

PrEcIOUS ACTION PLAN FOR LGBTQIA+ INCLUSION AND ANTI-HOMOPHOBIA IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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Project Name:	PRECIOUS – PROMOTING PLURALISTIC EDUCATION IN EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES TO COMBAT INVISIBLE DISCRIMINATION RELATED TO LGBTQ+
WP	WP5 – HEIs' Guidelines - Vademecum on how to build HEI communities based on the concept of "plurality"
TASK	WP5.2 – Development of an Action Plans for the unbiased HE communities' sustainability

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PrEclIOUS Action Plan for LGBTQIA+ Inclusion and Anti-Homophobia in Higher Education Institutions, by Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (EL)

1. Introduction and relevance for PrEclIOUS Project

The objective of this document is to guarantee the sustainability of the project results and their impact at national and international level, through the elaboration of action plan that include both activities, target groups and financial commitment of HEIs.

2. Our Institution:

Founded in 1925, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki is the second biggest university in Greece, in terms of students and covered scientific fields. It has implemented various projects in the areas of equality, non-discrimination, education on all levels, and mainstreaming gender equality. AUTH has a long-standing commitment to social responsibility, democratic governance, and inclusion. It already operates:

- Committee for Gender Equality (CGE), ensuring gender-sensitive policy design.
- University Ombudsman for students and staff handling discrimination cases.
- Counseling and Psychological Support Center (K.E.S.Y.P.) offering mental health and crisis support.
- LGBTQ+ student groups and collaborations with Thessaloniki Pride & NGOs.

Additionally, AUTH teaching staff members (Professors Katerina Foundethaki and Lina Papadopoulou of the Law School) contributed in the development of the National Strategy for LGBTI Equality (2021–2025) in line with Greek Government policies, as well as the drafting of Greece’s legislation on “marriage equality” (introducing same-sex marriage and recognition of decisions establishing a parent-child relationship in same-sex couples) in 2024.

These foundations make AUTH well-positioned to implement and expand a robust Action Plan against invisible discrimination and homophobia/transphobia.

3. Mission of the Action Plan

The partner universities jointly affirm their enduring commitment to promoting inclusive, safe, and pluralistic academic environments, free from all forms of discrimination, including manifestations of invisible homophobia and transphobia.

Building on the values of European democratic societies and the principles of equal dignity, diversity, and active citizenship, this Action Plan serves as a long-term institutional pledge.

We recognize that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are not only centers of knowledge, but also key agents of cultural transformation. As such, they bear the responsibility to actively promote respect for gender and sexual diversity, to prevent bias and microaggressions, and to ensure that LGBTQIA+ individuals are not merely tolerated, but fully visible, acknowledged, and empowered within the academic community.

Through this plan, each university commits to:

- sustaining and disseminating the knowledge and methodologies to promote a pluralistic and equal academic environment;
- institutionalizing good practices that promote pluralistic education and combat invisible homophobia;
- engaging in constant dialogue with students, staff, and external stakeholders;
- fostering intersectional approaches that connect LGBTQIA+ rights to broader struggles against sexism, racism, and other forms of exclusion;
- embedding inclusive values into university governance, curricula, research, and outreach initiatives.

This mission reaffirms the Institution's dedication to cultivating environments where all individuals—regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression—can grow with dignity, actively contribute to university life, and become active citizens of European values, based on a perspective of equality and inclusion.

4. Our Values

This Action Plan is grounded in the recognition of every individual's equal dignity and the conviction that diversity—of identity, perspective, and experience—is an essential strength of academic communities.

Inspired by the work carried out in the Erasmus+ PrEclIOUS project, the plan promotes values of equity, mutual respect, responsibility, and openness to dialogue. Its aim is not to impose ideological positions, but rather to support the development of inclusive university environments where subtle forms of exclusion—such as invisible homophobia or transphobia—are acknowledged and progressively addressed.

Through concrete and context-sensitive measures, often derived from practices already adopted by European universities and promoted within the Erasmus+ PrEclIOUS project, this Action Plan encourages the development of academic communities in which all students, academic staff, and employees can feel welcome, respected, and empowered.

