

NATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION EQUITY POLICY

Czech Republic



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?

- ➔ National Plan for the Promotion of Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities 2015–2020 (available in English). No recent version has been approved as of yet.
- ➔ Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MEYS) Strategic Plan for Higher Education 2021.

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?

- ➔ Excerpt from National Plan for the Promotion of Equal Opportunities for persons with disabilities: At institutions of higher learning, equal opportunities for persons with disabilities will be promoted by financing the costs of universities that make studies accessible to students with specific needs. The financing will be provided by funding projects and by incorporating the accessibility requirements into the standards for institutional accreditation. An emphasis is also placed on obtaining better data on the issues related to studies within various groups of student populations and mapping the progress of their studies.

- 1) Draw up MEYS requirements to ensure equal access to higher education for persons with disabilities – minimum standards for the accessibility of higher education in the context of disabilities. These guidelines will be specified in the form of standards for accreditation in relation to the amendment of the Act on Universities in the field of accreditation. The standards will specify the conditions and criteria of accessibility of higher education.

Responsibility: MEYS
Deadline: 31 December 2016

- 2) Use financial instruments to promote access to higher education for the greatest possible number of persons with disabilities.

Responsibility: MEYS
Deadline: continuously

For MEYS strategic plan, the topic is rather transversal and it mingles into some of 6 main priorities. According to document, low-income students are endangered group especially in conditions of online education (like it could be now during COVID-19 pandemic). General support of students in the areas of study-work balance and/or study-family balance are emphasized and an effort to open discussion about “part-time” form of study in the future. Students with mental illnesses and students from peripheral/underdeveloped regions are mentioned as “other” important topics but without direct implications for the current version of plan.

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.

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

- ➔ Low-income or lower socio-economic background students
- ➔ Gender groups

- Older or mature learners
- People from rural backgrounds
- Other groups under-represented in HE
 - ↘ Such as students-parents
- Students with disability

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

No.

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

There is no particular/specific agency; Czech Republic has only general bodies which are related to equity, e.g. Government Council for Human Rights, Inter-ministerial Commission for Roma Community Affairs, Government Council for National Minorities, Government Board for People with Disabilities.

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)

- Civil society organisations: **YES**
- Private sector organisations: **YES**

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?

By the level of institutions:

1. Secondary schools provides counselling to pupils/students who would like to study in higher education institutions.
2. HEIs provides information and advices for applicants (online as well as offline ways)
3. System level: no such policy, but currently MEYS is preparing information platform (as a part of graduate tracking system) for future students which will be based mainly on quantitative data about students and graduates.

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?

- ↘ System level: Merit based stipendiums for students with lower socio-economic background (all students whose family income is lower than 1.5x month/ minimum income of household are entitled to support (1/4 of CZ minimum wage, currently this 14 600 Kc ~ 540 Euros)
- ↘ NGO level: Romea (<https://romskastipendia.cz/>) provides annually stipendiums for Roma students
- ↘ Regional level: some (usually from underdeveloped regions) regional governments provide stipendiums for students who commit to stay and work in given regions for several years (but the support is not intended for specific groups but it should encourage young and qualified people not to go out of region).

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

Generally, MEYS. They track groups which are supported through stipends and number of disabled students.

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

Mainly annual reports of HEIs and/or data which are provided by HEIs to SIMS (Central database of students).

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

Czech HEIs have quite high autonomy regarding policy targets. Nevertheless (public) HEIs activities are strongly influenced by setting of financial rules at one side and on the other by accreditation process. But HEIs are also seen as strong and influential partners for negotiating about finances and accreditation.

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

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?

Currently the issue is discussed mainly with relation to primary and/or secondary education where socio-economic inequality is understood as a fact. As opposite, higher education (and open access and success for marginalized groups) is currently not seen as primary area of interest for Czech public policy during pandemic.

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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