

PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES TO STRENGTHEN THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE EHEA

AN INTRODUCTION

17 FEB | BWSE FOR2030 PLA1 | CAROLINE SUNDBERG

SESSION OUTLINE

- Background
- Rationale
- Latest developments
- Discussion

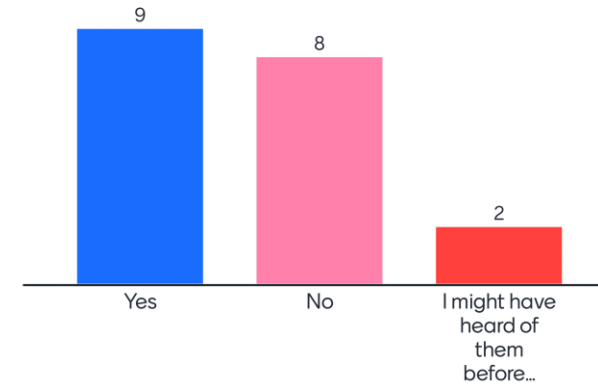
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MENTI

**WERE YOU
AWARE OF THE
PRINCIPLES
AND
GUIDELINES TO
STRENGTHEN
THE SOCIAL
DIMENSION OF
HE IN THE EHEA
BEFORE
PREPARING FOR
THIS PLA?**

Were you aware of the P&G before preparing for this PLA?

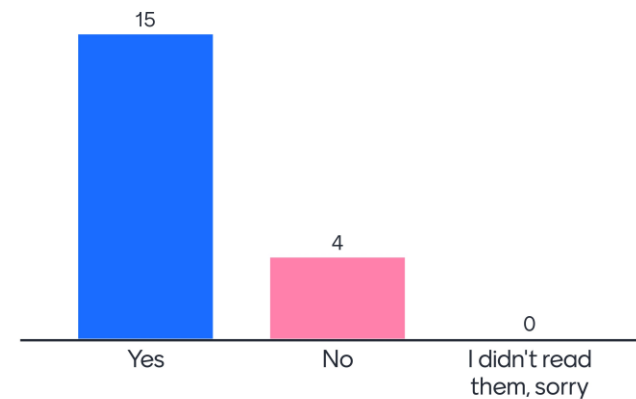
Mentimeter



**WHEN READING
THE
PRINCIPLES
AND
GUIDELINES, DO
YOU RECOGNISE
ANY RECENT
DEVELOPMENTS
IN YOUR OWN
CONTEXT IN
THEM?**

When reading the P&G, do you recognise recent developments in your own context in them?

Mentimeter



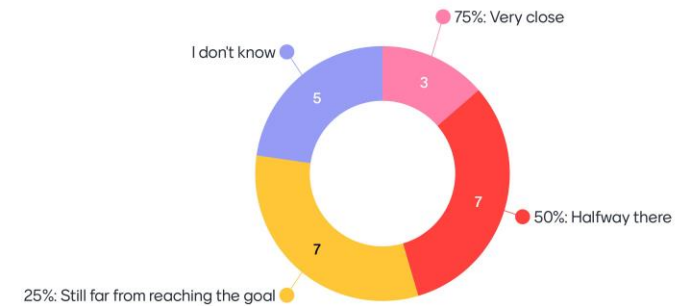
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**HOW CLOSE DO
YOU BELIEVE
YOUR COUNTRY
IS TO FULLY
IMPLEMENTING
THE
PRINCIPLES
AND
GUIDELINES?**

How close do you believe your country is to fully implementing the P&G?

Mentimeter





**IT ALL STARTED
WITH...**



[HOME](#) > [EHEA](#) > [WORK PROGRAMME](#) > [WORK PROGRAMME 2015-2018](#)

WORK PROGRAMME 2015-2018

WORKING GROUP ON POLICY DEVELOPMENT FOR NEW EHEA GOALS 2015-2018 - MEETING 5

Working Group meeting

📍 Brussels, Belgium

📅 05/09/2017

Fifth meeting of the **working group on Policy development for new EHEA goals**.

