IDEAS

Identifying effective approaches to enhancing the social dimension in Higher Education

Making inclusion in Europe a reality –

Policy paper on creating an inclusive environment in Higher Education

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1. Introduction

This policy paper synthesizes the findings and analysis of the IDEAS consortium into policy recommendations. This paper cannot be seen separately from the analysis of 57 cases in the IDEAS database, since this policy paper is based on the findings of the analysis. Some of the findings are integrated in this policy paper. We hope that these policy recommendations will be of added value to the many conversations and debates representatives of the European Commission and institutions in European countries are likely to have on the direction of the future of higher education in relation to the civic role and responsibility of higher education institutions as well as how to inspire and aspire students through teaching and learning to become civic engaged global citizens.

There could not have been a better time to write policy recommendations on equity and inclusion in higher education in Europe. The foundation of the European Community is being tested since Europe as an economic and civic entity as well as the social dimension in European countries is challenged with the flee of many refugees to Europe but also with recent attacks in major cities in Europe which has a big impact on the public opinion and the level of tolerance in different European countries towards certain groups in society[1]. The recent happenings will remain a major point of reference in Europe's history. 2015 was the year that the EU lead by a few countries showed leadership, took ownership and showed what being part of a European democracy means. It was also a year that Europe showed face to the rest of the world in their collective mourning. Meanwhile mobility of Europeans in Europe, which resembles patterns of classic economic migration, is full on as well. All these developments have impact on the changing demography of countries. Some countries are already diverse in many ways and will become even more diverse. This will increase diversity in all sectors of education and at the labour market and therefore ask for more deliberate action. Policy only is not good enough. There is a greater need for evidence-based practices from countries and institutions that have been successful in similar developments. *The declaration on Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education,* which is the result of an informal meeting of European Union education ministers in Paris, Tuesday March 17 2015, needs to be implemented successfully.

There is no need to invent new wheels. There is an opportunity though to make informed choices on how policy and evidence based practices could enhance opportunities in education *for all* and achieve more access and success in higher education, by implementing inclusive programmes and inclusive pedagogies. For this it should not matter in which part of the world the wheel is invented. It matters how evidence based practices are successfully replicated and scaled up to similar communities of students in Europe.

The increasing diversity in education in particular in higher education and at the labour market can be seen as an opportunity for Europe's agenda for the knowledge economy and is only affirming the necessity of the European Strategy for the Development of the Social Dimension and Lifelong Learning in the European Higher Education Area to 2020. "The social dimension plays an important role in enhancing the attractiveness and competitiveness of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The EHEA aims to widen overall access and increase participation and completion of underrepresented groups in higher education, according to the diversity of the national populations. In its turn, widening access to quality higher education is viewed as a precondition for societal progress and economic development.[2]"

In the IDEAS analysis a reference was made to a statement of the OECD Secretary General, Angel Gurria on the development of skills: "Skills have become the global currency of the 21st century. Without proper investment in skills, people languish on the margins of society, technological progress does not translate into economic growth, and countries can no longer compete in an increasingly knowledge-based global society."[3] In conversations around the globe on the future of higher education there is a consensus on the changing

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[1] Van Driel, B., Darmody, M., Kerzil, J., 'Education policies and practices to foster tolerance, respect for diversity and civic responsibility in children and young people in the EU', *NESET II report,* Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2016. doi: 10.2766/46172
[2] Report of the 2012-2015 BFUG working group on the Social Dimension and LLL to the BFUG, April 2015
[3] OECD, Better Skills Better Jobs Better Lives. Highlights of the OECD Skills Strategy, 2012

parameters of the need for skills besides knowledge. Jamie Merisotis, President of the Lumina Foundation[4], and Special advisor to the Executive Committee of the European Access Network, recently published a book in which he presents a vision and strategy for Attracting, Educating and Deploying the 21st Century Workforce in the United States. In his book he addresses the quantitative and qualitative gap between labor demand and the pool of talent. He presents five critical efforts to be implemented on a macro and meso level[5]. From these five efforts two are interesting thoughts for the European debate:

- **"Developing a new immigration model built around the type of talent we need:** Immigration is a core part of the story of American success, but that narrative has languished in recent years because of our bureaucratic and dysfunctional immigration system. We must reshape this system around attracting the talent employers need and equipping immigrants already here with the skills and knowledge for success.
- **Reimagining our cities as hubs of talent:** Cities that thrive in the 21st Century will be those that not only attract talent from the outside in, but also build it from the ground up. By focusing on cultivating cities as hubs of talent, we could create places that entice and embrace newcomers while educating the homegrown workforce."

These are two thoughts that are worth exploring in combination with current policy aims and strategies on the area of the social dimension for now and for future developments. The biggest challenge for the European Community and for individual nations however is a *lack of hope* on positives outcomes given the changes Europe is facing on a demographic level and the *slow pace* of developments on the area of the social dimension. It's therefore interesting to look for example at the success of Canada as a country that already in 1971 adopted a policy of multiculturalism. Pierre Trudeau, father of current Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, introduced this policy, which embraced the reality of a diverse society and provided space and acceptance for racial, ethnic, religious and language differences. Canadians "were allowed to keep their identity and take pride in their ancestry"[6] Canada now being one of the few nations where the cultural diversity in society apparently is not a barrier for gaps in educational outcomes, is an example of good practice in policy with proven success.

