

Business Management Education and Training Provision on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

WP 2 – D2.1

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Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of the EDIFY EDU European Project Work Package 2, which aims to identify the skills gap in the undergraduate Business Management education sector regarding competencies on workplace equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). The report provides an overview of the history and evolution of undergraduate business management education, tracing its roots to classical management theory and scientific management. It also analyses EDI in the curriculum and its effects on the labour market and gender. Despite globalisation and advances in the way of doing business, undergraduate business management education continues to perpetuate labour market segregation and discrimination based on gender and other intersectionalities. Women continue to experience significant barriers in employment, particularly in leadership roles.

This report compares the proposed European educational competency frameworks: the European framework for the personal, social, and learning to learn key competence (LifeComp), the European entrepreneurship competence framework (EntreComp), and the digital competence framework for citizens (DigComp), to competencies in 119 undergraduate business management courses and 36 professional development courses across the five partner European countries: Ireland, Finland, Germany, Greece, and Italy. It explores the current labour market, including a gender gap analysis. The findings from 32 in-depth interviews and 21 focus groups and coaching circles, identify gaps between undergraduate business management studies and the realities of management practice, particularly in SMEs (Small to Medium Enterprises). There is a need to move beyond classical management theories to create a more equal, diverse, and inclusive future.

The report highlights the need for an improved undergraduate business education, as outlined by the European Commission, that embeds equality, diversity, and inclusion and can contribute to alleviating existing gendered labour market and workplace EDI discriminatory practices. It provides insights into the social impact of existing and emerging labour market laws and policies and discusses the discrepancies between current policies and practices and sets out a recommended list of competencies needed to address EDI issues in the workplace. These competencies are aligned to the European frameworks (EntreComp, LifeComp and DigComp) and will be considered in the design and development of the micro credential modules, developed as part of the EDIFY EDU project (Work Package 3), to complement the identified competency gaps.

Section 1: Introduction

Undergraduate business management education in Europe and the US share common ontological and epistemological assumptions based on classical management theory, referred to as scientific management. These early views, unconscious of gender and race discrimination, informed the foundations of modern business management. The work of Taylor, Fayol, Weber, Mayo, McGregor, Maslow, Herzberg and Schein, contributed to the evolution of business management thinking and schools of thought including: scientific management, bureaucracy, human relations, competitive advantage, and shareholder value maximization. They have also shaped management practice conveying an image of who managers must be (Petriglieri, 2020).

Cummings (2016), noted the views of some scholars in relation to a decline in new ideas in business management studies, and points to the tendency to look to “best practice” instead of aiming for “next practice”. Furthermore, there is a gap between business management studies and the realities of management practice (Smith and Lewis, 2011). According to Petriglieri (2020), the challenge facing management is not the lack of new theories; it is the strength of the old ones, he argues that it is impossible to build the future using the blueprints of the past. Attempts by Lillian Gilbreth and others interested in improving the working conditions of women in industry, attempted to expand Scientific Management theory to consider the position of women and include a more humane and ‘soft’ approach to management. However, despite the early efforts to recognise women’s position in the labour market, diplomatic circles and international labour ignored women’s interests (Oldenziel, 2000). Scientific Management became associated chiefly with an accounting model of efficiency increasingly identified with Ford’s assembly line, especially in Europe. The new emerging business management theory combined paternalist notions with ideas about profitability, engineering concepts of mechanical efficiency and a military conception of discipline (Oldenziel, 2000).

The post-World War II period witnessed the spread of business schools at universities, where the first serious histories of management were written that outlined the fields noble origins and helped legitimise them as “university worthy.” The Ford and Carnegie reports outlined the legitimate form of a business school and its curricula, and with a further growth spurt in student numbers and advances in pedagogy and publishing, the first textbooks (as we know them) emerged en masse. Undergraduate business management education based on a limited and flawed foundation continues to be taught throughout Europe and globally in leading business schools, inadvertently perpetuating labour market segregation and discrimination in relation to gender and other intersections. Little has changed in 200 years, there is still no critical mass of women at the higher positions of organisations, from which women can access important organisational dynamics.

The need arises for a new undergraduate business education model, one that takes into consideration equality, diversity and inclusion. It needs to be capable of transferring new knowledge in the workplace and contributing towards the alleviation of the existing gendered labour market and workplace EDI discriminatory practices.

Section 2: Research Aims and Objectives

The European analysis aims to 1) demonstrate how multiple and intersecting social statuses shape undergraduate business management education and labour market participation; 2) explore how undergraduate business management in higher education acts as a conduit in the perpetuation and embedding inequalities in the structure of the labour market; 3) demonstrate how undergraduate business management education inadvertently stratifies and eschews labour market participation resulting in unequal treatment and unequal opportunities, glass ceilings and inaccessible corridors, for a significant percentage of the labour market. These aims will be addressed by the following:

The results of the analysis will create new knowledge and understanding of the current situation and practices in EDI undergraduate business management education across different European partner countries by:

- Assessing the existing Higher Education undergraduate management education courses and mapping of Learning Outcomes with EntreComp, DigComp and LifeComp
- Assessing the VET management education courses and mapping of Learning Outcomes with EntreComp, DigComp and LifeComp
- Comparing desk research on EDI European and national policies with private sector engagement on management education
- Conducting qualitative research among business experts and representatives involved in focus groups/coaching circles and interviews for the collection of qualitative data

Section 3: Methodology

The aim of this section is to outline the methodology framework that was used as part of Work Package 2 to identify needs and competencies for the EDIFY EDU curricula.

3.1 Desk research

The task involved mapping the most relevant training provisions on EDI in each partner country in the field of undergraduate business management education in Europe. This includes providers of higher education and continuous education for professional development. The research identified the most relevant learning objectives and the competences used and needed, by mapping them to the European frameworks of LifeComp, EntreComp, and DigComp.

Each partner country carried out a semi-systematic review of undergraduate business courses (EQF levels 5 and 6), and professional development courses. The following keywords were used to identify courses with an EDI element: “equality”, “diversity”, “inclusion”, “gender”, “multicultural” and “intercultural”. The course titles, description, programme learning outcomes, individual module descriptions and module learning outcomes were reviewed for relevance to EDI.

Undergraduate business management education courses included business management, business administration, management science and other related fields. In total, the sample size across the five partner countries consisted of 119 undergraduate business management courses, broken down as follows: Ireland 24% (n=29), Finland 15% (n=18), Germany 14% (n=17), Greece 25% (n=30), and Italy 21% (n=25).

Accredited professional development courses in business management were reviewed using the same keyword searches. In total, the sample size across the partner countries consisted of 36 courses, broken down as follows: Ireland 13% (n=4), Finland 28% (n=11), Germany 21% (n=6) and Italy 38% (n=15).

3.2 Social impact assessment

The Social Impact Assessment (SIA) follows the European Commission Guidelines (2009) to provide insights on the social impact of existing and emerging labour market laws and policies. The SIA must answer eight questions:

1. What is the nature and scale of the problem, how is it evolving, and who is most affected by it?
2. What are the views of the stakeholders concerned?
3. Should the European Union be involved?
 - a. If so, what objectives should it set to address the problem?
 - b. What are the main policy options for reaching these objectives? What are the likely economic, social, and environmental impacts of those options?
 - c. How do the main options compare in terms of effectiveness, efficiency, and coherence in solving the problems?
 - d. How could future monitoring and evaluation be organised?

These 8 questions (European Commission Guidelines, 2009) informed the SIA framework by exposing the gaps in relation to workplace equality diversity and inclusion based on national partner labour market profiles when compared with their EDI labour market laws and policies. To complete the SIA, we conducted the following:

Collated Labour Market Information: specifically, to develop a comprehensive profile of each national partner's labour market laws and policies in relation to workplace Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). The following was analysed for each participating country:

- National Legislation in relation to transposing EU Directives
- National Labour Market Policies and implementation of EU and national laws

Developed a Labour Market Profile:

Using publicly available statistics from national and European reports, the labour market profile of each partner country was developed under the following headings:

- Population by gender, ethnicity, disability, and age
- Employment and unemployment by age, gender, and disability
- Self employed by age, gender, and disability
- Employment by occupation, age, gender, and disability
- Education Level by age, gender, and disability
- Labour market demographic and sectoral overview

The European Commission Guidelines: (European Commission, 2009)

The European Commission Guidelines were used to conduct the Social Impact Assessment. The responses identified gaps in relation to workplace EDI policies and practice (labour market profiles) and suggest a call to action on behalf of the European Commission.

3.3 Qualitative analysis

The aim of this activity was to involve a heterogeneous group of people, including students, professionals, senior managers, entrepreneurs, and female entrepreneurs with representation from minority groups such as females, immigrants, and some from disadvantaged backgrounds to discuss issues of inclusion/exclusion at the workplace and implementation challenges of equality, diversity and inclusion. The objective of the activity was to identify the discrepancies between European legislation, national legislation and lived experience. This activity was conducted using focus groups, coaching circles, and in-depth interviews. The findings will be used to identify learning and training needs to be considered in the micro-credential courses which will be developed as part of Work Package 3.

Ethical approval was granted by the lead partner, the Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design & Technology (IADT), Ireland. All European partners agreed and complied with the ethics approval process. Prior to participating in the studies, potential participants received an invitation and information sheet detailing: purpose of the study; invitation to participate; statement that participation is purely voluntary and confidential; option to remove data before a stated date. Participants were required to complete six questions in relation to their education and employment and sign a consent form before the session began. Identifiable information was not required for the purpose of the focus groups and the in-depth research interviews. Any identifiable information was changed in the transcripts to preserve anonymity.

