

Austria

National Higher Education Equity Policy

Governance

Who is responsible for defining national policies in higher education?

- The Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research is responsible for setting higher education policy.

Higher Education Policy Documents

What are the current official documents defining the national higher education strategy / policies?

- The Universities Act of 2002
- National Strategy on the Social Dimension of Higher Education

Equity in Policy Documents

What broad and specific equity objectives do the policy documents identify?

The “National Strategy on the Social Dimension of Higher Education” outlines three overarching equity goals:

- More inclusive access
- Avoiding drop-out and improving academic success
- Creating basic parameters and optimizing the regulation of higher education policy

Which equity target groups are identified in the policy documents?

- Low-income students
- Gender groups
- Minority groups: regional, migrant backgrounds
- Students with disability
- Students with care responsibilities.

The Austrian national higher education policy on the social dimension identifies underrepresented groups and students with special needs:

Underrepresented groups are defined as follows:

- Students whose parents do not have higher education entrance qualifications or who come from lower socio-economic backgrounds (currently around 40%).
- Underrepresentation of women or men in particular degree programmes (e.g. women in technical studies, men in veterinary medicine studies)
- Students from particular regions/federal states
- Students with migrant backgrounds (with an Austrian entrance qualification)
- Students with a disability and/or chronic illness

Students with special needs:

- Students with young children or other care responsibilities
- Students with a disability and/or chronic illness
- Students with delayed entry to higher education (i.e. at least two years since leaving school or “second chance” education)
- Students in employment

Does the country have concrete targets for the participation of specific equity groups?

The *National Strategy on the Social Dimension of Higher Education* specifies the following goals and targets (page 10):

- Increase the number of “educationally disadvantaged” students in higher education by:
 - Reducing the recruitment quota/probability factor for admission to higher education to 2.25 (2020) and 2.10 (2025)
 - Decreasing the discrepancy in the probability factors between public universities and universities of applied sciences
 - Including private universities and university colleges of teacher education in the calculation of probability factors, adaption of target values
- Widen inclusive access by: Increasing the number of non-traditional admissions (educational residents) to higher education from the current 4,000 to 5,300
- Promote gender balance in all degree programs:

- Requiring a minimum percentage of 10% men or women in any degree program (excluding doctoral study) and at any higher education institution
- Halving the number of degree programs at each higher education institution where men or women comprise less than 30%
- Widen participation by:
 - Increasing the percentage of (educational resident) students admitted to higher education who are second generation children of immigrants from 22% to 30%
 - Increase the percentage of students admitted to higher education in all federal states to 42% by 2025 and towards the Austrian average (47%) with reference to the entire education and vocational education system
- Establish recognition of the social dimension in mobility by:
 - Increasing participation in overseas study programs by students whose parents have no university entrance qualifications, to at least 18%
- With respect to improved compatibility: Increase the number of vocational places at universities of applied science to 50%
- Student grants: Increase the number of self-supporting students receiving maintenance grants to 15,000
- Promote equal opportunity: Sustained increase in the percentage of student admissions from homes where neither parent has a university degree on medical and dental courses towards an eventual target of 50%

Is there a standalone policy document dedicated to equity promotion in higher education?

- Yes, the National Strategy on the Social Dimension of Higher Education

Are there specific anti-discrimination provisions?

- Yes, the Universities Act of 2002 includes antidiscrimination provisions, especially with regards to gender.

What specific interventions and/or instruments of equity promotion are included in the official strategy and policy documents (monetary and non-monetary)?

Monetary Policy Instruments

- **No tuition fees or low fees in public institutions / No fees for certain groups:**
 - Public universities charge minimal fees.
 - Special allowances for disadvantaged students are in place in relation to paying fees and keeping up a certain pace of studies.
- **Needs-based scholarships and grants / Other grants targeted for equity groups**
 - Student support grants based on financial need (family) and merit
 - Needs based scholarships to support scientific and artistic theses.
 - Small amounts for study assistance is available to students undergoing financial hardship (to cover, for example, housing costs)

Non-Monetary Policy Instruments

- Outreach programs
- Academic and career guidance and counseling
- Gender and Diversity management in higher education is a thematic area of concern

Financial Resources

What financial resources does the country devote to equity promotion measures?

- Not available

Quality Assurance

Do the quality assurance criteria take equity elements into consideration?

- Strategic Gender Equality Objectives formalized in the Universities' Performance Agreements

Monitoring and Evaluation

Who is responsible for monitoring the impact of equity promotion measures?

- Monitoring system is being put in place.

- Gender monitoring in higher education is emphasized:
<https://bmbwf.gv.at/english/home/science-higher-education/gender-and-diversity/programmes-and-initiatives/gender-monitoring/>

Dedicated Equity Promotion Agency

Austria does not have an agency dedicated to equity promotion in higher education.

Sources

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