

Ireland's National Report

WP 2.6

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Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of the EDIFY EDU European Project Work Package 2, which aims to address the skills gap in the Business Management education sector regarding competencies on workplace equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). The report provides an overview of the history and evolution of business management education, tracing its roots to classical management theory and scientific management. It also analyses the placement, or lack thereof, of EDI in the curriculum and its effects on the labour market and gender.

Despite globalisation and advances in the way of doing business, undergraduate business management education continues to perpetuate labour market segregation and discrimination based on gender and other intersectionalities. The report compares the proposed European educational competency frameworks, the European framework for the personal, social and learning to learn key competence (LifeComp), the European entrepreneurship competence framework (EntreComp), and the digital competence framework for citizens (DigComp) to competencies in undergraduate business management courses in Ireland and explores the current labour market, including a gender gap analysis. It examines the experiences of students and professionals in the workplace and EDI in undergraduate business education.

Furthermore, the report provides insights into the social impact of existing and emerging labour market laws and policies and discusses the discrepancies between current policies and practices. For instance, Ireland's labour market profile shows a gender imbalance in the workplace, with women underrepresented in senior management roles and on boards. According to the Gender Balance in Business Survey from 2021, only 22% of members of Boards of Directors were female. Women continue to experience significant barriers in employment, particularly in leadership roles. Furthermore, the report highlights the need for an improved undergraduate business education, as outlined by the European Commission, that takes into consideration equality, diversity, and inclusion and can contribute to alleviating existing gendered labour market and workplace EDI discriminatory practices. It also discusses the gap between undergraduate business management studies and the realities of management practice and the need to move beyond classical management theories to create a more equal, diverse and inclusive future.

The report sets out a recommended list of competencies needed to address EDI issues in the workplace. These competencies are aligned to the European frameworks (EntreComp, LifeComp and DigComp) and should be considered in the design and development of the micro credential modules developed as part of the EDIFY EDU project (Work Package 3), to complement the identified competency gaps.

Section 1: Introduction

Undergraduate business management education in Europe and the US share common ontological and epistemological assumptions based on classical management theory, referred to as scientific management. These early views, unconscious of gender and race discrimination, informed the foundations of modern business management. The work of Taylor, Fayol, Weber, Mayo, McGregor, Maslow, Herzberg and Schein, contributed to the evolution of business management thinking and schools of thought including: Scientific management, Bureaucracy, Human relations, Competitive advantage, and Shareholder value maximization. They have also shaped management practice conveying an image of who managers must be (Petriglieri, 2020).

Cummings (2016), noted the views of some scholars in relation to a decline in new ideas in business management studies, and points to the tendency to look to “best practice” instead of aiming for “next practice”. Furthermore, there is a gap between undergraduate business management studies and the realities of management practice (Smith and Lewis, 2011). According to Petriglieri (2020), the challenge facing management is not the lack of new theories; it is the strength of the old ones, he argues that it is impossible to build the future using the blueprints of the past. Attempts by Lillian Gilbreth and others interested in improving the working conditions of women in industry, attempted to expand Scientific Management theory to consider the position of women and include more humane and ‘soft’ approach to management. However, despite the early efforts to recognise women’s position in the labour market, diplomatic circles and international labour ignored women’s interests (Oldenziel, 2000). Scientific Management became associated chiefly with an accounting model of efficiency increasingly identified with Ford’s assembly line, especially in Europe. The new emerging business management theory combined paternalist notions with ideas about profitability, engineering concepts of mechanical efficiency and a military conception of discipline (Oldenziel, 2000).

The post-World War II period witnessed the spread of business schools at universities, where the first serious histories of management were written that outlined the fields noble origins and helped legitimise them as “university worthy.” The Ford and Carnegie reports outlined the legitimate form of a business school and its curricula, and with a further growth spurt in student numbers and advances in pedagogy and publishing, the first textbooks (as we know them) emerged en masse. Business management education based on a limited and flawed ontological and epistemological foundations continues to be taught throughout Europe and globally in leading business schools, and inadvertently perpetuating labour market segregation and discrimination in relation to gender and other intersectionalities. Little has changed in 200 years, there is still no critical mass of women at the higher positions of organisations, from which women can access important organisational dynamics.

The need arises for a new education model, one that takes into consideration equality, diversity and inclusion. It needs to be capable of transferring new knowledge in the workplace and contributing towards the alleviation of the existing gendered labour market and workplace EDI discriminatory practices.

Section 2: Research Aims and Objectives

The national analysis aims to 1) demonstrate how multiple and intersecting social statuses shape business management education and labour market participation; 2) explore how business management in higher education acts as a conduit in the perpetuation and embedding inequalities in the structure of the labour market; 3) demonstrate how business management education inadvertently stratifies and eschews labour market participation resulting in unequal treatment and unequal opportunities, glass ceilings and inaccessible corridors, for a significant percentage of the labour market. These aims will be addressed by the following:

Create new knowledge and understanding of the current situation and practices in EDI undergraduate business management education across different European partner countries by:

- Assessing the existing Higher Education management education courses and mapping of Learning Outcomes with EntreComp, DigComp and LifeComp
- Assessing the VET management education courses and mapping of Learning Outcomes with EntreComp, DigComp and LifeComp
- Comparing desk research on EDI European and national policies with private sector engagement on management education (social impact assessment)
- Conducting qualitative research among business experts and representatives involved in focus groups/coaching circles and interviews for the collection of qualitative data

For more information, please refer to the Research Framework for Work Package 2.

Section 3: Business Management Education

The aim of this activity is to map the most relevant training provisions in the field of business management education.

3.1 Method

We searched for “business management” in the Central Applications Office (CAO) list of available undergraduate courses in 2023-2024. It resulted in 142 courses from 22 higher education institutions. Within the 142 courses, we searched for the keywords “equality”, “diversity”, “inclusion”, “multicultural”, “intercultural” in the course title, description, programme learning outcomes, individual modules and module learning outcomes (where the information was available). We did not find any keyword match for 88 courses (61% of the initial sample). Some courses had details of modules and others did not have that level of detail. There was no mention of the keywords in the course descriptions or course titles. Fifty three course codes had at least one keyword match. Some course codes involved more than one similar business course and this number increased as we reviewed the course content, these courses are reported on separately in the final analysis. Twenty five (47%) had only one keyword match. For a representative sample of full-time undergraduate courses, we eliminated the courses with less than two key word matches, 28 courses remained from five Irish higher education institutes. Therefore 15% of the initial sample of 142 courses was analysed. Learning outcomes were from the individual modules, there were no learning outcomes available at the programme level.

For the professional development courses, we searched for “Business Management” under Springboard courses (www.springboardcourses.ie). Springboard courses are part-time government funded higher education courses for people who are looking to upskill, who are unemployed (or were self-employed) and those looking to return to the workforce. They are delivered by public and private higher education institutions. On the Springboard website, only the course description and overview are available, it was not possible to see the module descriptions or learning outcomes. Out of 14 courses returned in the search, only the description of one course matched the keywords, specifically “diversity” and “inclusion”, this course specialises in HR management. Other professional development courses accredited by professional bodies (such as the IMI, CMIT, UCD and QQI) returned four matches to keywords out of 27 courses, three courses only matched one keyword. Considering the small number of professional courses matching the keywords, we included all continuous professional development courses in the analysis. In total, five professional development courses (12%) of the 41 professional development courses were included in this analysis. In total, we analysed 33 courses, 27 of which were full-time undergraduate courses (European Qualifications Framework (EQF) levels 6, 7 and 8) and five professionally accredited courses.

