EUROPEAN STUDENTS' UNION,
IMMIGRANT AND ETHNIC MINORITIES WORKING GROUP

HANDBOOK FOR NATIONAL UNIONS OF STUDENTS ON

Students with a Migrant or Ethnic Minority Background

IMPRINT

Handbook for National Unions of Students on Students with a Migrant or Ethnic Minority Background

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by the Immigrant and Ethnic Minorities Working Group of the European Students' Union

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1 OPENING

Since this handbook was first finished in 2013 the world, and Europe in particular, has witnessed major developments in the area of ethnic minorities and migrants' access to education. That is why we decided it was finally time update the handbook and publish it for broader use in National Unions of Students (NUSes). The changes include updating time context specific text, and adding smaller parts relevant to the policy developments we have witnessed over the past three years.

With the change in migrants arriving in Europe the European Union, governments and not least NUSes are faced with an even more challenging and urgent responsibility than before, to ensure that those young people and students have their inherent right to education fulfilled, just as their national peers do. To put it into perspective, about 50 percent of all the asylum seekers across the 28 EU countries are in the age group 18-34, highlighting why careful attention to expand access to higher education for migrants and refugees must be a priority (Eurostat, 2016). As students we have to ask ourselves, how our actions (or lack of) in this area reflect on our broader struggle to ensure inclusive and equitable education for all, and realise that one student's struggle is our common struggle.

Globally, all Member States of the UN committed themselves to fulfil that exact task by 2030, when they adopted the Sustainable Development Goals, incl. Goal 4 to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all". This ambition often translates into primary and secondary education only, but with the majority of the refugees arriving in Europe being young people, we must also keep in mind the goal 4.3 to ensure equal access to affordable quality tertiary education. In ESU we have already agreed to a Joint Action Programme with Education International (EI), and the Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU), which is published along with this handbook. We encourage all of you to find inspiration in both these two publications.

At the same time as we must ensure access to tertiary education,

the recent terrorist attacks across Europe also reminds us that we must ensure success, by unleashing the transformative power in quality education for all. It is important that our diversity is leveraged to create better learning, but engaging students through student-centred learning, and applying the diverse range of present in the classroom. The national ministers in the EU reaffirmed they committed to this exact idea of education, when they adopted in Paris Declaration. Translating the declaration into action, is a task that NUSes must also direct attention to.

These are the three main events, though far from all, that have elevated the importance of ensuring inclusion of ethnic minorities and refugees onto the main stage. It is a struggle the student movement has long fought, and with tremendous respect to the great work that is already carried out, we hope that this updated handbook will inspire to even greater actions and more success stories.

2 INTRODUCTION FROM THE AUTHORS

This handbook has been written by the European Student's Union's Ethnic Minorities Working Group (EMWG) based on the work it conducted from its establishment at ESU's Board Meeting 57 in 2009 until its expiration at the Board Meeting 64 in 2013. The work was undertaken by representatives from ESU's members SAMOK (Finland), NUSUK (UK), LSVb (the Netherlands), ANOSR (Romania), NASC (Bulgaria), FAGE (France) and NSUM (Macedonia), as well as ESU's Equality Coordinator and Human Rights and Solidarity Coordinator and previous members of social affairs committee.

Without the dedication, knowledge and not least impressive work from the working group members this handbook would never have been realised. Thank you.

2.2 General Introduction

The demographically convenient labels of persons of a migrant or ethnic minority background cannot be treated as one group, and any single policy initiative aimed at improving performance or attainment of education targeted at such a broad group tends to have a simple and predictable effect - those who are doing well in society will improve their lot, but those who are marginalised will continue to be so, in extreme cases their performance may actually disimprove.

Ethnic minorities are vast and complex groups of people. Some identifiable groups, such as the largest in Europe - the Roma people, live in no single geographic region and live in every country in Europe and beyond. Other groups, such as the Basque community have maintained coherence because of their geographic location. Migrants, whether from within the European Union, whether migrants of economic necessity, personal choice, or so-called third-country migrants resident in Europe for reasons of asylum, economic necessity or choice all have as many different contextual backgrounds as there are people.

As such, it is intensely challenging to attempt to create any single policy or set of guidelines to deal with a non-unified group of demographic convenience, rather than a single community. As the numbers of people within Europe who might fall into the category here discussed runs to the dozens of millions, the statistical data which reinforces the underperformance and underrepresentation of these groups in higher education is an unacceptable aberration and it is the responsibility of all parties involved in higher education governance to take actions to improve the chances of any group which is victim to inequality.

It is the firm belief of the authors of this toolkit that National Unions of Students are not exempt from this obligation.

2.3 About the Immigration and Ethnic Minorities Working Group

In 2009, at the 57th meeting of the Board of the European Students' Union in Krakow, Poland, it was decided to establish a working group, made up of representatives of National Unions of Students to discuss, debate and develop policy for ESU and national unions on the issues concerning students with a migrant or ethnic minority background.

Since then the membership of the group has developed over time, with SAMOK (Finland) chairing throughout the four year mandate. NSUM (Macedonia), LSVb (the Netherlands), ISO (The Netherlands), NUSUK (United Kingdom), NASC (Bulgaria), ANOSR (Romania), and FAGE (France)[1] with support from the Executive Committee, Social Affairs Committee and Coordinators of ESU have been represented in the group over that time.

This handbook is the final work of the group, which completed its mandate at the 64th Board Meeting in Budapest, Hungary.

1 SAMOK: Suomen opiskelijakuntien liitto; NSUM: National Student Union of Macedonia; LSVb: Landelijke Studenten Vakbond; ISO: Interstedelijk Studenten Overleg; NUSUK: National Union of Students; NASC: Nacionalno Predstaviteltsvo na Studenstkite Saveti v Republika Bulgaria; ANOSR: Alianta Nationala a Organizatiilor Studentesti din Romania; FAGE: Fédération des Associations Générales D'Etudiants.

2.4 Definitions: Ethnic minorities and migrants

There is a difference between persons of a migrant background and persons belonging to an ethnic minority group, although they may both constitute minorities and share many characteristics. A minority is defined by a numerical proportion, but also by the fact that a minority is treated differently than the majority in the social and political context.

In almost every nation and society, ethnic minorities exist. Often their language, culture, origin, beliefs or style of life differ from the majority.

The variety of definitions of an ethnic minority and an immigrant show the complexity of categorizing minorities and defining them.

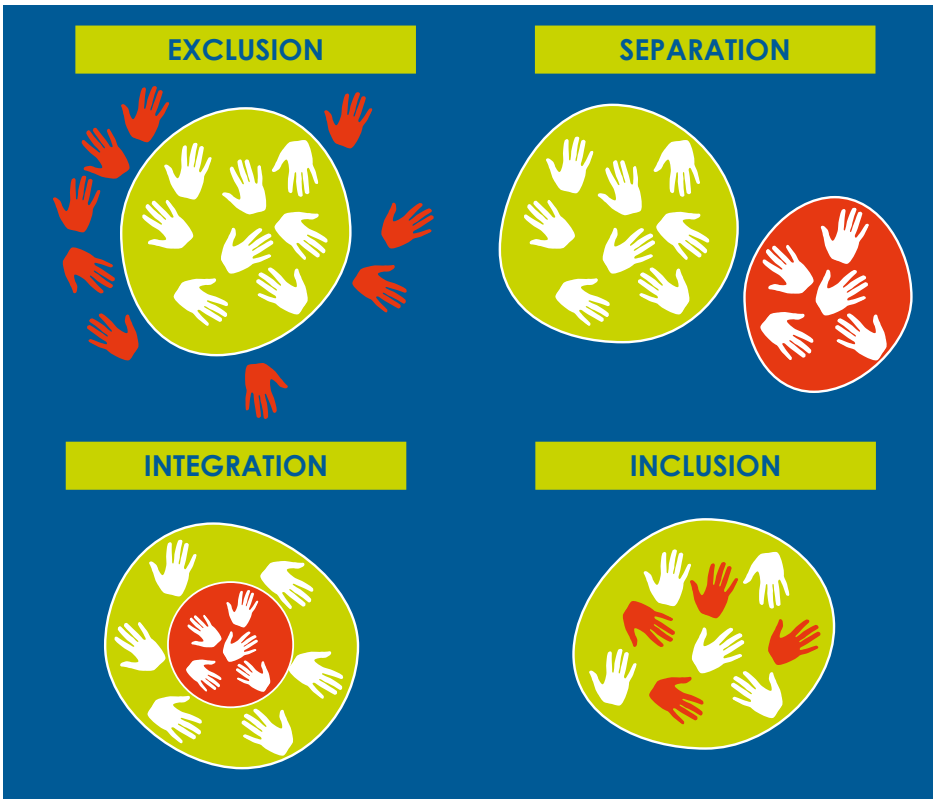
The Council of Europe has provided a definition of an ethnic / national minority as a group of persons in a state who:

