D10.3 - Compilation of Reports on the State of Inclusion and Diversity in the Arqus Alliance

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ARQUS AND THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) are increasingly recognised as fundamental values and key drivers of excellence, innovation and societal relevance in higher education. In a rapidly changing European and global context, universities are expected not only to generate knowledge and educate future generations, but also to act as responsible societal actors, capable of responding to complex social challenges, fostering democratic values and ensuring that no one is left behind. Within this landscape, the Arqus European University Alliance has embedded EDI at the core of its vision and strategy.

Arqus strives to transform European higher education, research and innovation through close cooperation and progressive integration. Its mission is to educate critical and socially engaged European citizens equipped for lifelong learning, to generate excellent and innovative knowledge, and to act as a committed multi-level societal and global player. This ambition cannot be fulfilled without a strong and explicit commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. Removing barriers to participation, fostering a sense of belonging, and ensuring that all members of the academic community can thrive are not peripheral concerns, but central conditions for academic excellence, institutional relevance and social impact.

In line with its Mission and Vision, Arqus envisions a forward-looking, open, integrated and research-driven European University that builds impactful excellence with and for all. Diversity is not seen as a challenge to be managed, but as a cornerstone of the Arqus community and a source of creativity, innovation and strength. Promoting EDI competence, global understanding and respect for diversity across all communities is therefore both a strategic priority and a shared responsibility across the Alliance.

This commitment is reflected in the Arqus EDI Action Plan, which provides a coordinated framework to mainstream EDI across all areas of cooperation. The Action Plan positions EDI as a transversal and strategic focus, embedded in governance, communication, teaching and learning, research and innovation, internationalisation, the creation of safe and inclusive environments, and the social mission of the Alliance. Through this holistic approach, Arqus seeks to cultivate an inclusive organisational culture that enhances equal opportunities, fosters mutual respect and belonging, and empowers all individuals—students, staff and stakeholders alike—to contribute and succeed.

In line with the EDI Action Plan, Arqus has adopted a broad and inclusive understanding of equality, grounded in multiple equality dimensions, including age, disability/functional diversity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, race and ethnicity (including language diversity), religion, family and civil status, and legal or migrant status. The Alliance also explicitly recognises the importance of intersectionality, acknowledging that individuals embody multiple identities and may experience overlapping forms of disadvantage or privilege. This shared framework informs and guides the Arqus Alliance in remaining attentive to complexity, nuance and lived realities.

The present compilation of reports builds directly on this shared vision and strategic framework. It aims to make visible how EDI has been translated into practice across the Alliance throughout the 2022–2026 project period, highlighting collective progress, emerging impacts and areas where further efforts are needed. Importantly, this is not a collection of isolated institutional stories, but a reflection of what Arqus is achieving together, as a European University Alliance, through coordinated action, mutual learning and shared responsibility.

Who We Are - The Arqus Inclusion & Diversity Hub

The Arqus Inclusion & Diversity Hub serves as a key enabler for the Alliance's EDI ambitions. The members of our Hub play a central role in facilitating, coordinating and supporting the mainstreaming of equality, diversity and inclusion across all Arqus activities (EDI mainstreaming). Acting as a transversal structure, we aim to connect working groups, governance bodies and communities of practice, ensuring that EDI is not treated as a standalone topic, but as a cross-cutting dimension of the Alliance's work.

We bring together expertise, experience and perspectives from across the Arqus universities, fully aware that our Alliance is characterised by diverse institutional contexts, starting points and needs. At the same time, we see this diversity as one of Arqus' greatest strengths. By working collaboratively, we foster a shared understanding of EDI, support capacity building, and promote the exchange of good and promising practices, tools and resources across the Alliance.

Equally important, we act as a space for dialogue, reflection and co-creation. We seek to engage the entire Arqus academic community—students, teaching staff, researchers, administrative and support staff, leadership and external stakeholders—in a shared endeavour to build a more inclusive, equitable and diverse European university. In this sense, the Hub is not only a coordinating structure, but also a catalyst for change across the Alliance.

What is Behind this Report? Rationale, Scope And Purpose

This compilation of reports on the state of inclusion and diversity across the Arqus Alliance is rooted in a clear strategic rationale. First and foremost, it responds to the need to make visible the evolution of EDI-related activities across Arqus in a systematic, accessible and transparent manner. Over the past years, numerous initiatives, projects, tools and practices have been developed across working groups, institutions and communities. The work on EDI-related topics across the Alliance spans a wide range of activities: from supporting the development of guidelines and policy frameworks to fostering inclusive communication practices; from contributing to safer and more inclusive learning and working environments to promoting teaching and learning, impactful, intersectional research and innovation practices, and responsible internationalisation; and from strengthening the social mission of the Alliance to enhancing monitoring and evaluation of EDI progress. Bringing these efforts together in a coherent narrative allows the Alliance to take stock of what has been achieved collectively, to recognise progress, and to identify gaps and areas for further development.

Secondly, this report serves as an instrument for accountability and learning. By documenting actions, outputs and emerging impacts, it supports evidence-informed reflection on how EDI is being mainstreamed across the Alliance. It also contributes to strengthening a culture of monitoring, evaluation and continuous improvement, in line with the EDI Action Plan's emphasis on indicators, assessment and iterative development. In this sense, the report is not only a retrospective exercise but also a forward-looking tool to inform future priorities, strategies and actions.

Thirdly, the report aims to foster shared ownership of the EDI agenda within Arqus. By highlighting cross-Alliance efforts—rather than focusing on individual institutional and working groups' achievements—it underlines the collective nature of this endeavour. EDI is not the responsibility of a single working group or hub but a transversal commitment that concerns all governance levels, thematic areas and communities within Arqus. The compilation therefore seeks to reflect how different strands of work intersect, reinforce one another, and contribute to a common trajectory of change.

Erasmus+ project number 101089551

The scope of this report encompasses a broad range of EDI-related activities, including (but not limited to) inclusion-related modules, courses and training events; initiatives targeting students, staff and vulnerable or underrepresented groups; actions developed by trainers, professionals and support services; and co-designed or student-led activities. It mirrors the comprehensive structure of the EDI Action Plan and its seven strategic axes—Governance; Safe and Inclusive Environment; Communication; Teaching and Learning; Research and Innovation; Internationalisation; and Social Mission—demonstrating how these strategic orientations have been translated into practice across the Alliance.

