

european university continuing education network



# Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in European Higher Education Institutions

Results from the INVITED project

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### Foreword by the EUA President

Diversity is a key concern for universities. It is a condition for excellence and for facing competition in various parts of universities' missions. Universities that want to retain their high levels of excellence need to be able to attract talent at all levels, and in a globalised world this means being open to diversity. Diverse research environments are demonstrably more creative and produce better results; diverse learning environments are likewise more stimulating than homogenous ones. Consequently, promoting diversity, equity and inclusion in Europe's universities supports institutional growth and capacity building to serve better the needs of European society.

Higher education is opportunity for the individual: graduates from higher education have higher life satisfaction and are more likely to find employment as latest OECD figures show. As labour markets change and demand grows for the skills that universities provide, it is necessary to embrace inclusion of all groups that can and will benefit from being part of the university community. Universities cannot be exclusive at a time when society is evolving fast and awareness of different dimensions of diversity grows, be it cultural, gender, or sexual orientation. Our fundamental university values of openness and tolerance demand that we celebrate diversity and be inclusive.

In this wider societal context, our report presents key evidence about how universities can and do promote diversity, equity and inclusion. Derived from a survey and in-depth discussions with EUA members about their practices and challenges, it gives a unique quantitative picture of how universities approach the topic with an unprecedented breadth and scope. While we hope that this work will further help our members to develop their own policies and actions, we are certain that it can also inform policy makers and other stakeholders in the field, serving as a basis for fruitful dialogue to support the development of European society in the years ahead.

**Professor Michael Murphy** EUA President



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Many thanks as well to all those 159 higher education institutions that submitted answers to the survey and those that accepted to have a more in-depth discussion about their institutional experience during the follow-up interviews, namely Ferran Badia Rector's delegate for the Igualada Campus, University of Lleida, Spain, Verena Blechinger-Talcott, Vice President for International Affairs, Diversity and Equality, Freie Universitaet Berlin, Germany, Melora Felsch, Consultant for gender and diversity & Coordinator of projects for family friendliness, University Osnabrück, Germany, Sandra Healy, Head of equality, diversity and inclusion, Dublin City University, Ireland, Magdalena Kudewicz-Kiełtyka, Head of the institutional development office, Silesian University of Technology, Poland, Laurent Licata, Vice-rector for the academic policy and career management, Université Libre de Bruxelles, Belgium, Lena Lindell, Human Resources Consultant, Lund University, Sweden, Anu Mäkelä, Equality Coordinator, University of Turku, Finland, Annie McLaughlan, Equality and Diversity Lead, University of Strathclyde, United Kingdom, Annalisa Oboe, Vice Rector for Cultural, Social and Gender Relations and Benedetta Zatti, Head of the Inclusion Sector, Student Service Office, University of Padova, Italy, Coralie Perrin and Philippe Liotard from the Equality and Diversity Mission of Claude Bernard University Lyon 1, France as well as Ruta Ruolyte-Verschoore, Equal Opportunities Coordinator, Vilnius University, Lithuania.

In addition, many thanks go to Michal Karpíšek, Secretary General of the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), for promoting the survey among EURASHE member institutions.

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Last, but not least many thanks go as well to our partners, the European University Continuing Education Network (eucen) and Executive Director Carme Royo as well as the European Students' Union (ESU) and Hélène Mariaud, Member of the Executive Committee and former Equality and Diversity Coordinator, for their good collaboration during this project.

We hope that the results presented in this report will inspire further stakeholder dialogue and strategy development both at institutional and at policy level, to foster inclusiveness of higher education institutions across Europe.

Thomas E. Jørgensen EUA Senior Policy Coordinator Anna-Lena Claeys-Kulik EUA Policy Coordinator

# Introduction

### **1.1. SOCIETAL DEVELOPMENTS AND EUROPE'S HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS**

Our societies are transforming. The demographic profile of Europe is changing. Technological development, digitalisation and the use of artificial intelligence are impacting the way we live and work, increasing the need for new skills. In this context, social diversity and inequality are hotly debated, and access to education and lifelong learning, including higher education, has become a high priority to ensure that no one is left behind.

The arrival of an increased number of refugees in Europe in recent years has contributed to more cultural diversity and more awareness on the topic. Regarding gender, there is heightened awareness of diversity,<sup>1</sup> but gender equality, or the underrepresentation of women in top positions of business and industry as well as universities, remains an unresolved issue across Europe.

The innovation economy is also linked to social diversity and questions of equality. The need for innovation increases the demand for highly skilled people,<sup>2</sup> while demographic decline and outgoing migration put pressure on the economies and social systems in several European countries. This has an effect on universities and their student populations: some systems show a steady increase in student numbers and others suffer from a brain drain, with young people leaving the country. Both mean that the student body is becoming more diverse, either due to the larger number of people entering universities or the need for universities to reach out and attract new groups of people.<sup>3</sup> This reveals financial pressures in many systems as funding does not grow proportionally to student numbers.<sup>4</sup>

Internationalisation of higher education and research as well as student and staff mobility are another driver for diversity on campus. While students in Europe have been mobile through programmes like Erasmus for more than three decades, student mobility has been given another push recently through the European Universities Initiative. It foresees the creation by 2024 of at least 20 networks of universities from across Europe. This increased international interaction is expected to heighten cultural diversity on campus, with students and staff spending study or work time partly in the other countries, creating the need to adapt curricula and methodologies accordingly.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See website of ILGA-Europe, the European Region of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans & Intersex Association.

<sup>2</sup> OECD (2017). OECD employment outlook 2017. Paris: OECD Publishing.

<sup>3</sup> Sursock, A. (2015). Trends 2015: learning and teaching in European universities. Brussels: European University Association, p 61 ff.

<sup>4</sup> Bennetot-Pruvot, E., Estermann, T., Lisi, V. (2018). Public Funding Observatory Report 2018. Brussels: European University Association.

<sup>5</sup> The HE4u2 consortium (2017). *Creating intercultural learning environments – Guidelines for staff within Higher Education Institutions*. Barcelona: eucen Publishing.

The HE4u2 consortium (2018). Integrating Cultural Diversity in Higher Education - A Generic Structure for a Continuing Professional Development course. Barcelona: eucen Publishing.

Diversity and inclusion are clearly becoming an important topic in mobility, including in the negotiations about the future Erasmus programme where measures to foster inclusiveness, such as higher grants for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, are currently under discussion.

### **1.2. POLICY RESPONSES AT VARIOUS LEVELS**

At the European level, several political commitments to strengthen diversity and inclusiveness in higher education have been made throughout the past few years, starting with the Paris Declaration of EU member states in March 2015 on promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education. This is also reflected in the 2015 Yerevan Communiqué and the 2018 Paris Communique of the Bologna Process, i in an attempt to strengthen the social dimension of higher education introduced as a concept in earlier Communiques. In the context of EU policies, social inclusion has also gained in importance over the past few years. In 2017 the European Commission took up the topic in its renewed agenda for higher education, and at the same time it became part of the European Social Pillar. On the research side, the focus has been on gender equality as it has been one of the priority topics in the framework of the European Research Area for two decades.

At the global level, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted in 2015 by 193 countries, aiming at ending poverty, protecting the planet and ensuring prosperity by 2030, provide a broader perspective where social welfare plays a key role in the concept of sustainability. Here, there is a close connection between education and the specific goals for reducing inequalities and promoting gender equality through the broader goal of providing quality education for all – and consequently providing decent work. Education is also seen as facilitating health, civic and cultural participation.

Despite these broad political commitments, only a few European countries have followed up with concrete action at the system level to foster social inclusion in higher education. These include Austria, Ireland, the Netherlands, Sweden and, more recently, Croatia, which started developing a national strategy and policy measures.

### **1.3. INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES**

Meanwhile, inclusiveness has become a strategic question for a number of universities and higher education institutions, impacting learning and teaching, research and institutional cultures. Many have taken action to find new ways to enable people from traditionally less-represented backgrounds to find their place in higher education. While the first EUA publication on the topic from 2018 illustrated this through a number of case studies from individual institutions,<sup>1</sup> the present report presents a broad picture through quantitative data from 159 higher education institutions in 36 European systems, collected through a survey and follow-up interviews between autumn 2018 and summer 2019. It will be of interest to university leaders and managers developing their institutional strategy, staff charged with implementation, researchers and students interested in the topic, as well as policy makers and administrators at European and national levels as they develop new policies for higher education and research.

### The INVITED project

The data collection exercise is part of the EUA-led INVITED project which aims to support universities in developing strategies towards equity, diversity and inclusion. It also seeks to promote dialogue between stakeholders at the system level in order to ensure that regulatory and funding frameworks empower universities to fulfil their social responsibility. Together with its partner, the European University Continuing Education Network (eucen) and supported by the European Students' Union (ESU), EUA has conducted this research to build a knowledge base on institutional approaches, success factors and challenges as well as the support needs of higher education institutions. Results are used to foster exchange of experiences through activities like the INVITED Peer Learning Seminar for institutional leadership and management that took place in June 2019 at University College Dublin (UCD) in Ireland as well as to feed into policy discussions, notably in the framework of the Bologna Process, where EUA represents the university sector.

<sup>1</sup> European University Association, 2018, Universities' Strategies and Approaches towards Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, (EUA, Brussels)

# The sample

A total of 159 higher education institutions from 36 European systems responded to the INVITED survey, and semi-structured follow-up interviews were conducted with 12 higher education institutions from 11 countries.

