

The G.I.V.E. Model: Innovations in the VET system for Inclusive Excellence



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

www.thegiveproject.eu

G.I.V.E. - Governance for Inclusive Vocational Excellence[®], Erasmus+ Program, KA3 Support for Policy Reform, 621199-EPP-1-2021-1-IT-EPPKA3-VET-COVE.

The European commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the Authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



This work is licensed by GIVE under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International Licence.



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

Index

4. **Glossary of Terms**

5. **Inclusive Vocational Excellence: Values and Challenges**

by Alessandro Mele, Paolo Nardi, Luigi Proserpio, Teresa Salvino
(Cometa Formazione)

13. **GIVE- Reference Framework for Anticipatory, Entrepreneurial and Agile Governance (RFAEAG)**

by GIVE Team - University of Bucharest

41. **GIVE Reference Framework on Vocational Excellence through for Innovative and Inclusive Pedagogies**

by GIVE Team - University of Bucharest

69. **Inclusion as Multidimensional Accessibility**

by Anu Raudasoja, Sanna Ryökynen, & Ida-Maria Raudasoja
(HAMK University of applied sciences)

83. **Inclusion in Labour Market: Rational and Emerging Challenges**

by Rossella Riccò (Gi Group - ODM)

104. **Drivers for Inclusion in different generations.**

by GIVE Team – Centro San Viator

123. **Community Social Responsibility: more than just an Educational Experience. An asset to Society and the Future of Work**

by Daniela Grech and Diana Miceli (The Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise, and Industry), Duncan Vella and Joseph Zammit (Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology)

137. **Process of Inclusive Work Integration of Immigrants through the Governance Model of Cross - Sectoral Collaboration**

by GIVE Team - Omnia



Glossary of Terms

ACVT – Advisory Committee for Vocational Training
CAS - complex adaptive systems
CBOs – community-based organizations
CoVE – centres of vocational excellence
CSR – Community / Corporate Social Responsibility
CVET – Continuing Vocational Education and Training
ECEEA – European Education and Culture Executive Agency
EQF – European Qualification Framework
EC – European Commission
ETF - European Training Foundation
EU – European Union
GIVE - Governance for Inclusive Vocational Excellence
ICT - Information and Communications Technology
ILO – International Labour Organization
IVE - inclusion based vocational excellence
IVET – Initial Vocational Education and Training
KA – Key Action
MCAST – Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology
MLG - multi-level governance
NEETS – Not in Employment, Education and Training
NGOs – nongovernmental organizations
NPM - New Public Management
OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PAA - Policy Arrangement Approach
PPPP - People Partnership with Private-Public agents
RFAEAG - Reference Framework for Anticipatory, Entrepreneurial and Agile Governance
RFIIP - Reference Framework for Innovative and Inclusive Pedagogies
SDG – sustainable development goal
TMC – The Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise, and Industry
UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNESCO – UNEVOC International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training
VET – vocational education and training
VET4EU2 - VET for you too
VETNET- European network of researchers in VET
WEF – World Economic Forum
WP2 – working package 2



Inclusive Vocational Excellence: Values and Challenges

Authors:

**Alessandro Mele, Paolo Nardi, Luigi Proserpio, Teresa Salvino
Cometa Formazione**



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

1. Introduction to Inclusive Excellence

Far away are the days in which getting a vocational education meant leaving school before year 13-14, at least in Europe.

Nowadays, Vocational education means a real educative alternative to secondary schools, with the possibility to let students following their own inclinations and to get to university in case they wanted to.

Vocational education needs the same (or more) level of attention that has been dedicated to traditional secondary/high schools, because the numbers of years that are on average devoted to school are lesser and more concentrated. Here overwhelmingly emerges the need to provide excellent Vocational training, and the need to investigate what make this excellence possible.

The GIVE consortium is persuaded that VET excellence can be described, formalized in best practices, and taught, and disseminated. To start doing this, we provide a definition of inclusive vocational excellence, an analysis of its components, the underlying values, some examples, and a discussion of the challenges to transfer knowledge that is often tacit from an organization to another.

2. Inclusive vocational excellence, towards a definition

We start with the definition of inclusive excellence, then we move to the narrower field of inclusive vocational excellence. As a first and very important example, we have two layers to include into our definition of excellence.

On the one hand, the EU envisage inclusive excellence as an overall quality of the organization that applies it. As stated by Hazelkorn and Klemencic (2022): *“The principle of ‘inclusive excellence’ reaffirms that ‘excellence’ occurs across all the core missions – learning and teaching, research and innovation, knowledge use and diffusion, engagement and service to society and institutional governance and management. Inclusion and excellence are mutually reinforcing.”*

In this definition, one can easily perceive the holistic view of excellence, that includes organizational practices, quality of instructors, quality of results, and so on. Excellence is not composed only, as often happens, by the quality of people involved in the process. There is a clear vision of an ecosystem of practices that has to be developed and nurtured simultaneously in all its parts, in order to achieve and monitor excellence.



Then, we must consider the individual dimension of inclusive excellence, the excellence of everyone, tailored to the individual learning potential, valued and valorised, which represents an agenda of the related public policies (Ciolan, 2021).

By combining the two above definition and including the VET dimension, we can position the excellence of VET systems within the wider concept of inclusive excellence.

The definition consists of four primary elements (Williams et al. 2005):

1. *A focus on student intellectual and social development. Academically, it means offering the best possible course of study for the context in which the education is offered.*
2. *A purposeful development and utilization of organizational resources to enhance student learning. Organizationally, it means establishing an environment that challenges each student to achieve academically at high levels and each member of the campus to contribute to learning and knowledge development.*
3. *Attention to the cultural differences learners bring to the educational experience and that enhance the enterprise.*
4. *A welcoming community that engages all of its diversity in the service of student and organizational learning.*

To be able to provide excellent VET products, we have designed a sophisticated path, from scouting to dissemination of best practices within the GIVE project. The best practices are all based on a similar system of values, shared by the organizations which compose the consortium. From this shared system of meanings and values (which includes and values also inevitable diversity) we try to make the implicit GIVE knowledge as explicit as we can.

3. Artifacts, Values, and Assumptions for transferring the practices

An organization (for instance a VET school) can be usefully read through the Schein model (Figure 1). This is a model that highlights the different aspects of which the organizational culture is composed of. It is an essential premise, because artifacts are visible, tangible and sometimes already explicit. Assumptions are not.

Let's start from artifacts. The post part of the GIVE practices will show how to build a good and inclusive environment for learning, a good management system for professors and staff, and so on. Artifacts are an important part to convey the practices, since they are formalized, composed of clear steps, and imitable.



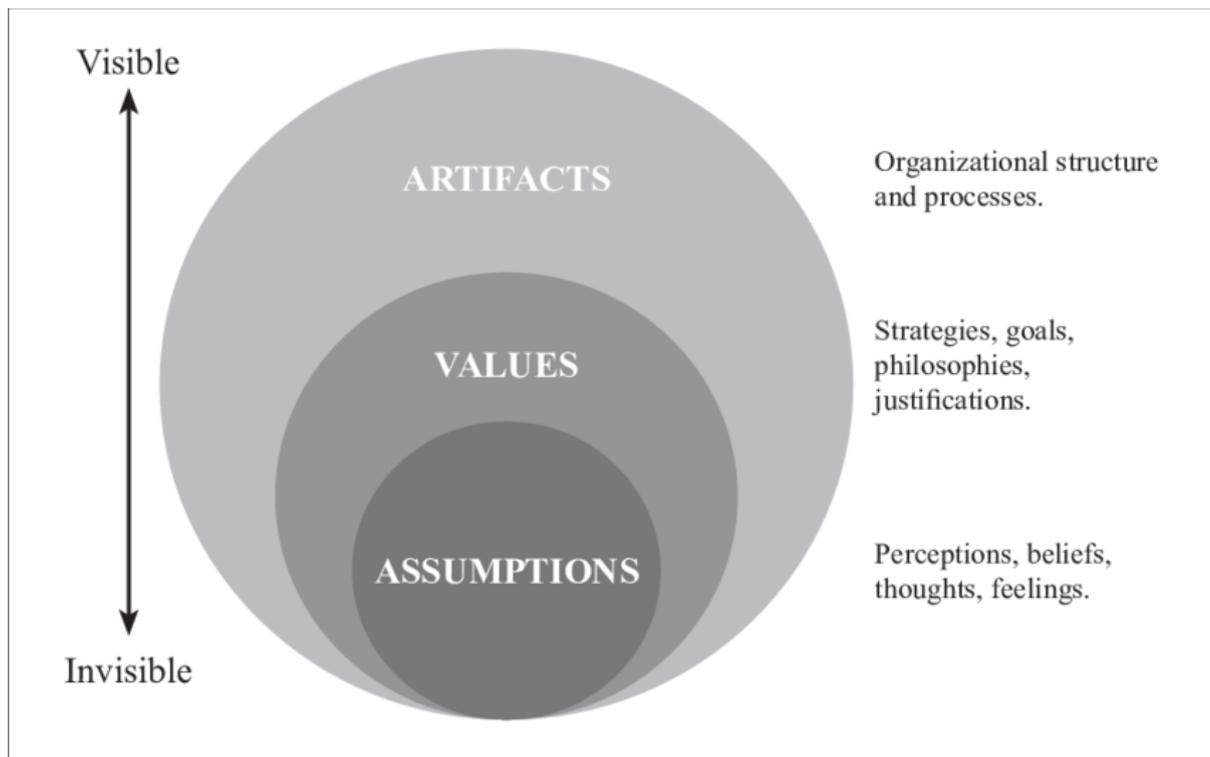


Figure 1, the Schein Model (2010)

What we sustain is that artifacts without a reflection on values and assumptions are transferable, but (in a sense) without their “soul”. As the GIVE consortium, we don’t want to underestimate the power of values and (somehow) of assumptions. They are the semi-tacit and tacit part of the practices in the mother organization. Without incorporating them into the explicit description, practices are not completely transferable.

We have to accept that some level of tacitness cannot be formalized and the described practice lacks some aspects. In general we are confident that our level of profound analysis of practices is good enough to transfer the most important part of a practice. There are, in any case, ways to transfer even the most inner parts, for instance through socialization (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995).

What are the values that drive the GIVE project? Of course there is some variance among the project’s partners. But we widely discussed among us and the list we propose here is shared by all members.

One of the most important values is the **centricity of the person**. The person is always fundamental to orient choices and developments. “Person” is a very ample concept, and includes students, professors, migrants, staff, people with different abilities, tutors, funders, managers, public administrators and so on.

Centricity of the person means that each person’s contribution has to be included in the ecosystem of Inclusive Vocational Excellence.

Our assumption is that, to get a good result in terms of inclusion, people that work together has to share the “centricity” value. Of course, each individual will contribute to the value actuation in a different way. For instance, managers pave the way to individual motivation, donors complement the resources of the mother organization to improve the possibilities of inclusion, students do their best to participate, learn, discuss, improve themselves.

People (in this case, it is mostly referred to students) must become balanced adults, who are included in a community and in which they play an active role. In order to be able to accomplish such a complex “task”, a person must be knowledgeable, socialized, autonomous, and self-aware of her means.

Being knowledgeable is a pristine value. Paradoxically, in our context it can refer to an organization or a group or an individual. A knowledgeable organization is an institution with formalized practices that make the goal of inclusion visible to all, and supported by explicit practices. A knowledgeable team is an organizational unit that is able to tackle some relevant aspects of inclusion. A knowledgeable person is an individual that can understand the external world and act consequently.

Of course in VET environments the increase of individual knowledge is the main mission. But we don't have to forget that organizational learning is needed to build the environment in which people learn. Organizational environment is built by **Continuous improvement of processes** (Imai, 1986), **Curiosity** and the ability to embed the practices from outside (often called **Absorptive Capacity** – Cohen and Levinthal, 1990). These values are truly relevant for the whole GIVE project, since they postulate the necessity of being open and capable to absorb from others to further improve existing inclusive excellence. Or, to put up from scratch an organization that has a clear orientation towards inclusive vocational excellence.

For the reasons shown before, also **Autonomy** is a central value. Autonomy means that inclusive vocational excellence must aim at making people autonomous and able to make solid choices about themselves and their future. Putting together autonomy and **Self-awareness** (Moran et al, 2018), we can think of people taking VET as their educational path as individuals able to **self-determine** themselves. And this is a value that all schools should possess.

4.Challenges: toward a diffused inclusive vocational excellence

As said in the previous paragraph, artifacts have to be supported by values. Among the most important artifacts (following the Schein model), we can mention Inclusive Learning models, inclusive pedagogies, inclusive hospitality, inclusive mobility, inclusive transition to work, inclusive management practices, and so on.

Inclusive pedagogies are truly difficult to implement. The goal is to let the individual best characteristics emerge and thrive, while the entire class grows. The problem is how to understand the entry point of each individual, her different abilities, her peculiarities, her strengths and weaknesses. And then, design a personalized plan for everybody.



Some of the practices we present in the GIVE project are aimed at improving the learning and teaching inclusiveness.

Inclusive learning models are a different area if compared to inclusive pedagogies. We point out the importance of having active methodologies, compatible with a constructivist view of learning. Including a person and the entire class is also a matter of having an interactive methodology. There's plenty of active methodologies, some of them are better attuned to improving the activity in a class composed of diverse individuals. Some others are better for more homogeneous classes. Choosing the right approach is fundamental. And fundamental is the respect of the values previously described. In the opposite case, an active method is void.

Inclusive transition to work is something very difficult to achieve. It requires the interplay of several stakeholders. Here come in to play schools, companies, public administration. Applying to this inclusive transition the concept of centrality of the persons, it appears very clearly that the role of schools and companies can't be passive. There is a huge need of practices that blend students' real competences and characteristics with real jobs in real companies. Then, companies need practices to welcome students in their workplace, engaging them in jobs that are compatible with the individual characteristics.

Inclusive mobility is a very interesting topic, which is skyrocketing in these days, due to the Erasmus program and the programs put up by Countries, regions, schools. Inclusive mobility is a tough issue, especially when it comes to people with different abilities. In the easiest case, students move to comparable schools (or companies) in a different Country, and they enrich by far their capability of discerning cultural differences and methodological differences, thus fostering the value of **autonomy**. When it comes to students with different abilities, there is also the need to design the learning approach, for example through micro-learning, one of the practices available in the learning platform. Then, movement, hospitality, and other issues have to be taken into account.

Inclusive governance is a way to make all the stakeholders feeling included in "the project". Stakeholders are many and of a very diverse nature. Stakeholders, for instance, are the founders, the funders, the public administration, the employees, the students. Each of them should be considered in an inclusive way. So, it is important to collect and propose practices that foster the relationship between the organizations and their founders. For example, a funder is not only an entity that deliver money, but also a source of knowledge, a source of networking, a source of inspiration. It is not advisable to improvise the relationship with funders, since too much is at stake. We must find and disseminate the best practices to improve the abovementioned relationship.

Inclusive management is often underestimated, but it is of crucial importance. Often, there is the sense that belonging to a non-profit or a social enterprise (VET schools usually are) is intrinsically motivating. Helping people, teaching, interacting are indeed



very touching activities for people who are sensitive to. What if people get demotivated?

There are at least two very important reasons to care for people in an inclusive environment. First reason is that one cannot be inclusive towards a category of people, excluding others. This impacts on equity.

Second reason is that no organization should try to attract only people that are self motivated because of the context. The risk is that people with competences needed by the mother organization (i.e. IT management skills) are not willing to join the organization. Thus, weakening the set of capabilities possessed by the mother organization. Practices of people management are crucial and have to be adopted by all the organization over a minimal size.

5. Conclusions

In this chapter we highlighted the approach we follow to make inclusive practices from the mother organization explicit and replicable, by other institutions.

We started by defining what inclusion is and what an excellent inclusion should look like. Then, we extended the concept of excellent inclusion to the VET world, which is the focal point of the entire GIVE project.

Excellent inclusive practices for Vocational training are exemplified and discussed in the following chapters, as a first example. Then there is an entire training program dedicated to trainers that is parallelly developed. Each practice of the training program is made with the best criteria to make it teachable and learnable with ease.

Practices vary from governance (the ability to build a network of stakeholder that can participate, help and sustain the project), management (for instance, the capability to split and coordinate activities in an effective way, the ability to motivate people, the skills related to technical aspects, like technology or accounting), teaching (the capability to transfer relevant knowledge, the capability to adapt to different abilities, etcetera), tutoring (the personalization of learning paths, the personalization to the induction to work).

Together, all these practices pave the way to reproducibility of excellent VET systems, which is an extraordinary opportunity for Europe to reduce dispersion and increase the level of skilled people.



References

- Cohen and Levinthal (1990), "Absorptive capacity: A new perspective on learning and innovation", *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Volume 35, Issue 1 pg. 128-152.
- Hazelkorn Ellen and Klemencic Manja, 2022, Strategy seeks 'inclusive excellence' for European HE, *University World News* (retrieved on April 26, 2022).
- Imai, Masaaki (1986). *Kaizen: The Key to Japan's Competitive Success*. McGraw Hill/Irwin. ISBN 0-07-554332
- Moran, Orla; Almada, Priscilla; McHugh, Louise (January 2018). "An investigation into the relationship between the three selves (Self-as-Content, Self-as-Process and Self-as-Context) and mental health in adolescents". *Journal of Contextual Behavioral Science*. 7: 55–62.
- Nonaka, I. and Takeuchi, H. (1995) *The Knowledge-Creating Company: How Japanese Companies Create the Dynamics of Innovation*. Oxford University Press, New York.
- Schein, Edgar H. *Organizational Culture and Leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010.
- Williams, Damon & Berger, Joseph & McClendon, Shederick. (2005). *Toward a Model of Inclusive Excellence and Change in Post-Secondary Institutions*.



GIVE- Reference Framework for Anticipatory, Entrepreneurial and Agile Governance (RFAEAG)

Authors:

GIVE Team - **University of Bucharest**



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

1. INTRODUCTION

The Erasmus Project KA3 – Support for Policy Reform, Centres of Vocational Excellence / ECEEA 33/2019 *Governance for Inclusive Vocational Excellence* **GIVE** aims at designing and developing a European Platform of Centres of Excellence devoted to innovate VET sector for the social inclusion of individuals belonging to disadvantaged groups, particular references being given to learners with a migration background, disabilities, low skills and obsolete qualification, a drop-out history, special learning needs, difficult socio-economic background.

Inequality is getting worse, as evidence indicates and the price is paid by human dignity. This has a consequence at individual level, having also societal influences by nurturing the populist rhetoric and disintegrating the social fabric in many countries.

GIVE project explores two elements considered critical to the inclusion based vocational excellence (IVE), namely **Governance** and **Pedagogies**, without eliminating the other elements that compose the results chain of successful public policies.

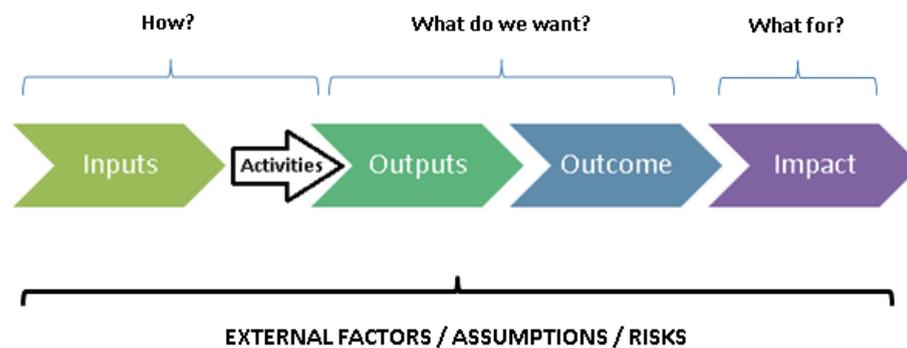


Fig.1. Results chain in a Theory of change logic (inspired by Fund Against Child Labour (FBK) - *Developing your Theory of Change*)¹

In this chapter is our answer to the question: why is governance an essential element? How should be shaped and where should be positioned in the result chain for maximizing the impact of the foreseen change?

¹ https://english.rvo.nl/sites/default/files/2018/11/FBK_theory_of_change_guidelines_0.pdf

1.1 GIVE context calls for place-based interventions

The globally distributed inequality and the no border risks factors give indication on the magnitude of the phenomenon.

However, to act locally remain relevant in this case too; with other words “local action” translates into a place-based intervention due to the specificity that make any context peculiar.

The globally distributed inequality and the no border risks factors give indication on the magnitude of the phenomenon.

However, to act locally remain relevant in this case too; with other words “local action” translates into a place-based intervention due to the specificity that make any context peculiar.

1.2. Inclusion – the new paradigm embraced by GIVE

This is why we call for **Inclusion** to be understood as going beyond charity and corporate social responsibility, beyond binary thinking.

“Inclusion is a process rather than an outcome, and participation is essential”. (Beth Ziebarth, Director of the Accessibility Program for the Smithsonian Institution, and Katherine Ott, Curator in the Department of Medicine and Science at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History).

It is often claimed that greater educational equality of opportunity is associated with greater social cohesion and that education is correlated with several indicators of social cohesion such as civic engagement, life satisfaction, a reduced level of criminality, increased political stability and democratisation (Campbell, 2006; McMahon, 1999; OECD, 2006). Several authors have distinguished between the quantity and the quality of education in relation to social cohesion.

VET education seems to have an especially important role in reinforcing the link between educational opportunity and social cohesion. Studies by the Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning (UK) have shown the positive effect of vocational learning on social capital, political attitudes and health. Using data from the European Values Survey, Preston and Green (2008) find a positive relationship between VET and greater educational equality and between greater educational equality and improved civil and political liberties. **They argue that this evidence supports their statement that VET has an important role in promoting social integration and social cohesion.**

However, **not much research has been carried out on the relationship between VET and social cohesion.**



Therefore, **GIVE is proposing**

(i) Social Inclusion by design

Inspired by the Strategic Intelligence: global issue of the World Economic Forum, here follow some critical elements we draw attention on and which are considered by the GIVE project

- Inclusion is about diversity! Inclusion is about solidarity and not about what has been identified as a “deficit model”!
- “inclusion” involves the broader process of changing social norms, values, and attitudes, while addressing unconscious biases and stigma, and adapting policies and practices in schools and training centres accordingly and favouring the diversification of the competences provision in a LLL perspective.
- inclusive education must leverage technology to reinforce the equitable access and increasingly personalized learning; redefining when and where learning takes place and paving the way for greater flexibility and access should be high on the agenda, together with adaptive learning.
- technology has been proposed as a solution for resolving issues related to unequal access to education, for example in rural or hard-to-reach communities.
- however, research has also highlighted that new learning tools do not always enable engagement with hard-to-reach groups - and it is critical that the drive towards education innovation is matched by a monitoring of its effectiveness in providing the right returns.

(ii) Social cohesion by inclusive design

- **social cohesion** is “a characteristic of society which depends on **the accumulated social capital**”, while **social capital is “an individual’s contribution made in an effort to promote cooperation with others. Incentive of an individual to invest in social capital is related** to the extent of his or her access to social institutions such as education, health services or employment, i.e. **to the extent of social inclusion**”. (Oxoby,2009).
- **“inclusive design is a people-centred strategy for innovation**, rooted in progressive, post-World War II ideas about providing ways for the marginalized and excluded - whether economically, culturally or technologically - to gain greater access.

Although they both have a similar purpose, it is important to recognize how **inclusive design**, which **focuses on collaboration resulting in ‘one size fits one person,’**

is different from the

“universal” design and its **‘one size fits all’ mandate**.

Current issues in the world of inclusive design that merit close attention include accessibility and disability, sustainability, human dignity, and the inclusiveness of cities. (Strategic Intelligence - WEF, curated in partnership with the Smithsonian Institution).



(iii) Economic inclusion

Inspired by the EBRD practice and methods of work related to economic inclusion (Strategy for Inclusion 2016-2021)

- Economic inclusion, the opening up of economic opportunities to previously under-served social groups, is integral to achieving a transition towards sustainable market economies.
- An inclusive market economy ensures that **anyone** regardless of their gender, place of birth, socio-economic environment, age or other circumstances **has full and fair access to labour markets, finance and entrepreneurship and, more generally, economic opportunity.**
- **Promoting an inclusive market-based system is about efficient (human) resource allocation rather than being a social policy choice.**
- But **there is also a political dimension to inclusion.** Beyond its contribution to efficient markets, fair and equitable access to economic opportunity is essential in fostering broad support for market reforms and, ultimately, sustainable market economies.
- **Economic inclusion is therefore an important transition quality.** If people are given a chance to succeed, they are more likely to participate in the workforce, pursue education, or engage in other activities that lead to economic growth. This, in turn, strengthens the transition process.

This leads to the GIVE **“Inclusion double helix”**

(iv) Social and economic inclusion by inclusive design

- Agglomeration of firms (Marshall, 1890/1920), location of industries (Weber, 1929), cluster – “economic diamond model” (Porter, 1998), the “new innovation diamond” (Guth, 2004): **a similar CoVE approach?**
 - ✓ specialization should favour diversity and not the polarization
- knowledge (competences) flows and spill overs primarily focused on competitiveness, organized according to the *industrial network theory* (Axelsson & Easton, 1992), offer lessons on
 - “uncertainty reduction” through the network relationships:
the “social exchange can build trust and reduce risk in a network”

Taking advantage of all the above, by maintaining the industry/business leadership, **GIVE is focusing on inclusive design for an “inclusion diamond powered by vocational excellence”.**



1.3. GIVE background of the Governance for Inclusive based Vocational Excellence

The GIVE-Reference Framework for Anticipatory, Entrepreneurial and Agile Governance (RFAEAG) considers the (i) organizational culture, the (ii) architecture and developmental plans, and the (iii) leadership and management of the VET Centres that already have the excellence assumed through their organizational mission, as central internal elements, organically interconnected with others, externally placed within their communities. Altogether, the internal and the external elements, form an eco-system whose governance capable to generate excellence through inclusion will be documented by the GIVE project.

Over the last decades, the term ecosystem has proliferated as a metaphor for thinking differently about the future of education and training, moving beyond a top-down systems approach. Similar trends one can notice for the term governance.

Therefore, the conceptual clarification contextualised to the logic of the project is important.

2. THE STATE OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE FIELD OF ANTICIPATORY, ENTREPRENEURIAL AND AGILE GOVERNANCE

2.1. Governance epistemology

Following the work of Douglass North (1990), governance has for a long time been associated with the quality and predictability of institutions. More recently there has been a growing interest in going beyond institutions and also analysing structural variables that determine the quality and performance of institutions.

Over the last two decades, governance has become a catchword in the social sciences (Kjær, 2004; Jordan, 2008). Although scholars still argue over the theoretical conceptualizations of the term (Arts and Visseren-Hamakers, 2012; Ruhanen et al., 2010), it is generally agreed that **effective governance occurs when societal actors cooperate in order to solve collective problems** (Driessen et al., 2012; Gonzalez and Healey, 2005; Kooiman, 1999; Mayntz, 1998).

Governance is widely recognized as one of the crucial preconditions for political, social, and economic development (Cubbin and Stern, 2006; Degnbol-Martinussen, 2002;



Goodwin, 1998; Graham and Fortier, 2009; Kaufman and Kraay, 2002). Governance, as opposed to government, involves the collaborative engagement of the public in addressing common problems (see multilevel, multilateralism, multi-stakeholders, citizens included).

Why is Governance approached by the GIVE project as essential to addressing the IVE challenge?

There is growing evidence that the co-construction of public policy greatly reduces information asymmetry (like in the case of vulnerable groups) and transactions costs for government and assures coherence between policy measures and outcomes:

- 'model' of governance, often derived as an empirical, non-normative or normative theory (including regulatory governance, participatory governance, multilevel governance, meta-governance, and collaborative governance). Descriptive and theoretical perspectives will equally be considered;
- governance as process;
- management and assessment of the governance quality and impact. Normative and non-normative.

2.2. GIVE Governance philosophy and methodology

Key to the **GIVE governance** is its **future and people centric approach** defined by the strategic attributes, which are **anticipatory, agile** and **entrepreneurial**. That translates into CoVEs' empowerment to augment their performance by powering the **internal enablers** through the **external ones**, which, on their turn, are nurtured by the respective strategic attributes of the GIVE governance.

GIVE governance is modelled by theoretical and cognitive basis that resonates with its strategic attributes in a variety of taxonomies, approaches and conceptual knowledge, of which we retain:

- (i) complex adaptive systems - CAS;
- (ii) social networks;
- (iii) multi-level governance - MLG;
- (iv) quintuple helix, innovation based and sustainable development driven.

Based on the conceptual foundations of the general theory of systems, any microsystem belongs to a holarchy that can be self-organized or can be organized in various structural schemes. A holarchy is a connection between holons, where a holon is both a part and a whole, as coined in 1967 by Koestler, A. *"The Ghost in the Machine"*, Penguin Group, (1990 reprint ed.).



These conceptual bases put forward the shaping of GIVE governance into building blocks and analytical units, regarded as criteria for GIVE modelling. Reflecting the logic of the holon and holarchy, we correlate the inclusion based vocational excellence (IVE) with its **“regional development context”**, that represents a **building block**, with **holistic and integrated** characteristics as **criteria**. This logic will be further followed into the methodological approach of the GIVE Reference Framework.

Governance mode in case of GIVE CoVEs, which aims at inclusion based vocational excellence (IVE), is an accumulation of “centralised, decentralized, interactive and self-governance modes” (inspired by Driessen et al., 2012).

Governance modes define the interaction and interdependence of multiple agents, illustrating the multilateralism of the collective action. In terms of spatial arrangement of the multiple agents, complexity implies multiple facets. For consistency in the GIVE modelling definition, the facets are considered **building blocks**. Again, we recognise the holarchic relationship where each holon is a "level" and a “pillar” of organization, and all are ultimately descriptive of the same set. The top can be a bottom, a bottom can be a top, the same is with left and right, and, like a fractal, the patterns evident at one level can be like those at another.

To the VET ecosystem we associate the **vertical dimension of multilevel governance (MLG), a building block**, which is defined by the decision-making levels in VET related public policies (each level represent / is treated as criterion in the GIVE modelling). Each level, wherever it is in the hierarchy, is in itself a "complexity" and, therefore, its knowledge presupposes not only its research as a whole (holistic), but also of the "parts" that compose it, including their integration levels.

It is important to emphasize that each level of decision has its own individuality, works according to specific laws, and is structured according to the **quintuple helix geometry (represents a building block)**.

In the logic of actors' involvement, as agents of action and change, the GIVE governance builds on the **people partnership with private-public agents (PPPP)**.

As underlined, inclusion based vocational excellence (IVE) is a complex problem that calls for collective action of multiple actors in addressing solutions. The IVE complexity leads to the involvement of several actors having concrete institutional roles in the punctual solution of what is on the agenda, from the multitude of IVE issues. They thus create variable geometries of the connections they make, depending on the legitimate interest they represent. The variable interactions of different actors, according to their institutional mandate, to obtain negotiated solutions to a variety of IVE related problems is similar to the mode of operation of complex adaptive systems.

So, Axelrod & Cohen in their work „*Harnessing Complexity. Organizational Implications of a Scientific Frontier*” (2000) refer to all **complex adaptive systems (CAS)** that are made up by large number of agents that interact, and form a complex net of connections and dependences, indicating the environment in which the agents / the partners evolve. Inside the network, due to the structural and functional differences, the



partners react differently to the diverse categories of stimulus. **Various types of interdependences may appear between the members of the network**, but it is certain that **none of them can exist outside the network**. The fundamental idea of the Complex Adaptive Systems represents **the selection of the strategies that allow some of the agents to adapt to the influences generated by the other networked agents**.

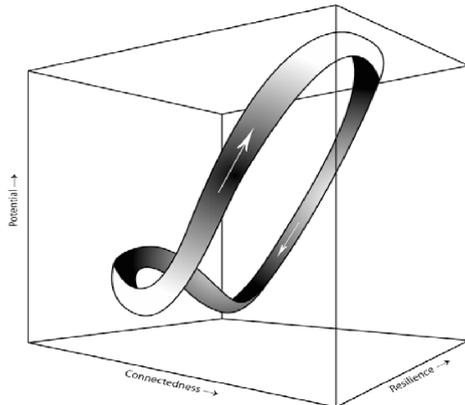


Figure 2

Governance strategic attributes exploit the Complex Adaptive System (CAS) perspective, inter alia, as illustrated by the **Panarchy Theory in three-dimensional space by the variables potential, connectivity, and resilience** (Holling, Gunderson, & Peterson, 2002).

