BFUG Working Group on Social Dimension 2021-2024

Final Report for the Period 2021-2024

Tirana, 2024

EHEA: Transforming Education together.

Albanian BFUG Secretariat 2021-2024

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Summary

The Bologna Follow-Up Group's (BFUG) Working Group on the Social Dimension (2021-2024) initiated efforts to enhance the social dimension of higher education within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), culminating in the BFUG's adoption of the 'Indicators and Descriptors for the Principles of the Social Dimension in the EHEA' in 2024. Building on the 'Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA' from the 2020 Rome Communiqué, this document introduces actionable tools to help public authorities and institutions implement and monitor inclusive policies, fostering equity and inclusion in higher education across the EHEA.

Under the leadership of Ninoslav Šćukanec Schmidt (Croatia) and Horia Onița (European Students' Union), the group facilitated 15 meetings, engaging in peer-learning and consultations, which were vital for supporting the implementation of these principles within the EHEA. The Working Group's activities between 2021-2024, including developing indicators and organizing seminars, culminated in a comprehensive framework for the social dimension in higher education. This framework, consisting of principles, guidelines, indicators, and descriptors, marks a significant advancement towards an inclusive environment in higher education that caters to the diverse needs of all students and staff.

The 'Indicators and Descriptors' document is a key achievement, providing EHEA member states and institutions with a 'toolbox approach' to develop tailored policies for enhancing the social dimension, acknowledging the unique contexts and challenges of each member state. Thus, the work of the BFUG Working Group on Social Dimension from 2021 to 2024 has significantly advanced the social dimension within the EHEA, offering a robust framework for promoting equity, diversity, and inclusivity in higher education. These accomplishments highlight a collaborative and innovative approach toward a more inclusive higher education landscape.

Moreover, the BFUG Working Group on Social Dimension emphasizes the crucial need for the continuous implementation of the EHEA social dimension framework during the BFUG 2024-2027 cycle, to address emerging challenges such as climate change, technological advancements, and societal inequalities that threaten higher education accessibility and equity. The group underscores the importance of exchanging good practices, integrating the social dimension across all higher education policy areas, and conducting regular monitoring to advance inclusive higher education. It advocates for maintaining momentum through either continuing the Working Group on Social Dimension or establishing a Thematic Peer Group to ensure the social dimension remains a core part of the EHEA policy agenda, in alignment with the goals set in the 2020 Rome Communiqué for an inclusive EHEA by 2030.

Introduction

During the preceding Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG) mandate from 2018 to 2020, the BFUG Advisory Group 1 on Social Dimension achieved significant milestones. The Advisory Group successfully formulated fundamental principles, guidelines, and introduced an updated definition for the social dimension of higher education within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). In 2020, during the ministerial conference held in Rome, the EHEA ministers officially adopted a forward-thinking strategic document "Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA".' This document defines 10 principles of the social dimension of higher education, in the form of high-level statements that serve as the basis for conceptualizing policies for the enhancement of the social dimension. Notably, the Principles and Guidelines with the revised definition were integrated as Annex II to the 2020 Rome Ministerial Communique. The aim of the Principles and Guidelines is to support convergence of social dimension policies in the EHEA through shared commitments and provide support to EHEA member countries in their ongoing endeavors to refine policies related to the social dimension and facilitate their effective implementation at the national level to achieve the objective of an inclusive EHEA for all students and staff by 2030.

In 2021, the BFUG established a new Working Group on Social Dimension for the period 2021-2024. The task of this Working Group was to complete the new framework for the social dimension in Europe, which was initiated during the previous BFUG period of 2018-2020, a period during which the Principles and Guidelines were completed. The main objective of the 2021-2024 BFUG Working Group on Social Dimension was to define indicators and descriptors for the principles and guidelines of the social dimension. These indicators and descriptors are intended to enable the creation of a system for monitoring the implementation of the social dimension's principles at both the EHEA and national levels. The Working Group was led by two Co-chairs: Ninoslav Šćukanec Schmidt, representing Croatia, and Horia Onita, representing the European Students' Union (ESU; with Martina Darmanin representing the ESU as co-chair until June 2022).

Reference to the 2020 Rome Communiqué: *"We adopt the 'Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA' (Annex II) based on a broadened understanding of the social dimension and commit to implementing them in our systems. We will engage in wide-ranging policy dialogue on how to implement the principles and guidelines fully at the national level. We will support our higher education institutions in integrating them into their institutional culture and core missions: learning and teaching, research and innovation, knowledge circulation and outreach, institutional governance and management. We ask the BFUG to report back to us in 2024 on the steps taken and the related monitoring measures to assure evidence-based follow-up".*

In 2021, the Working Group defined its Workplan for 2021-2024[1]. During the working period of 2021-2024, the Working Group organized three to five meetings per year. These meetings incorporated various methods of work, including peer-learning activities and sharing of practices for implementing the Principles and Guidelines; discussions on tools, indicators, and benchmarks for the Principles and Guidelines; and discussions on a system for monitoring the implementation of the Principles and Guidelines. The Working Group had a section on the EHEA website: http://www.ehea.info/page-Working-Group-SD. This section contained documents related to all the meetings of the Working

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[1] Available at https://www.ehea.info/Immagini/BFUG_WG_Social_Dimension_Workplan_2021-2024_(1).pdf

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Group (including minutes and agendas); key documents relevant to the work of the Working Group; and useful resources such as literature, policy briefs, and information on relevant projects.

The following members and consultative members took part in the Working Group (in alphabetical order): Albania, Austria, Belgium Flemish Community, Belgium French Community, Council of Europe, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, EI - ETUCE, Estonia, ESU - European Students' Union, EUA - European University Association, European Commission, EUROSTUDENT, France, Georgia, Germany, Italy, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Malta, Moldova, Montenegro, The Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Türkiye, United Kingdom (Scotland), United Kingdom. The list of representatives attending the Working Group meetings can be found in the minutes of the meetings at the www.ehea.info.

Activities of the BFUG Working Group on Social Dimension in the period 2021-2024

Activities of the BFUG Working Group on Social Dimension in 2021

1st online meeting, 8 July 2021
The first meeting of the Working Group on Social Dimension (2021-2024) convened online on 8 July 2021, focused on laying the groundwork for enhancing the social dimension in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Co-chaired by Ms. Martina Darmanin of the European Students' Union and Mr. Ninoslav Šćukanec Schmidt from Croatia, the meeting emphasized the achievements from 2018-2020, presented the Working Group's Terms of Reference for the period until 2024, and engaged members in a productive discussion on developing indicators and benchmarks for the Principles and Guidelines. A key update from the European Commission/Eurydice on assessing the social dimension in higher education was also shared, setting the stage for the Working Group's activities and objectives aimed at improving social dimension policies across the 49 countries in the EHEA. The meeting concluded with a consensus on the Work Plan 2021-2024, underscoring a collaborative approach towards implementing and monitoring the principles of social dimension in higher education.

2nd online meeting, 6 October 2021
The second online meeting of the Working Group, convened online on 6th October 2021, dedicated to advancing the social dimension in the EHEA. Co-chaired by Ninoslav Scukanec Schmidt and Martina Darmanin, the session opened with reflections on the progress since their last assembly and set the agenda focused on fostering equity and inclusion. David Crosier offered an update on European Commission/Eurydice's evolving questionnaire, aiming to deepen understanding of equity and inclusion policies in the Eurydice's partner countries through the forthcoming publication "Towards equity and inclusion in higher education in Europe". This was followed by two peer-learning activities; Kristina Hauschildt and Martin Unger presented Eurostudent's insights on student life conditions in Europe, while Frans Kaiser and Anete Veidemane discussed U-Multirank's potential indicators for social inclusion in higher education. The meeting proceeded to refine the Working Group's Work Plan for 2021-2024, highlighting future strategies and tasks, underscored by contributions from members, including Professor Graeme Atherton's initiatives, to enrich discussions on enhancing social dimension policies in higher education.

3rd online meeting, 16 November 2021
The third meeting of the Working Group, held online on 16 November 2021, focused on enhancing the implementation of Principle and Guideline No.8, which aims at fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion in international mobility programs. Nadia Manzoni from the European Commission discussed the Erasmus+ program's commitment to social inclusion and its relevance to Principle No.8, exploring opportunities and challenges in monitoring its implementation. The Support Centre for Inclusive Higher Education in Flanders, Belgium (SIHO) showcased the InclusiveMobility.EU platform, which features a comprehensive self-assessment tool and a toolbox designed to promote inclusive international mobility. The meeting also included a critical discussion on creating indicators, benchmarks, and a system for monitoring the 'Principles and Guidelines' effectiveness, particularly in terms of fostering equity and inclusion in higher education.

Activities of the BFUG Working Group on Social Dimension in 2022

Progress during 2022
In 2021-2022, the BFUG Working Group on Social Dimension collaborated effectively with the European Commission/Eurydice to develop indicators of the social dimension. By the end of 2022, the Working Group agreed to adopt most of Eurydice's indicators for each of the 10 social dimension principles, which typically include three to five indicators per principle. The Working Group's unique contribution, beyond adjusting the indicators, is the creation of additional descriptors for each one. These descriptors provide detailed information about the indicators, making them easier to understand and implement, and offer practical recommendations for action.

At the end of 2022, the Working Group created a proposal for a new document titled 'Principles, Guidelines, and Indicators to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA.' This document includes the previously adopted principles and guidelines for the social dimension in 2020, as well as newly added indicators and descriptors. During the BFUG Meeting in Brno on November 7-8, 2022, the BFUG Working Group on Social Dimension initiated a consultation with all BFUG members regarding the content of this new document.

