

PROMOTING INCLUSIVE PEDAGOGIES TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF VULNERABLE GROUPS IN CIVIS UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract

Vulnerable groups—including individuals marginalized by race, gender, disability, migration status, and socioeconomic background—continue to face systemic barriers restricting access, participation, and recognition in higher education. This presentation examines strategies for strengthening inclusive pedagogies across five CIVIS University Alliance partners: the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Aix Marseille Université, the University of Bucharest, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, and Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen. It draws on a study that analyzed organizational conditions shaping teaching practices responsive to vulnerable groups.

The study aimed to:

- (1) explore how academic staff understand the needs of vulnerable groups;
- (2) assess whether institutional cultures support inclusive pedagogies;
- (3) examine internal organizational factors influencing teaching; and
- (4) propose evidence based strategies for advancing inclusion across the alliance.

A mixed methods design was used. Quantitatively, 325 academics completed the Organizational Culture Inventory® (OCI®) and Organizational Effectiveness Inventory® (OEI®). The OCI® assessed Constructive, Passive/Defensive, and Aggressive/Defensive norms that shape behaviour in teaching environments. The OEI® examined leadership, communication, empowerment, job design, and collaboration, as well as outcomes such as motivation, adaptability, and psychological safety. These indicators reveal whether institutional conditions enable inclusive pedagogical approaches such as Universal Design for Learning (UDL), culturally responsive teaching, trauma informed practices, and participatory assessment. Qualitatively, around 150 academics participated in focus groups discussing experiences with inclusion, collaboration, and pedagogical innovation. Findings show that although faculty value inclusive pedagogies and aspire to work within Constructive cultures—characterized by humanistic support, affiliation, self actualization, and achievement—current cultures are dominated by defensive norms, especially Avoidance, Conventionality, and Oppositionality. These norms create risk averse environments that discourage experimentation, limit collaboration, and reduce the adoption of inclusive teaching strategies. Qualitative data indicate that inclusive practices are often informal, individual, and fragmented rather than institutionally coordinated. Faculty describe inclusion as symbolic or dependent on personal commitment, while structural barriers—centralized governance, bureaucratic overload, and misaligned recognition systems—undermine sustained pedagogical change. The study concludes that promoting inclusive pedagogies requires both pedagogical development and systemic cultural transformation. Recommendations include targeted professional development in UDL and culturally responsive teaching; faculty learning communities to co develop inclusive practices; curriculum redesign grounded in equity principles; participatory assessment methods; and institutional reward systems that recognize inclusive teaching and mentorship. Strengthening leadership capacity and reducing structural barriers are essential for creating psychologically safe, collaborative environments where vulnerable groups can thrive. This presentation invites dialogue among educators, administrators, and policymakers to position inclusive pedagogies as a foundation of academic excellence and social justice within the CIVIS Alliance.

Keywords: Pedagogies, Vulnerable Groups, CIVIS Alliance, Higher Education, Organizational Culture, Universal Design for Learning, Culturally Responsive Teaching, Equity, Academic Belonging, Faculty Development.