The interpretation by Homer-Dixon (2011) highlights **“the adaptive cycle”** from which we retain for the GIVE governance the need to **flatten and decentralize the decision-making hierarchies** and move the capacity to address the collective complex problems outwards and downwards to as many agents as possible.

In this context the two building blocks of the MLG are meant to create PPPPs and highlight the balance between local-central governance. However, **resilience is also about autonomy** that raise questions on the **connectivity** (one of the three variables of the Panarchy theory) that beyond a certain point – beyond the middle of the range – produce negative consequences, rising **potential** for cascading failure, and declining **resilience** overall (the other of the Panarchy theory).

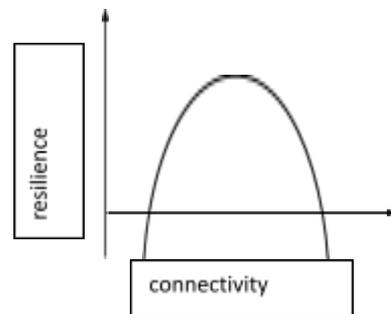


Figure 3

Bernd Scholz- two variables Reiter illustrates the *Characteristics-of-Complex-Adaptive-Systems* in a suggestive self-explanatory manner.

Some authors writing on governance consider the concepts of **governance and network to be tightly connected**. Among others, Eric Hans Klijn and [Joop Koppenjan](#) too explore this relation in their work “*Governance networks in the public sector*”, published in 2016.

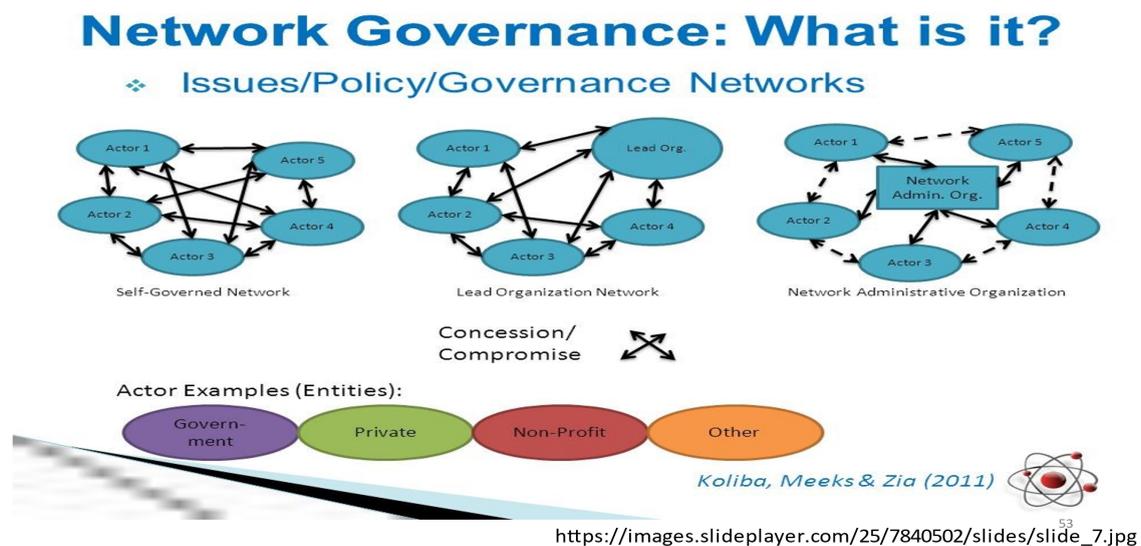


Figure 4

Governance takes place within networks of public and non-public actors, and the interaction between these groups makes processes complex and difficult to manage. Consequently, different steering and management strategies are required compared to more classical approaches. The focus in this case is on the complex interaction process in a network of public and private stakeholders, as societal actors, including individuals, groups, organizations, and groups of organizations (Kooiman, 1993; Rhodes, 1996; Kickert et al., 1997; Sørensen & Torfing, 2007).

Consequently, we propose to associate the **strategic attributes of the GIVE governance**, as documented by the review of relevant literature earlier highlighted, with the following determinants/determinant factors:

Table 1. Determinants of the GIVE governance strategic attributes

Anticipatory	Entrepreneurial	Agile
strategic vision	risk taking (disruptive change)	flexibility
multiannual strategy	innovative (possible futures)	adaptability (unlearning)
foresight/prospective studies	creative (beyond one size fits all)	resilience

To sum-up this section, we appreciate that, in case of GIVE, the CoVE management board should behave as a system that adjusts or adapts to its external environment in real time, as that environment changes.

At the same time, the CoVE management board interacts with multiple agents that are part of the constellations formed by the two building blocks of the MLG. We acknowledged autonomy at the CoVE level, however this will fuel performance only if the “strong state” will equally allocate resources to empower delivery at excellence standards based on inclusion and will be loyal to all levels.

2.3. GIVE Governance performance

2.3.1. GIVE governance quality

GIVE governance quality is approached as a combination of methods mainly inspired by theoretical perspectives of the **policy arrangement approach** - PAA (Arts and van Tatenhove, 2004; Van Tatenhove and Leroy, 2000) and informed by relevant literature (e.g. Visseren-Hamakers, Arts and Phung Dang, 2015) on **governance capacity and institutional capacity**.

The policy arrangement approach - PAA is a mid-range theory (Arts and van Tatenhove, 2004; Van Tatenhove and Leroy, 2000) that builds on neo-institutionalism (March and Olsen, 1989), network theory (Marsh and Rhodes, 1992), the advocacy coalition framework (Sabatier, 1987, 1988), and discourse analysis (Hajer, 1995).

We also acknowledge the approach of governance as *New Public Management (NPM)*, which emphasise on improving performance and accountability, or as *market*



governance (Hood,1991; Osborne and Gaebler, 1992; Kettl, 2000; Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004; Fenger and Bekkers, 2007). Under this definition, **the role of governments is to steer rather than to row** (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992). Government should set goals and formulate policies. The implementation of policies and the delivery of services are best left to other organizations or separate public agencies that can be held accountable through the use of clear **performance indicators** and other market mechanisms, like contracts, competition, **and benchmarks**. However, education and training go beyond the efficiency which looks central to the NPM and focus primarily on the outcomes of the delivered services. Judged exclusively in terms of costs, inclusion will not go up on the agenda and will not show results. Still, for efficiency we propose, for the logic of the GIVE project, to acknowledge “best out of an optimal investment”.

Although, as previously mentioned, the conceptualizations of governance are different, they share some elements. All of them emphasize the **process** of governing rather than the **structure** of government. They also acknowledge the limits of governmental power. This supports the notion that governments in dealing with complexities shift from a government approach – implying that they use their formal hierarchical position to unilaterally impose solutions – to governance, in which their focus is on the process through which outcomes are achieved. As Pierre and Peters (2000: 194) state, **‘The strength of the state has become contextual and entrepreneurial** rather than, as was previously the case, something derived from the constitutional and legal strength of the state institutions.’

Governance capacity (Visseren-Hamakers, Arts and Phung Dang, 2015) is defined as the ability of societal actors to work together in order to solve collective problems (Knill and Lehmkuhl, 2002; Nelissen, 2002). It is shaped both by the agencies of individual actors and the wider institutional and structural settings influencing the collaboration. It includes:

- the potential of actors’ cooperation and
- the performance in terms of solving collective problems (Arts and Goverde, 2006),

both of which are the outcome of actors’ interactions (Caffyn and Jobbins, 2003; Pahl-Wostl, 2009), and evolve under and are influenced by wider social contexts (Healey, 2002).

Actors’ interactions, which refer to their mutually influencing relations, take place at both structural and strategic levels (Kooiman, 1999, 2000). **Structural** interactions are shaped by **institutional settings**, which determine the actors’ behaviour (Hyden et al., 2000; Kjær, 2011; March and Olsen, 1995), their relations (Caffyn and Jobbins, 2003; Gonzalez and Healey, 2005), and the flow of resources for collective action (DiGaetano and Klemanski, 1993; Healey, 2006). **Strategic** interactions, on the other hand, take place when **actors’ interests, values, norms, ideas, and frames of reference shape their choices** in collective action (Caffyn and Jobbins, 2003; Knilland Lehmkuhl, 2002; Kooiman, 1999).



Institutional capacity (Visseren-Hamakers, Arts and Phung Dang, 2015) refers to the degree to which rules and procedures enable actors to work together in order to solve collective problems (Bhagavan and Virgin, 2004; Cornell, 2002; Savitch, 1998; Solokow, 1979; Wickham et al., 2009; Willems and Baumert, 2003); comprises potential and realized capacity (Li and Zusman, 2006) and is also influenced by socioeconomic contexts (Phelps and Tewdwr-Jones, 2000).

We observe that between the concept of governance capacity and that of institutional capacity there are

- ❖ commonalities (collective problem solving) and
- ❖ differences (capacity of actors and functioning of institutions).

That is, because authors still debate the link between potential capacity and realized capacity. For example, although many authors agree that governance capacity and institutional capacity are context-dependent (Gonzalez and Healey, 2005; Grindle, 2007; Healey et al., 2002; Phelps and Tewdwr-Jones, 2000), it is still an open question how socioeconomic factors influence actors' interactions (Gonzalez and Healey, 2005).

2.3.2. GIVE governance performance descriptors

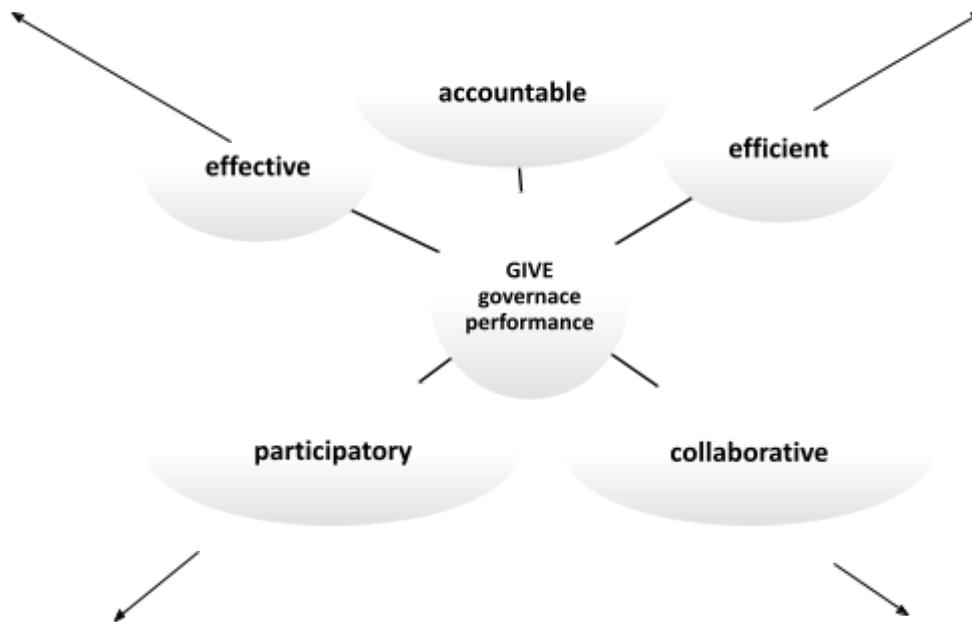
GIVE governance performance, a building block of the GIVE governance construct, associates the following descriptors, methodologically approached as criteria: effective, efficient, participatory, collaborative, accountable governance. The collective interventions for collective problem solving are approached from their results perspective and accountability. The institutional settings and the processes adopted in the collective transformative problems solving by the involved multiple agents should be concomitantly participatory and collaborative.

Reflecting the relevant literature and the theoretical basis of the governance philosophy of the strategic attributes, determinant factors correlated with specific criteria create the architecture of the GIVE governance performance building block as presented in the Figure 5.

GIVE CoVE RFAEAG through its design is proposing solution-oriented actions to the challenges defined by the authors of the CoVE mapping for the EC, done in 2019

	accountable	efficient (process oriented)
effective (results oriented)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● functionally connected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● follow the purpose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● adaptive (fit to the purpose)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● adequately resourced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● transparency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● empowered (social learning)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● clear and transparent roles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● loyalty of levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● innovative





participatory	collaborative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • equity and inclusiveness (“vulnerables” are represented) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • social networks - engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • trustfulness (common understanding of roles and responsibilities of the agents involved in the MLG) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shared governance (e.g. Blockchain governance)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • legitimacy/representativeness (the voice of the “vulnerables”, including those in the informal sector of the economy) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • societal partnerships (quintuple helix)

Figure 5. GIVE performance building block, criteria and descriptors

2.3.3. GIVE governance quality management

Governance quality management may be understood as the composite measures established to verify that processes and procedures are in place, which, when effective, ensure the quality and quality improvement of inclusion-based VET governance.

The measures often have a regulatory or legislative underpinning and status and can relate to quality standards with underlying principles, criteria and indicators. A quality assurance measure does not control or assure quality per se: rather, it assures that a given procedure is being followed and that it meets certain requirements. The procedure, if it is a good one, will increase the probability that there is a quality result. If there is a feedback loop, any inadequacies will be reported and fixed, thus increasing quality. There is a word of caution! Quality assuring procedures can be implemented, but the rendered services can be low quality; thus, every care must be taken that measures are based on a vision for “inclusion based vocational excellence” and that they are appropriate, understood, accepted and effective. Documented by the consensus grounded governance capacity related literature, the focus of the governance quality management is on **processes** adopted in the collective transformative problems solving by the involved multiple agents, on **impacts**, as well as on the analysis of the related **institutional settings**.

3. RFAEAG – MATRIX: multicriterial definition of the Anticipatory, Entrepreneurial and Agile Governance of the Inclusion based Vocational Excellence

3.1. RFAEAG – MATRIX: conceptualization

Through our gnoseological substantiation, in the construction of the present taxonomy, we have identified essential building blocks of the VET eco-system governance for excellence through inclusion, integrated systemically by the conditionalities set through (i) the regional development context, organized as building block. The building blocks (ii) and (iii) cluster the stakeholders according to the multilevel vertical and horizontal geometry of the institutional arrangements, based on their respective role and responsibilities. The building blocks (iv) and (v) highlight the qualitative determinants of governance, explicitly (iv) referring to the governance attributes, and (v) to the governance performance descriptors. The building block (vi) focus is on functional governance, observing the VET functions acknowledged by the GIVE project.



We emphasize that the building blocks are treated as subsystems of the eco-system, subsequently any criteria seen as an analytical unit represents in itself a sub-system with its complexities and therefore approached as complex adaptive systems. Under these circumstances, the criteria represent the holons of the holarchy, as earlier defined.

It is assumed that governance processes can be found in any education and training area, and unlike other approaches, these can be observed and analyzed from a non-normative perspective (inspired by Hufty, 2011).

As before mentioned the CoVE functional governance has also to be analyzed from the perspective of its strategic attributes - approached as external enablers, as well as by considering the CoVE internal enablers, such as organizational culture, institutional development, as well as leadership and management.

***The MATRIX is multipurpose.
It can serve for the diagnosis, for capacity building,
for monitoring and evaluation.***

The MATRIX is based on a methodology that investigates governance processes where various stakeholders interact and make decisions regarding collective issues in the domain of the inclusion-based excellence in VET, thus creating or reinforcing social norms, according to the [culture](#) in which the [social interaction](#) is taking place.

The interlinked and interdependent core elements represented by building blocks, criteria, determinant factors and benchmarks are set out by the GIVE governance Reference Framework.

Here below are the building blocks and the related criteria. Next sections will introduce the other elements.

1. Regional development characteristics – criteria/analytical units
 - 1.1. Holistic
 - 1.2. Integrated
 - 1.3. Innovation and smart specialization
 - 1.4. Social Cohesion focused
 - 1.5. Sustainable development supportive – links with SDGs
2. Governance MLG structure/vertical - multiple levels- criteria/analytical units
 - 2.1. Trans-national
 - 2.2. National
 - 2.3. Sectoral



- 2.4. Regional
- ~~2.5. Local~~
- 3. Governance MLG structure/horizontal Quintuple Helix – criteria/analytical units
 - 3.1. Business agents
 - 3.2. Public administration agents
 - 3.3. Universities, Research organizations
 - 3.4. Civil society organizations (NGOs and CBOs)
 - 3.5. Sustainable development agents
- 4. Governance strategic attributes – criteria/analytical units
 - 4.1. Anticipatory
 - 4.2. Entrepreneurial
 - 4.3. Agile
- 5. Governance performance - criteria/analytical units
 - 5.1. Effective
 - 5.2. Efficient
 - 5.3. Participatory
 - 5.4. Collaborative (collective action/networks/partnerships/shared responsibility e.g. Blockchain governance)
 - 5.5. Accountable
- 6. Functional Governance- functions analyzed² by the GIVE
 - (i) Skills intelligence: (i.a.) anticipation of skills needs; (i.b.) learners' profile and potential;
 - (ii) Matching schemes – skills formation: (ii.a.) VET tailored supply and personalized inclusive pedagogies; (ii.b.) guidance and career advice;
 - (iii) Internal efficiency with focus on: (iii.a.) teachers/trainers/other professionals and (iii.b.) quality improvement;
 - (iv) External efficiency with focus on: (iv.a.) transition to work; (iv.b.) employability, career perspective;
 - (v) Financing, Funding, Costing and Budgeting.

3.2. RFAEAG: MATRIX design

The building blocks and criteria are clustered functionally into the following groups by having the CoVE focally positioned:

- A. regional development context (i)
- B. architecture – multilevel geometry of the institutional arrangements (ii) and (iii)
- C. qualitative determinants of the governance (strategic attributes and performance descriptors) (iv) and (v)

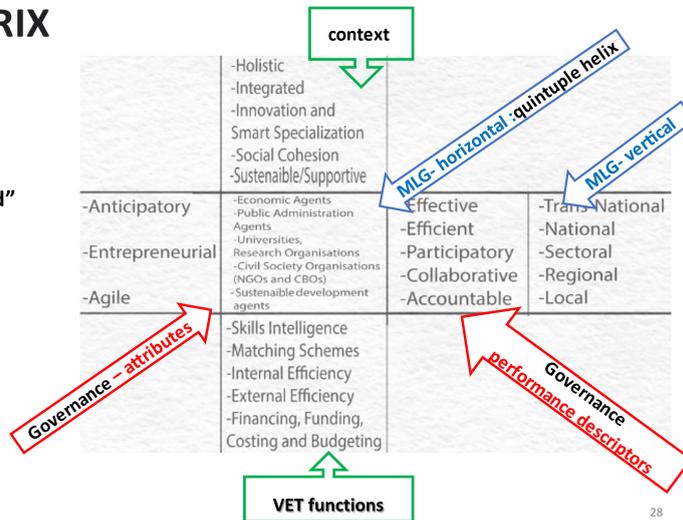
² The GIVE project does not minimize the importance of the other functions, and is including the partiality of the approach among the project risks formulated as risk to distort conclusions



D. vocational excellence functions (vi)

RFAEAG- MATRIX

• “GIVE inclusion diamond”


Figure 6. GIVE governance inclusion diamond

Under the conditions set by group A, the related groups B and C criteria (process determinants and institutional arrangements descriptions) are defined for each of the VET functions in the group D (functional governance).

The proposed methodology is based on variable geometries created by the criteria interplay. There is an interaction of both criteria and building blocks. Altogether, form an eco-system capable to generate vocational excellence through inclusion.

The interplay of the criteria and of the building blocks is forming **the GIVE Governance essentials**. That represents the optimal multidimensional connections between criteria of different building blocks, and between building blocks themselves. The geometry of connections is documented by the project and represents the **GIVE Governance MATRIX**. RFAEAG MATRIX has criteria on each of the 6 building blocks facets and the CoVE is centrally placed. The respective criteria are considered in case of the GIVE project the external enablers of inclusion-based vocational excellence, to which by the epistemological construct we associate determinants, and benchmarks.

The cube facets define the eco-system, allow contextualization, and describe GIVE governance through external enablers. At the centre of the cube is the CoVE to which we have associated internal enablers. The centrality of the CoVE to the building blocks suggests also a visual representation of the building blocks as CoVE satellites in the Governance landscape.

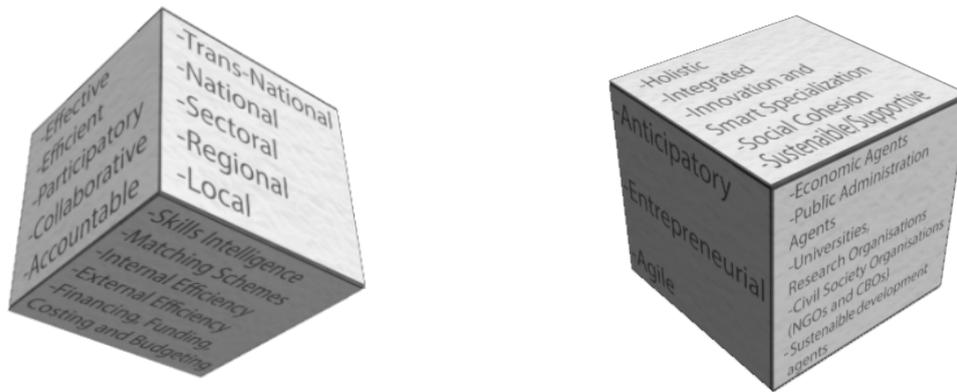


Figure 7. GIVE – Governance MATRIX CUBE model - spatial illustration

The RFAEAG MATRIX purpose is to generate reasonable guarantees of the inclusion-based vocational excellence. Therefore, GIVE Matrix is seen as the **“inclusion diamond powered by vocational excellence”** under the firm assumptions that

- ✓ Social inclusion is powered by economic inclusion, forming **“the Double Helix of Inclusion”** (proposed by GIVE) that is fuelled by **“the Double Helix of Learning and Work”** (see Malitza, & Giarini, 2003);
- ✓ Social inclusion is getting a **lifelong perspective (lifelong employability related)** through anticipatory, entrepreneurial and agile governance;
- ✓ Social inclusion is the outcome of **inclusive design**, it is process, which **focuses on collaboration resulting in “one size fits one person”**;
- ✓ Social inclusion is powered by social capital, cultural capital, intellectual capital and human capital, as well as economic capital and natural capital, moving away from the **“deficit model”**.

3.3. RFAEAG – MATRIX: criteria methodology - indicators and benchmarks

The GIVE Governance methodology is driven by the idea that there never will be a model; the model will never be fixed; it is constantly adapting. Thus, it refers to modellization rather than suggesting a model. Like in the Developmental Evaluation (Patton, 2011), GIVE Governance marks the difference from a classic modelling approach to a non-linearity unfolding approach. In the classic modelling approach, we plan just around impacts. In the non-linear version we look principally at the way endeavours unfold. Yet, impacts will not be completely neglected.

The GIVE Governance modelling focuses on supporting something that keeps changing. There is no stable or consistent mode of action for inclusion when individuals' diversity is huge. It is more about supporting learning to inform action, to adapt. Following Patton (2011) on this “means to make changes within systems, which involves getting beyond surface learning to deeper understanding of what happens in a system”. As earlier mentioned, the governance of the inclusion based vocational excellence (GIVE) is approached as governance of complex adaptive systems, of thinking systems, forming a constellation around a focal point that is CoVE. And this constellation alone does not solve the inclusion complex problem, unless to the vocational excellence other key services will not be added at community level, complementing public policies measures.

The multiple stakeholders involved in the IVE governance have to understand “how the system they want to change is operating and make changes that go beyond temporary and surface solutions to change the system itself. This involves double learning” (Patton, 2011).

Under this fundamentally different paradigm, the focus will therefore not be on quantitative indicators. Instead, developmental stages are defined for guiding towards that governance that builds and fosters IVE.

In the bellow Figure 8 it is schematically illustrated how it works in case of the **Building block 1** - the context set by regional development in which CoVE is located.



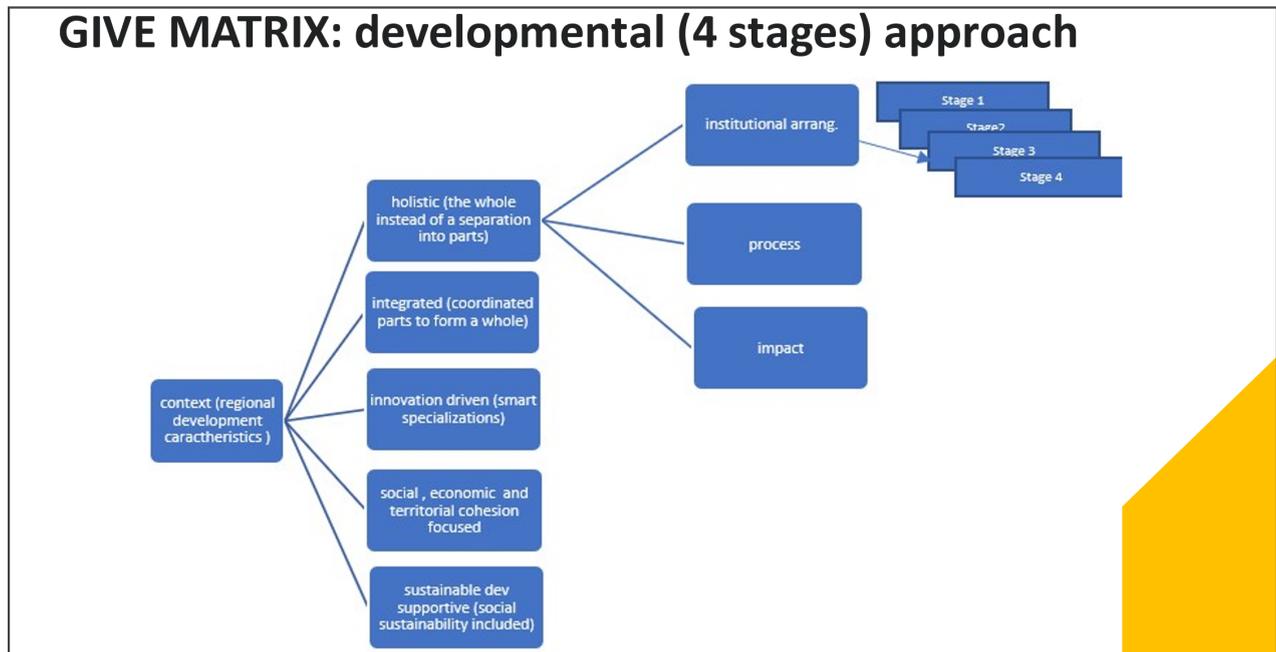


Figure 8. GIVE MATRIX – developmental approach

The self -assessment of the developmental level for every analytical unit, named also criterion, should be done for determinant factors related to CoVE’s roles and responsibilities in strategic planning, in the implementation, as well as in the impact.

In summary, a more visual representation of the methodological correlations of the dimensions, criteria and determinants is added for supporting the understanding of the MATRIX of the RFAEAG modellization.

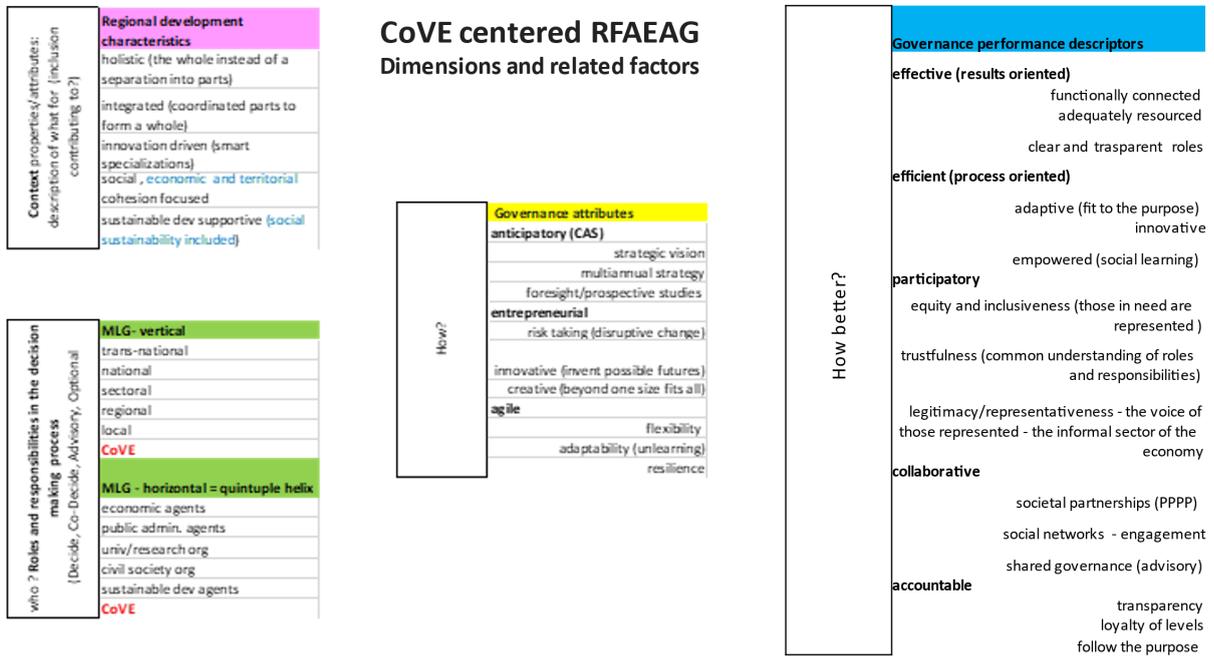


Figure 9. RFAEAG MATRIX modellization logic

REFERENCES

- Argyris, C., Schon, D. (1978). *Organizational Learning: Theory, Method and Practice*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Argyris, C., Schon, D. (1992). *Theory in Practice: Increasing Professional Effectiveness*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Press
- Arts, B., Goverde, H. (2006). *The governance capacity of (new) policy arrangements: A reflexive approach*. In: Arts B and Leroy B (eds) *Institutional Dynamics in Environmental Governance*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer
- Arts, B., Van Tatenhove, J. (2004). *Policy and power: A conceptual framework between the 'old' and 'new' policy idioms*. Policy Sciences
- Arts, B., Visseren-Hamakers, I.J. (2012). *Forest governance: mainstream and critical views*. ETFRN
- News
- Axelrod, R., Cohen, M.D. (2000), *Harnessing Complexity. Organizational Implications of a Scientific Frontier*, Basic Books, New York
- Bhagavan, M.R., Virgin, I. (2004). *Generic Aspects of Institutional Capacity Development in Developing Countries*. Stockholm: Stockholm Environment Institute.
- Caffyn, A., Jobbins, G. (2003). *Governance capacity and stakeholder interactions in the development and management of coastal tourism: Examples from Morocco and Tunisia*. Journal of Sustainable Tourism
- Cornell, S. (2002) *What is institutional capacity and how can it help American Indian nations meet the welfare challenge? Prepared for the symposium on capacity building and sustainability of tribal Governments: The development of social welfare systems through preferred futuring*. St. Louis: Washington University
- Cubbin, J., Stern, J. (2006). *The impact of regulatory governance and privatization on electricity industry generation capacity in developing economies*. The World Bank Economic Review



- Degnbol-Martinussen, J. (2002). *Development goals, governance and capacity building: Aid as a catalyst*. Development and Change
- Di Maggio, P., Powel, W.W., (1983). *The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields*, American Sociological Review
- DiGaetano, A., Klemanski, J.S. (1993). *Urban regime capacity: A comparison of Birmingham, England, and Detroit, Michigan*. Journal of Urban Affairs
- Douglass, N. (1990). *Institutional Change and Economic Performance*, Cambridge University Press, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511808678>
- Driessen, P.P.J., Dieperink, C., van Laerhoven, F., et al. (2012). *Towards a conceptual framework for the study of shifts in modes of environmental governance—Experiences from the Netherlands*. Environmental Policy and Governance 22: 143–160. DOI: 10.1002/eet.1580.
- Gonzalez, S., Healey, P. (2005). *A sociological institutionalist approach to the study of innovation ingovernance capacity*. Urban Studies
- Goodwin, M. (1998). *The governance of rural areas: Some emerging research issues and agendas*. Journal of Rural Studies
- Graham, J., Fortier, E. (2006). *Building governance capacity: The case of potable water in First Nations Communities*. Paper presented at the Aboriginal Policy Research Conference. Ottawa
- Grindle, M.S. (2007). *Good enough governance revisited*. Development Policy Review
- Hajer, M.A. (1995). *The Politics of Environmental Discourse: Ecological Modernization and the Policy Process*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Healey, P. (2002). *On creating the ‘city’ as a collective resource*. Urban Studies
- Healey, P., Cars, G., Madanipour, A., et al. (2002). *Transforming governance, institutionalist analysis and institutional capacity*. Aldershot, Hants: Ashgate Publishing
- Holling, C.S., Gunderson, L.H., Peterson, G.D. (2002). *Sustainability and panarchies. Panarchy: understanding transformations in human and natural systems*. Washington, DC: Island Press