4th online meeting, 17 February 2022
The fourth meeting of the Working Group, held online on 17 February 2022, focused on Principle and Guideline No.9, emphasizing the enhancement of community engagement in higher education. The session showcased initiatives such as the Council of Europe's Platform on the local democratic mission of higher education,presented by Sjur Bergan and the TEFCE Toolbox from the Institute for the Development of Education (Zagreb, Croatia), presented by Thomas Farnell, both aimed at strengthening institutional commitment to community engagement in higher education. Kinga Szuly from the European Commission presented the social dimension aspects of the European Strategy for Universities, highlighting the goal of creating a more sustainable, resilient, and inclusive Europe. John Edwards from the EURASHE presented the UASiMAP project, aimed at developing a self-reflection tool to measure the local engagement of universities of applied sciences. This tool also assists in the development of further strategies to support the implementation of Principle No. 9. The meeting also explored the formation of subgroups to intensify the creation of indicators and monitoring systems, aligning with the group's strategic objectives and planning for future activities.

5th meeting, Malta, 25-26 April 2022
The BFUG Working Group on Social Dimension's meeting, held on 25-26 April 2022 in Malta, was hosted by the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority. The main agenda involved a comprehensive exploration of indicators for the social dimension, facilitated by co-chairs Martina Darmanin and Nino S. Schmidt. The meeting engaged participants in a World Café Method to collaboratively refine and discuss the draft indicators developed by three subgroups, aiming to cover all aspects of the social dimension across various principles. Through structured workshops, members consolidated their positions on indicators, shared insights across subgroups, and participated in a plenary session to share collective discoveries. This constructive dialogue aimed to ensure the proposed indicators were SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound) and could effectively guide public authorities in implementing social dimension principles. The meeting concluded with a wrap-up of discussions, planning for future meetings, and setting the stage for ongoing subgroups work.

6th meeting, The Hague, Netherlands, 13-14 June 2022

The BFUG Working Group on Social Dimension convened on 13-14 June 2022 in The Hague to further refine and develop indicators for the social dimension in higher education. Hosted by the Dutch Ministry for Education, Culture & Science, the meeting began with an overview and approval of the agenda, followed by a recap of the last meeting's outcomes and a discussion on the progress made since then. Notable contributions included updates from NUFFIC and U-Multirank on their work related to social inclusion, offering insights for potential collaborative efforts. The highlight of the meeting was the intensive plenary work dedicated to improving the indicators for the social dimension. This effort was spread across three sessions on the second day, each focused on refining the indicators for the ten principles of the social dimension. This discussion built upon the work done by the three sub-groups that had refined the indicators and descriptors since the previous meeting in Malta. The meeting concluded with a consensus on the revised indicators and plans for the next steps, highlighting the commitment to advancing social inclusion in higher education.

7th meeting, Brussels, Belgium, 29-30 September 2022

The BFUG Working Group on Social Dimension met on 29-30 September 2022 in Brussels, hosted by the European University Association, to progress the development and refinement of indicators for the social dimension in higher education. The meeting commenced with opening remarks, the introduction of the new Working Group Co-chair from the European Students' Union (ESU), Horia Onița (replacing Martina Darmanin from ESU), and a review of the conclusions from the previous meeting. This set the stage for the presentation of the project "Peer Learning Activities and Resources to Underpin the Principles and Guidelines for Social Dimension" (PLAR-U-PAGs), an initiative funded by Erasmus+ Key Action 3 (KA3). The project is aimed at supporting the implementation of the Principles and Guidelines for the social dimension across the EHEA. The bulk of the meeting was devoted to intensive plenary work sessions on the indicators, facilitated by co-chairs Nino S. Schmidt and Horia Onița.

8th online meeting, 14 November 2022

The Working Group's online meeting on 14 November 2022 focused on the progression towards establishing a system for monitoring the implementation of the Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA. Key activities included peer-learning activities on different monitoring systems: "Bologna with Student Eyes," highlighted by Horia Onita, demonstrating student-led monitoring efforts; the EUA's Autonomy Scorecard, presented by Enora Bennetot Pruvot, providing an evidence-based overview of university autonomy in Europe; and an update from the European Commission/Eurydice on the development of indicators for social dimension principles, shared by David Crosier.

Activities of the BFUG Working Group on Social Dimension in 2023

Progress during 2023

The BFUG Working Group on Social Dimension presented updated versions of the document 'Principles, Guidelines, and Indicators to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA' at BFUG Board meetings in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Georgia, as well as at the BFUG plenary meetings in Sweden and Spain. Feedback was gathered from EHEA members during these meetings

and through written submissions afterward. Following each round of consultations, the Working Group made refinements to the document.

In 2023, the Working Group held four additional meetings alongside the BFUG Board and BFUG meetings, aiming to make further improvements. These meetings involved extensive consultations with members of E4 (ENQA, ESU, EUA, EURASHE) and Education International – ETUCE (European Trade Union Committee for Education). The discussions led to a mutual agreement on enhancing the document for the benefit of all stakeholders. In total, there were 19 iterations of the document throughout 2023.

To finalize the aforementioned document, the Working Group organized also an online consultative meeting for all BFUG members on 6 September 2023. The purpose of this online meeting was twofold: (1) to gather feedback on the document's content and (2) to discuss the modalities of adopting the document at the end of the BFUG cycle in 2024. The online meeting was attended by 20 BFUG representatives who expressed their support for the document and suggested additional improvements. All participants in the meeting reached a consensus that the document should be adopted by the ministers, with the majority opting towards adopting it in the same manner as it was in 2020, as an annex to the 2024 Tirana Communique. Alternatively, the EHEA ministers could opt to adopt the document as a standalone document, provided there is a clear reference to its adoption in the communique's text.

The Working Group facilitated the submission of written comments until September 25, 2023. Following this round of consultation, the Working Group thoroughly discussed all the received comments during their meeting in Ghent on October 24-25, 2023, and subsequently produced a revised version of the document for presentation at the BFUG plenary meeting in Madrid.

At the BFUG Meeting in Madrid on November 16-17, 2023, the working group received new comments on how to improve the document 'Principles, Guidelines, and Indicators to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA', primarily from the Nordic countries. They stressed that the document should highlight the flexibility in using the indicators of the social dimension in higher education and adopt a toolbox approach to indicators. The Working Group discussed all the comments received in Madrid at the meeting in Ghent on December 7-8, 2023, and subsequently prepared the new version of the document for further discussions at the BFUG Board Meeting in Rome on January 23, 2024.

9th meeting, Ghent, Belgium, 7-8 February 2023
The Working Group convened on 7-8 February 2023 in Ghent, focusing on the enhancement of indicators for the social dimension in higher education. The meeting featured updates from the European Commission (Lucie Trojanova) on the European Strategy for Universities and related frameworks, along with discussions on collaboration opportunities. A significant portion of the agenda was dedicated to evaluating the relationship between social dimension principles and quality assurance, led by ENQA (Anna Gover), and examining the SIHO's role in promoting student mental health in Flanders (Valerie Van Hees). The group also worked on refining the indicators for social dimension principles and explored creating a national monitoring system, aiming to align quality assurance policies with social dimension objectives.

10th meeting, Brussels, Belgium, 24-25 April 2023

The Working Group convened on 24-25 April 2023 in Brussels and was hosted by the European Trade Union Committee for Education(ETUCE). The meeting opened with a session chaired by Rob Copeland from ETUCE, discussing ways to foster the social dimension within the trade union which includes teachers in higher education in Europe. This was followed by a detailed examination of how the social dimension and quality assurance in higher education can mutually reinforce each other, featuring presentations on the QA-FIT project and debates with E4 representatives. The group also dedicated time to internal work on drafting a list of indicators and developing a monitoring system, aimed at strengthening the implementation and effectiveness of the social dimension across European higher education.

11th online meeting, 12 June 2023

The BFUG Working Group on Social Dimension held an online meeting on 12 June 2023. The meeting featured an in-depth update and discussion on the feedback from the BFUG Plenary Meeting in Stockholm (May 2023) regarding the Principles, Guidelines, and Indicators for the social dimension, focusing on their adoption in upcoming BFUG meetings in 2023. The group also dedicated time to refine the current text of these documents, aiming to enhance their effectiveness and implementation across member states.

12th meeting, Ghent, Belgium, 24-25 October 2023

Key discussions revolved around updates from the Erasmus+ projects "Peer Learning Activities and Resources to Underpin the Principles and Guidelines for Social Dimension" (PLAR-U-PAGs) and "Inclusive Engagement of Non-Traditional Students in Professional Higher Education" (InclusiPHE), along with the outcomes from a recent consultative meeting. The Working Group also reviewed the draft chapter on the social dimension for the upcoming 2024 Bologna Process Implementation Report. After that the Working Group engaged in extensive discussions on improving the indicators for social dimension principles and discussed the preliminary work for the draft Tirana Communique. The meeting concluded with deliberations on the future role of the social dimension within the BFUG for the 2024-2027 period, setting a strategic direction for upcoming sessions at the Tirana Ministerial Conference/Bologna Policy Forum in May 2024.

13th meeting, Ghent, Belgium, 7-8 December 2023

The meeting focused on reviewing the outcomes from the BFUG Plenary Meeting in Madrid (November 2023) and discussing the relevance of the 2024 Tirana Communique for the social dimension in higher education. Significant time was dedicated to finalizing changes to the document on Principles, Guidelines, and Indicators for the social dimension based on feedback received in Madrid. Discussions also delved into the future of the social dimension within the BFUG for the 2024-2027 period, culminating in group work and plenary conclusions to shape strategic directions.

Activities of the BFUG Working Group on Social Dimension in 2024

Progress during 2024

The Working Group organized one more consultative meeting on January 10, 2024, with Finland, Sweden, Norway, Iceland, Germany, Belgium, the Holy See, and the European Commission-Eurydice to discuss the new version of the document and modalities for its inclusion among the documents for the

2024 Tirana Ministerial conference. There was a general agreement that the improvements in the latest version of the document effectively addressed earlier comments received at the BFUG Meeting in Madrid. It was agreed that this new version of the document should be presented at the BFUG Board meeting in Rome in January 2024. Additionally, there was an agreement that the BFUG should explore different options on how to include the document among the documents for the 2024 Tirana Ministerial conference.

