

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

Adopted at the Rome Ministerial Conference on 19 November 2020 as the Annex II to the Rome Ministerial Communiqué<sup>1</sup>

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## Proposal of indicators for Principles and Guidelines Produced by the BFUG Working Group on Social Dimension 1 November 2022

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### Foreword

The strategic document “Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA” was adopted as the Annex II to the 2020 Rome Ministerial Communiqué. Based on the Rome Communiqué, the 2021-2024 Terms of Reference for the BFUG Working Group on Social Dimension was created. The Terms of Reference contain the objective “defining indicators and benchmarks for the principles included in the Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA” for the BFUG Working Group on Social Dimension for the period 2021-2024.

The BFUG Working Group on Social Dimension worked on indicators for the principles of social dimension in higher education in the period 2021-2022. This document contains the final proposal of indicators that should be adopted by the BFUG until 2024. Each of the ten principles below contains two to six indicators (marked in bold). Each indicator contains several explanatory descriptors that provide more information on how an indicator could be implemented (listed in bullet points).

During 2021-2022, in parallel with the work of the BFUG Working Group on Social Dimension, the European Commission/ EACEA/Eurydice developed indicators for the principles of social dimension, the survey for collecting data on the implementation of principles in the Eurydice’s partner countries and the system of monitoring the implementation of these principles. The BFUG Working Group on Social Dimension and Eurydice cooperated closely on the above activities. The final outcome of Eurydice’s work is the publication “Towards equity and inclusion in higher education in Europe”<sup>2</sup> released in the first half of 2022. It contains an overview of the indicators and the implementation of principles for social dimension in higher education in Eurydice’s partner countries.

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<sup>1</sup> In the further text we will use the abbreviation ‘Principles and Guidelines’ instead of the full name of the adopted document: Rome Ministerial Communiqué 19 November 2020 - Annex II to the Rome Ministerial Communiqué: Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA. EHEA Ministerial Conference. Available at:

[http://www.ehea.info/Upload/Rome\\_Ministerial\\_Communique\\_Annex\\_II.pdf](http://www.ehea.info/Upload/Rome_Ministerial_Communique_Annex_II.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice. (2022). Towards equity and inclusion in higher education in Europe. Eurydice report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

The BFUG Working Group on Social Dimension and Eurydice have agreed that the BFUG Working Group on Social Dimension will adopt most of the indicators created by Eurydice. 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 has created additional explanatory descriptors for each indicator that provide more information on how an indicator could be implemented.

## Introduction<sup>3</sup>

The 2018 Paris Communique recognized the need to guide member states on how to define and implement policy for improving the social dimension of the EHEA. This document outlines core principles and guidelines, which we believe are fundamental to the further development of the social dimension in higher education. This document 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. The Advisory Group for Social Dimension also goes beyond the before mentioned definition and has enlarged the definition by stressing that the social dimension encompasses creation of inclusive environment in higher education that fosters equity, diversity, and is responsive to the needs of local communities.

The principles and guidelines within this document complement the EHEA 2020 strategy “Widening Participation for Equity and Growth”<sup>4</sup>, 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. The social dimension should interconnect the principles of accessibility, equity, diversity and inclusion into all laws, policies and practices concerning higher education in such a way that access, participation, progress and completion of higher education 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 offering a legal, financial, administrative and informative framework that can initiate processes of implementation at the local level. This framework will promote inclusive strategies, which provide both specific support for vulnerable, disadvantaged and underrepresented students<sup>5</sup> as well as highlight broader measures and policies wherefrom the student population and staff employed at higher education institutions can mutually benefit.

Increased participation of vulnerable, disadvantaged and underrepresented groups in higher education produces wider 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 delivered to a wider pool of citizens means better employment prospects, higher earnings premiums and the passing on of an appreciation for the benefits of higher education to the next generation and to their 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.

