

Smile

Policy

Recommendations and
Action Plan

ENABLING A MORE INCLUSIVE
AND DIVERSE WORLD

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EUCEN | SOLIDAR FOUNDATION | ESU

SMILE - Social Meaning Impact through LLL universities in Europe

Erasmus+ KA3 Social inclusion and common values | 621433-EPP-1-2020-1- BE-EPPKA3-IPI-SOC-IN

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

Policy Recommendations and Action Plan

Enabling a more inclusive and diverse World

Our societies are made up of diverse cultures, ideas and preferences, which offer a rich environment with endless possibilities for learning from each other. However, these possibilities are often overshadowed by economic and political concerns. As a result, a greater emphasis is placed on the challenges that diversity might pose, instead of recognising the potential for personal growth and societal transformation that they offer. The SMILE project aims to reverse this trend, by promoting a culture of understanding and inclusion, and thus contributing to a more tolerant and welcoming Europe. As part of the project, a set of principles and recommendations have been designed which are aimed at HEIs, policy makers and civil society. Taken together, they form an action plan for creating more vibrant, diverse, and socially just societies.

Underpinning the SMILE project is an understanding of diversity as an asset to, rather than a burden on society. The SMILE project champions diversity in all its forms, but has focused its work on three main diversity areas: individuals with migrant backgrounds, women in leadership, and individuals with low socio-economic status. However, the results of the project can be transferred to other diversity groups and maintain their relevance across various contexts.

The current SMILE Policy Recommendations and Action Plan identify ten points, the SMILE Principles, that are crucial to creating more diverse and inclusive societies. Some principles are transversal and cross-cutting in nature, such as the intersectionality of diversity challenges: for example, a migrant background student may also have low socio-economic status – if this student happens to be a women, it may be an even bigger challenge for her to access and successfully complete her studies.

We have used the term “disadvantaged groups” throughout the document to refer to minorities, under-represented and marginalised groups. We understand that disadvantaged groups are not always a minority, as is the case with women. However, we have decided to use this terminology for the purpose of simplicity.

The following document consists of short descriptions of the ten principles, followed by action plan tables addressed at HEI top management, policy makers and civil society, respectively. The tables provide ideas on how to implement changes at these three levels. Whilst we have separated the three levels, they should be seen as informing and reinforcing each other: such inter-sectoral collaboration is crucial in bringing about sustained change.

The SMILE Policy Recommendations and Action Plan complements other SMILE tools like the Diversity Audit model for HEIs and the Staff Development CPD courses on diversity. We hope you will be interested in exploring the entire set of SMILE tools, and that you encourage others to do so, too.

The SMILE Principles

Understanding Diversity	01	<p>To promote diversity and inclusion as added values which enable us to learn from each other and overcome the challenges we face towards achieving a more equitable Europe</p> <p><i>Diversity makes us richer culturally, helps us understand societal problems and challenges in a more holistic manner, and points us to more creative and innovative solutions to these problems.</i></p>
	02	<p>To apply an intersectionality analytical framework to inclusion and diversity policymaking to ensure equity in education</p> <p><i>Marginalised individuals often belong to multiple traditionally disadvantaged groups, and as a result are discriminated against for different reasons at different levels</i></p>
	03	<p>To promote active engagement and advocacy towards diversity and inclusion in society at multiple scales</p> <p><i>Only by involving citizens and giving visibility to the challenges of less privileged groups can we build the empathy, understanding and appreciation of diversity that is necessary to bring about change</i></p>
Collaborating towards diversity	04	<p>To ensure collaboration between all education stakeholders in the process of promoting diversity and inclusion to increase participation of regionally and/or locally specific disadvantaged groups</p> <p><i>When all education levels combine their efforts, diversity and inclusion will be transversally addressed and our society can change more cohesively and sustainably</i></p>
	05	<p>To ensure adequate support for all education stakeholders' actions to understand and navigate the complexities of inclusion and diversity</p> <p><i>Collaboration among key actors and an adequate allocation of resources can make the difference between a hostile, and a more committed and caring society</i></p>
Facilitating Diversity	06	<p>To enable flexible pathways in Higher Education for everyone</p> <p><i>Less privileged groups have special needs, and offering them flexibility can give them a real chance to succeed and build a better life</i></p>
	07	<p>To offer staff training at different levels</p> <p><i>Training individuals (from administration to management) will help them to understand and then communicate better the challenges of diversity and inclusion to their peers and wider communities</i></p>
	08	<p>To identify and use inclusion and diversity-oriented funding opportunities such as institutional funding and student funding</p> <p><i>Only by making a proper provision for inclusion will institutions and organisations be able to promote, support and give visibility to diversity effectively</i></p>
Embedding Diversity	09	<p>To establish diversity-oriented study programmes promoting Higher Education access in accordance with the students' needs. <i>If programmes are planned with the needs and challenges of less privileged groups in mind, their situations are taken into account by default, and they are more likely to be given the necessary support</i></p>
	10	<p>To monitor progress and needs at institutional level but also at national level through data collection and monitoring</p> <p><i>Understanding the effects of previous actions taken, and knowing what works well and what does not, will help us to plan better approaches that make a real impact on society</i></p>

UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY**Recommendations on how to implement diversity at different levels**

	HEI top management	Policy makers at National and EU levels	Civil society
1. Promote diversity and inclusion as added values	<p>Short Design and promote an awareness campaign internally and externally</p> <p>Medium Review the current diversity and inclusion 'idearium' of the institution and embed an institutional diversity strategy plan</p> <p>Long Review all the activities and policies at institutional level to make them diversity and inclusion-oriented</p>	<p>Short Review the current policies and see if they are adequate to achieving equity and inclusion in higher education</p> <p>Medium Implement a policy and funding approach conditioned on diversity-oriented demands of committed entities requesting it</p> <p>Long Make sure that legislation is diversity and inclusion-oriented transversally</p>	<p>Short Inform policy makers about the needs of citizens and their requests in terms of diversity and inclusion</p> <p>Medium Flag diversity and inclusion as a key topic in relevant communications</p> <p>Long Promote diversity and inclusion in activities and involve citizens in shaping the agenda in this area</p>
2. Apply an intersectionality analytical framework	<p>Short Institutionalise an intersectionality analytical framework in the way the HEI refers to diversity and inclusion in all its actions, promoting it as a means to achieve equity and not as an end in itself</p> <p>Medium Train staff to understand and identify intersectionality, and train staff on bias recognition and mediation</p> <p>Long Boost research and monitoring into how the different social and political identities can stack up instances of discrimination</p>	<p>Short Review the current categories of disadvantaged groups referred to by national policies and the way in which their interconnections are approached</p> <p>Medium Set up diversity working groups to evaluate the inclusion of intersectionality in policymaking</p> <p>Long Institutionalise an intersectionality analytical framework for any policymaking process related to inclusion and diversity</p>	<p>Short Give visibility to the term "intersectionality" as an approach to adequately refer to the challenges of disadvantaged people</p> <p>Medium Develop a designated intersectionality approach to the internal inclusion policies</p> <p>Long Streamline intersectionality in the development of advocacy strategies</p>
3. Promote active engagement and advocacy	<p>Short Foster an environment in which disadvantaged groups are empowered in the HEI community</p> <p>Medium Create advisory groups which include representatives of disadvantaged groups in your institution to guarantee their rights to advocate for inclusion and diversity actions</p> <p>Long Allocate one representative of disadvantaged groups in all relevant committees as they have a right to lead discussions</p>	<p>Short Identify institutions and organisations actively engaged in diversity and inclusion</p> <p>Medium Create awards or rewards for organisations actively engaged in the promotion and advocacy of diversity and inclusion and give them visibility</p> <p>Long Allocate one representative of disadvantaged groups in all relevant local committees as they have a right to lead discussions and express their needs and worries</p>	<p>Short Support representatives of disadvantaged groups and promote multi-cultural participatory activities</p> <p>Medium Facilitate the exchange of knowledge and research between HEIs and CSOs for improved responses to the needs of disadvantaged groups</p> <p>Long Network and collaborate with other civil society organisations to promote bottom-up approaches and demonstrate that active participation is not only possible but useful</p>