Importantly, this compilation is conceived as part of a longer-term process. Like the EDI Action Plan itself, it should be updated and refined as Arqus continues to evolve. The intention is not to present a final or definitive picture but to capture a moment in an ongoing journey towards a more inclusive, equitable and diverse European University, built through cooperation, mutual learning and sustained commitment.

Ultimately, this report reflects a shared conviction: that advancing equality, diversity and inclusion is essential not only for fairness and social justice, but also for the quality, relevance and impact of higher education and research. By embedding EDI into all aspects of its work, Arqus seeks to contribute to a more inclusive European Higher Education Area and to a society in which all individuals can participate, belong and thrive.

REPORT

The report is structured around the seven strategic axes of the **Arqus Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Action Plan** (*Deliverable 10.2, Working Group 10 "Arqus Inclusion & Diversity Hub"*): Governance; Safe and Inclusive Environment; Communication; Teaching and Learning; Research and Innovation; Internationalisation; and Social Mission. Activities, initiatives and outputs reported by the Alliance partner institutions and by other working groups have been reviewed and grouped according to the strategic axis to which they primarily contribute. Within each section, selected highlights illustrate key developments and examples of implementation across the Alliance. This structure provides a coherent framework for documenting and reflecting on how EDI has been embedded across Arqus' governance, programmes, policies and institutional practices, while ensuring alignment with the objectives of the EDI Action Plan and broader European priorities, including the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

1. GOVERNANCE

The Arqus European University Alliance has progressively advanced the mainstreaming of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) within its governance through a coherent set of actions combining policy development, programme implementation, awareness raising, and capacity building. As part of the Governance axis of the EDI Action Plan, these efforts have contributed to embedding an EDI perspective across decision-making processes, programme design, implementation, and evaluation, while recognising this as an ongoing and evolving process.

In practice, this has been achieved by strengthening participatory governance and dialogue through inclusive formats and representative mechanisms, alongside embedding EDI-sensitive approaches in selection procedures, funding schemes, and recognition frameworks. Measures to promote equitable access—such as more inclusive application and registration processes—have been complemented by targeted actions addressing the needs of underrepresented and vulnerable groups, including dedicated funding opportunities, support for early-stage researchers, and mentoring initiatives connecting students and alumni.

At the institutional level, EDI considerations have been increasingly integrated into key instruments, platforms, and services, including induction materials, teaching excellence frameworks, seed funding for bottom-up initiatives, and the development and alignment of support services. Participatory and collaborative spaces—both physical and digital—have further facilitated dialogue, co-creation, and cross-institutional exchange, contributing to a more inclusive governance ecosystem.

Complementing these structural efforts, the Alliance has also implemented actions aimed at raising awareness and strengthening capacity across the Arqus community, recognising that informed and engaged stakeholders are essential for the effective integration of EDI principles into governance and institutional practices. Key initiatives have included the development of a **Professional Development Plan tailored to Communities of Practice (CoPs)** (*Deliverable 10.5, Working Group 10 "Arqus Inclusion & Diversity Hub*), enabling structured engagement with EDI topics and facilitating peer learning and exchange across the Alliance. Capacity-building has also been reinforced through targeted training and participatory formats, such as the Arqus Staff Training Week on Inclusion & Diversity, which brought together 75 participants to explore digital and physical accessibility (*see Highlight below*), and the Collaborative Open Room on the EDI Action Plan, which created opportunities for dialogue, reflection, and collaborative engagement among students, staff, and leadership representatives.

Together, these actions reflect a sustained and collective effort to embed EDI as a cross-cutting principle within the Alliance's governance, policies, programmes, and institutional practices. By combining structural measures with awareness raising and capacity-building initiatives, the Alliance continues to strengthen the conditions for more inclusive, participatory, and equitable governance across Arqus, while maintaining a forward-looking approach open to continuous development and refinement.

Initiative Name

Arqus Staff Training Week on Inclusion & Diversity - Accessibility in Higher Education, including the Open Conference "An impact that matters"

Short Description

The Arqus Inclusion & Diversity Staff Training Week, centered on "Accessibility in Higher Education", provided a dynamic platform to equip academic and administrative staff across the Arqus Alliance with practical tools for fostering inclusive environments. The intensive programme featured plenary lectures, panel discussions, hands-on workshops, and visits to accessible facilities. Key thematic tracks covered gender equality, digital accessibility, physical and campus orientation technologies, widening participation, and Universal Design for Learning (UDL).
A standout highlight was the Open Conference "An Impact that matters", chaired by Dorothy Kelly - Arqus Alliance Coordinator. The Conference brought together speakers from five European University Alliances -Arqus, CHARM-EU, Eutopia, UnaEuropa, and YUFE, and the Academic Cooperation Association.

Coordinating university / Working Group: University Lyon1 / WG10 "Arqus Inclusion & Diversity Hub"

Partner Universities / WGs involved: All Arqus partner universities and the National University of Kyiv - Mohyla Academy

When: 04 to 08 November, 2024

Mode of delivery: in-person with some sessions and the Conference delivered in a hybrid format

Reach: 75 participants | 60 professional staff; 13 academic staff; 2 students

Key Impact and added value

The Staff Training Week achieved significant impact by fostering an intersectional approach to diversity, connecting professional and academic staff to emphasize their joint responsibility in building accessible higher education institutions. Beyond delivering actionable competencies in accessible digital content and inclusive teaching practices, the event successfully promoted mutual learning and awareness, re-establishing the Arqus Inclusion & Diversity Hub as a crucial support structure for the entire Alliance. Ultimately, it reinforced a shared culture of belonging, innovation, and long-term collaboration within and beyond Arqus.

Participants' quote

"I particularly enjoyed the brainstorming sessions in the Reimagining Inclusive Higher Education: Advancing Access and Inclusion in Europe workshop. It was really interesting to hear the ideas and experiences that colleagues had for supporting students before entry to third level, during their studies and when transitioning to employment."

Anonymous - Feedback survey

For more info

https://arqus-alliance.eu/event/first-arqus-staff-training-week-on-inclusion-diversity/

https://arqus-alliance.eu/event/arqus-open-conference-on-inclusion-and-diversity-an-impact-that-matters/

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2. Safe and Inclusive Environment

During the reporting period, the Alliance further strengthened its commitment to fostering a safe, respectful and inclusive environment across its member universities. Guided by the EDI Action Plan, a range of initiatives was implemented to prevent discrimination, promote well-being and strengthen institutional capacities for inclusion. These efforts were complemented by capacity-building programs, awareness-raising initiatives and collaborative events that engaged diverse members of the Arqus community.

