



A Guide to Promoting Equality, Diversity, and Social Inclusion in Tourism and Hospitality- Update 2026



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Introduction



Training and skilling, particularly the reskilling and upskilling of employees, have been key priorities for various organisations in the European tourism and hospitality sector. Over the past decade, the industry's growth has reinforced its position as one of the most thriving in Europe. The sector has been responsible for the employment of 12.5 million jobs in the European Union [1] and generates economic growth and social development at local, regional and national levels.

A key driver for this skilling effort is the Pact for Skills [2], an initiative designed to strengthen education and develop sectoral collaboration across the European Union. Guided by the European Pillars of Social Rights [3] and other relevant policies, this handbook aims to provide practical information and tools to promote training and skilling for Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI).

EDI training presents multiple benefits for all sub sectors within tourism and hospitality. For example, companies that embrace diversity observe improved employee performance, workplace well-being, job satisfaction, staff retention, productivity, and innovation [4]. Diverse organisations are also more likely to outperform non-diverse ones in terms of profitability. More importantly, EDI contributes to social development, creates opportunities for formerly marginalised groups, and fosters a sense of belonging for all.

[1] Eurostat (2023)

[2] European Commission (2020)

[3] European Commission (2017)

[4] McKinsey (2022); Wang et al. (2023); Kossek et al. (2022); Emidy et al. (2024); Chaudhry et al. (2021); Akpa et al. (2021)



Within this context, EDI training is essential for the future of the industry as it helps attract and retain a resilient and qualified workforce. Advancing the inclusion of minorities is particularly important given the diverse nature of the industry. Additionally, it is crucial to tackle the challenges that hinder the industry's progress toward inclusion by, for example, supporting workers with disabilities, removing barriers to women's career advancement, promoting intercultural awareness, addressing unconscious bias, and combating discrimination and underrepresentation.

Changes such as embracing EDI require a shift in organisational culture, which can be challenging to achieve. Additionally, developing new practices demands effort, investment, and human resources. With this handbook, the Pact for Next Tourism Generation Skills ([PANTOUR](#)) consortium provides practical tools to support small and medium-sized organisations (SMEs) in tourism and hospitality to develop EDI skills and practices. The tools and resources aim to improve understanding of how to achieve equality and promote inclusion within a diverse workforce. It includes a step-by-step methodology for creating a change management plan and developing an EDI strategic plan for organisations. The handbook also provides best practice case studies from tourism and hospitality organisations across Europe, providing real-world insights and examples of effective strategies that can be replicated across various tourism and hospitality subsectors.

Understanding EDI

In recent years, human resources specialists in the private and public sectors have focused their attention on EDI education and training initiatives, aligned with organisations' changing core values and the world's ever-evolving work practices. Thus, training for EDI has become essential in workplaces aiming to create a fairer and more equitable environment.

It is important to define what EDI means in this handbook:

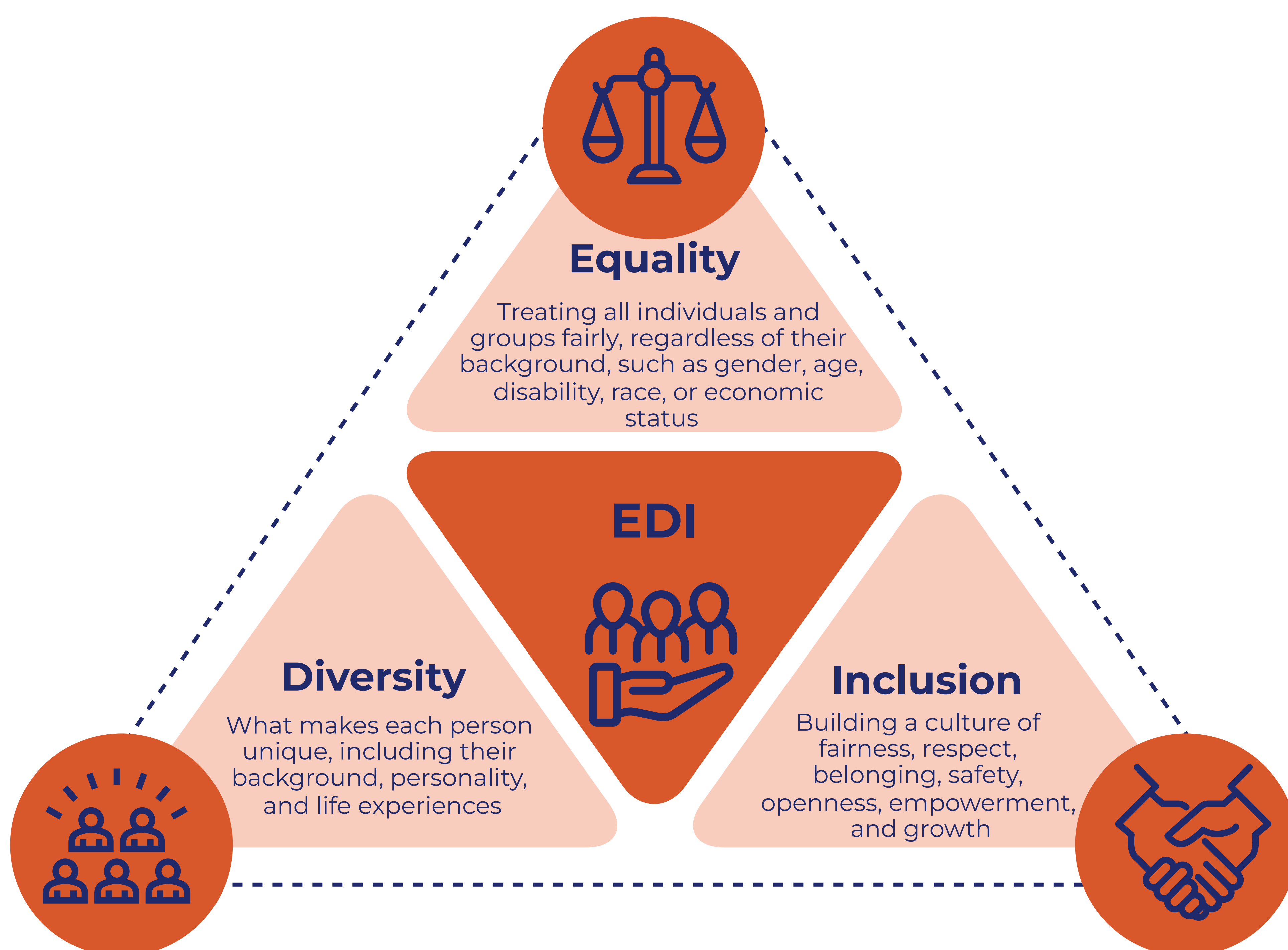


Figure 1: EDI Definition [5]

Equality involves providing employees with the same opportunities regardless of their individual characteristics. Diversity means valuing unique differences and promoting the representation of all people in the workplace. Inclusion focuses on enabling staff members to contribute meaningfully to the organisation while enhancing their experiences. Integrating EDI into tourism and hospitality is key to developing a sustainable future for stakeholders, creating multiple positive outcomes for the sector, as detailed in the next section.

Why EDI Matters in Tourism

The previous sections have already highlighted some of the key benefits of EDI which are especially relevant to the tourism and hospitality industry. Research on the topic has underscored the importance of inclusiveness training for the workforce.

