

Mainstreaming Social Dimension in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA): Strategies, Tools, Raising Awareness

Country Profiles

Country: AUSTRIA

Authority in charge with "Social Dimension": BMWFW, especially Directorate General IV (Universities, Universities of Applied Sciences, Premises) and Directorate General VI (Budget Coordination Central Services & Public Relations, Personnel Student Support & Counselling Recognition Issues)

Person in charge/contact: Dr. Maria Keplinger, Expert Unit on Higher Education Development in the Directorate General IV, BMWFW

Rationale for your strategy: Why do you work on/with a national Strategy and/or a coherent set of measures and/or another way of mainstreaming Social Dimension?

- Pursuing the shared goal on which the member states agreed within the London Communiqué 2007: The student body should reflect the diversity of the broader population at all levels of higher education, from admission, to participation and successful completion.
- Raising quotas for underrepresented groups, e.g.: In Austria, the probability for learners from academic backgrounds to participate in higher education is higher than that for learners from lower educational background > academics are overrepresented
- Improving evidence base for ongoing political discussions of social dimension in connection with regulating/limiting access to higher education

Short explanation of the status of your national strategy and/or your coherent set of measures and tools and/or another way of mainstreaming Social Dimension (ongoing discussions, target groups involved, implementation, evaluation, monitoring, adjustments...)

- Presentation by the Austrian Vice Chancellor Federal Minister of Science, Research and Economy, Dr. Reinhold Mitterlehner on a press conference on Feb. 20th, 2017
- Preceded by a one-year strategic process in 2016: involvement of stakeholders, discussion of possible content within 9 events and a 6 week consultation phase at the end of 2016
- Implementation and next steps:
 - o Dissemination of the strategy and further raising of awareness with regard to the social dimension: e.g. presentation and dissemination on Bologna Day 2017
 - o Social Dimension-Mainstreaming: within ministerial planning documents
 - Performance agreements 2019-2021 with public universities
 - Development and Funding Plan for Universities of Applied Sciences
 - Austrian National Development Plan for Public Universities
 - o Supporting monitoring and evaluation

On which concept/definition of "Social Dimension" is your current work based?

- "Social dimension" as an individual resource for civic, economic and political participation and integration by creating equal chances for all learners with a focus on (the needs of) individual learners
- "Social dimension" as an educational resource for (Higher) Education Institutions including factors influencing the participation in (Higher) Education apart from talent and motivation, e.g. regional origin, educational background, gender
- "Social dimension" as an economic and civic resource that enables adequate reaction to economic and civic developments by activating unused potential

What kind of strategic approach do you follow? Target groups (underrepresented/disadvantaged groups)? Which ones, and why? Or do you follow an "anticategorical" strategy e.g. according to student life cycle, diversity concept etc.?

The Austrian "National Strategy for the Social Dimension in Higher Education" aims to combine a categorical approach (addressing target groups) and an "anticategorical" approach (addressing specific/overlapping problem areas). This enables a quantitative approach (e.g. raising quotas for underrepresented groups) as well as a qualitative approach (e.g. improving the accessibility and completeness of information material). This results in a structure following three target dimensions along the student life cycle, each consisting of 3 action lines and a list of specific policy measures and 9 quantitative goals.

Websites/ main online sources for your core Social Dimension initiatives and/or strategy:

www.sozialerhebung.at/sozdim; www.studiversum.at;

Online Link for a relevant documentation or movie related to Social Dimension:

<https://www.bmwfw.gv.at/Presse/AktuellePresseMeldungen/Seiten/Mitterlehner-zu-Maßnahmenpaket-für-mehr-soziale-Durchlässigkeit-an-Hochschulen.aspx>

Online Link for a relevant event and/or empirical study related to Social Dimension:

www.sozialerhebung.at

Country: Belgium – Flemish Community

Authority in charge with "Social Dimension": Department of Education and Training

Person in charge/contact: Patrick Willems – Noël Vercruysse

Rationale for your strategy: Why do you work on/with a national Strategy and/or a coherent set of measures and/or another way of mainstreaming Social Dimension?

