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DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION – OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

Deliverable 3.1

NEOcharter

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CONTRIBUTORS	Bielefeld University, University of Jaén, University of Nicosia, Örebro University, University of Ostrava, University of Salerno, University Ștefan cel Mare Suceava, Šiauliai State University of Applied Sciences, University of Tours
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1. Used terms and abbreviations

- D&I – Diversity and Inclusion
- WP – Work Package
- NEOcharter – NEOLAiA Diversity and Inclusion Charter
- WP – Work Package

2. Introduction

NEOLAiA, with its motto 'Transforming Regions for an Inclusive Europe', is an Alliance of nine European Universities cofunded by the European Commission in its 2023 call for the period 2024-2027. The aim of NEOLAiA is to transform regional connectivity by embracing (i) digital transformation, through (ii) inclusion and diversity in a context of (iii) enhanced mobility, which are the three pillars of the project. To achieve this end, "NEOLAiA, Transforming Regions for an Inclusive Europe" is based on ten lines of action:

WP1 Project Management

WP2 Improving Teaching and Learning

WP3 Diversity and inclusion - Overcoming barriers to participation

WP4 Enhanced Mobility

WP5 Increasing Regional Research Impact
 WP6 Entrepreneurship - NEOLAIa Capabilities for the society of tomorrow
 WP7 Towards a multilingual and intercultural European university
 WP8 Adopting and Sustaining Open Science
 WP9 Digital Transformation
 WP10 Sustainability and dissemination

The NEOLAIa Alliance consists of nine partners: University of Jaén, Örebro University, Bielefeld University, University of Ostrava, University of Nicosia, Ștefan cel Mare University of Suceava, University of Tours, University of Salerno, and Šiauliai State University of Applied Sciences.

The aim of WP3, Diversity and Inclusion - Overcoming barriers to participation, is to establish a set of common diversity and inclusion (D&I) values and principles within the Alliance that are aligned with European guidelines. WP3 is based on seven tasks (task 3.1-3.7) that lay out the detailed activities of the work package:

- This objective will be achieved through the creation of a common framework (NEOcharter, task 3.1).
- The implementation of the NEOcharter within the Alliance will then be sustained through continuous improvement, reflection on the current best practices, and mapping NEOLAIa's current D&I practices with regards to removing barriers in different dimensions as defined by the European Union policy (NEObest, task 3.2).
- Furthermore, the objective of WP3 is to enhance the abilities of NEOLAIa's internal stakeholders (i.e. students, researchers, faculty, and staff) to address obstacles to participation and inclusion through training. The training will empower underrepresented groups, particularly students, who are disproportionately affected by these barriers (NEOstaff, task 3.3 and NEOmentor, Task 3.4).
- Another objective is to implement diversity and inclusion (D&I) initiatives on campus and beyond. This will be achieved by engaging our communities through the combined offering of lifelong learning content on sustainable diversity and inclusion (NEOlife, task 3.5).
- The principles and practices for underrepresented groups suffering from regionally identified barriers to participation will be disseminated to all Alliance stakeholders. These will include guidance on the maintenance of effective D&I practices across the various WP activities and throughout the project lifetime (NEOad, task 3.6).
- Furthermore, it is essential to educate users on the significance of D&I in the metaverse and on the methods for fostering a culture of respect and tolerance in the digital realm (NEOmet, task 3.7).

The present deliverable (D3.1) details the frameworks, guiding principles, implementation mechanisms, and institutional policies that have been integrated into the NEOcharter. It explains how the Charter emerged from a

collective review of institutional D&I documents, structured stakeholder engagement, and coordinated alliance-wide collaboration.

3. Executive summary/abstract

The NEOLAIa Diversity and Inclusion Charter (D&I NEOcharter) sets out a common framework for diversity, equity, and inclusion across the NEOLAIa Alliance. Co-developed by all nine partner institutions, it reflects a shared commitment to fostering inclusive academic environments that are grounded in regional realities yet informed by European values.

The Charter, included as an annex in this report, articulates five guiding values – respect and dignity, equal opportunities, gender equality, well-being, and European/global citizenship – and translates them into four key action areas: research, teaching and education, leadership and management, and campus culture. Each university is expected to implement these commitments locally through institutional action plans aligned with the Charter.

Rooted in both institutional policies and a cross-alliance needs assessment, the Charter establishes a robust framework for implementation and monitoring. It includes mechanisms for internal reporting and biennial external review to ensure accountability and continuous improvement.