A key characteristic of the industry is its diverse workforce and customer base [6]. Developing policies and inclusive practices to recognise diversity and uphold dignity and fairness is key to building a more equitable workplace and essential for the sector’s social and economic growth.

Tourism and hospitality businesses are also increasingly focused on developing sustainable practices such as incorporating corporate social sustainability goals, enhancing well-being in the communities, and involving employees in the organisation’s activities and values [7]. These themes, identified through research, highlight EDI as an important driver of change in the sector. Examples of these studies are provided in Figure 2:



Figure 2: EDI Recent Topics of Study in the Tourism and Hospitality Sector [8]

[6]Thompson (2013)

[7] Dangi & Petrick (2021); Saarinen (2021; Camilleri (2013)

[8] Russen et al (2023); Tracey et al (2023); Mooney (2020); Ali et al. (2022); Guillet et al. (2019); Kim et al. (2022); Wang & Cheung (2024); Baum (2018); Zhou et al. (2022); Mahoharan (2024); Kalargyrou & Volis (2014); Baum & Hai (2020); Zhou et al. (2022); Liu-Lastres et al. (2023); Claudio-Quiroga et al (2022); Markose et al (2023); Dangy & Petrick (2021); Saarinen (2021); Camilleri (2013)



Studies also highlight how promoting an inclusive workplace brings multiple benefits, such as:



Figure 3: Benefits of EDI in Tourism and Hospitality [9]

It is widely recognised that industry stakeholders are adopting new approaches. This includes development of supportive policies and inclusive practices backed up by training programmes. In other words, the studies recognise EDI's importance to building a more equitable workplace.

EDI Education and Training in Tourism and Hospitality

EDI education and training are essential for developing best practices in the workplace, as they raise awareness and help combat behaviours such as stereotyping, bullying, and unconscious bias. Training is also critical to promote a stronger sense of belonging among employees and improve their engagement.

Implementing EDI training is essential for several reasons:

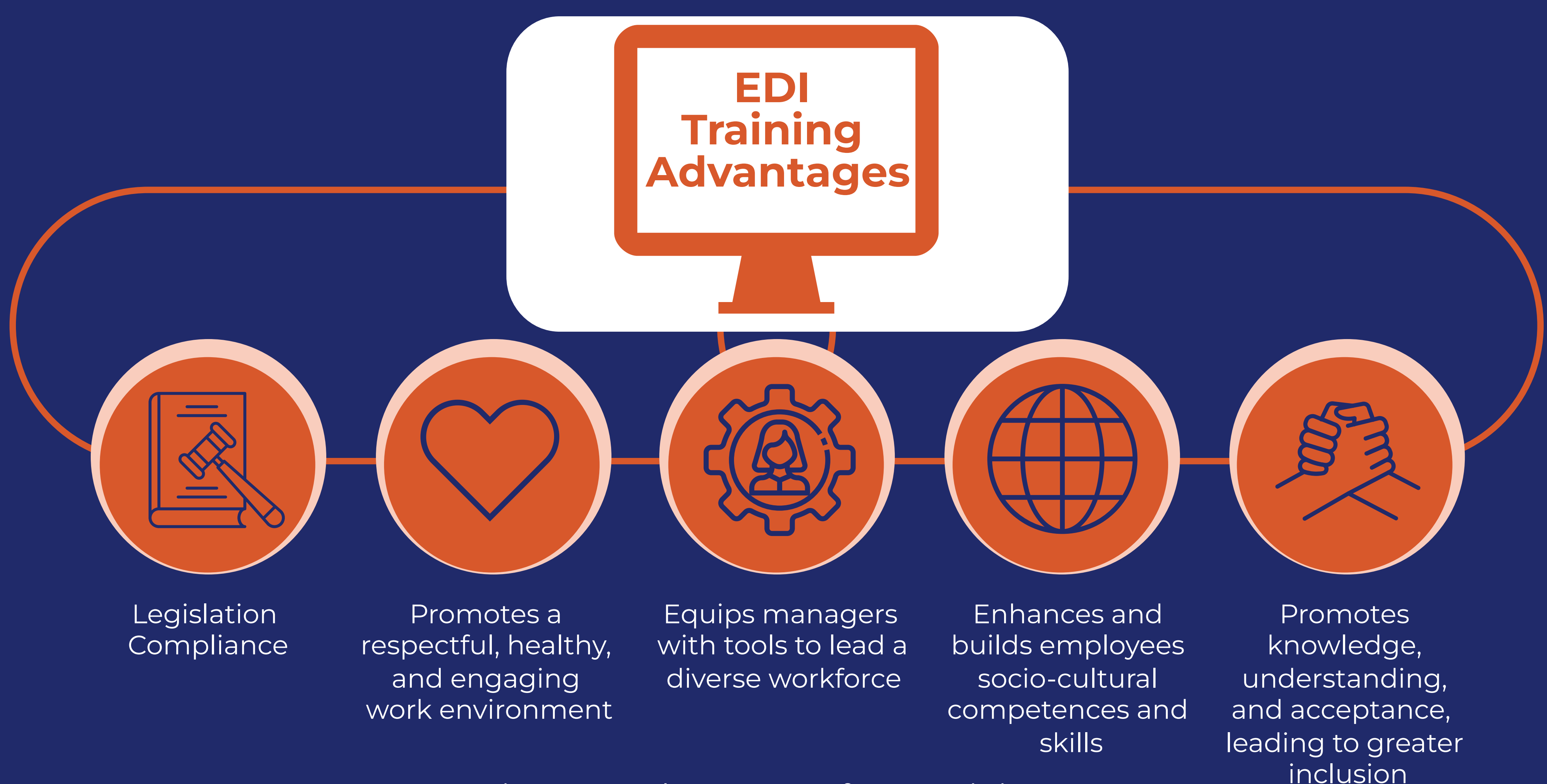


Figure 4: Advantages of EDI Training

Legislation compliance: EDI training helps organisations comply with legal requirements, protecting workers from discrimination. It also promotes ethical behaviours, which are important for building dignity and respect in the workplace.

Promotes a respectful, healthy, and engaging work environment: EDI training ensures employees understand their rights and responsibilities while aligning with the organisation's values. Additionally, it improves mental and health well-being and promotes a supportive work environment.

Equips managers with tools to lead a diverse workforce: EDI training equips managers with the necessary knowledge to lead employees in a respectful and responsible manner. This, in turn, provides an understanding of different dimensions of diversity while promoting dialogue and solutions for problems that may arise in the workplace.

Enhances and builds employees' socio-cultural competencies and skills: EDI training helps employees identify, understand, and recognise differences, biases, and needs while building social competencies such as cultural intelligence, intercultural competence, and collaboration.

Promotes knowledge, understanding, and acceptance, leading to greater inclusion: EDI training encourages employees to acknowledge differences and develop empathy while promoting acceptance and true inclusion. It further nurtures equity by challenging discrimination and creating a more inclusive work environment.

EDI Training and Research Topics

PANTOUR's research identified existing gaps and needs in EDI training and curricula within the tourism and hospitality sectors across Europe. Firstly, a survey was sent to employees across various tourism and hospitality subsectors, asking about the EDI training they had received in the past five years and the types of training they would like to receive. In addition, experts from higher education, vocational education and consultancy training organisations were interviewed to explore the EDI training landscape. The following figures outline the key takeaways.