Social Dimension:

Policy objectives are:

- getting more young people to and through higher education in a way that promotes social cohesion, social mobility, '*democratisation of higher education*' and that addresses the demographic trends;
- improving the attainment and achievement for those who are most at risk of failing in higher education programmes;
- reducing the educational attainment gap between the different groups participating in higher education.

Driving forces or rationales are:

- increasing the student numbers and the participation rates;
- the belief that a diverse student population enriches learning experiences;
- social justice: higher education has an important role to play in fostering equity and social justice to the wider society;
- contributing to social and economic development;
- tapping the pool of talent;
- participation in higher education is important because of its implications for an individual's chances in life.

Central to the policy is access to and participation in higher education, but also progression and success within it. It is not just about access to higher education but it is also about completion.

Short explanation of the status of your national strategy and/or your coherent set of measures and tools and/or another way of mainstreaming Social Dimension (ongoing discussions, target groups involved, implementation, evaluation, monitoring, adjustments...)

Set of enabling measures:

- An extra weighting factor(1.5) in the funding formula for students from a lower socio-economic background;
- An extra weighing factor in the funding formula for disabled students;
- An extra weighting factor in the funding formula for students who are combining working and studying (a kind of a second chance);
- Tuition fees are lower for students from a lower socio-economic background (100 euro instead of 890 euro per academic year);
- We pay a lot of attention to the permeability between the different sectors and types of HE: from level 5 to level 6 (professionally oriented bachelor programmes) and from level 6 (professionally oriented bachelor programmes) to the master programmes at the universities (we don't have professionally oriented master programmes at the University Colleges/Universities for Applied sciences); The share of students coming from a lower socio-economic background is bigger at the University Colleges (offering only professionally oriented bachelor programmes) than at the universities (almost 30% versus 18à19 %). We consider the permeability as a measure promoting the social mobility. Bridging programmes are included in the funding formula.
- We provide an extra monthly top up grant (150 à 200 euro) for the mobile students coming

- Almost all the HEIs offer some remedial courses during the summer or at the very beginning of the academic year such as 'academic dutch' in particular of interest for the student from ethnic minorities but also mathematics.
- We have also a small programme of tutoring in place: HE students as tutors of secondary education pupils from a disadvantaged background. The aim is to increase their aspirations and their motivation to attend HE.
- Most of the HEIs have developed their own aptitude test toolkit for new entrants allowing aspirant students to test/evaluate their motivation/interests/aspirations, their way of studying and learning, their preparedness for a particular discipline; the toolkit provides feedback to the aspirant and new students and the institutions offer remedial courses and activities; The aim is to match better the preparedness of the students in terms of their competences with the prerequisites for entering higher education; at this moment a pilot of a Flemish aptitude test is running (Columbus).
- An income based grant scheme (but only 25% of the students are entitled to such a grant)
- Flexible higher education allowing students to enroll for less than 60 credits per academic year.
- Part-time students are funded on equal footing as full-time students.

Monitoring:

The overall student database for higher education includes data with regard the following student characteristics:

- Entitlement to a grant (proxy for lower socio-economic background);
- Secondary education life cycle;
- Included in the Flemish register of disabled people;
- Working students

With regard to pupils in secondary education the schools collect data about the language spoken in the family and at home and the highest qualification obtained by the mother. By coupling the secondary education database with the higher education database we are allowed to use that information for monitoring students life cycle in higher education. That kind of information is a proxy for ethnic or migrant background.

Most of HEIs are collecting information about the physical and mental/psychological/learning disabilities of their own students. The Flemish Council of Education has developed a uniform template supporting the HEIs in collecting those data. It is voluntary.

After the abolishment of the Social Dimension Support Fund no evaluation nor monitoring exercises were conducted.

Although there is no explicit national strategy most of the HEIs have an institutional social dimension strategy and policy including several concrete actions. Most of the actions were developed with the support of the former Social Dimension Support Fund and are now continued with the support of their own funds.