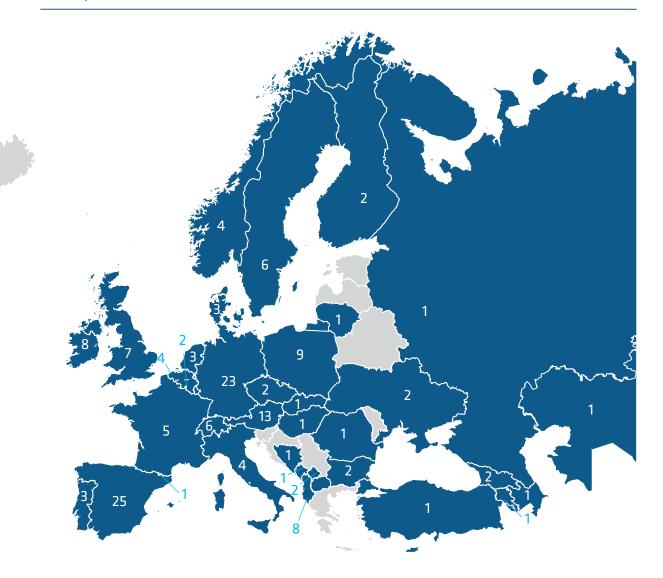
### 2.1. GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE & SELF-SELECTION BIAS

When looking at the geographical coverage of the sample and the number of responses per country, the size of the higher education system needs to be taken into account. While institutions from Spain and Germany represent a large part of the sample, they are also the countries with bigger systems. Outliers are, for instance, France, with a comparably big system but a small number of responses or, conversely, Austria, a smaller country and system with a high number of responses in the sample. This indicates what the further analysis will also show: the sample has a self-selection bias, meaning it mostly covers those higher education institutions which have diversity, equity and inclusion among their mission values and main priorities and often already have strategies and activities in place. Consequently, the survey results are in most cases not representative at the country level, and therefore the further analysis does not include a country breakdown of the data.

Nevertheless, it is notable in itself that such a high number of institutions from a large range of countries have responded. This testifies the importance of the topic and the interest to contribute among European universities. The data provides valuable insights into the strategies and approaches, challenges and success factors of those higher education institutions in Europe working on the topic and can thus be a useful source of information for institutions, including those that are just starting to discover the complexity of related issues.

### Figure 1 - Number of responding institutions per country

*Q6a:* In which country is your institution located? Please select the country from the drop-down menu below. - Country



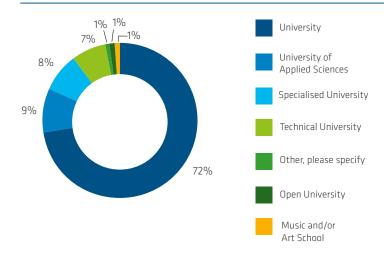


### **2.2. INSTITUTIONAL PROFILES**

Almost three quarters of the responding institutions are comprehensive universities. The remaining quarter is mainly composed of universities of applied sciences (9%), specialised universities (8%) and technical universities (7%) and only a very small number of responses are from other types of higher education institutions, including music and art schools and open universities.

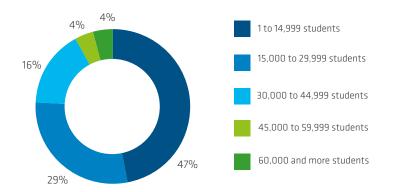
### Figure 2 – Types of responding institutions

*Q7*: What is your institution's profile? Please select from the list below. To view the definition of institutional types, please hover over the word in the list and the definition will appear.



#### Figure 3 – Size of responding institutions

Q8: How many students are enrolled at your institution? Please select the applicable range from the list below based on the 2017/2018 academic year.

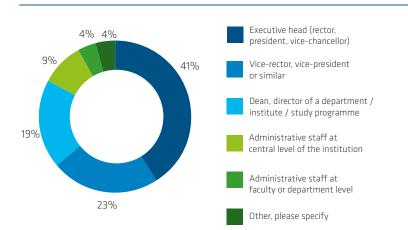


Almost half of the sample is composed of smaller institutions with up to 15 000 students and just under one third are from medium-sized institutions with up to 30 000 students. Another 16% of responses come from large institutions with up to almost 45 000 students, and there is a small number of respondents from very large institutions. This largely corresponds to the size of responding institutions in the latest EUA Trends survey 2018.

### **2.3. FUNCTION OF RESPONDENTS**

People responding to the survey on behalf of their institution come from diverse functions. The biggest group of respondents is administrative staff at central level (41%). Almost one quarter (23.6%) of respondents are vice-rectors, vice-presidents or similar, and another fifth come from other diverse functions. Only a small number of responses came from executive heads such as rectors or presidents or from administrative staff at faculty level.

Almost 80% of people filling in the survey on behalf of their higher education institution indicated that they have a specific responsibility for diversity, equity and inclusion, most of whom either come from a specific administrative unit in charge of topics linked to this agenda or are vice-rectors, who are often responsible for diversity, equity and inclusion aspects combined with a broader portfolio such as learning and teaching, internationalisation or research.



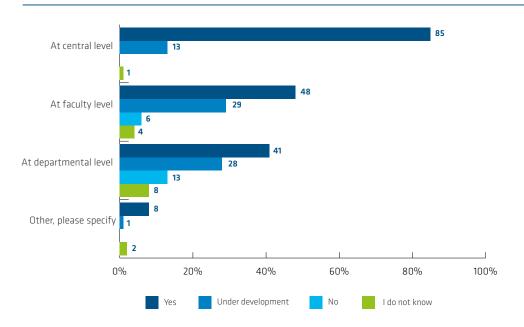
### **Figure 4** - Function of respondents *Q2: What is your main function at your institution? Please select from the list below.*

# Institutional strategies

Giving priority to diversity, equity, and inclusion in universities is often a strategic choice. The survey results indicate that the issue is very often driven by the central leadership of the institution. The vast majority of respondents indicate that the topic is addressed in institution-wide policies and strategies at central level (see graph 5). More than half the respondents have strategies both for the whole institution as well as at the level of faculties and departments.

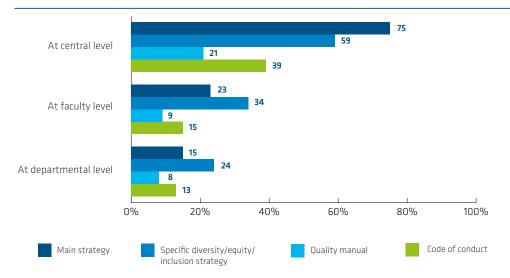
### Figure 5 - Strategic engagement according to institutional levels

Q10a: Are diversity, equity and inclusion topics that are addressed in your institution's strategy or policies? Please select the applicable option for each level at the institution



### 3.1. ESTABLISHING A STRATEGIC APPROACH

At the central level, diversity, equity, and inclusion are part of the main strategy of the institution in three out of four cases, but there are also specific, institution-wide strategies for the topic in more than half of the responding institutions. It was rare to find cases where strategies only existed at the level of faculties or departments. This was confirmed through interviews, where the role of central leadership to take forward the topics was underlined on several occasions, including by staff who themselves are at lower hierarchical levels. Often the direct and explicit support of the rector or a vice rector has been a turning point in developing strategic aims. It is the support of institutional leadership that allow experiences and practices from bottom-up initiatives to become policies and lead to cultural and structural changes. There were, for instance, examples of structural changes, including support for persons running distinct projects on different levels to meet and contribute to the development and implementation of the common strategy. For example, Dublin City University, Ireland, used the DCU Fuse platform to encourage staff and students to take part in the definition of the university's strategy. Over 80 000 people participated in the surveys and specific online fora focusing on different topics.



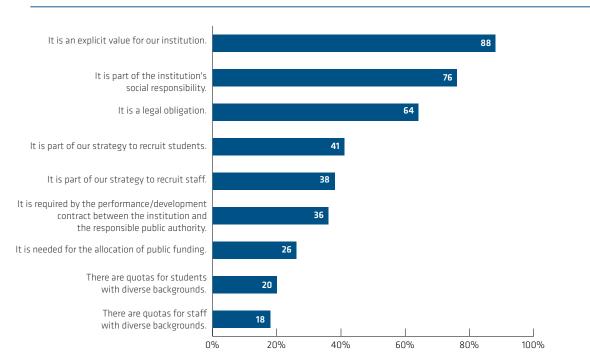
#### **Figure 6** – Strategic tool according to institutional level

Q10b: Where are equity, diversity and inclusion addressed exactly? Please tick all applicable for each level.

It is clear that respondents to the survey perceive inclusiveness and embracing diversity as an explicit value for their institution and a part of their social responsibility (see Figure 7). These institutional values can be articulated in different ways: from adherence to the spirit of enlightenment to the wish to further creativity through diversity. They are naturally also part of the larger public discourse that has developed over time in their surroundings, and there is a clear interplay between the values of the institution and the discussions in society, including the legal requirements in the systems.

Figure 7 – Drivers and reasons for institutional engagement

Q14: Why is the topic of equity, diversity and inclusion of importance to your institution? Please tick all applicable options from the list below.



Most respondents to the survey have been giving importance to the topic for many years: 45% for ten years or more, with only 12% indicating that they started their engagement very recently. In many cases, a particular aspect such as disability or gender equality was the starting point for discussions and actions at the institutional level. This often follows societal developments and new legal requirements, such as ensuring access to buildings for disabled persons and having staff directly responsible for this, or an obligation to have gender equality officers. In the survey, 64% of respondents indicate having legal obligations linked to diversity, equity and inclusion. In some cases, this was accompanied by a general societal understanding of the topic. One interviewee, for example, pointed to attention to gender equality being a natural part of the national culture so that students would come with an already ingrained awareness of gender issues.

In the case of the **University of Lleida (UdL)**. Spain, the university board approved in 2003 the promotion of the education of values, including freedom, justice, equality, responsibility, solidarity, participation and full citizenship in the institution. This decision triggered the creation of the *Dolors Piera Centre for equity of opportunities and promotion of the woman* in 2006, with an initial focus to improve gender issues and the aim to promote the topic amongst students. Since then, this centre has addressed the engagement to promote equality in a broader way throughout the university, integrating other areas of diversity and integration to the strategy of the UdL.

