



MINISTRY OF
SCIENCE AND
EDUCATION
REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

Federal Ministry
Republic of Austria
Education, Science
and Research

 Swedish Council for
Higher Education



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CONFERENCE CONCEPT NOTE

Final conference of the Erasmus+ project 'SIDERAL – Social and International Dimension of Education and Recognition of Acquired Learning'

Date of the conference

July 7th, 2021, online (Zoom)

Organizer

Croatian Ministry of Science and Education

About the project

The Erasmus+ project '**SIDERAL – Social and International Dimension of Education and Recognition of Acquired Learning**' started on February 14th, 2019 and ends on August 14th, 2021. The aim of the project was to improve the national and European policies on social dimension in higher education and recognition of prior learning. The project supported the implementation of the National Plan for Enhancing the Social Dimension in Croatia with the support of peers from Austria and Sweden and in close cooperation with the European Students' Union. Through conferences, study visits, peer learning and working groups, the project also aimed to contribute to further developments in recognition of prior learning in higher education within the broader policy framework of social dimension. Moreover, the project supported the work of the BFUG Advisory Group on Social Dimension by facilitating the Advisory Group meetings and related peer learning activities as well as by developing relevant documents to foster the social dimension in EHEA. Adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic, the project also contributed to research on digital teaching and learning through exploring students' experiences and identifying the key issues during the crisis.

Project Results

The results of the project are as follows:

1. [*The Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA*](#)
2. [*The study Student Life during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown: European-wide insights*](#)
3. The study *On Underrepresented and Vulnerable Groups of Students: Contributions to the Enhancement of the Social Dimension of Higher Education in Croatia*



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4. *The Methodology for collecting data on educational and professional pathways of students according to their social and economic status*
5. *Guidelines for drafting general acts of higher education institutions for the recognition of prior learning in Croatian higher education institutions*

Aims and Objectives of the Conference

The final conference will present the results of the project and try to provide an overview of the current global, European and national state of play regarding inclusion in higher education, with a focus on the digital transition amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and defining social inclusion. At the final conference, experts from different institutions will examine the ways in which project results can foster further research on social dimension and recognition of prior learning in higher education considering all lessons learned and steps made to cover all aspects of inclusion and having in mind the specificities of the COVID-19 crisis. The aim of this conference is to contribute to the development of future projects, research and debates on the European and national level and the changing paradigm of global education, teaching and learning. It will bring together national and international experts on educational policies, representatives of higher education institutions, students, NGOs and other stakeholders.

Background

The Croatian [Strategy of Education, Science and Technology](#) emphasizes the social dimension of higher education as one of its objectives. Following this objective, the National Group for the Enhancement of Social Dimension in Higher Education was established to develop the [National plan for the Enhancement of Social Dimension of Higher Education of the Republic of Croatia 2019-2021](#) which was adopted in 2019 by the Croatian Government. The project SIDERAL supported the work of the National Group whose task was to monitor the implementation of the National Plan as well as to follow the European policies with its connection to the BFUG Advisory Group on Social Dimension, where Croatia was (and is) the co-chair together with ESU. The current National Group prepares the new National Plan 2022-2024 in which there will be objectives and measures related to social inclusion and the COVID-pandemic. The publications on under-represented and vulnerable groups of students, the methodology for collecting data on students' educational and professional pathways as well as the outcomes of the study on student life during the COVID-pandemic will be used to develop a solid and updated document for the upcoming period.

The topic of recognition of prior learning was recognized as complementary to fostering the social dimension of higher education. Within the SIDERAL project, peer learning on the European level within the partner [RPLinPractice project](#) supported the development of procedures for validating non-formal and informal learning within Croatian higher education.



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On the European level, the 2018-2020 BFUG Advisory Group on Social Dimension set the course towards providing a guide to member states on how to define and implement policy on the social dimension, a need identified in the 2018 Paris Communiqué. The project SIDERAL supported the creation of the *Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA* by organizing the 2019-2020 meetings of the BFUG Advisory Group co-chaired by ESU and Croatia.

The Principles and Guidelines provide the solid ground for policy makers and administrators of higher education systems to cooperatively and effectively implement accessibility, inclusiveness and equity in higher education for all current and future students to succeed. Undoubtedly, COVID-19 presented a very important time for higher education institutions to integrate the PAGs into the functions of higher education, including digital learning and teaching, research, innovation, knowledge exchange and outreach, institutional governance and management as well as in policies for empowering present and future students and higher education staff to contribute towards the recovery of society, both economically and environmentally. In this regard, the primary role of the 2021-2024 BFUG Working Group on the Social Dimension will be to see the (a) development of a system of monitoring the implementation of the Principles and Guidelines and (b) definition of indicators and benchmarks for the principles for social dimension as means to support and incentivise EHEA member states and institutions to prioritize the implementation of the principles of the social dimension.



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AGENDA

SIDERAL – Social and International Dimension of Education and Recognition of Acquired Learning

FINAL CONFERENCE

7 July 2021, 9:30 AM (CET), online

- 9:00 Opening the platform
- 9:30 **Welcome speech – Dijana Mandić**, Head of Sector for the
Development of Higher Education, Ministry of Science and
Education, Republic of Croatia
- 9:40 **Global overview of the inclusion in higher education during
and post COVID-19** – Diego Ambasz and Lucia Brajković, World
Bank
- 10:00 **Social inclusion at European higher education institutions** –
Henriette Stöber, European University Association (EUA)
- 10:20 **Students' experiences in online teaching and learning: how
to foster inclusion?** – Martina Darmanin, European Students'
Union (ESU), BFUG Advisory Group for Social Dimension
- 10:40 **Presentation of the study 'On Underrepresented and
Vulnerable Groups of Students – Contribution to the Social
Dimension in Higher Education in Croatia'** – Saša Puzić,
Institute for Social Sciences in Zagreb
- 11:00 **Introducing the Recognition of Prior Learning to Croatia to
Support the Social Dimension** – Đurđica Dragojević, Ministry of
Science and Education



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- 11:20 Break
- 11:30 Panel session: **Inclusion in higher education in the digital era: way forward**
- 'New decade for the social dimension within the Bologna Process' Ninoslav Šćukanec Schmidt, Institute for the Development of Education, Zagreb
 - 'The social dimension revisited in the light of COVID-19' Maria Keplinger, Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, Austria
 - 'Digital education: issues and challenges' Velimir Srića, Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Zagreb
 - 'Can the new COVID-19 normal help to achieve SDG 4?' Martina Gaisch, University for Applied Sciences Upper Austria
 - 'On digitalisation and instant access to global knowledge' Martin Unger, Institute for Advanced Studies, Vienna
- 13:00 Lunch Break
- 14:00 Panel session – **Recognition of prior learning as a tool for enhancing inclusion** – chairing: Đurđica Dragojević, Ministry of Science and Education
- Christina Paulus, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna, Austria
 - Mislav Balković, Algebra University College
 - Marta Žuvić, University of Rijeka
 - Michael Karpišek, EURASHE
 - Ernesto Villalba-Garcia, CEDEFOP
- 15:30 Conclusions

Moderator: Ana Jerković, Ministry of Science and Education