1. "reside on the territory of that state and are citizens thereof;
2. maintain longstanding, firm and lasting ties with that state;
3. display distinctive ethnic, cultural, religious or linguistic characteristics;
4. are sufficiently representative, although smaller in number than the rest of the population of that state or of a region of that state;
5. are motivated by a concern to preserve together that which constitutes their common identity, including their culture, their traditions, their religion or their Language." (Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, 1995)

Persons belonging to an ethnic minority group differ from persons of a migrant background in a way that they can be already living for a long time in that area. For example; the Frisians in the Netherlands constitute an ethnic minority, but they are not migrants. Stefan Wolff (2008) insists more on the fact that migrants constitute a minority and are characterized as such on ethnic and national background, like ethnic minorities. However, migrants constitute the most recent category of ethnic minorities and often do not hold the citizenship of the country they live in, unlike ethnic/national minorities. Immigrants that are able to foresee citizenship of their host country can later be considered as an ethnic minority.

2.5 Beyond Integration

Within the social sciences there is a debate over language, whether we should talk about 'integration' or 'inclusion.' It is our opinion that the concept of integration is outdated, and indeed unhelpful, as integration and assimilation can be seen to be homonymous in many cases. Just as migrant people must adapt to the new society in which they now live, so must society adapt itself to be as inclusive as possible. Therefore, we will speak about inclusion here, beyond and aside from integration which is a concept we now reject.



Barriers to educational inclusion are likewise diverse and challenging. Often the most immediate issue is language, as many third-country migrants will find it difficult to be active parts of soci-

ety without the language skills to interact with their peers and the implements of state. More challenging than language, however, is the process of adapting to and adopting a new culture. The process of changing one's culture dwarfs the legal-bureaucratic complexities of attaining new citizenship into insignificance in its challenges.

Furthermore, simply including migrant youth in education systems is insufficient to address the needs that arise within the system. Widened participation in higher education can only be achieved through a fully holistic approach. All levels of education matter hugely and even education alone cannot be seen as capable of delivering the societal shifts necessary to achieve long lasting and meaningful change.

> "What happens outside of the school environment is just as important as what happens inside it. We cannot look at education in isolation." Jipé Kelly (Irish Integration Centre)

2.6 Systemic challenges

It is crucially important that government, institutions and organisations go out of their way to understand the reasons behind poor participation or performance. The family background and daily experience of people of ethnic minority backgrounds and migrants are often radically different from national majorities. Simply expecting people to change their expectations and daily routine is not a coherent means of driving inclusion.

The development of National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs) within Europe is a very positive move in terms of assisting migrants towards recognition of pre-existing education before arriving at their host countries. It is however extremely important that NQFs and accrediting bodies allow some flexibility within the NQF, and that resources are made available for interpreting and explaining the frameworks to newly arrived communities. The same applies to ethnic minority groups: special effort should be made to explain the NQF to all participants in a learner's education, including family and peer networks.

In line with this, it is important that more flexible procedures of assessing refugees' qualifications are developed. Countries have committed themselves under the Lisbon Recognition Convention article VII to do so (as detailed later in this handbook), but truth be told the Convention's requirements are still grossly under-implemented.

Simply placing migrant youth in the age-appropriate educational level on arrival is insufficient. Those with such diverse backgrounds cannot be expected to be treated as one cohort of students who are all at the same educational stage of the average, say, sixteen-year-old. Furthermore, it is important to include entire families in the education process as soon as possible, so that a child's expectations and a family's can match with full understanding and inclusion in the structures of the education systems.

2.7 Role models

For every underrepresented group in higher education one trope remains true, regardless of demographic niche: Those who are surrounded on a daily basis by peers and role-models who have previously attended and benefited from higher education are much more likely to attend and excel at higher education. For many ethnic minority groups and migrants, there has been practically no experience of higher education. As such, prospective students may not see the value or benefits accrued from higher education. To use a slightly flippant example - if the only people you know are manual labourers, it is unlikely it will occur to you to become a lawyer.

2.8 Governance and inclusive representation

This document will talk about the obligations of the 'majority' population to the minority groups described. Perhaps the most challenging barrier to education for underrepresented groups is the fact that a highly disproportionate majority of policy makers and leaders are from the traditional majority groups. It is a right in democratic societies for individuals to criticise and engage in making and shaping change. In order for higher education to truly adapt

to a more inclusive model of governance, those responsible for governance must more accurately reflect the groups for whom higher education is available - which should, of course, be everyone.

All members of society should be encouraged to express their opinions and their opinions must be sought. Furthermore, the actions arising from this consultation must be visible and promoted. The Estonian government around 2011 rolled out an e-government initiative towards soliciting the opinions of migrant youth. The findings of this online, targeted survey, were then debated and acted upon by the national parliament. This level of visibility and inclusion should be strived for.

2.9 Conclusion

Throughout the document which follows we will cite several examples. The authors of the document come from and, obviously have demonstrable and specific expertise in France, Finland, Georgia, Ireland, Macedonia, the Netherlands and Romania, and often these countries will be used to reference certain points. This does not prejudice the meaning of the points and it does not follow that the point being made applies only to that country. However, and conversely, without an understanding of national or local context, it can be easy to misunderstand policy actions. Therefore, the authors encourage careful reflection from the readers.

We hope this document provokes questions in the readers' minds and gives you some insights to what is, after all is said and done, a hugely local / national matter, and requires very local actions. This European overview can only serve to provoke these discussions, but will feed into ESU's European-level inputs. We hope the same will be true in the countries of our member unions.

3 DISCRIMINATION

3.1 Introduction

Access to higher education and discrimination are very much connected and it is important to understand what discrimination means in order to be able to identify a discriminatory situation in the field of higher education. Indeed, among the many obstacles to higher education, discrimination is one of them and impedes access to higher education to a large segment of our society.

Discrimination is always directed towards a specific group or an individual. In higher education, it can result in discrimination against persons of a migrant or ethnic minority background. There are different forms and levels of discrimination, which makes it difficult sometimes to recognise a discriminatory situation or policy, especially in higher education. It is easier to trace inequalities in higher education based on mechanisms of exclusion and segregation than disadvantage caused by other forms of discrimination. Within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), what constitutes discrimination is not easy to distinguish as often it consists of hidden and indirect discrimination, which is as harmful as direct discrimination and hinders our ability to recognise the difficulties in accessing higher education for persons of a migrant or ethnic minority background.

3.2 What is discrimination?

Discrimination is the prejudicial or distinguishing treatment of an individual based on his or her (perceived) membership in a certain group or category. Discrimination restricts members of one group from opportunities or privileges that are available to another group, leading to the exclusion of the individual or entities based on illogical or irrational decision making (Giddens, 2009: 334).

Discrimination is linked with equality. Indeed, although discrimination can take many forms, it always results in some form of exclusion, thus implying unequal treatment, disrespect and unequal rights of an individual or a specific group. Individuals with a migrant

or ethnic minority background in their country are human beings and as such enjoy certain unalienable rights, one of them being the right to access (higher) education. Discrimination in higher education affects migrants and ethnic minorities more than other members of society and deprives them often of their fundamental right to education.

