

# Potential Indicators for the 2024 Bologna Process Implementation Report on the principles and guidelines for the social dimension

## Background

The 2024 Bologna Process Implementation Report (BPIR) should cover all policy areas/issues highlighted in the Rome Communiqué. With regard to the social dimension, this means following up on the adoption of the Principles and Guidelines to strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA. The Principles and Guidelines propose making coherent policy links throughout education systems, and provide a broad agenda for national action.

Eurydice has undertaken a project to establish a prototype social dimension/equity policy-monitoring framework related to the Principles and Guidelines. Such policy mapping would inform policy makers and relevant stakeholders about progress made as well as the areas of particular challenges. This required the development and testing of indicators related to each principle and its guidelines.

The project report was published in May 2022. The project explored national policy action to address systemic factors reinforcing inequity in higher education as well as the capacity to provide a European-level assessment of country progress in implementing the Principles and Guidelines.

The Eurydice project indicators were discussed with the Social Dimension working group at their meeting in The Hague. There was agreement that the 10 scorecard indicators serve the purpose of monitoring implementation of the Principles and Guidelines and can be proposed to be used in the Implementation Report.

## P&G 1 (STRATEGY)

### Principle:

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, nongovernmental 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.

### Indicator

The following elements are considered. An education system gets dark green if all four of the following elements are in place <sup>(1)</sup>:

1. At least one strategy (or other major policy plan) related to equity in higher education is being currently implemented.
2. The strategy has specific and measurable targets.
3. A social dialogue related to the strategy took place or is currently taking place.
4. Quality assurance agencies are required to monitor whether higher education institutions have policies with a social dimension (equity, inclusion, diversity).

## **P & G 2 (LEGISLATION)**

### **Principle:**

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 organise 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 national qualifications frameworks should facilitate transparent recognition of learning outcomes and reliable quality assurance procedures.

### **Indicator**

The following elements are considered. An education system gets dark green if all four of the following elements are in place

1. Part-time studies, distance learning and blended learning programmes are allowed in the first cycle by all higher education institutions.
2. Candidates can enter higher education on the basis of recognition of non-formal and/or informal learning and this applies to all higher education institutions.
3. Prior non-formal and/or informal learning counts towards the fulfilment of a higher education study programme in all higher education institutions.
4. Quality assurance agencies are required to address the recognition of prior non-formal and/or informal learning in higher education.

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<sup>(1)</sup> The scoreboard indicator gives an equal value to all elements because its goal is to reflect how many elements of the Principled and Guidelines are being currently implemented.

### **P& G 3 (LIFELONG LEARNING)**

#### **Principle:**

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:**

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.

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.

Equity, diversity and inclusion should play a key role in the training of pre higher education teachers.

#### **Indicator**

An education system receives dark green if all four of the following criteria are in place:

1. Coordination mechanisms between education levels with a focus on equity.
2. Involvement of representatives of other related policy areas in policy discussions on equity in higher education.
3. Top-level measures to support adult returners.
4. Initial and/or continuous teacher training programmes develop competences on equity, inclusion and diversity.

### **P& G 4 (DATA)**

#### **Principle:**

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:**

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.

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.

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.

### **Indicator**

An education system receives dark green if all four of the following criteria are in place:

1. At least one student characteristic, in addition to gender and age, is monitored at entry, during studies or upon graduation. For this criterion, administrative data is considered.
2. Vulnerable, disadvantaged and underrepresented groups of students can be identified in completion rate data.
3. Completion rate data at the end of the first year of the first cycle is available to top level policy makers.
4. Participation in Eurostudent, with Eurostudent VIII as the reference publication.

### **P & G 5 (GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING)**

#### **Principle:**

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:**

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.

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.

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.

### **Indicator**

An education system receives dark green if all four of the following criteria are in place:

1. Top-level legal requirement to provide psychological counselling services for potential or enrolled students.
2. Psychological counselling services focused on students with specific characteristics.
3. Quality assurance of psychological counselling services is required.
4. Presence of public institution(s) with a formal role of mediating in conflicts related to equity in higher education.

## **P& G 6 (FUNDING)**

### **Principle:**

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:**

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 particular in relation to vulnerable, disadvantaged and underrepresented groups. Mechanisms for achieving these targets should not have negative financial consequences for higher education institutions' core funding.

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.).

### **Indicator**

The following elements are considered, and points have been attributed. Dark green requires 4 points:

- Public funding is attributed to higher education institutions that meet targets in widening access, increasing participation or completing higher education, provided that public funding has remained stable or increased between 2013 and 2018: 1 point
- Need-based or universal grants are awarded to over 50% of the first-cycle student population: 2 points

- Need based grants are awarded to 10-49% of the first-cycle student population: 1 point.
- Top-level support is provided for at least two of the following elements: accommodation, transport and meals: 1 point.

## **P& G 7 (DIVERSITY AND TEACHER TRAINING)**

### **Principle:**

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.

### **Indicator**

An education system receives dark green if all four of the following criteria are in place:

- Requirement or recommendation for higher education institutions to offer training on equity.
- Public authority financial support for training.
- Other (non-financial) public authority support.
- Focus on equity and inclusion in quality assurance.

## **P& G 8 (MOBILITY)**

### **Principle:**

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:**

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.

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.

### **Indicator**

An education system receives dark green if all four of the following criteria are in place:

1. National mobility policy with a focus on specific characteristics.
2. Portability of degree and credit mobility grants.
3. Guidance, mentoring services, subsidised accommodation, food/canteens are in place in all higher education institutions for incoming and/or outgoing students.
4. Top-level authorities advise higher education institutions on the use of the new technologies in teaching and learning.

## **P& G 9 (COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT)**

### **Principle:**

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

### **Guidelines:**

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.

Community stakeholders (e.g. local authorities, cultural organisations, nongovernmental 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.

### **Indicator**

The indicator is composed of three criteria as follows:

- Public authority financial support to community engagement activities focused on equity and inclusion.
- Other public authority support to community engagement activities focused on equity and inclusion.
- External quality assurance agencies required to evaluate community engagement activities.

Where three elements are in place, the country is shown in dark green and scores four points. In this case there is one point per element, plus a bonus point for having all three elements in place as there is no light green category used. Where there are two elements the country is shown in yellow and receives two points, one element is depicted in orange and scores one point, and countries with none of the elements are shown in red and don't score any points.

## **P& G 10 (POLICY DIALOGUE)**

### **Principle:**

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:**

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.

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.

### **Indicator**

The indicator is composed as follows:

Where policy dialogue is established in a forum specifically focused on ensuring implementation of Principles and Guidelines, the country is shown in dark green.

If policy dialogue on the Principles and Guidelines is taking place within another forum that has other purposes, the country is indicated in yellow.

When no policy dialogue on the implementation of Principles and Guidelines has been established, the country is shown in red.