



European Partnership for Clean Sport in Tertiary Education Project

D5.3 Case study: University of Trento in the Milano - Cortina Olympic Games 2026



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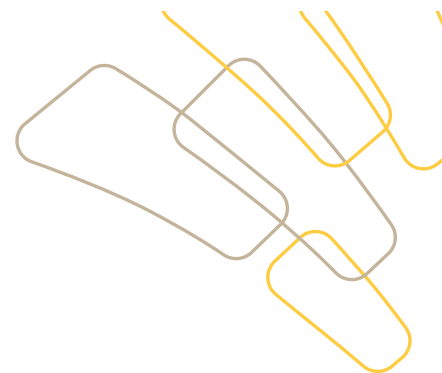


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**UNIVERSITÀ
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Dipartimento di
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ADDICTION
SCIENCE LAB

The Contribution of the Addiction Science Lab (University of Trento) to Anti-Doping Prevention and the Educational Legacy of Milano–Cortina 2026

Executive Summary

This report presents a case study of the contribution developed by the Addiction Science Lab at the University of Trento (UNITN) in the field of anti-doping prevention in connection with the Milano–Cortina 2026 Winter Olympic Games. The document illustrates how, through the European project EPCS-TE (European Partnership for Clean Sport in Tertiary Education), UNITN transitioned from fragmented and ad hoc anti-doping initiatives to a structured, strategic, and Olympic-oriented partnership with NADO Italia, the Federazione Medico Sportiva Italiana, Fondazione Milano Cortina 2026, the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), and other sport and health organizations in Italy.

The key message of this case study is that EPCS-TE acted as an institutional catalyst. It provided legitimacy, a shared operational language, and a European framework that enabled the University of Trento to position itself as a national strategic partner in clean sport education, contributing to the educational, social, and ethical legacy of the Olympic Games. The experience described here represents a replicable model for other European universities seeking to engage meaningfully with National Anti-Doping Organizations and international anti-doping bodies in the context of major sporting events.

1. Introduction

This report has been prepared by the Addiction Science Lab at the University of Trento (UNITN) within the framework of the European Partnership for Clean Sport in Tertiary Education (EPCS-TE) project.

The purpose of this case study is to present how UNITN's knowledge capital has increased through its participation in the EPCS-TE project and how the knowledge, institutional capacity, and partnerships developed are being strategically applied to support the Milano–Cortina 2026 Winter Olympic Games.

The report illustrates the institutional evolution of the University of Trento from fragmented and ad hoc anti-doping initiatives toward a structured, strategic, and Olympic-oriented clean sport education pathway. It demonstrates how EPCS-TE functioned as a strategic enabler, providing a European framework that strengthened institutional legitimacy, facilitated formal collaboration with NADO Italia and other key stakeholders, and aligned university-based research and education activities with national and international anti-doping priorities, including those promoted by the WADA.

Furthermore, the case study shows how the knowledge and partnerships developed through EPCS-TE are being embedded within the broader educational, cultural, and community-based legacy of Milano–Cortina 2026. In doing so, it highlights the role of higher education institutions as systemic actors capable of translating research into policy-relevant action, strengthening clean sport ecosystems, and contributing to sustainable Olympic legacy building grounded in health, integrity, and social responsibility.

2. Context and rationale

2.1 The Olympic Opportunity: Milano – Cortina 2026

The Milano–Cortina 2026 Winter Olympic Games represent a global opportunity to promote integrity, health, and clean sport beyond elite competition. The Games function as a catalyst for collaboration across education, research, sport governance, cultural institutions, and public policy. Increasing attention is being paid to doping-related risks not only in elite sport, but also among young people and the general population, particularly in relation to performance pressure, body image, emerging substances, and digital environments.

For the Trentino region and the University of Trento, the Olympic framework offered a strategic horizon within which to consolidate expertise on doping prevention, emerging substances in sport, and health-oriented education, while strengthening links with national and international stakeholders, including WADA and Olympic institutions.

2.2 Initial Situation at the University of Trento (Before EPCS-TE)

Before the launch of the EPCS-TE project, there was no structured or institutionalized anti-doping education strategy at UNITN. No formal collaboration existed between UNITN and NADO Italia on anti-doping activities, and interactions with international anti-doping bodies were limited and non-systematic. At the same time, there was growing internal awareness of UNITN's potential role as a knowledge exchange hub connecting research, education, sport, health, and public policy.