As mentioned previously, discrimination is a complex concept, as it comprises different levels and forms of behaviour. It is therefore advisable to talk about direct discrimination, indirect discrimination and institutional discrimination.

3.3 Direct discrimination

Direct discrimination is the most obvious and recognisable form of discrimination. It consists as the result of an intentional differentiated treatment of an individual or a group.

> "Direct discrimination shall be taken to occur where one person is treated less favourably than another is, has been or would be treated in a comparable situation on grounds of racial or ethnic origin", or more generally speaking, on grounds of his/her special characteristics or personal choices." (European Council, 2008)

In the context of education, direct discrimination by teachers and peers can be referred to as a prejudice, which tends to be expressed in harassment, racial slurs, and scapegoating. It may have the result that students of a migrant or ethnic minority background perceive themselves as not being accepted or being excluded by members of the dominant culture.

In every European country, discrimination is illegal and punishable by the law. Therefore, it is very unlikely that direct forms of discrimination persist in higher education. However, this is not the case with invisible or indirect discrimination.

3.4 Indirect discrimination

> "Indirect discrimination shall be taken to occur where an apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice would put persons (of a racial or ethnic origin) at a particular disadvantage compared with other persons." (Ibid.)

If that provision, criterion or practice is objectively justified by a legitimate aim and the means of achieving that aim are appropriate and necessary, this is considered as positive discrimination. For example, in some countries universities integrate the ethnic background of the student in their criteria to access higher education. According to the OECD in 6 member countries ethnicity was used as a factor for access to tertiary education (OECD, 2012: 525). These countries are Australia, Germany, Israel, Italy, Norway and Brazil (Ibid: 534).

Indirect discrimination is hard to identify and to prove as the measures or policies are apparently neutral. Therefore, one has to focus on the results of these policies and measures in order to recognise an indirect discrimination towards persons from a migrant background or pertaining to an ethnic minority. To illustrate this with a simple example, in France some entrance exams to higher education Institutions include a test on general knowledge (knowledge of history, political situation, international relations, current affairs, geography). Every student has to sit this exam and is graded fairly. However, when looking at the consequences and results of this type of examination, mainly national students from a higher socio-economic background are able to pass - as general knowledge is something that builds outside of school and in the long-term. Students who do not belong to this category, especially students from a migrant or ethnic minority background have more difficulties in gaining general knowledge (particularly when it comes to history and the political situation).

In addition to linguistic, cultural, and socio-economic differences between different groups, it has been noted that indirect discrimination has notable impact on attainment of students from a minority background. Such experiences may permanently cause a negative effect on students' stance towards the education system and

also affect the teachers' sense of ambition for their students. This will inevitably have a negative effect on attainments of students.

3.5 Institutional discrimination

As this toolkit focuses on discrimination within the field of higher education, it is necessary to cover institutional discrimination (i.e. discrimination caused by institutions and public authorities), aside from direct and indirect discrimination. Organisations working in the field of higher education should focus particularly on discrimination caused by policies, regulations or practices of universities, administrations, academia, or the Ministry of Education.

Luciak's study has identified five types of institutional discrimination (Luciak, 2004).

3.5.1 Segregation in school classes:

Placement in "minority classes" has been criticised as a strong negative characterisation, which may lead to "racialised" groups, a practice which interferes with inclusion of persons from a migrant or ethnic minority background into the dominant culture.

3.5.2 Assignment to special education for reasons other than disability:

If one assumes that the distribution of pupils with disabilities is similar across all ethnic groups, an over-representation of migrant and minority pupils in these classes indicates that a portion of these pupils is wrongfully assigned to such classes. This in turn limits their advancement within education and employment.

3.5.3 Exclusion from schools for cultural reasons:

Certain cultural practices considered incompatible with customs of the dominant culture have been reported to lead to exclusion and harassment. In France, one can find such institutionalised discrimination such as the exclusion of Muslim female students wearing the headscarf at school, or the fact that Jewish students respecting Shabbat cannot attend classes on Saturday.

3.5.4 Admittance to more prestigious institutions or private institutions:

Discrepancies between public and private school admittance as well as between prestigious and ordinary educational institutions interfere with access to equal chances in education and may limit future opportunities. For example, some companies do not recruit from schools or universities in which ethnic minorities are concentrated.

3.5.5 Lack, or low quality of compensatory or support programmes:

There is often a lack of effective compensatory language programmes, second language teaching undertaken by teachers who are not specifically trained, lack of native language instruction, lack of intercultural curricula approaches in school programmes to foster diversity, lack of religious pluralism, etc.

3.6 Affirmative action

When talking about discrimination (and ways of countering), we must also consider affirmative action (also sometimes referred to as positive discrimination in the UK context). Affirmative action emerged in the US in the 1960's when John F. Kennedy sought to remedy past racial discrimination, by calling for government contractors to "take affirmative action to ensure that applicants are employed, and that employees are treated during employment, without regard to their race, creed, color, or national origin." In the law encyclopedia of Cornell University affirmative action is defined in the following way:

> "A set of procedures designed to eliminate unlawful discrimination between applicants, remedy the results of such prior discrimination, and prevent such discrimination in the future. Applicants may be seeking admission to an educational program or looking for professional employment."

Today, affirmative action has become a much-debated topic in North-America, where it is still used nationally to ensure access to education to minority groups. Europe has been much more reluctant to take on affirmative action, although for instance Denmark

since 2014 has implemented affirmative action targeting Greenlandic students. In this case Greenlandic students with a GPA of C- can dispensate from the GPA requirements to access degrees that other students have to fulfill. However, the case of Denmark also highlights the need to ensure the success of minorities in the education system, as the lack of other targeted support systems have effectively meant that a lot of Greenlandic students have been set up to fail. Something which the Greenlandic Students' Union already warned the Ministry about prior to the implementation.

3.7 Discrimination in higher education in Europe

This section, using two examples, aims at demonstrating concrete examples of discrimination in higher education in Europe and the reactions by the different higher education institutions.

The first example concerns the Netherlands where persons from Friesland and/or speaking the Frisian language are often discriminated against in primary, secondary and higher education. However, the Dutch government has made an effort to provide these persons from an ethnic and language minority background with education in Frisian. In Friesland pupils in primary and secondary education have to be taught in Frisian language and have Frisian language classes. It is stated in the legislation that Frisian is compulsory and can be a mean of instruction. In Higher Education there is nothing in the higher education and scientific research legislation binding Universities to provide classes in Frisian. The legislation states that the language of instruction in universities should be Dutch. However, in practice, there is a level of cooperation between Universities in Friesland and in the rest of the country to teach and study in Frisian.

> "The University of Groningen offers students the possibility to take the first year of law degree in Ljouwert/ Leeuwarden in cooperation with the NHL Hogeschool. Hogeschool Van Hall Larenstein offers various courses and research opportunities in cooperation with Wageninen University." "Frisian can be taken as an additional course at Leiden University." (Ytsma et al., 2007: 28f)

It is a sad observation that courses in Frisian are not offered at every university in the Netherlands and only courses in Frisian culture and language are offered in Frisian. However, some departments and universities have made the choice to provide courses in Frisian. This is highly encouraging. More efforts are made now with the Dutch government as it signed the administrative agreement on Frisian language and Culture 2013-2018 (State of the Netherlands, 2012).

The second example shows the discrimination Roma students face in higher education in European countries.

The Roma are the largest ethnic minority in Europe and are amongst the most vulnerable and marginalised. Though they live in all countries of Europe with a population of approximately 12-15 million, 70% are concentrated in C/SEE (Central or Southeastern Europe). The greatest proportions in this region live in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Macedonia, while large numbers also live in the Czech Republic and Poland (UNICEF, 2009: 10). Therefore, the information and examples used in this paper emanate mainly from the above-mentioned countries.

