



THE TRANSNATIONAL ID REPORT WORK PACKAGE 2 Executive Summary

Diversity Matters | Empowering Marginalised Young People for Diversity and
Inclusion in VET



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).



Co-funded by
the European Union

1. INTRODUCTION

The DiMa Transnational Inclusion and Diversity (ID) Report represents the first major deliverable of the Erasmus+ project *Diversity Matters (DiMa): Empowering Marginalised Young People for Diversity and Inclusion in VET*. The research conducted across Austria, Ireland, Belgium, Croatia, and the Basque Country, by all partners, explored how inclusion, diversity, and belonging are understood and practised within vocational education and training (VET) systems across Europe.

This research and final report fulfil the specific objectives of Work Package 2 (WP2): *Evidence Collection and Needs Analysis*, whose purpose it was to generate a robust, evidence-base of insights into the lived experience, challenges, and needs of young people and professionals in VET responding to diversity and inclusion. The findings complement the DiMa consortiums original hypothesis, gleaned from our extensive collective practice experience working with young people in VET settings, that gaps in responses to inclusion and diversity in VET pose a particular challenge in the current challenging context of increased global migration, the rise in nationalism and extremist ideologies and the complexities of meeting this moment through capacity building for young people, professionals and VET institutions. The report highlight not only highlights the need for the development of Dima's proposed tools, training materials, and learning resources under Work Package 3 and 4, but does so by ensuring that all outputs are grounded in real experiences and systemic realities. This ongoing task continues to be led by [Jugend am Werk Steiermark GmbH](#) – Austria (project coordinator) in collaboration with our five partners:

1. [Meath Partnership](#) – Ireland,
2. [Ikaslan Bizkaia](#) – Basque Country / Spain,
3. [Volonteurop](#) – Belgium,
4. [E.N.T.E.R.](#) – Austria,
5. [Agencija za strukovno obrazovanje i obrazovanje odraslih](#) – Croatia.

2. METHODOLOGY

In achieving comprehensive, reliable and authentic results, a mixed-methods approach was implemented in the research phase, resulting in a rich and nuanced, participatory transnational comparative analysis across all partner countries. This included:

1. Online surveys to gather large-scale quantitative data on attitudes, practices, and barriers.
2. Informal interviews and consultations and discussion based, contextual conversations with participants to capture qualitative insights and lived experiences from learners and professionals.
3. Desk research analysing relevant policy, academic, and institutional documentation.

This triangulated research design provided both data comparability and contextual nuance, allowing each partner to explore inclusion and diversity dynamics, trends and experiences within its own VET landscape while contributing to a broad collective European overview.

The methodology proved both fitting and sensitive to WP2's transnational research aims. Online surveys enabled broad participation, while discussion-based context driven exchange provided rich qualitative data reflecting emotional depth and lived realities. This comparative approach supported meaningful cross-country learning.

Some challenges were noted. Digital access barriers, particularly among marginalised youth, potentially limited participation in some regions while also limiting spontaneous dialogue. Informal discussion, while open ended and inclusive had to be managed sensitively to ensure equitable voices were heard and represented. Addressing this DiMa's future phases benefit from participatory cocreation workshops which will use visual tools and storytelling to make engagement more nuanced and dynamic.

Overall, the methods successfully met the WP2 objective: to provide an evidence-based framework for the design of new tools and training that directly responds to participant needs and promote inclusive transformation in VET.

3. KEY FINDINGS

Several themes revealed themselves through our research analysis, highlighting what appear to be broadly experienced dynamics between young people and professionals and within VET institutions themselves. Socio-cultural context, while driving specific local experience and practice norms did not provide for a significant diversity of experience and lived realities. How relationships and power dynamics are developed and maintained, however formal, informal and nuanced, proved to be the key process through which inclusion and diversity are facilitated. The feelings that the facilitation was authentic and meaningful and the degree to which young people felt that these were selectively applied to them or indeed how professionals felt they were selectively applied in policy and practice.

Data overall reflected a reflexive approach on the part of professionals who seemed to clearly understand the context of inclusion and diversity in their specific VET settings and practice, however, doubts about their own capacity to facilitate this and feelings of a lack in support to do so were strong threads throughout the data.

Systemic barriers to implementing diversity and inclusion either within VET institutions or driven by local / national policy, norms and perceived prejudices and inequalities appeared, implicit, throughout the data too. Highlighting a challenge faced across the European destination where research was conducted. This date often reflected that the implementation of inclusion and diversity practices and policy felt somewhat meaningless in light of broader, external top-down trends. Others reflected that broader more progressive and inclusive approaches driven by national and local policy and attitudes were experienced as somewhat tokenistic in their application. Or, were perceived to be applied genuinely, but with a lack of sufficient planning, capacity and support to ensure meaningful positive engagement and sustained inclusion and diversity.

Evident also, across most sites, there was a tension between what young people stated as their experience and what professionals believed young people's experience of diversity and inclusion. This tension was also replicated by professionals and the administration of the VET institutions. This revealed a lack of exploration undertaken in these settings and a communication failure, where a real lack of insight into both young people and professionals lived experience and perceptions intruded on power dynamics and indeed acted as blocks to identifying and responding to issues of diversity and inclusion.

Thematically findings fall into 7 key areas.