On which concept/definition of "Social Dimension" is your current work based?

We have endorsed the definition of the social dimension of the London Communiqué:

"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."

What kind of strategic approach do you follow? Target groups (underrepresented/ disadvantaged groups)? Which ones, and why? Or do you follow an "anticategorical" strategy e.g. according to student life cycle, diversity concept etc.?

In their official discourse all HEIs follow the 'non-categorical' approach aiming at developing inclusive higher education according the definition of the Higher Education Academy:

With a greater emphasis today on equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) we should revisit our teaching and engage with the learning needs of all students by adopting inclusive pedagogies. By inclusive we mean valuing the contribution of students regardless of their backgrounds and appreciating the contributions of different value systems. Inclusive learning and teaching benefits all students by drawing on the strengths of students from different backgrounds. It is not about providing 'remedial' or 'special' measures for certain groups of students.

But in practice the focus lies on providing special measures for certain disadvantaged groups in order to remove the specific barriers related to the characteristics of those groups. In fact building an inclusive teaching and learning environment and in particular developing an inclusive culture in HE is challenging and remains a (too) high level aim. It has an impact on all dimensions of the teaching and learning process and it requires an integrative approach: recruitment of students, study choice, quality information, all aspects of curriculum design, outreach activities, community engagement, monitoring, counseling, assignments, evaluations, mobility opportunities, work placements, peer learning, staff development, physical spaces, creating a sense of belonging, ...

Target groups:

- Students with disabilities (physical as well as mental disabilities (dyslexia and dyscalculie)
- Students from ethnic minorities
- New comers
- Second chance students

The social dimension has 2 working areas:

- The academic area (teaching and learning);
- The financial area (tuition fees, grants, student houses and students restaurants).

Websites/main online sources for your core Social Dimension initiatives and/or strategy:

Website of the Flemish Education Council: (only texts in dutch):

http://www.vlor.be/doelgroepen_aanmoedigingsfonds

Online Link for a relevant documentation or movie related to Social Dimension:

The website of PL4SD includes a reference to actions related to the social dimension in Flanders.

Online Link for a relevant event and/or empirical study related to Social Dimension:

Modernisation of higher education: Access, Retention and Employability:

http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/165EN.pdf

Country: CROATIA

Authority in charge with "Social Dimension": Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Croatia, Directorate for Higher Education – the sector responsible for development of policies, social dimension included and the sector responsible for student standard

Persons in charge/contact: Ana Tecilazić Goršić (ana.tecilazicgorsic@mzo.hr) and Ivana Krznar (ivana.krznar@mzo.hr)

Rationale for your strategy: Why do you work on/with a national Strategy and/or a coherent set of measures and/or another way of mainstreaming Social Dimension?

The national Strategy for Education, Science and Technology (2014) stipulated that the social dimension is one of the key objectives for the policy developments in higher education. In particular the Objective 6 of Upgrading student standard with special care for social dimension is directed to making higher education accessible to all.

This objective has been set up as a part of a broader, European policy framework and is based on research findings, in particular, of the EUROSTUDENT. Firstly, the strategic goal is shared with the Bologna countries with the aim that the social profile of 'the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education should reflect the diversity of our population' (the London Communiqué 2007). Secondly, it is set towards reaching the Europe 2020 Headline Target on tertiary education attainment (40%) with the national target of 35%.

The results of the EUROSTUDENT demonstrated that the access to higher education is unequal for various vulnerable groups and that living and studying conditions may have negative influence on the experience of studying, as well as on learning outcomes.

Short explanation of the status of your national strategy and/or your coherent set of measures and tools and/or another way of mainstreaming Social Dimension (ongoing discussions, target groups involved, implementation, evaluation, monitoring, adjustments...)