The difficulties Roma people face in accessing higher education and the discrimination they face in universities are interlinked with the treatment the Roma population faces in European societies in general. Most European governments do not comply with the Directives from the European Union regarding the integration of the Roma population emphasising that governments have to facilitate access of Roma to employment, education, healthcare and housing. The dismantling of Roma camps in France and Italy has been occurring frequently in the past years. Also, in France on the 24th of September 2013 the French Minister of the Interior, Manuel Valls stated that "the Roma population has a vocation of going back to Romania and Bulgaria; not to integrate into their hosting community." (Parienté & Soullier, 2013).

One of the most successful ways of inclusion of persons from a migrant or ethnic minority is through education. However, as many European governments refuse to proactively include Roma people in society, they are often denied access to primary and secondary education, which in turn impedes their access to higher education, development as an active citizen and empowerment

to be active citizens in their own society. When it comes to higher education, "the proportion of youngsters is almost negligible. In CEE their share in university is less than 1%" (UNICEF, 2009: 13).

Although Roma children and students are underrepresented in education, there are examples of good initiatives in European countries. The main issues regarding Roma people and education is that on one hand "the schools often lack the cultural sensitivity and support needed for Roma children to make the transitions from comforts and familiarity of their homes to that of mainstream homes" (Ibid.) and on the other hand children are victims of discrimination on an almost daily basis.

Roma children are often victims of discrimination in the classroom and in schools by their peers, but also by the teachers and the administration. This impedes all punishment or change of behaviour towards other schoolchildren for their act of discrimination. It also leads to isolation and high dropout rates of Roma students. Another form of discrimination is to have segregated classes in primary school with Roma-only classes.

This measure is very common. Hungary has put into practice this method and has been condemned by the European Court of Human Rights on January 20th, 2013 (Amnesty, 2013) as Roma students were being wrongly placed in remedial schools. Fotis Filippou, Amnesty International's Regional Campaign Coordinator for Europe and Central Asia alarmed other governments "Special education is a dead-end for Romani children. Governments must stand up and take notice because as long as parallel education based on race systems exist, Romani children are denied opportunities" (Ibid.)

3.8 Fighting discrimination in Higher education: NUSUK's Race for Equality

Fighting discrimination is the only way to ensure access to and inclusion of persons with migrant and ethnic minority backgrounds in the higher education system.

Many organizations and institutions play a decisive role in the fight against discrimination like the Council of Europe, the OSCE, the

EU, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, Open Society Foundations, UNHCR, UNESCO, Minority Rights Group, and many national and local NGOs. However, students have been a driving force for changes in society many times in the past, and are therefore ought to play a role in the fight against discrimination as well.

The National Union of Students of the United Kingdom's (NUSUK) action "Race for equality" constitutes a good example of the fight against discrimination targeted at "black students", an expression used in this action to describe members from the African, Arab, Caribbean and Asian community (National Union of Students, 2011: 7). NUSUK emphasised the fact that the problems of access to higher education of black students do not come from black people but from the society and the institutions (Ibid: 3).

The ongoing black students' liberation campaign consisted of the publication of a report with data analysis and research skills based for the most part on surveys and focus groups. NUSUK looked at discrimination against black students in terms of access to higher education, teaching and learning, institutional environment and black international students. All solutions presented in the report are student-led solutions.

In the consultations carried by NUSUK, regarding access to higher education, black students stated "if Black students are to have equality of opportunity when they enter further and higher education, it is crucial that they receive a high standard of teaching from primary school onwards, attend colleges and universities that cater for the needs as Black students and have parents who are able to effectively support them." (Ibid: 17).

In their teaching and learning, higher education institutions should ensure equal treatment among their students, recognise unique issues black students may face and address them, improve black representation as role models and staff, and provide tutoring sensitive to issues concerning black students.

It is important to change the institutional environment in order to more fully include members of the black students community. Higher education institutions should promote the diversity of its staff, promote social inclusion and promote equality. As for the

students - they also have a role to play to improve the institutional environment for black students. Students should provide support networks of students and promote black representation and engagement in students' unions.

Carrying on with the study, consulting black students is important to promote and carry appropriate actions. Now NUSUK carries activities such as black history month, e-update on the campaign and a black forum online.

The initiative led to some local students' unions emulating the National, for example Edinburgh University Student Association's "Black and Ethnic Minority Liberation Campaign."

NUS UK is one of the few students' unions that has carried out a campaign targeting a specific ethnic minority group. Often, NUSes are concerned and raise awareness about the difficulty and the discrimination students from a migrant or ethnic minority background face like ANOSR (Romania) which includes students from a migrant or ethnic minority background in their campaigns against discrimination and carry out some surveys among the students it represents. However, it is regrettable to observe that not enough actions are taken and those taken are not visible enough. Therefore, this toolkit encourages students and students' unions to exchange good practices and replicate them at their national and local level.

3.9 Case example: Romani culture instructors and mentors

While far from perfect - for instance there are systematic prejudices, discrimination and racism especially in the employment sector and society in general - Finland has tried to take some actions regarding Roma persons in the spheres of particularly housing, health and education. The actions are guided by a national Roma strategy, developed in participation and consultation with Roma representatives. Finland already as a practice of administrative model of national advisory boards for Roma affairs at all levels of government, from local municipalities and provincial governments to ministerial level, including the National Board of Education and Helsinki University.

There has been various projects aiming to improve e.g. retention in basic education. A prior training to Romani mediators has been transformed into a vocational qualification. The qualification conferred is that to Romani Culture Instructor and is a competence-based examination[2]. The instructors have comprehensive and structured knowledge on Romani culture, which is needed in communications, promotion of Roma affairs, language and culture, and social interactions, to name a few instances. They are able to recognize and deal with specific questions and challenges with regard to the Romani culture and can help with interactions with authorities and officials. The overarching aim for actions is to prevent exclusion and inequality, as well as to promote inclusion and the status of the Roma. While it is hard to say which actions exactly could be pinpointed to be the key to success, it was noted by the European Commission[3] that there has been an increase of participation of Roma pupils in early childhood education and care as well as the new compulsory pre-school year, which they regard a sign of progress.

In Hungary, the national student union HÖOK, with the support from the Ministry of National Resources, has implemented a mentoring program for youth from disadvantaged groups. The mentoring program does not specifically target migrants or national minorities (such as the Roma), but instead students who come from socially disadvantaged backgrounds - which by and large, includes these groups. Each student who is accepted into the programme is assigned a personal mentor, who will support the student through the first two semesters. The mentors are all senior students in the same programme and institution. The mentors support the student with practical issues on campus, settling into life as a university student, and generally integrating into the higher education community. They also provide information on e.g.

2 Ministry of Education website describes competence-based examinations as follows: "Finland has been developing competence-based qualifications since 1994. This system is intended to enable working-age adults to gain qualifications without necessarily attending formal training. It is possible to take competence-based vocational qualifications, further vocational qualifications and special vocational qualifications or only parts of them. The competence-based qualifications are set and supervised by field-specific education and training committees. The committees agree on the organisation of the tests with providers of education and other communities.", available at http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/Koulutus/ammatillinen_koulutus/opiskelu_ja_tutkinnot/?lang=en

3 European Commission (2014). Assessment of Finland's National Roma Strategy. Retrieved from: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/country_assessment_2014/finland_en.pdf

scholarship programmes. For instance there are two scholar programmes targeted Roma student that both include financial and educational support (e.g. the Romaveritas programme supports professional development).

4 ACCESS AND SUCCESS

4.1 Access as a Question of Equal Opportunities

Access to higher education is a question of equal opportunities. Migrants, second generation migrants and other ethnic and/or national minorities tend to be in a disadvantageous position when it comes to accessing higher education across the entire European continent.