5. Strategic priorities

In continuity with the aims of the PrEclIOUS project, this Action Plan outlines a set of strategic objectives that can guide universities in building more inclusive, aware, and pluralistic academic communities. These objectives are designed to be operational and adaptable to different institutional contexts, respecting each university's autonomy and will of change.

1. Raise Awareness of Invisible Homophobia and Transphobia

Promote a shared understanding within the academic community of the concept of invisible discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. This could include integrating reflection moments, implicit bias testing, and educational opportunities into existing training and teaching frameworks.

2. Foster a Culture of Plurality and Mutual Respect

Move beyond the notion of “including others” to building a community based on shared responsibility and plurality. Encourage respectful interaction, recognition of diversity, and the adoption of open communication practices across teaching, administrative, and student activities.

3. Strengthen Competencies for an Unbiased Academic Environment

Support the development of transversal skills such as empathy, intercultural communication, and critical thinking, which are essential for countering prejudice and fostering active citizenship. These competences

could be promoted through curricular and co-curricular activities, peer education, and collaborations inside and outside the academic context.

4. Support Structural and Institutional Change

Provide academic and administrative staff with practical tools and guidelines to make their institutional environment more accessible and gender-respectful. This could lead to promoting the use of gender-inclusive language, enabling support services for LGBTQIA+ students, and ensuring that university policies reflect the principles of non-discrimination and equal treatment.

5. Ensure Sustainability and Visibility of Actions Beyond the Project

Embed the outcomes and values of the PrEciOUS project in the long-term strategies of the institution. This includes incorporating inclusive practices into university quality assurance processes, dedicating resources to ongoing training and student support, and fostering partnerships with local and national stakeholders committed to LGBTQIA+ rights.

6. Our Action Plan

Action Plans cover a long-term period of 5 years and the implementation plan for the first year. The Action Plan also includes funding and resources for the establishment of the responsible institutional body (enlarging responsibilities of an existing one or creating a new one).

Proposed structure of the Action Plan:

AREA	Objectives	Action	KPIs	Responsible structure	Timeline
Institutional Governance	Add LGBTQIA+ inclusion practices into AUTH policy framework	The Equality and Non-Discrimination Committee should function also as an AUTH LGBTQIA+ Advisory Committee	Committee established by 2027;	Rector's Office, Senate	2026–2027
Services for students	Advance student support and highlight LGBTQIA+ services within the university community	Expand Counseling Center with sensitivity on LGBTQIA+ issues; create online "Q-AUTH" info hub	Desk operational by 2026; ≥50 visits in first year	Counseling Center, IT Services, Student Union	2026
Teaching and training activities	Build knowledge, awareness, and practical skills on LGBTQIA+ inclusivity and safe space values among all members of the	Launch annual Safe Space training for staff & students (MOOC, open badges & credits); integrate inclusive language guidelines into curricula	≥100 participants/year; Guidelines adopted in 30% syllabi by 2028	Faculties, Lifelong Learning Center	2025–2028

AREA	Objectives	Action	KPIs	Responsible structure	Timeline
	academic community, supporting a climate of respect and non-discrimination.				
Research	Promote human rights, inclusion and LGBTQIA + studies	Mainstreaming equally and non-discrimination in research, esp. in social sciences and humanities; support theses/dissertations on gender & sexuality	≥5 funded projects/ theses by 2030	Research Committee, Faculties	2026–2030
Third Mission and collaboration with civil society organizations	Strengthen community engagement	Partner with NGOs, participate in the parallel events and activities of the annual Thessaloniki Pride week; establish affiliations for internships programmes with NGOs	≥100 students engaged/ year	NGOs, Student Union	Starting 2026
Spaces	Ensure safe & inclusive spaces	Install gender-neutral toilets in central buildings. Ensure that each campus prominently features details on student services (psychological support, tutoring, etc), with dedicated visibility for services addressing the needs of the queer community	≥3 toilets installed. Installation of information signs across all campuses, with annual reviews to ensure their visibility.	Facilities Dept.	2026–2028

7. Identification and Dissemination of Existing Good Practices within the Institution

As a foundational action within the first phase of this Action Plan, each university commits to the structured identification and internal dissemination of existing good practices that promote inclusion, respect for sexual and gender diversity, and the prevention of discrimination – including forms of invisible homophobia and transphobia. This activity aims to recognise and valorise ongoing efforts, often informal or marginalised, and to use them as a basis for reflection, replication, and future development.