Attendees of the BFUG Board meeting in Rome on 23 January 2024 agreed with the improvements in the content of the document, particularly because the toolbox approach to indicators and descriptors, as well as flexibility in their use, is highlighted in the new version of the document. The Holy See suggested changing the title of the document so that there is a visible difference between the title of the already adopted document, Principles and Guidelines, in 2020 and the new document. It was agreed that the Co-chairs of the Working Group on Social Dimension would discuss the final improvements with members of the Working Group and prepare the new document for adoption by the BFUG at its meeting in Brussels in February 2024.

The Working Group on Social Dimension had an online meeting on 2 February 2024 and agreed on the new title of the document on indicators and descriptors of the social dimension. The proposal for the new title to the BFUG was "Indicators and Descriptors for the Principles of the Social Dimension in the European Higher Education Area." The Working Group adopted the final version of the document and asked the Co-Chairs to propose its adoption to the BFUG at its meeting in Brussels on 19 February 2024. All the members of the BFUG adopted the document at its pleanary meeting in Brussels on 19 February 2024.

14th online meeting, 2 February 2024
The online meeting held on 2 February 2024 included updates on the 2024 Tirana Communiques, insights from the recent BFUG Board Meeting in Rome (January 2024), and a consultative meeting with Nordic countries. The group focused on finalizing changes to the Principles, Guidelines, and Indicators document, specifically considering a change to the document's title to better reflect its content. Additionally, the meeting addressed the future of the social dimension within the BFUG for 2024-2027 and prepared for upcoming sessions at the Tirana Ministerial Conference/Bologna Policy Forum and the final Working Group's meeting in Vienna in April 2024.

15th meeting, Vienna, Austria, 4-5 April 2024
The meeting provided updates and engaged in discussions stemming from the recent BFUG Plenary Meeting in Brussels (February 2024) and the BFUG Board meeting in Vatican (March 2024), both focusing on the 2024 Tirana Communique. A peer-learning activity, conducted with the National Union of Students in Austria, spotlighted strategies for enhancing student support services. Additionally, the Federal Ministry of Education in Austria shared updates on their initiatives regarding the social dimension of education. The meeting included a session dedicated to the future of the social dimension in higher education within the BFUG. This session concluded with the Working Group finalizing a proposal to advise the BFUG on the social dimension of higher education in the EHEA for the 2024-2027 period. The meeting wrapped up with the approval of the Working Group's final report for the 2021-2024 cycle, marking significant strides towards enhancing the social dimension within higher education in the EHEA.

Key Achievements in the Period 2021 - 2024

The Working Group successfully created the document "Indicators and Descriptors for the Principles of the Social Dimension in the European Higher Education Area," which was adopted by the BFUG in 2024. This pivotal document builds upon the previously approved "Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)," serving as Annex II to the 2020 Rome Communique. It introduces indicators and descriptors for the social dimension, offering essential guidance for public authorities on implementing these Principles and Guidelines. Together, these documents create a robust framework that effectively addresses the social dimension within the EHEA.

This framework equips public authorities and higher education institutions in the EHEA with the tools to develop system-wide and institutional policies, strategies, and action plans aimed at enhancing the social dimension. Moreover, it provides methodologies for monitoring, evaluating, and assessing the impact of these policies. The indicators and descriptors facilitate the practical application of the Principles and Guidelines, suggesting adaptable recommendations for approaches that can vary to suit different contexts and policy preferences.

Authorities have the autonomy to select indicators for the social dimension that align with their commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion in higher education, reflecting national priorities and the specificities of their systems. The 'toolbox approach' is a flexible framework allowing the selection and exclusion of specific indicators and descriptors based on their relevance and applicability to a country's unique context. This approach acknowledges that not all indicators are suitable for every system, particularly in those adopting a universal approach, where some might be deemed inapplicable. By enabling the exclusion of certain indicators, the toolbox approach allows authorities to focus on those elements that resonate with their national context. This adaptability ensures that progress in implementing the principles is measurable and congruent with each unique policy setting.

EHEA Framework for the Social Dimension in Higher Education

The key achievements of the Working Group on Social Dimension have facilitated the creation of the first comprehensive EHEA framework for the social dimension in higher education. This framework comprises principles, guidelines, indicators, and descriptors for the social dimension. It represents a coherent system that enables public authorities in EHEA member states and higher education institutions to integrate social dimension principles and guidelines into their policies, strategies, institutional missions, governance, and culture.

The adopted document "Indicators and Descriptors for the Principles of the Social Dimension in the European Higher Education Area" contains definitions for the framework's constituent parts, including a definition of the social dimension. The social dimension in higher education is a process entailing specific and transversal policies aimed at creating an inclusive environment in which the composition of the student body entering, participating in, and completing higher education at all levels reflects the diverse social profile of society in EHEA countries. This definition also emphasizes the creation of an inclusive higher education environment that fosters equity, diversity, and responsiveness to the needs of local communities.

The social dimension intertwines the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Access, participation, progress, and completion of higher education should primarily depend on students' abilities, rather than on personal characteristics or circumstances beyond their direct control. With this goal in mind, public authorities are encouraged to support the implementation of these Principles and Guidelines by providing legal, financial, administrative, and informational support to kickstart implementation processes at the national level. This framework advocates for inclusive strategies, offering specific support for vulnerable, disadvantaged, and underrepresented students and staff while also promoting broader measures and policies that benefit the entire student population and staff at higher education institutions.

Principles and Guidelines for the Social Dimension in Higher Education
The ten principles, adopted in the 2020 Rome Communique, should be viewed as high-level political commitments that form the foundation for conceptualizing various policies to enhance the social dimension. The guidelines, also adopted in the 2020 Rome Communique, are recommendations designed to assist policymakers in practically implementing these principles. Public authorities committed to support higher education institutions in integrating these principles across multiple dimensions of higher education: learning and teaching, research, innovation, knowledge circulation, outreach, institutional governance, management, and policies for empowering current and future students and staff.

Indicators and Descriptors for the Social Dimension in Higher Education
Indicators for the social dimension are tools for measuring progress in implementing its principles. Each indicator is accompanied by a descriptor that provides a detailed outline of attributes, features, and characteristics, enhancing understanding of the indicators and delineating their effective implementation. Consequently, descriptors offer specific recommendations for actionable steps. In some higher education systems, especially those adopting a universal approach, certain listed indicators and descriptors might be inapplicable.

Proposal for the Future of the Social Dimension in the European Higher Education Area for 2024 - 2027

The BFUG Working Group on Social Dimension for the 2021-2024 period concluded at its final meeting in Vienna on April 4-5, 2024, that securing the implementation of the EHEA framework for the social dimension in member states is crucial for 2024-2027. This implementation will assist countries in addressing various challenges related to the social dimension of higher education in the forthcoming period.

EHEA member states are increasingly facing complex challenges, including climate change, digital and green transitions, demographic shifts, and economic instability, which could adversely impact the social dimension of higher education. Moreover, the rapid advancement in digital technologies, particularly artificial intelligence, risks amplifying societal inequalities. This technological divide could exacerbate the disparity between the affluent and the impoverished, potentially leading to a society deeply divided by wealth. Such disparities might significantly hinder access to and completion of higher education, thereby further widening social gaps. The advancement of the social dimension in higher education is pivotal in mitigating the negative effects of these social and economic challenges.

In the 2020 Rome Communiqué, the ministers committed to achieving an inclusive EHEA by 2030 as one of the three overarching political priorities. They adopted the Principles and Guidelines of the social dimension to provide direction for achieving this overarching objective. It is essential, therefore, that the BFUG maintains momentum in relation to the social dimension of higher education in the 2024-2027 cycle. This can be achieved by supporting the implementation of the adopted EHEA framework for the social dimension. Clear evidence from past BFUG cycles shows that the absence of direct tasks assigned to a BFUG substructure to work (exclusively or among some key topics) on the social dimension of higher education invariably leads to a lack of focus on the social dimension within the EHEA. This lack of focus could significantly hamper the efforts to achieve an inclusive EHEA by 2030, as decided by the ministers. Bearing this in mind, the Working Group on the Social Dimension 2021-2024 proposes the following strategy to the BFUG for 2024-2027:

- The exchange of good practices among EHEA member states is essential for supporting the implementation of the EHEA social dimension framework. This exchange will aid in understanding how the framework's implementation addresses the various social and economic challenges facing the higher education sector. Therefore, the BFUG should incentivize framework implementation through peer-learning activities, which also offer a unique space for discussing the social dimension of higher education policies at the European level.

- The successful implementation of the framework will depend on effectively integrating the social dimension of higher education with other policy areas in higher education, including inclusive learning and teaching, research, governance and management, quality assurance, financing, the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (especially SDG-4 on quality education), community engagement, and lifelong learning. As the social dimension is a cross-cutting theme in higher education, it is crucial for countries to engage in peer learning activities to embed the social dimension across all key missions of higher education.

- Regular monitoring of the implementation of all ten principles of the social dimension at the EHEA level is paramount. Reports on such monitoring should be published every three years to ensure continuous progress.

The BFUG should have an organizational structure that actively works on the aforementioned activities in the period 2024-2027. **Continuing the Working Group on Social Dimension for the 2024-2027 period with specified tasks would be necessary**. Alternatively, if the BFUG cannot support the continuation of this working group, to avoid losing ambition and derailing the increasing momentum towards achieving an inclusive EHEA, exploring the possibility of establishing a Thematic Peer Group on Social Dimension for the upcoming period could serve as an alternative. These proposals aim to ensure that the social dimension and its framework implementation remain central to the policy agenda in higher education within the EHEA, thereby securing further progress in this area.

