

Smile

The SMILE Diversity Audit Model

GUIDE FOR MODERATORS TO RUN
AUDIT SESSIONS ON DIVERSITY IN
HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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ON BEHALF OF THE SMILE CONSORTIUM

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Introduction

This document contains a Diversity Audit Model and a user guide on how to practically implement a diversity self-auditing process in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Addressees are leaders, authorities and participants within HEIs. The document can be used to reflect the benefits of a diversity approach in HEI and to work practically on an auditing process. The text includes a generic template providing a catalogue of questions on specific diversity topics. The questions focus transversally on three selected areas and target groups, by means of pillars of inclusion and diversity. The SMILE areas of work have been called “pillars”, because it was considered that these are key topics of diversity and inclusion. These pillars “migrant background”, “women in leadership” and “low socio-economic background” are meant to be permeable, they overlap and influence each other. Because during the lifespan of the project only a certain amount of work can be carried out, three representative areas of diversity are in focus. More areas or “pillars” may be added if other aspects of diversity and inclusion emerge or are relevant to the user of this document. The objective is that those members of HEIs who want to reflect on diversity as well as those who want to implement an audit on diversity get inspired by working with this document. Thereby HEIs are empowered to self-reflect and assess on an institutional level regarding their engagement to diversity-oriented actions.

Representatives of HEIs can use this document in terms of a reflection (see sections 1 and 2) and/or doing a self-audit on the topic of diversity by focusing on specific questions of the three pillars of their own choice (see section 3). Guidelines and templates will support this process through the self-reflective questionnaire on the diversity aspects HEIs selected. The outcomes of this reflection process can be used for future planning and carrying out diversity actions in HEIs.

PART I: Why auditing HEIs on Diversity and Inclusion?

1. Auditing Higher Education Institutions on Diversity and Inclusion

This audit tool originates from the sociological awareness that despite the ongoing overtures of European states regarding equal access to education, inequalities persist tenaciously and will continue to define our educational spaces in the years to come. The narrative that frequently emerges from several studies that focus on the issue of access is characterised by the relative invisibility and misrecognition of non-traditional groups of students, academics and administrators. The same studies suggest that students from traditionally unrepresented groups are overrepresented in the drop-out statistics, participate in less prestigious courses, and obtain lower qualifications. The presence of academics and administrators from non-traditional groups is also limited and is of concern to the social justice agenda in education. Thus, while recognising the efforts undertaken by the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) to enhance inclusivity, widen representation, increase visibility and root out discrimination, the consortium believes that much more needs to be done to mitigate the wider effects of education systems that are still a long way from puncturing the asymmetrical access to Higher Education, thereby contradicting the fundamental values of equity, inclusion, solidarity and social justice.

Everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning in order to maintain and acquire skills that enable them to participate fully in society and manage successful transitions in the labour market.

This tool responds to the call for critical engagement by HEIs. The foregoing instrument is intended to help HEIs (e.g. Universities, Colleges, Vocational Training Institutes) to reflect on how they can improve on their political, cultural, curricular, pedagogical and democratic performance in the areas of migration, socio-economic status and the presence of women in senior administrative roles.

The Diversity Audit Model is not meant to evaluate, label, classify or collect data. Its sole objective is to **encourage reflection and discussion** around equity and how it can manifest itself better in all aspects of institutional life. The aim is to **embrace reflection and dialogue** on the issue of diversity in HEIs. For other types of institutions this tool is not appropriate. Ultimately, this tool should catalyse HEIs to not only think inwardly but also act outwardly, with multiple communities, to address grave imbalances in wealth, power, and representation.

1.1 Introducing the Diversity Audit Model

The Diversity Audit Model has been developed within the Erasmus+ Project SMILE¹ (Social Meaning Impact through LLL Universities in Europe). SMILE aims to promote inclusive HEIs by developing, testing and implementing innovative tools that improve the way HEIs deal with diversity and social inclusion. The project intends to call upon the expertise of civil society organisations and individuals and includes their experiences in the SMILE tools. To ensure a high quality of this model, experts from different fields have discussed the content and questions of the model, and Higher Education Institutions have tested the audit tool so it was continuously optimized.

The Diversity Audit Model is a result of the three-year project (2020-2023) and can be used by HEIs as well as by other educational institutions. It is crucial to have your management team participate in this process. This makes it possible to foster diversity oriented changes of framework conditions on the institutional level of HEIs. Depending on how important this audit is for your institution and on which level the changes are planned, it is important to have your management team participate in this process. The active participation of your institutional senior management will be key to the implementation of changes that the auditing process identifies.

When using this model, institutions can either use it entirely or adjust the content according to their needs. The Diversity Audit Model is meant to be a participative model. It emerged by involving not only the affiliates of the HEI itself but through Focus Groups and holding sessions with faculty, staff and students to collect their thoughts and ideas. It also involved the community and experts by installing Focus Advisory Groups with the aim to include their questions and thoughts. The results of these discussions were integrated as feedback in this model.

The audit consists of a set of intersectional questions, covering the three pillars and concluding questions. The questions have been grouped into thematic areas. Your institution can start with the fundamental questions which tackle more intersectional and general issues of diversity, but it is also possible to directly focus on the inclusion-oriented questions of one of the three pillars that the model has selected.

Recommendations on how to use the Diversity Audit Model are specified in section 3.1 of this document and also in the “SMILE Diversity Audit Model Preliminary Self-Assessment Tool”, which helps institutions to determine the appropriate starting point for their audit. We recommend that users do it as warm up activity before starting the audit process.

This Diversity Audit Model focuses on three areas of inclusion and diversity: “Migrants Background”, “Women in Leadership” and “Socio-Economic Background”. Within this Diversity Audit Model, they are being treated separately as “pillars” to focus on a first step. However, be aware that these three areas of inclusion overlap and intersect.

¹ <http://smile.eucen.eu>

2. Three pillars as target groups of the Diversity Audit Model

2.1 Migrant Background

“Migrant” and “Migrant Background” are, before anything else, social, political, cultural and moving categories and “migrants” are not a homogenous group. Nationality, race, gender, class and other factors determine and diversify personal experience. The impact of the category “Migrant” or “Migrant Background”, perceived or classified as such, is in constant flux and is likely to shift over time depending on changes in legal status, work experience, language acquisition, access to the welfare state, family reunification and familiarity with the administrative, educational, cultural, health and transport systems of the host country. Any person falling under the category “Migrant” and “Migrant Background” will nevertheless continue to be affected by racist policies, border regimes and structural discrimination.

