improving employee engagement and satisfaction. Consider Diversity Metrics (e.g., new hires), Inclusion Metrics (e.g., satisfaction surveys), Bias Metrics (e.g., complaints of discrimination), and Business Impact Metrics (e.g., revenue growth). *More Here from The Culture Factor*

Diversity Dos and Don'ts

Don't make diversity **feel like a cost** – identify how it leads to business benefits

Do offer **work-life programmes** – these can encourage mothers or people with disabilities who can only work part-time to join the company

Don't discard **cultural differences** – a good understanding between employees will help to develop and maintain mutual respect

Do set **behaviour standards** by using role models – exemplary behaviour from managers and older employees will be adopted by others

Don't recruit someone just because they have a different background

Do always employ someone because they are the **most qualified** person for the job

Source: European Commission [Diversity for Talent and Competitiveness: The SME Business Case for Diversity Report](#)

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Diversity is not about how we differ. Diversity is about embracing one another's uniqueness

Ola Joseph





06

Develop an Understanding of the Seven DARE Competency Areas

With Examples of How to Integrate DARE D&I Competencies into SME Business Strategies

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Europe, like their counterparts around the world, face the challenge of adapting to the diverse and inclusive nature of the modern workforce. Embracing diversity and inclusion not only fosters a positive workplace culture but also enhances creativity, innovation, and overall business performance. To meet these challenges, SMEs in Europe need to focus on developing certain skills and competence areas.

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Develop an Understanding of the Seven DARE Competency Areas

With Examples of How to Integrate D&I DARE Competencies into SME Business Strategies

01

Competency 1 Top Level Support is Essential to Integrate D&I Successfully

Example: Signicat, Norway (Digital Identity SME)

02

Competency 2 Inclusive HR & Talent Management

Example: Klevu, Finland (E-Commerce SME)

03

Competency 3 Inclusive Leadership Management

Example: Sidero, Ireland (Digital Engineering SME)

04

Competency 4 Diverse and Inclusive Cultural Engagement

Example: EOBA, Ireland (Fire Engineering SME)

05

Competency 5 Embracing Diversity-Focused Internal Communication

Example: GSLS, Ireland (Cash Logistics SME)

06

Competency 6 Diversity and Inclusive-Centric Marketing

Example: Bellamianta, Ireland (Makeup SME)

07

Competency 7 SMEs' Supporting Diversity and Inclusion in Communities

Example: Fairphone, Netherlands (Ethical Phones SME)



DARE's 7 Competency Areas

This section explains the importance of each competency area and why businesses need to adopt a comprehensive approach to diversity and inclusion, particularly SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises).

1. Executive Support Integrating Diversity and Inclusion
2. Inclusive Human Resource Management
3. Inclusive Leadership Management
4. Diverse and Inclusive Cultural Engagement
5. Embracing Diversity-Focused Internal Communication
6. Diversity and Inclusive-Centric Marketing
7. SMEs' Supporting Diversity and Inclusion in Communities

Competency Area 1 - 4

Description

Key Skills Involved

1. Executive Support Integrating Diversity and Inclusion

Ensuring SME top-level is committed to and actively supports D&I initiatives.

Strategic Planning, Advocacy, Communication, Change Management

2. Inclusive Human Resource Management

Developing and implementing SME HR or talent policies that promote diversity and inclusion.

Recruitment, Policy Development, Bias Mitigation, Training

3. Inclusive Leadership Management

Training leaders to manage diverse teams and promote an inclusive work environment.

Leadership, Emotional Intelligence, Conflict Resolution, Mentorship

4. Diverse and Inclusive Cultural Engagement

Developing an SME culture that values and respects diverse backgrounds.

Cultural Competence, Event Planning, Networking, Empathy



Competency Area 5 - 7

5. Embracing Diversity-Focused Internal Communication

Description

Ensuring internal communications reflect and promote D&I values.

6. Diversity and Inclusive-Centric Marketing

Creating marketing strategies that appeal to diverse audiences and reflect inclusive values.

7. SMEs' Supporting Diversity and Inclusion in Communities

Demonstrating how small and medium enterprises can engage in and support community D&I initiatives.

Key Skills Involved

Clarity and Conciseness, Active Listening, Cultural Sensitivity, Transparency

Market Research, Creative Development, Cultural Awareness, Messaging

Community Engagement, Partnership Building, Corporate Social Responsibility, Advocacy

Skills Explanations

- **Strategic Planning:** Develop long-term plans that incorporate D&I goals.
- **Advocacy:** Promote and support D&I initiatives within and outside the company.
- **Communication:** Clear, inclusive communication that engages all employees and stakeholders.
- **Change Management:** Lead and manage change to integrate D&I into company culture & fabric.
- **Recruitment:** Attract and hire diverse talent.
- **Policy Development:** Craft policies that promote an inclusive and diverse workplace.
- **Bias Mitigation:** Identify and reduce biases throughout the company e.g., processes and decisions.
- **Training:** Educate employees and leaders on D&I but also implement learnings and actions.
- **Leadership:** Lead diverse teams with inclusivity and diversity at the top of mind.
- **Emotional Intelligence:** Understand and manage one's own and others' emotions.
- **Conflict Resolution:** Understand, address and resolve D&I disputes and conflicts effectively.
- **Mentorship:** Guide and support employees, particularly those from underrepresented groups.
- **Cultural Competence:** Understand, respect and educate different cultural backgrounds.

