



Diversity Equity Inclusion

DEI4SME NEWSLETTER

edition 1



Co-funded by
the European Union

DEI4SME is an Erasmus+ project co-funded by the European Union, uniting six partner organisations from Finland, Germany, Austria, and Lithuania for the mission to enable **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion** in business and business education.

The project's vision sets out to create an effective digital tool and a learning ecosystem around it to enable social responsibility planning, execution, and governance.

By equipping business graduates with the skills and resources needed to drive change towards DEI, the project aims to implement social sustainability in businesses with a positive impact on businesses and society.



www.dei4sme.eu



[@dei4sme.project](https://www.instagram.com/dei4sme_project)



[@DEI4SME](https://www.linkedin.com/company/dei4sme)

CONFERENCES & MEETINGS

DEI4SME has already participated in various international conferences and hosted in-person partner meetings.

The **Neurodiversity Day at the University of Vaasa** in October 2024 engaged around *150 students* to raise awareness about DEI in SMEs during a month of events celebrating neurodiversity.

The **Nordic-Baltic Sustainable Business Summit in Vilnius** in November 2024 highlighted greenwashing in ESG policies and featured a panel on the risks of superficial DEI efforts and overlooked social sustainability issues.

DEI4SME participated in the international **German/online CoSiM conference** on management studies in November 2024.

Diversity & Inclusion conference in May 2025

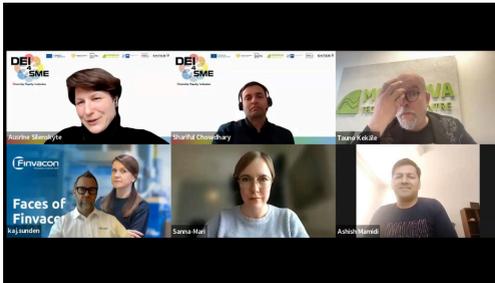
The DEI4SME consortium has come together in **two face-to-face meetings in Vaasa** (February 2024 and 2025) to discuss important project progress.



DEI4SME WEBINARS

The DEI4SME project produced two webinars on DEI relevant topics with company representatives.

Why and when are diversity, equity, and inclusion relevant to a company?



This webinar explains the value of diversity management for businesses of all sizes, focusing on its relevance to regulation, strategy, growth, and social sustainability. It covers EU regulations, the business and social cases for diversity, practical starting points, and provides useful open-access resources for implementation.

Strengthening Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in SME management.



This webinar explores how DEI goes beyond corporate social responsibility and HR, highlighting its role in enhancing business competitiveness. It features insights from senior executives and offers valuable resources for company representatives and educators interested in social sustainability.

DEI4SME HACKATHON I - Recap

The **DEI4SME Hackathon I**, hosted by the University of Vaasa, Room466 and E.N.T.E.R., **brought together 200 students, 10 SMEs, and 30 global experts** to tackle DEI challenges in small businesses.

Held in February 2025 in a hybrid format, the event focused on including diverse groups in SME internationalisation. Students addressed real-life business challenges across strategy, HR, and product development. With expert-led sessions, poster exhibitions, and mentoring, the hackathon highlighted DEI as a strategic asset for growth. Its success gained international attention, promoting inclusive innovation in European SMEs.



DEI4SME HACKATHON II - Recap



DEI4SME Hackathon II, held in March 2025, in Kaunas and online, united students, professionals, and academics to explore how DEI drives innovation in SMEs. Hosted by Kaunas University of Technology, the event featured student pitches, inspiring keynotes on breaking gender stereotypes and career empowerment, and a panel on DEI best practices with **experts from Telia, Moody's, and EDUNAUK**.

Participants tackled real business challenges, presenting creative, inclusive solutions. The hackathon showcased DEI as a strategic asset for growth and sustainability.

DEI4SME BLOG

The DEI4SME blog offers practical, research-based insights from the project partners and external experts to help SMEs embed DEI into their daily work routine.