Download the available documents:

- 📄 [WG EHEA New Goals - Brussels 05.09.2017 - Draft Agenda](#)
- 📄 [WG EHEA New Goals - Brussels 05.09.2017 - Practical information](#)
- 📄 [WG EHEA New Goals - Brussels 05.09.2017 - EUA Directions](#)
- 📄 [WG EHEA New Goals - General recommendations - Draft 25.08.2017](#)
- 📄 [BFUG Meeting 54 Gozo May 2017 - Minutes](#)

Draft agenda

1. Welcome, Introduction and Report from the BFUG Board and BFUG meetings in the first semester 2017

Chair: Caroline Sundberg (ESU)

Rapporteurs: Nadesza Kamyninan (Russia), Andreas Keller (EI)

WORKING GROUP

In a perspective of renewing the vision of the EHEA, the Working Group on New goals will be dedicated to **defining new priorities for the future of the EHEA** (taking into account the goals mentioned in the Yerevan communiqué and in "The Bologna Process revisited" paper).

[READ MORE](#) →

WG ACTIVITIES

WG meetings

- Meeting 1 - Moscow 9 February 2016
- Meeting 2 - Paris 13-14 June 2016
- Meeting 3 - Stockholm 2-3 November 2016
- Meeting 4 - Brussels 6-7 April 2017
- Meeting 5 - Brussels 5 September 2017

Co-chairs meetings

- Co-chairs meeting - Brussels 6 April 2016
- Co-chairs meeting - Brussels 21 September 2016
- Co-chairs meeting - Brussels 25 January 2017
- Co-chairs meeting - Brussels 25 April 2017

BOLOGNA WITH STUDENT EYES 2018

The Final Countdown





5 SOCIAL DIMENSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

"Social dimension is the means by which we widen access to higher education, ensure it is representative of the diverse society in which it exists, fulfils its responsibility to extend social equality, and that those who enter higher education are supported to achieve and succeed. The social dimension is certainly not limited to or achieved by solely allocating and distributing financial support, but needs to be understood as all parameters that define an inclusive environment in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and as a consequence in the society at large. These parameters include a big variety of incentives that foster the Higher Education's responsibility to cultural, political, scientific and human development, which must be considered simultaneously as the whole breadth of the social dimension." (ESU, Policy Paper on Social Dimension, 2015)

"The social dimension was first mentioned in the Bologna Process in 2001, when on the initiative of ESU, "the need [...] to take account of the social dimension" (Conference of Ministers Responsible for Higher Education 2001: 3) was acknowledged. A clearer commitment was made at the Bergen Ministerial Conference in 2005 with the promise to take measures to widen access to higher education (ESU 2012)." ESU-Bologna With Student Eyes 2015

In 2015, the importance of widening access and participation in higher education to mirror the rich complexity of societies was acknowledged and underlined:

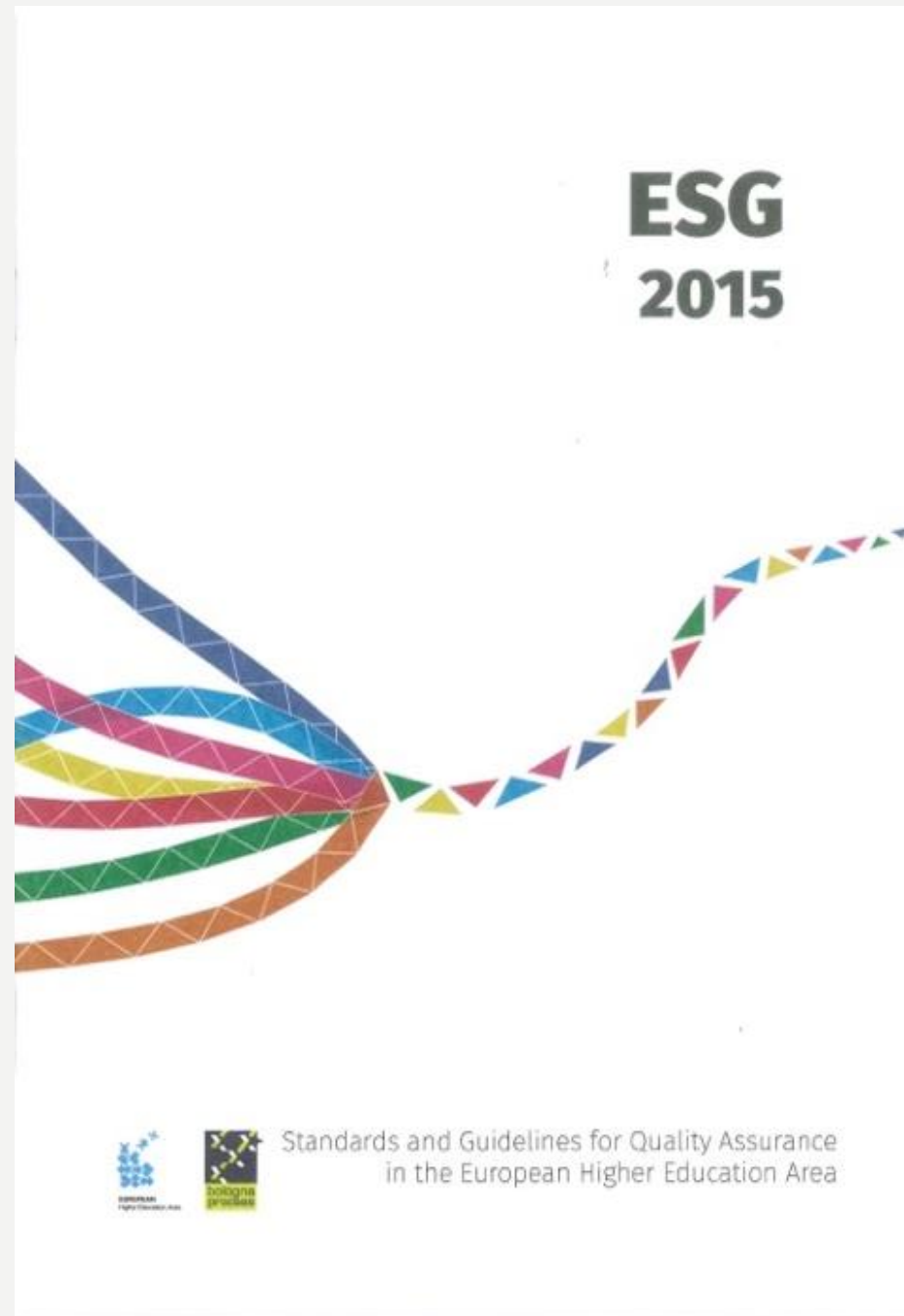
"Making our systems more inclusive is an essential aim for the EHEA as our populations become more and more diversified, also due to immigration and demographic changes. We undertake to widen participation in higher education and support institutions that provide relevant learning activities in appropriate contexts for different types of learners, including lifelong learning. We will improve permeability and articulation between different education sectors. We will enhance the social dimension of higher education, improve gender balance and widen opportunities for access and completion, including international mobility, for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. We will provide mobility opportunities for students and staff from conflict areas, while working to make it possible for them to return home once conditions allow. We also wish to promote the mobility of teacher education students in view of the important role they will play in educating future generations of Europeans." (Yerevan Ministerial Conference 2015).

But has this all been translated into reality?

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

- Similarly to what has already been outlined three years ago in the previous edition of this publication, despite numerous commitments to treat the social dimension as a policy priority, this is still far from reality in the majority of the European Countries. Concrete measures need to be put in place in order to mirror the diversity of the European population in its Higher Education system.
- What is required to reach full representation of the diversity in our society is a holistic approach towards inclusion in higher education, with the multitude of barriers towards active participation in Higher education identified and removed.
- A concrete measure that urgently needs to be put in place in order to define underrepresented groups, and better understand how to foster their inclusion, is student tracking.
- National Access Plans are needed to ensure full participation of all members of society in the Higher education system.
- As the right to education is not only the right to access it but the right to fully participate in it, and get the most out of it to fulfill one's personal growth within society, tailored dropout prevention measures are urgently needed to be put in place.

Why not



...But for the Social
Dimension of Higher
Education in EHEA?

Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA

Prepared by the BFUG Advisory Group 1 on Social Dimension

Introduction

The 2018 Paris Communiqué recognized the need to guide member states on how to define and implement policy for improving the social dimension of the EHEA. This document outlines core principles and guidelines, which we believe are fundamental to the further development of the social dimension in higher education. This document takes as its starting point the definition of the social dimension provided in the 2007 London Communiqué, namely that the composition of the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels should correspond to the heterogeneous social profile of society at large in the EHEA countries. The Advisory Group for Social Dimension also goes beyond the before mentioned definition and has enlarged the definition by stressing that the social dimension encompasses creation of inclusive environment in higher education that fosters equity, diversity, and is responsive to the needs of local communities.



RATIONALE

PRINCIPLE

The ten Principles should be understood as high-level statements that serve as a basis for the conceptualization of different policies for social dimension enhancement.

GUIDELINE

Guidelines are recommendations intended to advise policy makers on how the 10 principles should be implemented in practice.

A baseline for continuous improvement of policies and their effective implementation at national and institutional level.



THE PRINCIPLES & GUIDELINES

- 1.** The social dimension should be central to higher education strategies at system and institutional level, as well as at the EHEA and the EU level. Strengthening the social dimension of higher education and fostering equity and inclusion to reflect the diversity of society is the responsibility of a higher education system as a whole and should be regarded as a continuous commitment.
- 2.** Legal regulations or policy documents should allow and enable higher education institutions to develop their own strategies to fulfil their public responsibility towards widening access to, participation in and completion of higher education studies.
- 3.** The inclusiveness of the entire education system should be improved by developing coherent policies from early childhood education, through schooling to higher education and throughout lifelong learning.
- 4.** Reliable data is a necessary precondition for an evidence-based improvement of the social dimension of higher education.
- 5.** Public authorities should have policies that enable higher education institutions to ensure effective counselling and guidance for potential and enrolled students in order to widen their access to, participation in and completion of higher education studies.
- 6.** Public authorities should provide sufficient and sustainable funding and financial autonomy to higher education institutions enabling them to build adequate capacity to embrace diversity and contribute to equity and inclusion in higher education.
- 7.** Public authorities should help higher education institutions to strengthen their capacity to respond to the needs of a more diverse student and staff body and create inclusive learning environments and inclusive institutional cultures.
- 8.** International mobility programs in higher education should be structured and implemented in a way that foster diversity, equity and inclusion and should particularly foster participation of students and staff from vulnerable, disadvantaged or underrepresented backgrounds.
- 9.** Higher education institutions should ensure that community engagement in higher education promotes diversity, equity and inclusion.
- 10.** Public authorities should engage in a policy dialogue with higher education institutions and other relevant stakeholders about how the above principles and guidelines can be translated and implemented both at national system and institutional level.

1. THE SOCIAL DIMENSION SHOULD BE CENTRAL TO HIGHER EDUCATION STRATEGIES AT SYSTEM AND INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL, AS WELL AS AT THE EHEA AND THE EU LEVEL. STRENGTHENING THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND FOSTERING EQUITY AND INCLUSION TO REFLECT THE DIVERSITY OF SOCIETY IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF A HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM AS A WHOLE AND SHOULD BE REGARDED AS A CONTINUOUS COMMITMENT.

Strategic commitment to the social dimension of higher education should be aligned with concrete targets that can either be integrated within existing higher education policies or developed in parallel. These targets should aim at widening access, supporting participation in and completion of studies for all current and future students.

In the process of creating strategies there should be a broad-based dialogue between public authorities, higher education institutions, student and staff representatives and other key stakeholders, including social partners, non-governmental organisations and people from vulnerable, disadvantaged and underrepresented groups. This broad-based dialogue is to ensure the creation of inclusive higher education strategies that foster equity and diversity, and are responsive to the needs of the wider community.

2. LEGAL REGULATIONS OR POLICY DOCUMENTS SHOULD ALLOW AND ENABLE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS TO DEVELOP THEIR OWN STRATEGIES TO FULFIL THEIR PUBLIC RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS WIDENING ACCESS TO, PARTICIPATION IN AND COMPLETION OF HIGHER EDUCATION STUDIES.

Legal regulations and administrative rules should allow sufficient flexibility in the design, organisation and delivery of study programmes to reflect the diversity of students' needs. Higher education institutions should be enabled to organise full-time and part-time studies, flexible study modes, blended and distance learning as well as to recognise prior learning (RPL), in order to accommodate the needs of the diverse student population.

