

# Long-term Strategic Plan for Diversity, Equity and Migration Health

2022–2026

22.03.2022

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## 1. Background

This document serves as a long-term strategic plan for Akershus University Hospital (Ahus). The purpose of the plan is to promote and further develop equitable, holistic and high quality health services for patients and their families. Additionally, it aims to build and strengthen employees' abilities with the goal of further promoting diversity, equality, inclusion and patient-centeredness at Ahus. Between 15–18% of the Norwegian population has a disability (visible or invisible), and it is estimated that approximately 7% of the population identifies as non-heterosexual (LGBTQIA+). The elderly population is also growing; the percentage of 67-year-olds in the hospital's catchment area is expected to increase by 14%–19% by 2035. In addition, a large proportion of employees and every fifth patient has a multicultural background. The immigrant population (immigrants and Norwegian-born to immigrant parents) constitutes well over 50% of the population in the districts within the hospital's catchment area, and up to 30% in some municipalities. There is also a significantly skewed gender distribution at the hospital.

There are documented differences in health status between the majority population and minority groups. This includes aspects such as variations in disease patterns, risk factors, perception of illness, perceived discrimination, language comprehension, communication methods, the patient's health literacy skills and/or treatment results.

The focus on diversity, equality and migration health at Ahus is highlighted in Ahus' revised Development Plan 2040 as well as this long-term strategic plan.

### 1.2. Strategic guidelines for diversity, equality and migration health at Ahus

Work within the area of diversity, equity and migration health and its importance is outlined in strategic and governing documents:

- Ahus' vision and values
- Ahus' Development Plan 2040
- Relevant laws and conventions, the Commissioner's Document from South-Eastern Norway Regional Health Authority, national strategies and action plans, and The Letter of Intent regarding a more inclusive working life (IA agreement)

**Diversity and inclusion:** diversity is about meeting people as they are, without discrimination. Here we refer to diversity in a broad sense. This includes linguistic and cultural diversity, gender and sexual diversity, and functional diversity\*. Diversity should be acknowledged as a resource and prioritized within the health system. Diversity in and of itself is not an end, but a means. If this hospital has a diverse group of employees, this can improve value creation, promote new ways of thinking, and better equip us to provide equity in healthcare. Inclusion is also part of the diversity concept, and is about giving individuals the opportunity to participate on equal terms in social communities, as well as equal opportunities to succeed and have real influence. This includes, among other things, universal design.

**Equity:** equity is about taking into account that people are different and have different needs. We can help ensure and achieve equity by adapting our systems, routines, and the way patients and staff interact. Health services are equitable when we provide the same quality of care and equally accessible services, which provide equal results for all.

**Migration health:** migration health is knowledge about how migration processes and migrant background can affect migrants' physical and mental health, as well as incidence of disease. This can also affect both access to, and quality of healthcare services.

\* [www.oslo.kommune.no/oxlo](http://www.oslo.kommune.no/oxlo)  
\*\* [www.imdi.no/](http://www.imdi.no/)



## 2. Goals for work within diversity, equality and migration health

- a) Ahus should offer good, tailored and equitable health services regardless of age, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, geographic location, socio-economic status, language, ethnic background, religion/beliefs, health literacy skills or functional ability.
- b) Ahus should strengthen its patients and facilitate good, safe patient pathways through systematic work with diversity, equity and migration health.
- c) Ahus should have personnel with the right knowledge and expertise who can communicate in a safe and secure manner with patients, families and colleagues.
- d) Ahus should contribute to research and innovation which safeguards the diversity perspective so that the hospital is better equipped to meet the needs of patients and their families.
- e) Ahus should have a work environment that values diversity, promotes inclusion and gender equality, and prevents discrimination against employees.
- f) Ahus should ensure that diversity, equity and migration health are safeguarded in the hospital's strategic and governing documents.