PANTOUR's Key takeaways: Undertaken Training

Figure 5 shows that, in the last 5 years, most organisations have trained their employees in Conflict Management, Cultural & Intercultural Awareness, and Accessibility & Disability Awareness. On the other hand, the EDI training that was offered the least was Neurodiversity Awareness & Inclusion, LGBTQ+ Awareness, and EDI in Recruitment.



Figure 5: Most and Least Delivered EDI Training Courses

PANTOUR's Key takeaways: Training Needs

When asked what EDI training they would like to receive, employees expressed strong interest in participating in Conflict Management, Mental Health Awareness, and Creating a Culture of Dignity & Respect at work. Conversely, employees showed less interest in participating in LGBTQ+ Awareness, Gender Equality, and Neurodiversity Awareness & Inclusion courses.

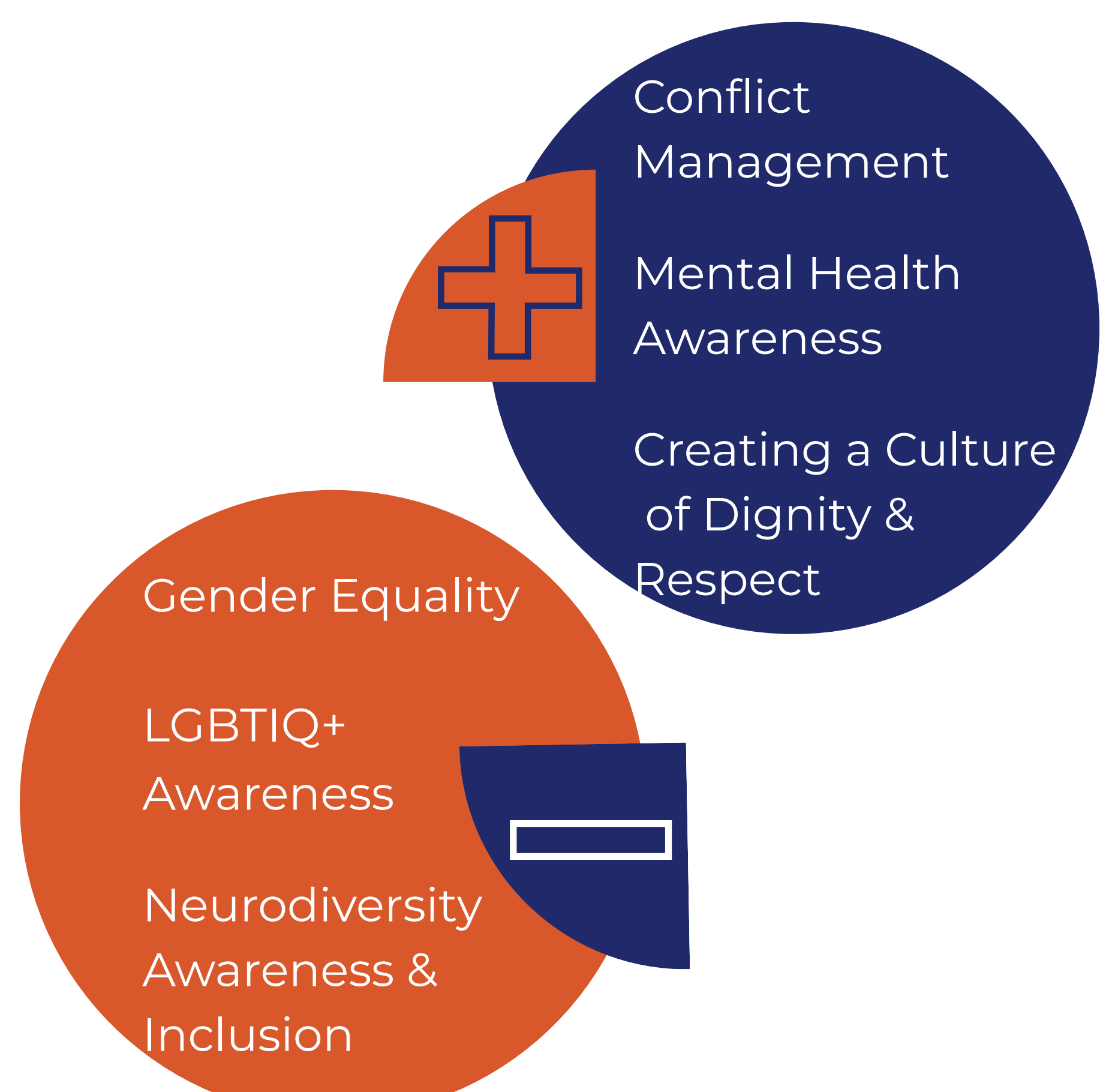


Figure 6: Training Courses with the Highest and Lowest Levels of Interest

PANTOUR's Key takeaways: Interviews

Educators shared their perspectives on the EDI training landscape in various EU countries. Five themes were identified, as seen in the figure below:



Figure 7: Identified Key Points of Interviews with Educators

In summary, experts emphasise the need for EDI skills and training from both a client and HR perspective, given their diverse workforce and customer base in the sector. EDI is being incorporated into curricula at varying degrees across European countries. These are not stand-alone modules but form part of different programmes and training courses. Barriers to EDI training in the sector include resistance to change, the allocation of resources, societal barriers and the lack of educators and trainers. However, these barriers can be overcome with legislation and organisational and cultural practices. As a key takeaway from interviews, the implementation of policies and practices is an enabler of change and a crucial starting point. A consistent focus on EDI skills development in the sector will advance social justice and bring more equal opportunities, intercultural awareness and respect in the workplace.



Tools and Resources for Integrating EDI in SMEs

Training and education are key to developing EDI practices in the workplace. Successfully developing EDI strategies requires administrative, financial, technological and personnel resources. It also demands a culture shift. This includes building an inclusive culture, establishing sustainable social initiatives, and cultivating responsible and inclusive leadership and management practices. This handbook offers tools and resources to help develop plans and integrate EDI practices and policies in the workplace, offering practical insights for developing change.

Developing a Change Management Plan



To integrate change and EDI practices into the workplace, it is important to plan, identify potential obstacles, develop clear communication, understand what can be addressed and develop a consistent monitoring system. A change management plan is crucial for tourism businesses because it helps service providers to innovate, offer a better customer experience, and adapt to challenges to increase competitiveness [10].

