Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA

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SIHO Webinar 1, 10 December 2020 - 15.30 - 17.00 CET: Current state of play in relation to the implementation of inclusion and universal design strategies in higher education across Europe and beyond
Content

1. **Historical background** for social dimension
2. **Challenges** for social dimension
3. **Solution**
4. **New definition** for social dimension
5. **Principles and Guidelines** for social dimension
6. Next steps
Historical background

2001 Prague Communiqué  Inclusion of underrepresented students

2003 Berlin Communiqué  Widening access

2005 Bergen Communiqué  Equitable access

2007 London Communiqué  1st definition

**SOCIAL DIMENSION** = composition of the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels should correspond to the heterogeneous social profile of society at large
Historical background

2009 Leuven Communiqué
Widening participation

2012 Bucharest Communiqué
Flexibility of entry routes

2015 Yerevan Communiqué
Strategy for social dimension 2015-2020
Link to lifelong learning

2018 Paris Communiqué
Recognized the need to guide member states on how to define and implement policy

2018-2020 BFUG Advisory Group for Social Dimension
Co-chairs: Croatia and ESU

Objectives
• to develop a common understanding of the concept of the social dimension in HE
• to develop principles and guidelines for social dimension
1. **Recognized importance for the social dimension** in HE in all key EHEA policy papers. In many EHEA countries, there are **already measures in place** to address the underrepresentation of particular societal groups in HE.

   - But, these measures often create **a set of isolated interventions** and are **not a part of a coherent national strategy** for the social dimension enhancement.

   - Very **few countries have developed national** strategies or plans for fostering social dimension systematically.

2. The majority of countries have some **targets related to widening access and participation** in HE.

   - However, most of these targets are about widening overall participation, **without making reference to specific underrepresented groups**.
Key output of the BFUG Advisory Group for Social Dimension 2018-2020: a NEW forward-looking strategic document for the period 2020-2030

Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA
New definition: social dimension

• Definition: composition of the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels should correspond to the heterogeneous social profile of society at large

• Policy levers for identifying and improving the prospects of underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable students

• Embraces a social justice agenda

• New: moving beyond widening accessibility clauses and focusing on public good agenda by integrating principles in core HE mission and governance

Starting point: definition in the 2007 London Communique

New: fosters equity

New: fosters diversity

New: responsive to the needs of local communities

• New: enlarged definition that goes beyond the London definition - by stressing that the social dimension encompasses the creation of an inclusive environment in higher education that fosters equity and diversity and is responsive to the needs of local communities.

• New: Public authorities and higher education institutions need to integrate the principles into the core higher education mission: learning and teaching, research, innovation, knowledge exchange and outreach, institutional governance and management, policies for empowering students and staff.
10 principles for the social dimension for the upcoming decade:

- **Principles** = should be understood as high-level statements that serve as a basis for the conceptualization of different policies for social dimension enhancement.

- **Guidelines** = recommendations intended to advise policy makers on how the principles should be implemented in practice.

- **Glossary of Terms and Definitions:**
  - Underrepresented students
  - Disadvantaged students
  - Vulnerable students
Principles & Guidelines for social dimension

- Policy dialogue between public authorities and HEIs
- Community engagement in HE promotes social dimension
- Supportive legal framework: Flexible and adaptable L&T, RPL
- Inclusiveness of the entire education system: From early childhood edu to lifelong learning
- Learning & teaching: reflect diversity of students’ needs
- Inclusive and equitable international mobility programs
- Strengthening HEIs’ capacity for diversity
- Sufficient and sustainable funding
- Effective counselling and guidance for students
- Reliable data: for evidence-based improvements
- Community engagement in HE promotes social dimension
- Policy dialogue between public authorities and HEIs
- Strategic approach
- Learning & teaching: reflect diversity of students’ needs
- Inclusive and equitable international mobility programs
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- Sufficient and sustainable funding
- Effective counselling and guidance for students
- Reliable data: for evidence-based improvements
Highlights:

• Legal regulations and administrative rules should allow sufficient **flexibility in the design, organization and delivery of study programs** to reflect the diversity of students’ needs.
  o Higher education institutions should be enabled to organize **full-time and part-time studies, flexible study modes, blended and distance learning** as well as to recognize prior learning (RPL).

• It is important to ensure a **holistic approach** to the social dimension aiming to create **coherent policies from early childhood education**, through schooling to higher education and throughout lifelong learning.
  o This requires **more connectivity** between the work of those responsible for higher education and other ministries and sectors, which can bring about **change only in a joint effort**.
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- Community engagement in HE promotes social dimension
Highlights:

• Higher education institutions should ensure that community engagement in higher education promotes diversity, equity and inclusion.
  o Such engagement provides a holistic basis on which universities can address a broad range of societal needs, including those of vulnerable, disadvantaged and underrepresented groups, while enriching their teaching, research and other core functions.
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Conclusion:
• Principles and Guidelines are not to be seen as a checklist, but as an instrument for developing fit-for purpose national and institutional strategies and policies for social dimension enhancement
  o Enabling concrete and tangible progress over the next decade

Favourable moment:
• Principles and Guidelines adopted by the 48 EHEA ministers at the EHEA Rome Ministerial Conference on 19 November 2020
  • Principles and Guidelines are an integral part of the 2020 Rome Ministerial Communique
    - ministers have politically committed to its implementation.
Next steps:

- **Public authorities** should support the implementation of the Principles and Guidelines by **offering a legal, financial, administrative and informative framework** that can initiate process of implementation at the national level.

- **Public authorities** should engage in a **policy dialogue** with **HEIs and other stakeholders** to develop fit-for-purpose policy measures > will enable progress towards diversity, equity, inclusion in higher education.
Thank you for your attention!

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BFUG Advisory Group 1 for Social Dimension:
http://www.ehea.info/page-Advisory-Group-1

EHEA Ministerial Conference Rome 2020 – 19 November 2020 (9-17h):
http://www.ehea.info/index.php
https://ehea2020rome.it/