Focus on one or two dimensions of diversity at times provides a structure that then allows for expanding the agenda within the institution. Several interviewees gave examples where tasks of an existing central function or office or a network of gender equality officers were enlarged to cover issues such as disability and used as a basis for spreading a more general awareness about the importance of diversity. However, this of course requires that the persons with responsibility for individual dimensions are themselves aware of the broader topics, able to acquire additional expertise and convinced that including more dimensions will not dilute the work that they have been doing so far.

### **3.2. EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL DRIVERS**

Although most respondents to the survey indicated that equity, diversity and inclusion were part of the institution's value, external drivers do play an important role. There is a variety of incentives for developing strategies, dependent on the culture and structures of the system. In Germany, for example, the Excellence Initiative, which provides highly competitive funding to strategically develop universities, has played a significant role in several cases. University leadership could use the initiative as an occasion to formulate the strategic objectives for equity, diversity and inclusion as part of the application for funding.

In the UK and Ireland, the Athena Swan Charter managed by Advance HE, an association dedicated to developing higher education, is central to institutional aims for gender equality. Here, institutions go through an evaluation and, depending on their starting point, aim for different levels of recognition (bronze, silver and gold) for their work and progress towards gender equality. At the **University of Strathclyde** this has been a driver to expand gender equality efforts across different parts and levels of the institution and go beyond the originally narrow focus on gender equality in STEM.

Another external driver which matches well with the internal quest for excellence of many institutions is the HR Excellence in Research label awarded by the European Commission, which has a strong emphasis on gender equality. The **Silesian University of Technology in Opava, Poland**, took this as a starting point for its internal strategy development for gender equality. Initially supported by the Ministry of Science in Poland, the institution obtained the label in 2016.

On a more general level, internationalisation has been a driver for the diversity agenda. Evidence from the EUA Trends 2015 study indicates that European higher education institutions are becoming more international and that mobility is a key to further internationalisation.<sup>6</sup> This has brought the opportunity to review and discuss how welcoming the local culture is to students and staff who come with different cultural backgrounds.

For about 40% of the respondents of the INVITED survey, recruitment of students in general is a driver for equity, diversity and inclusion. In some cases, this is likely linked to the internationalisation agenda and the wish to have more international students and staff. For some countries, notably in Central and Eastern Europe, decreasing numbers of domestic students, often due to a general demographical decline, have increased the incentive to become more attractive to a broader group of young people from home as well as abroad. This was also the case for the **Silesian University of Technology in Opava**, **Poland**, for which opening up to international students including from outside Europe has become an important strategic goal.

<sup>6</sup> Sursock, A. (2015). Trends 2015: learning and teaching in European universities. Brussels: European University Association, pp. 28-33.

In some systems, diversity-related indicators are part of the performance-based funding system or of performance contracts of institutions with the state,<sup>7</sup> and in a few cases, the INVITED survey reveals that there are quotas for students and staff from diverse backgrounds. It was not always clear from the interviews that these requirements were directly helpful to promote equity, diversity and inclusion; the survey respondents clearly preferred to have support focusing on building capacity at institutional level, awareness raising and training, rather than forcing quotas on institutions. One argument for this approach was that diversity is an asset for the institution, and it should not be framed as a problem to be solved by attaining certain quantitative levels in terms of students and staff. Another argument against such strong measures was that they alone are too rigid and not adequate to achieve a real cultural change and convince people about the value of diversity and inclusiveness, nor do they equip them with the tools and skills needed to embrace diversity, whether as teacher in a diverse classroom or administrative staff addressing diverse student needs.

In the survey, two thirds of the respondents indicating that equity, diversity and inclusion are an institutional value also indicate that there are legal requirements. Indeed, in many cases, there seems to be a fruitful interplay between external incentives and institutional initiatives, where it is possible to use the incentives to develop cultures and structures aligned with the institution's aims.

### **3.3. CONTENTS OF STRATEGIES**

Strategies for equity, diversity and inclusion differ widely, dependent on the overall societal discourse, a country's welfare system and legislative framework as well as the institutional culture and governance structures.<sup>8</sup> Some are very detailed in terms of the goals and the actions to be taken, while others are more general. In terms of core content, there are many similarities.

Many institutions make an explicit link between the topic of equity, diversity and inclusion, excellence in research, and learning and teaching. A common argument is that diversity produces a more creative working environment with new ways of cooperation and that this in turn will lead to excellence. Others argue that in order to achieve excellence, it is necessary for everyone to be able to contribute fully within the university community. For this reason, the institution must act to ensure that the working environment is inclusive and equitable.

"**Lund University** aims to be one of the very best European universities. In order to achieve that goal, the knowledge and ambitions of staff and students must be harnessed, and their different perspectives must be allowed to contribute to a creative environment for study, teaching and research. Gender equality, equal opportunities and diversity lead to improved quality in the University's operations." (Lund University Policy for Gender Equality, Equal Opportunities and Diversity, p. 1)

Another reason for promoting the topic is recruitment. In order to be competitive, institutions have to ensure that the work and study environments are appealing so that it is possible to attract a wide range of talent in terms of students and staff.

<sup>7</sup> See also, Claeys-Kulik, A. & Estermann, T. (2015). *DEFINE Thematic Report: Performance-based Funding of Universities in Europe*. Brussels: European University Association, p. 28.

<sup>8</sup> The following is based on a limited number of strategies from the respondents of the survey studied in detail.

Strategy documents mention various tools and types of actions, ranging from prevention of discrimination and harassment to actively promoting diversity. Some institutions take great care to underline how discrimination and harassment can be fought, at times also pointing to the legal requirements in the country or to institutional codes of conduct. Others put more emphasis on supporting actions that can help underrepresented, disadvantaged or vulnerable groups (for more on different types of actions see chapter 5 on measures and success factors).

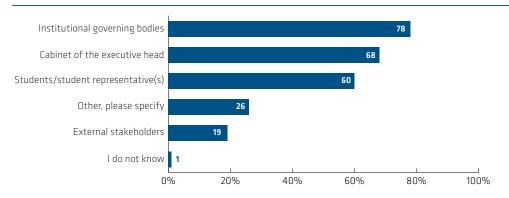
Most strategies that were looked at also included a component of monitoring and evaluation, ranging from the simple mention of the need for an adequate accountability process to explicit key performance indicators. This difference is probably due to diverse institutional cultures, but also to the different levels of professionalisation of university management. In systems where institutions use many resources on professional staff, strategies can have explicit goals for these kinds of processes, while other systems will focus on the establishment of these processes as the strategic goal itself.

Another point in several of the strategies is the ambition to cooperate with external stakeholders. This corresponds well to the survey results where 56% indicate that cooperation with external stakeholders is a way to overcome barriers. These stakeholders are often schools, but little less than half the respondents also indicate that they work together with businesses, employers' organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (see Figure 21 on measures to overcome barriers).

### **3.4. INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES**

As stated above, there is a strong tendency for strategies to be led by the institutional leadership. Strategies are articulated by the central governing bodies (78% of survey respondents), often with direct involvement of the rector's cabinet (68% of respondents) (Figure 8).

### **Figure 8** - Actors involved in developing strategies and policies *Q10c: Who is/was involved in developing the strategy and/or policies?*



Close to 70% of responding institutions have one or more vice rectors who work with the topic, and 40% of respondents have a vice rector with a specific responsibility for equity, diversity and inclusion. Likewise, 59% of respondents indicate that administrative staff at the central level is in charge of implementation, and 53% have a specific office in place. Only 27% indicate that implementation is done by staff at the faculty or departmental level, and these respondents also have dedicated staff in the central administration. (Figure 9)

Students were repeatedly mentioned in the interviews as a main partner in taking up this topic. As many as 60% of the respondents indicated that students are part of developing the process, and in by far the most of these cases they were involved through their formal representatives. In some cases, however, both formal student representatives as well as students outside the governing bodies were engaged in developing strategies. (Figure 9)

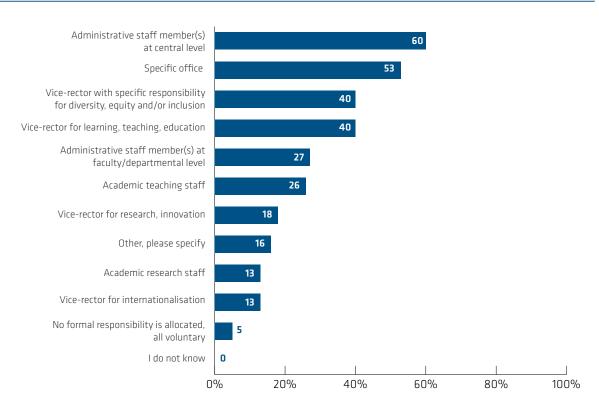
Implementation is at times supported by a specific committee or working group for diversity. These groups can gather representatives of students and staff who have an interest in the topic, including those who manage individual projects at, for example, the departmental level. They can also include researchers who look scientifically at the issues and can provide systematic knowledge to institutional policies.

The **University of Strathclyde in the United Kingdom** for instance established a central Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDIC) with representatives from across the university, including students and staff. The University's Vice Principal is Equality Champion for the institution and convenes EDIC. EDIC oversees the University's compliance with its equality and diversity obligations, most recently set out within the Equality Act 2010, and is responsible for approval, review and embedding of the University's equality and diversity policies, strategies, action plans and projects. EDIC meets three times per academic year and membership includes the University Secretary and Compliance Officer, the Director of Student Experience, the Director of Human Resources, Deans or Deans' representatives from all four Faculties, the Equality and Diversity Manager, Head of Disability and Wellbeing and the President and Vice President Inclusion of Strathclyde Students' Union. The Committee reports annually to the Executive Team, Senate and the University Court on the University's compliance with equality and diversity legislation and effectiveness of the equality and diversity strategy.

