



D10.2 - Arqus EDI Action Plan

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) are increasingly recognized as fundamental values and key drivers of excellence, innovation, and societal relevance in higher education. Yet, despite significant progress, there is still much to be done. As a European university alliance, Arqus places EDI at the heart of its vision and strategy. It is not only a distinctive and defining feature of our alliance but also a cross-cutting priority that enhances our identity and amplifies our collective impact.

Work Group 10 (WG10) - as an enabler WG - plays a pivotal role in facilitating this process, fostering a joint commitment to embedding EDI across all areas of cooperation. Despite our diverse starting points, institutional profiles, and specific needs, we are united by common principles and a shared objective: to advance and mainstream Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion as we strive for academic and societal development.

By embracing EDI as a transversal and strategic focus, Arqus is dedicated to cultivating an inclusive organisational culture and environment that enhances equal opportunities, fosters a sense of belonging and mutual respect, and empowers all individuals to thrive. This collective endeavour nurtures creativity, innovation, and success across the alliance.

This **EDI Action Plan** (D10.2) outlines a coordinated strategy and framework for ensuring a holistic, synergistic, visible, and sustainable approach to EDI. It serves both as an inspirational vision and a comprehensive roadmap for action, promoting shared understanding, responsibility, and ownership among ARQUS members. This Plan will guide us as we continue to build a genuinely inclusive environment by practising equality, proactively embracing diversity, and fostering inclusion and belonging—an opportunity that is as unique as it is invaluable.

The scope of this Action Plan encompasses all Arqus activities and represents a collaborative process of engagement, co-development, and joint implementation. We recognise that advancing EDI requires the active involvement and combined efforts of Arqus entire academic community. By working together, we can drive meaningful cultural change that is cohesive, sustainable, and transformative.

This is a living document, intended to evolve and be updated whenever necessary, reflecting Arqus continued dedication to progress. It is firmly aligned with Arqus **Mission Statement 2022–2032**, the **Common Charters for Inclusion, Gender Equality, and Sustainability**, and other policy frameworks that provide complementary guidance and reinforce the rationale and objectives of EDI across the alliance.

For the purposes of this document, the term “**Academic Community**” refers to all members of Arqus: teaching staff, researchers, students/learners, administrative and support staff, leadership and senior management, internal and external stakeholders, and service providers. In line with Arqus commitment to lifelong learning, the term “**student**” should be understood as inclusive of all learners, at every stage of their educational journey.

MISSION AND VISION

The Arqus European University Alliance strives to transform European higher education, research, and innovation through deep cooperation and progressive integration. Our mission is to educate critical and socially engaged European citizens equipped for lifelong learning, generate excellent and innovative knowledge, and act as a committed multi-level societal and global player. We are dedicated to breaking down barriers to effective cooperation, fostering an inclusive and equitable academic environment.

According to these principles, we envision a forward-looking, open, integrated, and research-driven European University that builds impactful excellence with and for all. By promoting enhanced EDI competence, global understanding, and respect for diversity throughout our communities, we aim to create an environment where diversity is celebrated as a cornerstone of our community. Our “Mission and Vision” are the guiding principles of our EDI Action Plan:

1. **Deep Cooperation and Progressive Integration:** Our EDI Action Plan is designed to foster an inclusive academic environment through collaborative efforts across member institutions. By leveraging the collective strengths of our diverse universities, we aim to break down barriers to cooperation and create an integrated academic community that values and supports all its members.
2. **Educating Socially Engaged European Citizens:** The plan emphasizes the importance of equipping students and staff with the knowledge, skills, and awareness necessary to become socially engaged citizens. By promoting EDI, we ensure that all individuals, regardless of their background, have equal opportunities to participate in and contribute to the academic and social life of the Arqus Community.
3. **Generating Excellent and Innovative Knowledge:** Diversity in perspectives is crucial for innovation and excellence in research and education. Our EDI Action Plan supports initiatives that encourage diverse participation in research and teaching, thereby enriching the academic output and ensuring that the knowledge generated is reflective of a wide range of experiences and viewpoints.
4. **Breaking Down Barriers:** Central to our mission is the removal of obstacles that hinder effective collaboration. Our EDI initiatives aim to create an environment where all members feel valued and supported, thus facilitating smoother and more productive cooperation across the Alliance.
5. **Respect for Diversity and Human Rights:** Our EDI Action Plan is grounded in the core values of respect for diversity and human rights. This commitment ensures that all actions and policies are designed to uphold these principles, fostering an environment where all individual’s rights and identities are respected and celebrated.

