EPiCUR
EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY

EDI
FUNDAMENTALS
FOR EPICUR

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) are key for a just, healthy and united society.
Located in campuses across Europe, EPICUR universities rely on a set of shared core values which cut across their missions: European values, Academic freedom, Sustainable transformation, equity, diversity and inclusion throughout all aspects of life, that shape how EPICUR develops our European teaching and learning as well as research.

EPICUR's vision is to educate and train students and staff to build a society, united in the mission to sustainably applying the principles of equity, diversity and inclusion in all aspects of academic life.

This focus on EDI is in line with the Rome Ministerial Communiqué of 2020 and the European Commission's policies and strategies, such as:

- **a gender equality strategy**
- **an antiracism action plan**
- **a Roma strategic framework**
- **a strategy for the rights of LGBTIQ persons**
- **a strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities**
- **COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION on building bridges for effective European higher education cooperation**

In particular, the EU strategy for universities, in chapter 4.2., defines the goal "Foster diversity, inclusiveness and gender equality" – the present document therefore has to be seen as a contribution to the European framework for diversity and inclusion, including on gender gaps, identifying challenges and solutions for universities. This document can also be used as complementary document to the institutional gender equality plans (GEP).

With the establishment of a concept of EDI fundamentals for EPICUR and the "toolkit for an action plan" within EPICUR (related to EPICUR activities), each university can select the activities and tools that are suitable for this institution, according to their own EDI-related strategies and -policies already in place as well as regulations of networks or projects they are already involved in. These documents thus shouldn't be considered as something contradictory to these existing strategies or additional aspects that have to be implemented, but rather as stepstones to build upon, contributing to the further development of an inclusive, respectful and safe space for students, researchers and staff. Nevertheless, by adopting the concept of EDI fundamentals, EPICUR will not only follow the EU recommendations concerning this topic but also share best practices within the consortium to learn from each others' experiences and identify gaps which have not been addressed yet. EPICUR will hence set an example as a European University Alliance to foster equitable and inclusive pathways in all aspects of the alliance's work and beyond through holistic and intersectional approaches. Through raising awareness for the importance of diversity and inclusion in our education and workplaces, our intention is that all kinds of discrimination will be acknowledged and addressed and, in the long term, these procedures shall ensure that discrimination has no place in EPICUR. All of the EDI principles will be included in our innovative teaching methods and hereby setting an example for the future teaching and learning environments. By implementing and living EDI standards, EPICUR will become a role model for safe and discrimination-free workplaces and will be known for an inclusive, diverse and equitable European university. The respectful and appreciative atmosphere will allow students and staff to acquire interpersonal skills and will make them more resilient.

2. Objectives: Joint statement by the EDI Working Group

The EPICUR alliance has a strong and clear commitment to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and has a clear vision of how an EDI impacted educational environment should look. EDI is implemented through all aspects of life, framed around the idea of "widening access to EPICUR's education offer ... for a successful learning experience for all". EDI should be included at the heart of each university's strategy, policies and governance. Equity, diversity and inclusion should be embedded in the EPICUR members' human resources policies and student recruitments, as well as the careers developments and supports for students' employability. In addition to this, it should be reinforced that EDI values trickle down into educational and professional contexts to the extent that staff and students alike are incorporating this actively in their way of interactions. An inclusive environment should also be provided to staff, academics and students with support services, accessible campus environments and open institutions. Diversity should be promoted and everyone has a right to equality of opportunity and to a good and harmonious working environment and atmosphere. EPICUR aims to create a culture that promotes respect and dignity in all relationships, enable its member universities in the creation and elaboration of instruments, policies and processes to measure and promote EDI, to prevent against discrimination in any form: be that on the basis of "gender"[1], age, race"/ethnic origin, sexual orientation, ability, mental health, religion or belief. We believe that looking at all of these factors and more requires an intersectional approach to fighting against discrimination and recognising privilege.

Complaints and related situations are to be handled seriously in relevant structures and victims supported. Proactively, information should be displayed and awareness raised to all staff, academics and students.