This combination of limitations and latent potential created fertile ground for systemic development once an appropriate European framework became available.

3. The EPCS-TE Project as a Strategic Enabler

EPCS-TE provided UNITN with a formal European-level framework for clean sport in tertiary education. Its objectives of mapping existing practices, identifying institutional needs, developing educational frameworks, and testing innovative interventions created the conditions for long-term institutional collaboration. Crucially, the project aligned its timeline and priorities with Milano–Cortina 2026, positioning the Olympic Games not as a one-off event but as a strategic driver for sustainable educational, cultural, and societal impact, in line with European and WADA education strategies.

3.1 How EPCS-TE Enabled the UNITN–NADO Italia Partnership

The EPCS-TE project played a decisive role in transforming UNITN's engagement with anti-doping from informal interaction to structured collaboration. Within this framework, UNITN was able to legitimise direct contact with NADO Italia, moving beyond sporadic exchanges toward a goal-oriented institutional dialogue. The project positioned UNITN as a strategic national partner capable of contributing scientific expertise, educational capacity, and public engagement aligned with national anti-doping priorities and WADA's international education framework.

Through EPCS-TE, UNITN and NADO Italia aligned their goals on education, prevention, and public outreach, using Milano–Cortina 2026 as a shared strategic horizon. Olympic values such as integrity, clean sport, prevention, and responsibility were translated into concrete, co-designed activities. The project fostered a shared operational vision, enabling both institutions to move from parallel interests to coordinated action, while facilitating dialogue with international actors including WADA.

4. Activities and Original Contribution

During the EPCS-TE project, the Addiction Science Lab at the University of Trento developed an integrated model combining research, education, creativity, and community engagement in the field of anti-doping prevention. A central element of this contribution was the “100% ME” campaign, co-developed with NADO Italia as a national anti-doping prevention initiative aimed at sensitizing the general population, with particular attention to young people.

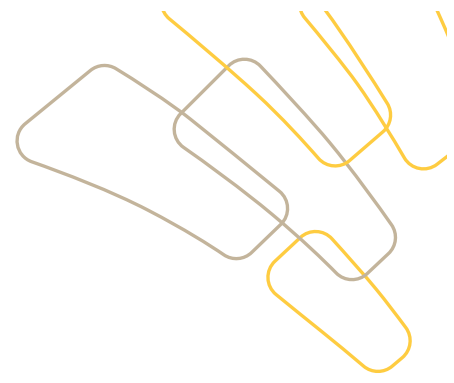
The “100% ME” campaign was designed to address crucial and emerging issues related to health and integrity in sport, including the use of performance and image enhancing drugs (PEDs), substance use among athletes, and health-risk behaviors such as exercise addiction. The prevention strategy was based on the production of original multimedia materials developed through close collaboration between an interdisciplinary group of researchers, artists, and young athletes. This approach enabled the integration of the most recent scientific evidence with a strong creative contribution in visual and sound design, ensuring that the messages were scientifically robust, accessible, and emotionally engaging.

A distinctive feature of the campaign was the active involvement of young athletes, who are often the primary targets of PED promotion and normalization through social media. Their reflective contributions enhanced the authenticity, credibility, and persuasive power of the campaign’s content, in line with WADA’s recommendations on youth engagement, values-based education, and athlete-centered prevention.

In parallel, the Addiction Science Lab contributed to a broader portfolio of educational and institutional activities, including educational interventions in schools on doping prevention, emerging substances, performance pressure, and psychological well-being; the preparation of a university textbook (Corazza, Esposito & Zanichelli, 2025) including a dedicated chapter on emerging substances in sport; collaboration with MUSE – Museo delle Scienze for an exhibition on sport, health, integrity, and Olympic values opening in February 2025; the organization of a public EPCS-TE event on 16 January at Casa Moggioli, headquarters of Milano–Cortina 2026 in Trentino; and the establishment of a formal agreement with the Ministry for Sport and Youth under Minister Andrea Abodi, recognizing the strategic role of universities in national prevention policies.