- Homer-Dixon, T. (2011). *Complexity Science*. Oxford Leadership Journal, Volume 2, Issue 1
- Hood, C. (1991). *A Public Management for All Seasons?*. *Public Administration*, Spring
- Hufty, M. (2011). *Investigating Policy Processes: The Governance Analytical Framework (GAF)*. In: Wiesmann, U., Hurni, H., et al. eds. *Research for Sustainable Development: Foundations, Experiences, and Perspectives*.
- Hülsmann, M., Scholz-Reiter, B. (2008). *Autonomous Cooperation - A Way to Cope with Critical Incidents in International Supply Networks (ISN)? An Analysis of Complex Adaptive Logistic Systems (CALs) and their Robustness. Characteristics-of-Complex-Adaptive-Systems*
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/237629437/figure/fig1/AS:341593895784450@1458453739132/>
- Hyden, G., Olowu, D., Ogenda, H.W., et al. (2000). *African Perspectives on Governance*. Trenton/ Asmara: Africa World Press.
- Jordan, A. (2008). *The governance of sustainable development: Taking stock and looking forwards*.
- Environment and Planning C, Government & Policy
- Kaufmann, D., Kraay, A. (2002). *Growth without governance*. World Bank policy research working paper.
- Kjær, A.M. (2004). *Governance*. Cambridge: Polity Press
- [Klijn, E. H., Koppenjan, J., \(2016\). Governance networks in the public sector.](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/284158898_governance_networks_in_the_public_sector)
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/284158898_governance_networks_in_the_public_sector
- Knill, C., Lehmkuhl, D. (2002). *Private actors and the state: Internationalization and changing patterns of governance*. *Governance*
- Koestler, A. (1967). *The Ghost in the Machine*. Penguin Group
- Kooiman, J. (1999). *Social-political governance: overview, reflections and design*. *Public Management: An International Journal of Research and Theory*



- Kooiman, J. (2000). *Societal governance: Levels, models, and orders of socio-political interaction*.
- In: Pierre J (ed.) *Debating Governance: Authority, Steering and Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Leroy, P., Arts, B. (2006). *Institutional Dynamics in Environmental Governance*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Li, W., Zusman, E. (2006). *Translating regulatory promise into environmental progress: Institutional capacity and environmental regulations in China*. The Environmental Law Reporter: News and Analysis
- Malitza, M., Giarini, O. (2003). *The Double Helix of Learning and Work*
- March, J.G., Olsen, J.P. (1996). *Institutional perspectives on political institutions*. Governance
- Marsh, D., Rhodes R. (1992). *Policy Networks in British Government*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Mayntz, R. (1998). *New challenges to governance theory*. In: Bang HP (ed.) *Governance as Social and Political Communication*. Manchester: Manchester University Press
- Nelissen, N. (2002). *The administrative capacity of new types of governance*. Public Organization Review
- Osborne, D., T. Gaebler. (1992). *Reinventing Government*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley
- Patton, M.Q. (2011). *Developmental Evaluation: Applying Complexity Concepts to enhance Innovation and Use*, Guildford Press, New York
- Pahl-Wostl, C. (2009). *A conceptual framework for analysing adaptive capacity and multi-level learning processes in resource governance regimes*. Global Environmental Change
- Peters, B.G., Pierre J., (2000). *Citizens Versus the New Public Manager: The Problem of Mutual Empowerment*. Administration & Society. 2000; doi:[10.1177/00953990022019335](https://doi.org/10.1177/00953990022019335)
- Phelps, N.A., Tewdwr-Jones, M. (2000). *Scratching the surface of collaborative and associative*



- *governance: Identifying the diversity of social action in institutional capacity building.* Environment and Planning
- Porter, M. (1990). *The Competitive Advantage of Nations*, Free Press, New York.
- Porter, M. (1998). *Clusters and the New Economics of Competition*, Harvard Business Review
- Porter, M.E. (2003). *The economic performance of regions*, Regional Studies
- Porter, M. E. (2008). *Clusters and competition: New agendas for companies, governments, and institutions*. Harvard Business School Press: Boston, MA.
- Porter, M.E., Ketels, C. (2015). *Building a Competitive Jerusalem*, conference presentation, available at <http://www.hbs.edu/faculty/Pages/item.aspx?num=49267>
- Ruhanen, L, Scott N, Ritchie B, et al. (2010). *Governance: A review and synthesis of the literature*.
● Tourism Review
- Sabatier, P.A. (1987). *Knowledge, policy-oriented learning, and policy change: An advocacy coalition framework*. Science Communication
- Sabatier, P.A. (1988). *An advocacy coalition framework of policy change and the role of policy-oriented learning therein*. Policy Sciences
- Savitch, H.V. (1998). *Global challenge and institutional capacity*. Administration & Society
- Serban, M. (2013). *Entrepreneurial continuum*. ETF. Torino
- Sokolow, A.D. (1979) *Local governments in Nonmetropolitan America: Capacity and will*. Washington,DC: Report, US Department of Agriculture.
- Van Tatenhove, J., Leroy, P. (2000). *Political Modernisation and the Environment: The Renewal of Environmental Policy Arrangements*. Dordrecht, the Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers
- Visseren-Hamakers, Arts and Phung Dang , 2015
- Wickham, F., Kinch, J., Lal, B. (2009). *Institutional capacity within Melanesian Countries to effectively respond to climate change impacts, with a focus on Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands*. Report, Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, Samoa.



- Willems, S., Baumert, K., (2003). Report, OECD Environmental Directorate International Energy Agency. Annex 1 Expert Group. France
- World Economic Forum, curated in partnership with the Smithsonian Institution, Strategic Intelligence: Global issues, <https://intelligence.weforum.org/topics/a1G0X0000057IniUAE?tab=publications>)



GIVE Reference Framework on Vocational Excellence through for Innovative and Inclusive Pedagogies

Authors:

GIVE Team - University of Bucharest



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

1. Introduction

Nowadays, innovative and inclusive approaches are being used with increased frequency in relation to learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, attitudes and values) that are needed for today's learners to thrive and shape the world, create and contribute for a better future of themselves and of their communities. Short-term and long-term employability based on the resilience and creativity founded by the key competences are essential for both young and adult learners. This is even more so in the case of learners with special education & training needs, approached holistically, being them with learning disabilities, from disadvantaged areas, at risk of exclusion or with a migrant profile. Therefore, active pedagogies for skills achievement and effective schemes for transition to work are part of the solution (GIVE application project, 2019).

There are significant evidence-based approaches promoting authentic, equitable and connected learning communities, striving for excellence. The excellence of everyone, tailored to the individual learning potential, valued and valorized, represents an agenda of the related public policies.

The eco-system of the active inclusive pedagogies is fundamental in enabling them for excellence. This is the reason we brace and soundly advocate for considering together the pedagogies, organizational processes and the governance of the VET providers. The value of multilateralism in case of the governance is central to forging collaborative networks capable to generate personalized, flexible and timely VET offer (GIVE application project, 2019).

A qualitative education that ensures the maximum exploitation of the individual potential of each student must be centered on the students, on their needs and characteristics. The need to individualize the learning process is obvious in the case of educating students belonging to vulnerable groups. For this it is fundamental to know what are the characteristic features of each category of vulnerable groups as well as their main educational needs. In this sense, it is necessary to use an adequate methodology to assess the level of development of students and, in relation to the chosen level of development, their educational needs.

1.1. General theoretical background

The clearly expressed goal of GIVE project is "to offer a trigger for the consolidation of a European Platform for the analysis and development of practices and tools in terms of pedagogical framework and governance for a really inclusive and excellent VET system,



as well as leaders' and trainers' training in EU and beyond" (GIVE application project, 2019).

This aim, certainly consonant with different strategic documents and policies (Council Recommendation of 24 November 2020 on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience , Osnabrück Declaration 2020 on vocational education and training as an enabler of recovery and just transitions to digital and green economies, endorsed on 30 November 2020), EU New Skills Agenda, 2020 and many important others), is built around some important key words:

excellence through innovation and inclusiveness.

Apparently, these terms seem contrasting and difficult to conciliate. "Excellence in learning is the goal of all education and training systems both within and outside the European Union (EU). In the area of vocational training, excellence is traditionally contrasted with inclusiveness. However, there is a growing recognition in policy as well as in practice that these two goals have to go hand in hand" (ETF, 2020, p.8). This is the challenge of GIVE project as well, to prove the vocational excellence "may also imply an enlarged, more comprehensive and inclusive conceptualization of skills provision – addressing innovation, pedagogy, social justice, lifelong learning, transversal skills, organizational and continuing professional learning and community needs" (ETF, 2020, p.14).

Therefore, excellence and innovation are not contrasting with inclusiveness, they support each other, sharing close interrelationships; „excellence without equity risks leading to large economic and social disparities; equity at the expense of quality is a meaningless aspiration" (Schleicher, 2014).

Promoting inclusive VET practices means constructing learning opportunities for each and every student, providing them support to engage purposefully in their development. For GIVE network, this means designing and implementing an equitable and holistic approach, consistent with:

- the premise that each individual has to be accepted as unique and unrepeatable
- the ability to identify and enhance personal excellence
- the ability to take into consideration all aspects of the learners' life cooperating with all the main stakeholders (family, social services, etc.).



1.2. Innovative pedagogies: definitions and taxonomies

From a general perspective, innovative pedagogies are focused on creating a stimulating and conducive learning environment where good, relevant, and robust learning can occur. When attempting to deepen the concept's understanding, one can notice that the concepts are not easily defined. Some opinions emphasize the creative and generative potential of teaching practices and environments, others are focused on the use of creative methods and techniques or, in some cases, on technology-enhanced learning (Ciolan et al, 2020, pg. 6).

Also, the term “innovative pedagogies” is being used with increased frequency in relation to the learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, responsibility and autonomy or knowledge, skills, attitudes and values) that are needed for today's students to thrive and shape the world, create and contribute to a better future, as well as how instructional systems can effectively develop them (Ciolan et al, 2020, p.7).

A consistent perspective of the idea of innovative pedagogies, relevant to the present approach is the one developed within OECD's project “Innovative Pedagogies for Powerful Learning” (IPPL), which builds on the “Cs” framework:

- **C**ombinations – Pedagogical approaches
- **C**ontent – Pedagogies for what?
- **C**ontext matters
- **C**onnoisseurship – Expert application
- **C**hange – Embedding innovative pedagogies

Different taxonomies were designed for clustering innovative pedagogies; for instance, OECD's Teachers as Designers of Learning Environments. The Importance of Innovative Pedagogies (Istance & Paniagua, 2018, p.79), takes into consideration the following directions: blended learning, gamification (engagement through play and the pedagogies of games), computational thinking (problem-solving approach through logic), inquiry in a complex world, embodied learning (capitalizing on creativity and emotions), multiliteracies and discussion-based teaching – Fostering critical thinking and questioning.

Another perspective, as the one developed by a working group coordinated by University of Bucharest in the framework of an European project (CIVIS Alliance), describe the following clustering structure of innovative practices relevant mainly to higher institutions specific (see Ciolan at all, 2020, pg. 10):



Table 1 - Innovative pedagogies clusters

1.	Technology-bd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● online/digital: OER, platforms (MOOCs), blended learning, online laboratories, artificial intelligence in education ● Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR): Virtual Learning Environment (VLE),, Multisensory learning ● Labs: FabLab, Makerspace, Science in remote labs, Open labs
2.	Context / Community-based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Community-based learning, service learning ● Real-world: project-based, problem-solving ● Work-based learning
3.	Design-based (methodology)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Structure (micro-programs / micro- credits etc.) b. Methodologies <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Flipped / Reverse / Parallel learning and classroom b. Experiential learning design / design thinking / universal design c. Game- / Play-based learning
4.	Skill-based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cognitive skills: learning analytics, making thinking visible, computational thinking ● Non-cognitive development innovations: learning experiences addressing emotional and social development, cultural awareness, empathy, etc. ● Transversal / transferable skills driven innovations: stimulation of entrepreneurship, creativity, intercultural communication, etc. ● Core professional skills: job-related skills

In the process of the analysis of the innovative and inclusive pedagogies practices should be take into consideration the contextual drivers specific for the VET centers.

Table 2 - Organizational/ Contextual drivers for inclusive and innovative pedagogies practices

1.	Governance	Anticipatory, entrepreneurial, agile, etc. (see GIVE governance framework)
2.	Staff	Ready, willing, capable
3.	Learning partnerships	Cooperation of stakeholders (learning triangle)
4.	Logistics	Needed materials, time, space

1.3. Educational and career support services to enhance learning

VET as a system has a broad range of functions and outcomes, which can be summarized mainly under three main headings:

- **personal development** - VET, at least for young people and special needs groups, has to impart key competences in VET, personal skills, social skills, and life skills as well as technical or job-specific skills or occupational competencies. Skills development relates not only to technical or job-specific skills, but also to a whole range of key competences and soft or transferable skills and competences. As highlighted by the OECD in its PIAAC survey, „individuals with poor literacy and numeracy skills are more likely to find themselves at risk of economic disadvantage and unemployment” (European Commission, 2014).
- **occupational competence**, including technical or job-specific skills - starts with having the technical skills and knowledge that are needed to perform a job well, but also comprises certain more general or “meta-skills” that are becoming more and more important, like teamwork, customer orientation, and the ability to learn and organize by oneself. Moreover, entrepreneurial skills are gaining importance in most countries where self-employment is often the most realistic option for many VET graduates.
- **educational mobility** - refers to the recognition of VET certificates within the overall education system in a country or internationally while VET graduates receive credits that provide or facilitate access to higher levels of VET, or to higher education in the general education system (European Commission, 2014; Kehl, Kohlheyer & Schlegel, 2013).

These outcomes are important as they are key in identifying the learning support services that complete the actual programs of training.



According to the EU Skills Agenda which states that skills are a pathway to employability and prosperity, and a vehicle for innovation, the role of skills intelligence and information for making better career choices and for more effective sector-based skills strategies are central (Walsh & Azzoni, 2016).

Consequently, another way of looking at the roles of VET systems in relation to skills intelligence leads to the following support services related to certain processuality of skill development:

- Skills development, enhancement and compensation (related with skills formation):
 - Educational and learning support to achieve readiness/ functionality/ enhancement;
 - Special needs support
- Skills anticipation, identification and guidance:
 - Career, educational and vocational support, coaching and mentoring;
- Skills implementation:
 - Work related inclusion and transition support;
 - Social inclusion support

1.3.1. Dimensions

Social inclusion is complex, a multi-faceted domain, and should be therefore advanced by a variety of support services out of which, education and training is just one. This section of the document focuses on educational and career support services as part of education and training system both in IVET and CVET while strengthening innovative and inclusive pedagogies, and actively supporting their goals.

For the purpose of this framework, we assume a working definition: *By GIVE Educational and Career Support Services (ECSS) we refer to a set of services offered to the VET learners at risk irrespective of their occupational status (e.g. jobs seekers, employed) or learning contexts, including all diversity of VET providers (educational system, working place, etc.) on several dimensions: (1) educational/ learning support and (2) career guidance and counselling, including in (3) work settings and career transitions.*

There are different institutions that work on developing the system of support for vulnerable learners either if we refer to those with disabilities, or with special educational needs, or with migration backgrounds, those with low skills or with a drop-out history or belonging to difficult socio-economic background (GIVE's target groups) based on quality assurance principles and using a quality development approach linked to specific policies, regulations and recommendations.



(1) The term learning support services (LSS) may refer to:

(i) a wide variety of instructional strategies, educational services, or school resources provided to students in the effort to support them accelerate their learning progress, catch up with their peers, meet learning standards, or generally succeed in school and fulfil their potential.

(ii) a set of services offered to adults enrolled in training centres (employed or unemployed) during theoretical and work-based learning.

In both cases the main goal of this type of services is to ensure the coherency of theoretical and practical learning experiences as well as transition from learning to work.

In practice, *learning support* encompasses a broad array of educational strategies, including tutoring sessions, supplemental courses, summer learning experiences, after-school programs, teacher advisors, and volunteer mentors, as well as alternative ways of grouping, counselling, and instructing students. Learning support may be provided to individual students, specific student populations (including at risk students and youth, such as non-native speakers, disabled students), or all students in a school. Educational policies may require schools to provide learning support to certain student populations, such as identified special-education needs students, or schools may voluntarily create support programs to address specific performance results or trends, such as large numbers of dropouts, course failures, behavioral problems, etc. While the term learning support typically refers to the services provided to underperforming students, it may be used in reference to “enrichment” programs and more advanced learning opportunities provided to higher-achieving students.

While the design and purpose of learning-support programs may vary widely from school to school, the following are some representative examples of common forms of learning support:

- **Classroom-based strategies:** Teachers continually monitor student performance and learning needs, and then adjust what they teach or how they teach to improve student learning.
- **School-based strategies:** Schools create educational/learning support opportunities during the school day, such as learning labs, to increase the instructional time that academically struggling students receive, while also varying the way that instruction is delivered. For example, if students in a course primarily learn in large or small groups that all work at the same pace, students in a learning lab or other support program might work one-on-one with a teacher and be given more time to practice skills or learn complex concepts.



- **After-hours strategies:** Schools may provide after-school or before-school programs, usually within the school building, that provide students with tutoring or mentoring, or that help students prepare for class or acquire study skills, for example.
- **Community-based or outside-of-school strategies:** Community groups and volunteer-based learning programs, often working in partnership with local public schools, may provide a variety of programs, such as reading programs for young students, that are connected to what students are learning in school.
- **Vacation-break strategies:** Strategies such as summer school or „summer bridge programs” may be created to help students catch up (if they fell behind during the previous year) or prepare for the next grade (if there are concerns, they might struggle academically or drop out of high school). Similar support programs and learning opportunities may be provided during vacation breaks in the fall, winter, and spring.
- **Technology-assisted strategies:** Schools may use digital and online learning applications, such as visual simulations or gamed-based learning, to help students grasp difficult concepts, or teachers may use course-management programs that allow them to archive course materials and communicate with students online. These options may be self-directed by students or overseen by teachers, or they may be provided during the school day or they may allow students to work from home at their own pace. (The Glossary of Education Reform, 2014a)

In addition to the various support settings and delivery strategies described above, learning support may also have a specific educational focus or goal. A few representative examples:

- **Relationship-based support:** In schools, strategies such as teaming or advisories may be used to build stronger and more understanding relationships between teachers and students. The general idea is that students will be better served and more effectively taught if teachers know students well and understand their distinct learning needs, interests, and aspirations.
- **Key-competences-based support:** In some cases, schools may decide to create a literacy program, for example, that provides all students with more concentrated instruction, practice, and guidance in reading, writing, and communicating. The support may be provided during regular classes, during the school day, or after regular school hours. Support that focuses on math skills or technological literacy are two other common examples.



- **Needs-based support:** Many or most forms of learning support are based on identified educational/ learning needs, and schools will provide supplementary or intensive instruction, practice, and educational guidance delivered to students who are struggling academically or who have specialized needs - these can include students with learning disabilities, physical disabilities, or developmental disabilities; migrant students who are learning the official language(s), or students who are performing academically or developing intellectually well below or above the expectations for their age or grade level. (The Glossary of Education Reform, 2014a)

(2) Guidance and counselling – represent a “range of activities designed to help individuals to take information, advice educational, vocational or personal decisions and to carry them and guidance (IAG) out before and after they enter the labour market” (Cedefop, 2014a) and they may include: „counselling (personal or career development, educational guidance); assessment (psychological or competence/performance related); information on learning and labour market opportunities and career management; consultation with peers, relatives or educators; vocational preparation (pinpointing skills/competences and experience for job-seeking); referrals (to learning and career specialists). Guidance and counselling can be provided at schools, training centres, job centres, the workplace, the community or in other settings” (Cedefop, 2014a).

In light of the project the term of “career” should be defined. Career is defined in a modern perspective, as an individual’s work-related and other relevant learning and life experiences, both inside and outside of organizations, that form a unique pattern over the individual’s life span. This definition recognizes both physical movements, such as between levels, jobs, employers, occupations, and industries, as well as the interpretation of the individual, including his or her perceptions of career events (e.g., viewing job loss as failure vs. as an opportunity for a new beginning), career alternatives (e.g., viewing limited vs. unlimited options), and outcomes (e.g., how one defines career success). Moreover, careers do not occur in a vacuum. An individual’s career is influenced by many contextual factors, such as national culture, the economy, and the political environment, as well as by personal factors, such as relationships with others (e.g., dual-career marriages) (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009).

Career guidance and counselling refers to services intended to assist people, of any age and at any point throughout their lives to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers (IEAVG). Career guidance helps people to reflect on their ambitions, interests, qualifications and abilities. It helps them to understand the labour market and education systems, and to relate this to what they know about themselves. Comprehensive career guidance tries to teach people to plan and make decisions about work and learning. Career guidance makes information about the labour market and about educational opportunities more accessible by



organizing it, systematizing it, and making it available when and where people need it. (OECD, 2004)

(3) Job placement services take place at the interface of VET and employment. Although placement is a key function of the labour market system and in particular of the public employment services it is more and more widely acknowledged that training providers also have a role to play. This covers issues like networking with local companies, internships, and preparation for job search (how to identify job opportunities and how to apply). These services could include also counselling, coaching or mentoring for beginners in the world of work and their employers can also be found more and more often. It is known that the first couple of months in a job are decisive for stable employment. Support provided by counsellors, coaches or mentors can reduce the risk of failure during this period. This is very important for special needs groups and in particular for those who opt for self-employment.

Furthermore, as OSNABRÜCK DECLARATION 2020 on vocational education and training as an enabler of recovery and just transitions to digital and green economies underlines, *as job and qualification profiles change and new professions emerge in the wake of the digital and green transitions, individuals need support to upskill and update their skills in a permanent manner.*

1.3.2. Educational and career support services: definitions and taxonomies

The support services aim at:

- Learning support
- Special needs support
- Career, educational and vocational support
- Work related inclusion and transition support
- Social inclusion support

Table 3 - Learning and career support services

Aims	Services
Learning support	Learning development services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Co-curricular or integrative curriculum ● Remedial activities ● Advisory services and special supportive courses ● Educational coaching



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational mentoring
Special needs support	<p>Special needs assistance (dyslexia, dyscalculia, ADHD, Autism spectrum disorders, developmental coordination disorder, gifted etc.)</p> <p>Dyslexia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-sensory instruction in decoding skills • Small group or individual instruction • Assistive technologies: text-to-speech software, audiobooks, optical character recognition <p>Dyscalculia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialized instruction (support teacher) • Multi-sensory instruction in math techniques • Assistive Technologies (calculators, math notation tools, graph paper, drawing tools, graphic organizers, text-to-speech etc.) <p>Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behaviour therapy • Cognitive behavioural therapy • Social skills group (small groups – 2-3 individuals led by an professional who teaches them how to appropriate interact with each other) <p>Autism spectrum disorders (ASD)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diagnostic services and periodic assessment; • Early intervention therapies • Support at school (support teacher) • Behaviour support <p>Developmental coordination disorder (DCD),</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occupational therapy • Assistive technology (text-to-speech software, touchscreens, keyboards) • Accommodation in class (seat the student closer to the board, teacher; adjust chair for a proper posture of the student, provide different writing tools to reduce pencil pressure etc.) <p>Giftedness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differential instruction

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● After school Enrichments Clubs ● Independent study ● Early admission ● Cluster grouping ● Summer Centres and Camps or Schools
Career, educational and vocational support	Career guidance and counselling services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Guidance (including assessment and testing and information) ● Career Counselling (including career construction, development, and management) ● Rehabilitation counselling ● Advising
Work related inclusion and transition support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Job matching ● Placing services ● Workplace inclusion ● Transition from school or training to work services ● Coaching and mentoring
Social inclusion support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cultural context change ● Context learning change (formal, informal) ● Transitions (portability of acquired learning outcomes)

Table 4 presents definitions and short descriptions for the educational and career support services.

Table 4 - Definitions and descriptions fo educational and career support services

<p>Learning support</p>	<p>Learning development services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Co-curricular or integrative curriculum refers to activities, programs, and learning experiences that complement, in some way, what students are learning in school—i.e., experiences that are connected to or mirror the academic curriculum. Co-curricular activities are typically, but not always, defined by their separation from academic courses. For example, they are ungraded, they do not allow students to earn academic credit, they may take place outside of school or after regular school hours, and they may be operated by outside organizations. That said, these traditional distinctions between academic and co-curricular programs are being eroded in some schools. A few examples of common educational opportunities that may be considered co-curricular include student newspapers, musical performances, art shows, mock trials, debate competitions, and mathematics, robotics, and engineering teams and contests. But given the differing interpretations of the term, as well as its many potential applications, it’s best to determine precisely how co-curricular is being used in a particular educational context (The Glossary of Education Reform, 2014b). ● Remedial activities are „activities or programs aimed at helping students with learning difficulties or supporting students that may need to develop better learning skills as well as master content” (UNESCO-IBE, 2013). ● Advisory services and special supportive courses are sometimes offered during the training process. The aim of these measures is twofold: to prevent or at least reduce or mitigate dropout – which is still a common feature of many training programs – and to
--------------------------------	--

	<p>make sure that the participants perform well in the final assessment, thus increasing the number of successful graduates.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational coaching is a process designed to focus on skill development and behavior change to deliver improved performance. Coaching is usually delivered one-to-one (ELGPN, 2014). • Educational mentoring represents a relationship between a less experienced individual and a more experienced individual known as a mentor through which the mentor facilitates and supports learning. It can involve a one-on-one relationship or a network of multiple mentors. The network can contain peers, ‘step-ahead’ peers, or supervisors. (UNESCO-IBE, 2013). Another perspective describes mentoring as a developmental process that involves a transfer of skills and knowledge from the person with more experience to another with less experience, the transfer being made through learning, dialogue and personal example. In other ways, it can be a learning partnership between colleagues (EMCC Romania, 2020).
<p>Special needs support</p>	<p>Special needs assistance services (dyslexia, dyscalculia, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism spectrum disorders (ASD), developmental coordination disorder (DCD), giftedness etc.) include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special needs education - educational activity and support designed to address specific needs of children with disabilities or children failing school for reasons known to impede optimal progress (Cedefop, 2014). • Dyslexia is a developmental language disorder that involves a deficit(s) in phonological processing. This disorder manifests itself in various phonological difficulties as well as a specific reading disability. (Catts, 1989, p. 50)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dyscalculia is defined as difficulty acquiring basic arithmetic skills that is not explained by low intelligence or inadequate schooling. (Kaufmann & von Aster, 2012) ● Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a behavioural disorder. It is characterized by symptoms of inattention and/or impulsivity and hyperactivity which can significantly impact on many aspects of behaviour and performance, both at school and at home. (Faraone, Sergeant, Gillberg & Biederman, 2003) ● Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) refers to a group of pervasive neurodevelopmental disorders that involve moderately to severely disrupted functioning in regard to social skills and socialization, expressive and receptive communication, and repetitive or stereotyped behaviours and interests (Phetrasuwan, Miles & Mesibov, 2009) ● Developmental coordination disorder (DCD) is a neuromotor disability in which a child's motor coordination difficulties significantly interfere with activities of daily living or academic achievement. These children typically have difficulty with fine and/or gross motor skills, with motor performance that is usually slower, less accurate, and more variable than that of their peers. ● Giftedness is asynchronous development in which advanced cognitive abilities and heightened intensity combine to create inner experiences and awareness that are qualitatively different from the norm. This asynchrony increases with higher intellectual capacity. The uniqueness of the gifted renders them particularly vulnerable and requires modifications in parenting, teaching and counselling in order for them to develop optimally (The Columbus Group, 1991, in Morelock, 1992).
<p>Career, educational and</p>	<p>Career guidance and counselling services, involving career construction and development, career management services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Career counselling includes all counselling activities associated with career choices over a life span. In the career counselling process, all aspects of individual needs

<p>vocational support</p>	<p>(including family, work, and leisure) are recognized all integral parts of career decision making and planning (Zunker, 2016). Career development as defined by the American Counselling Association „is total constellation of psychological, sociological, educational, physical, economic, and change factors that combine to influence the nature and significance of work in the total life span of any given individual (Engels, 1994).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career guidance – “a range of activities that enable citizens of any age, and at any point in their lives, to identify their capacities, competences and interests; to make meaningful educational, training and occupational decisions; and to manage their individual life paths in learning, work and other settings in which these capacities and competences are learned and/or used” (Council of the European Union, 2008). • Rehabilitation counselling - A systematic process intended to facilitate person-centered decision-making, this process is utilized to select, plan, and achieve goals with individuals with disabilities related to personal, career, and independent living. The Rehabilitation process includes the tasks of assessment, developing a rehabilitation plan, implementation and service delivery, follow-up, and consultation. Rehabilitation counselling address varied issues within the rehabilitation counselling context. Rehabilitation counsellors work collaboratively with individuals with disabilities, their support systems, and their environments to achieve their personal, social, psychological, and vocational goals. (CACREP Standards 2016) • Advising - helping individuals and groups to interpret information and choose the most appropriate options. Cultural relativity starts to be important here to establish critical bridges between different culturally-based valuing systems. Advising must incorporate care for specific world-view of migrant groups and the way it can articulate with local systems. (Cedefop, 2014b)
<p>Work related inclusion and</p>	<p>Work related inclusion and transition services include:</p>

<p>transition support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Job matching - The purpose of support and matching is to get a job or start studying as quickly as possible. The intention is to provide people who are far from the labour market with special and individually adapted efforts (matching, guidance) that lead them to work or study and increase their prerequisites for getting a job. (Cedefop, 2014a) ● Placing services - Job placement is “process of supporting individuals to find jobs matching their skills” (Cedefop, 2014a). ● Workplace inclusion services - Workplace inclusion is an organizational effort and practices in which different groups or individuals having different backgrounds are culturally and socially accepted and welcomed, and equally treated. These differences could be self-evident, such as national origin, age, race and ethnicity, religion/belief, gender, marital status, and socioeconomic status or they could be more inherent, such as educational background, training, sector experience, organizational tenure, even personality, such as introverts and extroverts (Global Diversity Practice) ● Transition from school or training to work services - move from education or training to employment, covering the period between leaving education and entering the labour market (Cedefop, 2014a). Another perspective is that Transition refers to the process of moving from one education, employment or training situation to another. This would include a move out of the labour market, for example into unemployment or to look after children, and the move back into employment, education or training after a period of not being in work, education or training (ELGPN, 2014). ● Coaching or mentoring for beginners in the world of work and their employers can also be found more and more often. It is known that the first couple of months in a job are decisive for stable employment. Support provided by coaches or mentors can reduce the risk of failure during this period. This is very important for special needs groups and in particular for those who opt for self-employment.
----------------------------------	---

Social inclusion support	<p>Integration services including cultural context change (i.e. immigrants), institutional change (i.e. school/ city/ country), transitions (one cycle to the other) etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • „The concept of integration reflects the access that migrant individuals have to receiving countries’ culture, language, systems and networks. It includes their ability to use such access effectively to live their lives with minimum welfare, in safety, and to develop themselves as professionals, community/social agents and more broadly as human beings. It is assumed that both the immigrant individuals/communities and the receiving society influence the integration process and that mutual adaptation is likely to be necessary for its success” (Cedefop, 2014b).
---------------------------------	--

In conclusion, we acknowledge and emphasize the fact that there are Educational and Career Support Services (ECSS) in place today and there is a trend to introduce on larger scale such services and instruments in order to make the rather expensive training programmes more efficient and effective. Moreover, there is a sustained endeavour to enhance the process of identification, analysis, assessment of services needed for excellence in VET.

2. Mapping innovative and inclusive practices; screening methodology

Screening of the innovative and inclusive practices (both theoretical approach and best practices that could be shared, developed or implemented) will create robust evidence related to the topics. It will seek out those practices that exhibit fulfilment of the criteria and show potential for adoption across other organization. The internal self-assessment exercise (developed by each organization from the consortium) will be performed against the agreed principles and criteria and will be based on a clear definition of what an innovative and inclusive pedagogy stands for.