Public authorities should promote recognition of prior non-formal and informal learning (RPL) in higher education, because it has a positive impact on widening access, transition and completion, equity and inclusion, mobility and employability. RPL enables flexible modes of lifelong learning in the entire education sector, including higher education. Implementing RPL will require effective cooperation amongst the higher education system, employers and the wider community and to enable this national qualifications frameworks should facilitate transparent recognition of learning outcomes and reliable quality assurance procedures.

3. THE INCLUSIVENESS OF THE ENTIRE EDUCATION SYSTEM SHOULD BE IMPROVED BY DEVELOPING COHERENT POLICIES FROM EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION, THROUGH SCHOOLING TO HIGHER EDUCATION AND THROUGHOUT LIFELONG LEARNING.

It is important to create synergies with all education levels and related policy areas (such as finance, employment, health and social welfare, housing, migration etc.) in order to develop policy measures that create an inclusive environment throughout the entire education sector that fosters equity, diversity, and inclusion, and is responsive to the needs of the wider community.

Equity, diversity and inclusion should play a key role in the training of pre higher education teachers.

The social dimension policies should not only support current students, but also potential students in their preparation and transition into higher education. Participation in higher education has to be a lifelong option, including for adults who decide to return to or enter higher education at later stages in their lives. An inclusive approach needs to involve wider communities, higher education institutions and other stakeholder groups to co-create pathways to higher education.

4. RELIABLE DATA IS A NECESSARY PRECONDITION FOR AN EVIDENCE-BASED IMPROVEMENT OF THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.

In order to develop effective policies, continuous national data collection is necessary. Within the limits of national legal frameworks, such data collection should provide information on the composition of the student body, access and participation, drop-out and completion of higher education, including the transition to the labour market after completion of studies, and allow for the identification of vulnerable, disadvantaged and underrepresented groups.

In order to make such data collection comparable internationally, work on categories for administrative data collection that are relevant for the social dimension should be developed at the EHEA level through Eurostudent or similar surveys. With the aim to rationalize the process and avoid administrative burden on public administration and higher education institutions, this development should take account of existing national practices and relevant data collection processes.

Such national data collection exercises could, where relevant and necessary, be complemented by higher education institutions undertaking additional surveys, research and analysis to better understand vulnerability, disadvantages, and underrepresentation in education, as well as transitions of students across the education system.

5. PUBLIC AUTHORITIES SHOULD HAVE POLICIES THAT ENABLE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS TO ENSURE EFFECTIVE COUNSELLING AND GUIDANCE FOR POTENTIAL AND ENROLLED STUDENTS IN ORDER TO WIDEN THEIR ACCESS TO, PARTICIPATION IN AND COMPLETION OF HIGHER EDUCATION STUDIES.

Public authorities should create conditions that enable collaboration between different public institutions that provide counselling and guidance services together with higher education institutions in order to create synergies and omit duplication of similar services. These services should uphold the principles of clarity and user-friendliness, because end users must be capable of understanding them easily.

Within a diverse student body, special attention should be directed towards students with physical and psychological health challenges. These students should have access to professional support to secure their success in accessing and completing higher education studies. Special focus should be placed on prevention of psychological challenges caused by the organisation of study and students' living conditions.

Public authorities should also consider setting up ombudsperson-type institutions that will have the capacity and knowledge to mediate any conflicts, particularly related to equity issues that may arise during accessing or participating in higher education, or conflicts that hinder the completion of studies.

6. PUBLIC AUTHORITIES SHOULD PROVIDE SUFFICIENT AND SUSTAINABLE FUNDING AND FINANCIAL AUTONOMY TO HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS ENABLING THEM TO BUILD ADEQUATE CAPACITY TO EMBRACE DIVERSITY AND CONTRIBUTE TO EQUITY AND INCLUSION IN HIGHER EDUCATION.

Higher education funding systems should facilitate the attainment of strategic objectives related to the social dimension of higher education. Higher education institutions should be supported and rewarded for meeting agreed targets in widening access, increasing participation in and completion of higher education studies, in particular in relation to vulnerable, disadvantaged and underrepresented groups. Mechanisms for achieving these targets should not have negative financial consequences for higher education institutions' core funding.