Moreover, UNITN strengthened sustainability beyond time-limited project actions by promoting the integration of clean sport and anti-doping topics into regular academic curricula and extracurricular university activities, reinforcing continuity in student engagement and education.

In addition, the Addiction Science Lab contributed to clean sport dissemination through audio-based public communication, producing two dedicated podcast outputs: one episode with Prof. Lambros Lazuras focused on anti-doping education and prevention themes, and a second where Prof. Ornella Corazza discussed image and performance enhancing drugs (IPEDs) within an Italian RAI podcast context, expanding the project’s outreach through national media channels.



5. Case Study: Public Launch of the “100% ME” Campaign

The official launch of the “100% ME” campaign took place on 24 March 2025 at the Teatro Zandonai in Rovereto, within the national event “Nuove droghe emergenti nello sport”. The event reached full capacity, with over 250 participants including health professionals, athletes, students, and policymakers from across Italy, and represented a key moment for the public dissemination of the campaign and interdisciplinary dialogue between institutions, academia, sport governance bodies, and international anti-doping stakeholders.

The launch was attended by high-level institutional representatives, including the Minister for Sport and Youth Andrea Abodi, the Rector of the University of Trento Flavio Deflorian, the Head of Department Gianluca Esposito, the Mayor of Rovereto Giulia Robol, the President of the Autonomous Province of Trento Maurizio Fugatti, and Tito Giovannini, Coordinator of the Milano–Cortina 2026 Olympic Games for Trentino. Their participation testified to strong institutional and territorial support and reinforced the positioning of the campaign within the broader Olympic educational legacy.

The event provided an opportunity for in-depth reflection on doping as a complex and evolving phenomenon extending beyond elite sport to young people and the general population. The programme included contributions from leading experts such as Fabio Pigozzi (President of NADO Italia), Paola Mora (President of CONI Trento), Maurizio Casasco (President of the Italian Federation of Sports Medicine), and Olivier Rabin, Scientific Director of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA). The direct involvement of WADA highlighted the international relevance of the campaign and its alignment with global anti-doping education and prevention strategies.

6. Olympic-Specific Engagement and Community-Based Legacy

A distinctive element of the UNITN case study is the strong emphasis on community-based activities during the Olympic Games. Beyond elite sport contexts, the project envisions education initiatives embedded in the local territory, cultural venues, and public spaces. A central role is played by trained student volunteers, prepared through EPCS-TE activities to act as clean sport educators and ambassadors. During the Games, these students can support public-facing initiatives, educational booths, and outreach activities that extend beyond the Olympic Village and into the wider community. This approach ensures that the Olympic legacy is not confined to sport professionals but becomes a shared educational experience for citizens, young people, and visitors.

To ensure operational alignment with the Olympic context, UNITN has also engaged in ongoing preparatory coordination with Milano–Cortina 2026 stakeholders, including participation in planning

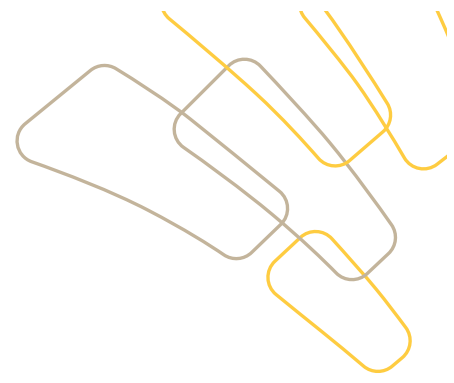
moments and institutional exchanges aimed at aligning educational actions with Olympic protocols and legacy priorities. In this framework, the public EPCS-TE event held on 16 January at Casa Moggioli also functioned as a structured educational moment to present project findings and the UNITN case study to local stakeholders and Olympic-linked institutional actors, strengthening visibility and shared ownership of the educational legacy. During the Olympic Games, a key proposed implementation pathway is the deployment of trained student volunteers in public-facing education booths and information points, operating in full compliance with Olympic “zero-risk” and official communication protocols, while extending education beyond the Olympic Village into community settings.