The economic angle of Merisotis in combination with the societal angle of Trudeau provide important elements for future policy in Europe on the area of the social dimension or even better, they form the foundation of future policy relevant to the context of culturally diverse cities in Europe. European cities like Amsterdam, Berlin, Brussels, London and Paris are centers of culture, history and economic activity. Cities are spaces for innovation, creativity, knowledge provision and -circulation because of the presence of major universities. And most of these cities are also majority-minority cities[7], meaning that there is no ethnic majority anymore. The former majority is one of the many minorities in these cities. The future population of these cities will be urban and cosmopolitan in the first place and an increasing richness of cultural diversity in many ways. Like Canada in the 70's, Europe needs to have a vision on what the ethnic and cultural diversity means and how this given fact can be an asset to Europe as an economic entity as well as an entity embracing shared values on human rights, democracy, equality and other values[8]. This vision will be the foundation to create a *European sense of belonging* to all Europeans, whether roots are European from origin, whether being European is based on a history of economic migration waves, migration due to the colonial history of countries, by international mobility, having a background as a political refugee and for those who are members of indigenous communities in Europe. In an interview Jamie Merisotis makes the following statement: "Immigrants are not a *nice to have* for America -- they are a *gotta have*. Immigrants are nearly twice as likely as their native-born counterparts to start businesses, and while immigrants with college and graduate degrees now represent 6 percent of the U.S. labor force, their earnings represent 9 percent of all combined wages in the United States. Immigration should be viewed not as a problem to be dealt with, but a powerful opportunity to grow America's talent pipeline -- is something that should resonate for higher education."

These are thoughts that cannot be replicated one to one since Europe is not the United States or Canada. The economic, political, historical, linguistic, religious and social diversity of Europe itself is a fact that in many ways

[4] Lumina Foundation is the largest private foundation in the US, focused solely on increasing Americans' success in higher education. Lumina's outcomes-based approach focuses on helping to design and build an equitable, accessible, responsive and accountable higher education system while fostering a national sense of urgency for action to achieve Goal 2025.

[5] Merisotis, *Five Ways to Deploy a 21st Century Workforce,* Blog in the Huff Post, 15 September 2015

[6] Dhakiwal, Sarbjith, *Justin Trudeau walks a multicultural path*, The Tribune March 16, 2016

[7] Crul, M.R.J, Schneider, J, & Lelie, F. (2013). *Super-diversity. A new perspective on integration,* CASA/VU University Press. Retrieved from http://hdl.handle.net/1765/50358

[8] Standard Eurobarometer 77 / Spring 2012 – TNS Opinion & Social, *The Values of Europeans*, http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb77/eb77_value_en.pdf

makes Europe an interesting 'laboratory of innovation' but it can also be a barrier to make real progress on the area of the social dimension. The intentionality and determination of these visions in combination with a message of hope for a better and inclusive future is what could be a source of inspiration to European countries and the European Commission. In Canada in the 70s there was undoubtedly also a conversation on shared values but there was also room to develop new-shared values that reflected the broad diversity of different cultural groups in society. This way new Canadians felt also represented and were therefore able to embrace the values of their new home country.

The cases in IDEAS are a mirror of how equity is perceived in different parts of Europe and in other parts of the world. They represent the sense of intentionality and determination of national and local governments, (higher) education institutions, programme coordinators, student unions, faculty, local businesses, foundations, ngo's and many students. All these cases in IDEAS reflect an African proverb: It takes a village to raise a child. All the cases in IDEAS were and still are successful because of a collective effort with a collective impact of proven success. These cases started with a vision and intention - and developed itself through determination, ownership, accountability, collaboration, negotiation, representation and innovation within a culture of evidence - to the success that they have become.

2. IDEAS

The background and motivation to start IDEAS[9]
Despite all intentions in the course of the Bologna Process and decades of investment into improving the social dimension, results in many national and international studies show that inequity remains stubbornly persistent, and that inequity based on socio-economic status, parental education, gender, country-of-origin, rural background and more continues to prevail in our Higher Education systems and at the labour market. While improvement has been shown, extrapolation of the gains of the last 40 years in the field show that it could take over 100 years for disadvantaged groups to catch up with their more advantaged peers, should the current rate of improvement be maintained.

Many of the traditional approaches to improving equity have also necessitated large-scale public investments, in the form of direct support to underrepresented groups. In an age of austerity, many countries in Europe are finding it necessary to revisit and scale down these policies, so as to accommodate other priorities, such as balanced budgets or dealing with an aging population. An analysis[10] of the current situation indicates that the time is ripe for disruptive innovations to mobilise the cause forward by leaps and bounds, instead of through incrementalist approaches. Despite the list of programmes in this analysis there is very little evidence as to the causal link between programmes, methodologies for their use and increases/improvements in equity in institutions. This creates a significant information gap for institutions and public authorities seeking for indicators to allocate limited resources to equity-improving initiatives, without adequate evidence of effectiveness. The IDEAS project aimed at addressing and improving this information gap.

Aims & Objectives IDEAS
- Create a database of initiatives (programmes/policies) at micro/meso level for enhancing equity in access, participation and completion of Higher Education from across Europe and on a global level.
- Screen the database for evidence of a causal link between the initiatives and improvements in equity for their target groups.
- Understand the environmental, social and political enabling factors which allow successful examples of practices to take root
- Select a number of good practices based on criteria of success, and disseminate these widely to promote the replication and dissemination of examples in institutions throughout Europe as well as on a global level.

Previous European projects, such as EQUNET, have analysed how minority groups entered and performed at universities and it became clear that all major efforts realised by the Member States did improve the persistence of inequity. However European Universities do not yet reflect the diversity of the European population as aimed at the European Higher Education Area and, there are big gaps in educational outcomes.

[9] Equnet, *Evolving diversity. An overview of evolving equitable access to HE in Europe*, Brussels 2010
[10] Equnet, *Evolving diversity. An overview of evolving equitable access to HE in Europe*, Brussels 2010

Central, regional and local governments supported those large-scale programmes with the aim of promoting a social development including the reduction in social exclusion and diminishing ethnic minorities' isolation. Target groups of these programmes developed a better integration in the countries, regions or cities where they live, achieving a better feeling of belonging to a common European culture with values such as democracy, social consciousness, respecting differences and diversity. The weight of immigrants in national populations of European countries rose significantly and is now estimated over 10% in 15 countries[11].

