

## University of Siena (IT)

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**Type of organisation:**

SME     School     **University**     Public Authority   
 Training     No Profit     **NGO**

Other (Specify)

**Fields of action :**

SMEs     Youth     Universities     Public Authorities   
 Equal opportunities     Schools     Unemployed

Other (Specify)

### Description of the organization

The University of Siena is one of the oldest in Europe. With its 15 departments, the University of Siena is keeping renewing its selection of degree programmes, which are offered in the following areas: Economics, Law, Arts and Humanities, Medicine and biotechnology, Chemistry and pharmacy, Mathematical, Physical and Natural Sciences, Engineering and Political Science.

For the academic year 2015-2016 the academic offer includes 36 first cycle degree programmes; 30 second cycle degree programmes; 5 long single cycle EU regulated degree programmes. Moreover, 1 BA degree in Economics, 9 Master degree courses and 12 doctoral research programmes are entirely taught in English.

With over 18,000 students, in 2012 the University of Siena was classified first in the whole of Italy for its

structures, quality of services, internet access, study grants and internationalization (Censis classification), and fifth out of 58 Italian Universities for its attractiveness to students from other regions and countries. The University of Siena has always seen the process of internationalization as the means to and primary aim of the recognition and enhancement of its training and research activities. Since the early 1990s the University of Siena has signed several international cooperation agreements with universities in North America, Australia, Latin America, in the Mediterranean area and in the Far East.

### **Experience of the organization in previous European projects**

Since their inception, the University of Siena has participated in European mobility programmes such as the LLP/Erasmus, Tempus, Erasmus Mundus, Leonardo da Vinci and thematic networks. The University of Siena is member of active international networks, such as the Coimbra Group, the EUA and the COIL Global Network. In recent years the University of Siena has been part of 4 Consortium in the frame of the Erasmus Mundus/Action 2 managing the projects activities and mobility with South-Africa, Russian Federation and Maghreb countries.

The University of Siena is also the hub Regional Solutions Network Centre for the Mediterranean Basin of the network MED- SDSN, "Mediterranean Sustainable Development Solution Network", recently commissioned by UN. The International Relations Department of the University of Siena can count on ten people who have been working in the field for many years and have proper linguistic competences and a wide experience in managing activities related to international projects and collaborations.

Between 2008 and 2014, UNISI was awarded over €23 million in international research contracts. These included most of the scientific areas in which UNISI is committed (Engineering, Health, Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, Humanities etc.). Income from international research projects was generated from both EU related programs (7th Framework Program, Horizon 2020, COST, IMI etc.) and other programs. In that period UNISI has been involved in 63 research projects financed within the 7th Framework Program (of which 16 in Engineering field) and 8 research project financed within Horizon 2020 with both roles of coordinator and partner. UNISI has also within its premises a Europe Direct point.

### **Experience and Expertise of the organization in the project's subject area**

The University of Siena has a long tradition in welcoming foreign students. In particular the Institution receives every year more than 500 students through the Erasmus Plus mobility scheme, making it one of the most sought after destination in Italy. At the same time, due to the increased number of degree courses taught entirely in English the University of Siena is experiencing an increased number of foreign students who are degree seekers. In order to better include them in the academic and social life of the University, Siena is organizing specific activities such as Italian language classes, and social events aimed at enhancing the knowledge and understanding among diverse cultures (the events are named "Nice to meet you"). Moreover the University of Siena is part to the EU4Refugees initiative (Euraxess portal) and it is now member of the international university network "Scholar at risks" with which universities around the world aim at the protection of research in dangerous situation through lobbying and specific activities. In 2015 the University of Siena has launched a new initiative UNISICARES which consists in a group of researches in various fields who offer their knowledge on migration issues and refugees protection as free consultants to migrants, citizens and public authorities.

Moreover, UniSi is partner (with other 13 institutions) in the EUinDepth project, coordinated by Institutul de Economie, Finante si Statistica (Moldova).

The project, still in progress, is offering a sound contribution to the mutual understanding among representatives of national political schools, in order to develop intercultural communications and comparative evaluation of similarities/ differences of views on Europe.

The result is to overcome contradictions on the issue of perception of what Europe is, on its geographical and cultural borders, to develop a common understanding of what people in the project partner countries read into the words "being a European".

The project is building on staff exchange to promote and strengthen the complementarity of the participants involved as well as boost collaborative research activities.