7. Reflection and Institutional Learning

Through EPCS-TE, UNITN evolved from isolated project participation to strategic institutional engagement in the field of anti-doping prevention. The experience demonstrated how universities can translate research into policy-relevant action and function as systemic actors within sport integrity ecosystems at local, national, and international levels. One concrete outcome of this process was the formalization of an agreement with the Ministry for Sport and Youth, recognizing the University of Trento as a strategic partner for collaboration on anti-doping education, prevention initiatives, and public engagement activities aligned with national policies and international frameworks promoted by WADA.

Beyond national-level collaboration, EPCS-TE also facilitated dialogue with the local government of the Autonomous Province of Trento on the long-term legacy of Milano–Cortina 2026. In this context, discussions have been initiated regarding the development of a dedicated rehabilitation and support facility for professional athletes sanctioned for doping violations. The proposed structure would combine rehabilitation pathways, psychological and medical support, training activities, and prevention-oriented education, positioning rehabilitation not only as a sanction-related measure but as an opportunity for recovery, reintegration, and values-based re-education. In parallel, the facility is envisaged as a hub for training, research, and prevention activities targeting athletes, coaches, health professionals, and young people.

These discussions reflect a broader shift from short-term project outputs toward sustainable, place-based legacy building linked to the Olympic Games. The case study highlights the potential of EU-funded projects to amplify local and national impact when aligned with major societal events such as the Olympic Games and embedded within institutional and governmental strategies. It also offers transferable lessons for other universities and policymakers seeking to leverage higher education as a pillar of clean sport education, rehabilitation-oriented prevention, and sustainable Olympic legacy building grounded in health, integrity, and social responsibility.



In practice, EPCS-TE also functioned as a pre-institutional testing ground that reduced uncertainty and operational risk before formal commitments, demonstrating feasibility through pilot delivery and enabling a smoother transition toward structured agreements.

Finally, the UNITN–NADO Italia pathway is transferable to other European universities through a phased model (pilot activities trust-building and operational learning institutionalisation), particularly when major sporting events are used as strategic accelerators to embed clean sport education within broader social and cultural legacies.

8. Recommendations and Transferability

Based on the experience developed through the EPCS-TE project and the collaboration between the Addiction Science Lab (University of Trento), NADO Italia, and Olympic stakeholders linked to Milano–Cortina 2026, a set of key recommendations can be identified to support the transferability and scalability of this model to other universities, regions, and major sporting events.

1. Adopt a Broader and Contemporary Terminology

Institutions should adopt inclusive and up-to-date terminology that extends beyond a narrow focus on “anti-doping” to reflect contemporary substance-use realities in sport and fitness cultures. This includes explicitly addressing emerging drug trends, including image and performance enhancing drugs (IPEDs), supplements, and non-traditional substances circulating in digital environments. This broader framing allows prevention initiatives to resonate not only with elite athletes but also with young people and the general population, reflecting contemporary risk patterns.

2. Integrate Mental Health into Prevention Strategies

Anti-doping prevention strategies should systematically address athletes’ mental health as a central vulnerability factor and integrate it as a core component rather than a secondary topic.

Performance pressure, identity and self-worth concerns, injury and rehabilitation, career transitions, and body image concerns can increase vulnerability to substance use and risk-taking behaviors. Integrating mental health promotion and psychological well-being into clean sport education strengthens prevention outcomes and aligns with current WADA, public health approaches and values-based education models promoted internationally.

3. Prioritize Co-Design with Athletes and Students

Meaningful co-design of prevention initiatives with athletes should be treated as a strategic priority. Athlete involvement enhances authenticity, credibility, and relevance, ensuring that educational messages reflect lived experiences rather than top-down prescriptions. In parallel,

universities should actively engage students throughout the whole process -from research and content development to dissemination and public engagement- thereby supporting peer-to-peer communication, capacity building, and long-term sustainability beyond individual project cycles.

4. Develop a Strategic and Audience-Centered Communication Approach

A clear and strategically planned communication strategy is essential. Messages should be scientifically accurate yet accessible, emotionally engaging, and socially appealing. Communication should avoid moralistic or overly regulatory language, which can reduce identification and uptake among target audiences.

5. Use the Arts as a Core Dissemination Tool

The integration of the arts - such as visual design, sound, storytelling, and performance - should be considered a core component of dissemination rather than an optional add-on. Artistic approaches function as powerful forms of engagement and “edutainment,” facilitating emotional connection while reinforcing educational content.