By aligning our EDI Action Plan with the mission and vision of the Arqus European University Alliance, we ensure that our efforts to promote equality, diversity, and inclusion are not just peripheral activities, but are central to the Alliance's overarching goals. This sound-based framework amplifies our individual efforts and enhances the impact, large-scale success and sustainability of our EDI initiatives, contributing to the creation of a truly inclusive and equitable European higher education landscape.

DRAFTING PROCESS

The development of the Action Plan for Equality, Inclusion & Diversity within the framework of the Arqus European Alliance has unfolded through a distinctive, inclusive, and collaborative process across various stages, engaging a broad spectrum of our universities' communities.

In the initial phase, the University of Granada and the University of Minho took the lead in drafting the Action Plan. To achieve this, they conducted internal consultations, updated background analyses, performed desk research, and considered standards and recommendations from policy documents, as well as outputs from relevant European projects and initiatives. WG10 Board representatives from all Alliance members have been involved.

To ensure the Action Plan's success, WG10 engaged in extensive consultation, feedback and revision processes. These steps were crucial for building engagement and ownership among all stakeholders, and for fostering consensus around the Action Plan at Arqus governance level. The consultation process included feedback from the Arqus Boards (Education, Research & Innovation, Societal Engagement), and the Executive Council as decision-making body, representing the Transversal Board. After thorough revisions, the Action Plan was submitted to the Executive Council for approval before it reached the Rector's Council for final validation.

Overall, this crucial phase involved detailed negotiations and discussions aimed at refining and finalizing the plan, ensuring it met the collective objectives and standards upheld by the institutions involved. The involvement of the highest-level decision-making bodies underscored the significance of the initiative and its desired impact on fostering an inclusive and accessible academic environment across Arqus.

The adopted multilevel process exemplifies a model of participatory and consultative development, leveraging the diverse perspectives and expertise within Arqus community and beyond. It highlights our commitment to create a more inclusive academic environment that addresses the current needs and anticipates future challenges in equity and social inclusion.

AIM AND BENEFICIARIES

The primary objective of this plan is to enhance equal opportunities and foster agency, sense of belonging, sense of being respected, creativity and success, embedding inclusivity and diversity across ARQUS European University. This initiative aims to inclusively support all members, with a specific focus on those who, due to their visible and/or less visible characteristics, face particular barriers that might limit their effective and full participation in the academic community on an equal basis. By addressing these issues, the plan is dedicated to creating a safer, and more welcoming and supportive academic environment.

This plan targets Arqus entire academic community - students, potential students, faculty members, researchers, administrative and support staff, senior management, internal and external stakeholders, and service providers. On the one hand, this holistic framework is essential to guarantee full representation of Arqus communities, on the other hand, it will foster favourable conditions for joint collaborative work.

Equality Grounds

ARQUS Equality, Diversity and Inclusion work is based on the 10 equality grounds set out below:

1. Age: a person's age (this does not apply to a person aged under 16)
2. Civil status: a person's civil status be it single, married, separated, divorced, widowed, civil partnered and formerly civil partnered
3. Disability/Functional Diversity: includes people with physical, intellectual, learning, cognitive or emotional disabilities and a range of medical conditions
4. Family status: being pregnant or having responsibility as a parent of a person under 18 years or the resident primary carer or parent of a person with a disability
5. Gender: a person's gender identity including male, female, transgender or non-binary
6. Race: includes race, skin colour, nationality or ethnic origin (including language diversity)
7. Religion: a person's religious beliefs, background, outlook or none
8. Sexual orientation: a person's sexual orientation including gay, lesbian, bisexual and heterosexual
9. Socio-economic status: a combined economic and sociological measure of economic and social position in relation to others, based on the income, education, and occupation of an individual and their family
10. Legal Status | Migrant status

Recognising the importance of intersectionality, the Action Plan also gives visibility to the understanding that individuals represent a mosaic of identities and can be members of different groups at the same time. Each person has multiple characteristics, which individually or in combination can lead to unique experiences of discrimination and/or privilege.

Arqus celebrates the diversity that constitutes the Arqus community, ensuring that diversity is seen as a strength and an institutional cornerstone of all its actions.