These Principles and Guidelines set the course for the next decade of the EHEA for public authorities and higher education institutions to integrate these principles into the core higher education missions: learning and teaching, research, innovation, knowledge exchange and outreach, institutional

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<sup>3</sup> This text is an integral part of the adopted Principles and Guidelines at the 2020 Rome ministerial conference

<sup>4</sup> Accessible at

[http://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/2015\\_Yerevan/71/5/Widening\\_Participation\\_for\\_Equity\\_and\\_Growth\\_A\\_Strategy\\_for\\_the\\_Development\\_of\\_the\\_SD\\_and\\_LLL\\_in\\_the\\_EHEA\\_to\\_2020\\_613715.pdf](http://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/2015_Yerevan/71/5/Widening_Participation_for_Equity_and_Growth_A_Strategy_for_the_Development_of_the_SD_and_LLL_in_the_EHEA_to_2020_613715.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Glossary of Terms and Definitions related to the definitions for vulnerable, disadvantaged and underrepresented students is at the end of this document.

governance and management, as well as in the policies for empowering present and future students and higher education staff. Improving the social dimension by moving beyond widening accessibility clauses and instead focusing on the concept of ‘leaving no one behind’ is a crucial step forward when looking to strengthen our societies and democracies. Supporting diverse learning environments is a necessity and should be seen as an investment towards societies, and public authorities need to shoulder the responsibility of ensuring that the proposed principles and guidelines are consulted, adjusted to national realities and implemented, in order to safeguard a better future for our higher education systems.

Principles in the text below should be understood as high-level statements that serve as a basis for the conceptualization of different policies for social dimension enhancement. Guidelines are recommendations intended to advise policy makers on how the principles should be implemented in practice. Therefore, the entirety of this document is not to be seen as a checklist, but rather as the basis for continuous improvement of policies and their effective implementation at national and institutional level.

## Principles<sup>6</sup>

**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 and diversity, and are responsive to the needs of the wider community.

### Indicators

**1. Existence of a national strategy, or a similar major policy plan, on social dimension of higher education, which strengthens diversity, equity and inclusion of students (Eurydice, 2022<sup>7</sup>).**

- Public authority has developed a strategy or a policy on social dimension enhancement in higher education that improves study conditions of underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable students and creates an inclusive environment in higher education.

<sup>6</sup> 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 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.

<sup>7</sup> 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.

- Public authority incentivizes and has a legal framework that encourages higher education institutions to have an inclusive student admission policy, so that the composition of student body reflects diversity of society.

**2. Existence of a national strategy, or a similar major policy plan, on social dimension of higher education, which strengthens diversity, equity and inclusion of staff (Eurydice, 2022).**

- Public authority has developed a strategy or a policy 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.
- Public authority incentivizes higher education institutions to have inclusive human resources policies, that pay attention to recruitment in particular, so that the composition of staff reflects diversity of society.

**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).**

- Public authority periodically assesses the implementation of the national strategies and policies, together with stakeholders, and monitors whether the selected targets are reached within proposed deadlines.

**4. Public authority has established social dialogue with stakeholders in higher education on how to implement Principles and Guidelines in the process of creating national<sup>8</sup> strategies and policies.**

- Public authority incentivizes, including through funding, higher education institutions to co-create strategies and policies on diversity, equity and inclusion at institutional level with a wide range of stakeholders, including student unions, staff unions, representatives from underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable groups of students and staff, representatives of local communities, etc.
- Public authority incentivizes higher education institutions to assess impact of their social dimension strategies and policies.
- Public authority provides recommendations to higher education institutions to include representatives of underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable students and staff in those assessments.

**5. Quality assurance agencies are required to monitor whether higher education institutions have social dimension strategies and policies (Eurydice, 2022).**

- Quality assurance agencies have standards and criteria in their external evaluation procedures that check whether higher education institutions have social dimension strategies and policies.
- Quality assurance agencies raise the awareness of social dimension principles and guidelines among higher education institutions, offer needs-based consultation with the involvement of underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable students and staff members.
- Quality assurance agencies provide structured training on social dimension in higher education to external reviewers engaged in external evaluations. This training should be delivered and co-created with underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable students and staff.

**6. Existence of a legal framework that enables recognized student representative body at higher education institutions to democratically represent all students and to be actively engaged in the enhancement of social dimension.**

<sup>8</sup> 'National' means in some countries the federal or regional government.