Conclusion of the Report

Over the course of three transformative years (2021-2024), the BFUG Working Group on Social Dimension has profoundly influenced the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), marking a significant era of progress in advancing the social dimension of higher education. The group's important achievement, the development and adoption of the "Indicators and Descriptors for the Principles of the Social Dimension in the European Higher Education Area," stands as a testament to their successful endeavors. This document, unique in its scope and detail, offers a comprehensive framework for the social dimension for public authorities and higher education institutions in the EHEA, guiding the implementation and monitoring of inclusive higher education policies with precision and adaptability.

This period of work has undeniably positioned the social dimension as a central pillar within the EHEA, providing a robust framework for enhancing equity, diversity, and inclusivity across higher education systems. The achievements of the BFUG Working Group on Social Dimension epitomize a collaborative, innovative, and strategic approach to fostering a more inclusive and equitable higher education landscape, paving the way for continued progress in the years ahead.

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List of Annexes

Annex I: Indicators and Descriptors for the Principles of the Social Dimension in the European Higher Education Area

Summary

This document enhances the previously approved and adopted "Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA),"[2] which serves as Annex II to the 2020 Rome Communique. It introduces indicators and descriptors for the social dimension, providing valuable guidance to public authorities in implementing the Principles and Guidelines. Together, they form a comprehensive framework that effectively addresses the social dimension within the EHEA.

The framework empowers public authorities and higher education institutions in the EHEA to formulate system-wide and institutional policies, strategies, and action plans for strengthening the social dimension. Additionally, it offers methodologies for monitoring, evaluating, and assessing the impact of these policies. Indicators and descriptors guide the implementation of the Principles and Guidelines, offering practical recommendations for suitable approaches while maintaining flexibility to accommodate diverse contexts and policy options.

Authorities can strategically choose indicators for the social dimension that align with their approach to equity, diversity, and inclusion in higher education, as well as with national priorities and capacities within their higher education system. In certain higher education

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[2] In the further text we use the abbreviated title 'Principles and Guidelines' instead of the full name of the document: Rome Ministerial Communiqué. (2020). Annex II to the Rome Ministerial Communiqué: Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the European Higher Education Area. Rome: EHEA Ministerial Conference. Available at https://www.ehea.info/page-ministerial-declarations-and-communiques

systems, particularly those with a universal approach, some listed indicators and descriptors may not be applicable. The toolbox approach allows public authorities to omit certain indicators and descriptors, focusing only on those that fit their national higher education system. This flexibility enables them to gauge progress in implementing the principles while remaining aligned with their unique context. It is essential to recognize that various approaches can lead to positive outcomes for the social dimension in the EHEA.

Introduction

Definition of the social dimension in higher education: Social dimension in higher education is a process containing specific and transversal policies aimed at creating an inclusive environment in higher education in which the composition of the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels corresponds to the heterogeneous social profile of society at large in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) countries. This definition of the social dimension encompasses also the desired inclusive environment in higher education that fosters equity, diversity, and is responsive to the needs of local communities.

Positive impact of the social dimension on societies: Increased participation of vulnerable, disadvantaged and underrepresented groups in higher education produces wider personal and societal benefits with respect to decreased social welfare provision, improved health outcomes and increased community involvement. Collectively, these wider benefits sustain cohesive, democratic societies where social justice, public good, public responsibility and social mobility prevail. Graduate qualifications acquired by a wider pool of citizens mean better employment prospects, higher earnings and passing on the appreciation for higher education to the existing and the next generation and to local communities.

Beyond reaching the commitments made by the EHEA, taking a holistic and proactive approach to improving the social dimension of higher education further serves to accelerate progress in attaining the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Supporting inclusive learning environments is a necessity and should be seen as an investment towards societies. Public authorities should shoulder the responsibility of ensuring that the proposed principles, guidelines and indicators for the social dimension are adjusted to national realities and implemented, in order to safeguard a better future for our higher education systems.

The comprehensive EHEA framework for the social dimension in higher education: This framework consists of the principles, guidelines, indicators, and descriptors for the social dimension. The framework, with its constituent parts, represents a coherent system that enables public authorities in the EHEA member states and higher education institutions to incorporate social dimension principles and guidelines in the policies and strategies, institutional missions, governance and culture of higher education institutions.

The social dimension interconnects the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Access, participation, progress and completion of higher education should depend primarily on

students' abilities, not on their personal characteristics or circumstances beyond their direct influence. With this scope at heart, public authorities should support the implementation of these Principles and Guidelines by providing a legal, financial, administrative, and informative support that can initiate processes of implementation at the national level. This framework promotes inclusive strategies, which provide both specific support for vulnerable, disadvantaged and underrepresented students[3] and staff as well as highlighting broader measures and policies from which the student population and staff at higher education institutions can mutually benefit.

Policy alignment with previous EHEA documents: The broadened understanding of the social dimension defined above builds on the notion of the social dimension as developed in the 2007 London Communique. The EHEA framework for the social dimension within this document complements the EHEA strategy "Widening for Equity and Growth", which ministers adopted in Yerevan in 2015 as a mean to further strengthen the social dimension while concomitantly contributing to increasing quality in higher education. Also, the framework fulfils the need expressed in the 2018 Paris Communique to guide member states on how to define and implement policy for improving the social dimension of the EHEA.

One of the three key priorities in the 2020 Rome Ministerial Communique for the next decade of the Bologna Process is related to building an inclusive EHEA. Therefore, the EHEA ministers adopted the forward-looking strategic document "Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA" as the Annex II to the 2020 Rome Communique and committed to implementing it in the national higher education systems. To facilitate this implementation, the current document complements the adopted Principles and Guidelines by providing indicators and descriptors for each principle, and as such represents an EHEA framework for the social dimension.

Principles and guidelines for the social dimension in higher education: The ten principles in the text below, adopted in the 2020 Rome Communique, should be understood as high-level political commitments that serve as a basis for the conceptualisation of different policies for the social dimension enhancement. The guidelines, which were also adopted in the 2020 Rome Communique, are recommendations intended to help and advice policy makers on how to implement in practice the agreed principles. Public authorities and higher education institutions should integrate these principles into the following dimensions of higher education: learning and teaching, research, innovation, knowledge circulation and outreach, institutional governance and management, as well as in the policies for empowering present and future students and higher education staff.

Indicators and descriptors for the social dimension in higher education: Indicators[4] for the social dimension are tools for measuring progress in implementing the principles of the social

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[3] A glossary of Terms and Definitions related to the definitions for vulnerable, disadvantaged and underrepresented students is at the end of this document.

[4] The 2021-2024 BFUG Working Group on Social Dimension established a fruitful cooperation with the European Commission/Eurydice and agreed that it would adopt most of the Eurydice's indicators developed for the principles for the social dimension and published in the report "Towards equity and inclusion in higher education

dimension in higher education. Each indicator is accompanied by a descriptor that outlines the attributes, features, and characteristics of the indicators in more detail. This provides a better understanding of the indicators and clarifies how they can be effectively implemented. As a result, the descriptor offers specific recommendations for actionable steps. In certain higher education systems, particularly those with a universal approach, some listed indicators and descriptors may not be applicable.

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in Europe" (Eurydice, 2022). Therefore, the indicators listed below contain citations related to Eurydice whenever the indicator takes its main elements from Eurydice. The specific contribution of the BFUG Working Group on Social Dimension is that it expanded the scope of indicators and has also created additional descriptors for each indicator.

1. Principle on strategic approach to the social dimension

Principle [5]

> **1. The social dimension should be central to higher education strategies at system and institutional level, as well as at the EHEA and the EU level. Strengthening the social dimension of higher education and fostering equity and inclusion to reflect the diversity of society is the responsibility of a higher education system as a whole and should be regarded as a continuous commitment.**

Guidelines

a. Strategic commitment to the social dimension of higher education should be aligned with concrete targets that can either be integrated within existing higher education policies or developed in parallel. These targets should aim at widening access, supporting participation in and completion of studies for all current and future students.

b. In the process of creating strategies there should be a broad-based dialogue between public authorities, higher education institutions, student and staff representatives and other key stakeholders, including social partners, non-governmental organisations and people from vulnerable, disadvantaged and underrepresented groups. This broad-based dialogue is to ensure the creation of inclusive higher education strategies that foster equity, diversity and are responsive to the needs of the wider community.

Indicators
1.1. Existence of a system level strategy, or a similar major policy document, on social dimension of higher education, which strengthens diversity, equity and inclusion of <u>students</u> (Eurydice, 2022[6]). *Descriptor:* Public authorities should develop a strategy or a major policy document on social dimension enhancement in higher education to improve study conditions of underrepresented, disadvantaged, and vulnerable students and to create an inclusive environment in higher education. The strategy or major policy document should take into account all the Principles and Guidelines on Social Dimension from this document.

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[5] The text of the following ten principles and their guidelines in the further text is an integral part of the adopted Principles and Guidelines at the 2020 Rome ministerial conference. However, the text of the indicators and descriptors is new and is proposed by the BFUG Working Group on Social Dimension, in line with the Terms of Reference 2021-2024 for the BFUG Working Group on Social Dimension.

[6] This citation refers to the publication: European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice. (2022). Towards equity and inclusion in higher education in Europe. Eurydice report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

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1.2. Existence of a system level strategy, or a similar major policy document, on social dimension of higher education, which strengthens diversity, equity and inclusion of staff (Eurydice, 2022).

Descriptor:

Public authorities should develop a strategy or a major policy document on social dimension enhancement in higher education that improves working conditions of underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable staff and creates an inclusive environment in higher education. It is important to incentivise higher education institutions to have inclusive human resources policies, that pay attention to recruitment in particular, so that the composition of staff reflects the diversity of society.

1.3. Strategies and policies on social dimension of higher education have specific and measurable targets that are assessed and monitored by responsible bodies within concrete timeframes (Eurydice, 2022).

Descriptor:

Public authorities should periodically assess the implementation and impact of the national strategies and policies, together with stakeholders, and monitor whether the selected targets are reached within proposed deadlines. Public authorities should ensure that an appropriate body has the mandate to monitor the social dimension strategies and policies of higher education institutions. Based on national contexts, external quality assurance frameworks could be used for monitoring the implementation of social dimension strategies and policies at higher education institutions.