A number of working groups relevant to specific areas of equality and diversity report to EDIC, including but not limited to the Gender Equality Steering Group, LGBT Champions Group, Equally Safe (Gender Based Violence) Steering Group, Disability and Wellbeing Service, Widening Access Service and Project Search (a project supporting young people with learning difficulties into employment).

### Figure 9 - Functions involved in implementation of activities

Q11: Who is in charge of implementing your institution's activities in relation to diversity, equity and inclusion? Please tick all applicable.



In systems where higher education institutions are supported by a high number of professional administrative staff and with a high level of management capacity, there are examples of highly developed and very intricate models and structures governing the institutional activities on diversity and inclusion, ensuring attention to a wide range of diversity issues. Other institutions focus on specific dimensions of diversity and have less complex structures to work on the topic.

In addition, many institutions either have specific research departments that are dedicated to producing evidence to support policies, or they generally use research and do projects on the topics. In the survey, 59% of respondents mention research on the topic as a way to overcome barriers, and 61% do specific projects. This way, developing and implementing strategies are done on the basis of evidence, and – importantly – evidence can be used to raise awareness about the challenges that exist within the institution.

**Dublin City University (DCU)** established the DCU Centre of Excellence for Diversity and Inclusion in June 2018. The Centre is a central hub for research, advice and knowledge exchange on diversity and inclusion. It creates a bridge between DCU's talent, industry bodies and specialist groups, helping organisations build cultures of inclusion by providing access to the very latest academic research, insights and tools on diversity and inclusion. It supports organisations in all aspeacts of their diversity and inclusion journeys. A core element of the Centre is a membership community of academic experts, informed practitioners, thought leaders and networks that research and produce best practices in workplace diversity and inclusion. At **Masaryk University** in the Czech Republic, the **Support Centre for Students with Special Needs** is central to the university's mission to be a national leader for students with disabilities. Its tasks is the make sure that the physical and virtual environments of the university, including documents and communications, are accessible to people with special needs. It develops inclusive educational methods for the university and suggests economical models to the Ministry of Education for financing such services. There is a close co-operation between the centre and the **Institute for Research in Inclusive Education** which conducts research ways to develop inclusive education methods for teaching at primary and secondary education.

Data collection is a key part of further developing institutional strategies and policies and monitoring progress, and is often linked to various challenges (see chapter on monitoring and evaluation). Some institutions develop projects on specific sets of data for individual dimensions. Gender is a very prominent dimension where data is available; there are examples of implementing so-called gender budgeting through reports and benchmarking, which present the imbalance between genders within the institution.<sup>9</sup>

The **University of Padua in Italy** published its first annual Gender Report in 2017 (concerning the year 2016). Since then it has conducted yearly monitoring of the indicators that reveal inequalities and power imbalances in the university and in academic careers. The reports present disaggregated data about students, teaching staff, and administrative staff; include surveys of the different leadership positions occupied by men and women in the institution; and feature information on the gender pay gap and other relevant issues. The reports also look at differences in performance of male and female students, in terms of university careers, employment and earnings after graduation. The collected data are used to provide evidence about existing imbalances and to develop gender budgeting actions that address disparities, with the aim of creating a learning and working academic environment that promotes and respects gender equality.

<sup>9</sup> Università degli studi di Padova (2017) Bilancio di Genere. Aggiornamento 2017, Padova: https://www.unipd.it/bilancio-genere

# **Dimensions of diversity**

### **4.1. DEFINING THE TERMS**

Equality, equity, diversity and inclusion are terms that are often used interchangeably, despite the fact that they may mean different things. The term **equality** is linked to the idea that everyone has the same rights and should thus enjoy **equal treatment** and **non-discrimination**. It has long been the focus of discussions around **access to education**. However, these discussions do not necessarily take into account that people have different points of departure. That is to say, they may have different needs for support during the educational process, even if they have equal access.

The concept of **equity** goes further and includes **needs-based support** to level out relative disadvantage. It thus often comes along with measures such as **positive action** or **positive discrimination**. Equity also takes into account that there are often **structural barriers** towards participation which, if they cannot be removed, make such needs-based individual support necessary. A way to eliminate such structural or system barriers is **universal design**.<sup>10</sup>

**Diversity** is in itself a multi-dimensional concept, dependent on the cultural context and level of awareness of difference. Certain dimensions of diversity have received particular attention because the groups identified as either under-represented, disadvantaged or vulnerable (or any combination of these three). In terms of gender, there is a clear under-representation of women in academic and leadership positions, while men are often slightly under-represented in the student body. In these examples, diversity would mean reflecting the diversity in society at large. Embracing diversity, when related to those defining themselves as outside the classic binary perception of men and women, or not identifying with their (original) physical sex, is less a question of reflecting demography than of allowing space and recognition for all groups. As awareness about different aspects of diversity has broadened, inclusion has come to mean embracing this diversity and working to make groups identified as 'diverse' an integrated part of the university community.

Inclusion is often linked to social inclusion, where the challenge is to attain a social profile of the student body that corresponds to society at large. In some countries or languages such as German the term inclusion without further adjective is specifically used for including persons with disabilities.

<sup>10</sup> A useful overview of terms and their use is provided in the glossary developed by the HE4U2 project coordinated by EUCEN

### 4.2. VARIOUS CONCEPTS AND APPROACHES

In the sample, higher education institutions work in different ways with these concepts, often depending on the starting point for the discussion and the societal, political and legal context. Often they began years ago to work on gender equality which, at the time, was often associated with family-friendliness and accommodating the needs of people with caring responsibilities. From there, they broadened the scope of the term to include other grounds of discrimination such as disability, ethnic background, religion or belief, age or sexual identity. Inclusiveness towards students from lower socio-economic backgrounds is also often discussed with regard to underrepresented, disadvantaged or vulnerable groups.

Some institutions in the sample have opened up to various dimensions of diversity, addressing several but not necessarily all of those mentioned above. This also depends on the societal, cultural and political context in which they operate. While increased migration has in some places let to a greater awareness of cultural diversity in the university, in others the focus remains more on issues such as gender equality and disability. Some issues such as gender identity, LGBT+ or religious background and beliefs are at times more politicised, which can make it harder for universities to address them. Also, the way in which universities approach the topic differs: while many work with the concept of different target groups, others have on purpose abandoned such categorisation, arguing that putting people into specific categories can sometimes actually foster rather than avoid discrimination.

The concept of **intersectionality**, referring to persons who identify with various dimensions of diversity (e.g., a female researcher in engineering who has a migration background or first-generation student coming in through an alternative pathway and having caring responsibilities) is known and mentioned by some, but not often addressed in the institutional strategies or practice. Some institutions see addressing intersectionality as a qualitative next step forward in their work on the agenda.

The following graph shows which aspects and dimensions of diversity for students, academic and nonacademic staff have been addressed by responding institutions. Disability and gender for both students and staff are addressed by a very large majority of institutions. This corresponds with the evidence from the interviews that these are often topics with a longer history and where there are legal requirements. A large majority of respondents also address diversity related to ethnic or cultural background, but much more so for students than for staff. The same is the case for socio-economic background.

### Figure 10 - Dimensions of diversity addressed by responding institutions

Q12 Which aspects and dimensions of diversity do you address at your institution? Please tick all applicable, distinguishing between students, academic staff and non-academic staff.

	Students	Academic staff	Non-academic staff
Disability	92%	76%	76%
Gender	82%	83%	74%
Ethnic/cultural/migration background	76%	55%	45%
Socio-economic background	71%	20%	19%
Sexual identity (including LGBT+ )	65%	52%	49%
Educational background (alternative pathways, lifelong learners)	61%	31%	28%
Caring responsibilities	53%	58%	58%
Religious background/beliefs	48%	39%	36%
Age	39%	46%	45%

Like many universities in Germany, the **University of Osnabrück** started its work on gender equality in the 1980/1990s with the establishment of the first gender equality officers, and until today the term equality (Gleichberechtigung or Gleichstellung) is mostly associated with gender issues. The discussion around the inclusion of disabled people started later, and the main driver for it was the **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)** adopted in 2006 (A/RES/61/106). While it was first more an issue for primary and secondary education, it has meanwhile also reached the higher education sector. Diversity is a newer topic which came up during the last decade, when the internationalisation of higher education institutions brought cultural diversity into the debate. The topic gained in urgency in 2015/16 with the increased influx of refugees, which led many higher education institutions across Europe to develop concrete actions for support.

# Measures and success factors

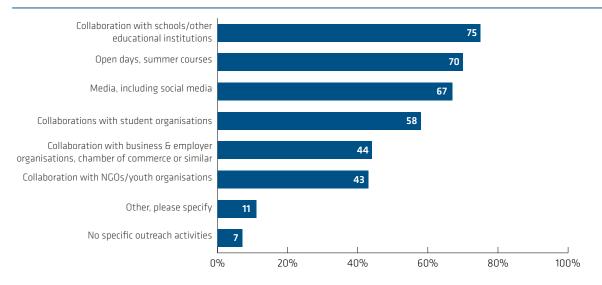
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The survey results show that responding higher education institutions are working with various measures aimed at fostering equity, diversity and inclusion among students, academic and non-academic staff. For students the distinction was made between outreach measures to attract potential students, access measures to support those willing to enrol in higher education, and retention measures to support current students during their study process.

### **5.1. MEASURES ADDRESSING STUDENTS**

#### Figure 11 - Outreach measures

Q16: How do you reach out to students (including potential students) to ensure diversity, equity and inclusion?