It is also extremely important to note and acknowledge that there are within the EPICUR consortium, differing national positioning, legislation and institutional policies on EDI and the concepts therein which affect a common definition and the same level or degree of application. These are absolutely to be considered when thinking of 'one common' approach, which won't be feasible within EPICUR. Nevertheless, the common denominator will and must be that discrimination and injustice are considered by all members of this consortium as elements of our society we wish to address and diminish. We do not rely on concepts to hold us back from understanding basic human rights standards and application of these for the betterment of everyone. We acknowledge the existence of privilege, of intersectional axes and varying levels of discrimination for marginalised, vulnerable, underserved individuals and communities whose needs are valid – for example we do not advocate 'colour blindness' in questions of 'Race' and we address "difference" in the sense of who is treated equally and who is not.

[1] terms in "" refer to constructed notions of terms which are to this day questioned but which make it easier to refer to a specific attribute or characteristic, even if we do not acknowledge their existence as such beyond their construction.

3. EPICUR Definitions - explanation / aim

To develop the Concept of EDI fundamentals and this Toolkit for an Action plan, the EDI experts of the EPICUR EDI Working group used the following definitions of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, which were developed in joint meetings on the basis of existing terminology and relevant theories.
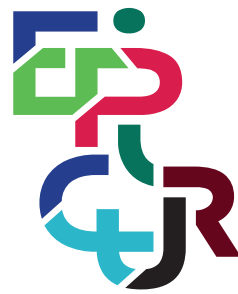
3.1. E is for Equity

How does equity differentiate from equality? As EPICUR sees it, not all people are treated, understood, perceived, supported and acknowledged or recognised equally. In a world full of preconceptions and discriminatory practices on various intersectional (the intersections of ethnicity, class, gender, age, ability (physical and mental), religion, 'gender', (a)sexual preference/orientation and much more) axes, we must consider that equity is a key criterion for understanding how to rectify that imbalance. EPICUR is committed to EQUITY, and therefore defines it specifically for our consortium and area of work, as a key principle for understanding that imbalance has to be addressed by equity. By definition it differs from equality in that 'everyone is given the same' rather equity says "some need more than others" for equality to be reached, truly, fairly and sustainably.

When we talk of equity, we talk of listening to marginalised and underrepresented groups and addressing their specific concerns and needs with integrity and sensitivity, we talk of empowering those groups to be in a position of defining deciding for themselves what their needs, desires and aims are and finally we talk of including diverse groups in processes which aim to achieve equity.

3.2. D is for Diversity

Diversity has long been a topic within various kinds of institutions with differing intentions and goals. Within EPICUR, diversity is appreciated and considered as normal, since it is a reflection of our world and society and a natural occurring phenomenon from biodiversity to ideas of gender spectrums. When we refer to Diversity, we concretely mean the act of recognising differences of whatever aspect, discrimination and discriminatory practices, hiring methods, teaching curricula which do not include, address, acknowledge and accept a broad, diverse cross-section of our society. Following the concept of diversity, we aim at not creating labels and categories which lead to reproduce discriminatory practices but talk with diverse groups in order to include them in diversification processes.

In the context of educational institutions, we talk of diversity on 3 key levels:

Personnel and students – for example (non-exhaustive list): how diverse the staff are: how the institution goes about hiring and including diverse staff in long term, well-paid, decision-making positions as well as with expertise on diverse parts of society; how accessible the workplace is to include diverse persons; how sensitive the institution to cultural diversity, how represented marginalised groups (i.e., hiring in ways which do not produce tokenism) are.

Programming – for example (non-exhaustive list): how the curriculum reflects different parts and people from all over the world and includes all kinds of people and their ways of life; how do the institutions address forms of knowledge which are non-Eurocentric and which are not only scientific/technical/formally academic, i.e how programming makes way for alternative forms of teaching, learning and ideas of knowledge.

Public – for example (non-exhaustive list): how the institution considers and includes its prospective public/audience, if there are ways for them to engage with the institution and how they can offer insight and feedback as well as thinking of ways the public (perhaps locally but also internationally) can benefit from the institution.

Within those three areas we consider diversity to be a key foundation of our work and considerations as we strive towards a more diverse EPICUR via the diversity of its members.

