



Institute for the  
Development of Education

# Inclusivity, acceptance of student diversity and disadvantaged groups:

## TAM Albania

**Institute for the Development of Education, Croatia**

**Nino Schmidt**, Executive Director

**Ana Skledar Matijevic**, Higher Education Policy Expert

3-4 December 2024, Albania

## About us

### Institute for the Development of Education, Croatia

- **European think-tank** committed to advancing policies in higher education.  
Our focus areas include:
  - **Equity and inclusion** in higher education:  
*Driving the development of the European Framework for Social Dimension*
  - **Community engagement** in higher education:  
*Establishing the European Platform for Community Engagement*
  - **Quality assurance** in higher education:  
*Linking quality with inclusion and engagement with society.*
- Providing **consultancy services** in key focus areas to public authorities and higher education institutions worldwide.
- Collaborating with public authorities and higher education institutions worldwide on impactful **projects to advance higher education reforms.**



# About us

## Nino Schmidt, Executive Director

- 1999 - 2024: Founder and Executive Director of IDE
- 2018 - 2024: Former **Co-Chair** of the Working Group on **Social Dimension** within the **Bologna Follow-Up Group** (BFUG)
  - Successfully led the creation of the **first EHEA Framework for the Social Dimension**, establishing principles, guidelines, and indicators to **help 47 EHEA countries** improve social dimension policies in higher education.
- 2023 - now: Member of the **Council of Europe's** CDedu Sub-Group on **Higher Education Policy** and Working Group on **Democratic Mission** of Higher Education
- 2015 – 2021: Member of the Croatian National Committee for Enhancing the Social Dimension of Higher Education



# About us

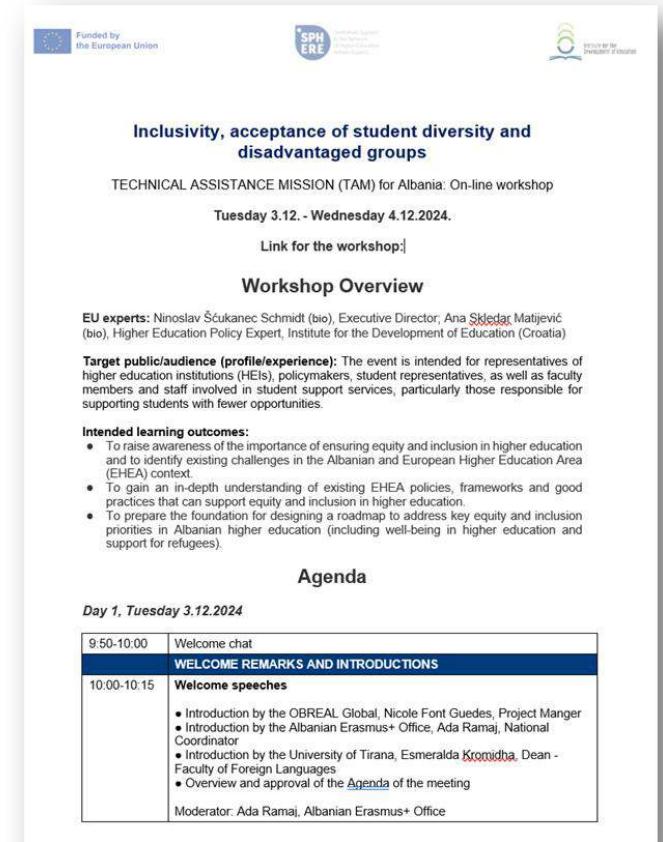
## **Ana Skledar Matijevic**, Higher Education Policy Expert

- **2001-2019:** College professor, Vice-Dean and Acting Dean in several terms of office at a Croatian university of applied sciences, in charge of creating and implementing various educational policies at institutional level
- **2020-2024:** Member of European Network of Experts on the Social Dimension of Education and Training (NESET)
- **2020-2024:** Participating in EU projects on equity and inclusion in education
  - *National Lifelong Learning for All Network*



# Workshop: expected outcomes

- **Increased awareness** of the importance of ensuring equity and inclusion in higher education and to identify existing challenges in the Albanian and European Higher Education Area (EHEA) context
- **In-depth understanding** of existing EHEA policies, frameworks and good practices that can support equity and inclusion in higher education
- **Foundation for designing a roadmap** to address key equity and inclusion priorities in Albanian higher education



Funded by the European Union

SPH ERE  
Strategic Partnership for Higher Education in the Region of Europe

Inclusivity, acceptance of student diversity and disadvantaged groups

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE MISSION (TAM) for Albania: On-line workshop

Tuesday 3.12. - Wednesday 4.12.2024.

[Link for the workshop](#)

**Workshop Overview**

**EU experts:** Ninoslav Šćukanec Schmidt (bio), Executive Director; Ana Skledar Matijević (bio), Higher Education Policy Expert, Institute for the Development of Education (Croatia)

**Target public/audience (profile/experience):** The event is intended for representatives of higher education institutions (HEIs), policymakers, student representatives, as well as faculty members and staff involved in student support services, particularly those responsible for supporting students with fewer opportunities.

**Intended learning outcomes:**

- To raise awareness of the importance of ensuring equity and inclusion in higher education and to identify existing challenges in the Albanian and European Higher Education Area (EHEA) context.
- To gain an in-depth understanding of existing EHEA policies, frameworks and good practices that can support equity and inclusion in higher education.
- To prepare the foundation for designing a roadmap to address key equity and inclusion priorities in Albanian higher education (including well-being in higher education and support for refugees).

**Agenda**

**Day 1, Tuesday 3.12.2024**

9:50-10:00	Welcome chat
<b>WELCOME REMARKS AND INTRODUCTIONS</b>	
10:00-10:15	<b>Welcome speeches</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Introduction by the OBREAL Global, Nicole Font Guedes, Project Manager</li><li>• Introduction by the Albanian Erasmus+ Office, Ada Ramaj, National Coordinator</li><li>• Introduction by the University of Tirana, Esmeralda Kromidha, Dean - Faculty of Foreign Languages</li><li>• Overview and approval of the <a href="#">Agenda</a> of the meeting</li></ul> Moderator: Ada Ramaj, Albanian Erasmus+ Office

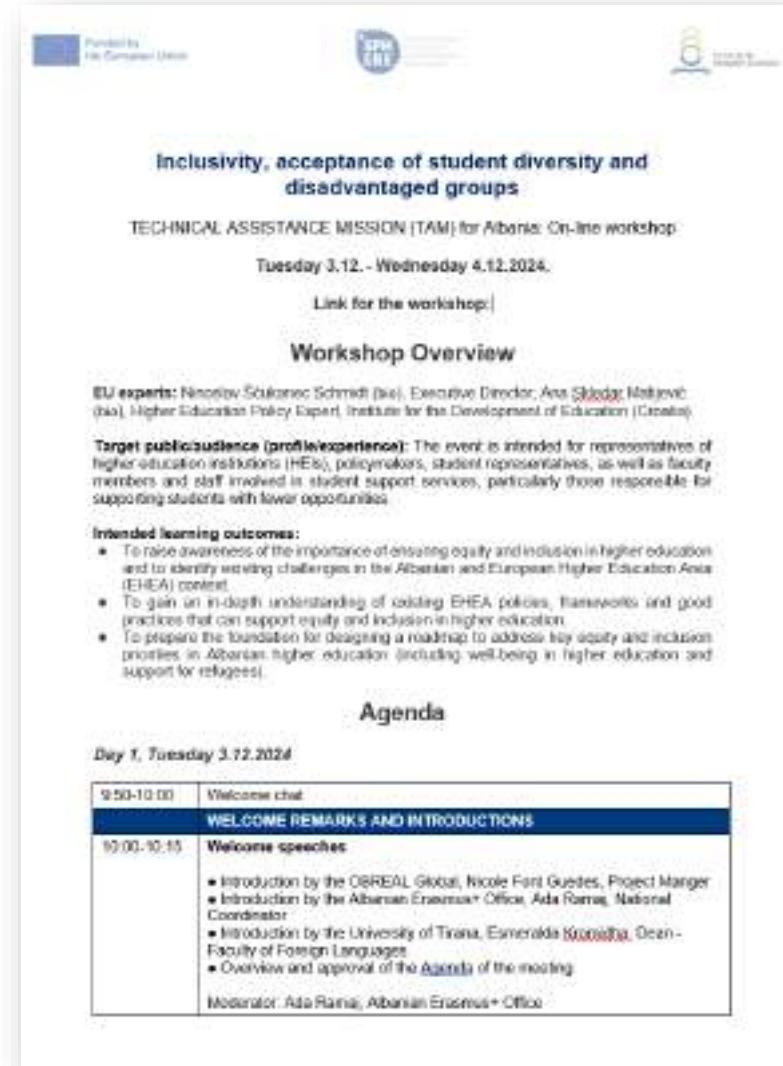
# Workshop: agenda

**Day 1: 10:00-16:30**

- **TOPIC 1 > CONCEPTS AND CONTEXT:**  
Presentation and group discussion
- **TOPIC 2 > CHALLENGES:**  
Presentation; panel; group discussion
- **TOPIC 3 > POLICY RESPONSES:**  
Presentation; panel; group discussion
- **TOPIC 4 > PLANNING FOR NEW ACTIONS:**  
Presentation; wrap-up

**Day 2: 10:00 – 13:30**

- **TOPIC 5 > FOCUS ON NATIONAL PRIORITIES:**  
Presentations, panels, and group discussions.



The screenshot shows a registration page for a workshop. At the top, there are logos for the European Union, the Albanian Erasmus+ Office, and the Institute for the Development of Education. The title of the workshop is "Inclusivity, acceptance of student diversity and disadvantaged groups". It is described as a "TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE MISSION (TAM) for Albania: On-line workshop" taking place "Tuesday 3.12. - Wednesday 4.12.2024". A link for the workshop is provided. Below this, there is a "Workshop Overview" section. It mentions EU experts: Nenadov Škuljarec Schmidt (Slo), Executive Director; Ana Škodje Matović (Slo); Higher Education Policy Expert, Institute for the Development of Education (Croatia). The "Target public/audience (profile/experience)" is defined as representatives of higher education institutions (HEIs), policymakers, student representatives, as well as faculty members and staff involved in student support services, particularly those responsible for supporting students with lower opportunities. The "Intended learning outcomes" include raising awareness of the importance of ensuring equity and inclusion in higher education, identifying existing challenges in the Albanian and European Higher Education Area (EHEA) context, gaining an in-depth understanding of existing EHEA policies, frameworks and good practices that can support equity and inclusion in higher education, and preparing the foundation for designing a roadmap to address key equity and inclusion priorities in Albanian higher education (including well-being in higher education and support for refugees). The "Agenda" for Day 1, Tuesday 3.12.2024, is shown in a table:

9:50-10:00	Welcome chat
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10:00-10:15	Welcome speeches
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Introduction by the OBREAL Global, Nicole Fanti Guestes, Project Manager</li><li>■ Introduction by the Albanian Erasmus+ Office, Ada Rama, National Coordinator</li><li>■ Introduction by the University of Tirana, Esmeralda Kuzmita, Dean-Faculty of Foreign Languages</li><li>■ Overview and approval of the Agenda of the meeting</li></ul> <p>Moderator: Ada Rama; Albanian Erasmus+ Office</p>

# TOUR-DE-TABLE

Local participant introductions (name, function, institution)



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# TOPIC 1: CONCEPTS AND CONTEXT



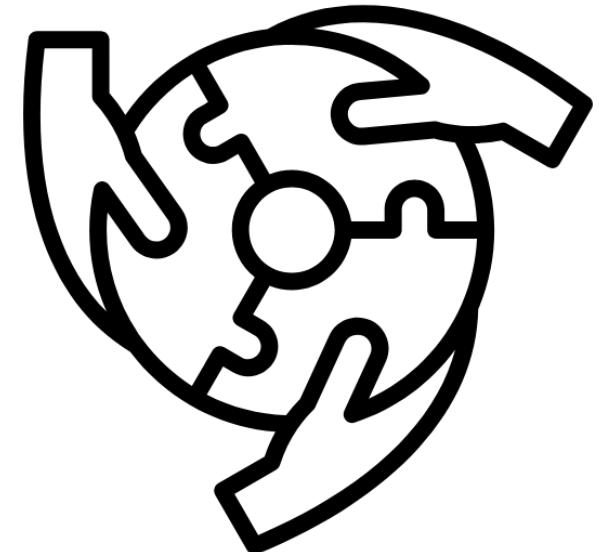
## Presentation:

**Equity, inclusion, diversity and the social dimension  
of higher education:**

Key terms and policies in the EHEA context

# Why are equity and inclusion important?

- **Broad societal benefits of higher education:**
  - *Individuals: fulfilling one's potential; better financial, health and social outcomes;*
  - *Society as whole: sustainable economic growth; meeting societal needs and challenges; social cohesion*
- **Inequality in higher education participation:** At a global level, major challenges in participation of certain social groups in higher education.
- **Additional emerging factors:** COVID-19 pandemic, wars, economic crisis, AI/digital gap



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# A global policy agenda



OECD

Topics

OECD > Publications > Equity in Education

## Equity in Education

Breaking Down Barriers to Social Mobility

Education Global Practice

*Smarter Education Systems for Brighter Futures*

SABER

## Equity and Inclusion

WORLD BANK GROUP

unesco #LeadingSDG4 | Education2030

## Making Higher Education more inclusive

European Commission

## Inclusive and connected higher education

Towards inclusive and connected higher education

# European Higher Education Area: The social dimension of higher education

- The Bologna Process, launched in 1999 and implemented in 47 states, creating the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).
- One of the three key **objectives for the EHEA by 2030** is to build an **inclusive EHEA** by implementing the social dimension principles across member states.
- (More on this later!)