1.4. Broad-based dialogue with stakeholders in higher education is fostered and incentivised by the public authorities in the process of developing system-level and institutional strategies and policies on social dimension of higher education.

Descriptor:

Public authorities should co-create strategies and policies on diversity, equity and inclusion with a wide range of stakeholders, including higher education institutions, student and staff representatives, social partners, non-governmental organisations and people from underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. Public authorities should incentivise higher education institutions to co-create strategies and policies on diversity, equity and inclusion at institutional level and to assess their impact with a wide range of stakeholders.

2. Principle on flexibility of higher education systems

Principle

2. **Legal regulations or policy documents should allow and enable higher education institutions to develop their own strategies to fulfil their public responsibility**

Guidelines

a. Legal regulations and administrative rules should allow sufficient flexibility in the design, organisation and delivery of study programmes to reflect the diversity of students' needs. Higher education institutions should be enabled to recognise full-time and part-time studies, flexible study modes, blended and distance learning as well as to recognise prior learning (RPL), in order to accommodate the needs of the diverse student population.

b. Public authorities should promote recognition of prior non-formal and informal learning (RPL) in higher education, because it has a positive impact on widening access, transition and completion, equity and inclusion, mobility and employability. RPL enables flexible modes of lifelong learning in the entire education sector, including higher education. Implementing RPL will require effective cooperation amongst the higher education system, employers and the wider community and to enable this the national qualifications frameworks should facilitate transparent recognition of learning outcomes and reliable quality assurance procedures.

Indicators
2.1. Existence of top-level regulations that allow higher education institutions to offer flexible pathways like part-time studies, stacking modules, blended or distance learning programmes (Eurydice, 2022). *Descriptor:* Public authorities should provide funding to ensure that higher education institutions are able to implement inclusive curriculums and tailor teaching and learning modes and methods to the needs of students from underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. Public support should be provided for the development of modules for underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable students and staff to enhance their integration within higher education institutions. Public authorities should provide legal regulations for inclusive admission policies, flexible pathways to access into, progress through and complete higher education. There should be a legal framework that values the outcomes of full-time and part-time studies equally.
2.2. Candidates can <u>enter</u> higher education based on recognition of prior non-formal and informal learning and this applies to all higher education institutions (Eurydice, 2022). *Descriptor:* Public authorities should elaborate a national policy of recognising prior non-formal and informal learning for the purpose of accessing higher education, including specific policies for migrants, refugees and students with refugee backgrounds. Public authorities ensure that

a National Qualifications Framework facilitates recognition of prior non-formal and informal learning.

2.3. Prior non-formal and informal learning counts towards fulfilment of a higher education study program (Eurydice, 2022).
Descriptor:
Public authorities should elaborate a national policy of recognising prior non-formal and informal learning for the purpose of progressing through and completing higher education. Public authorities ensure that legal provisions require using learning outcomes in the design of qualifications and study programmes, in accordance with National Qualifications Frameworks.

2.4. Quality assurance agencies address the recognition of prior non-formal and/or informal learning in higher education in their external evaluation procedures (Eurydice, 2022).
Descriptor:
Public authorities should ensure that an appropriate body has the mandate to monitor procedures of recognition of prior non-formal and informal learning, preventing parallel and opposing recognition procedures, delays, and additional costs for students. Quality assurance frameworks could be used for monitoring procedures of recognition of prior non-formal and informal learning.

2.5. Existence of a legal framework that enables recognised student and staff representative bodies at higher education institutions to be actively engaged in the enhancement of the social dimension.
Descriptor:
There should be a legal framework which enables both students and staff to actively participate in decision-making processes pertaining to the social dimension within higher education, as well as in initiatives aimed at enhancing their study and working conditions.

3. Principle on the inclusiveness of the entire education system

Principle

> 3. **The inclusiveness of the entire education system should be improved by developing coherent policies from early childhood education, through schooling to higher education and throughout lifelong learning.**

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Guidelines

a. It is important to create synergies with all education levels and related policy areas (such as finance, employment, health and social welfare, housing, migration etc.) to develop policy measures that create an inclusive environment throughout the entire education sector that fosters equity, diversity, and inclusion, and is responsive to the needs of the wider community.

b. The social dimension policies should not only support current students, but also potential students in their preparation and transition into higher education. Participation in higher education has to be a lifelong option, including for adults who decide to return to or enter higher education at later stages in their lives. An inclusive approach needs to involve wider communities, higher education institutions and other stakeholder groups to co-create pathways to higher education.

Indicators

3.1. Existence of top-level coordination structures and mechanisms between different levels of education with a focus on diversity, equity and inclusion in education (Eurydice, 2022).
Descriptor:
Public authorities should actively coordinate with stakeholders and advisory bodies at all educational levels and organise a national social dialogue on diversity, equity and inclusion in education. They could support awareness raising and peer learning activities on diversity, equity and inclusion among children, students, parents, administrative and teaching staff in schools and higher education institutions, among local civil society representatives and other important stakeholders in education.
Public authorities could consider creating a national or regional contact point for dealing with diversity, equity and inclusion of students and staff in the education sector. Such contact point could, among its services, provide support and guidance to educational institutions on how to make the information for underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable groups publicly accessible.

3.2. Public authorities systematically involve and coordinate with representatives of other related policy areas, such as finance, employment, housing, health, social welfare or other social services in creating shared commitments for the enhancement of diversity, equity and inclusion in education (Eurydice, 2022).
Descriptor:
Public authorities should provide support and guidance to educational institutions and connect representatives of other policy areas to cooperate on solving the financing, employment, housing and related issues to help underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable students avoid the obstacles that hinder their involvement in general and further education.

3.3. Public authorities provide support to students with a delayed transition into higher education (Eurydice, 2022).

Descriptor:

Public authorities should provide a legal framework that ensures there are no age-related restrictions on funding students. Higher education institutions and, if the case, public service centres outside of higher education systems should provide information and guidelines on lifelong learning options for students with delayed transition into higher education. Public authorities should provide funding to higher education institutions for offering adequate flexibility and support to those students.

3.4. Initial and continuous teacher training programmes offered in higher education develop competencies on diversity, equity and inclusion in education (Eurydice, 2022).

Descriptor:

Diversity, equity and inclusion in education should be an integral part of the curriculum of all higher education programs offering teacher training for all levels of education.

4. Principle on monitoring and data collection

Principle

4. Reliable data is a necessary precondition for an evidence-based improvement of the social dimension of higher education. Higher education systems should define the purpose and goals of collecting certain types of data, taking into account the particularities of the national legal frameworks. Adequate capacities to collect, process and use such data to inform and support the social dimension of higher education should be developed.

Guidelines

a. In order to develop effective policies, continuous national data collection is necessary. Within the limits of national legal frameworks, such data collection should provide information on the composition of the student body, access and participation, drop-out and completion of higher education, including the transition to the labour market after completion of studies, and allow for the identification of vulnerable, disadvantaged and underrepresented groups.

b. In order to make such data collection comparable internationally, work on categories for administrative data collection that are relevant for the social dimension should be developed at the EHEA level through Eurostudent or similar surveys. With the aim to rationalise the process and avoid an administrative burden on public administration and higher education institutions, this development should take account of existing national practices and relevant data collection processes.

c. Such national data collection exercises could, where relevant and necessary, be complemented by higher education institutions undertaking additional surveys, research and analysis to better understand vulnerability, disadvantage, and underrepresentation in education, as well as transitions of students across the education system.

Indicators

4.1. Public authorities regularly collect data on student characteristics and experiences prior to entry in higher education as well as at entry in higher education, during studies and upon graduation (Eurydice, 2022).
Descriptor:
There should be regular national surveys or administrative data collection on student characteristics of potential students, students entering higher education and students participating in higher education, that includes data on underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable students. Also, there should be regular national surveys or administrative data collection on student dropout. Completion rate data at the end of the first year of the first cycle should be available to top level policy makers (Eurydice, 2022). Data on the trends on transition of graduates to the labour market after completion of studies should also be collected through the national survey(s) and administrative data collection. Public authorities should ensure interoperability of the data collection systems and platforms on student characteristics and experiences with other public registers.

4.2. Data collected through national surveys and administrative data collection on students' characteristics and experiences are used to enhance policies on social dimension in higher education.
Descriptor:
Public authorities should identify the categories of underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable students on a national level. They should translate the results of surveys and administrative data collection into student support measures and strengthen the social dimension practices for the identified underrepresented, disadvantaged, and vulnerable groups. It is important to detect obstacles during studying, for underrepresented, disadvantaged, and vulnerable students, as well as analyse this data in connection with other policy areas (such as finance, housing, other social services, etc.). Public authorities should make surveys or administrative data sets accessible to the public, higher education institutions and researchers to build capacity for diversity, equity and inclusion in higher education. Furthermore, they should provide support to higher education institutions to organise surveys and research on the institutional level to understand underrepresentation, disadvantages, and vulnerability in education.

4.3. Public authorities regularly collect data on higher education staff characteristics and work experiences in higher education.
Descriptor:
Public authorities should organise national surveys or administrative data collection on staff characteristics and their work experiences. Based on the collected and analysed data, they

should identify underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable staff at a national level. Public authorities should translate results of surveys and administrative data collection into staff support measures for identified underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable staff.

4.4. Public authorities regularly conduct research on potential systemic barriers to diversity, equity and inclusion from early childhood education, through schooling to higher education and throughout lifelong learning.
Descriptor:
Public authorities should analyse student data through all levels of education, lifelong learning and entry into the labour market to make sure that its social dimension policies are effective and efficient. They could compare graduation data from second level (secondary education) with entrance data into third level education (higher education) to improve transition from second level into third level education.

4.5. Public authorities participate in internationally comparable data collections in higher education.
Descriptor:
Internationally comparable taxonomies should be used for internationally comparable data collection (e.g., ISCED, EQF for levels of study, the EHEA definitions of underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, etc.). Public authorities should participate in European Higher Education Area surveys on student characteristics (e.g., Eurostudent survey) and in graduate surveys (e.g., Eurograduate survey).

