

NATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION EQUITY POLICY

Estonia



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?

- https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/estonian_lifelong_strategy.pdf;
- <https://www.hm.ee/en/activities/higher-education/study-allowances-and-state-grants>
- Higher Education Act: <https://www.rigiteataja.ee/en/eli/529082019022/consolide>

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?

The Lifelong Learning Strategy (LLS) is a document that guides the most important developments in the area of education. It is the basis on which the government made its decisions for educational funding for the years 2014-2020 and for the development of programmes that support the achievement of necessary changes. The general goal of drafting the Lifelong Learning Strategy is to provide all people in Estonia with learning opportunities that are tailored to their needs and capabilities throughout their whole lifespan, in order for them to maximize opportunities for dignified self-actualization within society, in their work as well as in their family life.

Strategic goals and measures in LLS:

1. Change in the approach to learning. Implementation of an approach to learning that supports each learner's individual and social development, the acquisition of learning skills, creativity and entrepreneurship at all levels and in all types of education.
2. Competent and motivated teachers and school leadership. The assessments of teachers and headmasters including their salaries are consistent with the qualification requirements for the job and the work-related performance.
3. Concordance of lifelong learning opportunities with the needs of labour market. Lifelong learning opportunities and career services that are diverse, flexible and of good quality, resulting in an increase in the number of people with professional or vocational qualifications in different age groups, and an increase in overall participation in lifelong learning across Estonia.
4. A digital focus in lifelong learning. Modern digital technology is used for learning and teaching effectively and efficiently. An improvement in the digital skills of the total population has been achieved and access to the new generation of digital infrastructure is ensured.
5. Equal opportunities and increased participation in lifelong learning. Equal opportunities for lifelong learning have been created for every individual.

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
- Students with disability

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

higher education?

The general attitude tends to follow the strategy on education - all groups of the society are important, and the strategy covers equal opportunities in general.

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

No information was available.

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?**

Higher Education Institutions may establish different admission requirements for different groups, based on the prior qualifications or special needs of the applicants. The specific target group can be determined by the Higher Education Institution, but can be students with special needs.

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?

Scholarships for students with special needs. Needs-based study allowance. Language learning programme

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

All Estonian higher education institutions (HEI) collect tracking data on their students by means of electronic data collections. The data feeds into a central database called EHIS (Estonian Education Information System, <http://www.ehis.ee/>) which is in place since 2005 and is managed by the Ministry of Education and Research. Not only HEIs, but educational institutions at all levels and of all kinds are obliged to deliver data to EHIS. EHIS has input from approximately 2,000 educational institutions, publishers, other registers and cooperates with over 20 different information systems.

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

The EHIS allows detailed tracking of the educational career of the entire student population in Estonia from primary to higher education. EHIS covers all levels of education (from primary education to higher education, incl. vocational education). It contains information on the people (students and staff) and institutions (schools, HEIs, etc.) involved in education as well as on curricula and certificates. The EHIS database is managed centrally, supervised and financed by the Ministry of Education and Research. Data collection is also commissioned by the Ministry. EHIS holds information on study progress throughout all levels and programs a student has participated in and allows tracking student's progression paths

thoroughly.

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

Universities in Estonia are highly autonomous and the role of the state is to supervise that they are acting according to the law of higher education and their own legislation

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)

1. Facilitating peer learning, exchange of experience among countries
2. Policy setting
3. Financial assistance (grants, loan financing, scholarships)
4. 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?

There are currently no restrictions for conducting studies and the universities started the new academic year as usual. Each lecturer can use the teaching methods of their choice when teaching their class.

As mentioned, universities in Estonia are highly autonomous and the role of the state is to supervise that they are acting according to the law of higher education and their own legislation.

Setting enrolment criteria and decisions on study arrangements are made solely by the University and if they come to a conclusion that they are not able to guarantee the safety of the existing or new students or quality of the studies, the state cannot interfere or decide otherwise.

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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