# Key concepts

- **Diversity:** a fact  
*'Learners have different characteristics, backgrounds, needs'*
- **Equity:** a principle  
*'All learners are considered as equally important and have equal opportunities'*
- **Inclusion:** a process  
*'Removing barriers to achieve equity in education'*

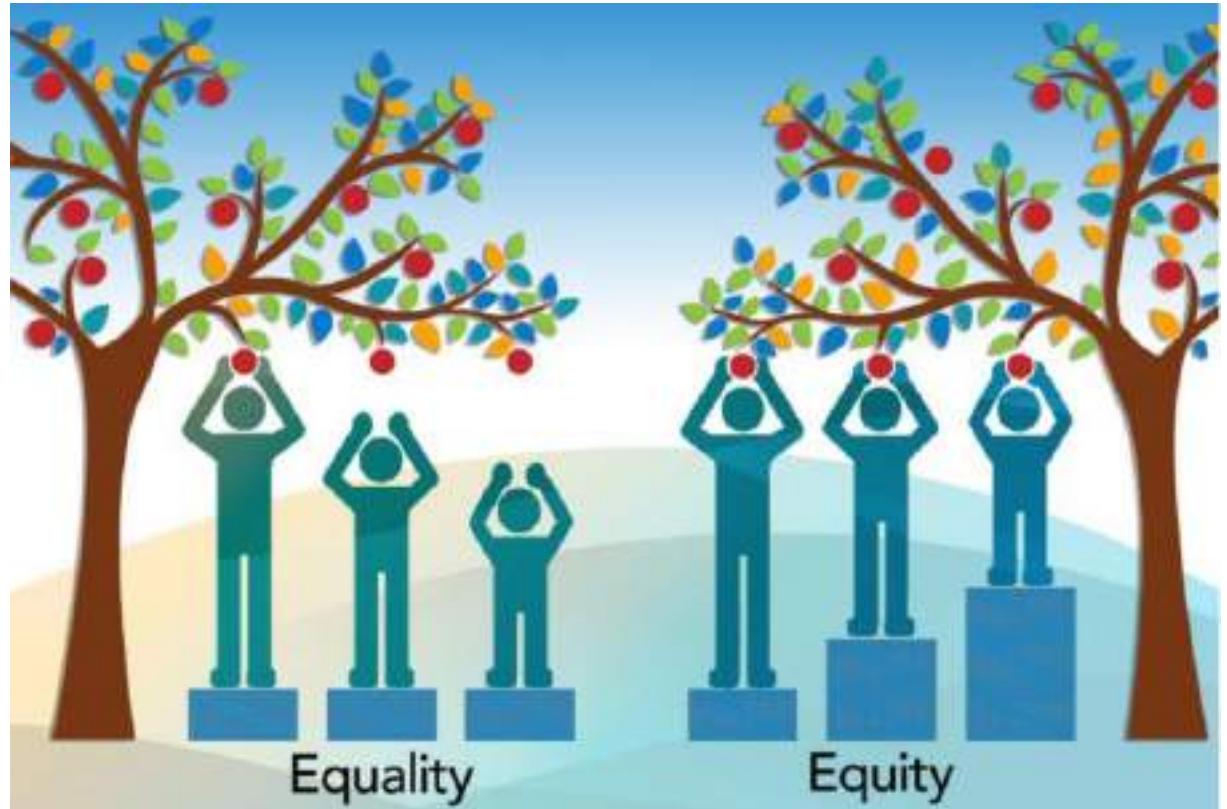


Source: *Inclusion by Design: Insights from Design Week Portland*; Gensler

Source: *definitions of equity and inclusion based on UNESCO (2017)*

## Additional concepts

- **Diversity:** a fact ... but also a goal!  
*Some groups of learners are underrepresented*
- **Equality of treatment** is not the same as equity. However, we can talk about equity being about creating equal opportunities. While equality implies **uniformity**, equity focuses on creating **fair opportunities tailored to individual needs**.
- **The 'social dimension of higher education'** (more on this later!)



Source: *Equity vs Equality*. Northwestern Health Unit

# Three dimensions of equity and inclusion



## Access

Ensuring the conditions and removing barriers for individuals to access educational institutions or programmes that match their needs or educational objectives



## Well-being

Ensuring an optimal experience for all learners in the educational system, leading to a comprehensive and balanced development of each individual's potential



## Achievement

Reducing differences in educational achievements among different groups of learners, preventing dropout and stimulating further education.

Croatian Lifelong Learning for All Network (Source: Farnell et al., 2023)

# Overview of policy development in the Bologna Process: Social dimension in higher education in the period 2001 - 2024



**2001 – 2020:** the notion of a social dimension has been **embedded** into the policy objectives of the **Bologna Process**

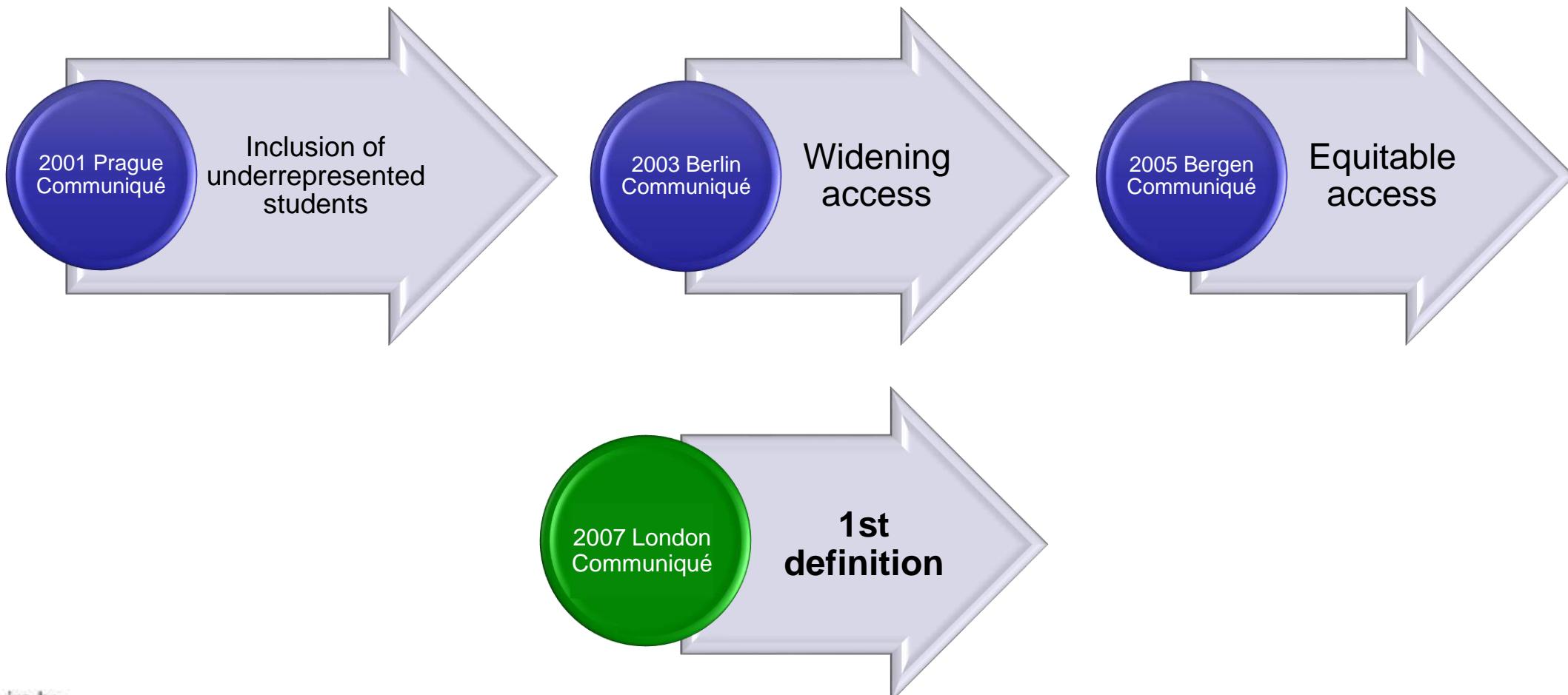


rather than being derived from the research that informed these policy objectives