The “by migrant, for migrant” approach

To mitigate the impact of rigid categorisation whilst achieving the desired results in the field of migrant access to Higher Education, any action must have at its core a “by migrant, for migrant” approach. The will to give voice to migrant background students and empower them are elements which must be examined and foregrounded in direct conversation with impacted communities. This means that identifying barriers to Migrant access to Higher Education, locating good practices in “migrant” access to Higher Education and identifying future avenues, are fields of action that must have self-organised migrant groups in leading roles. Higher Education Institutions have amongst the strongest platforms, networks and resources for identifying barriers to access (hidden curricula, exclusionary pedagogies, institutional linguisticism, no recognition of prior learning) that must be shared with persons falling under the category “Migrant” and “Migrant Background” rather than speak on their behalf. Higher Education Institutions are willing to contribute to common goals (like the Agenda Goals 2030 for sustainability for example) and most of them regard the inclusion of people with “Migrant Background” as part of their mission statement.

2.2 Women in Leadership

Gender is situated as part of enduring and deeply embedded inequalities in access and participation to leadership positions in Higher Education, intersecting with other areas of inequalities including socio-economic background, ethnicity, age and disability. This has been exacerbated in the wake of Covid19 pandemic (Zarrilli & Luomaranta, 2021).

Since the 2000s, policy debates have emphasised the need to combine organisational measures with efforts to overcome gender bias in knowledge production and research (Schiebinger 2008). Gender balance in decision-making is part of a broader process of institutional change in research organisations, which includes gender sensitivity at all levels, but also changes in institutional norms, values, and culture which impact the organisation as such and how knowledge is produced.

Equality legislation, intended to promote women's participation in leadership, has had contradictory effects placing immense strains on current female leaders. This continued the vicious circle of women having less visibility (due to a lower research portfolio), while also being extra-visible for gender equality purposes (O'Connor 2007a; Grummell et al. 2011). Quotas implemented without any other measures and in a context with a low ratio of women in the institution can often lead to the so-called double burden of women because of the failure to implement the necessary additional support.

Research does recognise the importance of continuous professional development (CPD), of collecting data and of mentoring to address the significance of gender, race, socio-economic and disability in the provision of mentorship especially in hegemonic cultures of patriarchy, class or race (Thackwell et al. 2018). The relational aspect also highlights the potential contribution of mentorship and ongoing communities of practice for social capital and networks.

A core finding from this research was a strong sense that training should be informed by a certain pedagogic philosophy that draws from the following principles:

- A rootedness in equality, justice and empowerment
- A needs-based approach that is driven by the lived experience of women at the centre of the phenomena
- A facilitative, participatory process...
 - that promotes critical thinking.
 - that offers a social analysis of the socially constructed nature of gender and other intersectional features.
 - that focuses on relationship building.

2.3 Low Socio-Economic Background

Socio-economic status (SES) as a concept refers to the position of individuals, families, households, or other aggregates on one or more dimensions of stratification. As a variable in statistical research and surveys, it often includes components such as parental education, parental income, and parental occupational status. In qualitative research, individual student experiences have been studied through means of ethnography and interviews.

Research has detected that low SES students are underrepresented in Higher Education. Socio-economic status may also affect programme choice or students' conceptions of their ability to achieve academic success in their desired or chosen field of study. Psychological barriers (e.g., emotional distress, identity management issues, negative self-perception, and more damaging forms of motivation) may help to explain their worse academic success. However, low SES students also face concrete challenges in making ends meet in their daily life, or in acquisition of material goods needed for their studies such as projects and laboratory work.

2.4 Principles and user guide of the Diversity Audit Model

This audit model on diversity is guided by certain principles as an expression of an open-minded attitude.

When running this Diversity Audit Model it is mandatory....

- ✓ that there is a **strong commitment** of the executive leader group of the HEI
- ✓ that the language used during the sessions is clear and simple to ensure a common understanding of reflection
- ✓ that there is a common understanding of the content of the model
- ✓ that it focuses on the benefits for the HEI or educational institution.

This Diversity Audit Model is....

- ✓ **a participative model**
The characteristics of this model are participative because
 - ✓ it focuses on the inclusive process and it is enabling
 - ✓ it involves different types of users (students, teaching and administration staff, governance) in order to make sure that all the changes needed are identified
 - ✓ it recommends strongly to consult or to involve different types of education stakeholders in the process
 - ✓ the audit model needs to be promoted by the whole institution
- ✓ **a self-reflective tool**
 - ✓ it focuses on reflection
 - ✓ the institution is encouraged to question its own practices, processes and structures
- ✓ **a flexible tool**
 - ✓ it may be combined with already existing tools
 - ✓ it allows users to ignore some sections, to make it suit the user's real needs
- ✓ **a mix of different methods:** it is a survey which contains a set of questions. There are Y/N methods of questions, broader questions, a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods
 - ✓ enabling the users to categorise the questions first before building up the body of questions, so it allows the potential division into student body, staff, and it allows to include measures implemented already by the HEI for inclusion
 - ✓ aware of that measuring for target groups can end up stigmatising, excluding, being paternalistic, so the collection of facts and figures on diversity must be carefully considered.

PART II: How to run the Audit on Diversity and Inclusion?

3. How to prepare audit sessions

The document that you have in your hands is a comprehensive tool for the moderator of the audit sessions. To address all the questions that you see in this document would take too much time. Before you start, we highly recommend you to carry out the Preliminary Self-Assessment Tool which the SMILE consortium has developed. It will allow you to see how advanced your institution in the area of diversity and inclusion is. Therefore, it will help you to determine which scenario you have to choose for your audit sessions.

Graphic 1 on the following page shows a global view of the full SMILE Audit approach and process.

