



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

Findings from a Comparative Study of Five Partner Institutions

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Why This Matters: Vulnerability in European HE

- Vulnerability operates across:
 - **Race & ethnicity**
 - **Gender & gender identity**
 - **Disability & neurodiversity**
 - **Migration / refugee status**
 - **Socioeconomic background**
- Exclusion functions at three levels: **access • participation • recognition**

Research Context: The CIVIS Alliance and eBelong2

- **CIVIS** — European University Alliance
- Five partners studied:
 - *Aix-Marseille Université* (France)
 - *National and Kapodistrian University of Athens* (Greece)
 - *University of Bucharest* (Romania)
 - *Universidad Autónoma de Madrid* (Spain)
 - *Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen* (Germany)
- Project: **eBelong2** — Organizational culture diagnosis

Research Objectives

- 1) Understand how academic staff perceive the needs of **vulnerable groups**
- 2) Assess whether current institutional cultures enable **inclusive pedagogies**.
- 3) Analyze internal **organizational factors** shaping teaching practice.
- 4) Propose **evidence-based strategies**.

Conceptual Framework

Pedagogical

- **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)**: multiple means of engagement, representation, expression.
- **Inclusive Curriculum Framework** — equity baked into design, outcomes, assessment.

Organizational

- Constructive / Passive-Defensive / Aggressive-Defensive culture model (Cooke & Szumal ,1993).

Ethical

- **Inclusive Excellence** — inclusion as core to academic quality, not an add-on.
- **Intersectionality** — race, class, gender, disability, migration.

Methodology: Mixed-Methods Design

Component	Tool	Sample	Period
Quantitative	Organizational Culture Inventory [®] (OCI [®])	325 academic staff	Nov 2024
Quantitative	Organizational Effectiveness Inventory [®] (OEI [®])	325 academic staff	Nov 2024
Qualitative	Focus groups (national reports)	~150 academics	2024–25

Comparative Snapshot: Five Institutions, Five Inclusion Profiles

Institution	Inclusion Stance	Nature
AMU	Service-rich; SPRE, transgender support, counselling	Structured
NKUA	Civic / ethical — democracy, dignity, human rights	Semi-institutionalized
UB	Transversal values — equity, intersectional intent	Aspirational
UT	Internationalization & gender equity lens	Fragmented
UAM	Primarily disability-oriented, project-driven	Aspirational / reactive

Organizational Culture Inventory Findings: A Defensive Reality

Current Operating Culture (n = 325)

-  **Passive/Defensive — DOMINANT** (strongest cluster)
 - **Avoidance** ← most prominent behavioural style (non-commitment, risk aversion)
 - **Conventionality** (conformity, self-protection)
-  **Aggressive/Defensive — MODERATE**
 - **Oppositionality** (criticism, resistance, "safe" decisions)
 - **Perfectionism** (status preservation, control)
-  **Constructive — WEAKEST**
 - Achievement, Self-Actualizing, Humanistic-Encouraging, Affiliative all **underrepresented**
-  **Low consensus** across units → cultural fragmentation, sub-cultural variation

The Ideal vs. Current Gap

OCI Ideal — what staff collectively want

- 🏆¹ Humanistic-Encouraging — 98th percentile
- 🏆² Self-Actualising — 97th percentile
- Strong preference for **Affiliation, Self-Actualization** and **Achievement**

The Gap:

- Staff envision Constructive culture (mutual support, autonomy, meaning)
- They experience Defensive culture (avoidance, conventionality, opposition)
- *A deep implementation gap between values and practice*

Organizational Effectiveness Inventory Findings: Engines and Outcomes

Causal Factors (the "engines")

- ▼ **Mission clarity** — low; faculty unclear about institutional purpose around inclusion
- ▼ **Empowerment & participation** — limited; centralised governance dominates
- ▼ **Leadership behaviours** — underdeveloped communication, coaching, support
- ▼ **Job design** — low autonomy, weak feedback, poor task significance, low interdependence
- ▼ **HR systems** — misaligned with collaborative / inclusive practices; weak recognition

Outcomes (what the engines produce)

- ⚠ **Intention to stay — HIGH** (but loyalty without energy)
- ▼ **Motivation — VERY LOW**
- ▼ **Teamwork & service quality — LOW**
- ▼ **Adaptability — LOW** (rigid, reactive institutions)

Qualitative Findings: Inclusion as Fragmented and Symbolic

Recurring qualitative themes:

- **Inclusion is rhetorical, not operational** — espoused values ≠ lived reality
- **Driven by individual initiative, not institutional support** — fragile, unsustainable
- **Symbolic, project-based, externally funded** — particularly at UB, UT, UAM
- **Invisibilised labour** — mentoring and inclusive work go unrewarded
- **Risk-averse climate silences voice** — neglect, overload, competing priorities as quiet resistance

Cross-Institutional Comparison: What Varies, What Converges

What converges across all five universities:

- Strong normative commitment to inclusion
- Defensive operating culture
- Fragmented implementation driven by individual initiative
- Misaligned HR and recognition systems

What varies:

- AMU → most *service-rich* (SPRE, LGBTQ+, counselling)
- NKUA → strongest *ethical / civic* framing
- UB → most *intersectional* in aspiration
- UAM → most *disability-focused & project-based*
- UT → most *internationally framed* but staff-short

Recommendations: From Levers to Strategies

Interconnected levers → strategies:

- **Clarify and communicate the mission** — co-define inclusion with faculty; embed it in everyday practice
- **Empower & decentralise** — redistribute decision-making; participatory governance
- **Redesign HR systems** — reward mentorship, inclusive teaching, cross-unit collaboration; non-competitive recognition
- **Enrich job design** — autonomy, feedback loops, interdependence, task significance
- **Develop Constructive leadership** — training, coaching, psychological safety, mid-level leadership

Pedagogical strategies:

- 🎓 Targeted PD in UDL, culturally responsive teaching, trauma-informed practice
- 🤝 Faculty learning communities to co-develop inclusive practices
- 📚 Curriculum redesign embedding equity principles
- ✅ Participatory assessment methods
- 🏆 Recognition systems that value inclusive teaching and mentorship

Implications for the CIVIS universities

- CIVIS is uniquely positioned to model *cross-border inclusion* — but only if bureaucracy is reduced and shared learning infrastructures built
- Simplify administration, budgets, and partnership protocols so initiatives survive contact with reality
- Invest in leadership roles dedicated to cross-border inclusion; create platforms for shared reflection, joint courses, best-practice exchange

Conclusion & Call to Dialogue

- **Inclusive pedagogy = pedagogical development + systemic cultural transformation.**
- From *aspirational rhetoric* → *embodied practice*.
- **For educators:** experiment, build learning communities, share what works.
- **For administrators:** align HR, design jobs, develop Constructive leadership.
- **For policymakers:** resource UDL training, recognise inclusive mentorships, simplify alliance governance.