The framework we build to analyse the relevant practices has two purposes:

- a) **An evaluative purpose**, meant to validate identified examples by assessing them against a specific number of principles, criteria, dimensions.
- b) **A descriptive/analytical purpose**, meant to help us understand different aspects, specific to that practice, the main characteristics.

2.1. From lessons learned to best and relevant practices: defining terms

There is a wide variety in terminology describing the practices worthy of replication and dissemination; concepts are frequently used interchangeably, without clear terminological boundaries. Here there are some examples of concepts:

- **Lessons learned** – according to International Labor Organization, a lesson learned is an observation from project or program experience which can be translated into relevant, beneficial knowledge by establishing clear causal factors and effects; It focuses on a specific design, activity, process or decision and may provide either positive or negative insights on operational effectiveness and efficiency, impact on the achievement of outcomes, or influence on sustainability (ILO, 2014).
- **Emerging good practice** – a lesson learned may become an emerging good practice when it additionally shows proven marked results or benefits; an emerging good practice is any successful working practice or strategy, whether fully or in part, that has produced consistent, successful results and measurable impact; it implies a mapped logic indicating a clear cause-effect process through which it is possible to derive a model or methodology for replication (ILO, 2014).
- **Good practice** - a good practice is an activity process, methodology that is functional, works well, while being „ethical, fair, and replicable, succeeds in achieving its objective(s), and therefore can be recommended as a model’ (Good Practices for Urban Refugees, a platform managed by a team of UNHCR staff working in the Division of Program Support Management and the Policy Development and Evaluation Service)



- **Best Practice** – is a technique or methodology that through experience and research has proven reliably to lead to the desired result (WHO, 2017). The idea of best practice should not inhibit the used, due to the superlative included in the concept. „Best practice is not about a state of perfection, being the gold standard or referring to the only elements that have been shown to contribute towards making interventions work or successful” (UNAIDS, 2017). It is mainly about “being innovative, developing creative solutions; showing a positive impact on the level of implementation of migrants’ rights; having a sustainable effect, especially by involving migrants themselves; and having the potential for replication” (International Organization for Migration (2004).
- **Promising practices** – comparative with the best practices, the promising ones are those susceptible of producing positive effects which have not yet been empirically tested.
- **Evidence-based practices** – interventions that are accompanied by an acceptable number of research studies that proved their functionality and their ability of producing positive effects when carried out in educational settings.

For the purposes of the GIVE project, we use and consolidate the term of relevant practices, defined as any functional initiatives that produce visible effects and results that are powerful enough to exhibit potential relevance beyond the specific context of their initiation.

The innovative and inclusive relevant practices we aim to identify, and further exploit describe significant experiences produces by research, literature or experience, deserving to be disseminated and replicated for producing new knowledge and development. They refer both to processes and educational products, to results and resources that can be efficiently transferred, after being vetted against certain specific criteria.

2.3. Principles and criteria for defining and selecting innovative and inclusive pedagogies

The several principles and criteria for identifying emerging innovative and inclusive good practices are to be taken into consideration. The following proposal includes some worldwide agreed standard performance criteria (like relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, as they were described by different international institutions - WHO, 2012), accompanied by specific items, relevant to GIVE network interventions. Therefore, the principles and criteria are tailor made for the purposes of the project;



they are neither exhaustive (not being able to fully cover all the variety of practices existent) or exclusive.

Moreover, the proposal of the analysis framework based on all these has to be discussed and agreed upon within the GIVE network and peer reviewed by external experts, as a collaborative, widely inclusive exercise (an example of functional practice in itself).

In general terms, the identified practices are supposed to:

- **Foster inclusiveness, equitable and personalized approaches**
Practices considered relevant have to foster an effective inclusion of different groups of individuals participating in education; a special focus will be put on practices supporting learners belonging to disadvantaged groups, with particular reference to those with the following characteristics:
 - o with a migration background
 - o with disabilities
 - o with low skills
 - o with a drop-out history
 - o with educational special needs
 - o with social and economic disadvantages
- **Foster pedagogical innovation – the practice** shows creative thinking and approaches, contributes to an innovation in learning experiences of the participants. This aspect includes the idea of *fostering digital innovations* – by adopting recent e-learning methodologies and tools and integrating them in instructional design approaches

Key principles for inclusive and innovative pedagogical approaches are identified and briefly described below. They reflect key values of VET practice excellence:

Table 5 - *Principles for inclusive and innovative pedagogical approaches*

1.	Learner centered	Personalization = having the ability to adapt the pedagogical approach to the characteristics and needs of the individual (person).
2.	Reality-based learning	Authentic tasks, learning from problems to solve, from experience, from the real world. A real process, from customer request to product/service delivery



3.	Labour-market related	<p>Fostering work-based learning as an effective system of training, where also basic skills and life skills are strongly supported and integrated.</p> <p>Customized programs for each student, together with companies, to make talents emerge and to facilitate integration into the labour market</p>
4.	Management & faculty supported	<p>Faculty (professors, tutor) is attracted, selected, trained in a very specific way to participate in the process;</p> <p>The role of management and managerial practices is central in supporting innovative and inclusive approaches.</p>
5.	Beauty / aesthetic value	<p>Environment matters, environment aesthetic value permeates learning in artisanal contexts</p>
6.	Openness / flexibility / adaptability	<p>Approach based on benchmarks, comparisons with the external world (institutions, research, companies)</p> <p>Promoting adaptative reactions – by designing and implementation interventions able to respond simultaneously to the needs of the student and the labour market (companies)</p>
7.	Ethical soundness, respect of the human rights	<p>The practice is respectful with ethic values and guarantees the safeguarding of dignity; it reflects the basic universal principles of human rights (Mateus, Pinho, 2019)</p>
8.	European dimension and internationalization	<p>Strengthening European dimension, promoting internationalization; promoting intercultural communication and transnational mobility.</p>

Criteria are more operational **determining factors** for an inclusive and innovative pedagogy in TVET. While principles reflect mainly values to be embedded in the approaches, criteria are technical targets to be met by a relevant practice.



Table 6 - *Criteria for inclusive and innovative pedagogical approaches*

1.	Relevance	The aims of the intervention have to be consistent with beneficiaries' needs, their priorities and, in the same time, with wider strategic priorities.
2.	Effectiveness	The practice must work and achieve results that are measurable (WHO, 2017)
3.	Efficiency	The resources are converted to results in a functional and optimal way.
4.	Sustainability	The practice, as carried out, has the capacity to be maintained in the long-term with the use of existing resources (WHO, 2017)
5.	Technical feasibility	The good practice, due to its structure, it is easy to learn and is possible to implement (Mateus, Pinho, 2019)
6.	Replicability	The practice has the potential for being transferred or scaled up to broader target groups or different contexts
7.	Impact	The practice have the potential to show individual and organizational behavioral change, to produce positive effects on the broader learning / working environment
8.	Traceability	The practice can be documented, can show evidence/results that prove its usefulness.

IVET and CVET offers should be better interlinked, compatible and based on skills intelligence at European, national and/or regional levels. A new lifelong learning culture implies that individuals benefit from career guidance throughout life, can engage in quality and inclusive VET programmes and acquire key competences to actively manage their education, training and employment phases with the support and

increased responsibility of all stakeholders. It relies on practice-oriented VET policies and frameworks that are driven by social and occupational demand.

References

- Barnes, S.-A., Bimrose, J., Brown, A., Kettunen, J. & Vuorinen, R. (2020). Lifelong guidance policy and practice in the EU: Trends, challenges and opportunities, final report, European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusions, Directorate E. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. DOI:10.2767/91185
- Cedefop (2014a). Terminology of European education and training policy: a selection of 130 key terms. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- Cedefop (2014b). Valuing diversity: guidance for labour market integration of migrants. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/6124_en.pdf
- Cedefop (2020). Career guidance policy and practice in the pandemic Results of a joint international survey. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
<https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/career-guidance-policy-and-practice-pandemic-results-joint>
- Chapman, C., Muijs, D., Reynolds, D., Sammons, P., Teddlie, C. (Eds.). (2016). International Handbook of Educational Effectiveness and Improvement. Research, policy, and practice. London: Routledge
- Ciolan, L., Iucu, R., Nedelcu, A., Mironov, C, Carțiș, A. (2020), Innovative pedagogies: ways into the process of learning transformation, working document of Task Force Innovative Pedagogies, Civis Alliance.
- Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs. (2015). 2016 CACREP Standards.
<http://www.cacrep.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/2016-Standards-with-citations.pdf>
- Department for Education and Skills, (2001). Special Educational Needs Code of Practice.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/273877/special_educational_needs_code_of_practice.pdf
- Engels, D. W. (Ed.). (1994). The professional practice of career counseling and consultation: A resource document (2nd edition). Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association.



- EMCC Romania (2020). Research report. Romania in digital era: is mentoring a solution?
- European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN). (2014). Lifelong guidance policy development: glossary. Kirjapaino Kari, Finland.
- European Commission Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion Directorate E — Skills Unit E.3 — VET, Apprenticeships & Adult Learning
- European Commission. Development and Cooperation - EuropeAid (2014). Concept Note Vocational Education and Training in European Development Cooperation DEVCO B3 Employment, Social Inclusion, Migration. https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/concept-note-tvet_en.pdf
- European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice (2019). Integrating Students from Migrant Backgrounds into Schools in Europe: National Policies and Measures. Eurydice Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/sites/eurydice/files/integrating_students_from_migrant_backgrounds_into_schools_in_europe_national_policies_and_measures.pdf
- European Council (2008). Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council of 21 November 2008 on better integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies. https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/educ/104236.pdf
- European Training Foundation (2015). Good Practice in Entrepreneurial Learning and Enterprise Skills.
- European Training Foundation (2020), Centers of Vocational Excellence. An engine for vocational education and training development. An International Study.
- European Training Foundation (2020). Career guidance policy and practice in the pandemic: Results of a joint international survey.
- European Training Foundation (2020). International trends and innovation in career guidance – Volume I. Thematic chapters. <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/international-trends-and-innovation-career-guidance-0>
- ExpandNet, World Health Organization. (2012). Worksheets for developing a scaling-up strategy. Geneva.
- GIVE application project. (2019). KA3 – Support for Policy Reform. Centres of Vocational Excellence. Application form. Call for proposals: EACEA 33/2019. Detailed description of the project.
- IAG (2020). Report on survey 'Covid-19 pandemic and career guidance systems and policy development.



- IRIS Center. What should teachers understand in order to address student diversity in their classrooms.
<https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/div/cresource/q2/p06/>
- International Encyclopedia of Education. Reference Work. Third Edition (2010). Editors-in-Chief: Penelope Peterson, Eva Baker and Barry McGaw. ISBN 978-0-08-044894-7. Imprint: Elsevier Science.
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/referencework/9780080448947/international-encyclopedia-of-education>
- International Labour Organization (ILO). 2014, Evaluation Lessons Learned and Emerging Good Practices.
- International Organization for Migration. (2004). Glossary on Migration, Geneva, IOM.
- Istance, D. & Paniagua, A. (2019). Learning to Leapfrog: Innovative Pedagogies to Transform Education. Center for Universal Education at Brookings. Retrieved from
<https://www.brookings.edu/research/learning-toleapfrog/>
- Kehl, F., Kohlheyer, G., Schlegel, W. (2013). Understanding and analysing vocational education and training systems – An introduction, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
- OECD. (2004). Career Guidance and Public Policy Bridging the Gap.
<http://www.oecd.org/education/skills-beyond-school/34050171.pdf>
- OECD. Innovative Pedagogies for Powerful Learning (IPPL) – The C's Framework.
<https://www.oecd.org/education/ceri/innovative-pedagogies-for-powerful-learning-the-5-cs.htm>
- OECD. (2019) Getting Skills Right: Engaging low-skilled adults in learning.
www.oecd.org/employment/emp/engaging-low-skilled-adults-2019.pdf
- Pereira, E., Kyriazopoulou, M., Weber, W. (2016), Inclusive Vocational Education and Training (VET) – Policy and Practice" In Implementing Inclusive Education: Issues in Bridging the Policy-Practice Gap.
- Schleicher, A. (2014), Equity, Excellence, and Inclusiveness in Education: Policy Lessons from Around the World, International Summit on the Teaching Profession, OECD Publishing. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264214033-en>
- Sullivan, S. Baruch, Y. (2009) Advances in Career Theory and Research: A Critical Review and Agenda for Future Exploration in Journal of Management, December 2009, DOI: 10.1177/0149206309350082
- The Glossary of Educational Reform. (2014a). Academic support.
<https://www.edglossary.org/academic-support/#:~:text=The%20term%20academic%20support%20may,or%20generally%20succeed%20in%20school>
- The Glossary of Educational Reform. (2014b). Co-curricular and integrative curriculum.



<https://www.edglossary.org/cocurricular/#:~:text=Co%2Dcurricular%20refers%20to%20activities.their%20separation%20from%20academic%20courses>

- UNAIDS, 2017, Best Practice Collection.
<http://www.unaids.org/en/site-search?keywords=Best+practice+collection>
- UNESCO - International Bureau of Education (2013). Glossary of curriculum terminology. UNESCO-IBE.
<http://www.ibe.unesco.org/sites/default/files/resources/ibe-glossary-curriculum.pdf>
- Walsh, K, Azzoni, L. (2016), Evaluation of ETF activities in the Skills and Employment field in Partner Countries Organization and Methodology. Final Report, CPD-16-EVA-04, ICON-INSTITUTE GmbH & Co. KG Consulting Gruppe, submitted to the European Training Foundation, Turin.
https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2018-07/Evaluation%20of%20ETF%20activities%20in%20skills%20and%20employment_0.pdf
- World Health Organization - Regional Office for Africa. (2017). A guide to identifying and documenting best practices in family planning programs.
- World Health Organization. (2012). Worksheets for developing a scaling-up strategy. Geneva: World Health Organization.
<http://www.expandnet.net/PDFs/ExpandNet-WHO%20Worksheets%20-%20July%202012.pdf>
- Zunker, V., G. (2016). Career Counseling. A Holistic Approach. CA United States: Cengage Learning, Inc.



Inclusion as Multidimensional Accessibility

Authors:

Anu Raudasoja, Sanna Ryökkynen, & Ida-Maria Raudasoja
HAMK University of applied sciences



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

The accessibility of vocational education and training can be viewed through the mental, social, physical, pedagogical, and digital dimensions. Inclusion in vocational education and training (VET) requires stakeholders to have sufficient skills to implement accessible teaching and guidance. Their purpose is to support students' learning in the best way so that students can study according to their own individual conditions. The atmosphere of the vocational institution and workplace must be supportive of equality so that students can feel safe and valued. Students must have the opportunity to influence their own affairs and decision-making will be supported during the training by strengthening participation and competence. This requires stakeholders to have values, attitudes and professional ethics that consider diversity and accessibility, so that vocational training can be carried out in a customer-oriented manner. The most important elements of an accessible culture in VET are parity, non-discrimination, equality, and inclusion.

1. Individual educational pathway in vocational education and training

The purpose of Finnish VET is to provide all applicants in the need of vocational training with an individual educational pathway (Pirttimaa & Hirvonen, 2016). All students regardless of age, gender, religion, nationality, state of health or disability are welcome to Finnish knowledge-based, customer- and work life-oriented VET (Juutilainen & Rätty, 2017; Raudasoja & Ryökkynen, 2022). Students' starting points for VET are very different, as some students will be studying their first profession, and some are career changers or lifelong learners (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2019b). The education is organized in such a way that the individual needs of the students are considered when planning the study path. All students are equal members of the community in educational institutions, e-learning environments, and workplace learning. Institutional policies on accessibility and inclusion are necessary (see Mendoza-González et. al, 2022).

In Finland, a personal competence development plan (PCDP) is drawn up for each student together with the student, the teacher and, if necessary, other experts such as workplace instructors, special needs teachers, study counsellors and non-teaching service providers (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2012). Personalization means that each student is encountered holistically as an individual with different life situations, ability to function or learn, skills, competencies, strengths and needs (Juutilainen & Rätty, 2017). Students' wishes and emphases for different learning environments, study methods and study contents are carefully considered. They can acquire vocational skills in part or in full in working life, by doing work (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022). That enables the student to flexibly acquire competence in the form of an apprenticeship, an education contract or an educational institution, whichever is suitable for her/him (Kaiser, Struck & Frind, 2020; Karttunen &



Seppänen, 2021). The flexibility also provides students with an opportunity to complete entire qualification, parts of them or even smaller units based on their or work life's needs (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2019a; Cedefop, 2019).

Finnish vocational education is competence-based (Laukia, 2017), so each student's previously acquired competence is assessed when drawing up PCDP, so that there is no need to re-study what has been learned before. The student's individual needs are considered to provide from inclusive pedagogical support and, if necessary, special support and guidance for their studying (Juutilainen & Rätty, 2017). Inclusive VET aims at strengthening the student's agency and inclusion, providing equal opportunities for studying and social belonging to the study and work community (Kaiser et al., 2020).

2. Accessibility dimensions in vocational education and training

Vocational education and training support equality in such a way that all members of the community feel valued and safe. The attitude towards diversity is positive and promotes an inclusive operating culture, a positive learning atmosphere and a sense of community. In Finnish VET, learning environments must be appropriate for the profession being studied. Learning environments refer to mental, social, physical, and digital learning environments that consider students' diversity and their individual needs (see Ministry of Education and Culture, 2019b; Raudasoja & Ryökkynen, 2022). The student should be given sufficient guidance on the use of learning environments and the materials in them. The materials must be readily available before the start of the teaching so that the student can get to know them in advance. Teaching materials must support multichannel learning opportunities, such as videos (Korkealehto, 2022), podcasts (Safford etc., 2016), or online materials (see Amhag, 2020; Demir, 2020; Dewi etc., 2018).

Table 1 - Accessibility dimensions in education (According to Raudasoja & Ryökkynen, 2022)

Psychological accessibility	Social accessibility	Physical accessibility	Pedagogical accessibility	Digital accessibility
Mental well-being	Social belonging	Yard, parking and accessways	Operating culture and interaction	Paying attention to different users
Feel valued	Attitudes	Entrance	Personal study plan	Easy to use
Getting understood	Accepting atmosphere	Emergency exit	Objectives and content	Clear



Ability to utilise knowledge and skills	Integration	Signs and services	Teaching and guidance	Logical understandable
Will be heard	Prevention of discrimination	Learning environments	Support	Subtitles of videos
Equal opportunities	Professional ethics	Accessways and shared facilities	Learning environments	Alternative texts in images
	Values		Equipment and materials	Visual accessibility
	Equality		Time	
			Evaluation methods	

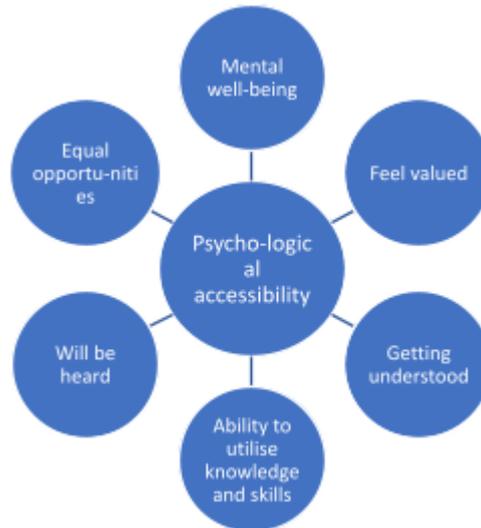
2.1 Psychological accessibility

Psychological accessibility refers to the abilities, knowledge, and skills that students need to be able to learn effectively (Swager et al., 2015). It can be promoted by the fact that the student has been accepted as he or she is, the study atmosphere is positive and safe, and it promotes the student's ability to use his or her individual abilities. Psychological accessibility is important so that the student can feel valued, heard, and understood. The teacher's and the student's relationship must be confidential and equal (see Ryökkyinen, Pirttimaa, & Kontu, [2019](#); Wrede-Jäntti & Westerback, [2020](#)).

Psychological accessibility is reflected in how other people are treated in different learning environments, how they talk and behave, and how things are raised. Mental accessibility supports students' well-being in many ways. The role of the teacher is to encourage students to take on an active agency role, in which they can use their existing skills and knowledge to consider and outline their future. Students must describe their current competence identity and begin to build a new one in interaction with the teachers and different learning communities like workplaces (Swager ym, 2015). They should have equal opportunities to participate in the planning of their own future from their own perspective. (Finnish National Board of Education, [2014](#); Lignell, [2013](#); Raudasoja, [2021](#))



Figure 1. Psychological accessibility (According to Raudasoja, 2021)



2.2 Social accessibility

Social accessibility refers to an atmosphere in which everyone can study equally as part of a community. Social accessibility is promoted by the teacher's and, if necessary, the work community's knowledge of the student's life situation, illnesses, injuries, and an understanding of how these things affect learning and work (Kaiser ym., 2020). This will help the community better understand why some students need support for communication or more personal space around them. The transfer of information must be ensured to avoid unnecessary problems (Shawa, 2013). A permissive atmosphere allows one to discuss issues without fear of discrimination, disparagement or bullying. Social accessibility encourages all members of the work community to participate and be active actors according to their own abilities and skills. Measures to promote accessibility in the workplace should be based on the diversity of the organization, the advocacy skills of employees in disclosing and discussing accommodation, and the recognition of the strengths and abilities of employees that best meet the demands of the job (Waisman-Nitzan, Gal & Schreuer, 2021).

The social accessibility of VET is based on stakeholders' professional ethics, values, and attitudes, which must also consider human rights and equality and non-discrimination legislation. They should be sensitive to the dialogue with the student and consider the



student's holistic life as part of the teaching and guidance (Mäkinen, Alemu & Abebe, 2019). Student social networks are important in building the inclusive future and they also prevent exclusion (Penttilä, 2012). Teachers and other staff members should discuss ways to promote inclusion so that students can have confidence in a unified operating culture for all (Metsola, [2007](#), pp. 37–38, Raudasoja, [2021](#), p. 21.)

Figure 2. Social accessibility (According to Raudasoja, 2021)



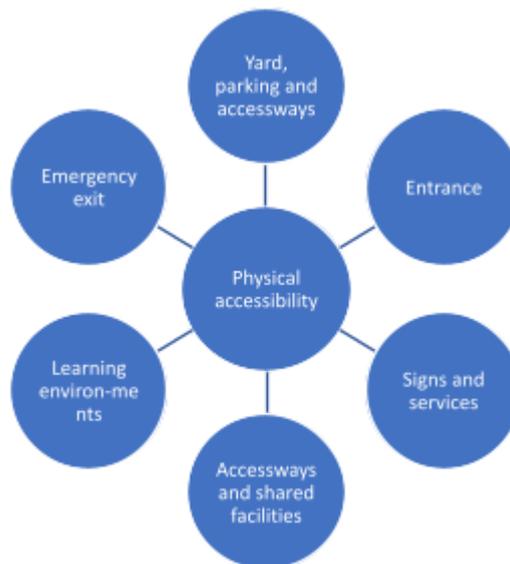
2.3 Physical accessibility

Physical accessibility is an important part of VET and it is available on the website with assistive technologies. Physical accessibility refers to the accessibility of the operating environment to all actors and its gender neutral (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2012; Karttunen & Parkkinen, 2019). The promotion of physical accessibility begins at the entrance and continues from there to the yard and parking lot (Penttilä, 2012). The all entrances to the building must be accessible to all users, clearly marked and accessibility can be supported by various signs from the perspective of a wide range of users in terms of their placement, clarity, and legibility. The accessibility of temporary routes in connection with construction work will be regularly communicated and all users of the premises will have easy access to the information. Emergency exits must be ensured as part of physical accessibility. (Eskola, [2007](#); Finnish National Board of Education; Raudasoja, [2021](#))

Physical accessibility is also promoted by staff finding descriptions of accessibility of the premises and rooms, for example on websites or intranets. The room reservation

system includes descriptions of the accessibility of different buildings and rooms, such as elevators, door opening systems, lighting, sound environment and induction loops (Penttilä, 2012). Interiors, walkways, public spaces and any work or study environment with furniture must be functional and accessible to all regarding moving, seeing, hearing and participation (Mäkinen ym., 2019). Physical accessibility often overlooked in the dimensions of accessibility, even though it plays an important role in work-based WET. (Eskola, [2007](#); Finnish National Board of Education, [2014](#); Raudasoja, [2021](#))

Figure 3. Physical accessibility (According to Raudasoja, 2021)



2.4 Pedagogical accessibility

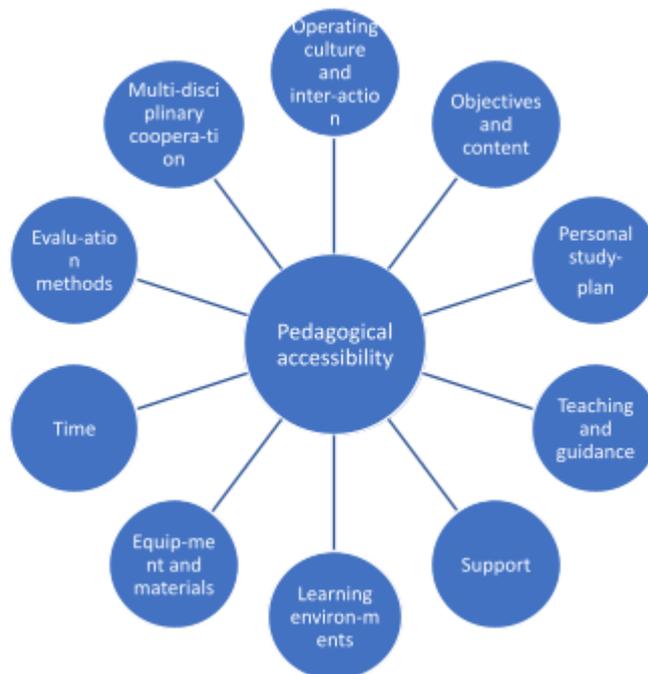
Accessibility of teaching and guidance must be part of the operating culture of the work-based vocational education and training. It supports positive student engagement and open interaction. When developing students' PCDP, it must be relevant to their goals and content so that they can commit to it. The PDCP should consider the student's wishes about learning environments and methods, as well as materials, tools, and available time (see Penttilä, 2012). Students' individual needs are considered through inclusive teaching, holistic guidance, and special support, which may also include positive special treatment to take account of real equality. It requires multidisciplinary cooperation with educational institutions and workplaces, for example in terms of teaching staff, to create the best solution for the student in the future. (Finnish National Board of Education, [2014](#); Metsola, [2007](#), pp. 21–22; Raudasoja, [2021](#), p. 23).



Vocational education and training use illustrative teaching methods, which are supported by a variety of channels. When choosing teaching methods, the student's individual needs and different learning methods of the students are considered (Juutilainen & Rätty, 2017). The teaching methods used in vocational education and training promote community-based activities in educational institutions, workplaces, and society. Teaching and guidance emphasize the student's respectful approach.

Accessibility is considered in practical vocational training and in cooperation with workplaces. If necessary, the student, teacher and workplace instructor are suitable for accessible learning implementation. The student's individual strengths and support requirements are considered when planning and implementing the work-based training. (Suursalmi, 2017.) The student receives the support and feedback they need before, during and after learning at the workplace (Karttunen & Seppänen, 2021).

Figure 4. Pedagogical accessibility (According to Raudasoja, 2021)



2.5 Digital accessibility

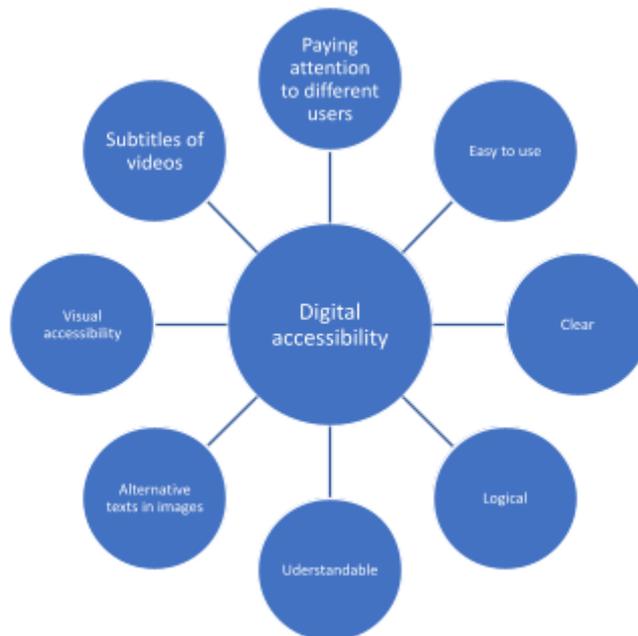
A digital is the last dimension of accessibility in VET. Digital accessibility considers the requirements of different students for digital services, learning environments and teaching methods (Starcic & Niskala, 2010). During the design phase, attention should be paid to the usability of the online services used in teaching and guidance using different devices (European Union Council, 2020). Teachers must be familiar with the accessibility requirements related to digitalization and implement them as part of practical teaching (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2012). Teachers know what kind of aids can be used in different learning environments and they must have sufficient information available to make materials. Students can receive guidance on the types of assistive devices that can be used in digital learning environments (Starcic & Niskala, 2010).

Digital learning environments and learning materials must be clear, logical, easy to find and can be easily used with various devices, assistive devices, and connections. Digital learning environments consider visual accessibility, such as colour contrast, layout, font, or alternative texts in images, in addition to which the language used must be clear (Starcic & Niskala, 2010; Penttilä, 2012). The student must have the opportunity to make choices about the appearance of the learning environment, i.e. to personalize it. The materials offered in online services must be accessible so that the videos are subtitled, and the text files can be changed to a format that is listened to by read programs. Teaching and training should be multichannel and accessible to VET in such a way that it can be adapted to the student's needs (cf. Penttilä, 2012, pp. 32-33).

Online content offered in VET, such as the Internet and intranet, is accessible. Online content can be accessed on different devices, assistive devices, and interfaces. Content should be easy to use, clear, logical, and understandable. Technology should not create cognitive overload but promote augmented cognition so that students can carry out their tasks to achieve their goals; do so in a way that reflects the student's user context (Adams, 2006).



Figure 5. Digital accessibility (According to Raudasoja, 2021)



Summary

Achievable education is relevant for the implementation of inclusive vocational education and training. Stakeholders need to know the dimensions of accessibility to be able to provide students with high-quality inclusive teaching and guidance. Accessibility supports equality and equal opportunities for students to participate in vocational education and training and activities in different learning environments, such as workplaces. The achievable vocational education supports the involvement of students and strengthens positive agency, through which the student builds a new competence identity in relation to the working life of the future and the functioning of society.

Accessibility is an ever-changing and evolving phenomenon with many dimensions depending on the perspective of the review. In this article, the dimensions have been examined from the perspective of vocational education and training, which focuses on social, mental, physical, pedagogical, and digital accessibility. Of these areas of accessibility, digital accessibility is a subject of constant change due to technological development and contributes to the development of pedagogical accessibility. At the heart of accessibility is the interaction between people and the acceptance of diversity to promote accessibility.