- The overall national strategy, the Strategy for Education, Science and Technology was adopted in 2014.
- The National Group for Social Dimension in Higher Education was set up in September 2015. It gathers representatives of the academia working on issues related to social dimension, governmental members, a non-governmental member and a students' representative. The main task of the National Group is to develop and to propose a National Plan for improving social dimension in higher education
- The National Group for SD in HE adopted a document on vulnerable and underrepresented groups of students in November 2016
- The National Group developed the draft National Plan for improving social dimension in higher education that is envisaged to be presented to the Minister of education in April/May and then, after a wider public consultation and consultation with the stakeholders, it is envisaged to be adopted by the Government in 2017

On which concept/definition of "Social Dimension" is your current work based?

There is no a concrete definition of social dimension in the national steering documents. The concept is taken as understood in the framework of cooperation between the countries in the Bologna process and as an objective set by the ministers of higher education, of the Bologna countries, committing to the shared strategic goals with the social dimension included as of the London Communiqué in 2007.

What kind of strategic approach do you follow? Target groups (underrepresented/ disadvantaged groups)? Which ones, and why? Or do you follow an "anticategorical" strategy e.g. according to student life cycle, diversity concept etc.?

We have identified the vulnerable and underrepresented groups as this was the basis for launching the debate on the specific measures to be proposed in the National Plan for improving social dimension in higher education. However, as the work on the National Plan progressed, it became evident that the groups often overlapped and that it was difficult, and sometimes impossible, to design particular measures that would address selected groups only. Moreover, it was agreed that a more comprehensive set of measures would be proposed that would take into account particular needs of the identified vulnerable and underrepresented groups of students but, would, however, not be limited by such "clusterisation".

Websites/main online sources for your core Social Dimension initiatives and/or strategy:

<http://www.novebojeznanja.hr/strategija/visoko-obrazovanje/1>
<http://public.mzos.hr/Default.aspx?sec=3674>

Online Link for a relevant event and/or empirical study related to Social Dimension:

<http://www.iro.hr/en/publications/printed-publications/>

Country: Hungary

Authority in charge with "Social Dimension": Ministry of Human Capacities

Person in charge/**contact**: Márton Beke, Tempus Public Foundation, eha@tpf.hu

Rationale for your strategy: Why do you work on/with a national Strategy and/or a coherent set of measures and/or another way of mainstreaming Social Dimension?

- In general, our efforts are in line with the Bologna/EHEA process and its social dimension, especially with the Yerevan Communiqué and the document *Widening Participation for Equity and Growth*.
- National HE strategy: it is making steps in this direction, inasmuch it suggests including the possibility of alternative admission and a future appreciation of the role of flexible, nonstandard academic learning methods. Furthermore, the structural changes in the institutional system (e.g. increase of network of local/regional HEIs) will increase access of underrepresented groups.
- National Reform Programme (NRP) towards Europe 2020 targets. In the field of tertiary education Hungary is committed to increase the rate (aged 30-40) of those having tertiary or equivalent qualifications to 34%. The NRP 2016 of Hungary lists programmes and measures that "contribute to inclusive and integrated education, thus improving students' results in further education and decreasing the risk of early school leaving" the target groups of these activities are "vulnerable, disadvantaged and multiply-disadvantaged – including Roma – learners".

Short explanation of the status of your national strategy and/or your coherent set of measures and tools and/or another way of mainstreaming Social Dimension (ongoing discussions, target groups involved, implementation, evaluation, monitoring, adjustments...)

Instead of a separate strategy, efforts are made to identify target groups and to set realistic goals and the tools that are needed to achieve these goals. The current developments include:

- Implementation of the **National Strategy for Higher Education**. E. g. Community-based higher education study centres in disadvantaged regions.
- Revision of the **National Youth Strategy** (ongoing).
- Launching of the **National Disability Programme** (2015-2025). In tertiary education, the programme emphasises the need to include – so far missing - study programmes or subjects that are related to the inclusion of people with disability, offering complex services and creating a network of disability coordinators in HEIs.
- **Hungarian National Social Inclusion Strategy II**. (2011-2020): Access and retention of disadvantaged, especially Roma youth. E. g. through the extension of the Mentor Programme, development of the system of „Roma Colleges” and the Bursa Hungarica scholarship programme.
- In 2016 through the Hungarian **EHEA reforms** project a comprehensive **research** has been conducted with the following goals:
 - o Reviewing the current European situation in SD and presenting the developments of 3 selected countries
 - o Identifying disadvantaged student groups in Hungarian higher education and to analyze their admission and educational path
 - o Presenting the legal background, support measures on both national and institutional levels and highlighting good practices.