3.3. I is for Inclusion

Inclusion is for EPICUR a **process** of increasing the participation of all people, students and staff, in education, work, and reducing their potential exclusion from higher education. The inclusive approach therefore goes beyond the question of access to education and working environment but (also) takes into account the differences of all people on a daily-basis during the educational process. Differences are based on ethnics, linguistics, cultural or religious background, gender, disability or particular abilities...

These differences define **diversity** and should be taken into account to allow EPICUR to better meet the needs of everyone. Diversity is therefore a great asset, but also a great challenge: that of inclusion.

Inclusive education is based on the principle of **equity**, which means giving everyone the resources they need to success.

Adopting an inclusive approach means guaranteeing an education and working environment free of discriminatory behaviours or practices, allowing the expression of diversity and taking advantage of its richness.

It means giving students and staff access to all the educational codes and expectations, adapting the studying and working environment for people with disability, removing barriers to learning (i.e. giving access to disciplinary English lexicon), favouring interactions between people of different educational and cultural backgrounds, questioning teaching and evaluation practices.

For staff, it also means to address unconscious bias, questioning managerial practices and supporting underrepresented groups.

Taking inclusion into consideration benefits to everyone.
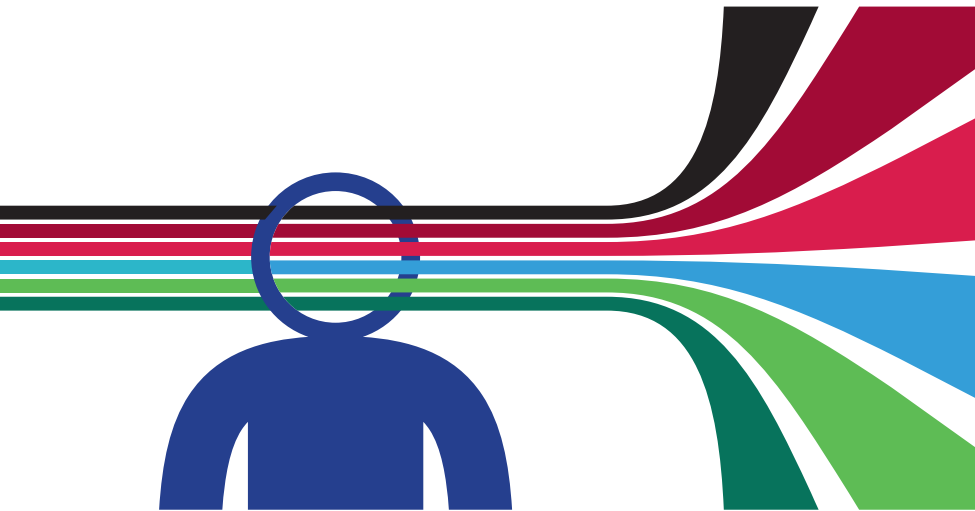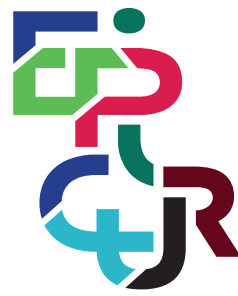
4. Key EPICUR EDI Fundamentals:

4.1. Open mindedness and flexibility

Open mindedness is an attitude related to the tendency to accept new ideas and to be willing to review social, political and religious values. According to Tjosvold & Poon (1998), open-mindedness norms relate to the way in which people approach the views and knowledge of others, accept the others, and „incorporate the belief that others should be free to express their views and that the value of others' knowledge should be recognized."[2] Open mindedness is considered an important factor for constructing effective intercultural and diverse teams.

In EPICUR, we accept the above definition of open mindedness and consider this trait as an important element to be cultivated within our context. Being open-minded means encouraging people to feel free to express their views without being afraid of others' criticism or undervalue. We value highly the expression of new ideas and knowledge and try to create an open atmosphere where different ideas and views would be exchanged.

In this open-minded intercultural environment, people with diverse background (students, professors or staff member) will be able to express themselves, without harming others and will work together collaboratively. Different approaches, attitudes and background are considered as positive elements that foster collaboration leading to novel solutions.