References

- Adams, R. (2006). Decision and stress: cognition and e-accessibility in the information workplace. *Universal access in the information society* 2007-04, Vol.5 (4), p.363-379. DOI 10.1007/s10209-006-0061-9
- Amhag, L. (2020). Student's reflections and self-assessments in vocational training supported by a mobile learning hub. *International Journal of Mobile and Blended Learning* 12(1).
<https://www.igi-global.com/article/student-reflections-and-self-assessments-in-vocational-training-supported-by-a-mobile-learning-hub/239542>
- Cedefop. (2019). *Vocational Education and Training in Finland: Short Description*. Publications Office. <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2801/723121>.
- Demir, Ü. (2020). An examination of the impact of game-based geometric shapes education software usage on the education of students with intellectual disabilities. *ECNU Review of Education*, 1-23.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/2096531120940721>
- Dewi, K., Ciptayani, P., Surjono, H. & Priyanto (2018). Modeling vocational blended learning based on digital learning now framework. *The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology* 17(2). <http://www.tojet.net/articles/v17i2/1729.pdf>
- Eskola, S. (2007). Introduction. In S. Eskola, L. Metsola, K. Miettinen, L. Piha, M.-L. Rahikkala, & U. Ruuskanen (Eds.), *Kaikille yhteiseen ammatilliseen oppilaitokseen. Puheenvuoroja esteettömyydestä ja saavutettavuudesta*. [To a vocational school common to all. Speeches on accessibility] Finnish Association of People with Physical Disabilities.
- European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (2012). *Vocational Education and Training: Policy and Practice in the field of Special Needs Education – Literature Review*.
https://www.european-agency.org/sites/default/files/vocational-education-and-training-policy-and-practice-in-the-field-of-special-needs-education-literature-review_VET-LiteratureReview.pdf
- European Union Council (2020). *Council Recommendation of 24 November 2020 on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience*. 2020/C 417/01. A.
[https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32020H1202\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32020H1202(01))
- Finnish National Board of Education. (2014). *Esteettömästi toisen asteen opintoihin – opas esteettömään opiskelijavalintaan ja opintoihin*. [Accessible secondary education - a guide to accessible student selection and study.] *Guides and manuals* 2014:10.



https://www.oph.fi/sites/default/files/documents/esteettomasti_toisen_asteen_opintoihin.pdf

- Juutilainen, P-K. & Rätty, K. (2017). Educational support and guidance counselling in Finnish vocational education. Finland. In J. Laukia, A. Isacson & P-K. Juutilainen (Eds.), *Vocational education with a Finnish touch* (pp. 75-88). <https://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-7225-83-7>
- Kaiser, F., Struck, P., & Frind, H. (2020). Personal goals of vocational teachers in Sweden and Finland and their view of their country-specific VET system. In C. Nägele, B. E. Stalder, & N. Kersh (Eds.), *Trends in vocational education and training research*, Vol. III. Proceedings of the European Conference on Educational Research (ECER), Vocational Education and Training Network (VETNET), pp. 152–158. <https://doi.org/10.5281/10.5281/zenodo.4005851>
- Karttunen, J. & Parkkinen, A-L. (2019). Teaching equality in vocational education through a game practice. *Experientially and Emotionally Involving Teachers and Students*. <https://verkkolehdet.jamk.fi/ev-peda/2019/11/28/teaching-equality-in-vocational-education-through-a-game-practice/>
- Karttunen, J. & Seppänen, H. (2021). Meaningful vocational training in Finland supporting each student's individual path to working. *Evolving pedagogy*. <https://verkkolehdet.jamk.fi/ev-peda/2021/08/23/meaningful-vocational-training-in-finland-supporting-each-students-individual-path-to-working/>
- Korkealehto, K. (2022). University of applied sciences students' perceptions on engagement and spoken interaction in blended learning language studies. Thesis. Helsinki Studies in Education 130. <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-951-51-7803-9>
- Laukia, J. (2017). From shadows to brightness – the development of vocational education in Finland. In J. Laukia, A. Isacson & P-K. Juutilainen (Eds.), *Vocational education with a Finnish touch* (pp. 8 – 22). <https://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-7225-83-7>
- Lignell, I. (2013). Esteettömät opetusmenetelmät, pedagogiset mallit ja oppimisympäristöt. [Accessible teaching methods, pedagogical models and learning environment] In A. Raudasoja (Ed.), *Erityisen hyvää opetusta ja ohjausta*. [Specially good teaching and guidance] Hämeen ammattikorkeakoulun e-julkaisu 20/2013. <https://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-951-784-630-1>
- Mendoza-González, R.; Luján-Mora, S.; Otón-Tortosa, S.; Sánchez-Gordón, M.; Rodríguez-Díaz, M.A.; Reyes-Acosta, R.E. Guidelines to Establish an Office of Student Accessibility Services in Higher Education Institutions. *Sustainability* 2022, 14, 2635. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14052635>
- Metsola, L. (2007). Introduction. In S. Eskola, L. Metsola, K. Miettinen, L. Piha, M-L. Rahikkala, & U. Ruuskanen (Eds.), *Kaikille yhteiseen ammatilliseen oppilaitokseen. Puheenvuoroja esteettömyydestä ja saavutettavuudesta*. [To a vocational school common to all. Speeches on accessibility]. Finnish Association of People with Physical Disabilities.



- Ministry of Education and Culture (2019a). *Finnish VET in a nutshell*. <https://www.oph.fi/en/statistics-and-publications/publications/finnish-vet-nutshell>
- Ministry of Education and Culture (2019b). *Vocational education and training promotes lifelong and continuous learning in Finland*. 4/2019. <https://okm.fi/documents/1410845/4150027/Lifelong+and+continuous+learning+in+Finland.pdf/8cc84ec0-06bf-583b-1a45-38dec497da3d/Lifelong+and+continuous+learning+in+Finland.pdf?t=1570430393000>
- Ministry of Education and Culture (2022). *Reform of vocational upper secondary education*. <https://okm.fi/en/reform-of-vocational-upper-secondary-education>
- Mäkinen, M., Alemu, Y., & Abebe, A. K. (2019). Towards Inclusive Education in Vocational Education – Development Project as a Change Agent. *Ammattikasvatuksen aikakauskirja* 21(3), pp. 35–45. <https://journal.fi/akakk/article/view/87500/46392?acceptCookies=1>
- Penttilä, J. (2012). Hitaasti, mutta varmasti? Saavutettavuuden edistyminen yliopistoissa ja ammattikorkeakouluissa 2000-luvulla. [Slowly but surely? Progress in accessibility in universities and universities of applied sciences in the 21st century.] *Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriön julkaisuja* 2012(10). <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-263-106-0>
- Pirttimaa, R. & Hirvonen, M. (2016). From special tasks to extensive roles: the changing face of special needs teachers in Finnish vocational further education. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs* 16(4), pp. 234–242. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1471-3802.12078>
- Raudasoja, A. (2021). Inklusiivinen ammatillinen koulutus. [Inclusive vocational education] In A. Raudasoja (Ed.), *Ammatilliset opettajat tulevaisuuden rakentajina*. [Vocational teachers as builders of the future] Hämeen ammattikorkeakoulun e-julkaisuja 4/2021. <https://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-951-784-834-3>
- Raudasoja, A. & Ryökkynen, S. (2022). Inspiration from abroad - Inclusive Finnish vocational education and training. *Social Education* 10(1), pp. 72-75. https://soced.cz/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/INSPIRATION_10-1-2022_9122_SocEd.pdf
- Ryökkynen, S., Pirttimaa, R., & Kontu, E. (2019). Interaction between students and class teachers in vocational education and training: “Safety distance is needed”. *Nordic Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, 9(2), 156–174. <https://doi.org/10.3384/njvet.2242-458X.1992156>
- Safford, K. & Stinton, J. (2016). Barriers to blended digital distance vocational learning for non-traditional students. *British Journal of Educational Technology* 4(1), 135–150. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjet.12222>



- Shawa, L. & Jennings, M. B. & Poost-Foroosh, L. & Hodgins, H. and Kuchara, A. (2013). Innovations in workplace accessibility and accommodation for persons with hearing loss: Using social networking and community of practice theory to promote knowledge exchange and change. *Work* 2013;46(2):221-9. doi:10.3233/WOR-13175
- Suursalmi, P. (2017). Vocational education and training in collaboration with the world of work. In J. Laukia, A. Isacsson & P-K. Juutilainen (Eds.), *Vocational education with a Finnish touch* (pp. 33-43). <https://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-7225-83-7>
- Starcic, A. I. and Niskala, M. (2010). 'Vocational students with severe learning difficulties learning on the Internet' *British Journal of Educational Technology* 41(6), pp. E155–E159. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8535.2010.01128.x>
- Swager, R., Klarus, R., van Merriënboer, J. J. G., & Nieuwenhuis, L. F. M. (2015). Constituent aspects of workplace guidance in secondary VET. *European Journal of Training and Development* 39(5), pp. 358–372. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EJTD-01-2015-0002>
- Waisman-Nitzan, M. & Gal, E. & Schreuer, N. (2021). "It's like a ramp for a person in a wheelchair": Workplace accessibility for employees with autism. *Research in Developmental Disabilities* 114 (2021), 103959. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ridd.2021.103959>
- Wrede-Jääntti, M., & Westerback, F. (2020). Haastavia tilanteita nuorten arvostamassa Ohjaamossa – Miten Ohjaamoon tyytymättömät nuoret perustelevat kritiikkinsä? [Challenging situations in a One-Stop Guidance Center valued by young people - How do young people dissatisfied with the One-Stop Guidance Centers justify their criticism?] In M. Määttä, & A-M. Souto (Eds.), *Tutkittu ja tulkittu Ohjaamo. Nuorten ohjaus ja palvelut integraatiopyörteessä* (pp. 46–69). [Examined and interpreted One-Stop Guidance Center. Youth guidance and services in the integration vortex] Nuorisotutkimusseura Nuorisotutkimusverkosto [Youth Research Society, Youth Research Network]



Inclusion in Labour Market: Rationale and Emerging Challenges

Author:

Rossella Riccò

Gi Group - ODM



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

1. Introduction

It is more than thirty years that managers, professionals and academics around the world are trying to devise how people's diversities can be managed in an efficient, effective, and equitable way within organizations (Yadav, Lenka 2020; Riccò, 2012). Indeed, the concept of **Diversity Management** was introduced in USA at the beginning of 1990 addressing the organizational commitment to attract, recruit, retain, reward and develop a heterogeneous mix of productive, motivated and committed employees, including people of different colors, genders and physical or mental abilities (Thomas 1991). Later on the concept of diversity was widened to include all dimensions of diversities such as age, religion, sexual orientation, education, social status. Diversity Management was so defined as an organizational approach aimed at creating a work environment³ that enables organizations to enhance and to integrate people's diversities in order to achieve better results so increasing the organization's effectiveness.

The term "diversity" here expresses the multiplicity of differences and similarities that exist among people that combined create person's multiple and intersecting identities. These identities define the uniqueness of a person. Such uniqueness is expressed in the way that everyone has to see the world, to live in it and to relate to others, influencing lifestyles, tastes, preferences and needs. These diversities have a strong impact at work on person's attitudes and behaviors in the workplace, on preferences and motivational factors as well as on the ability to work well with other people inside and outside the organization (Kossek, Lobel 1996; Kreinter, Kinicki, 2004; Riccò, 2016).

Diversities of people are a reality that bring to business both opportunities and costs (EU 2003). In terms of opportunities, international studies show that Diversity Management brings to organizations **economic, competitive and reputational benefits**, the so called **business case for Diversity Inclusion and Equity** (ILO 2022; Armstrong et al. 2010; Riccò, 2016). There are two main ranges of economic benefits connected to Diversity Management: the *reduction of costs* (such as health, stress, demotivation and absenteeism costs; reduction of legal causes⁴; cuts in selection and training costs by widening the potential pool of candidates and the decrease of turnover rates) and the *increase in sales, market share and profits* (expansion of reference market; invention, innovation⁵ and introduction of new and more targeted

³ Here work environment consists of workplace, job and relationships.

⁴ Interesting data on legal costs of discrimination can be found with reference on the American context on the website Law360.com and in the article of Businessinsider 2021

<https://www.businessinsider.com/every-company-that-was-sued-discrimination-and-harassment-lawsuits-2020-2021-1?IR=T#amazon-was-accused-in-lawsuits-this-year-of-having-hiring-practices-and-covid-19-safety-measures-that-were-racially-biased-as-well-as-discriminating-against-a-pregnant-transgender-man-1>

⁵ Bcg's diversity and innovation survey in 2017 found that companies with more diverse leadership teams reported higher innovation revenue compared to above the average diverse teams (45% vs 26%).



goods and services; increase in sales⁶, profit⁷ and in stock value⁸). Whereas competitive benefits related to Diversity Management deal with the *increase in productivity* (improvement in employees' behaviors; manifestation of unexpressed potential; employees more committed and engaged⁹; better group problem solving capabilities; increase in creativity and innovation; better organizational climate) and the *improvement of customer relations* (workforce diversity reflects customer diversity and develops the organization's ability to understand customers' needs as well as to improve service levels and to expand the potential market). Last but not least, Diversity Management brings to company reputational benefits by improving the company image and reputation among potential candidate, customers and institutions, enhancing the sustainability effort and the corporate social responsibility of the company and becoming an important element for the attraction of qualified candidates and the retention of high-potential employees¹⁰.

Diversity Management brings to companies costs too in economic, organizational, legal and change terms. The costs of Diversity Management include opportunity losses, increased conflict management for overcoming resistance to cultural change, lower group cohesion, additional planning and organization to make necessary alterations within the company, and the financial weight of implementing new solutions (EU 2003; Slater, Weigand, & Zwirlein, 2008). Companies need to find out how to manage people diversities such that the benefits outweigh the costs.

While diversities of people are a reality, the creation and the promotion of an inclusive workplace to valuing, enhancing and including such diversities within the organization is a business choice. Inclusiveness in work environment occurs when everyone acknowledges persons' value, recognizes the existence of diversities of people, is attentive to people different needs, has great respect for the sensitivities and rights of others, is aware of the effects that his/her own behavior has on them and feels they can express themselves freely because they are accepted and valued. An environment where the diversity of people are combined and integrated with each other, giving rise to new ways of working, collaborating and communicating. Unlike diversity, which often focuses on quantity (the representation of different groups in an enterprise)

⁶ The Italian Diversity Index shows that in 2021 inclusive brands achieved 23% more revenue growth than non-inclusive brands. http://www.diversitybrands Summit.it/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/DBI2022_infografiche_def.pdf

⁷ A study made by McKinsey shows that companies in the top quartile for gender diversity in top management are 25% more prone to above-average profits; those in the top quartile for diversity of nationalities in top management 36%.

⁸ The study of Loukil, Yousfi, Yerbanga (2019) shows that the presence of internal female boards increases both the daily trading volume of shares and the ability to implement ESG-conscious strategies that lead investors to react positively. Also, the study of Daniels et al (2021), Wang & Schwarz, (2010) and Wright, Ferris, Hiller & Kroll (1995) present increase in stock value for organizations committed to adopting diversity management. Especially the most recent study made by University of Stanford found that share prices jumped when companies reported better-than-expected gender diversity; they fell when firms announced demographics that underwhelmed.

⁹ The study made in 2017 by Salesforce research found that employees result more productive when they feel they belong, are heard, and are able to be their authentic self at work. Indeed, among those who feel they belong at their company, 73% say they are empowered to perform their best work: 4.6 times more likely than the average.

¹⁰ The Diversity Brand Index study (2021) shows that in Italy the 77.5% of consumers are sensitive to the inclusive message of brands choosing inclusive brand with conviction for their purchasing. Furthermore, they tend to prefer such inclusive brand promoting inclusive companies as "place to work in" with parents and friends with a value of Net Promote Score (NPS) of +86,5 points vs. -77,2 score obtained by companies perceived as less inclusive.



inclusion is focused on quality (the experience of individuals and groups in the workplace) (ILO 2022). So the concept of Diversity Management evolved in **Diversity and Inclusion** in order to immediately underline the orientation and effort to create a respectful, non discriminatory and inclusive workplace for all. The historical context has evidenced the requirement of the workers to be "seen" as persons, in a holistic way, with multiple individual characteristics that must be taken into account (regardless of the classifications) and integrated in the business processes. The study of ILO (2022) shows that the perception of inclusion tends to increase as the hierarchical level of enterprises increases and tends to be lower among persons belonging to minority groups.

Most recently, the concept of Diversity and Inclusion has been enriched by another element: equity. To be more precise, equity in results, procedures and relations (Greenberg, 1993). Distributional equity refers to perceived fairness of the rewards obtained on the work. Starting from the recognition of the same rights and the implementation of actions to eliminate the existing imbalances and discriminations, equity in a business occurs guaranteeing the same responsibilities/role and the same contributions, the same awards understanding how to identify objective, clear and communicable differentiation criteria. To achieve that, it is necessary to revisit organizational processes and procedure to overtake bias by creating a participant-independent method for equitable talent decisions and eliminate any forms of discrimination (procedural equity). Distributional and procedural equity need to go with relational equity. Relational equity refers to the interpersonal experience felt during the procedure: the quality of interaction and communication in the workplace, both between managers and collaborators and between team members themselves, it includes an honest and truthful relationship, respect for people's rights and dignity, provide sufficient information to employees and justification for decisions made.

Nowadays we consider **Diversity Inclusion and Equity Management (DIE)**¹¹ an organizational approach that looking to persons in their entirety as essential elements for business success creates a non discriminatory and impartial work environment where the diversity of people are recognized, respected, enhanced, included and the expression of individual potential is encouraged. To achieve this, a company must fulfill a cultural and organizational change that affects individuals, group and organizational mindsets, types of behavior, processes, and outcomes.

The reasons that can drive companies to adopt Diversity Inclusion and Equity, significantly influencing the practical implementation of it, can be very different: respect for legal principles, "business case" (economic, competitiveness and reputational reasons), ethical (social justice) or sustainability (combining economic, social and environmental reasons). Even if these reasons can be simultaneously present, one will always turn out to drive the action of the company so prevalent. Nonprofit companies, those that have as mission and purpose furthering a social cause,

¹¹ Generally is used the term "Diversity Equity and Inclusion" expressed through the acronym DEI. Instead for the author on the basis of the studies done and the consistency of the process, the order of the steps to be pursued is diversity, inclusion and equity.

providing a public benefit and having a social impact¹², usually see social-ethical reasons prevailing (Tomlinson, Schwabenland, 2010). Instead, for profit companies, those organized for the purpose of developing, maintaining competitiveness over time, earning profits, enhancing the financial position of owners and shareholders and promoting the wellbeing of different stakeholders by selling products or services, tend to be distinguished between realities driven to adopt the Diversity Inclusion and Equity Management for legal reasons, business case or sustainability.

The translation of the Diversity Inclusion and Equity concept into practice is a real challenge for both for profit and nonprofit companies. Too often Diversity Inclusion and Equity Management remains confined to slogans, ethical code sections, training sessions, and limited initiatives or solutions copied and pasted from other companies - and which tend to be poorly planned and disjointed from the general strategy (Riccò, Guerri 2014). ILO (2022) recognizes that exist different **levels of maturity in enterprise** distinguishing three **approaches to Diversity Inclusion and Equity Management: compliance, transactional and transformational**. A company is adopting a compliance approach when Diversity Inclusion and Equity efforts focus on putting into action basic DIE enterprise-level initiatives aimed to meet legal requirements. Generally, the reasons that push these companies to deal with Diversity, Inclusion and Equity are complying with national legislation or policy to avoid lawsuits for discrimination, mobbing, bullying or taking advantage of anticipated benefits. When Diversity Inclusion and Equity efforts put in place a range of DIE initiatives that remain not coordinated and integrated the Diversity Inclusion and Equity approach is said to be transactional. Usually, are reputational, competitive or economic reasons that bring these companies to deal with Diversity Inclusion and Equity. The actions realized through this approach tend to have a limited impact to achieve systemic change and to left the onus for change on under-represented groups that are implicitly required to adapt or assimilate to fit with the predominant enterprise culture and ways of working. Conversely, when Diversity Inclusion and Equity become part of the enterprise culture and strategy and are embedded into every aspect of the employee life cycle and organizational activity the approach is called transformational. Commonly, companies adopting this approach are driven by social justice or sustainability (ESG) reasons, their top level management is diverse and all people are held accountable for DIE actions. Riccò and Guerri (2014) sustain that is treating diversity management as a central part of a company's strategy and introducing it across the organization at the strategic, tactical, and operational levels represents "really" Diversity Inclusion and Equity Management. It implies involving senior management and mid-level executives, but also line managers and employees, in a process of cultural and organizational change that affects the company's vision, leadership, strategy, policies, practices, measurements, and communications. ILO (2022) summarizes four principles to implement Diversity Inclusion and Equity achieving transformational change:

- adopt a strategic and culture change approach

¹² Nonprofit companies include hospitals, universities, national charities and foundations. These companies do not distribute profit to anything other than furthering the advancement of the organization.



- build diversity at the top (in top management)
- co-create shared responsibility and accountability for DIE (senior leaders and all managers and staff are held accountable as role models for DIE in their everyday actions and behaviors and work together to co-create the approach to DIE)¹³
- focus on creating both a strong sense of belonging and enabling everyone to be themselves at work (with their individual needs seen, understood, cared about and, wherever possible, met) supporting people enhancement across the employee life cycle (from recruitment through development and retention).

The study of ILO shows that when these principles are present people declare higher levels of inclusion regardless of individual diversity and hierarchical level or enterprise sector, size or region. Moreover, people also report higher levels of experiencing the benefits of inclusion, such as feelings of well-being, commitment and collaboration that have the potential to bring business benefits to the enterprise in the form of innovation, retention, productivity and overall performance. Nevertheless, there is still little dissemination of the transformative approach among firms (ILO 2022; PWC 2021). This approach is more widespread in multinational for profit companies and less in small and national enterprises (SMEs¹⁴) that often lack the time, means and expertise to implement impactful DIE programs (Hajjar and Hugonet 2016). Besides, in multinational and large and structured for profit companies is more easily created a dedicated role to Diversity Inclusion & Equity Management while in SMEs and nonprofit companies the activities aimed to promote and realize inclusion and equity are managed by HR function or by working groups composed of corporate figures representing different functions¹⁵.

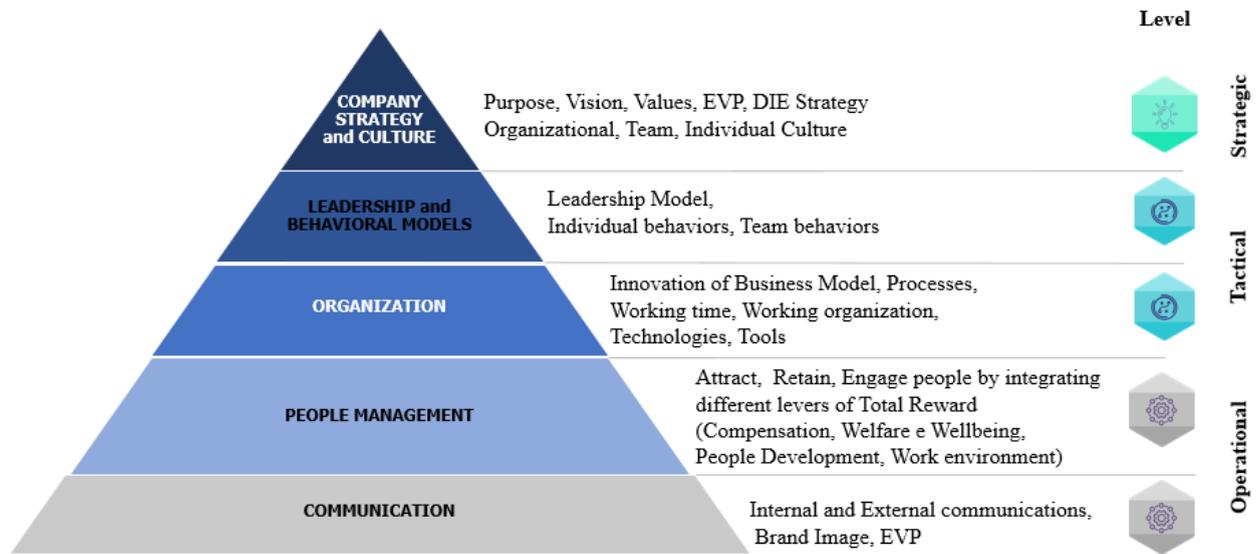
The organizational elements that Diversity Inclusion and Equity Management through the transformative approach asks to rethink and review are showed in Figure 1.

¹³ When senior leaders, managers and employees are all held responsible and accountable for their actions and behaviors for D&I, levels of inclusion are higher. (ILO 2022, pp. 67).

¹⁴ We bear in mind that SMEs in the European Union employ some 67% per cent of the population and form the backbone of the economy (ILO 2022).

¹⁵ Pwc (2021) reports that in the European sample the 42% of companies have in place a Diversity Inclusion and Equity Manager (14% peer to C-suite; 28% reports to senior executive), 25% of companies have no diversity leader in place while 33% have not a leader but a staff devoted to other activities that looks also to DIE topics.



Figure 1. Organizational elements to be rethought adopting a transformative DEI approach


2. Leave no one behind: inclusion for all beyond barriers to access to work

Typically, diversities mentioned in Diversity Inclusion and Equity Management measures are sex, age (generations), disability, nationality, sexual orientation and religion¹⁶. However, there are many other dimensions of diversity which can be taken into consideration and managed. Some are underlying attribute (e.g. attitudes, socio-economic background, migratory background, educational background, special learning needs, diseases, skills and qualifications, tenure, communication styles, veteran experiences, international experiences, care loads, drop out experiences), while others are observable attribute (e.g. physicality -weight, height...-, professional category, generation, skin color) (Milliken, Martins 1996; Yadav, Lenka 2020). Diversity, Inclusion and Equity Management aims to create and promote inclusion for all people within the company regardless their personal characteristics or situation.

Leave no one behind is the central pledge of the United Nation 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development covered by Goal 5 (gender equality), Goal 1 (no poverty), Goal 10 (reduce inequalities within and among countries) and target 5 of Goal 8 (decent

¹⁶ ILO (2022) in its study has investigated age, disability, ethnicity, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation and gender identity and people living with HIV.

work and economic growth¹⁷). In particular, seeing work as an essential component of human life and well-being for *economic* (it allows people to acquire funds needed for development and improvement of living standards), *psychological* (it contributes to the construction of personal identity, shapes social skills, enables professional fulfillment, stimulates self-improvement, provides satisfaction and helps to set goals) and *relational* (it fosters personal development through the dialogue and confrontation with other people) reasons (Gary, 2018), Agenda 2030 recognizes the centrality of decent work for all.

However, the possibility to access work is not the same for all. OECD (2020) identifies three types of barriers to employment: **work-readiness** (low education and skills, low or no past experience), **work-availability** (health limitations or care responsibilities) and **work-incentives** (high partner or non-labor income, or generous income-support). In the author's view should be added to those obstacles as well **work-related-stigma** (prison experiences, hiv, mental diseases and all deep negative stereotypes associated with disable persons, aged persons, migratory background, race, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, physical appearance). It is important to take into account that through work-incentives it is the individual who is led to choose to stay out of the labor market. Instead, in cases of work-readiness, work-availability and work-related-stigma, barriers to employment are endured by people that find enmity in entering, or remaining, in the labor market feeling or effectively being excluded by it. People who for various reasons are likely to be excluded from work or social occasions (plans that strongly influence each other) are sometimes defined as "fragile". We prefer to call them **vulnerable** or **marginalized**, because they usually face structural, social and economic barriers to inclusion due to their personal characteristics, situation or professional readiness. Each vulnerability presents specific criticalities to access or stay in the world of work and in organizations. Therefore it requires to put in place differentiated solutions built to facilitate the inclusion in the company of the person presenting that specific vulnerability, taking into account his/her history, situation and personal characteristics too.

The job placement of vulnerable people is very hard especially in for profit companies. Indeed while nonprofit companies can more easily promote the commitment "to find the right place for the person with its constraints, limitations, specificity and potential", in for profit companies prevail the logic of "finding the right person for the enterprise" with the skills and qualifications necessary to carry out with responsibility, passion, effectiveness and efficiency the activities entrusted. Competences, experiences and motivations are the keys to access work. Even if the job placement of vulnerable categories is not a priority for profit companies, in latest years, boosted especially by the 2030 Agenda, the focus and concrete commitment of these companies too towards Sustainability (economic, social, environmental), Diversity Inclusion and Equity Management and People Wellbeing has increased considerably. Indeed all these are factors taken into account by potential candidates when they have to choose how to work and by customers too when they have to choose with whom make affairs. Being

¹⁷ Precisely target 5 of Goal 8 states "By 2030, *achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value*".



able to make a positive impact on society and on people's life and wellbeing is more and more important for all kind of companies. Therefore, it is increasingly urgent, that for profit companies too develop specific skills of inclusion, expanding their knowledge and attention to vulnerable people, acting both on people at risk of exclusion and on all those involved, encouraging the development of an adequate corporate culture and involving all functions and management in this process. To effectively favor the access and the development of marginalized people in the job, for profit companies will need to create strong collaboration and systemic partnership with different external organizations including those specialized in that specific vulnerability, in social inclusion, in matching labor supply and demand and in training (skilling, up-skilling, re-skilling, with a relevant role of vocational training systems). Undoubtedly, non-discrimination legislation, mandated quotas in employment or training, reducing the tax rate on formal businesses, lowering payroll taxes, introducing active labor policies and job reinsertion programs through (re-)training can contribute to boost or encourage for profit companies to taking care of the inclusion of vulnerable people but they are not enough. Indeed, without a real cultural and organizational change in favor of inclusion, the business will remain an inaccessible or hostile place for marginalized people. For everyone to have a true opportunity to succeed, all persons and companies need to acknowledge that people are all starting from different points on the track. From there, they need to recognize that those "different starting points" are not solely individual, but are related to categories of privilege and marginalization. Only then, they can begin to question and disrupt the systems that are responsible for creating and maintaining these differences, and in so doing work for equity.

To check the real attention to vulnerable people by for profit and nonprofit companies Gi Group Holding has realized a on line survey on the Italian and Spanish context aimed to gather data on what kind of companies make inclusion, for what reasons and how they usually work to promote inclusion.

124 companies took part at the survey¹⁸: 80 (65%) Italian companies and 44 (35%) Spanish companies, 104 (84%) are for profit companies and 20 (16%) nonprofit companies¹⁹, 42 (34%) have small dimension (<50 employees), 37 (30%) have medium dimension (≥ 50 and ≤ 149 employees); 34 (27%) have medium plus dimension (≥ 150 and ≤ 999 employees) and 11 (9%) have large dimension (≥ 1000 employees). Between the Italian sample there is a consistent prevalence of for profit companies (77 companies; 96%), while in the Spanish sample the presence of nonprofit companies is more high (17 companies, 39% vs. 27 for profit companies, 61%). Between the respondents, 40 companies (32%) did not had inclusion experience while 84 companies (68%) already made inclusion experience.

Companies that do not have inclusion experience are mainly composed by for profit companies (95%). Between the 40 companies that do not have inclusion experience, 15 (38%) declared that they are not interested in inclusion (none is nonprofit nor a large company), while 25 (62%) said that they would be interested in doing that, but

¹⁸ The sample was created thanks to direct contacts of Give project's partners. More precisely, Gi Group Holding and Lantegi Batuak.

¹⁹ Quite all the nonprofit companies are located in Spain.



something prevents it. Specific professional requirements necessary to perform the job, too high investments required (in economic and time terms) to insert and train people, company dimension (too few employees), only highly specialized or highly qualified profiles researched were the main obstacles to inclusion reported by respondents. A biased idea against the capability to cover organizational roles by vulnerable people still remains. In fact, 45% of these companies says that they would be willing to place vulnerable people in generic professions vs. a 35% in specialized professions. There is a prevalence of companies that would be interested in covering with marginalized people white collar positions rather than blue collar (30% vs. 25%). The main actions that could help these organizations to open their doors to hire marginalized people are receiving help in recruiting the right people (63%), obtaining economic support (43%), providing extra education (40%) and asking consultation and support from specialized entities (33%).

