

# Tunisia

## National Higher Education Equity Policy

### **Governance**

The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research 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 Law (2008)
- Since the Arab Spring, the government of Tunisia has undertaken a long reform process to build consensus around the proposed changes, culminating in the December 2017 national conference (*Assises Nationales*) on ten key themes that do not, however, specifically include equity.<sup>1</sup> A book on the agreed reforms is under preparation.

### **Equity in Policy Documents**

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

- Open access to higher education for all secondary school graduates
- Removal of financial barriers
- Provision of subsidized housing in university dormitories (especially for girls)

Which equity target groups are identified in the policy documents?

- Low-income students
- Girls. While enrollment is not an issue (females represent 65% of all students), graduate employment is a serious concern, as females are more affected by graduate unemployment than males.
- Minority groups: students from remote, under-privileged regions.
- Students with disability.

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<sup>1</sup> 1.Quality and accreditation; 2.Employability and openness to the environment; 3.Organization and governance of scientific research; 4.ValORIZATION and internationalization; 5.University Life; 6.Administration Governance; 7.Autonomy and University Organization; 8.University map and regional integration; 9.Teachers Status, training and evaluation; and 10.New teaching methods.

Tunisia does not have concrete targets for the participation of specific equity groups.

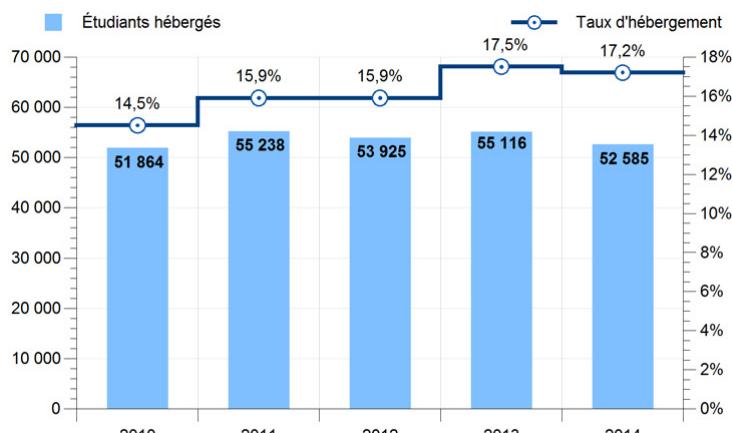
Tunisia does not have a standalone policy document dedicated to equity promotion in higher education.

Tunisia does not have specific anti-discrimination provisions.

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: public higher education is free for all students.
- Needs-based grants for low-income students (whose parents earn the minimum legal salary or less)
- Subsidized student loans for living expenses
- Subsidized student dormitories. Male students are entitled to at least one year in a university dormitory, while female students get at least two years (up to three years expected by 2019). The Ministry declared 2015 as the “year of university housing”. Table 1 shows the evolution of the number and percentage of students benefiting from subsidized lodging. Close to 17% of students are in that category.



Source: Offices des Œuvres universitaires

- Competitive funding with favorable terms for universities in remote / underprivileged regions of the country

### ***Non-Monetary Policy Instruments***

- Affirmative action: since June 2018, the Ministry of Higher Education has introduced an affirmative action element in the orientation into universities of secondary education graduates from remote provinces. In that way, 400 students from 12 provinces (*gouvernorats*) were able to enter the top 30 higher education institutions in the country.
- New universities were set up in under-privileged provinces. Also, a twinning program supports partnerships between research labs in top universities and labs in the new universities established in remote parts of the country.
- The Tunisian Virtual University serves students in all universities, especially those in remote regions. One of the youngest universities (Jendouba University) located in a remote region has developed a highly successful MOOC to help students prepare for French language certification.
- Specialized institutions targeting underrepresented groups: Tunisia has a higher education institution for blind and low-sighted students.
- Academic and career guidance and counseling: all universities can apply for funds to support the establishment of career counseling and competencies certification departments. Priority is given to young universities in remote regions.

### **Financial Resources**

What financial resources does the country devote to equity promotion measures?  
Not available

### **Quality Assurance**

The quality assurance criteria do not take equity elements into consideration.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

- The Department of Student Affairs at the Ministry of Higher Education and the Office of University Affairs (in charge of student housing) are responsible for monitoring the impact of equity promotion measures.

### **Dedicated Equity Promotion Agency**

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

## **Sources**

Tunisian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

<http://www.mes.tn/?langue=fr>

Higher Education Law of 2008

<http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/SERIAL/78210/83454/F927320668/TUN-78210.pdf>