Being open-minded means also accepting all individuals no matter their physical or mental health. We value the uniqueness and worth of all people, ensuring that people who face difficulties or disabilities will be included and well-integrated in EPICUR environment. People with disabilities will find in EPICUR an open place to foster and grow academically or professionally and their critical point of view will be heard and considered for designing and implementing actions.

We see multilingualism as an opportunity for personal growth and active humanism, therefore, e.g. in EPICUR meetings an approach towards pragmatic language use (by making use of passive language knowledge) is made – in line with the EPICUR Model Language Policy (https://epicur.education/epicur-european-model-language-policy/).

---

[2] Tjosvold, D, Poon, M. (1998). „Dealing with scarce resources: openminded interaction for resolving budget conflicts", Group and organization management, Vol.23, No.3, pp237-58. as cited in Mitchell, R. and Nicholas, S. (2006). Knowledge Creation in Groups: The Value of Cognitive Diversity, Transactive Memory and Open-mindedness Norms. Electronic Journal of Knowledge Management, Vol 4 (1) pg 67-74.

Another element that we considered important is **flexibility**; the ability to be easily modified and the willingness to change or compromise in order to face challenges. According to the European Observatory of Working Life (EurWork) , "although flexibility is used frequently in the context of the employment and industrial relations, its meaning is contested". Flexibility has three dimensions and therefore similar definitions. It refers as 1) the employer's desire for variable labour inputs or changing tasks in order to increase productivity, 2) the employees' desire for variable contractual arrangements in working conditions or working time in order to reconcile changing private and domestic needs and achieve a better work-life balance and 3) the EU policy that responses to 'labour market rigidities". In EPICUR, we accept this multi-dimensional definition as flexibility has the meaning of offering flexible working conditions (pg working hours, mobile working, schedule etc.) for all employees (teaching or administrative staff) and especially staff members with disabilities or care givers, in order to reconcile well their working and family obligations.

Furthermore, EPICUR member universities promote flexibility also for students. Working and studying in a decentralized scheme has been applied already (pg the program of studies, the teaching methods or the pace of studying is flexible). In the next years, flexibility will be offered for example to students facing mobility problems or students with disabilities, by offering innovative (short-term or virtual) exchange formats or adapting the methods of examinations or evaluation.

In this context flexibility also means that every EPICUR member is able to follow its own and its networks' EDI strategies and can take the fundamental document and the EDI toolkit as resources for further development.

In this way, the EPICUR University will be a prosperous working environment for all but also a living organization that accepts and faces challenges.

4.2. Inclusive governance

Inclusive governance denotes the means by which an organisation steers its collective concerns including everyone who has stake in its issues. EPICUR commits to creating structures and policies across the EPICUR Alliance that make these processes as inclusive as possible.

- Policies and structures which reflect and foster the partner institutions' diversity in such a manner are:
- Increasing the representation of all relevant stakeholders (e.g. students, staff, etc.) at every level of EPICUR decision-making processes and governance
- Ensuring each EPICUR partner institution is equipped to prioritise EDI, anti-discrimination- and gender-equality-related issues taking into account diverse factors of background and circumstance
- Supporting the development of inclusive procedures that take into account different cultural and social backgrounds in EPICUR partner organizations
- Enhancing the transparency of decision-making through appropriate and open communication
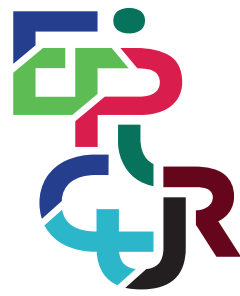
Any governance should strengthen the values on which EPICUR is based (see page 2 of this document), including social cohesion, democratic societies, diversity and inclusion. The proven principle of subsidiarity (the smallest competent unit can make a decision) should be applied as often as possible.

4.3. Inclusive infrastructure
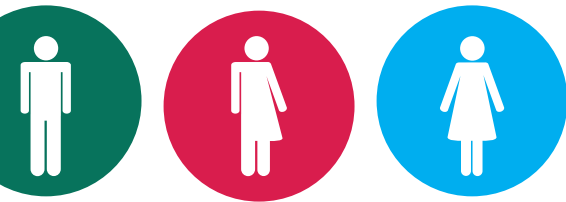
Inclusive infrastructure is a basic requirement for all students and staff to be able to engage and participate in EPICUR without barriers. It covers the following three areas: physical, information technology and personnel infrastructure – these areas have to be taken care of at each EPICUR member university.