3.1 Tips for moderators

The SMILE project recommends users to adopt the following approach at the beginning:

1. Considering the results of the Preliminary Self-Assessment Tool, read the full document and select the areas that you are most interested to address. You can plan enough sessions to cover all the areas that you want to work.
2. Think who is important in your meetings:
 - a. You need to create impact and commitment for change – you need some managerial levels involved
 - b. You need to give visibility to the diversity and inclusion challenges – you need people working with disadvantaged groups
 - c. You need to hear the voices of those who are disadvantaged – the meeting has to involve those who you want to help too
3. Send participants some preparatory documents that help them to understand what you are planning and which questions will be discussed. Send an adapted and shortened version of this document (if you send this guide for moderators some participants might feel overwhelmed by the amount of ideas). You want the group already to focus on the selected areas that you have identified under the key prerequisites 1 and 2 (see *Figure 3 Key Prerequisites to use the SMILE Diversity Audit Model* in the next section 3.2).
4. Choose a room that allows all the participants to see each other's faces – a large room with a big round table or, if this is not possible, a classroom with mobile tables/chairs that can be set in a circle
5. Plan your moderation in a non-intrusive and enabling way – allow participants to contribute with their experiences and views more than leading them in a certain direction

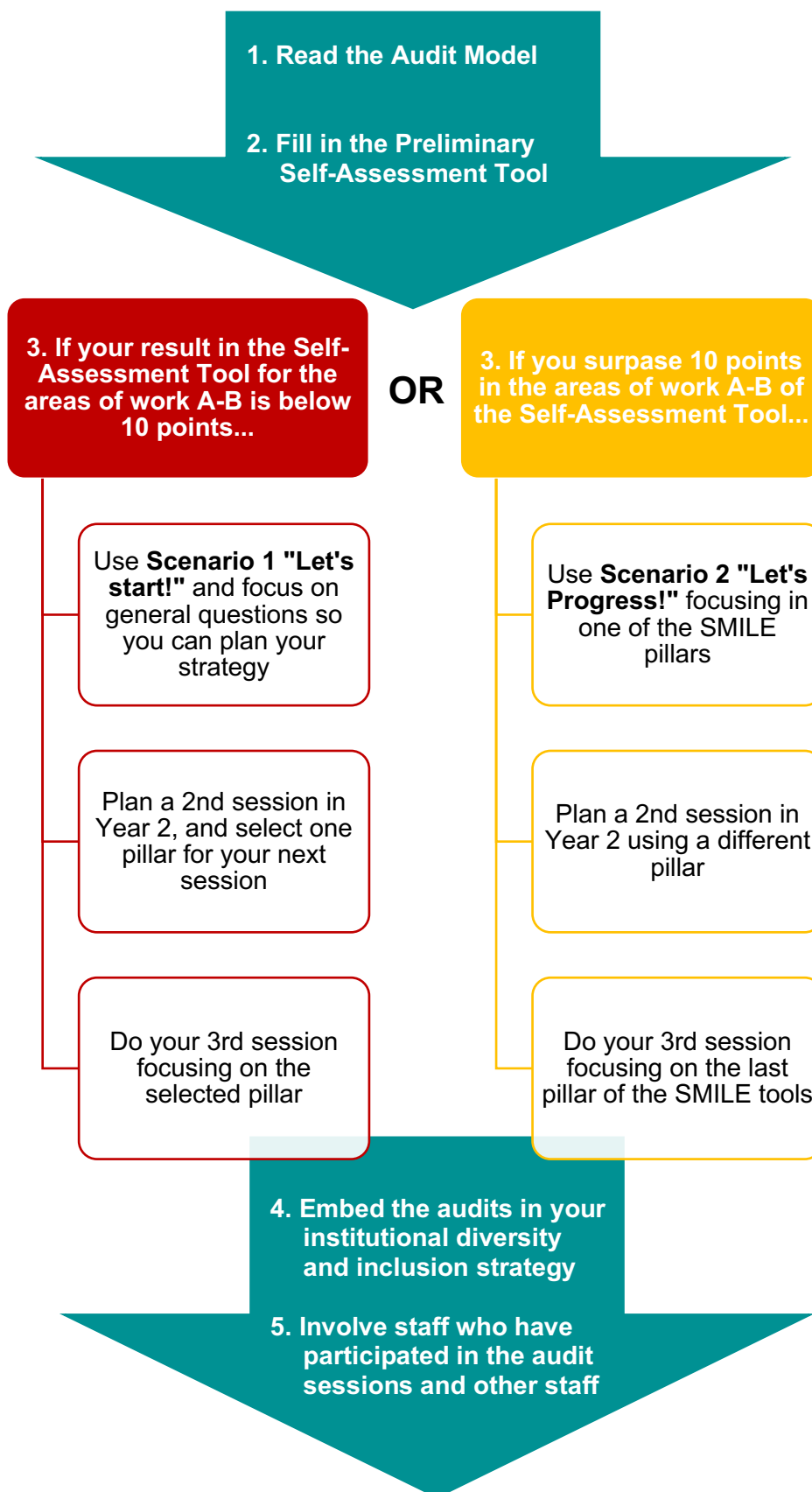


Figure 1 Overview: approach and process of the Audit

6. Identify the questions that you want to discuss in two main areas: Fundamental questions and Specific working areas. Use *Figure 2* as a guide