Inequity does not result only from socio economic- and ethnic background. There are other constraints that prevent young people to aspire and apply to universities, such as:
- a different understanding of who is entitled to access university
- the ignorance of the importance of a certain social, cultural and educational capital
- the presumption that STEM is inaccessible
- gender disparities.

While states, regional and local administrations felt growing difficulties to fund, universities and students found other ways to promote greater equity in the universities. This project was conceived to elicit, promote and disseminate some of those *ideas* – good *IDEAS* - that were developed in different parts of the world, but in particularly in Europe. *The goal is to contribute to the dissemination of good practices*. The aim from the beginning was to identify *ideas and proven practices* that have the potential to be implemented with small investment and can be disseminated, replicated and scaled up. A specific focus was to look particularly for evidence of success and for evidence of flexibility – ideas that can be translated and adapted in different contexts with small changes to the specific conditions of those new contexts. We are looking for alternatives for the large-scale public investments, revisiting and trying to find ways to scale down those policies. Project members used their networks to find some of the best practices.

What we found
What we found were 57 practices from 20 countries, of which at least 70% are from Europe. All practices have proven to be successful in a quantitative or qualitative way and transformed from a promising practice to a shared best practice. Meaning that all programmes started as an intervention of promise and became a shared best practice after implementation by being tested, evaluated, monitored and in some cases replicated or scaled up.

Context
The reference to context is one of the most important conclusions of this analysis based on the cases in IDEAS. There is no 'silver bullet' nor a 'one size fits all' solution to the many issues that were presented as challenges for institutions who are determined to improving equity and inclusion for a diversity of students in their higher education institutions, schools, communities etc. All cases started with the intention to make a change for certain groups of students that are either underrepresented or for many reasons deal with barriers that are related to a specific political, institutional, national, regional, local and personal context. It is this specific why initiators of these cases designed the programmes that have led to the success that it resulted in. The more the specific context is taken into account, and the more targeted an intervention is implemented and replicated, the more successful the intervention will be. There are examples of policy where different groups[12] who face barriers in accessing or in being successful in higher education are mentioned as one target group without differentiating in interventions based on their specific needs. The fear for stigmatizing students is an often-mentioned reason, which can have deep rooted historical connotations. By not taking the different needs into account there is a risk that policy is too general and at the end of the day not reaching the target groups to whom the policy was meant to make a change. That is why monitoring, evaluating and measuring impact on equity and inclusion are important parts of a strategy and policy to improve equity and inclusion in education. Since many institutions already have systems in place for monitoring, evaluation and measuring impact, equity and inclusion should ideally be additional parameters in existing quality assurance processes.

In the IDEAS database there are two cases, Upward Bound USA in Boston and Upward Bound UK in London. The UK programme was replicated based and inspired by the Boston programme. The Boston programme is also based on TRIO Upward Bound, which is a national federally funded programme implemented at many

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[11] Source: http://www.jornaldenegocios.pt/economia/detalhe/mapa_o_peso_da_imigracao_na_europa.html

[12] Diversity by gender, ethnic background, socio-economic background, health condition, sexual orientation, indigenous or refugee background, age, rural/urban etc.

universities in the US. The Boston programme is tailor made to the community and education system of the Boston area, which is the same for the London programme. The barriers students encounter may be the same as well as aims, programmes and methodologies of an institution but for the process of implementation the specific barriers, background etc. matter. Both programmes although being executed in different parts of the world have proven to be successful. In chapter 3 of the analysis a paragraph is written on "Key factors for replication through scaling up".

Initiators
What we expected to find were more grassroots initiatives developed by others than only higher education institutions. What we got was that in most of the cases universities were involved in collaboration with schools, communities, student unions and other stakeholders. Only in a few cases initiatives were initiated and run by ngo's like Arbeiterkind.de in Germany, The Brilliant Club in the UK and ECHO Center for Diversity Policy in the Netherlands. Initiatives started by Student Unions were also initiated and run within universities. We hoped to find more open resource initiatives where equity and inclusion is part of the mission and 'dna' of the organisations and therefore access should not be a barrier anymore. There were only a few cases that we identified. IDEAS has two cases of Technology Driven initiatives with proven success: OERu coordinated by the OER[13] Foundation in New Zealand and RadioActive101 coordinated by the University of East London in the UK. This last initiative started with EU Funding.

Resources and policy as enabling factors
An interesting finding is that the success of programmes in institutions is related to the financial support programmes receive in combination with in-kind resources and in-kind capacity of students who work as volunteers in many of the programmes. Financial support is often embedded and part of long-term policy strategies. Many national enabling policy strategies were an important indicator or at least a catalyst for the start of these practices and during the development in time; institutional support, a growing ownership and intentional and committed leadership on different levels within the institution were critical to the success. These different reasons for the intentionality and commitment are either influenced by the determination to improve equity and inclusion, or driven by improving educational outcomes and diminishing performance gaps enhanced by barriers related to ethnicity, gender, socio economic background, health conditions, sexual preference, age, privilege etc. In many ways *there is no either or* between being social justice driven or economic driven. Institutions are often driven by policy aims and economic goals on educational performance but to make these programmes successful it takes more than an only an economic model and reason.

Culture of evidence
In time where funding is limited but challenges of institutions remain the same, accountability becomes more important. Pursuing a culture of evidence related to equity programmes is an aim and decision that takes vision and determination hence, the kind of leadership that understands how data can play an important role in improving the success of programmes that not always have the highest priority within institutions. It also asks additional effort to create an infrastructure to support a culture of evidence. Too often accountability is seen as a means to enhance a control mechanism instead of evidence being supportive to organisational learning and innovation. The cases in IDEAS show that investing in a culture of evidence benefits many stakeholders committed to the programmes: students, their communities, schools, institutions, funders and on a longer term will also have a benefit for regional development in the case attainment is improving, communities have better opportunities to learning etc. However, IDEAS also learnt to evaluate the value of projects through a wider lens than impact alone. Many of the projects were new, experimental, organic and flexible. In many cases proof of success was relative to how far into a Theory of Change an intervention was. IDEAS therefore promote a 'realist' approach to evaluation that considers context, mechanisms and outcomes and not just a linear approach of cause and effect.