Below are the important steps to develop a change management plan in the workplace:

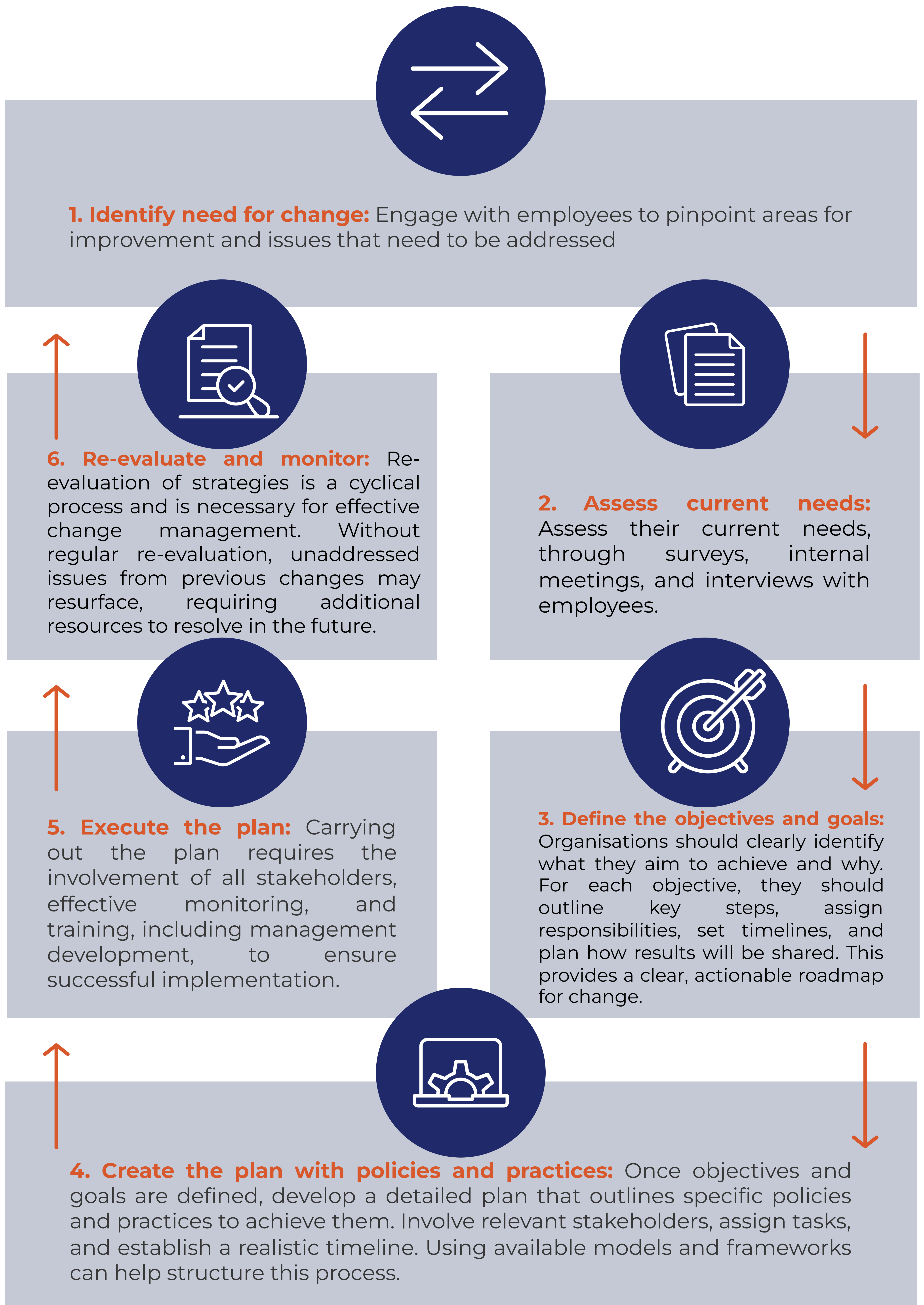


Figure 8: Steps to Develop a Change Plan in the Workplace

Adopting a change management plan with the steps listed above is essential to develop EDI in organisations. Additionally, it is important to define key principles when developing the plan. Figure 9 provides these practical tips:



Figure 9: Elements for Developing a Plan [11]

With a plan, potential obstacles can be identified, a clear communication strategy can be created to benefit the organisation, and misunderstandings about the why, how, and who is responsible for these changes can be addressed. Potential risks can also be recognised, with effective mitigation strategies to improve performance.

Developing an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan

When creating a change management plan, it is critical to concurrently develop a strategic plan. Addressing existing inequalities, developing fairness practices, and implementing actions are essential to building a sense of belonging in the workplace.

Key questions to ask before developing this strategic plan are:

- Why should the organisation invest in EDI initiatives?
- What are the opportunities and benefits of incorporating this strategic plan?
- How can the organisation integrate the strategic plan in their day-to-day operations?
- How can the organisation monitor progress?

With the chosen methodology and a change management plan in place, some useful tools can be used to assess how EDI can be promoted in the workplace:



Figure 10: Approaches to Assessing EDI needs

Strategic plans may have different formats, but usually include:

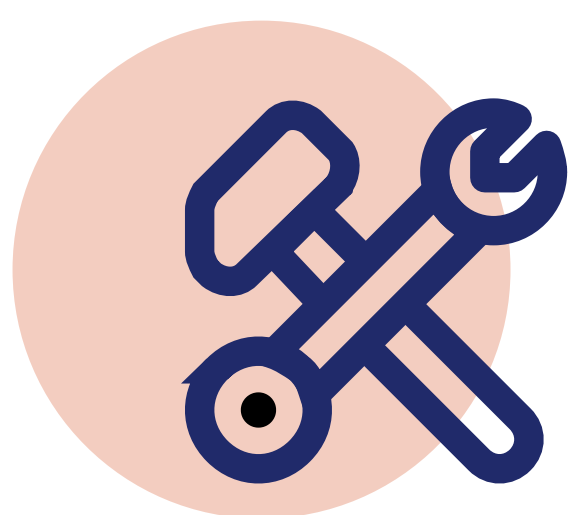
- **An introduction:** a brief overview of the mission and vision for developing the plan;
- **A self-assessment:** reflection based on organisations' SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis, data collection, and lessons learned from previous experiences in developing and planning EDI practices in the workplace;
- **Goals, strategies, and metrics:** essential to understand the success of the strategies and organisation's goals;
- **An implementation plan:** document for developing the strategies and achieving goals [12]

A useful tool for developing an EDI strategic plan in the workplace is a self-audit questionnaire. This questionnaire helps identify areas for improvement and the actions needed:

Table 1: Example of EDI Self-Audit Questionnaire^[13]

Questions	Current Practices	Areas for Improvement	Action
Are the values of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion recognised by your organisation?	We recognise these values in our mission statement	Increase the visibility of commitment by stating it clearly on the website, printed materials and internal/external communications	Work on an EDI policy linked to our strategy and mission to reinforce our commitment in communications around all programmes.

[12] Sarran et al (n.d.)
 [13] Arts Council Ireland (n.d.)



Formulating and implementing an EDI strategic plan is a process that is crucial for embedding inclusive practices in organisations.

Table 2: EDI Sample Plan [14]

Actions	Level of Priority	Timescale	Resources Needed	Team Members
1. Inclusive Hiring				
2. Provide training for EDI needs				
3. Create promotional content/marketing embedding diversity and inclusion				
4. Provide accessible information on the website				
5. Engage with local communities to understand needs				
6. Develop an 'EDI champions' programmes				
7. Develop an employee resource group for shared identities				
8. Develop a calendar to celebrate the diversity of the employees				
9. Promote transparent communication on promotion decisions and pay equity				
10. Develop an inclusive language guide				

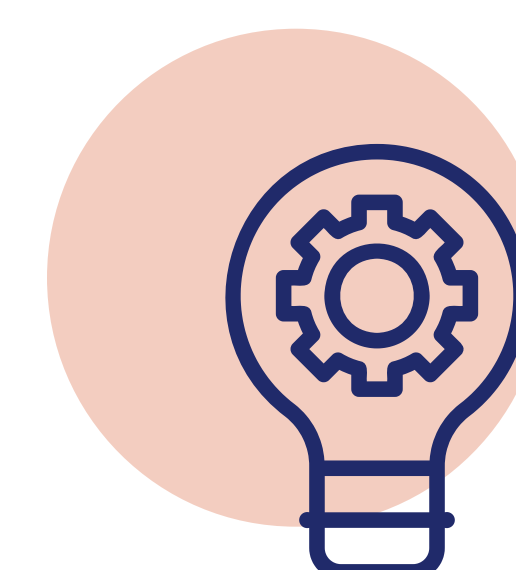
[14] Arts Council Ireland (n.d.).