Skills Explanations

- **Event Planning:** Organise events that promote cultural awareness and inclusion.
- **Networking:** Build relationships that enhance and promote D&I efforts.
- **Empathy:** Understand and share the feelings of others.
- **Clarity and Conciseness:** Communicate messages clearly and effectively.
- **Active Listening:** Truly hear and understand the perspectives of others.
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Be aware of and respectful towards cultural differences.
- **Transparency:** Openly share information about D&I initiatives.
- **Market Research:** Understand diverse markets and consumer needs.
- **Creative Development:** Craft marketing materials that resonate with diverse audiences.
- **Cultural Awareness:** Recognise and value cultural diversity in marketing efforts.
- **Messaging:** Develop inclusive and effective marketing messages.
- **Community Engagement:** Actively participate in and support community initiatives.
- **Partnership Building:** Create alliances with other companies to support D&I.
- **Corporate Social Responsibility:** Ensure the company's actions positively impact society.
- **Advocacy:** Support community and company D&I initiatives.

Competency 1 Top Level Support is Essential to Integrate D&I Successfully

Executives, CEOs, and managers play an important role in setting out the strategic direction and tone for D&I initiatives. Their commitment is essential for embedding D&I into the company's core values and actions. For D&I to be taken seriously, direction must start from the top.

Strategies include;

- **Training and Development:** D&I training for executives, managers, HR managers, and team leaders
- **Goal Setting:** Clear, measurable D&I objectives integrated into the business strategies, activities, vision and decision-making.
- **Resource Allocation:** Allocate necessary resources for D&I initiatives inclusive of people, guides, time, funding and other required commitments.



[Learn More](#)

[Why These are the Best CEOs](#)

[for Diversity](#)

Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella was named the top-rated CEO for his diversity efforts based on reviews from employees

Competency 1, Signicat Asger Hattel



CEO has been an instrumental leader working with the Women in the Signicat ERG, creating mentoring programs, organising webinars with industry leaders, facilitating internal networking opportunities to empower women within the company and, most importantly, to connect women across the company, and helping inspire women to work towards their ambitions.

<https://www.signicat.com/about/diversity-and-inclusion-policy>

Signicat is a digital identity company based in Norway.

Signicat won the Best Diversity Initiative Award at the 2020 Nordic Women in Tech Awards.

'According to the latest report of The World Bank, women make up about 28% of the worldwide tech workforce in 2023. This is a significant improvement from the early 2000s when women only made up 9%.'

Signicat, Norway

(467 Employees)

Empowering Women in Tech: Signicat's Commitment to Equality and Diversity

26% of all employees were female by the end of 2021 compared to 21% by the end of 2020. Taking into perspective the experience and competencies the compensation for female and male employees Signicat compensates according to the principle of equal work and equal pay.

At Signicat, we take pride in cultivating an inclusive and diverse workplace, guided by our core values of TRUST. Treating others with respect and recognising the strength that diverse perspectives bring, we are committed to ensuring equal opportunities for all.

Signicat is putting great efforts into complying with the requirements put forward in the Equality and Discrimination Acts (LDL §26), especially regarding ethnicity, religion, disability, and sexual orientation.

<https://d2qcmozihh2auk.cloudfront.net/blog/sg-diversity-inclusion-policy-2021.pdf>.

Competency 2 Inclusive HR & Talent Management

HR's/CEO's Role and how they can nurture and support talent management. SMEs need to adapt and learn how to update their policies so that they integrate and promote diversity and inclusion throughout the employee lifecycle.

Strategies include;

- **Unbiased Recruitment:** Implement blind recruitment, inclusive job descriptions and diverse interview panels.
- **Inclusive Onboarding:** Develop an onboarding process that supports new hires from diverse backgrounds.
- **Ongoing Training:** Offer training on unconscious bias and cultural competency.

Klevu Oy reviews

4.3 ★★★★☆ ...o...

88% would recommend to a friend
(25 total reviews)

5.0 ★★★★✓

Great company to work for

Anonymous employee

Current employee, more than 1 year London, England

✓ Recommend ✓ CEO approval ✓ Business outlook

Pros

The founders are amazing and very supportive. Work from anywhere i

<https://www.glassdoor.co.uk/Reviews/Klevu-Oy-Reviews-E1615582.htm>



Competency 2, Klevu



<https://www.klevu.com/>

Career Benefits Flexible working arrangements, health and wellness programs, employee recognition and rewards, professional development, global referral, enhanced maternity and paternity, individual learning budget...ratings on [Glassdoor](#)

Klevu, Finland

(106 Employees)

Founded in 2013, Klevu's are a fast-growing technology company that is revolutionising the online shopping experience using AI.

At Klevu, we believe that our people are our most valuable asset. That's why we are committed to creating a supportive and collaborative work environment that fosters creativity, growth, and professional development.

Join our global team and embrace diversity

Empowered by diversity



120+

Employees



50%

Females in management

Proud to support



WOMEN IN MACH



14+

Nationalities



8+

Languages

Competency 2, Mindvalley

Mindvalley Manifesto

We Transform Our People into The Best Versions of Themselves

“Leadership is recognising that we are all ONE. That every person you lead is as brilliant as you, as talented as you, and has the same capacity for growth and accomplishment. They simply need to be reminded of this fact.”

We Innovate Rapidly to Stay on The Leading Edge of Exponential Change

<https://careers.mindvalley.com/manifesto>



60+

Nationalities

40+

Languages spoken

15m

Lives touched

Competency 3 Inclusive Leadership Management

Leadership Skills: Leaders must develop skills to manage diverse teams effectively and inclusively. This includes team leaders so that they can better understand and ensure all teams feel included, and everyone is on the same page and heard. Skills include communication, mediation, how to harness and integrate diverse viewpoints often leading to groundbreaking solutions and improvements, conflict resolution, adaptability and how to provide an inclusive environment.

Strategies include;

- **Provide D&I Leadership Training:** Provide training focused on inclusivity, inclusive leadership and conflict resolution. Developing skills in inclusivity ensures that all team members feel valued and included, regardless of their background. Leaders can learn and adjust management styles to meet the needs of their team and company.
- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Establish channels for continuous feedback and improvement across the company focusing on D&I.