3.2 Overview of Profile

There were 30 learning outcomes identified across four categories of modules within the undergraduate business management courses: People (34%), Culture (23%), Management (17%), and Gender Studies (3%).

- The **People** category includes HR, organisational behaviour, people management, people management strategies and anthropology (all electives within a business degree)
- The **Culture** category includes cultural studies, languages and culture, introduction to modern Ireland, Irish culture and contemporary society, sport and society, working with multicultures, world cultures and etiquette.

- The **Management** category includes modules such as being a manager, challenges of management, international business environment, workplace diversity and contemporary management.
- The **Gender Studies** category contains modules such as gender and sexuality in society and culture. This module was elective within a business degree

Within each category, there were elective modules:

- Management 16% elective modules
- People/Humanity 16% elective modules
- Culture 28% elective modules
- Gender studies – 100% elective (1 module)

3.3 Key Findings & Discussion

Based on the analysis, courses that had a global element to them were found to have the highest levels of relevance to the European Framework LifeComp and EntreComp. In particular, certain electives such as World Cultures & Etiquettes, and Gender & Sexuality in Society & Culture, were found to be highly relevant to the aforementioned frameworks, although these modules were not widely available or mandatory in some cases. Additionally, it was observed that the courses were rarely associated with the DigComp Framework. It may be worthwhile for institutions to consider incorporating more courses that include a digital competency component, as this is becoming increasingly important in today's globalised digital business landscape.

3.3.1 European frameworks

Overall, there was a low to moderate match with the European frameworks. In summary, the LifeComp framework was the most aligned with the learning outcomes that were identified as part of this analysis.

- 45% of the courses aligned with S1.3 Responsiveness to another person's emotions and experiences, being conscious that group belonging influences one's attitude
- 39% of the courses aligned with S1.2 Awareness of another person's emotions, experiences and values
- 36% of the courses aligned with P2.2 Understanding and adopting new ideas, approaches, tools and actions in response to changing contexts

There was a low to moderate alignment with EntreComp:

- 39% of the courses aligned with Self-Awareness and Self-Efficacy
- 33% of the courses aligned with Ethical and Sustainable Thinking
- 27% of the courses aligned with Working with Others

3.3.2 General gap analysis

The findings show that there was minimal integration of business management theory with EDI concepts. Business management theory was considered to be a separate module in most courses and did not include any element of EDI, or culture. EDI was associated mostly with the people side of management but not the effect on business both nationally and internationally. A module or aim that considers the underlying effects on business of EDI policies and procedures was not available. Additionally, global inequalities, diversity and inclusion were not considered in light of business management. However, analysis of world cultures and how to manage a global organisation or diverse workforce was available through culture modules but could be integrated into business management modules, such as to analyse

workforce diversity and its impact on shaping organisational structure, the business landscape and the industry landscape.

The majority of the keyword matches with equality, diversity and inclusion, intercultural and multicultural tended to be in people management modules such as organisational behaviour, HR, world cultures and other culture modules and for the most part, not within business management modules. Whilst the evidence suggests that some courses address aspects of EDI, is it usually a part of a module and not given precedence as a module in its own right or part of an overall programme aim or competency. This suggests that EDI in Irish higher education and continuous professional development, is not considered to be an integral part of business management, this is reflected in the content of elective modules available to undergraduate students in some higher educational institutes.

3.3.3 Gap analysis - European frameworks

EntreComp: there was very little on working with others to identify and address workforce diversity, equality and inclusion. For example learning through experience could mean 'real-world' experience e.g. work placement where employers with EDI policies and multi-cultures are sought

LifeComp: The Irish analysis showed that this framework was the most relevant to the current learning outcomes from the sample of 33 courses. Aspects of well-being in business management education was largely missing in relation to EDI, multicultures and intercultural. Self-awareness and understanding one's own behaviour thoughts, personal characteristics etc. were also missing. This could be addressed by more education on unconscious bias at an undergraduate level, preferably integrated into a business management module rather than sitting in a people management or HR related module. Effective ways of communicating with a diverse workforce is largely missing from the analysis. Perhaps considering how businesses can effectively use tools and technologies to improve communications within a diverse workforce is an area that could be addressed within business management and strategic business management modules. Areas of growth mindset were not addressed in the results from the analysis, again areas of unconscious bias could be integrated into business management modules along with motivation arising from developing awareness and confidence in team abilities. An effective manager and leader will be aware of their own limitations and capabilities.

DigComp: Only one course was relevant to the DigComp framework. A key missing factor in the sample is the aspect of online culture, equality, diversity and inclusion. Considering that working from home is more common since the COVID-19 pandemic, and with the growth of business technologies such as artificial intelligence, there is an opportunity to apply the concepts of EDI to the digital world.

For more information, please refer to the document on Ireland's draft of findings from the desk research analysis.

Section 4: Qualitative Research

The aim of this activity was to involve a heterogeneous group of people, including students, professionals, senior managers, entrepreneurs and female entrepreneurs with representation from minority groups such as females, immigrants, and some from disadvantaged backgrounds to discuss issues of inclusion/exclusion at the workplace and implementation challenges of equality, diversity and inclusion. The objective of the activity was to identify the discrepancies between both European and national legislation and lived experience.

4.1 Procedure

Ethical approval was granted in the Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design & Technology (IADT), Ireland. All European partners agreed and complied with the ethical approval process.

Prior to participating in the studies, research candidates received an invitation and information sheet detailing: purpose of the study; invitation to participate; statement that participation is purely voluntary and confidential; option to remove data before a stated date. Participants were required to complete six questions in relation to their education and employment and sign a consent form before the session began. Identifiable information was not required for the purpose of the focus groups and the in-depth research interviews. Any identifiable information was changed in the transcripts to preserve anonymity. The face to face focus groups were audio recorded and transcribed using the MS Word dictate feature, the online focus groups and interviews were transcribed using MS Teams.

4.2 Thematic Analysis

Once the data was collected, thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was conducted to synthesise the information gathered from the focus groups and in-depth interviews. The six steps of thematic analysis were followed, this involved transcribing and anonymising each focus group and in-depth interview, coding the data and identifying recurring themes. Upon completion of the thematic analysis, the overarching themes extracted from the data matched the themes of the focus group questions.

4.3 Focus Groups

The aim of this activity was to involve a heterogeneous group of people, including representatives from the social partners, business students, workers from minority groups or disadvantaged backgrounds, and to create a generative dialogue around a real case of inclusion/exclusion at the work place which provided the research with qualitative data, including the lived experience of those involved. The participants talked about their own personal experiences working in part-time and full-time positions and the challenges and opportunities they faced. The participants who were or had been enrolled in college discussed the placement of EDI in the curriculum, their understanding and the challenges of implementation.