The commitment to a Safe and Inclusive Environment has been primarily operationalised through the establishment of the Community of Practice (CoP) for the Prevention and Management of Discrimination, (Sexual) Harassment, and Mobbing (*see Highlight below*). The CoP has created a collaborative platform through which university stakeholders share knowledge, share good practices and develop resources tailored to higher education institutions.

The Alliance also promoted a more participatory and inclusive environment through transdisciplinary initiatives such as the Arqus Thinkathons and Living Labs. By bringing together students, staff, local stakeholders and civil society to address real-world challenges, these initiatives increased the participation of underrepresented groups and fostered collaborative approaches to inclusion.

In addition, the initiative Arqus Women Connect provides a dedicated collaborative space to ensure that gender equality and professional networking remain at the forefront of the Alliance's mission to provide a truly safe and equitable academic home for all.

Initiative Name CoP for the prevention and management of discrimination, (sexual) harassment and mobbing at universities

Short Description

This Community of Practice (CoP) was created within Arqus to address discrimination, gender-based violence, sexual harassment and mobbing in universities through collaboration and shared learning. The initiative responds to the need for safer and more inclusive university environments and for increased recognition of discrimination, unconscious bias and unequal treatment within academic communities. Through a participatory approach, members mapped challenges at macro, meso and micro levels and collectively identified three priorities: raising awareness and overcoming resistance to change; improving training for responders and bystanders and increasing its visibility; and strengthening institutional policies, accountability and disciplinary measures.

Coordinating university / Working Group: WG03 "Arqus Communities of Practice" / Vilnius University

Partner Universities / WGs involved: University of Minho, University of Graz and Leipzig University

When: established in summer 2023

Mode of delivery: face to face and online

Reach: 4 people I Professional Staff

Equal Opportunities Coordinator I Community Wellbeing Department I VilniusU
Gender Equality Commission I UMinho
Coordination Centre for Gender Studies and Equal Opportunities I UGraz
Department of Equal Opportunities, Diversity and Family I LeipzigU

Key Impact and Added value

The CoP fostered trust, networking and peer exchange among participants, creating a valuable space for collective reflection on discrimination prevention in higher education. Through the sharing of experiences, institutional approaches and case-based discussions, participants gained deeper insight into challenges and responses related to gender-based violence, harassment and inclusive university cultures. The initiative promoted professional and personal enrichment and encouraged broader institutional reflection within member universities. Continuing and expanding this collaborative platform across all Arqus universities, whatever the format, will be essential to contribute to safer and more inclusive environments across the Alliance.

Participants' quote

"The Community of Practice represented a valuable joint learning journey, enabling us to deepen our understanding of different institutional realities and challenges. The exchange of experiences and perspectives enabled shared reflection and community building, contributing to a more nuanced and comprehensive grasp of discrimination prevention in higher education."

Adriana Lago de Carvalho (UMinho) and Sarah Zapusek (UGraz)

For more info

https://arqus-alliance.eu/our-communities/communities-of-practice/

3. COMMUNICATION

The Alliance made significant progress in advancing its communication objectives. In alignment with its aim of consolidating democratic structures across the Alliance, communication has been strategically steered to ensure that dissemination channels act as essential pillars for transparency and equity. Recognizing that a diverse university community requires information that is accessible and understandable to all, the Alliance has prioritized the creation of inclusive dialogue spaces. These efforts have focused on fostering a culture of cooperation and justice, where communication serves as a means of listening to diverse perspectives and responding effectively to the needs of the academic community,

To ensure the adoption of inclusive language and communication across the Alliance, a significant milestone was reached with the launch of the *ArqusTerm English Glossary: Key Terms and Definitions for Inclusion and Accessibility in Higher Education*. This resource, available through the Arqus Termbase, contains 210 curated entries that support consistent terminology and facilitate informed discussions on inclusion and accessibility in higher education.

To further the visibility of the Arqus EDI dimension and ensure the wide dissemination of action results, the Alliance has leveraged a variety of strategic communication channels and formats. A central role has been played by the Arqus website, which regularly features news and articles highlighting inclusion and diversity initiatives, events, and policy discussions, ensuring that these topics remain at the forefront for both the internal community and external audience. This digital presence is complemented by the Arqus Knowledge Pills podcast series, which has addressed complex societal challenges through different episodes focused on gender discrimination, motherhood, ethics in technology, and intergenerational bonds, translating academic research into accessible audio content for all.

To address the objective of nurturing a multicultural environment through language and intercultural skill acquisition, the Alliance has implemented a program of plurilingual and mobility-based initiatives. One of these initiatives is the *Arqus Café (see Highlight below)*, an informal online language exchange initiative that promotes multilingual communication and intercultural interaction across the Alliance. Since its launch, it has brought together more than 690 participants through 12 editions comprising 47 events in up to 11 languages. These cafés have transitioned into a successful hybrid format, including on-site sessions fostering language exchange and community building. The Alliance also organized the webinar series *9 Months, 9 Universities, which has attracted more than 1,000* views and provided prospective graduate students and early-stage researchers with insights into doctoral opportunities across the Alliance (for approximately 130 students and staff).

Initiative Name Arqus Cafés

Short Description

Launched in spring 2020 as a digital initiative, the Arqus Cafés have grown into one of the Alliance's most popular activities for promoting multilingualism and interculturality. Designed as informal, relaxed practice sessions led by native and near-native tutors, they allow students and staff to enhance their language skills outside traditional classroom environments. Operating in both online and in-person formats—with local on-site sessions successfully piloted at Leipzig and Vilnius University—the cafés provide an accessible, flexible space for informal language learning, cultural exchange, and personal connection across member institutions.

Coordinating university / Working Group: Leipzig University / WG11 "Arqus Plurilingual and Intercultural Hub"

Partner Universities / WGs involved: All Arqus partner universities

When: Throughout the Arqus II project timeframe

Mode of delivery: online - with on-site sessions at Leipzig and Vilnius University

Reach: over 690 participants - 12 editions comprising 47 events in up to 11 languages

Key impact and added value

The initiative has demonstrated exceptional growth and engagement, expanding from 19 cafés in 11 languages for its 7th edition (December 2023) to 31 cafés across 14 languages in its 9th edition (late 2024), reaching 444 participants. Overall, participation targets were surpassed by 50% for students and 66% for academic staff. The added value of the Arqus Cafés lies in their unique ability to foster a vibrant community, combining digital accessibility with face-to-face interaction. By combining language practice with cultural dialogue, the cafés successfully strengthen inclusion, mutual understanding, and internationalization across the entire Arqus Alliance.

