New decade for the social dimension within the Bologna Process

Nino S. Schmidt

Co-Chair of the BFUG Working Group for Social Dimension 2018-2020 and 2021-2024

Institute for the Development of Education (IDE), Executive Director

Zagreb, Croatia

Project SIDERAL Final Conference, July 7, 2021 // 11,30-13h

2020-2030: The decade of the social dimension in the EHEA – WHY?

CONTENT:

1. **Impact of COVID-19** on the social dimension of higher education
2. **New policy developments and opportunities** for the social dimension in the EHEA
3. **Future of 'Principles and Guidelines** to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA'
4. **Building a European movement** for the social dimension of higher education

2020-2030: The decade of the social dimension in the EHEA – WHY?

1.

Impact of COVID-19

on the social dimension of higher education

Impact of COVID-19 on the social dimension

- **At-risk students** will be **disproportionally affected.**

- COVID-19 **crisis is exacerbating pre-existing education disparities,** rather than causing those disparities.
  - Now at-risk students **face a range of additional challenges** in accessing higher education, participating fully in their study programs and successfully completing their studies.

(NESET Analytical Report, Farnell et al., 2021)

4

Institute for the
Development of Education

WHAT: overview of **challenges faced by the EHEA students** during COVID-19 pandemic

Learning and teaching challenges:

- almost 60 % reported they **do not always have a reliable internet connection**

- almost 70 % reported they **do not always have access to course study materials**

- almost 35 % of students **did not often have a quiet place to study**

(ESU Survey, Doolan et al., 2021)

5

Institute for the
Development of Education

WHAT: overview of **challenges faced by the EHEA students** during COVID-19 pandemic

Funding challenges:

- **almost 40 %** of students who worked during their studies **lost their jobs**
- almost 15 % of students had **significant financial concerns** about their **study costs**

(ESU Survey, Doolan et al., 2021)

www.iro.hr

Institute for the
Development of Education

WHAT: overview of **challenges faced by the EHEA students** during COVID-19 pandemic

Students' well-being challenges:

- Students have **frequently felt frustrated and anxious** in their academic activities since on-site classes had been cancelled.

- Lower levels of general well-being were reported by students **who do not have a supportive social network:**

  - almost 10 % of students indicated that they **do not have several people they can trust to help solve their problems.**

(ESU Survey, Doolan et al., 2021)

Institute for the
Development of Education

WHO: identifying students more likely to face difficulties in adjusting to studying during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown:

- Students **at lower levels of study**

- Students **lacking a supportive social network**

- Students who reported having **mental health problems**

- Students with lower levels of digital skills

- Students who do not have a **quiet place to study**, a **good internet connection** and **material for studying** at their disposal

(ESU Survey, Doolan et al., 2021)

Conclusion: Impact of COVID-19 on the social dimension – short term (next year) and medium term (up to 2025)

- Pandemic will have **negative impact on equity and social inclusion in pre-tertiary education >>>** creating a knock-on effect of:

  a) **reducing equal access** to higher education

  b) **lowering the level of participation** of at-risk students in higher education in the upcoming years.

  o Long-term **'scarring' effects** for young people under the age of 25 – the 'COVID generation' – resulting in an **unprecedented decline in social mobility** due to rising economic and educational inequalities.

9

(NESET Analytical Report, Farnell et al., 2021)

2020-2030: The decade of the social dimension in the EHEA – WHY?

2.

New policy developments and opportunities
for the social dimension in the EHEA

New policy developments and opportunities for the social dimension

- Important to consider > **what opportunities that the** COVID-19 **crisis provides** for addressing challenges faced by higher education systems and universities.

- Provides an opportunity **to place the inclusion** of underrepresented, vulnerable and disadvantage groups **as a top priority** in the efforts to address the disruption caused by COVID-19

- **2020 Rome Ministerial Communiqué** > 49 ministers of higher education committed to build an **inclusive**, innovative and interconnected European Higher Education Area (EHEA) **by 2030**.

New policy developments and opportunities for the social dimension: EHEA

2020 Rome Ministerial Communiqué - an inclusive EHEA:

- Adopted a new strategic document **"Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA"**
  - Novelty (for the 1st time): guidelines intended to advise policy makers on **how the principles should be implemented in practice**
  - **integral part** of the 2020 Rome Ministerial Communique - ministers have **politically committed** to its implementation

12

New policy developments and opportunities for the social dimension: EHEA

European University Association (2021)**: "Universities without walls: a vision for 2030"**

- **Priorities for action**: <u>one of the three key areas</u> in which European universities "see major potential for moving forward in increasing societal engagement and contributing to sustainable development" is **strengthening of their civic engagement**

