



# THE TRANSNATIONAL ID REPORT WORK PACKAGE 2

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

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This document represents the first project result under the Erasmus+ project ‘Diversity Matters: Empowering Marginalised Young People for Diversity & Inclusion in VET’ (DiMa).

The DiMa project aims at finding ways to better sensitise and train young, marginalised people in VET for inclusion and diversity. It also aims to support and train professionals from Vocational Education and Training (VET) to promote diversity and inclusion in their daily work with the target group.

The DiMa project is co-financed by the European Commission through the Erasmus+ Programme (Project number: 2024-1-AT01-KA220-VET-000245634) and is implemented by six European project partners representing vocational training organisations, public bodies and pan-European networks from five European countries, namely:

1. [Jugend am Werk Steiermark GmbH](#) – Austria (project coordinator)
2. [Meath Partnership](#) – Ireland
3. [Ikaslan Bizkaia](#) – Basque Country / Spain
4. [Volonteurop](#) – Belgium
5. [E.N.T.E.R.](#) – Austria
6. [Agencija za strukovno obrazovanje i obrazovanje odraslih](#) – Croatia

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The first step of this transnational inclusion & diversity (ID) report was to produce a comprehensive and holistic quantitative and qualitative survey analysis that provides valuable insights into the experiences, challenges and needs of young people in relation to diversity and tolerance. Survey analysis was also conducted with professionals working with young people, providing important insights for the development of targeted policies and programmes. This supports the development of a more holistic approach to diversity and inclusion by considering the perspectives of both groups.

Between April and June 2025, the project partners conducted both field and desk research to gain valuable insight into the experiences, challenges and needs of young, often marginalised people in VET in relation to diversity and tolerance. Questions in the national surveys served as a starting point to talk to young people in VET about their personal experiences, perspectives and needs. Providing valuable insights that will be used to develop targeted activities and measures to promote diversity, inclusion and tolerance.

By involving VET professionals - internally- and externally - who work with young people, important insights were gained to contribute to the development of targeted activities and measures. Furthermore, targeting both groups supports the development of a more holistic approach to diversity and inclusion by considering the perspectives of both young people and professionals in VET.

The surveys were conducted at local, regional, national, and European level, with 24 questions for young people, and 34 questions for VET professionals.

349 young people and 148 professionals participated in the transnational surveys, resulting in 497 participants.

The two-perspective surveys were split into 6 distinct categories, namely:

1	<u>Basic Data</u>	Target group demographics
2	<u>Past (context and experience)</u>	highlighting how the levels of inclusion and diversity have been in VET centres.
3	<u>Present (context and experience)</u>	focusing on the present situation regarding inclusion and diversity.
4	<u>Gaps and Blind spots</u>	highlighting possible support if the situation is not ideal but also focusing on the things that could be improved in relation to diversity and inclusion.
5	<u>Supportive Institutions and Actions</u>	revealing people and actions that support you concerning diversity and inclusion.
6	<u>Future (needs)</u>	aiming at finding out about future actions that would shape inclusion and diversity.

Desk-research was undertaken in each partner country and resulted in the creation of five national, and one European fact sheet detailing:

- Country Overview: providing insight into the current situation concerning diversity and inclusion in general.
- Policy and Practice: giving an overview of the legal frameworks and political approaches to foster diversity and inclusion.
- Initiatives for Young People: highlighting best practices and initiatives to foster diversity, inclusion, and participation amongst young people.

The country-specific and European factsheets can be found as stand-alone downloads on the project’s website:

<https://diversity-matters.eu/project-results/>

In conducting surveys with the two target groups and supplementing this with comprehensive desk research across the multiple regions a thorough context and needs analysis was established from which concrete, holistic recommendations were formulated. These are outlined in chapter 6 of this document and supported the development of approaches to developing training programmes, promoting intercultural activities, and developing tools and measures to support young people and professionals in VET navigating diversity and inclusion.

## 3. TARGET GROUPS OF THIS REPORT

The target groups for this project are young, often marginalised, people in VET and VET professionals who engage with them.

### What does the term 'marginalised' mean in this context?

Marginalised members of our young target group are aged 15-32 and represented through their identification as members of minority groups, such as, people with disabilities, people with different cultural backgrounds, people with migrant backgrounds, people with LGBTQIA+ backgrounds, etc., facing barriers and obstacles during quality education and training opportunities as a result of their minority group status. The DiMa project aims to provide targeted support and resources to help these groups overcome challenges and succeed in their careers.

VET professionals, as the second target group, are those who have direct contact with our young/youth target group due to their engagement with a VET (Teachers, Guidance Counsellors, Youth Workers etc.). They will be supported through the DiMa project to implement and promote tools and measures for diversity, inclusion, mutual respect, civic engagement and social participation. The project promotes the implementation of diversity and inclusion in the everyday working life of this target group by providing them with activities and measures for their work with the target group of young people which will be useful for organisation-specific staff already working with the target group of young people, simultaneously providing valuable resources for external professionals.

## 4. DESK RESEARCH

Significant findings resulting from nationally targeted desk top research are outlined below. The fully elaborated national reports are available for download [here](#).

### 4.1 Desk Research – Austria

#### Country Overview

Diversity and inclusion in vocational education and training (VET) is important and is increasingly being brought into focus to promote equal opportunities for young people.

In Austria, diversity in VET is considered a key aspect of providing equal educational opportunities for all people, regardless of gender, ethnicity, age, disability, or other characteristics. The federal government and various non-statutory organizations are actively committed to creating inclusive structures.

According to the "Vocational Training Report 2022," the importance of diversity and inclusion in VET is increasingly recognised to reflect a diverse society and combat the shortage of skilled workers. In addition to this observation specialised support programs, such as the "Inclusion Support Program," which supports the integration of people with disabilities into VET are increasingly being implemented.

Austria places great emphasis on inclusion to reduce discrimination and promote an open society. Schools, companies, and public institutions work to create a respectful coexistence.

## Policy and Practice

An important reference point is the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF), which supports initiatives to promote diversity and inclusion in VET. For example, there are programs specifically aimed at integrating people with disabilities to break down barriers and facilitate access to training.

Furthermore, the "Charta der Vielfalt" (Diversity Charter) in Austria is a valuable tool that encourages companies and educational institutions to actively embrace diversity and combat discrimination. The Austrian Working Group for Rehabilitation (ÖAR) is also working to develop inclusive educational offerings.

## Initiatives for Young People

In Austria VET is viewed as a vital component of integration and equal opportunities for young people. Efforts are being made to make VET more inclusive to offer equal opportunities to people of all gender identities and sexual orientations. This means that training institutions and companies are taking measures to prevent discrimination and create a respectful environment. Many training companies and educational institutions are actively committed to diversity, for example through awareness training, anti-discrimination policies, and the promotion of open exchange. There are also special counselling services for LGBTQIA+ youth and young adults seeking support in choosing a career or in the training process.

Protection against discrimination in VET is also enshrined in law. The Equal Treatment Act (2015) protects against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, which helps to break down barriers and promote equal opportunities. Overall, Austria is working to make VET more inclusive to create a diverse and open workspaces.

There are numerous general initiatives specifically aimed at young people to promote diversity, equality, and inclusion, e.g.:

1. Youth centres and projects: Many cities and municipalities offer youth centres that create spaces for exchange, education, and leisure activities. These centres often promote tolerance and mutual respect and offer special programs on topics of inclusion and diversity.
2. School projects and workshops: Schools in Austria are increasingly integrating teaching units and workshops on diversity, equality, and anti-discrimination to raise awareness of these issues among young people at an early age (see [RosaLila PantherInnen](#) NGO in Graz and [Q:WIR](#), Vienna)
3. Counselling centres: Various organisations offer free counselling for young people who have questions about their sexual orientation, gender identity, or discrimination. This counselling is confidential and supports young people in their personal development. These initiatives aim to provide young people with an open, respectful, and supportive environment in which they can develop freely.

## Best Practices

Organisations such as HOSI Salzburg, the LGBTI\* community, or the youth organisations of political parties regularly conduct campaigns to educate people about sexual orientation, gender identity, and discrimination.

In 2024, a queer youth centre was opened by the [RosaLila PantherInnen](#) NGO in Graz which offers a safe space and counselling options. Also, there is one in Vienna by [Q:WIR](#).

Furthermore, there are numerous websites, forums, and social media channels aimed at young people, offering information, support, and opportunities for exchange.

## 4.2 Desk Research – Basque Country

### Country Overview

The Basque Country has developed a series of plans and programs to promote inclusion and address diversity at all levels of the education system, including Vocational Training (VT).

The Framework Plan for the Development of an Inclusive School (2019–2022) and the Educational Guidance Strategy 2023–2026 establish guidelines to ensure that students with specific educational support needs (SEN) have equitable access to VET.

Decree 78/2024 has been approved, which regulates the response to diversity in non-university schools, promoting an inclusive education system adapted to the different realities of students.

Specific programs such as Bidelaguna, PREE (Specific Educational Reinforcement Projects), and complementary schooling programs offer additional support to students with difficulties or at risk of educational exclusion.

In addition, tools such as Digital Readers have been implemented, which facilitates access to content for students with a variety of learning , and/or language abilities.

### Policy & Practice

The Berritzegune Nagusia (National Council of Education) is the educational innovation support centre of the Basque Government's Department of Education. Its objective is to promote the continuous improvement of the Basque education system, with special attention to innovation, equity, and quality.

- Promoting inclusive education: Designs strategies to ensure the right to equitable education for all students, respecting differences in origin, ability, gender, and more.
- Supporting attention to diversity: Provides guidance on curricular and methodological adaptations, especially for students with special needs, high abilities, or at risk of exclusion.
- Fostering coeducation and gender equality: Coordinates programs that promote gender equality, LGBTQ+ inclusion, and prevention of gender-based violence.
- Intercultural education Develops resources for newly arrived migrant students and encourages respect for cultural diversity in schools.
- Inclusive digital accessibility: Ensures that digital learning environments are accessible to all, including students with disabilities.

### Initiatives for Young People

Valores 4.0 Training Project for Vocational Education in the Basque Country:

This project integrates values-based education as a key element of Vocational Education and Training (VET) in the Basque Country. Its goal is to train technically skilled and ethically

responsible professionals capable of creating a positive impact on society. It promotes training based on self-awareness, personal branding, critical thinking, and individual and collective responsibility. Ethical values, sustainable development, and corporate social responsibility are core pillars of these values driven approach. The methodology for implementation is participatory, dialogical, and emotionally connected to students. Practical workshops, experiences with sustainable companies, volunteering, and collaboration with NGOs are promoted. The initiative aims to shape students into conscious leaders of change. The project aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals.

### Best Practices

#### Flexible Learning Pathway in Initial VET:

The Flexible Learning Pathway for Initial Vocational Training in the field of Information Technology and Communications was aimed at students with disabilities, prioritising a personalised and inclusive approach. The main objective of the project is to facilitate the progressive acquisition of skills that will allow students to obtain the Level 1 Professional Certificate in Information Technology and Communications. The project focused on competencies, developing autonomy, communication, coexistence, and self-esteem, integrating functional learning from the academic and social spheres. The group, with stable support and adapted environments, experienced significant improvements in attendance, engagement, and active participation. Basic digital skills, language skills, and teamwork were strengthened. Organisational and methodological flexibility allowed for adaptation to the individual pace of each student. The most considerable progress was in personal autonomy, work habits, and interpersonal relationships. The classroom environment was cohesive, with visible progress in self-esteem, confidence, and motivation. The project has allowed students to advance their educational journey with realistic expectations of social and professional integration.

## 4.3 Desk Research – Belgium

### Country Overview

Belgium is home to diverse linguistic, cultural and ethnic communities. Strong legal protections and national anti-discrimination structures exist, yet social inequalities persist across education, employment and public life. Inclusion efforts are shaped by the country's federal structure, with differing approaches in Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels. Fragmentation, together with limited cross-community cooperation, often results in uneven access to rights and services. Survey findings confirmed that learners and professionals experience systemic inequalities as still keenly felt in education and training environments. Many underlined a tension between formal equality and the everyday reality of discrimination and exclusion. This complex landscape demands more than policies on paper: it calls for coherent, well-implemented practices at all levels.

### Policy & Practice

Belgium has a solid legal and institutional foundation for promoting equality and tackling discrimination, with regional bodies like UNIA and equal opportunity centres playing a key role. Education policies in both Flanders and Wallonia include frameworks to support diversity, and funding programmes often incentivise inclusive school cultures. However, respondents in our research stressed the persistent gap between these frameworks and daily practice in VET

centres. Many pointed to ad hoc implementation, low awareness among staff and a lack of sustained support for inclusive action. Teachers and youth workers also noted that top-down policies are rarely co-developed with those affected, limiting ownership and impact. In this context, young people themselves are increasingly stepping in to bridge the gap, offering insight, leadership and creative solutions to drive inclusion from the ground up.

### Initiatives for Young People

Young people are not only the beneficiaries, but also the drivers of inclusion efforts. Many initiatives support youth engagement through peer learning, creative expression and intercultural dialogue, responding to young people's desire to take ownership of diversity work. Our survey revealed a strong appetite among learners to raise awareness, support peers and be role models of openness and respect. Several respondents highlighted the need for spaces to express their identities, contribute ideas and challenge stereotypes. Professionals echoed this by calling for structured opportunities to include youth voices in institutional decision-making. Despite differences across regions, there is a shared momentum towards positioning young people as agents of change in shaping inclusive environments. These youth-oriented initiatives set the stage for more structured, practice-based approaches, which have emerged across the Belgian VET landscape.

### Best Practices

There is a range of promising practices that reflect its multilingual and locally grounded approach to inclusion. In Flanders and Brussels, [School Zonder Racism](#) supports over 110 schools with peer-led workshops and anti-racism strategies, fostering student voice and structural change. [Maks vzw](#), based in the Canal Zone of Brussels, combines digital training, job coaching, and storytelling to empower marginalised youth. [D'Broej](#), a network of youth centres across Brussels, offers co-created safe environments through sport, arts, and civic action, particularly for racialised and low-income communities. In Wallonia-Brussels, the [Dispositif d'Accrochage Scolaire \(DAS\)](#) provides holistic support to learners at risk of school dropout. These initiatives show how inclusive intentions are translated into practice across different regions.

## 4.4 Desk Research – Croatia

### Country Overview

In Croatia, when we talk about diversity and inclusion in the context of education, the focus is mostly on students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Gender equality and students belonging to ethnic minorities are less represented, while students belonging to the LGBTIQ+ community and those belonging to religious minorities are much less likely to be included in policies and measures to promote diversity and inclusion in schools. Non-governmental organisations, local communities and schools play a key role in promoting inclusion and diversity by carrying out various activities as part of projects to promote cultural and other diversity, tolerance, understanding and inclusion.

### Policy & Practice

Since 2019, the curriculum for the interdisciplinary subject of Civic Education for primary and secondary schools in the Republic of Croatia, which integrates the area of gender equality, has been implemented. The curriculum for the subject of health covers the following areas: Physical Health, Mental and Social Health, and help and Self-help. The regulation for the inclusion of Civic

Education, adopted in 2019, emphasises the obligation to promote gender equality in textbooks in an appropriate manner by using images of people of both genders in equal proportions and using nouns of both genders, especially when naming professions and occupations.

The National Youth Programme (2023-2025) covers six priority areas, including youth work, youth participation in society, youth education, youth in rural areas, health and the crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic. The programme is in line with the objectives of the National Development Strategy of the Republic of Croatia until 2030 and the EU Youth Strategy (2019-2027).

#### Initiatives for Young People

[The Forum for Freedom in Education](#) is a civil society organisation that promotes education based on the principles of equality, justice, free choice, pluralism, democracy and social responsibility, enabling everyone to develop their full personal potential and skills.

[Humana Nova Social Cooperative](#) is a social enterprise that employs people with disabilities and other socially marginalised people who create new value at Humana Nova every day. It is a leading Croatian example of a social enterprise for work integration and reuse that is recognised throughout the region. Through its activities, the co-operative contributes to building tolerant social relations and a balanced use of resources.

#### Best Practices

The Amazonas association was founded with the aim of promoting positive change and social activation. The project 'More than sports' aims to promote the inclusion of disadvantaged youth by strengthening and developing socio-emotional skills through sports and physical activities.

#STRUKA-HR is an association of professionals and enthusiasts whose goal is to act, become concrete and be useful in the field of vocational education in Croatia and beyond. They are currently implementing the Green ASC VET project, Metautism for short, which aims to promote the inclusive employment of autistic people.

## 4.5 Desk Research - Ireland

### Country Overview

Over the last number of years, Ireland has seen an increased demand for places in Further Education and Training institutions.

Research conducted by [Solás](#) in 2023 and 2024 highlights an increased need for opportunities in education and training while also diversifying approaches catering to new and marginalised communities with diverse and complex needs. These [reports](#) highlight the changing demographics of FET learners and the changing communities from which they come. VET in Ireland saw an increased diversity of nationalities, needs and abilities in tandem with experiences stemming from an increase in migration, a need to support those escaping conflict zones, and adapting systems to complement neurodiverse needs and varied abilities while tackling an increase in racism, hate and extremism ([IHREC, 2024](#)).

The (VET) FET Strategy 2020–2024, [Transforming Learning](#) and related SOLAS frameworks include dedicated efforts to promote inclusion and insure those from lower socio-economic backgrounds have allocated funds for education and training actively targeting vulnerable groups such as the long term unemployed, lone parents and people in direct provision. This further emphasizes the diverse nature of the VET sector in Ireland.

Past initiatives to promote inclusivity in the FET sector have predominantly focused on learners with disabilities and member of Roma and Traveller ethnic groups. This has broadened with the introduction of new, inclusion and comprehensive policies and initiatives.

### Policy & Practice

A changing society and the increasingly diverse population engaging with FETs drove the FET 2020–2024 strategy positions, embedding inclusion as a foundational principle and action. In collaborating on this strategy with SOLAS the FET moved to widen the participation of marginalised and underrepresented groups, including Roma and Traveller groups, people with disabilities and migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees.

Supporting this, the [Mitigating Against Educational Disadvantage Fund \(MAEDF\)](#), introduced in 2020, has supported FETs engaging and catering to marginalised, at-risk, and underrepresented groups. The Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science [Access plan 2022-2028](#) also prioritises underrepresented groups and communities to promote equal access and participation.

In line with National legislation and strategy, every Education and Training Board (ETB) in Ireland now implements an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) policy, promoting anti-racism, anti-discriminatory practice, including ensuring training, support measures, and community outreach. Initiatives like these promote multiculturalism and work toward the goals set out in [The Equal Status Act, 2000](#), protecting learners against discrimination gender, marital status, Family status, age, disability, sexual orientation, race, religion, and membership of the Traveller community.

### Initiatives for Young People

The Irish FET/VET sector offers a variety of initiatives and programmes for young people. One of the most successful programmes is the [Youthreach programme](#).

led by the ETB, Youthreach programmes focus on creating opportunities for personal, social and educational development with at-risk youth, including those from marginalised, new and/or ethnic minority communities. In collaboration with the [National Youth Council of Ireland \(NYCI\)](#), FETs, and Youthreach programs, promote the inclusion of marginalised youth in education and training. These projects are staffed by teachers and youth workers, trained to support participants aged 16 to 20, in safe, supportive environments to achieve their personal, educational and training potential.

In tandem with this, ETBs implement other diversity and inclusion initiatives, including Traveller Education support, Migrant integration programmes, and LGBTQ+ Awareness and Support Groups. This includes a targeted, inclusion-focused, prosocial development project with nationwide reach designed for young people at risk of coming into conflict with the law, fostering leadership, personal development, and providing educational support.

### Best Practices

Ireland's best practices are derived from targeted research, national and international standards and expertise and influenced by changing social and learning needs and dynamics which augment nation-wide FET agreements, training and funds.

[Strategic Performance Agreements \(SPAs\) developed by SOLAS](#) in collaboration with the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, set targets to widen opportunities for access and participation of marginalised groups and communities specifically targeted to creating pathways and fostering inclusion.

In tandem with this Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Awareness Training in Ireland encompasses a range of educational programs and initiatives aimed at fostering inclusive environments. These programs are designed to equip individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to understand and address issues related to equality, diversity, and inclusion while also embedding awareness and capacity building through [Trauma Informed Education](#).

FET educators are provided training to enhance their support of neuro-divergent learners, while [the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Enhancement Fund](#) provides financial support aiding HEIs to design, enhance and implement inclusive practices.

## 5. EVALUATION OF QUESTIONS

The following evaluation of survey findings is based on the analysis of the aggregated transnational data, paying particular attention to needs analysis. For specific national open questions results, refer to the national reports which are available as stand-alone versions on the project's website: <https://diversity-matters.eu/the-id-report/>

### 5.1 At a Glance

This comparative overview provides key-insights of the findings from the evaluation of questions posed to young people and professionals in vocational education and training (VET) centres across Austria, Ireland, the Basque Country, Belgium, and Croatia. The analysis focuses on demographics, perceptions of inclusion and diversity, experiences of discrimination, and the overall sentiment towards VET environments at a glance.

#### Demographics

##### Young People:

- **Age Range:** Respondents aged between 15 and 32 years, with an average age of approximately 21.46 years.
- **Gender Identity:** 40.52% identified as female, 52.87% as male, and 4.02% as diverse.

##### Professionals:

- **Age Range:** Professionals surveyed ranged from 24 to 64 years, with an average age of 43.75 years.
- **Gender Identity:** 64.91% identified as female, 32.46% as male, and 2.63% as diverse.

#### Perceptions of Inclusion and Diversity

## Young People:

- **Inclusion Ratings:** A significant number rated their VET centres positively, with 20.86% describing the level of inclusion as "Good."
- **Discrimination Experiences:** 64.29% reported not witnessing discrimination, with notable exceptions in Belgium, where 51 young respondents indicated experiences of exclusion.

## Professionals:

- **Inclusion Ratings:** Professionals also rated their experiences positively, with 20% indicating a "Good" level of inclusion.
- **Discrimination Awareness:** A nearly even split in responses, with 50.68% acknowledging experiences of discrimination, particularly in Belgium (80.85%).

## Experiences of Discrimination

### Young People:

- **Reported Incidents:** Discrimination was reported based on nationality, appearance, and language, with specific instances noted in Austria and Belgium.
- **Regional Variations:** The Basque Country showed a strong belief in the absence of discrimination, with 92.4% responding "No."

### Professionals:

- **Reported Incidents:** Professionals noted that discrimination often stemmed from peer interactions, with significant reports from Belgium.
- **Awareness of Issues:** Professionals were more likely to acknowledge discrimination compared to young people, indicating a potential gap in awareness or experience.

## Support Systems and Recommendations

### Young People:

- **Support Sources:** Family (24%), friends (22.87%), and teachers/trainers (19.18%) were identified as primary support sources.
- **Desired Support:** Young people expressed a need for counselling, peer support, and workshops to enhance inclusivity.

### Professionals:

- **Support Sources:** Professionals also highlighted the importance of teachers and trainers, alongside family and peers.

- **Training Needs:** There is a strong call for ongoing training in diversity and inclusion, with a focus on practical workshops and knowledge transfer.

The evaluation highlights a generally positive perception of inclusion and diversity within VET centres among both young people and professionals. However, discrepancies in the recognition of discrimination suggest a need for enhanced communication and awareness initiatives. Both groups expressed a desire for more structured support systems, including workshops and training, to foster a more inclusive environment. The findings underscore the importance of collaboration and knowledge sharing across European VET institutions to strengthen practices and promote diversity.

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## Basic Data

### Young People:

#### How old are you?

The age of young respondents in our survey ranges from 15 to 32 years; however, it is worth noting that some individuals reported ages significantly outside this range, with one participant identifying as 64 years old. Consequently, certain data points may not be entirely reliable.

When examining the country-specific average ages of young respondents, we find the following breakdown:

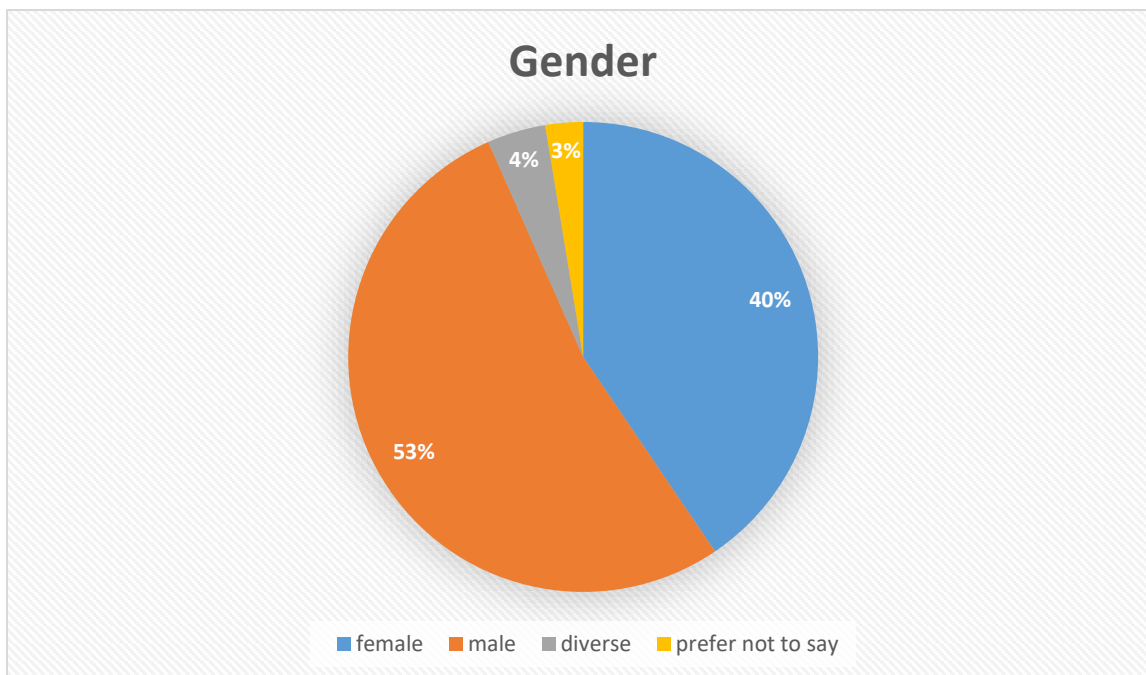
- Austria (AT): 18.6 years
- Ireland (IE): 25.6 years
- Basque Country: 23.01 years
- Belgium: 23.37 years
- Croatia: 16.7 years

Overall, the average age of respondents across all countries is approximately 21.46 years.

#### How would you define your gender?

Among the young respondents, 141 individuals identified as female, accounting for 40.52% of the total. 184 participants identified as male, making up 52.87%. Additionally, 14 individuals (4.02%) identified as diverse, while 9 participants (2.59%) preferred not to disclose their gender identity.

Additionally, some respondents choose to leave this question unanswered.



## Professionals:

What is your job position?

Of the professionals surveyed, roles ranged from VET teachers to trainers, social pedagogues, youth workers, and staff working in counselling.

How old are you?

The age of professional respondents in our survey ranges from 24 to 64 years.

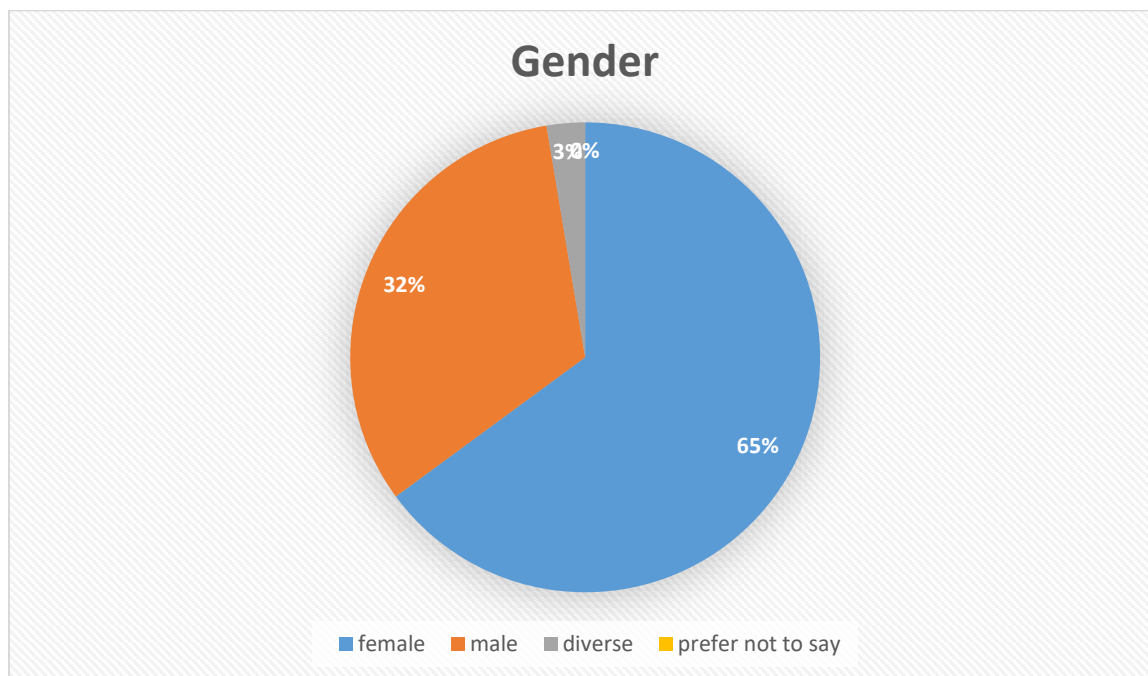
When examining the country-specific average ages of young respondents, we find the following breakdown:

- Austria: 42.37 years
- Ireland: 44 years
- Basque Country: 46.5 years
- Belgium: 39.1 years
- Croatia: 46.8 years

Overall, the average age of respondents across all countries is approximately 43.75 years, providing valuable insight into the demographic profile of the professionals participating in our survey.

How would you define your gender?

Among the professional respondents, 74 individuals identified as female, accounting for 64.91% of the total. 37 participants identified as male, making up 32.46%. Additionally, 3 individuals (2.63%) identified as diverse. Of those who answered this question none choose not to disclose their gender identity, however, not all respondents gave an answer to this question.



## 5.2 PAST

This section highlights how the levels of inclusion and diversity have been in your VET centre.

### 5.2.1 How has the level of inclusion and diversity been in your VET centre?

#### Young People:

	very high	high	good	average	satisfactory	bad
Austria	9	19	30	7	6	1
Ireland	11	24	9	5	0	1
Basque Country	4	19	27	9	4	3
Belgium	0	23	26	20	15	2

Croatia	3	7	47	19	3	5
Total	7	49	100	48	22	10
%	7.14%	10.14%	20.86%	10.14%	4.57%	2.14%

These results highlight a generally positive perception of diversity and inclusion among the young people in VET who we surveyed, with the highest proportion of respondents rating their experience as "Good" at 20.86%. However, there remains a small percentage of respondents who expressed dissatisfaction, indicating areas for potential improvement.

### Professionals:

	very high	high	good	average	satisfactory	bad
Austria	8	13	6	1	0	0
Ireland	1	5	2	1	0	1
Basque Country	3	11	15	2	3	0
Belgium	1	10	20	11	4	0
Croatia	3	14	6	4	3	0
Total	7	35	41	17	10	0
%	3.43%	17.14%	20.00%	8.43%	4.90%	0.90%

These results indicate a generally positive perception of diversity and inclusion, with the highest proportion of professional respondents rating their experience as "Good" at 20.00%. Notably, there was only one response categorised as "Bad," suggesting a favourable overall sentiment among participants.

## 5.2.2 Have you witnessed or experienced discrimination or exclusion of others in your VET centre?

### Young People:

No: 204 answers, = 64.29%

- Austria: 20
- Ireland: 44

- Basque Country: 61
- Belgium: 25
- Croatia: 54

Yes: 114 answers, = 35.71%

- Austria: 52
- Ireland: 6
- Basque Country: 5
- Belgium: 51
- Croatia: 30

The data indicates a significant majority of respondents answered "No," with 64.29% of the total responses. Notably, the Basque Country had the highest percentage of "No" responses at 92.4%, while Belgium showed a more balanced perspective with 67.4% responding "Yes." In contrast, Ireland had a particularly high rate of "No" responses at 75.86%, suggesting a strong consensus against the assessed question in that region.