6. Safeguard Scientific Rigor and Credibility

Credibility depends on scientific rigor. It is crucial that all messages remain firmly grounded in scientific evidence to maintain institutional credibility and public trust. Close collaboration between researchers, communication professionals, and creative practitioners is recommended to ensure both rigor and impact.

7. Plan Media Engagement Proactively

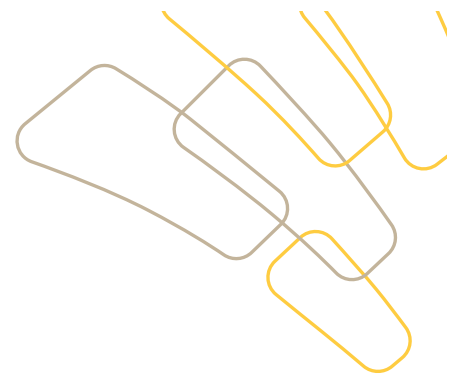
Media engagement should be actively planned and secured, rather than treated as incidental. Strategic partnerships with national and local media outlets, including radio, television, and digital platforms, significantly amplify outreach, extend the lifespan of campaign content and contribute to the normalization of clean sport messages within public discourse.

8. Organize Public Events in Community Spaces

Public events should be organized in culturally relevant venues beyond university environment—such as museums, theatres, and civic spaces—to enhance visibility, accessibility, and public appeal. These settings help position clean sport education as a societal issue rather than a purely academic or sporting concern.

9. Leverage Major Sporting Events as Prevention Catalysts

Major sporting events, particularly Olympic and Paralympic Games, should be strategically leveraged as high attention critical “social amplifier” moments for prevention messaging. When aligned with official protocols and legacy strategies, these events provide unique opportunities to



embed education within broader cultural and community-based legacies, strengthening long-term societal impact.

10. Invest in High-Quality Audio-Visual Materials

Adequate investment in high-quality audio-visual materials is strongly recommended. Prevention campaign initiatives benefit substantially from professional-level production in video, sound design, and graphic communication. Dedicated budgets should be allocated, and collaborations with experienced professionals prioritized. It is important to try to avoid low-budget or poorly produced materials risk undermining both credibility and impact.

11. Develop Sustainable Podcast Dissemination Channels

The development of a dedicated project-based podcast channel is recommended as a sustainable and scalable dissemination tool. Podcasts should be distributed across major platforms (e.g. Spotify and Apple Podcasts). Attention to scientific rigor and relevance of the topic being discussed must be prioritized, however overall attention to preparation, interview structure, sound quality, editing, and post-production is also fundamental. High-quality audio storytelling enhances accessibility, supports engagement across diverse audiences and extends the lifespan of project outputs well beyond the duration of funded activities.

Taken together, these recommendations outline a transferable, phased model for clean sport education and anti-doping prevention (pilot activities, trust-building, and institutionalization). When aligned with major sporting events and embedded within university, governmental, and cultural ecosystems, this approach supports sustainable educational impact, reinforces public health objectives, and contributes meaningfully to long-term Olympic and societal legacies grounded in health, integrity, and social responsibility.

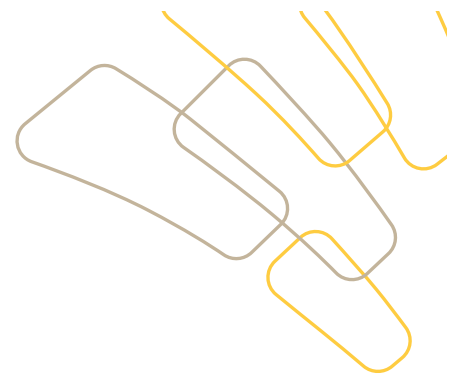
APPENDICES

A. Key Activities Implemented

This appendix summarizes the main pilot and institutional activities delivered by the Addiction Science Lab (University of Trento) within the EPCS-TE framework, in collaboration with NADO Italia and stakeholders connected to the Milano–Cortina 2026 Winter Olympic Games. Consistent with the report, these activities reflect the transition from fragmented initiatives to a structured, strategic, and Olympic-oriented clean sport education pathway.