Implementation Roadmap

Effective EDI implementation in tourism and hospitality organisations should be sequenced to reflect realistic resourcing, operational pressures, and the time required for cultural change. The following phased roadmap provides a realistic framework that organisations can adapt according to their size, maturity, and capacity. The roadmap (Table 3) is grounded in Lewin's (1947) foundational three-step model and adapted for modern organizational contexts according to various contemporary authors [15].

Table 3: Roadmap for EDI Implementation

Phase	Timeframe	Primary Focus	Key Actions	Expected Outcomes
Phase 1: Foundation & Quick Wins	0–6 months	Establish commitment and build internal awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct EDI self-assessment • Update policies and inclusive language • Deliver introductory awareness training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear organisational direction • Staff awareness raised • Early visible improvements
Phase 2: Structural Integration	6–18 months	Embedding EDI into core systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate EDI into recruitment and HR processes • Conduct physical and digital accessibility audits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved recruitment practices • Increased accessibility
Phase 3: Systemic Embedding & Continuous Improvement	18+ months	Long-term cultural and strategic alignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Align EDI with organisational KPIs • Establish reporting and feedback systems • Annual review and adaptation cycle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EDI embedded in strategy and culture • Sustainable impact • Continuous improvement mechanisms in place



Digital Accessibility in Tourism Practice

Under the European Accessibility Act (EAA) and specifically Directive (EU) 2019/882 (2019), digital services must be accessible to persons with disabilities, ensuring they can perceive, understand, navigate and interact with digital content independently. In practice, this means websites, apps, booking systems and digital tools must be designed to remove barriers. Digital accessibility is particularly relevant in tourism due to the ageing population. Older travellers and employees may experience age-related changes in vision, hearing, mobility or cognition, which can create barriers when using digital platforms.

Organisations can take the following actions [16]:


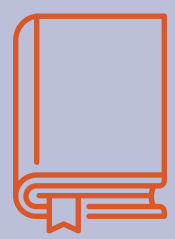

- Ensure screen reader compatibility in reservation systems and websites (clear structure, labelled forms, accessible navigation)
- Improve readability and usability through larger fonts, high contrast colour schemes and simplified navigation
- Train front-line staff to support guests using digital check-in kiosks, booking platforms and mobile tools
- Provide captions and audio descriptions in digital training and online content to support diverse sensory needs



Additional Tools and Resources for embedding EDI practices in organisations

This section outlines readily available tools and resources designed to help SMEs establish EDI practices and policies. These include self-assessment tools to identify gaps in EDI within organisations and guidance on implementing change. The list also features exercises and training courses to strengthen EDI initiatives. All these resources are free of charge and can be accessed online. The section concludes with case studies that showcase hospitality and tourism organisations that have successfully incorporated EDI into their operations.

Table 3: Tools Icon Meanings

Icon	Explanation
	Toolkits/ Training Resources
	Reading Resources
	Connecting Platforms

NTG/PANTOUR Toolkit (English)- Access: [Toolkit](#)

A number of tools and frameworks to guide SMEs on acquiring green, social and digital skills.

Failte Ireland's Accessible Toolkit (English) – Access: [Toolkit for Inclusive Tourism](#)

Toolkit designed for SMEs to create welcoming visitor experiences and support employees of all abilities through inclusive practices.

PANTOUR Sectoral Skills Intelligence Monitor (SSIM)- Access: [SSIM](#)

The Sectoral Skills Intelligence Monitor (SSIM), developed by PANTOUR, can be a useful tool for individuals, teams, businesses or sectors to evaluate skills gaps and current needs and developing actions regarding training.

Asperger JobLinks Platform (Greek) – Access: [Connecting Platform](#)

Platform connecting autistic individuals or other impairments with job opportunities in Greece with the guidance of a mentor that oversees their integration.

The Academy for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (Bulgarian) Access: [Inclusion of Women Courses](#)

Over 35 training courses to encourage women's professional development in SMEs.

The Open Doors Initiative's Inclusive Employment Toolkit and Inclusive Recruitment Toolkit (English) – Access: [Toolkit for Inclusive Recruitment](#) & [Toolkit for Inclusive Employment](#)

These toolkits aim to increase recruitment and retention of marginalised groups in SMEs.

  **The Finnish Institute of Occupational Health (Finnish and English) – Access: [Self-Assessment Tool](#)**

The Diversity and Inclusion Self-Assessment Tool aid SMEs to recognise areas to enhance diversity and inclusion with a Matrix and User Manual.

  **Village4All (Italian) – Access: [Accessibility Toolkit](#)**

Toolkit providing guidelines, certified training courses, and manuals to provide accessibility and inclusivity.

 **The Cornerstone OnDemand Foundation (English)- Access: [Inclusivity Training Courses](#)**

Portal offering over 500 free Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Training Courses to help SMEs create inclusive environments.

 **Diversity within Small and Medium Sized Businesses – Access: [Best Practices and Approaches for Moving Ahead \(English\) EDI Reports](#)**

European report providing guidance, exercises, strategies, and resources for SMEs to implement diversity and inclusion practices within their operations.

 **The Adecco Foundation Training on Diversity and Disability (Spanish) – Access: [Disability Awareness Courses](#)**

Online training to challenge prejudices that prevent people with disabilities from entering the workforce.

 **Diversiteit in Bedrijf, The Social and Economic Council of the Netherlands (SER) (Dutch) – Access: [Knowledge Platform](#)**

Case studies and reports focusing on recruitment, policies and guides, among others to enhance the inclusion of people from diverse groups.

 **Berkeley's Change Management Toolkit (English) – Access: [Toolkit](#)**

Tools, strategies, and techniques to plan, lead, communicate, and overcome challenges associated with changes in organisations.

 **Inclusion and Diversity Guidelines, World Travel & Tourism Council (English) – Access: [Guidelines](#)**

The WTTC offers guidelines formulated from experts' insights and frameworks to embed EDI initiatives and policies.

 **Intrama Consultoria training resources (Spanish) – Access: [Inclusive Talent Management Courses](#)**

Training resources and tools to promote inclusive talent management with an option for diversity management certification from Universidad Nebrija.

Best Practices Case-Studies in Tourism and Hospitality

Best practices are successful initiatives that can be adapted and applied in different environments. They provide valuable insights and guidance for organisations seeking change. Since they are not one-size-fits-all and are influenced by factors like culture and context, it is important to assess and refine them for each unique setting. However, they can still serve as a useful starting point for implementing change.