If yes, describe the situation:

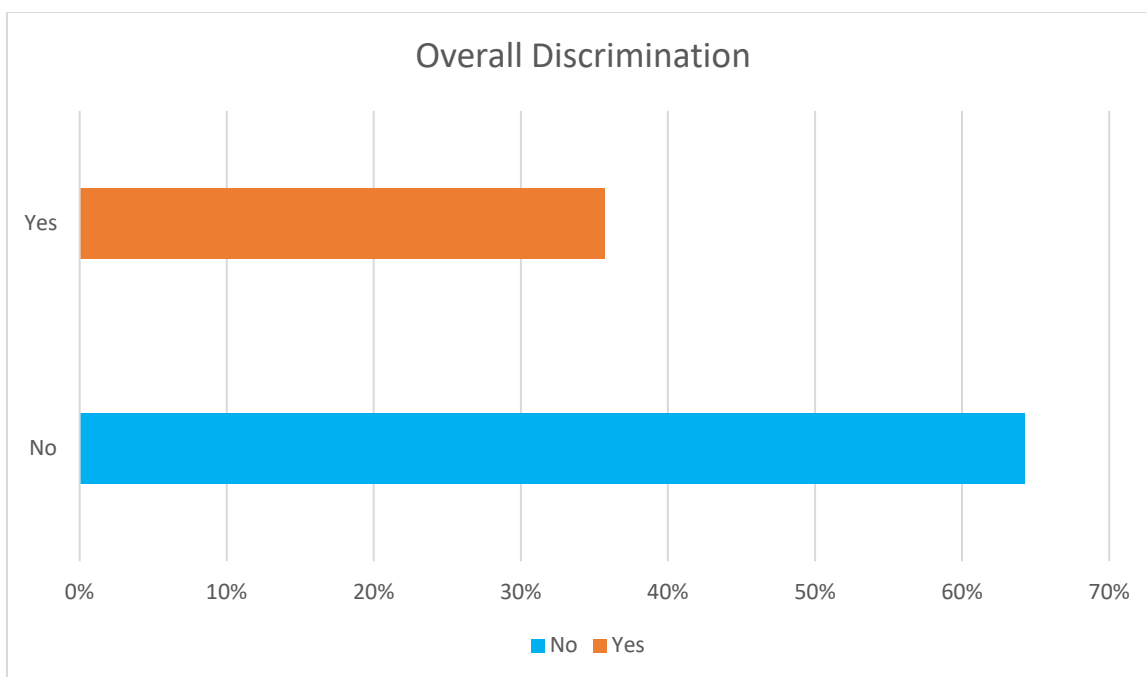
In **Austria**, data analysis suggests a troubling trend of exclusion among young people, often based on their backgrounds or nationalities. Many adolescents insult others due to their different origins, and some specifically exclude Austrians. There are reports of racist attitudes and jokes among certain youths, contributing to a general atmosphere of discrimination. Instances of exclusion are particularly noted among boys, who often make derogatory comments. Additionally, a Romanian individual with cognitive impairments frequently faces exclusion from peers. Overall, the statements reflect a concerning prevalence of racism and discrimination within the youth community.

13% of the respondents in **Ireland** who noted they had experienced and/or witnessed discrimination or exclusion reflected that this was due to a persons, nationality, geographical location or proficiency in English.

7.6% of respondents in the **Basque Country** reported serious incidents of verbal harassment, exclusion, or discrimination and while this figure may appear small, it remains significant and warrants serious attention. Each instance of such behaviour is unacceptable and cannot be dismissed. Even a single experience like this can have profound implications for those affected. Moreover, some open-ended responses reveal signs of confusion, superficiality, or evasion, which may suggest several underlying issues. It is possible that the question was not fully understood by respondents, or there could be discomfort and reluctance to engage in discussions about these sensitive topics. Additionally, a lack of a safe and supportive environment may hinder individuals from expressing their thoughts and feelings openly.

In **Belgium**, young respondents who reported having witnessed or experienced discrimination described a range of situations. This included mocking or exclusion based on ethnicity, clothing, religion, gender identity, and language. One participant noted that some students were made fun of for wearing a hijab or for being “different” from others. Another described how a classmate who was gay was often avoided or laughed at. Other respondents reported feeling teachers show favouritism, creating a sense of exclusion for others. There were also comments alluding to potential racial prejudice and judgmental attitudes from peers.

In **Croatia** young people were made fun of because of the way they dressed or their physical appearance, but there were also experiences of discriminations disclosed which were based on nationality or the way they speak. Some respondents used the word “injustice” when speaking to grading due to different attitudes and tolerance levels by some professors. Additionally, there were reports of students being excluded or made fun of due to disabilities or sexuality.



### Professionals:

No: 73 answers, = 49.32%

- Austria: 12
- Ireland: 5
- Basque Country: 28
- Belgium: 9
- Croatia: 19

Yes: 75 answers, = 50.68%

- Austria: 16
- Ireland: 5
- Basque Country: 6
- Belgium: 37
- Croatia: 11

These results suggest a nearly even split in responses, with a slight majority of participants answering "Yes" at 50.68%. The data highlights differing perspectives across regions, particularly in Belgium, where a significant majority responded "Yes" at 80.85%.

If yes, describe the situation:

In **Austria**, survey analysis highlights a concerning environment in which Austrian students experience mistreatment from groups of foreign students, characterised by bullying, prejudice, and insults. One participant noted feeling frequently teased by peers due to their identification as male, highlighting the challenges faced within peer and gender groups. As noted previously an issue of exclusion among young people often arises from differences in nationality. Some young people may even self-exclude based on their backgrounds. Discriminatory remarks are a reality among students, exclusion, on the other hand, as reflected in the survey data, occurs less frequently.. Response highlights that efforts are made to prevent exclusion related to culture, religion, and other factors, with discussions held to address misconduct and promote awareness of integration and diversity. However, a new participant has been subjected to racist nicknames based on their skin colour, which they find hurtful, despite others perceiving it as a joke. Instances of exclusion are acknowledged and discussed to foster sensitivity, and the training and counselling sessions have addressed these issues to promote a more inclusive atmosphere.

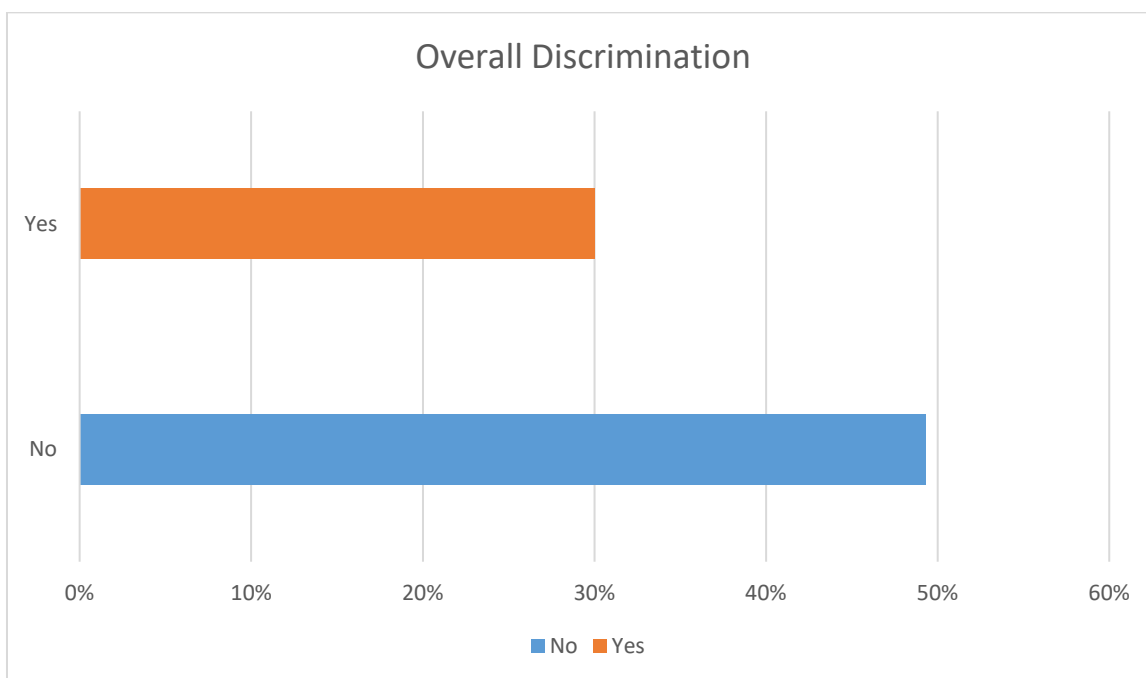
In **Ireland**, tensions were observed amongst students with diverse perspectives coming from marginalised backgrounds. These were exacerbated by students being treated differently on the basis of their sexuality, gender or because English was not their first language, sometimes resulting in their being ignored in group activity. Physical mobility and students experiencing neurodiversity and other "hidden disabilities" were observed to be discriminated against, noting too that these cohorts lacked representation on the faculty, where the diverse student body was not reflected in the staff profile.

In the **Basque Country**, the statements highlight several observed situations involving migrants and transgender young people, primarily focusing on instances of rejection among students due to differences in culture, ideology, or customs. While the number of respondents

reported cases of bullying and serious breaches of coexistence has not been significant, there have been occurrences of exclusion and discrimination based on numerous factors, including language barriers, academic performance, and race. These issues underscore the challenges faced in fostering an inclusive environment for all students.

Professionals in **Belgium** highlighted instances where students were excluded or marginalised due to language barriers, socio-economic background or cultural differences. Some respondents noted gender-based stereotypes, especially in traditionally male-dominated vocational sectors. A few professionals recalled students from migrant backgrounds being overlooked or unfairly assessed. Several respondents also mentioned homophobic behaviour among students and difficulties addressing these situations effectively due to lack of support or training.

In **Croatia**, professionals mentioned that discrimination is based on economic status and lack of knowledge. Other statements refer to gender, nationality and disabilities as the reason for discrimination and exclusion.



Overall Trends:

- Young People report a significant majority of "No" responses at 64.29%, indicating that a substantial portion of this demographic does not perceive or has not witnessed discrimination or exclusion in their VET centres.

- In contrast, Professionals show a nearly even split, with a slight majority answering "Yes" at 50.68%. This suggests that professionals are more likely to acknowledge the presence of discrimination or exclusion in VET settings compared to young people.

#### Regional Insights:

- In the Basque Country, young people overwhelmingly responded "No" at 92.4%, suggesting a strong belief that discrimination or exclusion is not an issue in their VET centres. Professionals, however, reported a more moderate response, with 82.35% indicating "No," reflecting a similar trend but with less certainty.
- Belgium presents a stark contrast between the two groups. Young people reported a considerable number of "Yes" responses (51), while professionals had a much higher percentage of "Yes" responses at 80.85%. This indicates that professionals in Belgium are more inclined to recognise instances of discrimination or exclusion compared to their younger counterparts.
- Ireland shows a notable difference as well, with young people indicating a high rate of "No" responses at 75.86%, while professionals had an equal number of "Yes" and "No" responses (5 each), suggesting a lack of consensus among professionals regarding the presence of discrimination or exclusion.

#### Implications:

- The data above suggests that of the young people survey across Europe, there is a general perception that VET centres as inclusive environments. Professionals surveyed, on the other hand, are more aware of potential issues related to discrimination or exclusion. This divergence may reflect differences in experiences, awareness, or engagement with the topic.
- The significant difference in responses between the two target groups, particularly in regions like Belgium and Ireland, may warrant further investigation to understand the underlying factors influencing these perspectives and to address any potential gaps in awareness or experience.

The comparison between young people and professionals regarding the question of discrimination or exclusion in VET centres reveals distinct attitudes. Young people show a clear majority of "No" responses, indicating a perception of inclusivity, while professionals exhibit a more balanced viewpoint, acknowledging the possibility of discrimination or exclusion. This divergence highlights the importance of considering demographic factors when analysing experiences and perceptions of discrimination in vocational education and training settings.

### 5.2.3 Young People: Have you ever felt that your diverse background impacted how others engaged with you in VET?

No: 269 answers, = 77.38%

Austria: 52

Ireland: 44

Basque Country: 61

Belgium: 38

Croatia: 74

Yes: 79 answers, = 22.62%

Austria: 20

Ireland: 6

Basque Country: 5

Belgium: 38

Croatia: 10

The survey results reveal a predominant sentiment of inclusivity among respondents regarding the impact of diverse backgrounds on engagement in VET. While the majority feel that their backgrounds do not influence how others engage with them, the significant responses from Belgium indicate that there are areas where perceptions of discrimination or exclusion may still exist. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for fostering inclusive environments in vocational education and training.

If yes, describe the situation and how you felt in that situation:

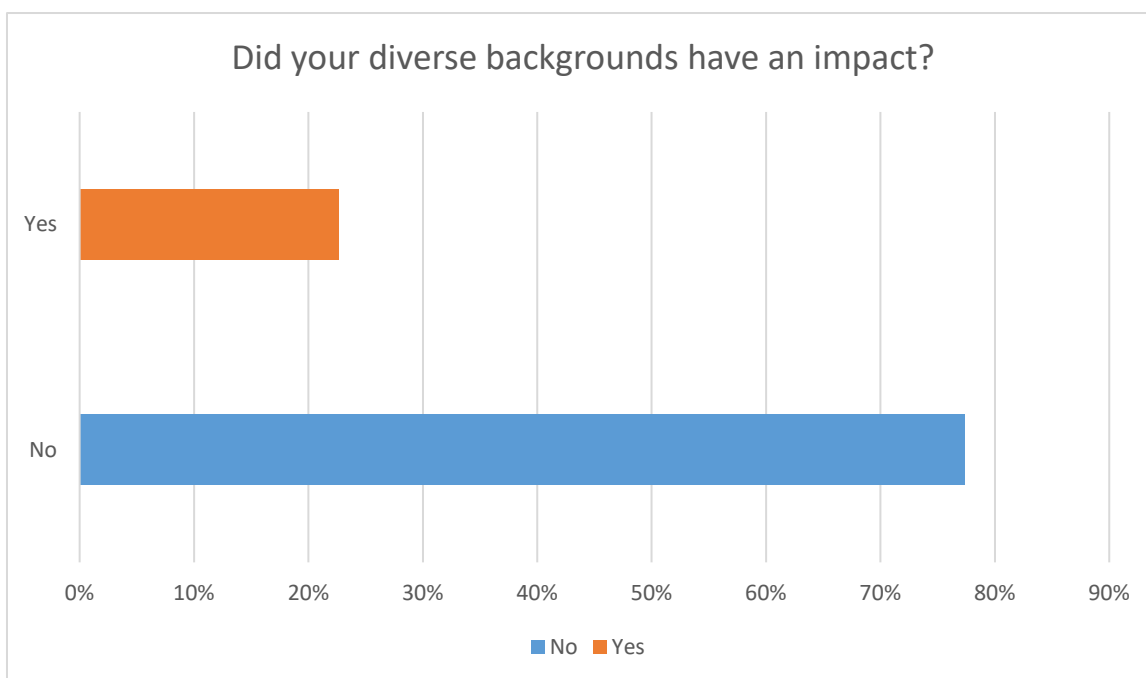
In **Austria**, survey responses reflect a range of experiences related to social dynamics and discrimination. Some individuals express that conflicts arise among peers, with a sentiment that kindness can improve interactions. There are mentions of racism in companies and feelings of indifference towards it. One person recounts feeling uncomfortable after receiving inappropriate images from someone they know, although they do not classify it as sexual harassment. There is a belief that educators are more patient and give them more time. However, non-Austrians are noted to face exclusion, which is viewed negatively. One individual mentions being excluded for being Austrian and experiencing sexual comments from boys, which contribute to feelings of discomfort and confusion. Overall, the text conveys a sense of frustration with social interactions and the impact of discrimination.

In **Ireland**, among the 16% who did feel impacted, few recorded their experiences, with only one noting that differential treatment was based on physical characteristics.

In the **Basque Country**, approximately 17.6% of respondents reported witnessing incidents of discrimination based on ethnic origin, gender identity (especially towards immigrants and transgender adolescents), and cultural or ideological differences. Some professionals consider these cases of peer bullying "not significant," indicating a possible underestimation of their impact.

Young people in **Belgium** who felt their diverse backgrounds influenced how they were treated described experiences of stereotyping related to skin colour, language, or religion. For instance, one respondent mentioned being ridiculed for their accent, while another felt overlooked in class discussions due to their headscarf. Many expressed feelings of isolation and frustration, although some found support from friends or teachers.

In **Croatia**, a minority of young people indicated that their diverse backgrounds affected how others engaged with them. Those who specified their experiences reported being judged for their actions and insulted based on nationality, religion, and language.



### 5.2.3 Professionals: Have diverse backgrounds ever impacted on how others engaged with young people in VET?

No: 71 answers, = 48.29%

Austria: 16

Ireland: 5

Basque Country: 18

Belgium: 8

Croatia: 24

Yes: 77 answers, = 51.71%

Austria: 12

Ireland: 5

Basque Country: 16

Belgium: 38

Croatia: 6

The answers reveal a nuanced understanding of how diverse backgrounds may influence engagement in VET. While there is a slight majority who feel that young peoples’ backgrounds impact interactions, significant regional differences exist. This underscores the importance of continued efforts to promote inclusivity consistently and address any disparities in experiences related to diversity in vocational education and training.

If yes, describe the situation and how you felt in that situation:

In **Austria**, a high percentage of foreign students are believed to lower overall performance levels due to perceived risks of insufficient effort. Biases against young people from diverse

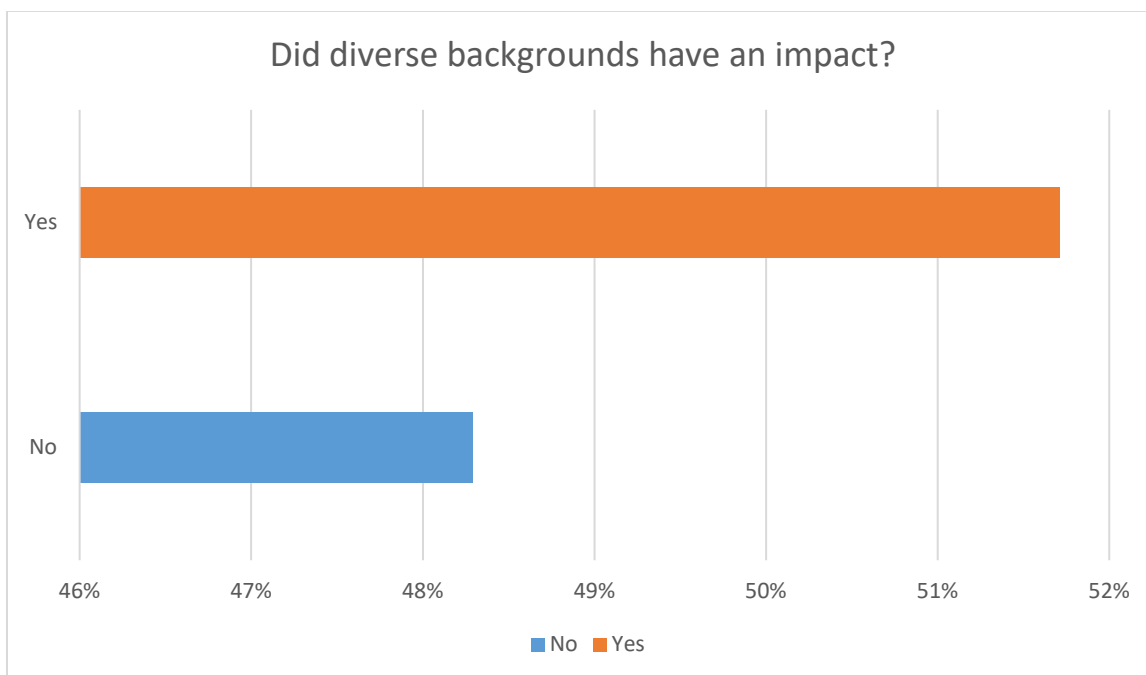
backgrounds lead to reports of racist remarks and exclusion. Muslim students face challenges, such as needing to pray during class, which can cause misunderstandings. Gender and nationality stereotypes persist, affecting job opportunities for individuals with stereotypical appearances. Some companies reject applicants with migration backgrounds without apparent reasons, although many are becoming more open-minded.

In **Ireland**, professionals noted that young people are treated differently based on their backgrounds. One tutor, as a non-native speaker, experienced exclusion and self-consciousness. Respondents observed that students' immigration status, English competency, and cultural diversity significantly impacted their treatment, highlighting the need for more explicit training on LGBTQAI+ issues.

In the **Basque Country**, about 47.1% of professionals believe diversity affects their interactions with young people, particularly due to cultural, religious, and language barriers. Reports of exclusion and discrimination are common, with language identified as a primary barrier. Professionals' express frustration over a lack of tools to address these issues and note the impact of "low-intensity discrimination" on social cohesion. There is a call for a zero-tolerance policy against discrimination and increased institutional support for faculty.

**Belgian** professionals reported that young people's cultural, ethnic, or religious backgrounds influenced their treatment in classrooms, with some students being excluded from group work or labelled as "difficult." A few professionals felt conflicted or powerless in these situations, while others took proactive steps to promote inclusion.

In **Croatia**, only 20% of professionals indicated that diverse backgrounds impacted engagement with young people, with some mentioning Roma students and others citing social status, ethnicity, and religion as reasons for differential treatment.



## 5.2.4 Young People: Who supported you in those situations?

In **Austria**, teachers and trainers were identified as the most significant source of support, with 21 mentions (75% of responses), followed by friends (13 mentions, 46.4%) and family (8 mentions, 28.6%). Youth workers were mentioned by 7 individuals (25%), while social services and health services received minimal recognition (2 mentions each, 7.1%). Notably, 4 respondents (14.3%) reported receiving no support from any listed sources, indicating a potential gap in available support networks.

In **Ireland**, young people reported that their teachers, family, and friends provided the most support during times of cultural diversity impact. 34% found their peers supportive, and 12% relied on self-support, with 10% indicating none of the potential supports listed on the survey were available to them. This raises questions about the effectiveness of peer support and relationship building.

In the **Basque Country**, nearly half of the respondents (48.5%) reported receiving no support, highlighting a significant lack of trust in available resources, or gaps in available resources, including people, to engage such support. Among those who sought help, friends (24.2%), family (22.7%), and self-reliance (24.2%) were the most common sources. Education professionals were noted by only 13.6%, suggesting barriers to accessing formal support.

In **Belgium**, teachers and trainers were the most frequently mentioned source of support (23 mentions, 30.3%), followed by friends (20 mentions, 26.3%) and family (19 mentions, 25.0%). Peers were cited by 12 participants (15.8%), while youth workers (7 mentions, 9.2%) and social services (6 mentions, 7.9%) received less attention. 9 respondents (11.8%) reported not utilising any support sources, indicating a need for greater awareness of sources of support and potentially increased availability of resources, support programs and supportive individuals.

In **Croatia**, friends were the most significant source of support (27.91%), followed closely by family (22.09%). Teachers and peers each accounted for 11.63% of responses. Youth workers received no mentions, and social services (3.99%) and health services (1.16%) were minimally recognized. Some respondents (10.47%) indicated they supported themselves, reflecting a degree of independence, but the overall data suggests a need for improved support systems.

16.28% of participants reported that they did not rely on any of the listed sources for support giving rise to concern for supportive resources available to these young people.

## 5.2.4 Professionals: Who supported them in those situations?

The survey analysis from **Austria** reveals the significant role of various support systems for young people. Teachers and trainers were the most prominent source of support, with 21 mentions, accounting for 75% of the responses. Friends were also recognised as vital, receiving 13 mentions (46.4%), while similar-aged peers were noted by 15 respondents (53.6%). Family support was indicated by 8 respondents (28.6%), and youth workers were mentioned by 7 individuals (25%). However, social services and health services received minimal recognition, with only 2 mentions each (7.1%). Notably, 4 respondents (14.3%)

indicated they did not receive support from any listed sources, highlighting a potential gap in available assistance.

In **Ireland**, teachers and trainers were identified as the primary source of support, acknowledged by 8 respondents (80%). Family support was also significant, with 6 respondents (60%) relying on family members. Friends and peers were each mentioned by 5 respondents (50%). Youth workers were not identified as a source of support, indicating a potential gap in awareness. Social services and health services were mentioned by 2 respondents (20%) and none, respectively. Interestingly, 3 respondents (30%) indicated they supported themselves, while 1 respondent (10%) reported not receiving support from any sources.

In the **Basque Country**, teachers and trainers provided the main support (61.8%), followed by peers (35.3%), with family and friends playing a minor role (17.6%). Social and health services offered little support (8.8% and 2.9%), and youth workers were not mentioned. Digital platforms and self-help had some presence (5.9% each) but were not predominant.

In **Belgium**, teachers and trainers were again the most significant source of support, with 21 mentions (45.7%). Family support was noted by 7 respondents (15.2%), and friends were mentioned by 8 respondents (17.4%). Peers were acknowledged by 7 respondents (15.2%), while youth workers received 3 mentions (6.5%). Social services were mentioned by 7 respondents (15.2%), and health services garnered 5 mentions (10.9%). Social platforms were noted by 4 respondents (8.7%). Interestingly, 10 respondents indicated they supported themselves, but 5 respondents (10.9%) reported not receiving support from any of the listed sources.

In **Croatia**, teachers and trainers were the most significant resource, with 19 respondents (63.33%) acknowledging their influence. Family support was indicated by 7 respondents (23.33%), and friends were mentioned by 10 respondents (33.33%). Peers were acknowledged by 6 respondents (20%), but youth workers were not identified as a source of support. Social services received minimal recognition (2 mentions, 6.67%), while health services and social platforms garnered no mentions. Additionally, 2 respondents (6.67%) indicated they supported themselves, and 4 respondents (13.33%) reported not receiving support from any listed sources.

### 5.2.5 Young People: Has there been a tradition, rule, or activity in your school that you found confusing or unfair? How did it affect you?

The **Austrian** statements reflect a general sentiment of contentment with, and acceptance of the rules and environment within the vocational training centre. Many respondents indicated that they have not encountered any significant issues or confusion, with several stating they experience everything was fine. Some acknowledged the necessity of rules to maintain order, while a few expressed dissatisfactions with specific aspects, such as the strictness of punctuality rules and the requirement to hand in mobile phones. There were also mentions of cultural considerations, such as holidays for foreign cultures, but overall, the responses suggest a lack of significant grievances or concerns among the participants.

In **Ireland**, most of the students reported that there was no specific rule or activity they found confusing or unfair however they did note that zero tolerance policies felt harsh and did not take account of context or whether an incident was intentional or accidental. One noted that marginalised communities seemed to be disproportionately impacted by VET policies and their consequences.

In the **Basque Country**, most respondents did not perceive any injustices, with several responses indicating that everything was fine or that they had not encountered any problems. Some criticisms of educational measures, such as the view that feminism leads to inequalities in vocational education, or frustration about the unjustified confiscation of mobile phones were highlighted. Concerns about religious inclusion were raised, with one respondent mentioning the lack of consideration for Muslim students during Ramadan.

Conflicts regarding authority and competence were also raised and include reference to people imposing their knowledge or making unilateral decisions.

In **Belgium**, several young respondents described instances where school rules felt confusing or unfair. Several highlighted dress codes as disproportionately targeting certain gender expressions, noting that some students were reprimanded for clothing considered inappropriate, which affected their confidence and made them feel judged. Others found language policies limiting, particularly when students from non-dominant linguistic backgrounds were discouraged from using their native languages, even during breaks. This led to feelings of exclusion and being "othered".

Some students pointed to punctuality rules and strict attendance penalties, even in cases of justified absence, as unfair. These policies were experienced as lacking empathy and flexibility, particularly for students balancing education with work or family responsibilities. In a few cases, disciplinary procedures were described as inconsistent, with some groups of students feeling they were more frequently targeted or punished. These situations contributed to a sense of mistrust or disengagement from the school environment.

In **Croatia**, a majority of respondents noted that there is no tradition, rule or activity that is confusing or unfair but there were some with different opinion or experience. For example, three students wrote that they are not allowed to wear shorts, and that they do not understand why it is such a big problem if it is hot. Several respondents mentioned being locked in school as unfair. Other statements included students being unheard and talented students not being noticed. One answer that needs to be highlighted states: *lot of situations that were reported but nothing much was done as always, generations and generations of students will complain about the same thing, but the school has better things to do than worry about the mental health of their students.*

### 5.2.5 Professionals: Has there been a tradition, rule, or activity in your school that you found confusing or unfair? How did it affect young people?

Data sourced from professionals from **Austria** highlight several concerns regarding inclusivity and fairness within the vocational training centre. Some respondents noted that the tardiness

and absenteeism of foreign students are tolerated due to a lack of effective measures to address these issues. There were mentions of condescending communication, which raises concerns about respect and professionalism. Additionally, a trainer expressed the expectation for students to address them formally, acknowledging both pros and cons to this approach. While some respondents felt that the rules apply equally to everyone, there were significant concerns about the lack of appropriate facilities for diverse individuals, particularly regarding the availability of gender-neutral restrooms. Overall, the feedback suggests a need for improved inclusivity and respect for all students.

In **Ireland**, professional respondents noted specific, systemic barriers reflected in their VET rules and activities which they found confusing and/or unfair. These included the celebration of Christian religious holidays only, often leaving students and young people of other religions excluded, noting this pattern was historical and no longer reflective of the diverse student body.

Professionals also noted that criteria and processes regarding “Back to Education Allowance” and other DEASP (social economic supports) measures and criteria resulted in counterproductive decisions, often perceived as unfair.

Finally, experiences and observations related to gender identity reflected what respondents saw as the need to opt for gender neutral uniforms and an increase of facilities available to non-binary identities.

In the **Basque Country**, negative responses predominated, with the majority of responding professionals indicating that they had not identified confusing or unfair rules or traditions. Some specific mentions, such as dress and conduct codes, could generate restrictive norms.

Furthermore, there are diverse interpretations, as some did not understand the question or considered injustice to be relative.

Additionally, there is recognition of social inequalities, with mentions of indifference or rejection in certain cases, and references to religious holidays, highlighting that each person celebrates them according to their beliefs, suggesting a neutral view of the issue.

In **Belgium**, several professionals identified rigid institutional traditions or school-wide events that unintentionally excluded students from diverse backgrounds. For example, celebrations based on specific religious calendars or national holidays were mentioned as not always inclusive of students from other faiths or cultures. Some professionals also noted that language expectations during formal activities did not always accommodate multilingual students, causing frustration or passive disengagement.

A few professionals also highlighted the standardised approach to discipline as problematic, particularly for students with neurodiverse profiles or socio-emotional challenges. They indicated that zero-tolerance policies may unfairly penalise students for behaviours that would benefit more from mentoring or mediation. Additionally, some raised concerns about unequal application of rules, especially when teachers’ discretion varied widely. Such inconsistencies, they noted, led to confusion among students and perceptions of bias or favouritism.

In **Croatia**, more than 80% of professionals stated that there is no such rule or activity in their school. On the other hand, there was one answer that said students are treated differently regarding absences excuse, depending on class teacher. Other respondent mentioned *Bread Days* as an event that was “coloured”, “with very religious motifs and in which everyone had to participate regardless of their religion. The students who were not Catholic felt confused

*because they did not know the prayer and felt forced to participate in something that was not part of their culture. I think such events could continue, but to celebrate the fruits of nature without a religious context”.*

### 5.2.6 Young People: What has been your favourite place to hang out in your VET centre, and why did it feel comfortable or safe?

In **Austria**, the statements reflect a variety of preferred spaces where individuals feel comfortable and engaged within their educational or work environments. Many respondents mentioned enjoying time in communal areas such as the lounge, kitchen, and seminar rooms, where they can socialize with peers and colleagues. The learning support room was highlighted as a quiet place conducive to studying, while the workshop and mechanical areas were favoured for hands-on learning and skill development.

Several individuals expressed a preference for outdoor spaces, such as the terrace, where they can relax with others during breaks. The importance of feeling included and understood in these environments was emphasized, with many noting that being around friends and supportive colleagues contributes to their sense of belonging and comfort.

Some respondents also mentioned enjoying time at home or in personal spaces, such as their rooms or libraries, where they can find peace and focus. Overall, the feedback indicates that a mix of social interaction, quiet study areas, and hands-on experiences are valued by individuals in their learning and working environments.

In **Ireland**, students’ preference of places to “hang out” would appear to reflect their diverse use of VET facilities citing canteens, libraries and outdoor areas as the areas most used for students to gather/meet. Availability of spaces where noise was reduced while also having access to areas where noise was permitted was a common theme, with some students appreciating opportunities to get away from noise in libraries and computer rooms and others preferring areas where there was high social activity, band practices, lounge areas etc.

