

**THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF HIGHER
EDUCATION**

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COMPREHENSIVE EHEA FRAMEWORK FOR THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

1. Principles and Guidelines for the Social Dimension of Higher Education
2. Indicators for each principle
3. Explanatory description for each indicator

EHEA FRAMEWORK FOR THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Enables Public Authorities in EHEA member States and HEIs to create national and Higher Education Institution policies, strategies and action plans for strengthening the social dimension, as well as define instruments for monitoring and evaluation of their implementation and assessing their impact.

EHEA FRAMEWORK FOR THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

This framework will promote inclusive strategies, which provide both specific support for vulnerable, disadvantaged and underrepresented students and staff, as well as highlight broader measures and policies from which the student population and staff employed at HEIs can benefit.

The document being developed compliments and reinforces the previously adopted Principles and Guidelines to strengthen the Social Dimension of H. Ed in the EHEA (Annex II of the Rome Communique) by providing Indicators and explanatory descriptions for each Social Dimension Principle.

DEFINITION OF SOCIAL DIMENSION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Creating an inclusive environment in H. Ed. in which the composition of the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels corresponds to the heterogeneous social profile of society at large in the EHEA Countries.

This inclusive environment should foster equity, diversity and be responsive to the needs of local communities.

Current Draft Indicators to the 10 Principles and Guidelines of the Social Dimension of H. Ed

- 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.**

Indicators:

- ...a national strategy which strengthens diversity, equity and inclusion of Staff and Students...
- ...specific measurable targets...
- ...social dialogue with stakeholders...
- ...legal framework...

2. Legal regulations or policy documents should allow and enable Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to develop their own strategies to fulfil their public responsibility towards widening access to, participation in and completion of higher education studies.

Indicators

- 1. ... regulations that allow HEIs to offer flexible pathways like part-time studies, stacking modules, blended or distance learning programmes...**
- 2. ...recognition of prior non-formal and or informal learning...**

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.

Indicators:

- 1. ... co-ordination structures and mechanisms between different levels of education with a focus on diversity, equity and inclusion in education...**
- 2. ...integration of diversity, equity and inclusion into the mandate of the top-level coordinated mechanisms between different levels of education...**
- 3. ... involvement of representatives of other policy areas - finance, employment, housing, health and social welfare...**
- 4. ... support to students with a delayed transition to Higher Education...**
- 5. ... initial and continuous teacher training programmes...**

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.

Indicators:

1. ... regular national data collection on student characteristics and experiences prior to entry to H.Ed, as well as on entry to H.Ed. during studies and upon graduation...
2. ...data collected used to enhance policies on Social Dimension of H Ed...
3. ... regular national data collection on staff characteristics and experiences in H. Ed...
4. ...regular surveys on potential systematic barriers to diversity, equity and inclusion...
5. ... internally comparable data collection in H. Ed...

6. 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.

Indicators:

- 1. ... legal requirements and supports to provide free accessible and timely academic and careers counselling and guidance services ...**
- 2. ...free accessible and timely psychological counselling and guidance services to students and staff...**
- 3. ... quality assessment of career, academic as well as psychological counselling and guidance services...**
- 4. ... existence of public institutions with a formal role in conflict resolution and in mediating conflict related to the SD in H Ed...**

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.

Indicators:

- 1. ...public funding is attributed to HEIs that meet targets in widening access, increasing participation or completing H.Ed. ...**
- 2. ...universal or needs based grants for first cycle students**
- 3. ...financial support for the indirect costs of study...**
- 4. ... information, assistance and clear communication on available student financial supports...**

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.

Indicators:

- 1. ...training on diversity, equity or inclusion to academic, administrative staff and students...**
- 2. ...monitor whether HEIs offer such training...**
- 3. ...guidelines and financial means – how to make buildings and infrastructure easily accessible and adjusted...**

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.

Indicators:

- 1. ... mobility policy focused on vulnerable, disadvantaged or underrepresented students and staff...**
- 2. ...standardised methodology to collect data, monitor participation and experiences...**
- 3. ...measures in place to support vulnerable, disadvantaged and underrepresented groups...**

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

Indicators:

1. ...provide financial support to higher education institutions in developing community engagement activities focused on diversity, equity and inclusion...
2. ... supports higher education institutions to train their staff and students on how to increase their community engagement activities focused on diversity, equity and inclusion.
3. ...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...
4. ...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...
5. ...ensures that an appropriate body has the mandate to monitor community engagement activities of higher education institutions focused on diversity, equity and inclusion

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.

Indicators:

- 1. ...established policy dialogue in a specific forum dedicated to the implementation of the Principles and Guidelines...**
- 2. ...supports and participates in international peer learning activities and exchange of good practices on strengthening social dimension of higher education...**

DISCUSSION

BFUG Working Group on the
Social Dimension of H.Ed with
HERSC, EI/ETUCE.