Adopted in May 2025 and valid until December 2027, the D&I NEOcharter constitutes an accomplishment for NEOLAIa. It aligns regional institutional autonomy with a shared European vision of inclusive higher education.

4. Detailed Policy Description of the D&I NEOcharter

The NEOLAIa D&I Charter represents a cornerstone policy document within the Alliance. Its primary function is to provide a common yet adaptable framework for planning and implementing diversity and inclusion (D&I) strategies across nine partner institutions. As a shared point of reference, the Charter is designed to ensure coherence in vision, flexibility in institutional adaptation, and mutual accountability among NEOLAIa members. It articulates normative commitments, operational mechanisms, and evaluation structures that support the mainstreaming of D&I values into all spheres of academic life.

Rather than functioning as a static declaration of intent, the Charter operates as a living policy instrument that links institutional autonomy with alliance-wide collaboration. Its formulation was grounded in a rigorous process of document analysis, stakeholder engagement, and inter-institutional dialogue. This ensured that the Charter emerged from an evidence-informed and participatory process, incorporating both regional specificities and overarching European values.

At the normative level, the Charter sets out five foundational values that underpin NEOLAIa's approach to inclusion: respect and dignity, equal opportunities, gender equality, well-being, and European and global citizenship. These values reflect a shared ethical commitment to social justice, human rights, and academic equity. Importantly, they serve not only as symbolic principles but as operational anchors, each linked to concrete expectations for institutional practice.

The values are further embedded into four strategic action areas, each of which spans multiple institutional domains.

1. In the field of research, the Charter calls for the integration of ethical standards, the recognition of underrepresented perspectives, and the elimination of gender and cultural biases in research design and funding.
2. In teaching and education, it promotes inclusive pedagogical methods, barrier-free access to learning, and the cultivation of intercultural competencies.
3. Leadership and management are approached through the lens of participatory governance, transparent decision-making, and equitable representation in senior roles.
4. Finally, campus culture and society are addressed through initiatives that create safe, accessible, and inclusive environments – both physical and digital – that enable all members of the academic community to flourish.

What makes the D&I NEOcharter distinctive as a policy framework is its integration of values, structures, and instruments into a cohesive model. It does not prescribe uniform solutions but instead provides guiding scaffolding upon which each NEOLAIa partner builds its own tailored D&I strategy. In doing so, the Charter recognizes the diversity of legal frameworks, institutional cultures, and demographic realities within the Alliance. At the same time, it ensures that all universities remain aligned on key principles and actions, fostering comparability and shared learning.

Implementation is central to the Charter's policy function. All NEOLAIa universities are expected to either develop new institutional action plans or align existing ones with the Charter's framework. These action plans must translate the Charter's commitments into concrete institutional goals. They are to include measurable objectives, defined responsibilities, timelines for implementation, and mechanisms for internal coordination. By mandating this planning process, the Charter ensures that values are operationalized and embedded in university governance structures rather than remaining aspirational.

To support institutional learning and facilitate alliance-wide coherence, the Charter outlines a monitoring system that combines both internal and external processes. Each NEOLAIa university engages in periodic internal reviews that involve students, academic and administrative staff, and local stakeholders. These internal reflections provide valuable insights into institutional progress and highlight emerging challenges and good practices. In parallel, a biennial external evaluation will be conducted by at least one expert outside the Alliance. This external dimension introduces a critical perspective, encourages accountability, and strengthens the transparency of the Alliance's D&I work. The findings from both internal and external reviews will be shared within the NEOLAIa governance structure, allowing for collective reflection and policy refinement.

The Charter's credibility as a policy document is further reinforced by its grounding in real institutional contexts. As a foundation for its development, the Alliance conducted a comprehensive review of over 25 institutional policy

documents from its member universities. These included gender equality plans, anti-discrimination guidelines, accessibility frameworks, diversity strategies, and student rights charters. The analysis served two purposes: first, to identify commonalities and divergences in policy language, approaches, and priorities; and second, to build upon proven institutional experiences in addressing D&I challenges.

Moreover, the Charter was shaped by a broad participatory process that involved local consultations, expert dialogues, and in-person workshops at all nine partner universities. These sessions engaged students, faculty, administrators, and regional stakeholders in co-constructing the Charter's values, action areas, and implementation tools. This participatory approach not only enriched the content of the Charter but also enhanced its legitimacy among those expected to implement it. As a result, the final version of the Charter is both aspirational and grounded, capable of inspiring change while remaining sensitive to the constraints and opportunities present at each institution.