1. Generational Gaps and Communication – Intergenerational collaboration and co-learning are vital to bridge differing attitudes toward inclusion, communication, and technology.
2. Resource Limitations and Funding Constraints – Professionals cited insufficient resources, limited budgets, and inadequate staff capacity to implement inclusive practices.
3. Training and Professional Development Needs – Educators require ongoing, practice-based training in cultural competence, trauma-informed practice, diversity and inclusive communication.
4. Emotional Safety and Belonging – Young participants emphasised psychological safety and supportive relationships as central to inclusion and diversity.
5. Institutional and Structural Barriers – Inclusion and diversity are often seen as a personal value rather than an institutional strategy, indicating a lack of leadership and accountability. While well intentioned as evidenced in the research these intentions did not always translate into practice and experience, and outcomes were largely understood differently between both cohorts.
6. Cultural Awareness and Representation – Unconscious bias and underrepresentation of minority groups were noted in practice, relationship building and management, curricula and traditions.
7. Systemic Change and Coordination – Inclusion and diversity require coordinated leadership, systemic vision, and collaboration with community partners. Support, resourcing and capacity building of professionals must be facilitated to build both professional confidence and skill while also providing key tools for real world diversity and inclusion change and practice. Young people also lack supports and creative tools which speak to their generational experience and facilitate understanding and adapting to changing migration trends and national population demographics. Ensuring they too are armed with the knowledge, tools and dynamics to embody inclusion and diversity in their own lives.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this report and the rich data gathered during the stages of our research further the bolster the DiMa consortiums position when identifying this project and its stated goals and deliverables; to meet existing gaps in much needed supports and capacity building for young people and professionals in VET responding to inclusion and diversity. Core to this our report lends itself to 5 key recommendations:

	Recommendation	DiMa Project Resource Response
1	<u>Institutional Leadership and Governance:</u> Integrate inclusion as a strategic objective within VET institutions and ensure leadership accountability. Develop clear inclusion strategies supported by budgets and action plans.	DiMa proposed response tool: Reflective strategies and self-evaluation templates for educators and institutions including inclusive practice guides and practical check lists.
2	<u>Professional Capacity Building:</u>	ID Training Series including practical, experiential learning modules, peer

	Deliver practice-based professional learning on inclusive pedagogy and cultural competence. Encourage peer mentoring and transnational exchanges.	learning and mentoring and exchange initiatives and classroom-based activities.
3	<p><u>Learner Centred Support Systems:</u></p> <p>Expand counselling, mentoring, and peer-support programmes to promote emotional safety and learner voice.</p>	<p>Promote youth voice and participation and strengthen emotional safety and belonging including the development of cocreated tools and activities and a context fitting, bespoke digital game. These tools will act as youth voice and peer mentoring guides to empower young people as ambassadors of inclusion and peer supporters.</p>
4	<p><u>Cultural and Structural Change:</u></p> <p>Adopt a whole-institution approach embedding inclusion in policy and practice. Review curricula for bias and promote diversity. Linked Tool: ID Activity Series – ‘Culture Circles and Shared Stories’.</p>	<p>Storytelling, cultural exchange, dialogue and reflection are strongly embedded throughout the DiMa project goals and deliverables. In facilitating Cultural and structural change the DiMa ID training series includes modules which support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • intercultural communication and empathy • diversity in teaching and learning • reflective practice and dialogue methods • storytelling and experiential exercises
5	<p><u>Community Partnerships and Policy Alignment:</u></p> <p>Strengthen collaboration between VET centres, families, NGOs, and local authorities. Align institutional goals with EU lifelong learning priorities. Linked Tool: Community Collaboration Framework (from DiMa Toolbox).</p>	<p>Dima tools will act as resources and frameworks that enable VET professionals and institutions to collaborate with community actors, NGOs, and policy stakeholders to strengthen inclusion and diversity within local education systems. These align with EU priorities and will support cross cultural cooperation and stakeholder engagement via the development of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-creation tools and frameworks to operationalise inclusion strategies at institutional and community level. • Validation and testing of inclusive partnership models between VET providers, youth organisations, and local communities.

4.1 CONCLUSION

The DiMa Transnational Inclusion and Diversity Report provide a robust, evidence-based foundation for shaping the project's next phases. It meets the objectives of WP2 by translating complex research into actionable insights that will inform the co-design of practical training and institutional tools. The findings highlight that inclusion and diversity in VET must move beyond compliance to transformation — embedding diversity, equity, and belonging into all aspects of policy, practice, and pedagogy.

By grounding the next stages of work in this evidence, DiMa ensures that future deliverables will be relevant, sustainable, and scalable across diverse European contexts.

Building on the outcomes of WP2, the project now moves into Work Package 3 (WP3): The ID Toolbox and Series. This phase will conduct targeted focus groups with educators and young people to refine themes emerging from WP2. A series of interactive workshops will follow, enabling the co-design and prototype testing of the DiMa Toolbox and Inclusion and Diversity Training Series activities.

Tools and activities developed will be piloted in real VET environments, with participant feedback guiding refinement and validation. Through these steps, WP3 will transform the research findings from WP2 into practical, evidence-based activities and training series that empower educators and learners to implement inclusion at every level of VET practice. This process ensures continuity, participation, and alignment with the DiMa project's vision for inclusive, learner centred education.