'A Theory of Change is an ongoing process of reflection to explore change and how it happens – and what that means for the part we play in a particular context, sector and/or group of people.'[14] This definition while rather broad makes clear that an 'analysis should be about both *how* change in a given context occurs and what ongoing role individuals and organisations can play. This definition helps tackle a recurrent problem with

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[13] Open Educational Resources
[14] James, C. (2011), *'Theory of Change Review: A Report Commissioned by Comic Relief'*. London: Comic Relief

Theories of Change – that organisations imply that change in a society revolves around them and their programme, rather than around a range of interrelated contextual factors, of which their programme is part.' [15]

Policy
Many of the policies mentioned by case providers were driven by economic and socio-economic factors. The more countries develop into diverse or 'superdiverse' societies the more there is a shift from interventions driven by social justice arguments only to interventions that are driven by economic imperatives aimed to have an economic impact. Institutions in very diverse urban regions automatically have a very diverse enrolment of students. Their concern however is to make sure all students are able to retain and graduate equally as well as having aspirations to pursue graduate and doctoral degrees. Unfortunately these highly diverse areas also show gaps in attainment between different groups of students. The most important economic factor mentioned is *retention and attainment* as well as *nation's aims to maintain their position as one of the most educated and skilled workforces in the world/region.* About half of the cases were initiated as part of a retention strategy with the aim to increase student's academic success despite students' background. Also half of the cases mentioned access in relation to either demographic changes or in relation to shortages of graduates in certain disciplines such as the STEM areas. Access, Retention and Attainment were often mentioned in combination with underrepresentation given demographic changes in society and therefore a shortage of graduates of all disciplines and certain disciplines like STEM in particular.

The cases that focus on improving the attainment gaps are often part of a national strategy or at least started in respond of national policy. Several national/regional strategies were mentioned as context for the development of interventions, often in combination with institutional and regional aims to improve access, retention and attainment. A few of these national policies with a focus on attainment are:
- The Bradley Review in Australia
- The G5 Grant of the Ministry of Education Culture and Science in the Netherlands
- Widening Participation in the United Kingdom and Scotland
- National Inclusion Strategy in Hungary
- The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in the United States
- School/College/Work/Initiative (SCWI) in Ontario Canada

Lack of Policy
Initiatives that started as grassroots initiatives would not have become successful quantitatively and qualitatively without the determination, belief and commitment of the persons who had a vision and started the initiative. The founders of *"Arbeiterkind.de"* and *"The Brilliant Club"* are non-profit organisations that were not part of a policy. These leaders had a vision on change and were aware of a *lack of policy* for the target group they advocate for. Both initiatives are now successful programmes in respectively Germany and England with sustainable funding and can count on positive support from the public and attention in media. Arbeiterkind.de advocates for first generation students in Germany and The Brilliant Club advocates for underrepresented youth from non-selective state schools that progress on to highly selective universities.

Funding
All case providers were asked to give information on the type and amount of resources necessary to achieve the presented outcomes. *An important conclusion is that targeted funding is inevitable and an important means to increase successful outcomes on access, retention and successful completion of underrepresented groups in higher education.* This doesn't necessarily refer to the amount of funding that is involved but more the type of funding and how funding can be a means to enhance the process of creating ownership and (regional) collaboration among stakeholders.

It is naïve to assume that successful emancipation of underrepresented, non-traditional groups in education can be reached without the necessary financial commitment to targeted funding and without a sense of ownership.

Financial contributions only however cannot achieve the kind of innovation and change needed. It is the type of funding and the combination of different types of funding that are necessary to enhance successful outcomes. The provided information shows that cases can be successful with a budget of € 10.000,- or less as well as major programmes with a 5 million euro budget per year. In our search of including successful cases in

[15] Valthers, C, (2015) *Theories of Change Time for a radical approach to learning in development*, The Asia Foundation, London 2015

the IDEAS database we specifically also looked for cases that proofed to be successful with smaller budgets, which were hardly found. We have to bear in mind that many well funded programmes that have been in place for many years also started with small amounts of targeted funding. This means that successful strategies to enhance a more equitable and inclusive higher education learning environment are only possible with proper sustainable financial support. Among the financially well-supported programmes (more than 1 million euro's per year) are programmes with successful outcomes in general as well as having proven to be successful and sustainable over the years. Among these programmes are three cases with budgets between one to five million euro's for (equity) scholarships. These programmes basically provide financial means for students from underrepresented groups to enter higher education.

It has to be said that scholarship programmes alone are not sufficient to enhance a more inclusive higher education. Among European policy to enhance the social dimension, there are many scholarship programmes. These programmes are certainly important for students to get access to higher education but it does not necessarily expect institutions to change accordingly. How programmes are funded proof how committed institutions are to become more inclusive by creating opportunities for underrepresented groups.

EU Funding
It is important to notice that only 2 cases in IDEAS mentioned receiving EU funding. This is the Hungarian programme "*Development of complex services for disadvantaged students at Wlislocki Henrik Student College*" of Pecs University focussing on Roma students and the case "*RadioActive101*" by the University of East London with many EU partners. "*Junge Vorbilder ("Young Role Models") at verikom – Verbund für interkulturelle Kommunikation und Bildung e.v*. in Hamburg mentioned the use of ESF funding. Looking at the funding resources of the cases in IDEAS we see that almost all cases with proven long-term success have been funded by a variety of sources. EU funding can ideally be a source at the initiation of a programme but has to be continued with other sources of funding.

The question is whether EU funding is an option for institutions that are determined to make a change and take ownership by investing institutional funding and finding other sources. Another question is whether EU funding is sufficient to develop proven and sustainable success on a longer term. A third question is whether EU funding is more a means for consortia to find ways to collaborate or to cover staff costs and in fact lack the intentionality and determination nor the knowledge, experience and ownership to aspire change, instead of a way to run projects. This last question might sounds harsh but without a real intention to change the social dimension in higher education, these types of initiatives won't be able to provide the kind of evidence and success we found within some of the cases in IDEAS.