Outdoor areas where the young people could gather and smoke were also cited as favourite places for students.

In the **Basque Country**, the workshop is the most frequently mentioned location where respondents felt comfortable and safe, suggesting that young people perceive it as a safe and engaging space. Other popular areas include the cafeteria, the courtyard, and the classroom, reflecting the importance of spaces for socialisation. A smaller number prefer quieter locations, such as the dining room, the bar, or a bench. A small group did not identify any favourite location.

The responses reflect a need for a mix of spaces for social interaction and a preference for hands-on learning environments, with the workshop taking centre stage due to its impact on professional development.

In **Belgium**, young respondents frequently identified the school cafeteria or canteen as their favourite place to spend time. They appreciated it as a relaxed and social environment where they could connect with peers across classes, languages, and backgrounds. The informality of

the space allowed them to express themselves freely without the pressures of academic performance or observation from teachers. Several mentioned that it felt “neutral” and “easy,” with one student describing it as “the only place where I feel like myself in the school.”

Other commonly mentioned spaces included outside courtyards and benches near the entrance, which were appreciated for providing fresh air and a break from the classroom setting. These areas were often chosen for their accessibility and openness, and for being social meeting points. Some young people also appreciated libraries or study corners, particularly when these were quiet and inclusive, allowing them to decompress or spend time alone without being questioned. What made a space feel safe, according to respondents, was a combination of low surveillance, peer presence and a lack of judgement, places where they could speak their own language, express their identity, and relax without concern.

In **Croatia**, it seems that many respondents have the same favourite places to hang out in their VET centre. The most common ones were in front of the school, schoolyard and a hallway with benches and couches. Other ones mentioned were the gymnasium, school practicum and library where respondents note they can act more freely and feel relaxed there.

### 5.2.6 Professionals: What has been the favourite place for young people to hang out in your VET centre, and why does it feel comfortable or safe?

The statements from professionals from **Austria** provide insights into the various spaces where students are perceived to feel comfortable and valued within their educational environment. Many respondents noted the absence of dedicated lounges for students, with most interactions occurring in classrooms, hallways, or designated areas like seminar rooms and common spaces.

Respondents suggest students appreciate areas where they can engage with peers, such as the cafeteria, lounge, or outdoor spaces, where they can relax and socialize without the pressure of formal instruction. The presence of comfortable seating, such as sofas, is highlighted as a positive aspect that encourages conversation and connection among students.

Overall, professionals in Austria places strong emphasis on the importance of having spaces that foster a sense of community and belonging, with many respondents observing that many students express satisfaction with the relationships they have with their teachers. The feedback suggests that professionals understand that students value environments where they can feel safe, recognized, and supported, whether in informal settings or during structured activities like group work in workshops or career planning sessions.

In **Ireland**, professionals’ responses corresponded closely to those of students regarding perceived favourite space students “hang out” in. This cohort also noted that quiet spaces were popular for students. Canteen and coffee shops with communal spaces were also observed as popular meeting and gathering points for young people.

In the **Basque Country**, the cafeteria is the most mentioned location cited by professionals, standing out as a social and recreational space where young people to feel comfortable. The patio and outdoor areas are relevant, valued for their sense of freedom and less institutional

pressure. The workshop remains an important option, professionals noted this was due to its practical and engaging approach to learning. Rest and meeting places, such as the bar, the break room, and communal areas, are appreciated for their relaxed atmosphere.

In **Belgium**, professionals overwhelmingly identified communal spaces, especially cafeterias and open seating areas, as the main gathering points for students. These were described as zones of informal interaction, offering students a sense of autonomy and choice. Professionals noted that young people tend to gravitate toward spaces where they are not constantly monitored, where conversations flow freely, and where they can create their own micro-communities.

Several professionals also mentioned outdoor areas, including courtyards and sports zones, as places where students felt most at ease. These areas were seen as providing both physical space and emotional breathing room, especially for students who might feel overstimulated or constrained indoors. A few professionals highlighted the importance of dedicated student lounges or wellbeing corners, noting that when such spaces were designed with student input or allowed for diverse uses, they tended to be more respected and better used. Overall, professionals emphasised the need for non-institutionalised, flexible environments that support young people's social and emotional safety.

In **Croatia**, the professional in their responses mentioned the same places as the students, in front of the school, schoolyard and hallway with the benches and couches.

### 5.2.7 Did your school celebrate diversity? How would you describe it?

#### Young People:

In **Austria**, the responses regarding whether schools celebrated diversity reveal a mixed perspective. Some respondents affirmed that their schools actively celebrated diversity through various initiatives, such as workshops and special diversity days, which facilitated discussions and learning about diverse cultures and traditions. Many expressed appreciations for the opportunities to engage with peers from diverse backgrounds, highlighting the positive experiences of learning from one another.

However, there were also voices of uncertainty and indifference, with some individuals stating they were unsure or had not experienced any celebration of diversity in their schools. A few respondents explicitly mentioned a lack of engagement with diversity initiatives, indicating that they did not perceive any significant efforts in this area.

In **Ireland**, most students noted that diversity days and regular cultural exchange days were observed with music and dance. Some respondents reported that despite having diversity orientated posters that active diversity and inclusion measures and initiatives were not explicitly present. There is a recognition of the VETs working to include diverse communities and that the student body represents diversity but that perhaps a gap exists in how this is experienced.

In the **Basque Country**, there is a diversity of opinions regarding the effectiveness of diversity initiatives, with responses split between "yes" and "no," indicating varied experiences among

participants. This division highlights a significant level of uncertainty, as several individuals expressed that they did not know or could not adequately describe the initiatives in place. Such responses suggest a lack of clarity surrounding the objectives and implementation of diversity initiatives within the organisation.

Moreover, the lack of detail in most responses further underscores this ambiguity. Many participants provided brief answers that failed to explain how diversity was celebrated or, conversely, why it was not perceived as being effectively acknowledged. This absence of comprehensive feedback points to a need for more robust communication and engagement regarding diversity efforts, ensuring that all members of the community are informed and involved in these important initiatives.

In **Belgium**, young people offered mixed responses regarding whether their VET centre celebrated diversity. A small number responded affirmatively, mentioning events such as cultural days, food sharing activities or occasional campaigns on gender identity and respect. These were generally appreciated and were seen as meaningful when student involvement was high and the initiatives were interactive or visible. However, many respondents felt that either diversity was not celebrated at all or that efforts were minimal, tokenistic or superficial. Several noted that celebrations, when they did occur, were often limited to a single day or event and lacked follow-up or deeper engagement.

A few students expressed frustration that only “acceptable” forms of diversity were acknowledged, particularly those related to nationality or language, while issues such as gender identity, socio-economic background or neurodivergence were ignored. Some young people shared that, in their view, the school promoted “respect” in theory but rarely translated this into concrete inclusive practices. The feeling that diversity was tolerated rather than celebrated came through in several comments.

In **Croatia**, most students wrote that diversity is not celebrated in their school or that they don’t know if it is celebrated. The ones that wrote it is celebrated mentioned that it was done through different projects. One of the students wrote there is nothing to celebrate because everyone is human and the other one doesn’t see the point in celebrating diversity if everyone should be equal.

## Professionals:

The professionals’ responses from **Austria** to the question of whether VET centres celebrate diversity indicate a strong commitment to inclusivity and recognition of various backgrounds. Many respondents noted a significant presence of students with migrant backgrounds, with some schools reporting around 50% of their student population coming from diverse ethnicities. The inclusive ethos is highly valued, with schools actively welcoming students from diverse backgrounds and ensuring that this diversity is reflected in coaching and training programmes.

Several respondents highlighted the importance of workshops and training for staff to effectively manage and celebrate diversity. They mentioned that their institutions host inter-

cultural events and provide opportunities for students to engage with one another through various activities, including sports.

Moreover, many expressed that diversity is seen as a strength and an opportunity for growth, with a focus on individual abilities rather than nationality, religion, or past experiences. While some noted that there is currently less diversity among staff, the student body is described as diverse, encompassing various nationalities, beliefs, and experiences, including those with refugee backgrounds.

Overall, the feedback reflects a positive view of diversity as an integral part of the educational experience, with a commitment to fostering an environment where every individual is valued and respected.

In **Ireland**, some participants mentioned efforts being made to celebrate diversity and promote inclusion and anti-discrimination, but there was a sense of scepticism in responses and an acknowledgement that in some cases this felt more tokenistic. Respondents noted that facilities and practice could be improved. Others gave examples of multicultural days, and the availability of safe spaces for LGBTQ+ students and allies and some VET schools working towards getting an [Athena swan status](#). There is, however, some sense of diversity being an action and anti-discrimination performative on specific occasions such as Anti-racism Week etc.

In the **Basque Country**, there is a landscape of divided opinions regarding the celebration of diversity within educational institutions. While some individuals believe that diversity is actively celebrated, others contend that it is merely made visible without being underpinned by deep-rooted values.

Institutional celebrations play a role in this discourse, with events such as International Women's Day, the Day Against LGBTphobia, and the Day of Sexual and Gender Diversity being highlighted as significant occasions for raising awareness. Additionally, some schools have taken structural approaches by incorporating diversity into their institutional plans, such as Agenda 2030 and initiatives focused on equality and normalkuntza.

However, criticisms and doubts persist among respondents. Some indicate that the questionnaire appears to be aimed at confirming the existence of discrimination, while others point to barriers faced in private schools that may hinder genuine inclusivity.

Despite these challenges, many participants acknowledge the multicultural experience within their schools, noting that students come from diverse backgrounds. This diversity contributes to a rich environment, although it is not always celebrated in a meaningful way. Overall, the findings suggest a need for deeper engagement with diversity initiatives to ensure that they are not only visible but also rooted in the values and practices of the institution.

In **Belgium**, there was greater confidence among professionals in affirming that diversity is acknowledged and celebrated, but most described these efforts as emerging, inconsistent or project based. Some institutions were said to organise awareness campaigns, cultural exchanges or involve students in planning diversity days, particularly in relation to international backgrounds or multilingualism. These initiatives were framed positively, though professionals admitted that participation varied widely.

Several professionals highlighted that while some staff are committed to inclusive practices, there is often no systemic approach or clear institutional priority for celebrating diversity. Some

noted that celebrations tend to depend on individual motivation and are not embedded in the school's identity or curriculum. A few professionals acknowledged that more work was needed to recognise invisible dimensions of diversity, such as mental health, class background, and non-normative identities. Overall, there was an awareness that diversity is often reduced to cultural representation rather than addressed as a structural and relational issue within VET settings.

In **Croatia**, professionals mentioned different days and events to celebrate diversity; The pink shirt day, The planet earth day, School Day, Talent Show, European Skills Day, Project Day, The Language Day.

### 5.2.8 Professionals: Reflecting on your teaching or mentoring experience, was there a time when you felt unprepared to address an inclusion challenge? What was the outcome?

While some respondents in **Austria** indicated that they have never felt unprepared, others acknowledged moments of uncertainty, particularly when faced with specific inclusion challenges.

Several educators expressed that they often feel the need to be flexible and responsive in the moment, highlighting the dynamic nature of working with diverse student populations. Some mentioned the importance of preparation and ongoing professional development to build confidence in handling inclusion issues. For instance, one respondent noted the challenge of tutoring a student from Ukraine with limited language skills, which was compounded by a lack of experience in teaching German as a foreign language. Another situation, where a professional respondent felt completely unprepared, was the rampage at a school in Graz.

There were also mentions of specific incidents, such as conflicts between students of different nationalities, where educators had to navigate the situation carefully. In these cases, the importance of communication, teamwork, and seeking collaborative solutions was emphasised.

Overall, while many educators feel equipped to handle inclusion challenges due to their training and support from colleagues, there are still instances where they encounter difficulties, particularly when faced with unique or unexpected situations. The feedback underscores the need for continuous learning and adaptability in the field of education.

In **Ireland**, many of the participants noted that they did not feel unprepared to tackle an inclusion challenge. While some mentioned training and workshops they attended as having facilitated this, others felt they had worked to raise their own awareness and could use additional supports implementing inclusive practices. Overwhelmingly professional respondents noted lack of resourcing was a huge barrier here. Tutors noted that they are paid only for hours teaching and that due to this many teachers did not have time to allocate for specific intercultural activity or out of class support for students. This cohort also noted that working collaboratively to achieve this was also difficult for this same reason. Others

mentioned that when they were approached by students reporting discriminatory cases, they felt unprepared and unsure about how to handle the situation.

One respondent noted that trends in society were often mirrored in the FETs, citing the impact of “Andrew Tate” and the impact of this period on students’ attitudes to each other.

In the **Basque Country**, many teachers reported that they had not encountered significant difficulties related to inclusion, but others highlighted complex situations that required careful navigation. The main challenges identified included supporting immigrant students who lacked language skills, addressing mental health issues, and adapting educational approaches for students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). These difficulties underscore the diverse needs present in the classroom and the importance of tailored support.

In terms of solution strategies, some educators turned to collaborative work teams, sought assistance from support associations, or engaged in self-directed training to enhance their skills. However, a common concern among respondents was the lack of preparation for these challenges. Several teachers expressed a strong need for more comprehensive inclusion training to better equip them to address the varied needs of their students effectively.

From a learning perspective, some educators viewed each challenge as an opportunity for growth, recognising that navigating these situations could improve their teaching approaches and professional skills. This mindset reflects a commitment to continuous improvement and a desire to foster a more inclusive environment for all students.

In **Belgium**, several professionals reflected openly on moments when they felt unprepared to respond to inclusion-related challenges. A recurring theme was uncertainty in addressing students’ mental health issues, especially when these overlapped with cultural misunderstandings or social disadvantage. Some respondents admitted to lacking training in handling situations involving racism, homophobia or students with neurodiverse needs, which led them to question whether their responses were adequate or supportive enough.

One respondent described a situation where a student navigating gender transition faced teasing and social exclusion, and the staff member struggled to find the right words or support mechanisms to intervene effectively. Another mentioned difficulty in engaging with students from refugee or migrant backgrounds, especially when these students were dealing with trauma or language barriers. A few educators also expressed feeling isolated when trying to act without broader institutional support or guidance.

Despite these challenges, many professionals used the experience as a learning moment, either seeking guidance from colleagues, turning to external services or advocating for changes within the school. Some reported that these instances pushed them to request training, improve their listening skills, or adapt their teaching practices. However, a minority noted that structural barriers remained, such as time constraints or lack of leadership support, which limited what they could do beyond their individual effort.

In **Croatia**, some respondents reported not having encountered any issues related to inclusion in their classes. However, others shared that they sometimes felt unprepared or unsure of how to handle certain situations, often reflecting on what they could have done differently. A few mentioned that they try to adapt to the needs of the situation they encounter, and through discussions with professional services and colleagues, they often achieve satisfactory results. A recurring theme is the challenge of balancing the needs of students with disabilities and

those without. Some respondents expressed concerns that inclusion, as it is currently implemented, can sometimes lead to unequal attention and support for students without disabilities. They emphasised the importance of realistic assessments and appropriate support for students with disabilities, rather than inflating grades. Several respondents highlighted the need for better education and training for teachers to handle inclusion effectively. They noted that while inclusion promotes diversity and coexistence, it can also lead to students with difficulties being mocked or ridiculed, which is often not addressed adequately. Overall, these responses underscore the complexity of inclusion in education and the need for ongoing support, training, and realistic approaches to ensure that all students receive the attention and resources they need to succeed.

### 5.2.9 Professionals: Looking back, what was the most effective strategy you have used or seen to re-engage a young person who felt excluded?

In **Austria**, the responses highlight the significance of personal connection, communication, and empathy. Many educators believe that sharing subjective experiences can foster a sense of understanding and respect. They emphasise the importance of engaging in conversations that address both conscious and unconscious biases while recognising the strengths and competencies of the individuals involved. Personal and group discussions, including the involvement of leadership, are seen as crucial, with many noting that one-on-one conversations are particularly effective because they allow young people to feel heard and valued, rather than anonymous in a group setting.

Educators also mention the value of participating alongside students to model positive behaviour and encourage inclusion. Randomly assigning groups during activities or intentionally including excluded individuals can help them integrate into the group. The focus should be on the individual rather than the circumstances, with mutual respect and awareness of each other's backgrounds being fundamental to interaction. Frequent conversations, especially with quieter students, can help build trust and openness, while addressing negative incidents directly is essential for raising awareness and promoting positive behaviour.

In **Ireland**, many professionals utilised peer learning, project work and group work to re-engage someone feeling excluded. Another professional spoke about giving individual students time with the teacher to share their issues and build a rapport. Respondents felt proactively and clearly dealing with challenging behaviour was useful while appropriate recording mechanisms to track behaviour was also important. Most respondents reflected a reliance on individual and creative responses being required to re-engage and the need for a collaborative response with good interagency communication was also essential. Many found group work approaches, accommodating different learning styles and promoting peer mentorship helpful.

In the **Basque Country**, an individualised approach to inclusion is increasingly recognised as essential in educational settings. Many strategies focus on providing personalised support, active listening, and confidence building to meet the unique needs of each student.

The importance of empathy and communication cannot be overstated; dialogue, workshops, and group reflection are highlighted as key tools in fostering an inclusive environment. By

prioritising these elements, educators can create a space where students feel valued and understood.

Positive role assignment also plays a crucial role in integration. Several educators emphasised that recognising and building upon young people's strengths significantly aids their inclusion within the school community.

Furthermore, teamwork and coexistence are fostered through collaborative projects, sports, and joint activities, which generate greater social connections among students. These shared experiences not only enhance inclusion but also promote a sense of belonging.

However, there is a diversity of experiences among teachers regarding cases of exclusion. While some have not encountered significant challenges, others perceive a lack of preparation as a considerable hurdle. This disparity highlights the need for ongoing professional development and support to ensure that all educators are equipped to address the complexities of inclusion effectively.

In **Belgium**, professionals identified a range of effective strategies to re-engage young people who had experienced exclusion, most of which combined individual attention, empathy and practical adjustments to the learning environment. A commonly mentioned approach was to build personal trust through one-on-one conversations, demonstrating that the educator was willing to listen without judgement and to understand the student's personal experience.

Several respondents emphasised the impact of creating small, achievable goals together with the student and celebrating their progress, however incremental. Others highlighted the use of peer mediation, where a trusted classmate or group would help the student feel reconnected and less isolated. Flexible teaching methods and adapted tasks were also cited, especially for learners with diverse educational needs or those who had disengaged due to language or cultural barriers.

In some cases, professionals described how organising extracurricular or practical learning opportunities, such as creative workshops or real-life assignments, helped students rebuild confidence and feel more motivated. A few educators stressed the importance of consistent follow-up and collaboration with support staff or families, rather than viewing the student's exclusion as a one-time issue.

Overall, the most effective strategies appeared to be those that combined emotional support with practical responsiveness, giving young people space to re-enter the learning environment on their own terms, without pressure or stigma.

In **Croatia**, some respondents mentioned that they have not encountered issues related to inclusion in their classes. However, others shared various approaches they use to address such situations. Common strategies include engaging in pair and group work, having conversations with students, and organising informal activities like class trips or workshops. Several respondents emphasised the importance of conversation and personal examples to foster acceptance and respect for diversity. They also highlighted the role of teamwork and collaboration with professional services and parents to support students facing exclusion. One respondent shared a detailed example of an EU project where students made pastries and breads with children with disabilities, demonstrating how practical activities can promote inclusivity and teach valuable lessons about diversity.

## 5.3 PRESENT

*This section focuses on the present situation regarding inclusion and diversity.*

### 5.3.1 Rate your VET centre from 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest):

#### Young People:

In **Austria**, the average rating by young people is 7.01, while it is 8.6 in **Ireland**, and 7.66 in the **Basque Country**. This is followed by **Belgium** with an average rating of 6.1, and **Croatia**, with the lowest rating by young people with 5.9.

#### Professionals:

By contrast, the ratings provided by the professionals are generally higher, with 8.36 in **Austria**, and 7.3 in **Ireland**. In the **Basque Country**, professionals rated their VET centre with 8.09 in average, and 6.85 in **Belgium**, and 8.3 in **Croatia**.

### 5.3.2 Young People: Do you feel like you can fully express yourself, e.g., your identity, opinions, interests in your VET centre?

Yes: 177 answers, = 52.8%

Austria: 37

Ireland: 44

Basque Country: 45

Belgium: 38

Croatia: 13

No: 97 answers, = 29%

Austria: 8

Ireland: 8

Basque Country: 6

Belgium: 34

Croatia: 41

I do not know: 61 answers, = 18.2%

Austria: 27

Ireland: 2

Basque Country: 15

Belgium: 4

Croatia: 13

In total, the responses by young people indicate a varied sense of self-expression among students in different countries. The highest percentage of respondents who feel they can fully express themselves is found in the **Basque Country** (75%), followed closely by **Ireland** (73.3%)

and **Austria** (57.8%). **Belgium** (52.1%) also shows a relatively positive response, while **Croatia** stands out with a significantly lower percentage of only 10.4%.

Conversely, the responses indicating "No" reveal a stark contrast, particularly in **Belgium**, where nearly half of the respondents (47.9%) feel they cannot express themselves fully. **Croatia** also reports a notable percentage of 32.3% who feel similarly.

The "I do not know" responses suggest uncertainty among students, particularly in **Austria**, where 42.2% of respondents are unsure about their ability to express themselves. This uncertainty is less pronounced in Ireland (3.3%) and **Belgium** (5.5%), indicating a clearer sense of self-expression among students in those countries.

### 5.3.2 Professionals: Do you feel young people can fully express themselves (their identity, opinions, interests) in your VET centre?

Yes: 109 answers, = 73.6%

Austria: 25

Ireland: 4

Basque Country: 30

Belgium: 27

Croatia: 23

No: 23 answers, = 15.5%

Austria: 3

Ireland: 2

Basque Country: 4

Belgium: 12

Croatia: 2

I do not know: 16 answers, = 10.8%

Austria: 0

Ireland: 4

Basque Country: 0

Belgium: 7

Croatia: 5

Overall, the data indicates a generally positive sentiment by professionals towards self-expression of young people in VET centres, with a combined 73.6% of respondents across all countries feeling confident in young peoples' ability to express themselves.

These findings suggest that while many young people feel empowered to share their identities and opinions, targeted efforts may be necessary in certain regions to foster a more inclusive and supportive environment for self-expression.

### 5.3.3 Imagine your VET centre as a team. How well do you think this “team” works together to make sure everyone feels valued and included?

#### Young People:

In **Austria**, many respondents express a positive view of the team dynamics, with phrases like "very good," "good," and "the team works well together" appearing frequently. Some respondents highlight the supportive role of trainers, noting that they work effectively with students and assist them in their vocational training. Comments such as "we are all a very good team" and "the working atmosphere is very good" suggest a sense of camaraderie and mutual respect among team members. However, there are also mixed opinions regarding the effectiveness of teamwork. Some respondents indicate that while the team generally functions well, there are instances where not everyone participates equally or values the team dynamic. Phrases like "it depends on the youth" and "some younger participants do not take it seriously" point to variability in engagement levels. Additionally, comments such as "it could be better" and "it's mediocre" suggest that there is room for improvement. A few participants express uncertainty about the team's effectiveness, with responses like "I don't know" and "difficult question" indicating a lack of clarity on the matter. Some mention challenges, such as individuals preferring to work alone or not fully embracing the team concept, which can hinder overall collaboration.

In **Ireland**, students had varied opinions on this question. Many students felt that their team or social environment worked well together. They emphasise communication, inclusivity and even distribution of work. A student mentioned that when designing a course extra tuition and help must be available to help everyone feel valued and included and to keep them engaged. Students reflected that they did ask questions of each other and noted that some students and teachers are inclusive when someone appears to be left out. Several noted this was good but could be improved.

In the **Basque Country**, the perception was predominantly positive, with many responses indicating that the school functions well or very well in terms of inclusion and appreciation. However, there were also some points of criticism and suggestions for improvement, and some responses mentioned a lack of respect for opinions and a feeling of exclusion in certain groups. The clarity of the responses varied; some participants gave vague or context-free responses, which could indicate a lack of reflection on the topic. The reference to teamwork emphasised that students work together and support each other, although there were differences in the perceived level of integration. A few isolated responses mentioned structural problems, such as the organisation of demonstrations or strikes, which could affect the perception of an inclusive environment.

In **Belgium**, young respondents shared a range of perspectives. Some expressed that while certain teachers or staff members make a clear effort to support inclusion, this approach is not consistently reflected across the whole institution. The term "team" often felt too generous, with several young people describing their centre as disjointed, with individuals working in isolation rather than a coordinated effort. Others noted that although the intentions may be good, the actual collaboration and shared responsibility for fostering inclusivity often fall short.

A small group reported positive experiences where they felt supported and encouraged, but they remained a minority.

In **Croatia**, students have a wide range of opinions about how the “team” works together. Many respondents feel that their team and school environment works relatively well, with several describing their experiences as "excellent," "very good," or "good." Some highlighted that their team works well together, are united, and succeed in their efforts. For example, one respondent mentioned that their team works very well in groups, while another noted that they are united when together. However, there are also respondents who feel that their team does not work as effectively. Some described their experiences as "so so," "average," or "bad," and mentioned that their team does not work well together or that everyone works on their own. One respondent noted that their team does not work well because everyone works individually, while another mentioned that their team is not collegial. Several respondents emphasized the need for improvement, suggesting that teachers should change their approach towards students, respect their opinions, and understand that students have lives and problems outside of school. One respondent highlighted that teachers need to understand that students often have worse lives than them and that the emphasis should not always be on the teacher-student hierarchy.

## Professionals:

In **Austria**, many respondents express a keen sense of collaboration and support within the team, with phrases like "very good" and "good" appearing frequently. Comments such as "the team works very supportively together" and "everyone feels safe and valued" highlight a positive atmosphere where participants engage in personal conversations and support one another. The sentiment that "everyone pulls together" and "the team works well as a whole" reinforces the idea of a cohesive unit striving for common goals. However, some responses indicate that there are challenges to be addressed. A few participants describe the teamwork as "moderate" or "fair," noting difficulties in managing negative emotions and impulses among participants. There are mentions of occasional unfair statements from staff due to overwork or fatigue, which can create an imbalance in the team dynamic. Additionally, the need for ongoing discussions about roles and needs to ensure continuous progress is highlighted.

In **Ireland**, most professional mentioned how they communicated well but some mentioned how they wished they had more collaboration between staff. Again, limitations associated with pay and availability of teachers outside teaching hours due to this really impeded their capacity to collaborate noting team meetings were not always held and additional time with students was not facilitated.

In the **Basque Country**, professional respondents had predominantly positive perceptions of how their “team” worked with many observing that the centre works well to ensure inclusion and appreciation. They also noted the usefulness of Strategic projects, cultural training and specific measures to promote equality.

Professionals in the Basque Country cited the positive impact of diverse approaches, from everyday integration practices to specialised inclusion teams while also noting areas for improvement. Some respondents point to a lack of coordination between teachers and

external actors, as well as differences between inclusive cycles. Others noted the importance of institutional commitment to diversity and inclusion highlighting efforts to create a welcoming environment, although some believe there is still room for improvement.

In **Belgium**, the notion of the VET centre operating as a cohesive team received a more optimistic but still critical response. Many described a functioning team dynamic, particularly among teaching staff, with collaboration taking place at a practical level. However, they also pointed out structural barriers and siloed practices that hinder a unified approach to inclusion. Some noted that while they personally prioritise inclusive practices, they do not always see the same level of engagement from others, suggesting that inclusion is still seen as the responsibility of individuals rather than a collective ethos. A few highlighted the need for stronger leadership and institutional commitment to embed inclusive teamwork more deeply across the board.

In **Croatia**, many professionals feel that their team and school environments works very well, with several describing their experiences as "excellent," "very good," or "good." They highlighted that cooperation is satisfactory, problems are being addressed, and there is a high level of support and empathy. For example, one respondent mentioned that their team works well and efficiently, while another noted that the professional pedagogical staff contributes to making students feel included. However, some respondents believe there is still room for improvement. They mentioned that while the team is doing well, there is a need for more teamwork and better functioning together. One respondent emphasized the importance of respecting each other and finding more ways to work together, recognizing that students learn from teachers and vice versa.

### 5.3.4 Professionals: What initiatives are currently in place at your institution to promote diversity and inclusion?

In **Austria**, the answers reveal a variety of strategies aimed at fostering an inclusive environment. Many emphasise training and workshops, including diversity and gender training, to raise awareness around these issues. Specific programmes like "Diversity Day" are also mentioned. Some answers report comprehensive diversity management strategies that prioritise inclusion at all levels. These values are often integrated into daily practices, promoting respectful interactions among all members and normalising diversity within the organisational culture. Collaborative projects, such as Erasmus+ initiatives and cross-class activities, encourage shared experiences among diverse groups. Continuous professional development and mandatory training for staff are essential for equipping employees to support an inclusive environment.

Additionally, some answers focus on integrating individuals with disabilities and youth in shared workspaces, fostering inclusivity through everyday interactions. While many answers show the commitment to creating inclusive environments, some responses indicate a lack of specific initiatives. Overall, the commitment to diversity and inclusion is a fundamental aspect of the institutional culture, supported by various programmes and practices.

In **Ireland**, professionals mentioned Athena Swan initiatives, international societies and EDI HR practices in addition to multi-cultural days, migrant weeks and community events. This

cohort also highlighted the need to introduce facilities for those experiencing neurodiversity such as sensory rooms, quiet spaces, and games rooms.

In the **Basque Country**, active institutional strategies include group mentoring, inclusive Erasmus projects, and collaboration with external organisations. Awareness is raised through the observance of significant dates and the celebration of international days, such as Women's Day, Anti-Discrimination Day, and Gay Pride Day, accompanied by various awareness-raising activities. Educational initiatives aimed at promoting inclusion involve curriculum adaptations and tailored programmes for students with special needs or those at risk of exclusion. Additionally, projects designed to strengthen coexistence encompass challenge-based work, company internships, and cross-year initiatives, all of which foster collaboration and understanding among students.

Opportunities for improvement and challenges: Some believe that there are no clear initiatives, while others emphasise the need to strengthen organised strategies.

In **Belgium**, professionals identified several efforts within their institutions that aim to foster diversity and inclusion. These included formal activities like themed events, awareness-raising campaigns, and specific classroom projects focused on cultural understanding, gender equality, and inclusion. Several mentioned the integration of diversity-related content into lessons or using inclusive language in communications and materials. A few centres had established mentoring or buddy systems to support students from underrepresented backgrounds. However, many respondents acknowledged that these initiatives were fragmented or lacked strategic continuity. While there was a sense that inclusion was on the agenda, it was not always embedded systematically across the institution.

In **Croatia**, many respondents mentioned that their schools engage in various projects, workshops, and activities to promote inclusion. For example, some highlighted psychologist workshops, school projects, and special classes where both regular students and students with disabilities participate. Others mentioned cooperation with associations, involvement in joint individual projects, and partnerships with schools from other countries to celebrate different customs and religions. Several respondents emphasized the importance of conversation, socializing, and joint activities to foster a sense of belonging. They also noted the role of professional services in supporting inclusion efforts. For instance, one respondent mentioned that their school has a professional service dedicated to working on inclusion. However, some respondents indicated that there are currently no concrete initiatives at their school level, but individual teachers are trying to promote diversity and inclusion within their authority and capabilities. A few respondents expressed hope that such activities will be introduced in the future.

### 5.3.5 Professionals: If you could change one thing to make diversity a priority, what would you do?

The answers obtained from **Austria** reflect a range of ideas aimed at enhancing diversity within institutions. Some participants suggest the need for additional support staff in every class, such as social workers, psychologists, and educators, to better address the diverse needs of students. Others advocate for adjusting class sizes to create a more inclusive environment.

Training all staff in non-violent communication is also highlighted as a crucial step, along with the creation of leisure activities that cater to all young people. There is a strong emphasis on excluding individuals who engage in bullying or discrimination from projects and classes, ensuring a safe space for everyone. Some respondents propose regular lectures or workshops featuring speakers who have personally experienced diversity, as well as increased awareness-raising efforts.

A few participants express uncertainty about what changes could be made, while others believe that diversity should be viewed as a natural part of life. The importance of accepting and living diversity as a given is reiterated, alongside the promotion of girls and the need for training staff on handling diagnoses and related issues. Suggestions also include spending more time on diversity initiatives and bringing together people from diverse backgrounds in smaller groups to break down prejudices. Overall, the responses convey a desire for a more positive and proactive approach to experiencing and embracing diversity.