Participants' quote

"This was a great opportunity to communicate with native speakers of another language and improve your level of live communication"

Anonymous participant

For more info

https://arqus-alliance.eu/our-communities/our-hubs/arqus-plurilingual-and-intercultural-hub/arqus-cafe/

https://arqus-alliance.eu/news/arqus-cafe-10th-edition-success/

https://arqus-alliance.eu/news/arqus-cafe-anniversary-event-europe-day/

4. TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching and Learning stands as a foundational pillar for the Alliance's mission to reshape the European educational landscape. By fostering an inclusive and accessible environment, Arqus has prioritized flexible academic pathways and the integration of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) directly into its activities.

Bridging the gap between institutional policy and classroom reality, the Alliance has launched a series of high-impact capacity building initiatives for both staff and students. For instance, the Teaching Innovation Workshops saw an impressive engagement of 689 educators sharing best practices on active learning and AI. To support these efforts, the Alliance maintains a comprehensive and interactive **repository of Learning Resources for Inclusive Higher Education** (*Deliverable 10.6, Working Group 10 "Arqus Inclusion & Diversity Hub*), which is constantly updated with contributions from across the network. This is complemented by the Web Space with resources for lifelong and plurilingual learning, such as the Arqus Language Cafés (*see Highlight above)*. The Web space also features an inclusive English Style Guide that standardizes gender-neutral terminology across the network.

Student empowerment remains at the heart of this axis through a robust ecosystem of peer-led programs and co-creative labs. The Arqus Student Agora has successfully deployed 201 Student Ambassadors and 141 Alumni Mentors to provide personalized guidance and foster a sense of belonging. Furthermore, the Arqus Student Lab in Vilnius "Shaping the future of higher education" and the second edition "Activating Communities" have empowered participants to tackle challenges like mental health and digital transformation, with specific sessions dedicated to showcasing Diversity and Inclusion Services from partner universities to over 100 participants. The Student Co-designed Projects have funded innovative student-led initiatives focusing on human rights and minority needs. This is complemented by the Student Services Network Toolkit, which now includes a specific taxonomy for "Diversity & Inclusion Services," ensuring that support is transparent and easily navigable for every student.

Looking toward the future of European education, the Alliance has proactively integrated EDI principles into the development of Joint Programmes and the European Degree Exploratory Action. By organizing specialized sessions on "Inclusion in Joint Programmes" (*see Highlight below*) and launching Blended Intensive Programmes (BIPs) focused on Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and cultural diversity (*see corresponding Highlights*), Arqus was already implementing inclusive curricular frameworks before they became a mandatory requirement in recent EU calls. Specifically, the BIP on Cultural Diversity utilized an innovative autobiographical approach to foster self-awareness and reflected on how migration impacts multiple language repertoires. This forward-thinking approach is further exemplified by the Arqus Thinkathon in Graz, which invited researchers to explore the critical issues of trust, transparency, and bias in Artificial Intelligence. These efforts are recognized annually through the Arqus Teaching Excellence Awards, which celebrate educators who go above and beyond to create student-centered learning environments that empower diverse talent and foster research-informed teaching.

Another important mechanism for promoting quality and excellence in teaching and learning is the Arqus Label and Arqus Mention. These instruments recognise activities and programmes that meet the Alliance's quality standards while demonstrating the integration of cross-cutting values including Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. In this way, they contribute to embedding EDI principles within the design and delivery of educational activities across the Alliance.

Initiative Name Arqus Student Ambassadors Programme

Short Description

Led by the Arqus Student Agora (Working Group 4), the Arqus Student Ambassadors Programme empowers students from partner universities to actively foster an inclusive, interconnected European campus environment. Student ambassadors act as key points of contact, raising awareness of diversity values, facilitating peer-to-peer support for incoming students, and driving student engagement. Complementing this effort, the Arqus Student Agora promotes key inclusion initiatives, including the Arqus Student Services Network Toolkit—mapping student services across member universities, with a focus on inclusion, diversity and support services —and student co-creation platforms like the 1st Arqus Student Lab in Vilnius and the online 2nd Student Lab, which showcased institutional Diversity & Inclusion services.

Coordinating university / Working Group: WG04 "Arqus Student Agora"

Partner Universities / WGs involved: All partner universities

When: 3 calls for Arqus Student Ambassadors published in 2023, 2024 and 2025 | 1st Arqus Student Lab: 02 and 03 July, 2025 | 2nd Arqus Student Lab: 03 December, 2025

Mode of delivery:

Reach: 318 selected Arqus Student Ambassadors | 18 students participating in the 1st Arqus Student Lab in Vilnius | 100 people participating in the 2nd Arqus Student Lab (online): 90 students, 1 academic staff, 9 professional staff

Key impact and added value

The Arqus Student Ambassador Programme delivers significant added value by embedding student-led inclusion directly into higher education governance. By empowering ambassadors to co-create solutions, the initiative breaks down barriers and strengthens a culture of belonging. Through complementary activities—such as the Student Services Network Toolkit, which ensures equal access to support systems at Arqus partner universities, and the Arqus Student Labs, where students actively collaborate on mental health, empowerment, and diversity—the initiative transforms inclusive values into concrete practice. Ultimately, it creates a more accessible, supportive, and interconnected community for all students across the Alliance.

Participants' quote

"Participating in the Student Labs and the Ambassadors Programme is an extraordinary opportunity to challenge yourself, turn theory into real-world projects, and connect with students who share the same passion across our Alliance"

Student Ambassador

For more info - link to news / link to programme / photos

https://arqus-alliance.eu/our-communities/arqus-student-agora/students-ambassadors/

https://arqus-alliance.eu/news/arqus-student-lab-2025-vilnius-university/

https://arqus-alliance.eu/event/2nd-arqus-student-lab-creating-communities/

Initiative Name Workshop "Inclusion in Joint Programmes"

Short Description

On 27 April 2026, the Arqus Inclusion & Diversity Hub convened a pivotal online workshop on "Inclusion in Joint Programmes" for academic and administrative staff designing and managing Joint Programmes across the Alliance. Designed as an interactive capacity-building initiative, the workshop delivered actionable frameworks for embedding Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) throughout the complete academic lifecycle. Participants explored key operational dimensions, including equitable outreach, barrier-free admissions, inclusive pedagogical approaches, and accessible assessment practices. By equipping staff with practical tools, the session had the objective of ensuring that Arqus joint programmes actively support underrepresented groups, fostering academic success and a genuine sense of belonging.

