

Smile

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) course on Socio- Economic Status

ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION – SOCIO-ECONOMIC
STATUS OF STUDENTS IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION
ENVIROMENT

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List of abbreviations

- CPD – Continuing Professional Development
- EU – European Union
- eucen – European university continuing education network
- HE – Higher Education
- HEE – Higher Education Environment
- HEIs – Higher Education Institutions
- SDGs – Sustainable Development Goals
- SES – Socio Economic Status
- SMILE – Social Meaning Impact through LLL universities in Europe (Erasmus+ KA3 project, Social Inclusion and common values)
- TUIASI – "Gheorghe Asachi" Technical University of Iasi, Romania
- UDHR – Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- UTU – University of Turku, Finland

Facts and Figures

Project Acronym	SMILE
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A. Context and core features of the SMILE CPDs

i. SMILE project and SMILE CPD courses

Although the last 30 years of research in social and educational sciences addressed the challenge of diversity in the Higher Education Environment (HEE), the inclusiveness is slow to manifest on a daily basis, and the liberalism of giving voice to everyone is dividing the society more than ever. A European Commission Erasmus+ project SMILE - *Social Meaning Impact through LLL Universities in Europe* develops the diversity approach in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to a higher level of awareness, understanding, and commitment, to make significant steps forward to a better society.

Together with an Audit Model on Diversity and policy recommendations¹, SMILE provides Continuous Professional Development (CPD) courses - for training of university staff, both academics and administrative personnel, based on recent research, collaborative experience and online resources. It addresses frequent discrimination among students and staff with the scope of development of the critical mass in the higher education environment, as drivers of change and engagement for an effective and holistic education of future graduates.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) course on Socio-Economic Status is one of SMILE CPD courses. The other SMILE CPD courses are:

- *Introductory Continuing Professional Development course on Diversity – First steps to know ourselves better in a diverse higher education*
- *Building Multicultural Competence at University CPD course – Critical reflections & action*
- *The Glass Ceiling Ain't Broken – A CPD course on women and leadership in the non-compulsory education sector*

We consider that these themes require a special emphasis to foster more diversity-oriented practices in HEIs over time. Based on this, SMILE CPD courses are underpinned by the following **seven fundamental educational principles**:

1. The main objective of courses is to give further expertise to individuals working in HEIs especially but not exclusively.
2. Inclusive practices involve creating a learning space open for everybody in HEIs: academics, administrative staff and policy makers in charge of developing and implementing policy, procedures and practices.
3. Inclusive practices in HEI mean adapting arrangements to meet the needs of the staff, students and potential students in all their diversity.
4. For staff this means an awareness of their own identity and experiences, including cultural background, socioeconomic situation, and an understanding of the impact that different circumstances have on learners and their learning outcomes.
5. The CPD courses are most effective when they take a problem-solving approach to course design and delivery rather than a didactic one. This means that:
 - Information is provided as a resource, not as a long lecture.
 - Time is given to sharing of best practices as well as of those practices which 'went wrong'.
 - Time is given to participants to reflect on their own professional practice and that of their team.

¹ Find them on the project website: <http://smile.eucen.eu/>

- Time is given to reflect on appropriate institutional arrangements.
 - Action planning to make changes is important to enabling participants to think about how to implement new ideas.
6. Role models are an important feature of the training - it is important that the HEI staff hears the voice of the ultimate target groups. This is done by involving them directly in the course in some way and/or through the use of case studies, videos or recordings.
 7. It is important to value what the participants already know and/or can do. The own experiences of participants are relevant and a key starting point in these courses. It will help participants to reflect on situations explained in the courses.

ii. Core features of this CPD course

The Socio-Economic Status (SES) represents a trigger to divide the perspective of the stakeholders and actors from Higher Education, and therefore it is important to draw the interest of potential trainees on the followings:

- It broadens your perspective: Listening to the voice of others builds a higher level of understanding on a much larger reality than you might consider previously;
- It works on your skills of communication: Inner thoughts over the hardships of student's engagement in learning are altered while speaking to them aloud in a group of peers;
- It builds on your flexibility: while you have the experience of what worked best for you, the experience of others challenges your limitations – I can do it, too!
- It boosts your ability to develop new skills: whenever you feel overstressed by the uncertain future of higher education it is time to work on a new skill.