In **Ireland**, some professionals spoke about funding and access to funding for socio-economically marginalised students. Professionals also called for education, diversity and inclusion to be at the heart of all subjects. In addition to this Teachers advocated student-led diversity committees and structured mentorship programmes connecting students from underrepresented groups with supportive mentors. Others noted additional days or weeks of celebration and cultural diversity to be included in schedules of celebration. One respondent noted a need for spaces for Muslims to pray, while another respondent referenced the [Youthreach National Guidelines](#). One respondent suggested developing a student-led diversity committee and structured mentorship program connecting students from underrepresented groups with supportive mentors. Tutors recommended embedding EDI in all learning modules regardless of topic or discipline. One respondent suggested a fulltime translator in schools and a need for increased budgets for targeted workshopping.

In the **Basque Country**, education and awareness-raising are key pillars. Many suggest including diversity as a cross-curricular subject, increasing training for students and teachers, and organising workshops, talks, structured and strategic actions. Some propose institutional inclusion plans with clear objectives and action protocols to ensure sustainability. They emphasise on the importance of coordinating teachers, engaging students, and fostering coexistence through cultural gatherings and collaborative projects, whereas some mention the need to dedicate more time to people and less time to managing forms. Several suggestions point to the celebration of key days, internal campaigns, and the creation of safe spaces for dialogue.

In **Belgium**, the most common suggestion was to introduce structured and ongoing diversity training for staff. Professionals expressed a strong desire for capacity-building initiatives that go beyond one-off sessions. Others proposed stronger leadership and institutional commitment, including clear policy frameworks and designated staff roles for inclusion. Several respondents also emphasised the importance of involving students directly in designing inclusion strategies. Additionally, there were calls for better representation in staffing and curricula, more inclusive language, and safer spaces where students and staff alike can express themselves without judgement.

In **Croatia**, many respondents emphasised the importance of conversation, workshops, and social activities to promote diversity and inclusion. For example, some suggested organizing lectures, workshops, and free activities to encourage socializing and understanding among

students. Others recommended more informal days and situations where students can interact and learn about different cultures and traditions. Several respondents highlighted the need for more structured activities, such as joint activity days, team-building events, and student exchange projects with other schools in the EU. They also suggested reducing class sizes to allow for more individual attention and involvement in projects that confront students with differences, such as volunteering. Some respondents proposed placing diverse individuals in leadership positions within student communities and introducing a diversity day at school with a program of lectures and workshops. They also mentioned the importance of starting acceptance and education about diversity from an early age, involving families, kindergartens, and primary schools. A few respondents expressed the need for more empathy from teachers and better support for students with fewer opportunities, such as those who are financially disadvantaged or have disabilities. They also noted that understanding and promoting diversity should be a priority not only at the school level but also globally.

### 5.3.6 Professionals: In your view, do staff members at your institution receive enough support and training to handle diversity-related issues effectively?

	yes	could be more	no	I do not know.
Austria	15	9	2	2
Ireland	1	7	2	0
Basque Country	4	22	6	2
Belgium	6	26	12	2
Croatia	14	12	2	2
Total	40	76	24	8
%	27.03%	51.35%	16.22%	5.41%

The responses from professionals about the support and training staff members receive to manage diversity-related issues reveal a mixed perspective. A sizeable portion, approximately 27% of respondents, feel that staff members do receive adequate support, showing a level of confidence in the existing training and resources. However, a more substantial majority,

approximately 51%, believe that while some support is present, it could be enhanced to better equip staff for the challenges they face in promoting diversity and inclusion.

Conversely, 16% of professionals express concerns that the current support is insufficient, suggesting that there are gaps in training that need to be addressed. Additionally, a small percentage, (approximately 5%), are uncertain about the level of support available, highlighting a potential need for clearer communication about the resources and training offered.

Overall, the feedback suggests that while there are positive aspects to the current support system, there is a clear call for improvement and further investment in training to ensure that all staff members are fully prepared to manage diversity-related issues effectively. This shows a collective recognition of the importance of ongoing professional development in fostering an inclusive environment within the institution.

## 5.4 BLIND SPOTS

*This section highlights possible support if the situation is not ideal but also focuses on the things that could be improved in relation to diversity and inclusion.*

### 5.4.1 Young People: Where can you ask for help and support, inside and outside of school?

teachers / trainers: 187 mentions

family: 234 mentions

friends: 223 mentions

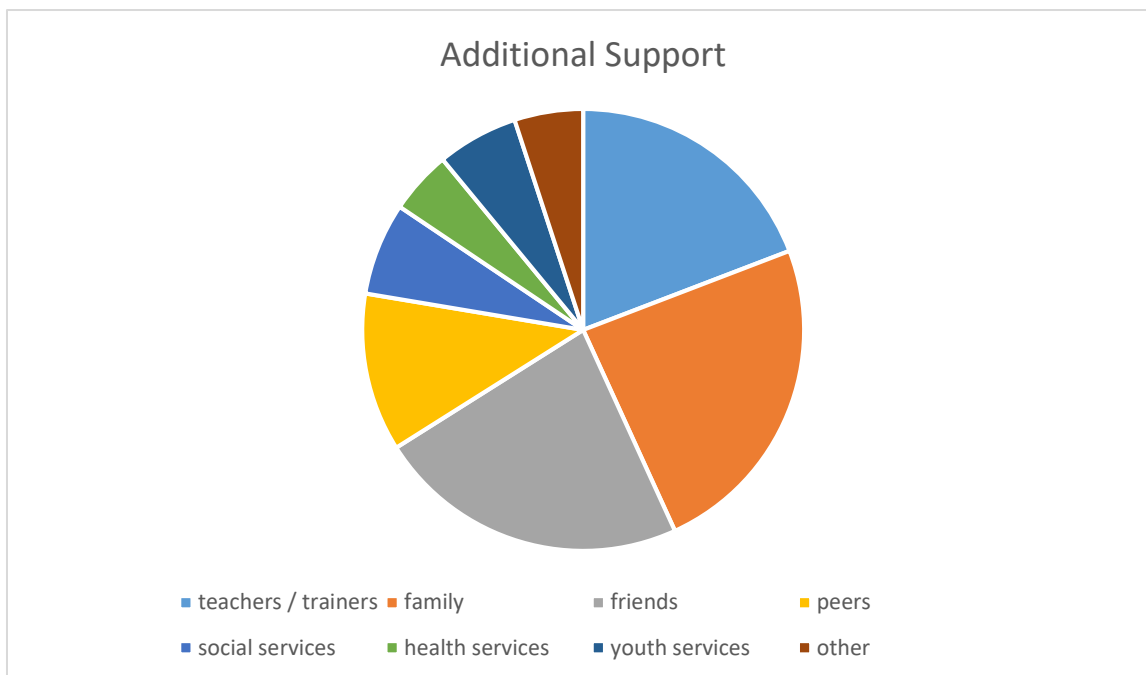
peers: 113 mentions

social services: 66 mentions

health services: 45 mentions

youth services: 58 mentions

other: 49 mentions



Young people find a variety of sources for help and support both inside and outside of school, reflecting a diverse network of options available to them. The most often mentioned source is family, with 24% of respondents showing that they turn to their relatives for assistance. This highlights the importance of familial support in navigating challenges. Friends also play a significant role, with 22.87% of young people seeking help from their peers, demonstrating the value of social connections in providing emotional and practical support.

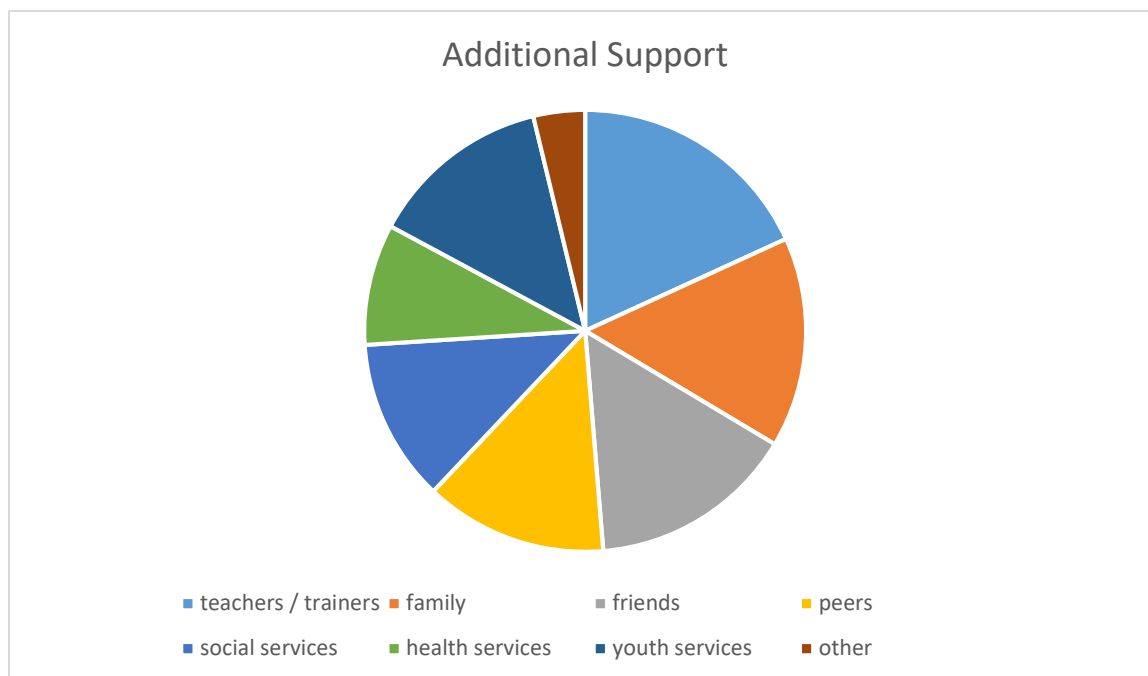
Teachers and trainers are another key resource, with 19.18% of young people looking to them for guidance and assistance within the educational environment. Peers, while slightly less frequently mentioned, still account for 11.59% of responses, indicating that young people often rely on their classmates for support.

In addition to these personal connections, young people also recognise the importance of professional services. Social services are mentioned by 6.77% of respondents, while health services and youth services are cited by 4.62% and 5.95%, respectively. This suggests that young people are aware of the broader support systems available to them, even if they are not the primary sources of help. Lastly, a small percentage of respondents, 5.03%, refer to other unspecified sources, indicating that there may be additional avenues for support that are not as commonly recognised. Overall, this information illustrates that young people have a multifaceted support network, encompassing family, friends, educators, and professional services, which they can turn to in times of need.

### 5.4.1 Professionals: Where can learners / young people ask for help and support, inside and outside of school?

- teachers / trainers: 125 mentions
- family: 106 mentions
- friends: 104 mentions

peers: 92 mentions  
 social services: 82 mentions  
 health services: 61 mentions  
 youth services: 92 mentions  
 other: 26 mentions



Professionals recognise that learners have access to a variety of support systems both within and outside of school. A considerable number of respondents, 18.17%, indicate that teachers and trainers are a primary source of help, highlighting the crucial role that VET staff play in providing guidance and support. Family is also identified a valuable resource, with 15.41% of professionals noting that young people often turn to their relatives for assistance, underscoring the foundational support that family can offer.

Friends are similarly valued, with 15.12% of responses indicating that peers are a common source of support. This reflects the importance of social relationships in helping young people navigate challenges. Additionally, 13.37% of professionals mention that learners seek help from their peers, further emphasising the role of social networks in providing emotional and practical assistance.

Social services are identified by 11.92% of respondents as a vital resource, indicating that young people are aware of the professional support available to them. Health services, while less frequently mentioned, are still recognised by 8.87% of professionals as an important avenue for support, particularly for those facing mental health challenges. Youth services also receive attention, with 13.37% of responses highlighting their role in offering guidance and resources to young people.

Finally, a small percentage, 3.78%, refer to other unspecified sources of support, suggesting that there may be additional avenues available that are not as commonly identified. Overall, this information illustrates a comprehensive network of support for learners and young people, encompassing educators, family, friends, and various professional services, all of which play a vital role in helping them seek assistance when needed.

### 5.4.2 Young People: If you created a TikTok video to promote your VET centre? What would you not put on the video?

The answers provided by young people in **Austria** reflect a range of concerns about the content that would be excluded. Many participants express uncertainty or simply state "nothing" or "I don't know." However, there are specific mentions of elements that would likely be omitted, such as private matters, inappropriate behaviour, and any unsightly or chaotic environments, like a messy room or damaged communal areas.

Participants also highlight the importance of not filming individuals without their consent and avoiding any negative portrayals of staff or students. There is a clear desire to avoid unprofessional or misleading content, including instances of racism, bad attitudes, and disruptive behaviour from certain individuals. Overall, the responses suggest a strong inclination to present a positive and respectful image of the VET centre, ensuring that the video reflects professionalism and a supportive environment.

In **Ireland**, students' responses varied widely. With most agreeing, sexual, violent and false information would not be content to put in a Tic Tok recommending their VET. Personal information or content someone did not want used would also not be put up. Use of technical terms or difficult to understand language would also not be used.

In the **Basque Country**, Opinions differed on what should not be shown: some believed that everything should be shown, while others wanted to exclude certain aspects. Elements to be avoided included bathrooms, old furniture, some teachers, parking lots and restrictive rules. Rejection or disinterest in TikTok: Some responses indicated that they would not create a video or that they did not like the platform. Others noted that would not include criticism of the school's image, avoiding elements that could create a negative impression, such as discrimination or disrespect. A smaller number of responses did not take a clear position stating, 'I don't know,' 'Nothing,' or that they would show everything without restrictions.

In **Belgium**, young people pointed to physical spaces that feel outdated, dirty, or poorly maintained, such as old classrooms, broken toilets, and crowded or neglected communal areas. Some respondents expressed concern about showing any aspects of the school environment that might reflect disorganisation or lack of inclusivity. A few mentioned they would avoid filming certain teachers or classroom situations that they perceive as boring, strict, or unwelcoming. Others highlighted rules or traditions that they felt were unfair or confusing, such as dress codes or attendance policies. There was also mention of avoiding topics that might expose social tensions or visible inequalities within the school.

In **Croatia**, some of the students mentioned that they would not makes a TikTok video at all, either because they do not use TikTok or they do not feel it's necessary. For those who would make a video, common themes of exclusion included not showing toilets, avoiding vulgar content, and respecting the privacy of people who do not want to be in the video. Some respondents emphasized that they would not include any negative aspects of the school, such as lack of organization or ignored problems. Others mentioned they would not publish personal information about students or teachers' names publicly. On the other hand, a few respondents noted that they would include everything about the school, highlighting both positive and

negative aspects. Some suggested focusing on school projects, activities, and the overall school environment.

### 5.4.2 Professionals: If young people created a TikTok video to promote your VET centre, what would they not put on the video?

In **Austria**, the answers reveal a variety of concerns regarding the content that might be excluded. Many participants express that negative aspects such as violence, judgments, and insults would likely be omitted. There is a consensus that any instances of trainers or teachers reprimanding students, as well as the duration of the programme, would not be featured. Participants also mention that embarrassing situations, such as a damaged common room or inappropriate interactions among peers, would likely be left out. Some express a desire to avoid censorship, while others worry that young people might capture everything, including potentially problematic or unreflected statements. Additionally, there is concern about the inclusion of discriminatory behaviour, categorisation based on religion, nationality, appearance, or gender, and any sexually suggestive content.

Overall, the responses indicate a strong awareness of the importance of presenting a positive image of the VET centre while acknowledging the complexities and challenges that may arise in the environment.

In **Ireland**, professionals noted they would prohibit any content that goes against EDI policies. While one noted student would be mindful not to put anything “that creates them as a target” or display other students without consent.

In the **Basque Country**, professional respondents reflect that their VET centre is a safe, welcoming place where students feel protected, valued, and equal. They focus on positive or neutral aspects and expect to omit or avoid negative topics (e.g., racism, harassment, sexism, conflicts, complaints, internal problems) if sharing content on Tic Tok. Attention is given to what is mentioned rather than what is omitted; with emphasis placed on student perspectives. There is concern about the condition of facilities, especially aging ones which have not been renovated in decades. Practical concerns include the areas where smoking occurs and the presence of older, possibly less maintained furniture. Visual portrayals should avoid reinforcing stereotypes or excluding groups; diversity should be represented. Professionals surveyed acknowledge an intention to avoid showing deteriorated or limiting areas, obsolete rules, or activities that reduce autonomy.

In **Belgium**, professionals believe that young people would likely avoid showcasing the less attractive or less inclusive aspects of their VET centres in a promotional TikTok. Many assume that students would leave out visuals of neglected areas, such as restrooms, cafeterias, or unused facilities. Several professionals also noted that young people might avoid sharing examples of rigid discipline or outdated practices that don't reflect their everyday experience. Some highlighted a concern that issues around diversity, inclusion, or lack of youth representation in decision-making would be deliberately omitted to present a more polished image of the centre. A few professionals also reflected on the possibility that students might avoid showing disengaged peers or uncomfortable learning moments.

In **Croatia**, many respondents stated that inappropriate and indecent content, such as explicit language, smoking at the entrance, and locking classrooms, would be excluded from a TikTok video. Some also noted that spaces students are not satisfied with, like certain classrooms, would not be shown. Several respondents highlighted that students with disabilities might be excluded, especially if their difficulties are more pronounced. However, others mentioned that students with different abilities have been included in related videos before. A few respondents pointed out that content related to teaching and learning might be left out, with a focus instead on people and socialising. Some mentioned that professors and certain students would also be left out.

### 5.4.3 What are the biggest barriers to inclusion in your VET centre?

#### Young People:

not enough knowledge: 80 mentions

not enough interest: 71 mentions

insecurity: 54 mentions

unawareness: 34 mentions

structural conditions: 38 mentions

teachers / trainers: 34 mentions

peers: 29 mentions

I do not know: 125 mentions

other: 36 mentions

In the transnational context, young people have reported in the multiple-choice format that one of the most prominent barriers is a lack of knowledge, which received 80 mentions. Many young people feel that insufficient understanding of diversity and inclusion issues among both staff and students contributes to an environment that is not fully supportive or welcoming. This lack of knowledge can lead to misunderstandings and a failure to recognise the importance of inclusivity in the learning process.

Another barrier of significance noted by respondents is that there is not enough interest in diversity and inclusion, with 71 mentions. Young people have expressed that a general apathy towards diversity and inclusion can create a culture where these issues are overlooked. When individuals are not engaged or invested in fostering an inclusive environment, it can lead to feelings of isolation among those who may already feel marginalised.

Insecurity is also a significant concern, noted by 54 respondents. Many young people report feeling insecure about their place within the VET centre, which can stem from a lack of confidence in their abilities or fear of judgement from peers and instructors. This insecurity can prevent them from fully participating in activities and engaging with their learning environment.

In addition to this a lack of awareness of the challenges faced by others was mentioned 34 times. This suggests that many individuals within VET centres may not be fully aware of the barriers that their peers encounter, leading to a lack of support. Raising awareness about these issues is crucial for fostering a more inclusive atmosphere.

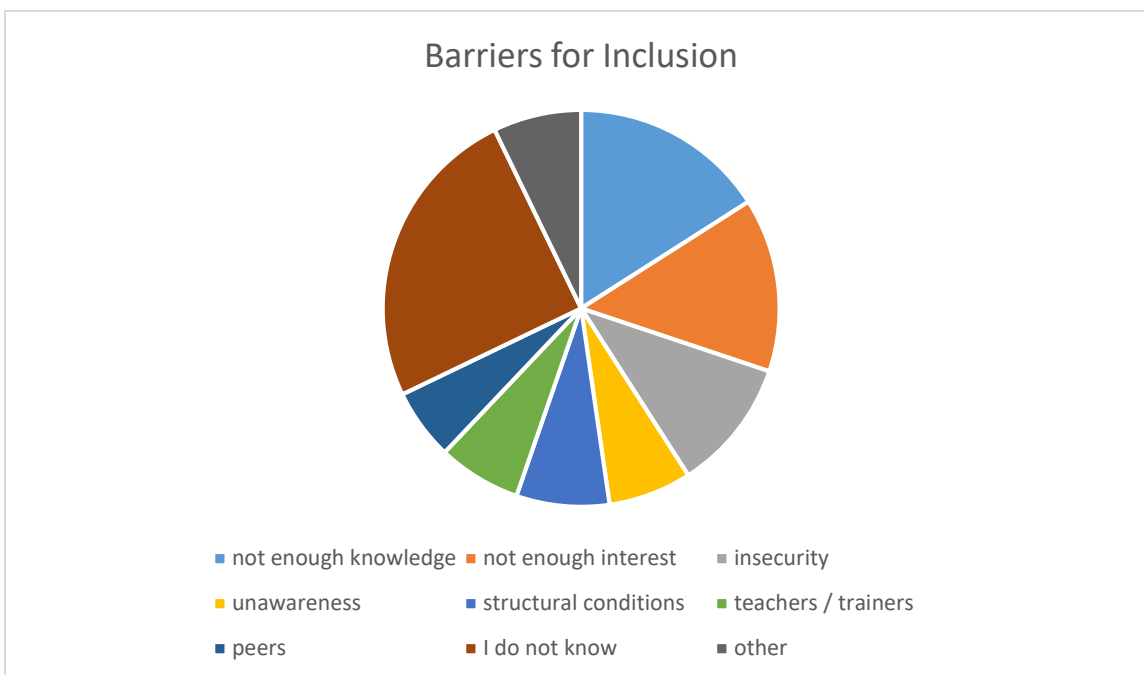
Structural conditions were highlighted in 38 mentions as another barrier. This encompasses the physical environment of the VET centre, including accessibility issues and inadequate resources that do not cater to the diverse needs of all learners. Improving these structural conditions is essential for creating a more inclusive space.

The role of teachers and trainers was noted in 34 mentions. Young people feel that the attitudes and approaches of educators can significantly impact the inclusivity of the learning environment. If teachers are not adequately trained or do not prioritise inclusivity, it can create barriers for students who may already feel vulnerable.

Peers were mentioned in 29 responses as a barrier to inclusion. The social dynamics among students can sometimes lead to exclusionary behaviours, making it difficult for some individuals to feel accepted and valued within their peer groups.

Interestingly, 125 mentions of "I do not know" indicate a significant level of uncertainty among young people regarding the barriers to inclusion. This suggests that many may not have fully considered or understood the numerous factors at play, highlighting the need for further education and capacity building on both topics.

Lastly, 36 mentions fell under the category of other, indicating that there are additional barriers that young people believe could be addressed to improve inclusion in their VET centres.



### Professionals:

- not enough knowledge: 41 mentions
- not enough interest: 35 mentions
- insecurity: 41 mentions

unawareness: 44 mentions  
structural conditions: 45 mentions  
colleagues: 9 mentions  
young people: 15 mentions  
I do not know: 16 mentions  
other: 12 mentions

In the transnational context, professionals have reported in the multiple-choice format that a significant barrier is the lack of knowledge around diversity and inclusion, which received 41 mentions. Many professionals believe that insufficient understanding of diversity and inclusion issues among staff and students contributes to an environment that is not fully supportive. This gap in knowledge can lead to misconceptions and a failure to recognise the importance of fostering inclusivity within the educational setting.

Lack of awareness of diversity and inclusion issues was noted in 44 mentions as another major barrier. This suggests that many individuals within VET centres may not be fully cognisant of the challenges faced by their peers, potentially leading to a lack of support. Raising awareness about the diverse needs of learners is essential for cultivating a more inclusive atmosphere.

Structural conditions were highlighted in 45 mentions as a significant obstacle. This encompasses the physical environment of the VET centre, including issues related to accessibility and inadequate resources that do not cater to the diverse needs of all learners. Improving these structural conditions is vital for creating a more inclusive space where every student can thrive.

Insecurity was also a prominent concern, with 41 mentions. Many professionals noted that feelings of insecurity among both staff and students can hinder participation and engagement. This insecurity may stem from a lack of confidence in addressing diversity issues or fear of negative repercussions when discussing sensitive topics.

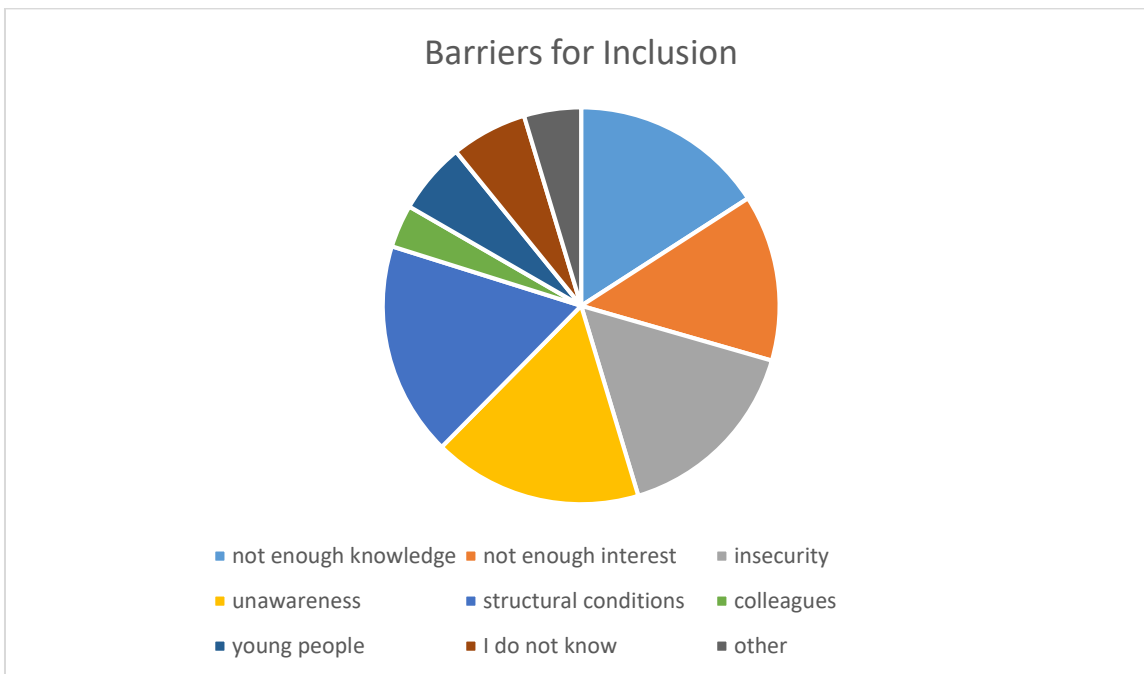
35 professional respondents noted lack of interest in diversity and inclusion and a barrier. They observed that a general apathy towards diversity and inclusion can create a culture where these issues are overlooked. When individuals are not engaged or invested in fostering an inclusive environment, it can lead to feelings of isolation among those who may already feel marginalised.

The role of colleagues was mentioned in 9 responses, indicating that interpersonal dynamics among staff can also pose challenges to inclusion. If colleagues do not prioritise inclusivity or are resistant to change, it can create barriers for those who are committed to fostering a supportive environment.

Young people were noted in 15 mentions as a factor in the inclusivity landscape. Professionals recognise that the attitudes and behaviours of students can significantly impact the overall atmosphere of the VET centre. Encouraging positive interactions among peers is essential for promoting a culture of inclusion.

Interestingly, 16 mentions of "I do not know" reflect a level of uncertainty among professionals regarding the barriers to inclusion. This indicates that further exploration and discussion of these issues are necessary to fully understand the complexities involved.

Lastly, 12 mentions fell under the category of other, suggesting that there are additional barriers that professionals believe could be addressed to improve inclusion in their VET centres.



### 5.4.4 If someone visits your VET centre, what would they notice about how people treat each other?

#### Young People:

In **Austria**, young people report that if someone visits the VET centre, they will likely notice that people generally treat each other with respect and kindness. There is a prevailing atmosphere of mutual understanding and support, evident in friendly conversations and collaborative working styles. Visitors might observe that both learners and educators are open to questions and engage in appreciative communication, all while striving to improve their skills together.

While the overall environment is positive, some responses indicate that there can be moments of disrespect or disruptive behaviour, particularly among younger individuals. However, most interactions are characterised by a sense of camaraderie, with many expressing that everyone gets along well and enjoys each other's company. Laughter and humour were also recognised as contributing to a lively atmosphere. Overall, Austrian respondents give the impression that the VET centre fosters a respectful and supportive community, creating a pleasant learning and working environment.

In **Ireland**, students mentioned that people generally treated each other with respect. The students added that people were open and communicated well with each other and were very

welcoming, kind, friendly and helpful. One respondent felt people with learning disabilities were treated with disregard.

In the **Basque Country**, the responses varied greatly: many said they would include everything, while others mentioned aspects they would avoid.

The most essential elements to be omitted were bathrooms, old furniture and less attractive areas of the centre.

Some general criticisms, such as references to discrimination or disrespect, indicated a certain concern about the centre's image.

People who would not shoot the video stated that they had no interest in TikTok or would not participate in advertising.

In **Belgium**, young people often described their VET centre environment as generally friendly and welcoming on the surface, with many highlighting a culture of respect between students and staff. However, several respondents noted that beneath this appearance, subtle dynamics of exclusion persist. Visitors might see polite interactions and formal inclusivity but would not immediately notice how certain students are sidelined in everyday group activities or left out in informal social spaces. Some young people mentioned that respect is often conditional and can depend on fitting in or conforming to the dominant group norms, leaving those with diverse backgrounds, interests, or appearances feeling isolated. For others, staff behaviour appeared fair and attentive, though a few observed inconsistent responses to discrimination or bullying, which undermines the overall atmosphere.

In **Croatia**, many students noted that people generally treat each other well, with descriptions such as "good," "particularly good," "friendly," and "respectful." They mentioned that students and staff are kind, polite, and get along well, creating a harmonious and relaxed atmosphere. For example, one respondent highlighted that everyone treats each other with respect, while another mentioned that people are friendly and open in their communication. However, some respondents pointed out that there are instances of negative behaviour, such as students insulting people with disabilities, swearing, and making fun of others. They also noted that not everyone gets along, and there are groups that have problems with each other. One respondent mentioned that people behave badly and are not interested in each other, while another described the behaviour as "uncultured." Several respondents emphasized that relationships and behaviour depend on the individuals involved and their level of familiarity with each other. They also mentioned that people tend to judge each other and that there are different behaviours in different situations.

## Professionals:

According to professionals in **Austria**, if someone visits the VET centre, they will likely notice a vibrant and open atmosphere characterised by mutual respect and appreciation among individuals. The environment fosters a culture of tolerance and friendliness, where everyone interacts in a polite and supportive manner. Visitors might observe that patience is a key aspect of the interactions, with a strong emphasis on valuing each person's contributions.

The relationships among staff and students are marked by a sense of equality and collaboration, promoting self-directed learning and allowing individuals the freedom to explore and develop their skills. There is a positive teacher-student dynamic, and the overall culture reflects a keen sense of community and togetherness. The atmosphere is not only welcoming but also celebrates diversity, contributing to a positive and enriching experience for everyone involved.

In **Ireland**, replies from professionals were consistent and included words like kindness, friendly, welcoming and respectful.

In the **Basque Country**, respondents acknowledged that they would avoid negative aspects of their VET centre such as dilapidated facilities, restrictive rules or internal conflicts. They would exclude discriminatory content so as not to reinforce stereotypes or exclude certain groups. They would not emphasise “boring” or “rigid” elements, such as long lectures or strict rules. Some responses reflect uncertainty, with several participants stating that they do not know what they would avoid. Others believe that everything would be shown in transparency, reflecting a more open perspective without obvious restrictions.

In **Belgium**, professionals echoed many of these insights. They believed that visitors would perceive a respectful and inclusive tone at first glance, with staff engaging supportively and a visible commitment to diversity on the walls and in institutional messaging. However, several professionals also recognised that this impression might not fully reflect the internal experience of marginalised learners. Several acknowledged that group dynamics among students can reinforce exclusionary behaviours, and that these micro-interactions are less visible to outsiders. Some staff highlighted that inclusion is promoted at an institutional level but not always embodied in everyday relationships, especially peer-to-peer.

In **Croatia**, many respondents highlighted positive aspects of their school environment, such as attentiveness, friendliness, politeness, and collegiality. They mentioned that people communicate quite well, with a focus on respect, kindness, and healthy communication and that those are the things a visitor would notice. For example, one respondent noted that colleagues are cheerful, smiling, and talkative, while another emphasized the correctness in communication and teamwork. However, a few respondents acknowledged that there are some who do not tolerate each other and do not communicate, but they are in the minority.