COLLABORATING TOWARDS DIVERSITY

Recommendations on how to implement diversity at different levels

	HEI top management	Policy makers at National and EU levels	Civil society
4. Ensure collaboration between all education stakeholders	<p>Short Involve the entire HE community in the process of auditing the inclusion strategy of education providers</p> <p>Medium Work jointly with secondary education and community learning providers to recruit and qualify local learners who face barriers to accessing HE</p> <p>Long Develop co-creation actions that would include learners and professionals at all levels of education to provide pre-degree level programmes/access and reviewed diversity and inclusion policies in HE</p>	<p>Short Promote shared or open resources on diversity and inclusion to give citizens access to knowledge and tools and share all available research and data with all other education stakeholders</p> <p>Medium Strengthen social and civil dialogue to ensure that matters of inclusion in HE policymaking can be discussed at these levels and promote programmes that enable this type of approach</p> <p>Long Institutionalise processes of inclusion for education professionals, learners and CSOs in education policymaking that go beyond simple consultations, and facilitate co-creation in policymaking with all education stakeholders</p>	<p>Short Promote the idea of co-creation of policies for inclusion</p> <p>Medium Build up partnerships with HEIs for the promotion of inclusion. Deliver additional programmes which aim to provide advice, information, or guidance and share own data and research with HEIs</p> <p>Long Establish long-term partnerships or franchises on HE progression routes and outreach programmes in relation to the needs of the local HEI community</p>
5. Ensure adequate support for all education stakeholders' actions	<p>Short Identify opportunities for senior individuals and junior staff to be part of inclusive approaches where they can learn from each other in a bi-directional learning process</p> <p>Medium Create a Champions/ Ambassadors programme for inclusion that promotes the SMILE Audit or other comparable audits in other institutions</p> <p>Long Develop an environment conducive to attending CPD courses on inclusion, ensuring that courses are offered to the education professionals during working hours and for free</p>	<p>Short Conduct a study about the opportunities for CPD for education professionals and the current environment for accessing such opportunities, considering whether the education professionals are prepared to adapt to the diverse student body</p> <p>Medium Develop policies to facilitate the use of the Audit Model as part of the national accreditation services and support a bottom-up approach</p> <p>Long Promote the Audit Model with ENQA and similar organisations and make them champions of these processes</p>	<p>Short Offer training to overcome language barriers. Network with other organisations to identify and address the needs of minority groups</p> <p>Medium Take an active role in the development of CPD courses in partnership with relevant authorities given their expertise in working with pedagogy in relation to inclusion and diversity</p> <p>Long Signal identified needs to policy makers and recommend possible ways to overcome these needs at local level</p>

FACILITATING DIVERSITY

Recommendations on how to implement diversity at different levels

	HEI top management	Policy makers at National and EU levels	Civil society
6. Enable flexible pathways in Higher Education for everyone	<p>Short Offer flexible pathways such as VPL and offer support such as scholarships or accommodation or academic language aid</p> <p>Medium Put the challenges in the centre of your activity for example by facilitating the presentation of role model cases and engaging with representatives from disadvantaged groups</p> <p>Long Promote best practices through study visits or exchanges</p>	<p>Short Facilitate free entry to short HE tester courses to disadvantaged groups that make them believe “<i>HE is possible for me too</i>”</p> <p>Medium Articulate policies that allow HEIs to offer flexible pathways to disadvantaged groups in particular</p> <p>Long Enable an agile VPL system that recognises experiences and deals with possible lack of formal documentation</p>	<p>Short Involve disadvantaged minorities in developing and promoting short courses and activities organised at HE level to disadvantaged groups</p> <p>Medium Inform about VPL to disadvantaged groups</p> <p>Long Become an information point for HEIs so disadvantaged groups learn about possible short courses or ways to continue studying regardless of their situation</p>
7. Offer staff training at all staff levels	<p>Short Creation of awareness and political consciousness amongst staff, so they can advocate for diversity</p> <p>Medium Embed in the institution’s training strategic plan of staff on diversity and inclusion</p> <p>Long Run mandatory short courses on diversity and inclusion such as the SMILE CPD courses for all HEI staff and train them to become future trainers</p>	<p>Short Creation of mandatory training for policy makers on diversity and inclusion</p> <p>Medium Make diversity and inclusion training mandatory for all the staff in public institutions as a requirement for promotion or progression</p> <p>Long Rewarding institutions that develop better and more effective training approaches on diversity and inclusion for their staff</p>	<p>Short Creation of awareness amongst staff on diversity, intersectionality and assessment of state of play through the audits</p> <p>Medium Encourage diversity and inclusion training for staff in Civil Society Organizations¹ (CSO) as a tool for inclusion</p> <p>Long Achieve more diversity in staff composition across CSO.</p>
8. Identify and use inclusion and diversity-oriented funding opportunities	<p>Short Encourage staff to review and advocate for European and national funding incentives to provide inclusion and diversity-oriented courses or programmes for disadvantaged students</p> <p>Medium Use the SMILE Audit Model Principles of self-reflection to review if current institutional funding possibilities can be related to inclusive actions</p> <p>Long Integrate funding opportunities in the traditional institutional financial budgeting, make student funding subsidies transparent on the Student Centre Service websites</p>	<p>Short Review national HE policies in relation to widening participation / inclusion and diversity and ensure that they include funding performance agreements for institutions supporting disadvantaged students</p> <p>Medium Seek to elaborate better funding strategies with HE policy actors and integrate performance-based institutional funding models to develop inclusion and diversity-oriented curricula, establish loans or grant system for disadvantaged students, etc</p> <p>Long Integrate diversity and inclusion-oriented funding incentives permanently in HE legislation on a national level</p>	<p>Short Explore funding requirements that meet the needs of local disadvantaged students and their life-circumstances, see if national inclusion and diversity funding opportunities match local students’ demands and share findings with HEIs</p> <p>Medium Establish and engage with guiding services to inform local disadvantaged students about opportunities in HE</p> <p>Long Contribute to improving the inclusion and diversity-based funding models of national policies while remaining in dialogue with local universities and HE policy makers at the national level</p>