The future skills of occupations in the context of digital and green transformations mirrors the needs of university staff to adapt to a diverse student population, hence the necessity for the academics and administrative personnel to continuously work on their professional development.

iii. Guide of use of the course

This course is designed to be a flexible tool, **adaptive to one's university needs** to train their staff, in behaving and acting in the spirit of inclusiveness and equity when addressing diversity and equity of the higher education environment. It can also be used for a group of individuals interested to train later a diverse population of students, of various ages, ethnicity, beliefs, gender and background.

The format of this course is proposed to follow the basic traits of dialogic learning:

- Egalitarian dialogue - in giving equal voice to one's ideas, experience and knowledge;
- Interactive – high participant-trainer talk ratio in arranging information and ideas into different patterns;
- Exploratory talk for learning – collective mind storming and probing ideas, enabling "the speaker to try out ideas, to hear how they sound, to see what others make of them".

Modes of study

The SMILE CPD courses have been conceived to be carried out in different ways, adapting to the needs and availability of the user:

- **Unsupervised.** The user can read through the course, undertake the tasks and self-evaluate the answers.
- **Online, with a tutor's support.** The user can be guided by a tutor who will help to understand the content, its use and application in real life and analyse the final conclusions drawn from the work done.
- **Face-to-face, in a group and with a tutor.** The user will form part of a group, listen to the presentations, contribute to the discussion, and follow the rhythm of the class, benefiting from peer-exchange and peer-review.

This guide and the exercises have been written with the assumption that the participants are studying face-to-face (or hybrid) in a group with a tutor. However, the materials can be utilized also unsupervised and without tutoring support.

Participants

The courses are targeted at staff having a beginner and intermediate level of competences in diversity and inclusion.

Participating academics should have:

- Some competences in diversity and inclusion in “learning and teaching”
- A little or some previous knowledge about diversity and inclusion matters
- Curiosity to explore diversity and inclusion in higher education at a deeper level
- Students and/or colleagues who belong to the target groups of the SMILE courses
- Interest in and commitment to creating a fairer society

Participating non-academics should have:

- Working experience helping or communicating with students
- Some curiosity to explore diversity and inclusion in higher education at a deeper level
- Contact with colleagues who belong to the target groups of the SMILE courses
- Interest in and commitment to creating a fairer society

Active involvement of participants

This course is designed to make use of previous reading and watching (recorded) materials based on published research, experience of trainers, teachers and graduates, work from previous projects and collective ideas from the SMILE participants. The user needs to read the text and undertake the activities described in the “self-reflecting time” red boxes. Some activities will be optional (especially those that involve reading further materials or watching videos, because these are activities that require quite a lot of time). Extra-materials are found in yellow boxes and have been made available for those individuals who want to deepen into the topic. The activity boxes **can involve thinking, writing, reading or discussing activities**. Each box has been identified with an icon:

Think



Write



Read



Discuss



Practical arrangements

The time budget is 6-8 hours, in two consecutive sessions:

- Session 1 – Part A, B, and C.
- Session 2 – Part D and E.

It's suggested that there is at least several days, even 2-3 weeks between the sessions in order to give time to think the themes of the sessions.

To support dialogue and discussions the room setting should be informal with individual chairs and also equipped with flipchart(s), a screen and digital projector and laptop. The sessions will be facilitated by a trainer with competence working with diverse group composition. It is recommended that the trainer will use a learning management system (i.e. Moodle) or a group email list and/or WhatsApp to keep ongoing communication, sharing materials and ideas during the two sessions.

iv. Do I fit in?

We often ask ourselves this question before joining a group when we are interested on the subject that matters to us. The recent years taught us all that when we sense that change is around the corner, we feel the need to understand what is happening and how is it going to affect us, our life. As educators or support personnel in the higher education environment we became familiar with the student-centered education as a concept, though we know how limited our attempts are to do just that, and how much the profile and needs of the student population changed, all the more during the pandemic time.

We try to adapt, to thrive in our profession and job mostly individually (or following international online courses) but we rarely have the chance within the same institution to talk and learn from the experience of others, to try out new ideas, to probe with others our techniques/developments. So here is your opportunity to join a group to do all that and become a driver of change.