#### 5.4.5 Do you think learners/young people and teachers/trainers see inclusion the same way? Why or why not?

##### Young People:

In **Austria**, some individuals believe that there is a shared understanding of inclusion among both groups, but others assert that significant differences exist. Several respondents highlight that perspectives on inclusion vary greatly depending on subjective experiences and backgrounds, suggesting that everyone has their own unique viewpoint.

Many young people are perceived to have a different understanding of inclusion compared to teachers and trainers, who often approach the topic from a more structured and responsible

standpoint, focusing on the practical implementation of inclusive practices. Some responses indicate that young people may not fully recognise or engage with the concept of inclusion, particularly if they hold prejudiced views or lack awareness of its importance.

Conversely, there are also sentiments that suggest young people can be accepting and treat everyone equally, especially when they have subjective experiences that shape their understanding of inclusion. Overall, the responses indicate that while there may be common ground, the interpretations of inclusion are influenced by individual perspectives, experiences, and levels of awareness, leading to a complex landscape of understanding between learners and educators.

In **Ireland**, some students suggested that both learners and educators have the same perspectives on inclusivity, but many believe that generational gaps and differing perspectives lead to different views not only between students and teachers but amongst teacher and students. Some noted that different experiences and ways of coping shaped their views and how they responded to others. For most young people responding, they noted that students and teachers might have the same views but how these are acted on are different.

In the **Basque Country**, opinions differ, as some believe that students and teachers perceive inclusion in a comparable way, while others believe that there are significant differences. For these respondents teachers tended to focus on normative and curriculum-related aspects, while young people emphasised acceptance and everyday interactions with one another. Others mentioned that maturity influences how inclusion is understood.

Some respondents indicated there were teachers with “power-hungry” attitudes or a lack of up-to-date knowledge about today's world.

However, perceptions of a positive environment were also noted in some cases, with references to respect and inclusion within the VET centre.

In **Belgium**, young people overwhelmingly felt that their perspective on inclusion is not the same as that of teachers or trainers. While they recognised that staff often made formal efforts to promote diversity (through policies, awareness activities or respectful communication), many emphasised that these actions do not always reflect the lived experiences of students. Inclusion for young people was described as feeling of being accepted without having to hide one's identity, being able to express personal views without fear of judgment and being treated with fairness and empathy. Several respondents felt that teachers underestimate the social pressures and subtle forms of exclusion that occur within student groups and some questioned whether adults notice when someone is left out unless it escalates to a clear issue.

In **Croatia**, some students believe that teachers and students do not see inclusion in the same way. They mentioned that everyone has their own opinions and perspectives, which leads to different views on inclusion. For example, one respondent noted that students are much more honest than teachers, while another mentioned that teachers have more experience with inclusion than students. Several respondents highlighted that students often look at things from their own perspective and may not be mature enough to consider other angles. They also pointed out that teachers might not see the real relationships between students or understand how students behave towards each other. Some respondents expressed that teachers and students have different priorities and ways of thinking, which affects their views on inclusion. For instance, one respondent mentioned that teachers might focus more on their own needs, while students think about their peers. However, a few respondents believe that teachers and

students do see inclusion in a comparable way, emphasizing mutual understanding and equality. They noted that in their school, everyone is treated equally and there is a shared view on inclusion.

## Professionals:

The survey responses in **Austria** reveal a range of perspectives on the differing views of inclusion between the target groups. While some believe there is a fundamental agreement on the importance of inclusion, many others argue that significant differences exist due to varying life experiences, values, and levels of understanding.

It was observed that young people often struggle to grasp the full meaning of inclusion, sometimes lacking the necessary awareness and tolerance. This disconnect may stem from their subjective experiences, interests and/or bias, leading to a perception that inclusion is less significant to them compared to adults, who typically have more training and knowledge on the subject. Some responses highlight that young people may view inclusion in a more straightforward or neutral manner, while educators approach it from a more theoretical perspective.

Additionally, there are concerns for respondents in Austria that younger individuals may not fully recognise or challenge discriminatory language and behaviours, as they might see them as normal. This lack of reflection can hinder their understanding of inclusion. Overall, the responses suggest that while there is a shared commitment to inclusion, the interpretations and implications of it can vary greatly between learners and educators, influenced by age, experience, and awareness.

In **Ireland**, most of the respondents noted that they feel that their idea of inclusion may vary to their students' vision. Some noted the presence of a generational gap and a lack of knowledge around diverse cultures, noting that people can be blind to things which do not affect them.

In the **Basque Country**, there are different perceptions of inclusion: Teachers tend to focus on structural aspects (regulations, curriculum adjustments), while young people view it from an emotional and social perspective (acceptance, belonging). Some respondents mention that maturity and life circumstances influence views on inclusion. Some believe that teachers and students share a common view, while others see a discrepancy between the understanding and implementation of inclusion. Several respondents emphasise that learners have grown up with diversity and inclusion as a norm and see it as something natural, unlike adults who have had to adapt to change. Finally, some responses from professionals in the Basque Country criticise a lack of depth in the analysis of diversity and inclusion as issues, while others believe that there is not enough interest in the topic.

In **Belgium**, professionals largely agreed that learners and staff interpret inclusion differently. Many noted that educators tend to associate inclusion with equitable access to education, non-discrimination, and adapting teaching methods. In contrast, they acknowledged that young people's expectations go further, encompassing emotional safety, being seen and heard, and feeling socially connected. A few respondents reflected critically on the gap between institutional definitions of inclusion and how these are perceived by learners. There

was a shared recognition that this disconnect may limit the effectiveness of inclusion strategies and that more open dialogue is needed to align understandings.

In **Croatia**, it seems that many respondents believe that teachers and students do not see inclusion in the same way. They mentioned that everyone has their own opinions and perspectives, which leads to different views on inclusion. For example, one respondent noted that students are often uninterested or unaware of the concept of inclusion, while another mentioned that teachers are burdened with rights and legal frameworks, and students are burdened with social relationships. Several respondents highlighted that students and teachers have various levels of experience and knowledge, which affects their perspectives on inclusion. They opined that students may not be mature enough to understand the concept fully, and their primary desire is often to fit in. Teachers, they reflected on the other hand, have more life experience and see things differently. Some respondents emphasised that the views on inclusion depend on individual experiences and prior knowledge. They mentioned that students and teachers have different priorities and ways of thinking, which leads to varied perspectives on inclusion. For instance, one respondent noted that students reflect their parents and family situations, while another mentioned that teachers face challenges due to administrative obstacles and unclear boundaries.

#### 5.4.6 Professionals: Does marginalisation come from learners, adults or both?

In **Austria**, professionals have provided insightful perspectives on the origins of marginalisation, indicating a complex interplay between learners and adults within educational and social contexts. A modest 35.7% of respondents believe that marginalisation primarily arises from learners themselves. This viewpoint suggests that certain behaviours, attitudes, or social dynamics among young people can contribute significantly to the exclusion of their peers. Factors such as bullying, social cliques, or a lack of understanding and empathy can create an environment where some learners feel isolated or undervalued, highlighting the impact of peer interactions on the overall climate of educational settings.

In contrast, only 3.6% of professionals attribute marginalisation solely to adults. This low percentage indicates that while adults may play a role in the marginalisation process, they are not seen as the primary source of the issue. This suggests that the influence of adults, such as teachers and parents, is often viewed as secondary to the dynamics that occur among learners themselves.

However, a significant majority, accounting for 80.7%, assert that marginalisation stems from both learners and adults. This overwhelming consensus underscores the understanding that the dynamics of marginalisation are multifaceted and cannot be attributed to a sole source.

In **Ireland**, professionals have provided valuable insights into the origins of marginalisation, revealing a complex interplay between diverse groups within educational and social environments. A small percentage, of respondents (10%), believe that marginalisation primarily arises from learners themselves. This perspective suggests that certain behaviours, attitudes, or social dynamics among young people can contribute to the exclusion of their peers. Factors such as bullying, cliques, or a lack of understanding and empathy can lead to

situations where some learners feel isolated or undervalued, highlighting the significant impact that peer interactions can have on the overall atmosphere within educational settings.

In stark contrast, a substantial, 90% of professional's respondents assert that marginalisation stems from both learners and adults. This overwhelming consensus indicates a recognition that the dynamics of marginalisation are multifaceted and cannot be attributed to a sole source. The involvement of adults—such as teachers, parents, and community leaders—plays a crucial role in shaping the environment in which learners operate. Adults may inadvertently contribute to marginalisation through their actions, attitudes, or lack of awareness regarding the challenges faced by young people. For instance, systemic issues, such as biases in disciplinary actions or unequal access to resources, can perpetuate feelings of exclusion among certain groups of learners.

In the **Basque Country**, professionals have provided valuable insights into the origins of marginalisation, indicating a complex interplay between diverse groups. A notable 23.5% of respondents believe that marginalisation primarily arises from learners themselves. This perspective suggests that certain behaviours or attitudes among young people can contribute to the exclusion of their peers, highlighting the role of interpersonal dynamics in the classroom and social settings.

In contrast, only 2.9% of professionals attribute marginalisation solely to adults, indicating that this group is not seen as the primary source of the issue or that subjectively they do not identify their own role, if it exists, in issues of diversity and inclusion. This low percentage suggests that while professionals in VET may play a role in marginalisation, their influence is perceived by them as less significant compared to that of learners.

Most professionals, accounting for 43.5%, assert that marginalisation stems from both learners and adults. This viewpoint underscores the understanding that the dynamics of marginalisation are multifaceted, involving contributions from both young people and the adults in their lives.

In **Belgium**, professionals presented a nuanced view on the sources of marginalisation within VET centres. Several respondents emphasised that learners are often the primary source, particularly in the form of peer exclusion, cliques, bullying, or casual prejudice. Others pointed out that adults can also play a significant role, not necessarily through deliberate actions, but through omission, lack of awareness or inconsistent responses to issues. Some professionals reflected on how unconscious bias, rigid rules or failure to create safe spaces may reinforce feelings of marginalisation among young people. A strong theme among responses was that marginalisation rarely stems from a particular group alone. Many professionals believed it is a systemic issue involving both learners and adults, shaped by wider cultural norms, institutional practices and sometimes even structural limitations in staff capacity or training. The sense of shared responsibility was clear, with several calling for deeper collaboration between staff and students to address these challenges.

In **Croatia**, professionals have provided insights into the sources of marginalisation, revealing a nuanced understanding of the issue. According to the responses, a sizeable portion, (40%), believe that marginalisation primarily stems from learners themselves. This perspective suggests that certain behaviours or attitudes among young people can contribute to the exclusion of their peers. However, most professionals surveyed, (60%), assert that marginalisation arises from both learners and adults. This indicates a recognition that the

dynamics of marginalisation are complex and multifaceted, involving interactions between diverse groups.

The responses from professionals in Croatia suggests that the issues of diversity and inclusion come from both target groups and a result of how they interplay with both groups having a shared responsibility. This highlights the need for a collective effort to address the factors contributing to marginalisation, whether they arise from the actions of learners or the influence of adults in their lives.

### 5.4.7 Professionals: Are there any everyday habits or traditions in your school that unintentionally leave some people out?

No: 61 answers, = 41.22%

Austria: 27

Ireland: 5

Basque Country: 24

Belgium: 3

Croatia: 2

Yes: 87 answers, = 58.78%

Austria: 1

Ireland: 5

Basque Country: 10

Belgium: 43

Croatia: 28

If yes, describe them:

In **Austria**, there was only one professional who responded to this question in the survey. They identified “language barriers” as an everyday habit which unintentionally excludes young people.

In **Ireland**, many professionals noted culturally unique costumes and practices were sometimes overlooked with the majority cultural identity defining norms. Class discussions could leave students out when they focus on certain norms, events or holidays and key issues which exclude young people tended to focus on religious practice, diet and language.

One respondent noted that Neurodiverse students can have sensory sensitivities that make some activities difficult. Culturally unique celebrations and holidays were also noted as traditions which may make some people feel left out.

In the **Basque Country**, some respondents reflected a perception of exclusion in some school practices, such as religious holidays and heteronormative practices, which may not include all students also indicating a lack of knowledge about activities that truly encourage everyone's participation.

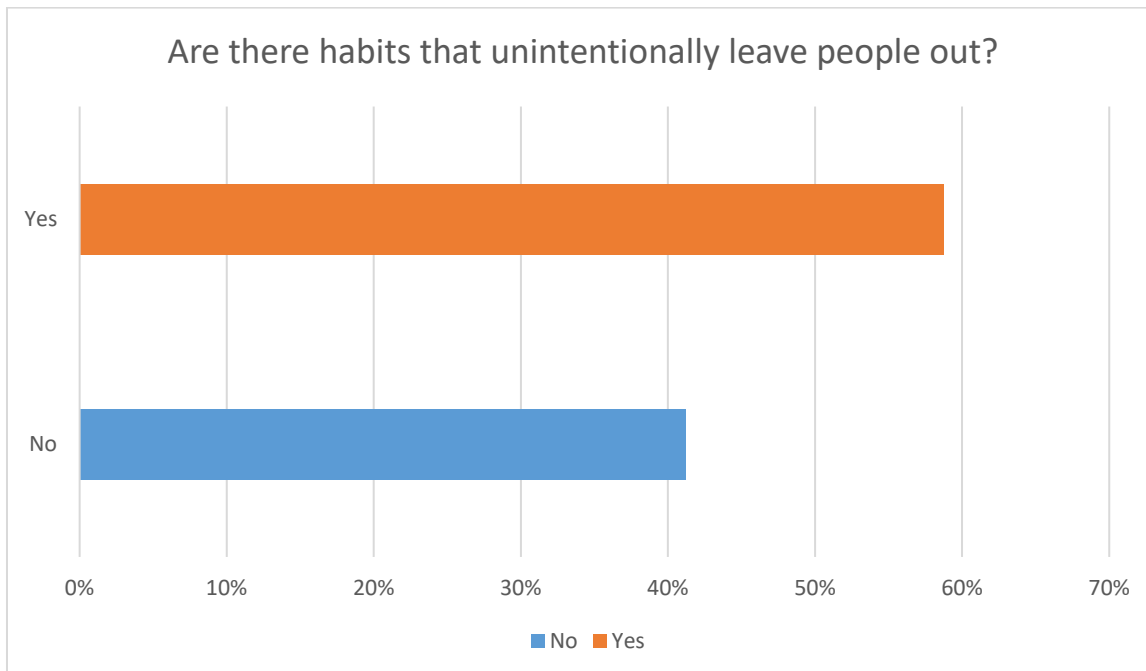
A specific example of religious barriers was offered by one respondent who observed a difficulty some Muslim students face with prayer time during exams. Some school traditions

were also highlighted broadly as having capacity to exclude unintentionally, which raises the importance of reviewing practices to ensure an equitable environment.

In **Belgium**, professionals provided thoughtful, sometimes, critical reflections on routines or traditions that may inadvertently exclude certain groups. Several respondents highlighted school celebrations or cultural events that tend to reflect majority traditions, leaving out students from different religious or cultural backgrounds. Others mentioned that the (local) language used in communication, both formal and informal, which may not always be accessible or inclusive for all learners, particularly those with migrant backgrounds or lower literacy levels.

A few respondents pointed to learner cliques or group project assignments that tend to favour more outspoken or academically strong students, unintentionally excluded quieter learners or those perceived to have less confidence. One respondent also noted that certain expectations around punctuality or dress codes, although standardised, do not account for the realities of students facing economic hardship or unstable living situations. These reflections suggest a growing awareness among professionals of how everyday institutional habits, often seen as neutral, can reinforce feelings of exclusion when not examined through an inclusion lens.

In **Croatia**, it seems that majority of professionals think that there are no everyday habits or traditions in their school that unintentionally leave some people out. Only two, out of 30 professionals survey answered yes to this question with one respondent offering further explanation, that teacher's personality is the reason why some are being excluded



## 5.5 SUPPORTIVE INSTITUTIONS & ACTIONS

*This section reveals people and actions that support you concerning diversity and inclusion.*

### 5.5.1 Young People: Do you have a role model (teacher, mentor, peer) in your VET centre who makes you feel included and valued?

No: 165 answers, = 47.14%

Austria: 37

Ireland: 22

Basque Country: 40

Belgium: 23

Croatia: 43

Yes: 185 answers, = 52.86%

Austria: 35

Ireland: 28

Basque Country: 26

Belgium: 53

Croatia: 43

If yes, what do they do that helps?

Many respondents in **Austria** express that they do have role models in their VET centre who make them feel included and valued. These individuals, often teachers or mentors, play a crucial role by actively listening and providing support when learners feel uncertain or unprepared for their studies. They are described as approachable and understanding, creating an environment where students feel comfortable discussing their problems and seeking guidance.

Role models here were identified for their ability to motivate and encourage students, helping them build confidence in their communication skills and personal abilities. Some learners appreciate the consistent availability of these mentors. Additionally, respondents noted that their peers also contribute to a sense of inclusion by inviting others to participate in social activities, fostering a sense of belonging within the group.

Overall, the qualities respondents note which make these role models effective include their perceived kindness, openness, and willingness to engage with students, which collectively help create a supportive and inclusive atmosphere in the VET centre.

In **Ireland**, students mentioned teachers who gave great support to their students and examples of teachers who built a rapport with students and were also available to talk and give advice. Some mentioned teachers who were respectful to all cultures and good listeners. Students also highlighted the significance of peers and friendship in feeling included while they also felt it was great to have teachers who respected and/or shared their cultures.

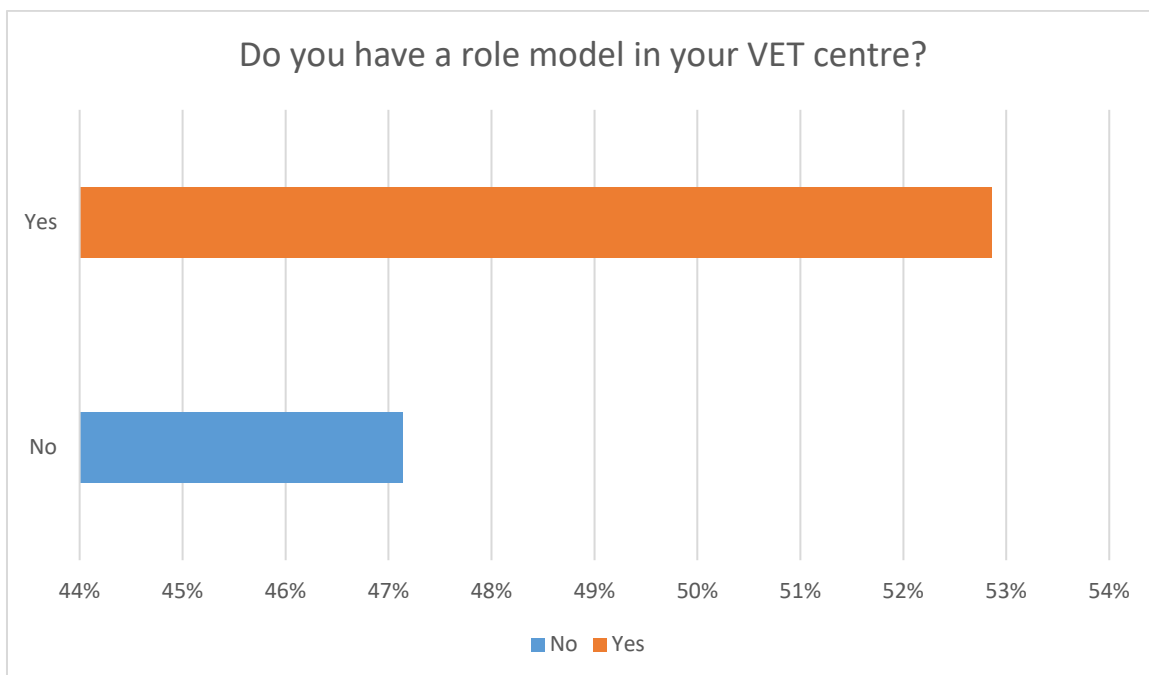
In the **Basque Country**, respondents emphasised that teachers are attentive, supportive and committed to their students' learning with several mentioning their admiration for the commitment and knowledge of teachers seeing them as role models.

Respondents also noted the Importance of communication, with listening, dialogue and the exchange of ideas cited as important aspects for role modelling and demonstrating learners value.

While some responses were neutral or vague, with some students stating that they had no opinion or were unsure. negative experiences were mentioned less frequently, although there were inferences that some teachers are not helpful or that attention varies depending on the context.

In **Belgium**, young people who reported having a role model in their VET centre pointed to a range of behaviours that made them feel included and valued. These role models were often teachers or trainers who showed genuine interest in their well-being and respected their individual backgrounds. Respondents appreciated adults who listened actively, encouraged them to express themselves, and created a safe space for sharing opinions without judgement. Peers were also named, particularly those who supported them during difficult moments or stood up against exclusion. For these respondents, a consistent attitude of encouragement, patience, and openness made significant contribution to their sense of value and in those they perceived as role models. Several respondents emphasised how much it meant to be taken seriously and to have someone believe in their potential.

In **Croatia**, an equal number of respondents noted that yes, they did or not they did not have role models of a sense of value. Among those who have role models in their VET centre most responded that their role model is the person who gives them support, respects them, is nice and helpful. Several wrote that they include them in different activities and that they can turn to them in need of help. On the other hand, one respondent stated that there are teachers behave “badly towards students” just because something is happening to them in their private life. They want to show authority over the students even though they already have it, they want to show that they are in charge and that students have no rights.



### 5.5.1 Professionals: Do young people have a role model (teacher, mentor, peer) in your VET centre who makes them feel included and valued?

No: 28 answers, = 18.92%

Austria: 6 answers

Ireland: 1 answer

Basque Country: 12 answers

Belgium: 4 answers

Croatia: 5 answers

Yes: 120 answers, = 81.08%

Austria: 22 answers

Ireland: 9 answers

Basque Country: 22 answers

Belgium: 42 answers

Croatia: 25 answers

If yes, what do they do that helps?

**Austrian** professionals believe that young people do have role models who make them feel included and valued. They believe these role models, often teachers, mentors, or peers, foster a supportive environment through authentic and respectful interactions. They actively listen to the students, engage in meaningful conversations, and provide motivation and encouragement in everyday situations.

These professionals believe building strong relationships is essential, as trainers aim to establish connections with the youth, which enhances their role as positive examples. The professionals emphasize the importance of being present and attentive, addressing the individual circumstances of each student, and offering guidance and constructive feedback. Newcomers are often paired with a buddy who helps them navigate the institution, ensuring they feel welcomed and supported from the start.

Overall, the commitment to a respectful and appreciative approach, combined with open communication and genuine interest in the students' well-being, contributes significantly to creating a sense of inclusion and value among young people in the VET centre.

In **Ireland**, professionals noted that actively listening and giving support to students has made those students feel valued. Also, teacher facilitated meetings to discuss any issues students may have were noted as useful. Engaging in learners' interests and being kind was also noted as a tool for promoting inclusion.

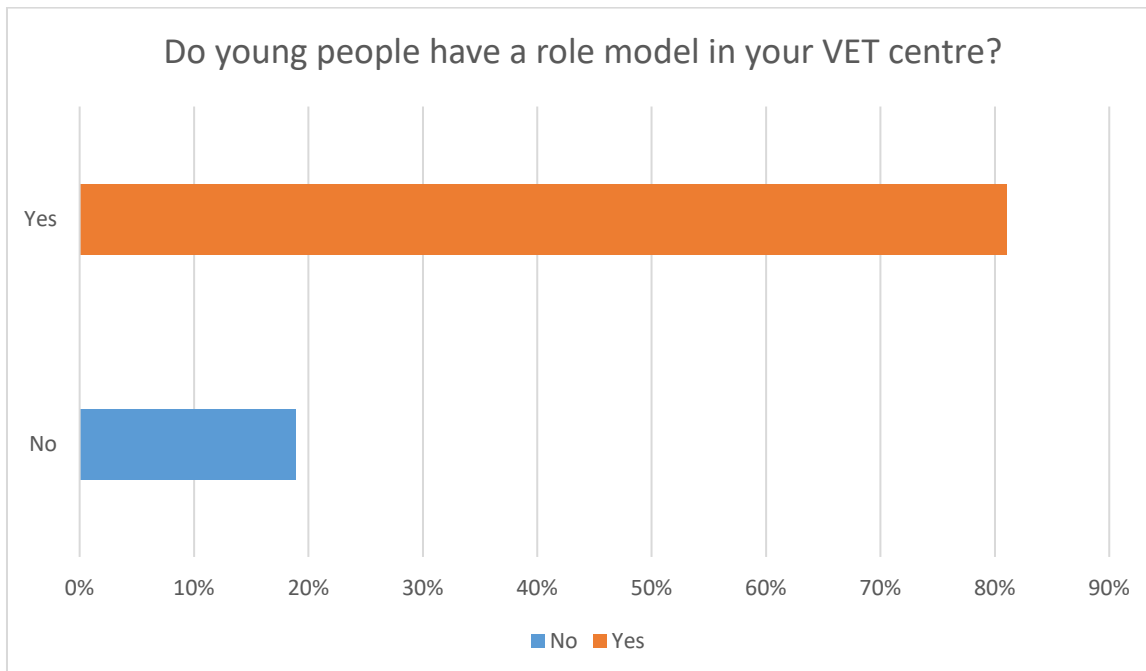
In the **Basque Country**, teachers and counsellors play a key role and are cited as key role models for guiding and supporting students. The importance of mentoring and counselling is emphasised. The role of mentors and the presence of an inclusion team in ensuring a barrier-free and equitable environment is emphasised. The focus on closeness and empathy is mentioned. The willingness of teachers to listen without prejudice, adapt and act as positive role models is mentioned. Some perceptions are neutral or absent, with responses suggesting that there is no specific role for this. The availability of integration rooms was proffered, while

others mentioned teams such as ‘Equality’ and other institutional programmes that focus on inclusion.

In **Belgium**, professionals overwhelmingly observed that young people in their centres do have role models, often in the form of dedicated staff or supportive peers. These figures were described as approachable, trustworthy, and proactive in fostering a sense of belonging. Teachers and trainers were praised for noticing when a young person was struggling and taking time to support them, academically, socially or emotionally.

Respondents noted that inclusive staff members often use culturally sensitive language, adapt to different learning needs, and speak openly about diversity and identity. The presence of peers who offer emotional support or stand in solidarity against discrimination was also seen as a key factor in helping young people feel valued and respected.

In **Croatia**, most professional respondents (83.33%) stated that young people have a role model at their vocational training centre. Several respondents emphasised how important it is to treat students as equals and to be understanding but strict. They mentioned that teachers who are approachable and have a friendly relationship with their students enjoy trust and can serve as a point of contact in demanding situations. One respondent, for example, described these teachers as ‘cool professors’ who are open, humorous and supportive. Some respondents pointed out that teachers include topics that open students' eyes to differences between people and help them to respect and understand each other. They also noted that practical lessons and discussions with students are effective ways to gain respect and support.



## 5.5.2 What kind of support do you think would help young people to feel more included?

### Young People:

mentoring: 128 mentions  
counselling: 159 mentions  
peer support: 157 mentions  
awareness raising: 118 mentions  
workshops: 126 mentions  
I do not know: 59 mentions  
other: 37 mentions

To help young people feel more included in **Austria**, various forms of support have been identified as beneficial. The most significant type of support is counselling, which was mentioned by 43.1% of respondents. This highlights the recognition among young people of the value of professional guidance in navigating personal challenges and expressing their needs.

Following closely is peer support, valued by 40.3% of participants, emphasising the importance of social networks and friendships in fostering a sense of belonging. Additionally, mentoring was identified by 34.7% of respondents as crucial, indicating a desire for personal guidance and support in various aspects of life.

Workshops, mentioned by 31.9% of participants, provide a platform for learning and interaction, while 20.8% expressed uncertainty about the type of support needed. Finally, 9.7% of respondents indicated a desire for other forms of support.

In **Ireland**, young people have identified several key forms of support that they believe would enhance their sense of inclusion. The most frequently mentioned types are mentoring and counselling, each supported by 46% of respondents (23 mentions). This indicates a strong desire for both guidance from experienced individuals and professional help to navigate personal challenges.

Peer support is also significant, with 42% of participants (21 mentions) recognizing the importance of connections with fellow young people in fostering a sense of belonging. Awareness-raising initiatives, which can help educate peers about diversity and acceptance, were highlighted by 44% of respondents (22 mentions), showing a collective interest in promoting understanding within their communities.

Workshops, mentioned by 34% of participants (17 mentions), are seen as valuable for skill development and social interaction. While a small percentage of respondents (6% and 8%) expressed uncertainty or suggested other forms of support, the overall feedback underscores a clear call for comprehensive support systems.

In the **Basque Country**, young people have expressed various ideas regarding the types of support that could help them feel more included in their environments. A sizeable portion, 37.9%, highlighted the importance of mentoring, suggesting that having a mentor can provide guidance, encouragement, and a sense of belonging. Additionally, 27.3% of respondents

identified peer support as a crucial element, indicating that connections with fellow young people can foster a sense of community and understanding.

Counselling was mentioned by 18.2% of young people, reflecting the need for professional support to address personal challenges and enhance emotional well-being. Workshops, also supported by 27.3% of respondents, are seen as valuable opportunities for skill development and social interaction, further promoting inclusion. Awareness-raising initiatives, noted by 12.1%, are recognised as essential for educating peers about diversity and the importance of inclusivity.

While 16.7% of young people expressed uncertainty about the types of support needed, a small percentage, 6.1%, suggested other forms of assistance.

In **Belgium**, young people have identified several forms of support that they believe would enhance their sense of inclusion. The most frequently mentioned type of support is counselling, with 66 mentions, indicating a strong desire for professional guidance to help navigate personal challenges and emotional well-being. Mentoring follows closely behind, with 57% of respondents highlighting its importance in providing guidance and fostering personal development.

Peer support is also a significant factor, with 61 mentions, reflecting the value young people place on connections with their peers for building community and understanding. Workshops, mentioned by 54% of respondents, are seen as beneficial for skill development and social interaction, while awareness-raising initiatives, noted by 53%, are recognised as essential for promoting understanding and acceptance among young people.

Despite the clarity in these preferences, 16% of respondents expressed uncertainty about the types of support needed, and 7% suggested other forms of assistance.

In **Croatia**, young people have expressed a range of support options that they believe would enhance their sense of inclusion. The most prominent response was counselling, with 51.16% of participants identifying it as a crucial form of support. This highlights the importance of professional guidance in helping young people navigate personal challenges and emotional well-being. Close behind, peer support was mentioned by 50% of respondents, indicating that connections with fellow young people are vital for fostering a sense of community and belonging.

Workshops were also noted by 31.40% of participants, suggesting that structured activities can provide valuable opportunities for skill development and social interaction. Additionally, 26.74% of young people highlighted the need for awareness-raising initiatives, which can educate peers about diversity and promote a more inclusive environment.

Despite these clear preferences, 20.93% of respondents expressed uncertainty about the types of support needed, while 19.77% suggested other forms of assistance.



### Professionals:

- mentoring: 84 mentions
- counselling: 99 mentions
- peer support: 102 mentions
- awareness raising: 112 mentions
- workshops: 96 mentions
- I do not know: 13 mentions
- other: 11 mentions

To foster a greater sense of inclusion among young people in **Austria**, various forms of support have been identified as essential. According to the data, the most significant type of support is workshops, which were highlighted by 89.3% of respondents. This indicates a strong belief in the value of interactive learning environments that promote skill development and social interaction.

Following closely is the need for awareness-raising initiatives, supported by 67.9% of participants. This reflects the importance of educating young people about diversity and inclusivity, helping them to understand and appreciate different perspectives.

Peer support is also crucial, with 60.7% of respondents recognising its role in fostering connections among young people. Additionally, counselling, mentioned by 28.6% of participants, underscores the need for professional guidance in navigating personal challenges.

To enhance the sense of inclusion among young people in **Ireland**, professionals have identified several key forms of support that could be beneficial. The most prominent type is workshops, which were highlighted by 70% of respondents. This indicates a strong belief in the

value of interactive learning environments that promote skill development and social interaction.

Capacity building and improved structural conditions were also noted as crucial support mechanisms, each supported by 80% of participants. This reflects the importance of creating a robust framework that empowers young people and provides them with the necessary resources to thrive.

Awareness raising was mentioned by 60% of respondents, emphasising the need for initiatives that educate young people about diversity and inclusion, helping to foster a more accepting environment. Additionally, change in attitude and change of mindset were each recognised by 40% of participants, highlighting the importance of shifting perspectives to create a more inclusive culture.

Knowledge transfer was noted by 30% of respondents, indicating a desire for sharing information and skills among peers.