3.3.1 Focus groups/coaching circles

Ireland, Germany, Greece, and Italy conducted focus groups. Once the data was collected, thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was conducted to synthesise the information gathered from the focus groups and in-depth interviews. The six steps of thematic analysis were followed, this involved transcribing and anonymising each focus group and in-depth interview, coding the data, and identifying recurring themes.

Finland conducted coaching circles. The workshops were recorded to capture the discussions. The participants' reflections were transcribed, creating a dataset for further analysis. To facilitate the analysis process, a Miro visual collaboration tool was employed, enabling the identification and organisation of important themes that emerged from the discussions. Through thematic analysis, the information was examined, allowing for the synthesis and identification of overarching themes.

This task involved a heterogeneous group of people, including representatives from the social partners, business students, workers from minority groups or disadvantaged background and involved creating a generative dialogue around a real case of inclusion/exclusion at the workplace providing the qualitative data, including the emotional perspective of those involved. Each country was required to conduct four coaching circles or focus groups. The aim was to have one group dedicated to Higher Education undergraduate students; one dedicated to labour market actors and representatives and the remaining two were heterogeneous. The purpose of this structure was to discover the learning and training needs of the different target groups as well as enhance the communication and exchange among them.

3.3.2 Participants

Recruitment took place over various channels throughout the partner countries. Participants for the student groups were contacted through the higher-level institutes and associated contacts; professionals were recruited through professional networks, business contacts, LinkedIn, and word of mouth. Only those over the age of 18 could participate in the focus groups/coaching circles and in-depth interviews. In total, across all five partner countries, there were 91 participants in the focus groups and coaching circles: female 46% (n=39), male 29% (n=25) and other 1% (n=1), 23% are unknown gender.

Table 1 Participant information (focus groups and coaching circles)

Focus groups/Coaching circles						
Country	groups	Participants	Women	Men	Other	Age range
Greece	5	20	40%	60%	0%	30-60 years old
Ireland	4	17	59%	41%	0%	21-51 years old
Germany	4	20	70%	30%	0%	22-55 years old
Italy	4	16	69%	31%	0%	25-63 years old
Finland	4	18	72%	22%	6%	18-53 years old

The age range among all focus groups across all partner countries was between 18-63 years of age. The professional participants worked in various roles in the following industries: vocational training, education, engineering, food and hospitality, design, investment sector, family business, startups, agriculture,

consultancy, marketing & communication, non-profit organisations fostering education, business management consulting, construction, insurance, motor, agriculture, big tech, voluntary organisations, state agencies, confectionery, superfoods & coffee, and law. Most participants were in senior roles, ranging from two years' work experience to forty years. Areas of expertise included management roles in education, Human Resources, strategic marketing, sales, customer support, technical support, and retail. Many of the students in the focus groups were employed in part-time and full-time positions in industries such as health, hospitality, and retail. The participants had varied educational backgrounds with a range of credentials including undergraduate diplomas, ordinary and honours bachelor's degrees, and postgraduate degrees.

3.3.3 Design

The study was designed on the premise that participants would not be working in the same company, however, in some groups, participants were familiar with each other. Each participant signed a consent form and agreed to confidentiality around the content of the topics of discussion. The focus groups questions were designed to provoke interpersonal dynamics within the participating student, professional and homogenous groups. The focus groups were held from January to May 2023 across four partner countries. Coaching circles were conducted in Finland only. The focus groups were conducted both online and face to face. The online option was presented to participants who could not attend face to face. Finland's coaching circles were held in person. All focus groups were semi-structured and somewhat directed by the researcher to elicit the sharing of experiences and opinions among the participants.

3.3.4 Materials

Focus Group Themes and Prompt Questions

Theme 1: Education

- Brief overview of modules studied,
- Did your studies include modules on: EDI, empathy, kindness, etc.

Theme 2: Promotion/Progression

- Have you been promoted since you joined this company? If yes, how many times?
- Have you applied for promotion and was unsuccessful? Did you think this was a fair outcome? Why?

Theme 3: Organisation Culture

- Can you talk a bit about the organisational culture?
- Do you feel your company operates fair and transparent procedures in relation to pay, promotion and recognition of effort?
- Does equal pay operate in your company between women and men?
- What percentage of the senior management team are female?
- What percentage of the Board are female?

Discussion Question

- What changes would you like to see introduced in the organization?
- Do you have anything else that you would like to add?

Slight variations of the above questions were used in differing partner countries, depending upon the flow and discussion in the focus groups. All questions centred on the EDI themes as listed above.

The questions for the coaching circles differed from the focus groups where an empathetic approach to active listening and reflection was employed.

3.4 In-Depth interviews

The objective of this task was to go deeper in understanding the complexity of labour settings and the difficulties encountered specifically in implementing the EDI principles. Additionally, interviews were conducted with female entrepreneurs, to understand the specificity of their condition and their career path.

3.4.1 Participants

The number of industry experts interviewed across the partner countries were as follows: Ireland interviewed five participants (female=2; male = 3); Finland interviewed 5 participants (female = 3; male = 2); Germany interviewed 6 participants (female=4; male=2); Greece interviewed 6 participants (female=4; male=2); and Italy interviewed 10 participants (female=7; male=3). In total the breakdown of participants were 20 females and 12 males.

Table 2 Participant information (in-depth interviews)

Country	Participants	Women	Men	Age range
Greece	6	67%	33%	35-55 years old
Ireland	5	40%	60%	31-60 years old
Germany	6	66%	33%	25-55 years old
Italy	10	70%	30%	29-63 years old
Finland	5	60%	40%	27-56 years old

Recruitment for professional participants took place on LinkedIn, business alumni groups, business association networks and word of mouth. Only those over the age of 18 could participate in the interviews. Further, the potential participants were contacted via email regarding general interest and officially invited via phone, face-to-face, and subsequent email.

In total 32 in-depth interviews were conducted across the five partner countries. The participants represented a wide range of roles from different economic sectors and small and medium sized enterprises.

The age range was between 25-63 years old. Participants represented a variety of different industries such as sales, social enterprises, big tech, fashion, auto motive, academia and human resources and held

positions as chief executive officer (CEO), creative director, executive assistant, sales director, project manager, human resources manager, heading of marketing, head of business development, founder & designer, and academics. Participants were employed in long term, short term, and self-employed positions.

The participants had varied educational backgrounds with a range of credentials. Participants held Honours Bachelor's degree, Post Graduate qualifications and Doctoral Degrees. Several of the participants had also obtained additional certificates of training in their field such as Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) and Strategic Leadership for Chief Financial Officers.

3.4.2 Design

The study was designed to gather insights from female entrepreneurs and other industry experts through in-depth research interviews. Participants were selected based on their relevance and expertise in a range of different fields, company size and self-employed experts. Each participant signed a consent form and agreed to keep the discussions confidential. The interviews were conducted between February and May 2023. Most of the interviews took place online although some took place at the respective workplace of the interviewee or a neutral location unrelated to the workplace.

3.4.3 Materials

The following list of questions were asked under three themes: EDI Principle Interpretations, and Implementation Challenges and Competences Used or Needed. Additional relevant questions were asked by the interviewer from the respondent's answers.

Theme 1: EDI Principle Interpretations

- How do you understand the concept EDI / Equality /Diversity /Inclusion?
- How do you see the current status of EDI in your company?

Theme 2: Implementation Challenges

- How do you see EDI-themes affecting your daily work as a manager?
- What are the most challenging aspects of managing EDI?
- Can you give an example of a challenging situation to managing EDI in your daily work? How did you handle the situation?

Theme 3: Competences Used or Needed

- What do you see as most valuable skills, knowledge and competence linked to managing EDI?
- Where did you yourself get such skills, knowledge, and competence?
- Reflecting your own experiences on the EDI-related challenging situations, what skills, knowledge and competence were the most important?
- What would you suggest including in an EDI-related curriculum?

There were some slight variations on questions, depending on the flow of conversation in the interview.

Section 4: Desk Research Findings and Existing Learning Outcomes and Competencies

This section presents the main findings from desk research on current business management and training in Ireland, Finland, Germany, and Italy towards EntreComp, LifeComp and DigComp frameworks.

4.1 Existing learning outcomes and competencies with comparisons to European frameworks

A diverse range of training offerings that encompass the variations among different countries

Partners from Ireland, Finland, Germany, Greece, and Italy assessed existing 1) higher education management courses at the undergraduate level, as well as 2) courses provided by business management education/continuous learning in these five countries. The number of identified courses varied from 23 to 33 per country, resulting in a total of 155 identified courses across all five countries. However, due to variations in available learning objectives for analysis, such as access to course descriptions and syllabi, each country employed slightly different approaches to identify learning objectives. Table 3 demonstrates the distribution of analysed courses between higher education (HE) programs and continuous learning (CL) in each country. Greece exclusively looked at higher education programs, while Italy had an approximately equal distribution of 50% in each category. Notably, there were differences in the courses/programs analysed. In Ireland, Germany, and Greece, learning objectives were assessed at the program level, whereas in Finland and Italy, the focus was on evaluating the learning objectives of individual courses/modules. This discrepancy also highlights variations in the accessibility of course descriptions across European countries. It is crucial to consider this heterogeneity when interpreting the findings and comparing differences between the countries.

