

NATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION EQUITY POLICY

Romania



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 Law of National Education no. 1/2011:

https://www.edu.ro/sites/default/files/fi%C8%99iere/Legislatie/2020/LEN_actualizata_octombrie_2020.pdf

The provisions of the Law are complemented by government decisions and ministerial orders on awarding scholarships and other forms of financial and non-financial support to students from low-income or marginalized populations, including for the foreigners who have acquired international protection in Romania.

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 Law of National Education no. 1/2011

The Romanian Government, through the Law of National Education no. 1/2011, promotes a national system of higher education based on the principle of academic freedom, the principle of equity, the principle of respecting the rights and freedoms of students and academic personnel, the principle of independence from ideologies, religions and politic doctrines, the principle of freedom of national and international mobility for students, teachers and researchers (Article 118, al. 1, lit. a, e, h, i, j). Thus, in higher education, discrimination based on age, ethnicity, gender, social origin, political or religious orientation, sexual orientation criteria or any other types of discrimination are not allowed, except the affirmative measures provided by law (Article 118 (2)).

The students with physical disabilities have the right to access ways adapted to their needs, in all university spaces, as well as to conditions for normal development of academic, social and cultural activities within higher education institutions (Article 118 (3)). Additionally, a number of budget places are guaranteed for candidates coming from environments with high socio-economic risk or from socially marginalized ones—Roma, graduates from rural high-schools or from towns with less than 10.000 inhabitants (Article 205 (6)).

Also, the Order of the Minister of Education, Research, Youth and Sports (OMECTS) no. 4174/2011 that establishes the list of indicators effectively used in the process of evaluation, introduced for the first time in the evaluation process of Romanian universities, criteria and indicators that measure the degree in which the universities fight against discrimination and stimulate inclusion by ensuring access to higher education for students from disadvantaged socio-economic environments, adults and students with disabilities.

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)?

The National Strategy for Tertiary Education 2015 – 2020:

https://www.edu.ro/sites/default/files/fisiere%20articole/Strategie_inv_tertiar_2015_2020.pdf (in Romanian)

According to the National Strategy for Tertiary Education 2015-2020, Romania has set as priorities certain measures to ensure a favourable context for an inclusive higher education

The main objectives for the period 2018-2021 are included in the Institutional Strategic Plan 2019-2022 for the Ministry of Education, Program 2.1., entitled "Improving the participation in tertiary education", with the related measures, which refer to the increase of the participation and graduation rates by facilitating

the wide access to an inclusive, quality, coherent, continuous and relevant education. (https://sgg.gov.ro/1/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/MEN-_EN.pdf)

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
- Students with disability
- Refugees of all kinds (internally and externally displaced; deported)
- Children of people affected by historical violence
- Students with care experience, orphans, youth without parental care

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

In order to facilitate the access of students from under-represented and disadvantaged groups to university studies, Romania offers dedicated and budgeted places at admission: thus, the candidates coming from high socio-economic risk areas or socially marginalized - Roma, high school graduates from rural areas or from cities with less of 10,000 inhabitants - can benefit from a number of guaranteed budget places, according to the law. Also, the higher education institutions may grant, apart from the approved school enrolment, at least one tuition free place to the high school graduates who obtain the baccalaureate diploma coming from placement centres, under the conditions established by the university senate.

With regards to access to education for people belonging to the Roma minority, the National Strategy for Tertiary Education 2015-2020 has set out 2 goals:

- Ensuring equal, free and universal access of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority to quality education at all forms and levels of the public education system, in order to support the economic growth and development of the knowledge-based society;
- Promoting inclusive education within the educational system, both by preventing and eliminating segregation, as well as by combating discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, social status, disabilities or other factors that have an impact on children and young people from disadvantaged groups, including Roma.

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

The Ministry of Education is taking such actions to promote inclusion/equity in higher education.

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
- International Organisations
- Student Organisations/Association
- Others: Please specify: National Authority of Qualifications (ANC), Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS), Executive Unit for the Financing of Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation (UEFISCDI)

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?