To foster a greater sense of inclusion among young people in the **Basque Country**, professionals have identified several key forms of support that could be beneficial. Peer support emerged as the most significant, with 52.9% of respondents highlighting its importance. This underscores the value of young people connecting with one another to build a sense of community and belonging.

Awareness raising was also a crucial element, mentioned by 55.9% of participants. This reflects the need for initiatives that educate young people about diversity and inclusivity, helping to create a more accepting environment. Workshops were noted by 50% of respondents, indicating that interactive learning experiences can effectively promote skill development and social interaction.

Counselling was identified by 32.4% of professionals, emphasising the importance of providing young people with access to mental health resources and guidance to navigate personal challenges. Additionally, mentoring was mentioned by 29.4% of participants, highlighting the value of having experienced individuals support young people in their development.

While 11.8% of respondents expressed uncertainty about the types of support needed, and 5.9% suggested other forms of assistance, the overall feedback suggests that a combination of peer support, awareness raising, workshops, counselling, and mentoring is essential in creating a supportive framework.

To enhance the sense of inclusion among young people in **Belgium**, professionals have identified several key forms of support that could be beneficial. Mentoring stands out as the most significant type of support, with 72% of respondents highlighting its importance. This reflects a strong belief in the value of experienced individuals guiding young people in their personal and professional development.

Counselling is also crucial, mentioned by 63% of participants, indicating the need for accessible mental health resources to help young people navigate their challenges. Workshops were noted by 61% of respondents, emphasising the effectiveness of interactive learning experiences in promoting skill development and social interaction.

Awareness raising was highlighted by 59% of professionals, underscoring the importance of educating young people about diversity and inclusivity to foster a more accepting environment.

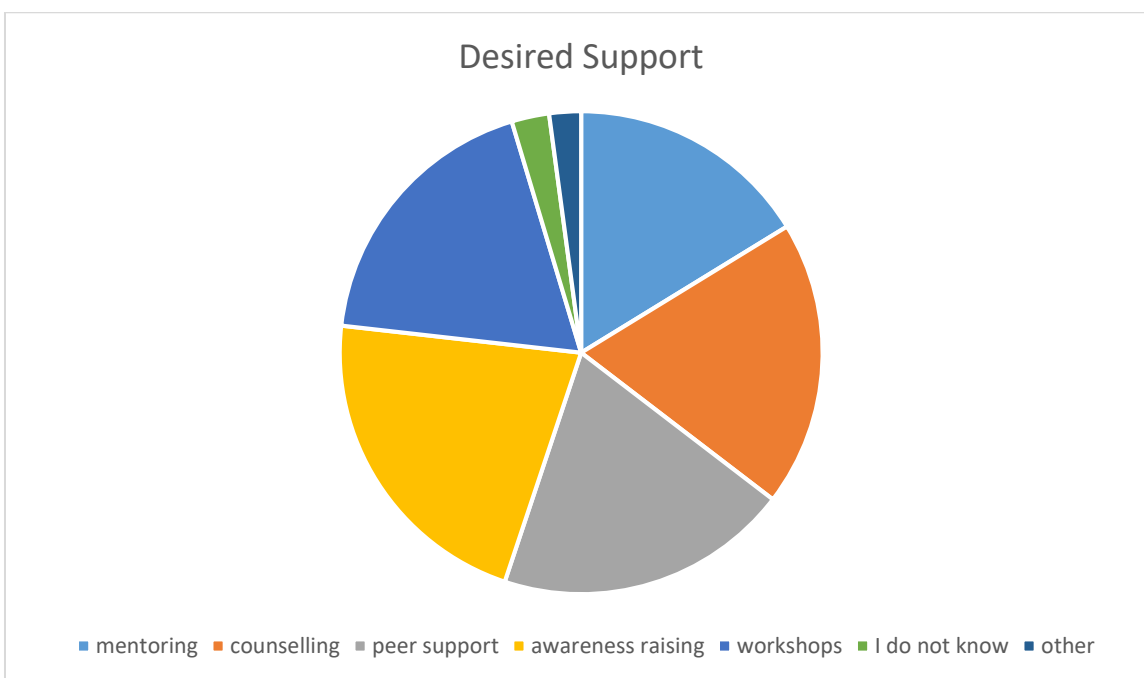
Peer support, mentioned by 54% of participants, further reinforces the value of young people connecting with one another to build a sense of community, while 9% of respondents expressed uncertainty about the types of support needed, and 7% suggested other forms of assistance.

To promote a greater sense of inclusion among young people in **Croatia**, professionals have identified several key forms of support that could be beneficial. Peer support emerged as the most significant, with 73.33% of respondents highlighting its importance. This underscores the value of young people connecting with one another to foster a sense of community and belonging.

Counselling was also deemed crucial, with 66.67% of participants recognising the need for accessible mental health resources to help young people navigate their challenges. Awareness raising was mentioned by 60% of professionals, emphasising the importance of educating young people about diversity and inclusivity to create a more accepting environment.

Workshops were noted by 53.33% of respondents, indicating that interactive learning experiences can effectively promote skill development and social interaction. Mentoring, while slightly lower at 33.33%, still reflects a significant belief in the value of experienced individuals guiding young people in their personal and professional growth.

Only 3.33% of respondents expressed uncertainty about the types of support needed, and another 3.33% suggested other forms of assistance.



### 5.5.3 If you could draw a “diversity tree” for your VET centre. What would its roots, trunk, and branches represent, and how would it grow?

#### Young People:

If **Austrian** young participants were to draw a "diversity tree" for their VET centre, the roots, trunk, and branches would symbolise various aspects of diversity and inclusion within the institution. The roots would represent respect, although some feel that these roots are not deep enough to support the tree's growth. The trunk would signify collaboration and stability, indicating a solid foundation for the community.

The branches would illustrate the diversity of individuals, with many different directions and colours, reflecting the variety of backgrounds, cultures, and experiences present in the centre. Some envision the tree as large and vibrant, with leaves that could represent photos of all the people involved, showcasing the richness of the community. The tree is seen as growing in all directions, symbolising the continuous development and learning that occurs through cooperation and mutual support. Overall, the diversity tree would embody a healthy, interconnected environment where respect, collaboration, and diversity flourish together.

In **Ireland**, this type of question appeared to be too abstract for the questionnaire respondents. Many answers wrote “I’ve no idea” while others mentioned how diverse groups like family, friends and their teachers potentially represented different part of the tree. There are diverse answers with broad interpretations making it difficult to find a pattern or clear tangible picture of what a diversity tree might look like to everyone.

In the **Basque Country**, the responses varied and reflected uncertainty about the concept of a diversity trees. Many young people said they do not know how to define the ‘diversity tree’ in their centre. Some responses associated the roots with fundamental values (respect, equality, empathy), the trunk with the educational community, and the branches with the diversity of students and opportunities for growth. Other respondents believed that the tree would not exist due to a lack of learning processes, or that ‘everything is complicated and unhelpful.’ Several responses mentioned that the tree would grow ‘gradually’ or slowly to strengthen its principles.

In **Belgium**, many young respondents described the roots of their diversity tree as values they bring from home or their community—respect, family culture, and lived experiences. These roots were often seen as rich and varied, anchoring the tree in a mix of traditions and personal histories. The trunk represented the structural support of the school: teachers, trainers, and school staff. Some described it as “strong” and “guiding,” while others saw it as “rigid” or unaware of difference. The branches were painted as friendships, teamwork, moments of inclusion, and creative expression—parts that allowed them to grow and connect with others.

In terms of growth, several said the tree could flourish if everyone was respected, differences were celebrated, and voices were heard. Others were more concerned, describing their trees as growing slowly or being stunted due to a lack of inclusion. A few gave more critical depictions (“bare” trees or “broken branches”), reflecting alienation or exclusion. The leaves were used as a symbol for everyday experiences, turning green with positive interactions and falling off in moments of exclusion.

In **Croatia**, it seems like the Diversity Tree concept was again too abstract for the young people as most of them wrote they do not know what a Diversity Tree would look like. Those who answered envisioned a Diversity Tree with various parts representing various roles and elements within the school. For example, some described the root as the principal and professional staff, the trunk as the teachers, and the branches as the students. Others mentioned that the root could be knowledge, the trunk skills, and the branches students. Several respondents highlighted the importance of communication, connection, and safety as foundational elements of the diversity tree. They suggested that the tree would grow well if it accommodated all students and promoted acceptance and understanding.

## Professionals:

If **Austrian** professionals were to draw a Diversity Tree for their VET centre, the roots, trunk, and branches would represent various elements of diversity and inclusion within the institution. The roots would be depicted as strong and deeply anchored, symbolising the diverse backgrounds and experiences of the individuals within the centre. These roots would provide stability and resilience, allowing the tree to withstand challenges.

The trunk would signify collaboration and the shared learning experiences that connect everyone in the community. It would be broad and robust, capable of delivering essential nutrients to the branches. The branches would be numerous and widely spread, illustrating the numerous opportunities and pathways available to learners. They would be adorned with vibrant leaves, representing the unique contributions and perspectives of everyone, showcasing the richness of diversity.

Overall, the tree would grow in all directions, reflecting a dynamic and interconnected environment where everyone can thrive and flourish. This imagery encapsulates the idea that diversity is not a singular entity but rather a complex, cooperative system where each person plays a vital role in the collective growth and success of the community.

In **Ireland**, there seemed to be a misunderstanding regarding this question. Some of the key ideas referred to the roots acting as a metaphor for the students, the trunk would be the VET staff, and the branches would be the celebrations and measures to engage the diverse students. For other respondents this question drew one-word responses such as “respect”, “people”. It seems this question provoked confusion for professionals also.

In the **Basque Country**, for many of the professional respondents the roots represent core values such as respect, inclusion, equality, and empathy, as well as the teaching staff and diversity training. The trunk symbolises the educational community, including students, faculty, and organisational structures that sustain coexistence. Branches reflect the diversity of the school, representing the students, inclusive initiatives, and opportunities for growth.

The growth of the tree for these respondents depended on strengthening its roots and trunk through awareness, ongoing training, and openness to dialogue. Several other respondents define the tree in a structured way, while others offer more abstract or uncertain interpretations.

In **Belgium**, professional respondents offered rich and layered metaphors. For many, the roots of the diversity tree were grounded in shared values such as equality, justice and openness to difference. They also pointed to school culture, leadership commitment, and student diversity as core foundations. The trunk was often seen as inclusive pedagogical practices, staff communication and whole-school policies. Some described this trunk as “sturdy,” while others considered it “shaky” if these structures lacked consistency or attention.

Branches symbolised the day-to-day interactions between young people and adults, student-led initiatives, and intercultural activities. For some, they reflected the visible enactment of inclusion: the outward signs that values were being lived. Respondents who described a flourishing tree often attributed this to trust, collaboration and curiosity. Others, however, mentioned uneven growth, fragile branches, or shallow roots, pointing to issues like structural gaps, burnout or limited training. Several metaphors captured the conditions needed for growth, including the idea that “all roots must have space to take hold” and that the tree needed “sunlight in the form of empathy and time.”

In **Croatia**, professionals envisioned the diversity tree with various parts representing various roles and elements within the school. Common themes often described as the foundation of the tree, represented teachers, professional pedagogical staff, the principal, and the local community. Some respondents also mentioned knowledge, understanding, and tolerance as the roots. For the Croatian professional respondents, the tree trunk is visualised as the core structure, representing students, classes, and the relationships within the school. Some respondents also included the principal, teachers, and staff as part of the trunk.

For these professionals tree branches represented the various activities, projects, and individual students. Respondents highlighted the importance of extracurricular activities, diversity, and inclusion as the branches of the tree.

Several respondents emphasised the importance of support from the wider environment, such as the local community and other institutions, for the tree to grow and thrive. They also mentioned that the tree would grow through education, workshops, and the joint effort of all members of the school community.

#### 5.5.4 Professionals: Do you think you are a role model to learners?

Yes: 68 answers, = 48.57%

Austria: 11

Ireland: 6

Basque Country: 12

Belgium: 31

Croatia: 8

No: 16 answers, = 11.43%

Austria: 1

Ireland: 0

Basque Country: 4

Belgium: 8

Croatia: 3

I do not know: 56 answers, = 40%

Austria: 16

Ireland: 4

Basque Country: 18

Belgium: 7

Croatia: 19

In response to the question of whether professionals consider themselves role models to learners, the data reveals a diverse range of perspectives. A sizeable portion, 48.57%, or 68 respondents, affirmed that they do see themselves as role models. This sentiment is particularly strong in **Belgium**, where 31 professionals expressed this belief, followed by the **Basque Country** with 12, **Austria** with 11, and **Croatia** with 8. **Ireland** had the fewest affirmations, with only 6 respondents identifying as role models.

Conversely, 11.43% of respondents, totalling 16 individuals, indicated that they do not view themselves as role models. This response was most prevalent in **Belgium**, where 8 professionals answered negatively, followed by the **Basque Country** with 4 and **Croatia** with 3. **Austria** had only 1 respondent who felt this way, while **Ireland** reported no negative responses.

A notable 40% of respondents, amounting to 56 individuals, expressed uncertainty about their role as models for learners. This uncertainty was particularly pronounced in **Croatia**, where 19 professionals were unsure, followed by the **Basque Country** with 18, **Austria** with 16, **Belgium** with 7, and **Ireland** with 4.

Overall, the data highlights a significant belief among professionals in their potential to serve as role models, while also revealing a considerable level of uncertainty regarding this role. This suggests an opportunity for further discussion and reflection on the impact professionals can have on their learners and the qualities that define effective role modelling.

## 5.6 FUTURE

*This section aims at finding out about future actions that would shape inclusion and diversity.*

### 5.6.1 What changes would you like to see in your VET centre to make it more inclusive for all young people?

#### Young People:

awareness raising: 125 mentions

workshops: 138 mentions

knowledge transfer: 110 mentions

change in attitude: 93 mentions

change of mindset: 98 mentions

capacity building: 98 mentions

improved structural conditions: number and percentage: 59 mentions

In **Austria**, a considerable number of respondents, (52.8%), expressed a desire for workshops. These workshops could serve as interactive platforms for skill development and social interaction, allowing students to engage with one another in a supportive environment. By facilitating hands-on learning experiences, workshops can help break down barriers and foster a sense of community among diverse student groups.

Another important consideration for the future for 40.3% of Austrian respondents is the exchange of knowledge. This suggests a strong interest in creating opportunities for students to share their skills and experiences with one another. Such exchanges can promote collaboration and mutual learning, contributing to a more inclusive atmosphere where every student feels valued.

Additionally, 37.5% of respondents called for initiatives to raise awareness about diversity and inclusivity. This could involve campaigns or educational sessions aimed at promoting understanding and acceptance of diverse backgrounds and perspectives within the student body. By increasing awareness, VET centres can cultivate a more respectful and inclusive environment.

A change in attitude was noted by 20.8% of young people, indicating a desire for a more positive and open-minded approach among both students and educators. This shift can help create a culture of respect and understanding, which is essential for fostering inclusivity.

Furthermore, 19.4% of respondents suggested a change of mindset, advocating for a fundamental embrace of diversity and inclusivity as core principles within the VET centre. Encouraging all members of the community to reflect on their perspectives and be more accepting of differences is crucial for creating an inclusive educational environment.

The need for building common strengths was highlighted by 26.4% of participants, pointing to the importance of fostering collaboration and teamwork among students. This could involve group projects or activities that encourage students to work together, thereby strengthening their sense of belonging.

Lastly, 4.2% of respondents mentioned the need for improved structural conditions within the VET centre. This could include enhancing physical accessibility, better facilities, or resources that cater to diverse learning needs, ensuring that all students feel welcome and supported.

In **Ireland**, awareness raising is a significant priority, with 52% of respondents advocating for initiatives that promote understanding and acceptance of diversity within the student body. This could involve workshops, seminars, or campaigns aimed at educating both students and staff about various cultures, backgrounds, and experiences, thereby creating a more inclusive environment.

Equally important, workshops were also highlighted by 52% of participants. These interactive sessions can provide valuable opportunities for skill development, collaboration, and social interaction, allowing students to engage with one another in a supportive setting. By facilitating hands-on learning experiences, workshops can help break down barriers and encourage inclusivity.

Another notable area of focus is knowledge transfer, which was mentioned by 34% of respondents. This highlights the need for sharing skills and information among students,

fostering a collaborative learning atmosphere where everyone can benefit from each other's strengths and experiences.

A change in attitude was noted by 32% of young people, indicating a desire for a more positive and open-minded approach among both students and educators. This shift can help cultivate a culture of respect and understanding, which is essential for an inclusive educational environment.

Additionally, 38% of respondents called for a change of mindset, suggesting that embracing diversity and inclusivity should be a fundamental principle within the VET centre. This involves encouraging all members of the community to reflect on their perspectives and be more accepting of differences.

Capacity building was highlighted by 26% of participants, pointing to the importance of equipping both students and staff with the necessary skills and resources to support inclusivity effectively. This could involve training programmes or mentorship opportunities that empower individuals to contribute positively to the community.

Lastly, 20% of respondents emphasised the need for improved structural conditions within the VET centre. This could include physical accessibility improvements, better facilities, or resources that cater to diverse learning needs, ensuring that all students feel welcome and supported.

In the **Basque Country**, the most frequently mentioned change was workshops, with 36.4% of respondents advocating for more interactive learning opportunities. These workshops could serve as platforms for skill development and social interaction, helping to create a more engaging and inclusive environment for all students.

Awareness raising was also a significant focus, highlighted by 22.7% of participants. This reflects a strong desire for initiatives that educate both students and staff about diversity and inclusivity, fostering a more informed and accepting community within the VET centre.

Knowledge transfer was noted by 15.2% of young people, emphasizing the importance of sharing information and skills among peers. This collaborative approach can enhance learning experiences and create a supportive network among students.

Additionally, a change in attitude was called for by 18.2% of respondents, suggesting that fostering a more positive and open-minded approach among both students and educators is essential for creating an inclusive atmosphere. Similarly, 18.2% of participants expressed the need for a change of mindset, indicating that shifting perspectives to embrace diversity is crucial.

Both capacity building and improved structural conditions received equal attention, with 12.1% of respondents highlighting these areas. These changes are seen as vital components in enhancing the overall inclusivity of the VET centre.

Finally, a notable 34.8% of respondents provided other suggestions, indicating a variety of additional ideas and initiatives that could contribute to a more inclusive environment.

Among young people in **Belgium**, the most prominent suggestion was awareness raising, with 37% of respondents advocating for initiatives that educate both students and staff about

diversity and inclusivity. This highlights a strong desire for a more informed community that understands and values different perspectives.

Workshops were also a significant focus, mentioned by 33% of participants. These interactive sessions could provide valuable opportunities for skill development and foster social connections among students, contributing to a more engaging and inclusive environment.

Knowledge transfer was highlighted by 26% of young people, emphasizing the importance of sharing information and skills among peers. This collaborative approach can enhance learning experiences and create a supportive network within the VET centre.

Additionally, a change in attitude was called for by 24% of respondents, suggesting that fostering a more positive and open-minded approach among both students and educators is essential for creating an inclusive atmosphere. Similarly, 29% of participants expressed the need for a change of mindset, indicating that shifting perspectives to embrace diversity is crucial.

While capacity building received 14 mentions, and improved structural conditions garnered 18 mentions, these aspects were seen as important but less frequently highlighted compared to the other suggestions. Finally, 8% of respondents provided other suggestions, indicating a variety of additional ideas that could contribute to a more inclusive environment.

In **Croatia**, the most frequently mentioned change was the implementation of workshops, with 40.70% of respondents advocating for more interactive learning opportunities. These workshops could serve as platforms for skill development and social interaction, helping to create a more engaging and inclusive environment.

Awareness raising was also highlighted by 33.72% of participants, indicating a strong desire for initiatives that educate both students and staff about diversity and inclusivity. This reflects the importance of fostering understanding and acceptance within the VET community.

Knowledge transfer, mentioned by 39.54% of young people, underscores the need for sharing information and skills among peers, which can enhance collaboration and support among students. Additionally, a change in attitude was called for by 37.21% of respondents, suggesting that a more positive and open-minded approach among both peers and educators is essential for creating an inclusive atmosphere.

Similarly, 36.05% of participants expressed the need for a change of mindset, highlighting the importance of shifting perspectives to embrace diversity fully. Capacity building, noted by 20.93%, and improved structural conditions, mentioned by 24.42%, were also seen as vital components in enhancing inclusivity within VET centres.

Finally, 30.23% of respondents suggested other changes, indicating a variety of additional ideas and initiatives that could contribute to a more inclusive environment.

## Professionals:

awareness raising: 96 mentions

workshops: 82 mentions

knowledge transfer: 60 mentions

change in attitude: 52 mentions  
change of mindset: 58 mentions  
capacity building: 51 mentions  
improved structural conditions: 32 mentions  
other: 10 mentions

In **Austria**, awareness raising stands out as a crucial area for improvement, with 19 responses (67.9%) advocating for initiatives that promote understanding and acceptance of diversity within the VET centre. Professionals believe that fostering a culture of awareness is essential for creating an environment where all students feel valued and included. This could involve training sessions, informational campaigns, and discussions that highlight the importance of inclusivity.

Workshops were also highlighted as a significant avenue for change, receiving 17 responses (60.7%). These interactive sessions can provide practical opportunities for students and staff to engage with one another, share experiences, and develop skills in a collaborative setting. Workshops can serve as a platform for building relationships and breaking down barriers, ultimately contributing to a more cohesive and inclusive community.

The exchange of knowledge was noted by 14 responses (50%), indicating a desire for structured opportunities to share expertise among professionals and students. Facilitating knowledge transfer can enhance the educational experience and ensure that all young people benefit from the diverse skills and perspectives available within the centre.

A change in attitude was mentioned by 10 responses (35.7%), suggesting that fostering a more positive and open-minded approach among both staff and students is vital for creating an inclusive atmosphere. This cultural shift can help cultivate respect and understanding, which are essential for supporting all learners.

Similarly, 10 responses (35.7%) called for a change of mindset. This reflects the need for a fundamental embrace of diversity and inclusivity as core values within the VET centre. Encouraging all members of the community to reflect on their perspectives and be more accepting of differences is crucial for fostering an inclusive educational environment.

Additionally, capacity building was highlighted by 4 responses (14.3%), emphasising the importance of equipping staff with the necessary skills and resources to effectively support diverse learners. This could involve training programmes or mentorship opportunities that empower professionals to contribute positively to the community.

Lastly, there were 2 responses (7.1%) categorised as other, suggesting that there are additional ideas and initiatives that professionals believe could contribute to a more inclusive environment.

In **Ireland**, the most significant area of focus is awareness raising, with 6 responses (60%) indicating its importance. Professionals believe that increasing awareness about diversity and inclusivity among both staff and students is crucial. This can be achieved through targeted campaigns and educational initiatives that promote understanding and acceptance, ultimately creating a more supportive environment for all learners.

Workshops also received considerable attention, with 7 responses (70%) advocating for their implementation. These interactive sessions can serve as platforms for skill development and social engagement, allowing participants to collaborate and share experiences. Workshops

can play a vital role in breaking down barriers and fostering a sense of community within the VET centre.

The need for knowledge transfer was highlighted by 3 responses (30%). This reflects a desire for structured opportunities to share expertise and information among professionals and students. Facilitating knowledge exchange can enhance the learning experience and ensure that all young people benefit from the diverse skills available within the centre.

A change in attitude was noted by 4 responses (40%), indicating that cultivating a more positive and open-minded approach among staff and students is essential for creating an inclusive atmosphere. This cultural shift can help foster respect and understanding, which are vital for supporting all learners.

Similarly, 4 responses (40%) called for a change of mindset. This suggests a need for a fundamental embrace of diversity and inclusivity as core values within the VET centre. Encouraging all community members to reflect on their perspectives and be more accepting of differences is crucial for fostering an inclusive educational environment.

Capacity building was highlighted by 8 responses (80%), emphasizing the importance of equipping staff with the necessary skills and resources to effectively support diverse learners. This could involve training programmes or mentorship opportunities that empower professionals to contribute positively to the community.

Lastly, improved structural conditions were mentioned by 8 responses (80%), indicating a recognition of the need for physical and logistical enhancements within the VET centre. This could include better facilities, accessibility improvements, or resources that cater to diverse learning needs, ensuring that all students feel welcome and supported.

Interestingly, there were no responses in the other category, suggesting that the professionals surveyed had a clear focus on the aforementioned areas for improvement.

In summary, the feedback from professionals underscores the importance of awareness raising, workshops, knowledge transfer, and shifts in attitudes and mindsets as critical components in making VET centres more inclusive. By implementing these changes, educational institutions can create a supportive and welcoming environment where every young person feels valued and empowered to succeed.

In the **Basque Country**, the most prominent suggestion is awareness raising, with 21 responses (61.8%) highlighting its critical importance. Professionals recognise that fostering a deeper understanding of diversity and inclusivity among both staff and students is essential. Initiatives aimed at raising awareness can help create a more accepting and supportive environment, where all young people feel valued and understood.

Workshops were also a significant focus, receiving 18 responses (52.9%). These interactive sessions can provide valuable opportunities for skill development and social interaction, allowing participants to engage in meaningful discussions and collaborative activities. By facilitating hands-on learning experiences, workshops can help break down barriers and promote a sense of community within the VET centre.

The need for knowledge transfer was highlighted by 10 responses (29.4%). This underscores the desire for structured opportunities to share skills and information among professionals and students. Encouraging collaboration and mutual learning can enhance the educational

experience and ensure that all young people benefit from the diverse expertise available within the centre.

A change in attitude was noted by 8 responses (23.5%), indicating that fostering a more positive and open-minded approach among both staff and students is essential for creating an inclusive atmosphere. This cultural shift can help cultivate respect and understanding, which are vital for supporting all learners.

Additionally, 12 responses (35.3%) called for a change of mindset. This reflects the need for a fundamental embrace of diversity and inclusivity as core principles within the VET centre. Encouraging all members of the community to reflect on their perspectives and be more accepting of differences is crucial for fostering an inclusive educational environment.

Capacity building received 16 responses (47.1%), highlighting the importance of equipping staff with the necessary skills and resources to support diverse learners effectively. This could involve training programmes or mentorship opportunities that empower professionals to contribute positively to the community.

Improved structural conditions were mentioned by 11 responses (32.4%), indicating a recognition of the need for physical and logistical enhancements within the VET centre. This could include better facilities, accessibility improvements, or resources that cater to diverse learning needs, ensuring that all students feel welcome and supported.

Lastly, 3 responses (8.8%) were categorised as other, suggesting that there are additional ideas and initiatives that professionals believe could contribute to a more inclusive environment.

In **Belgium**, the most frequently mentioned change is awareness raising, with 33 mentions (72%) highlighting its critical importance. Professionals recognise that fostering a deeper understanding of diversity and inclusivity among both staff and students is essential. Initiatives aimed at raising awareness can help create a more accepting and supportive environment, where all young people feel valued and understood.

Workshops were also a significant focus, receiving 26 mentions (57%). These interactive sessions can provide valuable opportunities for skill development and social interaction, allowing participants to engage in meaningful discussions and collaborative activities. By facilitating hands-on learning experiences, workshops can help break down barriers and promote a sense of community within the VET centre.

The need for knowledge transfer was highlighted by 24 mentions (52%). This underscores the desire for structured opportunities to share skills and information among professionals and students. Encouraging collaboration and mutual learning can enhance the educational experience and ensure that all young people benefit from the diverse expertise available within the centre.

A change in attitude was noted by 18 mentions (39%), indicating that fostering a more positive and open-minded approach among both staff and students is essential for creating an inclusive atmosphere. This cultural shift can help cultivate respect and understanding, which are vital for supporting all learners.

Additionally, 17 mentions (37%) called for a change of mindset. This reflects the need for a fundamental embrace of diversity and inclusivity as core principles within the VET centre.

Encouraging all members of the community to reflect on their perspectives and be more accepting of differences is crucial for fostering an inclusive educational environment.

Capacity building received 20 mentions (43%), highlighting the importance of equipping staff with the necessary skills and resources to support diverse learners effectively. This could involve training programmes or mentorship opportunities that empower professionals to contribute positively to the community.

Improved structural conditions were mentioned by 13 respondents (28%), indicating a recognition of the need for physical and logistical enhancements within the VET centre. This could include better facilities, accessibility improvements, or resources that cater to diverse learning needs, ensuring that all students feel welcome and supported.

Lastly, 5 mentions (11%) were categorised as other, suggesting that there are additional ideas and initiatives that professionals believe could contribute to a more inclusive environment.

In **Croatia**, a considerable number of professionals, specifically 17 respondents (56.67%), emphasised the importance of awareness raising. This highlights a strong consensus on the need for initiatives that educate both staff and students about diversity and inclusivity. By fostering a greater understanding of diverse backgrounds and experiences, VET centres can create a more welcoming and supportive environment for all young people.

Workshops were also a prominent suggestion, with 14 respondents (46.67%) advocating for more interactive sessions. These workshops can serve as valuable platforms for skill development and social interaction, allowing both students and educators to engage in meaningful discussions and activities that promote inclusivity. By facilitating hands-on learning experiences, workshops can help break down barriers and foster a sense of community.

The need for knowledge transfer was highlighted by 9 respondents (30%). This indicates a desire for structured opportunities to share skills and information among professionals and students alike. By encouraging collaboration and mutual learning, VET centres can enhance the educational experience and ensure that all young people benefit from the diverse expertise available within the centre.

A change in attitude was noted by 12 respondents (40%), suggesting that fostering a more positive and open-minded approach among both staff and students is essential for creating an inclusive atmosphere. This shift can help cultivate a culture of respect and understanding, which is vital for supporting all learners.

Additionally, 15 respondents (50.5%) called for a change of mindset. This reflects the need for a fundamental embrace of diversity and inclusivity as core principles within the VET centre. Encouraging all members of the community to reflect on their perspectives and be more accepting of differences is crucial for fostering an inclusive educational environment.

Lastly, capacity building was mentioned by 3 respondents (10%), indicating that while this area is less frequently highlighted, it remains an important aspect of enhancing inclusivity. This could involve providing training and resources to equip staff with the skills necessary to support diverse learners effectively.

## 5.6.2 How can learners/young people contribute to making their VET centre more diverse and welcoming?

### Young People:

Respondents opined that learners and young people in **Austria** can contribute significantly to making their VET centre more diverse and welcoming through various actions and attitudes. One key approach noted is to foster a friendly and respectful environment, where kindness and open communication are prioritised. By being more tolerant and avoiding negative comments, where the VET can create a space where everyone feels comfortable and valued.

Engagement in workshops and creative activities were also highlighted as a tool to enhance the sense of community, allowing individuals to express their ideas and collaborate on projects that promote diversity. Using digital media and social platforms can help connect diverse groups and showcase the centre as an inclusive space. Additionally, learners can take the initiative to participate actively, share their perspectives, and encourage discussions that raise awareness about diversity.

By being open-minded and empathetic, students can bridge gaps between diverse backgrounds, helping to break down prejudices and foster understanding.

In **Ireland**, many students responded with an emphasis on peer-to-peer feedback. Students wanted more opportunities to engage with tutors and directors to advocate for a diverse curriculum. They also wanted brainstorming and focus groups to express their opinions and experiences. Learners suggested having peer representatives while some suggested that learning should focus on preparation for life as opposed to academics. Learners also identified the need for student engagement in course design, delivery and evaluation while also bringing a more collaborative approach to learning which focused on culturally creative activities.

In the **Basque Country**, the responses varied, with some mentioning support and participation, while others expressed uncertainty or a lack of opinion. Focusing on respect and empathy, many responses emphasized the importance of treating others well and being understanding. Suggestions for improvement: some suggested changes in teaching, such as more practice and less theory, as well as more organised learning. Valuing spaces for coexistence were mentioned: workshops, activities, and peer support were mentioned as key elements for improving the environment. Criticisms of specific aspects: some responses mentioned changes in teachers or avoiding undervalued activities.

In **Belgium**, young respondents highlighted the importance of awareness raising and workshops as the most frequently mentioned measures to improve inclusion in their VET centres. Many expressed a desire for more open conversations about diversity, backed by regular activities and events that ensure everyone feels visible and respected. A considerable number also pointed to the need for shifts in mindset and attitudes, noting that existing policies are often not reflected in daily interactions. Some additionally called for better infrastructure and accessibility, as well as specific training for teachers and staff to support more inclusive practices.