[Read the DEI4SME Blog](#)



Unlock Growth: How Understanding Cultural Mindsets Can Boost Your Small Business

Unlock Growth: How Understanding Cultural Mindsets Can Boost Your Small Business By Jing Betty Feng, Associate Professor at the Department

[Continue Reading](#)



Is there a small or medium business (SME) that does NOT need to care about diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)?

Is there a small or medium business (SME) that does NOT need to care about diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)?

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ONLINE TEACHING CASES

The DEI4SME team is working on creating a substantial **collection of teaching cases and guides on DEI management in SMEs** to enable teaching social responsibility in business, raise awareness among higher education institutions and SMEs about the importance of DEI and its effects on companies and their success, and help other institutions (e.g. chambers of commerce, vocational education institutions) foster social responsibility for their diverse and individual needs.

The DEI4SME teaching cases and teaching notes will be **published on the DEI4SME website** and in a **peer-reviewed book, which is coming in 2026.**

The teaching cases cover the following themes:

- How to **raise** awareness on DEI issues in SMEs among peer managers and employees
- How to **use** DEI to support SMEs growth and strategy implementation
- How to **solve** DEI-related conflicts in the SMEs

HIGHLIGHT TEACHING CASE



SURVEY AND HACKATHON REPORTS

The DEI4SME project conducted extensive research to understand how SMEs, employees, and job seekers, particularly from under-represented groups, perceive and manage DEI in European SMEs.

Between May and September 2024, two multilingual **online surveys** were distributed across **Austria, Finland, Germany, and Lithuania**, gathering 441 validated responses: 137 from SME leaders and 304 from employees and job seekers.

To gain deeper **qualitative insights**, the team also organised **two international hackathons** in Finland and in Lithuania in early 2025, which brought together students, entrepreneurs, and policy experts to explore practical DEI challenges and solutions in SMEs.

The research findings are **detailed in four parts**:



Part 1: Managing Diversity in
Smaller European Businesses:
EMPLOYEE PERSPECTIVES



Part 2: Managing Diversity in
Smaller European Businesses:
SME PERSPECTIVES



Part 3: Managing Diversity in
Smaller European Businesses:
COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS



Part 4: Managing Diversity in
smaller European Businesses –
INSIGHTS FROM
HACKATHONS

This comprehensive approach aims to inform about the development of effective DEI strategies and tools tailored to the needs of smaller European businesses.

[Read the full report](#)

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

on Frameworks to Manage DEI in Smaller European Businesses start!

In June 2025, the DEI4SME Project team based in Vaasa held the first Focus Group Discussion during the *4th International Global Innovations Conference*. This focus group discussion was held in hybrid format with both online and onsite attendees discussing at the same time – including all voices in the conversation. The event gathered diverse profiles: from **DEI experts**, to **HEI representatives**, and **under-represented groups**. Thanks to active discussions and interested participants, the team gathered useful feedback and advice on improvements to apply to the DEI Management framework, base of the future digital tool.

This Focus Group discussion is the first of the series that will last until mid-September 2025.

If you are interested in raising your voice and making a positive impact on DEI Management in Europe, please let us know by contacting us at contact@dei4sme.eu!

You can attend upcoming focus group discussions in Austria, Germany, Finland, and Lithuania - our project team will get in touch with exact dates and further information on how to attend and share your insights.





TESTING THE DIGITAL TOOL

The DEI4SME project is developing a **digital tool to support SMEs in planning, implementing, and managing DEI initiatives**. Designed to align with EU ESG reporting requirements, the tool aims to simplify compliance while helping SMEs unlock DEI's potential to drive growth, innovation, and sustainability.

Inclusive companies report 22% lower employee turnover, 22% higher productivity, 27% greater profitability, and 39% higher customer satisfaction. Drawing on

insights from 304 individuals and 137 SMEs across Austria, Finland, Germany, and Lithuania, the tool will be tailored to real business needs.

We invite you to get involved!

Are you an SME ready to explore DEI? Become one of the first testers of the upcoming digital tool launching in 2025!

Are you a DEI expert? Join us and share your expertise to shape a tool that supports inclusive business practices across Europe.

Get in touch and be part of the change

[Register here!](#)



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