Competency 3, Sidero



<https://www.sidero.ie/leading-technology-innovation/>

Carmel Owens, the CEO of Athlone-based Sidero, Ireland's software, cloud and digital transformation specialist, has been named Diversity Role Model of the Year at the Diversity in [Tech Awards 2022](#). Sidero prides itself on being a culturally diverse company, with its team comprising 26 nationalities. Carmel leads the Senior Management team which consists of a 60/40 male/female split. ([Read more](#))



DIVERSITIES ARE REVIVING ENTERPRISE

Sidero, Ireland

(150 Employees)

Sidero is a GlobalLogic company and a leader in digital engineering. They help brands across the globe design and build innovative products, platforms, and digital experiences for the modern world. By integrating experience design, complex engineering, and data expertise—they help their clients transition into tomorrow's digital businesses.

Carmel was commended for her work to inspire change across all business areas, her diversity of thought and her passion for forging an inclusive ethos. Carmel ensures that diversity and inclusion are an integral part of Sidero's company objectives including increased gender diversity in leadership roles, underpinning an inclusive company culture, ensuring fair and unbiased recruitment, and championing outside-the-box thinking.

Competency 3, Sidero

An Inspirational Leader

Carmel is an inspirational leader and role model for women in tech, while also advocating for change. Carmel leads with authenticity and empathy, inspiring women, and investing significantly in education, STEM, and early career intern and grad programs. Carmel drives collaboration with all levels of education in Ireland. She also focuses on her leadership which is representative of the great commitment to diversity and inclusion with 60 / 40 male / female representation across the leadership team. The aim is to narrow the IT skills gap and show a career in technology is achievable for anyone, from any background.

CLICK TO WATCH VIDEO

Carmel Owens 'Diversity Role Model of the Year' at the Diversity in Tech Awards for 2022 Podcast



<https://www.shannonside.ie/podcasts/the-bottom-line/athlone-ceo-awarded-diversity-role-model-of-the-year-213990>

Competency 4 Diverse and Inclusive Cultural Engagement

Cultural Engagement: Build a culture that values and respects diverse backgrounds and perspectives so that employees feel comfortable and valued in sharing their unique perspectives and ideas. This leads to better collaboration and more innovative problem-solving, as diverse viewpoints can offer new insights, solutions and profitability. Skills include how to enhance collaboration, improve employee engagement, broaden the talent pool, create a positive work environment and more.

Strategies include;

- **Cultural Events:** Organise events that celebrate different cultures and traditions.
- **Employee Resource Groups (ERGs):** Support ERGs to provide a sense of community and belonging. These are employee-led groups that nurture and enable a diverse inclusive workplace by creating safe spaces, building networks, professional development and rolling out culture awareness education.



Competency 4, EOBA



Eamon O'Boyle Managing Director

<https://eoba.ie/>

'We are one of Ireland's leading fire engineering and public event safety management consultancies'.



EOBA, Ireland

(approx. 49 employees)

EOBA receive the Sisk Supply Chain Award for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. Here are some of their strategies;

Equality – EOBA promotes equality of opportunity by seeking to remove barriers, eliminating discrimination and ensuring equal opportunity and access for all stakeholders (staff, clients and the public)

Diversity – we accept each person as an individual. EOBA's success is built on our ability to embrace diversity, and we believe that everyone should feel valued for their contributions. By working together, we will deliver the best possible service for our staff and stakeholders.

Inclusion – EOBA seeks to create a working culture where differences are not merely accepted but valued; where everyone has the opportunity to develop in a way that is consistent with, and adheres to, values of impartiality, honesty, integrity and objectivity. Our aim is to be an organisation where people feel involved, respected and connected to our success.

<https://eoba.ie/news/sisk-award-eoba-equality-diversity-inclusion-award>

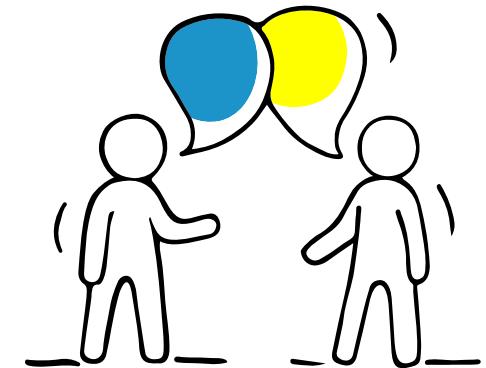
<https://eoba.ie/about>

Competency 5 Embracing Diversity-Focused Internal Communication

Communication to Promote D&I: This means ensuring consistent internal communications reflect and promote D&I values. This helps to maintain a consistent message, understanding and culture across the company. It involves employee engagement where they feel recognised, valued and connected to the company's mission and goals. It must be transparent to build trust between employees and management and to demonstrate D&I is supported and action-orientated. It involves skills like clarity and concise communication, active listening, empathy, cultural sensitivity and transparency.

Strategies include;

- **Inclusive Language:** Use inclusive language in all communications.
- **Feedback Systems:** Implement systems for employees to share their experiences and suggestions.
- **Intranet Systems** and platforms for digital D&I communication and messaging accessible to all.



Competency 5, GSLS



GSLS Win Women In Security Award 2023

<https://gsls.ie/bronze-award-for-investment-in-diversity/>

Awarded Ireland's premier Equality, Diversity * Inclusion (EDI) Accreditation Mark, they remain committed to implementing Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) practices. With a growing team, from a huge variety of backgrounds, diversity and inclusion is the foundation of ensuring each team member is truly valued. *'The team at GSLS continues to be the secret to our ability to deliver the exceptional levels of service we pride ourselves on'.*

GSLS, Ireland

(250 Employees)

gsls is a secure cash logistics partner offering market-leading cash management solutions to its clients. An independent company it covers retail, hospitality, financial services and the public sector in Ireland. Recommended by Retail Excellence Ireland as the security provider of choice.

Awarded Silver Award by 'Investors in Diversity' for initiatives in Diversity, Equality & Inclusion.