In **Croatia**, many respondents emphasised the importance of students being more open, respectful and accepting of diversity. They suggested that students should socialise more,

participate in activities and contribute their ideas to foster a sense of belonging. For example, one interviewee mentioned that students should be nice to everyone and respect each other, while another emphasised that students should accept all people regardless of their religion, gender, ethnicity, etc. Several interviewees pointed out that students should increase their self-confidence, become better and more interested people and try harder to contribute positively to the school environment. They also mentioned that students should co-operate with professors, promote the school online and take more responsibility in school. Some respondents expressed uncertainty or found the question complicated, while others made more specific suggestions such as not destroying property, making new friends, and participating in workshops and co-curricular activities

## Professionals:

According to professionals in **Austria**, learners and young people can play a vital role in making their VET centre more diverse and welcoming through various actions and attitudes. One significant way is by promoting respect and empathy in their interactions, ensuring a considerate approach to shared resources and the property of others. By living out acceptance and congruence, they can foster a culture of understanding and inclusivity.

Participation in community-building activities is essential, such as organising joint projects, leisure events, or cultural celebrations that allow everyone to feel comfortable and included. Students can contribute ideas to make the centre more inclusive, such as creating barrier-free spaces, using gender-neutral language, and providing multilingual information materials. Offering constructive feedback when feeling excluded or unwelcome can also help improve the environment.

Engaging in events that celebrate diversity, such as intercultural days or awareness campaigns, allows learners to share their experiences and perspectives, enriching the collective understanding of cultural and social diversity. Demonstrating tolerance and respect for all individuals, regardless of their background, is crucial, as is responding to discriminatory behaviour in a friendly yet assertive manner.

By being open-minded and actively participating in the community, learners can bring their individuality to the forefront, fostering a sense of belonging. Initiatives like a buddy system for newcomers can help ease their transition and encourage connections.

In **Ireland**, answers included using workshops, student councils and have spaces for young people to voice their opinion.

In the **Basque Country**, respondents observed that active student participation played a key role importance by getting youth involved in workshops, inclusive activities, and awareness-raising sessions. These respondents emphasised that diversity is not imposed but should be promoted through values such as understanding and inclusion. They also suggested creating spaces for dialogue; safe places to share experiences and launch proposals for improvement within the school.

Other noted peer support as a key diversity and inclusion tool with some respondents mentioning the importance of forming support groups and acting as mediators in conflicts or situations of exclusion.

Criticisms regarding student responsibility: Finally, several responses suggest that the burden of inclusion should not fall solely on students but should also be reinforced by families and society.

In **Belgium**, professionals overwhelmingly mentioned the need for more awareness raising and knowledge transfer initiatives. Many stressed the importance of concrete tools and a shared understanding across the institution to support diversity in practice, not just theory. There was strong interest in professional development, including workshops and capacity-building opportunities to enhance their confidence and competence. A number highlighted the need for attitudinal, and mindset shifts across the institution, not only among staff but also within the learner community. While mentioned less frequently, structural conditions were still recognised as barriers in need of reform.

In **Croatia**, some of the professionals emphasised the importance of open-mindedness and recognising differences. They suggested that students should support diversity, socialise more, and participate in school activities to foster a sense of inclusion. For example, one respondent mentioned that students should be open to diversity and learn to respect others, while another highlighted the need for more conversations on this topic to raise awareness. Several respondents pointed out that students can contribute by expressing their opinions, participating in the Student Council, and engaging in activities that include all students, regardless of their background. They also mentioned that students should not be afraid to speak up if they feel marginalised, and that teachers and staff should approach these issues delicately. Some respondents noted that students need to change their attitudes through education and follow the good examples set by adults. They emphasised the role of parents, teachers, and professional associates in helping students understand and respect diversity.

### 5.6.3 How could companies and workplaces promote diversity and inclusion for VET learners / young people in VET?

#### Young People:

awareness raising: 136 mentions  
workshops: 144 mentions  
knowledge transfer: 102 mentions  
change in attitude: 81 mentions  
change of mindset: 84 mentions  
capacity building: 90 mentions  
improved structural conditions: 52 mentions  
other: 74 mentions

In **Austria**, one of the most significant recommendations by young people is to raise awareness, which garnered 31 responses (43.1%). This involves creating initiatives that educate employees about the importance of diversity and inclusion. By fostering a culture of

understanding, companies can help dismantle stereotypes and biases, making the workplace more welcoming for all VET learners.

Workshops were also highlighted as a key method, receiving 34 responses (47.2%). These interactive sessions can provide VET learners with opportunities to engage with professionals, develop skills, and share experiences in a supportive environment. Workshops can serve as a platform for dialogue, allowing participants to explore issues related to diversity and inclusion while building valuable connections.

The exchange of knowledge was noted by 26 respondents (36.1%), indicating a desire for structured opportunities where experienced employees can share their insights with VET learners. This exchange not only enhances the learning experience for young people but also enriches the workplace by integrating diverse perspectives.

A change in attitude was mentioned by 17 respondents (23.6%), suggesting that fostering a more open-minded approach among all employees is essential for creating an inclusive atmosphere. Encouraging staff to reflect on their biases and embrace diversity can lead to a more respectful and supportive workplace.

Similarly, a change in mindset was highlighted by 21 responses (29.2%). Companies should strive to embed diversity and inclusion as core values within their organisational culture. This shift can empower all employees to contribute to a more inclusive environment, ultimately benefiting both the workforce and the organisation.

Additionally, the building of common strengths was suggested by 7 respondents (9.7%). This could involve team-building activities that promote collaboration and understanding among diverse groups, fostering a sense of belonging for all employees.

Improving structural conditions was also mentioned, with 8 responses (11.1%) indicating the need for better physical environments that accommodate diverse needs. This could include ensuring accessibility in the workplace and providing resources that cater to various learning styles.

Lastly, 12 responses (16.7%) fell under the category of other, suggesting that there are additional ideas and initiatives that young people believe could further enhance diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

In **Ireland**, awareness raising emerged as a crucial element, with 27 responses (54%) highlighting its significance. Companies should actively engage in initiatives that foster understanding and acceptance of diversity within the workplace. This could involve awareness campaigns, training sessions, and discussions aimed at educating employees about the importance of inclusivity and the positive impact it has on the organisation.

Workshops were also a prominent suggestion, receiving 25 responses (50%). These interactive sessions can provide valuable opportunities for VET learners to connect with professionals, share experiences, and develop essential skills in a collaborative environment. Workshops can serve as a platform for building relationships and breaking down barriers, ultimately fostering a more inclusive workplace culture.

The need for knowledge transfer was noted by 16 responses (32%), indicating a desire for structured opportunities to share expertise and insights between experienced employees and

VET learners. Facilitating this exchange can enhance the learning experience for young people and ensure they benefit from the diverse skills and perspectives available within the company.

A change in attitude was also mentioned by 16 responses (32%), suggesting that fostering a more positive and open-minded approach among all employees is vital for creating an inclusive atmosphere. This cultural shift can help cultivate respect and understanding, which are essential for supporting all learners and ensuring they feel valued in the workplace.

Similarly, capacity building received 11 responses (22%), emphasising the importance of equipping staff with the necessary skills and resources to effectively support diverse learners. This could involve training programmes or mentorship opportunities that empower professionals to contribute positively to the development of VET learners.

Additionally, a change of mindset was highlighted, with 18 responses (36%) indicating the need for companies to embrace diversity and inclusivity as core values. Encouraging all employees to reflect on their perspectives and be more accepting of differences is crucial for fostering an inclusive environment that benefits everyone.

Improved structural conditions were mentioned by 8 responses (16%), indicating a recognition of the need for physical and logistical enhancements within workplaces. This could include creating accessible facilities, providing resources that cater to diverse learning needs, and ensuring that all young people feel welcome and supported in their work environment.

Lastly, 5 responses (10%) fell under the category of other, suggesting that there are additional ideas and initiatives that young people believe could contribute to a more inclusive workplace.

In the **Basque Country**, one of the most significant areas identified is workshops, which received 29 answers (43.9%). Young people believe that interactive workshops can provide valuable opportunities for VET learners to engage with professionals, share experiences, and develop essential skills in a collaborative environment. These sessions can serve as a platform for building relationships and breaking down barriers, ultimately fostering a more inclusive workplace culture.

Awareness raising was also highlighted, with 12 answers (18.2%) emphasising its importance. Young people feel that companies should actively engage in initiatives that promote understanding and acceptance of diversity within the workplace. This could involve awareness campaigns, training sessions, and discussions that educate employees about the value of inclusivity and the positive impact it has on the organisation.

The need for knowledge transfer was noted by 8 answers (12.1%), indicating a desire for structured opportunities to share expertise and insights between experienced employees and VET learners. Facilitating this exchange can enhance the learning experience for young people and ensure they benefit from the diverse skills and perspectives available within the company.

A change in attitude was mentioned by 8 answers (12.1%), suggesting that fostering a more positive and open-minded approach among all employees is vital for creating an inclusive atmosphere. This cultural shift can help cultivate respect and understanding, which are essential for supporting all learners and ensuring they feel valued in the workplace.

Similarly, 12 answers (18.2%) called for a change of mindset. This reflects the need for companies to embrace diversity and inclusivity as core values. Encouraging all employees to

reflect on their perspectives and be more accepting of differences is crucial for fostering an inclusive environment that benefits everyone.

Capacity building also received 12 answers (18.2%), emphasising the importance of equipping staff with the necessary skills and resources to effectively support diverse learners. This could involve training programmes or mentorship opportunities that empower professionals to contribute positively to the development of VET learners.

Lastly, 6 answers (9.1%) were related to improved structural conditions, indicating a recognition of the need for physical and logistical enhancements within workplaces. This could include creating accessible facilities, providing resources that cater to diverse learning needs, and ensuring that all young people feel welcome and supported in their work environment.

Additionally, 19 answers (28.8%) were categorised as other, suggesting that there are further ideas and initiatives that young people believe could contribute to a more inclusive workplace.

In **Belgium**, one of the most significant areas identified is awareness raising, with 38 mentions (25.0%) highlighting its critical importance. Young people believe that companies should actively engage in initiatives that promote understanding and acceptance of diversity within the workplace. This could involve awareness campaigns, training sessions, and discussions that educate employees about the value of inclusivity and the positive impact it has on the organisation.

Workshops were also a prominent suggestion, receiving 20 mentions (13.2%). These interactive sessions can provide valuable opportunities for VET learners to engage with professionals, share experiences, and develop essential skills in a collaborative environment. Workshops can serve as a platform for building relationships and breaking down barriers, ultimately fostering a more inclusive workplace culture.

The need for knowledge transfer was noted by 23 mentions (15.1%), indicating a desire for structured opportunities to share expertise and insights between experienced employees and VET learners. Facilitating this exchange can enhance the learning experience for young people and ensure they benefit from the diverse skills and perspectives available within the company.

A change in attitude was mentioned by 19 mentions (12.5%), suggesting that fostering a more positive and open-minded approach among all employees is vital for creating an inclusive atmosphere. This cultural shift can help cultivate respect and understanding, which are essential for supporting all learners and ensuring they feel valued in the workplace.

Similarly, 9 mentions (5.9%) called for a change of mindset. This reflects the need for companies to embrace diversity and inclusivity as core values. Encouraging all employees to reflect on their perspectives and be more accepting of differences is crucial for fostering an inclusive environment that benefits everyone.

Capacity building received 31 mentions (20.4%), emphasising the importance of equipping staff with the necessary skills and resources to effectively support diverse learners. This could involve training programmes or mentorship opportunities that empower professionals to contribute positively to the development of VET learners.

Lastly, 12 mentions (7.9%) were related to improved structural conditions, indicating a recognition of the need for physical and logistical enhancements within workplaces. This could

include creating accessible facilities, providing resources that cater to diverse learning needs, and ensuring that all young people feel welcome and supported in their work environment.

In **Croatia**, one of the most significant areas identified is awareness raising, with 28 responses (32.56%) highlighting its importance. Young people believe that companies should actively promote understanding and acceptance of diversity within the workplace. This could involve campaigns, training sessions, and discussions that educate employees about the value of inclusivity and the benefits it brings to the organisation.

Workshops were also a prominent suggestion, receiving 36 responses (41.86%). These interactive sessions can provide practical opportunities for VET learners to engage with professionals, share experiences, and develop essential skills in a collaborative environment. Workshops can serve as a platform for building relationships and breaking down barriers, ultimately fostering a more inclusive workplace culture.

The need for knowledge transfer was noted by 29 responses (33.72%), indicating a desire for structured opportunities to share expertise and insights between experienced employees and VET learners. Facilitating this exchange can enhance the learning experience for young people and ensure they benefit from the diverse skills and perspectives available within the company.

A change in attitude was mentioned by 21 responses (24.42%), suggesting that fostering a more positive and open-minded approach among all employees is vital for creating an inclusive atmosphere. This cultural shift can help cultivate respect and understanding, which are essential for supporting all learners and ensuring they feel valued in the workplace.

Similarly, 24 responses (27.91%) called for a change of mindset. This reflects the need for companies to embrace diversity and inclusivity as core values. Encouraging all employees to reflect on their perspectives and be more accepting of differences is crucial for fostering an inclusive environment that benefits everyone.

Capacity building received 13 responses (15.12%), emphasising the importance of equipping staff with the necessary skills and resources to effectively support diverse learners. This could involve training programmes or mentorship opportunities that empower professionals to contribute positively to the development of VET learners.

Additionally, improved structural conditions were mentioned by 19 responses (22.09%), indicating a recognition of the need for physical and logistical enhancements within workplaces. This could include creating accessible facilities, providing resources that cater to diverse learning needs, and ensuring that all young people feel welcome and supported in their work environment.

Lastly, 36 responses (41.86%) were categorised as other, suggesting that there are additional ideas and initiatives that young people believe could contribute to a more inclusive workplace.

## Professionals:

awareness raising: 94 mentions

workshops: 67 mentions

knowledge transfer: 68 mentions

change in attitude: 46 mentions

change of mindset: 49 mentions  
capacity building: number and percentage  
improved structural conditions: 31 mentions  
other: 15 mentions

In **Austria**, awareness raising stands out as a crucial approach, with 22 mentions (78.6%) indicating its significance. Companies should prioritise initiatives that educate their workforce about the importance of diversity and inclusion. This could involve awareness campaigns, training sessions, and discussions aimed at fostering a culture of understanding and acceptance. By raising awareness, organisations can create an environment where all employees, particularly VET learners, feel valued and included.

Workshops are another effective method, receiving 17 mentions (60.7%). These interactive sessions can provide VET learners with opportunities to engage directly with professionals, develop practical skills, and share their experiences in a supportive setting. Workshops can serve as a platform for collaboration and dialogue, helping to break down barriers and build relationships among diverse groups.

The exchange of knowledge was highlighted by 19 mentions (67.9%), emphasising the need for structured opportunities where experienced employees can share their insights and expertise with VET learners. Facilitating this exchange not only enhances the learning experience for young people but also enriches the workplace by integrating diverse perspectives and skills.

A change in attitude was noted by 15 mentions (53.6%), suggesting that fostering a more positive and open-minded approach among all employees is vital for creating an inclusive atmosphere. Encouraging staff to reflect on their biases and embrace diversity can lead to a more respectful and supportive workplace for everyone.

Additionally, a change of mindset received 14 mentions (50%), indicating the necessity for companies to embed diversity and inclusion as core values within their organisational culture. By promoting a mindset that values differences, companies can empower all employees to contribute to a more inclusive environment.

Capacity building was also highlighted, with 12 mentions (42.9%). This underscores the importance of equipping staff with the necessary skills and resources to effectively support diverse learners. Training programmes, mentorship opportunities, and professional development initiatives can empower employees to play a proactive role in fostering inclusivity.

While improved structural conditions received 1 mention (3.6%), it suggests that ensuring physical and logistical enhancements within workplaces is also important. This could include making facilities more accessible and creating an environment where all young people feel welcome and supported.

Lastly, the category of other received 1 mention (3.6%), indicating that there may be additional ideas and initiatives that professionals believe could further enhance diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

In **Ireland**, awareness raising stands out as the most crucial approach, with 8 responses (80%) highlighting its significance. Companies should prioritise initiatives that educate their workforce about the importance of diversity and inclusion. This could involve campaigns, training sessions, and discussions that aim to foster a culture of understanding and

acceptance, ultimately creating a more inclusive environment for all employees, particularly VET learners.

Workshops were also deemed essential, receiving 6 responses (60%). These interactive sessions can provide VET learners with opportunities to engage directly with professionals, develop practical skills, and share their experiences in a supportive setting. Workshops can serve as a platform for collaboration and dialogue, helping to break down barriers and build relationships among diverse groups.

The need for knowledge transfer was noted by 4 responses (40%), indicating a desire for structured opportunities where experienced employees can share their insights and expertise with VET learners. Facilitating this exchange not only enhances the learning experience for young people but also enriches the workplace by integrating diverse perspectives and skills.

A change in attitude was mentioned by 5 responses (50%), suggesting that fostering a more positive and open-minded approach among all employees is vital for creating an inclusive atmosphere. Encouraging staff to reflect on their biases and embrace diversity can lead to a more respectful and supportive workplace for everyone.

Similarly, a change of mindset was highlighted by 3 responses (30%). This reflects the need for companies to embed diversity and inclusion as core values within their organisational culture. By promoting a mindset that values differences, companies can empower all employees to contribute to a more inclusive environment.

Capacity building received 5 responses (50%), emphasising the importance of equipping staff with the necessary skills and resources to effectively support diverse learners. This could involve training programmes or mentorship opportunities that empower professionals to play a proactive role in fostering inclusivity.

Additionally, improved structural conditions were mentioned by 4 responses (40%), indicating the need for physical and logistical enhancements within workplaces. This could include ensuring accessibility, providing resources that cater to various learning needs, and creating an environment where all young people feel welcome and supported.

Lastly, 4 responses (40%) fell under the category of other, suggesting that there are additional ideas and initiatives that professionals believe could further enhance diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

In the **Basque Country**, awareness raising emerged as the most significant recommendation, with 25 answers (73.5%) highlighting its critical importance. Professionals believe that companies should actively engage in initiatives that foster understanding and acceptance of diversity within the workplace. This could involve awareness campaigns, training sessions, and discussions aimed at educating employees about the value of inclusivity and the positive impact it has on the organisation.

Workshops were also identified as a valuable method, receiving 13 answers (38.2%). These interactive sessions can provide VET learners with opportunities to engage with professionals, share experiences, and develop essential skills in a collaborative environment. Workshops can serve as a platform for building relationships and breaking down barriers, ultimately fostering a more inclusive workplace culture.

The need for knowledge transfer was noted by 13 answers (38.2%), indicating a desire for structured opportunities to share expertise and insights between experienced employees and VET learners. Facilitating this exchange can enhance the learning experience for young people and ensure they benefit from the diverse skills and perspectives available within the company.

A change in attitude was mentioned by 11 answers (32.4%), suggesting that fostering a more positive and open-minded approach among all employees is vital for creating an inclusive atmosphere. This cultural shift can help cultivate respect and understanding, which are essential for supporting all learners and ensuring they feel valued in the workplace.

Similarly, 17 answers (50%) called for a change of mindset. This reflects the need for companies to embrace diversity and inclusivity as core values. Encouraging all employees to reflect on their perspectives and be more accepting of differences is crucial for fostering an inclusive environment that benefits everyone.

Capacity building received 14 answers (41.2%), emphasising the importance of equipping staff with the necessary skills and resources to effectively support diverse learners. This could involve training programmes or mentorship opportunities that empower professionals to contribute positively to the development of VET learners.

Additionally, improved structural conditions were mentioned by 13 answers (38.2%), indicating a recognition of the need for physical and logistical enhancements within workplaces. This could include creating accessible facilities, providing resources that cater to diverse learning needs, and ensuring that all young people feel welcome and supported in their work environment.

Lastly, 4 answers (11.8%) were categorised as other, suggesting that there are additional ideas and initiatives that professionals believe could contribute to a more inclusive workplace.

In **Belgium**, awareness raising is a fundamental strategy, with 20 mentions (19.2%) highlighting its importance. Companies should actively engage in initiatives that educate their workforce about the significance of diversity and inclusion. This could involve awareness campaigns, training sessions, and discussions aimed at fostering a culture of understanding and acceptance, which is essential for creating an inclusive environment for all employees, particularly VET learners.

Workshops were also identified as a key method, receiving 21 mentions (20.2%). These interactive sessions can provide VET learners with opportunities to engage directly with professionals, develop practical skills, and share their experiences in a supportive setting. Workshops can serve as a platform for collaboration and dialogue, helping to break down barriers and build relationships among diverse groups.

The need for knowledge transfer was noted by 15 mentions (14.4%), indicating a desire for structured opportunities where experienced employees can share their insights and expertise with VET learners. Facilitating this exchange not only enhances the learning experience for young people but also enriches the workplace by integrating diverse perspectives and skills.

A change in attitude was mentioned by 11 responses (10.6%), suggesting that fostering a more positive and open-minded approach among all employees is vital for creating an inclusive atmosphere. Encouraging staff to reflect on their biases and embrace diversity can lead to a more respectful and supportive workplace for everyone.

Additionally, capacity building received significant attention, with 24 mentions (23.1%). This highlights the importance of equipping staff with the necessary skills and resources to effectively support diverse learners. Training programmes, mentorship opportunities, and professional development initiatives can empower employees to play a proactive role in fostering inclusivity.

While change of mindset and improved structural conditions received 4 mentions (3.8%) each, indicating that these areas are also important but perhaps less frequently discussed. Companies should strive to embed diversity and inclusion as core values within their organisational culture and ensure that physical and logistical enhancements are made to create a welcoming environment for all.

Lastly, 5 mentions (4.8%) fell under the category of other, suggesting that there are additional ideas and initiatives that professionals believe could further enhance diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

In **Croatia**, awareness raising is highlighted as a fundamental approach, with 19 responses (63.33%) emphasising its importance. Companies should actively engage in initiatives that educate their workforce about the significance of diversity and inclusion. This could involve awareness campaigns, training sessions, and discussions aimed at fostering a culture of understanding and acceptance, which is essential for creating an inclusive environment for all employees, particularly VET learners.

Knowledge transfer also emerged as a critical component, receiving 17 responses (56.67%). This highlights the need for structured opportunities where experienced employees can share their insights and expertise with VET learners. Facilitating this exchange not only enhances the learning experience for young people but also enriches the workplace by integrating diverse perspectives and skills.

Workshops were mentioned by 10 respondents (33.33%) as an effective method for promoting inclusion. These interactive sessions can provide VET learners with opportunities to engage directly with professionals, develop practical skills, and share their experiences in a supportive setting. Workshops can serve as a platform for collaboration and dialogue, helping to break down barriers and build relationships among diverse groups.

A change of mindset was noted by 11 responses (36.67%), indicating the need for companies to embed diversity and inclusion as core values within their organisational culture. By promoting a mindset that values differences, companies can empower all employees to contribute to a more inclusive environment.

Additionally, a change in attitude was mentioned by 7 respondents (23.33%), suggesting that fostering a more positive and open-minded approach among all employees is vital for creating an inclusive atmosphere. Encouraging staff to reflect on their biases and embrace diversity can lead to a more respectful and supportive workplace for everyone.

Improved structural conditions were highlighted by 9 responses (30.00%), indicating the need for physical and logistical enhancements within workplaces. This could include ensuring accessibility, providing resources that cater to various learning needs, and creating an environment where all young people feel welcome and supported.

Lastly, capacity building received 6 responses (20.00%), emphasising the importance of equipping staff with the necessary skills and resources to effectively support diverse learners.

This could involve training programmes or mentorship opportunities that empower professionals to play a proactive role in fostering inclusivity.

Only 1 response (3.33%) fell under the category of other, suggesting that there may be additional ideas and initiatives that professionals believe could further enhance diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

#### 5.6.4 Young People: Describe your ideal, inclusive workplace.

In **Austria**, young people envision their ideal inclusive workplace as a vibrant and diverse environment where individuals are respected and valued for their unique contributions. They desire a space that fosters open communication and collaboration, where colleagues are supportive and willing to help one another. A stress-free atmosphere is important, as is the presence of motivating and friendly coworkers who create a positive and enjoyable work experience.

In this ideal setting, empathy and respect are fundamental values, with a strong emphasis on understanding and accommodating the emotional needs and boundaries of each person. Young people appreciate a workplace that is clean, organised, and equipped with modern facilities, allowing for a comfortable and efficient working environment. They express a preference for a familial atmosphere where mistakes are viewed as opportunities for learning rather than failures, promoting a culture of growth and understanding.

Overall, the ideal workplace is one where everyone feels included, has a sense of belonging, and is encouraged to ask questions and seek guidance. It is a place where individuals can thrive, develop their skills, and work harmoniously with others, regardless of their background or position.

In **Ireland**, many young people focused on the ideal part and only marginally referred to the inclusive part. Many mentioned a quiet, warm and comfortable environment where people are welcomed and treated equally regardless of their background. Young people also mentioned a calm space to work. Of the 46 respondents each choose unique ways to describe their vision of an ideal, inclusive workspace. From this the young learners have a clear idea of what inclusivity looks like however some young people misinterpreted the question answering with reference to the workplace's physical appearance ("quiet, small, warm"), while others referred to values ("calm, inclusive, respectful").

In the **Basque Country**, respondents identified the following:

- Diversity in ideal spaces; some mention workshops, hair salons, hospitals, ships, and educational settings as their preferred workplaces.
- Valuing inclusive environments; several responses highlight the importance of spaces free from discrimination, with respect and effective communication.
- Preference for quiet and organised spaces; some mention that their ideal place would be relaxed, tidy, and with adequate tools.
- Autonomy and professional freedom; some responses indicate a preference for working from home, as entrepreneurs, or in roles that allow them independence.

- Lack of clarity or experience; some responses reflect uncertainty, with several indicating that they do not know or that they have not worked in Spain.

In **Belgium**, young people described an ideal workplace as one where everyone is treated with respect, regardless of background, identity or ability. Respondents envisioned spaces where colleagues help one another, where there is no discrimination or exclusion, and where communication is open and non-judgemental. Several young people mentioned the importance of a diverse team and leaders who listen. A few noted practical considerations such as accessible spaces and mental health support, indicating that inclusion is both relational and structural.

In **Croatia**, it seems that most young people leave the inclusive part aside when describing their ideal inclusive workplace. They emphasised the importance of a positive environment with fresh air, light and good music and that the ideal workplace is clean, tidy and well organised. Several interviewees visualised their ideal workplace as a place where they could work independently or run their own business. They mentioned working at a desk or in their own office or having their own cake shop. Others described their ideal workplace as being in nature, by the sea or in a kitchen. A minority of students emphasised the importance of inclusion, fairness and respect in their ideal workplace. They mentioned that the workplace should pay fairly, treat everyone equally and offer adequate opportunities for advancement. For example, one respondent stated that they would like to work in a place without discrimination and unfair treatment, while another said they would like no one to treat them differently because of their religion, nationality or language.

#### 5.6.4 Professionals: Describe the ideal, inclusive workplace for learners / young people.

In **Austria**, VET professionals envision the ideal inclusive workplace for learners and young people as a supportive and respectful environment that actively embraces diversity. This workplace would be characterised by a culture of appreciation and understanding, where everyone is encouraged to be themselves and where mutual respect and tolerance are paramount. It is essential that the workplace allows for mistakes, fostering a good error culture that views failures as opportunities for learning and growth.

In this ideal setting, there would be a strong emphasis on equal opportunities for all, ensuring that every individual has the chance to develop and thrive. The presence of mentoring and guidance is crucial, providing tailored support to those who need it. Open communication is vital, allowing for discussions about individual needs and challenges, particularly for those with cognitive differences or learning difficulties.

Accessibility is another key aspect, with the workplace designed to be barrier-free and adaptable to meet the diverse needs of all learners. The professionals stress the importance of a collaborative team spirit, where everyone works together and takes each other's needs into account. Ultimately, the ideal inclusive workplace is one where young people feel valued, understood, and empowered to reach their full potential, regardless of their backgrounds or individual characteristics.

In **Ireland**, professionals mentioned a place where they can thrive regardless of their background, ethnicity, sexuality, gender or academic ability. Additionally, participants mentioned a place that is welcoming and understanding of the various needs (and changing needs) of the learners.

In the **Basque Country**, respondents paid particular emphasis on respect and equality, with a majority noting that the ideal environment should ensure that all people are treated without bias or discrimination. Several responses highlighted the need for welcoming and safe spaces for free expression and personal growth. Other respondents reflected a belief that any place can be inclusive if it respects others, while others see inclusion as something that needs to be reinforced with training and awareness. The need for specialised teachers, accessible mentoring, and programs that address different learning needs also presented as potential positive initiatives.

In **Belgium**, professionals highlighted workplaces that prioritise mutual respect, empathy, and fairness, with strong emphasis on guidance and mentoring for young people. They stressed the need for companies to adopt inclusive policies, provide safe reporting mechanisms, and actively work against stereotypes. Many noted that an inclusive workplace is one where learners feel empowered to speak up, are encouraged to grow, and are valued for who they are, not just what they produce. Some also called for clear anti-discrimination rules and regular staff training.

In **Croatia**, many respondents emphasised that an ideal inclusive workplace is a place where students feel comfortable, safe and valued. They emphasised the importance of a supportive environment where everyone has equal opportunities and can express themselves freely. For example, one interviewee said that the ideal workplace is a place where everyone is happy and content, while another said that it should be a place where students can be themselves without fear. Several interviewees pointed out that the ideal workplace should be free from prejudice and discrimination, with a focus on collaboration and respect for diversity. They mentioned that students should be able to work with colleagues and guests from diverse backgrounds and that religion, ethnicity, gender and nationality should not play a role in how individuals are treated. Some respondents noted that the ideal workplace depends on the profession and the individual needs of the student. They pointed out that it should allow students to maximise their skills and abilities and that everyone should be accepted and encouraged to do their best.

## 5.6.5 What would be your ideal role in promoting diversity and inclusion in the future?

### Young People:

When considering their ideal role in promoting diversity and inclusion in the future, many young people in **Austria** express uncertainty about what their specific contributions would look like. However, some highlight the importance of being a positive role model and fostering an environment of respect and acceptance. They envision themselves as approachable individuals who are willing to help others and support those in need, particularly those who may require integration assistance.

A few respondents mention the desire to engage in social work, where they can interact with diverse individuals and embrace everyone for who they are. Others suggest that being kind, polite, and actively participating in community initiatives would be essential aspects of their role. There is also an acknowledgment of the need to raise awareness about diversity and inclusion, although many still feel unsure about how they would specifically contribute.

Overall, while there is a general sense of willingness to promote diversity and inclusion, many young people are still exploring what that role might look like for them in the future.

In **Ireland**, there was a misunderstanding and low response rate to this question. Many young people were unsure of the question itself instead identifying roles which they felt had potential value in progressing diversity and inclusion which included teaching, information coordinator, councillor, policy maker and educator for diversity and inclusivity.

In the **Basque Country**, many young respondents indicated that they do not know what their ideal role would be in promoting diversity and inclusion. Some responses mention support between students and teachers, reporting unfair situations, or collaborating on equality and well-being.

Other respondents identified specific roles of significance to this proposition. Finally, some responses highlight the importance of active participation, involving VET staff to support those in need, and to share experiences.

In **Belgium**, young people imagined themselves in roles as advocates, mediators, and peer supporters. Several said they would like to share their own experiences to help others, while others hoped to lead awareness-raising activities or campaigns. Some envisioned being part of student councils or organising inclusion workshops. A small group also expressed the desire to help design fairer rules within their VET centres. A few respondents were unsure of how they could contribute, indicating a need for encouragement and structured opportunities.

In **Croatia**, most students do not know what their ideal role in promoting diversity and inclusion would look like in the future. Overall, responses show a mixture of practical and aspirational ideas, with a focus on supporting, advocating and creating an inclusive environment. The importance of equality, respect and understanding is a recurring theme.

## Professionals:

VET professionals in **Austria** envision their ideal roles in promoting diversity and inclusion as multifaceted and deeply impactful. Many express a desire to focus on their core competencies, particularly teaching, while also adopting a reflective approach that integrates and empowers all individuals, ensuring that no one is excluded unless they are unwilling to participate. They aspire to be mentors, listeners, and advisors, leading workshops that foster engagement and understanding.

A strong commitment to creating inclusive spaces is evident, with professionals aiming to ensure that everyone feels seen, heard, and valued, regardless of their background or perspective. They believe in actively celebrating diversity rather than merely accepting it, recognising that varied viewpoints enrich the learning environment and enhance creativity.