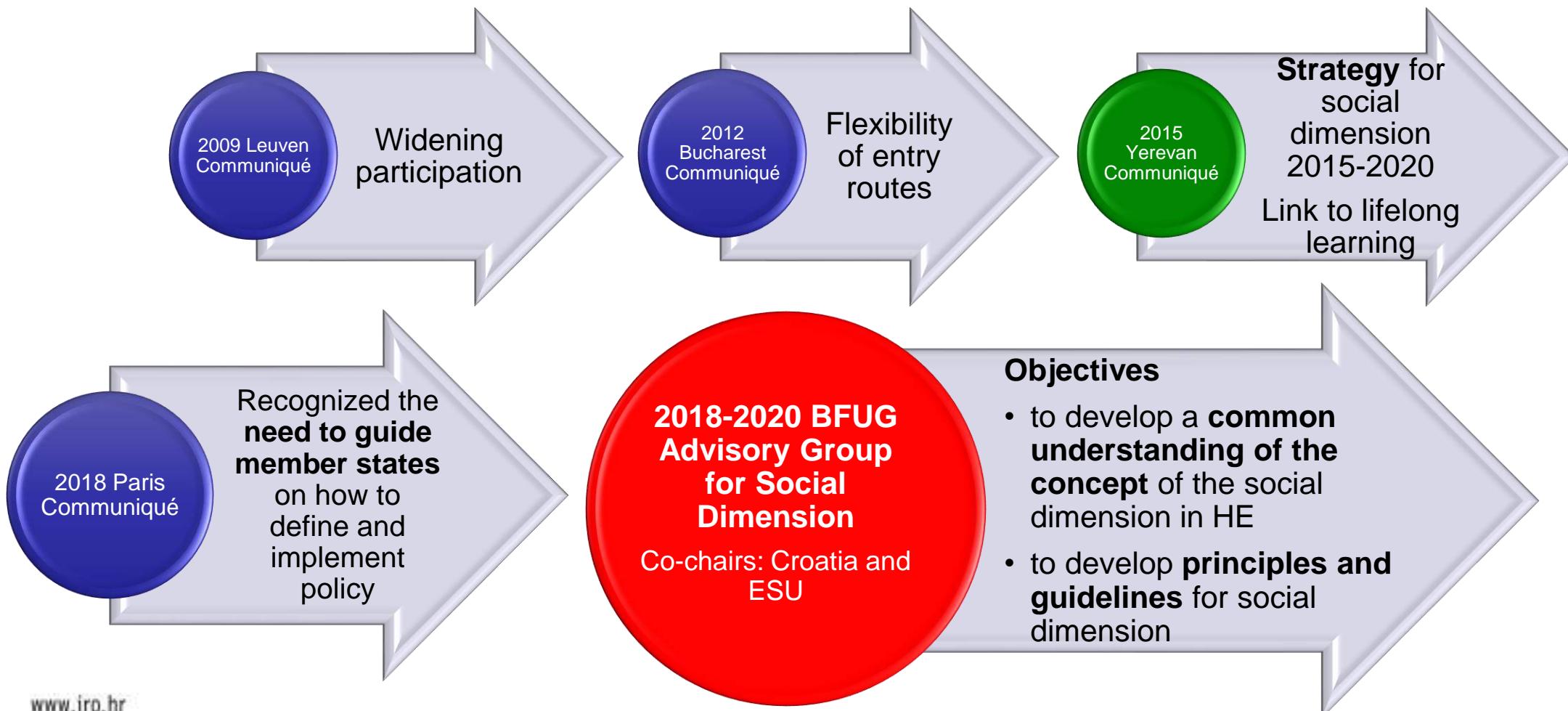


**definitional anarchy**

## Historical background: Bologna Process and social dimension of higher education



## Historical background: Bologna Process and social dimension of higher education



## New definition of the social dimension in the Bologna Process and EHEA (adopted in 2020)



Social dimension in higher education is

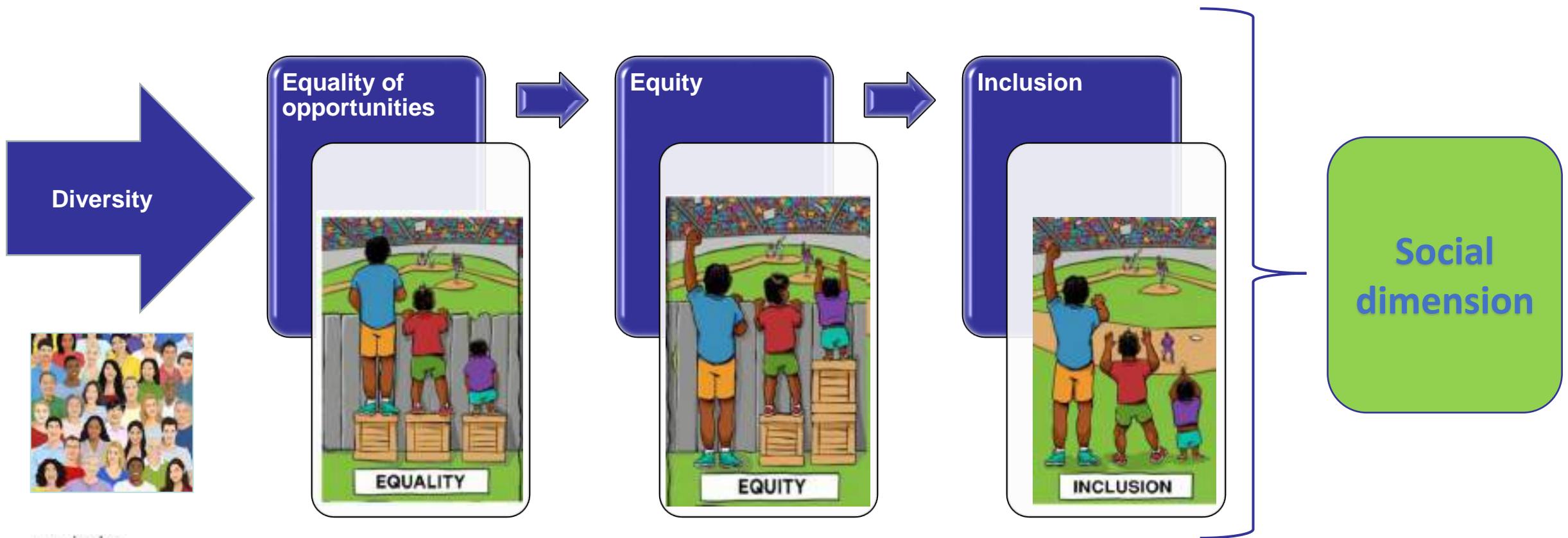
- **a process** aimed at creating an inclusive environment in higher education
- in which the **composition of the student body** entering, participating in and completing higher education
- **at all levels** corresponds to the **heterogeneous social profile of society at large** in the EHEA countries.

This definition of the social dimension encompasses also

- the desired **inclusive environment** in higher education that
- fosters **equity, diversity**, and is responsive to the **needs of local communities**.



# Bologna Process: new definition of the social dimension (2020)



# GROUP DISCUSSION



# Group discussion 1: Equity in HE in Albania

	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3	Other
1 <b>Priority level</b>	Equity and inclusion are <b>not</b> yet a policy priority in HE	Equity and inclusion are an <b>emerging</b> policy priority in HE	Equity and inclusion are a <b>high</b> priority in HE	?
2 <b>Focus areas (dimensions)</b>	Policy and public discussions mainly focus on increasing <b>availability</b> of HE institutions and programmes	Policy and public discussions mainly focus on <b>access</b> to HE	Policy and public discussions focus on <b>access, well-being and completion</b> of HE.	?
3 <b>Approaches to equity and inclusion</b>	Financial and/or other support for students is predominantly provided based <b>on merit / excellence</b>	Financial and/or other support for students is predominantly provided to <b>all students equally</b>	Financial and/or other support for students is predominantly provided to <b>students in need / disadvantaged students</b>	?

## TOPIC 2: CHALLENGES

### Presentation:

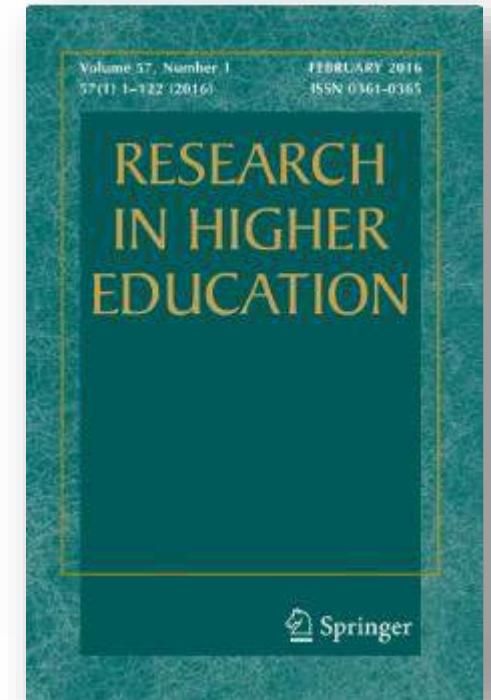
**Equity and inclusion challenges in EHEA and key factors that lead to inequalities**



# Educational inequality in HE: European trends

Recent research findings (Palmisano et al., 2022):

- **Heterogeneity among Europe states, but clear patterns:** Northern European countries show low levels of inequality of opportunity; and Mediterranean and Eastern European countries show significant degrees of educational inequalities.
- **Common factors:** Parental education and occupation are the most relevant circumstances linked to inequality in the great majority of the countries considered.
- **Other identified links (...not proven as causes though!):** Higher equality of opportunity in tertiary education linked with level of GDP, with students/teacher ratio and public spending in tertiary education.



# Key source of data: EUROSTUDENT survey

The EUROSTUDENT survey - provides a comprehensive analysis of the **social and economic conditions of student life** across 25 European countries.

Focuses on various aspects of student demographics, study conditions, and the socio-economic backgrounds of students.

[eurostudent.eu](http://eurostudent.eu)  
★ ★ ★ ★ ★



# Inequality in HE: European trends

## 1. Characteristics of national student populations:

- Majority of **female students** in most countries, but **gender imbalance** in fields like Engineering and ICT.
- Around **24%** of students have a **migration background**.
- Around **19%** of students having a **disability** that affects their studies.

**eurostudent.eu**  
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# Inequality in HE: European trends

## 2. Socioeconomic background of students:

- Students from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds are underrepresented in HE.
- The share of **students without a tertiary-educated parent** is higher in **professional higher education** than in university programmes.
- Financial difficulties are more prevalent among students from **lower socioeconomic backgrounds**, leading to greater **reliance on part-time work**.

[eurostudent.eu](http://eurostudent.eu)  
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# Inequality in HE: European trends

## 3. Transition into and within higher education:

- The pathways into higher education vary significantly, but increasingly there are **alternative access routes**, especially for older students or those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.
- **Delayed transitions** (students entering higher education later) are common in several countries, particularly for students with non-tertiary-educated parents or those working more than 20 hours per week.

**eurostudent.eu**  
★ ★ ★ ★ ★



# Inequality in HE: European trends

## 4. Types and modes of study:

- Most students are enrolled in **full-time study**.
- **Part-time and distance learning options** are increasingly available, especially **for older** students or those balancing employment and **family responsibilities**.
- Integration of **digital learning**, particularly post-COVID, has expanded, though access and effectiveness vary across countries.

[eurostudent.eu](http://eurostudent.eu)  
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# Inequality in HE: European trends

## 5. Students' time budget:

- Time spent on studies varies significantly, with students from **professional study programmes or older students often spending less time** on academic work due to employment or family obligations.
- Many students, particularly those working more than 20 hours per week, face challenges in **balancing work and study**.

[eurostudent.eu](http://eurostudent.eu)  
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# Inequality in HE: European trends

## 6. Students' employment and internships:

- **Student employment is widespread**, with many students working part-time to support themselves financially.
- Employment rates are particularly **high among students from lower socio-economic backgrounds**.
- **Internships are common but often unpaid**, limiting access for students who cannot afford to work without pay.

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# Inequality in HE: European trends

## 7. Students' resources:

- Students rely on **a mix of family support, self-earned income, and public financial aid**.
- Students from **lower socio-economic backgrounds are more dependent on self-earned income and financial aid**, while students from **higher socio-economic backgrounds receive more family support**.

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# Inequality in HE: European trends

## 8. Students' expenses:

- **Housing** represents the **largest expense** for most students, particularly those living away from home.
- Students from **lower socio-economic backgrounds** are more likely to **live with their parents** to save on housing costs.
- There are significant variations in living costs across countries, with students in northern and western Europe typically facing higher expenses.

[eurostudent.eu](http://eurostudent.eu)  
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# Inequality in HE: European trends

## 9. Students' housing situation:

- A majority of students live in **rental accommodation**, though a significant proportion, particularly in southern and eastern Europe, **live with their parents**.
- **Access to affordable student housing** is a key issue in many countries, with shortages in urban areas driving up costs.

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# Inequality in HE: European trends

## 10. International student mobility:

- Participation in international mobility **remains low for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds** or those with disabilities.
- **Financial constraints, lack of information, and personal obligations** are common barriers.
- While mobility is encouraged, many students report **limited support for international experiences**, both financially and academically.

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# Reminder: Dimensions of equity and inclusion



## Access

Ensuring the conditions and removing barriers for individuals to access educational institutions or programmes that match their needs or educational objectives



## Well-being

Ensuring an optimal experience for all learners in the educational system, leading to a comprehensive and balanced development of each individual's potential



## Achievement

Reducing differences in educational achievements among different groups of learners, preventing dropout and stimulating further education after completing a programme.



# Synthesis – linking EUROSTUDENT & dimensions



## Access

- 1. Characteristics of national student populations
- 2. Socioeconomic background of students
- 3. Transition into and within higher education
- 4. Types and modes of study
- 10. International student mobility



## Well-being



## Achievement

- 5. Students' time budget
- 6. Students' employment and internships
- 7. Students' resources
- 8. Students' expenses
- 9. Students' housing situation

# Case study - Croatia

## Country

- Population: 3.8 million
- Capital: Zagreb (767.131 population)
- EU Member State since 2013

## Higher education system

- Binary system (university and professional studies)
- 62 HE institutions: 10 universities, 15 universities of applied science, 27 schools of professional HE
- 151.827 students



# Cast study: Croatia



## Access

- **Low overall attainment rate** (Croatia: 36.6%; EU: 40.5%)
- **Underrepresented groups** (lower socioeconomic status; mature students; student parents; Roma)
- **Horizontal inequalities** (differences academic vs professional programmes, field of study and institution)



## Well-being

- **Challenging study circumstances** (e.g. paying tuition fees, part-time, working, expensive accommodation, inter-county commuting)
- **Working students** (44% of all students) more exposed to negative study experiences.
- **Diverse disadvantaged students identified**: disability, alternative care, homelessness, Roma; LGBT, rural/ remote areas. migrants. etc.



## Achievement

- **40% of students do not complete** first study programme
- **20% of students drop out** completely
- **Disadvantaged groups are higher risk of drop out**
- **Differences positioning of graduates in the labour market** due to horizontal inequalities

# Students with fewer opportunities

- **Underrepresented groups:** groups of students according to certain characteristics (e.g. gender, age, nationality, geographic origin, socio-economic background, ethnic minorities) whose share among students is lower than the share of a comparable group in the total population.
- **Disadvantaged groups:** groups of students facing specific challenges compared to their peers (e.g. disability, low family income, mental health, etc), affecting their education. They can be part of an underrepresented group, but do not have to be.
- **Vulnerable groups:** groups of students at risk of disadvantage and in addition have special (protection) needs, e.g. due to illness, disability, age, migrant status etc. because they are at risk of being discriminated against.