5. Principle on counselling and guidance

Principle

5. Public authorities should have policies that enable higher education institutions to ensure effective counselling and guidance for potential and enrolled students in order to widen their access to, participation in and completion of higher education studies. These services should be coherent across the entire education system, with special regard to transitions between different educational levels, educational institutions and into the labour market.

Guidelines

    a. Public authorities should create conditions that enable collaboration between different public institutions that provide counselling and guidance services together with higher education institutions to create synergies and omit duplication of similar services. These services should uphold the principles of

clarity and user-friendliness, because end users must be capable to understand them easily.

b. Within a diverse student body, special attention should be directed towards students with physical and psychological health challenges. These students should have access to professional support to secure their success in accessing and completing higher education studies. Special focus should be placed on prevention of psychological challenges caused by the organisation of study and students' living conditions.

c. Public authorities should also consider setting up ombudsperson-type institutions that will have the capacity and knowledge to mediate any conflicts, particularly related to equity issues that may arise during accessing or participating in higher education, or conflicts that hinder the completion of studies.

Indicators

5.1. Public authorities ensure and support the provision of free, accessible and timely <u>academic and careers</u> counselling and guidance services to all potential and enrolled students in higher education.

Descriptor:
Public authorities should ensure the provision of free and inclusive academic and career counselling and guidance to all prospective and current students in public centres and/or contact points within educational institutions. They should facilitate the cooperation among all providers of academic and careers counselling and guidance for higher education to enable exchange of good practice and omit duplication. Public authorities should consider funding higher education institutions, which provide free and inclusive academic and careers counselling and guidance to potential and current students.

5.2. Public authorities ensure and support the provision of free, accessible and timely <u>psychological</u> counselling and guidance services to all potential and enrolled students, as well as to staff in higher education (Eurydice, 2022).

Descriptor:
Public authorities should ensure and support the provision of free and inclusive psychological counselling and guidance to all students and staff in public centres and/or contact points within educational institutions. The timely provision of this counselling is key in helping to prevent the negative effects of mental illness for students, such as a worsening of their condition or study delays. They should facilitate the cooperation among all providers of psychological counselling and guidance for higher education to enable exchange of good practice and omit duplication. They should consider funding higher education institutions that provide free, inclusive, and timely psychological counselling and guidance to potential and enrolled students, as well as to staff. Public authorities should help higher education institutions to adapt their organisation of studies and students' living conditions in a way that prevents or mitigates potential psychological challenges.

5.3. Quality assessment of career, academic as well as psychological counselling and guidance services in higher education is required (Eurydice, 2022).

Descriptor:

Public authorities, in cooperation with higher education institutions, should ensure that an appropriate body has the mandate to assess the quality of career, academic and psychological counselling services in higher education and whether beneficiaries are satisfied with these services.

5.4. Existence of impartial bodies with a formal role in conflict resolution and in mediating conflicts related to the social dimension in higher education (Eurydice, 2022).

Descriptor:

Public authorities should ensure that an impartial body is mandated for conflict resolution and mediation specifically pertaining to the social dimension issues in higher education. Such a body should provide access to counselling and legal services to both students and staff if they have any concerns related to discrimination issues.

6. Principle on funding

Principle

6. Public authorities should provide sufficient and sustainable funding and financial autonomy to higher education institutions enabling them to build adequate capacity to embrace diversity and contribute to equity and inclusion in higher education.

Guidelines

a. Higher education funding systems should facilitate the attainment of strategic objectives related to the social dimension of higher education. Higher education institutions should be supported and rewarded for meeting agreed targets in widening access, increasing participation in and completion of higher education studies, in relation to vulnerable, disadvantaged and underrepresented groups. Mechanisms for achieving these targets should not have negative financial consequences to higher education institutions core funding.

b. Financial support systems should aim to be universally applicable to all students, however, when this is not possible, the public student financial support systems should be primarily needs-based and should make higher education affordable for all students, foster access to and provide opportunities for success in higher education. They should mainly contribute to cover both the direct costs of study (fees and study materials) and the indirect costs (e.g. accommodation, which is becoming increasingly problematic for students

across the EHEA due to the increased housing, living, and transportation costs, etc.).

Indicators

6.1. Public funding is attributed to higher education institutions that meet targets in widening access, increasing participation or completing higher education, in particular in relation to underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable groups (Eurydice, 2022).
Descriptor:
Public authorities should take into consideration the local/regional contexts of higher education institutions and the socio-economic context of students and staff for determining the amount of public funding that higher education institutions receive to support underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. Public authorities could provide funding to higher education institutions to have a contact point for dealing with diversity, equity and inclusion of students and staff.

6.2. Public authorities provide universal or need-based grants for students, that cover direct and indirect costs of study (Eurydice, 2022).
Descriptor:
Public authorities should provide universal or need-based grants for underrepresented, disadvantaged, and vulnerable students. These grants should cover both direct costs (tuition fees, administration fees, other fees, study materials, personal IT equipment, etc.) and indirect costs (accommodation, transport, meals, etc.) for students both for full-time and part-time study programmes. Access to higher education should be promoted through ensuring free universal education or, if not possible, for underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable students, especially in the first cycle. The type and amount of the student financial support should depend on factors such as a student's regional socio-economic background and the place of study. Public authorities should collect data on the share of students that receive universal or needs-based grants.

6.3. Public authorities provide top-level indirect student support for covering the costs of study.
Descriptor:
There should be a top-level policy regarding raising accessibility, affordability and quality of higher education through indirect support, which should include public funding support for dormitories, canteens, transport services etc. to lower the costs of these services for all types of students, including international students. Public authorities should collect data on the funding provided to indirect student support schemes and compare their share with the share of funding provided to direct student support.

6.4. Public authorities provide information, assistance and communicate effectively on available student financial support to all students, in particular to underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable students.

Descriptor:

Public authorities should provide comprehensive information and assistance on available student financial support to both potential and enrolled students, with a particular emphasis on underrepresented, disadvantaged, and vulnerable students. The information they provide should be transparent, up-to-date and provided through suitable and easily accessible communication channels.

7. Principle on inclusive institutional culture

Principles

> 7. **Public authorities should help higher education institutions to strengthen their capacity in responding to the needs of a more diverse student and staff body and create inclusive learning environments and inclusive institutional cultures.**

Guidelines

a. Public authorities should support and provide adequate means to higher education institutions to improve initial and continuing professional training for academic and administrative staff to enable them to work professionally and equitably with a diverse student body and staff.

b. Whenever possible, external quality assurance systems should address how the social dimension, diversity, accessibility, equity and inclusion are reflected within the institutional missions of higher education institutions, whilst respecting the principle of autonomy of higher education institutions.

Indicators

7.1. Public authorities enable higher education institutions to offer training on diversity, equity or inclusion to academic and administrative staff, and students (Eurydice, 2022).

Descriptor:

Public authorities should support the creation of common concepts, frameworks and tools that can be used in the delivery of the training on diversity, equity and inclusion in all higher education institutions. These common tools should be created together with student representatives and higher education institutions. Public authorities should provide funding for the provision of initial and continuing academic and administrative staff and student

training on diversity, equity and inclusion (e.g. training on equal opportunities, universal accessibility, universal design, etc.).

7.2. Existence of <u>support</u> offered by top-level public authorities to higher education institutions to offer trainings on diversity, equity or inclusion to staff and students (Eurydice, 2022).
Descriptor:
Public authorities should support a mentoring network at the local, regional or national level for both staff and students in order to involve, guide and assist them on how to best interact with the needs of a more diverse student and staff body. Public authorities should provide higher education institutions with tools and other non-financial means of support on diversity, equity and inclusion for students and staff.

7.3. Existence of an appropriate body has the mandate to monitor whether higher education institutions offer training on diversity, equity or inclusion to staff and students.
Descriptor:
Public authorities should ensure that an appropriate body periodically monitors the quality of initial and continuous staff and student training. Students and staff representatives should be included in this monitoring, including representatives of underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable students and staff. In some national contexts, quality assurance frameworks could be used for the monitoring.

7.4. Public authorities issue guidelines and provide financial means to make higher education buildings and infrastructure easily accessible and adjusted to the needs of underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable students and staff.
Descriptor:
Public authorities should provide financial support to higher education institutions to ensure universal accessibility of their buildings and infrastructure. Public authorities should monitor the implementation of this indicator, ensuring that the implemented improvements align with established accessibility standards and effectively address the needs of underrepresented, disadvantaged, and vulnerable students and staff.

8. Principle on international mobility

Principle

> **8. International mobility programs in higher education should be structured and implemented in a way that foster diversity, equity and inclusion and should particularly foster participation of students and staff from vulnerable, disadvantaged or underrepresented backgrounds.**

Guidelines

    a. International experiences through learning mobility improve the quality of learning outcomes in higher education. Public authorities and higher education institutions should ensure equal access for all to the learning opportunities offered by national and international learning and training mobility programmes and actively address obstacles to mobility for vulnerable, disadvantaged or underrepresented groups of students and staff.

    b. Besides further support to physical mobility, including full portability of grants and loans across the EHEA, public authorities and higher education institutions should facilitate the use of information and communications technology (ICT) to support blended mobility and to foster internationalisation at home by embedding international online cooperation into courses. Blended mobility is the combination of a period of physical mobility and a period of online learning. Such online cooperation can be used to extend the learning outcomes and enhance the impact of physical mobility, for example by bringing together a more diverse group of participants, or to offer a broader range of mobility options.

