

D&I NEOcharter

Diversity and Inclusion Charter of
NEOLAIa as an Alliance and its Members

Implemented 14 May 2025 | Version 1.0

The charter will be formally ratified by the rectors of the nine NEOLAIa universities. Their signatures will be obtained by 14 May 2025. Once signed, the Charter will apply until December 2027. The charter includes a selection of a collection of best practice examples illustrating initiatives across the NEOLAIa universities. These examples, included in the appendix, are intended to inspire and guide the implementation of the charter's values and actions. The endnotes provide further context for these practices. A larger selection of examples will be made available in a [database](#) from June 2025.

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Preamble

NEOLAIa is a European University Alliance consisting of nine higher education institutions, widely spread across Europe. They are Bielefeld University (Germany), University of Jaén (Spain), University of Nicosia (Cyprus), Örebro University (Sweden), University of Ostrava (Czech Republic), University of Salerno (Italy), 'Stefan cel Mare' University of Suceava (Romania), University of Tours (France) and Šiauliai State University of Applied Sciences (Lithuania). We see our role in small and medium-sized cities with the potential to boldly transform the European higher education system and society, from the bottom up, bringing sustainable innovation for social and economic prosperity not only to our regions, but to the EU as a whole and beyond.

As NEOLAIa is dedicated to promoting diversity and inclusion as one of its main pillars, the member universities acknowledge that it is of the utmost importance to foster an environment where all people are recognized, respected, supported, and feel valued. The alliance agrees to prioritize issues of respect, dignity, and equality as they focus on promoting inclusion and diversity in as many ways as possible.

This charter is seen as an overarching umbrella paper, that refers to the various institutional and national policies relevant to diversity and inclusion. It brings together the key aspects of these different documents, while valuing the differences between them. The charter is not intended to unify views and perspectives, but rather to inspire further discussions and foster joint growth in the areas of inclusion and diversity.

We believe, that our diversity and inclusion charter benefits not only the university community, which consists of students, faculty, and staff, including services. It also contributes to the advancement and transfer of knowledge and values to the broader society and the region. By integrating principles of diversity and inclusion into all aspects of university life, we are committed to fostering a more welcoming environment for current and future generations.

Values and Commitments

The following values and commitments guide the actions of each NEOLAiA member to be inclusion-oriented, sensitive to diverse needs and the intersectionality inherent in those needs. They are seen as the foundation for building sustainable structures for diversity and inclusion. They serve as a basis for the sharing of practices and knowledge within the regions and the society:

1. Respect and dignity: Every person has the right to have their dignity respected and protected. This means that all people are of equal worth, regardless of their cultural affiliation. We endorse respectful interaction among all members of the university based on open-minded exchange and welcoming views of diversity.¹ We take a clear stand against all forms of sexism, ageism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, and other forms of devaluation and exclusion. We work actively to promote equality and take responsibility to make sure that actions such as (sexual) harassment, discrimination and violence are contrary to our values and shall not be tolerated.

2. Equal opportunities: We aim to continuously reduce barriers through equal access and inclusive measures. We therefore want to contribute to the development of a culture and society of openness and equal opportunities, thus assuming social responsibility. This includes promoting and defending the values associated with such a culture and society, such as freedom of expression and moral courage. Increasing access to education and employment and full participation is a principle we endeavor to uphold.² All environments, including digital ones, are designed to be accessible to ensure equal participation and inclusion.^{3, 4, 5}

3. Gender equality: Gender equality serves as a core element of all relevant aspects of university life. We strive for a gender-equal academic and scientific culture. Gender mainstreaming is intended to be integrated into all activities, policies, research, teaching and decision-making processes. Thus, gender equality is an integral part of all processes.^{6, 7}

4. Well-being: We promote a healthy work-life balance and the compatibility of family, caring responsibilities, studies, and career. For this reason, we systematically create family-friendly working and study conditions, career paths, and offer targeted reconciliation measures for all parents and caregivers. We aim to design working and study conditions that support physical and mental health and well-being. In addition to the focus on organizational conditions, another focus will be on the development of competencies, e.g. in stress management.⁸