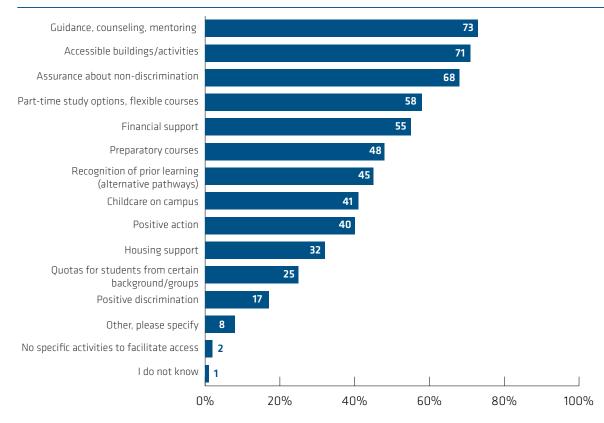
Among the outreach measures to attract potential students, the collaboration with schools and other educational institutions is used by three quarters of respondents. Also, open days and summer courses are popular measures used by 70% of respondents, closely followed by outreach through media, including social media. Many also collaborate with student organisations, which organise activities for prospective students such as visits to campus or attendance at lectures, as done by the **Student Access Leaders at University College Dublin (UCD)** in Ireland. More than 40% also indicate collaboration with business and employer organisations, chambers of commerce or non-governmental and youth organisations, as measures to reach out to potential students. Several respondents mention other types of awareness raising activities such as Girls' and Boys' days, Diversity Weeks or trainings for students on diversity issues. Also, specific university centres providing services and conducting projects with students and local communities are often part of such outreach measures, like the **Community Outreach Center of Dublin City University in Ireland**.

The Student Access Leaders Programme at University College Dublin (UCD) in Ireland has been working with students from underrepresented groups since 2013. The idea is that students, who themselves have entered higher education from various different routes or come from a group that is underrepresented or disadvantaged, are empowered to help their peers, both new and potential students. Student Access Leaders are typically selected at the end of an academic year and then undergo an intense leadership training preparing them for their role in assisting the UCD Access and Lifelong Learning centre with campus tours, welcome events or outreach activities. They also act as contact persons and role models for other students.

**Dublin City University (DCU), Ireland**, has created the "DCU in the Community" outreach centre in Ballymun with the objective of bringing the university to people who have not engaged with HE before or have never considered this an option. They offer not only education but a series of interventions with the overall mission of DCU in the Community in mind: "to provide educational opportunities to local people in North Dublin in order to increase participation levels and to promote equality in Third Level education". DCU in the Community recognises the individual talents of each student and develops a curriculum based on the student's needs.

### Figure 12 – Access measures

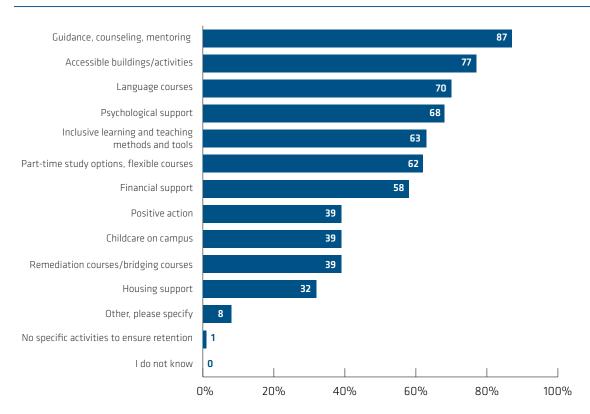
Q17: How do you facilitate access of students to your institution in order to ensure diversity, equity and inclusion?



Guidance, counselling and mentoring are the measures most often used by responding institutions to facilitate access of students to higher education. Similarly, accessibility including accessible infrastructure as well as learning material and inclusive learning, teaching and assessment methods are the second among the measures to facilitate access, closely followed by the assurance about non-discrimination. Part-time study options and flexible curricula are other instruments used by many responding institutions to allow students with caring responsibilities or working obligations to participate in higher education. Also, childcare on campus is provided by more than 40% of respondents for this purpose.

Similarly, preparatory courses mentioned by 48% of respondents and the recognition of prior learning mentioned by 45% of respondents are important measures which open up the possibility to study for a wider pool of people than those coming in directly from secondary education. Financial support is often provided to help students from lower socio-economic backgrounds or international (particularly non-EU) students. The **Silesian University of Technology in Opava, Poland**, for instance, set up an internal scholarship programme supported by own funds for international students from non-EU countries based on merit. This helped the university to increase the number of international students and make progress on its internationalisation strategy, which also increased cultural diversity on campus.

Guidance, counselling and mentoring are also the measures most often used by responding institutions to support students from various backgrounds during their studies. Based on the idea of student-centred learning, this may be an offer that is provided to all students independently from their background, or also specifically to students from underrepresented, disadvantaged or vulnerable backgrounds, such as is the case for students with a disability at **Vilnius University in Lithuania**.



### Figure 13 - Retention measures

Q18: How do you support students during their studies to ensure diversity, equity and inclusion?

At **Vilnius University in Lithuania** the disability coordinator is in charge of supporting students with disabilities during their studies, following an individualised approach towards accessibility. When entering the university, the student can fill in a survey detailing specific needs for support. In agreement with the student, the disability coordinator then develops recommendations to adapt the study process, learning material or assessment methods and coordinates the support with the relevant departments. This process can be repeated every semester depending on the needs, and the student can also decide to discontinue the measures should there be no need for specific support anymore. The disability coordinator position was created in 2016 with the view to develop and implement a strategy and action plan to foster accessibility and participation of students and staff with disabilities.

### **5.2. MEASURES ADDRESSING STAFF**

For staff, the survey looked both at measures that prepare staff for dealing with a diverse student body and those that aim at accommodating or increasing diversity and fostering equity and inclusion among staff members. Awareness raising plays an important role for both aspects. It can reach from general information campaigns to more targeted offers such as information or expert input from the office in charge of diversity, and inclusion measures in areas such as mental health or disabilities. Accessibility is important for staff as well as for students and can reach from general measures for infrastructure accessibility through elevators and larger doors, to accessible documents, learning and teaching material and digital communication for disabled or impaired people. Accessibility may also include more inclusive administrative forms that go beyond the binary choice of gender, or the possibility to adapt the work and study place to individual needs.

Staff training is another important measure to foster inclusiveness. While 67% of responding institutions indicate that they offer training to teaching staff on inclusive methods and tools, only 23% have similar training in place for non-academic staff. Around one third of responding institutions provide intercultural communication and anti-bias training to staff.

At the same time, a lack of awareness and specific training enabling staff to accommodate the needs of a diverse student body both in the classroom as well as outside on campus is mentioned as a continuing challenge by 65% of responding institutions (see chapter 6 on barriers and external support). While staff training might be available, it is often voluntary and in addition to the usual work, or only mandatory for new staff.

Measures that are specifically conceived to increase diversity among staff are often focused on gender equality.

This seeks to overcome a long-standing problem among academic staff in particular: women leave the academic profession. Although a majority of students and are women, the more senior the position, the larger is the majority of men. In Europe, 24% of full professors<sup>11</sup> and only about 14 % of rectors are women.<sup>12</sup> This large imbalance is with good reasons seen as the main diversity challenge concerning research staff.

<sup>11</sup> See European Commission, 2019, She figures 2018, p. 121.

<sup>12</sup> EUA, 2019, International Women's Day: the hard numbers on female university leaders in Europe (the figure 14% concerns EUA member institutions)

### Figure 14 - Measures towards staff

Q19 What activities and measures do you have in place at your university to ensure diversity, equity and inclusion for university staff? Please tick all applicable from the list below for academic and non-academic staff.

	Academic staff	Non-academic staff
Awareness raising among university community	81%	73%
Accessible infrastructure	75%	70%
Training for teaching staff on inclusive teaching methods and tools	68%	22%
Code of conduct/non-discrimination policy	68%	66%
Language courses	58%	52%
Measures for staff with caring responsibilities	51%	48%
Intercultural communication training	43%	35%
Tailored support/personal coaching	40%	34%
Positive action	39%	28%
Anti-bias training	35%	30%
Positive discrimination	27%	19%
Other	4%	3%

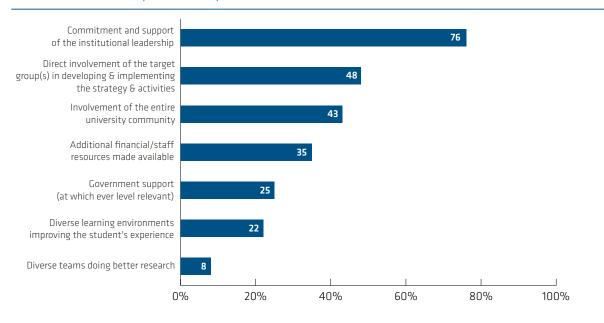
**Freie Universität Berlin in Germany** has a long-standing policy to increase the number of female professors. This includes clear and strict formal rules for the recruitment process. For example, half of the members of search committees, and at least two of them, must be female scholars (one of them a female professor). If there are no female candidates on the shortlist, the department is obliged to explain why, including information on attempts to obtain applications from female candidates, and to explain whether the gender equality officer had been consulted and how the department plans to increase the number of female scholars in the future. In order to achieve a higher percentage of female professors, the university is actively counselling the members of search committees and engages in active scouting for female talent. Moreover, gender equality officers are involved throughout the process. As a result, the share of female professors has risen from 24 % to 32 % between 2008 and 2017 and has reached 37 % by 2019.

### **5.3. MAIN SUCCESS FACTORS**

When asked about the top three success factors for their institutional strategies and activities, a clear majority of 76% of respondents indicates leadership commitment as being one of those. This also reflects the fact that the topic seems to be very much driven by the central level within institutions (see chapter 3 on institutional strategies). Besides strategy development, institutional leadership is responsible for allocating resources and establishing structures for related activities, so getting the buy-in of the leadership is perceived as critical to the goal of making sustainable changes. Direct involvement of the target group(s) as well as the entire university community in developing and implementing strategies and activities are the other two success factors that are perceived as crucial by almost half of the respondents, as they foster ownership and help to conceive activities that are fit for purpose and correspond to the actual needs of people. Other factors, such as additional resources, government support or enhancing the quality of learning, teaching and research through diversity are less often mentioned as being among the three top success factors of institutional action, while this does not mean that they cannot be important at different stages of institutional engagement.

