

Conference of Ministers of Education  
of European Member States of Unesco on  
Access to Higher Education

Vienna. 20-25 November 1967

# Access to higher education in Europe

Comparative background documents  
and report of the conference

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# General considerations and recommendations

1. The Conference has re-emphasized the importance of education, and especially of higher education, in regard to economic, social, and cultural development in all parts of the world. Higher education is the most effective means of utilizing human resources and potential to the fullest degree.

2. The hope was expressed that adequate resources would be employed to ensure the exchange and comparison of experience among European countries. The discussions brought out the importance of concerted action under the auspices of Unesco, with particular reference to the standardization of data on education and to the organization of systematic documentation.

Further co-operation among European countries should facilitate comparative studies and co-ordinated research, dealing in particular with the modernization of teaching methods at all levels through the use of new educational methods and techniques.

3. The conference noted that the intake of students at secondary and higher level has increased considerably in all European countries in recent years, that this trend is likely to continue, and that it has created auxiliary problems, which all European countries are endeavouring to solve through some form of educational planning. This may take either the form of forecasts designed purely for guidance or that of fixing student and pupil quotas within a general development plan.

It was agreed that some specific mechanism for the planning of access to education, especially at the higher level, was necessary in the educational system. There were differences of opinion with respect to the practical operation of planning mechanisms to this effect.

There was also agreement as to the importance of studying the methodology of educational planning. To this end, Unesco and other international organizations should undertake research projects,

which would both test and reinforce the effectiveness of planning methods.

4. All European countries are called on to do their utmost in meeting the increased demand for higher education. Many countries reported themselves as obliged to impose either some form of quantitative control or a stricter system of selection during study programmes. All European countries are continuing their efforts to increase possibilities of admission in order to meet the social demand through such measures as the creation of new universities, the diversification of higher studies and the improvement of student/teacher ratios.

5. The conference stressed the importance of the principle of continued guidance and counselling as constituting a means of co-ordinating the free choice of studies and professional careers (acknowledged everywhere as an individual freedom) with social requirements. Such educational guidance should set out: (a) to provide pupils and parents, by appropriate means, with information on scholastic opportunities and on the nature and prospects of the various occupations; (b) to observe and record the progress of pupils or students; (c) to detect and stimulate specific aptitudes and vocations, by such means as tests, more individualized instruction and by para- and out of-school activities connected to the academic programme.

Such a system of guidance was viewed as a crucial element in preventing wastage of human and material resources in higher education by reducing the disturbing number of failures or drop-outs. In this connexion, the conference noted that, although useful research had been carried out, there was as yet no adequate basis for international comparisons of incidences of wastage and failure at different levels of education.

It was the general consensus that an exchange of experience or a compilation of existing systems of counselling and guidance in European countries,

together with a comparison of the methods used would be productive.

6. To meet with social requirements and the demands of technological development, higher education is being continually and effectively diversified in all European countries. This leads to the substitution of eliminatory and negative selections by counselling and guidance.

7. There was general agreement as to the continuing need to so improve curricula as to allow for a greater utilization of the results of educational research and the introduction for new methods. New materials of learning and instruction were also considered as crucial in facilitating a 'keeping abreast' of social and technological developments.

8. In the view of European countries, higher education can be expanded and developed only by eradicating at every level of education all factors of inequality relating to race, sex, language, religion, political convictions, national or social origin, economic position or birth, especially among workers and peasants.

The documents placed before the conference and the related discussions have emphasized that while effective action, in the form of free admission, scholarship and other financial assistance, and the creation of good living and working conditions (halls of residence, restaurants, transport, health services, and the provision of textbooks) are of great importance, the structure and content of education at every level still remain paramount factors in terms of access and academic success.

In this context, it was felt that the educational system should effectively counterbalance factors of social, cultural and economic inequality, particularly those incurred by a premature choice of courses leading away from higher education and professional careers. These measures should go hand in hand with more individualized teaching, in order to place guidance at the very mainspring of academic progress.

9. The opinion was shared that education is destined to become a permanent process applicable to employed adults as well. The possibility of following or resuming studies without the sacrifice of professional activity was viewed as a powerful factor in democratization, social mobility, adaptation to social requirements and for correcting socio-cultural inequalities experienced in youth.