STRATEGIC AXES, OBJECTIVES, ACTIONS AND INDICATORS

The Arqus EDI Action Plan is structured around the following sections:

Strategic Axes

The strategic axes delineate the key focus areas of intervention. Based on the [EDI Dimension Breakdown](#) exercise carried out, the Arqus EDI Action Plan encompasses 7 strategic axes.

1. Governance

The Arqus European University Alliance aims to redefine its role to foster a supportive academic culture that emphasizes collective responsibility in governance and community involvement. To create an inclusive culture, it is essential to understand and address inequality by actively promoting equality, prioritizing education on equality and feminism, and monitoring diversity and gender equality. The university's role extends to providing services and policies that contribute to social, economic, cultural, and environmental development, maintaining an interdependent relationship with societal actors to encourage innovation and adaptability. Strong leadership within the university can drive both educational and non-educational sectors towards a more equitable and sustainable world, aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda. As a knowledge generator, the university is tasked with exploring various forms of social and economic development to ensure collective prosperity, managing collaborations that create dignified, inclusive, and sustainable employment while teaching values essential for personal and professional growth in a rapidly evolving world.

2. (Safe & Inclusive) Environment

The European University Alliance Arqus cultivates a safe and inclusive environment by emphasizing the well-being and security of its diverse community. This strategy underscores the importance of implementing robust policies and fostering practices that promote inclusivity and protect against discrimination, harassment, and violence. It advocates for sharing knowledge and exchanging good practices and resources that raise awareness about diversity, equity, and respect for differences, ensuring that all members feel valued and supported. By focusing on enhancing the social and emotional aspects of the community environment, the Arqus Alliance seeks to create a nurturing and welcoming atmosphere that encourages innovative and adaptive responses to societal challenges, thereby contributing to a more equitable and cohesive society.

3. Communication

To consolidate democratic structures at the university, dissemination channels are essential for sharing information understandable to all areas of a diverse university community. Alongside institutions that guarantee the participation of all actors, according to the principles of non-discrimination and equity, decision-making must have an approach open to dialogue, justice, cooperation, that listens to all parties, and can provide effective responses to concerns.

4. Teaching and Learning

Teaching and Learning represents a foundational pillar aimed at reshaping the educational landscape. This axis is dedicated to fostering a more inclusive and accessible learning environment that adapts to the diverse needs of students across the Arqus Alliance. By embracing innovative approaches such as inclusive peer tutoring, mentoring, and enhanced digital infrastructures, the alliance seeks to widen access and participation in higher education. The Action Plan supports the development of flexible academic pathways, and the importance of

integrating equality, diversity, and inclusion into the curriculum. Through these efforts aim to stimulate educational excellence and relevance, ensuring that all learners benefit from a supportive and enriching academic experience that prepares them to contribute effectively in a rapidly evolving world.

5. Research and Innovation

Through its research, the Arqus Alliance addresses global challenges with a multidisciplinary and cross-sectional approach. The outcomes of this research are intended to be transferred to society, contributing to the creation of a more sustainable world and serving as a model for socially just development. This is accomplished by specific intervention projects that apply this knowledge both locally and internationally, paying particular attention to the unique challenges faced by certain groups.

6. Internationalisation

The strategic axis of Internationalization aims to broaden the global perspective and outreach of its programs. This initiative focuses on enhancing international collaborations and exchanges, thereby enriching the academic and cultural experiences of students and staff. By fostering global networks and partnerships, the Arqus Alliance seeks to facilitate a deeper understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures and viewpoints, preparing its community to operate effectively in an interconnected world. Through this strategic axis, the alliance commits to creating a dynamic environment that transcends geographical boundaries and promotes a comprehensive, global approach to higher education.

7. Social Mission

As a European university alliance, our social mission is grounded in active societal engagement and collaborative partnerships with stakeholders. We are committed to fostering inclusive, equitable, and diverse communities by working together to co-design solutions to societal challenges. Through participatory approaches, co-creation platforms, and joint initiatives, we aim to amplify underrepresented voices, promote social justice, and strengthen the social impact of higher education and research. A key focus is on raising awareness and enhancing Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) skills across our entire community, empowering individuals and institutions to drive meaningful and lasting change.

