

National Union of Students in Denmark inputs on headlines for the P&G

Focus: completion, access, and underrepresented groups

When composing these principles and guidelines, it is fundamental that we advise countries to map not only their access indicators, but as well their completion rates. Access to education, is not only about managing to enrol in HE, but as well to be able to complete it.

Furthermore, it is also important that we maintain the focus of asking countries to map their underrepresented groups in HE, and that our principles and guidelines are implemented taking in consideration the special needs of these groups, that are often different across Europe.

Although, it is also important that we do not forget the agreed underrepresented groups in 2009 in the “Analysis of the National Strategies on the SD of the Bologna Process”. These were:

- Groups with Lower socio-economic background
- migrants and cultural minorities with less academic background
- Students with disabilities
- Non-traditional students (such as mature students)
- Specific genders in specific educations (like women in engineering or males in teacher educations)

Transportation

Distance between HEI and place of residence of students is an important factor that plays a role on access and completion to education. Transportation can be unnecessarily long and it can often be very expensive for students on a limited budget. This affects especially students that live outside the big cities, so it is an important aspect of accessibility for students coming from outside them.

It is therefore a good idea that mechanisms for ensuring affordable and effective transportation between students’ place of residency and HEI are put in place.

Housing

Housing is an important aspect of accessibility and completion of HE. Housing plays a role on students’ possibilities of studying outside their regions of origin, allows them to gain autonomy from their families, and it is important to promote internationalization. Furthermore, lack of access of housing, as well as poor and uncertain living conditions, play a negative role in students’ well-being and mental health.

It is then important that our our principles and guidelines mention the importance of facilitating access to affordable and stable student housing.

Equal gender distribution in all study lines

Education choice is still highly gendered. Many educations in the STEM sector remain mainly partaken by males, while many in the humanities sector show a majority of female students.

This division is deeply rooted in the gender norms of our society and it starts at very early ages. This division plays as well a role in our future societies, where this division ends up reproducing itself in future generations. Therefore, if we aim to move towards gender equality, there is a need of tackling the challenges we have with student choice.

Therefore our principles and guidelines need to propose that mechanisms that counteract gender bias in education choice should be put in place.

Student wellbeing and mental health

Stress levels among students is peaking up across Europe. This is given both because of educational and social mechanisms that induce performance pressures, as well as, in some cases, lack of flexibility in the education system. Student lack of well being, as well as high levels of stress, affect completion rates by increasing drop-outs; as well as affect some groups of students more than others.

It is then important that our principles and guidelines mention the importance of developing mechanisms to increase student wellbeing and to reduce reduce stress levels; as well as promote the creation of more flexible learning paths.

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