In total, we conducted four focus groups:

- One full-time student focus group
- One professional focus group
- Two professional and student focus groups

4.3.1 Method - participants

4.3.1.1 Recruitment

Participants for the student focus groups were recruited from an Irish institute through heads of departments and course lecturers. The researchers had permission from the course lecturer to approach the class groups either at the end or the middle of class. A private room was booked and participants went straight from the classroom to the focus group. All recruitment of students was carried out face to face. Recruitment for professional participants took place on LinkedIn, Business Alumni groups and word of mouth. Only those over the age of 18 could participate in the focus groups.

4.3.1.2 Sample Size

The professional focus group comprised of two female and two male participants. The homogeneous focus groups consisted of full-time professionals and students, five professionals and four students, six female and three male participants. The remaining focus groups comprised of four final year students enrolled in business programmes, two male and two female participants. The total number of participants in the focus groups was 17, ten females and seven males.

4.3.1.3 Demographics

The age range among all focus groups was between 21-51 years of age. The professional participants worked in various roles in the following industries: construction, insurance, motor, agricultural, big tech, public, law, voluntary organisations, and Irish state agencies. Their roles included marketing, tech support, communication, sales, consultancy, and project management. The majority of participants were in senior roles. The length of time held in each position started from less than a year to ten years. The length of time employed in each company ranged from one year to 17 years. Many of the students in the focus groups were employed in part and full-time positions in industries such as health, hospitality, and retail. The participants had varied educational backgrounds with a range of credentials including Honours Bachelors Degree, Masters Degrees and one participant held a Doctoral Degree.

4.3.2 Design

The study was designed on the premise that participants would not be working in the same company, however, in most groups, participants were familiar with each other. Each participant signed a consent form and agreed to keep discussions confidential. The focus groups questions were designed to provoke interpersonal dynamics within the participating student, professional and homogenous groups. The focus groups were held in January and February 2023. Two focus groups were held online due to scheduling difficulties with participants and two focus groups were held face to face. All focus groups were semi-structured and somewhat directed by the researcher in an attempt to elicit the sharing of experiences and opinions among the participants.

4.3.3 Materials

The following list of questions were asked under three themes: Education, Promotion and Progression and Organisational Culture. Additional relevant questions were asked by the interviewer from the respondent's answers.

Theme 1: Education

1. Brief overview of module studies
2. Did your studies include modules on: EDI, empathy, kindness, etc.?

Theme 2: Promotion/Progression

1. Have you been promoted since you joined this company? If yes, how many times?
2. Have you applied for promotion and was unsuccessful? Did you think this was a fair outcome? Why?

Theme 3: Organisation Culture

1. Can you talk a bit about the organisational culture?
2. Do you feel your company operates fair and transparent procedures in relation to pay, promotion and recognition of effort?
3. Does equal pay operate in your company between women and men?
4. What percentage of the senior management team are female?
5. What percentage of the Board are female?
6. Discussion Question: What changes would you like to see introduced in the organisation?
7. Does your company operate EDI policies and could you tell us about them?
8. Do you have anything else that you would like to add?

4.4 In-Depth Interviews

Five in-depth research interviews were conducted, the participants comprised of small Irish business owners, female entrepreneurs, HR specialists, and senior managers. Participants represented different economic sectors and small and medium sized enterprises. The objective of this task was to go deeper in understanding the complexity of labour settings and the difficulties encountered specifically in implementing the EDI principles. Two of the interviews were conducted with female entrepreneurs, in order to understand the specificity of their condition and their career path.

4.4.1 Method - participants

4.4.1.1 Recruitment

Recruitment for professional participants took place on LinkedIn, Business Alumni groups, and word of mouth. Only those over the age of 18 could participate in the focus groups and interviews.

4.4.1.2 Sample Size

The professional interviews consisted of five interviews, three male and two female.

4.4.1.3 Demographics

The age range was between 32-60 years old, with the average age of 35. They represented a variety of different industries and held positions as chief executive officer (CEO), creative director, sales director, and founder and designer. The length of time held in each position started from less than a year to ten years, with an average of four years in position. The length of time employed in each company ranged three years to 14 years, with an average of six and a half years in an organisation/self-employed.

The participants had varied educational backgrounds with a range of credentials. Three participants held an Honours Bachelors degree, two held a Masters Degree / Post Graduate Diploma and one participant held a Doctoral Degree. Several of the participants had also obtained additional certificates of training in their field such as Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) and Strategic Leadership for Chief Financial Officers.

4.4.2 Design

The study was designed to gather insights from female entrepreneurs and other industry experts through in-depth research interviews. Participants were selected based on their relevant and expertise in a range of different fields, sized companies and self-employed experts. Participants were not affiliated. Each participant signed consent form and agreed to keep the discussions confidential. The interviews were conducted between February and March 2023.

4.4.3 Materials

The following list of questions were asked under three themes: EDI Principle Interpretations, and Implementation Challenges and Competences Used or Needed. Additional relevant questions were asked by the interviewer from the respondent's answers.

Theme 1: EDI Principle Interpretations

1. How do you understand the concept EDI / Equality /Diversity /Inclusion?
2. How do you see the current status of EDI in your company?

Theme 2: Implementation Challenges

1. How do you see EDI-themes affecting your daily work as a manager?
2. What are the most challenging aspects of managing EDI?
3. Can you give an example of a challenging situation to managing EDI in your daily work? How did you handle the situation?

Theme 3: Competences Used or Needed

1. What do you see as most valuable skills, knowledge and competence linked to managing EDI?
2. Where did you yourself get such skills, knowledge and competence?
3. Reflecting your own experiences on the EDI-related challenging situations, what skills, knowledge and competence were the most important?
4. What would you suggest including in an EDI-related curriculum?

4.5 Key Findings & Discussion

4.5.1 Focus groups

The overall findings from the data analysis of the focus group data focuses on the predetermined themes as noted in the WP2 research framework, namely: education, promotion/progression, and organisational culture. Within these themes, other sub-themes were identified from the data.

The findings from the focus groups indicate a lack of knowledge regarding EDI among participants. This lack of knowledge may be due to a lack of integration of EDI into the curriculum which was noted by the students and supported by the desk research. However, the majority of participants expressed a desire for EDI to be implemented into the curriculum.

Participants highlighted the impact of unconscious bias and its effect on women's career opportunities. In addition, they spoke of gender discrimination in relation to attitudes and conflicts, further implicating negatively on women's opportunities. This data aligns with labour market research that shows a decrease in female representation as one moves up the career ladder.

Students, especially those from a non-Irish background reported a lack of knowledge about their legal protections under the Employment Equality Act. They

were unaware of their rights as workers and the information had not been passed down or in some cases, they were completely unaware of it. This raises questions about whether employers are adequately informing their employees of their rights or deliberately neglecting to educate their staff for their own interests. Furthermore, it strengthens the argument that education should ensure that students and professionals understand EU and national legislation in relation to the workplace.

Younger participants expressed feeling exploited in their roles and working in toxic environments. Some reported doing extra work without compensation, while others reported that their employers engaged in performative behaviour around EDI.