### Figure 15 - Top three success factors for institutional strategies

Q27: What are the top three success factors of your activities towards diversity, equity and inclusion? Please select the three most important ones from the list below.



## Data and monitoring

### 6

The collection and use of data as regards diversity, equity and inclusion are often subject to controversial discussions, and perspectives vary according to cultural, political and legal contexts across Europe. Most systems across Europe only collect very partial data at national level on a limited number of characteristics relevant for diversity, equity and inclusion and intersectionality is rarely addressed in this context.<sup>13</sup> While some systems, as in the United Kingdom and Ireland, make intensive use of data, in others collecting data on certain aspects such as ethnicity or migration background is very sensitive like in Germany and may even be forbidden by law, as in France.

Basic data on gender or age of students and staff is available to most of the higher education institutions in the sample, while less so for disability. Only a little more than half of the institutions systematically collect data on the educational background of their students and relate it to their work on diversity, equity and inclusion, and this is even less the case for the socio-economic background. Less than one third of the sample has information about the ethnic or migration background of students, notably due to the above-mentioned sensitivities around this topic in many European countries. Also, data on caring responsibilities, sexual identity or religious background is only rarely collected.

Besides legal restrictions with regard to the collection of certain data, questions about data protection and sensitivities around disclosure also play an important role in this regard. While some personal characteristics, such as physical disabilities, might be visible to everyone, others, such as sexual orientation or socio-economic background, might not be, and disclosure depends on how safe from discrimination the person feels. This also points to the question what and in which cases data is actually needed for the purpose of fostering diversity, equity and inclusion.

The collection and use notably of quantitative data plays a role especially when it comes to the definition and identification of underrepresented groups in higher education. The concept of underrepresentation refers back to the idea that our societies are diverse and that certain groups of people are less represented in higher education than they are in society, which is perceived as unjust. In order to identify underrepresentation, it is needed to know about certain characteristics within the population as a whole and then determine the share of specific groups within those participating in higher education. Which groups are then identified as underrepresented and to what extent this is perceived as a problem, depends very much on the country or system and the specific context. While women tend to be more underrepresented further up the academic career ladder,<sup>14</sup> and this is a problem in most countries across Europe, some countries have a particular focus on inclusion of people from ethnic minorities, indigenous populations, specific migration or lower socio-economic backgrounds.

<sup>13</sup> See chapter 5 on opening higher education to a diverse student population in Eurydice, 2018, The European Higher Education Area in 2018. Bologna Process Implementation Report, p. 153-214.

<sup>14</sup> See European Commission, 2019, She figures 2018, p. 115.

### **6.1. DATA COLLECTION**

### Figure 16 - Data collected at institutional level

Q20a What data do you collect about your students and staff that is of relevance to diversity, equity and inclusion? Please tick all applicable below.

	Students	Academic staff	Non-academic staff
Gender	88%	83%	80%
Age	72%	68%	66%
Disability	60%	49%	49%
Educational background	57%	40%	37%
Socio-economic background	35%	7%	8%
Ethnic/cultural background	28%	19%	18%
Migration background	27%	14%	12%
Caring responsibilities	14%	14%	15%
Sexual identity (including LGBT+ )	9%	9%	9%
Religious background/belief	8%	11%	11%
We do not collect any of these data in a systematic way	4%	4%	4%
l do not know	1%	1%	1%

In order to make this issue visible and inform policymaking at system level as well as strategy development at institutional level, quantitative data on certain characteristics and categories can be very useful.

### 6.2 DATA USAGE

Most of the respondents in the sample use such data for transparency and accountability purposes and external reporting, and they also indicate that it is used to identify disadvantaged or less represented people/groups as well as their needs, raising awareness about activities and support provided. About half of the respondents use data to measure the impact of their activities to foster diversity, equity and inclusion among students as well as to systematically monitor study progress.

# **Figure 17** – Data used in relation to diversity, equity and inclusion at institutional level *Q21* How do you use these data in the framework of your diversity, equity and inclusion activities? Please tick all applicable for each group.

	Students	Academic staff	Non-academic staff
For transparency, accountability and external reporting purposes	66%	58%	57%
To identify disadvantaged/less represented people	61%	49%	46%
To identify different needs of diverse groups	57%	39%	38%
To raise awareness about specific activities/support	53%	37%	39%
To measure performance and impact of our activities towards diversity, equity and inclusion	50%	39%	37%
To monitor study progress/ careers of specific groups	47%	35%	26%
Other	4%	2%	3%
l do not know	3%	2%	2%
We do not use these data in a systematic way for our diversity, equity and inclusion activities	2%	4%	4%

Data is also needed to monitor progress towards quantitative targets. Such targets are mostly used with regard to gender equality, notably as regards academic staff (57%). Just under one third of responding institutions also have quantitative targets with regard to students with disabilities and about one quarter as regards students from lower socio-economic background, while quantitative targets are less used as regards other characteristics.

### Figure 18 - Use of quantitative targets according to diversity dimensions

Q17 Do you at your institution work with quantitative targets as regards the number/share/percentage of students or staff from (certain) disadvantaged or less represented groups? Please tick all applicable.

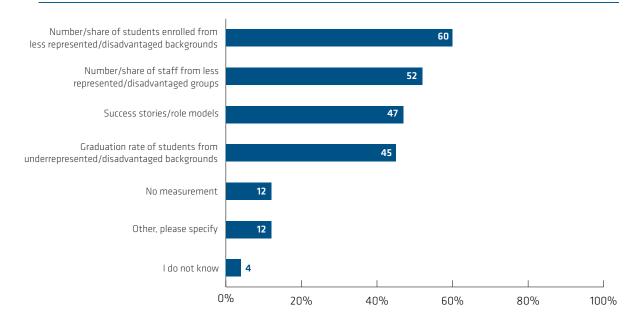
	Students	Academic staff	Non-academic staff
Gender	41%	57%	32%
Disability	31%	24%	24%
Socio-economic background	24%	2%	2%
Ethnic/cultural/migration background	21%	9%	5%
Educational background (alternative pathways, lifelong learners)	19%	7%	3%
Age	15%	12%	8%
Religious background/beliefs	7%	4%	2%
Sexual identity (including LGBT+ )	7%	3%	1%
Caring responsibilities	5%	5%	3%
No, we do not work with quantitative targets for this group	23%	15%	21%

Quantitative data plays also an important role in the impact assessment or evaluation of the institution's activities towards diversity, equity and inclusion, notably for those institutions that measure the number/share of enrolled students and/or staff or graduation rates from less represented or disadvantaged students. Many institutions also work with qualitative information, success stories,

role models or case studies obtained through surveys or interviews to show impact at individual level. This may be particularly important and useful when adopting measures for people who do not necessarily belong to an underrepresented group but who are still disadvantaged, vulnerable and/or may need specific support or a change in institutional culture and attitudes (e.g., people with caring responsibilities, people identifying as LGBT+). In these cases, the goal is not necessarily to increase the total number or share within the university community, but to ensure that the environment is welcoming and avoid discrimination.

### Figure 19 - Indicators and tools for impact assessment

Q22a How do you measure the impact of your activities on diversity, equity and inclusion? Please tick all applicable options.



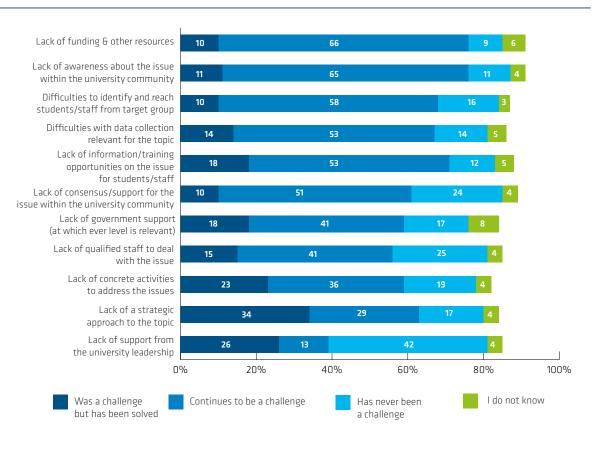
## **Barriers and external support**

### 7.1. WHAT THE BARRIERS ARE

The respondents to the survey identify a number of barriers to promote equity, diversity and inclusion at their institution. Some challenges have been solved to a certain degree, but many are still present. The two top barriers are lack of resources and lack of awareness.

#### Figure 20 - Main barriers to diversity, equity & inclusion at institutional level

Q23-What are the barriers to diversity, equity and inclusion that you face at your institution? Please look at each of the barriers and indicate whether it is or was a challenge.



Regarding resources, there are often few dedicated professional staff dealing with the topic. Of the survey respondents, 41% indicate that lack of qualified staff is a barrier. Only somewhat more than half of the respondents have a specific office that deals with the topic, employing usually about 1-5 FTEs (though this is highly diverse across the sample), which often includes the work time of the responsible vice rector as well as of committee members, including students. The typical number of dedicated staff seems to be one or two persons who either are part of the central administration or run a small office. Day-to-day administration is not necessarily seen as the biggest challenge, but resources are also needed to build capacity, for instance through training, and for awareness-raising measures.

While university leadership prioritises equity, diversity and inclusion, this is far from always being echoed at the level of faculties and departments. One reason seems to be lack of simple awareness and training. Lack of awareness ranks as highly as lack of funding as a barrier among the respondents to the survey. This connects well with the suggestions for overcoming the obstacles, where awareness raising and staff training are the most prominent recommendations (Figure 21).