5. European and global citizens: NEOLAIa is committed to promote democratic values, inclusivity, and active participation both in our respective countries and in the collaboration between countries. Central to this commitment is the respect and promotion of intersectionality, intergenerational exchange, multiculturalism and plurilingualism, recognizing them as vital components of a cohesive, diverse, and resilient Europe. By bridging global and local perspectives, NEOLAIa empowers individuals to engage critically and constructively with society at all levels.⁹



Action Areas

As NEOLAIa Alliance, we are committed to institutionalizing diversity and inclusion in all strategic decision-making processes. This commitment applies to the alliance as a whole and to the individual alliance partners. Therefore, our shared values must translate into actionable measures and decisions in the following action areas of (A) Research, (B) Teaching and education, (C) Leadership and management, and (D) Campus culture and society:

A. Research

- We will foster a research culture that ensures that all contributors are acknowledged and treated with **respect and dignity**. Hence, we ensure that ethical standards are embedded in our research practices to safeguard the rights and dignity of participants and communities.¹⁰
- Our institutional research agendas also address societal challenges related to **equal opportunities**, emphasizing how different forms of inequality intersect and reinforce each other. We actively work to ensure equitable access to funding, mentorship and research training, while also raising awareness of unconscious biases that may affect research decisions, methods, and outcomes. This includes fostering open dialogues and structured support for underrepresented groups in research settings.¹¹
- **Gender equality** is a central tenet of our research practices. We actively counteract gender biases in institutional support, funding allocation, and research methodologies. We encourage gender perspectives to be integrated into relevant projects, ensuring that such insights contribute to a more just society.¹²

- Research practices at NEOLAIa universities consider individual **well-being** by supporting students, faculty, and staff to balance academic pursuits and personal health. In all research disciplines as well as in interdisciplinary research, work-life balance and well-being for all members is promoted, thus setting a foundation for sustainable and impactful science.¹³
- By championing cross-cultural research initiatives, we aim to deepen our understanding of European diversity and to offer solutions to common challenges. We promote research that reflects democratic values, intersectionality, intergenerational exchange, plurilingualism, multiculturalism, and inclusivity, fostering collaboration across borders and disciplines for the benefit of **European and global citizens**.

B. Teaching and Education

- We cultivate learning environments built on **respect and dignity**, where diverse voices are valued. Emphasis is placed on amplifying marginalized perspectives, creating interactive spaces that enrich joint learning and mutual understanding.^{14, 15}
- To provide **equal opportunities**, teaching and assessment methods and materials are designed to accommodate diverse learning needs. We aim for barrier-free access – physical, technical, and financial – to course offerings and actively share strategies to address obstacles such as language and digital barriers.¹⁶
- Gender-sensitive teaching practices based on **gender equality** are encouraged, including the adaptation of materials and methods to foster gender equitable learning environments. Educators are supported in integrating gender perspectives into their courses and teaching content, where appropriate, and in addressing gender biases in teaching methods and teaching content.
- **Well-being** is integrated into curricula in discipline-specific ways and further supported through extracurricular activities and university-wide information, services, and counseling. These efforts ensure that the (mental) health and work-life balance of students, faculty and staff are addressed. Teaching practices are designed to reduce stress while fostering active and meaningful participation for both teachers and learners.^{17, 18}
- We embrace intersectionality, intergenerational exchange, plurilingualism and multiculturalism in our educational spaces, promoting active engagement with questions about **European and global citizens**, democratic values, and diversity. Teaching practices will make the diverse languages and cultures of European and global citizens visible and tangible within the alliance.