Table 3 Summary of the training provision data

Country	HE/CL	Number of programs/courses	SDG connections	EQF level ≤6
GREECE	HE	30	8	30
	CL	0	0	0
IRELAND	HE	29	0	29
	CL	4	0	0
GERMANY	HE	17	10	17
	CL	6	1	0
ITALY	HE	25	2	25
	CL	15	5	15
FINLAND	HE	18	4	7
	CL	11	1	1

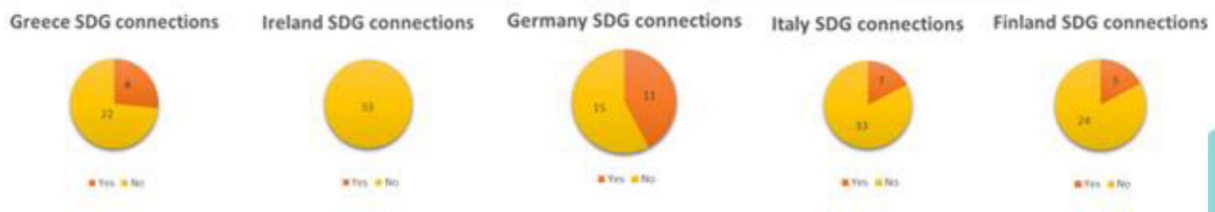
HE= higher education management course
 CL= business management/continuous learning course

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) potential for promoting EDI related training

An approach that underscores the intentions of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) is the United Nations' framework of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These goals encompass pertinent objectives aimed at promoting EDI, such as gender equality and reduced inequality. However, while the impact of these goals has primarily been discursive thus far, evidence of their normative and institutional impact remains rare (Biermann et al., 2022). Nevertheless, the discursive impact is crucial for understanding the diverse goals and comprehending their significance. It is foreseeable that their relevance will increase in the context of education and training provisions in the future.

Hence, the desk research conducted in this project aimed to examine whether SDGs were connected to the current training provisions related to EDI. Figure 1 illustrates the identified connections between SDGs and the training provision samples from the five partner countries. Among the analysed 27 courses, the German sample exhibited the highest number of SDG connections, with 11 programs identified as having such connections. Conversely, no SDG connections were identified in the Irish sample, representing the lowest end of the spectrum. In the case of Greece, among the 30 programmes analysed, only 8 programmes are aligned with the SDGs. The Finnish and Italian samples had a similar number of SDG connections relative to the total number of courses in each sample.

Figure 1 SDG Connections in different countries' courses/programs



EntreComp and LifeComp competences were moderately represented in learning objectives of the analysed courses.

The existing learning outcomes were mapped against the three European competency frameworks: EntreComp, DigComp and LifeComp. Table 4 demonstrates a significant variation in the total number of identified competencies across countries. For instance, the Italian sample yielded a total of 913 competencies across 40 courses, the Greek sample identified a total of 899 competencies across 30 courses, whereas the Finnish sample identified 33 competencies in the learning objectives of the analysed 29 courses.

Table 4 Summary of the identified competencies between countries

Country	HE/CL	EntreComp	DigComp	LifeComp	Total
GREECE	HE	258	281	360	899
	CL	0	0	0	
IRELAND	HE	48	3	92	165
	CL	8	0	14	
GERMANY	HE	71	65	115	457
	CL	65	44	97	
ITALY	HE	153	85	319	913
	CL	105	0	251	
FINLAND	HE	16	0	10	33
	CL	6	0	1	

HE= higher education management course

CL= business management/continuous learning course

One of the European frameworks used was EntreComp framework, which aims to highlight the entrepreneurial competencies needed to create financial, cultural, or social value for others. The most frequently identified competencies from the EntreComp framework among the five partner countries were “working with others”, “planning and management” and “ethical and sustainable thinking”.

Table 5 illustrates the identified EntreComp competencies and their distribution between higher education management courses (HE) and continuous learning (CL) categories. The table indicates that the competencies of "vision" and "self-awareness and self-efficacy" are more frequently identified in the continuous learning category, while the competencies of "financial and economic literacy" and "learning through experience" are more commonly identified in the higher education (HE) category.

Table 5 Distribution of EntreComp competencies between higher education and continuous learning courses/programs

ENTRECOMP	HE	CL	
Total number of courses	109	37	difference
Spotting opportunities	17%	8%	9%
Creativity	16%	3%	13%
Vision	18%	51%	-33%
Valuing ideas	34%	41%	-7%
Ethical and sustainable thinking	52%	57%	-4%
Self-awareness and self-efficacy	18%	49%	-30%
Motivation and perseverance	9%	19%	-10%
Mobilising resources	26%	0%	26%
Financial and economic literacy	43%	11%	32%
Mobilising others	28%	3%	26%
Taking the initiative	30%	3%	28%
Planning and management	57%	46%	11%
Coping with uncertainty, ambiguity and risk	32%	24%	8%
Working with others	51%	57%	-5%
Learning through experience	37%	3%	34%

HE= higher education management course

CL= business management/continuous learning course

The second framework, DigComp, emphasises the digital competences required in a digitalizing society. Among all the partner countries, the competencies most frequently identified were "collaboration through digital technologies", "sharing through digital technologies", and "interacting through digital technologies".

Table 6 shows the entire continuous learning column, indicating that nearly all DigComp competencies were identified from the higher education (HE) category. On average, the continuous learning category (CL) accounted for only 2% of the identified competencies. This finding implies that there may be a significant gap in continuous learning training provisions that specifically target the development of digitalization competencies.

Table 6 Distribution of DigComp competencies between higher education and continuous learning courses/programs

DIGCOMP	HE	CL
Total number of courses	109	37
1.1 Browsing, searching and filtering data, information and digital content	19%	3%
1.2 Evaluating data, information and digital content	27%	3%
1.3 Managing data, information and digital content	41%	3%
2.1 Interacting through digital technologies	59%	8%
2.2 Sharing through digital technologies	55%	5%
2.3 Engaging in citizenship through digital technologies	45%	0%
2.4 Collaborating through digital technologies	55%	8%
2.5 Netiquette	25%	0%
2.6 Managing digital identity	25%	0%
3.1 Developing digital content	15%	3%
3.2 Integrating and re-elaborating digital content	19%	0%
3.3 Copyright and licences	16%	0%
3.4 Programming	20%	3%
4.1 Protecting devices	6%	0%
4.2 Protecting personal data and privacy	31%	0%
4.3 Protecting health and well-being	39%	0%
4.4 Protecting the environment	22%	0%
5.1 Solving technical problems	28%	3%
5.2 Identifying needs and technological responses	45%	5%
5.3 Creatively using digital technologies	32%	3%
5.4 Identifying digital competence gaps	19%	5%

HE= higher education management course
 CL= business management/continuous learning course

The third framework, the LifeComp framework, encompasses fundamental competences required to adapt to a changing world. These competences are essential to achieve personal fulfilment and satisfaction, to develop ourselves and relate to others, and to learn how to learn and keep being employable. Among all partner countries, the most frequently identified competencies from the LifeComp framework were "Intention to contribute to the common good and awareness that others may have different cultural affiliations, backgrounds, beliefs, values, opinions, or personal circumstances (S3.1)" and "Awareness of potential biases in data and one's personal limitations while collecting valid and reliable information and ideas from diverse and reputable sources (L2.1)."

When examining the main categories of the LifeComp framework (P1-3, S1-3, L1-3) in Table 7, it becomes evident that the P3 competencies are most frequently identified in the continuous learning (CL) category.

Conversely, the L3 competencies are more commonly identified in the higher education category. This finding suggests that continuous learning courses tend to emphasize aspects related to well-being, the pursuit of life satisfaction, and the care of one's physical, mental, and social aspects. On the other hand, higher education courses appear to focus more on critical thinking and reflection.

More specifically, competencies P2.3, P3.1, P3.2, and P3.3 are significantly more often identified in the continuous learning (CL) category. Conversely, competencies P1.1, L2.2, L3.2, and L3.3 are more frequently identified in the higher education (HE) category.

Table 7 Distribution of the LifeComp competencies between higher education and continuous learning courses/programs

LIFECOMP	HE	CL	
Total number of courses	109	37	difference
P1 Self-regulation_ Awareness and management of emotions, thoughts and behaviour	13%	11%	2%
P2 Flexibility_ Ability to manage transitions and uncertainty, and to face challenges	22%	36%	-14%
P3 Wellbeing_ Pursuit of life satisfaction, care of physical, mental and social health; and adoption of a sustainable lifestyle	12%	40%	-28%
S1 Empathy_ The understanding of another person's emotions, experiences and values, and the provision of appropriate responses	32%	46%	-14%
S2 Communication_ Use of relevant communication strategies, domain-specific codes and tools, depending on the context and content	42%	45%	-2%
S3 Collaboration_ Engagement in group activity and teamwork acknowledging and respecting others	39%	42%	-3%
L1 Growth mindset_ Belief in one's and others' potential to continuously learn and progress	11%	14%	-3%
L2 Critical thinking_ Assessment of information and arguments to support reasoned conclusions and develop innovative solutions	38%	26%	11%
L3 Reflecting on and assessing purposes, processes and outcomes of learning and knowledge construction, establishing relationships across domains	36%	17%	19%

HE= higher education management course
 CL= business management/continuous learning course

The key findings from the training provision data of the five partner countries are summarized in Table 8. The percentage of identified EntreComp competencies among all countries is 31%. It is more common for EntreComp competencies to be found in the higher education (HE) category than in the continuous learning (CL) category. Additionally, EntreComp competencies are more likely to be present in courses with SDG connections compared to courses without SDG connections.