The objectives are aimed to:

- Map and document concrete examples of inclusive actions already in place within the institution;
- Increase visibility and institutional awareness of grassroots or department-level initiatives;
- Foster a culture of peer learning and mutual recognition among faculties, services, and student groups.

7.1 Methodology

The collection of good practices shall be conducted through a light and participatory process, ensuring the involvement of both staff and students, and guided by the following principles:

- Transparency: the process is open to contributions from all parts of the university community, without restrictions based on department, role, or seniority;
- Voluntariness: participation is non-compulsory, and examples are collected on a self-declared basis;
- Descriptive focus: the goal is to collect experiences, not to evaluate or certify them;
- Recognition of diversity: practices may differ significantly across contexts, and diversity in approaches is considered an asset.

7.2 Possible Sources of Good Practices

Examples of practices to be collected may include:

- A faculty that integrates inclusive language into its communications or syllabus templates;
- A student group that organises peer support spaces or informal talks on rights and equality;
- A counselling office that has adopted inclusive intake forms (e.g. allowing for chosen names or pronouns);
- Participation in European projects that address themes of diversity, tolerance, or equity in education.

7.3 Tools and Instruments

Each university may adopt one or more of the following tools to carry out the collection:

- Online submission form: A simple institutional form (e.g. via Google Forms or Microsoft Forms) allowing individuals or departments to describe their practices. Suggested fields include: title, brief description, people involved, outcomes, challenges, and transferability.
- Call for contributions: An internal announcement or email invitation encouraging the university community to report any relevant practice. This may be accompanied by examples or guiding questions such as “What have you done in your teaching, research, or services to promote respect and inclusion?”
- Structured interviews: Where appropriate, designated staff or trainees may conduct short interviews (in person or online) with stakeholders likely to have implemented inclusive actions. This approach is especially valuable where written reporting is less accessible or culturally less common.
- Focus group discussions: Small group meetings can be used to elicit examples and reflections, especially among students or early-career staff who may be more engaged in informal initiatives.

- Desk review of existing documents: Communications offices or equality units may scan internal documentation, such as project reports, annual activity summaries, or web pages, to identify initiatives that have not been labelled as “inclusion practices” but are nevertheless relevant.

7.4 Classification and Sharing

Collected practices should be briefly classified (e.g. by area: teaching, services, student engagement, research) and gathered in an internal compendium, available either digitally or in print. This resource is not intended for public dissemination at this stage, but rather to:

- Stimulate reflection and learning within the institution;
- Identify emerging needs or gaps in practice;
- Provide examples for possible pilot initiatives.

Where feasible, a brief internal event (e.g. a lunch seminar or roundtable) may be organised to present a selection of practices and to invite further contributions.

7.5 Alignment with EU Guidance

This action is directly aligned with the recommendations of the European Commission (2022),¹ which underline the importance of evidence-based planning and participatory assessment as building blocks for any LGBTIQ inclusion strategy. Specifically:

“Documenting and sharing good practices not only increases transparency but also strengthens internal ownership and accountability. It allows for peer-learning and identifies what already works in a given institutional or cultural context”. (Guidelines for Strategies and Action Plans to Enhance LGBTIQ Equality, p. 12).

8. Sources of funding

Each University will identify within its ordinary budget report a specific post dedicated to the contrast of discrimination and the promotion of inclusiveness culture within campus.

9. Conclusion

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki is committed to making inclusiveness and pluralism part of its institutional foundations. By incorporating anti-discrimination principles into its governance, teaching, services, research and civic engagement, AUTH aspires to become a leader in LGBTQIA+ inclusion within the Greek higher education sector.

¹ European Commission. (2022). Guidelines for strategies and action plans to enhance LGBTIQ equality. Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers.



Promoting pluralistic education in European universities to
combat invisible discrimination related to LGBTQ+

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