B. Part one: Socio-Economic Status of students: What does it mean?

1. Session aim

This question is actually opening the discussion to the holistic understanding regarding many features of students' status that reflects only partly on the student achievements.

2. Self-understanding of students' SES

It is useful to start with an exploration of the self-understanding of student's SES.

Self-reflecting time

Each participant will answer the following questions:

- What kind of behavior of your students do you consider it reflects their SES? To what extent this experience makes you bring changes in your instructional design of your classes?
- What other groups of students join the low SES students in terms of diversity and may experience discrimination in the HEE?

Anticipated time: 10 minutes



The group will share their answers and draw insights over the benefits of in-depth understanding of each other's perspective.

Anticipated time: 30 minutes



According to literature survey one can find a sum of characteristics that may indicate that a student belongs to disadvantaged socio-economic groups, as for example if she/he:

- comes from families with low incomes;
- has its domicile in a rural area;
- is a person with physical disabilities or chronic diseases;
- is orphaned by one or both parents;
- comes from placement centers, orphanages, or other similar institutions;
- belongs to some disadvantaged ethnic group (e.g. Roma).

When we discuss different socio-economic groups, it is important to recognize the concept of intersectionality by which we mean "*the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage*" (Oxford Languages; see also Royo et al. 2022). Thus, very often challenging situations go hand in hand.

Self-reflective time

You have been a student yourself, having your share of some inclusion practice or diversity challenges. Now you are invited to make a list of those moments and reflect on how your work at present has been shaped by that experience.



Anticipated time: 15 minutes

After writing, please share your story with the participant standing next to you.

Anticipated time: 5 minutes

**Extra material – Reading and Watching time**

On diversity: Access Ain't Inclusion

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j7w2Gv7ueOc>

The blessings and curses of being a woman in tech

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6UN2iKneBE8>

Let's stop talking about diversity and start working towards equity

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=deYUUFak08Y>

A migrant's experience of higher education in Finland

<http://smile.eucen.eu/2021/05/11/keynote-by-zahara-al-take-at-the-he4u2-final-event/>



C. Part two: The needs of students from the perspective of their SES

1. Session aim

When directly asking students about their needs try to differentiate them based on the student's SES, the numbers are not significantly important but the resulting list is helpful. The purpose of this session is to have a broader perspective and to use it as the main inspiration when you design the next activity or event for your class, and to better calibrate your relationships with the students as a group but also in individual meetings.

2. Collective perspective - Acknowledging one's self

This part is dedicated to the experience acknowledgement of each participant of the group related to two main issues:

- the identification of the needs of low SES students
- the identification of personal biases related to the perception of the student's identity and capability depending on their SES.

The participants can be separated in 3 sub-groups to work on these identifications (15 minutes). They will share the results using the flipchart and the trainer will facilitate and encourage the self-acknowledgement for all participants.

Anticipated time: 15 minutes



Extra material – Reading and Watching time

Education and Socioeconomic Status

<https://www.apa.org/pi/ses/resources/publications/factsheet-education.pdf>

The beauty of conflict

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=55n9pH_A0O8

Don't Take the Exit on People: A diversity & Inclusion Approach (learning about yourself)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MI52Brr7AeA>



D. Part three: Pedagogics and wellbeing in the Higher Education Environment

1. Session aim

Although Pedagogics is a well understood concept in the HEE, Wellbeing is not that familiar in this particular environment. As both concepts are complex, the purpose of this session is to become familiar with their multiple dimensions, to understand, explore and use them as a member of their university in everyday activities.

2. What, how, when, where and with whom did I get involved?

We are all shaped in our behavior by our past experiences. More than that, experiences in our personal life are bringing changes to our professional life. Many of us felt the need to become better, especially during the pandemic time, where digital tools took over the more traditional way of providing the learning environment with adequate interactions.

Before exploring the new ways, each participant is invited to answer the title question in writing (500 to 1000 characters) and send it to the learning management system (i.e. Moodle), group email or WhatsApp address.