- **Early career guidance for school students and targeted training of teachers.** Data analysis show that students with disadvantaged background are less well-informed about the benefits of having a tertiary degree (earnings premium of tertiary-educated people is the fourth highest among OECD-countries in Hungary [EAG 2015]) and that the turning point is before applying to a higher education institution (i.e. there is no difference in the admittance rate by disadvantaged status). HDOP-3.4.4 scheme of HUF 8bn (26 mio EUR) is to support skills development and communications programmes supporting entry to higher education, and promoting STEM fields (where labour-force is the most needed). The measure contributes to the improvement of educational level of students coming from disadvantaged geographical, social and economic environment and helps them the obtaining of tertiary qualifications, especially in fields they are underrepresented in.
- The newly created EHEA **information portal** (in Hungarian) gathers necessary information on and for both disabled and disadvantaged students in Higher Education.
- **Klebelsberg Scholarship Programme** for teacher trainees was established in 2013 in order to ensure the supply of well-qualified, devoted teachers with practical experience. It provides a non-refundable grant for well-performing students. The tendencies of the KSP show that the scholars often choose counties where the proportion of disadvantaged students is higher than the average.

On which concept/definition of "Social Dimension" is your current work based?

Following the concept of social dimension in the Bologna Process we regard SD as a policy objective to enhance higher educational institutions' social responsibility and improving the access and qualification rate of under-represented, non-traditional groups.

What kind of strategic approach do you follow? Target groups (underrepresented/ disadvantaged groups)? Which ones, and why? Or do you follow an "anticategorical" strategy e.g. according to student life cycle, diversity concept etc.?

Our approach focuses on the following target groups of people:

- socially disadvantaged,
- Roma students,
- living with disabilities,
- with small children,
- from the Hungarian diaspora.

Websites/main online sources for your core Social Dimension initiatives and/or strategy:

EHEA information portal: <http://tka.hu/nemzetkozi/6321/mindent-az-europai-felsooktatasi-tersegrol>

Online Link for a relevant event and/or empirical study related to Social Dimension:

- Research publication on SD 2016 (Executive Summary in English)
<http://tka.hu/docs/palyazatok/a-felsooktatas-szocialis-dimenzioja.pdf>
- Social Dimension of Higher Education: results of EUROSTUDENT V.
http://www.eurostudent.eu/download_files/documents/eurostudent_studies_hungary_en.pdf

Country: Ireland

Authority in charge with "Social Dimension": Ministry of Education and Skills (with support from the Higher Education Authority)

Person in charge/contact: Dr. Tony Gaynor, Head of Higher Education Equity of Access and Qualifications Unit, Ministry of Education and Skills

Rationale for your strategy: Why do you work on/with a national Strategy and/or a coherent set of measures and/or another way of mainstreaming Social Dimension?

Ireland has developed a national strategy on the social dimension in order to provide a shared vision for a more equitable higher education sector. The national strategy provides a coherent framework to coordinate the efforts of relevant stakeholders. It also outlines roles and responsibilities for those stakeholders. The national strategy includes actions that are time bound and assigns responsibility for the completion of each action, thereby ensuring accountability for delivery. We have also found the national strategy a useful means of securing additional funding for our target groups, as additional resources may become available.

Short explanation of the status of your national strategy and/or your coherent set of measures and tools and/or another way of mainstreaming Social Dimension (ongoing discussions, target groups involved, implementation, evaluation, monitoring, adjustments...)