The PANTOUR consortium has collected 31 best practices case-studies in tourism and hospitality from eight different countries and five sub sectors (Tour Operators, Accommodation, Food and Beverage, Destination Management Organisations, Visitor's Attractions) covering the following topics:



Figure 11: Themes of Collected Best Practices

The 31 examples of best practice case studies can be found in the [longer version of this handbook](#) on the PANTOUR website. The selected examples below highlight how tourism and hospitality businesses and SMEs addressed various challenges in training and developing EDI practices, offering valuable insights into innovative strategies that have proven successful in their contexts. These examples also contribute to the progress of the UN Sustainable Goals in creating a more just, welcoming, and sustainable industry.

Fostering Social Inclusion

Project Viajando al Futuro, Tipi, Laciana, Spain (Basque Country)

Subsector: Destination Management Organisation

Key Information

Viajando al Futuro (Travelling to the Future) is a project founded by Tipi, an organisation specialised in designing services for public administration across various sectors. The organisation works with city councils, provincial councils, governments, universities and development agencies in creating an innovative approach of developing user-centred services through co-creation.

Development of Best Practices

The project promotes sustainable tourism in underdeveloped regions of Spain by developing strategic development frameworks to improve tourism practices. It collaborates with local organisations, administrations, and marginalised groups to identify barriers, define challenges, allocate resources, and co-create workshops with stakeholders to design solutions. The project was piloted in Laciana and is developing a replicable model for implementing sustainable tourism strategies in other rural regions of Spain.

Enablers

- Strong sense of community in the region
- Municipal support for social and cultural activities
- Local tourism infrastructure for developing new strategies

Barriers

- Population decline in the region
- Unemployment
- Limited involvement of younger people



Outcomes & future directions

The initiative positively influenced customer experiences, though its long-term impact requires further evaluation. Participants' feedback will be presented at future events as an example for tourism and socio-economic development projects.

Links with United Nations Sustainable Development Goals



Source: free copyright from Pexels.com by [Andrea Piacquadio](#)

Inclusion of Employees and Tourists with Disabilities

Academica-VUM, Varna
University of Management and
International College, Bulgaria

Subsector: Food & Beverage

Key Information

Academica-VUM is a joint initiative between Varna University of Management and International College Ltd, financially supported by the Agency of People with Disabilities. Since 2020, it offers a restaurant and catering services promoting inclusive employment for individuals with diverse backgrounds.

Development of Best Practices

Academica-VUM seeks to provide long-term employment for individuals with disabilities. It achieves this by aligning the needs of people with disabilities with the university's vision and mission of integrating vulnerable groups into society. The programme provides employment and professional training in culinary arts and restaurant settings, personal development, and professional growth opportunities tailored to each person's needs and abilities. This approach helps guide the career paths of people with disabilities. Additionally, a team of social workers, a psychologist, and four mentors with expertise in different fields support their adaptability.

Enablers

- Financial support from Agency with Disabilities
- Students' involvement
- University's ability to create opportunities through community participation

Barriers

- Lack of prior experience
- Workforce training
- Continued financial support



Outcomes & future directions

Support networks have effectively integrated employment opportunities for people with disabilities, showing potential for wider adoption in Europe. It will continue staff training through job rotation and is exploring public support and co-financing to ensure long-term sustainability amid potential funding cuts.

Links with United Nations Sustainable Development Goals



Source: Photo with copyrights provided by Academica-VUM

Inclusion of Employees and Tourists with Disabilities

Albergo Etico Roma, Italy.

Subsector:
Accommodation

Key Information

Albergo Etico Roma is a socially responsible, non-profit small hotel within a network promoting social inclusion and accessibility in Italy. As the second of its kind in the country, it employs 20 people, including 12 with disabilities, creating an authentically inclusive space by integrating individuals with physical, intellectual, and sensory disabilities into its management.

Development of Best Practices

Albergo Etico promotes workforce integration for individuals with disabilities through employment opportunities and training. Its Academy of Independence programme offers three years of training to help participants achieve full autonomy. For 12 to 18 months, students work alongside industry experts in hands-on coaching, learning all hotel and restaurant tasks within an environment known as the 'artificial nest'. During this time, students live in the staff accommodation to strengthen teamwork and cooperation. Upon completion, they are encouraged to apply skills in their 'own nests', to reinforce independence.

Enablers

- Founded by a Roman hotelier family with industry expertise
- Environment builds strong solidarity
- Fosters trainee's connection and sense of belonging.

Barriers

- Traditional industry limitations
- Employees' personal challenges

Outcomes & future directions

The Academy of Independence helps workers build autonomy, confidence, and motivation as they integrate into society. It has also encouraged entrepreneurs to hire people with disabilities and will continue training students with impairments while offering employment.



Links with United Nations Sustainable Development Goals



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Inclusion of Employees and Tourists with Disabilities

Casa Rural Rosalia, Spain

Subsector:
Accommodation

Key Information

Casa Rural Rosalia is an accessible, automated rural accommodation in Cardeña, Andalusia, Spain designed to host individuals with severe mobility challenges. Since 2001, this micro-enterprise dedicated to inclusion aims to ensure a barrier-free environment, both physically and socially.

Development of Best Practices

Casa Rosalia was the first fully accessible accommodation in Andalusia, and one of the first in Spain, promoting inclusive rural tourism. The property functions as an 'intelligent property' in a restored century-old farmer's house, and hosts tourists with physical and sensory disabilities to enjoy the region's attractions. The property was restored with assistive technologies, motion sensors, automated light switches and door, a crane and shower chair and ramps while preserving the original architecture. Over the years, Casa Rosalia's reputation solidified, helping drive the development of inclusive public initiatives in the region. Today, Cardeña is considered a leading destination for individuals with disabilities.

Enablers

- Founder's personal experience with mobility challenges
- Barrier-free and automated rooms
- Specialised training for renovation

Barriers

- Absence of specific regulations for technology and architecture
- Limited online promotion in 2001, resulting in low visibility
- Low confidence

Outcomes & future directions

Casa Rosalia improved user satisfaction, earning high ratings and positioning itself as one of the country's top accessible accommodations. Its pioneering approach shows inclusive tourism is achievable by addressing challenges and remains a benchmark for EDI in the region.



Links with United Nations Sustainable Development Goals



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Inclusion of Employees and Tourists with Disabilities

InOut Hostel, Spain

Subsector:
Accommodation

Key Information

Founded in 2004, InOut Hostel was created by the NGO Icària Iniciatives Socials as a special employment centre. It offers 250 dormitories and is recognised as the first hotel in Europe with a workforce where 90% of its 56 employees have physical or mental disabilities. The NGO extended its employment initiatives into the tourism sector through this project.

Development of Best Practices

Icària Iniciatives Socials conducted market research to develop a tourism project centred around a hostel in Barcelona and created a marketing plan including a logo, catalogue, and organisational structure to promote InOutHostel. Employees with disabilities received professional training tailored to departments such as reception, housekeeping, restaurant, and maintenance. Operating for over 20 years, the hostel demonstrates how people with disabilities can successfully work and compete on equal terms within the tourism industry.

Enablers

- Strong values of teamwork and shared responsibility
- Employee ownership enhancing engagement and belonging
- Inclusive culture with mutual staff support

Barriers

- Need for workplace adaptations and accessibility tools for diverse disabilities
- Limited recruitment capacity restricting further hiring and expansion

Outcomes & future directions

InOut Hostel receives positive feedback, showing that its social mission delivers strong service quality. The initiative also highlights how inclusive employment can help address staff shortages in tourism. Future plans include expanding the hostel to create additional jobs for people with disabilities.