# Students with fewer opportunities - examples

Illustration based on groups identified in EUROSTUDENT survey:

Students groups (non-exhaustive list)	Under-represented	Vulnerable	Disadvantaged
Students without a tertiary-educated parent	x	x	x
Students from migrant backgrounds	x	x	x
Students from vocational education pathways	x		
Students with disabilities		x	x
Students facing financial difficulties		x	x
Student parents			x
Mature students / students delaying entry into higher education			x

Source: Author's own table, based on EUROSTUDENT findings

# Other factors of disadvantage / vulnerability

*'Those at greater risk of unequal access, lower well-being and lower achievements due to circumstances or characteristics beyond their control.':*

Social and family circumstances:	Individual characteristics:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lower socioeconomic status and poverty</li><li>• Place of residence (in rural, remote and isolated areas)</li><li>• Membership of ethnic, linguistic, and/or religious minority</li><li>• Status of refugee, migrant, or asylum-seeker</li><li>• Former beneficiaries of alternative care</li><li>• Exposure to exceptional circumstances such as natural disasters, wars, pandemics, etc.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gender (which can result in unequal outcomes due to stereotypical gender roles)</li><li>• Developmental difficulties and disabilities (e.g. sensory impairments, intellectual disabilities, motor disorders, autism)</li><li>• Behavioural and/or mental health problems</li><li>• Specific learning difficulties (e.g. dyslexia, dysgraphia, ADHD)</li><li>• Chronic illnesses</li><li>• Traumatic experiences (e.g. the death of a parent)</li><li>• LGBTIQ+ identity</li></ul>

# COFFEE BREAK

## 20 minutes

Next: Panel discussion

Equity and inclusion challenges in Albanian higher education



## TOPIC 2: CHALLENGES

Panel discussion:

**Equity and inclusion challenges in Albanian higher education**



# GROUP DISCUSSION



## Group discussion 2: Equity challenges in Albania

	1. Access	2. Well-being	3. Achievement
<b>1-3</b>	<b>Indicators of problem (examples)</b> <p>E.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overall rate of participation in HE</li> <li>Underrepresentation of certain groups</li> </ul>	<p>E.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Challenges with meeting costs of higher education</li> <li>Challenges with accommodation</li> <li>Challenges with mental health and wellbeing</li> </ul>	<p>E.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Drop-out rate</li> <li>Different labour market outcomes</li> </ul>
		Groups recognised in policies (at system/HEI level)	Groups not yet recognised in policies (at system/HEI level)
<b>4</b>	<b>4. Underrepresented/ Vulnerable /disadvantaged</b> <p>E.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students from low-income families</li> <li>Students with physical disabilities</li> </ul>	<p>E.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students from rural areas</li> <li>Students with non-physical disabilities</li> </ul>	

# TOPIC 3: POLICY RESPONSES

## Presentation 1:

**How to define policy responses to equity and inclusion in higher education: presentation of proposed methodology**





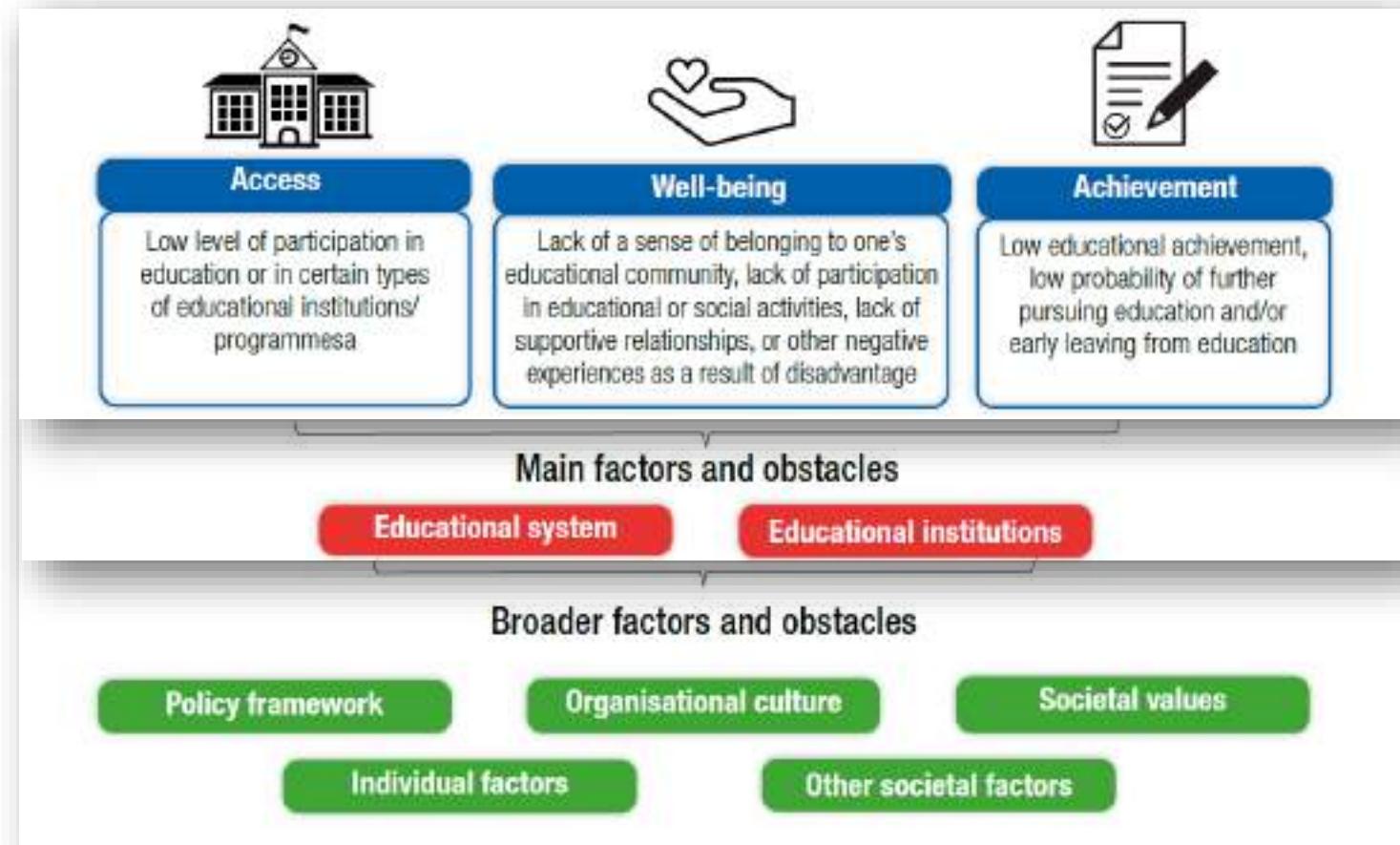
# Disclaimer about educational inequality and policy

- Educational inequalities **change very slowly**... e.g. 'persistent inequality' (Shavit & Blossfeld, 1995; Breen, 2022)
- New forms of inequality are emerging: '**horizontal inequalities**' according to status/prestige of institution or study programme (Lucas, 2001; Shavit et al., 2007; Koucký et al., 2010; McCowan, 2015)
- The **factors and obstacles that lead to inequality are complex and intertwined**. There are no easy policy solutions...





# Educational inequality: factors and obstacles



# Broader factors and obstacles

Factors	Examples	Research evidence
Policy framework	<i>E.g. tracking systems in primary or secondary education; inequalities in access/quality of early childhood education</i>	<i>E.g. Clancy &amp; Goastellec (2007); Coleman et al. (1966)</i>
Organisational culture	<i>E.g. institutional 'habitus' of prestigious institutions; non-university institutions become 'lower tier' institutions</i>	<i>E.g. Bourdieu (1977); Shavit et al. (2007)</i>
Societal values	<i>E.g. dominance of discourses of meritocracy, excellence and competition; perceived privilege of certain disciplines or institutions</i>	<i>E.g. Lynch &amp; O'Riordan (1998); Boliver (2011)</i>
Individual factors	<i>E.g. rational choices to avoid high HE costs, compounded by internalised limitations or low expectations ('self exclusion')</i>	<i>E.g. Boudon (1974)</i>
Other societal factors	<i>E.g. persistent influence of lower socioeconomic status; regional disparities in resources; lack of cultural resources in home environments.</i>	<i>E.g. Bourdieu &amp; Passeron (1990); Coleman et al. (1966)</i>

# Policy instruments

Four types of instruments to achieve policy objectives:

Policy instrument	Description
1. Regulation	Laws, regulations that allow, obligate or forbid certain activities.
2. Funding	Financial rules and financial incentives to influence behaviour.
3. Organisation	Specific organisations or organisational structures carrying out activities; ways of organising and carrying out activities within an organisation
4. Information	Collection and use of data; providing and disseminating information

Sources: *de Boer, H., van Vught, F. (2018), based on Hood (1983), Hood and Margetts (2007).*

# Policy instruments for equity: European trends (1)

Types of policy levers	Typical social inclusion policies	Number of countries using policy
<b>Regulations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Including measures to widen participation in accreditation criteria</li> <li>➤ Change in admission rules for specific groups of students</li> <li>➤ Rules for the recognition of prior learning</li> </ul>	

\*only 1 country known

10 countries or less identified

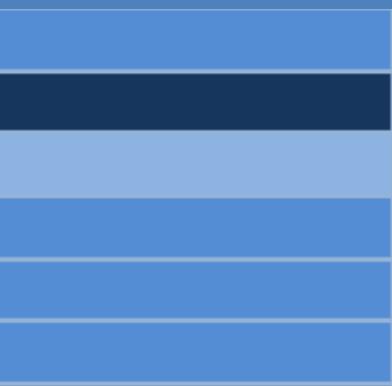
around half of the countries or more identified

all countries

Legend

Source: Kottmann et al. (2019)

## Policy instruments for equity: European trends (2)

Types of policy levers	Typical social inclusion policies	Number of countries using policy
<b>Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Merit-based grants</li> <li>➤ Need-based grants</li> <li>➤ Family allowances</li> <li>➤ Tax-benefits for parents</li> <li>➤ Student welfare benefits/support</li> <li>➤ Incentives to higher education institutions</li> </ul>	

\*only 1 country known

10 countries or less identified

around half of the countries or more identified

all countries

# Policy instruments for equity: European trends (3)

Types of policy levers	Typical social inclusion policies	Number of countries using policy
<b>Organisation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Organisational services to better prepare students from disadvantaged groups in terms of academic competencies</li> <li>➤ Differentiation/Introduction of (new/shorter) study programmes</li> <li>➤ More flexible provision of education</li> </ul>	

\*only 1 country known

10 countries or less identified

around half of the countries or more identified

all countries

Legend

Source: Kottmann et al. (2019)

## Policy instruments for equity: European trends (4)

Types of policy levers	Typical social inclusion policies	Number of countries using policy
<b>Information</b>	➤ Special support for specific groups for study choice	
	➤ Special regulations and programmes for refugees	
	➤ Monitoring of students - access, progress and retention	
	➤ Dissemination of knowledge from research on barriers to access HE for disadvantaged students	no data

\*only 1 country known

10 countries or less identified

around half of the countries or more identified

all countries

Legend

Source: Kottmann et al. (2019)