3. The Social Dimension and IDEAS

The European Higher Education Area and the Social Dimension
The concept of the social dimension is one of the overarching themes within the Bologna Process that has been on the agenda now for about 15 years. The main goal is to increase equity and inclusion in higher education by removing barriers in access to higher education. The goal of the social dimension, which was first mentioned in Prague Communiqué in 2001 has developed through the years in its level of ambition.

Work programme Social Dimension of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)[16]
* The Social Dimension in the Prague Communiqué, 2001 where "…*Ministers reaffirmed the need, recalled by students to take account of the social dimension in the Bologna process...*". At the following ministerial conferences, *the social dimension was described as an integral part of the EHEA and a necessary condition for enhancing the attractiveness and competitiveness of the* EHEA (the Bergen Communiqué, 2005).

* With the London Communiqué of May 2007, Ministers responsible for higher education agreed on a common definition for the objective of the social dimension: "*We share the societal aspiration that the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels should reflect the diversity of our populations*". Further on, Ministers concurred in setting national strategies and policies, including action plans and reports on their progress at the next ministerial meeting. It was also recommended to work towards defining comparable data and indicators for the social dimension of higher

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[16] Bologna Process EHEA http://www.ehea.info/article-details.aspx?ArticleId=12

education".

- In Leuven/Louvain-La-Neuve, Ministers committed further on to *"…set measureable targets to widen participation of underrepresented groups in higher education, to be reached by the end of the next decade…*" (the Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué, 2009).

- In Bucharest, acknowledging that "…widening access to higher education is a precondition for societal progress and economic development…" the Ministers agreed *"…to adopt national measures for widening overall access to quality higher education*". The Ministers also *committed to step up their efforts* towards underrepresented groups through developing the social dimension of higher education, reducing inequalities and providing adequate student support services, counselling and guidance, flexible learning paths and alternative access routes, including recognition of prior learning (the Bucharest Communiqué, 2012).

As a result of the Bucharest Communiqué in 2012, PL4SD, Peer Learning for the Social Dimension was introduced which focussed on supporting the process of international exchange and learning of good practices on the area of the social dimension. *"The objective of the PL4SD project is to address this need for "peer learning" and to provide policy-makers and practitioners with resources to develop effective measures for improving the social dimension of the European Higher Education Area[17]."*

- The social dimension was an important part of the Yerevan Ministerial Conference, held in May 2015. The part on the social dimension in this communiqué was able to reflect on the progress made so far and looked forward to 2020[18]. The ministers committed themselves as follows: "*to make our higher education more socially inclusive by implementing the EHEA social dimension strategy.*"

The ministers defined priorities in a renewed vision for the European Higher Education Area. These were the priorities related to the social dimension:
"*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.*"

Social Dimension and IDEAS
The different communiqués present a good understanding of what kind of barriers students are dealing with to improve educational success. Factors that are mentioned are: student ability; material and immaterial (e.g. social and cultural) resources and opportunity. There is also a common understanding that part of the barriers is related to the 'social and cultural capital'[19] of students. The students who are seen as part of the target group to the social dimension policy are often so-called first generation students: these students' parents have not had a higher education experience. First generation students often lack relevant information about the system and requirements of higher education. They lack 'role models', a network and a 'support group' in their community to identify with. In addition to this first generation students lack the support and a support group to feel at home in higher education[20] and to develop a sense of belonging with and within academia.

The introduction and development of the Social Dimension were a true opportunity to work on improving equity and inclusion in higher education – to help individuals overcome barriers to access, participate and complete higher education. The results however have not reached the kind of level of intentions and

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[17] PL4SD website http://www.pl4sd.eu
[18] Bologna Process EHEA, Yerevan Communiqué, May 2015, http://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Yerevan-Communique.pdf
[19] Bordieu, The Forms of Capital, 1986
[20] Severiens, S., Wolff, R. & Rezai. S. (2006). *Diversiteit in leergemeenschappen*. Utrecht: Echo.

commitments that was aimed at. With PL4SD the necessary first steps were reached in raising awareness, exchange in policy and practice by the conferences, meetings and country reviews. This especially for country's where these policies are either lacking or non-existent despite existing inequities. The question is whether the aims in the communiqués between 2001 and 2012 were too ambitious to begin with? Was is realistic to expect countries that are different in many ways and in some cases have no tradition, policy and experience with the social dimension in higher education, to commit to the same targets?

The Yerevan renewed vision is much more realistic about challenges and expectations. The Ministers acknowledged that the development on the area of the social dimension still needs improvement. With committing to the Yerevan Communiqué 2015, the sense of urgency to the needed change is emphasized. This sense of urgency also refers to the current demographic changes of higher education in Europe into account.

Sense of urgency
The results that were achieved with the peer learning process of PL4SD are promising. It is encouraging to read that countries without tradition and policy on the area of the social dimension are developing awareness on what is needed in society. But the rapid demographic changes in European countries need achievements that have past the test of peer learning and have proven their success. The results of the past years are not good enough to face the coming years. Higher education institutions in countries that are facing these rapid changes in fact need 'out of the box' solutions, which are based on sustainable, evidence-based programmes. The Ministers took the right conclusions in Yerevan but in fact need a strategy that is building on developed and successful experiences from programmes like the ones in the IDEAS database. Also building on the knowledge and expertise of organisations, individual experts and scholars who are working in the field of higher education, diversity and inclusion. With IDEAS we have seen that national policy on the area of the social dimension is one of the many enabling factors to achieve success. Institutions in countries where demographic developments are influenced by a disproportionate larger influx of refugees can certainly benefit from support with knowledge, expertise, proven practices and European funding to make sure that they can provide the same quality of higher education and make sure that newcomers in these countries are properly introduced to the values, culture, language of the receiving society.