Introduction to Inclusive teaching practices

i. Top three pedagogic traits

When it comes to academic achievements it is said that – **Student failure is instructional failure!** Thus, pedagogy applied in teaching develops the impact of education in our learners. When searching for pedagogic traits we may find several approaches and they all make sense in various contexts. From the available reading and video materials listed below, some examples of top three pedagogic traits: **Subject knowledge, sense of humour and method of teaching** in more general terms of pedagogy: what teachers do (behaviour), what teachers know (knowledge and understanding), why teachers act as they do (beliefs).

The participants are asked to write down their top three pedagogic traits they experienced as teachers.

Anticipated time: 10 minutes



Please share these traits with the group on the flipchart, followed by a group discussion.

Anticipated time: 30 minutes



Extra material – Reading and Watching time

What makes great pedagogy? Nine claims from research

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/329746/what-makes-great-pedagogy-nine-claims-from-research.pdf

The three characteristics of an effective teacher

[https://www.academia.edu/40183328/The Three Characteristics of an Effective Teacher](https://www.academia.edu/40183328/The_Three_Characteristics_of_an_Effective_Teacher)

Qualities of effective teachers: students' perspective

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/346895045 Qualities of Effective Teachers students' Perspectives](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/346895045_Qualities_of_Effective_Teachers_students'_Perspectives)

Introduction to Inclusive teaching practices:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fpsyKo-wKA>

Teaching methods for inspiring the students of the future

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UCFg9bcW7Bk>

ii. *Wellbeing: from individual to organization*

Wellbeing started to be associated to the health state of individuals and it referred to the complex dimension of a human being in search for a fulfilled daily life. During a flight, in case of an emergency, you are asked to put your mask first and then tend to the others. So whether you are a teacher or an administrative personal of the university, wellbeing should be the most important thing to nurture for yourself and for others – here is the link to help you navigate your own thoughts, emotions and decisions in both the personal and professional scope: <https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/healthwellbeing/about-us/minding-your-wellbeing.html>

At present, the wellbeing of students is at the heart of the educational environment and is more significant when related to low SES students. Most of this subject relates to what universities should/could do to provide their students the wellbeing services they need and appreciate during their studies. Another part of these subjects addresses the needs of teachers and the adequate wellbeing services designed for them.

Self-reflective time

The participants are invited to explore these two parts of the subject (wellbeing of the students, wellbeing of the teachers) before attending the session by writing (approximately 200 words) about their experiences with regard to the support they offered to students so far.

After writing your experience please share them with the group (face-to-face or electronically).



Anticipated time: 30 minutes

Extra material – Reading and Watching time

Wellbeing and learning environments of higher education

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QNR-nblqXVA>

A new approach to mental health in universities

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=203NKw-G-oY>

The power of inclusive education

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZIPsPRaZP6M>



3. The list of Do's and Dont's – A valuable dialogic learning

When we refer to our personal experience, we are more willing to share what works for us and our students and what is less effective in our work. If we referring to the new HEE we have to consider several aspects: a wider and diverse student population, digital technologies developed for the education sector, a different set of market requirements for the graduates, and the university staff mostly the same for the last decades.

In traditional HE there is an inertia to change educational content and tasks and the focus goes more to the behavior change/adaptation.

The experience of online educational environment is something all of us already had and new lessons emerged related to both content and behavior.

The hybrid education/classrooms are less experienced and this involves a different approach for teachers and the need for more significant resources required from the institution to provide high quality hybrid education.

Following the video's indicated below, that each participant is required to watch before attending this session, each participant is invited to reflect and share with the group the first two future changes they will do in their line of work.

Please watch these videos. After watching them write down two future changes you will do in your work to support students with different socio-economic status.



Do's and Don'ts in the Hybrid Virtual Classroom

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-lj3qp4S880>

The biggest myth in education

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rhgwlhB58PA>

Anticipated time: 20 minutes

Share your ideas with a group.

Anticipated time: 30 minutes



E. Part four: What is the way forward?

1. Session aim

This part aims to consolidate the information, thoughts and ideas gathered from the previous parts by exploring what new developments we can bring to our low SES students to ensure that they reach the achievements that university requires for graduation, enjoy their student life, and become attractive for future employment.

2. Brainstorming exercise: Indicators of our improvement – what else than numbers?

Any change we develop targeting an improvement in our academic life is followed by an assessment where mostly numbers play at the front. At individual level or organizational level we look for measuring the improvement that will give us further sense of direction to follow with respect to our low SES students.

