Is mobility for all? Potential barriers for temporary enrolment abroad.

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1.) Introduction

The promotion of student mobility has been a key political goal since the start of the Bologna Process. Such mobility is seen as **fostering desirable competences, including the further development of students' personalities, the promotion of their linguistic capabilities and the generation of intercultural sensitivity and professional competences;** and as such, it is seen as serving as a catalyst to the realisation of the European Higher Education Area. The benefits of mobility have also been emphasized by the Mobility Strategy for the European Higher Education Area. Since mobility abroad is such a focus of European and national policies for "better learning" in higher education, it is **essential to assure that it is also accessible to all.** Against this background, it is important to discuss mobility as well in the context of the Social Dimension which has become another cornerstone in the Bologna Process.

2.) General obstacles to mobility

Available data and research identify a number of **obstacles** in accessing opportunities for mobility: As outlined in the EUROSTUDENT IV report[1], **financial concerns** are the top obstacle followed by **separation from friends and family** in most EUROSTUDENT countries[2]. Another important factor related directly to the social context of a student is the **loss of opportunities to earn money**, expressed by around one third of all students. As outlined in the EUROSTUDENT IV report, across Europe around 40% of students work regularly during their study semester and this cross-country average increases to 50% for students from low social backgrounds. Apart from financial and social-context issues, around one third of students are concerned with study-related factors – namely expected **problems with recognition or results** achieved in foreign country and an expected **delay in progress** in their studies. Another important factor is related to the **difficulties of getting information**. In cross-country average, 21% of students consider this a (big) obstacle. In every case, the share of students expressing

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[1] *EUROSTUDENT (Dominic Orr, Christoph Gwosć, Nicolai Netz),* Social and Economic Conditions of Student Life in Europe. Synopsis of indicators. Final report. Eurostudent IV 2008–2011. See also *EUROSTUDENT*, Intelligence Brief: Short-Term Mobility And Mobility Obstacles

[2] *EUROSTUDENT (Dominic Orr, Christoph Gwosć, Nicolai Netz),* Social and Economic Conditions of Student Life in Europe. Synopsis of indicators. Final report. Eurostudent IV 2008–2011**,** p.175. See also *EUROSTUDENT*, Intelligence Brief: Short-Term Mobility And Mobility Obstacles. The following countries participated in EUROSTUDENT from 2012 to 2015: Armenia, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia,* Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan,* Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Montenegro, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia,* Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, The Netherlands, Ukraine* (*=pilot countries).

a concern about a particular obstacle is higher (often twice as high) for students from low social backgrounds (low education background of parents) in comparison to students from high social backgrounds (higher education background of at least one parent).[3]

BOX 1: Obstacles to enrolment abroad included in E:IV

Aggregated group	Items as surveyed
Language	Insufficient skills of foreign language
Personal reasons	Separation from family, partner, child(ren), friends Lack of personal drive
Financial issues	Loss of social benefits (e.g. child allowance) Loss of opportunities to earn money Expected additional financial burden
Studies at home	Expected delay in progress of studies Presumed low benefit for studies at home Problems with recognition of results achieved in foreign countries Does not fit into the structure of the programme
Organisation in home country	Difficulties in getting information Limited access to mobility programmes in home country
Access to host country	Limited admittance to preferred institution Access regulations in host country (e.g. Visa) Problems with accommodation in host country

Source: *EUROSTUDENT IV*, see also *IHS*, Student mobility in the EHEA: Underrepresentation in student credit mobility and imbalances in degree mobility (2014).

3.) Is mobility equally accessible for all?

As the 2012 Bologna Process Implementation Report[4] recognizes there is a difference in participation rates of different student groups in mobility. If left unchecked, increases in mobility rates may lead to a new dimension of social disparity.[5] This finding gives rise to calls for a greater equality of opportunities for students to go abroad during their studies.

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[3] In: *Dominic Orr*, Mobility is not for all: An international comparison of students' mobility aspirations and perceptions of barriers to temporary enrolment abroad. In: *Bernd Wächter, Queenie K.H. Lam, Irina Ferencz* (eds.), Tying it all together, Excellence, mobility, funding and the social dimension in higher education (2012).