# European Higher Education Area approach to equity and inclusion

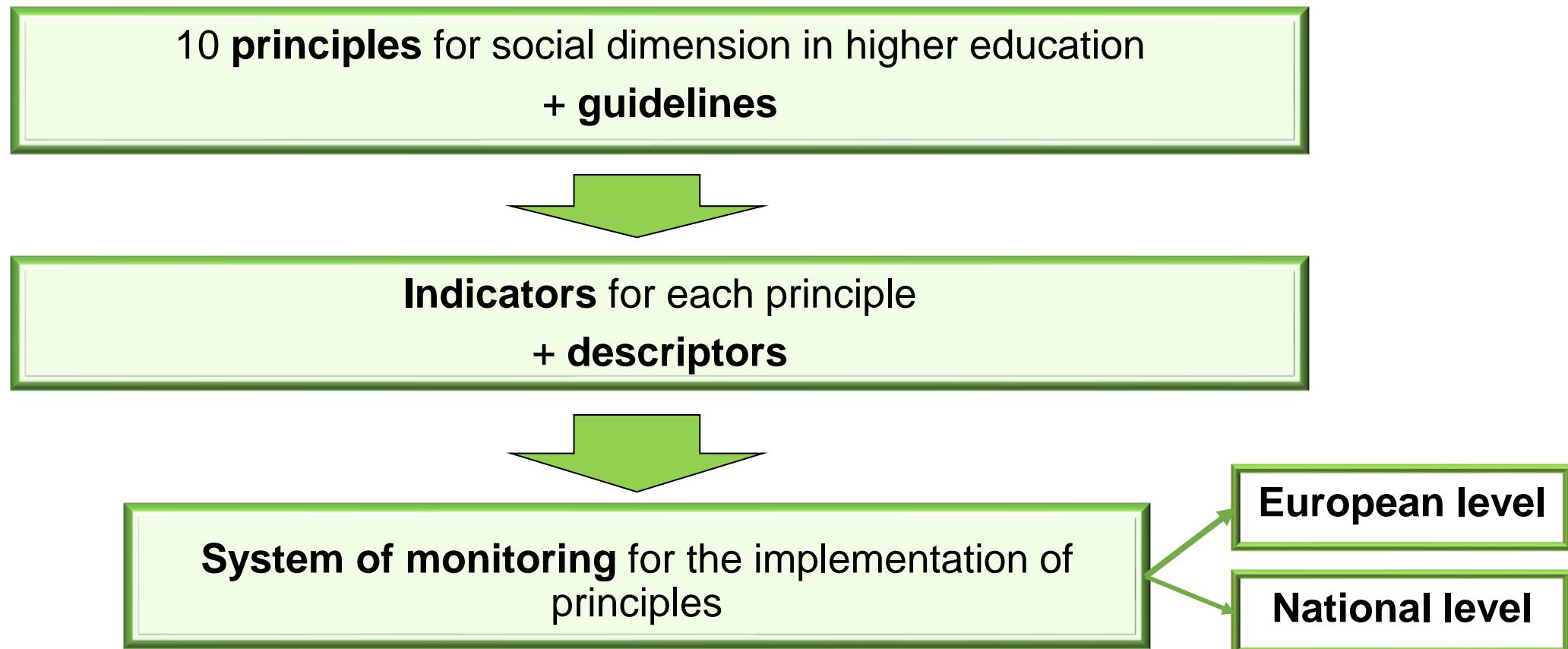
# Overview of policy development in the Bologna Process: Social dimension in higher education in the period 2020 - 2024



- 2020 Rome Communiqué: the **first official definition** of the social dimension and the **formulation of 'Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA'**
  - **'Game-changer'** for the further development of social dimension in the EHEA
- 2024 Tirana Communiqué: **'Indicators and descriptors for the Principles of the Social Dimension in the EHEA'**
  - Principles and guidelines + indicators and descriptors = new **EHEA framework for the social dimension** in higher education



## **EHEA policy framework for the social dimension in higher education adopted in 2024:**





## Principles and Guidelines – adopted in 2020

10 principles for the social dimension **for the upcoming decade**:



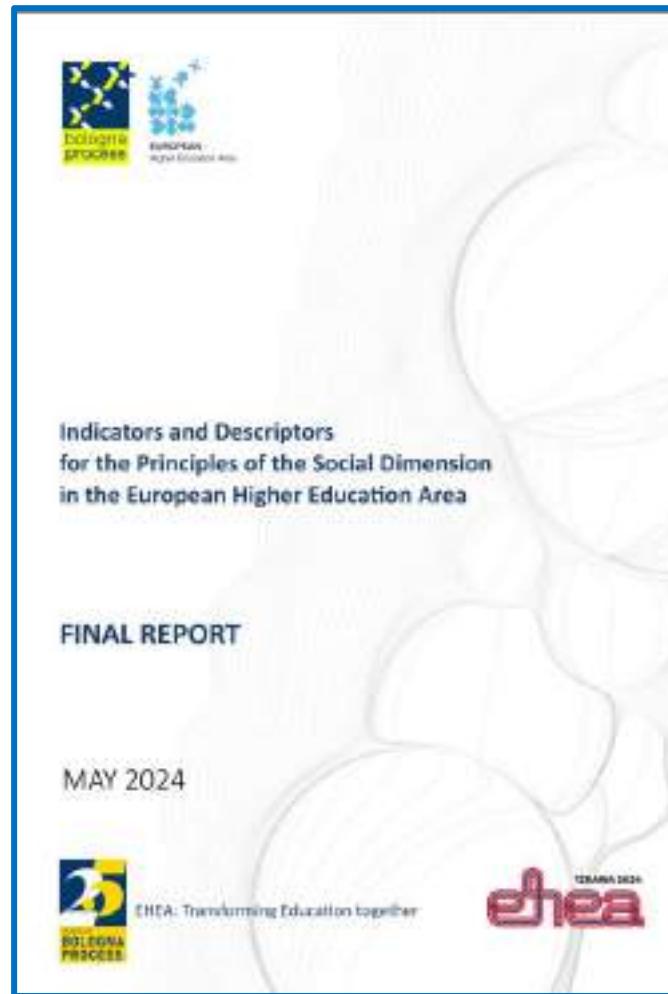
- **Principles** = should be understood as high-level statements that serve as **political commitments** and as a **basis for the conceptualization of different policies** for social dimension enhancement.
- **Guidelines** = recommendations intended to advise policy makers on how the principles should be implemented in practice.



# Principles and Guidelines

**10 principles for the social dimension for the upcoming decade:**

1. Principle on **strategic approach** to the social dimension
2. Principle on **flexibility** of higher education systems
3. Principle on the **inclusiveness of the entire education system**
4. Principle on monitoring and **data collection**
5. Principle on **counselling** and guidance
6. Principle on **funding**
7. Principle on **inclusive institutional culture**
8. Principle on **international mobility**
9. Principle on **community engagement**
10. Principle on **policy dialogue**



**Indicators** = tools for measuring progress in implementing the principles of the social dimension in higher education.



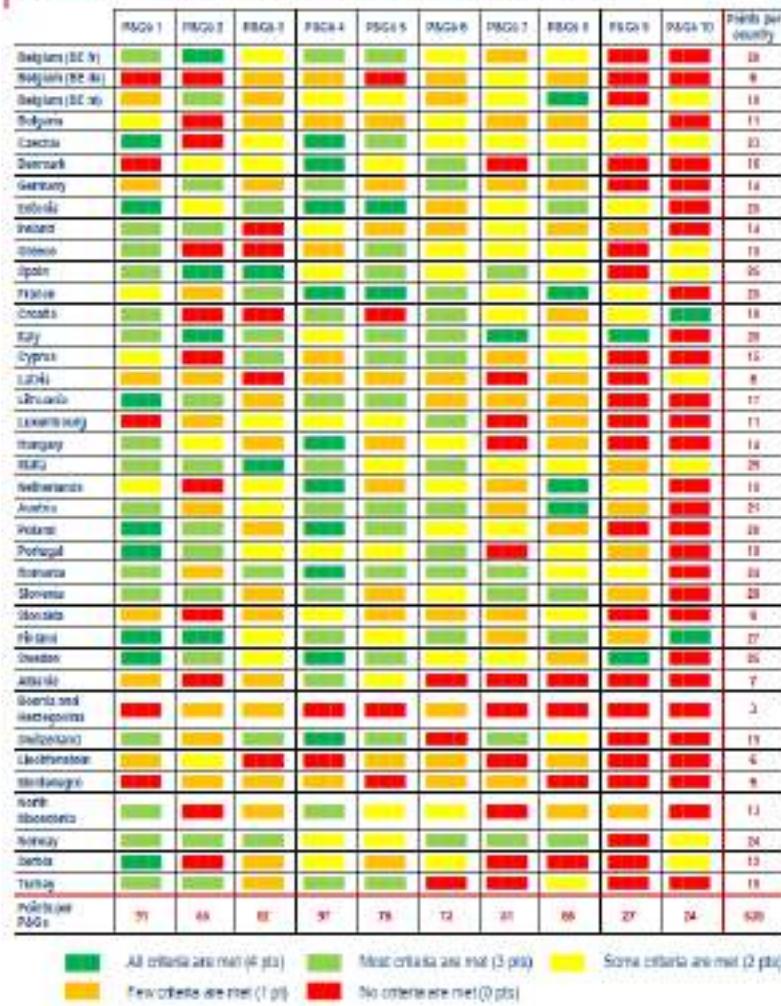
**Descriptors** = each indicator has its descriptor, which outlines characteristics of the indicators in more detail providing a better understanding of the indicators and how they can be implemented.



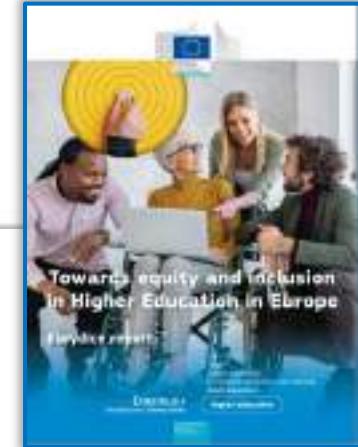
- **Not prescriptive – toolbox approach!** > enable the EHEA countries to implement the indicators in a way that suits their national higher education systems
- Important for creating **European-level and national-level SYSTEMS OF MONITORING and evaluating** the progress in the implementation of the principles for the social dimension.



Figure 11.1: Results of the 10 scoreboard indicators on Principles & Guidelines, 2020/2021



**There is still much to be improved in the EHEA in addressing the social dimension!**



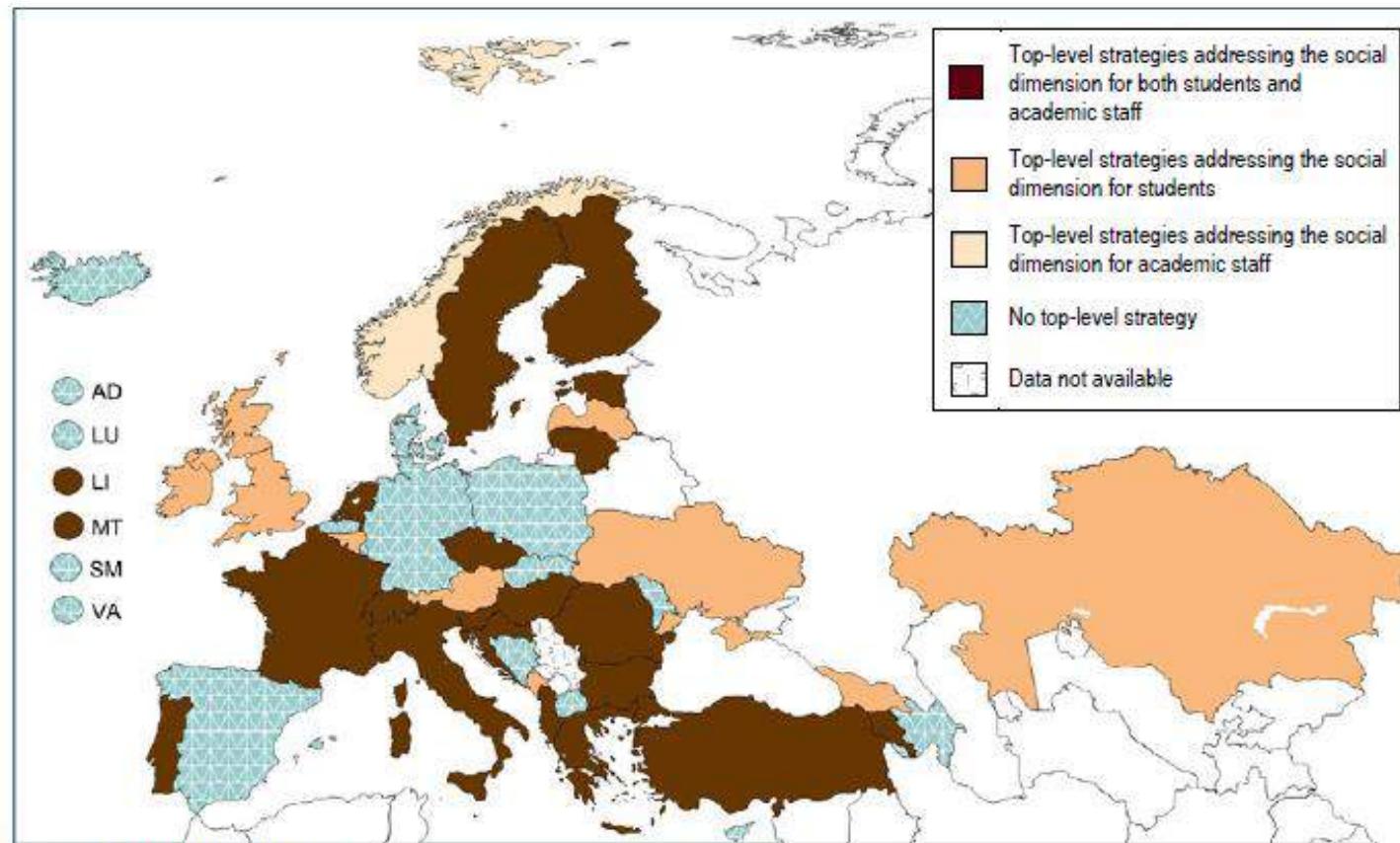
- Eurydice report (2022) shows that the **total number of points achieved** by the countries covered by this report is **635**.
- If all the education systems had been in the dark green category, **the total number would have been 1 520** (38 education systems × 40 points).
- The result indicates that **EHEA systems have put in place policies for nearly 42% of the interventions** required to meet the commitments.