Indicators
8.1. A top-level mobility policy is in place, which focuses on vulnerable, disadvantaged and underrepresented students and staff (Eurydice, 2022). *Descriptor:* Public authorities should develop an action plan, or a similar major policy document, with quantitative targets for stimulating international mobility of students and staff from vulnerable, disadvantaged and underrepresented groups. International mobility opportunities should be inclusive and suit different needs and aspirations of disadvantaged, vulnerable and underrepresented students (long-term and short-term mobilities, blended and virtual exchanges, joint study programmes at different levels, summer and winter schools, etc.).
8.2. Public authorities have a standard methodology to collect data and monitor the participation and experiences of beneficiaries in all types of international mobility programs, including their background characteristics (e.g., disadvantaged, vulnerable and underrepresented groups). *Descriptor:* Public authorities should ensure top-level monitoring of specific characteristics of students and staff participating in international mobility programs (Eurydice, 2022). There should be annual data collection on the enrolment, retention and graduation rates of international students and staff from underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable backgrounds. Public authorities should collect data on the percentage of students and staff participating in physical vs. blended mobility, particularly in relation to underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable students and staff, as well as data collection on the financial support provided

to underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable students and staff for participating in international mobility programs.

8.3. Public authorities have measures in place to support higher education institutions in creating equitable and inclusive international learning mobility (Eurydice, 2022).
Descriptor:
Public authorities should provide professional training support to higher education institutions on how to successfully organise equitable and inclusive international learning mobility, in particular blended mobility and internationalisation at home, along with the physical mobility. Where necessary, top-level authorities should provide support to higher education institutions on the use of the new technologies for successful participation of underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable students and staff in international mobility programs, particularly in blended mobility and internationalisation at home (Eurydice, 2022). Public authorities should consider providing funding support for: 1) guidance services, 2) mentoring services to enhance the performance and wellbeing of students and staff, 3) subsidised accommodation and food/canteens services available and accessible at higher education institutions for incoming and/or outgoing students and staff (Eurydice, 2022).

8.4. Public authorities have measures in place to support vulnerable, disadvantaged or underrepresented students and staff in international learning mobility.
Descriptor:
Public authorities should provide targeted administrative and financial support for students and staff from vulnerable, disadvantaged and underrepresented groups to help them participate in international mobility. Public financial support for students should be fully portable across the EHEA while taking part in the international mobility programmes.

9. Principle on community engagement

Principle

> 9. **Higher education institutions should ensure that community engagement in higher education promotes diversity, equity and inclusion.**

Guidelines

a. Community engagement should be considered as a process whereby higher education institutions engage with external community stakeholders to undertake joint activities that can be mutually beneficial. Like social dimension policies, community engagement should be embedded in the core missions of higher education. It should engage with teaching and learning, research, service

and knowledge exchange, students and staff and management of higher education institutions. 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.

b. Community stakeholders (e.g. local authorities, cultural organisations, non-governmental organisations, businesses, citizens) should be able to meaningfully engage with higher education actors through open dialogue. This will enable genuine university-community partnerships, which can effectively address social and democratic challenges.

Indicators
9.1. Top-level authorities provide financial support to higher education institutions in developing community engagement activities focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion (Eurydice, 2022). *Descriptor:* Public authorities should provide financial support, such as additional funding through funding agreements or additional earmarked funding, for the development of community engagement activities of higher education institutions that promote diversity, equity and inclusion.
9.2. Existence of local, regional, or national networks that support development of community engagement activities in higher education, particularly those focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion. *Descriptor:* Public authorities should support higher education institutions in implementing community engagement activities by initiating and supporting local, regional, or national networks for exchanging good practices and facilitating peer learning and training for students and staff. Public authorities could support networks which provide recognition for community engagement activities in higher education that foster diversity, equity and inclusion.
9.3. Existence of a policy framework which enables that community engagement activities of staff employed at higher education institutions contribute to the advancement of their professional careers. *Descriptor:* Public authorities should engage with higher education institutions to create a policy framework which will enable that community engagement activities of staff should be recognised as one of the criteria for career progression in higher education and as a part of the designated teaching and research workload.

10. Principle on policy dialogue

Principle

10. Public authorities should engage in a policy dialogue with higher education institutions and other relevant stakeholders about how the above principles and guidelines can be translated and implemented both at national system and institutional level.

Guidelines

a. Such policy dialogue should allow to develop fit-for purpose policy measures, which should respect institutional autonomy, avoid any unnecessary administrative burden, and thus enable concrete progress towards diversity, equity, and inclusion in higher education.

b. Within the scope of the above principles and guidelines, peer support and exchange of good practices are crucial among EHEA countries in order to facilitate progress towards the inclusiveness of higher education systems.

Indicators

10.1. Top-level authorities have established policy dialogue in a specific forum dedicated to the implementation of the Principles and Guidelines (Eurydice, 2022).

Descriptor:

Public authorities should actively engage relevant stakeholders, including higher education institutions and their representative bodies, student and staff unions, in the development, elaboration, monitoring, evaluation and review of all policies affecting the social dimension of higher education. Public authorities should regularly track progress towards the implementation of the Principles and Guidelines based on the collected data. They should regularly survey the satisfaction of relevant stakeholders related to their participation in the decision-making and consultation process on strengthening the social dimension of higher education.

10.2. Public authorities support and participate in international peer learning activities and exchange of good practices on strengthening the social dimension of higher education.

Descriptor:

Public authorities should actively engage in international knowledge exchange and collaborative practice-sharing initiatives to strengthen the social dimension of higher education. This engagement will deepen their understanding of the social dimension and enable them to establish meaningful partnerships that foster greater success in formulating, effectively implementing and evaluating policies to enhance the social dimension of higher education.

Glossary of Terms and Definitions [7]

This glossary defines the three central terms in this document, namely underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable students. The definitions are not to be understood as legal definitions and therefore do not conflict with any existing legal regulations, rather they are intended as explanatory definitions used in relation to the contents of the Principles and Guidelines.

Underrepresented students:
A group of learners is underrepresented in relation to certain characteristics (e.g. gender, age, nationality, geographic origin, socio-economic background, ethnic minorities) if its share among the students is lower than the share of a comparable group in the total population. This can be documented at the time of admission, during the course of studies or at graduation. Individuals usually have several underrepresented characteristics, which is why combinations of underrepresented characteristics ("intersectionality") should always be considered. Furthermore, underrepresentation can also impact at different levels of higher education – study programme, faculty or department, higher education institution, higher education system. This definition is complementary to the London Communiqué, *"that the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels should reflect the diversity of our populations"*, but does not fully cover it.

Disadvantaged students:
Disadvantaged students often face specific challenges compared to their peers in higher education. This can take many forms (e.g. disability, low family income, little or no family support, orphan, many school moves, mental health, pregnancy, having less time to study, because one has to earn ones living by working or having caring duties). The disadvantage may be permanent, may occur from time to time or only for a limited period. Disadvantaged students can be part of an underrepresented group, but do not have to be. Therefore, disadvantaged and underrepresented are not synonymous.

Vulnerable students:
Vulnerable students may be at risk of disadvantage (see above) and in addition have special (protection) needs. For example, because they suffer from an illness (including mental illness) or have a disability, because they are minors, because their residence permit depends on the success of their studies (and thus also on decisions made by individual teachers), because they are at risk of being discriminated against. These learners are vulnerable in the sense that they may not be able to ensure their personal well-being, or that they may not be able to protect themselves from harm or exploitation and need additional support or attention.

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[7] This glossary is also adopted as an integral part of the Principles and Guidelines at the 2020 Rome Ministerial Conference.

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Annex II: Terms of Reference for the Working Group on Social Dimension 2021-2024

Data of the ToR: 13.05.2021.

Name of the Working Group Working Group on Social Dimension
Contact persons (Co-Chairs) Croatia: Ninoslav Šćukanec Schmidt (nscukanec@iro.hr) European Students' Union (ESU): Martina Darmanin (martina.darmanin@esu-online.org); Horia Onita (horia.onita@esu-online.org)
Composition Albania; Austria; Belgium Flemish Community; Belgium French Community; Croatia; Cyprus; Denmark; Estonia; France; Georgia; Germany; Italy; Kazakhstan; Lithuania; Malta; Moldova; The Netherlands; Poland; Romania; Russia; Slovakia; Slovenia; Spain; Sweden; Turkey; United Kingdom (Scotland); United Kingdom; Council of Europe; EI – ETUCE; ESU - European Students' Union; EUA - European University Association; European Commission.
Purpose and/or outcome ➤ To support the EHEA members in developing social dimension policies that will create inclusive environment in higher education that fosters equity, diversity, and is responsive to the needs of local communities. The Working Group will follow up and will further develop the main outcomes of the work of the AG1 on Social Dimension 2018-2020: "*Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA*", which is annexed to the Rome Communiqué.
Reference to the Rome Communiqué *We adopt the "**Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA**" (**Annex II**) based on a broadened understanding of the social dimension, and commit to implementing them in our systems. We will engage in wide-ranging policy dialogue on how to implement the principles and guidelines fully at national level. We will support our higher education institutions in integrating them into their institutional culture and core missions: learning and teaching, research and innovation, knowledge circulation and outreach, institutional governance and management. We ask the BFUG to report back to us in 2024 on the steps taken and the related monitoring measures to assure evidence-based follow-up.*

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Specific Tasks

➢ Developing a system of monitoring the implementation of the Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA. It will enable measuring the impact of the broadened definition of the social dimension in the Principles and Guidelines on the work of different higher education institutions;

➢ Defining indicators and benchmarks for the principles included in the Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA;

➢ Organising peer support activities for social dimension to support the implementation of the Principles and Guidelines among the EHEA members. The Working Group should consider establishing partnerships for implementing Thematic Country Reviews for Social Dimension to systematically collect country needs for peer support;

➢ Organising a seminar on the social dimension at the end of the cycle in 2024 to discuss the progress made in developing social dimension policies in the EHEA members.

Reporting

Minutes of working group meetings and key documents developed by the Working group will be made available on the EHEA website www.ehea.info. The Bologna Secretariat will provide administrative support for the work of the Working Group. The BFUG should also receive regular reports and updates from the group. To ensure good communication and consultations with the BFUG as a whole, progress reports should be submitted at least two weeks before each BFUG meeting.