C. Leadership and management

- Leadership processes incorporate diverse voices, especially those of marginalized groups, fostering active participation in decision-making. Communication – whether personal, digital, or written – is rooted in mutual **respect and dignity**.
- Leadership is guided by transparent processes that support **equal opportunities** in access to roles and career paths. Inclusive management practices include training programs, structured opportunities for underrepresented groups, and stakeholder engagement to build fair governance frameworks.¹⁹
- We strive for **gender equality** and therefore foster gender parity and inclusion of all gender identities in leadership. Decision-making integrates gender mainstreaming, with transparent and accessible processes and resources for fostering gender equitable leadership environments. Targeted training on gender inclusivity is encouraged among students, faculty and staff.
- Policies on work-life balance and well-being are integral to leadership practices. Managers utilize an inclusive, person-centered approach that recognize diversity (in line with our core values) as a significant aspect of **well-being** of students, faculty and staff alike.
- Leaders embrace the EU's rich plurilingual and multicultural heritage, fostering excellence in diversity practices. Initiatives encourage an understanding of European languages, histories and values, building bridges across cultures for the benefit of all alliance members and supporting their growth as **European and global citizens**.

D. Campus culture and society

- We envision our campuses as spaces, where diverse identities, religions, affiliations, and lifestyles are valued and recognized, fostering a culture rooted in **respect and dignity** while aligning with shared values. Inclusive events and activities are designed to promote a sense of belonging and mutual understanding among all members.^{20, 21}
- We aim to empower underrepresented groups to actively engage with the wider community, while also encouraging the community to include these groups in promoting **equal opportunities**. Accessible infrastructure – both physical and digital – will be prioritized. Reporting units and feedback mechanisms may facilitate continual progress in creating an inclusive campus environment.²²
- **Gender equality** is embedded in the campus culture through initiatives to prevent and address gender-based violence and discrimination. We strive to provide safe, inclusive spaces, including gender-neutral facilities where possible, so that all people feel respected and valued.

- Campus **well-being** is supported through extracurricular activities, counseling services, and awareness initiatives. Spaces of trust are established to promote mental health and a healthy work-life balance for all students, faculty, staff, as well as for the wider community, enabling students to shape their own individual growth and become active participants in the development of teaching.^{23, 24, 25, 26}
- We aspire towards our campuses developing as vibrant spaces for intercultural dialogue and collaboration that reflect the values of **European and global citizens**. By enhancing accessibility and fostering active participation, we create physical and digital environments that encourage interdisciplinary and international exchange, enriching campus life for all.²⁷

Monitoring and Implementation

In order to monitor the implementation of this charter within NEOLAIa, the following actions will be taken by each member and also by the alliance as a whole:

- **Implementation and action planning:** After the ratification of the charter, the members of the alliance can decide to translate the defined values, commitments, and explanations for each action area into an individual action plan – including clear goals, responsibilities, actors, and timelines for diversity and inclusion issues. Also, the members can adapt or relate already existing actions plans to the charter. Actions plans generally support adjustments of institutional strategies and ensure that these are effectively integrated into the practices of all alliance members as well as of the alliance as a whole.
- **Regular reporting and sharing among alliance members:** On a regular basis, and at least annually, each member of the alliance will share a summary – including student perspectives – of progress toward the goals of the charter within the alliance governance structure. In addition, all universities are encouraged and guided to share best practices and innovative approaches to foster a common learning environment within the alliance, involving those responsible for the various dimensions of diversity and inclusion.
- **Internal and external monitoring process:** External monitoring takes place biennially at the level of the alliance and at the level of the individual members. It is led by at least one expert from outside the alliance to provide an external perspective. At the same time, an internal monitoring process will take place to gather and synthesize the views of students, faculty, staff, and local collaborators on progress in the area of diversity and inclusion. The outcome of both the internal and the external monitoring will be shared within the alliance and may be used to refine strategies and initiatives.

Conclusion and Final Remarks

This charter has been co-created within our NEOLAIa Alliance. It highlights our values and commitments, defines our action areas, and agrees on monitoring and implementation measures, and thus plays an important role in defining the presence and shaping the future of our university alliance.

Given the cultural differences as well as local and regional specificities, an initiation of an intensive inter-institutional dialogue on diversity and inclusion and the appreciation of different views on these issues is considered to be of paramount importance in the process of continuously becoming a more inclusive and diversity-oriented alliance as a whole. Each member of NEOLAIa contributes with individual, cultural and institutional definitions and understandings. They all need to be shared and are all of equal value for shared communication and learning on diversity and inclusion.