On the other hand, the corresponding percentage of DigComp competencies is 14%. This percentage is relatively low compared to EntreComp and LifeComp competencies, indicating that a significant number of competencies from the DigComp framework are missing. DigComp competencies are predominantly found in the higher education (HE) category and are slightly more likely to appear in courses with SDG connections compared to courses without SDG connections.

Among all courses, the percentage of identified LifeComp competencies is 30%. As with EntreComp, LifeComp competencies are more likely to be present in courses with SDG connections. However, in contrast to the other two frameworks, LifeComp competencies are more likely to appear in the continuous learning (CL) category than in the higher education (HE) category.

Table 8 Summary of the identified competencies among all countries

	EntreComp	DigComp	LifeComp
ALL COURSES	31%	14%	30%
HE	31%	31%	26%
CL	25%	2%	30%
SDG connections	45%	23%	41%

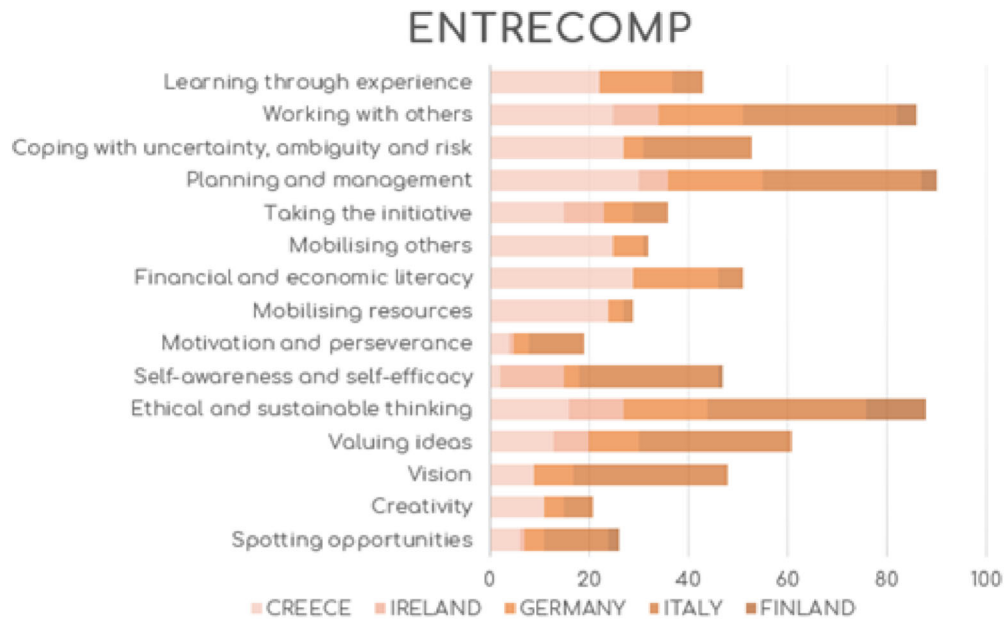
HE= higher education management course

CL= business management/continuous learning course

4.2 The missing European competencies

Due to the significant variation in the number of identified competencies among countries, there was a substantial difference in the number of missing competencies across these countries as well. However, most countries were found to have identified competencies from each of the three different frameworks, indicating that there were no completely missing competencies. Figures 2 to 4 present charts depicting the total number of identified competencies across all countries. Among all partner countries, the least frequently identified competencies from the EntreComp framework were "Motivation and perseverance" and "Creativity," as indicated in Figure 2.

Figure 2 Amount of identified EntreComp competencies among all countries



As depicted in Figure 3, the least frequently identified competencies from the DigComp framework were "4.1 Protecting devices" and "3.3 Copyright and licenses".

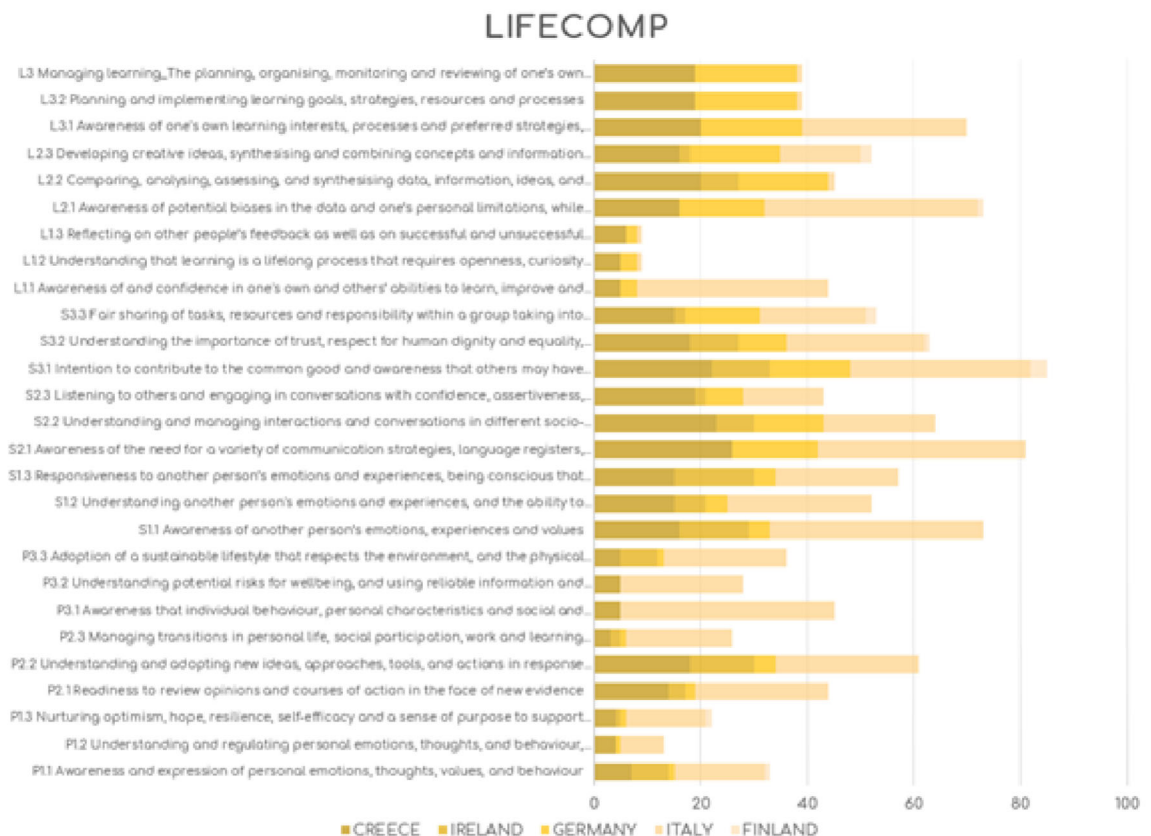
Figure 3 Amount of identified DigComp competencies among all countries



In Figure 4, it can be observed that the least frequently identified competencies from the LifeComp framework among all countries were "L1.2 Understanding that learning is a lifelong process that requires openness, curiosity, and determination" and "L1.3 Reflecting on other people's feedback as well as on

successful and unsuccessful experiences to continue developing one's potential". Additionally, the least often identified main category was L1 (the learning to learn area) within the LifeComp framework.

Figure 4 Amount of identified LifeComp competencies among all countries



4.3 Summary of the desk research findings

The implementation of EntreComp, LifeComp, and DigComp frameworks across different European partner countries revealed varying degrees of coverage and emphasis on certain competencies. Whilst some countries have a comprehensive approach to personal and professional development, others lack focus in specific areas such as diversity and inclusion or digital skills.

The EntreComp framework is implemented across different European countries, but the level of coverage and emphasis on certain competencies varies. In Ireland, there was a lack of emphasis on working with others to address diversity and inclusion. Italy's framework had significant attention to competences such as vision, ethical thinking, and self-awareness but lacked focus on creativity and learning through experience. Finland identified six out of 15 competencies among their courses while Greece showed gaps in supporting self-awareness/self-efficacy and motivation/perseverance, while identified only six competences in the 30 recorded courses. Germany's framework also had gaps except for ethical thinking, financial/economic literacy, planning/management, and working with others.

The LifeComp framework shows varying degrees of implementation and success across different European countries, with some courses lacking in certain competencies while others have a more comprehensive approach to personal and professional development. For example, the Irish analysis revealed areas for improvement in aspects of well-being and effective communication within diverse workforces. Italy had a

strong presence of most competences extensively covered, including skills related to self-regulation, flexibility, empathy, communication, collaboration, growth mindset, critical thinking, and managing learning. Finland identified seven out of 27 LifeComp competencies among its courses while Germany showed weakness in P1 self-regulation, P2 flexibility, P3 wellbeing, and S1 Empathy. Finally, Greece demonstrated gaps concerning awareness & management of emotions as well as direct EDI awareness competencies, identifying six competences in the 30 recorded courses.

The DigComp framework was found to be lacking in some areas in Ireland, Finland, Germany, Greece and Italy. Skills such as managing data, information, and digital content; sharing through digital technologies; managing digital identity; developing digital content; integrating and re-elaborating digital content; copyright and licenses; protecting devices; and solving technical problems were not adequately addressed. In Ireland, only one course was found to be relevant to the DigComp framework, with a key missing factor being online culture, equality, diversity, and inclusion. In Italy, the DigComp framework was found to have inadequate coverage in the selected courses. In Finland, no courses were found to be relevant to the DigComp framework. There is a mixed picture for DigComp in Germany when it comes to teaching digital literacy skills. Some courses cover basic skills like browsing and searching, but there are some deficiencies in other areas like sharing, collaborating, and managing digital identity. For Greece, six competences were identified in the 30 recorded courses.

