



**Conferenza Nazionale  
degli Organismi di Parità  
delle Università italiane**



**UNIMORE** Comitato Unico di Garanzia  
UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI  
MODENA E REGGIO EMILIA CUG



## **Gender, intersectionality, and the metamorphosis of rights: the role of Equal Opportunities Bodies**

**Annual Congress of the “National Conference of the  
Equality Bodies of Italian Universities”**

**University of Modena and Reggio Emilia**

**Modena, 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> December 2023**

The next annual Congress of the “National Conference of the Equality Bodies of Italian Universities” will be held at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia in Modena. The Conference activities will be hosted by the Marco Biagi University Foundation.

The Conference will be focussing on the theme of rights, in order to grasp its transformations over time. Unfortunately, while in some cases there has been a positive enlargement of rights and the recognition of new guarantees, in numerous other cases there has been a restriction of rights, or their formal recognition, even though deprived of the effective protection. This phenomenon primarily concerns social and economic rights, but also civil and political ones.

This particular issue will be addressed starting from the role of university Equality Bodies, which find themselves overstretched by the ongoing changes and the need to find adequate solutions to cope with them.

In this perspective, it seems essential to make a comparison between the theoretical guidelines and the good practices adopted by the “Single Guarantee Committees for Equal Opportunities, the Enhancement of Workers' Welfare and Against Discrimination” (“Comitati Unici di Garanzia” - CUG) and by the other Equality Bodies of the various universities, in order to give them visibility and network them.

The university world is confronted with the impoverishment of families and individuals, and with the crisis in the world of work, which makes many students unable to devote themselves to their studies full-time, and induces them to do precarious jobs, which ultimately make students' concentration too fragmentary and inconstant for a profitable completion of the academic course. This situation, on the one hand, ends up undermining the right to study itself, and, on the other hand, causes a situation of stress and psychological distress that the universities attempt to face with 'counselling services' and other services, by interfacing in various contexts with the services of the national health system and by confronting its limitations.

Moreover, the crisis of the national health service is such that the right to health itself is at risk, despite the emphasis on care during the pandemic phase.

Female students with a migrant background represent a growing percentage of the student population, which, however, often remains invisible. This is a population with highly varied characteristics, ranging from students with language difficulties and legal problems who have recently arrived in our country, to Italians and so-called 'second generation' Italians at risk of discrimination because of the colour of their skin, their religious faith or for other different reasons. The partially different problems that these students have to face are destined to mark their study paths, with repercussions on their integration into the world of work.

A peculiar and particularly difficult situation is that of female asylum seekers and refugees, for whom the right to study is closely intertwined with reception, housing and social integration policies. Attention to the issue is growing in the academic world, especially thanks to the University Corridors for Refugees project and the Inclusive Universities Manifesto project promoted by UNHCR and to Scholars at Risk. In the face of such relevant issues, what is the role of Equality Bodies in combating racist or institutional discrimination? What tools can be increased to facilitate access to the university world by guaranteeing equal educational opportunities?

The university space is not immune from forms of discrimination based on skin, colour, origin, religious faith, thus in a broad sense racist and ethno-cultural background, nor is it free from forms of gender-based violence, despite the now deep-rooted commitment, thanks primarily to equality bodies that prevent and combat them. On this front, however, there are positive achievements and a growing sensitivity that also increasingly involves the rights of LGBTQI+ people. Awareness of LGBTQI+ issues is growing, also thanks to the attention of universities to the provision of the change name policy and a progressive de-pathologizing of gender transition.

What is therefore the role that equality bodies can play in combating discrimination and disseminating a truly inclusive culture? What are the activated tools and policies that can give visibility and support to all components of the academic community? This includes tools such as change name policy for those among the university staff or within the student population who wish to adopt the name corresponding to their gender in a transition process without waiting for their identity documents to change.

Increasing sensitivity is being paid to people with disabilities or specific learning disorders by providing dedicated services such as computer and technological aids, tutoring, career and study methodology monitoring interviews, digitisation of texts, workshops, mediation for international mobility, LIS interpreting and teacher/student mediation.

These issues do not only concern the student population, but also – albeit with specific characteristics – lecturers and administrative technical staff, who are increasingly faced with work demands and deadlines that encroach on the right to rest and disconnection or accentuate the difficulties of reconciling life and work times.

Moreover, in people's concrete lives the different issues listed are intertwined in the most varied configurations, making it necessary to prepare intersectional intervention tools, i.e. capable of grasping the particular needs linked to the different constellations of sex, gender, skin colour, role, origin, sexual orientation, disability, access to rights of young and elderly people, and so on.

The Scientific Committee proposes two different lines of work on these issues:

1. **Call for papers** to collect research contributions aimed at identifying the extent to which there is unequal access to rights in the academic world and/or to propose policies to achieve an academic environment in which rights are defended and all forms of discrimination are tackled.
2. **Call for practices** aimed at sharing good practices in universities to safeguard rights and address their protection and promotion.

**Abstracts of 3,000 to 5,000 characters (including spaces) are solicited by filling out the attached form and sending it by 30<sup>th</sup> September 2023 to: [counipar@gmail.com](mailto:counipar@gmail.com). Acceptance of the contribution will be communicated by 10<sup>th</sup> October 2023. Confirmation of participation in the convention is requested by 16<sup>th</sup> October together with a short biography of the authors, whose contributions will have been accepted.**

**It is intended to propose the publication of a selection of the papers presented at the conference in the "Potenziali" series of the "National Conference of the Equality Bodies of Italian Universities" in the ETS publishing house.**

**Whether the conference will be held in presence and/or remotely will be subject to the health situation and the provisions in force as of October 2023.**

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