[4] *EHEA, The European Higher Education Area in 2012: Bologna Process Implementation Report (2012)*.

[5] Ibid.

Against this background of varying participation rates, the Ministers state: "We will give extra attention and opportunities to under-represented groups to be mobile and recognize the importance of adequate student support services to this end." In this, the ministers recognize that the intensity or influence of the barriers may be different for different student groups and that this has resulted in under-represented groups missing out on the opportunity to undertake mobility periods abroad. This is important, since the rationale for supporting mobility is that it has benefits beyond those accrued to the individuals themselves. Therefore, it must be a central aim of policy to dismantle barriers to mobility for all student groups.[6]

Available data and research point to the fact that the following groups of students benefit less from international mobility than others: Students from low education background, non-traditional students and older students as well as students from other groups considered vulnerable in a specific national context (e.g. migrant students, students belonging to ethnic minorities etc.). While there is relatively good data on students from lower socio-economic background, less data are available on other categories of under-represented students which also differ depending on the country context.

> ➢ **Students from low education (social) background**

Available data have shown that in the majority of countries, foreign enrolment rates **vary by social background**,[7] with students from high social backgrounds having higher rates than students from low social backgrounds. This also applies to countries where access to higher education seems to be generally equitable (Finland, Switzerland, Ireland and the Netherlands).[8]

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[6] In *Orr* (2012).

[7] *EUROSTUDENT*, Intelligence Brief: Short-Term Mobility And Mobility Obstacles

[8] Ibid. See also Orr (2012).

Figure 1: Students who have not been enrolled abroad and who do not plan to enrol abroad by social background in %
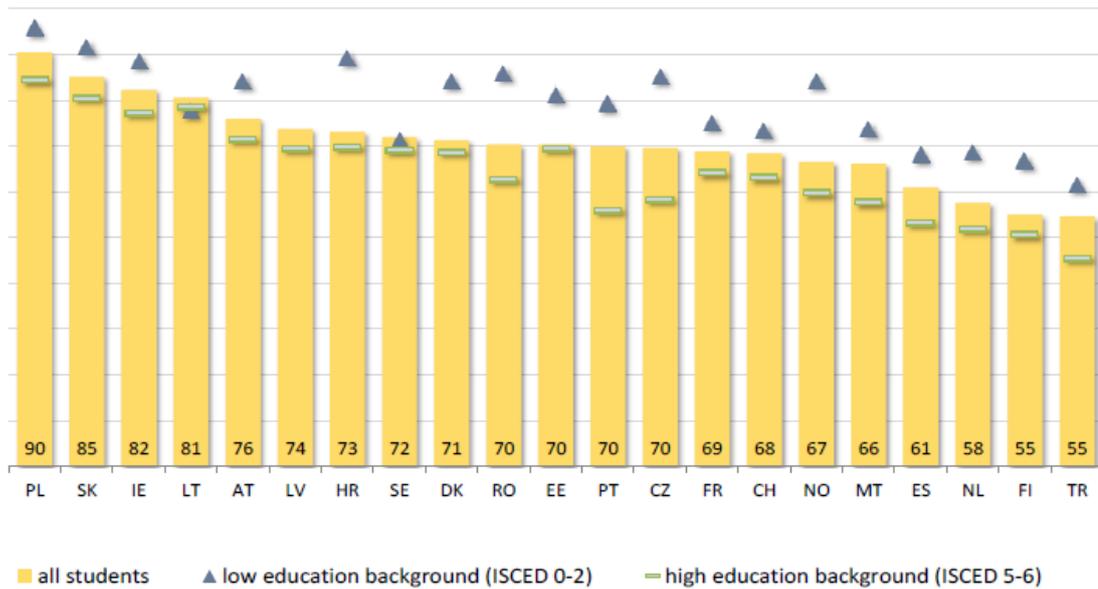
Source: EUROSTUDENT IV, Subtopic I.1 & I.3. No data: DE, E/W, IT, SI. Too few cases for low education background (ISCED 0-2): LV.

Figure 1: Students who have not been enrolled abroad and who do not plan to enrol abroad by social background in %
Source: EUROSTUDENT IV, Subtopic I.1 & I.3. No data: DE, E/W, IT, SI. Too few cases for low education background (ISCED 0-2): LV.