The main findings include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Currently higher education does not integrate EDI into undergraduate business management programmes
- Participants recognise a need for integrating EDI into all modules
- Assumptions are made that students already know about EDI but the responsibility needs to be placed on education to give a non-biased view to help students understand the topic
- There is some unconscious bias in relation to females attending “non-traditional” courses resulting in a supply and demand issue. If females are not applying to and attending courses in traditionally male dominated roles then companies find it difficult to fulfil their EDI goals
- Gender discrimination in relation to attitudes and conflict were reported
- In the private sector, particularly with small to medium business (SMEs) salaries are not common knowledge, and so the gender pay gap is not reported
- Some participants were unaware that their employer is legally obliged to inform employees of their rights
- Younger participants reported that they felt exploited in their roles, especially those who took on extra responsibility without pay
- The younger participants perceived that some organisations need to invest in education and policies rather than displaying token gestures around EDI

4.5.2 In-depth interviews

The overall findings from the data analysis of the research interview data focuses on the predetermined themes as noted in the research framework, namely: EDI principle interpretations, implementation challenges and competencies used or needed. Within these themes, other sub-themes were identified from the data.

The findings from the research interviews indicate participants were aware of EDI but they did not necessarily express their knowledge of employer’s legal obligations to employees. EDI was increasingly present in larger companies and SME’s lacked resources for EDI practices. The question arises as to how SMEs can implement EDI policies that are as beneficial as those of their larger counterparts. One significant advantage enjoyed by larger companies is the ability to conduct regular audits to ensure adherence to EDI objectives. This level of transparency is critical for any business that aspires to prosper in terms of EDI. While larger organisations in Ireland are making some progress towards closing the gender workforce gap, there remains a notable lack of cultural diversity, as noted by some participants. It is evident that the workforce does not reflect diversity in terms of representation.

Many participants were aware of the potential for unconscious bias to hinder their organisation’s progress in achieving their EDI goals, particularly in the hiring

process. To address this issue, some organisations have taken proactive measures to mitigate the impact of unconscious bias but it is an ongoing problem that needs constant attention for many organisations.

Many participants expressed an interest in ongoing training for management and leadership positions in order to support diverse employees in their role and within the workplace.

The **main findings** include, but are not limited to, the following:

- All participants demonstrated a clear understanding of the concept of EDI within their workplace but did not necessarily express a knowledge of the legal obligations of employers
- Accountability of EDI within smaller organisations seemed to be related to a lack of resources such as time, people and finance
- EDI in the hiring process was at times considered to be a risk to the business but yet in larger organisations, it was seen as a huge benefit to the company. The tendency is to hire people “like me”
- Unconscious bias in all aspects of the business is present, from the hiring process, through to dealing with staff, vendors and clients
- Some small Irish companies are hesitant to embrace EDI due to lack of education in the area and knowing where to start
- Management training is needed in the area of how to support diverse employees in their role and within the workplace

4.5.3 Competencies

As part of the analysis, potential competencies and learning outcomes were identified based on the experience of the participants from the in-depth interviews. The participants were specifically asked about their own experience in education and what they felt was missing from educational curricula that could address the current challenges of perceptions and implementation of EDI in the workplace. The data formed an insight into the reality of what is currently happening in small to medium enterprises (SMEs) and larger organisations.

Many of the identified competencies (see Table 1.4) correlated directly to competencies as outlined in EntreComp and LifeComp. The need for open discussion was mentioned multiple times which suggests a current lack of open dialogue between students and lecturers. Opening up discussion on the topic of EDI will complement competencies such as communication, collaboration, valuing ideas, and working with others. Many of the students did not have any classes involving EDI and those who did, studied it as a topic in HR or people management modules. Both students and professionals acknowledged that perhaps it would be more valuable to integrate EDI across all modules. This approach would actually be more consistent with the European Framework guidelines than the presently restricted choices of EDI-related modules in existing Business course.

For more information, please refer to the draft of the qualitative findings.

Section 5: Social Impact Assessment

The Social Impact Assessment follows the European Commission Guidelines (2009) to provide insights on the social impact of existing and emerging labour market laws and policies.

5.1 Method

The European Commission Impact Assessment Guidelines (SEC, 2009: 92), point out that an impact assessment has to answer a number of questions, including:

1. What is the nature and scale of the problem, how is it evolving, and who is most affected by it?
2. What are the views of the stakeholders concerned?
3. Should the European Union be involved?
 - a. If so, what objectives should it set to address the problem?
 - b. What are the main policy options for reaching these objectives? What are the likely economic, social and environmental impacts of those options?
 - c. How do the main options compare in terms of effectiveness, efficiency and coherence in solving the problems?
 - d. How could future monitoring and evaluation be organised?

These 8 questions (European Commission Guidelines, 2009) informed the SIA framework by exposing the gaps in relation to workplace equality diversity and inclusion resulting from national partner labour market profiles when compared with their EDI labour market laws and policies. To complete the SIA, we conducted the following:

1. Collated Labour Market Information such as National Legislation, transposing EU Directives; and National Labour Market Policies, implementing EU and national laws to develop a comprehensive profile of each national partner's labour market laws and policies in relation to workplace Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI).
2. Developed a Labour Market Profile, using the headings:
 - Population by gender, ethnicity, disability, age
 - Employment and unemployment by age, gender, disability
 - Self employed by age, gender, and disability
 - Employment by occupation and age/gender and disability
 - Education Level by age/gender and disability
 - Labour market demographic and sectoral overview
3. Addressed the 8 questions (European Commission, 2009) using the Irish labour market profile. The responses will identify gaps in relation to workplace EDI policies and practice (labour market profiles) and suggest a call to action on behalf of the European Commission.

5.2 Key Findings & Discussion

Ireland's Labour Market has undergone significant changes in recent years. Despite being one of the fastest growing economies in Europe, Ireland still faces significant structural problems in the labour market:

Ageism: Ireland has an ageing population. The social, economic, and environmental impacts of ageism can be extremely detrimental to an economy. The Employment Equality Act currently allows for an upper age limit to be included in a contract of employment, in certain public service jobs, and protected by law. However, this does not align with the EU Directive 2002/78 EC which only permits age discrimination where it can be objectively justified.

Gender inequality: Ireland's labour market profile shows gender imbalance in the workplace with women underrepresented in senior management roles. According to the Gender Balance in Business Survey from 2021:

- One in eight (13%) Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) in large enterprises in Ireland in 2021 were women
- Three in ten (30%) Senior Executives were female compared to seven in ten (70%) for male
- More than seven in ten (72%) Chief Financial Officers (CFOs) were male
- Men accounted for 86% of Board Chairpersons, down from 93% in 2019
- Almost 22% of members of Boards of Directors were female, an increase from 20% in 2019

EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 and Women on Boards Directive are significant initiatives that aim to promote gender equality across the EU. One of the key impacts of implementing these two initiatives in Ireland would be an increase in gender equality. By promoting equal opportunities for people in all aspects of society, including the workplace, these measures would help to reduce gender-based discrimination and ensure that everyone has the same chances to succeed. This would lead to greater social cohesion, as people from all backgrounds would have more equal access to resources and opportunities.

