



Republic of North Macedonia
**Ministry of Education
and Science**



Quality and Quality Assurance in Higher Education - trends and developments in the EU and Western Balkans

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Skopje, the Republic of North Macedonia

Quality Assurance for Equitable Higher Education

Working group B

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Handshakes



Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Article 26

1. Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.
2. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

UN Sustainable Development Goal

UN Sustainable Development Goal 4:

Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

Target 4.3

By 2030, ensure **equal access for all women and men to affordable** and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university

Target 4.5

By 2030, **eliminate gender disparities** in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for **the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations**

Target 4.7

By 2030, ensure that all **learners acquire the knowledge and skills** needed to **promote sustainable development**, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development



Higher education



Social dimension

2.18 Higher education should play a strong role in fostering **social cohesion, reducing inequalities** and raising the level of **knowledge, skills and competences in society**. Policy should therefore aim to maximise the potential of individuals in terms of their personal development and their contribution to a sustainable and democratic knowledge-based society. We share the societal aspiration that **the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels should reflect the diversity of our populations**. We reaffirm the importance of students being able to complete their studies **without obstacles related to their social and economic background**. We therefore continue our efforts to provide adequate **student services**, create more **flexible learning pathways** into and within higher education, and to **widen participation** at all levels on the basis of equal opportunity.

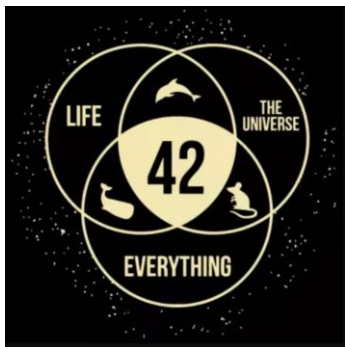
London Communiqué

Towards the European Higher Education Area: responding to challenges in a globalised world, 2007

Social dimension of Higher Education - definition

Social dimension: equitable access and completion

The student body within higher education **should reflect the diversity of Europe's populations**. We therefore emphasize the social characteristics of higher education and aim to provide equal opportunities to quality education. Access into higher education should be **widened** by fostering the **potential of students from underrepresented groups** and by providing adequate conditions for the completion of their studies. This involves improving the **learning environment, removing all barriers to study, and creating the appropriate economic conditions** for students to be able to benefit from the study opportunities at all levels. Each participating country will set **measurable targets for widening overall participation** and increasing participation of underrepresented groups in higher education, to be reached by the end of the next decade. Efforts to achieve equity in higher education should be complemented by actions in other parts of the educational system.



Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education,
Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve, 28-29 April 2009

Social dimension of Higher Education - meaning

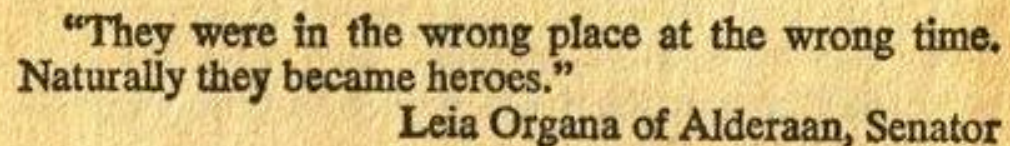
The principles and guidelines within this document complement the EHEA 2020 strategy “Widening Participation for Equity and Growth”¹, which ministers adopted in Yerevan in 2015 as a means to further strengthen the social dimension while concomitantly contributing to increasing quality in higher education. **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.

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.

3.4 We recognise the need to improve the **availability of data on both mobility** and the social dimension across all the countries participating in the Bologna Process. We therefore ask the European Commission (**Eurostat**), in conjunction with **Eurostudent**, to develop **comparable and reliable indicators** and **data** to measure progress towards the overall objective for the social dimension and student and staff mobility in all Bologna countries. Data in this field should cover participative equity in higher education as well as employability for graduates. This task should be carried out in conjunction with BFUG and a report should be submitted to our 2009 Ministerial conference.