As outlined above, the share of students expressing a concern about a particular obstacle to mobility is higher (often twice as high) for students from low social backgrounds in comparison to students from high social backgrounds (higher education background of at least one parent).[9]

➢ **Non-traditional students and older students**

In most countries, so-called non-traditional student groups are less likely to temporarily enrol abroad during their study career. These include students who study part-time (low study intensity) and students with delayed transition into higher education[10]. Students who enrolled in higher education directly after completing secondary education have a higher affinity towards enrolment abroad compared to students with delayed transition into higher education. To some extent this has also to do with the fact that these groups of students are more likely to already have family obligations.

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[9] Ibid. See also Orr (2012).

[10] *IHS* (2014), p. 14. See also *EUROSTUDENT* (2012).

> ➢ **Migrant students and students from other groups considered vulnerable in a specific national context**

In addition to the above mentioned categories of students which are under-represented in mobility across the EHEA region, it is also essential to consider groups of students or potential students which may be considered vulnerable and/or under-represented in a given national context. There are indications, for example, pointing to the fact that migrants are under-represented in the overall student population and that migrant students are also less likely to access mobility. Comprehensive regional (and national) data in this respect is unfortunately scarce.

By 2009, countries participating in the Bologna Process were requested to elaborate **national strategies for the social dimension**, including action plans and measures to show their impact. Strategies should start with the identification of possible under-represented groups. An analysis of strategies has shown considerable agreement among the reporting countries that several or all of the following groups are under-represented in higher education:

- Groups with lower socio-economic background,
- (Less educated) immigrants and cultural minorities,
- Students with a disability,
- Non-traditional students (mature students, students with foreign qualifications),
- Female – male students (gender balance).

Information on under-represented groups in the various countries of the Bologna Process should thus in principle be available, even though data availability varies strongly. Regarding the participation of women in mobility, it is interesting to note though, that available data from the EHEA region shows that female students are more likely to take advantage of possibilities for mobility than their male peers.[11]

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[11] *IHS* (2014), p.14.

4.) The Social Dimension of the Bologna Process and how it relates to mobility

In its *Council Conclusions on the Social Dimension of Education and Training* (2010), the EU Council invites member states to continue to **eliminate barriers to, expand opportunities for, and improve the quality of, learning mobility,** including by providing adequate incentives for the mobility of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Improving the Social Dimension of the Bologna Process entails focusing on the real needs and the personal circumstances of certain student groups, since these often constitute barriers to entry, participation and successful completion of higher education.

The concept of the social dimension of higher education was first developed within the Bologna Process in the Prague Communiqué of 2001 and, broadly speaking, refers to the goal of removing inequalities in access to higher education in the European Area of Higher Education. The goal of the social dimension was most clearly defined in the London Communiqué of 2007:

*"We share the societal aspiration that **the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels should reflect the diversity of our populations**. We reaffirm the importance of students being able to complete their studies without obstacles related to their social and economic background. We therefore continue our efforts to provide adequate student services, create more flexible learning pathways into and within higher education, and to **widen participation at all levels on the basis of equal opportunity**."*

The above `definition' does not only cover equitable access of these various groups to higher education, but also 'retention' (i.e. progress in studies), and `completion' (i.e. graduation). Addressing the social dimension should take into account that three key factors tend to determine educational success: Student ability; material and immaterial (e.g. social and cultural) resources; and **OPPORTUNITY**.[12]

In particular, non-academic factors such as social background and aspiration, and study framework conditions (e.g. balance between work and studies) affect participation and success in higher education. Indeed, visible student ability may have been affected by a

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[12] See e.g. *PL4SD Infosheet,* http://www.pl4sd.eu/download/PL4SD_Info_sheet.pdf.

person's material and immaterial resources at a previous (e.g. secondary) educational level. The social dimension therefore entails looking at various stages of the education system and adopting measures that can help individuals to overcome such disincentives to access, participate and complete higher education.[13]

Ensuring access to higher education for all groups of societies is not being argued only from a justice perspective: As a paper from the EU on its modernisation strategy states "[t]he group of school leavers from which higher education traditionally recruits is shrinking. Therefore, Europe needs to attract a broader cross-section of society into higher education, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, and deploy the resources to meet this challenge."[14]

BOX 2: Potential measures to foster the Implementation of the Social Dimension

In order to foster equal access and equal opportunities in higher education, the BFUG Working Group on the Social Dimension has developed a (non-exhaustive) list of potential measures to foster the implementation of the Social Dimension.