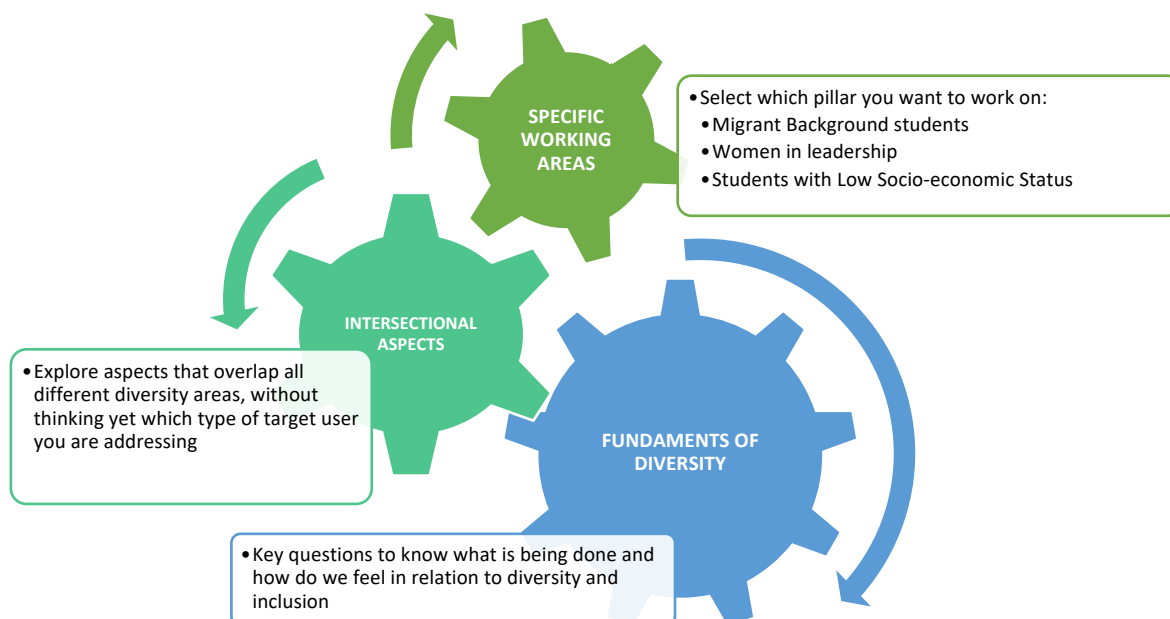


Figure 2 Areas of work during the Audit session

7. Estimate how much time you want to discuss every area. For this, please take the results from the Preliminary Self-Assessment Tool into account. Then, you can create a timing table. If you have a group of eight participants, you can use something such as:

SCENARIO 1 – Let's start!

- Welcome and icebreaking** (15 min). Give everyone the opportunity to say name, position and (if there is time) which are the main reasons of interest to be in this session
- Fundamentals of diversity** (20 min). These should be mandatory questions and you should have sent them in advance, so participants arrive at the session prepared to answer
- Fundamental questions** (30 min). Select one of the fundamental questions under section 4.1. Prepare for a short discussion on this sub-topic, collect their views. You can inform the participants which intersecting sub-topic you would like to discuss, but it is not necessary to send any questions in advance
- Action Plan** (30-60 min). Now is time to look ahead: how do you want your HEI to be in the future? Please use Template 'A' in section 4.3 and work with the group – identify the short, medium and long-term objectives that the group would like to see addressed in your HEI. You can use section 5 as inspiration points, especially if your group is not very talkative
- Feedback time** (10 min). Distribute the form (or the link to the form) and ask your participants to give you feedback using this online feedback form: <https://forms.gle/jQ3DBTPEZPAJBQRo9>

SCENARIO 2 – Let’s progress!

- a. **Welcome and icebreaking** (15 min). Give everyone the opportunity to say their name, position and (if there is time) which are the main reasons why they have wanted to be in this session.
- b. **Specific working area** (45 min). Participants select which pillar to work on (i.e. migrant background students, women in leadership or students with low socioeconomic status). Participants discuss the questions in the selected pillar: How are these questions inter-connected with the intersecting sub-topic? Which aspects are missing?
- c. **Action Plan** (30-60 min). Now is time to look ahead: How do you want your HEI to be in the future? Please use Template ‘A’ in section 4.3 and work with the group – find the objectives at short medium and long term that the group would like to be addressed at your HEI. You can use section 5 as inspiration points, especially if your group is not very talkative
- d. **Feedback time** (10 min). Distribute the form (or the link to the form) and ask your participants to give your feedback using this online feedback form: <https://forms.gle/jQ3DBTPEZPAJBQRo9>

The allocation of time for slots in scenario 1 and 2 has been calculated taking into account that a session will be about 2 hours long. But if you feel the group is interested to engage longer and there is time for doing so, you can modify the timings accordingly. Depending on your time resources, it may also be helpful to continue the action planning in a separate follow-up session.

8. This exercise can be repeated with different groups using different areas of work or using the same areas. For example, if you work with the same group and invite them for a second round, you can explore a different fundamental aspect (section 4.1) or a different specific working area (section 4.2). You can see also section 6 (*How to progress in diversity and inclusion issues*) if you want to plan follow-up sessions.
9. Prepare the Template A “Action Plan” table in advance for each session. The template you see in this document includes all the levels that can be addressed and can be overwhelming for the participants to see how much can be discussed. If the participants are committed during the discussion, you can also allow a longer Action Plan session or plan the discussion of the Action Plan in a series of shorter sessions.

3.2 How to organise a Diversity Audit: Key principles

This audit model **stimulates self-reflection and critical thinking on inclusion and diversity**. To achieve this, the SMILE team strongly recommends users to be guided by 5 key prerequisites as shown in *Figure 1*. These key prerequisites will help the user to transfer the Audit Diversity Model into practice. You will find further information on how to proceed with the key prerequisites in the Appendix (section 9).