Links with United Nations Sustainable Development Goals



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Inclusion of Employees and Tourists with Disabilities

De Pleats, The Netherlands

Subsector: Food and Beverage

Key Information

De Pleats is a family-run multifunctional restaurant offering coffee, food, and catering for events, and is regarded as a central community space. It employs around 50 staff and has consistently recruited autistic and neurodivergent employees since its establishment. Its inclusive approach is driven by the owner's commitment to social responsibility and personal connection to autism advocacy.

Development of Best Practices

De Pleats developed an inclusive workplace by adapting roles and tasks to employees' individual abilities and needs. The organisation introduced practical accessibility measures such as colour-coded instructions, visual supports, noise-reducing design, tailored onboarding, and on-the-job coaching, while integrating neurodivergent employees into the regular workforce. Staff also received training on supporting colleagues with additional needs through personalised approaches. Alongside its social inclusion efforts, De Pleats embedded sustainability into its operations through initiatives including Green Key Gold certification, Fairtrade partnership, and corporate social responsibility practices.

Enablers

- External support from government, unions, job coaches, and counsellors
- Inclusive, flexible organisational culture
- Guidance and support from local community networks

Barriers

- Balancing the needs of autistic employees' pace with the overall workflow.

Outcomes & future directions

De Pleats has created an inclusive environment for neurodivergent employees, leading to high staff satisfaction, low turnover, and strong employee loyalty. Customers also respond positively to inclusive practices such as quiet spaces. It aims to further embed inclusivity and sustainability into its long-term strategy.



Links with United Nations Sustainable Development Goals



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Welcoming Migrants

BioGastro Ltd., Hungary.

Subsector: Food & Beverage

Key Information

Established in 2007, Biogastro Ltd, offers catering and event management services to schools, businesses and corporate and social events. Due to staff shortages in Hungary's commercial kitchens, Biogastro began hiring Thai workers in 2018. Today, it employs 64 people.

Development of Best Practices

Following the Office of Immigration employment rules, the organisation advertised roles for kitchen assistants and other professions in Thailand. Upon hiring, workers were provided with accommodation, transportation and in-house traineeship. To support their integration and meet the needs of its diverse workforce, the company integrated intercultural awareness and inclusion strategies such as team-building events, on-demand online training for management level employees, among others. These initiatives aim to strengthen the effective collaboration between Hungarian and Thai workers and facilitate the transition for employees adapting to a new country.

Enablers

- Kitchen duty handbooks in English, Thai, and Hungarian
- Colour-coded communication system
- Emphasis on equality, respect, reliability
- Interpreter support for legal and social matters

Barriers

- Language and cultural barriers
- Time required for full integration was between 6-12 months

Outcomes & future directions

Welcoming migrant workers to BioGastro has strengthened teamwork and boosted employee satisfaction. It shows how diverse nationalities enhance performance and ease labour shortages. BioGastro will maintain its international workforce while balancing kitchen technologies with staff development.



Links with United Nations Sustainable Development Goals



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Embracing a Culture of Diversity

Rijksmuseum, Netherlands

Subsector: Visitor
Attraction

Key Information

The Rijksmuseum is the national museum of the Netherlands, housing a collection of over one million objects. Originally founded in 1800, it underwent a major renovation and reopened in 2013. With approximately 750 employees, the museum attracts a significant number of national and international visitors, making diversity and inclusion essential to its activities.

Development of Best Practices

The museum has introduced various EDI initiatives, including inclusive practices for people with disabilities, cultural diversity, and equitable recruitment, all aligned with its overall strategy. A baseline study by Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (2017-2018) shifted the focus from quantitative recruitment targets to promoting inclusive mindsets. Key actions included training department heads in inclusive leadership and launching a mentorship programme in 2022 to enhance cross-departmental learning. Accessibility improvements were made, and since 2024, neurodiversity has been part of the agenda. The museum also emphasises inclusion in its curation, highlighting female painters, colonial history, and collaborations with diverse communities.

Enablers

- Strong management support for EDI strategies
- Mentorships promoting lifelong learning
- Integration of the Dutch Cultural and Creative 4 Ps: Programme, Public, Personnel & Partners

Barriers

- Resistance to change
- Time investment needed to shift mindsets
- Establishing new dynamics between departments

Outcomes & future directions

The Rijksmuseum has enhanced employee satisfaction and retention through its mentorship programme and EDI efforts. By embedding EDI across departments, it aligns practices with its mission and plans to measure impact while engaging marginalised communities.



Links with United Nations Sustainable Development Goals



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Promoting Gender Equality

Trigon Hotels, Ireland

Subsector:
Accommodation

Key Information

Trigon Hotels, operating since 2009, employs 300 people across three properties in Cork, Ireland. Their services include accommodation, dining, and conference facilities. Since 2019, Trigon has integrated EDI strategies into various policies, earning recognition as a Great Place to Work in Hospitality in Ireland.

Development of Best Practices

Trigon has formalised EDI policies to embrace the diverse backgrounds of employees and guests, aiming to improve guest services through a committed team. Its 'Females in the Workplace' programme addresses menopause and fertility support, while the Gender Identity and Expression policy promotes inclusivity for all genders, particularly LGBTIQ+ employees. Trigon partners with Ability@work to integrate employees with disabilities and uses 'Just-a-Minute' cards to support those with visible and invisible disabilities. A workforce diversity report identified EDI gaps, leading to improvements in recruitment, onboarding, and training. In 2024, Trigon earned Silver Investors in Diversity accreditation from the Irish Centre for Diversity.

Enablers

- Comprehensive policies to embrace an EDI culture
- Reinforcing the importance of EDI through ongoing training
- Fostering a committed and engaged workforce

Barriers

- Resistance to change
- Significant training and effort required



Outcomes & future directions

Trigon has achieved gender balance at all levels, with increased employee engagement, motivation, and retention. Guests have praised its commitment to stakeholder well-being. Trigon will continue evaluating these practices to guide future training and policy development for greater inclusivity.

Links with United Nations Sustainable Development Goals



Source: Photos with copyrights provided by Trigon Hotels

Promoting Gender Equality

Grand Hotel Adriatico, Italy

Subsector:
Accommodation

Key Information

Based in Florence, Grand Hotel Adriatico has been a pioneer in barrier-free and accessible hospitality since the 1960s. With a team of 14 employees, the hotel expanded its inclusive mission in 2021 by becoming Italy's first certified LGBTIQ+ hotel, aimed to address their specific needs and improve overall service experience.

Development of Best Practices

The Grand Hotel Adriatico developed its best practice by formalising LGBTIQ+ inclusivity through the QueerVadis Diversity & Inclusion Protocol. This certification is provided and audited by the sustainability experts at RINA, a multinational body specialising in sustainable business practices. This process involved the creation of a comprehensive management manual that provided specific guidance on legislation, inclusive communication, marketing, and diversity management. By integrating these guidelines directly into their daily operations and training protocols, the hotel successfully merged its long-standing focus on physical accessibility with modern social inclusion standards.

Enablers

- Market demand among LGBTIQ+ travellers for certified inclusive hotels
- Inclusive reputation
- Commitment to EDI policies, attracting value-driven tourists.