These include:

A.) Measures to promote equal opportunities for access, participation and completion
- Anti-discrimination legislation covering higher education
- Admission rules that are simple, fair and transparent

B.) Measures to widen access to and participation in higher education
- Outreach programs for under-represented groups as defined nationally
- Flexible delivery of higher education
- Flexible learning paths into and within higher education
- Transparency of qualifications and recognition of prior learning
- Incentives for higher education institutions to take action to widen access and participation

C.) Study environment that enhances the quality of the student experience
a.) Provision of academic services
- Guidance (academic and careers) and tutoring
- Retention measures (modification of curricula, flexibility of delivery, tracking academic success etc.)
- Working tools and environment (well-functioning libraries, lecture hall and Seminar rooms, internet access, access to scientific data bases etc.)

b.) *Provision of social services*
- Counselling
- Targeted support for students with special needs and students with children
- Appropriate housing conditions for all students
- Provision of healthcare
- Provision of transportation, student canteens etc.

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[13] Ibid.

[14] *European Commission,* Supporting growth and jobs. An agenda for the modernisation of Europe's higher education systems (2011), p.3.

D.) Student participation in the governance and organisation of higher education
- Legislation or other measures to ensure student participation in higher education governance
- Provisions for the existence of and exercise of influence by student organisations
- Student evaluations of courses, programmes and institutions, including action plans and follow-up of actions taken

E.) Finances in order to start and complete studies
- Financial and legal advice for students
- Appropriate and coordinated national financial support systems that are transparent
- Targeted support for disadvantaged groups as defined nationally
- Support measures for students with children

For more information see http://www.ehea.info/article-details.aspx?ArticleId=12

The identification of vulnerable and under-represented groups in higher education in general and mobility in particular varies between countries. This underpins also the importance of **approaches and measures, tailored to a specific country context**.[15] On the other hand, however, a set of agreed indicators is needed to allow measurement of progress and (to the extent possible) comparability in implementing the Social Dimension across the EHEA. This process of developing EHEA wide indicators and measurable targets is still ongoing.[16]

In order to facilitate peer learning on the Social Dimension, the ministers responsible for higher education in the EAEA committed in the Bucharest Communiqué from 2012 **to collect and share data on the social dimension** of higher education. The result is the so-called "PL4SD database" (http://www.pl4sd.eu/) which collates and catalogues policy measures in the European Higher Education Area that address the social dimension of higher education: The database presents measures which share the common objective of reducing barriers to higher education access and of providing a conducive study environment for all students that can lead to their successful completion of higher education. In addition, the PL4SD project also

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[15] See also *WUS Austria, Summary from Focus Group Discussions on the Implementation of the Social Dimension of the Bologna Process in Kosovo, 2015:* Based on a desk research three Focus Group Interviews (FGIs) on the Social Dimension of the Bologna Process were conducted in Pristina in 2015. The FGIs aimed at stimulating a debate at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) on the Social Dimension of the Bologna Process and to identify recommendations to strengthen the Social Dimension of higher education in Kosovo. Participants in the FGIs included higher education teaching staff, university management, education authorities, CSOs and students from Bosnian, Roma and Turkish communities. Questions addressed in the FGIs included the following: Which groups can be considered as marginalised in Kosovo (overall)? Which groups are underrepresented in higher education? What are some of the obstacles they face? What measures could be taken to enhance access to higher education for marginalised groups?

[16] See also *Bernd Wächter*, The "social dimension" in higher education: Reflections on a 'woolly' concept. In *Bernd Wächter, Queenie K.H. Lam, Irina Ferencz* (eds.), Tying it all together, Excellence, mobility, funding and the social dimension in higher education (2012), p.80.

carried out three country reviews between 2013 and 2014 for which Armenia, Croatia and Lithuania have kindly volunteered to serve as pilot studies.