¹ See definition: EUR-Lex Civil Society Organisations <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/glossary/civil-society-organisation.html>

EMBEDDING DIVERSITY

Recommendations on how to implement diversity at different levels

	HEI top management	Policy makers at National and EU levels	Civil society
<p>9. Provide programmes that promote access to Higher Education for disadvantaged students</p>	<p>Short Review institutional strategy to access programmes for disadvantaged students wanting to enter or already studying at HE levels Medium Develop alternative modes of HE access and delivery of programmes and counselling and/or guidance services to better accommodate the diverse needs of disadvantaged students, such as flexible course scheduling, study duration and modality of courses Long Integrate HE access programmes in the institutional curriculum permanently and provide study guidance activities for disadvantaged student groups</p>	<p>Short Review HE policies and legislation in relation to flexible HE access conditions, including prior learning recognition approaches and frameworks, quality assurance and accreditation, credit accumulation and transfer systems or visa renewal support Medium Provide a coherent policy strategy to establish an overarching framework that can support widely across the system the implementation of flexible HE access pathways and programmes to validate prior learning and facilitate entry to HE, involving all relevant educational stakeholders Long Integrate flexible HE access opportunities and prior learning recognition approaches in national HE frameworks and HE legislation as a central objective in HE</p>	<p>Short To establish the link between academia, students and activist groups to open the dialogue Medium Link access programmes to the wider communities with special attention to underserved groups and promote access to HEIs. Long Establish long term initiatives in collaboration with HEIs, research and civic educational partners on how to develop flexible HE access programmes in accordance with the needs of students within the communities</p>
<p>10. Monitor progress and needs through data collection</p>	<p>Short Review the existing institutional policies for the collection of data about the impact of diversity management on disadvantaged student groups Medium Ensure that the data collection and monitoring process reflects the access and attainment of disadvantaged student groups, as well as their satisfaction in relation to the whole institutional approach towards inclusion and diversity and their transversal capacities Long Integrate the data collection, monitoring and evaluation into systemic and comprehensive periodical audit processes and reports</p>	<p>Short Review the current policies and processes in terms of data collection and monitoring at national and European level Medium Provide clear guidelines for data collection, monitoring and evaluation of needs, progress and success at national and European level Long Periodically review the systems of data collection, monitoring and evaluation, to ensure coherency and consistency between different institutions and between different countries</p>	<p>Short Raise awareness on the importance of adopting transparent and consistent data collection and monitoring processes of diversity and inclusion in HE Medium Contribute to improving the data collection, monitoring and evaluation processes of diversity and inclusion in HE Long Improve the accountability of the systems of data collection, monitoring and evaluation, as well as their responsible institutions</p>

The SMILE Principles



Why are diversity and inclusion important in Europe? What can we do to create a better society where minority groups are understood and supported? Who should be involved in this process? How can we facilitate the implementation of necessary changes to make diversity and inclusion a reality transversally in Europe?

The SMILE project has explored these and other questions and established a set of Principles and Recommended Actions to be implemented at different levels in the short, medium and long term. The final aim is to encourage stakeholders to work together towards a better society.

Publisher: [eucen](http://www.eucen.eu), Barcelona, Spain, 2022, <http://www.eucen.eu>

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Current version: 1.3.

Citation: Royo, C; Trevino, D; Frank, A; Nur, M; on behalf of the SMILE consortium (Ed.) (2022): *Policy Recommendations and Action Plan – Enabling a more inclusive and diverse World*
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