European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice. (2022). Towards equity and inclusion in higher education in Europe. Eurydice report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.



# Monitoring: Principle 1 on strategic approach to the social dimension

Figure 4.1: Strategic commitment to the social dimension of higher education: top-level targeted strategies, action plans and measures, 2022/2023



## Principle 1:

“The social dimension should be central to higher education strategies **at system and institutional level**, as well as at the EHEA level.”

European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice [EC]. (2024). The EHEA in 2024: Bologna Process Implementation Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.





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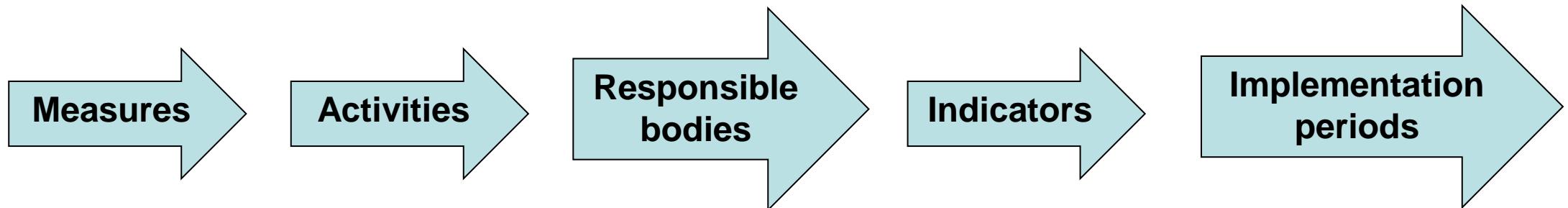
# **National level approach to equity and inclusion: Croatia**

## Croatia: National system level approach to equity and inclusion (1st cycle)

- 2015 – 2021: Established the 1st ***National Committee for Enhancing the Social Dimension of Higher Education***
  - Cross-sectoral representation
- 2019: Government adopted the ***National plan for enhancing the social dimension of higher education*** for the period 2019 – 2021
  - Includes identification of underrepresented and vulnerable groups in higher education
  - Objectives for (1) data collection and monitoring, (2) access, (3) participation, (4) completion and transfer to labor market, (5) student financial support system, (6) links between quality assurance and social dimension
- 2021 – 2025: Established the 2nd ***National Committee for Enhancing the Social Dimension of Higher Education***
- 2022: **Evaluation of the implementation** of the National plan 2019 – 2021

## Croatia: National system level approach to equity and inclusion (2nd cycle)

- 2023: Ministry adopted the new ***Action Plan for Enhancing the Social Dimension of Higher Education for the Period 2023 – 2025***
  - Aligned with the EHEA Principles and Guidelines for the social dimension > covers 10 policy areas
  - Structure for each principle:





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# **Higher education institution level approach to equity and inclusion: Croatia**

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## Croatia – University of Rijeka: Higher education institution level approach to equity and inclusion

- Diversity, equity and inclusion **embedded** into the **university strategy 2021-2025**
- **Gender Equality Plan (2021–2025):**
  - First Croatian university with an institutional gender equality plan.
  - Integrates gender perspectives into curricula, research and outreach activities and supports inclusive academic culture.
  - Establishes organizational unit: diversity and inclusion office + officer
- **2021: University Gender Equality Council:**
  - A university-level representative body established to monitor and support implementation of the Gender Equality Plan
  - Adopted *Guidelines for Prevention and Response to Cases of Sexual Harassment*

## Croatia – University of Rijeka: Higher education institution level approach to equity and inclusion

- 2023: Regulation on **awards for promoting gender equality**
  - Annual financial awards to students and university staff for impactful projects, initiatives, and gender-sensitive actions that improve gender equality within the university and the broader community.
- Important role for the **University Counselling Center**:
  - Provides psychological counselling for students and staff
  - Provides academic adjustment services:
    - Supports students facing ongoing or occasional challenges in academic activities due to illness, impairment, or disorders.
    - Assists teachers by offering guidance on adapting the academic environment to accommodate students with disabilities.
  - Provides career guidance

# LUNCH BREAK

Next: Panel discussion / case studies:  
**Policy responses in Albanian higher education**



# TOPIC 3: POLICY RESPONSES

Panel discussion / case studies:

Policy responses in Albanian higher education



# GROUP DISCUSSION



# Group discussion

Focus on **national and/or university-level** policies and practices

1

Policies/practices in place	Strengths	Weaknesses
E.g. Grant and scholarships	E.g. Large grant	E.g. Only for _% of students
E.g. Tuition waivers	E.g. Helps reduce cost	E.g. Criteria too strict
...		

2

Policies/practices that could/should be adopted	How feasible?
E.g. Student support offices	E.g. Feasible. Trained staff in previous project.
E.g. More flexible university admissions	E.g. Difficult – controversial topic for universities

# TOPIC 4: PLANNING FOR NEW ACTIONS

## Presentation 1:

**Policy support: Overview of EHEA level frameworks and instruments to support equity and inclusion in HE and how Albania can make use of them**



# How to plan policy changes in HE?

## Overview of presentation

### 1. Policy process

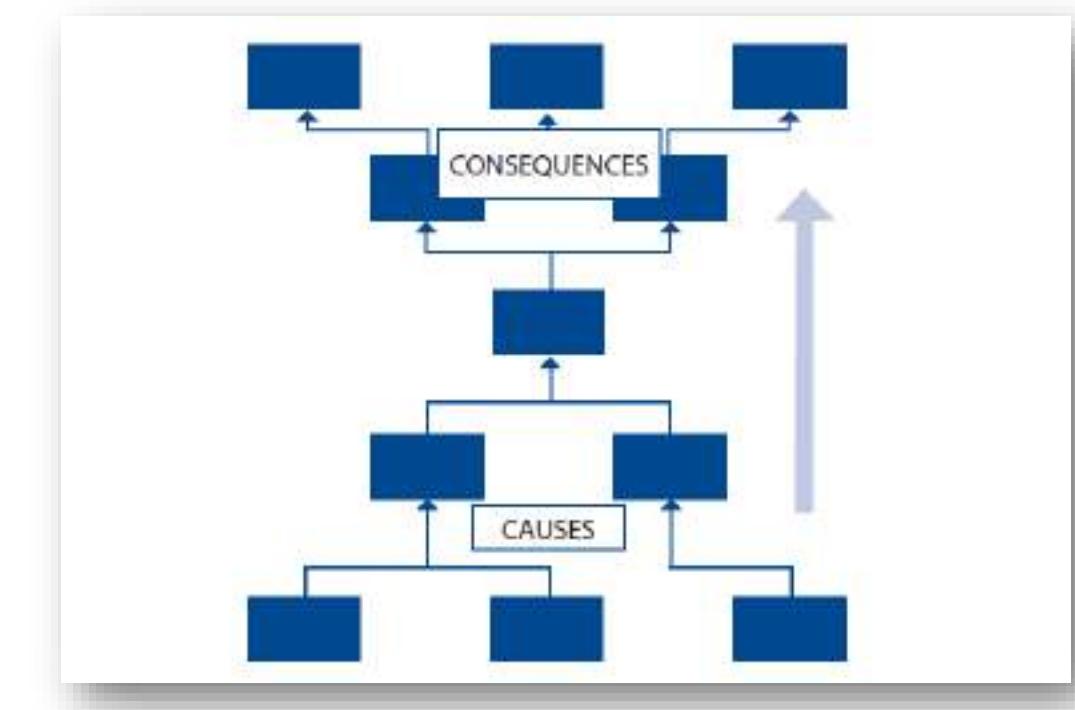
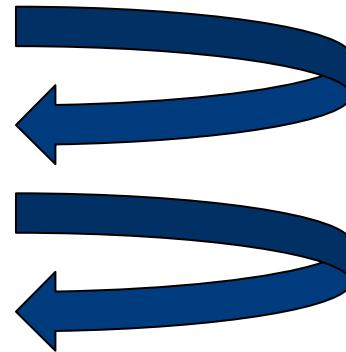
### 2. Policy problems

### 3. Policy objectives

### 4. Policy instruments

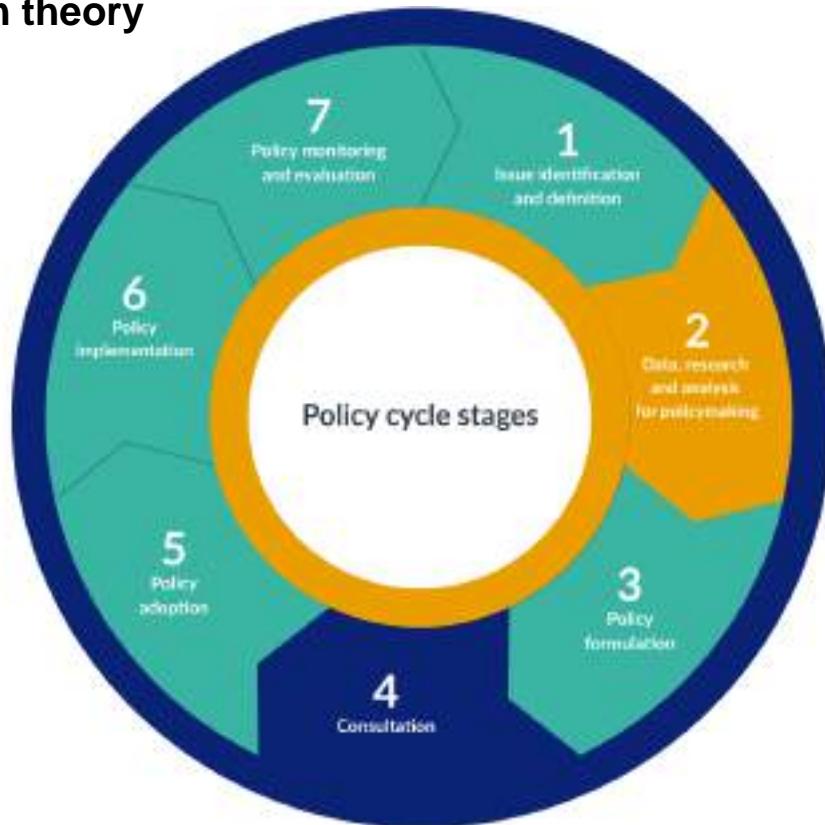
### 5. How EHEA and EU resources can help

### 6. Example from Croatia



# Policy process

## In theory



Source: International Organization for Migration (2024)

## In reality

Not a linear process at all! E.g. policymaking in the UK:

*"As one interviewee put it:*

*You don't start from scratch, surveying the evidence and so on and building up from there and arriving at some policies. Someone comes in with an idea and our job so often is to sort of retro fit the evidence and rationale to support the policy that ministers have already decided they want to pursue.*

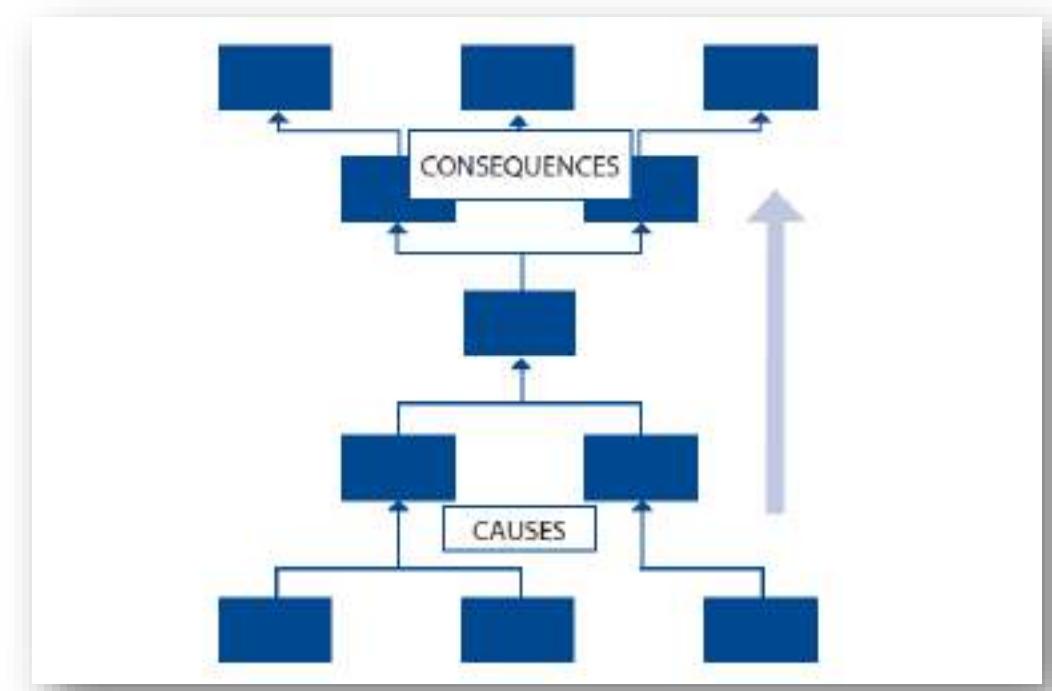
*This is the situation civil servants often find themselves in. Therefore, we need better ways of ensuring that **the policy problem has been fully considered**, and to enable civil servants to help politicians formulate their **strategic policy goals**.*

