

NATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION EQUITY POLICY

Belgium (Flanders)



Policy Frameworks

Does equity with regard to supporting students from low-income or marginalized populations to enter or succeed in higher education feature in any government produced policy documents? If so, which government policy document(s) are these and can you provide website link(s) to them?

The legal framework for Higher Education in Flanders is provided in the HE Codex:
<https://codex.vlaanderen.be/Portals/Codex/documenten/1023887.html>

There is not a central HE policy strategy on social inclusion (or 'social dimension in HE as it is called), as HE Institutions have a high level of autonomy in the organisation of Higher Education.

It has become much more central than it was a number of years ago. A shift is taking place from a 'disadvantaged groups'-based approach (Social Dimension as a peripheric matter) to an overall inclusive approach (SD becomes more central in HE policy).

Flanders has no national policy documents with quantitative targets related to inclusiveness in HE.

Basics of our national strategic approach are:

- Flemish government provides a legal framework for HEI (Higher Educational Institutions) in which they are able to develop their own Social Dimension policy
- Flemish government offers a number of measures (financial or otherwise) to support HEI in the development of their Social Dimension policy
- Funding for social Dimension integrated in overall funding mechanisms for HEI
- Separate funding for student social services (embedded by law)
- Lower tuition fees for scholarship students
- Extra weighting factor (1,5) in funding formula for students from a lower socio-economic background, disabled students and students who combine working with studying
- A number of small or specific project-based funding/measures,
- The legal framework and other supportive measures are the result of a structural dialogue between government and stakeholders (eg HEI, students, social partners)
- HEI have a large autonomy to develop their own Social Dimension-policies. The legal framework and financing system has been developed based on this principle.

What policies and actions are described in these government policy documents in terms of supporting students from low-income or marginalized populations to enter or succeed in higher education?

Higher Education Participation and Partnership Program (HEPPP):

- Development of tools for improving study choice of pupils venturing to enter HE;
- Project financing on student tutoring for disadvantaged groups;
- Lower tuition fees for scholarship students (tuition fee of a partly-scholarship student is 245 €/academic year + 4,30 € / credit and a full scholarship student pays only a fixed amount of 111,90 €/academic year and no additional cost per credit)
- Project financing on student tutoring for disadvantaged groups;
- national aptitude test toolkit for new entrants allowing aspirant students to test/evaluate their motivation/interests/aspirations, their way of studying and learning, their preparedness for a particular discipline; the toolkit provides feedback to the aspirant and new students and the institutions offer remedial courses and activities;

Is there a standalone policy document dedicated to equity promotion in higher education? If so, which document(s) is/are these? Can you provide a link(s)?

No information is available.

Which equity target groups are identified in the policy documents? (Please choose as many groups as apply in your own country)

1. Low-income or lower socio-economic background students
2. Gender groups
3. Older or mature learners
4. Students with disability

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

No, our strategy/our set of measures does not include quantitative targets, because following debates on the matter, HEI and the Flemish government prefer other approaches. There is one exception, namely in the case of participation in international mobility, where the target was set that in 2020 of all students that participate in international mobility 33% should come from disadvantaged groups (Action Plan Brains on the Move).

Which agency has responsibility for policies related to equity in student participation/success in higher education?

There is not 1 agency responsible for this. Main responsibility is for the HEI's. All HEI's have well developed policies and measures related to equity. Some examples:

- Vrije Universiteit Brussel: <https://www.vub.be/en/equality#equality>
- Ghent University: <https://www.ugent.be/nl/univgent/waarvoor-staat-ugent/diversiteit-en-gender>
- Antwerp University: <https://www.uantwerpen.be/en/about-uantwerp/organisation/mission-and-vision/diversity/diversity-policy/>
- KU Leuven: <https://www.kuleuven.be/diversiteit/diversity/PDF/Diversitypolicyplan2018.pdf>.
- There is an organisation supporting HEI's related to inclusion, with a focus on inclusive higher education for students with disabilities. <https://www.siho.be/en>

Which stakeholder groups are consulted during the equity policy formulation? (Please choose all the stakeholders that are invited to the consultation process in your own country)

- Higher Education Institutions' Associations
- Civil society organisations
- Student Organisations/Association

Achieving Policy Targets

Are there any non-monetary instruments such as outreach work between schools and universities, reforms to university admission etc. used to promote access/success for students from specific equity groups in higher education? If so, can you describe what they are?

- Social services of HEI's
- Student tutoring and student support mechanisms
- national aptitude test toolkit for new entrants allowing aspirant students to test/evaluate their motivation/interests/aspirations, their way of studying and learning, their preparedness for a particular discipline; the toolkit provides feedback to the aspirant and new students and the institutions offer remedial courses and activities;
- Pupil Guidance services (including Higher Education study orientation) in secondary education including outreach to pupils from specific equity groups.

Are there any financial instruments such as bursaries, scholarships and loans used to promote access/success for students from specific equity groups in higher education? If so, can you describe what they are?

- Lower tuition fees for scholarship students (full scholarship student only pays a tuition fee of 112 €/academic year)
- Extra weighting factor (1,5) in government funding formula for students from a lower socio-economic background, disabled students and students who combine working with studying – this provides additional funding for universities to attract and support students with disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Project financing on student tutoring for disadvantaged groups.

Who is responsible for monitoring the impact of measures used to promote access/success for students from specific equity groups in higher education?

HEIs themselves.

What instruments, methods and data are in place to carry out the monitoring and evaluation?

No information is available (due to the autonomy of HEIs).

What kind of autonomy do higher education institutions enjoy in reaching the policy targets set by government?

Universities are expected to take the full responsibility in using all kind of stimulating funding opportunities and other supportive measures to realize the social dimension of HE.

How do you see the role of inter-governmental/international organisations in supporting higher education equity policies? In which areas would be their contribution the most valuable? (1= most valuable contribution 4=least valuable contribution)

2. Facilitating peer learning, exchange of experience among countries
 Unranked: Policy setting
 Unranked: Technical assistance and capacity building
 Unranked: Financial assistance (grants, loan financing, scholarships)

COVID-19 and Equitable Access and Success in Higher Education

How, if at all, has Covid-19 affected the existence and implementation of policies designed to encourage greater access and success on higher education of those from low-income/marginalized groups?

No information is available yet at the central level (MoE).

Sources

This country brief was prepared as part of the [“ASEM National Equity Policies in Higher Education”](#) report, a collaboration between the [Asia-Europe Foundation \(ASEF\)](#) and the [National Education Opportunities Network \(NEON\)](#). The report was launched at the [8th ASEF Regional Conference on Higher Education \(ARC8\)](#) on *“Inclusive and Diverse Higher Education in Asia and Europe”* on 10 September 2021.

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