Coordinating university / Working Group: WG10 "Arqus Inclusion & Diversity Hub" and WG06 "Arqus Learning Pathways"

Partner Universities / WGs involved: All Arqus partner universities (?)

When: 27 April, 2026

Mode of delivery: in person at the University of Minho

Reach: 39 participants | 1 student, 23 academic staff, 15 administrative staff

Key impact and added value

This initiative marks a crucial step toward institutionalizing EDI across Arqus Joint Programmes, ensuring robust support and a sense of belonging for underrepresented groups. Building on this momentum, inclusion modules will be systematically integrated into future Joint Programme staff training, embedding equity directly into the Alliance's educational architecture.

For more info

https://arqus-alliance.eu/news/bip-cultural-diversity-starts/

Erasmus+ project number 101089551

Initiative Name Arqus Blended Intensive Programme targeting senior (and junior) students | "Cultural diversity: foundations, frameworks and practices"

Short Description

This initiative aimed to engage students in exploring core themes of cultural diversity, equity, and inclusion. The BIP combined interactive virtual exchange sessions and in person seminars and team-based tasks, including drama and music activities. A final project sought to encourage participants to examine inclusive cultural practices from interdisciplinary perspectives: working in cross-institutional groups, participants applied the theoretical frameworks discussed to real-world challenges, co-creating original proposals designed to improve university life, taking into account the pressing issues of cultural diversity and the possible future of universities. Beyond its stimulating content, the innovative feature of this BIP was the involvement of senior students, working together with their younger peers, bringing valuable experience, maturity, and peer mentorship to the collaborative tasks.

Coordinating university / Working Group: University of Padua / WG10 "Arqus Inclusion & Diversity Hub"

Partner Universities / WGs involved: University of Minho, University of Granada, University of Wroclaw

When: Mid January to the end of February, 2025 - in-person component at the University of Padua from 10 to 14 February, 2025

Mode of delivery: Blended

Reach: 44 students, 7 members of academic staff

Key impact and added value

The impact of the BIP extended beyond traditional academic learning by fostering a multi-perspective, interdisciplinary, and intergenerational dialogue. By integrating senior and junior students within the same teams, the initiative bridged generational perspectives. This dynamic generated a rich, reciprocal learning environment where traditional academic knowledge was tested against lived experiences. Working in cross-institutional groups, participants translated theoretical frameworks into concrete, real-world solutions. The final co-created proposals for inclusive education (ranging from the inclusion of physical "third spaces" on university campuses to encourage interconnectedness to "campfire" storytelling to foster intercultural exchange) directly addressed pressing issues of belonging, community building, and social sustainability. The initiative strengthened cross-border cooperation between partner universities and provided a replicable model for inclusive, blended mobility within the Arqus Alliance.

Participants' quote

Inspired by a transformative experience in the Blended Intensive Programme where I participated in European folk dance class, I realized how powerful body movement, rhythm, and shared culture can be in breaking down emotional and cultural barriers. At first, many of us felt tense or shy. But as the music started and our bodies moved together, laughter and connection replaced discomfort. It was not just a dance—it was a form of learning, communication, and healing.

Participant

For more info

https://arqus-alliance.eu/news/bip-cultural-diversity-starts/

Erasmus+ project number 101089551

5. Research and Innovation

The Research and Innovation strategic axis aims to strengthen excellence in research by integrating Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) perspectives into research cultures, collaboration and capacity building across the Alliance. By promoting inclusive research environments and supporting diverse research communities, Arqus seeks to enhance the quality, relevance and societal impact of its research and innovation activities while addressing complex global challenges through interdisciplinary cooperation.

Particular attention has been given to supporting early-stage researchers as a priority target group within the Alliance. Through mentoring, networking and professional development opportunities, Arqus has promoted more inclusive research careers and strengthened collaboration across partner universities. These activities contribute to reducing structural barriers, fostering knowledge exchange and creating more equitable opportunities for researchers at different career stages. Examples include the Arqus Career Week and other professional development initiatives supporting researchers in their career development within and beyond academia.

The Alliance has also promoted the integration of EDI perspectives into innovation activities by encouraging more inclusive and responsible approaches to entrepreneurship and innovation. Initiatives addressing intersectional gender equality and inclusive innovation ecosystems (*see Highlight below*) demonstrate how EDI can contribute to more diverse leadership, broader participation and greater societal relevance in research and innovation.

Initiative Name Workshop Inclusive Gender Equality in Innovation Ecosystems

Short Description

This 2-hour workshop explored inclusive gender equality as a cornerstone of vibrant and sustainable innovation ecosystems. As EDI mainstreaming is a cross-cutting priority within Arqus, WG08 embraced the opportunity to incorporate this topic into the "University Innovation and Entrepreneurial Ecosystems" International Week and Blended Intensive Programme (BIP). Participants reflected on who is often excluded from innovation processes and how structural inequalities shape participation, leadership, funding, and the development of solutions. Through an interactive methodology combining reflection exercises, discussions on unconscious bias, and case study analysis, the session promoted a holistic approach to embedding gender equality across all phases of the innovation and ideation process.

Coordinating university / Working Group: University of Minho, Gender Equality Commission and WG08 "Linking local ecosystems" co-leads

Partner Universities / WGs involved: WG08 / Leipzig University, Maynooth University, University of Padova, and Vilnius University.

When: 17th of June, 2025

Mode of delivery: face to face, University of Minho, Campus of Azurém (Guimarães)

Reach: 63 people I 40 Women and 23 Men

Students: 34 | Academics: 17 | Professional Staff: 12 | External Stakeholders I 22 Other Institutions

Key impact and added value

The workshop contributed to strengthening awareness and capacity-building around inclusive innovation practices among participants from different sectors of the innovation ecosystem. By bringing together actors involved in education, research, entrepreneurship, funding, and innovation support, the session promoted interdisciplinary dialogue and shared reflection on the role of gender equality in shaping more equitable and impactful innovation processes. A key achievement was encouraging participants to move beyond viewing gender equality as a standalone topic and instead recognise it as a transversal dimension that should inform the full innovation cycle. The workshop also highlighted the connection between diversity, creativity, societal relevance, and the quality of innovation outcomes. The initiative created opportunities for continued collaboration and provides a scalable model for future activities integrating EDI principles into entrepreneurship, research, and innovation training contexts. A second edition was carried out on the 25th of June, 2026, within the same format and scope.