EUinDepth is contributing to the development of intercultural communications, identification of similarities and differences of views between European and non-European entities.

## Contributions that can be provided to the project

### UniSi Team scientific contributions:

- participating in the outline of IHR Teachers & Students' questionnaires to be administered in the partner countries
- collecting the Italian case studies & best practices related to IHR theme
- selecting & involving 5 Italian upper secondary schools in IHR
- administering the two questionnaires in the selected Italian schools
- participating in the comparison & analysis of the results in all the partner countries
- providing the Italian contribution to IHR Output 1 & 2
- participating in the planning of the IHR training
- selecting the Italian teachers for the training course
- delivering the training in Italy
- coordinating the activities for the production of IHR Output 3
- providing the Italian contribution to IHR Output 3
- organising a multiplier event in Siena

### UniSi Team managerial contributions:

- taking part to IHR meetings (both face to face & virtual)
- keeping constantly in touch with the Partners, ensuring the best communication on IHR management & implementation
- managing the grant awarded according to the Partnership agreement
- providing IHR Coordinator with a quarterly report on expenditure
- following the guidelines for national monitoring and evaluation as set by IHR Coordinator and providing the related reports
- making available the ITC required for IHR implementation at its premises
- following the workplan as set by IHR Coordinator
- meeting the deadlines set by IHR Coordinator
- ensuring its contribution in problem solving process, if required
- disseminating IHR in events related to the project theme
- tackling with IHR sustainability issues
- highlighting the European Commission co-financing of IHR within the Erasmus+ framework in any activities related to IHR

## Reasons of involvement in the project

The 3 UNISI departments involved in IHR, under the coordination of the Dept. of International and Political Sciences are all undertaking research related to migration issues with three different approaches: migration as a human rights phenomenon, migration as a sociology phenomenon and migration as a challenge in education. This multidisciplinary approach is particularly relevant in IHR. The logical premises for the involvement of UNISI team is the consideration that education to human rights is an essential tool to foster awareness on non-discrimination values and rules. In school such shared values are the basis for the establishment of a sense of inclusiveness and mutual understanding which produces better academic results and reduces conflict situations. A student fully aware of the human rights discourse, capable of understanding non-discrimination and respect for diverse personal identities and diverse cultures in class, will contribute to the definition of a friendly learning environment and eventually to a more inclusive society. There are today large portion of European societies willing to "discriminate" in order to "protect" themselves from the perceived risks brought by increasing migration flows. Third-country nationals, including stateless persons, are often particularly vulnerable to discrimination due to their situation". The urgent need to increase knowledge and awareness on fundamental rights to fight discrimination, especially among young generations, is acutely felt at national and European level. Researches at both levels have been conducted, such as the surveys "Integrating Immigrant Children into Schools in Europe" (European Unit of Eurydice, 2004).

Taking into account such a context, education becomes more and more the crucial point of any possible improvement of social understanding and peaceful cohabitation in a renewed European society. Moreover,

it becomes quite evident that in order to foster a more inclusive education teachers need to define the roles in a new environment and need to achieve new or reinforced intercultural competences. UniSi, given its mission and expertise, aims at providing the European educational community with new scientific paths and tools towards an inclusive educational environment within IHR partnership.

#### **Contact Person's Experience and Expertise**

Prof. Alessandra Viviani is an international human rights lawyer who has specifically published on human and children rights. She teaches international human rights law at the Department of Political and International sciences. Main publications: A.Viviani, *Il diritto alla cittadinanza quale espressione del diritto all'identità personale*, (Right to Citizenship and Personal Identity), 2015; *Land Grabbing e diritti umani* (Land Grabbing and Human Rights), 2016; *Patologia dei rapporti familiari e diritti dei minori: L'Italia di fronte alla Corte europea dei diritti dell'uomo* (Children Rights: Italy before the European Court on Human Rights), 2014; *Il diritto all'identità personale degli immigrati* (The Right to personal identity), in R. Pisillo Mazzeschi-P. Pustorino-A. Viviani (eds), *Diritti umani degli immigrati: tutela della famiglia e dei minori*, Napoli, 2010.

Alessandra Viviani is also Vice Rector for International Relations at the University of Siena since 2010. In such a capacity she deals with all questions relating the integration of foreign students (mobility and degree seekers). She is also a member of the UNISICARES group of researchers and of CIRDUIS (former Secretary), an inter-university research center on migration and human rights.