Gender pay gap: Examples where the gender pay gap exists in Ireland at sectoral and occupational level include:

- Financial Services: Women in financial services earn 35% less than their male counterparts on average, according to a recent report by the Central Bank of Ireland. The gap is largely driven by the underrepresentation of women in senior roles within the sector
- Information and communication: Women working in the ICT sector in Ireland earn 20% less than men on average, according to Eurostat data. The industry includes jobs such as computer programming, software development and telecommunications
- Health and social work: The gender pay gap in this sector in Ireland is around 16%, according to the CSO data. This sector includes jobs such as nursing, midwifery, and social work
- Education: Women working in education in Ireland earn around 14% less than men, according to Eurostat data. The sector includes jobs such as teaching, research, and administration
- Science and technology: Women working in science and technology in Ireland earn around 11% less than men, according to Eurostat data. This includes jobs such as engineering, research and development and scientific analysis

The EU Directive for the Gender Pay Gap Information Act Regulations 2022 takes this further by effectively imposing a positive obligation on employers to take action where such pay differences cannot be justified by objective and gender-neutral means. A study by the European Institute for Gender Equality found that gender pay gaps can reduce economic growth and productivity as well as leading to higher levels of poverty and income inequality. A study by the World Economic Forum found that countries with greater gender equality tend to have higher levels of economic competitiveness and innovation.

Some challenges exist for Ireland regarding the implementation of the Gender Pay Gap Information Act Regulations 2022, including resistance from companies to report their gender pay gaps, the interpretation and comparison of data provided

by different companies and the potential risk of creating a stigma around certain occupations or industries, especially if they have particularly high gender pay gaps.

Gender occupations and labour market: Women continue to experience significant barriers in employment, particularly in leadership roles. In Ireland women make up 22% of board members in the top 20 publicly listed companies, and only 12% of CEOs of these companies are women. In the public sector women make up just 22% of senior civil servants and 21% of university presidents.

Ethnicity and the labour market: The 2016 Census indicates that the 535,475 non-Irish nationals living in Ireland originate from 200 different nations. The largest group are Polish nationals at 122,515, followed by 103,113 UK nationals, and 36,552 Lithuanians. Some of the major challenges emerging for ethnic workers in the Irish labour market include: the prevalence of low paid, low skilled jobs, making it difficult for immigrants to access the opportunities for career progression and professional development available to the Indigenous Irish population, creating a cycle of poverty and disadvantage difficult to overcome. The existence of the informal labour market with informal work arrangements including non-taxable remuneration, places immigrants' eligibility for social welfare and social protections at risk (sick pay and pensions), leaving them vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, particularly in domestic and agriculture work.

The Irish National Action Plan Against Racism 2021-2025 is a comprehensive strategy aimed at combatting the issue of racism in Ireland. Research by the ESRI shows that racism impacts on employment and earnings for people of colour. The research shows that non Irish nationals earned significantly less on average than their Irish counterparts. The economic impact of the National Action Plan against Racism 2021-2025 is aimed at curtailing the potentially negative economic impacts arising from racism, estimated to cost the Irish economy up to €6 billion per year.

5.2.1 Involvement of the European Union

While Ireland has made significant progress in transposing EU employment equality directives into national law, there are concerns about the implementation and enforcement of these directives in practice. Despite the existence of legal protections against discrimination at work, a number of factors contribute to the failure of these Directives to create EU and Irish workplaces free of discrimination, these factors include:

- Lack of enforcement by the EU and member states
- Limited resources in member states to ensure compliance
- The existence of the burden of proof in discrimination cases resides with the employee which can be difficult to achieve
- Employer and managers' lack of awareness and their obligations to employees
- Employees' lack of awareness of their employment rights
- The operation of unconscious bias in the workplace, including selection, recruitment, training, and promotion

There are ample EU Directives to promote workplace EDI which are transposed to national legislation. Yet despite existence of these EU Directives, gender inequality persists in European labour markets at sectoral and occupational level. Ireland is no different. To address structural problems emerging from a profile of the Irish labour market, action is required from the EU that would ensure the transposed

Directives are fully implemented at national, regional, and local level, employing the following:

1. An EU information campaign that requires member states and Ireland to ensure employers actively promote diversity and inclusion in the labour market
2. The EU to provide funding for training and education programmes that aim to raise awareness of EDI with the objective of addressing the labour market trends in terms of occupational segregation (gender, ethnicity, disability, age etc)
3. The EU could set diversity and inclusion targets to increase representation of underrepresented groups in the labour market. Including targets for increasing the number of women, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and older persons in senior positions, and monitor the implementation
4. The EU could require annual reporting on progress made by member states in promoting EDI in the workplace with penalties for non-compliance

As part of the SIA, we analysed the structural problems in Ireland's labour market, and noted the available main options to address these problems. The options are compared in terms of effectiveness, efficiency and coherence using a scale 1-5 (where 1=low; 5=high).

Structural Problems	Main options	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Coherence
Gender and occupation	EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 . One of its key objectives is achieving gender balance in decision-making	2	2	2
Women on Boards	EU Directive on Women on Boards 2022 – full implementation	2	2	2
Pay and earnings	The Pay Transparency Directive – full implementation.	3	3	3
Ethnicity and race	EU Action Plan Against Racism 2020-2025 outlines a range of measures to address racism and discrimination across the EU.	2	2	2
Age	The Employment Equality Act, 1998 and the Equal Status Act, 2000 introduced age as a ground on which discrimination is prohibited in the workplace and in the provision of goods and services,	2	2	1

Table 1.1: Structural problems in Ireland's labour market

The above table shows the options available through a range of EU Equality Directives are neither effective, efficient, or coherent. While Meenan (2021) concludes that the legislation is satisfactory and implements EU law, Ireland is at the preliminary stages of considering 'positive action' in respect of areas where there is an under-representation of women, e.g., at professorial level in the third-level sector.

The European Commission developed a set of indicators to measure progress in promoting gender equality in the workplace. These indicators include measures such as:

1. The gender pay gap
2. Women in leadership roles
3. The incidence of harassment and discrimination in the workplace

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) measures gender gaps between women and men in six core domains: work, money, knowledge, time, power and health, and it is composed of 31 indicators. The Index employs a scale of 1 to 100, where 1 stands for total inequality and 100 for total equality. The most recent EIGE index 2022 shows that Ireland's speed of progress has been above the EU average of 5.5 points, resulting in an increase in ranking by one spot. Since 2019, Ireland's score has increased by 1.2 points, which was mostly driven by improvements in the domains of health (+3.7 points) and power (+3.3 points). EIGE reports that gender inequalities are strongly pronounced in the domain of power (61.7 points). Although Ireland's overall score is 4.4 points above the EU average, improvements are needed in the sub-domain of political decision-making, in which the country scores 48.8 points and ranks 18th.

A report by PWC (2023) revealed a 12.6% gender pay gap, with a mean hourly pay gap of 22.9%. This report stresses the need for data collection and analysis to identify patterns of inequality and discrimination.

The European Committee of Social Rights in *University Women of Europe (UWE) v Ireland (2020)* concluded that there was a violation of Articles 4(3) (work of equal value) and 20.c (terms of employment, and working conditions, including remuneration) of the European Social Charter. These were on the grounds that pay transparency is still not ensured in practice. Furthermore, there is a violation of Article 20.c of the Charter on the grounds that there is an absence of indicators showing measurable progress in promoting equal opportunities between men and women in respect of equal pay. Additionally, there is a violation of Article 20.d of the Charter (career development including promotion) on the grounds that there has been insufficient progress in ensuring a balanced representation of women in decision-making positions within private companies.