Source: Rutter et al. (2021)

# Step 1: Policy problems

Based on **evidence / data**. Tools to identify problems

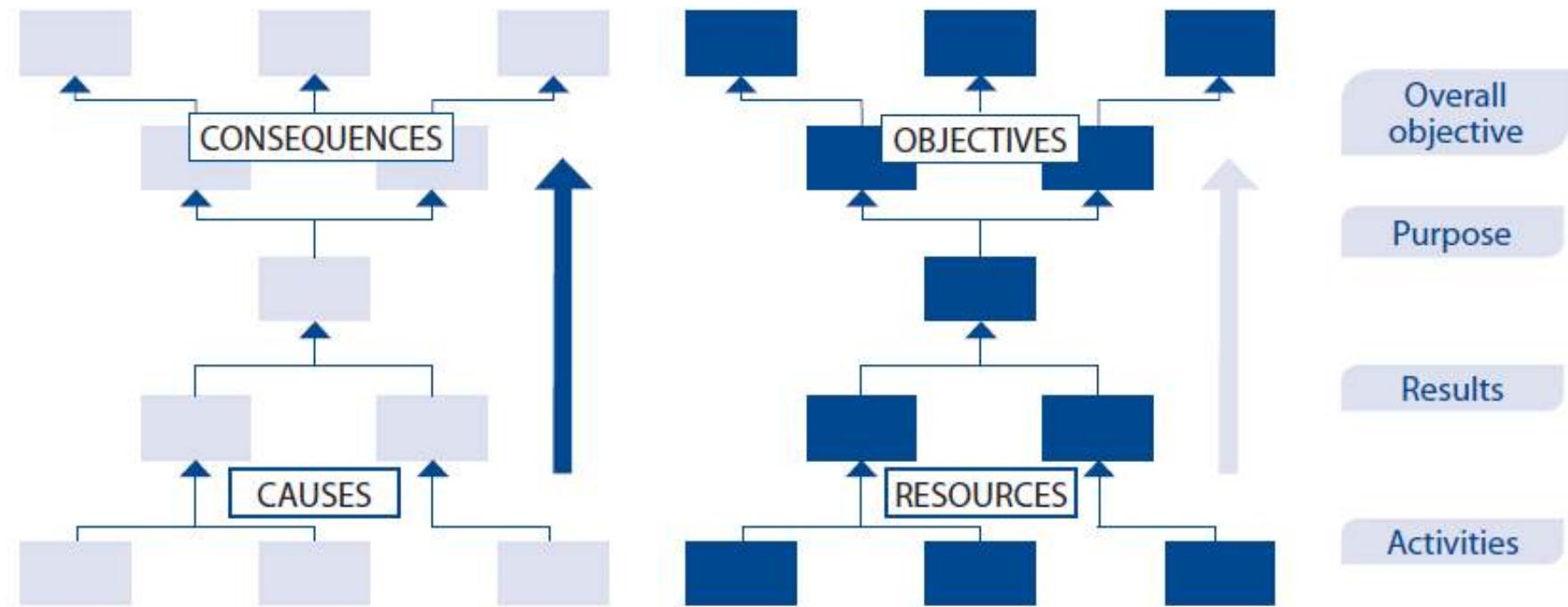
- **PESTL(E)**: analysis of key factors (political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental) of the external environment.
- **SWOT**: analysis the external and internal environment of a policy - S (strengths) and W (weaknesses), O (opportunities) and T (threats).
- **PROBLEM TREE METHOD**: identifying and categorising problems in a hierarchy of cause-and-effect relations





## Step 2: Policy objectives

Inverting a problem tree to an 'objectives' tree



## Step 2: Policy objectives

### Illustrative examples

Policy problems	Policy objectives
<i>'Little awareness of opportunities...'</i>	<i>'Raise awareness of opportunities'</i>
<i>'Financial obstacles to access...'</i>	<i>'Remove financial obstacles to access...'</i>
<i>'Lower academic achievement ...'</i>	-
<i>'Challenges with mental health...'</i>	<i>'Improve mental health...'</i>
Etc.	

## Step 3: Policy instruments

### Illustrative examples

Policy objectives	Policy instruments
‘Raise awareness of opportunities’	E.g. <u>Information</u> : Media campaign
‘Remove financial obstacles to access...’	E.g. <u>Funding</u> : Change criteria for financial aid
-	-
‘Improve mental health...’	E.g. <u>Organisation</u> : Set up counselling offices/services;
Etc.	

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# Wrap-up of key steps

## Policy problem definition

1. In-depth mapping of range of equity and inclusion **challenges**
2. In-depth mapping of **factors and obstacles** that lead to those challenges
3. Acknowledgement and acceptance that **broader factors** are hard to change in the short term

## Policy objective definition

1. Formulate objectives based on identified problems
2. Selection of objectives; acknowledgement that not all problems can realistically be addressed.

## Policy instruments

1. Gain inspiration from existing frameworks of policy instruments for equity/inclusion
2. Select policy instruments based on priorities and on feasibility

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## How can the Bologna Process support the future development of equity and inclusion?

Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG) 2024-2027: **Thematic Working Group D on Social Dimension**

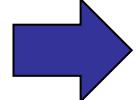
- Albanian public authorities can participate **as members of the TPG D**: they can nominate other stakeholder representatives to take part in the TPG D activities
- Plan: **peer-learning activities and exchange of good-practices** among EHEA member states to support the implementation of the Principles and Guidelines for the social dimension
- Plan: **EHEA level monitoring and data collection** related to the implementation of the Principles and Guidelines for the social dimension
- Plan: Erasmus+ project that will financially support the participation in the TPG D activities

---

## How can the Bologna Process support the future development of equity and inclusion?

### Future Erasmus+ call for proposals that support Bologna objectives

- **Funding for Equity and Inclusion Initiatives:** Grants for projects that promote inclusive practices within higher education institutions (HEIs).
- **Capacity Building:** Supports HEIs in developing strategies to address equity challenges.
- **Training and Resources:** Provides resources and training for staff on inclusive teaching practices and equity-focused policies.
- **Cross-Border Partnerships:** Encourages collaboration between HEIs across EHEA to share best practices in fostering inclusive education.
- **Data Collection and Analysis:** Funding for data collection to monitor progress on equity and inclusion goals.



**IDE is open for partnerships and joint projects with Albanian HEIs**

# TOPIC 4: PLANNING FOR NEW ACTIONS

## Presentation 2:

Towards a national action plan for equity and inclusion? Steps for action planning and case study from Croatia

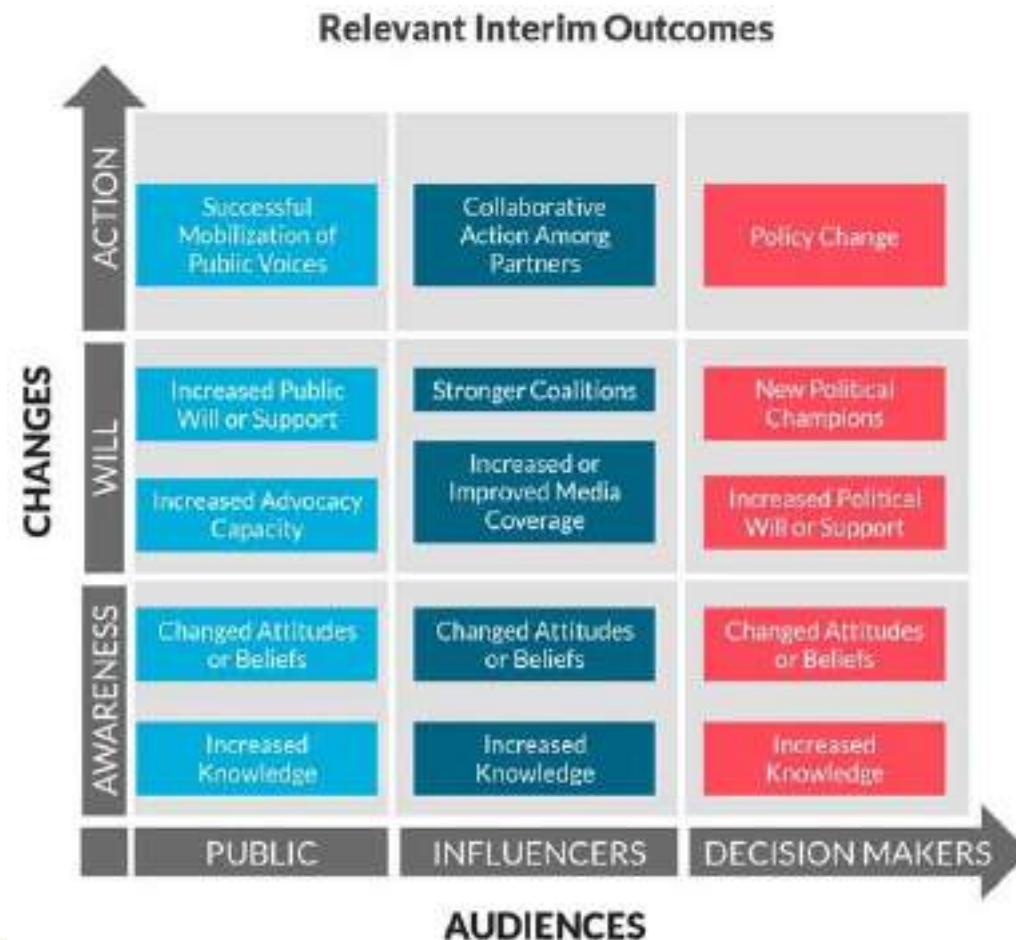




# Case study Croatia: from project to policy impact

## Background:

How to advocate and foster  
policy change as experts  
and/or as the higher  
education community?



# EU-funded project

**EU project "ACCESS: Towards an Equitable System of Higher Education Funding and Student Financial Support" (2009-2012)**

- Comparative analyses, policy
- International expertise; peer-learning
- The first EUROSTUDENT survey in Croatia
- Active role and cooperation of the Ministry of Education on the project
- Policy recommendations, including student financial support based on need and funding for universities to support equity/inclusion



# National dialogue/consultations

## Advocacy and discussions of ACCESS project policy recommendations

- Presentation at the Rectors' Council of Higher Education Institutions of the Republic of Croatia
- Presentation Ministry of Science and Education and Agency for Science and Higher Education
- Joint presentation of the final project publication with the Minister and the Deputy Minister of Education.