  - "**Diversity and social cohesion** are important components of sustainable development"
  - "Universities and **their missions will widely benefit from equity and inclusion**, and it is therefore **in their core interest to promote these values in society"**

New policy developments and opportunities for the social dimension: EU

- Achieving the **European Education Area by 2025** (European Commission, 2020):

  - One of the six dimensions necessary to further develop the EEA refers to **inclusion and gender equality.**

  - "**Educational attainment** and achievement should be **decoupled from social, economic and cultural status**, to ensure that education and training systems boost the abilities of every individual and enable upward social mobility"

New policy developments and opportunities for the social dimension: EU

- **European Universities** initiative (European Commission 2019-2020):

  - 2021-2027: the Commission will further optimize the vision of the European Universities "**to address big societal challenges**, become true engines of development for cities and regions and promote civic engagement"
  - fostered by the European Universities alliances whose **mission is dedicated to fostering inclusive higher education** - as the alliance Young Universities for the Future of Europe (YUFE) already demonstrates

2020-2030: The decade of the social dimension in the EHEA – WHY?

3.

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

✓ Key output of the BFUG Advisory Group for Social Dimension 2018-2020:
a **NEW forward-looking strategic document** for the period 2020-2030
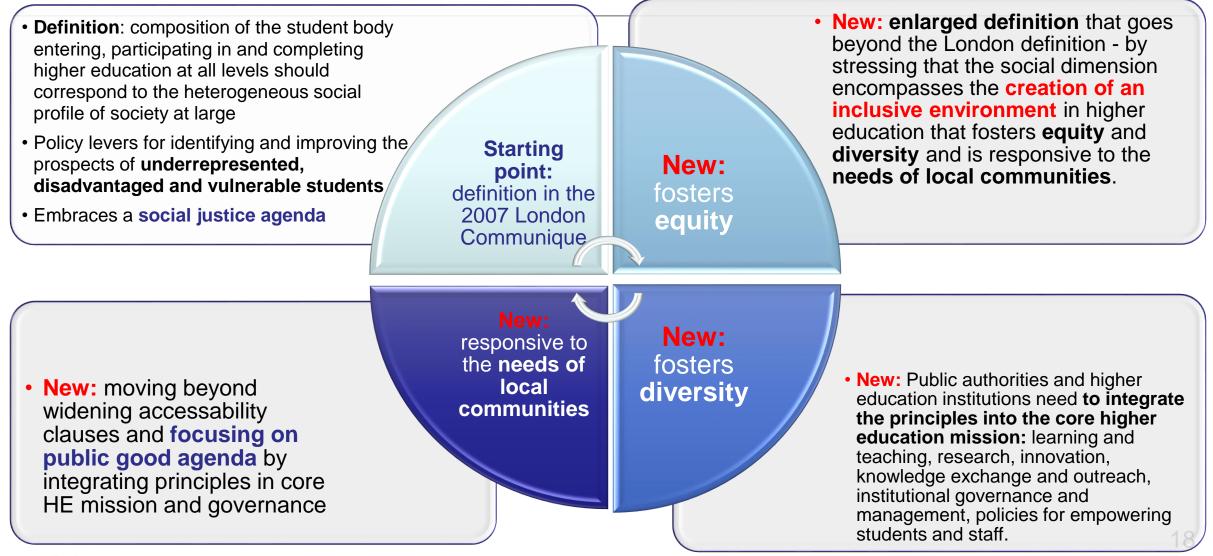
Principles and Guidelines
to Strengthen the Social
Dimension of Higher
Education in the EHEA

bologna process

EUROPEAN
Higher Education Area

- **Definition**: 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
- Policy levers for identifying and improving the prospects of **underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable students**
- Embraces a **social justice agenda**

- **New: enlarged definition** that goes beyond the London definition - by stressing that the social dimension encompasses the **creation of an inclusive environment** in higher education that fosters **equity** and **diversity** and is responsive to the **needs of local communities**.

Starting point: definition in the 2007 London Communique

New: fosters **equity**

New: responsive to the **needs of local communities**

New: fosters **diversity**

- **New:** moving beyond widening accessability clauses and **focusing on public good agenda** by integrating principles in core HE mission and governance