Another key feature of the Charter is its adaptability. While it defines a common baseline, it is not prescriptive. Instead, it provides enough interpretive space for each institution to contextualize the values and translate them into their own strategic priorities. This approach balances the need for alliance-wide coordination with respect to institutional diversity. It also facilitates innovation, as universities are encouraged to develop new solutions that can later be shared and scaled within the alliance.

The Charter also positions NEOLAIa in alignment with broader European policy developments. Its structure and values echo key priorities from the European Commission's Education and Training 2030 agenda, the European Strategy for Universities, and various EU equity and equality frameworks. In this way, the Charter enhances the Alliance's contribution to shaping a more inclusive European Higher Education Area. It also sets an example for other university alliances, demonstrating how structured collaboration, stakeholder engagement, and evidence-based planning can produce impactful D&I policy frameworks.

In sum, the D&I NEOcharter embodies a detailed and comprehensive policy architecture. It links ethics with action, values with monitoring, and institutional autonomy with collective accountability. It provides the NEOLAIa Alliance not only with a shared language and set of priorities, but with a practical roadmap for transforming higher education environments into spaces of genuine inclusion and opportunity. Its adoption marks not the end, but the beginning of a continuous process of institutional reflection, alliance-wide collaboration, and policy evolution – anchored in the belief that diversity and inclusion are essential to academic excellence, regional transformation, and democratic resilience.

5. Institutional Policies Integrated in the D&I NEOcharter

The final version of the NEOcharter reflects the outcomes of an intensive and iterative process that involved the systematic review of institutional policy documents submitted by each NEOLAIa university. These documents embody significant institutional experience and established practices in promoting diversity, equality, and inclusion within a wide range of legal, cultural, and educational contexts.

The following frameworks informed the structure, content, and guiding principles of the NEOcharter:

- **Bielefeld University (Germany):**
Action Plan for Diversity (2024a), Gender Equality Concept (2020), Diversity Policy (2019), Framework Plan for the Equality of Women and Men (2022), Guidelines on Sexual Harassment, Discrimination, and Violence (2024b), Diversity Strategy Paper (2018), Guidelines for TIN-Sensitive Teaching (2024c), and the Healthy University Concept (2005).
- **University of Jaén (Spain):**
Plan for Effective Equality Between Women and Men (2011, updated 2020).
- **University of Nicosia (Cyprus):**
Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan (2023–2029), Gender Equality Plan (2022).
- **Örebro University (Sweden):**
Discrimination and Victimisation Guidelines (2024), Orientation and Action Plan for Gender Mainstreaming and Equal Opportunities (2022–2025).
- **University of Ostrava (Czech Republic):**
Action Plan for Gender Equality (2022–2025), Strategic Plan (2021–2025).
- **University of Salerno (Italy):**
Charter of Students' Rights and Responsibilities (2017), Development Strategies Promoting Equality and Diversity (2020).
- **Ștefan cel Mare University of Suceava (Romania):**
Gender Equality Plan (2022), University Charter (2019).
- **Šiauliai State University of Applied Sciences (Lithuania):**
Code of Academic Ethics (2021).
- **University of Tours (France):**
Accessibility Charter (2023), Action Plan for Professional Equality Between Women and Men (2021), Multi-Year Disability Master Plan (2022b), Multi-Year Equality Master Plan (2022a).

These institutional frameworks provided both the conceptual foundation and practical orientation for the NEOcharter. Their synthesis ensured that the Charter was rooted in real institutional conditions while promoting a shared vision of inclusive academic development.

In parallel, a comprehensive needs analysis was conducted across the alliance to identify underrepresented groups and structural barriers to participation (see Deliverable 3.2). The methodology combined tailored surveys for students and staff with group interviews at each university. This resulted in a detailed, context-sensitive understanding of D&I challenges and informed the Charter's content accordingly.

Crucially, these insights were complemented by in-person exchange sessions at each NEOLAIa university, where internal stakeholders, students, local experts, and civil society actors contributed to the shaping of the Charter. Discussions focused on the core elements of the document: shared values, institutional commitments, thematic action areas, and implementation mechanisms. These participatory formats helped anchor the Charter in lived academic and societal realities.

The NEOcharter was finalized during a dedicated working session held at Bielefeld University in November 2024 and ratified by the rectors of all NEOLAIa partner universities in May 2025. Its structure includes a preamble, five guiding values, four cross-cutting action areas (research, teaching, leadership, and campus culture), a shared monitoring framework, and a set of implementation guidelines for institutional planning.