In the physical world, this means that transportation, pathways, and buildings on campus are accessible. This includes access to food, administration, teaching and learning spaces e.g. by providing accessible tables, ramps, toilets, elevators for wheelchair users, sockets for assistive technologies and guiding systems for people with visual impairments.

Moreover, information technology (IT) infrastructure - hardware, software, and virtual offerings - are a core part of EPICUR's ability to participate in its offerings. It is therefore essential that these offerings are accessible from the start.

The third part of an inclusive infrastructure is accessible services that support students and staff with disabilities and chronic illnesses, also considering the intersections of ethnic and social background or whether they have dependents. These considerations must also include the staff recruited for counselling and assistance.

4.4. Commitment and Collective Engagement

All EPICUR member universities are committed to safeguarding the EDI Fundamentals as laid down in this document and implement – in accordance with their own EDI strategies and current status of EDI implementation at their institutions - the most suitable examples listed in the "Toolkit for an Action Plan"   All EPICUR member universities will monitor that EDI is taken into account in the development of EPICUR policies, processes and infrastructure.

The new inclusive governance model of EPICUR will guarantee the high relevance of EDI, which is part of the duties of the EPICUR Ombudsperson committee.

4.5. Monitoring

Monitoring of EDI activities has to take place at the level of each EPICUR member university; however, it is the duty of the EPICUR governing bodies, supported by the Ombudspersons committee, to make sure that EDI is included in the development of EPICUR policies, processes and infrastructure.

The "toolkit for an Action plan" suggests Key Performance Indicators which can be used for this purpose.

4.6. Accountability

All EPICUR staff members and students have to apply and respect the values on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and adhere to the fundamentals as described in this document. Contradictory behaviour is not accepted within EPICUR, independent of the position of the person showing this behaviour.

In order to safeguard the implementation of the EDI principles, the following procedures are agreed upon and further defined in the Action plan:
- For exchange students, the home and host university define a procedure to deal with misbehaviour
- Staff misbehaviour is dealt with by the home university
- In order to solve issues between home university rules and EPICUR EDI principles, the EPICUR ombuds persons are nominated to mediate such cases. The EPICUR Ombuds persons will report cases which can't be solved within this committee to the EPICUR governing bodies.

In short, issues between home university rules and EPICUR fundamentals should be dealt with by each university's local ombuds persons. In case they cannot find a solution, the case should be put forward to the committee of all 9 universities' Ombudspersons. Matters that are beyond the competences of the committee of ombuds persons (e.g., financial resources, structural decisions, application procedures) will be brought forward to the Governing Body of EPICUR.

An overview of EDI contact persons can be found in Annex 5.2.

4.7. Dissemination

Dissemination of EDI activities and principles are considered essential for the EPICUR's long-term impact and the benefits it may bring to academics, industry, and the general public. We define dissemination as the public disclosure of the EDI principles, good practices, and events promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion.