Each participant is invited to explore what indicators of improvement we should use with reference to our job tasks regarding low SES students.



Anticipated time: 10 minutes

Share your ideas with a group.



Anticipated time: 30 minutes

Extra material – Reading and Watching time

Belonging, A Critical Piece of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2jK0gyQCoTs>



Communication is the key

It is a well-acknowledged truth that communication is mostly overlooked in the interactions we develop with our low SES students. “Inclusive communication” is worth learning about.

What do you understand by the term “inclusive communication”?

Anticipated time: 10 minutes



Please share your thoughts with the group, followed by a group discussion. For further insight the participants are invited to watch the video presented below.

Introduction in inclusive communication

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1IFeLURVwcQ>

Anticipated time: 20 minutes



The practice of communication becomes more effective once you make it a personal plan or even strategy, following some well documented principles and advices coming next.

Principles in inclusive communication with students according to the SES:

- Share information in a way that every student can understand and acknowledge.
- Do not separate students by their SES in different groups.
- Communicate with all in the same way.
- Do not assume student’s SES (based on the student look, actions, name ...) and to not treat them differently.
- Avoid using language that promotes exclusion from the group.
- Try to adapt your communication to be more accessible to everyone.
- Offer flexibility and willingness to communicate.
- Listen hard to the student.
- Always take their feedback-
- Step into the student shoes and try to understand his/her feelings and perspectives.
- Guide student’s actions.
- Check your tone and body language.
- Be there when the student needs you, value and support them in communicating experiences.
- Be positive.
- Integrate your inclusive communication into the regular one.
- Always speak in a positive and non-judgmental way.

How to integrate inclusive communication in HEIs

- Create a supportive environment and encourage an open communication through specialized services.
- Identify the low-SES student's needs of communicating and integrate them into the regular communication.
- Use different communication channels with low-SES students according to their needs.
- Design accessible events to involve low-SES students.

Dedicating time and interest to our daily work with students in our universities, in developing equity and inclusion practices, will contribute to the way forward in building a friendly-diverse community.

Extra material – Reading and Watching time

Becoming a better teacher

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fdZkmbY0HB0>

Daring Classrooms

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DVD8YRgA-ck>

How to have a good conversation

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H6n3iNh4XLI>



3. Support services of your university tackling SES

After we have now become more familiar with different aspects of SES, we are now getting acquainted with the services that universities are offering for students. Because of the interconnected nature of different needs, many student services are tackling also SES, even if they are not originally planned for this purpose. Universities can have i.e. study counsellors, student well-being services, study psychologists and accessibility services. Also, student associations are often providing services for different student groups.

What kind of services your university is offering for students with low socio-economic status? Note that often these same services are also for other students.

Anticipated time: 10 minutes



Discuss your findings with colleagues.

Anticipated time: 30 minutes



One example of support services are guided peer groups (Lundqvist et al. 2022). These groups aim to improve the well-being of the incoming international staff, researchers and PhD students by offering them a platform where they can discuss their matters in a safe setting. The themes covered in the discussions are manifold and among them is stress related to funding, which is naturally a big issue for low SES PhD students.

F. What next?

Congratulations! You have completed the **CPD Course on Socio-Economic Status!** We hope that many of the new perspectives you explored with us will help you engage actively to re-design your tasks for the benefit of your students.

As mentioned in the beginning of the course, in addition to this course, SMILE has developed also other full CPD courses on diversity:

- *Introductory Continuing Professional Development course on Diversity – First steps to know ourselves better in a diverse higher education*
- *Building Multicultural Competence at University CPD course – Critical reflections & actions*
- *The Glass Ceiling Ain't Broken – A CPD course on women and leadership in the non-compulsory education sector*

You are invited to request your institution to organise these courses for the staff or, if this is not possible, to undertake the courses autonomously or with some colleagues. You will discover things that you are not aware of and, surely, prepare you to be a more diversity-friendly HEI member of staff.

Thank you for your involvement!

Promote the SMILE courses as well – make diversity and inclusion your objective at work, at home and in your community!

<https://smile.eucen.eu>

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