GSLS makes significant investments in our team members, from ensuring their health and wellbeing to career development initiatives.

'We are proud to have over 26 nationalities with a range of age profiles from 18 to 68 years old. Hiring a diverse range of people has always been a priority. We know very well that everyone has something different to bring to the table'.

Competency 5, GSLS

At GSLS, EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) is not just a tick-box exercise, it is at the heart of everything we do. GSLS is a **female-founded company** with a diverse staff profile from our most senior roles, right through the various teams, functions and levels of the organisation.

Our **Board of Directors** has gender and racial representation, while our senior management supervisor and operational management positions are **50% female-led**.

Promoting Equal Opportunities: EDI training helps employees and leaders understand the importance of providing equal opportunities for everyone, regardless of their background. A focus on equality helps mitigate biases that might impact hiring, promotions, and other career advancement opportunities.

Improving Employee Morale and Engagement: Inclusive workplaces help individuals feel valued and respected. EDI training creates an environment where employees feel comfortable expressing their ideas and contributing to the organisation.

Competency 5, GSLS

Meeting Customer Needs: In a globalised world, having a workforce that reflects this diversity can enhance an organisation's ability to understand and meet the needs of a broad range of customers.

Reducing Unconscious Bias: Unconscious biases can influence decision-making processes, leading to unintentional discrimination. EDI training raises awareness about these biases and provides strategies to mitigate their impact.

Attracting and Retaining Talent: In a competitive job market, candidates often consider an organisation's commitment to diversity and inclusion when making employment decisions. Companies prioritising EDI are more likely to attract a diverse talent pool and retain employees who value an inclusive work environment.

Competency 6 Diversity and Inclusive-Centric Marketing

Marketing Strategies: Develop marketing strategies that reflect the diversity of the customer base. This means understanding and addressing the unique needs, preferences, and cultural nuances of different customer segments. It ensures that all customers feel represented and valued by the brand, leading to more effective engagement and loyalty. Skills include how to convey inclusive messaging, leverage diverse perspectives to customize campaigns, use empathy to genuinely connect, produce inclusive visuals, and develop culturally appropriate marketing materials.

Strategies include;

- **Representation:** Ensure diverse representation in marketing materials so all customers feel seen, valued, and a stronger connection is formed. This appeals to a broader audience and builds a strong reputation. They feel seen in imagery, heard in words and valued by message.
- **Targeted Campaigns:** Create campaigns that resonate with diverse audiences, not just one for all by understanding different cultures, traditions and values and developing culturally sensitive campaigns and marketing materials.

Competency 6, Bellamianta



Diversity and Inclusivity Campaign

<https://bellamianta.com/blogs/blogs-2024>

Bellamianta's **Being You Is Beautiful Campaign** showcases a range of women of all ages, sizes, and walks of life and is part of its mission to pave the way in putting diversity and inclusion at the forefront of today's beauty industry. Bellamianta is determined to highlight the importance of representation in what is an ever-changing landscape by featuring ten women, representing women today.

Bellamianta, Ireland

(11-50 Employees)

Bellamianta is a clean, nutritious, luxury tanning brand, our products are formulated with the cleanest ingredients without compromising on performance. Bellamianta is a female founded brand and stands for beautiful aspirations and we aspire to bring you a beautifully clean, nutritious, luxury tanning experience.



International Women's Day: Inspire Inclusion Campaign. Ensuring women feel like their voices matter!

CLICK TO WATCH VLOG

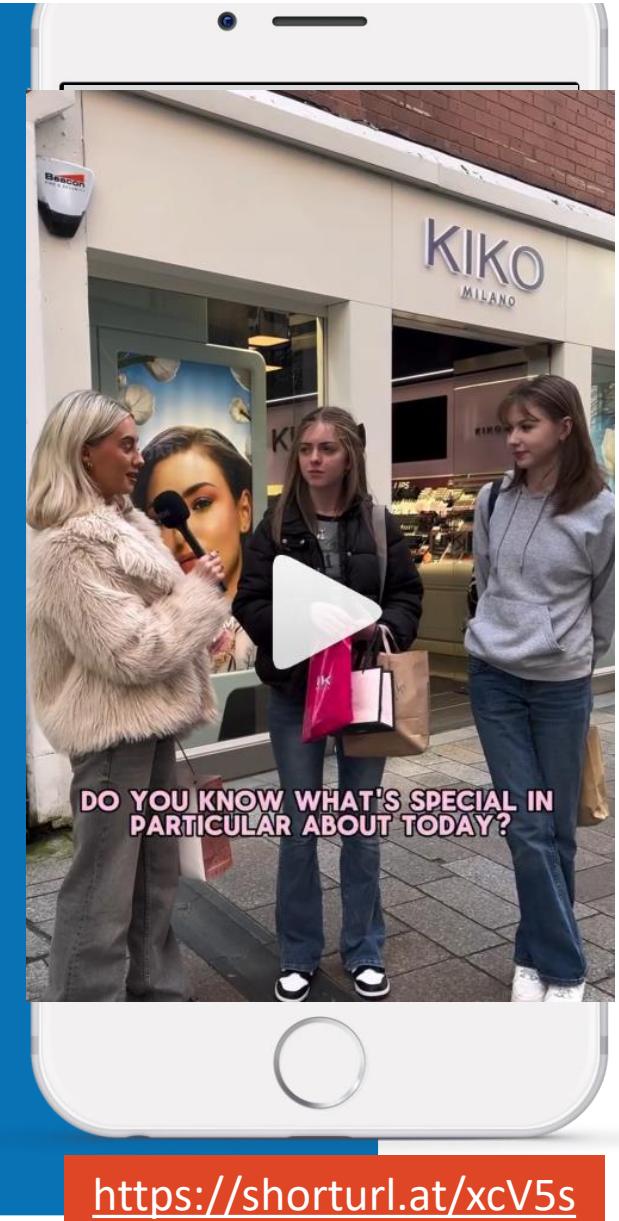
Being You Is Beautiful

Competency 6, Bellamianta

Being You Is Beautiful Campaign

Everyone feels important and heard! Bellamianta took to the streets of Belfast, Ireland to ask local women what they love most about being a woman and what advice they would give to other women. The responses hit our heartstrings, [watch our vlog here!](#)

Inclusive Messaging and Action: To honour this amazing day, we will be donating 10% of all our proceeds to [Women's Aid](#), a charity that is working relentlessly against domestic abuse until women and children are safe.