- Public authority requires higher education institutions to include student representatives to participate in governance and management of a higher education institution, including in the planning process related to learning and teaching, research and outreach.

**2. Legal regulations or policy documents should allow and enable higher education institutions to develop their own strategies to fulfil their public responsibility towards widening access to, participation in and completion of higher education studies.**

**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 recognize full-time and part-time studies, flexible study modes, blended and distance learning as well as to recognize 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 national qualifications frameworks should facilitate transparent recognition of learning outcomes and reliable quality assurance procedure.

**Indicators**

**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).**

- Public authority provides funding and requires higher education institutions to implement inclusive curriculum and to tailor teaching and learning modes and methods to the needs of students from underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable groups.
- Public authority provides support for the development of tailored programmes or modules for underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable students and staff in order to enhance their integration within higher education institutions.
- Public authority provides legal regulations for flexible pathways to access into, progress through and completing higher education.
- Public authority provides funding to higher education institutions to have a contact point for dealing with diversity, equity and inclusion of students and staff.
- Public authority provides legal framework that values the outcomes of full-time and part-time studies equally.

**2. Candidates can enter higher education based on recognition of prior non-formal and/or informal learning and this applies to all higher education institutions (Eurydice, 2022).**

- Public authority has elaborated a national policy of recognizing prior non-formal and/or informal learning for the purpose of accessing higher education.
- Public authority ensures that National Qualifications Framework facilitates recognition of prior non-formal and/or informal learning.
- Public authority ensures the provision of legal regulations and funding to facilitate the recognition of prior non-formal and/or informal learning for migrants, refugees and students

with a refugee-like background, based on the provisions of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

**3. Prior non-formal and informal learning counts towards fulfilment of a higher education study program (Eurydice, 2022).**

- Public authority has elaborated a national policy of recognizing prior non-formal and/or informal learning for the purpose of progressing through and completing higher education.
- Public authority ensures that legal provisions require using learning outcomes in the design of qualifications and study programs, in accordance with National Qualifications Frameworks.

**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).**

- Quality assurance agencies have standards and criteria in their external evaluation procedures that check whether higher education institutions recognize prior non-formal and/or informal learning.
- Quality assurance agencies and higher education institutions work jointly on the recognition of prior non-formal and/or informal learning to prevent parallel and opposing procedures, delays, and extra costs for students.

**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.**

**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.) in order 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**

**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).**

- Public authority actively coordinates with stakeholders and advisory bodies at all educational levels and organizes a national social dialogue on diversity, equity and inclusion in education.
- Public authority supports 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 authority provides support and guidance to educational institutions to provide publicly accessible data on available advice, support, funding and regulations for underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable groups.

**2. Public authority has integrated diversity, equity and inclusion in education into the mandate of the top-level coordination mechanisms between different levels of education (Eurydice, 2022).**

- Public authority coordinates a shared vision on diversity, equity and inclusion between students and staff on all levels of education.
- Public authority includes representatives from underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable learning groups, student and staff unions in the top-level coordination mechanisms between different levels of education.

**3. Public authority systematically involves representatives of other related policy areas, such as finance, employment, housing, or other social services in policy discussions on diversity, equity and inclusion in education (Eurydice, 2022).**

- Public authority provides support and guidance to educational institutions and connects representatives of other policy areas to cooperate on solving the financing, employment, housing and related issues to help underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable students avert the obstacles that hinder their involvement in general and further education.
- Public authority actively engages and coordinates with representatives of other related policy areas, such as finance, employment, housing or other social services in creating shared commitments to the enhancement of diversity, equity and inclusion in education.

**4. Public authority provides support to students with a delayed transition into higher education (Eurydice, 2022).**

- Public authority provides a legal framework that ensures there are no age-related restrictions on funding students.
- Public authority supports public service centers outside of higher education system with information and guidelines for students with delayed transition in higher education and with information and guidelines on lifelong learning options in higher education.
- Public authority provides funding to higher education institutions that offer adequate flexibility and support to students with a delayed transition into higher education.

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

**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 rationalize the process and avoid 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, disadvantages, and underrepresentation in education, as well as transitions of students across the education system.