Despite the existence of EU Equality Directives transposed to national legislation, and despite the existence of a substantial body of research on gender inequality in the Irish workplace, a lacuna persists between the operation of the law and workplace practices. This requires further action by the EU, the Irish government, and key stakeholders.

The organisation of future monitoring and evaluation should include the following:

1. The use of a unified methodology that will ensure the availability of comparable data across all EU Member States

2. A range of progressive actions organisations can commit to, for example embedding flexible working in their culture, advocating for the female talent within their organisation and building out a team that is reflective of Irish society (LinkedIn 2023)
3. Stakeholder education and understanding in the application of the European Commission's set of indicators to measure progress in promoting gender equality in the workplace

For more information, please refer to Ireland's social impact assessment and the labour market policy documentation.

Section 6: Overall Discussion & Conclusion

The aim of this section is to present the overall findings from the Irish research, work package 2, in relation to inform the future design and development of new micro credential modules in work package 3. This section will highlight discrepancies between labour market legislation, activity and data from the interviews and focus groups. Professional and higher education course competencies/learning outcomes will be listed along with identified missing competencies that should be addressed in the design of the new micro credential modules.

6.1 Main Findings from the Research Activities

6.1.1 Focus group findings

The main findings include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Currently higher education does not integrate EDI into undergraduate business management programmes
- Participants recognise a need for integrating EDI into all modules
- Assumptions are made that students already know about EDI but the responsibility needs to be placed on education to give a non-biased view to help students understand the topic
- There is evidence of unconscious bias in relation to females attending “non-traditional” courses resulting in a supply and demand issue. If females are not applying to and attending courses in traditionally male dominated roles then companies find it difficult to fulfil their EDI goals
- Gender discrimination in relation to attitudes and conflict were reported
- In the private sector, particularly with small to medium business (SMEs) salaries are not common knowledge, and so the gender pay gap is not reported
- Some participants were unaware that their employer is legally obliged to inform employees of their rights
- Younger participants reported that they felt exploited in their roles, especially those who took on extra responsibility without pay
- The younger participants perceived that some organisations need to invest in education and policies rather than displaying token gestures around EDI

6.1.2 In-depth interviews findings

The main findings include, but are not limited to, the following:

- All participants demonstrated a clear understanding of the concept of EDI within their workplace but did not necessarily express a knowledge of the legal obligations of employers
- Accountability of EDI within smaller organisations seemed to be related to a lack of resources such as time, people and finance
- EDI in the hiring process was as times considered to be a risk to the business but yet in larger organisations, it was seen as a huge benefit to the company. The tendency is to hire people “like me”
- Unconscious bias in all aspects of the business is present, from the hiring process, through to dealing with staff, vendors and clients
- Some small Irish companies are hesitant to embrace EDI due to lack of education in the area and knowing where to start
- Management training is needed in the area of how to support diverse employees in their role and within the workplace

6.1.3 Social impact assessment findings

Despite the existence of EU Equality Directives transposed to national legislation, and despite the existence of a substantial body of research on gender inequality in the Irish workplace, a lacuna persists between the operation of the law and workplace practices. This requires further action by the EU, the Irish government, and key stakeholders.

Future monitoring and evaluation should include the following:

- The use of a unified methodology that will ensure the availability of comparable data across all EU Member States
- A range of progressive actions organisations can commit to, for example embedding flexible working in their culture, advocating for the female talent within their organisation and building out a team that is reflective of Irish society (LinkedIn 2023)
- Stakeholder education and understanding in the application of the European Commission’s set of indicators to measure progress in promoting gender equality in the workplace

6.2 Learning Outcomes and Competencies

6.2.1 Existing learning outcomes/competencies

Table 1.2 (below) summarises the existing learning outcomes and competencies that were identified from the desk research activity:

Category	Learning Outcomes	EntreComp	LifeComp	DigComp
Culture	Identify the effect of culture, contemporary culture, subcultures and cross-cultures on domestic and international business	Valuing ideas Ethical & sustainable thinking Self-awareness & self-efficacy Taking the initiative Working with others	P1 Self-regulation P2 Flexibility P3 Wellbeing S1 Empathy S2 Communication S3 Collaboration L2 Critical thinking	None
	Develop a knowledge of evolving diverse cultures and cultural characteristics of international societies (German, Spain, France, Japan)			
People/ Humanity	Understand how diversity can be managed and maintained in a business	Valuing ideas Ethical & sustainable thinking, Planning & management Self-awareness & self-efficacy	P2 Flexibility S1 Empathy S2 Communication S3 Collaboration L2 Critical thinking	None
	Analyse and appraise the management of			

	<p>workforce diversity and inclusion, and its impact on shaping HR policies, employee efficiency and effectiveness</p> <p>Gain an introductory knowledge of the intertwined roots of global inequalities and ecological crises</p> <p>Question stereotypical images and treatment of people different from ourselves and apply intercultural skills in their daily life</p> <p>Understand current issues involved in the staffing and management of organisations from both national and global perspectives, to include ethical considerations and demonstrate equality, diversity and inclusion principles</p>	Working with others		
Management	<p>Explore the increasing diversity of the workforce and describe the strategies and techniques for managing diversity</p> <p>Recognise and value cultural differences, identify and implement ethical</p>	<p>Valuing ideas</p> <p>Ethical & sustainable Thinking, Self-awareness & self-efficacy</p> <p>Taking the Initiative</p> <p>Planning & management</p> <p>Working with others</p>	<p>P2 Flexibility</p> <p>S1 Empathy</p> <p>S2 Communication</p> <p>S3 Collaboration</p> <p>L2 Critical thinking</p>	None

	cross-cultural communication practices			
Gender Studies	Identify how gender and sexuality are produced, performed and/or legislated for in a variety of social and cultural contexts.	Self-awareness & self-efficacy	P2 Flexibility: S1 Empathy	None

Table 1.2: Existing learning outcomes/competencies

6.2.2 European competency gaps

The competencies that were not addressed in relation to undergraduate business management EDI topics and modules are listed below. The design process of the new micro credential courses should evaluate each of these competencies in light of EDI undergraduate business management education, see Table 1.4:

EntreComp	LifeComp	DigComp
Spotting Opportunities	P1.2 Understanding and regulating personal emotions, thoughts, and behaviour, including stress responses	Information and data literacy
Creativity	P1.3 Nurturing optimism, hope, resilience, self-efficacy and a sense of purpose to support learning and action	Communication and collaboration
Vision	P3.1 Awareness that individual behaviour, personal characteristics and social and environmental factors influence health and wellbeing	Digital content creation
Motivation and perseverance	P3.2 Understanding potential risks for wellbeing, and using reliable information and services for health and social protection	Safety
Mobilising resources	S2.1 Awareness of the need for a variety of communication strategies, language registers, and tools that are adapted to context and content	Problem solving
Financial and economic literacy	L1.1 Awareness of and confidence in one's own and others' abilities to learn, improve and achieve with work and dedication	
Mobilising others	L1.2 Understanding that learning is a lifelong process that requires openness, curiosity and determination	
Coping with uncertainty, ambiguity and risk	L1.3 Reflecting on other people's feedback as well as on successful and unsuccessful experiences to continue developing one's potential	
Learning through experience	L2.1 Awareness of potential biases in the data and one's personal limitations, while collecting	

	valid and reliable information and ideas from diverse and reputable sources	
	L3.1 Awareness of one's own learning interests, processes and preferred strategies, including learning needs and required support	
	L3.2 Planning and implementing learning goals, strategies, resources and processes	
	L3 Managing learning: The planning, organising, monitoring and reviewing of one's own learning	

Table 1.3 The missing European competencies

6.2.3 Identified competencies from the in-depth interviews and focus groups

Table 1.4 summarises the list of competencies that were identified from the qualitative findings from the in-depth interviews and focus groups:

Competencies Needed	EntreComp	LifeComp	DigComp
Knowledge of European and National Law	Planning & management Coping with uncertainty ambiguity and risk Working with others Learning through experience	P3.1 Awareness that individual behaviour, personal characteristics & social & environmental factors influence well-being P3.2 Understanding potential risks for wellbeing, & using reliable information & services for health & social protection	1.3 Managing data, information & digital content 2.3 Engaging in citizenship through digital technologies 2.4 Collaborating through digital technologies 2.5 Netiquette 3.3 Copyright & licenses 4.1 Protecting devices 4.2 Protecting personal data & privacy 4.3 Protecting health & well-being
Knowledge of Business Culture	All competencies	2.1 Interacting through digital technologies 2.2 Sharing through digital technologies 2.3 Engaging in citizenship through digital technologies 2.4 Collaborating through digital technologies 2.5 Netiquette 2.6 Managing digital identity	All competencies

Conflict Management	Spotting opportunities Working with others Self-awareness & self-efficacy Motivation & perseverance	P1 Self-Regulation P3 Wellbeing S1 Empathy S2 Communication S3 Collaboration L1 Growth mindset L2 Critical thinking	2.1 Interacting through digital technologies 2.5 Netiquette 5.3 Creatively using digital technologies
Leadership Implementing EDI	Spotting opportunities Vision Valuing ideas Ethical & sustainable thinking Motivation & perseverance Mobilizing others Planning & management Working with others Coping with uncertainty, ambiguity & risk Learning through experience	P2 Flexibility P3 Wellbeing S1 Empathy S2 Communication S3 Collaboration L1 Growth mindset L2 Critical Thinking L3 Managing learning	1.3 Managing data, information & digital content 2.1 interacting through digital technologies 2.2 Sharing through digital technologies 2.3 Collaborating through digital technologies 2.5 Netiquette 4.2 Protecting personal data & privacy 4.3 Protecting health & wellbeing 5.3 Creatively using digital technologies 5.4 Identifying digital competence gaps
Open Discussion around EDI	Valuing ideas Ethical & sustainable thinking Self-awareness & self-efficacy Taking the initiative Working with others Learning through experience	P1 Self-regulation P2 Flexibility P3 Wellbeing S1 Empathy S2 Communication S3 Collaboration L1 Growth Mindset L3 Managing learning	2.4 Collaborating through digital technologies 2.5 Netiquette 2.6 Managing digital identity
EDI Integrated across all Business Functions	Valuing ideas Ethical & sustainable thinking Self-awareness & self-efficacy Financial & economic literacy	All competencies	2.1 Interacting through digital technologies 2.3 Engaging in citizenship through digital technologies 2.4 Collaborating through digital technologies 2.5 Netiquette

	Taking the initiative Planning & management Working with others Learning through experience		2.6 Managing digital identity 4.2 Protecting personal data and privacy 4.3 Protecting health & well-being 5.2 Identifying needs & technological responses 5.3 Creatively using digital technologies
Self-Awareness and Unconscious Bias	Valuing ideas Ethical & sustainable thinking Self-awareness & self-efficacy Motivation & perseverance Taking the initiative Coping with uncertainty, ambiguity & risk Working with others Learning through experience	All competencies	2.4 Collaborating through digital technologies 2.5 Netiquette 2.6 Managing digital identity
Accommodations for Remote Working	Motivation and perseverance Mobilising resources Mobilising others Taking the initiative Planning and management	P2 Flexibility P3 Wellbeing S2 Communication S3 Collaboration	1.3 Managing data, information & digital content 2.1 Interacting through digital technologies 2.2 Sharing through digital technologies 2.4 Collaborating through digital technologies 4.1 Protecting devices 4.2 Protecting personal data & privacy 4.3 Protecting health and well-being 4.4 Protecting the environment

			5.2 Identifying needs & technological responses 5.3 Creatively using digital technologies 5.4 Identifying digital competence gaps
Use of Digital Technology to promote EDI	Spotting opportunities Vision Ethical & sustainable thinking Planning & management Working with others Learning through experience	P1 Self-regulation P2 Flexibility P3 Wellbeing S2 Communication S3 Collaboration L3 Managing learning	All competencies

Table 1.4: Identified competencies from focus groups and in-depth interviews

6.3 Updated Version of the Labour Market Policies

6.3.1 Focus on impact

Women's labour force participation has grown substantially since Covid-19. Female participation rates increased over the course of the pandemic to reach 72%, a sharp increase from the pre-pandemic level of about 67%. If women's participation can grow so fast and is only 10% less than male participant why is there such huge discrepancies when it comes to gender and Senior Level, C-Suite Leadership and Board representation. Discrimination is deep rooted in societal gender roles, which provide limited opportunities for women to return to work after maternity leave. It is embedded in societal and constitutional values that women are primarily homemakers and should therefore stay at home raising children and doing other unpaid work.

The gender pay gap in Europe is low with new labour market entrants, tends to widen with age, and is higher in the private sector. The pay gap increase may be due to interruptions that women encounter during their working life. Competencies around understanding international cultures and societal treatment of gender could inform managers of the challenges that women face during their career years.

In a report from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (2018), female employment rates are lower for those with three or more children, those with lower levels of education and/or those aged between 15-19. The highest rates of employment were among females in the 25-44 year age range.

Currently in Ireland, the employment rate for females aged 15-64 years increased to 78.4% in 2022 in comparison to 68.8% in 1998, it is highest among women aged 35-44 years. Women are also having fewer children. Fertility rates have declined from 2.1 in 2009 to 1.6 in 2020. With the increase in age of students graduating from higher education, coupled with the projected growth in the population aged 65 and over,

the domestic working age population is getting smaller. The change from 25-44 age category to the 35-44 age category between 2018 and 2022, may reflect this decrease in the domestic population where female employment is concentrated in a smaller age bracket. The latest PWC report (2022) shows that childcare and domestic work responsibilities were the factors causing women to leave employment during the Covid-19 pandemic where across 33 OECD countries, gender equality in the workplace was set back by two years. Over the course of the pandemic, in Ireland, female participation rose in the labour market, possibly due to the option to work from home which helped overcome previous obstacles of family and household obstacles such as the cost of childcare, parenting responsibilities and a harmonious work life balance. Furthermore, it could be suggested that female participation in the workforce may continue on this trajectory due to the affordances of the Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Bill (2022). This is a unique piece of legislation for Ireland and needs to be integrated into business strategies and organisation.