Over the past few decades, immigration issues have risen to the agenda of most European Union member states. According to Eurostat, immigrants from third countries (i.e. non-EU/EEA) represent around four percent of the total EU population. Variation between member states is great: from 32.3% in Luxembourg (consisting of mainly EU nationals) to approximately 10% in Latvia, Cyprus, Estonia, Spain and Austria to less than 1% in Poland, Romania and Bulgaria. Same, if not greater variation exists for particular ethnic and/or national minorities. Europe-wide, the Roma are the largest ethnic minority in Europe, making up a population of at least 12 million and constituting as large a minority of close to 10% in certain member states (as estimated by the Council of Europe). They are also amongst the most under-privileged groups in Europe.

With first generation immigrants, there is a statistically significant difference according to the age of immigration: those immigrating to the country between the ages of 13-19 were at a more disadvantaged position than those that had immigrated before the age of 13. For the latter, 81% were high school graduates compared with 62% of those who immigrated after the age of 13 (in the age group of 18-24-year-old immigrants).

While some of the differences even out over the second generation, inequalities still exist. According to data from Eurostat second generation migrants are on average at greater risk of exiting the education and training system without having obtained any upper secondary qualification. The situation is not identical in all EU member states, however (Eurostat, 2011: 21). For instance, in 2008, in the EU as a whole, second generation migrants with foreign and mixed backgrounds (one parent foreign-born) tended to be better

educated than their peers with native-born parents. According to Eurostat, amongst adults aged between 25 and 54, 28% of persons with foreign and 33% with a mixed background have a tertiary education, compared to 26% of their native counterparts. It is noted, however, that there are significant differences at individual country level, where the size and direction of gaps differ significantly — particularly for persons with a foreign background. For instance, in Belgium, Spain and Germany, the proportions of highly educated persons with a foreign background were 10 or more percentage points lower than the proportions of persons with a native background. In contrast, in Ireland and the United Kingdom, the proportion of tertiary educated second generation migrants with a foreign background was at least 10 percentage points higher than their counterparts with a native background (Ibid.). However, some countries have relatively high proportions of second generation migrants with low educational levels. Such countries in which this is particularly noticeable include the Czech Republic, Spain, Austria, Belgium and Germany, where the proportions of lower educated persons with a foreign background were 10 or more percentage points higher than the proportions of persons with a native background.

As such the results are not uniform. It is, however, increasingly clear that if migrants are in a disadvantageous position when it comes to accessing higher education, we are ignoring a significant part of the population across Europe. Higher education has a value in itself but it also leads to, on average, higher incomes, as well as other fringe benefits that correlate with high level of education: better health and active citizenship to name just a few.

Equal access to higher education has for long been the grounding principle of the European student movement. In addition, the European Students' Union (ESU) has been the foremost champion of the concept 'social dimension of higher education' that considers equality of opportunities in higher education, e.g. access, participation and successful completion, guidance and counselling as well as financial support, among other issues.

A recent policy paper of ESU on the Social Dimension states that:

> "ESU believes that education is a human right
> that everyone, no matter political views, religion,

> nationality, ethnic or cultural origin, disabilities, sexual orientation, gender or social standing, has the right to access, and receive all the support needed in order to be able to and complete higher education in order to unfold their true potential."

Furthermore, the paper states that:

> "Higher education must be open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity. Access must be free, meaning not only economically free but also free in terms of without barriers. Access should not be considered solely as admission to higher education, but more holistic as the means, structures and mechanisms by which students are supported during their studies. It also includes the possibility to acquire the necessary tools to succeed when leaving higher education. The key concept behind free access lies in adequately identifying and confronting barriers, which are presented both by higher education systems themselves but also by individual and external factors. It is necessary to identify the mechanisms that would enable those who could, but cannot, participate. The obligation to do so rests both with the state and the institutions in ensuring that higher education is truly accessible for all." (European Students' Union, 2015).

Despite the emphasis on equal access to higher education, so far the attention paid to ethnic or national minority background students or students with a migrant background within the European student movement has been by and large insufficient.

Besides the core European value of equality and promotion of human rights (of which access to education is one), the various minorities and migrants is to a large extent unexplored pool of talent that contributes to the whole of society, higher education included. For instance, several studies have also shown that the more diverse and inclusive the society, the more innovations it produces.

In addition, some studies have suggested (e.g. Suarez-Orozco et al., 2008) that the educational levels of people of immigrant background do not even out as generations go but in fact they

decrease. One of the reasons, they speculate, are the disappointments that their parents have had to face and thus the loss of belief in educating oneself for a better future. The implications of this can be grave for the entire continent.

Therefore, on goals of widening access to underrepresented groups and making the student body more diverse, it is worth the effort to take a look at these specific groups and the challenges they may face in entering higher education.

4.2 Widening access on the European agenda

4.2.1 The Bologna Process on widening access

Widening access to higher education is one of the key goals for the European Higher Education Area. In the London Communiqué of 2007 of the Bologna Process, Ministers of Education stressed that "the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels should reflect the diversity of our populations" and that "students [should be] able to complete their studies without obstacles related to their social and economic background" (EHEA Ministerial Conference, 2007: 5).

In Leuven/Louvain-La-Neuve, the Ministers made a commitment to "set measurable targets to widen participation and widening participation of underrepresented groups in higher education, to be reached by the end of the next decade" (EHEA Ministerial Conference, 2009).

And even in 2012, the Ministers convening in Bucharest for the Bologna Ministerial Meeting stated that:

The student body entering and graduating from higher education institutions should reflect the diversity of Europe's populations. We will step up our efforts towards underrepresented groups to develop the social dimension of higher education, reduce inequalities and provide adequate student support, services, counselling and guidance, flexible learning paths and alternative access routes, including recognition of prior learning. We encourage the use of peer learning on the social dimension and aim to monitor progress in this area." (EHEA Ministerial Conference, 2012).

The commitment to developing more inclusive education systems was reaffirmed and expanded (to include mobility and conflict-affected students) in the 2015 Yerevan Communiqué:

> "Making our systems more inclusive is an essential aim for the EHEA as our populations become more and more diversified, also due to immigration and demographic changes. [...] We will enhance the social dimension of higher education, improve gender balance and widen opportunities for access and completion, including international mobility, for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. We will provide mobility opportunities for students and staff from conflict areas, while working to make it possible for them to return home once conditions allow." (EHEA Ministerial Conference, 2015)

However, despite all the glossy words after 9 years of political promises, real progress still awaits. Migrant populations in different national minorities still face immense barriers in entering higher education.

Between the Ministerial Conferences in Bucharest (2012) and Yerevan (2015) ESU co-chaired the BFUG Working Group on Social Dimension. The most tangible outcome is the EHEA Social Dimension strategy (BFUG SD WG, 2015) which gathers the objectives of the past Communiqués and attempts to translate them into national actions. The strategy was endorsed by the Ministers during the Conference, where they also pledged to implement it. Taking stock at the implementation when Ministers meet again in Paris in 2018 will be interesting.

4.2.2 European agenda

There are several key players that have addressed the issue of a diversifying European population and the understanding that we must ensure equal access not only to higher education but in all levels of the society.

Diversity of Europe's populations is increasingly acknowledged as a reference to the migrant populations of Europe, although national interpretations of this vary according to, among others, po-

litical priorities. For instance, Finland stated in a clear manner in its Strategy for the Internationalisation of Finnish Higher Education for 2007-2015 that the share of migrants in the society must be reflected equally in higher education institutions. The actual execution of this was found to be challenging to grasp by higher education institutions until the current migration situation in Europe took shape in the end of 2015. Since then, several institutions have tried to step up their game.

Increasing attention has been paid by the government. For instance, the Minister of Education established a widely representative working group at the end of 2015 whose task was to draw up a set of recommendations for actions to be taken at all levels of education in order to respond to the challenges and inadequacies of the current educational system with regard to newcomers. Student organizations representing secondary education and higher education students were also represented in the working group. The group handed over their recommendations to the Minister in late January 2016. The recommendations included actions for higher education and student organizations as well. You will find more information under "Further reading" in the end of this chapter.