On the other hand, inclusion experiences are more easily declared by nonprofit companies than in for profit ones (the percentage of nonprofit companies that already had inclusion experience equals 90% while that of for profit equals to 63%). Besides, inclusion experiences are more widespread between large companies that in small ones (in general as the size of company decreases the proportion of companies with inclusion measures decreases from 82% of large organizations to 50% of small organizations). The number of vulnerable people employed is directly proportional to the total number of employees²⁰, except for some social companies, where the number of disadvantaged people compared to the total number of employees is much higher. Generally, companies tend to hire a limited number of marginalized people. The majority of companies integrated between 1 and 5 vulnerable persons (57%), percentage that increases with the reduction of the business size (17% in large companies, 25% in medium plus companies, 71% in medium companies and 86% in small companies). Only an 8% of respondents indicate to have 50 or more vulnerable people, percentage expressed only by big corporations (specifically by 50% of large companies and 13% of medium plus companies). Compliance is the main reasons that boost companies to include vulnerable people, indeed, 63% of companies that have included marginalized people declare that are prompted by legal obligations compliance. The second reason is Corporate Social Responsibility (32%) followed by other reasons (e.g. people capabilities/validity of the profile/professionalism/knowledge of the job, corporate values, sensitiveness on ownership, KPIs). Reputation reach 13%, candidate shortage 10% and only a 6% declare that the reason is business strategy. Almost a third of companies believe that marginalized people are not suitable for technical profiles, skilled workers or positions of responsibility because they are perceived as lacking the necessary hard skills. Usually, vulnerable people are hired in generic profiles filling positions for which high hard skills are not required. Only in few cases companies in the service sector (i.e. ICT and banking) have hired marginalized people (people with disability and migration background) in strategic positions through a normal selection process grounded on skills. The most widely used contract is the

²⁰ The sector that employs the highest number of disadvantaged compared to the total number of employees is Manufacturing.



permanent one (74%). This data is heavily influenced by the statutory recruitment of disabled people, besides, companies that do not hire for legal obligation, use mostly temporary contracts. Persons with disabilities result to be the category of vulnerable people most frequently inserted within companies (64%) followed by people with low skills or obsolete qualification (38%), migrant background (37%) and difficult socio-economic background (23%). The prevalence of companies that made inclusion believes that do not exist vulnerable people who are not employable (43%). Among those who don't think so the size of vulnerabilities that are considered more difficult to occupy are low skills/ obsolete qualifications (20%), special leaning needs (13%), disabilities (9%) and drop out history (8%). The 30% of respondents declares that have done specific activities for vulnerable candidates. The areas in which targeted interventions have been carried out are Training (29%), HR (14%), Communication (14%) and Facility management area (5%). To better include vulnerable people 43% of companies contacted specialized associations asking support mainly in the selection process and in the initial phase of insertion. Finally, the study shows that those who have already experienced the inclusion of vulnerable people continue to keep their doors open to inclusion: 65% declares that are planning to hire more marginalized people.

3. Promoting inclusion for all through three essential levers

Considering work as a fundamental means for self-determination, emancipation and social mobility, we believes that all people have the right to access to decent work opportunities and experiences. Unlocking the potential and talents of marginalized persons will be for the benefit of the individuals, but also the organizations, the overall economy and for the cohesion of the society as a whole. Clearly anti-discrimination legislation and affirmative action measures are important, as well as the fact that labor market provide insurance to protect individuals against negative shocks (e.g. temporary or permanent health shocks, inability to work), job displacement shock due to downsizing or external trade competition or even to protect individuals who enter the labor market under poor initial conditions. Even if this “protection” may take many forms (e.g. disability insurance, unemployment insurance, retraining programs, maternity/paternity and parental leave, benefit schemas) it should be designed to promote labor market participation. Indeed the main objective must remain promoting the access and development of vulnerable people into the world of work through occupation in nonprofit companies, for profit companies or even by undertaking an independent professional activity.

The Give project focus its attention on people with a migration background, disabilities, low skills and obsolete qualifications, a drop-out history, special learning needs or difficult socio-economic background. Despite we are aware that each condition of marginalization asks for detailed analysis, specialized studies bringing with it profound



specificities of intervention, this study let us identify at least three recurring conditions which appear to act as facilitating factors, or sometimes as real "levers", for the development of forms of attention to Diversity, Inclusion & Equity for vulnerable people within companies.

1. **Ecosystem approach.** To favor the inclusion of marginalized people is necessary to create an ecosystem approach between different actors building networks and partnerships among businesses, specialized services, institutions and non-profit organizations for the promotion of multi-stakeholder initiatives aimed at the inclusion and enhancement of work. That way bringing together skills and expertise to improve the possibility of an integration of vulnerable person that is effective, durable and achieved in a short time.

While nonprofit or for profit associations specialized in the specific kind of vulnerability are usually get involved in the inclusion system, a partner not always taken into account that can cover a real key role in supporting the employment of vulnerable people is employment agency. Expert in the matching of supply and demand of work, with a national or international market coverage, employment agency *enables work, adaptation, security and prosperity*. It *enables work* by taking on the role of social integrators and providing employment opportunities, temporary or permanent, able to give people back a sense of hope, opening doors that the single person would hardly be able to open. Besides, it *enables adaptation* by generating agility and mutual trust among stakeholders and facilitating mobility and work transitions, as well as encouraging and promoting paths of skills upgrading, build for companies and with companies, to answer quickly to market demands (Academy). Moreover, it *enables security* for both companies and people. For companies by ensuring fast and effective identification and selection of the right talent for the company and the role researched so supporting an increase in company competitiveness. For people by making "portable" labor rights available to persons guaranteeing them access in the labor market and permanence in it. This is done by means of employment agency temporary or permanent contracts that allow to realize experiences even in different organizations, as well as by means of deeply caring for the development of people competences through specific training interventions aimed to enhancing people employability. Finally, it *enables prosperity* by driving economic growth, participating in the reduction of unemployment, promoting the inclusion of people in the world of work (even the vulnerable ones), and increasing employment income (Colli-Lanzi 2018).

Table 1 summarize the players/partners external to the company that should be involved in the inclusion process of vulnerable people distinguished by typology of vulnerability.

Table 1. External players involved in the inclusion process of vulnerable people by typology of vulnerability



Person's vulnerability	External players involved in the inclusion process
People with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ family ▪ specialized association (on the specific category of disability faced by the person) ▪ vocational training provider ▪ DEI expert to support the development of inclusive culture ▪ <i>external tutor</i> (psychologist, educator) ▪ public employment services ▪ employee agencies (to favor the matching between D-O of work, to offer temporary or permanent contracts) ▪ public entities (disability office at local level) ▪ public transportations
Migration background or Refugees status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ social association (nonprofit reality expert on migration able to be the reference point for private issues – e.g. support in finding home, in legal and administrative duties, in provide baby-sitting services, in giving psychological support) ▪ specialized association/company (expert in multicultural integration and specific nationalities, cultures, DEI expert to support the development of inclusive culture) ▪ language training provider ▪ vocational training provider and other training provider ▪ local national/cultural network ▪ public employment services ▪ employee agencies (to favor the matching between D-O of work, Academy to skill or re-skill people, to offer temporary or permanent contracts) ▪ public entities (migration offices) ▪ public transportations

Person's vulnerability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ External players involved in the inclusion process
Low skills Obsolete qualifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ vocational training provider and other training provider ▪ public employment services ▪ employee agencies (to favor the matching between D-O of work, Academy to skill, up-skill or re-skill people, to offer temporary or permanent contracts)
Drop out history or Extended absence from labor market (care duties)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ vocational training provider and other training provider ▪ public employment services ▪ employee agencies (to favor the matching between D-O of work, Academy to skill or re-skill people, to offer temporary or permanent contracts) ▪ expert in DEI to support the development of inclusive culture ▪ social structure for supporting care duties
Difficult socio-economic background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ social association (nonprofit reality able to be the reference point for private issues – e.g. support in finding home, in legal and administrative duties, in provide baby sitting services, in giving psychological support) ▪ vocational training provider and other training provider ▪ public employment services ▪ employee agencies (to favor the matching between D-O of work, Academy to skill, up-skill or re-skill people, to promote national or international mobility, to offer temporary or permanent contracts) ▪ expert in DEI to support the development of inclusive culture ▪ public transportations
Ex-detained	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ prison structure ▪ courts and law enforcement agencies ▪ specialized association on ex-detained re-inclusion processes ▪ <i>external tutor</i> (psychologist, educator able to be the reference point for private issues, to support the person to regenerating his/her life and to became a focal trust

	<p>point to persuade the organization to hire the detained or ex-detained person)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ vocational training provider and other training provider ▪ employee agencies (to favor the matching between D-O of work, Academy to skill, up-skill or re-skill people, to promote national or international mobility, to offer temporary or permanent contracts)
--	--

2. **Diversity Inclusion and Equity Management approach enlargement.**

Actualize sustainability through the adoption of DIE cultural and organizational change approach that affects the company at the strategic, tactical and operative level from top management to all and each person. Besides widening it to targeted groups of people that are vulnerable or marginalized as compared to the access and permanence in the labor market. Such kind of DIE Management can be synthesized through three main principles: access, voice and fairness.

- **Access**, this principle stipulates that an individual's access to specific jobs and occupations should be based on his/her ability to carry out the tasks associated with the activity, professionalism, motivation and not on socioeconomic or demographic factors. Besides, it will be important to clearly identify the essential requirements of the position and the non-essential ones. The access of vulnerable people very often requires the *support of specialized partners/associations* in recruitment as well as with expertise on people that present that vulnerability so to receive guidance and learn from their experience and knowledge. To support the access of vulnerable people, frequently targeted training to strengthen marginalized person's personal and professional skills is necessary²¹ as well as training on inclusion for future responsible and colleagues. Besides, the principle of access asks the revision of processes (e.g. screening recruitment processes, procedures and tools in order to identify any potential risk of bias or discrimination and then applying the remedial actions needed; rethinking induction and creating social occasions to socialize), activities, ways to work (e.g. smart working, remote working, team working), working hours (e.g. reduced working hours, entering and exit flexibility, shifts planning), working tools (e.g. assistive technology for people with disabilities²²) and infrastructures (e.g. local accessibility to people with motorial impairment, internal kindergarten).

²¹ Many vulnerable people are still not included effectively in mainstream education (e.g. national education and vocational training are often not well adapted to the inclusion of people with disabilities, migration background, special learning needs, drop out history, difficult socio economic background).

²² Assistive and accessible technologies (e.g. brain-computer interfaces, screen readers for visually impaired or blind people) are enabler factors especially for people with disabilities. Most of these people, if provided with the adequate supports, have full working capacity while some have permanently or temporarily partially-reduced work capacity. The adoption of assistive technologies need to be facilitated through grants, loans and training in their use. (ILO 2021).



- **Voice**, this principle requires the whole company (management and all people) to look to persons in their entirety approaching the individual through respectful listening and dialogue to better know him/her, his/hers needs and aspirations so to recognize, respect and enhance his/her attitudes, capabilities and competences, fueling his/her aspirations and encouraging the expression of individual potential. To facilitate the inclusion of vulnerable people and better know, listen, and support their personal expression and involvement, the organization can promote socialization activities (e.g. parties, companies lunches or dinners, employees resource group²³) and above all nominate an internal mentor who became the internal reference point for the vulnerable person. This mentor will receive specific training and is asked to interface with external tutors, when presents. With reference to the vulnerabilities considered in this study, the identification of a mentor is particularly relevant in the case of people with disabilities, migration background or refugees status, ex-detained. To support the process of inclusion and voice the organization should promote specific training sessions not only for vulnerable persons (e.g. language training for people with migratory background or refugees, personalized induction programs for special learning needs individual) but also for manager (e.g. DEI training, inclusive leadership) and colleagues (e.g. DEI training multicultural training, disability training, development of empathy training)²⁴. When a DEI approach is adopted, employees should also have a voice in the enhancement and definition of work processes, rules and practices (e.g. welfare solutions, training, work organization). This can be done by means of employees resource group, focus group or survey.
- **Fairness**. This principle asks the company to build a non-discriminatory and impartial work environment. A non-discriminatory work environment request to start from the culture by knowing cultural boundaries in the society in which company operates, unconscious biases, recognizing prejudices, bullying, mobbing and discriminatory behaviors and actions and detecting their existence so to plan and build interventions to reduce and deactivate biases and stigma, while eliminating discriminations. Such interventions will affect the company at the organizational, team and individual level. Negative prejudices are particularly accentuate with respect to these elements of vulnerability: detention experience, migratory background, mental and physical disability, low skills (often connected to school drop out experience and/or difficult socio-economic background). It is important to underline that still today even maternity and care duties are affected by strong stigma, that cause companies to think too often that these conditions are not reconcilable with work. Besides working on biases and

²³ Employees Resources Groups (ERGs) are voluntary, employee-led groups formally supported by an organization whose aim is to foster a diverse, inclusive workplace aligned with the organizations they serve realizing. ERGs generally are organized on the basis of common identities, interests, or backgrounds with the goal of supporting employees by providing opportunities to network and create a more inclusive workplace.

²⁴ With reference to diversities, experiential training is the most effective kind of training allowing a process of lived training that generates education, information and develops mutual knowledge and respect. The sharing of inclusion experiences can be very effective too.



prejudices, companies should define a non-discriminatory strategy, implementing an anti-harassment policy²⁵, investing to eliminate initial adverse conditions that may characterize a person²⁶ and revisiting HR processes to make them impartial. Table 2 suggests a road map to revisit the core HR processes.

Table 2. HR processes revision road map to make them non-discriminatory and inclusive

Onboarding top management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Managers must become protagonists and promoters of DIE ▪ Link the non-discriminatory strategy and policy to business priorities ▪ Get top management support for the initiative by showing personal and business benefit of non-discrimination and costs of discrimination
Prepare baseline information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Analyze the composition of workforce ▪ Analyze the composition of local labor market ▪ Identify gaps between business workforce and local labor market ▪ Get information on legislative requirements ▪ Analyze the presence of vulnerable people within your company ▪ Define diversity & Inclusion goals ▪ Consider whether you can work with government, workers' organizations and other stakeholders to develop the potential of under-represented groups
Review Recruitment processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Check your recruitment requirements: are they really necessary?

²⁵ After defining the anti-harassment policy and the consequences and sanctions provided in the event of non-compliance with the policy, company should communicate the policy to management and the workforce and training them so ensuring they know the standards of behavior expected of them, are aware of company policy and conscious that unacceptable behaviors will be subject to sanctions. Finally, company should provide dedicated channels to collect discrimination, mobbing or bullying complaints and build processes to support harassed people.

²⁶ For example by investing in technical and soft skills training for people with low skills, sustaining initial rent expenses for people for people with difficult socio economic background available to move in other regions.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consider ways of providing training to potential employees to improve their chances of employment ▪ Move to competence-based systems ensuring that selection and recruitment are not affected by unconscious biases or personal specifications ▪ Train managers and recruiters in non-discriminatory recruitment actions
Rethink on boarding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Check languages and messages and simplifying them to widening their understanding ▪ Revisit on boarding messages to underline the importance of DIE ▪ Share company DEI and anti-harassment policies ▪ Listen to new people (their dreams, expectations and concerns) ▪ Involve mentors during the on boarding phase to let them known
Assess and restructure compensation processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Audit payment disparities for women and minority groups ▪ Build a structured rewarding system based solely on role weight (expression of role responsibilities) and productivity (people contributions) ▪ Communicate the rewarding system to both manager and people training them to understand it ▪ Create a welfare and wellbeing system that matches the amount of the value to the role weight, is composed so to cover different and multiple needs and allow people to choose between the equipped basket the solutions to invest in
Invest in people development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Define company competences model ▪ Structure the internal development path ▪ Draws, find and offer training opportunity to all aligned with people professional and personal development making available a variety of training modalities to meet different learning styles ▪ Clearly communicate the training opportunities

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote an inclusive leadership²⁷ Invest in mentorship (training mentors)
Strengthen the inclusiveness of work environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop WLB policies Adjust workplace practices to facilitate the inclusion of vulnerable people (e.g. modifying languages in business communications and internal signs, flexible working solutions) Adjust workplace infrastructures and tools (e.g. make available assistive technologies asking people what they prefer to use, revisit infrastructure to favor accessibility of people with physical disabilities or visual) Give voice to people (ERGs, networking, focus group, survey, agile systems)
Open communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote respectful, inclusive and collaborative dialogues and actions between people Create socialization opportunities Rethink the company language and simplifying it so to make it more easily understood by all Sharing information related to strategy and operations

3. **Development of international and national inclusion laws, policies and programs.** Even if legislation alone do not lead to transformational change on DIE, it makes a positive difference if laws, policies and programs to favor the inclusion of vulnerable people exists, are known to business and employees and applied. This provides an argument for developing international and national frameworks of laws, policies and programs designed to promote labor market participation that are practical, well communicated and applied, promoting DIE in employment across all marginalized groups (ILO 2022).

The Give project presents the fascinating, challenging and necessary goal to create a wide network of non-profit and for profit international centers of excellence acknowledged and ready to work for a more sustainable world of work by opening training and working opportunity to vulnerable people. Rethinking and innovating the school offer bringing to recognize the value of VET solutions is one of the starting point. Then it is necessary to straight involving businesses spurring them to assume the social responsibility for contributing to build a more sustainable

²⁷ Inclusive Leadership is expressed by a set of specific skills and behaviors such as proximity innovation, sustainability, self-management, open-mindedness, impulse control, flexibility.



world of work that characterize each company reality, regardless of its nature of for profit or nonprofit. Our contribute shows that to strengthen the development of forms of attention to Diversity, Inclusion & Equity for vulnerable people within companies (for profit and nonprofit) the creation of an ecosystem approach, the enlargement of DIE management approach and the development of international and national inclusion laws, policies and programs are the three essential levers of success. It only remains to continue to systematically work together to realize inclusion for all beyond barriers to access to work, so to make the future of work truly sustainable by leaving no one behind.

References

- Armstrong, C., Flood, P. C., Guthrie, J. P., Liu, W., MacCurtain, S., & Mkamwa, T. (2010). The impact of diversity and equality management on firm performance: Beyond high performance work systems. *Human Resource Management*, 49(6), 977-998.
- Colli-Lanzi S. (2018). Employment agencies: a decisive turning point for market evolution. In *Next 20 Fondazione Gi Group*, Harvard Business Review Italia.
- Daniels D.P., Dannals J., Lys T.Z., Neale M.A. (2021). Do Investors Value Gender Diversity? Working Paper No. 3943 Stanford University.
- Di Mauro M. (2021). Includere e valorizzare le competenze dei migranti. Training Toolkit sul Diversity Management.
- Diversity Brand Index (2021). http://www.diversitybrandsummit.it/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/DBI2022_infografiche_def.pdf
- European Commission (2021). Union of Equality. Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030.
- EU. (2003). The costs and benefits of diversity. Methods and indicators to measure the cost-effectiveness of diversity policies in enterprises.
- Gorny M. (2018). The importance of work in human life and development. The consequences of unemployment, *Refleksje* no. 18.
- Greenberg, J. (1993). The Social Side of Fairness: Interpersonal and Informational Classes of Organizational Justice. In: Cropanzano, R., Ed., *Justice in the Workplace: Approaching Fairness in Human Resource Management*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Hillsdale, 79-103.
- Hajjar L., Hugonet C. (2016). Diversity in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises: Best Practices and Approaches for Moving Ahead. European Commission.
- ILO (2022). Transforming enterprises through diversity and inclusion.
- ILO (2021). Promoting diversity and inclusion through workplace adjustments a practical guide.
- ILO-OECD (2018). Labour market inclusion of people with disabilities International.
- ILO (2013). Practical guidelines for employers for promoting equality and preventing discrimination at work in Indonesia.
- IMF (2021). Working Paper - Inclusivity in the labour Market.



- ISMU (2022). The twenty seventh Italian Report on migrations 2021.
- Kreitner, R., & Kinicki, A. (2004). La gestione delle diversità: liberare il potenziale di ogni persona. In Kreitner R., & Kinicki A. (Eds.), *Comportamento Organizzativo* (pp. 39-68). Milano, IT: APOGEO.
- Loukil N., Yousfi O., Yerbanga R. (2019). Does gender diversity on boards influence stock market liquidity? Empirical evidence from the French market. *Corporate Governance International Journal of Business in Society* 19 (3).
- Monaci M., Zanfrini L. (2020). Una macchina-in-moto-con-freno-tirato. Fondazione ISMU.
- OECD (2020). Economic Surveys Belgium. <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/4c764a92-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/4c764a92-en>
- PWC (2021). Diversity and Inclusion Benchmarking Survey – European.
- Ravazzani S., Mazzei A., Fisichella C., Butera A. (2021). Diversity and inclusion management: an analysis of practice developments in Italy.
- Riccò R. (2016). Diversity Management: Bringing Equality, Equity, and Inclusion in the Workplace
- Riccò R., Guerzi M. (2014). Diversity challenge: An integrated process to bridge the ‘implementation gap’ *Business Horizons* (2014) 57, 235–245.
- Salesforce Research (2017). The Impact of Equality and Values Driven Business. <https://a.sfdcstatic.com/content/dam/www/ocms-backup/assets/pdf/misc/salesforce-research-2017-workplace-equality-and-values-report.pdf>
- Slater, S. F., Weigand, R. A., & Zwirlein, T. J. (2008). The business case for commitment to diversity. *Business Horizons*, 51(3), 201–209.
- Thomas, R. Jr. (1991). *Beyond race and gender: unleashing the power of your total workforce by managing diversity*. New York, NY: AMACOM.
- Tomlinson F., Schwabenland C. (2010). Reconciling Competing Discourses of Diversity? The UK Non-Profit Sector Between Social Justice and the Business Case. *Organization*, 17(1), 101-121.
- Yadav S., Lenka U. (2020). Diversity management: a systematic review. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*. May 2020.
- Zanfrini L., Monaci M. (2021) *Il Diversity Management per le risorse umane immigrate Booklet per le imprese e le altre organizzazioni di lavoro*.
- Wang, P., & Schwarz, J. L. (2010). Stock price reactions to GLBT non discrimination policies. *Human Resource Management*, 49(2), 195–216.
- Wright, P. M., Ferris, S. P., Hiller, J. S., & Kroll, M. (1995). Competitiveness through management of diversity: Effects on stock price valuation. *Academy of Management Journal*, 38(1), 272–287.

Tools

- <https://inclusivefutures.org/disability-confident-employers-toolkit/>
- <https://www.ismu.org/inclusione-lavorativa-di-migranti-per-ragioni-di-protezione/>



Drivers for Inclusion in different generations

Authors:

GIVE Team – Centro San Viator



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

1. Introduction

Diversity and inclusion are essential pillars in the culture of any organization that wants to advance along the path of sustainability. A diverse and inclusive entity or company better attracts and retains talent and innovates more, thereby becoming more productive and more open to society. Diversity refers to the set of characteristics that makes us unique and singular people, including visible and invisible variables such as age, gender, culture, disability, thinking styles or experiences. Companies and organizations have to bet on human capital as the main asset and key to success, through a social model committed to professional excellence and quality of life.

Diversity and inclusion within the governance processes of organizations goes far beyond simply doing the right thing. Research shows that a diverse and inclusive workplace enhances innovation, encourages collaboration and increases a sense of belonging in organizations. But even today, the definition and importance of diversity and inclusion, as well as the way they are addressed, are in a constant process of change and adaptation to the new realities of our society.

That said, there is one aspect of inclusion that has remained constant over the last few decades: the intersection between diversity and the issue of generations. Leading the discussion of diversity and inclusion with a generational perspective can help people to begin to develop changes in organizations and companies from a more inclusive point of view than in response to the needs presented by an increasingly complex and changing society. continuous transformation.

"Gross Domestic Product does not measure the health of our children, the quality of their education, or the joy of their games. It measures neither the beauty of our poetry, nor the strength of our marriages. It is indifferent both to the decency of our factories and to the safety of our streets. It measures neither our wisdom nor our education, nor our talent, nor our courage, nor our compassion, nor our devotion to our country. In fact, it measures everything that makes life worth living, and it can tell us everything about our country, except those things that make us proud to be part of it." Robert Kennedy²⁸

²⁸ Quoted in "Take it personally." Icaria Editorial-Intermón Oxfam. Barcelona. 2004



2. Exploring Inclusion

Inclusion is not just an environment, but an ongoing commitment. It defines the orientation of organizations towards their people. Have you ever walked into a room and instantly felt out of place? Many people have experienced this feeling trying to fit into a new context. Imagine being a prospective employee who comes in for an interview and feels like you don't belong to the group of people who are already employed.

The term generational diversity may not be widely known yet, and that precisely emphasizes how important it is to spread it.

Generational diversity is defined as the presence and inclusion of individuals belonging to all generations. When talking about generational diversity, there is often confusion about what exactly defines a generation. According to the last studies, the main generations are: The Silent Generation (those born between 1920-1945), the Baby Boomers (1946-1964), Generation X (1965-1980), Millennials (1981-1996) and the Generation Z (1997-2012). These are not universally accepted limits, but they should give us an idea of who belongs to which generation.

So why does generational diversity matter? It is certainly an often overlooked but vital aspect from a corporate diversity and inclusion perspective.

Almost all workplaces have a wide range of ages and career paths, so ensuring that communication between generations is respectful, empathetic, and cooperative is vital to a company's success. The people of each generation have clear differences in their life experiences conditioned by socio-educational factors, which influence their values and points of view. The different visions of the world that a Baby Boomer and a Millennial may have can be an excellent tool to encourage innovation, but they can also cause problems of mutual understanding. When a company implicitly has a diverse and respectful attitude towards generational diversity, the different skill sets of different generations can lead to the creation of a more flexible, agile and adaptable workplace.

To take advantage of the power that generational diversity can offer to companies, entities and social agents, it is essential to understand the main obstacles that can hinder intergenerational success.

One of them is communication. Communication has been constantly evolving, bringing with it new ideas and attitudes about etiquette and the proper use of communication. Some older generations may prefer phone calls and face-to-face meetings, while younger employees may prefer emails and messaging apps and



even social media. While there is no single "right way" to communicate, everyone should be able to communicate with each other freely.

This favors diversity and promotes the inclusion of different groups regardless of their communication patterns. In the case of the most disadvantaged groups, communication becomes a key part of the inclusive process. As Marcos de Castro²⁹ points out, "things have changed since the old industrial society: society evolves, new technologies have "revolutionized" production systems, economic growth is no longer directly related to social growth and, above all, the deterioration of social equity due to the action of a market that involves mechanisms of social exclusion requires citizen reactions to it. All this requires a remodeling of the concepts that have governed the action of companies until now".

By having open and honest conversations about communication preferences and using a mix of different communication channels, companies can limit misunderstandings and ensure that all employees feel included in the workplace conversation, regardless of their background or their intellectual abilities.

Another of the barriers that we can find in intergenerational spaces are the different expectations. This can be especially insidious, as expectations are rarely explicitly stated, but can lead to miscommunication and conflict if not addressed.

In the case of people with employability difficulties, this problem is aggravated, if possible, a little more. Many older employees emphasize loyalty to one company, while younger people may prefer to "try out" several companies before finding a good fit. These divergent attitudes can reflect different motivations, leading to misunderstandings between employees who do not understand each other's expectations and viewpoints. Like communication, differences in expectations are best resolved through open channels of discussion that allow employees to understand each other's motivations. Once there is a shared understanding, employees can leverage their knowledge of each other's expectations to avoid future misunderstandings.

While addressing communication and differences in expectations is vital, it can also be the start of a journey toward generational diversity. When we begin a reflection on the possible misconceptions we have about other generations, it is necessary to think about what attributes and stereotypes people wrongly assign to their generation. Using our own life experiences as a magnifying glass can help increase our empathy and give us a clearer picture of the prejudices that may exist.

²⁹ de Castro Sanz, Marcos. La Responsabilidad Social de las Empresas, o un nuevo concepto de empresa CIRIEC-España, Revista de Economía Pública, Social y Cooperativa, núm. 53, noviembre, 2005, pp. 29-51



Confronting our generational stereotypes with those we have about certain groups such as migrants can help us identify those areas that need to be reinforced in the process of labor insertion in a company. Employees from these groups want to feel that they are, or could be, accepted as part of the workplace community. They want to feel connected and have co-workers who respect and relate to them. This is where the existence of a varied intergenerational team with different codes of beliefs and values can reinforce the inclusive process.

Finally, it is important to remember that although there are differences between generations, the individuals of all generations are more alike than different and that, therefore, cooperation must occur. By acknowledging our similarities, we can build stronger intergenerational relationships and create a more inclusive culture for people with fewer opportunities who are integrated into different companies.

As difficult situations are said to build strong people, so is the case with organizations. The unprecedented timing of the COVID-19 pandemic has made diversity and inclusion once again key business issues.

To meet unique challenges, organizations need people with diverse thought processes: truly diverse teams; teams that exemplify diversity of thought, identities, gender, race, age, culture, ethnicity, sexual orientation, skills, talent, background, etc.

Much research has shown that diverse teams are demonstrably more successful, and tend to outperform more homogeneous teams, in most business case scenarios. Along these lines, Iñigo Camilleri points out that³⁰ *the deeply globalized market demands innovative points of view, and services and products increasingly personalized and flexible. In this sense, matching this changing demand with a diverse workforce gives greater chances of success.*"

This is because diverse teams tend to produce contextual variety; they often present creative, lateral and innovative perspectives; they are easily able to avoid the dangers of groupthink; and the various strengths of the teams make up for the imperfections of any individual member. Diversity is what leads to better insights, more informed decisions, better products, better customer experiences, better employee experiences, and employee retention.

In this way, if diversity is a value that deserves to bet on, win and take advantage of in the company, then inclusion is the practical expression of valuing diversity. Organizations that are market leaders in their respective industries are well aware that their success is largely the result of a diverse workforce that thrives in an inclusive and engaged workplace.

³⁰ Camilleri, Iñigo. (2021). Diversidad e inclusión en la empresa. *Economía industrial*, (419), 109-118.



Inclusion is not just an environment, but an ongoing commitment. It defines the orientation of organizations towards their people. An inclusive workplace ensures that every individual in the organization feels a deep and abiding sense of respect, worth, purpose and meaningful contribution towards the common goals of the organization and, to this end, everyone has equal access to all opportunities and resources within the organization.

For any organization to truly harness the strengths of its diverse workforce, it must work persistently to build an inclusive workplace.

3. IMPERATIVES TO DRIVE INCLUSION

Here are five imperatives to drive inclusion to the forefront of an organization's agenda:

1. IMPLEMENTING ACTIONS IN FAVOUR OF INTERGENERATIONAL DIVERSITY STARTS FROM THE TOP

A successful diversity strategy starts with Leadership. The leaders of an organization are in a fundamental position to show their conviction for the cause and set the tone for the rest to follow. They need to truly embrace and harness the power of intergenerational diversity (of thought, of experience, of background, and of uniqueness) so that this mindset permeates the entire organization.

Leadership and HR teams must closely monitor the overt and implicit signals being sent that have implications for company innovation and development. For example, have we analyzed whether employee promotion policies or career advancement opportunities invariably favor one particular group, gender, or skill set over another?

2. ACTIONS THAT MAY MAKE EMPLOYEES FEEL VALUABLE OR UNVALUED IN THE ORGANIZATION.

It is essential to examine the company's internal processes and policies to ensure that they support cross-generational cooperation. We must analyze business plans by examining them with an inclusive lens to guide them in the right direction.

The principles of inclusion focus on 3: stimulation, empowerment and empathy. It is also necessary to encourage employees, empowering them in their environment with empathetic leadership that supports all people regardless of the generation or social group to which they belong.



3. BUILD A CULTURE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Studies have shown that one of the biggest predictors of high levels of inclusion in the workplace is the feeling of psychological safety.

Psychological safety is defined by Amy Edmondson as "the belief that one will not experience rejection, insult, anger, embarrassment, or ridicule for expressing oneself freely and authentically in the workplace."³¹ Trust and mutual respect are the two fundamental pillars of psychological safety. Psychological safety supports and fosters each person's ability to speak candidly, openly, and freely. Here, people believe they can speak candidly about their ideas, questions, concerns, and even mistakes. Leaders and team managers play a key role in building a culture of safety and respect so that no individual team member is afraid of being vulnerable.

While a psychologically safe workplace has a great influence on the performance and mental well-being of employees, it has a greater impact on the performance, health, resilience and strength of organizations to bounce back in difficult times. Organizations with psychologically safer environments enjoy loyal employees who remain steadfast and committed to the whole, even in times of great crisis and challenge.

In the specific case of people from vulnerable groups, psychological safety is a fundamental aspect that can largely determine whether the person's integration process in the company is favored. Being able to freely express fears, insecurities, ask for help or request that an instruction be repeated again will facilitate an inclusive quality process. It is at this point where the general drivers can have a leading role, favoring the person to be able to communicate regardless of the difficulties they may have.

4. THERE CANNOT BE INCLUSION WITHOUT EQUALITY

For there to be real equality, it is unavoidable that each person feels the same as their co-workers, it is an essential requirement. The starting point of inclusion is the trust that we will be treated equally.

Equality is inseparable from inclusion. An inclusive workplace is also one where everyone knows they have the same access to resources and opportunities as their peers.

³¹ Amy Edmondson. (2018). *The fearless organization: Creating psychological safety in the workplace for learning, innovation, and growth*. John Wiley & Sons.