This way the peer learning process like PL4SD can focus more on countries that have a different pace and process of raising awareness and can focus on national inequities related to the social dimension. Especially because a recent survey done by the European Students' Union generated worrying facts about the level of commitment of some European countries.

The Student Perspective
New ideas, creative incentives and successful solutions need to be developed and disseminated. The ministers adopted this strategy to widen participation for equity and growth and recognize that "there are still too many capable students who are excluded from higher education systems because of their socio-economic situation, educational background, insufficient systems of support and guidance and other obstacles."

The evaluation of the social dimension chapter in this recent survey of ESU[21] however shows, that inclusion is not a very high priority in most of the countries. Some of the ministers do not even have a clear definition on who their local minorities are. Most of the countries lack a concrete strategy of how to identify the groups that need specific support to access higher education and successful completion. In other countries only well known minority groups are receiving special support. These findings are not desirable at all. Even though there is a need for a more inclusive environment due to demographic changes and immigration, the urgency of actions is paralyzed. Also programmes are not being implemented as funding is cut down in some countries. Measures that are regarded not to be too financially beneficial are also cut down. The willingness and the need to achieve outcome equality are there but the realization seems to be more complicated. In theory a lot of strategies and plans are in place but the actual implementation is lacking.

An article[22] written by (former) members of student unions mention that despite a large number of problems there are positive developments. "The progress made with regards to the affordability and portability of loans and grants, identification of some underrepresented groups and the commitment to improve access to higher

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[21] ESU, Bologna with Student Eyes 2015, http://bwse2015.esu-online.org/Introduction
[22] Florian Kaiser, Aengus Ó. Maoláin and Līva Vikmane, *No Future for the Social Dimension?*

education and completion rates, as well as the collection of data can be seen as a success." Problematic is the political follow up on the agreements in the many communiqué's, by countries in their local context. IDEAS is only confirming this. There is no silver bullet for the complexity of common issues in European countries. Institutions and regions who are serious about tackling issues of inequity without compromising on the quality of teaching and learning for all, are intentional and determined in policy and act upon it by implementing and constant evaluating best practices. In some cases systematic changes had to be made, legislation had to be adapted with the aim to be more inclusive. Countries ideally should commit to how they are going to initiate and implement transformative processes, realistic to the context of the country, instead of committing to 'big' common outcomes. The authors "assert that the social dimension is linked to nearly every action line of the Bologna Process, and many outside of its scope both on the European and local levels. But the problem area that remains at the end of this discussion is far more philosophical: What is the society we want to live in in the future, and what does higher education need to provide in order to create this society? This is a question that requires more debate than it has received to date."

PL4SD and IDEAS
Both PL4SD and IDEAS are databases with cases focussing on issues to improve equity and inclusion. The PL4SD database has more than 300 policy interventions to improve the social dimension in European higher education[23]. Four indicators classify these cases: *Target group, Objective of the measure, Type of measure and Country*.

The main focus of IDEAS is to identify cases with proven success through sharing good practices and learning of the success of others. Sharing good practices is one way to enhance mutual learning. But understanding why certain practices are successful and have impact require a more detailed level of (in-depth) context related data to get a better sense of the local and institutional situation. In policy there is often a strong focus on barriers on a student level, which is good but not sufficient if a systematic change on institutional level is aimed at. As elaborated in the analysis, working towards an inclusive learning environment ideally ask for developing interventions on four different levels: the level of *students*, *(educational) staff*, *the curriculum* and *management & organisation*. Successful programmes often had a combination of interventions on these four levels. The role of faculty and teaching staff is one of the most crucial ones since programmes can only be successful if implemented with (educational) staff that is able to engage with the diversity of students and understand the world (context) students come from.

The IDEAS database uses eleven indicators. The PL4SD indicators are also part of the IDEAS grid but in addition to that IDEAS also ask case providers for descriptions of qualitative developments on different others aspects. The qualitative information has the purpose to enable a broader and more in depth assessment of the context of the initiative as well as the level of success. The context of the initiative is a description of the target group, the barriers that are encountered and the enablers for instance policy on different levels and the resources. With IDEAS case providers were also asked to elaborate on how success has been achieved, what the results are, whether success is sustainable and how success was measured. PL4SD has a stronger focus on (national) policy interventions and does not capture regional, cultural, economic and institutional specifics. Most of the measures collected are on a conceptual and national level while for the IDEAS database national and regional policy and politics are described in depth in order to explore how the conditions for institutional interventions are shaped. The collected information on cases with IDEAS provides quantitative and qualitative evidence that are appropriate for the stage of development of the intervention or its resources. The IDEAS cases are all separately implemented cases. Each case presents a unique story of persistence and determination in combination with a rationality and empirical drive that is needed to develop a base of evidence and sustain success throughout the years. Although they are comparable for key success factors that are described in the analysis they should be interpreted within the context of a system, policy, region, institution etc.

4. The impact of the Paris Declaration

Paris Declaration
With the Paris Declaration the EU Ministers responsible for Education and the Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, declared the following: "In response to the terrorist attacks in France and Denmark earlier this year, and recalling similar atrocities in Europe in the recent past, *we reaffirm our determination to*

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[23] http://www.pl4sd.eu/index.php/database/about-the-database

stand shoulder to shoulder in support of fundamental values that lie at the heart of the European Union: respect for human dignity, freedom (including freedom of expression), democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights. These values are common to the Member States in a European society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail."

"Ministers wanted to boost EU-level cooperation on four overarching priorities[24]:

    a. Ensuring young people acquire social, civic and intercultural competences, by promoting democratic values and fundamental rights, social inclusion and non-discrimination, as well as active citizenship;

    b. Enhancing critical thinking and media literacy, particularly in the use of the Internet and social media, so as to develop resistance to of discrimination and indoctrination;

    c. Fostering the education of disadvantaged children and young people, by ensuring that our education and training systems address their needs; and

    d. Promoting intercultural dialogue through all forms of learning in cooperation with other relevant policies and stakeholders."