<b>Indicators</b>
<p><b>1. Existence of regular national data collection 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).</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Existence of regular national surveys or administrative data collection on student characteristics among potential students, students on entry to higher education and students participating in higher education, with a focus on underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable students.</li> <li>● Existence of regular national surveys and administrative data collection on student dropout.</li> <li>● Completion rate data at the end of the first year of the first cycle is available to top level policy makers (Eurydice, 2022).</li> <li>● Existence of regular national surveys and administrative data collection upon completion of studies.</li> <li>● Existence of regular national surveys or administrative data collection on transition of graduates to the labour market after completion of studies.</li> <li>● Public authority ensures interoperability of the data collection systems and platforms on student characteristics and experiences with other public registers.</li> <li>● Public authority collects data and consults higher education institutions and other stakeholders to identify barriers and good practices to support the social dimension enhancement.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Data collected through national surveys and administrative data collection on <u>students</u> characteristics and experiences are used to enhance policies on social dimension in higher education.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Public authority identifies underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable students on a national level.</li> <li>● Public authority regularly tracks progress towards the implementation of Principles and Guidelines based on the collected data.</li> <li>● Public authority translates results of surveys and administrative data collection into student and staff support measures, including counselling and guidance services for identified underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable groups.</li> <li>● Public authority regularly tracks student data on drop-out and completion rates in higher education to detect obstacles for underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable learning groups and analyzes this data in connection with other policy areas (such as finance, housing, other social services, etc.).</li> <li>● Public authority makes survey or administrative data sets accessible to higher education institutions and researchers in order to build capacity for diversity, equity and inclusion in higher education.</li> <li>● Public authority provides support to higher education institutions to organise surveys and research on the institutional level to understand underrepresentation, disadvantages, and vulnerability in education.</li> </ul>



**3. Existence of regular national data collection on staff characteristics and experiences in higher education.**

- Existence of regular national surveys or administrative data collection on staff characteristics and experiences, in order to enhance the social dimension policies in higher education.

**4. Existence of regular surveys on potential systemic barriers to diversity, equity and inclusion from early childhood education, through schooling to higher education and throughout lifelong learning.**

- Public authority tracks student data through all three levels of education, lifelong learning and entry into the labor market to make sure that its social dimension policies are effective and efficient.
- Public authority compares graduation data from second level (secondary education) with entrance data of the third level (higher education) in order to improve transition from second into the third level of education.

**5. Public authority participates in internationally comparable data collections in higher education.**

- Internationally comparable taxonomies are used for internationally comparable data collection (e.g., ISCED, EQF for levels of study, the EHEA definitions of underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, etc.).
- Participation in European Higher Education Area surveys on student characteristics (e.g. Eurostudent survey) and in graduate surveys (e.g. Eurograduate survey).

**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 in order 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**

**1. The existence of a top-level legal requirement and support to provide free, accessible and timely academic and careers counselling and guidance services to potential and enrolled students in higher education.**

- Public authority ensures the existence of public centres and/or contact points at educational institutions that provide free and inclusive academic and career counselling and guidance to prospective and current students.
- Public authority facilitates 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 authority funds higher education institutions that provide free and inclusive academic and careers counselling and guidance to potential and current students.

**2. The existence of a top-level legal requirement to provide free, accessible and timely psychological counselling and guidance services to potential and enrolled students, as well as to staff in higher education (Eurydice, 2022).**

- Public authority supports the access of students and staff to free and inclusive psychological counselling and guidance in public centres.
- Public authority facilitates cooperation among all providers of psychological counselling and guidance for higher education to enable exchange of good practice and omit duplication.
- Public authority funds higher education institutions that provide free and inclusive psychological counselling and guidance to potential and enrolled students, as well as to staff.
- Public authority funds and requires higher education institutions to adapt their organization of studies and students' living conditions in a way that prevents or mitigates potential psychological challenges.

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

- Quality assurance agencies have standards and criteria in their external evaluation procedures that check whether higher education institutions have career, academic and psychological counselling services and whether beneficiaries are satisfied with these services.