Thus, as Greene, A. M., & Kirton, G. (2002) point out, "*diversity management and equal opportunities are two different terms. The term equal opportunities are associated with tolerant, rights-based and is rooted in compliance with legal regulations so it is aimed at increasing the proportion of minorities and women in the organization's high-level objectives*"³², Inclusion and attention to diversity can further promote company performance when these values are properly implemented. To achieve this, it is recommended that companies contemplate Specific Individual Development Plans, Leadership Development Plans, Upskilling and Reskilling designed from an inclusive perspective that provide all their workers with fair and equal opportunities to progress within the company.

In addition, the global pandemic caused by COVID-19 has shown that in order to implement all these plans, there must be close cooperation and collaboration not only internally in companies among the workers themselves, but even with other related companies. with the aim of activating innovation and development through the creation of work networks.

These networks necessarily happen to be made up of diverse personnel with different potentialities, sensitivities and capacities. The resilience of generations such as the baby boomer or Generation X can make them essential Drivers that can activate new plans in companies in difficult times.

5. THE POWER OF INTERGENERATIONAL WORK AS AN ACTIVATING AGENT OF INCLUSIVE PROCESSES

Understanding the concept of diversity from a perspective focused on the intergenerational aspect, people over 45-50 years of age can have significant value for companies such as Inclusion DRIVERS.

As stated in the UNESCO Report of the International Commission on the education for the 21st century, "*intergenerational solidarity is closely linked to lifelong learning and the development of key skills that allow us to learn to know, learn to do, learn to be and learn to live together*"³³. And certainly, these values that at first may seem uninteresting from a business perspective, can become fundamental values that activate really attractive business plans in times of innovation.

³² Greene, A. M., & Kirton, G. (2002). Advancing gender equality: The role of women-only trade union education. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 9, 39–59. [Crossref], [Google Scholar]

³³ (6) UNESCO Report of the International Commission on Education for the 21st Century, Madrid, España: Santillana/UNESCO, 1996



With unequal representation among people with different abilities, origins, etc., it is vital that intergenerationally harness its power to help not only the people with fewer opportunities who work with them to prosper, but also the company itself.

Vulnerability then becomes a strength multiplied by teamwork and social responsibility. Companies must realize that values such as compassion, emotions, and life experience can be turned into valuable assets that turn their leaders into highly empathetic people with higher levels of emotional management than people with traditional leadership styles and that we have to get over it.

However, the usual tendency of the company is to consider that making an investment of time to activate inclusive processes directly interferes with the company's productivity. This approach goes hand in hand with a productive perspective of work and working life in which it is considered that there is only one way of doing things and that it is common to the entire organization. This approach does not take into account intergenerational collaboration and the potential that diversity and inclusion represent for the company. We firmly believe in what William Sloane Coffin Jr. said, "*Diversity can be the most difficult thing to live for a society, and perhaps the most dangerous thing for a society*"³⁴.

These could be five actions aimed at promoting inclusion in the business environment:

- Accept that diversity starts from the leadership itself. If we want to activate successful diversity strategies, it is necessary to start by defining the leadership style.
- Build a culture of psychological safety following the approaches defined by Amy Edmondson.
- Starting from the premise that there can be no inclusion without equality.
- Promote the talent of all generations present in the company.
- The power of the multigenerational workforce, knowing that including a wide range of ages in the organization adds value to it.

Younger workers, regardless of their abilities, origin, socioeconomic situation, etc... are used to the rapid development of technology and their adaptation to changes is more agile. However, more mature employees have knowledge gained from their work experience that can be decisive for decision making. The collaboration between the two will bring greater productivity to the company.

In parallel, some of the most significant benefits of the configuration of inclusive and diverse teams are:

³⁴ William Sloane Coffin (2011). "The Heart Is a Little to the Left: Essays on Public Morality", p.83, UPNE



- Multiple perspectives: different generations may have distinctive ways of seeing specific issues related to the professional field.
- Skills for problem solving: the combination of multiple generational perspectives and diverse skills and abilities drives more creative solutions to problems. Life experience influences how we relate and interact with others, taking into account in a more positive way the specific difficulties that people with fewer opportunities face in dealing with challenges and conflicts. As a result, work teams with a diversity of ages, abilities, backgrounds and aptitudes can offer a variety of ways to approach diverse problems and offer truly innovative perspectives.
- Learning/mentoring opportunities: the more diverse a team is, the more ways people have to interact and learn from each other's insights. This includes mutually beneficial mentoring opportunities. Those with more years of experience can advise younger employees on career development. What's more, the recent trend of [reverse/cross-generational mentoring](#) allows more junior employees to educate mature workers with their familiarity with current trends and technology.
- Knowledge transfer and retention: the awareness and strengths that each generation offers better prepare the business to meet its future leadership needs. Tacit knowledge stays within the company in a robust internal talent pipeline. Focus is more on in-house promotion and less on recruiting from the outside.
- Unique relationships: meaningful relationships with co-workers can help meet employees' emotional needs and contribute to job satisfaction. A variety of age groups within the organization mirrors a family structure to offer opportunities for personal connections with those outside of one's own generation.
- Learning opportunities: the more diverse a team is, the more ways people have to interact and learn from each other's ideas. This includes win-win opportunities for both. Those with more years of experience can advise younger employees on career development. In addition, both can provide beneficial help for newly hired workers, especially when they have some type of specific need.
- Transfer and socialization of knowledge: the strengths offered by each generation better prepare the company to meet its future needs. The knowledge acquired by the workers remains within the company and becomes a solid internal source of talent that can be shared with others.



- Powerful social relationships: Meaningful relationships with co-workers can help meet employees' social and emotional needs and help improve job satisfaction. It is undeniable that working in a positive work environment where "psychological security" is evident, favours the productivity of the company. In the case of workers from vulnerable groups, this becomes a key factor that can determine the success of labour integration. A variety of age groups, abilities etc... within the organization reflects a social structure that offers opportunities to establish personal connections outside of our generation, social background, intellectual ability etc. This will directly affect our way of interacting not only at a professional level but also at a social and personal level, transmitting this learning to other people outside the organization such as our family, friends, etc...

CHALLENGES FACED BY THIS INTERGENERATIONAL MODEL

Although the potential of this interaction model has numerous benefits for the company and its workers, it is true that it also presents some obstacles.

Some of the most significant are:

- Problems in communication: it is likely that there are differences in communication styles and even in the interpretation of some nuances of language between generations. In the case of people with difficulties in expressing themselves, such as some people with intellectual disabilities or those who do not have a command of the language, such as young migrants, the problem is aggravated. Nuances such as double meanings of language or irony can sometimes not be correctly interpreted by the listener and generate misunderstandings and even serious conflicts.

To minimize these risks, it is important first to use a common language that everybody can understand and second to select the most appropriate way to communicate with others, based on their characteristics, needs or motivations. For this we have numerous means of communication: email, WhatsApp, video calls, etc.

This is especially important in the case of leaders, whose communication with the workers must be as clear as possible. Selecting the best way to communicate with team members and avoiding communication breakdowns requires careful advance work.



- Negative stereotypes: as in society in general, sometimes people have preconceived notions about the main characteristics of the people with whom they interact, especially if they belong to the so-called group at risk of social exclusion. And this becomes something endemic to all generations, sociocultural strata and economic levels. Therefore, it also occurs in the educational and business field.

These broad generalizations form negative stereotypes that can lead us toward a toxic company culture, unequal treatment, and discrimination. This is especially evident when young people begin their internships in companies.

Although it is true that they are minority behaviors, they sometimes occur and greatly harm the people who suffer from them. That is why on February 17, 2022, the European Parliament published a resolution on the empowerment of European youth: employment and social recovery after the pandemic (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-0045_EN.pdf). This resolution includes a series of considerations regarding the empowerment of young people and the fight against discrimination for any cause or reason.

- Different expectations of employees: people from different generations may not have the same expectations towards their employment. In addition to people with few opportunities, the ways in which they fulfill their responsibilities, learn or are evaluated in their daily work can vary markedly. This, far from being a factor that separates them even more, can become an opportunity to establish bridges of collaboration between them that allow them to establish interpersonal support networks.



4. DRIVERS' WORK MANAGEMENT IN MULTIGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS FROM DIVERSITY

From the different departments, it is essential to ensure that the company develops its work from an inclusive, diverse and intergenerational perspective, having efficient and well-coordinated teams. But how to achieve it when we face an increasingly globalized and changing market?

Here are some people management ideas that can allow us to lead a multigenerational team that joins forces with the most vulnerable workers:

1. WORK FROM A PROPOSAL THAT VALUES THE WORK CARRIED OUT BY EACH OF THE EMPLOYEES.

From here, an internal career plan can be developed that is compatible with the career plans of other workers and that seeks cohesion between them, taking into account the inclusive criteria set out above.

As DeLong (2004, 2009) points out, "Workplace cultures may change as older workers accustomed to working in particular ways retire and younger workers with different skills and values replace them. Organizations will lose leadership skills, and knowledge, levels of talent and tacit knowledge, and relationships such as workers leaving"³⁵.

To keep employees satisfied with their work, regardless of their ability, aptitude, social status, etc., it is key to offer them a positive and non-discriminatory work environment that allows the person to feel that they will be able to carry out their work adequately.

Today, policies and programs to enhance the psychological well-being, work-life balance and paid time off of your workers are really attractive to all of them.

³⁵ DeLong, D.W. (2004). Lost Knowledge: Confronting the Threat of an Aging Workforce. Oxford: Oxford University Press. DeLong, D.W. (2009). Reducing risk: Building the business case for investing in knowledge retention. International Journal of Human Resources Development and Management, 9, 294–299.

All this stimulates a climate of respect, trust and well-being aligned with values of diversity and inclusion since it has a direct impact on them.

2. PLAN HOW AN INCLUSIVE HIRING PROCESS SHOULD BE.

From the design of the offer to the personnel selection process, it is necessary to guarantee transparency, striving to eliminate any discriminatory bias. Even during the period of carrying out non-work practices, the company must take care of the relationship established with young people, especially when they are people with specific needs. The first step would be to train the personnel who carry out the process of selecting people, as well as the professionals in charge of monitoring the internships.

It is necessary to adapt the process to the people and not for the people to adapt to it. This is significantly relevant when dealing with young people with disabilities or people in complex life processes, with low self-esteem or bad previous professional experiences.

3. PAY ATTENTION TO DIFFERENT STYLES OF COMMUNICATION

A good work environment is determined by effective communication between all members. The goal is to ensure that the same information is accessible to everyone, regardless of their abilities or skills.

Language gaps have always existed between generations but this is something that we must overcome in a world where our working life is getting longer and longer. Now that digital communication is changing culture so rapidly, younger generations have much more influence over older generations. Augustyniak writes that *"today adults learn different things using other forms and methods of work"*³⁶.

We must add the sociocultural diversity that exists in our society and that makes communication even more difficult. The main objective has to be to find points in common and combine the varied styles of communication that the different people of each organization have.

It is precisely the generational drivers who can contribute the most in terms of facilitating mechanisms that achieve effective communication between all members.

³⁶ Augustyniak, E. (2010). Edukacja dorosłych – potrzeba czy konieczność? [Adult education—the need or necessity?].



4. DEFINE THE PROFESSIONAL EXPECTATIONS OF EACH PERSON IN THE ORGANIZATION

A common purpose unites people and minimizes their differences. Regardless of their age, socioeconomic status, background, or abilities, people want to be clear about their goals within the organization and their specific role.

Leaders must establish formulas to let each of the people know what their specific objectives are, both individually and collectively, within the entity.

This process must become something continuous that is periodically reviewed and updated to adjust it to the changes that may occur not only in the organization but also in the personal life of each one of the people.

The constructive observations of the leaders will help the workers to meet the objectives and to improve their professional and socio-labour skills as well as their soft skills. This type of intergenerational leadership ensures that people have the confidence to know where they are going.

5. COLLECT PEOPLE'S SUGGESTIONS/OPINIONS.

Not everyone feels comfortable giving their opinion, so it is necessary to find formulas to encourage people to give us their opinion/suggestion honestly to stimulate the entity's continuous improvement process. It is advisable to offer different ways of being able to do so, since often the most vulnerable people in the organization are not used to having their opinion taken into consideration. To do this, methods such as surveys, self-assessments, individual interviews or other methods can be articulated. adapted to the individual characteristics of the people.

It is also essential to choose Drivers capable of creating environments of trust that allow people to "open up" and transmit their opinions with total confidence.

In this way, as we collect more information about how people feel and how they perform their duties, we can discover what we need to improve in the organization, in order to better manage the multigeneration potential that exists in each entity or company.

6. TRY TO ADAPT TO THE DIFFERENT PRODUCTIVE STYLES OF PEOPLE AND THEIR SPECIFIC NEEDS.

There is no single way to address how workers, regardless of their individual characteristics, can best perform their responsibilities. Organizations that are able to adapt to the needs of their employees are better able to attract and retain talent.



Offering people benefits such as flexible working hours that are compatible with their personal obligations or special needs can mean the difference between keeping a job or losing it.

The COVID-19 pandemic has taught us that flexibility has been key to keeping companies alive and has even increased worker productivity.

This is perfectly extrapolated to what often happens to young people with fewer opportunities when they start their first work experience. Your mental health, socioeconomic and even personal needs are determining factors when carrying out a labor activation process.

It is precisely the Drivers who can first detect these needs and, from their professional experience, help young people to respond to them.

7. CREATE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES.

People are generally eager to learn and advance in their careers, regardless of other external factors. Providing a wide range of professional development opportunities benefits people's growth and increases their contribution to the entity.

Skill enhancement is not only achieved through formal training. It can happen through the exchange of knowledge between generations, people of different origins or with diverse abilities. All this can be done through mentoring and peer learning or the creation of multi-professional teams.

For example, some people quickly become familiar with new technologies and can provide guidance and help to those who have more difficulties. This will increase the skills of both, increase mutual knowledge and improve social relationships.

8. SUPPORTIVE AND INCLUSIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT

It is the responsibility of leaders to create work environments that are inclusive of all. It is important to take into account discrimination due to generational gaps when designing strategies for attention to diversity and inclusion because it is precisely the strength of the drivers that can promote concrete inclusive actions.



5. CONCLUSIONS

Taking advantage of age-related differences provides a solid source of talent to support the human structure of companies and entities.

The key is to communicate openly, honestly, and transparently to create an atmosphere where people feel included and respected. This provides a positive experience and allows people to fulfill their needs and career potential.

Diversity and inclusion are not just corporate buzzwords; are statistically proven competitive advantages. *"The most diverse companies are better able to attract the best talent; improve your customer focus, employee satisfaction and decision making; and secure their license to operate,"* says global research firm McKinsey and Company. Their most recent study confirmed a significant correlation between diversity and financial performance.

That is why companies strive to hire diverse teams and turn them into work spaces with equal opportunities.

However, it is undeniable that people tend to look for those who share our beliefs, backgrounds and cognitive styles (similarity attraction effect), We look for information that confirms our beliefs (confirmation bias) or we assume that someone who is good in an area will be successful in other areas (halo effect).

So it stands to reason that to create diversity, it's not enough to put a bunch of different people on the same team. *"Organizations should consider making structural changes, implementing transparent data-driven solutions, and providing a visceral understanding of how bias affects decision-making, talent decisions, and business outcomes"* as the Deloitte Diversity report points out and inclusion: the reality gap.

"Discrimination is still a reality," said Sonia Kang, who led a two-year study that found bias begins even before a person is hired. She and her colleagues sent 1,600 resumes to employers. Those resumes that had been "whitewashed, removing names or information that revealed their ethnicity for example, were twice as likely to be called for an interview.

In addition, this discrimination is significantly greater when we include aspects such as race and disability,

"Building an inclusive culture requires research, thought, and even a willingness to feel uncomfortable. Too often, however, companies settle for the waffle, setting goals first and asking questions later, or asking no questions at all," says Ciara Trinidad, former director of D&I at Lever.



Perhaps the next step should be to have intergenerational Drivers who are experts in diversity in organizations.

This involves breaking down many barriers that most people are unaware of: subconscious personal biases, a toxic company culture that undermines "psychological safety," (Amy Edmondson) leadership training, and hiring process evaluation among others.

Leaders are ultimately responsible for ensuring that diversity and inclusion permeate the entire organization.

Without this strategic approach, diversity and inclusion programs may not make sense because they do not take into account the true dimension of the problem or fail to take advantage of all the advantages of having a diverse team of people.

These diversity expert Drivers can help diagnose and make recommendations, but it is the leaders of the organization who must implement the necessary measures to guarantee that diversity and inclusion are present.

All of this translates into a whole new generation of leaders who understand why diversity and inclusion matter. "We identify commitment, courage, bias recognition, curiosity, cultural intelligence, and collaboration as the six traits of an inclusive leader. We encourage companies to include these capabilities in their leadership development and assessment procedures," says Deloitte on diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

Let us then bet on it, collecting each of the individual benefits that people bring to organizations, focusing on our strengths and not on our weaknesses, creating synergies that generate even greater products, even larger and of better quality that, finally, it has a direct impact on the organization itself.



REFERENCES

- Augustyniak, E. (2010). Edukacja dorosłych – potrzeba czy konieczność? [Adult education—the need or necessity?].
- “Take it personally.” Icaria Editorial-Intermón Oxfam. Barcelona. 2004
- Camilleri, Iñigo. (2021). “Diversidad e inclusión en la empresa”. *Economía industrial*, (419)
- De Castro Sanz Marcos. “La Responsabilidad Social de las Empresas, o un nuevo concepto de empresa” CIRIEC-España, *Revista de Economía Pública, Social y Cooperativa*, núm. 53, noviembre, 2005
- DeLong, D.W. (2004). “Lost Knowledge: Confronting the Threat of an Aging Workforce”. Oxford: Oxford University Press. DeLong, D.W.
- DeLong, D.W.(2009). “Reducing risk: Building the business case for investing in knowledge retention”. *International Journal of Human Resources Development and Management*.
- Edmondson Amy. (2018). “The fearless organization: Creating psychological safety in the workplace for learning, innovation, and growth”. John Wiley & Sons.
- Edmondson Amy. (2013) “Teaming: How Organizations Learn, Innovate, and Compete in the Knowledge Economy”
- Greene, A. M., & Kirton, G. (2002). “Advancing gender equality: The role of women-only trade union education. *Gender, Work & Organization*” Crossref
- Kane, Sally. (2019). “Baby Boomers: How their Generational Traits and characteristics Affect the Workplace, the balance careers”, <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/>
- Pegasus, (2018), [online], Generation Z: The future of health and wellbeing, behavioural differences between generations, <http://thisispegasus.co.uk/content/themes/pegasus/build/images/genz.pdf>, [2019]
- Sloane Coffin William (2011). “The Heart Is a Little to the Left: Essays on Public Morality”, UPNE
- Ted Talks, (2018), [online], How generational stereotypes hold us back at work, https://www.ted.com/talks/leah_georges_how_generational_stereotypes_hold_us_back_at_work, [2019]
- UNESCO Report of the International Commission on Education for the 21st Century, Madrid, España: Santillana/UNESCO, 1996
- Yourston, Douglas (2016). “An investigation into the role of generational differences in the career types, progression and success of British managers”, University of Gloucestershire, PHD thesis.



Community Social Responsibility more than just an Educational Experience. An asset to Society and the Future of Work

Authors:

Daniela Grech and Diana Miceli
The Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise, and Industry

Duncan Vella and Joseph Zammit
MCAST - Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

This article by the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) in collaboration with The Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry (TMC) aims to present a best practice that requires students to carry out 20 hours of community work service as part of their journey and skills development at MCAST. This practice has developed to empower students to appreciate the work being carried out with minority groups and expose them to realities that require inclusivity and social skills.

The rationale behind this practice is that, by giving one's own time to help organisations where the community work is being carried out, the individual is also helping other individuals, communities, associations and/or the environment, thus learning about the purpose of the organisation and what it advocates for. Exposure for students outside their normal student life will bring to light new realities for them to learn about and develop an interest in, thus enabling them to become more active citizens and as a result make them more employable when they are knowledgeable about different realities.

Students with learning difficulties are also encouraged to be part of this initiative and will be supported by means of the intensive support team at MCAST.

This practice is part of a unit dedicated to soft skills and transversal skills which are much needed and sought after by employers and the world of work providing an opportunity not only for the students but also for employers, as it contributes to the pool of the future workforce, which will be better equipped with the soft and transversal skills developed by the students.



1. Background

Notwithstanding the repercussions of the pandemic, Malta has long been experiencing workforce supply issues in certain industries. Despite the influx of expats and an increased participation of women in the labour workforce, challenges with workforce supply coupled with skills shortage are keeping businesses from expanding and thriving as desired. Understaffed industries are not able to provide the level of service expected, in turn affecting reputation and possible ability to attract business.

Against this background, it is easy to understand why the inclusion of vulnerable cohorts within the Maltese labour market is seen as vital, and is given great importance, both from a legislative and administrative perspective.

One vulnerable cohort that definitely requires attention in the Maltese context are the NEETS, or young people who are *Not in Employment, Education and Training*, especially when taking into consideration Malta's higher than EU average early school leaving rate, which in 2020 stood at 16.3%³⁷.

2. Legal Framework

When it comes to vulnerability and hindrances to employment resulting from mental or physical disabilities, the Maltese Government is seeking to address, at least partially, these issues by means of two National Strategies, namely the National Autism Strategy³⁸ and the National Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disability³⁹.

Furthermore, the employment of persons with disability is regulated by means of the Persons with Disability (Employment) Act CAP 210 of the Laws of Malta⁴⁰, which provides positive support measures aimed at ending underemployment of persons with disabilities to unlock their job potential. This legislative act obliges employers who hire more than twenty employees to ensure that at the minimum 2% of said workforce must be persons with disability, but also provides for positive measures in this regard, such as exempting the employer from paying said employer's share of social security contributions for the employee in question, and the provision of a fiscal incentive – equivalent to 25% of the disabled person's basic wage – of up to €4,500 for each employed person with disability⁴¹. Employers failing to adhere to this legislation are

³⁷ (Key Indicators on the Labour Market: 2014-2019, 2020)

³⁸ Malta National Autism Strategy 2021-2030, 2022

³⁹ Malta's 2021-2030 National Strategy on the Rights of Disabled Persons, 2021

⁴⁰ Persons with Disability (Employment) Act

⁴¹ Employing Persons with Disability, 2015



requested to make an annual contribution for every person with disability they should be employing, capped at €10,000 per employer⁴².

As a further show of support, and strength, behind this legislation, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), acknowledging the financial and tax incentives granted to employers favouring employment of registered persons with disability, was signed on 28 April 2016, between the Employment and Training Corporation (Jobsplus), the Malta Employers Association and The Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry⁴³.

Apart from policy direction and legislative obligations, several on-the-ground practices are also in place to encourage persons with disability, and other vulnerable cohorts such as the NEETs and individuals coming from difficult backgrounds, to seek employment and to motivate potential employers to give them such opportunities. In fact, employers are supported through the Lino Spiteri Foundation⁴⁴ to support jobseekers into employment with various services including Job Coaching and Mentoring, while the Job Bridge Training Centre by Jobsplus offers various Awards in Pre-employment Skills⁴⁵. Moreover, European Social Funds have also been deployed in this area, with a programme titled VASTE⁴⁶ being financed during the 2014-2020 Programming Period to support vulnerable job seekers (including persons with disability) to enter the open labour Market.

3. Youth Guarantee Scheme

A lot is being done in order to encourage and facilitate the employment of vulnerable young people. A prime example is the use of the European Social Fund to finance the Youth Guarantee Scheme⁴⁷, which provides young people aged between 15 to 25 with opportunities to improve their employability or continue their education.

In fact, from an employment perspective, the NEET Activation Scheme II⁴⁸ provides young people (16 - 25-year-olds) who are NEETS with personal/professional training, mentoring and constant support, thereby facilitating their transition from education to gainful employment, while consequently improving their employment prospects, quality of life and social integration.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Home - the Lino Spiteri Foundation, 2022

⁴⁵ Job Bridge Training Centre, 2022

⁴⁶ VASTE Programme, 2022

⁴⁷ Youth Guarantee Scheme, 2022

⁴⁸ NEET Activation Scheme I and II - Malta, 2018



The programme consists of two main phases: training and work exposure/further education.

In the first phase, every applicant receives approximately four weeks (80 hours) of training on soft skills modules and also industry-based modules.

During phase 2, a participant is offered one of two options:

1. A work placement (maximum of 240 hours) with an employer based on the applicant's skills and desires. This placement lasts approximately 12 weeks – 80 hours every 4 weeks.
2. If the applicant desires to further their education level, they can choose a course from an accredited institution such as MCAST/ITS and pursue a course there. In this case, the scheme also covers a maximum of 240 hours.

Each participant is paid an allowance after both the training and the work exposure/further education phases based on their attendance rate.

3. Bridging the Gap Scheme

Moreover, Jobsplus also offers the Bridging the Gap Scheme⁴⁹, which is a national fund incentive that supports job seekers during the transitional period from unemployment to employment by allowing them to evaluate the performance of the client in the workplace, prior to proper engagement. Other efforts in this area are also being made through other pre-employment programmes offered by other government institutions (such as INK Project from Aġenzija Sapport) and other various pre-employment programmes from various educational institutions such as Level 1 Awards by MCAST and Youth.Inc by Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ.

4. Social Responsibility

Through such practices the state ensures the creation and sustainability of a supportive employment environment for disadvantaged groups. This supportive climate encompasses various aspects relating to the quality of life of disadvantaged cohorts. With education being key to enhanced employment prospects, such efforts are also extended to the educational sphere, Vocational Education and Training (VET) in particular. Feedback from educational and industry stakeholders has put student transversal soft skills on the agenda of VET institutions time and again. Evidently, an

⁴⁹ Bridging the Gap Scheme, 2022



individual's potential is often obscured by one's lacking abilities in the interpersonal, social, and communication domains. Job seekers in possession of well-developed soft skills in addition to good vocational competencies stand a higher chance of being successful in securing and maintaining a job. With vulnerable and disadvantaged VET students being increasingly prone to lacking such soft skills, the need to address this training domain becomes more imminent.

Consequently, in their strive to remain relevant to industry needs, VET institutions must not only focus on the vocational competencies that are directly related to a particular industry sector, but also on the soft skills which enable individuals to develop healthy inter-colleague relationships, good communication skills, effective conflict management strategies, and genuine social and humanitarian considerations. Although frequently overlooked by VET institutions, the soft skills aspect of an employee is highly valued by industry, particularly by organisations which take pride in their contribution to society through their Corporate Social Responsibility activities. Drawing on this model of an altruistic corporate community which seeks to enhance the various life dimensions of the wider community in which it operates, MCAST has structured the purposely designed unit of **Community Social Responsibility** and introduced it across its courses.

a. Community Social Responsibility - Mandatory skill unit at MCAST

Community Social Responsibility is a mandatory key skill unit delivered at MCAST that brings together two important and vital areas in one's character and one's life which are necessary to function in today's society and the world of work. These are:

- (i) transversal skills necessary for employment and
- (ii) active citizenship which is also seen as a vital practice in a modern society.

MCAST is an active collaborator with industry with regular meetings and events in which industry is invited to give active feedback. On numerous occasions industry feedback seems to revolve around similar issues once again. The first event from this series was called "Encounter - MCAST Meets Industry Thematic Round Table Series." The theme of this event was: *Exploring 21st Century Key Competences in Industry* and was held on Monday 25th April 2022. During this event, industry representatives were presented with work on keyskills units at MCAST, industry representatives commented that: *"transversal, interpersonal and intrapersonal skills are essential, and that unfortunately students lack public speaking skills and the ability to share their knowledge. In order for students to be successful during interviews and on the job, they must show that they are self-confident, resilient and can adapt to rapid changes."*



Community Social Responsibility was introduced in its current format in 2019 with the aim of addressing such deficiencies and empowering students for today's world of work. As already explained CSR is a mandatory unit meaning that whether students are starting their journey at MQF Level 1 or in the final years of their degree, they need to experience this unit in both of its facets. Students attend lectures either weekly or fortnightly depending on the level they are in to learn more about the transversal skills necessary in today's world and work on themselves to develop these further.

At lower levels the students work on areas including personal traits and interests, core values, goal setting, organisational skills, and self-management. While at higher levels, the skills experienced include, self-reflection, effective collaboration, communication skills, dealing with conflict and the importance of giving and receiving feedback. All the above lead to students becoming more employable in today's world.

The other aspect of the CSR units at MCAST link the college to non-governmental institutions, social partners and education institutions to form partnerships to develop and cultivate skills, attitudes and values for the real world and empower young and adult learners to become active citizens and become employable in a dynamic democratic society and economy. This involves students having to perform 20 hours of community work in an NGO of their choice or can come with a social initiative either that can be held either in person or virtually.

Students have the opportunity to enhance their educational experience, profile and CV through this experience. A diverse range of opportunities are provided by MCAST in collaboration with social partners and interested stakeholders to all learners who are willing to participate in the voluntary social responsibility initiative. The opportunities include areas such as entrepreneurship, creative and performing arts, sport and culture among others.

b. Benefits of Community work within CSR unit

The rationale behind this is that by giving one's own time helping the organisation where you are carrying out the community work, you are also helping people, communities, associations or the environment they represent. What turns that donation into an investment is that you get back far more than you give. Moreover, it is believed that by giving students the chance to try something new and build a real sense of achievement, students gain confidence. Community work can have a real and valuable positive effect on people, communities and society in general. Over the past



three years, there have been countless activities organised by students or CSR activities organised by the college in which students have participated.

Moreover, even the perception of students toward this unit and the benefits that it gives them towards their life changes after the unit. Feedback received from some students includes:

"It was a very interesting subject since we covered several topics which are not often discussed. Also, we had the ability to communicate with each other and share our own experiences. Moreover, we had the chance to carry out the 'voluntary work' which was important for me since I have gained more experience and improved my skills."

c. Community Social Responsibility as an Inclusive Practice

MCAST's mission statement has always reflected an inclusive dimension:

"To provide universally accessible vocational and professional education and training with an international dimension, responsive to the needs of the individual and the economy."

Same as with all aspects of the college, Community Social Responsibility is inclusive for various reasons. There are quite a number of students who have learning, and intellectual difficulties and they are supported to be able finalise the unit and the community work hours.

The CSR department ensures that any such students are supported in the best possible way. This is done either by liaising with the place where the community work is done, or else trying to find another place where the hours can be done that match the skillset of the student involved. Moreover, there are also instances where community work is done with the support of student mentors and student support coordinators who help students achieve their learning goals.

MCAST believes that the skills achieved from these hours are invaluable for their course and the student's future employment and opportunities for inclusivity at the of work.



5. Inclusivity at the Place of Work

The Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry carried out a qualitative analysis on the industry's experience on inclusivity at the workplace. In this context, The Malta Chamber approached 6 companies to better understand their experience when employing disadvantaged groups as well as the skills they bring to the company.

The interviews were held over the phone using open-ended questions, which include:

1. What is the impact of inclusivity on your company?
2. What are the skills appreciated by the company?
3. Was it a positive experience?

a. The Impact of Inclusivity in Industry

The Work Culture

From the six employers that were approached five provided very positive feedback as regards their experience, whereas one highlighted that they did not have the luxury to accommodate said cohort.

Nonetheless, those with a positive experience expressed the importance of an inclusive and diverse work culture that is ready to offer opportunities to all persons including those from disadvantaged groups.

Two of the companies highlighted the fact that given that this target group would have gone through various forms of negative personal experiences, when offered an opportunity within a positive work culture of acceptance, they would want to prove themselves, thereby going the extra mile and thrive in their role, especially when leveraging their talent towards the right job. This is when the employer recognises that the efforts made were worthwhile.

Moreover, employers highlighted the importance of promoting diversity and inclusion instead of positive discrimination, which is a disservice to disadvantaged groups. Thus, when prioritising a positive work environment and leveraging people's talents, it becomes a win-win situation for all.

Integration at the Place of Work

Some important aspects highlighted by companies when employing, engaging and integrating persons from disadvantaged groups include the employers' commitment to adjustments required to the place of work to ensure health and safety for the individual; the importance of having a job coach, mentor or 'guardian angel'; the improved teamwork and work culture within the company; as well as the challenges of



the invisible disability. The following is an explanation of the key elements for integration:

Adjustments: Employing persons with special abilities, requires adjustments to the place of work to ensure accessibility, safety and the ability for one to work depending on the impairment.

Mentoring: It takes them longer to learn and settle and a job coach is a crucial, this requires time and patience, for each individual depending on their needs - it is not a one-size-fits-all.