Participants' quote

"[...] the workshop showed me how powerful open dialogue can be in raising awareness of unconscious bias. I could see it turning some gears among participants, particularly those who had not previously considered how unknowing discrimination and bias can influence decision-making in innovation and entrepreneurship. "

Arume Aparicio (Student I UGranada)

For more info

https://internationalweek.dps.uminho.pt/ https://arqus-alliance.eu/call/register-uminho-staff-week-university-innovation-and-entrepreneurial-ecosystems/ Video BIP "Turning Ideas into Businesses" – short version.

Erasmus+ project number 101089551

6. INTERNATIONALISATION

The strategic axis of Internationalisation aims to broaden the global perspective and outreach of the Alliance by fostering a globally engaged university community that is both inclusive and responsible. To support these objectives, the Alliance developed the Arqus Global Outreach Strategy, which provides a framework for strengthening Arqus' role as a socially responsible and globally engaged university alliance. The strategy promotes international cooperation rooted in social justice, intercultural understanding and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), ensuring that global engagement remains closely aligned with the Alliance's core values.

During this period, the Alliance has focused on creating structured orientation and integration programs that transcend geographical boundaries and promote a comprehensive approach to higher education. By integrating diversity and sustainability into the mobility experience, Arqus ensures that international collaborations are accessible to all and aligned with contemporary global challenges. The Alliance has also diversified its mobility formats, introducing flexible and accessible schemes that lower the barriers to international experiences.

This commitment is also exemplified by the launch of the bottom-up initiative Implementing Academic Freedom for Responsible Internationalization, which has strengthened the collective capacity of the member universities to uphold academic freedom and it has also provided direct support for students and at-risk scholars through collaboration with the Scholars at Risk network.

Another initiative in this area is Arqus Twinnings, a short-term mobility scheme designed to strengthen subject-related collaboration between staff and students. By offering a versatile and modular format, Twinnings allows for joint learning and teaching activities that fit the needs of those who may not be able to commit to traditional long-term exchanges. In addition to physical mobility, the Alliance has prioritized digital inclusion through the Arqus MoVEs (Virtual Exchange) programme (*see Highlight below*). This virtual initiative serves as a pre-mobility project, connecting students across different academic backgrounds, ages, and time zones in an intercultural environment. Supporting these efforts, the Arqus Mobility Observatory has been established to monitor and analyze mobility trends within the Alliance. This observatory acts as a strategic diagnostic tool, generating data-driven insights into the dynamics of student and staff exchanges, with a specific focus on EU priorities. Another key initiative in this area is the Arqus Green Mobility Days, an action designed to foster sustainable travel habits and raise awareness about the environmental impact of international exchanges. Besides, the Arqus Green Mobility Days Awards reward initiatives that are feasible, applicable, and capable of producing a multiplier effect on local sustainability, incentivizing the Arqus community to lead the transition toward greener internationalization. The Green Mobility Days are complemented by other initiatives, such as the contest "Tell Your Mobility Story", a creative engagement initiative where students share their journeys through short videos that transform individual experiences into inspirational testimonials, encouraging future students to embrace both the challenges and rewards of a globally connected education.

The Alliance has reinforced its commitment to equity also through the Arqus Talent Scholarship Fund (*see Highlight below*). This scholarship scheme is specifically designed to attract and retain talented students and graduates from around the world who wish to pursue full postgraduate studies (Master's or Doctorate) at one of the Arqus partner universities, with a clear priority given to refugees, asylum seekers, and students with fewer opportunities. A compulsory mobility phase (study period, training, research stay) at a second Arqus partner university is included, while the Alliance encourages applicants for multiple and longer stays at the different universities of the Arqus Alliance.

Initiative Name Arqus Talent Scholarship Fund

Short Description

The Arqus Talent Scholarship Fund (TSF) is a flagship initiative aimed at attracting and retaining talented international postgraduate students from around the world. Supported by €1 million in funding, the scholarship scheme granted 27 scholarships for Master's and Doctoral studies, incorporating mandatory cross-alliance mobilities. Selected through a highly competitive process from nearly 1,300 applicants representing 123 nationalities across three calls for applications, recipients received a subsistence allowance and tuition fee coverage. In addition, a dedicated special needs fund was awarded to students with fewer opportunities. Scholarship holders acted as Arqus Ambassadors and showcased their academic achievements during the 2026 TSF Gathering Event in Granada, featuring a Three Minute Thesis® competition that highlighted their research impact.

Coordinating university / Working Group: WG13 "Arqus Talent & Innovation Fund"

Partner Universities / WGs involved: All Arqus partner universities

When: 3 calls across 2023 and 2024

Mode of delivery:

Reach: 1.299 applications representing 123 nationalities; 29 scholarships awarded (27 through the Talent Scholarship Fund and 2 through individual universities' funding (Granada and Padua). Unfortunately, visa denials and the temporary restriction of the funding period resulted in a total of 27 scholarships being granted (7 doctoral students and 20 master's students), with only one of them funded through an individual university's funding (Padua).

Key impact and added value

The TSF generated profound institutional and social impact, positioning Arqus as a pioneer in joint European scholarship models. By offering targeted top-up funding and special support, the scheme dismantled financial barriers for students with fewer opportunities, including refugees, thereby promoting diversity, social inclusion, and international access: four scholarship holders received the special needs fund. Beyond student mobility, local co-funding from institutions like Padua demonstrated strong institutional commitment. Ultimately, the TSF enhanced global visibility, enriched academic environments through cross-border cooperation, and served as a scalable blueprint for future policy initiatives, including European degree frameworks and Erasmus+ experimentation schemes.

Participants' quote

"Arqus is, without doubt, one of the most beautiful chapters of my life, and I am quite sure the story is not over yet. Like a wheel coming round again, I hope there will be many more chances to stay connected with Arqus and with Maynooth. I have been, I am, and I will go on being an ambassador, ready to share my wonderful experiences with the generations of Arqus students and scholars still to come."

Duyen Thruong Thi My (Arqus Talent Scholarship Holder)

For more info

https://arqus-alliance.eu/arqus-talent-scholarship-fund/https://arqus-alliance.eu/news/arqus-talent-scholarship-fund-celebrates-excellence-first-gathering-event-granada/

Erasmus+ project number 101089551

Initiative Name Arqus MoVEs

Short Description

Arqus MoVEs is an innovative virtual exchange program designed as a pre-mobility orientation for students entering international exchange programs or seeking intercultural engagement at home. Delivered before each academic semester, the scheme brings together a diverse, multi-generational cohort spanning different disciplines, cultures, and time zones across the Alliance. Structured into Basic and Advanced levels with flexible workloads, the program combines synchronous and asynchronous activities focused on cultural topics and collaborative tasks. Utilizing a multilingual and inclusive approach, participants engage in interactive group dynamics—using multiple languages as shared means of communication—to build networks and exchange perspectives prior to departure.