The agenda for integration of third country nationals claims that the average educational level of third country nationals is below that of EU nationals. Young people with a migrant background are at greater risk of exiting the education and training system without having obtained an upper secondary qualification. Furthermore, additional efforts are needed to prevent early school leaving among migrant youth.

In a Eurydice publication, *Modernization of Higher Education in Europe 2011: Funding and the Social Dimension,* it is noted that

> "European countries show significant differences in their approach to widening participation. While some countries focus on measures to increase participation of underrepresented groups in higher education, others take a general approach to increase and widen overall participation, hoping that this will also lead to an increase in participation from socially

disadvantaged groups. A third group can also be identified where both general and targeted measures are combined."

In line with this topic, the European Commission has addressed issues of integration of ethnic and other national minorities and immigrant populations. For example, the European Commission has put forward a European Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies, which seeks to help guide national Roma policies and mobilize funds available at EU level to support inclusion efforts. The Framework is in line with the EU's broader Europe 2020 targets for employment, social inclusion such as education, health and employment.

The Commission has also given a lot of attention to questions of integration of migrants through work and education. For instance, in its Communication of 17 June 2008, A Common Immigration Policy for Europe: Principles, actions and tools the Commission stressed that migrants should be given opportunities to participate and develop their full potential. In their understanding this is facilitated by appropriate mechanisms for the recognition of professional qualifications immigrants have acquired outside the EU. In addition, migrants' integration should be improved by further strengthening the mainstreaming aspect of integration policies, such as civic participation, integration into the labour market, social inclusion, anti-discrimination and equal opportunities.

The Commission also considers that "education is undoubtedly an essential element in the EU's fight against social exclusion and discrimination. Experiences and knowledge generated through education can and must be used to create an enriched coexistence based on solidarity, tolerance, and respect among all members of society."

In July 2011, the European Union published a renewed European Agenda for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals. The agenda is a contribution to the debate on how to understand and better support integration. A diversity of approaches is called for, depending on the different integration challenges faced by migrants, both low and highly skilled, as well as those requiring international protection. Actions targeting especially vulnerable groups of migrants are also needed.

In the Council Conclusions on the Social Dimension of Education and Training (2009), the Council of the European Union states that particular attention should be paid to the needs of persons with special educational needs, those of persons with a migrant background and those of the Roma community since increasing international competitiveness requires high professional skills combined with an ability to create, innovate and work in multicultural and multilingual environments.

The Council of Europe in particular has taken an active approach to the Roma issue, producing several recommendations. Council of Europe's former Human Rights Commissioner, Thomas Hammarberg, was especially attentive to the Roma question. The work of the Council of Europe, however, currently centers on preschool and school-age children.

Despite the attention paid to these issues, there is mounds of evidence both nationally and internationally, that migrant children tend to do less well within the education systems Europe-wide. Furthermore, as noted by MIPEX (Migrant Integration Policy Index) education tends to be the Achilles' heel in many countries integration efforts and it has included at access to education as a new indicator of integration for their future work.

In March 2015, following the terrorist attacks in Paris and Copenhagen, the topic of exclusion and racism rose to the top of the European agenda when EU ministers of education adopted the Paris Declaration, affirming that "*we must combine our efforts to prevent and tackle marginalisation, intolerance, racism and radicalisation and to preserve a framework of equal opportunities for all.*" The Paris Declaration emphasises that we must ensure inclusive education opportunities for all children and young people, and combat geographical, social and educational inequalities.

The European Commission already in 2015 amended the Education and Training in Europe 2020-strategy to make inclusive education a priority, and later in March 2016 published a map of all the national policy initiatives that had been undertaken by then. Unfortunately, action around higher education is not strong, and a sizeable group of countries have yet to implement any measures (European Commission, 2016).

It should be clear by now that the issues have been identified on several levels and by several institutions. The next question to be explored then is: "What are the barriers that we need to demolish?" and "What can we, as a student union, do about it?"

4.3 Barriers to Entering Higher Education

Access to higher education is not without barriers and migrant students as well as students with an (ethnic) minority background often face additional barriers. Below we will discuss some of the more pertinent ones.

4.3.1 Access to secondary education

The first hurdle to cross is often access to secondary education. Despite the existence of flexible study paths in some countries (e.g. via open university, separate quotas for student with no upper secondary degree and so forth), the main route to higher education is through (upper) secondary school. In some countries access to higher education is gained via both kinds of upper secondary education - be it vocational or academic in orientation but in many cases, the decisions on whether to pursue higher education must be made fairly early on in one's education, as access to higher education may only be gained through an academic type of upper secondary education.

According to the European Commission, early school leavers tend to come from a lower socio-economic background or belong to what they call vulnerable social grounds. In addition, early school-leaving rates tends to be double for migrant youth. According to some research (Erisman & Looney, 2007), especially those who have immigrated to the country in their teenage years have more tendency to drop out. This is probably due to many reasons, among them insufficient time to learn the necessary language skills, possible trouble of integrating into the country combined with other integration and personal issues coinciding with adolescence, can constitute greater than usual challenges.

In Finland, a study done by Laura Kyntölä (2011) examined second generation migrants in academic upper secondary educa-

tion. While the findings emphasised the role of family background, not only through the current socio-economic background of the students and language skills of the parents but especially the social capital as well as the faith that parents had in education. Information gained through official channels was often superficial and rarely reached the parents and thus decisions that the youth made relied heavily on hearsay and information gained through other networks. Support from parents is often relatively small due to lack of knowledge on the educational system as well as lack of language skills. Even with educated parents, the education system and needed qualifications for certains types of jobs may differ radically from what the parents know based on their own experiences in the country of origin. Guidance from schools was also considered insufficient so that the youth are often left to their own devices on making the decision.

Some countries offer special classes or preparatory routes for students from migrant backgrounds. For example, in Finland preparatory courses have been created to ease entry into vocational upper secondary education (since 1997), Universities of Applied Sciences (since 2010) and finally academic upper secondary schools in 2014 . These are set in legislation and they must be organized free of charge for the student. No preparatory courses exist for the (traditional) research universities. The content of these courses mainly centers around strengthening language skills, but also study and academic skills as well as offering information about the field of study.

4.3.2 Access to higher education

According to a study conducted by the Institute for Higher Education Policy (Erisman & Looney, 2007), there are multiple barriers that immigrants face with regard to access to higher education. While concentrating on the American context, the claims are generalisable, by and large, to the European context as well. According to IHEP, the so called structural barriers that migrants face are (in no specific order): lack of information about post-secondary education, work and family responsibilities, increased need for financial support, lack of academic preparation and achievement, and limited English proficiency (ibid: 6).

Lack of language skills in the local language is the one of the more obvious and easily observable barriers. Education, especially higher education, requires a fairly sophisticated level of language that often takes many years to achieve. Lack of information and understanding of the new education system, and requirements for certain professions and how to access higher education can hinder access to higher education. A mere application round to institutes of higher education can be a daunting task, even for students born in the country. In addition, the kind of information needed to understand access to higher education is not often available in sufficient breadth to either students with a migrant background or those coming from a non-academic family background.

The IHEP study concludes that many migrant students are often non-traditional students: entering education at a later point, may have to work alongside studies, and thus be part-time students, and often times may have family responsibilities. Lack of financial resources can constitute a great barrier. In the US, the study found that:

> "Immigrant students have higher unmet financial need than the average undergraduate and are more likely to enroll in community colleges or private for-profit institutions—55 percent of all immigrant undergraduates and 59 percent of legal permanent residents were enrolled in these types of institutions in 2003–04."

Community colleges tend to have cheaper tuition-fees and private-for-profit institutions offer a higher rate of scholarships. According to IHEP, migrant students are also more hesitant towards taking student loans. The growing trend (also in Europe) of ever rising tuition fees and cuts in student support can constitute therefore yet another barrier on widening access to higher education for migrant students. Especially for migrants who come to the country as adults, the financial implications of attaining higher education (like many other mature students) and in many cases trying to balance work and study and often supporting a family, may prove too difficult a task.