Ireland is on its third national strategy. The process began in 2005. The current national strategy is entitled 'The National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education, 2015-19'. The core vision is 'To ensure that the student body entering, participating in and completing Higher Education reflects the diversity and social mix of Ireland's population. It targets 6 groups that are currently under-represented in Higher Education, as well as some sub-groups that are common to one or more of the main target groups. There are specific targets for each target group. The strategy contains 5 key goals and 28 actions. These actions will be progressed over the period to 2019. There will be a mid-term evaluation of the strategy in late 2017.

On which concept/definition of "Social Dimension" is your current work based?

Social dimension as a means of:

- Ensuring a Higher Education sector that reflects the diversity of Irish society
- Promoting equal opportunities into and towards completion of higher education
- Maximising individual potential
- Fostering economic development by tapping into previously under utilised skills
- Promoting a more inclusive and tolerant society.

What kind of strategic approach do you follow? Target groups (underrepresented/ disadvantaged groups)? Which ones, and why? Or do you follow an "anticategorical" strategy e.g. according to student life cycle, diversity concept etc.?

We identify specific target groups. There are 6 target groups, each of which has a specific participation target to be achieved by 2019. This approach is complemented by a thematic approach that is intended to tackle issues that affect our some or all of our target students but which are also challenges for the main student body e.g. non – completion.

Websites/main online sources for your core Social Dimension initiatives and/or strategy:

<http://www.heai.ie/en/policy/national-access-office/introduction> (website of the National Access Office)

Online Link for a relevant documentation or movie related to Social Dimension:

<http://www.heai.ie/en/policy/national-access-office/national-plans-equity-access-higher-education/2015-2019-access-plan> (National Access Plan, 2015-19)

Online Link for a relevant event and/or empirical study related to Social Dimension:

<http://www.heai.ie/en/policy/national-access-office/conferences-seminarsworkshops-and-resources/how-equal-conference> (Proceedings of the 'How Equal' conference)

<http://www.heai.ie/sites/default/files/safreport.pdf> (Review of the Student Assistance Fund)

<http://www.teachingandlearning.ie/forum-resources/national-forum-publications/> (This is the website of our National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning. This webpage focuses on the recent publications by the Forum which include reviews relating to non-completion, transition from Further Education into Higher Education, and Recognition of Prior Learning)

Country: Iceland

Authority in charge with "Social Dimension": Ministry of Education, Science and Culture
Person in charge/contact: Una Strand Viðarsdóttir (Una.Strand.Vidarsdottir@mrn.is)
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Rationale for your strategy: Why do you work on/with a national Strategy and/or a coherent set of measures and/or another way of mainstreaming Social Dimension?

There is no national strategy in place in Iceland on the social dimension of higher education. This said, there are a set of measures and legal stipulations in place which contribute to the set of facets which combined form the area of the social dimension. Among other, these measures ensure fair and equal opportunity to access and complete higher education, and thus support social mobility.

Short explanation of the status of your national strategy and/or your coherent set of measures and tools and/or another way of mainstreaming Social Dimension (ongoing discussions, target groups involved, implementation, evaluation, monitoring, adjustments...)

While there is not a national strategy in place on the social dimension in higher education in Iceland, a set of measures and legal acts contribute to the set of facets which combined form the area of the social dimension:

Access to higher education and affordability

Higher education in Iceland is open to all people who have completed a matriculation exam (see Article 19 in HE Act), irrespective of their physical or mental health statues, gender sexual orientation, skin color, nationality, religion, residence or financial situation. **The Act on Higher Education** and **The Act on the affairs of disabled people** (No 59/1992) stipulate rules on access to and adequate support during studies for students with disability and those with emotional and social difficulties. Those who have dropped out of Upper Secondary can enter "bridging" programmes (lasting 2 semesters) in order to fulfill admission criteria. HEIs are further allowed to set specific admission requirements, e.g. to pass an entrance examination.

Gender equality is further enforced in **The Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men** (Nr 10/2008) which stipulates gender mainstreaming in all spheres of the society.