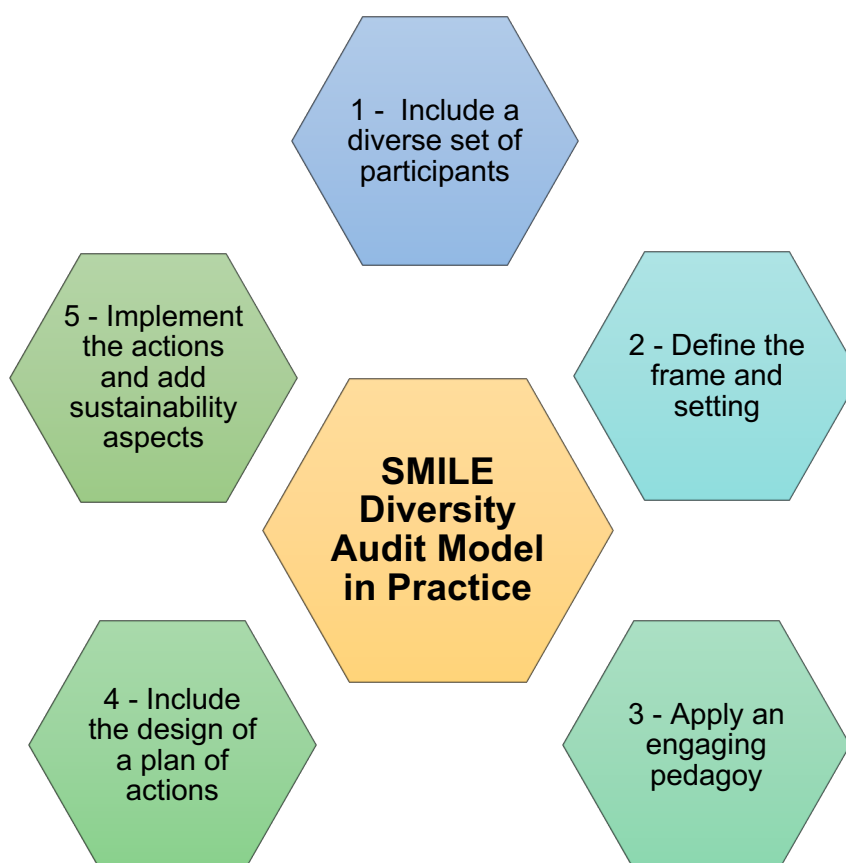


Figure 3 Key Prerequisites to use the SMILE Diversity Audit Model

4. Diversity Audit: Questions to select and reflect

In this section we offer you a set of questions to reflect on the diversity approaches of your HEI. The priorities or hierarchies of each HEI concerning diversity and inclusion are quite different. The decision of which pillar to focus on is crucial – this may be (a) specific pillar(s) or all three pillars. This is a decision individually decided by the HEI itself. Therefore, the following sample of questions below depends on this choice. The fundamental questions (section 4.1) address the topic of inclusion and diversity in a transversal and holistic way. The questions to specific pillars (section 4.2) offer questions to focus on the areas of Migrant Background, Socio-Economic Background and Women in Leadership.

4.1 Fundamental questions

Diversity and Inclusion Principles:

- Why does your HEI want to work on diversity?
- Why does an inclusive campus climate matter for your institution?
- Which benefits would your HEI experience when being more inclusion and diversity oriented?
- How do you personally feel about diversity and inclusion?

Diversity and Inclusion Practices:

- How does your institution define “inclusion”?
- What can your institution do in order to embed diversity?
- Which are the areas of diversity that you believe your institution is addressing more actively? Why these areas?
- Are there policies (mission statements, strategies) in your HEI on the SMILE pillars? Or documents on priorities or hierarchies concerning the pillars or other areas of inclusion and diversity?
- How do you prepare your staff to identify diversity in terms of inclusion? Do you offer any training?
- Do you reflect on the values promoted by your institution and the (unintended) impact?
- What are the gender-sensitive guidance policies and practices for supporting the choice of programme or subject by students?
- How could socio-economic and migrant factors be considered in the connection between secondary school and university in order to deal with inequality in disciplinary choices?
- How do the different SMILE pillars intersect in your institution, in your opinion?
- Does your institution ensure to integrate role models both amongst your employees and amongst your students who can show others that diversity is possible and useful?
- How would you rate the usefulness of these facilities, how often do you rely on them, what are barriers you identify in accessing these?

Access Initiatives:

- How to enable access for students with migrant background?
- How to make these potential students successful in the process?
- What is your institution doing to improve access?
- What is the institution’s understanding of the term “access to Higher Education”?
- Is equitable access embedded in your institution’s vision, mission and policies?
- Is inclusive access a shared value within your institution?

- Is access a frequently discussed issue within your institution?
- How do you promote access for e.g. those migrants with low socio-economic background?

Communication and Advocacy:

- The student's voice is of essence in establishing genuine inclusive spaces: which legal actions have been taken to facilitate access, equal opportunities and so on? Are there resources and websites available that open up these questions for the students and which give the standpoints of your institution?
- Is your institution communicating and promoting diversity approaches and activities in policy and public spheres?
- How is your institution coordinating and embedding internal communication to allow interaction between different faculties, schools and/or departments?

Community and Commitment:

- What outreach activities and measures does your institution use to reach students?
- How do you present these actions to society?
- How do you communicate your institution's support for diversity to your community? Do you think this is enough and effective? Do you think you can improve or enlarge it?
- Do you visit your community and reach out to potential students who might need special support to enter into HE? (e.g. financial, language or documentation wise)
- Is your HEI actively involving the participation of target groups when implementing diversity policies?
- Are the different communities that constitute society involved in the ongoing discussion and decisions about equitable access?

4.2 Questions to specific pillars

During the SMILE project, an overlapping of the three project pillars has been clearly identified. This, also known as intersectionality, has a huge influence on diversity and inclusion processes. The three "pillars" cover very important but not all areas of inclusion and diversity. Depending on the specific institutions, the pillars can be supplemented.

In the following pages you will find three subsections, each with a set of questions specific to one of the SMILE pillars. Use them as inspiration to tackle the topic during your sessions. Select those that are more relevant or useful for your group.



Figure 4 Intersectionality perspectives in the SMILE project

4.2.1 Pillar 1: Questions on Migrant Background

1. Advocacy - the external roadblocks of migrant (economic migrant, refugee and asylum seeker) access to HEIs

- Is your institution active in publicly pushing for policies and practices that enable greater access to Higher Education?
- Is your institution present in public policy fora that may have an impact on access to Higher Education?
- Is your institution present within the different migrant communities, contributing with awareness and preparedness?
- Does migrant access to education feature prominently in your institution's research profile? Is such research communicated publicly? How would you rate (1-5, 5 being the highest) the impact of the institution's research on policy and institutional practices? Give reasons for your answer.
- Is the institution inclusive of migrant communities in the formulation of institutional policies and in its public statements/official positions regarding inclusion, diversity, social justice and equity?
- Are members of staff active in European and international fora that advocate for greater access to Higher Education?

2. Access and Admissions – facilitation for migrants (economic migrant, refugee and asylum seeker)

- In a context marked by a digital divide, how is your institution facilitating access to information regarding course programmes?
- In what ways is the institution creating a context where shortcomings are addressed in order to facilitate access at entry point?
- How is the institution facilitating entry in the case of migrants: 1) whose financial situation is precarious; 2) who are in irregular administrative situation and/or undocumented; 3) whose credentials are insufficient for the course programme of the migrant's choice; 4) who lack the language proficiency necessary to profit from a course programme?
- Are the entry-point needs of different migrants being addressed in a one-stop-shop approach?
- Is Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) being employed on a regular basis and in the best academic interest of migrants?
- Is the institution collaborating with other HEIs in the country to facilitate the transition from one course/qualification to another?

3. Culture - curricular experiences, diversity in planning and pedagogical dynamics to facilitate the retention of migrants (economic migrant, refugees and asylum seekers) in HEIs

- To what extent (1-5, 5 being the highest) is the academic and administrative staff up to speed with multicultural issues and intercultural communication? Give reasons for your answer.
- Are continuous professional development courses in the foregoing areas being provided on a regular basis?
- How often are migrant students consulted on issues that range from pedagogy to curricular content?
- How are international students made to feel welcome and an integral part of the institutional community?
- What infrastructure does the institution have in place to mentor and enable migrant students?
- How are migrant students encouraged to actively contribute to campus life?