Especially first generation migrants may also face other stresses of immigration, from traumatic experiences (such as war) to the mere culture-shock of arriving in a new country and system. Those arriving during adolescent years have the increased challenge of growing up while adapting to a new culture.

Often, as the social network is more limited for migrant students, even non-mature students from migrant background might face more family responsibilities (such as caring for siblings, translating for parents etc.) which might affect entering and succeeding and graduating from higher education. The IHEP study quotes Tseng (2004) that in New York City, migrant students spent as much as 15 hours per week more on family responsibilities than native-born peers, and that this pattern held true regardless of region of origin or socio-economic status. This is bound to have implications for students with migrant backgrounds.

4.4 What can NUSes do?

The IHEP report referenced many times in this chapter (Erisman & Looney, 2007) suggests that "many of the barriers that immigrants confront are similar to the ones generally faced by low-income and first-generation college students and policies intended to benefit that population as a whole will also help immigrants." However, certain barriers have a greater impact on immigrants, regardless of their background and resources. Below are some ideas for what your NUS can do to start working on the issue.

You may also find inspiration in the Peer-Learning for Social Dimension (PL4SD) database online, which can be found on www.pl4sd.eu.

4.4.1 Sufficient language studies/classes prior and during higher education studies

Having sufficient language skills in the domestic language is the number one priority in accessing higher education. It is unfortunately still sometimes thought, especially in countries where the language is not English, that "international" degrees conducted in English will cater not only to international but also migrant students. This is often not the case. For instance, according to a study commissioned by the Ministry of Education (Sandberg & Stordell, 2016) conducted in Finland in 2016 in the aftermath of a significant increase in refugees seeking for asylum, 27% of the newcomers had completed higher education studies. However, it was estimated that perhaps only 5 % of all arrivals had sufficient language skills to be able to continue their studies directly in degree programs conducted in English.

Rather, sufficient language studies must be provided for the migrant population in order to facilitate entry to higher education as well as successful graduation. Higher education studies require for the most part language skills of at least (CEFR) B2 and this means that language courses that build up the skills to at least that point must be offered. For true facilitation of access, these must be widely available and financially accessible for the student.

In addition, sufficient language support during studies should be offered to the student through-out studies and integrating progressively advancing language studies into the curriculum should be a key consideration

Gaining sufficient language skills is a crucial success factor into widening access of migrants and ethnic minorities into higher education. Access to and success in higher education requires not only language skills that enable taking part in working life and integration into society, but also very specific jargon and type of vocabulary that may not be taught in courses offered to migrants.

CASE EXAMPLE FINLAND

The provision sufficient language classes is unsatisfactory. To gain Finnish citizenship, the applicant must reach the language level of B.1.1. of the European Language Framework. By and large, different institutions offer these courses either for free or for a very low cost for the student. However, language courses that build up language skills after that required level are not offered nearly enough for higher education; in most cases it is not sufficient for the labour market, save for menial jobs.

In order to gain access to preparatory courses (see 3.3.1) in Universities of Apwplied Sciences, the prospective student must have, in most cases, the language level of at least B2 to be admitted. There is then, a clear discrepancy of the required skills and courses offered to those with a migrant background and those required to enter higher education. The preparatory courses concentrate on further building up the prospective students' skills to enable them to gain a level that would suffice for higher education.

Finnish student organisations across the board have pointed out this need and called out for for sufficient amount of high level language classes that will cater for not only migrants but also international students wishing to gain access to the Finnish labour market after graduation. Integrating language studies into the curriculum. i.e. entry wil lower level language skills with support and classes offered suding studies, should be worked into the system.

4.4.2 Sufficient information, guidance and counselling

In addition to insufficient language studies, one of the biggest obstacles to entry into higher education is the sheer lack of knowledge about the education system and insufficient counselling and guidance at several transition points throughout the education system. The education system that the student is familiar with might differ radically from the country of new residence and as well for instance pre-qualifications for certain professions (e.g. need for pre-medical studies to enter MD education).

This extends to second generation migrants too in the sense that some immigrant parents, not recognising the long-term economic benefits of a college education, may be more inclined to encourage their children to work to help meet their family's immediate economic needs.

Student unions can call for or provide themselves sufficient information in variety of languages and written in a very concrete, non-bureaucratic style to be produced about the educational choices, and encourage their institutions to provide services that will serve the interests of those students needing more help in understanding their options, about the financing possibilities of their studies (grants, scholarships etc). These kind of actions help not only migrant students, but in fact, first generation higher education students as well.

In some countries, the establishment of a system of Roma mentors started in the 1980s and 1990s. It is rooted in the idea that using people from Roma communities to give Roma children easier access to schools, and improve their chances of succeeding when they get there, accords with the more general principle of encouraging members of those communities to play a direct part in finding and implementing solutions to their problems. The mentors also function as interpreters between the different cultures. A similar kind of system has been used by a Hungarian national student union, HÖOK, who has established a mentor program within higher education to help students from a Roma background navigate through higher education once they get there.

COUNSELLING AND GUIDANCE CASE EXAMPLE UNITED STATES

A case example presented in the IHEP study (2007) comes from New York. City University of New York, CUNY, offers many non-post secondary courses aiming to help migrant students learn English, civics or offer job training programmes. In connection to this, there is a counseling component included. The College Prep program holds on- and off-campus workshops that aim at helping students understand the American education system and move from non-credit programs to degree studies. They also offer legal assistance to migrants, for free, on issues of immigration and other legal issues.

4.4.3 Flexibility of admissions mechanisms

Providing alternative routes to higher education can undo some of the effects of early selection into the academic or non-academic track (in other words: choices can be remade). These issues have more to do with how the education system is structured and can admittedly be harder for NUSes to work on, as changing something as fundamental as entry routes into higher education can be quite challenging, as they are rather all encompassing. There is evidence, however, that issues like selection of one's education track (academic/vocational) at a later age (e.g. 15/16 or so) can help counter initial disadvantages that students from a migrant background (or ethnic minority) might have. This also accounts for other, non-traditional HE student backgrounds. Below are some other examples of flexible entry models currently being used.

Alternative tracks may include, among others:

- entry via the Open University system
  - sufficient success and completed credits can grant access to a degree granting program
- entry via entrance examinations
  - entrance examination success might be used as the only criteria for being admitted to a certain institution

    e.g. Finland: in most fields in the traditional universities students are selected via two quotas in the entrance examination: one where students' previous grades are combined with the entrance examination results and the other where entry is based solely on the entrance examination results. However, this practice may also become a hindrance for students as such, especially if the intake is based heavily on language abilities.
- flexible entry via different strands of education (e.g. from both academic and vocational education)
- short cycle degrees and granting access from short cycle degrees to HE
  - short cycle degrees (e.g. 2-year, e.g. Higher National Diploma, Associate degree etc.) tend to be more

accessible and can facilitate entry to full degree studies (Kirsch & Beernaet, 2011). However, not all countries have short cycle degrees and not everywhere do they grant access to HE.

- access on the basis of prior learning (e.g. short cycle degrees in Denmark, the Netherlands, UK) that can also be acquired through non-formal learning.
- Practises stemming from the full implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, with special attention paid to recognition of prior learning, even without documentary evidence
- Flexible entry routes e.g. separate intakes, free students etc.

It should be noted that none of these alternative routes are perfect solutions, but they should be looked into as a possibilities for widening access for a more diverse student population.

4.4.4 Addressing discriminatory access mechanisms

As discussed earlier in the chapter, direct discrimination is legally banned throughout Europe and is thus unlikely to occur at least in a very prevalent way. This does not mean that there are not discriminatory measures in place, as they might be indirect and unconscious structural mechanisms that need addressing.