Most obvious potential barrier to participation in HE is financial. In Iceland, cost of higher education studies is low. Registration fees collected by public institutes (4 out of 7) are regulated by the national authority (around 450 EUR per academic year) while privately run institutions (3 out of 7) can determine their own fees. These are currently from (3000 EUR to approximately 5500 EUR per academic year). Iceland is the only European country where the student support system is exclusively based on loans. This said, the current student loan system (**The Icelandic Student Loan Fund**) guarantees all students an opportunity to study irrespective of financial position. Loans cover both living costs and costs related to the study itself, e.g. tuition. Loans are calculated according to ECTS credits earned (pass 22 ECTS per semester). In calculating the loans, account is taken of the socio-economic status of the student (living at home, renting, nr. of children, etc.). The student loans are also fully portable. A review of the act is currently under way.

Support during studies

Since 1999, the relation with the HEIs is managed through a system of contracts. Thus student support services are the responsibility of individual HEIs. Excellence in teaching and learning has traditionally not been very high on the agenda in the design of the HE institutional landscape in Iceland. Some institutions have trademarked themselves as student-centered learning institutes but excellence in teaching is not rewarded specifically, e.g. in salary negotiations.

The Act on Higher Education stipulates that both teaching and research should be systematically improved (revision of the Act in 2012 strengthened this clause) and since 2011 the quality of teaching and student-centered learning is part of both internal and external evaluation. This emphasis is reinforced in the 2nd edition of **The Quality Enhancement Handbook for Icelandic Higher Education** (March 2017) in which direct reference is made to the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) and standards are laid out to ensure the quality of student learning experience and to respect the diversity of the student group and thus ensure equality of opportunity in learning for all. A gendered perspective is also reinforced in the Handbook (*see Standard 1.3*)

Study Success

No national policy is in place for monitoring and tracking the educational pathways of students. This said, completion rate has been part of the funding model since 2012 (**Performance-based funding**). The average rate of two years are compared, e.g. those enrolling 2013/2014 and graduating 2016 and each weighs 50%. A HEI receives 150 000 ISK (1200 EUR) for a student graduating a bachelors' programme (first cycle) in three years (full time study). For a student graduating from a Masters' programme in time a HEI receives 100.000 ISK (830 EUR) and for a doctoral graduate the HEI receives a scaled rate. HEIS have implemented instruments at institutional level to improve study success and lower drop out, e.g. Dean's Lists. Public HEIs have a common information and teaching portal enhancing transparency of practices.

On which concept/definition of "Social Dimension" is your current work based?

Current work is not based on any one concept/definition of social dimension.

What kind of strategic approach do you follow? Target groups (underrepresented/ disadvantaged groups)? Which ones, and why? Or do you follow an "anticategorical" strategy e.g. according to student life cycle, diversity concept etc.?

Equality of opportunity (access and support during studies) for students with disabilities is guaranteed in **The Act on the affairs of disabled people** as well as in **The Act on Higher Education** and in individual performance contracts made with each of the universities. Equality of opportunity is also ensured through equal access of all students to **The National Student Loan Fund** and government guaranteed student loans.

Gender equality is further supported in **The Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men**. Gendered perspective, as well as student support and student-centered learning based on diversity, is further reinforced in **The Quality Enhancement Handbook for Icelandic Higher Education**.

Online Link for a relevant documentation or movie related to Social Dimension:

The Higher Education Act (Nr. 62/2006 – latest revision 2015),

<https://eng.menntamalaraduneyti.is/media/frettir2015/Thyding-log-um-haskola-oktober-2015.pdf>.

Section VII (Article 19) stipulates rules on fair and equal access to HE and preparatory study programmes for those who do not meet admission criteria; rules on students' rights; and obligations and support to students with disability (in accordance with **The Act on the affairs of disabled people, No 59/1992**) and to students with emotional or social difficulties

Quality Enhancement Handbook for Icelandic Higher Education (2nd edition, 14 March 2017),

<https://en.rannis.is/media/gaedarad/Final-for-publication-14-3-2017.pdf>

Online Link for a relevant event and/or empirical study related to Social Dimension:

European Commission/EACEA/Eurodice (2015): *Dropout and Completion in Higher Education in Europe. Cheps and Nifu report*: Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union
European Commission/EACEA/Eurodice (2014): *Modernisation of Higher Education in Europe: Access, Retention and Employability 2014. Eurydice report*: Luxembourg: Publications Office of the EU.