By defining a common ground, the alliance sees this charter as one element in achieving a more open-minded and fair Europe in general, starting in the area of academia, but also bringing the values and actions into European societies and policies. Academia will then become an important anchor for the manifestation of democratic principles in European society.

Annex I: Diversity and Inclusion Best Practice Examples

- ¹ **Bielefeld University | Diversity-sensitive onboarding:** Diversity from the beginning – as soon as new students arrive at the university, discrimination is addressed, critically reflected upon and an open culture is made tangible that asks questions about discrimination and promotes reflection. The aim is to introduce the topic to all new university members from the very beginning and to enter into a dialogue about the diversity culture at Bielefeld University. [Read more...](#)
- ² **Örebro University | Linje 14:** A cooperative project focusing on motivating younger students toward higher education through workshops, homework support, and study visits. A study in 2018 showed a 52-53% increase in university study tendencies in a neighborhood school. [Read more...](#)
- ³ **University of Jaén | CRAI Lab:** This initiative promotes digital accessibility and innovation in higher education using adaptive learning technologies to ensure full participation of all students. [Read more...](#)
- ⁴ **Örebro University | Learning Lab:** A 300 m² test environment for students and teachers to collaborate on designing learning spaces and testing new teaching methods using spatial technology. [Read more...](#)
- ⁵ **Bielefeld University | Zentrale Anlaufstelle Barrierefrei:** Central point of contact for staff and students on the subject of accessibility, where various projects such as Study start barrier free, the accessible navigation app UniMaps and various other (cooperative) projects are anchored. [Read more...](#)
- ⁶ **Örebro University | Gender Mainstreaming Model:** A model developed for gender equality in academia, focusing on internal benchmarking for mutual learning and improvement of gender equality practices. [Read more...](#)
- ⁷ **University of Nicosia | CEDI - Digital Skills for Rural Women:** A project initiated in collaboration with the Commissioner for Gender Equality to promote digital skills among women living in rural areas in Cyprus. [Read more...](#)
- ⁸ **University of Nicosia | CEDI - Elderly Well-Being Strategy:** In partnership with the Deputy Ministry of Social Welfare, CEDI is helping to develop a national strategy to enhance the well-being and quality of life for elderly people in Cyprus. [Read more...](#)
- ⁹ **University of Jaén | UNIVERDI Project:** A program integrating young people with intellectual disabilities into university life with personalized learning plans, vocational training, and continuous support. [Read more...](#)
- ¹⁰ **'Stefan cel Mare' University of Suceava | MintViz Lab:** An interdisciplinary lab designing and developing accessible technology for people with motor impairments, including smart wearables and sensorimotor interfaces. [Read more...](#)
- ¹¹ **University of Tours | Inclusion at Work and Management:** A research project exploring how inclusive leadership influences the disclosure of chronic illness in the workplace. [Read more...](#)