To this end, the relevant information on EDI fundamentals, initiatives, and events and similar measures described in the toolkit and organized by EPICUR and/or members of the alliance will be available on various EPICUR communication channels, i.e., the EPICUR website and social media platforms. Periodical communications with update and important information in the area of EDI will also be distributed via the EPICUR newsletter. Importantly, we aim to develop sensitization materials to spread the EDI fundamentals, which will be fully available to other institutions. Furthermore, knowledge developed as a result of EDI-focused activities will be shared with internal and external stakeholders by, for instance, organizing open lectures, trainings, and workshops so as to further promote the relevance of EDI principles. Those events will be organized for both internal target groups (e.g., students and staff members of partner universities) and external groups, thus fostering the social responsibility of the Alliance. All Dissemination activities will be made in an accessible format.
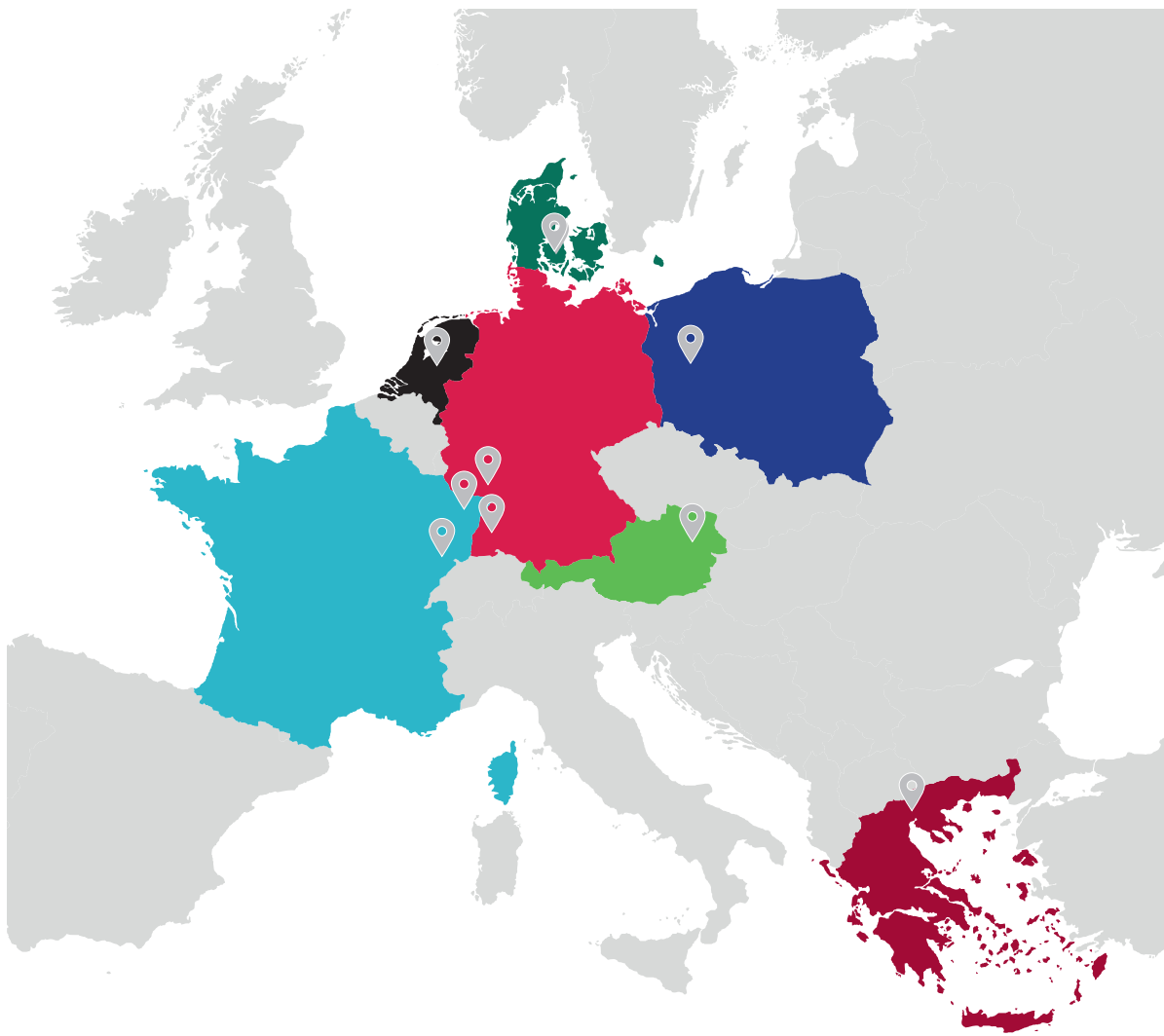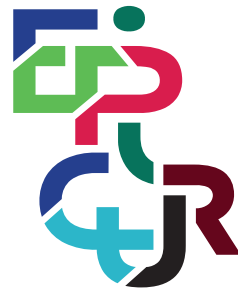
5. Final agreement/signing of the agreement/commitment

For **UNISTRA:**   **Président Michel Deneken**

For **UHA:**   **Président, Pierre-Alain Muller**

For **ALU-FR:**   Vice-President for University Culture, University of Freiburg, **Prof. Dr. Sylvia Paletschek**

