

Accessibility and completion of higher education : *Why students' mental health and wellbeing matter and how to improve them*

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OHO! Symposium
14th November 2019



Accessibility and completion of higher education : *Why students' mental health and wellbeing matter and how to improve them*

1 The European Students' Union

2 Accessibility, completion and the Social Dimension

3 Mental health and wellbeing

4 Food for thought : how to improve the situation?

1. The European Students' Union

- What is ESU ?

- An umbrella organisation of 45 National Unions of Students (NUS) from 39 countries
- ESU's mission is to represent, defend and strengthen students' educational, democratic and political and social rights
- Accessible higher education of high quality with strong student participation

1. The European Students' Union

- All NUSes are open to all students in their respective country regardless of political persuasion, religion, ethnic or cultural origin, sexual orientation or social standing.
- They are student-run, autonomous, representative and operate according to democratic principles.



1. The European Students' Union

- **What is ESU ?**

- Created in 1982
- A team of 13 elected and selected representatives
- Campaigns, policy work, capacity building, training and lobbying

- **Who do we work with ?**

- European Institutions
- Council of Europe
- Bologna Follow-up Group
- International partnerships

1. The European Students' Union

« Equal educational and social opportunities in an open and democratic Europe where students shape a sustainable future. »

2. Accessibility, completion and the Social Dimension

- **The Social Dimension of Higher Education**

- What are the three concepts that come to your mind when mentioning the Social Dimension of Higher Education ?
- Go to menti.com and use the event code : 11 48 25
- You have two minutes !

2. Accessibility, completion and the Social Dimension

- The Social Dimension of Higher Education

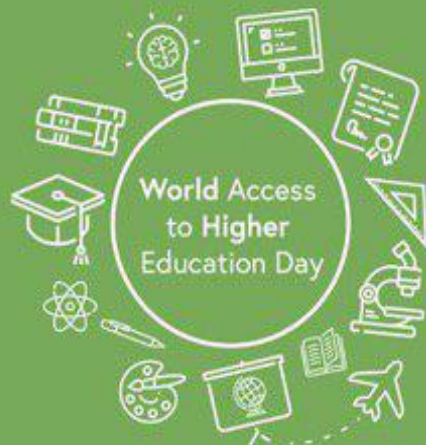
« Higher Education and the society coexist in an inseparable symbiosis. They affect and influence each other mutually and the social dimension is embedded into both. The Social Dimension defines the composition of the two and at the same time is under the influence by the symbiosis. »

(ESU 2015 Policy Paper on Social Dimension)

2. Accessibility, completion and the Social Dimension

- **The Social Dimension of Higher Education**

- Higher Education is not a separate « world »
- Mutual influence between higher education and the context of the society
- Higher education as a reflection of the society : inclusion and wider responsibility of higher education
- Achieve more social equality : a better and more diverse higher education !



2. Accessibility, completion and the Social Dimension

- The Social Dimension of Higher Education
 - Includes many aspects – each of them is linked to both
 - The accessibility to higher education
 - And the chances of completion of a given curricula

2. Accessibility, completion and the Social Dimension

- **Accessibility to higher education**

- Ability and possibility to enroll in Higher Education (becoming a student)
- Linked to societal mechanisms and barriers : background, gender, language, prior education, financial situation...
- All that will influence a potential student's enrollment

2. Accessibility, completion and the Social Dimension

- **Completion**

- The action of finishing the chosen curricula
- Also linked to mechanisms and barriers : discriminations, language, support, financial situation
- All that will influence a student's success and graduation

2. Accessibility, completion and the Social Dimension

- **Factors influencing the accessibility and the completion**
 - Structural and non-structural discriminative mechanisms
 - Academic support
 - Language
 - Financial and material support systems
 - Housing and transport
 - Curricula design
 - Physical access to the facilities

2. Accessibility, completion and the Social Dimension

- Factors influencing the accessibility and the completion

... And of course, the mental health and the wellbeing of the student !

3. Mental health and wellbeing

- **Mental Health**

- Mental and psychological state of a person
- A wide range of mental states exist
- Mental Health can fluctuate
- Positive/negative
- Stigma around mental health : opposition to physical health

- **Wellbeing**

- A person's wellbeing is directly linked to their mental health

3. Mental health and wellbeing

- **The link to higher education ?**
 - Mental health and wellbeing are extremely important factors for accessibility and completion of higher education
 - Rise in awareness of the students' situation : stress, anxiety, burn out, pressure...
 - Impacts the ability to learn and to fully participate in HE
 - Influences the results of the student
 - Crucial because they are linked to most other influencing factors

3. Mental health and wellbeing

- **What factors can influence mental health ?**
 - What are the first three factors influencing mental health that you can think of ?
 - Go back to menti.com (event code : 11 48 25)
 - You have two minutes

3. Mental health and wellbeing

- **What factors can influence mental health ? Examples :**
 - Financial situation of a student
 - For instance, having to work outside of HE : 50 % of the student population (Eurostudent) → risk of stress, burn out...
 - Uncertainty about sustaining oneself
 - **Material situation :** access to housing (23 % experience accommodation cost overburden), reasonable transport time, access to studying material...

3. Mental health and wellbeing

- **What factors can influence mental health ? Examples :**
 - Preexisting mental health conditions
 - Can be aggravated by the lack of support
 - Rythm of study and pressure:
 - Too many hours
 - Inapropriate workload (i.e. Art Schools, Medical studies...)

3. Mental health and wellbeing

- **What factors can influence mental health ? Examples :**
 - Support (or lack thereof) from family and friends
 - Teaching methods
 - Student centered learning
 - Adaptation to the diversity of students

3. Mental health and wellbeing

All of these factors (and many more) will influence a student's mental health and wellbeing, and therefore also influence its chances of accessing and completing higher education.

4. Food for thought : how to improve the situation?

- Which tools can be used to improve students' wellbeing and mental health ?
 - What are the first three tools/mechanisms/... that you can think of ?
 - Go back to menti.com (event code : 11 48 25)
 - You have two minutes

4. Food for thought : how to improve the situation?

- **At system level**
 - Adequate support systems :
 - Grants
 - Social support
 - Health care system that includes students
 - Admission procedures
 - Housing solutions
 - Transport
 - Awareness on the issue
 - Anti-discrimination measures

4. Food for thought : how to improve the situation?

- **At institution level :**

- Academic support
- Counselling
- Accessible medical facilities
- Financial support
- Anti-discrimination measures and campaigns
- Evaluation of the administrative procedures
- Curricula design
- Listening and believing : workload, harassment, student-centered learning

4. Food for thought : how to improve the situation?

- **As student representatives :**
 - Advocate at all levels
 - Peer support
 - Campaigns
 - Being an inclusive and accepting movement
 - Promoting healthy behaviours
 - Working towards ending the stigma related to mental health

4. Food for thought : how to improve the situation?

- **What do we do as ESU ?**
 - Mental Health Charter
 - Working with partner who are experts in the field
 - Raising awareness
 - Mental Health as a priority
 - During events



ANY QUESTIONS ?

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The European Students' Union

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Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

ESU has received financial support from the European Commission through Erasmus+ Programme: KA3, Support for Policy Reform- Civil society cooperation in the field of education and training.