- How is the institution facilitating, acknowledging and affirming migrant students' voice?
- How does the institution deal with issues of racism and other forms of discrimination inside the classroom and on campus?
- Is the academic staff being encouraged to include non-European literature in their bibliographies?

4. Policy - principal courses of action pertaining to migrant access to HEIs

- Are institutional policies robust enough to guard against any form of racism and discrimination?
- What mechanisms are in place to ensure across-the-board awareness and execution of non-discriminatory policies?
- How are the different institutional entities (faculties, departments, offices, etc.) being monitored and evaluated, against the standards set by the official policies?
- Is internationalisation a conscious and collectively-agreed-upon policy of the institution?
- Does the institution follow equitable principles in its recruitment of academic and non-academic staff? Is the institution offering academic and non-academic positions to meritorious migrant graduates, as part of its equitable recruitment policy?
- Are migrants actively engaged in policymaking?

5. Practice and Pedagogy - special offers and support

- Are there programmes, modules or special offers for migrants in your institution?
- Are there offers for staff/professionals in the foregoing areas in your institution?
- Is there a research centre or activities on this topic in your institution?
- Does your institution monitor awareness of a migrant sensitive approach in teaching? In research activities?
- How does your institution promote and support awareness of a migrant sensitive approach to teaching? In research activities? (Eurocentrism)

6. Transition - Facilitating the transition of migrants (economic migrants, refugees and asylum seekers) from education to quality employment.

- Is the institution adequately equipped in the area of guidance and counselling to help migrant students to make the right career choices and to eventually transition into the career of one's choice?
- Is the institution in a position to offer job shadowing and internships to the migrant students?
- Is the institution working closely with employers to ensure meaningful and equitable work places following graduation?
- Is the institution following migrant graduates in their career trajectory?

7 . Is there something else that you want to highlight about the topic?

4.2.2 Pillar 2: Questions on Women Leadership

1. Advocacy - promoting cultural change towards gender equality

- Is your institution active in promoting policies and practices that generate more equal access to leadership positions in a gender sensitive way? “Gender-sensitive” means e.g. to include a wide mix of people in different environments to ensure that images in your communication material do not reinforce gender stereotypes.
- What are gender-sensitive guidance policies and practices in your institution which support choice of programme or subject by students?
- Is your institution active in the public sphere and communities, advocating for a more balanced access and choice to Higher Education, especially in leadership roles?

2. Access and Admissions - facilitating a gender-balanced access through targeted actions

- In what ways is your institution facilitating access to information in a gender-sensitive way for students to make informed decisions regarding their choices in Higher Education?
- In what ways is the institution creating a context where an awareness of gendered issues are addressed in order to facilitate discipline and subject choice and to support equal participation?
- In what way is the institution creating intersectional awareness and facilitating entry in a gender sensitive way in the case of migrants whose financial situation is precarious or who is undocumented, or students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds?
- How is the institution facilitating access in the case of students who have care commitments?

3. Culture - promoting awareness on the importance of a gender-sensitive study and research environment

- To what extent is the academic and administrative staff aware of the measures and tools to support gendered issues and manner of communication? Are continuous professional development courses being provided in the foregoing areas?
- Is there a conscious drive to create a gender-sensitivity in curricula, research agenda and policies?
- Is there training in inclusive pedagogies and gender sensitive practices for staff?
- How are women made to feel welcome and an integral part of the institutional community (including social networks and informal connections) in senior leadership domains?
- How is the institution facilitating, acknowledging and affirming women in leadership positions?

4. Policy - specific positive actions for promoting a gender-balanced institutional strategic direction

- Are there institutional policies in relation to gender mainstreaming, support structures and inclusion practice in place? Gender equality plans, anti-harassment guidelines? Representations on panels and committees?
- Does your institution offer mentoring and supports for those applying leadership roles? Is this offered for female students, academics and early stage researchers?
- Is there a policy on the use of gender sensitive language for all staff? (teaching, administrative and support staff)
- Is there a specified office/ unit in place about gender equality? Is there a gender equality officer in place?

- Are there general institutional policies informed by the principles of gender equality, diversity and inclusion? What are the specific gendered aspects of these policies?
- What mechanisms are in place to ensure across-the-board awareness and execution of gender equality policies?
- How are the different institutional components (faculties, departments, offices, etc.) monitored and evaluated against the standards set by the official policies?
- Are there gender-sensitive perspectives and mechanisms in the collection of data in the institution? About students? About staff?

5. Practice and Pedagogy - special offers and support

- Is there programme(s) or module(s) on gender studies in your institution?
- Is there a research centre or activities on gender studies in your institution?
- Does your institution monitor awareness of a gender sensitive approach in teaching? In research activities?
- How does your institution promote and support awareness of a gender sensitive approach in teaching? In research activities?
- Is there awareness of the gendered impact on work conditions, type of work, timing of work?

6. Transition - facilitating an equal transition from education to quality work that counteracts horizontal and vertical gender segregation

- Is the institution adequately equipped in the area of guidance and counselling to help students to make gender sensitive career choices and to eventually transition into the career pathway of one's choice?
- How are women (dis)encouraged and (dis)abled to take up leadership positions? And how are they prepared and supported for that?
- Is the institution working closely with employers to ensure gender sensitive conditions in the work places, specific to leadership?

7. Is there something else that you want to highlight about the topic?

4.2.3 Pillar 3: Questions on Low Socio-Economic Background

1. Target groups - gaining a common understanding of socio-economic status (SES)

- Is your institution active in promoting policies and practices that generate a more equal access to Higher Education?
- What are the groups targeted by your institution's inclusive practices?
- What would be the aim of these inclusive practices? What does disadvantaged SES mean in your institution?

2. Advocacy - working on changing perspectives

- Is there any taskforce/working group or similar bodies on inclusion with reference to low SES students in your organisation?
- Is there any staff member within your organisation responsible for working on promoting inclusion of low SES learners within your institution's strategies?
- Are your decision-making groups open for participation from learners representing low SES?
- Is the institution proactive in raising awareness amongst students on the issue of socio-economic nature and equal access to Higher Education?
(Is the institution proactive in raising awareness amongst students on the issue of discrimination on socio-economic grounds and equal access to Higher Education?)