Sense of belonging

The Paris declaration is in fact a way to create a European sense of belonging. Education can certainly play an important role in creating a *European sense of belonging*. Sense of belonging is a valuable concept, studied and implemented in policy and practice in higher education, especially in situations of highly diverse student populations, often with the aim to increase retention and attainment. There are references made in the IDEAS cases to creating a sense of belonging through the presented programmes. Improving student's sense of belonging will have a positive effect on their level of engagement in their study specifically their level of social- and academic integration[25]. Integration can be interpreted as engagement. The better the quality of engagement of students with other students is (social engagement) and the quality of engagement with faculty or teaching staff (academic engagement), the better students will be motivated academically and the more their academic self confidence will grow[26]. In situations with existing inequities because of differences in gender, class, ethnicity, health condition, sexual orientation, privilege or other reasons developing a sense of belonging can empower young people in their process of engagement, identification and the process of feeling at home within a new learning environment.

Effective approaches to nurture belonging are[27]:

- Supportive peer relations (social integration);
- Meaningful interactions between staff and students (academic integration);
- Developing knowledge, confidence and identity as successful HE learners;
- A higher education experience that is relevant to interests and future goals.

Investing in the development of a sense belonging can perfectly be combined with programmes focussing on active citizenship, civic engagement and enhancing intercultural dialogue. It is important that countries and institutions support and enhance the process of identification with European and national values and invite 'others' to engage in intercultural dialogue but there has to be an awareness that this can only be successful if students who belong to migrant communities or other underrepresented communities feel represented as well in the staff and curriculum of higher education institutions. Most underrepresented communities have always been forced to negotiate their identity since they often belong to a minority in society. Therefore their cultural values have never been part of the mainstream context.

Creating a European sense of belonging can be successful if this process of transformation is truly inclusive, meaning the European or other national identity is a representation of the local diversity. A new report, the NESET II Report[28], which looked at education policies to foster tolerance in children and young people in the EU, gave a very good insight into the challenges but also opportunities. Challenging is certainly the growing feeling of intolerance towards specific ethnic communities or representatives of these communities especially

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[24] EU news, *Education and radicalisation - the Paris Declaration one year on*, http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/2016/0316-paris-declaration-education_en.htm, March 16 2016

[25] Tinto, V. (1993). Leaving College: Rethinking the Causes and Cures of Student Attrition. (2nd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press and Severiens, S., Wolff, R. & Rezai. S. (2006). *Diversiteit in leergemeenschappen*. Utrecht: Echo

[26] Wolff, R and Crul, M, *Blijvers en uitvallers,* ECHO, Utrecht 2002

[27] Thomas, *Building student engagement and belonging in Higher Education at a time of change: final report from theWhat Works? Student Retention & Success programme*, UK 2012

[28] Van Driel, B., Darmody, M., Kerzil, J., '*Education policies and practices to foster tolerance, respect for diversity and civic responsibility in children and young people in the EU*', *NESET II report,* Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2016. doi: 10.2766/46172.

after the attacks in Paris, Kopenhagen and Brussels, in combination with a growing increase of newcomers. Europe and countries in Europe are changing, will change even more over the course of the coming months and years and will remain ethnically diverse. Therefore education systems have to transform accordingly including higher education institutions. Otherwise a growing part of current and new European citizens will not be able to identify with the content of the curriculum and staff in (higher) education. Superdiverse cities will become even more diverse. *Differences in cultural, ethnic, socio economic background, in values, languages and religions should be acknowledged as a difference in identity but not as a weakness or deficiency.*

It is not helpful for this policy paper to mention all fourteen conclusions and nineteen recommendations of the NESET II Report. These conclusions and recommendations though speak volume. "Growing diversity in Europe challenges the education sector to develop strategies for accepting and embracing difference. Within the educational landscape, the school is a critical institution for transmitting values and attitudes that honour openness and learning from difference. The educational sector, and in particular schools, can provide a place where young people learn the skills and competences that will help them resolve conflicts in a peaceful manner and learn to live with diversity on a daily basis." The study showed that "When addressing intolerance in educational settings and promoting respect for diversity, the evidence presented above all points *to the importance of going beyond temporary and limited measures*. *Effective and sustainable change that will improve the atmosphere in schools and other educational institutions will involve all stakeholders on a continual basis*: teachers, students, school principals, parents, social services, the community at large and policy-makers. High-level policy interventions can reinforce and help steer more grassroots initiatives to make schools more inclusive and better connected to local communities. The policy implications and recommendations reflect these considerations."

Paris Declaration and IDEAS
As mentioned earlier both the Yerevan Communiqué on the social dimension as well as the Paris Declaration acknowledge the urgency for improvement. The Paris Declaration is in fact increasing the level of urgency in particular to the ethnic and cultural component of the social dimension. The recent attacks in Brussels will certainly increase the urgency. At a panel discussion of the Higher Education Summit during the Dutch EU Presidency on March 9 2016 in Amsterdam, professor Maurice Crul from the VU University Amsterdam made the remark that the current situation in Europe ask for creative and out of the box solutions. He referred specifically to the aim to accommodate the growing influx of refugees in higher education. For example: the requirement for newcomers in the Netherlands who have to learn Dutch before they can enter higher education. Since most of the refugees especially from Syria speak good English why not make exceptions and provide opportunities for potential students who are fluent in English to immediately enroll in studies where students are lectured in English. This way newcomers are able to integrate faster into higher education, are able to enter the labor market and one of their strengths, being fluent in two or more languages is acknowledged. Learning Dutch will still be an important means and condition to participate in Dutch society but doesn't prevent potential students who qualify for higher education to enroll in English speaking courses. This way the higher education experience will enhance the process of embedding in society for newcomers.

