

France

National Higher Education Equity Policy

Governance

The Ministry of Higher Education, Research, and Innovation is responsible for defining national policies in higher education.

Higher Education Policy Documents

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

- Higher Education and Research Law, July 2013, amended 2014
- 2015 National Higher Education Strategy: *Pour une société apprenante - propositions pour une stratégie nationale de l'enseignement supérieur* (“For a learning society – proposals for a national higher education strategy”)

Equity in Policy Documents

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

The strategy document, *Pour une société apprenante* identifies several equity or equity related objectives. The focus is generally more on “equality,” rather than on “equity”:

- Improve the efficiency and equity of guidance between high school and higher education
- Fight against gender stereotypes
- Diminish by 50% the “social gap to graduation” that includes students with parents who are working in blue collar jobs or as employees.
- Deconstruct stereotypes to fight against social, gender and territorial inequalities
- Develop accessibility to studies and success for students with disabilities

Which equity target groups are identified in the policy documents?

- Low-income students
- Gender groups
- Minority groups: territorial

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

- According to the higher education strategy, 50% participation of lower-income students by 2025 (by stating that 50% of students receiving needs-based grants in financial support).

France does not have a standalone policy document dedicated to equity promotion in higher education.

Are there specific anti-discrimination provisions?

- The Ministry's website dedicates a section to fighting discrimination through its higher education strategy:
 - Gender
 - Homophobia
 - Violence against women
 - Students with disabilities

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:**
 - students from low-socio economic status benefit from fee-waivers or very low fees
- **Needs-based scholarships and grants / Other grants targeted for equity groups:**
 - needs-based grants for students who qualify for fee-exemptions based on their socio-economic status
 - universal subsidies for university cafeterias and accommodation based on type of accommodation (and living conditions)
- **Student loans:** used to be both public and private, but today, it is largely the state that delivers student loans

Non-Monetary Policy Instruments

- **Institutions set up in remote areas / Support from more advanced universities to institutions in remote areas / Distance education available to equity groups living in remote areas:** satellite campuses created to promote greater participation and access in diverse regions. However, program offerings at the satellite campuses are less abundant than at the main campuses.
- **Outreach and bridge programs:**
 - France has alternative programs to bridging programs, including higher education preparatory programs (Diplôme d'accès à l'enseignement supérieur). Since September 2018, with the new admission system Parcoursup, universities have the possibility of accepting students who do not have the right academic level on the condition that they take a bridge program for a year ("admission oui si")
- **Academic and career guidance and counseling:**
 - Outreach and counseling services to secondary school leavers
- **Recognition of prior learning:**

- The validation of experience-based learning (*Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience*) allows individuals to get full or partial recognition of the skills and professional qualifications acquired on the job. Any individual, regardless of age, nationality or legal status, can participate in this process after three years of salaried, non-salaried or voluntary professional activity or experience. The outcome is a diploma or professional certificate inscribed into the National Registry of Vocational Qualifications.
- **Reformed admission procedures / Affirmative action programs:**
 - 10 % of the best ranked holders of the *Baccalauréat* (upper secondary school leaving examination) who come from deprived areas are guaranteed spots in select programs.
- **Retention programs:** Success plans to support students in their studies
- **Language support or counselling for migrants, refugees or foreign students**

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? The institutional evaluations done by the Haut Conseil de l'Évaluation de la Recherche et de l'Enseignement Supérieur (HCERES) considers the extent to which the institution supports students in all their diversity.

Monitoring and Evaluation

France has developed indicators of related to the retention or completion of disadvantaged learners. This includes the share of under-represented students at each higher education level, and the completion rates of need-based grant holders. Equity indicators are analyzed by the Ministry responsible for higher education and other State agencies, such as France Stratégie, which is located in the Prime Minister's office.

Dedicated Equity Promotion Agency

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

Sources

Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur, de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
<http://www.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/>

“Lutte contre les discriminations dans l'enseignement supérieur” Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur, de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
<http://www.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/pid29674/lutte-contre-les-discriminations.html>

Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur, de la Recherche et de l'Innovation [French Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation], 2015. Pour une société apprenante - propositions pour une stratégie nationale de l'enseignement supérieur [For a learning society – proposals for a national higher education strategy]. [pdf] Available at: http://cache.media.enseignementsuprecherche.gouv.fr/file/STRANES/12/2/STRANES_entier_bd_461122.pdf

Marie Duru-Bellat. Access to Higher Education: the French case. 15001. Ce rapport a été réalisé dans le cadre d'un projet comparatif européen sur l'accès à l'enseignement. 2015.