It was further emphasized that continuing education is also a factor of major importance in economic and social development. The utilization of evening and correspondence courses, intensive short-

term programmes of technical training and of instruction via radio, television and programmed instruction, is likely to contribute significantly to increased productivity by increasing the supply and diversity of highly qualified manpower.

10. In discussing the relationship between specialized training and subsequent employment, it was agreed that an unanticipated change in occupational direction on the part of a substantial number of students would have important repercussions on long-range educational plans.

11. As a means of increasing the exchange of European students, Member States stressed the importance of a system of equivalence of secondary school-leaving certificates and of mutual recognition of university degrees.

Further, study abroad was viewed as an effective means of overcoming inequalities and of significantly promoting agreement and mutual understanding between peoples.

12. Finally, the conference unanimously recognized the need for both the European Member States and Unesco to seek effective ways and means of encouraging European co-operation with respect to education and especially higher education. In carrying out this task, the conference considered as desirable the adoption of the following recommendations, in the hope of encouraging co-operation and educational progress in Europe, thereby contributing to the cause of international understanding and peace.

## GENERAL RECOMMENDATION <sup>1</sup>

The conference

1. *Recommends* that European Member States of Unesco and the Organization itself:

(a) consider appropriate ways and means of promoting activities designed to foster European co-operation in the field of education, and particularly higher education, taking into account the work already carried out by various national and international governmental and non-governmental organizations and expert meetings;

(b) develop the network of existing information services to enable a systematic and wider exchange of experiences relating to higher education;

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<sup>1</sup> This General Recommendation is based on proposals contained in draft recommendations 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28 and 29, submitted by the delegations of Poland, Spain, Romania, U.S.S.R., Ireland Yugoslavia, Federal Republic of Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg, Netherlands, United Kingdom, Switzerland, Hungary, France, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Austria.

(c) stimulate educational research in connexion with problems concerning access to and future planning of higher education;

2. *Recommends*, moreover, to Unesco:

(a) to carry out, in close co-operation with European Member States, and taking into account the relevant work of international organizations, further methodological studies and to formulate recommendations concerning the provision of internationally comparable data and the standardization of educational statistics, terminology and definitions on topics relating to access to higher education;

(b) to explore the possibility of making provision in the Organization's future programme for a further Conference on Ministers of Education of European Member States.

#### RECOMMENDATION A <sup>1</sup>

The conference

1. *Recommends* European Member States of Unesco:

(a) to undertake further research into the educational process at the second level in relation to access to higher education, with particular reference to promoting active co-operation on the part of parents;

(b) to consider, in the light of national requirements and circumstances, and according to the procedures of specific national legislation, the elaboration of an educational system providing for continuous counselling and guidance and for the postponement of differentiation and narrow specialization as long as possible;

2. *Invites* Unesco to undertake a comparative study of systems of differentiation at the secondary level with a view to ascertaining their relative effectiveness in solving problems of access to higher education.

#### RECOMMENDATION B <sup>2</sup>

The conference

*Recommends* that Unesco continue its studies and work in the sphere of the comparability and equivalence of matriculation certificates and higher education diplomas and degrees, for the purpose of preparing and adopting, in the near future, an international instrument on the equivalence of secondary school certificates and university diplomas and degrees, taking into account the existing intergovernmental conventions.

#### RECOMMENDATION C <sup>3</sup>

The conference;

1. *Invites* the European Member States of Unesco to become parties, if not already such, to the Convention against Discrimination in Education, which guarantees equally of educational opportunity for all without distinction of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or any other opinion, national or social origin, economic position or birth;

2. *Recommends* that European Member States of Unesco, in order to widen access to higher education, examine the existing system of student welfare in consultation with student organizations, with a specific view to such measures as would abolish economic obstacles to education at both the secondary and higher levels;

3. *Recommends* that Unesco:

(a) undertake a comparative study of existing systems of admission in educational structures to higher educational establishments;

(b) pursue detailed studies on such special topics relating to access to education as the socio-economic origin of student, linguistic minorities, and enrolment and wastage rates.