A.1. Pilot Events and Public-Facing Educational Activities

- 1) Training event – “Dipendenze e salute mentale nello sport”
 - Date & venue: 18 March 2024, Gallerie di Piedicastello (Trento)
 - Target audiences: young athletes, university students, experts, and stakeholders
 - Key contribution: educational training focused on sport-related prevention, mental health, and integrity, framed within the approaching Milano–Cortina 2026 horizon
 - Notable participation: involvement of high-level experts and Olympic stakeholders (including Prof. Olivier Rabin and Tito Giovannini), strengthening alignment with international and Olympic-related perspectives
- 2) Training and media session with athletes and institutions
 - Date & venue: 2 October 2024, Gallerie di Piedicastello (Trento)
 - Participants: athletes, CONI representatives, Milano–Cortina 2026 staff, and project partners
 - Key contribution: co-designed training and media-oriented session supporting athlete-centred messaging and institutional coordination, reinforcing the campaign-building approach described in the report (scientifically robust and publicly accessible communication)
- 3) National public launch – “100% ME” campaign
 - Date & venue: 24 March 2025 (public launch; as described in the report, hosted within the national event “Nuove droghe emergenti nello sport” at Teatro Zandonai, Rovereto)
 - Delivered in partnership with: NADO Italia
 - Focus: doping prevention, mental health, performance pressure, and integrity in sport
 - Key contribution: dissemination of the campaign to a broad public (health professionals, athletes, students, policymakers), reinforcing UNITN’s role as a clean sport education hub and consolidating institutional visibility within the Olympic legacy narrative
- 4) Podcast dissemination activities (public outreach)



- Format: two podcast episodes (science communication / public education)
- Outputs: one episode featuring Prof. Lambros Lazuras; one episode featuring Prof. Ornella Corazza on IPEDs within an Italian RAI podcast
- Key contribution: extended clean sport and prevention messaging beyond in-person events, strengthening national-level dissemination and public engagement through accessible audio formats

A.2. Institutional and Legacy-Oriented Actions

- 5) Facilitation of a formal agreement with the Ministry for Sport and Youth
 - Outcome: formal recognition of the strategic role of universities (including UNITN) in national prevention policies and anti-doping education, consistent with the report's "Reflection and Institutional Learning" section
 - Added value: strengthened institutional legitimacy and sustainability beyond single events
- 6) Support toward the development of a prevention and rehabilitation facility in Trentino (Olympic legacy)
 - Status: under discussion/development; expected launch in 2027 (legacy-oriented projection)
 - Purpose: rehabilitation and support pathways for athletes sanctioned for doping violations, integrating psychological/medical support, reintegration, education, training, and prevention-oriented activities
 - Legacy logic: shifts the approach from "sanction only" to recovery, re-education, and community health impact, aligned with the report's emphasis on sustainable, place-based legacy building

B. Stakeholder Ecosystem (Actors and Roles)

The UNITN case study is characterized by a multi-level ecosystem connecting higher education, anti-doping governance, Olympic institutions, and territorial actors.

B.1. Core Partners

- University of Trento (UNITN) – Addiction Science Lab
 - Academic leadership
 - Researchers and interdisciplinary contributors
 - Students (including prospective volunteers / ambassadors trained through EPCS-TE activities)
- NADO Italia
 - Educational expertise and institutional authority on anti-doping
 - Co-design and co-delivery of prevention initiatives (including the "100% ME" campaign)

B.2. Olympic and Sport Governance Stakeholders

- Milano–Cortina 2026 Organizing Committee
 - Strategic Olympic framework and coordination
 - Participation in preparatory engagement and alignment with legacy priorities
- CONI
 - Sport governance linkage and athlete/community access channels
- World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)
 - Scientific leadership engagement during major events as an international alignment anchor for values-based education and global education frameworks.
- Federazione Medico Sportiva Italiana
 - Part of the broader institutional ecosystem supporting health-oriented education and prevention.

B.3. Territorial and Community Stakeholders

- Local cultural institutions and schools
 - Venues and channels for community-based education and prevention activities
- Local/regional institutions (territorial governance)
 - Dialogue on long-term legacy planning, including facility development and community impact

B.4. National Policy Stakeholders

- Ministry for Sport and Youth
 - Existing formal agreement (as reported) recognizing the strategic role of universities in prevention policies and education



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