- 12 **Bielefeld University | Visibility Training:** The visibility training “Selbstbestimmt sichtbar” (Self-determined visibility) offers female scientists at Bielefeld University a space to develop their own strategies for public visibility with the support of experts and peers. The training program consists of three modules on communication, legal aspects, and resilience. It is aimed at female researchers at all career levels, particularly those who are just starting to think about their own visibility. [Read more...](#)
- 13 **University of Nicosia | CEDI - LGBTIQ+ Awareness in Healthcare:** A European-funded project aimed at raising awareness among medical, nursing, and pharmacy professionals about LGBTIQ+ issues in Cyprus. [Read more...](#)
- 14 **Šiauliai State University of Applied Sciences | Student Satisfaction Survey:** Every semester, a survey is conducted to assess student satisfaction with academic support, teaching quality, and content, which then informs improvements. [Read more...](#)
- 15 **University of Ostrava | Mesom So Mesom - Practice Consultants with Lived Experience:** Since June 2018, practice consultants with lived experience have been co-teaching at the Faculty of Social Studies, using storytelling to share their experiences and help students prepare for real social work practice. [Read more...](#)
- 16 **University of Salerno | Laboratory H:** The laboratory provides specialized tools like Braille printers, adaptive software, and accessible furniture to support students with disabilities, promoting barrier-free education. [Read more...](#)
- 17 **‘Stefan cel Mare’ University of Suceava | Teacher Training Courses:** Annual courses aimed at developing psycho-pedagogical skills, improving communication, and promoting student-centered approaches to teaching and mental health. [Read more...](#)
- 18 **Šiauliai State University of Applied Sciences | Mentor System:** A mentoring system for first-year students and international students helps with academic adaptation and provides guidance through teacher and student mentors. [Read more...](#)
- 19 **University of Tours | Disability Recruitment Commitment:** The university has increased its recruitment of people with disabilities, raising the percentage of staff with disabilities from 3.94% to 5.68% over four years. [Read more...](#)
- 20 **University of Jaén | Office of Cooperation and Volunteering:** Promotes social inclusion and civic engagement by actively involving students in community-oriented projects. [Read more...](#)
- 21 **University of Salerno | Gender Clinic:** The clinic provides gender-specific health services, including monitored hormone therapy and comprehensive support for individuals undergoing gender transitions. [Read more...](#)
- 22 **University of Tours | Accessibility Charter:** The charter, developed with input from students, faculty, and staff, addresses both legal provisions and practical feedback to improve accessibility on campus. [Read more...](#)
- 23 **‘Stefan cel Mare’ University of Suceava | Mental Health Projects:** Projects aimed at promoting mental health and well-being in various social contexts, including family support for children with special needs, school environments, and mental health in schools. [Read more...](#)
- 24 **Šiauliai State University of Applied Sciences | Multisensory rooms:** A multisensory room available to students and faculty to help with stress, anxiety, and autism spectrum disorder. Trained student mentors provide guidance on its use. [Read more...](#)

- ²⁵ **University of Ostrava | Counselling and Career Centre:** The Counselling and Career Centre offers psychological and other counseling services for both students and employees, supporting them with various concerns and solutions. [Read more...](#)
- ²⁶ **University of Ostrava | Medici na ulici (MNU) / Medics on the Street:** A student organization bringing together future healthcare professionals to focus on homelessness and medical care, offering basic wound treatment, health consultations, and care coordination in collaboration with social workers. [Read more...](#)
- ²⁷ **University of Salerno | Buddy System Project:** Supports international students by pairing them with local "buddies" to foster integration, cultural exchange, and social connections. [Read more...](#)

Annex II: D&I Charters and Policy Documents of the Alliance Members

Bielefeld University

- [Aktionsplan Diversität](#) [Action Plan for Diversity]
- [Gleichstellungskonzept](#) [Gender Equality Concept]
- [Handreichung TIN-Diskriminierungssensible Lehre](#) [Guidelines for TIN-Discrimination Sensitive Teaching]
- [Konzept gesunde Hochschule](#) [Healthy University Concept]
- [Leitbild Diversität](#) [Diversity Policy]
- [Rahmenplan zur Gleichstellung von Frauen und Männern](#) [Gender Equality Plan]
- [Richtlinie gegen sexualisierte Belästigung, Diskriminierung und Gewalt](#) [Guidelines against Sexual Harassment, Discrimination, and Violence]
- [Strategiepapier Diversität](#) [Diversity Strategy Paper]

University of Jaén

- [Plan de Igualdad Efectiva entre Mujeres y Hombres](#) [Plan for Effective Equality Between Women and Men]
- [III Plan director de Igualdad e integración de la diversidad sexual y de género](#) [3rd Master plan for equality and integration of sexual and gender diversity]
- [III Plan Estratégico](#) [3rd Strategic Plan]

University of Nicosia

- [Equality, Diversity, Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan](#)
- [Gender Equality Plan](#)

Örebro University

- [Discrimination and Victimisation - Guidelines for Students and Staff](#)
- [Orientation and Action Plan for Gender Mainstreaming and Equal Opportunities Efforts](#)

University of Ostrava

- [Akční plán genderové rovnosti](#) [Action Plan for Gender Equality]
- [Strategický záměr](#) [Strategic Plan]