Some professionals highlight the importance of raising awareness, addressing inappropriate behaviour, and engaging in meaningful conversations that promote equality. They see themselves as supporters and advocates for inclusive practices, striving to embed these values within the organisational culture. Ultimately, they aim to model respectful interactions in all encounters and work towards a future where inclusion is so ingrained that it no longer needs to be a focal point of discussion.

In **Ireland**, professionals mentioned being part of a collaboration of educators who meet regularly to develop and refine inclusive approaches and are given protected time to do so. Professionals wish to co-create lesson plans, teaching plans, share resources, and take part in evaluating what works for different student groups.

In the **Basque Country**, respondents suggested different approaches where ideally their role was as agents of inclusion, promoting projects and strategies, while others emphasise the importance of simply embracing diversity without changing their behaviour. Several respondents mention the need to act with respect and empathy daily, beyond institutional actions while others suggest creating spaces for learning, guidance, and support to reinforce diversity.

Forward-looking these respondents reflect a belief that diversity is already being normalised and that, ideally, it would not be necessary to actively promote it in the future.

Of note, several participants indicate they do not know what role they could play in this area.

In **Belgium**, professionals saw themselves as mentors and facilitators of inclusive dialogue, wanting to create safe environments where young people feel free to express themselves. Many said they would like to be better equipped with tools and knowledge to support diversity. Some spoke of the need to advocate for structural changes, including more inclusive curricula and better representation. A few professionals mentioned the desire to co-develop strategies with young people and help shape institutional policies.

In **Croatia**, the professionals emphasised the importance of organising activities, workshops and seminars to promote diversity and inclusion. They mentioned roles such as educators, mentors and class teachers who can involve students with different abilities in various activities and specifically cater for students with learning difficulties. For example, one interviewee mentioned that he would like to hold seminars on diversity and inclusion at his school and at other schools, while another emphasised the role of a foreign language teacher who introduces students to diverse cultures. Several interviewees pointed to the need for stronger links between schools and employers to ensure that diversity and inclusion are not just theoretical concepts but are put into practice. They also emphasised the importance of raising awareness of differences and the conditions in which they arise. Some interviewees expressed a desire to get involved in creative areas, such as designing posters or organising literary events to celebrate diversity and raise awareness of inclusion. Others emphasised the role of personal example to show young people how to treat others and promote respectful behaviour.

### 5.6.6 Professionals: What kind of training or resources would you find helpful in better supporting diverse learners needs?

**Austrian** VET professionals express a strong desire for various training and resources to better support the needs of diverse learners. They advocate for the presence of dedicated staff, such as educators, social workers, and psychologists, in every classroom to provide comprehensive support. Workshops focusing on anti-discrimination, equality, and cultural competence are seen as essential, along with training that addresses specific issues related to mental health, LGBTQ+ awareness, and common learning difficulties.

There is a call for more individual coaching and practical, hands-on workshops that allow young people to engage with the material in a meaningful way. Professionals emphasise the importance of low-threshold offerings that are easily accessible and require minimal preparation, enabling them to implement strategies quickly and effectively. They also highlight the need for training that fosters awareness of diversity and discrimination, as well as inclusive communication practices.

Additionally, professionals suggest that working directly with affected individuals can provide valuable insights into their perspectives and challenges. They recognise the importance of external consultation and tailored training to address the unique needs of their learners. Overall, there is a clear demand for more time and resources to facilitate these initiatives, ensuring that all learners receive the support they require to thrive.

In **Ireland**, professionals are seeking team building packs, anti-racism tools and workshop materials, real world studies and case studies to learn from other educators.

In the **Basque Country**, respondents offered numerous suggestions to address these gaps. Many identified a need for specialised training; workshops and courses on inclusion, neurodiversity, conflict management, and inclusive pedagogies, were seen as essential. Others cited a need for additional resources and tools such as guides, inclusive teaching materials, and strategies for personalised learning are mentioned. Some of the professional respondents also identified psycho-emotional supports as significant to increasing awareness and support for students and teachers.

Cultural exchanges, trips, or activities to better understand the realities of others were also highlighted as potential opportunities while a need for greater investment of funds and time were required to allow for increased teacher, training and activities.

In **Belgium**, professionals expressed strong interest in interactive training sessions that go beyond theory and offer practical tools for real-life situations. They want resources that cover intercultural communication, trauma-informed approaches, anti-discrimination practices, and strategies for engaging marginalised learners. Several emphasised the importance of ongoing learning, such as regular workshops or peer exchange formats. Others requested access to expert guidance or case studies that reflect the complex realities of VET learners. A few also mentioned wanting institution-wide strategies, not just individual tools.

In **Croatia**, most experts emphasised the importance of workshops, seminars and interactive activities that are tailored to the needs of the individual. They suggested that these workshops should focus on empowerment, changing attitudes and providing practical examples of good practice. For example, one interviewee mentioned the need for workshops on changing roles

involving students with and without disabilities. Several respondents pointed to the need for funding, specialised equipment and the employment of education and rehabilitation professionals to support students with disabilities. They also emphasised the importance of training and educating teachers to better understand and respond to the diverse needs of students. For example, one respondent pointed out that training is essential for working with pupils with diverse types of difficulties, as the same approach does not apply to everyone. Some respondents emphasised the value of projects that enable encounters with other cultures, such as trips and exchange programmes. They also emphasised the importance of ongoing conversations, lectures and educational films to raise awareness of diversity and inclusion.

### 5.6.7 Professionals: How can the institution's administration play a more active role in promoting an inclusive culture?

In **Austria**, VET professionals believe that the institution's administration can play a crucial role in promoting an inclusive culture by actively embodying and implementing the institution's values and mission. They emphasise the importance of leading by example, making diversity visible, and establishing clear guidelines and objectives that prioritise inclusion. Providing adequate resources and fostering transparent communication are seen as essential steps in this process.

Moreover, professionals suggest that the administration should encourage participation and involvement from all stakeholders, creating a culture of learning and development where successes are celebrated. They highlight the need for the administration to actively support training initiatives and to address any instances of discrimination or inappropriate behaviour, thereby raising awareness and promoting understanding.

By embedding diversity and inclusion as strategic goals within the institution, the administration can cultivate an environment of respect and appreciation. This includes ensuring that all young people are given equal opportunities, particularly in recruitment processes, and that the administration remains responsive to ideas and suggestions from the community. Overall, a proactive and engaged administration is viewed as vital in fostering an inclusive culture that benefits everyone within the institution.

In **Ireland**, professionals called for more staff engagement with management, focused group sessions to critically exam the education settings practices.

In the **Basque Country**, professional respondents suggested clear policies and tangible resources as essential to the administrations role in promoting an inclusive VET environment with many suggesting the need to establish visible regulations, ongoing training, and effective coordination spaces. The importance of increasing the budgets allocated to diversity, to support this was also highlighted.

Some respondents criticised bureaucracy and highlight the need to move from rhetoric and protocols to concrete actions citing a need for practical and realistic approaches which were also visible and focused on awareness raising, citing potential campaigns, educational projects, and teacher training as tools to strengthen diversity.

Finally, these respondents identified the active participation of the entire educational community to manage and promote diversity and inclusion involving not only teachers but students, families, and external stakeholders.

In **Belgium**, professionals pointed out that administration must lead by example, adopting a clear and visible commitment to inclusion. Many said this includes setting expectations, allocating time and budget, and recognising inclusion as a core priority. Respondents suggested that leadership should listen more to young people and frontline staff, and act on their input. Several asked for the administration to embed diversity in the institutional vision, offer structured support, and publicly reinforce inclusive values. Some also noted the need for data collection and evaluation mechanisms to measure progress.

In **Croatia**, many respondents emphasised the importance of organising workshops, training and educational activities to raise awareness of diversity and inclusion. They suggested that school leaders should invite guest speakers, share examples of good practice and provide resources for these activities. For example, one interviewee pointed to the need for workshops tailored to individual needs, while another emphasised the importance of regular training and CPD for staff. Several respondents pointed out that school management should be open to new projects and ideas, support teachers working on inclusion and encourage activities that provide students with freedom of expression and a safe environment. They also emphasised the importance of including diverse students in school activities and providing resources to support these initiatives. Some interviewees pointed out that school leaders need to actively raise awareness of the importance of inclusion and create an environment where diversity is valued. They suggested that school leadership should be accountable and consider the needs of students to create a supportive and inclusive environment.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS & CONSIDERATIONS ON NATIONAL, TRANSNATIONAL, AND EUROPEAN LEVELS

The survey findings lead to several key conclusions regarding diversity and inclusion in educational settings (mostly focusing on VET).

### 6.1 KEY CONCLUSIONS

#### Generational Gaps

The interaction between youth and professionals in VET is shaped significantly by the age gap, which presents both challenges and opportunities. To enhance diversity and inclusion, stakeholders should consider the following:

**Foster Intergenerational Collaboration:** Create platforms for young and professional respondents to share experiences, ideas, and knowledge. This can help bridge the gap and promote mutual understanding.

**Tailor Communication Strategies:** Recognise the different communication styles and preferences of each group. Adapting approaches to suit both younger and older individuals can enhance engagement and collaboration.

**Address Outliers with Caution:** Be mindful of outliers in survey data and ensure that conclusions drawn reflect the majority's views. This will help in formulating strategies that are relevant and effective for the target demographic.

**Promote Lifelong Learning:** Encourage professionals to engage with contemporary trends and technologies that resonate with younger individuals, fostering a culture of continuous learning and adaptation.

By acknowledging the age dynamics and actively working to bridge the gap, VET programmes can create a more inclusive and effective learning environment that benefits all participants.

## Resource Limitations

A considerable number of educators feel under-resourced, which hampers their ability to effectively support students and implement inclusive practices. This suggests a need for increased funding and resources dedicated to diversity and inclusion initiatives. To enhance diversity and inclusion, stakeholders should consider the following:

**Impact on Student Support:** When educators lack the necessary resources, their ability to provide adequate support to students diminishes. This can lead to a less inclusive environment where the diverse needs of all students are not met. It is essential to recognise that effective support systems are crucial for fostering an inclusive educational experience.

**Need for Increased Funding:** The call for increased funding is paramount. Financial resources are essential for providing training, materials, and support services that promote diversity and inclusion. Allocating funds specifically for these initiatives can empower educators to implement effective strategies that cater to a diverse student body.

**Professional Development Opportunities:** Resource limitations often extend to professional development. Educators may not have access to training that equips them with the skills and knowledge necessary to implement inclusive practices. Investing in ongoing professional development can enhance educators' competencies and confidence in addressing diversity in the classroom.

**Collaboration and Community Engagement:** Under-resourced educators may struggle to engage with the community and collaborate with external organisations that could provide additional support. Building partnerships with local organisations, businesses, and community groups can help supplement resources and create a more robust support network for educators and students alike.

**Technology and Learning Materials:** In today's digital age, access to technology and diverse learning materials is crucial for inclusive education. Resource limitations can hinder the integration of technology in the classroom, which is essential for engaging

students and accommodating different learning styles. Ensuring that educators have access to up-to-date technology and resources is vital for fostering an inclusive learning environment.

**Advocacy for Policy Change:** The feelings of being under-resourced among educators should serve as a catalyst for advocacy at the policy level. Educators, administrators, and stakeholders should work together to advocate for policies that prioritise funding for diversity and inclusion initiatives. This collective effort can lead to systemic changes that benefit both educators and students.

**Monitoring and Evaluation:** It is important to establish mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of resource allocation towards diversity and inclusion initiatives. Regular assessments can help identify gaps in resources and inform future funding decisions, ensuring that resources are directed where they are most needed.

The resource limitations faced by educators present significant challenges to implementing effective diversity and inclusion practices. Addressing these limitations through increased funding, professional development, community engagement, and advocacy is essential for creating an inclusive educational environment. By prioritising resources dedicated to diversity and inclusion, educational institutions can empower educators to better support their students and foster a culture of inclusivity.

## Cultural Diversity

There is a widespread recognition of the lack of cultural diversity among staff, which can impact students' sense of belonging and representation. Efforts should be made to recruit and retain a more diverse teaching body to better reflect the student population. Here are several key considerations that arise from this observation:

**Impact on Student Belonging:** A homogenous teaching staff can lead to students feeling disconnected or underrepresented in their educational environment. When students do not see themselves reflected in their educators, it can negatively affect their sense of belonging and engagement. Promoting a diverse teaching body is essential for fostering an inclusive atmosphere where all students feel valued and understood.

**Representation Matters:** Representation in the classroom is crucial for students from diverse backgrounds. A diverse staff can provide role models for students, demonstrating that success is attainable regardless of cultural or ethnic background. This representation can inspire students and enhance their aspirations, contributing to their overall academic success.

**Recruitment Strategies:** To address the lack of cultural diversity, educational institutions should implement targeted recruitment strategies aimed at attracting a more diverse pool of candidates. This may involve outreach to underrepresented communities, partnerships with diverse organisations, and the establishment of scholarships or incentives for candidates from diverse backgrounds.

**Retention Efforts:** Recruitment alone is not sufficient; retaining diverse staff is equally important. Institutions should create supportive environments that promote the professional development and well-being of diverse educators. This can include mentorship programmes, affinity groups, and professional development opportunities that address the unique challenges faced by diverse staff members.

**Cultural Competency Training:** Providing cultural competency training for all staff can enhance understanding and appreciation of diversity within the school community. Such training can equip educators with the skills to engage effectively with students from various cultural backgrounds, fostering a more inclusive and respectful learning environment.

**Curriculum Development:** A diverse teaching body can contribute to the development of a more inclusive curriculum that reflects a variety of cultural perspectives. This can enrich the educational experience for all students, promoting critical thinking and a broader understanding of the world.

**Community Engagement:** Engaging with the local community can help schools better understand the cultural backgrounds of their students. Collaborating with community leaders and organisations can provide insights into the needs and aspirations of diverse student populations, informing recruitment and retention strategies.

**Monitoring and Evaluation:** Establishing metrics to monitor the diversity of staff and its impact on student outcomes is essential. Regular assessments can help identify areas for improvement and ensure that efforts to enhance cultural diversity are effective and aligned with the needs of the student population.

The lack of cultural diversity among staff is a significant concern that can adversely affect students' sense of belonging and representation. To create a more inclusive educational environment, it is imperative to prioritise the recruitment and retention of a diverse teaching body. By implementing targeted strategies, providing support, and fostering cultural competency, educational institutions can enhance the educational experience for all students and promote a culture of inclusivity and respect.

## Training and Professional Development

The findings indicate a strong demand for more comprehensive training and workshops focused on diversity and inclusion. Educators require the tools and knowledge to address discriminatory behaviour and foster inclusive environments effectively.

Here are key considerations:

**Essential Skills for Educators:** Educators need specific skills and knowledge to effectively address discriminatory behaviour and create inclusive environments. Comprehensive training programmes should cover topics such as cultural competency, implicit bias, conflict resolution, and strategies for fostering inclusivity. Equipping educators with these tools is crucial for promoting a positive and supportive learning atmosphere.

**Tailored Training Approaches:** Training should be tailored to meet the diverse needs of educators at various stages of their careers. New teachers may require foundational training, while experienced educators might benefit from advanced workshops that delve deeper into complex issues related to diversity and inclusion. Customised training can ensure that all staff members receive relevant and impactful professional development.

**Ongoing Professional Development:** Diversity and inclusion training should not be a one-time event but rather an ongoing process. Regular workshops, refresher courses, and opportunities for continuous learning can help educators stay informed about best

practices and emerging issues in diversity and inclusion. This commitment to ongoing professional development can foster a culture of continuous improvement within educational institutions.

**Practical Application:** Training programmes should emphasise practical application, providing educators with real-world scenarios and case studies to work through. Role-playing exercises, group discussions, and collaborative problem-solving can help educators develop the confidence and skills needed to address discriminatory behaviour effectively in their classrooms.

**Involvement of Diverse Voices:** It is essential to involve diverse voices in the development and delivery of training programmes. Engaging educators from various backgrounds and experiences can enrich the training content and ensure that it resonates with all staff members. This inclusivity in training design can enhance the relevance and effectiveness of the professional development offered.

**Evaluation and Feedback:** Establishing mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of training programmes is crucial. Gathering feedback from participants can help identify areas for improvement and ensure that the training meets the needs of educators. Regular assessments can also measure the impact of training on educators' practices and student outcomes.

**Creating a Supportive Culture:** For training to be effective, it must be supported by a broader institutional culture that values diversity and inclusion. Leadership should actively promote and prioritise these initiatives, demonstrating a commitment to fostering an inclusive environment. This cultural support can encourage educators to apply what they learn in training to their daily practices.

**Collaboration with External Experts:** Partnering with external organisations and experts in diversity and inclusion can enhance the quality of training programmes. These collaborations can provide access to specialised knowledge, resources, and best practices that may not be available internally. Engaging with community organisations can also help educators understand the specific needs of their student populations.

The strong demand for comprehensive training and workshops focused on diversity and inclusion highlights the critical need for educational institutions to invest in the professional development of their staff. By providing tailored, ongoing training that emphasises practical application and involves diverse voices, institutions can equip educators with the necessary tools to address discriminatory behaviour and foster inclusive environments. This commitment to professional development is essential for creating a supportive and equitable educational experience for all students.

## Informal Support Networks

Many students rely on informal networks for support regarding inclusion issues, indicating a gap in institutional support. Educational institutions should work to strengthen formal support systems while also recognizing the value of peer relationships. The considerations are as follows:

**Recognition of Peer Support:** The existence of informal support networks indicates that students value peer relationships and often turn to their friends or classmates for guidance and assistance. Educational institutions should acknowledge the importance of these relationships and consider how they can complement formal support systems.

**Identifying Gaps in Institutional Support:** The fact that students are seeking informal support suggests that existing institutional mechanisms may be inadequate or inaccessible. Institutions should conduct assessments to identify specific gaps in their support services related to diversity and inclusion, ensuring that students feel safe and supported within the formal structures.

**Strengthening Formal Support Systems:** While informal networks are valuable, educational institutions must work to strengthen their formal support systems. This could involve enhancing counselling services, creating dedicated diversity and inclusion offices, and ensuring that staff are trained to address inclusion issues effectively. A robust formal support system can provide students with reliable resources and guidance.

**Integration of Informal and Formal Support:** Institutions should explore ways to integrate informal support networks with formal systems. For example, training peer mentors or student leaders to provide guidance on inclusion issues can create a bridge between informal and formal support. This approach can empower students and enhance the overall support network available to them.

**Creating Safe Spaces:** Educational institutions should focus on creating safe spaces where students feel comfortable discussing inclusion issues. This can include support groups, forums, or workshops that encourage open dialogue about diversity and inclusion. By fostering an environment of trust, institutions can encourage students to seek help from both peers and formal support systems.

**Encouraging Student Engagement:** Institutions should actively encourage student engagement in the development and implementation of support initiatives. Involving students in decision-making processes can help ensure that support systems are relevant and responsive to their needs. This engagement can also empower students to take ownership of their inclusion efforts.

**Training for Staff and Students:** Providing training for both staff and students on the importance of informal support networks can enhance understanding and collaboration. Educators can be trained to recognise and value peer support, while students can be educated on how to effectively utilise both informal and formal resources.

**Monitoring and Evaluation:** Institutions should establish mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of both informal and formal support systems. Gathering feedback from students can help identify areas for improvement and ensure that support services are meeting their needs.

The reliance of students on informal support networks for inclusion issues underscores the need for educational institutions to strengthen their formal support systems while recognising the value of peer relationships. By integrating informal and formal support, creating safe spaces, and actively engaging students in the process, institutions can foster a more inclusive environment that meets the diverse needs of all students. This holistic approach can enhance the overall support network and contribute to a positive educational experience.

## Soft Initiatives

Celebrations of diversity are often perceived as performative rather than substantive. This highlights the need for more meaningful and consistent approaches to diversity that go beyond

one-time events and integrate inclusivity into the daily culture of educational institutions. The following considerations need to be considered:

**Moving Beyond Performative Actions:** The recognition that diversity initiatives can be seen as superficial suggests a need for institutions to critically evaluate their current practices. It is essential to move beyond one-time events or token gestures and instead focus on creating lasting change that genuinely promotes inclusivity.

**Integrating Inclusivity into Daily Culture:** For diversity to be meaningful, it must be woven into the fabric of the institution's daily culture. This involves embedding inclusive practices into all aspects of the educational experience, from curriculum development to classroom management and community engagement. Institutions should strive to create an environment where diversity is celebrated and respected on an ongoing basis.

**Consistency in Efforts:** Consistency is key to fostering a culture of inclusivity. Educational institutions should develop long-term strategies and initiatives that demonstrate a genuine commitment to diversity. This could include regular training sessions, ongoing community dialogues, and continuous assessment of policies and practices to ensure they align with inclusivity goals.

**Engaging the Entire Community:** Diversity initiatives should involve all members of the educational community, including students, staff, and parents. Engaging the entire community in discussions about diversity and inclusion can help create a shared understanding and commitment to these values. Collaborative efforts can lead to more meaningful and impactful initiatives.

**Measuring Impact:** Institutions should establish metrics to assess the effectiveness of their diversity initiatives. By measuring the impact of programmes and events, educational institutions can identify what works, what doesn't, and where improvements are needed. This data-driven approach can help ensure that efforts are substantive and lead to real change.

**Fostering Open Dialogue:** Creating spaces for open dialogue about diversity and inclusion is essential. Institutions should encourage discussions that allow for diverse perspectives and experiences to be shared. This can help to challenge superficial understandings of diversity and promote deeper engagement with the issues at hand.

**Training and Professional Development:** Providing ongoing training and professional development for staff is crucial for fostering a culture of inclusivity. Educators should be equipped with the knowledge and skills to address diversity issues effectively and to integrate inclusive practices into their teaching. This training should be continuous and evolve based on the needs of the community.

**Highlighting Authentic Stories:** Institutions should focus on sharing authentic stories and experiences related to diversity. Highlighting the voices of underrepresented groups can help to humanise diversity efforts and demonstrate the real impact of inclusivity on individuals and the community.

The perception of diversity initiatives as superficial underscores the need for educational institutions to adopt more meaningful and consistent approaches to inclusivity. By integrating diversity into the daily culture of the institution, engaging the entire community, measuring impact, and fostering open dialogue, schools can create a more authentic commitment to

diversity. This holistic approach can lead to a richer, more inclusive educational environment that benefits all members of the community.

## Emotional Safety and Belonging

The emphasis on emotional safety and belonging points to the importance of creating environments where all students feel valued and respected. This requires ongoing efforts to address subtle forms of exclusion and marginalisation. These considerations arise:

**Creating a Culture of Respect:** Establishing an environment where all students feel valued and respected is fundamental to fostering emotional safety. Institutions should promote a culture that prioritises respect for diversity, encouraging students and staff to appreciate and celebrate differences.

**Addressing Subtle Exclusion:** Subtle forms of exclusion and marginalisation can significantly impact students' emotional well-being. Educational institutions must actively identify and address these issues, which may manifest as microaggressions, implicit biases, or social isolation. Training staff and students to recognise and respond to these behaviours is essential for creating a more inclusive environment.

**Building Trusting Relationships:** Emotional safety is linked to the quality of relationships within the educational community. Educators should strive to build trusting relationships with students, characterised by open communication, empathy, and support. When students feel they can share their experiences and concerns without fear of judgement, they are more likely to feel a sense of belonging.

**Encouraging Student Voice:** Providing opportunities for students to express their thoughts and feelings is crucial for fostering emotional safety. Institutions should create platforms for student voice, such as forums, focus groups, or student councils, where students can share their experiences and contribute to discussions about inclusivity and belonging.

**Implementing Support Systems:** Establishing robust support systems, such as counselling services, peer mentoring programmes, and safe spaces, can help students navigate feelings of exclusion and marginalisation. These resources should be easily accessible and actively promoted within the school community to ensure that students know where to turn for help.

**Promoting Social-Emotional Learning (SEL):** Integrating social-emotional learning into the curriculum can equip students with the skills needed to navigate social dynamics and build positive relationships. SEL programmes can help students develop empathy, resilience, and conflict resolution skills, contributing to a more emotionally safe environment.

**Regular Assessment of Climate:** Conducting regular assessments of the school climate can help identify areas where emotional safety and belonging may be lacking. Surveys, focus groups, and feedback mechanisms can provide valuable insights into students' experiences and inform strategies for improvement.

**Involving Families and Communities:** Engaging families and communities in discussions about emotional safety and belonging can enhance the support network for

students. Schools should foster partnerships with parents and community organisations to create a holistic approach to inclusivity that extends beyond the classroom.

The emphasis on emotional safety and belonging underscores the importance of creating environments where all students feel valued and respected. By addressing subtle forms of exclusion, building trusting relationships, encouraging student voice, and implementing robust support systems, educational institutions can foster a culture of emotional safety. This commitment to inclusivity not only enhances students' well-being but also contributes to a more positive and productive learning environment for all.

## Systemic Change

The findings underscore the necessity for structural and cultural changes within educational institutions to achieve genuine inclusion. This includes better coordination, clear policies, and a commitment to continuous reflection and improvement in practices related to diversity.

In summary, the conclusions drawn from the survey findings highlight the urgent need for comprehensive strategies that address resource limitations, enhance training, promote cultural diversity, and foster genuine inclusion in educational settings. These are the considerations:

**Structural and Cultural Transformation:** Achieving genuine inclusion requires both structural and cultural changes within educational institutions. This means not only revising policies and procedures but also fostering a culture that values diversity and inclusion at all levels. Leadership must model inclusive behaviours and create an environment where all members of the community feel empowered to contribute to these efforts.

**Better Coordination Across Departments:** Effective inclusion strategies require coordination among various departments and stakeholders within the institution. This includes collaboration between administration, teaching staff, support services, and community partners. Establishing clear communication channels and collaborative frameworks can enhance the effectiveness of diversity initiatives and ensure a unified approach.

**Clear Policies and Guidelines:** Institutions must develop and implement clear policies that outline their commitment to diversity and inclusion. These policies should provide guidelines for addressing discrimination, promoting equity, and supporting underrepresented groups. Having well-defined policies can help create accountability and ensure that all members of the institution understand their roles in fostering an inclusive environment.

**Commitment to Continuous Reflection:** A commitment to continuous reflection and improvement is essential for sustaining systemic change. Educational institutions should regularly assess their practices, policies, and outcomes related to diversity and inclusion. This can involve gathering feedback from students, staff, and the community, as well as conducting regular evaluations of programmes and initiatives.

**Comprehensive Strategies:** The need for comprehensive strategies that address various aspects of inclusion is paramount. This includes tackling resource limitations, enhancing training for staff, promoting cultural diversity, and fostering emotional safety and belonging. A holistic approach ensures that all elements of the educational experience are considered and that efforts are interconnected.

**Engagement of All Stakeholders:** Engaging all stakeholders—students, educators, parents, and community members—is crucial for driving systemic change. Institutions should create opportunities for collaboration and input from diverse voices, ensuring that the perspectives and needs of all community members are considered in the development of inclusion strategies.

**Professional Development and Training:** Ongoing professional development and training for staff are vital for equipping educators with the knowledge and skills needed to implement inclusive practices effectively. Training should be comprehensive, addressing not only the theoretical aspects of diversity but also practical strategies for fostering an inclusive classroom environment.

**Resource Allocation:** Addressing resource limitations is essential for supporting systemic change. Educational institutions should allocate sufficient resources—financial, human, and material—to implement and sustain diversity and inclusion initiatives. This may involve seeking external funding, partnerships, or grants to enhance available resources.

The findings underscore the urgent need for systemic change within educational institutions to achieve genuine inclusion. By focusing on structural and cultural transformations, improving coordination, establishing clear policies, and committing to continuous reflection and improvement, institutions can create comprehensive strategies that effectively address resource limitations, enhance training, promote cultural diversity, and foster genuine inclusion. This holistic approach is essential for creating educational environments where all students feel valued, respected, and empowered to succeed.

## 6.2 ALIGNMENT WITH EU POLICIES AND STRATEGIES ON DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN VET

The conclusions and considerations drawn from the survey findings regarding diversity and inclusion in educational settings resonate with various EU policies and strategies aimed at promoting inclusivity in Vocational Education and Training (VET). Below, we explore how these findings align with existing EU frameworks, identify complementary aspects, and highlight areas that may require further attention.

### Generational Gaps

**Alignment with EU Policies:** The EU emphasises the importance of intergenerational learning and collaboration in its strategic frameworks, such as the European Education Area and the European Skills Agenda. These initiatives advocate for lifelong learning and the sharing of knowledge across generations.

**Complementary Aspects:** The EU's focus on fostering intergenerational dialogue aligns with the recommendation to create platforms for young and professional respondents to share experiences. This can enhance mutual understanding and collaboration in VET.

**Missing Elements:** While the EU promotes intergenerational learning, specific strategies to tailor communication approaches for different age groups in VET could be further

developed. More emphasis on adapting teaching methods to accommodate diverse generational perspectives may be beneficial.

## Resource Limitations

**Alignment with EU Policies:** The EU has recognised the need for adequate funding and resources to support diversity and inclusion in education through initiatives like the Erasmus+ programme and the European Social Fund. These funds aim to enhance educational quality and accessibility.

**Complementary Aspects:** The call for increased funding and professional development opportunities aligns with EU strategies that advocate for investment in teacher training and resources to support inclusive practices.

**Missing Elements:** While the EU provides funding opportunities, there may be a need for clearer guidelines on how institutions can effectively access and utilise these funds specifically for diversity and inclusion initiatives. Additionally, more emphasis on community engagement and partnerships could enhance resource allocation.

## Cultural Diversity

**Alignment with EU Policies:** The EU promotes cultural diversity and inclusion through various policies, including the European Framework for the Key Competences for Lifelong Learning, which emphasises the importance of intercultural competence.

**Complementary Aspects:** The emphasis on recruiting and retaining a diverse teaching body aligns with EU objectives to reflect the diversity of the student population in educational settings. The EU also supports initiatives that encourage cultural exchange and understanding.

**Missing Elements:** While the EU encourages cultural diversity, specific strategies for targeted recruitment and retention of diverse staff in VET could be further developed. More concrete actions and best practices for institutions to implement may be needed.

## Training and Professional Development

**Alignment with EU Policies:** The EU has established frameworks for continuous professional development, such as the European Training Strategy, which aims to enhance the skills of educators in addressing diversity and inclusion.

**Complementary Aspects:** The demand for comprehensive training and workshops on diversity and inclusion aligns with EU initiatives that promote ongoing professional development for educators. The EU's focus on lifelong learning supports the need for tailored training approaches.

**Missing Elements:** While the EU promotes professional development, there may be a need for more specific training modules focused on practical applications of diversity and inclusion strategies in VET. Additionally, involving diverse voices in training development could be further emphasised.

## Informal Support Networks

**Alignment with EU Policies:** The EU acknowledges the importance of peer support and community engagement in its policies, promoting collaborative learning environments.

**Complementary Aspects:** The recognition of informal support networks aligns with the EU's emphasis on creating inclusive educational environments that value peer relationships.

**Missing Elements:** The EU could further explore strategies for integrating informal support networks with formal systems in VET. Guidelines on how to effectively leverage peer support in educational settings may be beneficial.

## Superficial Initiatives

**Alignment with EU Policies:** The EU advocates for meaningful and sustainable approaches to diversity and inclusion, as seen in its commitment to the European Pillar of Social Rights, which emphasises the need for inclusive education.

**Complementary Aspects:** The call for moving beyond performative actions aligns with the EU's focus on creating lasting change in educational practices and policies.

**Missing Elements:** The EU could provide more concrete frameworks for assessing the impact of diversity initiatives in VET, ensuring that efforts are substantive and lead to real change.

## Emotional Safety and Belonging

**Alignment with EU Policies:** The EU promotes emotional well-being and a sense of belonging in educational settings through initiatives that focus on mental health and well-being in schools.

**Complementary Aspects:** The emphasis on creating a culture of respect and addressing subtle forms of exclusion aligns with the EU's commitment to fostering inclusive environments.

**Missing Elements:** While the EU addresses emotional well-being, more specific strategies for implementing robust support systems in VET could be developed. Guidelines for creating safe spaces and promoting social-emotional learning may be beneficial.

The survey findings and the desk research regarding diversity and inclusion in educational settings align well with EU policies and strategies aimed at promoting inclusivity in VET. While there are many complementary aspects, there are also areas that require further development, such as tailored communication strategies, clearer guidelines for accessing funding, targeted recruitment practices, and specific training modules. By addressing these gaps, educational institutions can enhance their alignment with EU policies and create more inclusive environments that benefit all students.

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