Objectives

For each Strategic Axis, at least one Objective has been selected. The Objectives have been formulated in a general/broad manner, trying to keep them to the minimum, but allowing the proposal of concrete actions and activities. The Plan includes 16 Objectives that encapsulate the goals to be achieved within each strategic axis.

Due to the transversal nature of EDI, some Objectives can be associated with more than one Strategic Axis. Having this understanding in mind and in order to avoid overlapping, some decisions have been made on the preferred Strategic Axis to index each Objective to.

Actions

The Actions are then identified and grouped around one Objective and one Strategic Axis. The actions refer to the specific activities required to realize the objectives set forth for each strategic axis.

The Actions must be as concrete as possible to allow the identification of the relevant indicator(s). This step is very important not only to determine and clarify the connection of WG10 deliverables to the corresponding actions but also to allow the mapping of the EDI-related actions carried out by all WGs, which also feed into the I&D Hub.

This Plan is articulated through 28 Actions.

Indicators

The indicators are generally described and will be used to monitor and measure the EDI Action Plan progress.

Target-Group(s)

Identification of the specific group(s) to be reached.

Involved/Responsible Parties

Identification of those (co)responsible for and involved in the production and development of the indicator. During the implementation phase the specific roles of each involved/responsible party will be determined.

The Arqus EDI Action Plan should be implemented by the end of Arqus II.

ARQUS EDI Action Plan

Strategic Axis	Objective	Actions	Indicators	Target-Group(s)	Involved/Responsible Parties
Governance	Mainstreaming EDI through the integration of an EDI perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of Arqus policies, regulatory measures, decision-making processes and (spending) programmes and initiatives	Develop some internal guidelines for EDI mainstreaming	Guidelines /Recommendations elaborated and disseminated	Rectors' Council Executive Council Arqus Boards Student Council Working Groups co-leads Arqus Academic Community	WG01 WG10 WG14
		Propose EDI Mainstreaming as an ARQUS key process OR Develop proposals for incorporating an EDI dimension into all Arqus key processes, whenever applicable.	Key process proposal OR Proposals developed		WG10 WG14 WGs responsible for each key process
		Raise awareness and build capacity amongst the Arqus Alliance community by promoting greater understanding and engagement with EDI issues across the Alliance	Number of actions/meetings/initiatives Number of Participants Feedback Surveys		WG01 WG10 Arqus Boards
	Understand better Arqus EDI dimension	Select a harmonised set of gender/equality, diversity and inclusion indicators	List of global qualitative and quantitative indicators selected (and data collection methodology defined)	Arqus Academic Community	WG10 WG14 Rectors' Council Executive Council Arqus Boards Student Council Working Groups co-leads
		Assess and monitor Arqus EDI dimension	Data collected and monitoring report elaborated	Arqus Academic Community	WG10 WG14
	Communication	Ensure the adoption of inclusive language and communication	Produce and/or compile reference guidelines for the use of inclusive language and communication in all languages represented in Arqus	Guidelines ready and made available to the whole Arqus Community	Arqus Academic Community
Acknowledge and celebrate key dates in the EDI calendar		Establish an Arqus EDI Calendar	Arqus EDI Calendar	Arqus Academic Community Society in general	Communications Team

Strategic Axis	Objective	Actions	Indicators	Target-Group(s)	Involved/Responsible Parties
		Preparation of news/articles and/or organisation of events	Number of news pieces/articles/events	Arqus Academic Community Society in general	Communications Team WG co-leads and event organisers/project leaders
	Give increased visibility to Arqus EDI dimension and widely publicise actions and results	Communicate EDI-related initiatives	Number of news pieces/articles/events/specific section in Arqus website	Arqus Academic Community Society in general	Communications Team
		Incorporate EDI in Arqus institutional communication plan/policy	Institutional Communication policy reviewed	Communications Team	Communications Team
	Nurture a multicultural environment/atmosphere through language learning and intercultural communication skills acquisition	Organisation of language and intercultural communication courses/activities/initiatives	Number of Courses/actions Number of Participants Feedback Surveys	Arqus Academic Community	WG11 WG10
	Organise and promote inclusive events	Elaborate/Develop a checklist for the organisation of inclusive events	Checklist for the organisation of events created and disseminated	Arqus Academic Community	Communications Team WG10
(Safe & Inclusive) Environment	Promote and safeguard a safe and inclusive environment based on respect, dignity and recognition	Create a collaborative platform for sharing knowledge and exchange good practices and resources	Community of Practice on Anti-discrimination, mobbing and harassment created and fully operational	CoP members Arqus Universities relevant services	CoP members
Research and Innovation	Stimulate excellence in science and technology by contributing to the integration of the gender/EDI dimension into research & innovation	Raise awareness on the added value, relevance, impact and benefits of incorporating the EDI dimension into R&I and research content	Number of news pieces/articles/events/campaigns	Arqus Research Community	WG10 WG07 Research Board
		Produce and/or compile reference guidelines, examples and checklists on how to integrate EDI into R&I and research content	Guidelines/Checklist/Case Studies ready and made available to the whole Arqus Community	Arqus Research Community	
Teaching and Learning	Enhance access and participation in Higher Education	Develop and implement flexible and distinctive educational pathways for diverse learners	Number of modular and stackable credentials created and offered. Number of		WG06