Coordinating university / Working Group: University of Padua / WG09 "Arqus on the Move"

Partner Universities / WGs involved: All Arqus partner universities and Arqus associated partners

When: from the pilot edition launched in 2023 to the 6th call published in May 2026

Mode of delivery: online

Reach: 114 students completed the first module (minimum requirement for receiving a certificate); 17 completed the entire course and received an Open Badge - **please note that these are provisional data as the latest edition of the course is still ongoing*

Key impact and added value

Arqus MoVEs deliver high institutional and personal value by democratizing internationalization at home and easing transitions into study-abroad experiences. By creating a safe, inclusive virtual environment, the initiative boosts critical soft skills, including active listening, global competence, critical thinking, and digital literacy. The project fosters strong cross-border peer cohesion, alleviating pre-departure anxiety for mobile students while offering non-mobile participants a meaningful international experience. Beyond linguistic practice, its flexible multi-level structure serves as a sustainable blueprint for virtual exchange, enhancing student readiness and reinforcing the Arqus Alliance's core commitment to inclusive multilingualism, social integration, and global citizenship.

Participants' quote

"Participation in this project was crucial for me and really helped me a lot not only in improving language or communication but also in recognizing the diversity and inclusion of everyone. It has been shown that to internationalize and open your mind you therefore do not necessarily need to get on a plane. Simply create structured, welcoming, and inspiring digital spaces where you can compare, make fearless mistakes, and grow together as citizens of the world."

Marco, participant

For more info

https://arqus-alliance.eu/our-communities/arqus-on-the-move2/mobility-compass/students-on-the-move/arqus-mobility-pathways/arqus-moves/

https://arqus-alliance.eu/call/arqus-moves-6th-edition-virtual-exchanges-international-mobility-experiences/

Erasmus+ project number 101089551

7. Social Mission

The Alliance's social mission strategic axis promotes active civic engagement and collaboration with external partners to foster more inclusive, equitable and diverse societies. Through participatory approaches and co-creation with local communities, Arqus seeks to strengthen the societal impact of higher education while amplifying the voices of underrepresented groups.

Thanks to the participatory approaches and co-creation platforms, the Alliance has sought to amplify underrepresented voices and strengthen the social impact of higher education. To bridge the gap between academic knowledge and accessibility, the Alliance launched the Arqus Inclusion Hackathon, held at Leipzig University, where multidisciplinary teams of teachers, students and PhD candidates worked with local companies and public institutions to address real-world accessibility challenges. Through hands-on collaboration, participants developed innovative solutions for accessibility and inclusion, demonstrating how academic expertise can contribute directly to societal needs.

The spirit of co-creation is further embodied in the Blended Intensive Programme (BIP) *Diversity of Universal Design for Learning and Technology - Designing Inclusive Urban Learning Environments* (*see Highlight below*). This challenge-based programme equips students with practical skills to design inclusive learning experiences in both digital and physical settings. Through a combination of virtual theory and field-based learning in Wrocław, interdisciplinary teams co-designed prototypes such as accessible city learning routes and inclusive museum experiences.

A characterising feature of the Arqus Alliance is the attention to students and scholars at risk: the Alliance developed the **Arqus Action Plan for Students and Scholars at Risk with focus on Ukraine** (*Deliverable 10.4, Working Group 10 "Arqus Inclusion & Diversity Hub"*), which builds on the Integrated Arqus Plan for Refugees and Students at Risk developed during the pilot phase of the Alliance, with a renewed focus on those fleeing the war in Ukraine. This strategic deliverable provides practical solutions and promotes cultural sensitivity to ensure that at-risk academics are integrated, and they also feel truly welcome within our institutions. A key contribution -which fed into the recommendations of the Action Plan- was a Survey targeting Ukrainian students. The Survey, designed together with the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy (NaUKMA), had the objective of learning from the experience of Ukrainians to improve the support measures provided by universities abroad to students and scholars from Ukraine.

This commitment to human rights was further highlighted during the Arqus Conference on Higher Education and Human Rights at the University of Minho, where experts from NaUKMA discussed the university's role in fostering global awareness and protecting vulnerable populations.

This commitment is also exemplified by the Arqus Bottom-up Initiative: Supporting Refugees' Right to a Qualified and Unique Study Experience (*see Highlight below*). This project engaged 427 participants across nine partner universities through an onsite film forum and research presentation.

Initiative Name Bottom-up initiative "Arqus: an Alliance supporting Refugees' right to a Qualified and Unique Study experience"

Short Description

Funded by the Arqus Innovation Fund, "Arqus: an Alliance supporting refugees' right to a qualified and unique study experience" executed a multi-city roadshow across the nine Arqus partner universities between March and December 2025. Coordinated by researcher Elisa Gamba and with the participation of filmmaker Leonardo Cinieri Lombroso, each event combined academic presentations on refugee inclusion with screenings of the documentaries *Refugee Girls* or *When you can't go back*. The initiative reached over 400 total attendees across the Alliance, tailoring its agenda to local contexts. Activities ranged from institutional roundtables with university representatives, debates with civil-society organisations, and screenings in civic cinemas.

Coordinating university / Working Group: Elisa Gamba - PhD - University of Padua

Partner Universities / WGs involved: All Arqus partner universities

When: from March to December 2025

Mode of delivery: in person

Reach: 427 participants in total | 281 students; 31 academic staff; 23 administrative staff; 92 external stakeholders (citizens, social activists, etc.)

Key impact and added value

The project demonstrated significant added value by creating tailor-made, cross-sector dialogue among students, academic staff, local municipalities, and civil society across all nine Arqus institutions. By engaging diverse target groups and refugee scholars themselves, the initiative effectively bridged academic research with lived experiences. Personal accounts from former refugee students, alongside direct exchanges with director Lombroso, transformed host campuses into active platforms for democratic participation. This collaborative, bottom-up model successfully heightened Alliance-wide awareness of refugee inclusion, producing actionable insights to advance institutional equity policies across the European University network.

Participants' quote

"Our final event took place on 2 December at Leipzig University, during its anniversary celebrations: the university was founded on that very day in 1409, by scholars who had left Prague. A fitting reminder that academic communities have always been strengthened by those who arrive seeking refuge."

