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# New decade for the social dimension within the Bologna Process

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## 2020-2030: The decade of the social dimension in the EHEA – WHY?

### CONTENT:

1. **Impact of COVID-19** on the social dimension of higher education
2. **New policy developments and opportunities** for the social dimension in the EHEA
3. **Future of ‘Principles and Guidelines** to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA’
4. **Building a European movement** for the social dimension of higher education



# 2020-2030: The decade of the social dimension in the EHEA – WHY?

1.

## **Impact of COVID-19** on the social dimension of higher education



## Impact of COVID-19 on the social dimension

- **At-risk students are disproportionately affected.**
- Now at-risk students **face a range of additional challenges** in accessing higher education, participating fully in their study programs and successfully completing their studies.

(NESET Analytical Report, Farnell et al., 2021)

### WHAT: overview of **challenges** faced by the EHEA students during COVID-19 pandemic

#### **Learning and teaching** challenges:

- almost 60 % reported they **do not always have a reliable internet connection**
- almost 70 % reported they **do not always have access to course study materials**
- almost 35 % of students **did not often have a quiet place to study**

(ESU Survey, Doolan et al., 2021)



## Immediate impact of COVID-19 on the social dimension

**WHAT:** overview of **challenges** faced by the **EHEA** students during **COVID-19** pandemic

### **Funding** challenges:

- **almost 40 %** of students who worked during their studies **lost their jobs**
- almost 15 % of students had **significant financial concerns** about their **study costs**

(ESU Survey, Doolan et al., 2021)



### WHAT: overview of **challenges** faced by the EHEA students during COVID-19 pandemic

#### **Students' well-being** challenges:

- Students have **frequently felt frustrated and anxious** in their academic activities since on-site classes had been cancelled.
- Lower levels of general well-being were reported by students **who do not have a supportive social network**:
  - almost 10 % of students indicated that they **do not have several people they can trust to help solve their problems**.

(ESU Survey, Doolan et al., 2021)





## Immediate impact of COVID-19 on the social dimension

**WHO:** identifying students more likely to face difficulties in adjusting to studying during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Students **at lower levels of study**
- Students **lacking a supportive social network**
- Students who reported having **mental health problems**
- Students with lower levels of digital skills
- Students who do not have a **quiet place to study**, a **good internet connection** and **material for studying** at their disposal

(ESU Survey, Doolan et al., 2021)



## **Conclusion:** Impact of COVID-19 on the social dimension – short term (next year) and medium term (up to 2025)

- Pandemic will have **negative impact on equity and social inclusion in education >>>**
  - a) **reducing equal access** to higher education
  - b) **lowering the level of participation** of at-risk students in higher education in the upcoming years.
- Long-term ‘**scarring**’ effects for young people under the age of 25 – the ‘COVID generation’ – resulting in an **unprecedented decline in social mobility** due to rising economic and educational inequalities.



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## 2020-2030: The decade of the social dimension in the EHEA – WHY?

### 2.

## **New policy developments and opportunities for the social dimension in the EHEA**



## New policy developments and opportunities for the social dimension



- Despite the negative impact of COVID-19 pandemic on higher education, it is also important to consider **what opportunities the crisis provides to place the social dimension as a top priority** in the post-COVID-19 recovery in higher education.
- **2020 Rome Ministerial Communiqué** > 49 ministers of higher education committed to build an **inclusive**, innovative and interconnected European Higher Education Area (EHEA) **by 2030**.

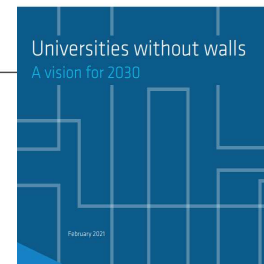


## New policy developments and opportunities for the social dimension: EHEA

### 2020 Rome Ministerial Communiqué - an inclusive EHEA:

- Adopted a new strategic document **“Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA”**
  - Novelty (for the 1st time): guidelines intended to advise policy makers on **how the principles should be implemented in practice**
  - **integral part** of the 2020 Rome Ministerial Communique – 49 ministers have **politically committed** to its implementation