University of Salerno

- [Carta dei Diritti e dei Doveri degli Studenti](#) [Charter of Students' Rights and Responsibilities]
- [Le Strategie e le Politiche di Sviluppo dell'Ateneo. La Valorizzazione delle Pari Opportunità e delle Diversità](#) [Development Strategies: Promoting Equality and Diversity]

'Stefan cel Mare' University of Suceava

- [Carta Universității](#) [University Charter]
- [Plan de Egalitate de Gen](#) [Gender Equality Plan]

University of Tours

- [Charte d'accessibilité](#) [Accessibility charter]
- [Plan d'Actions pour l'Égalité Professionnelle entre les Femmes et les Hommes](#) [Action Plan for the Professional Equality between Women and Men]
- [Schéma Directeur Pluriannuel Égalité](#) [Multi-Year Equality Master Plan]
- [Schéma Directeur Pluriannuel Handicap](#) [Multi-Year Disability Master Plan]

Šiauliai State University of Applied Sciences

- [Akademinės etikos kodeksas](#) [Code of Academic Ethics]

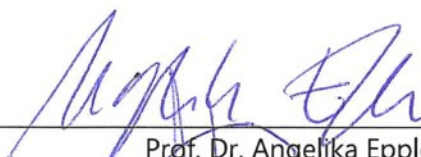
NEOLAIA D&I NEOcharter, version [1.0], 14 MAY 2025

Signatures

By signing this document, we hereby give our full approval to the D&I NEOcharter.

UNIVERSITÄT BIELEFELD (UNIBI)

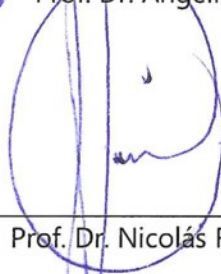
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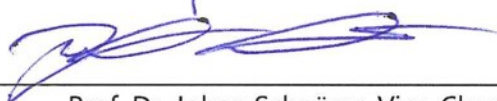
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Prof. Dr. Nicolás Ruiz Reyes, Rector

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Prof. Dr. Johan Schnürer, Vice-Chancellor

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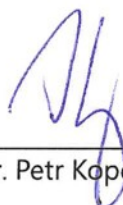
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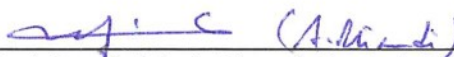
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Prof. Dr. Petr Kopecký, Rector

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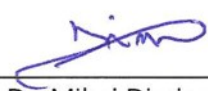
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Prof. Dr. Abdelaziz Rhandi, Rector's Delegate

UNIVERSITATEA STEFAN CEL MARE SUCEAVA (USV)

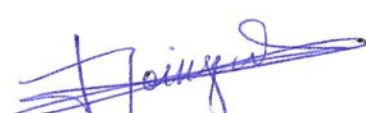
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UNIVERSITÉ DE TOURS (UT)

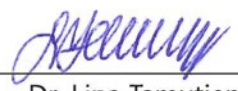
Ostrava, 14 May 2025,



Prof. Dr. Philippe Roingeard, Rector

SIAULIAI STATE UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES (SVK)

Ostrava, 14 May 2025,



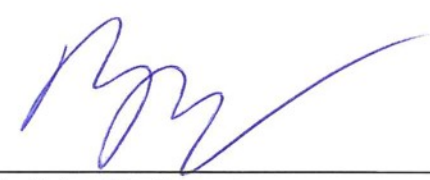
Dr. Lina Tamutienė, Director

Witnessed by:

We hereby confirm that the D&I NEOcharter has been signed by the official representatives of all NEOLAiA Alliance Partner universities.

NEOLAiA OVERALL PROJECT MANAGER

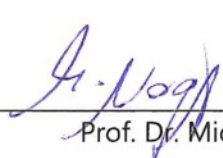
Ostrava, 14 May 2025,



Prof. Dr. Sebastián Bruque

NEOLAiA WORK PACKAGE 3 ,DIVERSITY & INCLUSION' LEADER

Ostrava, 14 May 2025,



Prof. Dr. Michaela Vogt

This document becomes effective upon the signature of all parties listed above.