Elisa Gamba, project coordinator

For more info

https://arqus-alliance.eu/arqus-innovation-fund/initiatives-funded/arqus-an-alliance-supporting-refugees-right-to-a-qualified-and-unique-study-experience/

Initiative Name BIP "Diversity of Universal Design for Learning and Technology - Designing Inclusive Urban Learning Environments"

Short Description

The course combined eight virtual preparatory sessions led by academics from five Arqus partner universities (Leipzig, Minho, Granada, Wrocław, and Padua) with a five-day on-site mobility week in Wrocław (1–5 June 2026). The curriculum bridged pedagogical theory and practical application, covering Universal Design for Learning (UDL) frameworks, digital accessibility, assistive technology, multimodal and accessible communication, and social entrepreneurship. In the physical phase, students applied these tools through field-based problem-solving across city heritage sites and cultural institutions. By reimagining urban spaces as active learning environments, participants collaborated in interdisciplinary teams to co-design and prototype accessible learning routes, inclusive museum experiences, and multilingual guides, culminating in the "City as a Learning Space for All" project showcase.

Coordinating university / Working Group: Leipzig University / WG08 "Linking local ecosystems" / WG10 "Arqus Inclusion & Diversity Hub"

Partner Universities / WGs involved: Universities of Wroclaw, Granada, Minho, and Padua

When: April through June, 2026 - in-person component at the University of Wroclaw from 01 to 05 June, 2026

Mode of delivery: blended

Reach: 30 participants | 24 students and 9 academic staff

Key impact and added value

The participants worked in interdisciplinary teams across universities. They exchanged perspectives on how to remove barriers and jointly developed ideas for making society more inclusive. These ideas were presented at the end of the in-person week and can be developed further beyond the programme. The greatest added value lay not only in facilitating exchange and networking across universities, but also in fostering interdisciplinary collaboration.

Participants' quote

"*The practical examples and collaborative activities helped me better understand how UDL and accessibility can be applied in real educational settings. Society is responsible for making the world accessible to everyone, regardless of their characteristics.* "

Participant

For more info

https://www.uminho.pt/PT/uminho/Internacionalizacao/Arqus/Paginas/Not%C3%ADcias.aspx

LESSONS LEARNT AND STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

The work developed between October 2022 and September 2026 has shown that Equality, Diversity and Inclusion can generate significant institutional and societal impact when approached as a collective endeavour. Several **lessons** emerge from the activities and initiatives developed across the seven strategic axes of the EDI Action Plan.

Treating **Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion as a shared, transversal responsibility** across all Working Groups and partner institutions has proven to be a defining success factor. However, shared ownership requires a strong engine: while EDI must be embedded systemically, the Arqus Inclusion & Diversity Hub plays a crucial role as a central coordinating body. Without this dedicated driver, inclusion efforts risk becoming fragmented, overly reliant on individual goodwill, and diluted in their scope. Looking ahead, as a mature culture of inclusion takes root, alternative organizational structures may well emerge; for now, however, by combining clear central coordination with widespread collective commitment, the Alliance has successfully broken down administrative silos and amplified the long-term impact of its inclusion initiatives.

Fostering a genuinely inclusive university environment requires continuous, tailored **training for both academic and professional staff**. For teaching personnel, building competence in Universal Design for Learning (UDL), inclusive teaching methodologies, and equitable assessment practices directly ensures that all students can thrive. Concurrently, upskilling administrative staff guarantees that institutional services, facilities, and campus operations are seamlessly accessible to everyone.

Equity, diversity, and inclusion consistently emerge as a top priority for **students**. Engaging them not merely as beneficiaries, but **as active co-creators**, has proven vital to driving meaningful change. Providing dedicated spaces for student agency—such as joint hackathons, Student Lab sessions, and Ambassador Workshops—harnesses their lived experiences, fuels innovative solutions, and fosters a deep, authentic sense of belonging across the entire Arqus community.

Experience has also highlighted the value of **experiential, participatory and intersectional approaches.** Initiatives that combined theoretical frameworks with practical activities, lived experiences and different perspectives tended to create opportunities for deeper engagement and co-creation. This was particularly visible in activities involving challenge-based learning approaches.

Small-scale funding opportunities, such as the Bottom-up initiatives funded by the Arqus Innovation Fund, can generate significant impact across the Alliance, while fostering cross-border cooperation and institutional engagement.

Maintaining a **diversity of participation and mobility formats** can help reduce barriers to engagement and contribute to making internationalisation and intercultural exchange more accessible to non-mobile and underrepresented groups. Creating accessible opportunities for students and staff to engage in international and intercultural activities without requiring (long-term) physical mobility serves as a powerful driver for broader engagement.

Building on the lessons learnt from the implementation of the EDI Action Plan, the following **recommendations** outline strategic pathways to sustain, deepen, and expand the impact of inclusion across the Alliance in the next phase of development.

To ensure continuous improvement and measure long-term impact, future EDI management must strengthen its culture of monitoring and evaluation. Transitioning toward a more **reflective, evidence-informed and data-driven framework** will allow the Alliance to assess the impact of its initiatives, identify emerging barriers, and adapt strategic priorities accordingly.

Future strategies should continue developing the current, dual **approach that combines structured, formal staff development with an enabling environment for grass-roots innovation**. While formal training on inclusive pedagogy and accessible administrative services remains essential, it must be complemented by continued support for bottom-up initiatives and Communities of Practice.

While broad awareness-raising activities remain valuable for establishing a shared baseline of understanding, the Alliance should progressively expand **participatory, experiential, and solution-oriented formats**. Future EDI activities should continue to move beyond information and awareness raising by creating spaces where participants can exchange experiences, reflect collectively and contribute actively to the development of solutions.

The **innovative initiatives, frameworks, and methodologies** co-created at the **Alliance level** should serve as a **source of inspiration and a benchmark for partner universities**. By translating Alliance-level achievements into local institutional contexts, member universities can leverage shared knowledge to advance their own inclusion policies, allowing European cooperation to act as a catalyst for systemic change at the national and regional levels.

Finally, as operational processes mature, the Alliance should maintain sight of the broader purpose underpinning all EDI efforts. **Advancing equality, diversity, and inclusion** is not merely an administrative goal or a set of compliance indicators; it **is an indispensable prerequisite for ensuring fairness, social justice, and the overall excellence, relevance, and societal impact of higher education and research**.

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