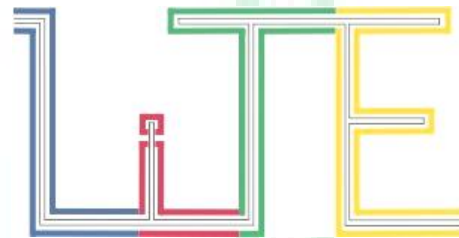


*SUPPORTING ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION
FOR UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS IN BULGARIA*

MULTIPLIER CONFERENCE
Project „Lost in Transition Europe” – LiTE
Lifelong Learning Programme, Sub-Programme Erasmus

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Types of underrepresented groups

- Criteria used to identify underrepresented (disadvantaged) groups in higher education in the EU Member States:
 - disabilities;
 - social and economic status;
 - ethnicity or immigrant status;
 - age (mature versus typical students);
 - geography (rural versus urban areas and/or deprived versus wealthy areas).

Models of implementation

- National-level strategies:
 - adapt the study environment to the needs of students with disabilities;
 - financial support – for students in disadvantaged social and economic situation;
 - exemption from paying HE fees, part-time (no less than 50%) attendance of lectures and seminars, extended examination session – for people with disabilities, mother of small children;
 - simplification of admission procedures, organisation of special HE application preparatory courses.

Models of implementation

- Good practices at national level:
 - Financial initiatives:
 - merit-based scholarships – for full-time students;
 - granting loans to students and doctoral candidates;
 - loan schemes for covering the living cost of young parents studying full-time in tertiary institutions;
 - additional financial schemes for monthly scholarships and financial awards under Operational Programme ‘Human Resources Development’ 2007-2013 (OP HRD);
 - private entities scholarships – Foundation “Aid for Charity in Bulgaria” and Foundation “Orphan”, Foundation “Evrika”, etc.

Models of implementation

- Promotion of flexible modes of study – development of e-forms of distance learning under OP HRD;
- Preparatory programmes for HE candidates:
 - preparatory programmes for higher education candidates in general and for secondary school graduates from ethnic minorities in particular;
 - programmes delivered under flexible arrangements allowing mature students to obtain standard upper secondary school leaving certificate;
- Student services – accommodation, services related to sport, social and cultural activities of students, favourable environment (incl. facilities, equipment and ICT infrastructure) for students with specific needs .

Models of implementation

- Good practices at institutional level:
 - regular monitoring of the opinions of disadvantaged students in UNWE about the implemented policies and practices for supporting their access to HE;
 - university centres for career development;
 - Interuniversity Centre for Career Development in UNWE;
 - Expanding the coverage of distant mode of learning in UNWE;
 - information campaigns for promoting distant mode of learning in UNWE – days of open doors and other initiatives;
 - Medical University in Bulgaria – scholarship programme for Roma medical students.

Framework guidelines

- National-level guidelines:
 - make the HE system in Bulgaria more open towards the recognition of learning outcomes acquired outside formal learning contexts;
 - provide financial resources under different donor programmes to initiate large-scale awareness-raising campaigns;
 - expand the preparatory programmes for higher education candidates;
 - offer guidance and counselling services targeting upper secondary graduates;
 - provide academic guidance and psychological counselling services to students from underrepresented groups in HEIs;
 - increase the per student state subsidies for the education of individuals from disadvantaged groups;

Framework guidelines

- introduce monitoring mechanisms for achievement of planned results;
- introduce quantitative targets to be reached;
- speed up the process of adapting the physical environment, training materials and ICT infrastructure and resources;
- initiate changes in the state legal regulations to allow for:
 - development and implementation of alternative selection procedures and systems – introduction of quotas for candidates from disadvantaged groups;
 - employers to cover the expenses (fees and tuition) of their employees' university studies.
- actively involve social partners and expand the cooperation between the HEIs.

Framework guidelines

- Guidelines for academic and administrative staff:
 - need for professional counselling of university academics and administration in order to increase their skills and competences with respect to students from underrepresented groups (disadvantaged students, students from vulnerable minority groups, mature learners) and specific approaches for working with these students;
 - establishment and maintenance of a working unit which should get academics, administration and other students acquainted with the problems of these learners and the ways of solving them;

Framework guidelines

- introduction and effective implementation of relevant interactive methods of education of the above-mentioned group of students;
- encourage students to actively participate in various events;
- adopting individual approaches, methods, means and manner of working with these students;
- organising joint extracurricular activities for regular students and students with specific educational needs – sporting, art, environmental activities, etc.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

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