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

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PrEcIOUS Action Plan for LGBTQIA+ Inclusion and Anti-Homophobia in Higher Education Institutions, by University of Siena (IT)

1. Introduction and relevance for PrEcIOUS 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:

The University of Siena in recent years has developed several structures and actions in order to promote inclusiveness and contrast to discrimination based on gender, gender identity and sexual orientation. To this aim, the University has recently (2024) amended its Statute providing for the respect of the non discrimination principles. It has adopted the "alias career" for both students and staff, in order to guarantee the possibility of using the elective name for transgender persons, it has appointed a Trust Counselor to advise students and staff in cases of discrimination and violence, it has created a special human rights office to coordinate activities within campus, it runs a special services on violence against women, last but not least it has established an Observatory on gender identity and sexual orientation with the aim of promoting a culture of inclusiveness within campus

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.

The University of Siena proposes this Action Plan to its relevant bodies (i.e Observatory on gender identity and sexual orientation) in order to enhance the existing structures and good practices to promote culture of inclusiveness and to strengthen the contrast to discrimination in campus

4. Our Values

This Action Plan is grounded in the recognition of every individual's 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+ PrEcIOUS 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+ PrEcIOUS 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 PrEcIOUS 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	To enhance and reinforce existing administrative structures: i.e Office for gender equality and human rights; CUG- Guarantee Committee	Definition of a dedicated budget for activities promoting plurality and contrast to discrimination based on gender	New post within university budget	General Director	2027
Services for students	Provide easy-to-access, centralized support information for LGBTQIA+ students and allies through a student-managed online and in person platform.	Establish Q-MUNITY admin team (appointed by Students' Counsel-Consiglio studentesco) Develop and maintain bilingual (English & Italian) online platforms, starting with an Instagram page under the name 'Q-MUNITY'. This may expand to other platforms (Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, etc.). Content is categorized into: (1) university services (e.g., psychological counseling, active listening desks, including contact info and schedules), (2) educational and engaging posts related to relevant topics, and (3) real-time interaction by trained admins addressing inclusivity and contrasting	Follower growth ≥ 300 followers within the first quarter Present Q-MUNITY during a URadio episode before the beginning of the 2nd semester 2025-2026 (March 2026)	OrientarSi - office "Servizio di supporto agli studenti" (UniSi Psychological Counseling) UniSi Communication and web offices URadio	Beginning academic year 2025-2026, Ongoing updates

PROMOTING PLURALISTIC EDUCATION IN EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES
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AREA	Objectives	Action	KPIs	Responsible structure	Timeline
		SOGIESC discrimination. Collaboration with uRadio is also planned to expand outreach and discuss SOGIESC discrimination.			
Teaching and training activities	Raise awareness, knowledge, and skills on LGBTQIA+ inclusivity and safe space principles among students, professors, and staff, promoting a bias-free and welcoming environment.	Implement short courses on diversity, unconscious bias, inclusive language, and allyship such as the PrEcIOUS in-presence course (= Students receive open badges and 3 CFUs) Get authorization for staff members to receive recognition and time off to participate in these courses as well For professors: Certification and/or "SAFE SPACE" sign/sticker to put on door granted after the completion of the PrEcIOUS MOOC and/or an interview conducted by the CUG	Participation rate ≥ 30 participants /semester; all must pass the implicit bias test at least once and send their results to Q-MUNITY team	UniSi Soft and Digital Skills team, CUG (interview standards and certification) "Divisione personale tecnico amministrativo" Office, Alberto Benocci + General Director	1st semester of a.y. 2025-2025 work with Soft and Digital Skills to implement courses for staff 2nd semester of a.y. 2025-2026, continue CFU courses for students + work with CUG to establish protocol for professor certification/stickers
Research	Promote awareness and understanding of queer theories as well as diversity and human rights by sharing foundational knowledge and research from marginalized communities	Creation within the university library of a dedicated 'Diversity & Inclusion Spotlight' section. Creation of "Human Library" session once a month with story telling by persons belonging to LGBTQIA+ communities and other vulnerable groups	≥ 3 diversity-related books submitted, reviewed, and acquired quarterly	University Library Committee: - Donata Franci Head of Research, Libraries and Third Mission - Sabrina Celi: Economic Library - Paola Fontani: Medical, Pharmaceutical and Biological Library	A.y. 2025-2026 initiate contacting responsible bodies and planning together to begin this activity a.y. 2026-2027, Report quarterly

AREA	Objectives	Action	KPIs	Responsible structure	Timeline
				- Marta Zorat: Humanities Library - Elisabetta Pepi: Scientific-Technological Area Library - Francesco Poesini: Legal and Political Science Library CUG committee for dissemination and cooperation in selecting and acquiring the books	
Third Mission and collaboration with civil society organizations	Strengthen collaboration with civil society organizations focused on diversity and plurality and provide students, teachers and staff with experiential learning opportunities within and outside the University	Partner with LGBTQIA+ groups and NGOs to co-host awareness campaigns (e.g., pop-up booths), workshops, and provide student internships. Support and participation to Pride Week by the University of Siena	At least 1 new organization engaged per year and ≥ 30 students participate per campaign/ workshop Have the University of Siena fly the Progress Rainbow Flag on May 17th, 2026 on all its campuses	Observatory on gender identity and sexual orientation CUG University Departments Directors Student representatives	Starting a.y. 2025-2026, Ongoing updates each semester with the goal of having an official protocol by a.y. 2026-2027
Spaces	Create safe and plural spaces for students to feel at home within the University premises	Dedicate a room to a public figure who advocated for diversity and human rights, as well as combating SOGIESC discrimination within civil society and/or learning environments such as schools and academia	≥ 5 students contact the advertised Services each month mentioning they have learned about the Services	Rector and Director General Heads of the Departments of the University CUG to support with the sign making	Be able to understand what kind of protocol to activate before the end of 2025, work with responsible bodies throughout

AREA	Objectives	Action	KPIs	Responsible structure	Timeline
		Hang in each campus information regarding the Student services for psychological help, the anti-violence center, tutoring and other services available highlighting services available and specific to the queer community	with these new signs	Student representatives	the year 2026 and aim to have the dedicated room naming + hanging of Student Services informatio nby the a.y. 2026-2027

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

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

PrEcIOUS

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

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