

NATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION EQUITY POLICY

# Finland



## 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?**

- Programme of Prime Minister Sanna Marin's Government 10 Dec 2019: [https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/161935/VN\\_2019\\_33.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/161935/VN_2019_33.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)
- In line with the Government programme, the Ministry of Education and Culture appointed on 26 June 2020 a steering group, a scientific panel and a rapporteur to prepare Accessibility Plan for Higher Education . The plan will examine accessibility in higher education from the perspectives of socio-economic status, regions, gender, immigrant background, ethnic groups, language groups and people with disabilities. The accessibility plan report is due to be completed by the end of July, 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?**

The accessibility plan is under preparation so the policies and actions are still to be confirmed. The aim is that higher education institutions would prepare their own accessibility plans on the basis of the guidelines which will be set in the accessibility plan. The plans could be included in the institutions' statutory equality and non-discrimination plans, for example. In addition, the accessibility plan will hopefully support both reporting on education policy and making political decisions.

In general, all the policies and actions are drafted in line with basic rights and liberties and educational rights as defined in the Constitution of Finland as well as on the non-discrimination legislation.

**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)**

All above and/or any other groups underrepresented in higher education. The upcoming plan will examine accessibility in higher education from the perspectives of socio-economic status, regions, gender, immigrant background, ethnic groups, language groups and people with disabilities.

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

Not at this moment.

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

The Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for the planning and implementation of higher education and science policy and preparing statutes, national Budget proposals and Government decisions that apply to these. The Ministry steers the activities of the higher education system.

### 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
- Private sector 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?

- The higher education student selections have been reformed. By 2018, Finnish universities and universities for applied sciences introduced student selection, which does not require long preparation from the applicant. Selection tests have been streamlined. The amount of pre-screening material has been reduced or completely abandoned. In some areas, entrance exams are based on general upper secondary syllabus.
- From 2020, more than half of the study places will be filled on the basis of matriculation grades, and in universities of applied sciences on the basis of matriculation grades and vocational upper secondary qualification. Selection based on common marks obtained from the selection test and the grades will be abandoned, but selections on the basis of the selection test alone will be organized as before the reform. In the autumn of 2019, universities for applied sciences introduced a joint entrance examination. The open higher education pathway will be developed further.
- For some under-represented groups such as the Sámi, there are quotas in some universities.
- The accessibility plan has an important role in promoting access/success for students from specific equity groups in higher education. The plan is under preparation so the policies and actions are still to be confirmed.

### 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?

The student financial aid system is composed of study grants, housing supplement and student loans. The purpose of the comprehensive system is to promote full-time studies. Tuition in higher education institutions is free of charge for the EU citizens.

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

- Equality and non-discrimination are basic principles in Finland and they are based on legislation (Constitution of Finland, Act on Equality between Women and Men and Non-discrimination Act). According to the law, every HE institution in Finland is responsible for enhancing equality and equity as well as responsible for monitoring impacts of measures and promoting access and success for students from specific equity groups.
- Every HE institution has to have an equality and non-discrimination plan/accessibility plan. Based on legislation Finnish HE institutions are responsible to monitor and assess their activities and to take part in external evaluations, that is international evaluations and for example audits of their quality systems implemented by the Finnish Education evaluation centre. HE institutions inform every year Ministry of Education by sending their annual reports and operating and financial plans to the

Ministry. In addition, The Ministry gets information from national statistics.

- ➔ As a part of national steering of HE institutions, accessibility and equity are embedded in 4-year performance-based agreements of the Finnish HE institutions. The agreements are monitored every two years by the Ministry of Education in close co-operation with the HE institutions and updated every four years.

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

For instance:

- ➔ Education Statistics Finland: <https://vipunen.fi/en-gb/>
- ➔ Finnish Education Evaluation Center: <https://karvi.fi/en/higher-education/>

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

The Finnish higher education system consists of universities and universities of applied sciences. To guarantee the freedom of science, the arts and higher education, universities are autonomous actors. They are independent legal entities that have the right to make independent decisions on matters related to their internal administration. Universities of applied sciences have extensive autonomy and freedom of education and research. They are independent legal entities and make independent decisions on matters related to their internal administration

### 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)

Unranked: Policy setting

Unranked: Technical assistance and capacity building

Unranked: Financial assistance (grants, loan financing, scholarships)

Unranked: Facilitating peer learning, exchange of experience among countries

## 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?

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## 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 [8<sup>th</sup> ASEF Regional Conference on Higher Education \(ARCS\)](#) on “*Inclusive and Diverse Higher Education in Asia and Europe*” on 10 September 2021.

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