3. Access and Admission - facilitating access through targeted actions

- What type of flexible studying programmes are provided by your institution to accommodate the needs of low SES students?
 - a. Part-time studying programme
 - b. Customisable learning process
 - c. Extensions for the study period
 - d. Blended learning
 - e. Distance learning
 - f. Other
- How does your institution advertise and share information on the flexible learning opportunities that it provides?
- Do you offer mentoring for students from backgrounds of low SES?

4. Culture - updating the knowledge on the needs of learners based on SES

- Is your institution confronted with the stigmatisation of lower socio-economic background learners?
- If so, how is this challenge tackled?
- How are the experiences of the lower socio-economic background learners included in your institution?
- Are CPD courses on various approaches depending on the SES and on sensitivity to SES provided on a regular basis?
- How does your institution identify cases of discrimination based on SES?
- How does your institution deal with cases of discrimination based on SES?

5. Policy - specific actions for inclusion of low SES learners

- What are the reasons and the objectives for which your institution is focusing on aspects linked to the inclusion of learners with a disadvantaged SES?
- How are students with a lower socio-economic background involved within your institution?
- What type of additional learning support is your institution offering to its students?
 - a. Study scholarships
 - b. Subsidised accommodation

- c. Career counselling
- d. Psychological counselling
- e. Study spaces
- f. Accessible digital tools/resources
- g. Other
- Does your university specifically offer support targeted at low SES learners?
If yes, which of the following:
 - a. Remedial programmes
 - b. Social scholarships
 - c. Other, please specify

5. Practice and Pedagogy - special offers and support

- Is there programme(s) or module(s) on gender studies in your institution?
- Is there a research centre or activities on gender studies in your institution?
- Does your institution monitor awareness of a gender sensitive approach in teaching?
In research activities?
- How does your institution promote and support awareness of a gender sensitive approach in teaching? In research activities?
- Is there awareness of the gendered impact on work conditions, type of work, timing of work?

6. Transition - facilitating the successful engagement of students regardless of the SES

- What kind of data is your institution collecting on the impact that the family situation has on learners' participation?
- What does your institution do in relation to this data?
- What are the guidance policies and practices for supporting choice of programme or subject by students from lower SES backgrounds?
- Is your institution working closely with employers to ensure equitable access of its learners regardless of their SES to the labour market?
- Is your institution tracking the employment trajectory of students from low SES backgrounds?

7. Is there something else that you want to highlight about the topic?

4.3 Strategy for actions to be taken

At this point it is time to plan concrete actions in relation to the specific area you have decided to work on. We invite you in this section to select a challenge and encourage the group to identify short, medium and long term objectives.

You can then fill in the **Action Plan Table 'A'** to identify the resources you need and the person(s) responsible. Fill in also the 3 transversal questions.

This will give you a good overview of what you need and how to achieve it.

Section 5 "Assisting boxes" list some points that you might find useful when filling in the Action Plan Table 'A' – it might help you to steer the discussion if your group is not too proactive.

TEMPLATE ‘A’: Action Plan table

Please write here one challenge that you have identified during the audit sessions for which you want to develop an action plan. A challenge could be for example, “training staff”.

Discuss the resources needed in as many areas of action as possible and identify the person(s) responsible for each area or for making sure that the resources are obtained.

Please use one template for each challenge that you identify and want to discuss with your group(s).

CHALLENGE

		Description of the support	
		Resources needed	Responsible
Areas of action	Finances (Box 1)		
	Internal Communication (Box 2)		
	External Communication (Box 3)		
	Administration and Infrastructure (Box 4)		
	HHRR and Training (Box 5)		
	Strategy (Box 6)		
	Governance and Structure (Box 7)		
	Research (Box 8)		
	Internal Cooperation (Box 9)		
	External Cooperation (Box 10)		

TRANSVERSAL QUESTIONS	
Timeframe for the implementation of this challenge with milestones	
Indicators that will confirm your success	
Way(s) of evaluating the implementation of this challenge	

5. Question Boxes

In this section we offer you some further points that can help you to fill in the Template 'A' – Action Plan Table (section 4.3). These points might help you steer the discussion during the Action Plan session.

If you feel the group is active enough, you can skip this section.

Box 1 – Finances

- Has your university enough allocation to diversity and inclusion? Where does it come from?
- Is there a separate budget for diversity measures? How much? Who manages it? Who has access to it?
- Do you think that innovative initiatives to get funding should be encouraged and undertaken? Can you think of any initiatives?
- Which key areas of diversity and inclusion should receive more funding?
- How would you convince others that more financing is needed for diversity and inclusion?

Box 2 – Internal Communication

- Have employees received sufficient and comprehensive information on the developed diversity strategy and the related goals? How? When?
- Do new employees receive comprehensive information on the university's diversity strategy when they start work? How? When?
- Does the university offer its community the opportunity to formulate and contribute their diverse needs (e.g. in diversity committees)? In what way?
- Has your institution hosted internal events on diversity topics in the last three years and announced it widely?
- How is your institution announcing its events or activities on diversity and inclusion topics?

Box 3 – External Communication

- Does your university offer visible access to the topic of diversity on the internet that is easy to find (e.g. diversity portal)?
- Are the descriptions of the degree programmes designed to be open and diversity-friendly in such a way that they potentially appeal to all those interested in the respective subjects?
- How is the university informing regularly on diversity issues that are relevant in the context of the university? i.e. newsletter, information materials, social media, participation in cross-institutional projects and networks, press releases, general website, etc
- Has your university hosted public events on diversity issues in the last three years?

Box 4 – Administration and Infrastructure

- Is there a complaints possibility (e.g. an office) for the employees?
- Is there an anti-discrimination office for students?
- Is there a transparent, structured procedure for dealing with cases of discrimination, mobbing and sexual violence?
- Is there a guideline for dealing with discrimination, bullying and sexual violence?
- Is there a committee, round table or similar, which deals with the issue of discrimination in the workplace or/and the university context?
- Are the counselling and complaints offices easily accessible for everyone, by means of location, opening hours, etc.?

Box 5 – Human Resources and Training

- Is the topic of diversity addressed in job advertisements?
- Is there a targeted search for diverse applicants for specific vacancies?
- Is there a structured, transparent application procedure and information on the application procedure?
- Is the acquisition of diversity competencies part of leadership development?
- Do managers act as role models in the field of diversity?
- Does training on diversity, cultural diversity exist for all employees?