Country: Sweden

Authority in charge with "Social Dimension":

The government has assigned the Swedish Council for Higher Education with mapping Swedish HEI's work on widening participation, highlighting good practice.

Person in charge/contact:

Aleksandra Sjöstrand, Analyst, Swedish Council for Higher Education

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Short explanation of the status of your national strategy and/or your coherent set of measures and tools and/or another way of mainstreaming Social Dimension (ongoing discussions, target groups involved, implementation, evaluation, monitoring, adjustments...)

The Swedish Council for Higher Education points out that the content and form of work on widening access and widening participation is context-dependent. HEIs have very different conditions in which to work on this task and its starting point must be the circumstances at each HEI. It can therefore be difficult to find one standard for how work on widening access and widening participation should be conducted, even if the overarching structures for the work are the same. These differing conditions also make it difficult to compare the work of HEIs on widening access.

However, the report provides seven clear recommendations for sustaining success in widening participation activities over the long-term (page 8-10).

Websites/main online sources for your core Social Dimension initiatives and/or strategy:

I enclose a report on this governmental assignment "Can excellence be achieved in homogeneous student groups?" <https://www.uhr.se/globalassets/uhr.se/publikationer/2016/uhr-can-excellence-be-achieved-in-homogeneous-student-groups.pdf>

Country: The Netherlands

Authority in charge with "Social Dimension": **Ministry of Education and ECHO (Expertise centrum Diversiteitsbeleid – 'Expert centrum diversity policy')**

Person in charge/contact: **Minister and State Secretary for Education and Mary Tupan (ECHO)**

Rationale for your strategy: Why do you work on/with a national Strategy and/or a coherent set of measures and/or another way of mainstreaming Social Dimension?

To ensure equal opportunities to study, also after the age of compulsory education (18) and to prepare students to study at their level, either directly from high school to vocational or higher education or via high school, vocational education to eventually higher education.

Short explanation of the status of your national strategy and/or your coherent set of measures and tools and/or another way of mainstreaming Social Dimension (ongoing discussions, target groups involved, implementation, evaluation, monitoring, adjustments...)

Three major discussion are related to the entry level in higher education, the opportunities to enter higher education after first completing vocational education (instead of directly via high school) and the difference in study results in higher education:

Entry level:

In the Netherlands the standardized test at the end of primary school (cito) used to be the instrument to set the level in which the student would enter secondary education. Now, the primary school will advise the entry level for secondary education. The advice can be discussed between teachers and the students' parents. The advice of the teacher as well as the discussion with the parents is influenced by the background of the student and/or their parents.

Other routes to higher education:

Structural reforms in secondary education have postponed the time at which the decision to select a specific education track has to be made, and have increased the permeability of the boundaries between tracks.

Students who finish the highest level of vocational education have the opportunity to enter higher education. Nevertheless, and partly because of the recent changes in financial support, the number of students who enter higher education after vocational education has decreased.

Study results in higher education:

Dropouts are more common in certain groups of students, like first generation students, students from (second generation) immigrants, from lower income families and who enter via vocational education. This is related to the absence of a sense of belonging and of (fitting) support.

On which concept/definition of "Social Dimension" is your current work based?

None

What kind of strategic approach do you follow? Target groups (underrepresented/ disadvantaged groups)? Which ones, and why? Or do you follow an "anticategorical" strategy e.g. according to student life cycle, diversity concept etc.?

Target groups. Students who enter higher education via vocational education, first generation students, students from (second generation) immigrants en students from lower income families.

Websites/main online sources for your core Social Dimension initiatives and/or strategy / Online Link for a relevant documentation or movie related to Social Dimension:

<https://www.gelijke-kansen.nl/>

<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2016/10/31/kamerbrief-over-actieplan-gelijke-kansen-in-het-onderwijs>