An example of this is an interview conducted as a part of entry to higher education. The interview, in general, tests many other things than the students' capabilities. For instance, there are differences between communication within different cultures. What is rude for a Nordic person (speaking on top of another, using a loud voice) is considered a standard way of communicating in Southern Europe. Vice versa, a Nordic student can be considered incapable of communication as they would wait for a turn to speak which will never come in another cultural setting. This is not a mechanism that people necessarily realise can actually be discriminating and cultural sensitivity and knowledge should be considered in those situations.

What the student union can call for is, for example:

- in case of interviews, the that the interview be recorded to guarantee equal treatment in case the student feels that the interview was conducted in an unfair way.
- training assessors on assessment methods: there are different criteria that assessors use that do not per se measure the students capabilities, but for instance style of communication in one-on-one situation or in groups which is culturally bound.
- the use of anonymous applications and grading to minimize the effect that the students' background or persona may have on the assessment.

4.5. Recognition of prior learning and the Lisbon Recognition Convention

Section VII, Article VII of the Lisbon Recognition Convention concerns the recognition of qualifications held by refugees, displaced persons and persons in a refugee-like situation. It is supposed to mitigate the impact conflict in one's home country has on one's education opportunities, but ensuring a fair chance of recognition, even when no documents exist. This has been an increasing problem in especially the Syrian conflict, where Assad has been known to purposefully delete education records of persons who have left the country. In the recognition process it is important to recognise the value of self-assessment, as well as to provide individual counselling to the student, allowing the individual to take ownership of the process. The article reads:

> "Each Party shall take all feasible and reasonable steps within the framework of its education system and in conformity with its constitutional, legal, and regulatory provisions to develop procedures designed to assess fairly and expeditiously whether refugees, displaced persons and persons in a refugee-like situation fulfil the relevant requirements for access

to higher education, to further higher education programmes or to employment activities, even in cases in which the qualifications obtained in one of the Parties cannot be proven through documentary evidence."

Out of the 53 signatories of the Convention. Only seven (7) countries have national legislation which meets the objective of Article VII. Eleven (11) more countries have a practice in place (de facto legislation). No signatories of the Convention have a reservation in place with regard to that specific article, and as such, seeing the Convention is legally binding, should implement the article fully. With the current increase in migrants with a refugee status, attention has been paid for instance to the Norwegian UVD-practice[4]. At the European Students' Convention 31, held in Amsterdam in March 2016, participants called for the full implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, with specific attention paid to the above mentioned Section VII, Article VII. Countries should look into the issue and develop practices that fit the national recognition system and practices in order to fully implement the aforementioned Convention.

4.6 Conclusions

While several support measures have been taken, and have been implemented, easing access to higher education is not enough. What must be ensured is that the students with an immigrant background have a genuine possibility to also complete the education they started. As such, all students, regardless of background must be sufficiently supported by the universal support systems of countries in which they reside, and further targeted measures of support must be either implemented in consultation with underrepresented communities, or existing ones radically improved.

The examples given in this report are not exhaustive and other measures may exist. They are meant to serve as an inspiration,

4 See the description at the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (Nokut): http://www.nokut.no/en/Foreign-education/Other-recognition-systems/Recognition-Procedure-for-Persons-without-Verifiable-Documentation/

background information and enable national student unions to look at the current system with a critical eye and improve where they can. National student unions are usually the best experts regarding their own system and where the most feasible actions can be taken regarding widening access to all, including migrants and (ethnic) minorities.

By and large, the support measures that have been identified here serve not only the needs of students with a migrant background, but also first generation higher education students, students from lower socio-economic background and other non-traditional higher education students. Paying attention to these details not only facilitates access of migrant students to higher education, but facilitates access to higher education in general - a goal that could not be more close to the hearts of students working in their national contexts.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Throughout this handbook, we have attempted to present some best practice examples of actions that NUSes have undertaken either on behalf of, or alongside students, or potential students with a migrant or ethnic minority background. As the European student movement is a hugely diverse and complex context, the same must be said of the many different contexts in which students face barriers for access to higher education. This final chapter presents some final thoughts, or small ideas for your consideration as actions your union might undertake.

5.1 Multilingualism (Raising Awareness and communication in multiple languages)

Many European countries are somewhat multilingual and although, and also because, numbers of minority groups are relatively low, problems with communication are quite common. Working communication requires, of course, that both parties understand each others. When speaking of communication with immigrants or minority groups, this means that not only there should be sufficient support and possibilities for learning the local languages, but also that the administrators, teachers and other members of the academic community should be able to communicate in more widespread languages, such as English, French etc.

Insufficient education might be one of the reasons for problems in communication, but also for example as seen in education of minority official languages. For example, with the Swedish language in Finland, or Frisian in the Netherlands, education of minority languages should start earlier on than 13-15 years of age, to fully embrace the potential and benefits of learning languages at a young age from a developmental point of view[5], as well as from the sociological point of view of prior to developing prejudices and/or rebellion against learning specific languages.

5 On discussion on the critical period hypothesis see e.g. Singleton, David, and Lengyel, Zsolt. (1995). The Age Factor in Second Language Acquisition. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Language oriented preparatory courses have been offered to be one solution to differences between different language levels. By equalising different levels of language skills, in addition to easier access to HE drop-out levels will decrease as immigrant-background students have better preparedness for studies, but also they have had better support for becoming included into society. To reach equally and widely enough potential students in need of these courses, they should cover at least the most common barriers to HE, but also they should be somewhat customisable for different backgrounds, and it is highly recommended that they would be free of charge for the students.

5.2 Internationalisation of Higher Education, international/multicultural support, International programs in Higher Education Institutions

Supporting a multicultural environment will not only ease access into higher education, but it will also support integrating minority groups into higher education. Wider selection of programs in English and other foreign languages will give more equal possibilities to get to HE, but attention should also be paid to international competence of staff in higher education institutes to reduce drop-out levels and to ensure sufficient support for minority groups. As a further positive consequence of internationalisation, the increased diversity in the classroom has been proven to improve the quality of learning for everyone.

5.3 Map and define the minorities

We often end up talking about minorities in very general terms: we acknowledge they exist, and might take for granted that we all discuss the same group of minorities. However, often the generalisation can lead to misunderstandings, and in the worse case harmful policies that do not support the intended target group. This can be done in partnership with the responsible Ministry and representatives from minority groups. With the EHEA Social Dimension Strategy adopted by Ministers in Yerevan (BFUG SD WG, 2016) members of the Bologna Process have committed themselves to develop Na-

tional Access Plans, in which local minorities are defined and specific measures proposed to assist them. Unfortunately, Ireland remains the only country to have successfully developed and implemented a National Access Plan, despite guidelines having been developed already.

5.4 Consultation

When we discuss minority groups in higher education, it is often a natural and unfortunate reaction to respond with an objective attitude - i.e. that the majority population must do something for the minority. This risks further marginalising the group in question, although the intentions may be only the best. The most effective way to include minority groups in higher education is to include them in all actors in higher education. It is recommended that NUSes cooperate with minority groups on promotion of inclusion, and look into building more inclusive democratic structures in their own local and national student unions.

5.5 What should you do

What could you do as an organisation?

Student unions, as well as other NGOs, are well known for their ability for doing campaigns for almost anything. Linguistic education as well as transitional programs that are focused on getting easier access for immigrants into higher education is one thing that student unions could focus on. As financing of programs etc. is also one of the major barriers, getting decision-makers on your side, on local and national level, is important. Therefore, having nothing but public rallying for something is not sufficient, but in addition active lobbying towards politicians cannot be forgotten. Campaigning should be targeted more to fighting against discrimination and attitude problems and also raising awareness about barriers that immigrants and minorities are having with access to higher education. Organisations should also encourage migrants and minorities to get involved with student unions and use their advice and use them as experts when campaigning or lobbying.

When trying to have an effect on new practices or policies, it's important to have your own ideas about how to improve things. Therefore, it is extremely important to have data on experiences of migrant students about what sort of barriers they face, where support systems are needed, as well as on structures and practises that work well.

5.6 Further reading

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