Undergraduate management education must now focus on how EDI, specifically gender and fostering a new culture, can be integrated into core business management programmes to allow females to yield the same career benefits as that of their male counterparts. Undergraduate business management education, not just HR or People Management modules, need to include competencies in relation to managing requests pertaining to the Bills such as the Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Bill (2022) and how to empathetically apply the new entitlements fairly whilst adhering to legislative compliance. The competencies identified in Table 1.5 aim to address the multiple issues outlined above.

6.3.2 Videos of best practice

The Irish team conducted six video interviews related to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) to obtain an overview of existing best practices in the workplace. These interviews are not only useful examples but will be used as part of training programmes for managers and undergraduate business management modules for higher education students.

We ensured that we had a selection of female entrepreneurs as participants and we were particularly interested in finding out about their career pathways, influences on decision making in relation to starting their own business and the challenges that women face as entrepreneurs and leaders. The implementation of EDI policies and associated challenges in the workplace were a common theme in all interviews. Inclusion of underrepresented groups in the workplace and community posed a challenge that was met through social enterprise projects, theatre and community involvement. Participants noted that EDI is not just important in the workplace but that it is equally important to listen to the wider community and to ensure that all underrepresented groups are included and given an equal voice. An important aspect was addressed with regard to EDI education for children and how this can be taught at a young age. Participants raised valid points and observations regarding current national EDI legislation and the responsibility of the employer. Future considerations of EDI were explored: definitions in law and legislation; EDI needs to be integrated into daily business operations; starting a business is different for female entrepreneurs in comparison to their male counterparts.

In Ireland, we warmly thank the following organisations for participating in these interviews:

- Mill Theatre Dundrum

- Red Torch Ginger
- Cycling Without Age
- Clara Clark Event Management
- Skinny Batch Bakery
- Sylvia's Childcare

6.4 Competencies Identified for the Microcredential Modules

The table below is a summary of the combination of required competencies from the social impact assessment, desk research and the qualitative research activities. Each competency is mapped to the European frameworks: EntreComp, LifeComp and DigComp.

Competencies	EntreComp	LifeComp	DigComp
Management: People/Humanity	Valuing ideas Ethical & sustainable thinking, Planning & management Self-awareness & self-efficacy Working with others	P2 Flexibility S1 Empathy S2 Communication S3 Collaboration L2 Critical thinking	2.1 Interacting through digital technologies 2.4 Collaborating through digital technologies 2.6 Managing digital identity 5.2 Creatively using digital technologies
Knowledge of European and National Law	Planning & management Coping with uncertainty and risk Working with others Learning through experience	P3.1 Awareness that individual behaviour, personal characteristics & social & environmental factors influence well-being P3.2 Understanding potential risks for wellbeing, & using reliable information & services for health & social protection	1.3 Managing data, information & digital content 2.3 Engaging in citizenship through digital technologies 2.4 Collaborating through digital technologies 2.5 Netiquette 3.3 Copyright & licenses 4.1 Protecting devices 4.2 Protecting personal data & privacy 4.3 Protecting health & well-being
Knowledge of Business Culture	All competencies	P1 Self-regulation P2 Flexibility P3 Wellbeing S1 Empathy S2: Communication S3 Collaboration L2 Critical thinking	2.1 Interacting through digital technologies 2.2 Sharing through digital technologies 2.3 Engaging in citizenship through digital technologies

			2.4 Collaborating through digital technologies 2.5 Netiquette 2.6 Managing digital identity
Management: Conflict Management	Spotting opportunities Valuing ideas Ethical & sustainable thinking Working with others Self-awareness & self-efficacy Taking the Initiative Planning & management Motivation & perseverance Working with others	P1 Self-Regulation P2 Flexibility P3 Wellbeing S1 Empathy S2 Communication S3 Collaboration L1 Growth mindset L2 Critical thinking	2.1 Interacting through digital technologies 2.5 Netiquette 5.3 Creatively using digital technologies
Management: Leadership Implementing EDI	Spotting opportunities Vision Valuing ideas Ethical & sustainable thinking Self-awareness & self-efficacy Motivation & perseverance Mobilizing others Taking the initiative Planning & management Working with others Coping with uncertainty, ambiguity & risk Learning through experience	P2 Flexibility P3 Wellbeing S1 Empathy S2 Communication S3 Collaboration L1 Growth mindset L2 Critical Thinking L3 Managing learning	1.3 Managing data, information & digital content 2.1 interacting through digital technologies 2.2 Sharing through digital technologies 2.3 Collaborating through digital technologies 2.5 Netiquette 4.2 Protecting personal data & privacy 4.3 Protecting health & wellbeing 5.3 Creatively using digital technologies 5.4 Identifying digital competence gaps
Open Discussion around EDI	Valuing ideas Ethical & sustainable thinking	P1 Self-regulation P2 Flexibility P3 Wellbeing S1 Empathy	2.4 Collaborating through digital technologies 2.5 Netiquette

	Self-awareness & self-efficacy Taking the initiative Working with others Learning through experience	S2 Communication S3 Collaboration L1 Growth Mindset L3 Managing learning	2.6 Managing digital identity
EDI Integrated across all Business Functions	Valuing ideas Ethical & sustainable thinking Self-awareness & self-efficacy Financial & economic literacy Taking the initiative Planning & management Working with others Learning through experience	All competencies	2.1 Interacting through digital technologies 2.3 Engaging in citizenship through digital technologies 2.4 Collaborating through digital technologies 2.5 Netiquette 2.6 Managing digital identity 4.2 Protecting personal data and privacy 4.3 Protecting health & well-being 5.2 Identifying needs & technological responses 5.3 Creatively using digital technologies
Gender Studies Self-Awareness and Unconscious Bias	Valuing ideas Ethical & sustainable thinking Self-awareness & self-efficacy Motivation & perseverance Taking the initiative Coping with uncertainty, ambiguity & risk Working with others Learning through experience	All competencies	2.4 Collaborating through digital technologies 2.5 Netiquette 2.6 Managing digital identity
Accommodations for Remote Working	Motivation and perseverance	P2 Flexibility P3 Wellbeing S2 Communication	1.3 Managing data, information & digital content

	Mobilising resources Mobilising others Taking the initiative Planning and management	S3 Collaboration	2.1 Interacting through digital technologies 2.2 Sharing through digital technologies 2.4 Collaborating through digital technologies 4.1 Protecting devices 4.2 Protecting personal data & privacy 4.3 Protecting health and well-being 4.4 Protecting the environment 5.2 Identifying needs & technological responses 5.3 Creatively using digital technologies 5.4 Identifying digital competence gaps
Use of Digital Technology to promote EDI	Spotting opportunities Vision Ethical & sustainable thinking Planning & management Working with others Learning through experience	P1 Self-regulation P2 Flexibility P3 Wellbeing S2 Communication S3 Collaboration L3 Managing learning	All competencies

Table 1.5: Competencies needed for micro credential modules

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