BOX 3: Findings from the Social Dimension Country Review in Armenia (Report from 2015):

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:
SHORT TERM:

- Gather data on the social background of pupils and students in current data initiatives.

Using existing practices of data collection (such as at registration for the central entrance examination or at enrolment to studies) has the advantage of limited additional costs. Surveys, which are not so regularly carried out, can then be used to collect additional data, which is not collected on a regular basis through the administrative system.

- Develop benchmarks on the participation of under-represented groups in higher education.

The participation of several groups could be boosted if the government sets benchmarks on national and institutional level for the participation of particular groups of students currently either non-present or only enrolled in higher education in very small numbers. Since the new law on higher education already mentions certain under-represented groups, a benchmark of achievement could be set for any of these groups:

MID TERM

- Development of the student support system which is less fragmented and based on identified needs, rather than on demonstrated ability.
- Develop an integrated strategy to decrease demand for private tutoring at secondary school level.
- Recognise the sustainability and effectiveness of the higher education funding system from the perspective of the HEIs and the students.

This issue is likely to remain tricky, since funding from both public budgets and private households is very scarce. However, it seems that the current system is not optimally configured. HEIs are keen to assure their sustainability by increasing fees whereas high fees are putting high pressures on students and their families. Additionally the turbulence caused by the rotation between paying fees and receiving state-funded places may be negative for student progression. There are no quick fixes here, but higher education funding appears to be a major issue.

- Review policy-making and implementation processes.

This recommendation can be given to any country, which is subject to multiple reforms. For them to enfold their full impact it is important to assure that: (i) **data and evidence is available and used well** for policy development and evaluation and (ii) the **policy-making and implementation process is as inclsuive as possible.** Many actors and stakeholders of Armenian education, such as teachers on secondary level, higher education teachers and students, as well as labour market actors, feel little ownership of recent policies made by the government and this effects the implementation of the potential of such policies. This could be addressed by including more critical voices in the elaboration and the implementation of policies.

5.) Excursus: Access to higher education based on international human rights treaties

Equal access to higher education is also a right enshrined in other international instruments such as human rights conventions, most importantly the UN International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).

BOX 4: The Right to Education in International Human Rights Law

> **Main international human rights instruments related to the right to education:**
>
> - Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948 (Article 26)
> - UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education, 1960 (Articles: 1, 3 and 4)
> - International Covenant on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), 1965 (Art 5)
> - **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights** (ICESCR), 1966 (Art.13)
> - International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), 1966 (Articles 18 and 19)
> - Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 1979 (Art 10)
> - Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), 1989 (Articles 28 and 29)
> - International Covenant on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (ICPRD), 2006, (Article 24)
>
> Worldwide, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) has been ratified widely, including Armenia, Belarus, Georgia and Ukraine.[17]
>
> International treaties establish an entitlement to **free, compulsory primary education for all children**, an **obligation to develop secondary education** supported by measures to render it **accessible to all** children, **equitable access to higher education** and a **responsibility to provide basic education** for individuals who have not completed primary education. The right to education has long been recognized as encompassing not only **access to educational provision**, but also the obligation to **eliminate discrimination at all levels** of the educational system, to **set minimum standards** and to **improve quality.**

The legal obligations stemming from the right to education are easily structured according to the following **A-4 SCHEME** which have been elaborated and further developed by relevant UN structures, most importantly the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education:[18]

1. *Availability*
2. *Accessibility*
3. *Acceptability*
4. *Adaptability*

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[17] The status of ratification of all international human rights treaties per country can be found under http://indicators.ohchr.org/.
[18] *CESCR*, General Comment No 13 on the right to education (1999).

Availability

Functioning educational institutions and programmes have to be available in sufficient quantity and different forms. What they require to function depends upon numerous factors, including the developmental context within which they operate. This includes an obligation of the State parties to permit the establishment of educational institutions respecting freedom of and in education as well as the obligation to ensure functioning educational institutions are available in sufficient quantity (subject to progressive realization).