Strategic Axis	Objective	Actions	Indicators	Target-Group(s)	Involved/Responsible Parties
			participants		
			Number of online and hybrid learning options displayed and expanded		
		Create guidelines for the promotion of accessibility in digital infrastructures	Self-assessment tool developed and disseminated. Number of webinars/events organised/made available through the Toolkit section	Arqus Academic Community (IT departments) Student Council I Students	WG10 WG12
		Develop an action plan to support particularly vulnerable minority groups	Action plan for students and scholars at risk	Arqus Academic Community	WG10
	Foster an inclusive and supportive university environment through Support Services	Provide robust, updated and easily accessible information on the available services	Update and Maintenance of Support Service information on website	Arqus Academic Community	
		Promote inclusive peer tutoring, mentoring and counselling opportunities	Creation of special programmes and collaboration platforms	Arqus Academic Community Student Council I Students	WG4 Student Council WG10
	Promote Inclusive Teaching & Learning practices across ARQUS	Compilation of digital learning & teaching resources and best practices	Learning Platform with resources displayed in a structured and easily accessible form/way	Arqus Academic Community Arqus Faculty Teaching & learning support services	WG10 WG12

Strategic Axis	Objective	Actions	Indicators	Target-Group(s)	Involved/Responsible Parties
		Capacity Building actions aimed at teaching staff and teaching & learning support services	Seminars, Webinars, Summer/Winter Schools, International Weeks, training actions and other relevant events, number of participants, ...	Arqus Academic Community Arqus Faculty Teaching & learning support services	WG5 WG10 Education Board
		Recognise inclusive Teaching & Learning as a criterion for teaching innovation and excellence	Teaching excellence Awards. Number of calls. Number of applications received. Number of Inclusive best practices. Number of awardees.	Arqus Academic Community Arqus Faculty	
	Stimulate excellence and relevance of education by contributing to the integration of the gender/EDI dimension into the <i>curriculum</i>	Raise awareness on the added value, relevance, impact and benefits of incorporating the EDI dimension into the <i>curriculum</i>	Number of news pieces/articles/events/campaigns	Arqus Academic Community	
		Produce and/or compile reference guidelines, examples and checklists on how to integrate EDI into the <i>curriculum</i>	Guidelines/Checklist/Case Studies ready and made available to the whole Arqus Community	Arqus Academic Community	
Internationalisation	Promote an Inclusive, Responsible and Comprehensive Internationalisation and foster a Globally Engaged University Community	Create inclusive orientation and integration programmes	Orientation and Integration programmes	Arqus Academic Community	WG04 WG09
		Design and implement mobility formats aimed at promoting the participation of non-traditional groups	New Mobility formats and programmes	Arqus Academic Community	WG09
Social Mission	Make Arqus contribution to SDGs visible/clear	Index all ARQUS activities to the SDGs	All Arqus activities indexed to the SDGs	Arqus Academic Community	All WGs

Strategic Axis	Objective	Actions	Indicators	Target-Group(s)	Involved/Responsible Parties
	Answer to societal challenges	Organisation of multicultural and pluridisciplinary challenge-based learning experiences, co-created with external strategic partners	Challenge-based programmes designed and offered	Arqus Academic Community	WG02 WG04 WG08 WG13 Societal Engagement Board

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

To ensure that our Action Plan reaches the intended Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) outcomes, it will be monitored and evaluated. The overall assessment will help us detect potential areas for improvement in our management processes and measure the effectiveness of our initiatives through qualitative and quantitative indicators.

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