2005 Bergen Communiqué

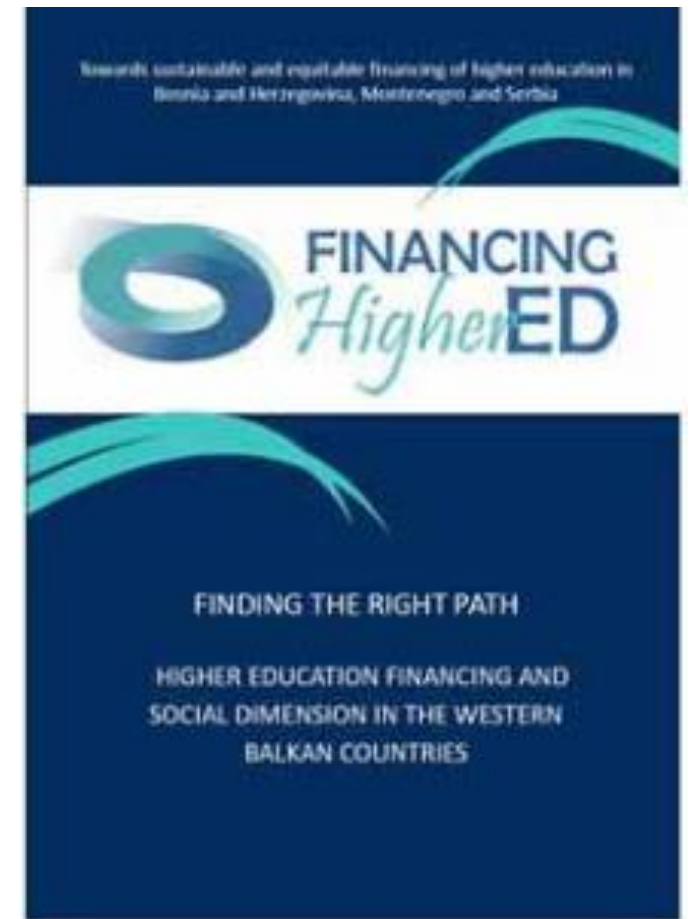
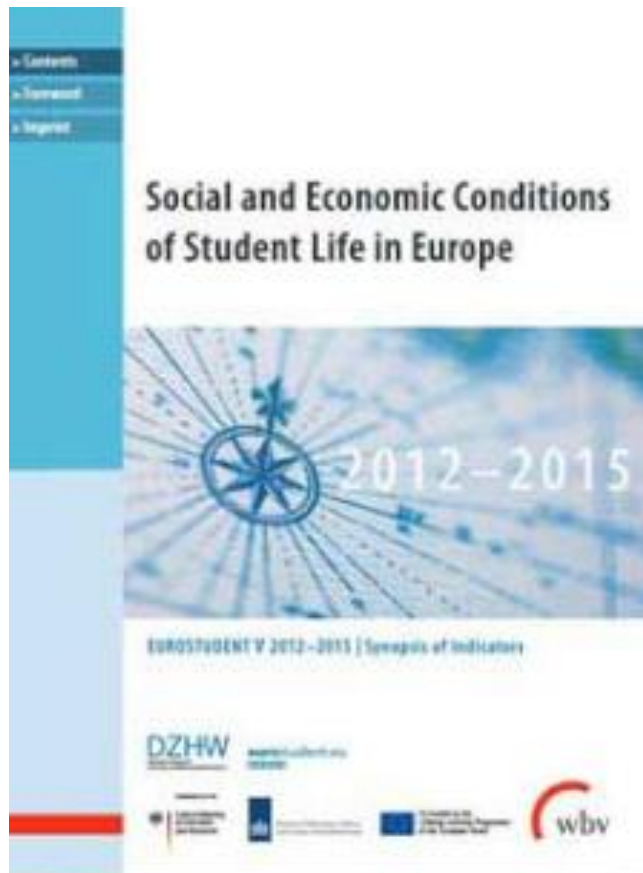
Eurostudent V: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia <https://www.eurostudent.eu/#>



“They were in the wrong place at the wrong time.
Naturally they became heroes.”
Leia Organa of Alderaan, Senator

IF YOU CAN'T
MEASURE IT, IT
DOESN'T EXIST.

Eurostudent V: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia <https://www.eurostudent.eu/#>





Definition of quality

'Quality in higher education refers to how well providers support students to consistently achieve positive outcomes in learning, personal development, and career advancement, while meeting the reasonable expectations of those students, employers, government, and society in general.'

Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area SDGs

The Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (SDG)

- the framework for internal and external quality assurance.
- Adopted at the EHEA Ministerial Conference in 2015.
- The ESG are divided into three parts:
 - Part 1: internal quality assurance
 - Part 2: external quality assurance
 - Part 3: quality assurance agencies

“The ESG apply to all higher education offered in the EHEA regardless of the mode of study or place of delivery.”

The term ‘quality assurance’ is used in this document to describe all activities within the continuous improvement cycle (i.e. assurance and enhancement activities).

1.1 Policy for quality assurance

(QA policies should be) guarding against intolerance of any kind or discrimination against the students or staff;

1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment

The implementation of student-centred learning and teaching - respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths;

Considers and uses different modes of delivery, where appropriate;

1.6 Learning resources and student support

For a good higher education experience, institutions provide a range of resources to assist student learning. These vary from physical resources such as libraries, study facilities and IT infrastructure to human support in the form of tutors, counsellors and other advisers. The role of support services is of particular importance in facilitating the mobility of students within and across higher education systems.

The needs of a diverse student population (such as mature, part-time, employed and international students as well as students with disabilities), and the shift towards student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing the learning resources and student support.

To recap

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

A graphic with a purple background on the left and a green background on the right. The purple section contains the QAA logo (a green diamond with a white 'Q') and the text 'QAA' in white. Below this, the text 'Definition of quality' is written in white. The green section contains a white quote: 'Quality in higher education refers to how well providers support students to consistently achieve positive outcomes in learning, personal development, and career advancement, while meeting the reasonable expectations of those students, employers, government, and society in general.'

The main challenges

Policy/system level support: what do HEIs **need** so that they can increase support to ALL students towards increasing the quality of HE provision in terms of:

- **Data on SD** - do we really know our systems
- **Equitable access** - financial but is it only that?
- **Completion**
- **HE funding**



The main challenges

Institutional response: what can **HEIs do** to increase support to ALL students towards increasing the quality of HE provision in terms of:

- **Data on SD** - do we really know our systems
- **Equitable access**
- **Completion**
- **Teching: quality of knowledge** that is responsive to societal needs including but not limiting to labour market, environmental and communal needs



Thank you!

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- We need to widen the understanding of the term vulnerable groups to all of those who are not having full access to all the resources.
- With the student body getting smaller widening participation gets more and more important
- There is system level and institutional support to students from underrepresented groups
 - Scholarships for students coming from disadvantaged background
 - Grants for students based on educational achievement
 - Infrastructure supporting access, learning
- We need qualitative and quantitative data on student aspirations and expectations based on which institutional policies should be developed.
- Quality assurance
 - the focus should be on detailed self-assessment report that should not be seen as an administrative unnecessary burden but rather as an essential tool for assessing strengths and weakness and developing policies
 - SA could go beyond SDGs