Financial support systems should aim to be universally applicable to all students, however, when this is not possible, the public student financial support systems should be primarily needs-based and should make higher education affordable for all students, foster access to and provide opportunities for success in higher education. They should mainly contribute to cover both the direct costs of study (fees and study materials) and the indirect costs (e.g. accommodation, which is becoming increasingly problematic for students across the EHEA due to the increased housing, living, and transportation costs, etc.).

7. PUBLIC AUTHORITIES SHOULD HELP HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS TO STRENGTHEN THEIR CAPACITY TO RESPOND TO THE NEEDS OF A MORE DIVERSE STUDENT AND STAFF BODY AND CREATE INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS AND INCLUSIVE INSTITUTIONAL CULTURES.

Public authorities should support and provide adequate means to higher education institutions to improve initial and continuing professional training for academic and administrative staff to enable them to work professionally and equitably with a diverse student body and staff.

Whenever possible, external quality assurance systems should address how the social dimension, diversity, accessibility, equity and inclusion are reflected within the institutional missions of higher education institutions, whilst respecting the principle of autonomy of higher education institutions.

8. INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY PROGRAMS IN HIGHER EDUCATION SHOULD BE STRUCTURED AND IMPLEMENTED IN A WAY THAT FOSTER DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION AND SHOULD PARTICULARLY FOSTER PARTICIPATION OF STUDENTS AND STAFF FROM VULNERABLE, DISADVANTAGED OR UNDERREPRESENTED BACKGROUNDS.

International experiences through learning mobility improve the quality of learning outcomes in higher education. Public authorities and higher education institutions should ensure equal access for all to the learning opportunities offered by national and international learning and training mobility programmes and actively address obstacles to mobility for vulnerable, disadvantaged or underrepresented groups of students and staff.

Besides further support to physical mobility, including full portability of grants and loans across the EHEA, public authorities and higher education institutions should facilitate the use of information and communications technology (ICT) to support blended mobility and to foster internationalisation at home by embedding international online cooperation into courses. Blended mobility is the combination of a period of physical mobility and a period of online learning. Such online cooperation can be used to extend the learning outcomes and enhance the impact of physical mobility, for example by bringing together a more diverse group of participants, or to offer a broader range of mobility options.

9. HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS SHOULD ENSURE THAT COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION PROMOTES DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION.

Community engagement should be considered as a process whereby higher education institutions engage with external community stakeholders to undertake joint activities that can be mutually beneficial. Like social dimension policies, community engagement should be embedded in core missions of higher education. It should engage with teaching and learning, research, service and knowledge exchange, students and staff and management of higher education institutions. Such engagement provides a holistic basis on which universities can address a broad range of societal needs, including those of vulnerable, disadvantaged and underrepresented groups, while enriching their teaching, research and other core functions.

Community stakeholders (e.g. local authorities, cultural organisations, non-governmental organisations, businesses, citizens) should be able to meaningfully engage with higher education actors through open dialogue. This will enable genuine university-community partnerships, which can effectively address social and democratic challenges.

10. PUBLIC AUTHORITIES SHOULD ENGAGE IN A POLICY DIALOGUE WITH HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AND OTHER RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS ABOUT HOW THE ABOVE PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES CAN BE TRANSLATED AND IMPLEMENTED BOTH AT NATIONAL SYSTEM AND INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL.

Such policy dialogue should allow to develop fit for purpose policy measures, which should respect institutional autonomy, avoid any unnecessary administrative burden, and thus enable concrete progress towards diversity, equity, and inclusion in higher education.

Within the scope of the above principles and guidelines, peer support and exchange of good practices are crucial among EHEA countries in order to facilitate progress towards the inclusiveness of higher education systems.



LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

HORIA ONIȚA



DISCUSSION

**HOW CAN WE MOVE
FROM POLICY TO
PRACTICE?**

A graphic of a staircase with yellow steps and a brown wavy line on the left side. The text "NEXT STEPS?" is written in bold black letters on the right side of the stairs.

**NEXT
STEPS?**

**“WE NEED TO DEVELOP A
FRAMEWORK FOR THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES!”**

NEW VERSION OF THE P&G:S IN 2024