However, in half of the cases in the survey, respondents do not only point to lack of awareness but lack of consensus or support, from within the community, which is arguably more difficult to manage. The societal context often determines which dimensions of diversity are recognised. In societies where ethnic diversity or LGBT+ rights are divisive topics, it is difficult to gain consensus about including these dimensions in institutional policies; as one interviewee put it: "We can talk about disability and [binary] gender, but everything else is difficult." The societal context can also be relevant in places where there is an overall consensus about promoting equality: one interviewee underlined that students would be expecting that universities value equality because they are used to this from their upbringing.

In societies where there is a wider acceptance of more dimensions of diversity, individuals at times tend to give more attention to one specific dimension. This can be out of a personal interest or affinity. In cases where some dimensions – for example gender (or, more precisely, discrimination against women) – have a long history, there might be fears of diluting the gains already achieved by adding other dimensions. In other cases, non-visible dimensions might not elicit the necessary awareness. This has typically been the case for mental illnesses, which have received attention only recently and where the medical evidence is less standardised. As with resources, this seems to be a persistent challenge. Only 10% of the survey respondents say that challenges concerning lack of consensus have been solved in the past, and a similar number indicate that it has never been a problem.

There is little direct evidence of a widespread belief that supporting underprivileged or minority groups will compromise excellence. On the contrary, (as described in the chapter on strategies) university leadership seems to underline the necessity of promoting equity, diversity and inclusion to retain excellence.

The two top barriers, resources and awareness, are followed by a number of challenges that are relevant for somewhat more than half of the respondents. Some of these, such as lack of consensus and support, are linked to the top issues. As many as 58% of respondents indicate that it continues to be a challenge to identify and reach students and staff from the target groups, and 53% point to challenges regarding data collection. Difficulties to reach particular groups can be because they are hard to identify; mental illness might, for example, be difficult to recognise and diagnose immediately. In some cases, international students or doctoral candidates are identifiable but hard to reach if they do not seek support actively or do not use university housing services. Some of these groups also have linguistic and cultural differences that are a barrier to accessing support.

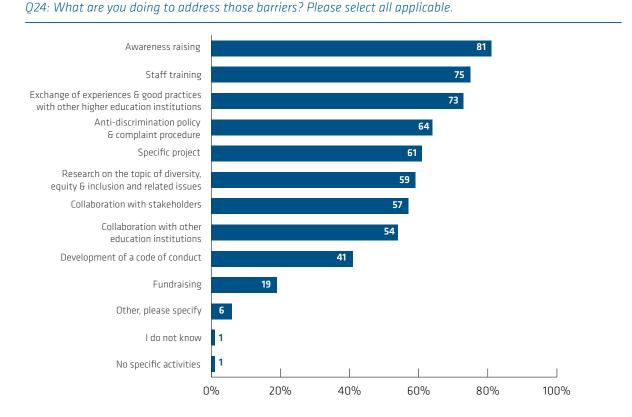
Data collection is used to distinguish the different groups needing support and to identify what these needs are, but only about 60% of respondents do this for students. For staff, 49% use data collection for detecting such groups among them, and 39% use it to identify their needs. Given that data collection is mainly focused on gender, age and disability, many dimensions cannot be addressed through this approach (see chapter 6.1 on data collection). Some respondents saw the legal constraints to data collection as a barrier, but this was by no means a systematic concern.

Regarding lack of activities, strategic approach and leadership support, between a third and a fourth of respondents indicated that this had been a challenge but that it had been solved. As many as 36% pointed to lack of concrete activities as a continuing challenge. Concerning the strategic approach of the institution, this was a rather positive example, with half of the respondents indicating that the challenge had either been solved or never existed; only 29% thought that the challenge persisted. Respondents were very positive towards leadership support, with only 13% indicating that this was a continuing challenge while 42% thought that this was never a problem. Although the latter figure might be influenced by the high number of university leaders that filled out the survey, there is evidence that universities have been active in strategy development and that this development has been led from the top by university leadership (see chapter 3 on institutional strategies).

### 7.2. OVERCOMING BARRIERS - EXTERNAL SUPPORT, TRAINING AND DIALOGUE

A sizeable minority of 41% saw lack of government support as a barrier to working for equity, diversity and inclusion. However, a similar number (35%) indicated that this had either never been a problem or that the challenge had been solved. When pointing to possible success factors, only 25% point to government support, which is deemed far less important than support from institutional leadership, named by 76% as a key success factor (see figure 15 on success factors). However, 69% still point to the need for more public investment in the area (see figure 22).

When asked about the measures that would help overcome the barriers, by far the most popular methods are related to dialogue and training. A very large majority of respondents point to awareness raising in general. More specifically, large majorities suggest staff training as a way to overcome obstacles – presumably relating to the questions of awareness and consensus. Other suggestions mentioned by a sizeable number of respondents point to more formal measures, including anti-discrimination policies and complaints procedures and development of a code of conduct. As many as 59% point to research on the topic as a way to overcome obstacles, which corresponds well to examples from the interviews, where several institutions had established research centres to support policies (see chapter 3.4 on institutional structures).

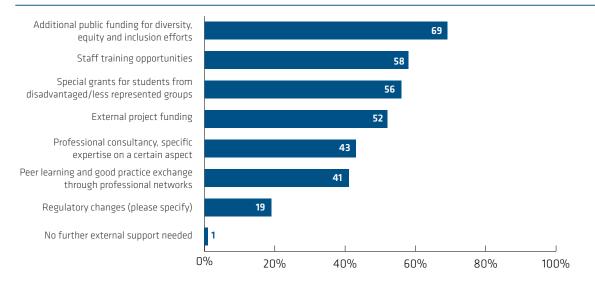


## Figure 21 - Measures to overcome barriers

#### 40

#### Figure 22 – External support required

Q26: What type of (additional) external support do you think would be needed to further the development and implementation of your institution's strategy and/or activities towards diversity, equity and inclusion?

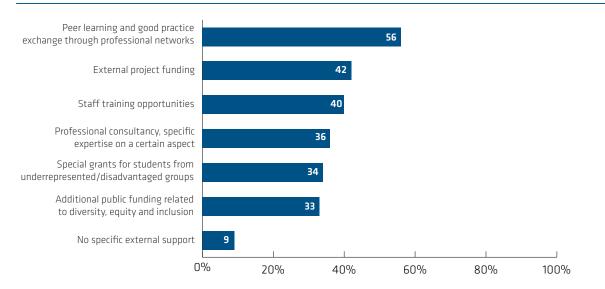


Very few respondents wished for regulatory changes to promote the issue, and the changes that were mentioned by these respondents were too diverse to make any conclusions about the nature of regulatory change. Apart from allocating resources, the direct role of government in overcoming barriers to equity, diversity and inclusion seems rather limited. In some cases, the implementation of legislation to avoid discrimination or ensuring access for persons with disabilities had been useful to initiate discussions within the institution, but many go further than what is required by the law in order to support underprivileged or under-represented groups. This corresponds well with the clear indication that universities are engaged in the topic because it is part of their institutional values and responsibilities rather than because they are complying with external policies (see chapter 3 on institutional strategies).

Measures to overcome barriers and success factors are to a large extent internal to the institution or involve dialogue with civil society. Commitment by institutional leadership is by far the most important success factor among survey respondents. This is coherent with the general tendency in the evidence collected that the agenda is mainly driven from the institutional leadership. However, this should not be seen as a one-way process: the second and third most popular success factors were the involvement of the target groups as well as the involvement of the whole institution in the process. These answers again mirror the findings concerning the strategic level, where committees representing staff and students as well as dedicated research units are common factors (see chapter 3.4).

There is also coherence between the indication that support is needed for staff training and the indication that lack of awareness or consensus about the equity, diversity and inclusion is a major barrier. Likewise, external support for peer learning opportunities often appears as one of the major success factors for overcoming barriers. When looking at the external support that institutions receive, these activities rank highly. In effect, the support received in large part correspond to what the respondents indicate that they would need. Concretely, such support comes in various forms and is not always linked to government initiatives.

### **Figure 23** - External support received to develop and implement strategies and/or activities Q25-What type of external support does your institution receive to develop and implement strategies and/or activities towards diversity, equity and inclusion? Please select all applicable.



However, one interviewee underlined how the present framework of public support and incentives was not perfectly adequate to the needs of universities: some incentives aimed at compliance and 'problem solving' rather than enhancement and using diversity as an asset. For example, quantitative measurements of performance and possible negative consequences for funding did not give enough positive incentives beyond simply complying with the requirements. Other incentives were seen as being too non-committal. Instead of compliance-oriented or even 'tick-the-box' exercises, incentives that lead to using diversity as an asset for institutions would be more useful. Such incentives would focus on raising awareness and sharing good practices, which is what most of the respondents to the survey see as the most useful external support (56%).

Examples of initiatives that promoted sharing of good practice and awareness raising are many. The European Union has included support for these activities in both its programme for research and in the Erasmus Programme. For example, the SAGE Project in the research programme has used the experiences from partners from Ireland to Turkey in order to develop a framework to develop gender equality plans.<sup>15</sup> Likewise, the HE4U2 project funded by the Erasmus Programme has developed tools to further cultural diversity in higher education.<sup>16</sup> Such European initiatives are important as they create a community of practitioners that share good practice across the continent with the potential to have a very wide international impact. At the national level, similar networks of practitioners exist in a number of countries.

At times, civil society organisations play a role in furthering the topic at the national level. In Germany, the *Stifterverband* – an organisation dedicated to the support of research, education and innovation – carries out 'diversity audits' which evaluate the activities and structures of universities with respect to diversity and also give advice and promote dialogue within the institution. Such initiatives can be very helpful both in terms of assisting the university leadership with an external evaluation, but also raising internal awareness.<sup>17</sup>

At the time of writing the report, two radical solutions to overcome the gender imbalance in academic staff were introduced. At the Technical University of Eindhoven, a rule was introduced that only women can apply for academic positions in the first six months of recruitment. Likewise, in Ireland, the government announced that it would create women-only professorships in order to better balance the ratio between men and women in higher education institutions. While such radical and targeted measures might be needed in the light of the great imbalance and slow progress in approaching gender balance, the survey respondents seem to prioritise measures that aim at structural and cultural change within institutions. Training and other forms of awareness raising are clearly important forms of supportas they directly address the main barriers to attaining equity, diversity and inclusion.