The analysis highlights the need for continuous improvement in addressing gaps within the frameworks to ensure individuals are equipped with necessary competencies.

Section 5: Qualitative Research Findings

This section discusses the main findings from focus groups, coaching circles, and interviews from all five countries (Ireland, Finland, Greece, and Italy).

5.1 Coaching circle findings

Finland was the only partner country that conducted coaching circles. The coaching circles discussed the requirements, prerequisites, and principles for embedding EDI competencies into an organisation's culture, as well as the obstacles to doing so. They also identified the EDI skills and competencies that future managers will need and suggested training methods and best practices for teaching them.

The main **barriers identified to embedding EDI** perspectives and competencies in organisations include the lack of time, the efficiency ethos, and the Western, especially Northern European, work culture. However, several enabling factors can help root EDI in an organisational culture, such as commitment from management, continuous team building, and a safe space for all employees to address grievances.

5 skills and competencies were identified which are important to effectively pursue equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) issues:

- Self-awareness helps individuals to be aware of their minority status, blind spots, and limits and can help them navigate these issues more effectively and holistically.
- Emotional competence means being present and aware of both your own emotions and those of others. Additionally, it is important to listen to what others are saying, both verbally and non-verbally. What is visible on the surface may not be the root of the problem; there may be deeper issues at play.
- Listening and encountering highlight the importance of being able to listen without becoming defensive in challenging situations.
- Self-compassion and mutual learning: It is okay to make mistakes and feel uncomfortable sometimes, as this can be a learning process. Mutual learning is something that should come from people themselves.
- Embodied and holistic knowing: The body's messages are honest, which is why it is important to incorporate embodiment when working on EDI issues. When dealing with challenging situations at work, we shouldn't just concentrate on the cognitive, rational side, but also be aware of what our bodies are telling us.

The **best practices for EDI training** include emphasising experiential learning, providing opportunities for reactivity and decision-making training through exercises and simulations, and offering peer support groups.

The main issues identified relevant for **promoting EDI** were the creation of a psychological safe space and the ability to be open, courageous, and vulnerable in front of and with others. Future developments should

focus on enabling the safe space experience and encouraging people to be vulnerability to create meaningful interactions.

5.2 Focus group findings

The EDI education system in four project partner countries exhibits unique challenges and opportunities. While students in Ireland expressed a lack of knowledge regarding EDI due to the absence of EDI modules in course curricula, participants in Italy perceived a lack of sufficient knowledge in some EDI-related modules. In Germany, although participants possessed some prior knowledge about EDI topics, they displayed unconscious biases that accentuated the need for incorporating comprehensive and inclusive learning modules into course programs. Similarly, participants in Greece recognised the importance of extending EDI education to the workplace but faced practical challenges such as dealing with external characteristics that can affect companies through employee-market relations.

Unconscious biases and discrimination are prevalent issues in the workplace. Data from Ireland, Italy, Germany, and Greece reveals that women face significant challenges when it comes to career advancement due to gender discrimination and traditional gender roles. The participants in Ireland noted the impact of unconscious bias on women's career opportunities. This data matches up with labour market research that has found a decrease in female representation as one moves up the career ladder. In Italy, both men and women struggle against prejudices that hinder diversity in management positions. Additionally, in Ireland, unconscious bias exists in relation to companies fulfilling their EDI goals where women tend to not apply to traditionally male dominated roles such as engineering resulting in supply and demand issues for some companies. In Germany, the prevalence of inequality in promotion, and glass ceiling have made it difficult for individuals belonging to marginalised groups to advance their careers. These issues are especially pronounced when women become mothers, as they often face additional discriminatory obstacles that limit their opportunities. Also, in Greece, gender, ethnic and age discrimination are all present in the business world. These findings underscore the importance of creating inclusive workplace cultures that address unconscious bias and discrimination towards all employees regardless of their gender or parental status.

The **younger generation** in different research partner countries have expressed their concerns about the workplace and the lack of EDI policies. While some feel exploited in their roles, others perceive a toxic work culture that needs to be addressed through education and practical tools. Younger participants in Ireland and Italy reported doing extra work without compensation while their employers engage in performative behaviour around EDI. Also, younger participants in Germany and in Greece seem to have a different understanding of EDI than the older generation as they travel the world and are more willing to implement it. Further, some students in Ireland are unaware of their legal protections under the Employment Equality Act, raising questions about whether employers are adequately informing their employees of their rights. Therefore, younger participants believe that organisations need to invest more in education and policies rather than token gestures.

Regarding the **ideal workplace** according to participants in Germany, it would be merit-based, with a flat hierarchy that incentivizes collaboration. There would be gender balance in management positions, and staff would reflect the population in its diversity. However also according to participants in Greece, many workplaces are hierarchical, with little recognition given to employees' efforts. Promotion and salary transparency is lacking, and office infrastructure is not inclusive or family friendly. In Italy, sometimes the reason certain categories of workers are excluded is not because of a desire to exclude them, but rather a lack of appropriate expertise to include them.

The research using focus group analysis found that EDI is important in workplaces across Europe and that educational institutions and organisations should embed EDI themes into their undergraduate business management curricula. Management training is critical to supporting diverse employees within the workplace, and such training should focus on enabling managers to understand cultural differences and facilitate open communication among team members from different backgrounds. The importance of extending **EDI education** beyond universities is paramount as young people must be well-informed about EDI and their rights at work.

5.3 In-depth interviews findings

The overall findings from the data analysis of the research interview data from Ireland, Finland, Germany, Greece, and Italy focus on the predetermined themes as noted in the research framework, namely: interpretation of the EDI principle, implementation challenges, and competencies needed or used. In addition to these themes, other sub-themes were identified.

While the **understanding of EDI** may vary across different EU countries, it is evident that all participants acknowledge its importance in the workplace. In Ireland, all participants demonstrated a clear understanding of the concept of EDI within their workplace but did not necessarily express knowledge of the legal obligations of employers. On the other hand, respondents in Italy showed a high level of awareness that diversity and inclusion are strategic success factors for any organisation. While they believe that not all Italian companies have implemented EDI policies yet and there is still much room for improvement to be applied. Interestingly in Finland, the term "EDI" is not commonly used as equality, diversity, and inclusion are regarded more as separate concepts that may sometimes overlap. The appearance of EDI varies between formal processes such as recruitment or informal daily practices in workplaces. Germany's respondents' focus on EDI differs in some aspects when it comes to priorities but agree on its importance to create opportunities for minority groups with equal treatment at work by providing work-life balance support while valuing employees' skills and abilities altogether regardless gender or ethnicity background etc. In Greece, younger participants recognise the need for extending EDI education to the workplace and the lack of practical tools for dealing with EDI issues.

The implementation of EDI in the workplace poses unique challenges across the partner countries. In Ireland, some smaller organisations struggle with accountability due to a lack of resources such as time, personnel, and finance. While larger companies view EDI in their hiring process as highly beneficial for the business, some smaller ones consider it a risk. The tendency to hire people "like me" persists and may impede progress toward inclusivity. Similarly, Finland faces challenges related to differing viewpoints among interviewees stemming from language barriers and an unequal setting shaped by history; issues that require concerted efforts at creating understanding and fostering dialogue. Italy faces complex situations where managing conflict between employees with diverse views on diversity becomes difficult but crucial for organisational growth and development. In Germany, prioritising the recruitment of new employees who fit into existing cultural frameworks, particularly language proficiency and cultural understanding, is key to overcoming EDI-related challenges in the workplace. In Greece, in the case of SMEs, EDI principles are dealt with as an external characteristic that can affect the company through the relation of employees with the "market", which in most cases is interpreted as a hostile environment to EDI in general. However, cost implications remain prohibitive for SMEs wishing to implement these measures effectively, while addressing gaps within legal frameworks proves essential for promoting diversity and inclusion in businesses across Europe today.

The presence of **unconscious bias** in different countries can pose unique challenges to implementing EDI at work. Ireland, for instance, acknowledges that unconscious biases exist across all aspects of their businesses, from hiring to dealing with staff and clients. Italy also recognises how discrimination in the workplace and prejudices during recruitment processes pose challenges to implementing EDI at work. For this reason, early intervention through discussion and training may be necessary to overcome these hurdles. In Greece, gender, ethnic and age discrimination may seem present in all aspects of the business, from the hiring process, through to dealing with staff, vendors, and clients. Meanwhile, in Germany, the presence of unconscious bias poses hurdles specifically related to gender discrimination and work-family reconciliation - both areas where EDI is crucially important.

EDI competencies are crucial for creating a workplace that is inclusive and welcoming to all employees. Different countries have identified different competencies needed to effectively tackle EDI issues in the workplace. For example, Finland has identified emotional competence, conflict management skills, cultural understanding, active listening capabilities, proactivity, and appreciation of diversity as essential components of EDI competency at work. Greece has identified essential EDI competences like active listening, teamwork, problem solving, empathy, communication, and collaboration skills as well as life competences. Germany on the other hand emphasises emotional competencies alongside leadership skills and interpersonal communication abilities including critical thinking and life-long learning. Furthermore, digitalization competencies must be developed to provide innovative solutions for future problems associated with EDI policy implementation. To successfully implement these policies, HR professionals need to create an organisational culture where diversity and inclusion are highly valued and appreciated as this will foster better collaboration among employees from diverse backgrounds.