Barriers

- None was disclosed

Outcomes & future directions

The certification has helped the Hotel differentiate itself in competitive markets through a strong commitment to diversity. This has supported improved service delivery and business growth. The hotel plans to continue advancing its social sustainability goals by attracting both international and local LGBTIQ+ guests.



Links with United Nations Sustainable Development Goals



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Supporting Education and Training

Associação Pão a Pão, Portugal

Subsector: Food & Beverage

Key Information

Associação Pão a Pão is an NGO in Portugal that supports refugees and migrants through a restaurant, catering services, and workshops. The organisation uses food as a bridge to connect people from diverse backgrounds. Its Mezze Escola training course enhances migrants' employability, offering training and job opportunities while promoting cultural integration. Currently, the organisation employs 20 people.

Development of Best Practices

The project, initiated at Mezze restaurant in Lisbon by Pão a Pão, offers a training programme for refugees and migrants to equip them with restaurant industry skills, while also educating them on their rights, social responsibilities, and mental well-being. Developed in partnership with the Lisbon School of Hospitality and Tourism and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation's Cidadãos Activ@s Programme, the six-month course combines theoretical and practical components. It aims to eliminate cultural barriers and foster connections between migrants and host communities. Upon completion, Pão a Pão connects participants with employers for internships and job placements. The organisation employs 20 people, promoting migrant integration and employability in Portugal.

Enablers

- Training certification to increase credibility and impact
- Continuous financial support from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation
- Ongoing development, ensuring success

Barriers

- Integrating newcomers into the national culture
- Supporting the physical and mental health of refugees
- Addressing time-consuming legal issues

Outcomes & future directions

The training course has enhanced employability and facilitated migrant integration into the workforce, earning the recognitions and awards. After three successful editions in Lisbon, it expanded to the Porto School of Hospitality and Tourism. It will continue raising awareness of migrant and refugee issues.



Links with United Nations Sustainable Development Goals



Source: Photo with copyrights provided by Associação Pão a Pão

Supporting Education and Training

The Mindful Kitchen, TU Dublin, Ireland

Subsector: Food & Beverage

Key Information

The Mindful Kitchen is a module that empowers culinary students to integrate well-being techniques into their training. Launched in 2019 at the School of Culinary Arts and Food Technology at Technological University Dublin, this module uses mindfulness-focused pedagogy to prepare students for careers as chefs, emphasising inclusivity and teamwork as essential. It originated from head chefs' feedback about mental health impacts from rapid environments.

Development of Best Practices

The Mindful Kitchen Project started with collaboration between lecturers and students to integrate sustainability and positive work habits into culinary education. It began with first-year students, focusing on skills like self-awareness, creativity, and inclusive leadership, with a zero-tolerance policy for poor practices. Following its success, a second module for second-year students emphasized social and environmental sustainability, particularly local sourcing. A third module highlighted social gastronomy and chefs' role in supporting inclusive communities. The project has since expanded to postgraduate degrees and received external funding from Food on the Edge, the Chef's Network, and partners, promoting sustainable practices across the culinary sector.

Enablers

- Transformation led by students
- Emphasis on a positive and inclusive culture
- Adoption of new methodologies promoting equality, including problem-based & collaborative learning

Barriers

- High-pressure, hierarchical nature of traditional culinary environments
- Resistance to change in professional settings

Outcomes & future directions

Assessments show these skills help students enter the industry, encourage teamwork, and support mental health, fostering an inclusive environment. Promoting equality and collaboration nurtures future chefs who value mindfulness. The Mindful Kitchen modules will remain part of the programmes.



Links with United Nations Sustainable Development Goals



Source: Photo with copyrights provided by TU Dublin

Supporting Education and Training

Walking Towards Employability, AITR (Greece, Italy, France and Belgium)

Subsector: Tour Operators

Key Information

Walking Towards Employability was developed by the L'Associazione Italiana de Turismo Responsabile (AITR). Founded in 1998, AITR is one of the oldest active associations for responsible tourism in Europe. It has about 80 diverse members, and advocates for sustainable tourism practices which respect local communities, preserve cultural heritage, and minimise environmental impact.

Development of Best Practices

In 2019, AITR launched the Walking Towards Employability as an EDI initiative to promote sustainable tourism through youth employability and community development in France, Italy, Belgium and Greece. The project aimed to identify replicable youth entrepreneurship models that encourage socio-professional inclusion, particularly for vulnerable groups. An innovative skills course based on the walking tour model was developed, using a learning-by-doing approach to equip young people with entrepreneurial, technical, and transversal skills while integrating vocational training with responsible tourism. Informed by partners' insights and 170 virtual or on-site tours, the project also highlighted the culture and history of underprivileged communities. Currently, 2 employees manage the initiative.

Enablers

- AITR's extensive expertise in responsible tourism
- Financial support from the Erasmus+ KA2 program

Barriers

- Initial launch delayed due to COVID-19
- Post-pandemic challenges with varying national regulations and reduced tourism



Outcomes & future directions

This played a key role in creating opportunities for young entrepreneurs. By building business skills in the responsible tourism sector, it empowered them to launch their own ventures. A handbook and website outline the methodology, offering guidance for effective implementation in other countries.

Links with United Nations Sustainable Development Goals



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Implementing EDI Policies

The City of Helsinki, Finland

Subsector: Destination
Management
Organisation

Key Information

Founded in 1550 and becoming the capital of Finland in 1912, Helsinki welcomed over 4 million tourists in 2023. The city aims to be one of the world's most sustainable travel destinations, leading the way in sustainability within the tourism and events sectors. This commitment focuses on economic, environmental, and social sustainability, with a strong emphasis on EDI practices. Helsinki's destination services unit employs 14 professionals.

Development of Best Practices

Helsinki has implemented EDI practices in tourism planning and event programmes, focusing on diversity in various areas such as age, gender, religion, and socio-economic status. The action plan includes diversifying marketing, increasing personnel diversity, and encouraging service providers to engage in EDI. Training initiatives were introduced to improve staff knowledge of diverse groups and enhance customer interactions, including support for individuals with disabilities. The city has also recruited a diverse workforce, aligned EDI practices with existing educational offerings, and engaged experts. Helsinki provides accessible tourist resources, including an accessibility service map and inclusive content on the MyHelsinki website.

Enablers

- Commitment to social and inclusive values, demonstrated through diverse events and culinary offerings.
- Proximity to nature and the sea
- Focus on EDI investment within the tourism sector

Barriers

- None were disclosed

Outcomes & future directions

The city's destination services is preparing for upcoming training by integrating different operating models and best practices. Materials will be produced in several languages for accessibility. It will continue promoting EDI at stakeholder events and sharing inclusive tourism guidelines with Finnish organisations



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Conclusion

This handbook provided practical examples and actionable steps to implement change and embed an EDI culture in the workplace. It also showcased some best practices aligned with the UN Sustainable Goals, featuring tourism and hospitality organisations in Europe that promote inclusion through tangible actions.

Developing EDI policies and practices can be facilitated by different tools and resources, but it must begin with developing a culture underpinned by ethics and integrity, social fairness, equality, inclusive practices, and equal opportunities. The case-studies in the handbook demonstrated a broad range of inclusive practices that already exist in the sector to tackle inequalities, promote awareness, develop gender equality, and promote European values. However, there are still many more actions that can be undertaken to support social justice across Europe.





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