- **New:** Public authorities and higher education institutions need **to integrate the principles into the core higher education mission:** learning and teaching, research, innovation, knowledge exchange and outreach, institutional governance and management, policies for empowering students and staff.
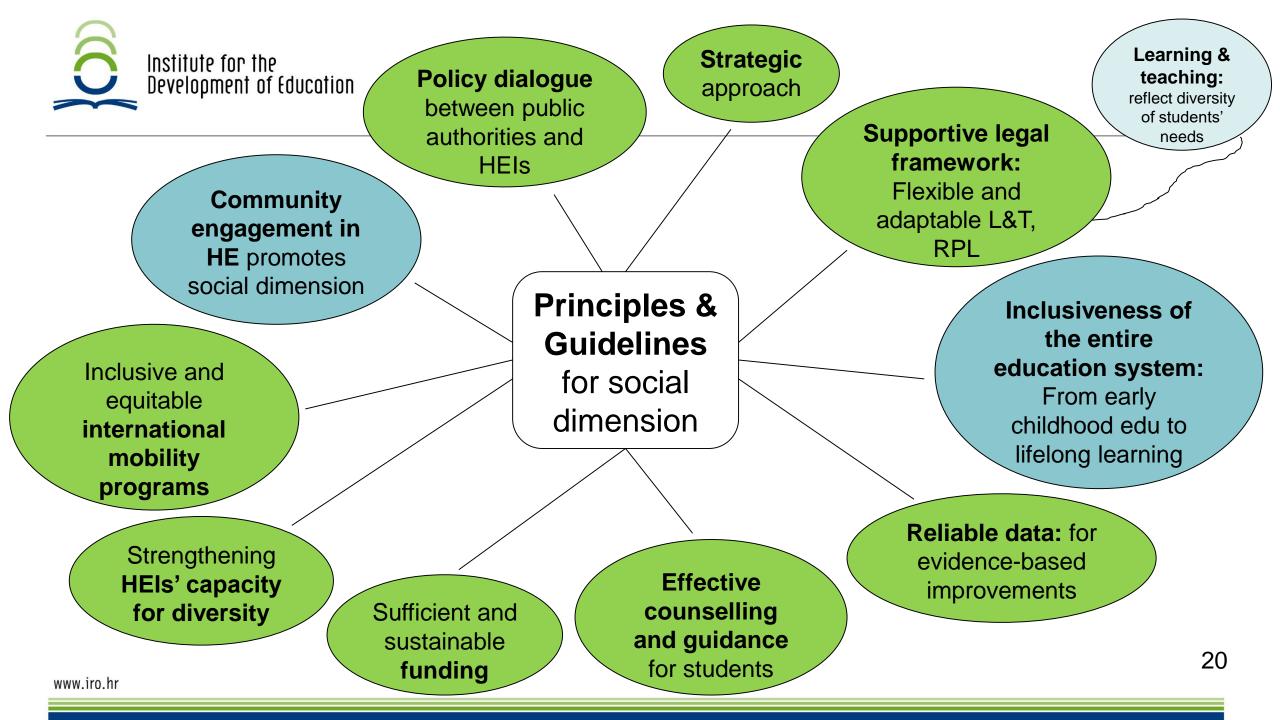
10 principles for the social dimension **for the upcoming decade**:

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

- **Guidelines** = recommendations intended to advise policy makers on how the principles should be implemented in practice.

- **Glossary of Terms and Definitions:**
    - Underrepresented students
    - Disadvantaged students
    - Vulnerable students

Principles and Guidelines: Conclusion

- Principles and Guidelines are not to be seen as a checklist, but as an instrument for **developing fit-for purpose national and institutional strategies and policies** for social dimension enhancement

  o Enabling concrete and tangible progress over the next decade

2020-2030: The decade of the social dimension in the EHEA – WHY?

4.

Building a European movement for the social dimension of higher education

Building a European movement: recommended policy approaches

TOP-DOWN approach:

- Focus on **building capacities** of public authorities and universities for the social dimension and on **facilitating a learning journey**, rather than on compliance
  - o Explore transnational learning and capacity tools
  - o Scale up through incentives
- **BFUG Working Group for Social Dimension 2021-2024** (www.ehea.info):
  - o Developing **tools for the implementation of Principles** for the social dimension
  - o Developing a **system of monitoring the implementation** of the **Principles and Guidelines**
  - o Organizing **peer support activities** for social dimension to support the implementation of the Principles and Guidelines among the EHEA members

Building a European movement: recommended policy approaches

BOTTOM-UP approach:

- Identify public authorities and universities committed to the social dimension
- **Build a network of institutions** committed to the social dimension and organize capacity building events with them
- **Build other alliances and scale up**: connect the social dimension agenda to the European Universities initiative and similar global networks, etc.

(NESET Analytical Report, Farnell et al., 2021)

TOP-DOWN approach + BOTTOM-UP approach = building a European movement for the social dimension

Thank you for your attention!

Ninoslav Šćukanec Schmidt

Co-Chair of the BFUG Advisory Group for Social Dimension 2018-2020 and 2021-2024

Institute for the Development of Education (IDE)

Zagreb, Croatia

nscukanec@iro.hr

www.iro.hr

BFUG Working Group for Social Dimension:

https://ehea.info/