

European Commission Equity Policy Template

Introduction

The European Commission, established in 1958 in Brussels, is the executive arm of the European Union (EU). Its main responsibility is to draw up proposals for new European legislation and implement the decisions of the European Parliament and the Council of the EU. Led by a team of 28 Commissioners—one for each member country—, it prepares the budget and allocates EU resources.

Higher Education Policy Documents

The European Commission's Directorate of Education has prepared several higher education strategies over the years. The most recent relevant documents are:

- Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a Renewed EU Agenda for Higher Education (2017).
- Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020)

Equity Policy Documents

What broad and specific equity objectives does the strategy document identify?

- The European Commission seeks to eliminate social divisions, which prevent students from disadvantaged groups from entering and completing higher education. To promote equity in higher education, the Commission works to build inclusive and connected systems by orienting Erasmus + support to “help HEIs in developing and implementing integrated institutional strategies for inclusion, gender equality and study success from admission to graduation.” It also supports the “recognition of qualifications held by refugees to facilitate their access to higher education”.
- 40 % of young people should have a tertiary education qualification or equivalent by 2020.
- Adult participation in learning should reach 15% by 2020.

Does the European Commission have a standalone equity promotion strategy for higher education?

- Strategy on Widening Participation for Equity and Growth, issued by the Ministers of Education of the European Higher Education Area

Which equity target groups are identified in the strategy document(s)?

- Students from parents with low educational attainment
- Gender
- Students from disadvantaged groups
- Students with migrant background
- Refugee students

What specific interventions and/or instruments of equity promotion are recommended to partner countries in the official strategy document (monetary and non-monetary interventions)?

Monetary Policy Instruments

What are the main financial instruments to promote equity?

- No tuition fees or low fees in public institutions / No fees for certain groups
- Needs-based scholarships and grants
- Tax benefits and family allowances
- Student loans

Non-Monetary Policy Instruments

What are the main non-monetary instruments to promote equity?

- Outreach and bridging programs
- Academic and career guidance and counseling
- Higher education preparatory programs and program providing alternative qualifications
- Recognition of prior learning / entry through the recognition of prior learning combined with an additional entrance exam / entrance exams/admission tests requiring no prior qualifications / entry through preparatory or trial higher education programs

- Reformed admission procedures / quotas / affirmative action
- Retention programs
- Monitoring of access
- Legal obligation for higher education institutions to promote wider access

Equity Interventions

What modalities and instruments does the European Commission rely on to promote equity in higher education in member countries?

- Policy work on key issues to inform consultations and advice to member states. The Commission is tasked with building evidence about what works in higher education through studies, expert groups, and analysis / monitoring of benchmarks and indicators. It supports cooperation, mutual learning and targeted policy advice between governments and authorities responsible for higher education in member states.
- Grants to higher education institutions through the Erasmus + program in support of innovative cooperation projects among institutions.

Financial Resources

What financial resources does the European Commission devote to equity promotion programs/projects in higher education?

- It is difficult to assess this aspect as the European Commission does not separate equity support projects from its other higher education interventions.

<http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects/>

http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/et-monitor_en

References

Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a Renewed EU Agenda for Higher Education (2017)

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=SWD%3A2017%3A164%3AFIN>

Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training

https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/european-higher-education-area-2018-bologna-process-implementation-report_en

Widening Participation for Equity and Growth – A Strategy for the Development of the Social Dimension and Lifelong Learning in the European Higher Education Area to 2020

https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/european-higher-education-area-2018-bologna-process-implementation-report_en

<http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects/>

http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/et-monitor_en