Accessibility

a.) Non-discrimination

Most importantly, this includes an obligation of State parties to eliminate exclusion from education (both legal and de facto) based on the internationally prohibited grounds of discrimination (race, colour, sex, language, religion, opinion, origin, economic status, birth, social status, minority or indigenous status, disability): Education in general must be available to all, especially the most vulnerable groups, in law and fact, without discrimination on any of the prohibited grounds. Higher education must be available to all on the basis of capacity. The "capacity" of individuals should be assessed by reference to all their relevant expertise and experience.

b.) Physical accessibility

Education has to be also within safe physical reach, either by attendance at some reasonably convenient geographic location (e.g. a neighbourhood school) or via modern technology (e.g. access to a "distance learning" programme). Physical accessibility also includes taking into account special needs of persons with disabilities.

c.) Economic accessibility

Education has to be affordable to all. Whereas primary education shall be available "free to all", States parties are required to progressively introduce free secondary and higher education (subject to progressive realization).

Acceptability

The form and substance of education, including curricula and teaching methods, have to be acceptable (e.g. relevant, culturally appropriate and of good quality) to students. This includes an obligation to set minimum standards for education, including the medium of instruction, contents and methods of teaching, and to ensure their observance in all educational institutions and continuously work towards improvement of quality of education. It also clearly includes an obligation to improve the quality of education.

Adaptability

Education has to be flexible so it can adapt to the needs of changing societies and communities: This includes an obligation of State parties to respond to the needs of students within their diverse social and cultural settings.

Conclusion: International human rights law and standards derived from the Bologna Process – including on the Social Dimension - should be seen as mutually reinforcing and complementary: Looking at both in conjunction can provide guidance for strengthening the benefits of higher education both for students and the broader society.

6.) Measures to enhance equal access to higher education in general and mobility in particular

In order to help bring about more socially inclusive and balanced participation in higher education – including also access to mobility - different measures are being employed all over Europe. An **analysis of the National Strategies on the Social Dimension** of the Bologna Process by the BFUG Coordination Group on the Social Dimension[19] shows clearly that virtually all countries take some action in order to enhance participative equity in their country, but only a minority of the countries has set up monitoring systems for measuring progress on the issue. Still fewer show evidence for an integrated strategy with synergies between government actions and institutional practices, funding arrangements, lifelong learning strategies, recognition of prior learning, cultural and linguistic minority issues, guidance services,

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[19] *BFUG Coordination Group on Social Dimension,* Analysis of the National Strategies on the Social Dimension of the Bologna Process, in: Bologna Process Stocktaking Report (2009).

communication policy, social policy, anti-discrimination protection, tax system etc. The coordination group concluded that there is still a long way to go before the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels will reflect the diversity of our populations.[20]

The following overview provided by *Bernd Wächter[21]* summarizes the **most common measures applied to enhance access to higher education**: `In line with the belief that a lack of financial means presents one of the steepest hurdles for participation especially of students from lower social-economic strata, **student aid** plays a big role as a means to ease the entry into higher education of the less privileged. This is also true for accessing opportunities for mobility: The support systems in place take many different forms, such as grants (not-to-be-paid-back scholarships) and (usually subsidized) loans. Some national support systems are means-tested and thus only provide for the needy, while others (prevalent in the Nordic countries) are available for the entire student body. On top of such direct aid to students, there are indirect forms of support. Tuition-free or tuition-low participation is one such form, tax benefits for parents of students another (…). **Improvement of access through more flexibility and recognition** is another mean. This includes the recognition of results from study periods abroad, but also for access to higher education in general also recognition of prior learning – non-formal and informal – as well as flexible study paths, for example by means of the provision of part-time studies, distance learning, short-cycle degrees, modularisation of the study programmes and elective courses. Finally, **student services** have widely come to be considered as an important mean to improve overall retention and graduation rates, but would appear to be particularly vital to ensure the study success of social-dimension-relevant groups. Next to practical support (student housing, canteens, etc.), these services include help for different groups in the form of, for example, guidance and counselling for educational and career matters, psychological help, as well as special support - for students with disabilities[22].' Other measures taken which are essential in particular for enhancing access to mobility for all include **dissemination about opportunities for mobility as well as offering language courses.**

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[20] Ibid.