**4. Existence of public institution(s) with a formal role in conflict resolution and in mediating conflicts related to social dimension in higher education (Eurydice, 2022).**

**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.).

<b>Indicators</b>
<p><b>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).</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local/regional context of higher education institution and the socio-economic context of students and staff is considered for determining the amount of public funding that higher education institutions receive to support underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable groups.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Public authority provides universal or need-based grants for first cycle students that cover direct and indirect costs of study (Eurydice, 2022).</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public authority collects data on the share of first cycle students that receive universal or need-based grants for covering direct and indirect costs of study.</li> <li>Existence of a mechanism that uses a student's local socio-economic context as a criterion for deciding on the type and amount of the student financial support.</li> <li>Students from both full-time and part-time study programmes have access to universal or need-based grants for covering direct and indirect costs of study.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Public authority provides top-level student financial support for indirect costs of study.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existence of a top-level policy regarding raising accessibility and affordability of study through covering indirect costs.</li> <li>Public authority collects data on the number/share of short, first, second and third cycle students that receive student financial support to cover accommodation, transport, meals and IT equipment due to digitization of higher education.</li> <li>Students from both full-time and part-time study programmes have access to student financial support for indirect costs of study.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. Public authority provides information, assistance and communicates effectively on available student financial support to all students, in particular to underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable groups of students.</b></p>

**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

**1. Existence of top-level requirements or recommendations for higher education institutions to offer training on diversity, equity or inclusion to academic and administrative staff, and students (Eurydice,2022).**

- Existence of top-level requirements or recommendations for initial staff and student training on diversity, equity and inclusion at higher education institutions (e.g. training on equal opportunities, universal accessibility and universal design, etc.).
- Existence of top-level requirements or recommendations for continuous professional staff development at higher education institutions on diversity, equity and inclusion strategies.

**2. Existence of support offered by top-level public authorities to higher education institutions to offer training on diversity, equity or inclusion to academic and administrative staff and students (Eurydice,2022).**

- Public authority provides funding for the provision of initial and continuous professional staff and student training on diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Public authority provides higher education institutions with tools and other non-financial means of support on diversity, equity and inclusion for its staff and students.
- Public authority supports the existence of 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 more diverse student and staff body.

**3. Public authority issues guidelines to quality assurance agencies to consider whether social dimension is addressed in the mission and strategy of higher education institutions (Eurydice, 2022).**

- The external quality assurance evaluations check whether diversity, equity and inclusion objectives are engrained into the learning and teaching, research, outreach, governance, and management of higher education institutions, and if there is a systematic monitoring in place at higher education institutions on the implementation of these objectives.
- Public authority supports the involvement of underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable students and staff in internal and external quality assurance procedures.
- Quality assurance agencies have standards and criteria in their external evaluation procedures that check whether higher education institutions offer training on diversity, equity or inclusion to academic and administrative staff and students.

**4. Public authority issues guidelines and provide financial means to higher education institutions on how to make their buildings and infrastructure easily accessible and adjusted to the needs of underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable students and staff.**

**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.

<b>Indicators</b>
<p><b>1. Existence of top-level mobility policy focused on vulnerable, disadvantaged or underrepresented students and staff (Eurydice, 2022).</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public authority has developed an action plan with quantitative targets for stimulating international mobility of students and staff from vulnerable, disadvantaged and underrepresented groups.</li> <li>• Public authority endorses and/or administers a variety of mobility programmes, in addition to Erasmus+ programmes, to 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.).</li> <li>• Public authority provides targeted administrative and financial support for students and staff from vulnerable, disadvantaged and underrepresented groups to help them participate in international mobility.</li> <li>• Public financial support for students is fully portable across the EHEA while taking part in the international mobility programmes.</li> <li>• Public authority promotes international mobility opportunities through a variety of accessible and inclusive formats.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Public authority has a standardized 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).</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existence of top-level monitoring of specific characteristics of students and staff participating in international mobility programs (Eurydice, 2022).</li> <li>• Existence of annual data collection on the enrolment, retention and graduation rates of international students and staff from underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable backgrounds.</li> <li>• Existence of data collection on the percentage of students and staff participating in physical vs. blended mobility, particularly in relation to underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable students and staff.</li> <li>• Existence of annual national data collection on the financial support provided to underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable students and staff for participating in international mobility programs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Public authority has measures in place to support vulnerable, disadvantaged or underrepresented students and staff in international learning mobility (Eurydice, 2022).</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public authority provides professional training support to higher education institutions on how to successfully organize international learning mobility, in particular blended mobility and internationalization at home, along with the physical mobility.</li> <li>• Public authority provides funding support for the following: 1) guidance services, 2) mentoring services to enhance the performance and wellbeing of students and staff, 3)</li> </ul>