<https://shorturl.at/xcV5s>

Competency 7 SMEs' Supporting Diversity and Inclusion in Communities

Community Engagement: SMEs should engage with and support diverse communities is vital for SMEs as it helps build trust and relationships with various customer bases and demonstrates a commitment to inclusivity and social responsibility to their community (ies). It shows they are committed to respecting and understanding different cultures and backgrounds, are aware of community needs and the challenges they face. To build genuine relationships based on trust and mutual respect SMEs need to respond to their concerns, challenges and needs and know how to engage, support and respond. Skills include collaboration and partnership, communication and networking, problem solving, leadership and advocacy.

Strategies include;

- **Partnerships:** Partner with local marginalised communities, community leaders and organisations focused on D&I to support aligned initiatives. Creating partnerships that benefit both the community and the business e.g., in unemployment providing internships for NEET's youth could be a great way to build the local talent pool.
- **Community Programs:** Develop programs that support underrepresented groups.

Competency 7, Fairphone



GSL Competency 7

<https://shop.fairphone.com/about-us>

Fairphone has a community of changemakers.

'Together we're disrupting the industry's short-term thinking that the world can no longer afford. And changing what it means to be "best."'

'We believe partnerships and like-minded communities are key to achieving systemic change. We work together to make our ambitions for fairer electronics a reality'.

'Bas van Abel, Fairphone's Founder'

Fairphone, Netherlands

(70 Employees)

'Fairphone make fair(er) phones to change the industry from the inside. One step at a time, all over the world. Together with our community, we're changing the way products are made. We are disrupting the tech space. Inside every phone is a complex supply chain. We uncover industry practices and show you how your phone is made, and its impact on the environment'.

We aim to craft the world's most ethical phone. Not just for people who share our values and mission, but for anyone who simply wants a great phone that does less harm. We're making a positive impact across the value chain in mining, design, manufacturing and life cycle, while expanding the market for products that put ethical values first. Together with our community, we're changing the way products are made.



07 —

Explore D&I from the Perspective of VET Educators, SMEs, and Employees

Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) are critical components for a healthy and productive work environment in European SMEs. From the perspectives of Vocational Education and Training (VET) educators, SMEs, and employees, D&I practices help build a more innovative, resilient, and competitive business landscape.

07

Explore D&I from the Perspective of VET Educators, SMEs, and Employees

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5. Adhere to Compliance with EU Regulations and Standards
6. Enhanced Reputation and Employer Branding
7. Government and Funding Opportunities

Importance of VET Education & Perspective in SME D&I

Shaping Future Workforce: By incorporating D&I VET education into SMEs, companies can influence the next generation of workers, ensuring they understand and value diversity and inclusion from the start of their careers.

Bridging Gaps: VET programs can serve as a bridge between education and employment, making them critical for integrating underrepresented groups into the workforce.

Creating Inclusive Workplaces: VET educators can help SMEs develop inclusive workplace cultures by providing training that emphasizes the benefits of diversity and teaches practical skills for managing and leveraging diverse teams.

Promoting Social Equity: VET institutions can play a significant role in promoting social equity by ensuring that their programs are accessible to all individuals, regardless of their background, and by addressing barriers to participation in training and employment.

Why VET Learning is a Great Way for SMEs and their Employees to Learn



'VET is viewed as a tool to develop skills at the highest possible level of performance. It also is viewed as a tool to include and integrate learners at risk of exclusion from the labour market and society – the focus is on excellence and inclusion' (Source Cedefop)

VET is rooted in a distinct mode or particular way of teaching and learning perfect for SMEs

- Emphasise using **practical knowledge** (know-how – skills)
- Use implicit, **situational knowledge** and **real-life scenarios**. Adaptive to the business receiving the learning.
- Knowledge is acquired through **participation and socialisation**
- Does not exclude combinations with **other forms of knowledge** (theoretical, academic)
- Learning takes place through **practical experience**
- Implies **active and problem-oriented learning**

VET are Well Positioned to Deliver SME D&I Education

VET institutions, educators, and stakeholders are committed to workforce development, including promoting Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) in Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs).

Providers of SME Education: VET programs are designed to meet the specific needs of the labor market by providing practical skills and theoretical knowledge. This makes VET educators well-positioned to integrate D&I principles into their curricula, ensuring that companies are prepared to work in diverse and inclusive environments.

Insights from Industry Collaboration: VET institutions work closely with industry partners, to design and deliver relevant training programs. This collaboration helps ensure that the training provided is aligned with industry needs and standards, including D&I practices.

Have a Learner Diversity Approach: VET programs are tailored to cover a diverse range of learners, including those from minority, underrepresented or disadvantaged backgrounds. This diversity enriches the learning environment and provides a natural setting for promoting inclusivity.

VET are Well Positioned to Deliver SME D&I Education

Practical Training: VET programs include hands-on training through internships, apprenticeships, and on-the-job training. This practical component allows for the direct application of D&I principles in real workplace settings.

Lifelong Learning: VET institutions support lifelong learning, offering continuous education opportunities for individuals to upgrade their skills throughout their careers. This ongoing engagement with learners provides multiple touchpoints for reinforcing D&I concepts.

Inclusive VET programs can lead to a 19% increase in learner engagement and a 15% improvement in learning outcomes (UNESCO).