By making the draft publicly accessible as a white paper in December 2024 and subsequently formalizing it through Alliance-wide ratification, NEOLAIa has established a transparent, evidence-based, and inclusive foundation for its future D&I work. The Charter now serves as the Alliance's binding policy framework for diversity and inclusion until December 2027.

6. Conclusion

The NEOLAIa D&I Charter represents a strategic accomplishment for the Alliance. It is not merely a symbolic declaration, but a comprehensive framework for embedding diversity, equity, and inclusion across institutional boundaries and academic functions. The Charter consolidates shared values into a concrete, operational structure that enables tailored implementation at each partner university while fostering cohesion at the alliance level.

One of the Charter's key strengths lies in its capacity to balance institutional diversity with policy coherence. Its development process – grounded in a systematic review of institutional documents and enriched by participatory stakeholder engagement – ensured that local contexts, legal frameworks, and organizational cultures were respected. This sensitivity to diversity among members strengthens the Charter's legitimacy and ensures its practical relevance across NEOLAIa.

The Charter's architecture reflects best practices in inclusive policymaking. It combines normative clarity (through its five core values), practical applicability (via its four strategic action areas), and measurable progress (through institutional action plans and alliance-wide monitoring). Each member institution is tasked with translating the Charter into a local D&I action plan that includes defined responsibilities, measurable indicators, and realistic timelines, while engaging stakeholders from across the university community.

The dual-level monitoring system – comprising biannual internal reviews and biennial external evaluations – ensures accountability and supports continuous improvement. It also enables the Alliance to respond dynamically to implementation challenges and institutional learning. By integrating D&I as a transversal dimension of governance, education, research, and campus culture, the Charter promotes structural and cultural change that goes beyond individual projects or initiatives.

Moreover, the NEOcharter serves as a model for other European university alliances. Its structure and methodology illustrate how a shared vision can be operationalized without imposing homogeneity, and how

institutional autonomy can be preserved within a collaborative framework. The approach taken by NEOLAIa – anchored in evidence, participation, and strategic planning – demonstrates how alliances can lead systemic change at both local and European levels.

With its formal adoption in May 2025, the Charter lays the foundation for inclusive, participatory, and resilient academic communities across NEOLAIa. It reflects the Alliance’s commitment to social justice, educational equity, and democratic values, and positions NEOLAIa as a pioneering force in advancing diversity and inclusion in European higher education through 2027 and beyond.

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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]

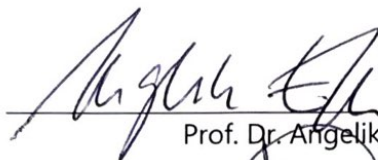
NEOLAiA D&I NEOcharter, version [1.0], 14 MAY 2025

Signatures

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

UNIVERSITÄT BIELEFELD (UNIBI)

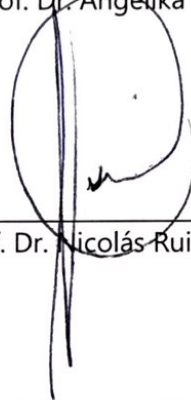
Ostrava, 14 May 2025,



Prof. Dr. Angelika Epple, Rector

UNIVERSIDAD DE JAÉN (UJA)

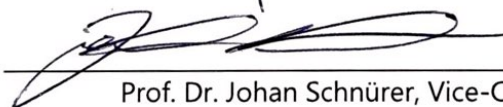
Ostrava, 14 May 2025,



Prof. Dr. Nicolás Ruiz Reyes, Rector

ÖREBRO UNIVERSITET (ORU)

Ostrava, 14 May 2025,



Prof. Dr. Johan Schnürer, Vice-Chancellor

UNIVERSITY OF NICOSIA (UNIC)

Ostrava, 14 May 2025,



Prof. Dr. Philippos Pouyioutas, Rector

OSTRAVSKA UNIVERZITA (OU)

Ostrava, 14 May 2025,



Prof. Dr. Petr Kopecký, Rector

UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI SALERNO (UNISA)

Ostrava, 14 May 2025,



Prof. Dr. Abdelaziz Rhandi, Rector's Delegate

UNIVERSITATEA STEFAN CEL MARE SUCEAVA (USV)

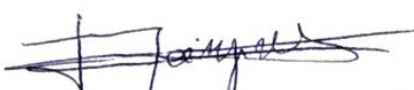
Ostrava, 14 May 2025,



Prof. Dr. Mihai Dimian, Rector

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

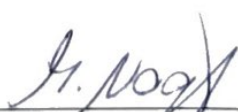
Ostrava, 14 May 2025,



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.