The lack of training in EDI is a common issue. Small Irish companies are often hesitant to embrace EDI due to a lack of education and knowledge on where to start. It is imperative for management training programs to be implemented that focus on how to support diverse employees within their roles and workplaces. On the other hand, Greece faces similar challenges as higher education institutions do not embed EDI into business management and administration programs. Participants have recognised the need for integrating EDI into all modules as well as supporting requisite changes in the study curriculum and vision of management, administrative, and accounting courses. Hence, it is critical that organisations invest resources towards developing comprehensive training programs aimed at enhancing awareness about EDI practices among stakeholders from various backgrounds across Europe.

5.4 EDI in education and the workplace

These findings underline the necessity for management training to support diverse employees and foster inclusive environments. While there are shared understandings of EDI, the significance of management training, and the presence of gender discrimination and unconscious bias, there are also variations in legal comprehension, approaches to hiring practices, the integration of EDI in education, and the specific challenges and competencies identified in each country. These differences reflect the unique contexts and priorities of each country in addressing EDI issues.

There is a widespread recognition of the necessity to incorporate EDI principles into various aspects of education and workplace modules. For example, the identified competencies required in Greece encompassed an understanding of diverse strategies and tools, managing interactions and conversations in different sociocultural contexts, and a commitment to the common good while being aware of individuals' diverse circumstances. In Germany, qualitative findings emphasised the significance of emotional

competencies, leadership skills, interpersonal capabilities, critical thinking, and lifelong learning as essential competencies for implementing EDI in the workplace. The competences identified as essential in Finland included emotional competence, conflict management, cultural competence, listening, proactivity, and appreciation of others. Their findings suggest that future management education should prioritise experiential learning, training in decision-making and responsiveness, and the establishment of peer support groups. According to Italy's findings, managers need to possess confidence and openness towards diversity and change, while also highlighting the lack of sufficient competence among teachers instructing EDI-related subjects.

The overall findings suggest that there is a demand for expanding EDI education to the workplace. However, partner countries identified barriers such as the lack of effective and practical tools, time constraints, and expertise as hindrances to implementation. The qualitative data consistently underscored the necessity for cultural change within organisations. For instance, Germany's findings emphasised the importance of recruiting new employees who align with the existing organisational culture, and effective EDI policies necessitate a culture that values diversity and inclusion. Italy's findings emphasised placing the employee at the centre of the organisation and integrating EDI principles into the organisational strategy. Young participants in Greece particularly expressed the need for EDI to be practiced within organisations. The findings from Ireland and Italy stressed the importance of investing in education and policies rather than merely engaging in superficial gestures related to EDI. In Finland, it was noted that there is a risk of perceiving EDI as an add-on rather than an integral part of organisational culture. Regarding organisational culture, participants in Germany highlighted the value of flat hierarchies, promoting collaboration, fostering open communication, and striving for gender balance in management positions.

Section 6: Social Impact Assessment Findings

This section discusses social impact assessment findings in the five countries (Ireland, Finland, Germany, Greece, and Italy).

When it comes to EDI, different European countries have achieved varying levels of success. One country that stands out as a leader in this area is Finland. Reports such as the Gender Equality Index, Global Gender Report and World Happiness Report consistently rank Finland highly in terms of gender equality and overall happiness. While progress has been made toward achieving EDI in the labour market, there are still challenges and areas for improvement. In contrast, Germany presents a starkly contrasting picture with persistent inequalities, barriers and discrimination disproportionately affecting women, people with disabilities, and other minority groups. To address structural problems emerging from the partner countries' social impact assessments, action is required from the European Union to ensure that the transposed directives are fully implemented at national, regional, and local level.

The issue of **gender pay gap** is a persistent problem in different European countries. In Ireland, despite the existence of anti-discrimination laws and policies, the gender pay gap continues to exist at sectoral and occupational levels. The situation is similar in Italy where statistical evidence indicates that women continue to earn lower wages compared to their male counterparts, which limits their access to higher-level employment opportunities. Although there has been some progress in Finland regarding the reduction of the gender pay gap, women still earn only 84% of male earnings throughout the labour market. Germany also struggles with this issue as women earn an average of 18% less per hour than men, although there have been slight improvements over time. One notable exception is Greece where the gender pay gap remains relatively low compared to other EU countries and has steadily decreased over time. Overall, addressing this ongoing problem requires continued efforts from policymakers and employers across Europe to ensure equal opportunities for all individuals regardless of their gender identity or expression.

Women's underrepresentation in senior management roles has been an ongoing challenge that needs to be addressed. Ireland's labour market profile indicates that women are underrepresented in leadership positions, with only 22% of board members and 12% of CEOs being female in the top 20 publicly listed companies. Similarly, Italy reports gender barriers to achieving management roles despite women being more qualified than their male counterparts on average. Finland has not introduced any legislation to promote equal gender distribution on boards of public limited companies. However, Germany stands out for having implemented a mandatory gender quota law requiring at least 30% representation of women on supervisory boards since 2016; this has led to an increase in the proportion of female board members by the 3rd quarter of 2020 (36%). Finally, Greece recorded a significant rise (9%) from 28% (2022) to 37% (2023), marking its highest level ever recorded amongst females holding senior management positions. Despite progress made by these countries toward promoting diversity and inclusion at board level and senior management level, much remains to be done to achieve true equality for all genders.

The **immigrant workforce** faces various challenges in the labour market, and this trend is evident across different countries. In Ireland specifically, ethnic workers face significant obstacles such as low-paid and low-skilled jobs that limit their opportunities for career advancement. This perpetuates a cycle of poverty and disadvantage that can be difficult to overcome. Furthermore, the existence of an informal labour market with non-taxable remuneration creates further barriers for these workers. Similarly, Greece has seen a notable increase in incoming migration flows over the last decade resulting in an influx of legal immigrants into the country. However, this also presents integration challenges into the Greek labour market particularly regarding discrimination during hiring and workplace practices. Finland is also

experiencing increased diversity among its population but still struggling with high unemployment rates among immigrant groups relative to national averages and concerns about discriminatory employment practices. It is evident that addressing these issues requires concerted policy efforts across Europe's diverse workforce to promote inclusive economic growth for all individuals regardless of their backgrounds or origins.

The above statistics, obtained through research and analysis, reveal significant **discrepancies between current policies and practices** in different EU countries regarding the social impacts of existing and emerging labour market laws and policies. Despite the existence of EDI policies aimed at promoting inclusive education programs that ensure equal opportunities for all individuals to participate in the labour market, there is still a gap between equality legislation and policy implementation in workplaces. This requires further action by national governments as well as key stakeholders within these countries. Greece has made progress legislatively towards inclusion; however, they face challenges related to limited resources including human resources and approaches that have not allowed inclusive education to effectively function to date. Finland has made considerable efforts towards promoting inclusion but more needs to be done to address barriers faced by people with disabilities when it comes to securing employment opportunities. It is evident that policymakers need to prioritise addressing these gaps if they are serious about ensuring an equitable future in labour markets across Europe.

The following **EU level policies and measures** are suggested to address these gaps:

- The use of a unified methodology that will ensure the availability of comparable data across all EU Member States
- A range of progressive actions that organisations can commit to, for example embedding flexible working in their culture, advocating female talent within the organisation, and building a team that is reflective of Irish society (LinkedIn 2023)
- Stakeholder education and understanding in the application of the European Commission's set of indicators to measure progress in promoting gender equality in the workplace
- The creation of specific Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), or statistical indicators designed to measure their impact
- Strengthening existing legislation, while increasing transparency in pay structures, enforcing obligations impacting intersectionalities
- Introducing programs and incentives, and investing in EDI vocational education and training programs to create a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable labour market environment
- Improvements require cooperation between the social partners

6.1 Summary of the identified discrepancies in the labour market

The labour market profiles for each of the partner countries, reveal persistent inequalities and barriers in achieving EDI. Discrimination, unequal opportunities, and limited access to resources are prevalent, and disproportionately affect women, people with disabilities, and other minority groups. According to the national reports from Ireland, Finland, Germany, Greece and Italy, the main discrepancies in the labour markets include the following:

- Gendered participation and structure in the labour market
In most cases there is a gender imbalance in the participation in the labour market with women's employment rate lagging behind at an average of approximately 10%. This difference is more evident in female and male unemployment rates. There is one exception in this, Finland, where participation in the labour market is approximately the same. Furthermore, a common attribute in

all project countries seems to be the gendered structure of the labour market, with professional sectors such as education, health and social services being female dominated, while for example construction, transportation and industry are male dominated.

- Gender Pay gap in labour market
There seems to be a consistent gender pay gap reported in the labour market which ranges between 11% (Ireland) to 18% (Germany). However, the pay gap must be seen from multiple angles and is based on several factors. Women and men work in different fields and jobs. In many female-dominated sectors, pay is lower than in male-dominated sectors. Thus, the gender division in specific financial sectors is mirrored in the payment structure, showing that gender inequality in the labour market is complex. Income development is stronger for men than for women, and on average men achieve their peak earnings at a younger age than women. Pay development among women is slowed by, for example, longer family leaves than men.
- Lower representation of women in senior management and on Boards of Directors.
In all countries women were underrepresented in senior management roles, with rates ranging approximately from 22% to 35% or female participation. Despite EDI strategies' efforts, women continue to experience significant barriers in employment, particularly in leadership roles.
- Unequal distribution of Carer roles among gender.
Although this was identified as a discreet discrepancy in only one of the participating countries (Finland) it seems to be casting its shadow in discrepancies identified in all countries. For example, in Ireland, Italy and Greece, female participation in the labour market is higher in the younger ages, suggesting that it is related either to an inter-generational change or most notably to a lower degree of domestic responsibilities in those ages.