[21] *Bernd Wächter*, The 'social dimension'in higher education: Reflections on a 'woolly' concept. In: *Bernd Wächter, Queenie K.H. Lam, Irina Ferencz (eds.), Tying it all together, Excellence, mobility, funding and the social dimension in higher education* (2012), p.80f.

[22] CHEPS, INCHER, ECOTEC, The Bologna Process Independent Assessment. The first Decade of Working on the European Higher Education Area. Volume 1. (2010), p.53.

Disaggregated data at the national level which also identify those who are under-represented are essential prerequisites for designing appropriate and tailored measures. Some countries report that they have sufficient evidence and research on which to base their policies. In some cases (e.g., Ireland) this is based on information gathered by the HEIs themselves. Several other countries report that they have insufficient or even no evidence. Many countries report that they have created - or plan to create - a student data base, giving detailed information on the social situation of students.[23]

In some cases (e.g., Ireland) these data are based on information gathered by the HEIs themselves. Several countries also plan to conduct regular student surveys. Some countries (e.g. Scotland) produce annual reports on the success of widening policies, giving performance indicators of HEIs. Data collection and research is typically done by a National Statistical Service, the Ministry of Education, or by a special agency. Student organisations can also be involved in conducting surveys. Several countries report that they have benefited from their participation in the Eurostudent Surveys on the Social and Economic Conditions of Student Life in Europe. In some countries (e.g. Finland) Student Unions also conduct research in cooperation with the government. Finally, it should be observed that some countries mention privacy or data protection problems when collecting data on the financial situation of students, their ethnic roots, possible disabilities, etc.

The exchange of good practices – such as through the PL4SD database (http://www.pl4sd.eu/) which collates and catalogues policy measures that address the social dimension of higher education – can be another useful tool for providing guidance and support. Some examples are listed in the box below.

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[23] *BFUG Coordination Group on Social Dimension,* Analysis of the National Strategies on the Social Dimension of the Bologna Process, in: Bologna Process Stocktaking Report (2009).

BOX 5: Examples of good practices/measures for implementing the Social Dimension (http://www.pl4sd.eu/)

Name of measure	Country	Short description
Additional funding support of internat. mobility of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds (Erasmus+)	Slovenia	HEIs can provide additional funding to support international mobility of students from lower socio economic backgrounds (2014/2015).
Accessibility mobility grant	Finland	Grants for students or staff of HEIs with disability to cover additional costs for participation in mobility (e.g. special learning materials, accessible accommodation etc.) as well as information/counselling.
Georgian Language Preparatory Programme	Georgia	Counselling and support measures for students from minorities (since 2010) including language preparatory course in Georgian.

7.) Summary and conclusions

Available data identify a **number of obstacles in accessing opportunities for mobility**: These include funding support, the loss of opportunities to earn money, the recognition of periods abroad at home institutions, information availability on benefits of and provisions for studying abroad, foreign language capability and the separation from family and friends. Data and research also point to the fact that **certain groups of students benefit less from international mobility than others**: These include students from low education background, non-traditional students and older students as well as students from other groups considered vulnerable in a specific national context (e.g. migrant students, students belonging to ethnic minorities etc.).

In its '*Council Conclusions on the Social Dimension of Education and Training*' (2010), the EU Council invites member states to continue to eliminate barriers to, expand opportunities for, and improve the quality of, learning mobility, including by providing adequate incentives for the mobility of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Improving the **Social Dimension** of the Bologna Process entails **focusing on the real needs and the personal circumstances of certain student groups**, since these often constitute barriers to entry, participation and successful completion of higher education.

In order to help bring about more socially inclusive and balanced participation in higher education – including also access to mobility - different measures are being employed all over Europe. Typically, these measures include different forms of **student aid, measures that enhance recognition and flexibility, student support services** including counselling,

dissemination of information and language courses. Another possibility to widen access to internationalization is through mobility at home (which, however, is not dealt with in this paper).

In any case – **measures need to be tailored to the national context** in order to be effective and to adequately respond to the existing challenges: **Disaggregated data** at the national level which also identify those who are under-represented are essential in this respect. The **exchange of good practices** – e.g. through the PL4SD database (http://www.pl4sd.eu/), but also as an integral part of future projects – can be another useful tool for providing guidance and support.

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