<sup>15</sup> See http://www.sage-growingequality.eu/web/assets/media/sage\_booklet.pdf

<sup>16</sup> See http://he4u2.eucen.eu/

<sup>17</sup> See https://www.stifterverband.org/diversity-audit

# Conclusions: what needs to be done

8

While there are many very valuable initiatives, programmes and projects, the challenge for taking a qualitative step forward on the topic of equity, diversity and inclusion is to connect all the dots, creating linkages within an institution as well as between institutions and systems. The goal must be a holistic strategy ultimately strengthening the inclusiveness of European higher education systems.

Still, half of the respondents to the INVITED survey indicate that lack of awareness among the university community about diversity and inclusion issues is a continuing challenge, followed by a lack of funding and other resources as well as the difficulty to identify the target groups. Staff training is required, both for administrative staff as well as teaching and research staff, to raise the level of awareness and provide concrete tools and approaches for addressing diversity. Ultimately this will foster inclusive learning, teaching and research environments.

Part of this awareness raising would be to continue to move the discourse on diversity from a challenge to be solved to a precondition for quality and excellence. A number of prominent universities have already explicitly taken this position, as they realise that through ensuring equitable treatment, they improve their learning environment as well as their research. If the university sector as a whole could embrace this notion fully, this would be beneficial to all stakeholders and also for society.

At system level, only a minority of countries in the European Higher Education Area has developed National Action Plans to follow up on their commitments. An important way forward would be to strengthen the dialogue at system level between universities, policy makers, funders, public authorities and stakeholder organisations active on behalf of underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. Measures conceived in this way are likely to be more fit for purpose and have higher impact than a 'carrot-and-stick-approach' (for example, putting further financial pressure on higher education institutions if externally set targets are not met). A holistic system-level approach, rather than looking at higher education institutions in isolation, is key. Exchange of experience and peer learning between universities from across Europe as well as at the level of policy makers and administrators can be a useful tool to inspire this dialogue. New policies and strategies then need to be adapted to respond to the specific system context and challenges.

## Annexes

## I. LIST OF PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS

### Institutions which responded to the survey

Country	Institutions
Albania	Aleksander Xhuvani University, Elbasan
Albania	Canadian Institute of Technology
Albania	Epoka University
Albania	University Aleksander Moisiu
Albania	University College Beder
Albania	University of Arts Tirana
Albania	University of Tirana
Albania	Wisdom University College Tirana
Andorra	University of Andorra
Armenia	Eurasia International University
Austria	Albania
Austria	Academy of fine Arts Vienna
Austria	Danube University Krems
Austria	FH JOANNEUM University of Applied Sciences
Austria	Graz University of Technology
Austria	Medical University of Graz
Austria	Medical University of Vienna
Austria	St. Pölten University of Applied Sciences
Austria	University of Graz
Austria	University of Music and Performing Arts
Austria	University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna
Austria	University of Vienna
Austria	Vienna University of Economics and Business
Austria	Vienna University of Technology
Azerbaijan	Baku Engineering University
Belgium - Federation Wallonia-Brussels	Catholic University of Louvain
Belgium - Federation Wallonia-Brussels	Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB)
Belgium - Flanders	Artevelde University College Ghent
Belgium - Flanders	Free University Brussels (VUB)

Belgium - Flanders	Ghent University
Belgium - Flanders	PXL University of Applied Sciences and Arts
Bosnia and Herzegovina	University of Sarajevo
Bulgaria	Medical University - Varna
Bulgaria	University of Agribusiness and Rural Development
Cyprus	Open University of Cyprus
Cyprus	University of Cyprus
Czech Republic	Silesian University in Opava
Czech Republic	University of Pardubice
Denmark	Aarhus University
Denmark	Copenhagen Business School
Denmark	Technical University of Denmark (DTU)
Finland	Åbo Akademi University
Finland	University of Turku
France	Claude Bernard University Lyon 1
France	Université de Savoie
France	Université Paul Sabatier (Toulouse 3)
France	University of Lille
France	University of Lorraine
Georgia	Child Development Institute, Ilia State University
Georgia	Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University
Germany	Bochum University of Applied Sciences
Germany	Bonn-Rhein-Sieg University of Applied Sciences (H-BRS)
Germany	Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus-Senftenberg - BTU
Germany	City University of Applied Science, Bremen
Germany	Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences (FRA-UAS)
Germany	Free University Berlin
Germany	Fulda University of Applied Sciences
Germany	Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz
Germany	Karlsruhe University of Applied Sciences
Germany	Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich
Germany	Münster University of Applied Sciences
Germany	Technical University of Berlin
Germany	TH Köln - University of Applied Sciences
Germany	University of Bayreuth
Germany	University of Bremen
Germany	University of Cologne
Germany	University of Erlangen Nuremberg
Germany	University of Goettingen
Germany	University of Hamburg
Germany	University of Kassel

Germany	University of Lübeck
Germany	University of Osnabrück
Germany	University of Siegen
Hungary	Central European University
Ireland	Dublin City University (DCU)
Ireland	Institute of Technology Carlow
Ireland	Limerick Institute of Technology
Ireland	National University of Ireland, Maynooth
Ireland	Technological University Dublin
Ireland	The University of Dublin - Trinity College
Ireland	University College Dublin
Ireland	University of Limerick
Italy	University of Aquila
Italy	University of Padua
Italy	University of Sassari
Italy	University of Trento
Kazachstan	Al-Farabi Kazakh National University
Козоvо	International Business College Mitrovicq
Козоvо	University of Haxhi Zeka, Peja-Kosovo
Lithuania	Vilnius University
Montenegro	University Mediterranean
Netherlands	Erasmus University Rotterdam
Netherlands	University of Maastricht
Netherlands	Utrecht University
Norway	MF Norwegian School of Theology, Religion and Society
Norway	Norwegian School of Economics (NHH)
Norway	Norwegian University of Life Sciences
Norway	VID Specialized University
Poland	Marie Curie-Skłodowska University
Poland	Medical University of Gdańsk
Poland	Nicolaus Copernicus University
Poland	Silesian University of Technology
Poland	University of Lódz
Poland	University of Warsaw
Poland	Vistula University
Poland	Warsaw School of Economics
Poland	Warsaw School of Information Technology
Portugal	Univeristy of Aveiro
Portugal	University of Porto
Portugal	University of the Algarve
Romania	Alexandru Ioan Cuza University

Russia	Russian Timiryazev State Agrarian University
Slovakia	Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica
Spain	Camilo José Cela University
Spain	Castilla-La Macha University
Spain	CEU Cardenal Herrera University
Spain	Comillas Pontifical University
Spain	Complutense University of Madrid
Spain	Jaén University
Spain	Lleida University
Spain	Madrid Open University
Spain	Málaga University
Spain	Miguel Hernandez University
Spain	National University of Education at Distance - UNED
Spain	Open University of Catalonia
Spain	Oviedo University
Spain	Pablo de Olavide University
Spain	Ramon Llull University
Spain	Technical University of Catalonia
Spain	Universitat Internacional de Catalunya
Spain	University of Barcelona
Spain	University of Cantabria
Spain	University of Girona
Spain	University of the Balearic Islands
Spain	University of Valencia
Spain	University of Valladolid
Spain	University of Vic - Central Catalonia University
Spain	University of Zaragoza
Sweden	Karolinska Institute
Sweden	Lund University
Sweden	Stockholm School of Economics
Sweden	Stockholm University
Sweden	University West
Sweden	Uppsala University
Switzerland	ETH Zurich
Switzerland	Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne (EPFL)
Switzerland	University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland (FHNW)
Switzerland	University of Applied Sciences and Arts Western Switzerland (HES-SO)
Switzerland	University of Lausanne
Switzerland	Zurich University of the Arts

Turkey	Hacettepe University
Ukraine	Sumy State University
Ukraine	Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv
United Kingdom	Coventry University
United Kingdom	Imperial College London
United Kingdom	University of Leicester
United Kingdom	University of Manchester
United Kingdom	University of Nottingham
United Kingdom	University of Strathclyde
United Kingdom	University of The West of Scotland

### Institutions interviewed

Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB)	Belgium (Wallonia-Brussels Federation)
University of Turku	Finland
Claude Bernard University Lyon 1	France
University Osnabrück	Germany
Freie Universität Berlin	Germany
Dublin City University	Ireland
University of Padova	Italy
Vilnius University	Lithuania
Silesian University of Technology	Poland
University of Lleida	Spain
Lund University	Sweden
University of Strathclyde	United Kingdom

Country	Institution
Estonia	Tallinn University
Finland	University of Tampere
France	Université de Lorraine
Germany	University of Göttingen
Germany	Freie Universität Berlin
Ireland	Central European University
Ireland	University of Limerick
Ireland	University College Dublin
Ireland	National University of Ireland Maynooth
Ireland	Dublin City University
Ireland	Trinity College Dublin
Ireland	Irish State Department for Higher Education
Ireland	Irish Universities Association (IUA)
Ireland	National University of Ireland Galway
Italy	University of Bologna
Italy	University of Padova
Lithuania	Vilnius University
Netherlands	Utrecht University
Norway	VID Specialised University
Poland	University of Lodz
Spain	University of Valencia
Sweden	University West
United Kingdom	University of Lancaster

## Institutions and organisations which participated in the peer learning seminar

### **II. INVITED SURVEY**

Please see EUA website.



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