Besides discrepancies in the labour market based on gender, in some countries there are references to inequalities based on disabilities and ethnic origin. Thus, in Germany there is a special reference that despite the legal provisions the employment of disabled persons is just over 50% while the Greek case highlights the lack of provisions concerning the inclusion of persons with disabilities in education. Furthermore, and as far as inequalities based on ethnic origins there are clear indications that these are quite evident. In the case of Ireland for example some of the major challenges emerging for ethnic workers in the Irish labour market include: the prevalence of low pay, low skilled jobs, making it difficult for immigrants to access the opportunities for career progression and professional development available to the Indigenous Irish population, creating a cycle of poverty and disadvantage difficult to overcome. The existence of the informal labour market with informal work arrangements including non-taxable remuneration, places immigrants' eligibility for social welfare and social protections at risk (sick pay and pensions), leaving them vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, particularly in domestic and agricultural work. Such inequalities exist in other countries; however, a great part of immigrant and refugee labour remains unaccounted for, there is a lack of accurate data.

Section 7: Best Practices from the Video Interviews

The aforementioned discrepancies were brought up not only through the analysis of quantitative data such as unemployment rates and structure of the labour market, but also through the video interviews. Each partner country conducted a minimum of five video interviews, a link to the videos from each partner country can be found [here](#). During the interviews, several ways to address these discrepancies in the

workplace were mentioned. Best practice scenarios included suggestions to create work environments that take EDI as a serious factor influencing both productivity and the well-being of individuals:

- The inclusion of underrepresented groups in the workplace and community posed a challenge that was met through social enterprise projects. For example, in Italy, the role of the Social and Solidarity Economy sector was emphasised.
- Value added by involving certain categories of workers in their organisation, such as immigrants, people with disabilities and unemployed over fifty years old. Not only that, but to emphasise the need for "uniqueness and/or diversity" training aimed at all employees of a company.
- Emphasis was put on theatre and community involvement. In Ireland, participants noted that EDI is not just important in the workplace but that it is equally important to listen to the wider community and to ensure that all underrepresented groups are included and given an equal voice.
- Participants raised valid points and observations regarding current national EDI legislation and the legal responsibilities of the employer.
- Interviewees mentioned the outdated understandings as a challenge for the implementation of EDI.
- They also identified the role of the manager as a key in implementing EDI.
- There are several key competences that need to be introduced such as emotional competencies, leadership skills, strong interpersonal and communication capabilities, and a developed open-mindedness.
- In some cases, specific solutions were introduced:
 - 1) Psychological safety group and safe space principles. Changing the culture with the safe space principles still requires more change management. In Finland, case gender equality in corporate management has been dealt with through a mentoring program for inclusive management. The mentoring program educates managers about inclusivity and creates leadership paths for more diverse groups. In another case an inclusion canvas was created, utilising a new tool for product and service development teams centred especially on inclusivity, thus promoting inclusive product and service development.
 - 2) Equal pay during parental leave was also identified as a key innovative policy that attempts to introduce EDI values in the workplace, offering not only financial support but also helping to create an equal parenthood culture.
 - 3) Large-scale educational activities and publications.
- Policies concerning a clear information flow on the values advocated and the practices to be followed to limit discrimination & inequalities.
- The creation of internal regulation, ethics codes and codes of conduct to achieve common understanding on behalf of the employees to incorporate entrepreneurial philosophy and culture related to discrimination in the workplace. Employees have knowledge of the rules to respect the diversity and equality on workspace and prevention of behaviours that lead to discrimination, whereas the enterprises adhere the principle of equal treatment at work in terms of recruitment, remuneration, promotions, and access to vocational training.

- Applying equality in recruitment criteria and selection processes, they also foresee and take care of providing equal opportunities in vocational training of the employees.
- In addition, applying a salary scale for work positions according to predefined adequate and fair criteria, strictly related to their skills, merits and qualifications.
- Create the possibility for flexibility in working hours regardless of employees' position or age by also respecting specific individual needs.
- Salary increases & bonuses according to criteria linked to evaluation results are applied.
- Participants also foresee the possibility of telecommuting, and they take care to create and maintain a safe working environment for the team members - employees.
- In some cases, measures were taken to reassure the application of special measurements for women employees for some special days related to health issues (menstruation) by providing days off for these specific periods, without being charged as Leaves, and furthermore pharmaceutical equipment if needed.
- For all involved stakeholders to feel open to target groups and the environment, the use of inclusive language in all business communication channels is applied.
- Moreover, another tool employed to secure a safe working environment and face any behavioural change, is constant updates and meetings with discussions between employees and the Administration. The aim and purpose of management meetings with executives of the company and the participation of all team members is to lead to the solution of problems detected, the makeup of solution proposals and the reflection of each member group's personal opinion, taking also into consideration the satisfaction of the employees, the beneficiaries and stakeholders involved.

All the above mentioned practices can lead to the creation and development of a healthy work environment, the positive effect of such practices in the workplace point at the need to further organise and introduce EDI principles in the workplace.

Section 8: Competencies & Skills for the Micro-Credential Courses

This section discusses the identified competencies and suggests competencies to be developed in the next phase of the EDIFY_EDU project, Work Package 3. A complete list of the competencies identified by the five partner country teams, and their alignment with the European Competency Frameworks can be found in Tables 9, 10 and 11. From the identified competencies, we analysed the common competencies identified by each partner country.

All five partner countries reported that conflict management, and emotional competencies such as unconscious bias, active listening, empathy, critical self-reflection, objectivity, open mindedness, self-awareness, and self-management, should be embedded in the EDIFY EDU curricula. Throughout the qualitative findings from the five countries, including both the in-depth interviews and the best practice interviews, empathy stood out as a skill that should be taught and is highly relevant in the field of EDI, not only as empathy towards others but empathy towards the self in the form of self-compassion. Additionally, upskilling in areas such as emotional competencies, interpersonal and intrapersonal communication emerged in the interviews. Honing in on these transversal skills will allow for further development of other competencies such as the facilitation of open discussions on EDI in the classroom where we currently see that the EDI topic is emotive in nature and discussions need to be facilitated amongst class groups. This is closely intertwined with the competency of effective communication skills such as active listening, problem solving, and social awareness that should be integrated into the new EDIFY EDU curricula.

As part of the findings of the qualitative research, the partner countries report that EDI needs to be integrated and interwoven into business and business management education. The findings from the desk research from Ireland, suggest that EDI sits in separate modules such as Human Resources (HR), People in Organisations or World Culture modules and is therefore considered to be gendered towards the female population. This supports the labour market analysis which suggests that some roles and industries are still attracting predominantly female applicants. Furthermore, the need to have EDI integrated across all business functions and to recognise it as the grass roots of an organisation was highlighted by all partner countries in the qualitative research findings. EDI remains on the periphery of undergraduate business management education where some courses offer EDI modules as electives. The research findings suggest that EDI should be an integral part of each Business Management undergraduate course. The findings suggest that competencies should be taught through modules such as managing people, cultural competence in national, world and business culture, conflict management, specific leadership skills to implement EDI policies and procedures within a business management context, inclusive business language, and finally modules on national and European equality legislation and policy.

On a lesser scale, both Ireland and Germany noted that education around European legislation and national law in relation to employee rights is imperative. The findings suggest that some employees and employers are unaware or disincentive to learn about the laws that protect employees, this lack of knowledge perpetuates unequal opportunities in the workplace. Policies, practices, ethics, and codes of conduct within workplaces should be clear to both employer and employee to promote equal treatment in terms of recruitment, remuneration, bonuses, training, and promotion. The role of the manager in the implementation of EDI policies is key to its success. For those in management positions, upskilling in the areas of communication, emotional competencies, conflict management, world culture studies, and people management are significant in the role of EDI policy making and implementation within organisations.

Collaboration and communication are key skills that are identified by the partner countries, not only face to face but also using digital technologies. The need for constant communication between management and

staff; staff members; and with the wider community is highlighted not only in the best practice interviews but also from the findings of the in-depth interviews. In particular, the use of digital technology promotes collaboration and allows flexible work arrangements.

The findings from the desk research suggests that DigComp was the least aligned with both undergraduate courses and continuous professional development and EQF levels 5 and 6. Therefore there is a need to develop digitisation competencies in the EDIFY EDU curricula. In a post-covid world, technology has become ubiquitous in how we teach, learn, work and live, therefore DigComp should have a more prevalent presence in the teaching and learning of EDI in undergraduate Business Management education and in continuous professional development. The findings suggest that digital literacy is an essential skill in self-management, effective communication, and collaborative work which reflects the current global technological business landscape. In conjunction with digital literacy, knowledge in the area of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), protecting devices, copyrights and licenses, netiquette, and the creative use of digital technology is paramount for undergraduate business management students. Inextricably linked to DigComp are the LifeComp competencies of emotional competencies such as self-regulation, wellbeing, and empathy where students should learn how to self-regulate their emotions and responses online and how to remain respectful during collaborative work. Furthermore, this relationship between DigComp and LifeComp needs to be integrated into the competencies for the EDIFY EDU curricula. Some of the competencies identified are broad in nature such as “communication, collaboration and problem solving” and “Inclusivity and accessibility” which involve all three European competency frameworks. However, these competencies should specifically link to DigComp competencies such as online collaboration, netiquette, and digital identities.