Career Counseling and Orientation Centers (CCOC), constituted as structures without legal personality, operate within the higher education institutions, aiming to provide the necessary support in view of increasing the insertion of students and graduates in the labour market. According to the regulations in force, they offer lifelong career counseling and guidance, which refers to all the services and activities that help people of any age and at any time of their existence make choices in the educational sphere, of training or work and to manage their career. At each level, Career Counseling and Orientation Center (CCOC) reports are drawn up regarding the activity undertaken during one academic year. The CCOCs function according to a set of regulations and common fundamental objectives that are monitored by the Ministry of Education, in order to create a homogeneous structure at national level of these centres.

In order to increase the participation in tertiary education, the Ministry of Education carries out the ROSE Project, in which students at risk take part in university activities, by attending summer schools organized at different universities in the country. In this respect, students can participate in workshops, study visits, sports competitions, cultural events, that is, both activities directly related to the university life and the specific of the faculties involved, as well as activities to know the city in which they would be going, continue the studies. The duration is between two and three weeks. The project on Secondary Education (Romania Secondary Education Project / ROSE), worth a total of 200 million euros, is fully funded by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), based on Law no. 234/2015 for the ratification of the Loan Agreement (the project on secondary education) between Romania and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, signed in Washington on April 17, 2015, and runs between 2015 and 2022.

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 budget allocated for higher education includes incentives that aim to provide universities with sufficient resources through the basic funding methodology for universities, to attract students from underprivileged backgrounds, non-traditional students and other underrepresented groups and through the complementary financing of tertiary education to further develop their accommodation and meal services for students and other measures which refer to the increase of the participation and graduation rates by facilitating the wide access to an inclusive, quality, coherent, continuous and relevant education.

In order to participate in tertiary education and to complete the studies, the social programs carried out in the current academic year and in the previous university years are continued: scholarships, subsidies for accommodation and meals, partial settlement of transport.

At addition to this, universities can access project-based funds from the Institutional Development Fund (FDI) for career counselling and guidance, for equity and inclusion, for tracking graduates and their employment, for internships, etc.

Through the Supplemental Financing (FS), which is about one third of the institutional funding, universities receive funds to meet the quality criteria, including the equity and inclusion criterion.

Also, the national regulations in force mentions that at least 30% of the scholarship fund allocated to universities is allocated to the category of social scholarships.

In support of these students, on request, the following types of social scholarships can be granted, whether or not the student is benefiting from another category of scholarship:

1. the occasional social assistance scholarship for clothing and footwear, which can be awarded to students with one or both deceased parents, respectively for which placement was provided, to socio-economically disadvantaged students, whose family is not in the 3 months before the application for this type of scholarship was achieved, an average net monthly income per family member from the net minimum wage at national level. This scholarship category can be awarded

- to the same student twice during a university year;
2. the occasional maternity social assistance scholarship, which is granted to the student or the student whose wife does not make any income or income higher than the national minimum basic salary and consists of a birth and leisure scholarship and a clothing procurement scholarship for the newborn child, which is granted only once during the academic year for each newborn child;
 3. the occasional social assistance scholarship in the event of death can be awarded for the death of a member of the student's family (s). Family member means husband, wife, child. In the case of the death of the unmarried student (s), married to a spouse who does not earn any income, the scholarship is granted to relatives of the first degree / legal successor, only once during the academic year.

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

The Ministry of Education, through the Executive Unit for the Financing of Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation (UEFISCDI)

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

Statistical reporting tools for higher education on the number of occupied places from those offered through the basic financing for tertiary education, as well as through social assistance measures - social scholarships, to which is added the allocation of a number of places for Roma students and for high school graduates located in rural areas.

Also, studies, questionnaires and other data reported on the National Platform for the Collection of Statistical Data for Higher Education.

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

Full autonomy, in line with the existing legislation in force

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)

3. Policy setting
3. Technical assistance and capacity building
4. Financial assistance (grants, loan financing, scholarships)
4. 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?

The challenges determined by Covid-19 are related to the transformation of traditional face to face courses and educational activities into online and virtual activities. The low-income/marginalized groups are prone to having difficulties in acquiring the necessary technical equipment, as well as access to a good internet connection.

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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