#### RECOMMENDATION D <sup>4</sup>

1. *Recognizing* the desirability for teachers to be trained in student guidance, and also that the provision of guidance and counselling at all stages of education be integrated with the application of new teaching methods and techniques and in particular individualized instruction;

2. *Recommends* Unesco to organize in 1969 or 1970 a European conference devoted to the problem of the modernization of higher education, with particular reference to the subject of guidance and counselling.

<sup>1</sup> This recommendation is based on proposals contained in draft recommendations 1, 10, 16 and 28 submitted by the delegations of Poland, United Kingdom, Sweden and Austria.

<sup>2</sup> This recommendation is based on proposals contained in draft recommendations 1, 7, 20 and 22 submitted by the delegations of Poland, U.S.S.R., Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

<sup>3</sup> This recommendation is based on proposals contained in draft recommendations 3, 7, 8, 9, 13, 14, 16 and 20 submitted by the delegations of Spain, U.S.S.R., United Kingdom, Sweden, Hungary and Poland.

<sup>4</sup> This recommendation is based on proposals contained in draft recommendations 2, 3, 6, 10 and 12, submitted by the delegations of Poland, Spain, Romania and the United Kingdom.

## RECOMMENDATION E <sup>1</sup>

The conference

*Recommends* European Member States of Unesco:

(a) to maintain statistics of access to the various forms of higher education which classify separately those students following full-time courses and those following part-time or correspondence courses;

(b) to find effective methods to provide those who have not followed the regular path to higher education with real possibilities for admission, by means of a policy based more on aptitude and factual knowledge than of formal requirements;

(c) to ensure the development of general and vocational education of adults who have not been able to benefit by the formal scholastic system and to permit thereby their access to higher education and a greater opportunity for social advancement; and, to this end, to organize courses for adults on higher education level, equipped with adequate educational facilities and making full use of modern methods of instruction.

## RECOMMENDATION F <sup>2</sup>

The conference

*Invites* Unesco to continue its work with regard to educational planning in co-operation with other competent international organizations, with particular reference to the following:

(a) the compilation and dissemination of information on the elaboration and implementation of educational plans in the European Member States;

(b) the study of the relationship between the educational specialization of students and their subsequent professional employment;

(c) the carrying out of detailed studies concerning the training of skilled manpower at institutions of higher education in relation to economic and social development, with special reference to such analytical studies as might improve the qualitative forecasting of educational needs;

(d) further research into the relationship between educational investment and the gross national prod-

uct, with reference to the economic aspects of developing higher education;

(e) the establishment of more detailed criteria for comparative studies of the distribution of the student population, with particular reference to wastage at all levels of education;

(f) examination of the current and projected effects of economic, scientific and social change on educational systems, in order to determine appropriate measures to improve long-term forecasting techniques used in the planning of higher education.

## RECOMMENDATION G <sup>3</sup>

The conference,

1. *Considering* that European Member States of Unesco can make a major contribution, especially through their institutions of higher education, to assistance to the developing countries, with a view to advancing the development of their educational and cultural institutions,

2. *Invites* European Member States to encourage their institutions of higher education to lay greater emphasis on studies concerning aid for development, and to adapt their existing facilities more effectively to the training of experts capable of assisting the developing countries;

3. *Considering* that it might prove advantageous for the States concerned to exchange the results of the activities undertaken to this end,

4. *Is of the opinion* that it would be useful for Unesco, on the basis of these exchanges of information, to explore the possibility of organizing, in the near future, a consultation bearing on the training of European experts and specialist personnel for service in the developing countries.

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<sup>1</sup> This recommendation is based on proposals in draft recommendations 2, 6, 8, and 16 submitted by the delegations of Poland, Romania, United Kingdom and Sweden.

<sup>2</sup> This recommendation is based on the proposals contained in draft recommendations 1, 5, 6, 8, 9, IS, 18, 20, 21, 26, 28 and 29 submitted by the delegations of Poland, Romania, United Kingdom, Ireland, Yugoslavia, Hungary, France, Netherlands, Austria and Spain.

<sup>3</sup> This recommendation is submitted by the delegations of the Netherlands and Yugoslavia, based on draft recommendations 17 (Yugoslavia and 23 (Netherlands)).