The findings from the desk research and qualitative research suggests there are significant challenges in the implementation of EDI policies in the workplace. Amongst those challenges lie issues such as cost, leadership skills, business challenges and education in the area of EDI. For some business owners, EDI is expensive to implement in both monetary and time aspects. There also seems to be a lack of in-house expertise in some businesses and this contributes towards the lack of implementation and management of EDI in the workplace. This accentuates the need for a revised curriculum for undergraduate business management students.

Table 9 Emotional competencies

Emotional Competencies			
Competency	EntreComp	LifeComp	DigComp
Self-awareness	Valuing ideas	All competencies	2.3 Engaging in citizenship through digital technologies
Empathy	Ethical & sustainable thinking		2.4 Collaborating through digital technologies
Emotional Competence	Self-awareness & self-efficacy Coping with uncertainty and risk		2.5 Netiquette
Listening & encountering & reflecting, respecting others	Motivation & perseverance Working with Others		2.6 Managing digital identity
Self-compassion & mutual learning	Taking the initiative		
Embodied & holistic knowing	Working with others		
Unconscious bias - awareness of discrimination	Learning through experience		

Table 10 Business management competencies

Business Management			
Competency	EntreComp	LifeComp	DigComp
Managing People	Spotting opportunities	P1 Self-regulation	1.2 Evaluating data, information, and digital content
	Creativity	P2 Flexibility	1.3 Managing data, information, and digital content
	Vision	P3 Wellbeing	2.1 Interacting through digital technologies
	Valuing ideas	S1 Empathy	2.4 Collaborating through digital technologies
	Ethical & sustainable thinking	S2 Communication	2.5 Netiquette
	Planning & management	S3 Collaboration	2.6 Managing digital identity
	Self-awareness & self-efficacy	L1 Growth mindset	3.3 Copyright and licenses
	Working with others	L2 Critical thinking	4.3 Protecting health and well-being
	Mobilising resources		5.1 Solving technical problems
	Motivation and perseverance		5.2 Creatively using digital technologies
	Mobilising others		5.3 Creatively using digital technologies
	Taking the initiative		5.4 Identifying digital competence gaps
	Planning and management		
	Coping with uncertainty, ambiguity, and risk		
European and National Legal Frameworks	Planning & management	P3 Wellbeing	1.3 Managing data, information & digital content
	Coping with uncertainty ambiguity and risk	L3 Managing Learning	2.3 Engaging in citizenship through digital technologies
	Working with others		2.4 Collaborating through digital technologies
	Learning through experience		2.5 Netiquette
			3.3 Copyright & licenses

			4.1 Protecting devices
			4.2 Protecting personal data & privacy
			4.3 Protecting health & well-being
Cultural Competencies - National, World and Business	All competencies	P1 Self-regulation	2.1 Interacting through digital technologies
		P2 Flexibility	2.2 Sharing through digital technologies
		P3 Wellbeing	2.3 Engaging in citizenship through digital technologies
		S1 Empathy	2.4 Collaborating through digital technologies
		S2: Communication	2.5 Netiquette
		S3 Collaboration	2.6 Managing digital identity
		L2 Critical thinking	3.1 Developing digital content
			3.2 Integrating and re-elaborating digital content
Conflict Management	Spotting opportunities	P1 Self-Regulation	2.1 Interacting through digital technologies
	Valuing ideas	P2 Flexibility	2.5 Netiquette
	Ethical & sustainable thinking	P3 Wellbeing	5.3 Creatively using digital technologies
	Working with others	S1 Empathy	
	Self-awareness & self-efficacy	S2 Communication	
	Taking the Initiative	S3 Collaboration	
	Planning & management	L1 Growth mindset	
	Motivation & perseverance	L2 Critical thinking	
Working with others			
Management Leadership in Implementing EDI	Spotting opportunities	P1 Self-regulation	1.3 Managing data, information & digital content
	Vision	P2 Flexibility	2.1 interacting through digital technologies
	Creativity	P3 Wellbeing	
	Valuing ideas	S1 Empathy	2.2 Sharing through digital

			technologies
	Ethical & sustainable thinking	S2 Communication	2.3 Collaborating through digital technologies
	Self-awareness & self-efficacy	S3 Collaboration	2.4 Collaborating through digital technologies
	Motivation & perseverance	L1 Growth mindset	2.5 Netiquette
	Mobilizing others	L2 Critical Thinking	2.6 Managing digital identity
	Taking the initiative	L3 Managing learning	3.3 Copyright and licenses
	Planning & management		4.1 Protecting devices
	Working with others		4.2 Protecting personal data & privacy
	Coping with uncertainty, ambiguity & risk		4.3 Protecting health & wellbeing
	Learning through experience		5.2 Identifying needs and technological responses
			5.3 Creatively using digital technologies
			5.4 Identifying digital competence gaps
Integration of EDI into the roots of business	Valuing ideas	All competencies	2.1 Interacting through digital technologies
	Ethical & sustainable thinking		2.3 Engaging in citizenship through digital technologies
	Self-awareness & self-efficacy		2.4 Collaborating through digital technologies
	Financial & economic literacy		2.5 Netiquette
	Taking the initiative		2.6 Managing digital identity
	Planning & management		4.2 Protecting personal data and privacy
	Working with others		4.3 Protecting health & well-being
	Learning through experience		5.2 Identifying needs & technological responses
			5.3 Creatively using digital technologies

Table 11 Broad competencies identified by partner countries

Broad Competencies			
Competency	EntreComp	LifeComp	DigComp
Digital Literacy	Spotting opportunities	P1 Self-regulation	All competencies
	Vision	P2 Flexibility	
	Valuing ideas	P3 Wellbeing	
	Ethical & sustainable thinking	S2 Communication	
	Working with others	S3 Collaboration	
	Learning through experience	L1 Growth mindset	
	Motivation and perseverance	L2 Critical thinking	
	Mobilising resources	L3 Managing learning	
	Mobilising others		
	Taking the initiative		
	Planning and management		
	Coping with uncertainty, ambiguity, and risk		
Communication, Collaboration & Problem Solving	Working with others	P1 Self-regulation	1.1 Browsing, searching, and filtering data, information and digital content
	Ethical and sustainable thinking	S1 Empathy	1.2 Evaluating data, information, and digital content
	Spotting opportunities	S2 Communication	1.3 Managing data, information, and digital content
	Creativity	S3 Collaboration	2.1 Interacting through digital technologies
	Vision	L2 Critical thinking	2.2 Sharing through digital technologies
	Valuing ideas		2.3 Engaging in citizenship through digital technologies
	Self-awareness and self efficacy		2.4 Collaborating through digital technologies
	Motivation and perseverance		2.5 Netiquette

	Mobilising others		2.6 Managing digital identity
	Taking the initiative		3.2 Integrating and re-elaborating digital content
	Coping with uncertainty, ambiguity, and risk		3.3 Copyright and licenses
	Learning through experience		4.1 Protecting devices
			4.2 Protecting personal data and privacy
			4.3 Protecting health and well-being
			5.1 Solving technical problems
			5.2 Identifying needs and technological responses
			5.4 Identifying digital competence gaps
Inclusivity & Accessibility	Valuing ideas	S1 Empathy	1.2 Evaluating data, information, and digital content
	Ethical and sustainable thinking	S2 Communication	1.3 Managing data, information, and digital content
	Self-awareness and self efficacy	S3 Collaboration	2.1 Interacting through digital technologies
	Mobilising others	L1 Growth Mindset	2.2 Sharing through digital technologies
	Taking the initiative	L2 Critical Thinking	2.3 Engaging in citizenship through digital technologies
	Learning through experience	L3 Managing Learning	2.4 Collaborating through digital technologies
			2.5 Netiquette
			3.3 Copyright and licenses
			4.2 Protecting personal data and privacy
			4.3 Protecting health and well-being
		5.1 Solving technical problems	

Based on the research findings from the five partner countries, the above identified competencies will be used to develop the EDIFY EDU curricula as part of Work Package 3.

Section 9: Validation of Findings

On the 13th of September 2023, in Finland, a panel of experts discussed and validated the findings from the EDIFY-EDU European report.

9.1 The role of leadership

Governance emerged as a pivotal factor in driving EDI success and understanding how EDI can positively impact business outcomes emerged as a compelling argument for change. The panel of experts emphasised the critical role of leadership and governance in promoting EDI. They highlighted the significance of higher management and board members empowering local communities, minorities, and recognising the importance of people at the heart of the organisation supporting the qualitative findings in relation to the role of leadership in EDI implementation. The importance of governance and EDI leadership within organisations are paramount in the successful implementation of EDI principles and policies. Management education on EDI at senior management level or C-Suite level is essential for the propagation of EDI principles throughout organisations.

9.2 Equal opportunities

Embedding equal opportunities for underrepresented groups should be a core principle, rather than a token gesture. Such as organisations exploiting EDI for branding opportunities without genuinely embracing it as a core value. This echoes the observation in this report that companies engage in performative actions validating the finding that EDI needs to be at the roots of the business. However, the expert panel stressed the importance of involving and listening to affected communities and marginalised groups in decision-making processes, rather than solely relying on privileged perspectives.

9.3 Empathy

An important term frequently emphasised throughout the seminar was "empathy", further supporting the identified emotional competencies as described in the report. The panel of experts discussed the significance of empathy not only within the workplace but also in broader life contexts. Empathy lies at the heart of EDI, underscoring the importance that both employers and educators should actively foster a powerful sense of empathy. Novel and innovative ways of training and assessment could be employed that relate to the feeling of empathy. Findings from the qualitative analysis should inform the design of the training modules and assessment materials.

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