How VET Educators Develop and Teach D&I Initiatives

VET Educators provide invaluable D&I support to European SMEs, here are some;

Committed to Providing D&I Education to SMEs: VET educators believe in creating an inclusive learning environment that reflects the diversity of the workforce.

Curriculum Development: Integrate D&I principles into educational materials and training programs to suit SME needs. Develop specific modules or courses on D&I, covering topics like unconscious bias, cultural competence, and inclusive leadership.

Training Delivery: Provide engaging and impactful training sessions on D&I topics.

Mentorship: Offer guidance and support to employers and employees, especially those from diverse backgrounds during and post training.

Resource Allocation: Provide cohesive, adaptable, practical resources, including training materials, case studies, and funding to support D&I initiatives.

Continuous Improvement: Provide ongoing professional development essential for learners to stay updated on best practices in D&I.

VET Vocational Education Training Perspective

Why is VET important when implementing SME D&I? Vocational Education and Training (VET) educators and organisations play a crucial role in promoting Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) in SMEs and among employees. VET educators can significantly impact workplace culture, employee engagement, and overall business success by developing, considering, and delivering tailored training programs that emphasise D&I.

What is the 'VET perspective'? It involves understanding the unique role and viewpoint that VET organisations, educators, and stakeholders have in the context of their professional experience and educational contributions to workforce development, which includes SMEs adopting Diversity and Inclusion (D&I). This partnership where VET facilitate what is needed can help SMEs integrate D&I successfully where it enhances their workforce's skills, promote diversity and inclusion (D&I), and drive overall business success.

This section covers key VET perspectives and how VET educators can facilitate what is needed to help SMEs integrate successfully D&I across Europe.

Engaging in the VET Education Perspective

A Partnership that Enhances Workforce Skills and Success



1. VET Ensure A Skilled Workforce

VET programs are designed to equip learners and SMEs with D&I skills that match industry needs, ensuring learners have the right skills and competencies required.

Example, Germany (Dual VET Training) SMEs benefit from the German Dual VET system where learners split their time between classroom instruction and practical work, ensuring they gain relevant skills and experience. This model has been successful in reducing skills mismatches and improving employment outcomes.

Benefits ‘In-company vocational training means companies avoid hiring the wrong person when recruiting workers from outside (60%) By comparison, reducing familiarization costs (34%), saving the cost of recruiting outside personnel (27%) and using company-trained employees to familiarize new employees (22%)’. (Dual VET Training Germany)

2. VET Enhances Employee Training and Development

VET educators can provide tailored training programs that meet the specific needs of SMEs, enabling continuous professional development for all managers and employees. This ensures they acquire skills directly relevant and beneficial to their roles leading to improved job performance and productivity.

Example, Ireland, The SOLAS Further Education and Training (FET) works with SMEs to develop bespoke training programs that address industry-specific skills gaps, thereby improving employee performance and retention.

Example, in Germany, the Bildungspromotion training voucher for low-income individuals who are employed covers 50% of direct training costs.

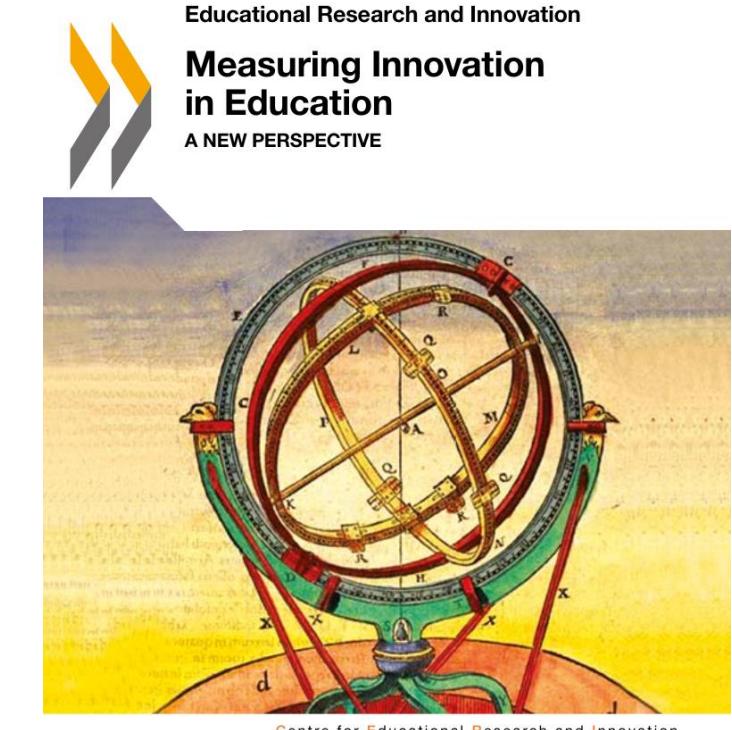


2. VET Enhances Employee Training and Development

(Contd.)

Benefit Customised Skills Development: According to a Cedefop [report](#), "The impact of vocational education and training on company performance" states tailored VET programs can increase employee productivity by up to 20%.

Benefit Increased Employee Retention: Continuous professional development strengthens loyalty and reduces turnover, it also helps employees stay updated with industry trends and technologies, therefore cultivating innovation. [Research](#) by the (OECD) indicates that continuous training can boost a company's innovation capabilities by 25%.



Centre for Educational Research and Innovation

[OECD Report](#)

3. VET Can Improve Diversity and Inclusion Integration

VET can help SMEs integrate D&I principles into their workplace by providing training on topics such as unconscious bias, cultural competence, and inclusive leadership.

Example: Poland: [**PARP**](#) a Warsaw-based VET institution offers D&I training workshops that help SMEs create more inclusive workplaces, resulting in higher employee satisfaction and productivity.

Benefit [**Report**](#) “Business Opportunity Boosted by DEI Initiatives” by the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) indicates that diverse teams produce 19% more revenue from innovation compared to non-diverse teams.