# Inclusion in policy-making process

## Participation in the writing of the Strategy for Education, Science and Technology (2013-2014)

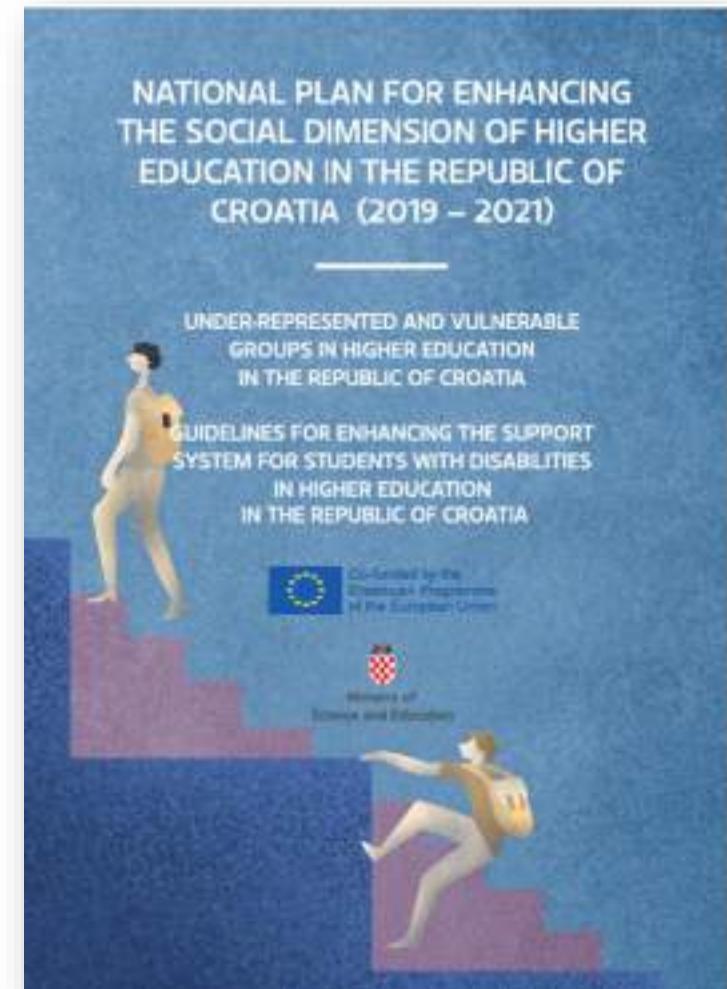
- Chapter entitled "The Social Dimension of Higher Education" – most of it written by IDE. Included recommendations from ACCESS project for needs-based support and for formulating a national action plan for the social dimension
- Chapter entitled "Financing of higher education" included ACCESS recommendation for supporting equity/inclusion through performance-based funding.



# Adoption and implementation

## **Establishment and operation of the National Group for the Social Dimension of Higher Education (2015-2021) and adoption of national plan**

- The result of IDE's proposal in the Education Strategy
- The first National Plan for the Social Dimension of Higher Education (2019 - 2021) was adopted and has been implemented
- A second plan was adopted in 2023 (for period till 2025), meaning the initiative is sustainable!



# Policy impacts

## Croatia

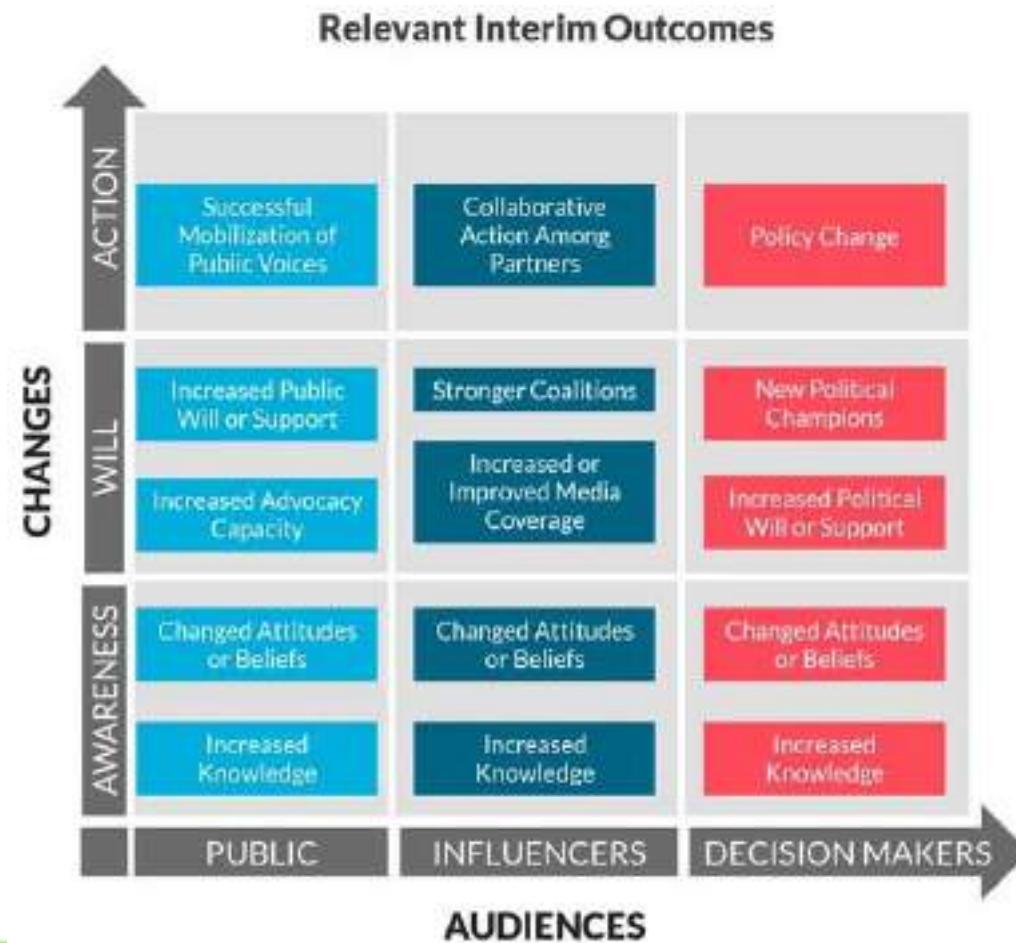
- Equity/inclusion included in the Education Strategy 2014 and special National Plan for Social Dimension 2019-2021 adopted; policy sustained in 2023 policy framework
- Collection and analysis of national equity/inclusion data through EUROSTUDENT since 2008 ; additional research on equity/inclusion funded by Ministry
- Equity/inclusion included as a criterion for performance-based funding
- Government scholarships fundamentally changed through new Socio-economic Scholarships and STEM Scholarships scheme (total: 12.500 students per year)

## International

- Croatia co-chairing EHEA Working Group for the Social Dimension 2018-2024; developing principles and guidelines for period 2020-2027



# Case study Croatia: from project to policy impact

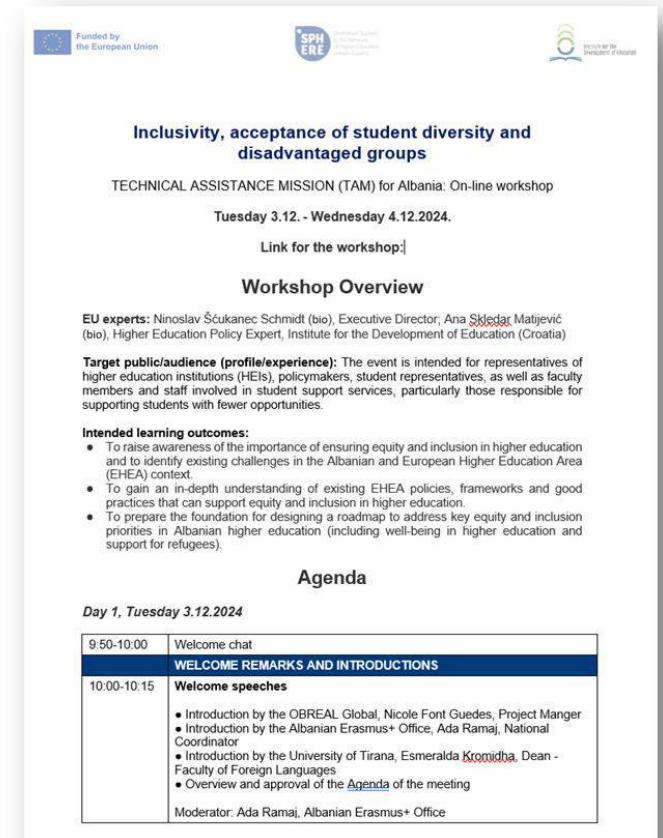


# DAY 1 WRAP-UP; DAY 2 PLAN



# Workshop: expected outcomes

- **Increased awareness** of the importance of ensuring equity and inclusion in higher education and to identify existing challenges in the Albanian and European Higher Education Area (EHEA) context
- **In-depth understanding** of existing EHEA policies, frameworks and good practices that can support equity and inclusion in higher education
- **Foundation for designing a roadmap** to address key equity and inclusion priorities in Albanian higher education



Funded by the European Union

SPH ERE  
Strategic Partnership for Higher Education in the Region of Europe

Inclusivity, acceptance of student diversity and disadvantaged groups

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE MISSION (TAM) for Albania: On-line workshop

Tuesday 3.12. - Wednesday 4.12.2024.

[Link for the workshop](#)

**Workshop Overview**

**EU experts:** Ninoslav Šćukanec Schmidt (bio), Executive Director; Ana Skledar Matijević (bio), Higher Education Policy Expert, Institute for the Development of Education (Croatia)

**Target public/audience (profile/experience):** The event is intended for representatives of higher education institutions (HEIs), policymakers, student representatives, as well as faculty members and staff involved in student support services, particularly those responsible for supporting students with fewer opportunities.

**Intended learning outcomes:**

- To raise awareness of the importance of ensuring equity and inclusion in higher education and to identify existing challenges in the Albanian and European Higher Education Area (EHEA) context.
- To gain an in-depth understanding of existing EHEA policies, frameworks and good practices that can support equity and inclusion in higher education.
- To prepare the foundation for designing a roadmap to address key equity and inclusion priorities in Albanian higher education (including well-being in higher education and support for refugees).

**Agenda**

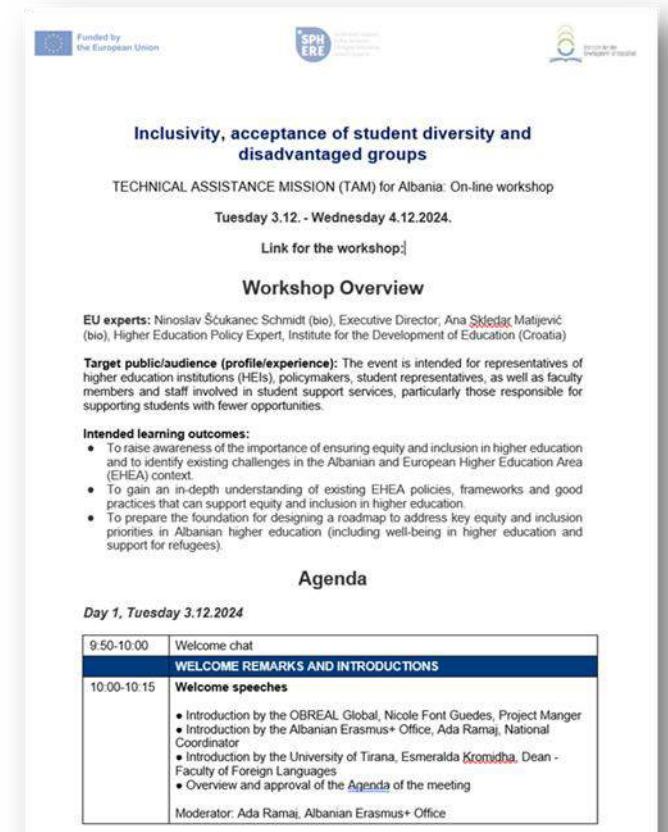
**Day 1, Tuesday 3.12.2024**

9:50-10:00	Welcome chat
<b>WELCOME REMARKS AND INTRODUCTIONS</b>	
10:00-10:15	<b>Welcome speeches</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Introduction by the OBREAL Global, Nicole Font Guedes, Project Manager</li><li>• Introduction by the Albanian Erasmus+ Office, Ada Ramaj, National Coordinator</li><li>• Introduction by the University of Tirana, Esmeralda Kromidha, Dean - Faculty of Foreign Languages</li><li>• Overview and approval of the <a href="#">Agenda</a> of the meeting</li></ul> Moderator: Ada Ramaj, Albanian Erasmus+ Office

# Workshop: agenda

**Day 2: 10:00 – 13:30h**

- **TOPIC 5: FOCUS ON NATIONAL PRIORITIES:** Presentations and group discussions.
  - **Refugees and equity and inclusion:** challenges in Albania and European trends, policies and practices
  - **Well-being in HE:** challenges in Albania and European trends, policies and practices
- **Final inspiration - community engagement for equity and inclusion:** building collaborations with local communities to address joint challenges.



Funded by the European Union SPHERE INSTITUT IN ROZET

**Inclusivity, acceptance of student diversity and disadvantaged groups**

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE MISSION (TAM) for Albania: On-line workshop

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**Agenda**

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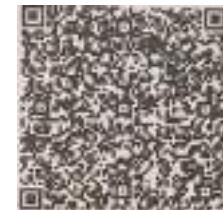
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# Thank you for your attention!

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Development of Education,  
Croatia:**

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## **Web sites:**

- Institute for the Development of Education: [www.iro.hr](http://www.iro.hr)
- European Higher Education Area – social dimension:  
<https://ehea.info/page-social-dimension>