Improved teamwork: It was also reported by most companies that the integration of persons from disadvantaged groups tends to create better teamwork within the rest of the team. While initially there is hesitation, having a job coach or a mentor or adopting the guardian angel practice at the workplace, provides for good camaraderie and group commitment.

Invisible Disability: It was also noted that while persons may be certified as having a physical impairment, mental health matters were neither certified nor disclosed to employers. In fact 2 companies highlighted this fact. Mental Health was especially reported to be the most complex and challenging, since this is not a visible disability, the person is not even aware most of the time, and it is not disclosed to the employer. Moreover, it was also analysed that those most challenging and not as long lasting are usually those emerging from correctional facilities.

The Role of Caregivers

Caregivers and family members of persons from disadvantaged groups are key to the success of the engagement and integration of such persons in their employment. Companies have highlighted the difference in approach by parents such as those being overprotective, which limits the individuals growth and autonomy; those being absent, for which the company would need to fill in the gaps brought about by this reality; and the educated caregivers or family members that have learned how to enable individuals reach their potential.

Overprotective parents: tend to limit and hinder the person's autonomy and independence in terms of mobility to and from the place of work, attending interviews with them and coming to work with the child.

Absent parents: in this case the employer ends up filling the role of the absent parents, as the employee becomes more dependent on the place of work.

Educated & participative parents: parents that have been educated as regards their children's abilities have shown to be easier to collaborate with as they promote their child's independence and encourage them to go ahead.



In this regard, more awareness and training should be made available for caregivers or family members that are responsible for persons from disadvantaged groups.

b. Skills appreciated and required by Industry

When companies were asked about the skills, they appreciated the most from disadvantaged groups, almost all organisations highlighted that **loyalty, commitment and dedication** were the most prominent features of employing persons from disadvantaged groups. This contributes to a **high retention rate of employment** of persons from disadvantaged groups. Such persons are appreciative of the opportunity given to them by the employer.

Employers expressed the importance of **reasonable expectations**. Two companies expressed having no experience of people from minorities, being unable to reach expectations or key performance indicators. If the person's talents are matched with the right role and task, the management would be leveraging their talent for their personal development as they bring the best out of them, which ultimately benefits the company.

Other **colleagues are appreciative of their skills** and contribution to their work, for instance, persons with disability tend to excel when doing repetitive routine tasks which provides them comfort while the repetition and rhythm makes them highly productive as they keep the momentum going. A particular example is a company having a specific task known as 'pinning', while most employees would try to avoid this task or take shortcuts, the person with disability is very loyal to the process and takes pride in the precision of the task. They feel crucial to the ultimate result or outcome and a valuable part of the process. When their task is crucial and indispensable, they feel they are providing value.

Another interesting observation is the fact that persons from disadvantaged groups feel that their **work is very important for their social life**. Most of them only have a social life thanks to their employment. So, when the pandemic hit, given that some of them are vulnerable and resided in facilities that were in fact classified and vulnerable like care homes, they were unable to come to work, socialise and felt very isolated. One of the companies identified a task that the individual could do at the care home, and the work would be taken to the residence for him to do and be picked up the next day. This enabled the individual to feel useful, valued and thought of, despite the social distance.

The **impact on other employees** tends to be positive, as they also become more accepting of issues that may develop within their own families, they take courage, knowing that their colleague managed. Hence the organisation is contributing to a better society at large.



6. Looking Forward - Recommendations for the Future

Nevertheless, notwithstanding the above policy and legal direction, as well as the ongoing efforts on the ground, MCAST and TMC still believe that more can be done in this area and, as part of its formal recommendations, it has in fact suggested that the national system of job coaching and mentoring should be strengthened, and that a new role within the employment section of persons with disability should be created to smoothen their transition into employment. Indeed, TMC has put forward the role of an Employment Support Worker, which should be at par with that of a Learning Support Educator and which would include the elements of job coaching and mentoring in order to support young people to transition into employment or to retain it.

Also, since young people with disability still face challenges to enter the labour market once they finish compulsory education TMC has also recommended that young people need to be guided to a job readiness programme as from Year 9 within compulsory education. This is to ensure that such young people will not end up in the vicious circle of 'training' once over the age of 16 and either never make it to employment or enter the labour market at a later stage.

Furthermore, MCAST and TMC also believe that the further strengthening of Vocational Programmes is imperative, and that this should be done by primarily working on removing structural barriers of current programmes, incentivising employers to invest time to develop and train students, and to participate more actively in such initiatives. Moreover, such programmes should also be extended to students without formal qualification to provide them with opportunities of development. TMC also believes that opportunities should be created for work placements within the post-secondary years in order to better prepare students to enter the world of work as adults whilst also gradually increasing the age of compulsory education to 18, including at least 2 years of postsecondary education. Social structures need to be given an elevated role in distributed education outside the typical educational curriculum, especially targeting at-risk students, and industry players should be encouraged to release their brightest minds to carve in time to educating, teaching and mentoring the future generation.

Employing and sustaining people from disadvantaged groups requires several efforts on multiple fronts. Nonetheless, the knowledge generated through such processes is invaluable to all stakeholders, organisations in particular. MCAST therefore recommends the creation of platforms such as forums with the aim of sharing effective practices among industry partners. Such platforms would create a space for industry to explore the issue of employment of disadvantaged groups deeper and learn from fellow organisations. This process of exchanging experiences, challenges, and outcomes would help address concerns among industry partners. Apprehension of the unknown



is commonly regarded as a major barrier to employing disadvantaged groups. These sharing platforms would thereby support industry in appreciating the value generated through such recruiting processes. Additionally, such activities would naturally lead to the formation of communities of practice within industry, thereby creating a shared, sustainable approach to a common undertaking.

Setting role models in industry is key to influencing perception of disadvantaged groups. MCAST recommends initiatives geared towards stimulating the promotion of successful stories experienced by organisations. Such promotion would focus on an employee's abilities, the challenges faced in recruiting such people and most importantly, the effective supportive measures adopted as well as the benefits created both in relation to the employee as well as the organisation. These initiatives could be implemented through an organisation's corporate social responsibility activities and funding. Additionally, supporting schemes and funding could be provided by the state. Promotion channels would include typical ones adopted in marketing campaigns.

For many students with disabilities MCAST acts as the step between secondary education and entities supporting the transition to employment. Such position has enabled the College to appreciate the efforts and expectations of both its feeding and receiving entities. Meanwhile, these two counterparts seem to lack familiarity with the services, requirements, and goals of one another. Since students with disabilities at age 16 are typically encouraged to further their education at MCAST and other post-secondary education institutions before moving on to employment, secondary schools tend to view employment as a distant goal, thereby keeping back from engaging with the entities facilitating transition to work for students with disabilities. This phenomenon also occurs in the opposite direction whereby entities supporting students towards employment miss out on interacting sufficiently with secondary schools and participating in effective individual plans for students with disabilities. MCAST therefore recommends the creation of a committee composed of representatives from both ends of the process as well as other related stakeholders with the purpose of developing an appreciation of the support activities adopted by the entities involved and most importantly, shape such activities in ways that complement each other, thereby ensuring that students with disabilities are trained in key transversal employment skills in secondary education. The committee would in turn advance this approach through the organisation of seminars, workshops, forums, continuous professional development, and related initiatives that foster a shared understanding of the support paths available to students with disabilities.



7. Conclusion

Most companies have highlighted the importance of integrating disadvantaged groups at the workplace, since the organisation is part of the community and society. Most companies started employing, engaging and integrating disadvantaged groups years before legislation imposed the 2% employment of persons with a disability in organisations. Most companies highlighted the fact that they have engaged persons with disability and special needs, others emerging from correctional facilities, persons emerging from the substance abuse recovery programme, early school leavers, third country nationals and more.

It was also clear that the organisation had to want to engage such disadvantaged groups, have it part of their ethos, and be well-equipped and prepared to employ, engage and integrate the right people. Most organisations have grown wiser, the awareness raised by different non-profit organisations and the incentives by government have helped further in the integration of disadvantaged groups however, the employer must want to engage and integrate such persons by having this mission at heart, be ready to allocate resources and develop the right work culture at the place of work.



References

- 2018. *NEET Activation Scheme I and II - Malta*. [ebook] Belgium: European Union. Available at: <<https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=20138&langId=en>> [Accessed 18 October 2022].
- 2020. *Key Indicators on the Labour Market: 2014-2019*. [ebook] National Statistics Office. Available at: <chrome-extension://efaidnbnmnibpcjpcglclefindmkaj/https://nso.gov.mt/en/News_Releases/Documents/2020/10/News2020_167.pdf> [Accessed 18 October 2022].
- Jobsplus.gov.mt. 2022. *Bridging the Gap Scheme*. [online] Available at: <<https://jobsplus.gov.mt/schemes-jobseekers/bridge-gap-scheme>> [Accessed 18 October 2022].
- Jobsplus.gov.mt. 2015. *Employing Persons with Disability*. [online] Available at: <<https://jobsplus.gov.mt/employers-mt-MT-en-GB/employing-persons/employing-persons-disability>> [Accessed 18 October 2022].
- Jobsplus.gov.mt. 2022. *Job Bridge Training Centre*. [online] Available at: <<https://jobsplus.gov.mt/schemes-jobseekers/job-bridge-training-centre>> [Accessed 18 October 2022].
- Jobsplus.gov.mt. 2022. *VASTE Programme*. [online] Available at: <<https://jobsplus.gov.mt/schemes-jobseekers/vaste>> [Accessed 18 October 2022].
- Jobsplus.gov.mt. 2022. *Youth Guarantee Scheme*. [online] Available at: <<https://jobsplus.gov.mt/schemes-jobseekers/youth-guarantee-scheme>> [Accessed 18 October 2022].
- Meae.gov.mt. 2021. *Malta National Autism Strategy 2021-2030*. [online] Available at: <https://meae.gov.mt/en/Public_Consultations/MISW/Pages/Consultations/MaltaNationalAutismStrategy20212030.aspx> [Accessed 18 October 2022].
- Meae.gov.mt. 2021. *Malta's 2021-2030 National Strategy on the Rights of Disabled Persons*. [online] Available at: <https://meae.gov.mt/en/Public_Consultations/MISW/Pages/Consultations/Maltas20212030NationalStrategyontheRightsofDisabledPersons.aspx> [Accessed 18 October 2022].
- *Persons with Disability (Employment) Act*. CAP 210.
- The Lino Spiteri Foundation. 2022. *Home - the Lino Spiteri Foundation*. [online] Available at: <<https://linospiterifoundation.org/>> [Accessed 18 October 2022].



Process of Inclusive Work Integration of Immigrants through the Governance Model of **CROSS** - Sectoral Collaboration

Authors:
GIVE team – Omnia



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

1. INTRODUCTION

Process of inclusive work integration of immigrants through the governance and cross-sectoral collaboration, while an indispensable line of phases of a continuous process, can be overlooked in focusing at an individual phase or activity of its own in favour of maximizing the importance of that particular part of the process. However, the ability to effectively describe and highlight the importance of the work integration as a process is crucial for success in the employment of the immigrants.

The cross-sectoral collaboration of the multidisciplinary career counselling identifies clients' set of resources in terms of competence, skills, education, abilities, health and job seeking skills. Different counsellors working through a combined governance model come from different organisations. It is important that the client in this case with immigrant background receives multidisciplinary and comprehensive counselling from one service.

In order to increase the emphasis on effective work integration of immigrants the chosen governance model is supported with certain activities to follow and we assembled a succinct description of the whole process that can be directly disseminated to interested parties in dealing with work integration of immigrants.

The description of the different supporting activities of the work integration process include the both personal and group job search coaching, employer cooperation consisting of coordination of employment possibilities as well as internships and language support delivering work related inclusion and transition support by strengthening a client's professional language skills and developing the competence of the work community in language awareness activities.

The article breaks down the work integration process into easily digestible phases and activities, providing concrete examples that can be referred to when improving the work integration of immigrant clients. By increasing exposure to the whole process, we hope to better prepare counsellors for understanding and implementing cross-sectoral collaboration and supporting activities of the process in work integration of immigrants.



2. Education for All is the Foundation of Inclusion in Education

Characteristics commonly associated with inequality of distribution include gender, remoteness, wealth, disability, ethnicity, language, migration, displacement, incarceration, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, religion, and other beliefs and attitudes. Some mechanisms contributing to inequality are universal while others are specific to social and economic contexts. Education is an opportunity with the potential to transform lives. Inclusion in education is not just a result; it is a process. Education system mechanisms that play out daily in classrooms, schoolyards, parent–teacher meetings, community gatherings, local government coordination structures and ministerial councils all have an impact.

2.1. Delivering inclusive education requires multiple actors to work together

Inclusive education requires horizontal collaboration to share information, set standards and sequence support services as well as vertical collaboration among government levels for local authorities to fulfil their mandates. Education governance encompasses a dense network of institutions, rules and norms that determine policy formulation, implementation and monitoring. A review of governance arrangements in education should capture not only formal administrative and management systems but also informal processes that distribute power in these systems and determine decision making at all levels. It can be stated that delivering inclusive education requires multiple actors to work together.

Responsibilities for delivering inclusive education need to be shared horizontally among government departments or government and non-government actors, as well as vertically across education or government levels, taking their respective advantages into account. Integrating services has two main benefits. First, it allows for greater consideration of a full set of needs. Services that form part of holistic care are more accessible and more likely to be taken up. Greater awareness of services and how they are linked also increases uptake. By improving needs identification and promoting accessibility, integrated services can also positively affect outcomes for those with complex needs. Second, integrated provision can improve the quality and cost-effectiveness of services, leading to cost savings. Integration can be achieved through case management whereby one service provider acts as a referral point for access to another. It can also be achieved by providing multiple services at single site.



Structures bringing together government entities to coordinate service delivery are a common first step towards integration. However, sharing responsibility does not always imply collaboration, cooperation and coordination. deep-rooted norms, traditions and bureaucratic cultures hinder smooth transition from traditional siloed service delivery to innovative collaboration and cooperation between education and other sectors. variable access to and quality of social services create additional, overlapping obstacles to effective integration. inadequate training, ineffective communication with educators, lack of shared vision or overarching policy framework, and variation in standards across regions also inhibit efficient service provision (Lawrence and Thorne, 2016; Lord et al., 2008).

When developing and implementing integrated service delivery, clear definition of standards and objectives is key to ensuring their effectiveness and quality. Well-defined, measurable standards outline actors' responsibilities, the desired outcomes of integration and the dimensions in which policies will be evaluated. Some studies note that lack of clearly defined standards and framework is a major impediment to integrating education and health services (Lawrence and Thorne, 2016).



3. Enhancing Employment by Facilitating The Recognition of Skills of Migrant Workers

Migrants who are fully integrated into the labour market can boost the income per capita of recipient economies by providing the labour and skills needed in critical occupations and sectors. Upon their return home, migrants at all skill levels also have the potential to make a positive contribution to economic development through financial investments, as well as human and social capital acquired abroad, such as new skills, ideas and know-how. ILO evidence convincingly demonstrates the positive impact of recognition of skills and qualifications to address various labour market challenges and to bring substantial benefits for individuals, employers and national economies (Braňka, 2016).

3.1. Recognition of Prior Learning

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) is a process of identifying, documenting, assessing and certifying formal, informal and non-formal learning outcomes against standards used in formal education and training. The benefits of RPL are three-fold, depending on the different user groups: individuals (migrant workers in this case), training providers or employers. (ILO, 2020).

Benefits of RPL for different actors:

Migrant workers	Learning and training providers	Employers
<p>Improving employment opportunities for immigrant workers and easing their full integration into the labour market of the receiving country;</p> <p>Planning for an individual's development in a lifelong learning perspective;</p> <p>Increasing migrant workers' self-esteem by recognizing their achievement in learning;</p>	<p>Enabling greater retention of learners;</p> <p>Widening access to a range of learners;</p> <p>Increasing participation of learners from non-traditional learning backgrounds</p>	<p>Helping to adequately match jobs and employees;</p> <p>Helping to identify employees' skills effectively;</p> <p>Helping to identify skills gaps in organizations;</p> <p>Increasing motivation and interest in workplace activities on the part of employees;</p>



The service of multidisciplinary career counselling identifies clients' set of resources in terms of competence, skills, education, abilities, health, job seeking skills among others by using the multidisciplinary staff of Omnia Skills Centre.

3.2. Knowing the target group of migrant workers

There are various factors that influence the outcomes for migrant workers in the labour markets of countries of destination. Among them, migrant workers' skill levels and education backgrounds play a significant role in determining their migration experience. These, together with other factors such as language barriers and a lack of local work experience, put many jobs out of reach.

An important factor is that, often times, migrant workers are not well informed about the employment services available in countries of origin and are unaware of the local labour market conditions. As a consequence, they may find it difficult to navigate services and the pathways among them and often end up having to rely on social networks, which are less likely to offer access to labour mobility (Benton et al., 2014).

Multi-component interventions that combine language training with work experience programmes and job search assistance, as well as raising awareness among employers that hire them, could be more cost-effective than single measures.

4. The Actors of Cross-Sectoral Collaboration of OSKE

OSKE, the Omnia Skills Centre provides services to immigrants in Espoo that increase their professional skills and promote employment. The service is provided to immigrants who are over 18 years of age, live in Espoo and have a residence permit, need support in identifying their skills, want to strengthen their professional skills and working life skills and need support in writing job applications and finding a job and are ready for full-time study or work.

The cross-sectoral governance model provides immigrant customers with a personal career counsellor and guidance in working life skills, training and coaching, support in Finnish language skills, assistance in matters relating to Kela (Supervised by the Finnish Parliament, Kela is an independent social security institution with its own administration and finances) and the TE Office (Employment Office) as well as guidance and support for coping. You can become a client of the Skills Centre through Employment Espoo.



4.1. Omnia, the Joint Authority of Education in the Espoo Region

The basic treaty of Omnia states that it is the mission of Omnia to promote the participation, competence and well-being of citizens and the vitality of the region's municipalities, communities and companies by:

- Organising, in accordance with the organisational and maintenance permits, vocational training for young people and adults, vocational and adult upper secondary education, basic education for adults, liberal adult education and basic art education for adults;
- Organising training and course services, workshop activities and competence centre services that **promote participation, competence and employment for the region's population with immigrant backgrounds and first languages other than Finnish or Swedish and for young people without a training place, degree or job**;
- Supporting individuals and communities through lifelong learning in increasing social participation, preventing social exclusion and promoting critical thinking as well as social and cultural diversity;
- Offering local companies and communities market-based services for updating personnel competence, a recruitment and interaction channel that responds rapidly to the labour needs of companies and helps students find jobs as well as a company-oriented, effective and measurable counselling service provided at the workplace;
- Strengthening, as a stakeholder unit, the competence of the personnel of the member municipalities by jointly organising learning events, courses and training customised based on needs and sectors as well as convenient opportunities for updating professional skills;
- Innovating training products, everyday digital tools that promote sustainable development at a national and international level for citizens and companies as well as competence-based solutions for future challenges and issues in cooperation with the educational sector, business life, the member municipalities and customers; and
- Promoting and carrying out, in cooperation with the member municipalities, education organisers and companies, educational export and promoting sustainable development as well as serving as a showcase of training and competence for international visitors.



The basis and the purpose for the inclusive work integration of immigrants through the governance and cross-sectoral collaboration is clearly stated as one of the missions of the treaty of Omnia.

4.2. City of Espoo

The member municipalities of the Joint Authority are the City of Espoo, the Municipality of Kirkkonummi and the City of Kauniainen. The Espoo Story/Strategy, the related cross-administrative development programmes and the goals for the council term are always updated at the start of a new council term. The current council term runs from 2021 to 2025. The strategy lists seven goals for the current council term.

- Espoo is the top city for culture and education in Finland
- Espoo provides services together with the entire Espoo community
- Espoo is economically sustainable and offers competitive taxation
- Espoo is internationally attractive capital of entrepreneurship and innovation
- Espoo is an attractive city close to nature and safe place to live
- Espoo will achieve carbon neutrality by 2030
- Espoo is Finland's best city for integration

The goals of the City of Espoo give a very concrete framework for the work of integration of immigrants through the governance and cross-sectoral collaboration. While several goals are in line with the method of cross-sectoral collaboration, it is the goal to be the best city for integration that is the basis between the cross-sectoral governance model and link to the cooperation with Omnia.

“The city's vitality, the availability of labour and socially sustainable development will be ensured by attracting skilled individuals and their families to Espoo, improving the integration of immigrants and speeding up the process of finding employment. Espoo will effectively implement an early-stage integration programme with the aim of ensuring that immigrants learn Finnish or Swedish and find a study place or employment that matches their skills. The difference between the learning outcomes of children and young people with an immigrant background and those with a Finnish background will be halved during the council term by improving learning outcomes. The employment rate among women with an immigrant background will be increased towards the Nordic level. The main aim of the Skills Centre for Immigrants is to promote employment in private sector jobs.”



4.3. Skills Centre for Immigrants OSKE

Omnia Skills Centre OSKE offers services that increase professional skills and promote employment for immigrants in Espoo. OSKE's services are intended for Espoo residents over the age of 18 who have a residence permit.

Omnia's Skills Centre for Migrants was developed by a multi-professional team representing various TVET stakeholders including relevant government authorities, employment offices, and Espoo's local municipality to address a gap in services for unemployed migrants. Omnia's approach is to empower people and build the programme content on people's competencies. Each learner has a personalized plan and a designated Career Counsellor who follows their progress. Other professionals working directly with learners include teachers, social workers, nurses, and work life coaches. From the very beginning a focus is made on building a common understanding of why and how the Skills Centre supports the learning process and integration of migrants.

Omnia's 'Skills Centre for Migrants' represents an innovative approach to migrant integration and to creating a sustainable workforce supply led by a traditional TVET institution. The Centre functions as a one-stop shop for migrants seeking employment or vocational education. The programme builds on two paths. One is directly to employment and the other one via education to employment. Each learner receives a personalized plan based on their needs, and various support services are included, for example social work, health services, and career counselling. A designated Career Counsellor supports this entire process.

5. Support and Training for Immigrants at the Omnia Skills Centre

The Skills Centre for Immigrants is a joint, multidisciplinary service of Espoo City and Omnia that

promotes immigrants' employment and access to education. The service was launched on 1 January 2019 and the current customer target is set to 600 per year. The key element of the Centre is the governance model of cross-sectoral collaboration resulting to the principle of having all services under one roof. The cooperation of different authorities enables the client being treated as a whole taking into consideration all aspects affecting employment instead of passing the clients from one service to another. The services of the Centre can be described in four entities.



5.1. Multidisciplinary Career Counselling

The multidisciplinary career counselling identifies clients' set of resources in terms of competence, skills, education, abilities, health, job seeking skills among others by using the multidisciplinary staff of Omnia Skills Centre and different activities in it, in sight to “connect the dots” and solve the problems which are holding the person back, and to guide the client to the right kind of services.

The multidisciplinary career counselling includes several Omnia Skills Centre workers working together aiming to help the customer to move forward in life. Primary career counselling is given by a Career Counsellor who is responsible of the path of the client, and he/she travels with the customer throughout the customer relationship. Other parties given the counselling services are for example Work Life Coaches, Finnish as a second language teachers, Social Counsellor, Business Coordinators, and Personal Coaches. Different counsellors work within Omnia Skills Centre, but they come from different organizations, so the customer is receiving multidisciplinary and comprehensive counselling from one service.

The result of this practice is multidisciplinary and comprehensive counselling services, where the customer gets all the services from one place and gets solutions and possibilities to advance into education or employment. The multidisciplinary counselling is aiming that the client gets employed or finds the vocational education and training of his/her own choice to boost the chance of employment in the future.

The target is to “connect the dots” and solve the problems which are holding the client back, and to guide the client to the right kind of services. Guidance and counselling discussions aim to achieve an open, participative, and two-way discussion. It encourages the client to outline a solution, focusing on the major changes that will affect their lives (Peavy 1999). The aim is to give the client all the support and guidance they need to achieve their goals or to find a solution to their challenges.

The outputs of Omnia multidisciplinary career counselling consist of the clients' ability to:

- Identify their competencies
- Make realistic plans for their career
- Search for work by themselves
- Apply for studies by themselves



5.2. Job search coaching

Two work life coaches from the Omnia Skills Centre for Immigrants (later OSC) offer job search coaching to their unemployed immigrant clients. The service is multidisciplinary, which means that several actors with different profiles are involved in the client's employment process.

Job search coaching includes both group and personal coaching, which teaches you about the job search process and helps you build your confidence and articulate your skills. The content of the coaching includes explaining your skills and making a marketing speech, preparing job application documents, looking for jobs and job interview exercises about real jobs. The job search coaching also discusses the importance of thoughts and emotions, as it is important to understand the state of mind and emotions the client is in when applying for a job. The work life coach also offers and provides personal mental coaching to clients, if necessary.

The aim is for clients to become active, empowered, skilled and bold enough to apply for jobs on their own and find employment. If it is found that employment is not yet an option, the career counsellor and personal coach work with the client to plan a further pathway for the client's career progress.

The aim of job search coaching is to support the strengthening and clarification of the clients' employee identity, the identification and articulation of their own attitudes, competences and strengths, and to increase their job search activity. The aim of the service is for the client to learn how to apply for a job independently, understand the job search process and find a job.

The output of the service is that clients have the necessary skills for employment: documents for job search (CV, resume template) and they can use different job search channels. They are also empowered, motivated and have a positive attitude towards employment.

5.3. Language support in the workplace

The model delivers work related inclusion and transition support by strengthening an employee's professional language skills and developing the competence of the work community in language- awareness activities. It provides employment opportunities for those; whose employment is otherwise difficult due to inadequate new country spoken language skills. It also lowers the threshold for employers to embrace linguistically diverse workforce.



The new country spoken language teacher supports the employee to cope with the linguistic environment of the workplace and guides language learning on-the-job. The language support also mentors the work community in language awareness. Language support guides on communicating work instructions and workplace rules in plain language. It strengthens language aware guidance during the orientation and installs the language awareness approach into the work community through language mentoring. Language support directs the process of mutual learning and adaptation, by which a worker with an immigrant background acquires the interaction skills required for the job.

Language support aims to help the unemployed foreign language speaker find a job. The goal is to develop the client's professional language skills and agency. The foreign language employee gets started and becomes part of the work community. Language support also aims to strengthen participation. Language support helps foreign language employees to become an equal member of the work community. Language support ensures that foreign language employees are given tasks that increase their opportunities to develop their professional language skills. Suitable work tasks support the foreign language employee's goal-oriented language learning. The aim is for the foreign language employee to feel capable and respected as an employee and to make work meaningful also for their own future.

Language support strengthens workplace interaction and language aware guidance. The aim is to strengthen the workplace's ability and willingness to welcome foreign language employees. This will contribute to equality and accessibility in the labour market.

The service provides personalized guidance and induction support. The service will spread language awareness in the workplace and facilitate the induction of foreign language employees. The teachers observe employment related challenges and assess critical points in the workplace. This helps OSC to develop services for unemployed foreign language speakers that support sustainable employment for jobseekers with an immigrant background.

5.4. Employer Cooperation

Business Coordinators in Omnia Skills Centre for Immigrants (OSC) are primarily responsible for building partnerships with Employers.

The clients in OSC are unemployed jobseekers, who require assistance in their search for employment. Coming to OSC, they are divided into two service lines: 1) those who are looking for employment immediately and 2) those who seek further education before employment.



The cooperation with employers mainly consists of coordinating employment possibilities for the first group and internships for the latter as a part of their training courses.

The goal is to:

- create direct employment channels for all our clients.
- eliminate bottlenecks and barriers associated with the employment of immigrants
- provide support for employers in recruiting diverse workforce

Providing workforce to employers is a balancing act between the needs of the employers and the qualities of the jobseekers. OSC's business coordinators interact keenly with both parties. Much of the cooperation is strategizing and finding ways to make the employment happen, which often includes negotiating for customized employment. OSC's jobseeker base is tilted towards low-skilled labour, and therefore government-funded support systems, such as work try-outs and pay subsidies (and OSC's own language support) play an important role in the processes. The used models lower the threshold for employing, give experience to the jobseekers, and work as stepping-stones towards non-subsidised and permanent employment.

6. Value of the Governance Model of OSKE

The model answers to the challenges of learners coming from diverse educational and cultural backgrounds, with different work experiences and language skills. Because of this, one approach is not suitable for all. It has been observed that during the process of migrants going through the employment office to the Skills Centre the diverse range of learners present challenges, and cultural adaptation and creating a new identity are also part of the equation.

Omnia's Skills Centre for Migrants has been successful because it has facilitated cooperation between a range of different public institutions and local authorities. Eliminating or minimising bureaucratic and institutional hurdles is what makes this approach so effective. The Skills Centre invests much effort in improving multi-professional collaboration. Previous experience shows that a person gets easily lost in a system or loses motivation to work towards the set goals.



7. Impact

National TVET reforms in Finland have meant that every student is offered a personalized study plan, which is an important part of their learning success. Additionally, the introduction of a linguistically sensitive approach contributes to successful learning and integration process for migrants.

The impact here is really system wide, from the local to national level. Personalized study plans can lead to shorter study paths, allowing migrants to quickly enter into training and employment, out from unemployment. This allows for personal competences to be recognized and mobilized to support learner empowerment. Migrants proceed from passive to active citizenship and are able to integrate more effectively into society and the workforce.

Omnia's Skills Centre for Migrants connects directly with local and regional industry to understand their needs and what skills are in high demand. This has demonstrated a lack of qualified workforce in many regions. As a result, the Skills Centre is able to cooperate with regional employers to respond to labour demands in partnership with government and TVET training providers.

Omnia's Skills Centre has opened new avenues to migrants' education and employment. Some are able to take fast track, and some need more time and support. The end result is that a more personalized and empowering approach is created to support migrant integration. Also, people have been more effectively engaged in the process of moving from unemployment to education, and to active citizenship.

8. Transferability

This example of governance model of cross-sectoral collaboration shows that it is possible to organize a multi-professional team representing varied stakeholders in order to address local and regional, educational, workforce, and social integration concerns. A shared understanding of the challenges, and of a vision and goals for addressing them, is important.

The challenge in transferring the model to another context is that not every country is able to offer individualized learning plans for every student or has a history of effective and comprehensive stakeholder engagement and collaboration that is needed to coordinate such a response as with the Skills Centre for Migrants. A shared vision of the need for the integration of migrants via education and empowerment is necessary in order to increase the chances for success of an initiative such as the Skills Centre supporting the process of inclusive work integration of immigrant workers.



References

- Basic Treaty of Omnia, The Joint Authority of Education in the Espoo Region
- Braňka, J. 2016. Understanding the potential impact of skills recognition systems on labour markets,
• research report (Geneva, ILO)
- Benton, M.; Sumption, M.; Alsvik, K.; Fratzke, S.; Kuptsch, C.; Papademetriou, D. G. 2014. Aiming higher: Policies to get immigrants into middle-skilled work in Europe (Washington DC, Migration Policy Institute; Geneva, ILO).
- Espoo Employment Services <https://toimistot.te-palvelut.fi/>
- The Espoo Story is the City's strategy
<https://www.espoo.fi/en/city-espoo/espoo-story>
- Finnish Institute of Occupational health (2014);
<https://www.ttl.fi/en/themes/tyoelaman-muutos/monimuotoinen-tyoelama/working-finland-information-immigrants-13-languages>
- International Labour Organisation (ILO). 2020. How to Facilitate the Recognition of Skills of Migrant Workers. Guide for Employment Services Providers. Switzerland, ILO.
- Omnia <https://www.omnia.fi/en>
- Peavy, R. Vance (1999). Sosiodynaaminen ohjaus. Konstruktivistinen näkökulma 21 (SocioDynamic Counselling: A Constructivist Perspective). vuosisadan ohjaustyöhön. Translated to Finnish by P. Auvinen. Helsinki: Gaudeamus.
- Richard Bandler (2008), Get the life you want
- Richard N. Bolles (2021); What colour is your parachute? Your Guide to a Lifetime of Meaningful Work and Career Success
- Skills Centre for Immigrants OSKE
<https://www.omnia.fi/en/services/omnia-skills-centre->



[immigrants/support-and-training-immigrants-omnia-skills-centre](#)

- UNESCO. 2020. Global Education Monitoring Report 2020: Inclusion and education: All means all. Paris, UNESCO.
- Ways to get into work life, City of Espoo
<https://www.espoo.fi/en/working-life/employment-espoo/ways-get-work-life>



thegiveproject.eu



GIVE Partners:



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union