## New policy developments and opportunities for the social dimension: EHEA

### European University Association (2021): “Universities without walls: a vision for 2030”

- **Priorities for action:** one of the three key areas in which European universities “see major potential for moving forward in increasing societal engagement and contributing to sustainable development” is **strengthening of their civic engagement**
  - “**Diversity and social cohesion** are important components of sustainable development”
  - “Universities and **their missions will widely benefit from equity and inclusion**, and it is therefore **in their core interest to promote these values in society**”



## New policy developments and opportunities for the social dimension: EU



- Achieving the **European Education Area by 2025** (European Commission, 2020):
  - One of the six dimensions necessary to further develop the EEA refers to **inclusion and gender equality**.
  - “**Educational attainment** and achievement should be **decoupled from social, economic and cultural status**, to ensure that education and training systems boost the abilities of every individual and enable upward social mobility”



## New policy developments and opportunities for the social dimension: EU



- **European Universities** initiative (European Commission 2019-2020):
  - 2021-2027: the Commission will further optimize the vision of the European Universities “**to address big societal challenges**, become true engines of development for cities and regions and promote civic engagement”
  - fostered by the European Universities alliances whose **mission is dedicated to fostering inclusive higher education** - as the alliance Young Universities for the Future of Europe (YUFE) already demonstrates





## 2020-2030: The decade of the social dimension in the EHEA – WHY?

3.



### **Future of ‘Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA’**



- ✓ Key output of the BFUG Advisory Group for Social Dimension 2018-2020:  
a **NEW forward-looking strategic document** for the period 2020-2030

## Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA





## New definition: social dimension

- **Definition:** composition of the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels should correspond to the heterogeneous social profile of society at large
- Policy levers for identifying and improving the prospects of **underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable students**
- Embraces a **social justice agenda**

**Starting point:**  
definition in the  
2007 London  
Communique

**New:**  
fosters  
equity

- **New: enlarged definition** that goes beyond the London definition - by stressing that the social dimension encompasses the **creation of an inclusive environment** in higher education that fosters **equity** and **diversity** and is responsive to the **needs of local communities**.