The NESET II report presents 27 good practices from different parts of Europe. The focus of this report is on educational *approaches to promote tolerance and respect for diversity in primary and secondary schools*. In some cases initiatives of informal education are also included but no initiatives in adult and higher education. The IDEAS database provide good practices with proven success in higher education as well as programmes in other education sectors that are all developed with the aim to aspire, continue, and progress in higher education. The IDEAS database shows that there are already many programmes in Europe active and successful that focus on civic engagement of students. Many of the programmes in fact rely on responsible students who are active citizens in the many programmes in and outside Europe. One of the areas that do need to be developed and incentivized in European higher education is the aim to initiate and foster intercultural dialogue that goes beyond the dialogue between students or initiated by students. These are examples worth exploring.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

In conclusion we can say that the cases in the IDEAS database are an additional source of good practices that provide inspiration, vision and tested knowledge and experiences on different themes to support the policy aims of the EU related to the Social Dimension in the Bologna Process and the Paris Declaration.

Good practices, peer learning and funding though are not enough to achieve the goals and challenges Europe is facing right now.

We can come up with many recommendations that will more or less echo what already has been said in many other papers and have been debated in the numerous ministerial meetings. There are only a few recommendations that matter now:

- The social dimension as a strategic aim is too general and too broad to deal with the current complexity and dynamics in Europe. Although it was meant to be inclusive, at the end of the day it is not enhancing the progress that was expected. At least not in the kind of proportions that was aimed at in the beginning. There is *a need to differentiate* how the social dimension will be effectuated with success in countries that have many newcomers entering the country and are already 'superdiverse'. And countries to which the social dimension is a peer learning process. If there is no differentiation in policy, expected outcomes and funding no substantial changes will occur.

- Cultural diversity/ethnic diversity/inclusion of newcomers has to be mentioned separately on the future agenda. *The Elephant in the room has to be noticed*, to be discussed and acted upon to the extent of what is expected to be achieved within the local and national context. Like earlier mentioned European countries should raise and discuss the question[29], "What is the society we want to live in in the future, and what does higher education need to provide in order to create this society?"

- Europe needs policy and practice on a short term to develop and create a *European sense of belonging*. Whether it is in society, education or at the labor market. Creating a European sense of belonging can be compared with designing a new home for Europeans of different walks of live who have to identify with the space, design and structure. Identifying with the spaces they will get in their new house is an important part of the process to feel at home.

- To achieve real progress on enhancing the social dimension in higher education it is important to also focus on institutional needs and what this means in terms of organizational change and critical reflection within organisations. *A Theory of Change* was already mentioned. As a recommendation it is important to emphasize this: 'A Theory of Change is an ongoing process of reflection to explore change and how it happens – and what that means for the part we play in a particular context, sector and/or group of people.'[30] This means more development and experience have to be done on the question *how* all existing have to be 'translated to' and implemented in a new context. In this process there has to be space for critical reflection within institutions on what diversity and inclusion actually means to the role of professionals and critical reflection on teaching and learning strategies.

- The analysis of IDEAS showed the importance of funding. Not just any funding but *the combination of different types of funding*. Long term funding is necessary to support activities but also to enhance ownership and a support a continuation in progress. The aim of working from a culture of evidence has implications for funding as well. EU funding should ideally complement activities that are already happening with other resources. New initiatives in countries with less experience could be linked to experts, agencies and networks that have the necessary experience. This could be a requirement as part of funding policy. Or all partners of EU funded projects need to participate in mandatory workshops organized by the Commission in collaboration with experts to discuss the progress of the work of partners. Experts will advise partners on different areas. Among the IDEAS partners for instance there are partners who could serve as experts based on their organisations' specific expertise.

Communities of practice and advocacy
There are existing networks on access and success on a country, European and Global level that focus on building communities of professionals from the higher education area to exchange best practices, inspire and discuss relevant topics, collaborate on research and develop new teaching and learning practices. These networks are communities of engaged and committed professionals, who are part of and/or lead programmes

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[29] Florian Kaiser, Aengus Ó. Maoláin and Līva Vikmane, *No Future for the Social Dimension?*
[30] James, C. (2011), *'Theory of Change Review: A Report Commissioned by Comic Relief'*. London: Comic Relief and Valthers, C, (2015) *Theories of Change Time for a radical approach to learning in development*, The Asia Foundation, London 2015

and developments on access and success of underrepresented groups in society and advocate for equity and inclusion developments in higher education in their respective countries. They have done this for many years with success and are sources of inspiration based on knowledge through research, policy and successful and practices. Some of them have provided cases for the IDEAS database. Of course there are a few national networks although not so many focus only on access and success of underrepresented groups, let alone on diversity and inclusion. To mention a few in Europe and on a global level:

- EAN, European Access Network, based in London: http://www.ean-edu.org
- GAPS, Global Access to Postsecondary Education Initiative, based in Den Haag: http://www.gaps-education.org
- TIES Network, The Integration of the European Second Generation, based in Amsterdam and Hamburg: http://www.tiesproject.eu/content/view/25/40/
- IMISCOE, International Migration, Integration and Social Cohesion based in Rotterdam: https://www.imiscoe.org

Hopeful
It is important for the European Commission and countries in Europe to remain hopeful on the societal changes and challenges Europe is currently facing. The many communiqués of the Bologna Process as well as the Paris Declaration of EU ministers form the framework of policy intentions and commitments. Most of them focus on barriers that come with the diversification of societies and with them a changing landscape in higher education.

The cases in IDEAS show that there is enough reason to be hopeful on how higher education can provide better and sustainable solutions for the future of higher education and to improve access, retention and success of *all* students. The cases in IDEAS provide examples of how collective effort can lead to collective impact whether interventions started as a grassroots initiative or as part of policy and institutional reform. The success of programmes of institutions in IDEAS is the accumulation of the determination and commitment of leaders on any level in the respective institutions that dare to challenge mainstream opposition, understand the need of the local student population, understand the strengths students bring because of their specific background, don't compromise on the quality of education, belief in a culture of evidence and understand the value of collaboration.