Draft meeting schedule:

The content and timeline of the meetings will be discussed amongst the co-chairs and the members of this Working Group; however, the following can be seen as a draft schedule:

Year 2021 – 1st quarter:
- Defining the Workplan for the mandate of the WG with the methods of work

Year 2021 – 2024:
- Organising peer support activities for social dimension

Year 2021 – 2022 (1st quarter)
- Defining indicators and benchmarks for the principles included in the *Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA.*

Year 2022 (1st quarter) – 2024 (1st quarter)
- Defining a system of monitoring the implementation of the Principles and Guidelines

Year 2024 (in the framework of the ministerial conference)
- Organising a seminar on the social dimension

Liaison with other WGs' activities

TBC

Introduction

The content of the Workplan 2021-2024 was agreed at the three meetings of the BFUG Working Group on Social Dimension held in 2021: on July 8, October 6 and November 16. The Co-Chairs, Ninoslav Šćukanec Schmidt (Croatia) and Martina Darmanin (European Students' Union) have created the content of this Workplan based on the conclusions of the before mentioned meetings.

Purpose of the Working Group on Social Dimension

The purpose of the Working Group on Social Dimension is to support the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) members in developing social dimension policies that will create an inclusive environment in higher education that fosters equity, diversity, and is responsive to the needs of local communities. The Working Group will follow up and will further develop the main outcome of the work of the AG1 on Social Dimension 2018-2020: "Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA", which is annexed to the 2020 Rome Communiqué. All the documents from the 2020 Rome Ministerial Conference are available here: http://www.ehea.info/page-ministerial-conference-rome-2020.

Reference to the 2020 Rome Communiqué: *"We adopt the 'Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA' (Annex II) based on a broadened understanding of the social dimension and commit to implementing them in our systems. We will engage in wide-ranging policy dialogue on how to implement the principles and guidelines fully at the national level. We will support our higher education institutions in integrating them into their institutional culture and core missions: learning and teaching, research and innovation, knowledge circulation and outreach, institutional governance and management. We ask the BFUG to report back to us in 2024 on the steps taken and the related monitoring measures to assure evidence-based follow-up".*

Definition of the 'social dimension of higher education'

This Working Group takes as its starting point the definition of the social dimension provided in the 2007 London Communique, namely that the 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 in the EHEA countries. In 2020 the Rome Communique has enlarged before mentioned definition by stressing that the social dimension encompasses creation of inclusive environment

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in higher education that fosters equity, diversity, and is responsive to the needs of local communities.

Specific objectives for the Working Group on Social Dimension for the period 2021-2024

- **Developing a system of monitoring** the implementation of the 'Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA' (Principles and Guidelines). It will enable measuring the impact of the broadened definition of the social dimension in the Principles and Guidelines on the work of different higher education institutions.
- **Defining indicators and benchmarks** for the principles included in the Principles and Guidelines.
- **Developing tools** for the implementation of the Principles and Guidelines.
- **Organizing peer support activities** for social dimension to support the implementation of the Principles and Guidelines among the EHEA members.
- **Organizing a seminar on the social dimension** at the end of the cycle in 2024 to discuss the progress made in developing social dimension policies in the EHEA members.

The above objectives will help public authorities in the EHEA to implement Principles and Guidelines into their higher education systems. Public authorities should support the implementation of the Principles by offering a legal, financial, administrative and informative framework that can initiate process of implementation at the national level. Also, public authorities should engage in a policy dialogue with higher education institutions and other stakeholders to develop fit-for purpose policy measures for 10 Principles for social dimension in higher education.

Agreed methods of work

During the working period 2021-2024 the Working Group will organize five (5) meetings per year. The meetings will include the following methods of work:
- Peer-learning activities and examples of best practices on the implementation of the Principles and Guidelines.
- Discussion on tools, indicators and benchmarks for the Principles and Guidelines.
- Discussion on a system of monitoring the implementation of the Principles and Guidelines.

Timeline

The Terms of Reference for the Working group envisage the following timeline:

Year 2021:
- Defining the Workplan for the mandate of the Working Group with the methods of work.

Year 2021 – 2022:
- Defining indicators and benchmarks for the principles included in the Principles and Guidelines.

Year 2021 – 2024:
- Organizing peer support activities for the social dimension.

Year 2022 – 2024:
- Defining a system of monitoring the implementation of the Principles and Guidelines.

Year 2024 (in the framework of the ministerial conference):
- Organizing a seminar on the social dimension.

The Working Group agreed to organize five meetings per year – the duration of the single meetings will range between four to eight hours per meeting (depending on the on-line or in-person mode of the meetings). The dates of the meetings in 2021-2022 are listed below.

Timeline for 2021

In 2021 all the meetings will be held on-line, because of the COVID-19 pandemic:
- 1st on-line meeting: 8 July 2021
- 2nd on-line meeting: 6 October 2021
- 3rd on-line meeting: 16 November 2021

Timeline for 2022

In 2022 there will be a combination of on-line and in-person meetings, depending on the situation with the COVID-19 pandemic. **The Working Group agreed on the following dates of the meetings in 2022:**

- 4th meeting in February 2022: **17 February 2022 (on-line)**
- 5th meeting in April 2022: **25-26 April 2022 (Malta)**
- 6th meeting in June 2022: **13-14 June 2022 (The Netherlands, The Hague)**
- 7th meeting in September 2022: **29-30 September 2022 (Belgium, Brussels)**
- 8th meeting in November 2022: **14 November 2022 (on-line)**

Until December 1, 2022, the Working Group will decide on the exact dates of the meetings in 2023-2024.

Timeline for 2023

In 2023 there will be a combination of on-line and in-person meetings. **The Working Group agreed on the following dates of the meetings in 2023:**

- 9th meeting in February 2023: **7-8 February 2023 (Belgium, Ghent).**

  The PLA-2 within the project PLAR-U-PAGs will take place on 9-10 February 2023 in Ghent – members of the WG SD are encouraged to apply for the PLA2.

- 10th meeting in April 2023: **24-25 April 2023** (more details TBC).

- 11th meeting in June 2023: **12-13 June 2022 (Croatia, Dubrovnik, University of Dubrovnik).**

  The PLA-3 within the project PLAR-U-PAGs will take place on 13-14 June 2023 in Dubrovnik at the University of Dubrovnik – members of the WG SD are encouraged to apply for the PLA-3.

- 12th meeting in October 2023: **24-25 October 2023** (Gent, Belgium).

- 13th meeting in December 2023: **7-8 December 2023** (Gent, Belgium).

Until December 1, 2023, the Working Group will decide on the exact dates of the meetings in 2024 (there will be 2 meetings in the period January – May 2024).

Timeline for 2024

In 2024 there will be a combination of on-line and in-person meetings. **The Working Group agreed on the following dates of the meetings in 2024:**

- 14th meeting in February 2024: **ON-LINE, 2 February 2024**, 10-13h
- 15th meeting in April 2024: **4-5 April 2024** in Vienna, Austria (4.4.2023. from 14-19h; 5.4. from 9-13,30h)

Resources and communication channels

The Working Group has a section on the www.ehea.info web site: http://www.ehea.info/page-Working-Group-SD. This section will contain:
- Documents related to all the meetings of the Working Group (including minutes and agenda of the meetings).
- Key documents relevant for the work of the Working Group.
- Useful resources: literature, policy briefs, information on useful projects etc.

Communication channels:
- The Co-Chairs encourage the communication via the BFUG Secretariat (secretariat@ehea.info), because this will ensure that all the members of the Working Group are included in the correspondence. The Bologna Secretariat will provide administrative support for the work of the Working Group.
- Both Co-Chairs are also available via email: Ninoslav Scukanec Schmidt, Croatia (nscukanec@iro.hr) and Martina Darmanin, European Students' Union (martina.darmanin@esu-online.org).
- The on-line meetings will be held using the Zoom or MS Teams platforms and links to the meetings will be available in the agenda of the meetings.

List of the members of the Working Group on Social Dimension

No.	Country	Name	Last Name
1	Albania	Iliriana	Topulli
2	Austria	Sara	Velić
3	Belgium Flemish Community	Patrick	Willems
4	Belgium French Community	Caroline	Hollela
5	Council of Europe	Katia	Dolgova-Dreyer
6	**Croatia (Co-chair)**	**Ninoslav Šćukanec**	**Schmidt**
7	Croatia	Mario	Vinkovic
8	Cyprus	Kyriacos	Charalambous
9	Cyprus	Alexandra	Petridou
10	Denmark	Jacob	Blasius Thomsen
11	EI - ETUCE	Annette	Dolan
12	Estonia	Janne	Pukk
13	**ESU (Co-chair)**	**Horia**	**Onita**
14	EUA	Henriette	Stoeber
15	European Commission	Lucie	Trojanova
17	EUROSTUDENT	Martin	Unger
18	EUROSTUDENT	Christoph	Gwosć

19	France	Stéphane	Lauwick
20	Georgia	Tornike	Bakakuri
21	Germany	Carlotta	Ekloh
22	Italy	Raffaella Ida	Rumiati
23	Italy	Maria Antonietta	Ciclista
24	Kazakhstan	Indira	Abilmazhinova
25	Lithuania	Andrius	Zalitis
26	Malta	Madonna	Maroun
27	Moldova	Doina	Usaci
28	The Netherlands	Arthur	Belle
29	Poland	Monika	Przybysz
30	Romania	Mihai Cezar	Hâj
31	Romania	Horia	Oniță
32	Russia	Irina	Karelina
33	Slovak Republic	Marcel	Vysocký
34	Slovenia	Maja	Švent
35	Spain	Margarita	de Lezcano-Mújica
36	Turkey	Lütfiye	Durak Ata
37	United Kingdom	Graeme	Atherton
38	United Kingdom	Angharad	Penny Evans
39	United Kingdom - Scotland	Lynn	Kilbride