## 3. Strategic focus areas and initiatives for 2022–2026

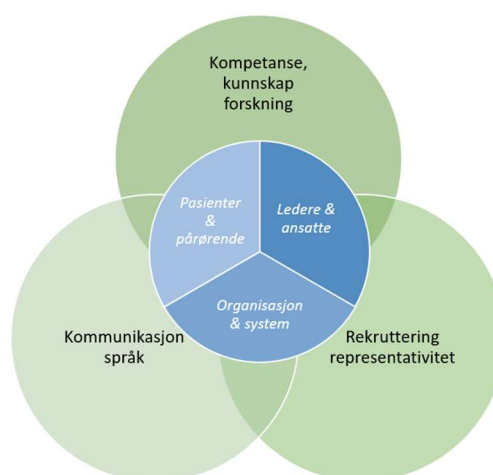
From 2022-2026, particular emphasis will be placed on three strategic **focus areas** related to diversity, equity and migration health:

- 1) Competence, knowledge and research
- 2) Communication and language
- 3) Recruitment and representativeness

All three focus areas are linked to one another and may overlap. Therefore, some initiatives may contribute to strengthening one or more focus areas.

The initiatives are aimed at three **target groups**:

- **Patients and families** (including children and teenagers as next of kin) to ensure equitable treatment throughout the entire patient pathway.
- **Managers and employees** to ensure that the resources in Ahus' diverse work environment are recognized, valued and utilized.
- **Organizational/system level** to ensure that this area is prioritized and followed up at the top level of the hospital's management.



On the next page, you will find an overview of the strategic focus areas. A detailed action plan, which summarizes the initiatives for 2022-2026, is included as an attachment to this document.



### 3.1 Competence, knowledge and research

Here we define competence as the knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes that make it possible to carry out tasks in line with defined requirements and goals. This is particularly important when it comes to how we relate to others; be it colleagues, patients or families. The amount of emphasis on multicultural, gender, sexual and functional diversity in professional education programs varies. In some cases, healthcare personnel may have received little to no training in this area upon completion of their program. Knowledge

about migration health is crucial for the hospital's ability to ensure patient safety and meet patients and families with dignity and respect. Research contributes to new and important expertise in this area.

#### Action areas

- Further develop the network for diversity, equity and migration health (MLM) so that it can be a strategic and operational resource for initiatives which fall under the focus area “competence and knowledge”
- Implement diversity management Ahus’ management school
- Develop “packages” with educational content that can be utilized at seminars, in following up the work environment, and in strengthening and developing leadership skills and employeeship in each individual department, etc.
- Facilitate the inclusion of patients with diverse backgrounds in studies
- Ensure that patients and their families’ spiritual care needs are met



### 3.2 Communication and language

Communication is the glue that holds our society together; it enables better collaboration and fosters trust. Many of our patients do not share a common language with the healthcare professionals they meet. This can be due to limited Norwegian skills or sensory impairments. Language barriers can reinforce cultural differences and complicate communication between patients and healthcare personnel, or between colleagues and managers. It can also lead to misunderstanding. This can affect patient safety and the quality of healthcare services. It can also lead to negative consequences when it comes to inclusion in the work environment. Communication and information must be adapted to the individual's specific needs.

#### Action areas

- Use qualified, professional interpreters and increase employees' knowledge and confidence when it comes to using interpreter services in a hospital setting
- Ensure high-quality patient information, written in plain language
- Utilize employees' diversity skills/competence
- Promote cultural sensitivity, understanding and inclusion
- Utilize digital tools



### 3.3. Recruitment and representativeness

It is important to have employees and managers who recognize and prioritize diversity, inclusion, gender equality and equity. This should also be reflected in the hospital's management systems.

#### Action areas

- Highlight the fact that Ahus is committed to addressing and safeguarding diversity by raising awareness, strengthening organizational culture and strengthening its reputation
- Ahus should have a recruitment policy that ensures diversity and promotes gender equality
- Establish and further develop collaboration between relevant organizations and resource personnel

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Questions? Contact the Department for Integrated Care and Health Promotion or HR

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