Box 6 – Strategy

- Is there a jointly developed understanding of diversity in the university? Where can it be found? What does include? (i.e. diversity guidelines, diversity concept or strategy, etc.)?
- Is the topic of diversity addressed in the institution's development plan or target agreements with the respective state government?
- What offers are there to support students during the transition phases between school and study and study and work (e.g. bridging courses)?
 - Is the introductory phase of studies gender- and diversity-sensitive (also with regard to different knowledge prerequisites)?
 - Is there accompaniment towards career entry, taking diversity characteristics into account?
 - Career entry: target group-specific mentoring programmes
- What support and assistance do you offer students during their studies? (e.g. counselling or mentoring, buddy programme, support courses for studying at different speeds)
- Are there resources and measures of university teaching and learning supports to integrate diversity in different courses?
- Is there a field of action of study and teaching?
- Has diversity been integrated into the curricula and the concrete design of the study programmes?
- Are there study programmes and/or courses related to diversity?

Box 7 – Governance and Structure

- Who is responsible for Diversity and Inclusion at university management level?
- Do you have a unit/diversity officer/staff representative? Where exactly is it structurally located? Do you have other organisational form(s) for diversity management?
- Are departments/faculties involved in diversity management?
- Is there monitoring of the diversity-relevant key figures? What is recorded? At what frequency?
- Do the recorded key figures flow into the strategic controlling of the university?
- Is there a general awareness of the diverse needs of learners with different forms of disabilities (physical disabilities, neurodiverse etc) in your policies and supports?
- Does your institution have work and rest rooms for employees with special needs? Such as
 - Family workrooms / Breastfeeding rooms / Baby changing facilities
 - Quiet rooms / Praying rooms
 - Library workstations for people with a visual or walking impairment
- Is there a mobility plan for all university buildings and facilities for people with physical disabilities?
- Are the workplaces equipped for people with disabilities?

Box 8 – Research

- Does your university promote the research connected to diversity and inclusion?
- Does your university encourage the writing of academic papers on diversity and inclusion?
- Does your university allow its staff to attend academic events about diversity and inclusion?
- Has your university collaborated in research activities led by others in the area of diversity and inclusion? Has your university led this kind of activities?

Box 9 – Internal Cooperation

- Are there internal university actors who network and collaborate? Such as commissions, working groups, etc
- Is there a coordinator or centralised office helping staff working on diversity and inclusion issues to get in touch, exchange ideas and needs and encourage them to interact?
- Have the responsibilities for diversity and the tasks of the various actors been recorded by the university management?

Box 10 – External Cooperation

- Do you cooperate with NGOs, civil society organizations and communities working with discriminated persons? How often are you in touch?
- Do you cooperate with national or regional HE government actors (e.g. ministries)? Do you share your data? Do you feed them with information on what is needed?
- Do you participate in regional, national or international projects or initiatives in the area of diversity and inclusion?

6. How to progress in diversity and inclusion issues? Steps to follow after your first Diversity Audit Model session

The work on diversity and inclusion is an ongoing activity for an institution. The SMILE project recommends to plan follow up sessions that can be annual or more frequent if the institution is prepared to go “that extra mile” and push for a faster implementation of a diversity strategy. Depending on the scenario that you have used, we suggest you follow one of these approaches:

Follow-Up Sessions

Coming from Scenario 1 “Let’s Start!”:

- Plan a session to see how the action plan has been implemented so far – obstacles, surprises, developments... dedicate 45 min for this task
- Discuss which pillar is more important for you and start talking about it – dedicate 30 min for this task
- Work on a reviewed Action Plan to integrate new general points and existing points about the pillar chosen (30 min minimum)
- Fill in the feedback form (10 min)
- In the following sessions, the group can tackle the follow up session from Scenario 2 (see below)

Coming from Scenario 2 “Let’s Progress!”:

- Plan a session to see how the action plan has been implemented so far – obstacles, surprises, developments... dedicate 30 min for this task
- Work on some questions related to a new pillar during 45 min
- Work on a reviewed Action Plan to integrate new points from the initial pillar and points about the new pillar chosen (30 min minimum)
- Fill in the feedback form (10 min)
- In the following session, the group can repeat this procedure but for the third pillar

At the end of the process, you will have a global approach to diversity and inclusion in place, that you can embed in your annual activity. You should always involve participants that attended the initial session in follow-up sessions, as well as inviting new staff members to attend who will bring a new view to the challenges and information that you have missed.

7. Outlook

We hope that going through this Diversity Audit Model for HEIs encourages you to take further steps towards a more diversity-oriented approach to your activities in your institution.

Within the framework of the SMILE project additional tools are also developed to inclusion and diversity-oriented actions in HEIs.

SMILE has also developed:

- ✓ One INTRODUCTORY COURSE to diversity in HEIs, addressed to academic and non-academic staff
- ✓ Three CPD COURSES addressing university staff (academic and non-academic) so that they are better trained to address the needs of
 - students with migrant background,
 - women in leadership positions and
 - students from lower socio-economic backgrounds
- ✓ An OPERATIONAL POLICY ACTION PLAN with recommendations, to guide and support HEIs, policy stakeholders, and the civil society in fulfilling and realising their commitment to diversity and social inclusion.

These additional tools will support employees as their careers develop at your institution and represent practical approaches to embed inclusion and diversity actions in your HEI.

8. Resources

We recommend you to use the resources that you will find following these two links:

- SMILE (2022). Resources. <http://smile.eucen.eu/resources/>
- References for the Audit Model: <http://smile.eucen.eu/the-smile-audit-model/references/>

Smile

The SMILE Diversity Audit Model

Whether your institution is already doing a lot in the area of Diversity and Inclusion, or you are relatively new adopting these types of approaches, the **SMILE Diversity Audit Model** can help you to reflect, analyse and plan a better strategy to have a more inclusive community.

The SMILE Diversity Audit Model has been developed with the collaboration and contribution from all the SMILE consortium:

- EUCEN – European university continuing education network (coordinators of the project). Belgium
- ESU – European Students Union. Belgium
- Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz. Germany
- Maynooth University. Ireland
- University of Turku. Finland
- University of Malta. Malta
- Università degli Studi di Cagliari. Italy
- Gheorghe Asachi Technical University of Iasi. Romania
- Fundació Solidaritat UB. Spain
- NOTUS. Spain
- Solidar Foundation. Belgium

This tool is open and free to use. If users need coaching or advice on how to use it, contact smile@eucen.eu