subsidized accommodation and food/canteens services available and accessible at higher education institutions for incoming and/or outgoing students and staff (Eurydice, 2022).

- Top-level authorities provide support to higher education institutions on the use of the new technologies for successful participation in international mobility programs, particularly in blended mobility and internationalization at home (Eurydice, 2022).

**Tools that can be used to support the implementation of this principle:**

The Inclusive Mobility Framework, The Inclusive Mobility Toolbox, The Inclusive Mobility Self-Assessment Tool available at <https://inclusivemobility.eu/>

**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 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**

**1. Top-level authorities provide financial support to higher education institutions in developing community engagement activities focused on diversity, equity and inclusion (Eurydice, 2022).**

**2. Public authority supports higher education institutions to train their staff and students on how to increase their community engagement activities focused on diversity, equity and inclusion.**

- Public authority recommends specific tools for the reflection on and enhancement of different dimensions of community engagement at higher education institutions: 1) Teaching and Learning dimension (e.g. service-learning programmes); 2) Research dimension; 3) Service and Knowledge Exchange dimension; 4) Students dimension; 5) Staff dimension; 6) Governance of higher education institutions dimension; 7) Management of higher education institutions dimension.

**3. Public authority initiates and supports 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 implement community engagement activities, particularly those focused on diversity, equity and inclusion.**



- Public authorities support higher education institutions by creating cooperative national structures, securing the exchange of good practices, and facilitating peer learning and inter-institutional staff development on how to best implement community engagement activities.
- Public authority supports networks which promote and disseminate good practices, and which provide awards for community engagement activities in higher education that foster diversity, equity and inclusion.

**4. Public authorities provides a legal framework which secures that community engagement activities of academic and administrative staff contribute to the advancement of their professional careers at higher education institutions.**

- Community engagement in higher education is valued at an equal level as scientific publishing and similar traditional requirements in the advancement of academic and administrative careers at higher education institutions.

**5. Existence of requirements for external quality assurance agencies to evaluate community engagement activities of higher education institutions focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion (Eurydice, 2022).**

- Quality assurance agencies have standards and criteria in their external evaluation procedures that check whether higher education institutions have community engagement activities, particularly those focused on diversity, equity and inclusion.

**Tools that can be used to support the implementation of this principle:**

TEFCE Toolbox: An Institutional Self-Reflection Framework for Community Engagement in Higher Education

Available at: <https://www.tefce.eu/toolbox>

UASIMAP Self-Reflection Tool (Mapping Regional Engagement Activities of European Universities of Applied Sciences)

Available at: <https://www.uasimap.eu/> [work in progress]

Participate in the U-Multirank, because it has indicators on regional engagement.

Available at: <https://www.umultirank.org/>

The Council of Europe has taken important steps in developing ‘local democratic mission of higher education’ by developing a particular focus on locality, and on values of democracy, human rights and a rule of law.

**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**

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

- Public authority actively engages relevant stakeholders, including student and staff unions, in the elaboration, adoption, monitoring, evaluation and review of all policies affecting social dimension of higher education.
- Public authority regularly surveys the satisfaction of relevant stakeholders related to their participation in the decision-making and consultation process on strengthening social dimension of higher education.

**2. Public authority supports and participates in international peer learning activities and exchange of good practices on strengthening social dimension of higher education.**

## Glossary of Terms and Definitions<sup>9</sup>

*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 health) 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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<sup>9</sup> This glossary is also adopted as an integral part of the Principles and Guidelines at the 2020 Rome Ministerial Conference. This glossary is intended only for the purpose of these Principles and Guidelines.