Benefit [**Cloverpop**](#), a decision-making platform, found that diverse teams make better decisions 87% of the time compared to individual decision-makers.

Benefit [**Harvard Business Review**](#) found that unconscious bias training can significantly reduce discriminatory behaviours.

4. Access to Cutting-Edge Research and Innovation

VET institutions often engage in research and development, providing SMEs with access to cutting-edge research, the latest industry trends, innovation, technologies, and best practices. They constantly collaborate with universities for up-to-date industry knowledge and educational approaches to update and incorporate new training that applies solutions to real-world problems. This enhances workforce skills crucial for maintaining a competitive edge, particularly in innovation capability and productivity.

For example, Germany: BIBB (Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training) work with universities and other research institutions to ensure their training reflects the latest trends and challenges to enhance SME operations and competitiveness e.g., managing diverse teams, nurturing inclusive leadership and addressing unconscious bias effectively resulting in higher employee satisfaction and production. [BIBB Website](#)

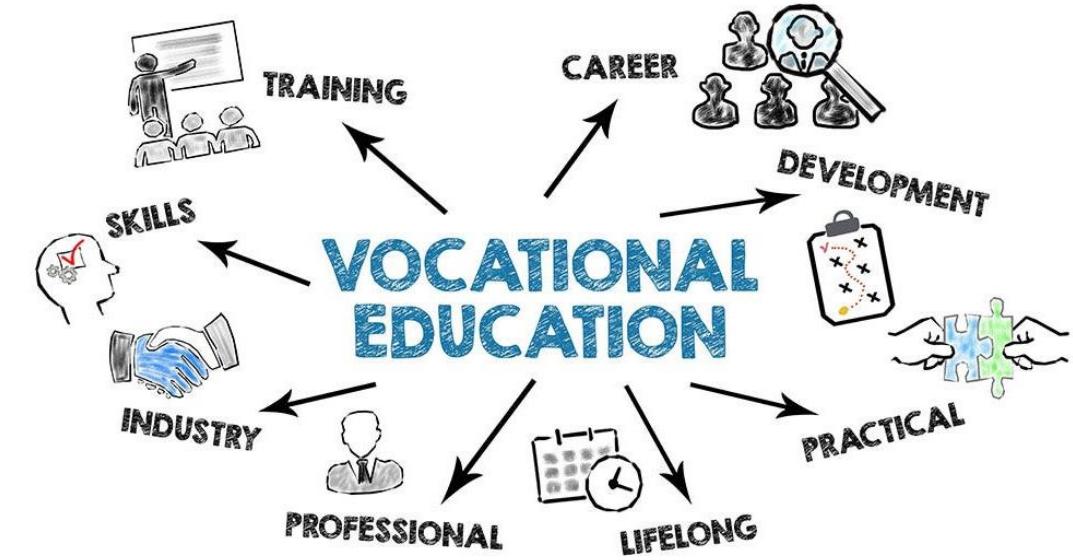
Benefit Boston Consulting Group (BCG) research indicates that diverse teams produce 19% more revenue from innovation compared to non-diverse teams. They enhance problem-solving and creativity, leading to higher innovation revenue and improved overall performance [BCG Report "How Diverse Leadership Teams Boost Innovation"](#)

Access to Cutting-Edge VET Education in Equality

VET equality resources include access to education and training opportunities and training credentials. Training is designed to provide employers access to the decision-making on the design and delivery of the training and access to a wide range of learning options. Examples of learnings options include:

- Develop an **equality policy** setting out a commitment to equality in employment and service provision in the workplace
- How employers can ensure training on **equality solutions and procedures** are available to all staff
- Produce a **plan to realise equality objectives** based on an audit of current equality provisions
- How to **develop supports to ensure careful monitoring** of the implementation of equality measures and how successful they are

Source [IHREC](#)



Source [VET Education](#)



6. Adhere Compliance with EU Regulations and Standards

VET can help SMEs stay compliant with industry regulations and standards by providing relevant training to meet regulatory requirements and adopt best practices and certification programs in diversity and inclusion. This pathway to compliance enhances SME reputation, operational efficiency and market position.

The Equality Authority has a broad mandate under the equality legislation to promote equality of opportunity and combat discrimination in the areas covered by the Employment Equality Acts 1998 and 2004 and the Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2018. This mandate not only focuses our attention on the obligations in the equality legislation but also on the ambitions for equality in Europe. Vocational education and training have been a particular focus in developing and delivering this work. They have been a subject for casework, research, communication initiatives and projects supporting good practice.

For example, VET can provide training on Non-discrimination where employers write a clear vision and statement that they will not tolerate discrimination, sexual harassment, harassment or victimization to prevent it happening in the first place. They can educate different procedures to deal with any such incidents that might arise.

European Equality Directive

Taking Disability as an Example: The Employment Equality Acts require employers to take appropriate measures to enable a person with a disability to access employment, advance in employment and undertake training unless this would impose a disproportionate burden on the employer. The Equal Status Acts require service providers to provide special treatment or facilities to customers with disabilities where without these it would be impossible or, unduly difficult to use the service provided unless this would cost more than a nominal cost. A failure to adapt to or to reasonably accommodate this diversity creates barriers for members of these groups to enter, participate in or achieve outcomes from training and education. Positive action that targets specific groups experiencing inequality is central in addressing legacies of discrimination and exclusion.



Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion

Home Policies and activities News Events Publications and documents

European employment strategy

Employment package

Social dialogue

Legislation - Employment Equality Directive (2000/78/EC)

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=166&langId=en>

Implementation of the Employment Equality Directive

The principle of non-discrimination on the basis of religion or belief

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/536345/EPRS_STU\(2016\)536345_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/536345/EPRS_STU(2016)536345_EN.pdf)

European Pillar of Social Rights - Building a fairer more inclusive and full-of-opportunity European Union

'As we overcome the pandemic, as we prepare necessary reforms and as we speed up the twin green and digital transitions, I believe it is time to also adapt the social rulebook. A rulebook which ensures solidarity between generations. A rulebook that rewards entrepreneurs who take care of their employees. Which focuses on jobs and opens up opportunities. Which puts skills, innovation and social protection on an equal footing'.