For **KIT:**   Vice President for Transfer and International Affairs **Professor Dr. Thomas Hirth**

For **AUTH:**   Vice Rector for Academic & Student Affairs, **Professor Dimitrios Koveos**

For **AMU:**   **Rector, Prof. Bogumila Kaniewska**

For **BOKU:**   **Rector, Univ.Prof. MMag. Dr. Eva Schulev-Steindl, LL.M.**

For **UvA:**   Executive Board chair, **Geert ten Dam**

For **SDU:**   **Rector, Jens Ringmose**

6. ANNEX

6.1. Multilingual Glossary

Français

English

Deutsch

Hollandsk

Ελληνικά

Polski
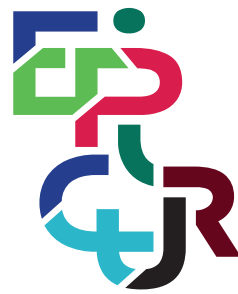
The ALU-FR „Diversity Glossary" https://www.diversity.uni-freiburg.de/diversity-in-teaching/DiversityGlossary.pdf (translated in all languages used within EPICUR; i.e. English, French, German, Greek, Polish, Dutch; including definitions of terms such as diversity, inclusion and equality/social justice and many more which we think will be useful to the project and subject matters dealt with therein)

6.2. EDI Contact persons / bodies at each EPICUR member university:

- **ALU-FR:**
  Dr. Regina Herzog (gleichstellungsbeauftragte@uni-freiburg.de)
  F**elix Wittenzellner** (Felix.Wittenzellner@zv.uni-freiburg.de)

- **AMU:**
  Prof. Robert Kmieciak, Rector's Representative for Equal Treatment: robert.kmieciak@amu.edu.pl

- **AUTH:**
  Professor Emerita Theofano Papazisi, Students' Ombudsperson at AUTH theopapa@law.auth.gr
  Professor Dimitrios S. Koveos, Vice Rector for Academic & Student Affairs - President of the Committee of Ethics, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (vice-rector-ac@auth.gr)

- **BOKU:**
  Coordination Office for Gender Equality, Diversity and Accessibility (kostelle@boku.ac.at); the Staff Councils (for scientific staff - brwiss@boku.ac.at; for administrative-technical staff: braup@boku.ac.at)

- **KIT:**
  - Representative for equal opportunities
    https://www.chg.kit.edu/english/index.php
  - Representative for students with impairments and chronic diseases
    https://www.studiumundbehinderung.kit.edu/english/index.php
  - Severely handicapped employee representative
    https://www.sbv.kit.edu/
  - Contact person for sexual harrassment
    https://www.chg.kit.edu/english/sexual_harassment.php
  - Conflict management
    https://www.kmb.kit.edu/338.php
  - ACCESS@KIT – Center for Digital Accessibility and Assistive Technology
    https://www.access.kit.edu
  - Diversity management
    https://www.peba.kit.edu/2281.php
    https://www.peba.kit.edu/2296.php

- **UHA:**
  Prof. Abdenacer Makhlouf, Vice-President in charge of Equality and Diversity abdenacer.makhlouf@uha.fr
  - Support for victims of sexist and sexual violence and harassment signalement.violences@uha.fr
  - Support Unit for students with an handicap accueilhandicap@uha.fr

- **UNISTRA:**
  Dr. Isabelle Kraus, Vice-president for Equality (Isabelle.kraus@unistra.fr)
  - Egality Diversity office: egalite-parite@unistra.frr
  - support unit for victims and witnesses of sexist, sexual and homophobic violence:
    violences-sexistes@unistra.fr
  - support unit for student with an handicap situation : svu-handicap@unistra.fr
  - support unit for staff with an handicap situation :

- **UvA:**
  Dr. Machiel Keestra, Central Diversity Officer, M.Keestra@uva.nl

- **SDU:**
  Eva Sophia Myers, Team Leader, Gender Equality Team, GET-SDU + Coordinator for SPEAR, myers@sdu.dk
  and **Maria Mortensen**, Gender Equality Consultant, marim@sdu.dk