



EUROPEAN COMMISSION - PRESS RELEASE

Higher education must open up to make the best use of Europe's talent – Commission report

Brussels, 16 September 2011 - Europe urgently needs to address the social dimension of higher education more forcefully and coherently, particularly in view of the economic downturn. This is the conclusion of a new Commission report looking at national policies on access to higher education, funding and student support. The report, covering EU Member States, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Turkey, provides input for the Commission's new strategy for the modernisation of higher education, to be launched on 20 September.

According to today's report, countries need to adapt their higher education systems to meet the challenges resulting from rapid societal change. In particular, they need to open up opportunities for more people to benefit from higher education, matching this objective with coherent measures, funding and monitoring to evaluate their impact.

Androulla Vassiliou, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth, said: "*We are failing to make the most of the talent available to us in Europe. Unless we change path, we will fall behind our global competitors. We need to widen access to higher education to the largest proportion of citizens possible, and it is vital that this objective is at the heart of our education goals.*"

European leaders have set a target for 40% of 30-34 year olds to have a higher education qualification by 2020 - an increase from just over 33% today. The study, produced for the Commission by the Eurydice network, focuses on three key topics: policies to widen participation in higher education; funding trends; and the impact of student fee and support systems.

It reveals that approaches to meet shared European objectives vary greatly between countries and have different impacts on the performance of higher education. For example, there seems to be an East-West divide regarding routes to higher education for non-traditional candidates such as adult learners and people entering university on the basis of skills gained in the workplace rather than school qualifications.

The report highlights changes in higher education spending in response to the crisis. Over the past academic year (2010/11 compared to 2009/10) budgets were most increased in Lithuania, Liechtenstein, Austria, France, Finland and Malta, while the deepest cuts were made in Greece, Ireland, Iceland, (8-10% decrease), as well as in Spain, Italy, the Czech Republic and Slovakia (up to 3% decrease).

The report also shows the tuition fees and grants which apply in each country. However, it does not single out any particular approach as the best option because what works well in one country does not always work in another.

For more information:

The full study, in English, as well as Highlights, is available here [Modernisation of higher education in Europe: Funding and the Social Dimension 2011](#) (French and German versions and printed copies will also be available shortly).

European Commission: [Education and training](#)

On the EU's education policies and programmes:

http://ec.europa.eu/education/index_en.htm

Eurydice

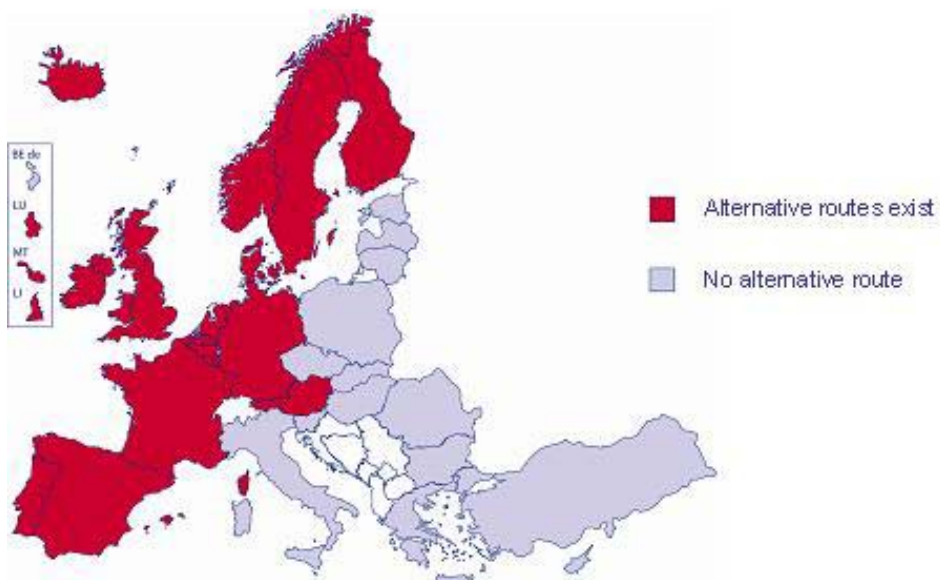
The [Eurydice Network](#) provides information on and analyses of European education systems and policies. It consists of 37 national units based in all 33 countries participating in the EU's Lifelong Learning Programme (EU Member States, Croatia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey). It is co-ordinated and managed by the EU Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, which drafts its studies and provides a range of online resources.

1. First and second cycle (Bachelor and Masters) students paying fees and receiving grants, 2009/10

	Majority receives GRANTS		
Minority pays FEES	DK, MT, FI, SE, UK-SCT, LI, NO	CY, NL, SK, UK-EWNI	Majority pays FEES
	DE, EL, LT, HU, AT	BE, BG, CZ, EE, IE, ES, FR, IT, LV, PL, RO, SI, IS, TR	
	Minority receives GRANTS		

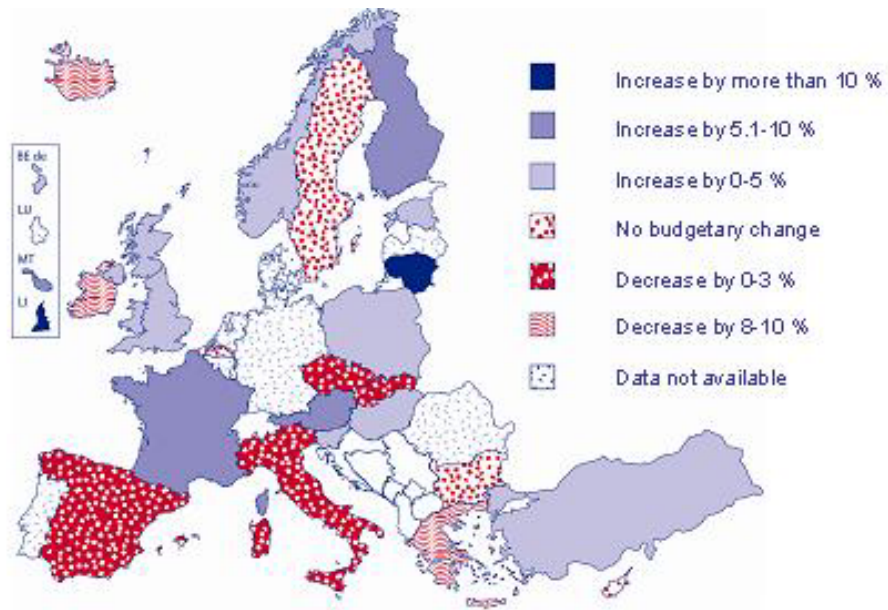
Source: Eurydice.

2. Alternative routes to higher education for non-traditional candidates, 2009/10



Source: Eurydice.

3. Changes in higher education budgets from 2009/10 to 2010/11



Source: Eurydice.

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