President von der Leyen, 20 January 2021

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1226>

CLICK TO WATCH VIDEO

Launch of the Agenda for Diversity & Inclusion | 2023 - 2025



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5nHTX8Lnles>

5. Enhanced Reputation and Employer Branding

Partnering with VET can help SMEs attract socially conscious customers and employees by creating inclusive workplaces that attract and retain top talent and enhance brand image and reputation as an employer and supplier of choice. VET teach them how to demonstrate that they are forward-thinking and how to communicate their commitment to D&I, therefore gaining a competitive edge in the labour market.

Benefit **Attract top talent;** research shows that 3 out of 4 job seekers and employees (76%) report that workplace diversity and inclusivity are important factors when evaluating companies and when considering employment opportunities ([Glassdoor, 2020](#)).

Benefit When employees feel that their organisation values diversity and inclusion, they are more likely to be engaged, satisfied, and committed to their work. In turn, this leads to higher retention rates and lower turnover costs ([Loeb Leadership](#))

7. Government and Funding Opportunities



SMEs engaged with VET organizations may access government grants, subsidies, and funding opportunities aimed at promoting skills development and D&I. Engaging with VET educators provides SMEs with numerous advantages, including access to a skilled workforce, improved training and development, enhanced D&I, cutting-edge research and innovation, improved reputation, regulatory compliance, and funding opportunities. By leveraging these benefits, SMEs can enhance their competitiveness, drive business success, and foster a more inclusive and innovative workplace culture.

Supporting Report: [European Commission: Vocational Education and Training for Inclusion Funding Program](#)

Example German SMEs partnering with VET institutions can benefit from government programs that provide financial support for training initiatives, reducing the cost burden and encouraging investment in employee development.

Example. A German SME in the manufacturing sector partnered with a local VET institution to upskill its workforce in advanced manufacturing techniques. The government program covered **50% of the training costs**. As a result, the company saw a **20% increase in productivity** and a significant reduction in operational errors.

Unleashing the Power of VET Education



- More than one-third of all pupils graduating from secondary school in Germany enter a vocational training program, of which one-third go on to pursue a single-track, school-based VET and two-thirds the dual-track counterpart.
- About 51 % of Germany's workers are skilled workers trained in the VET.
- The VET boasts roughly 330 officially recognised training programs, all listed on Planet-Beruf.net.
- Germany's vocational school's partner with around 430,000 companies, and more than 80% of large companies hire apprentices.
- The Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) publishes a list of occupations and respective salaries that apprentices receive, as well as the guide "Vocational Training in Germany." (Source)

How VET Programs Work.

Example Passgenaue Besetzung, A Jobstarter Program



The government supports these efforts through programs like the Passgenaue Besetzung program which assists SMEs in filling training positions with suitable candidates, including local youth and refugees ([CEDEFOP](#)) ([Clean Energy Wire](#)).

Many SMEs in Germany benefit from initiatives that support the integration of refugees into the workforce through apprenticeships and training programs. The network "Companies Integrate Refugees," funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs, helps companies, mostly SMEs, to employ refugees and integrate them into their operations. This initiative not only supports diversity but also addresses the skilled labour shortage faced by many German SMEs ([CEDEFOP](#)).



German Restaurant Platzhirsch, Integrates VET D&I Training

An example of a small German SME that has shown great leadership in Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) is Platzhirsch, a restaurant in Hamburg. With a staff of around 50 employees, it made significant strides in promoting D&I within its operations. The management team realised and began to emphasise the importance of a diverse workforce and inclusive culture.

The manager believed in creating a work environment where every employee felt valued and respected, regardless of their background. He implemented regular D&I VET training sessions for his staff to ensure that everyone understood the importance of diversity and how to nurture an inclusive workplace. Dittrich's commitment to D&I has not only improved team cohesion and morale but has also positively impacted the restaurant's customer service, attracting a broader customer base.

For more detailed information on Platzhirsch's approach to D&I and the benefits they have experienced, you can refer to the article on their official website [Platzhirsch Hamburg](#) illustrating how even small companies can effectively implement D&I initiatives and reap the benefits of a more inclusive workplace.

European Equality Directive

Taking Disability as an Example: The Employment Equality Acts require employers to take appropriate measures to enable a person with a disability to access employment, advance in employment and undertake training unless this would impose a disproportionate burden on the employer. The Equal Status Acts require service providers to provide special treatment or facilities to customers with disabilities where without these it would be impossible or, unduly difficult to use the service provided unless this would cost more than a nominal cost. A failure to adapt to or to reasonably accommodate this diversity creates barriers for members of these groups to enter, participate in or achieve outcomes from training and education. Positive action that targets specific groups experiencing inequality is central in addressing legacies of discrimination and exclusion.



Projects and organisations funded by the European Union
Programme for
Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI)



Report VII

Period covered 2013-2017

Written by Lukas Pukelis, Laima Užpelkienė, Mantas Pupinis and Modestas Stukas, Public Policy and Management Institute (PPMI), Vilnius

September 2017

Social Europe

<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/8bb9471c-c437-11e7-9b01-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

Learning Objectives

- **Assess and address the barriers** to D&I implementation in SMEs and propose solutions to overcome them.
- Understand and demonstrate knowledge of the **Seven DARE Competency Areas** and their importance in inclusive business practices.
- Design a **strategic approach to incorporating DARE competencies** into SME operations.
- **Evaluate and understand the role of VET educators**, SMEs, and employees in shaping inclusive workplaces.
- **Implement inclusive recruitment**, leadership, and communication strategies to enhance workplace diversity.



Well Done!

You Have Finished **Module 1**
Now Try **Module 2**

www.projectdare.eu



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