**New:**  
responsive to  
the **needs of**  
**local**  
**communities**

**New:**  
fosters  
**diversity**

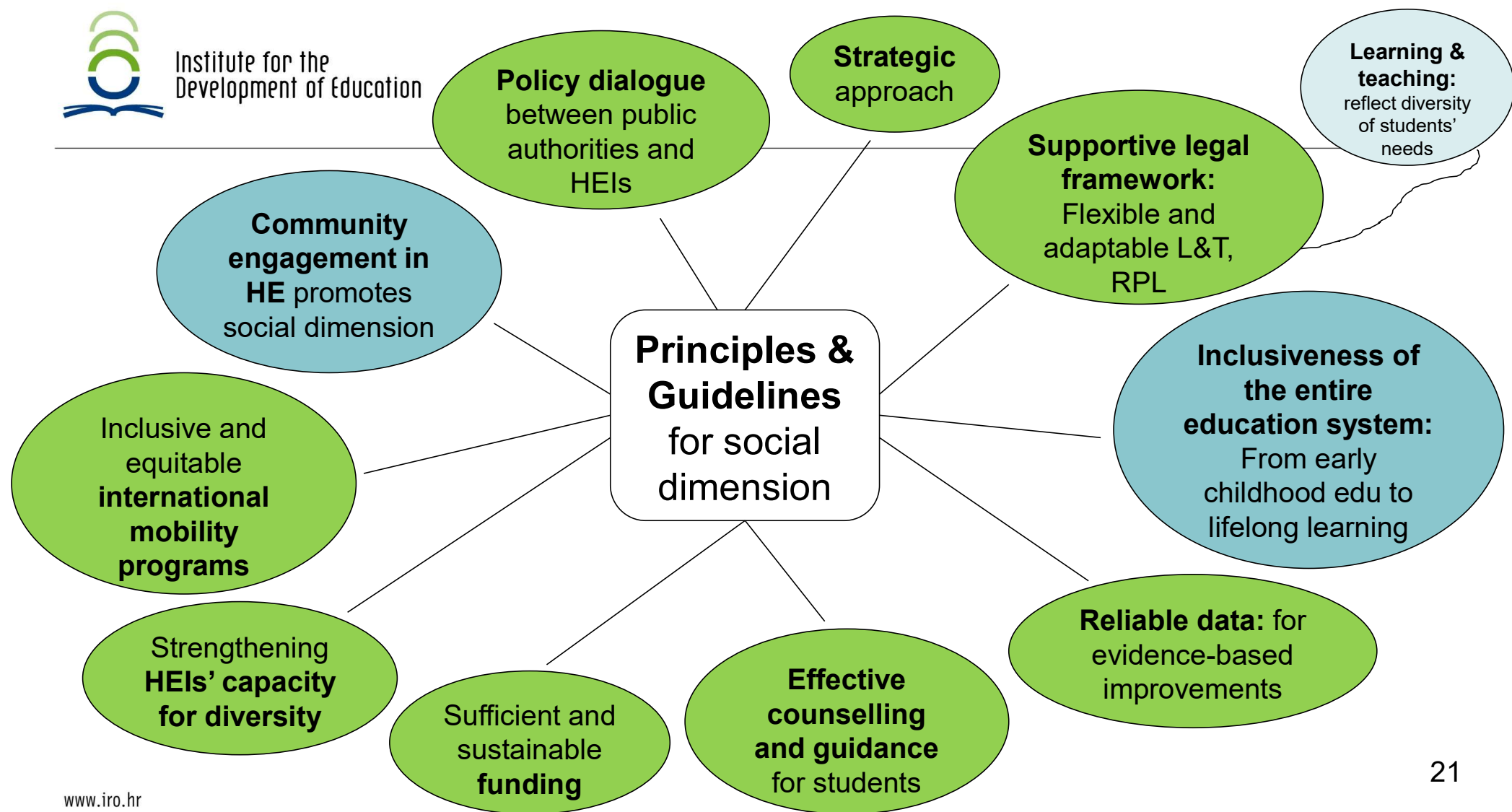
- **New:** moving beyond widening accessibility clauses and **focusing on public good agenda** by integrating principles in core HE mission and governance

- **New:** Public authorities and higher education institutions need **to integrate the principles into the core higher education mission:** learning and teaching, research, innovation, knowledge exchange and outreach, institutional governance and management, policies for empowering students and staff.

# Principles and Guidelines

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

- **Principles** = should be understood as high-level statements that serve 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.
- **Glossary of Terms and Definitions:**
  - Underrepresented students
  - Disadvantaged students
  - Vulnerable students





## Principles and Guidelines: Conclusion

- Principles and Guidelines are not to be seen as a checklist, but as an instrument for **developing fit-for purpose national and institutional strategies and policies** for social dimension enhancement
  - Enabling concrete and tangible progress over the next decade



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## 2020-2030: The decade of the social dimension in the EHEA – WHY?

4.

### **Building a European movement for the social dimension of higher education**



## Building a European movement: recommended policy approaches

### TOP-DOWN approach:

- Focus on **building capacities** of public authorities for the social dimension and on **facilitating a learning journey**, rather than on compliance
  - Explore transnational learning and capacity tools
  - Scale up through incentives
- **BFUG Working Group for Social Dimension 2021-2024** ([www.ehea.info](http://www.ehea.info)):
  - Developing **tools for the implementation of Principles** for the social dimension
  - Developing a **system of monitoring the implementation of the Principles and Guidelines**
  - Organizing **peer support activities** for social dimension to support the implementation of the Principles and Guidelines among the EHEA members





## Building a European movement: recommended policy approaches

### BOTTOM-UP approach:

- Identify universities committed to the social dimension
- **Build a network of universities** committed to the social dimension and organize capacity building events with them
- **Build other alliances and scale up:** connect the social dimension agenda to the European Universities initiative and similar global networks, etc.

(NESET Analytical Report, Farnell et al., 2021)

**TOP-DOWN approach + BOTTOM-UP approach = building a European movement for the social dimension**



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# Thank you for your attention!

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