



**Executive Agency, Education, Audiovisual and Culture**



## **Identifying Effective Approaches to Enhancing the Social Dimension of HE**

Final Report

Public Part

## Project information

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## Executive Summary

The main objective of IDEAS was to expedite the eradication of those barriers that cause inequity in European higher education systems. IDEAS set out to support this objective by creating an IDEAS Toolkit based on research material, good practices and the needs of stakeholders. The project is built on the assumption that equity interventions in HE do not have to be prohibitively costly and that evidence of good practice needs to be collated and disseminated. The IDEAS partners believe that the time is ripe for innovation and there is no reason why current successful interventions cannot be spread, deepened and scaled up.

IDEAS has been a practical project to support stakeholders. Through the analysis of case studies it developed a realist approach to good evidence in equity measures from which an online tool kit and policy paper were developed. Importantly IDEAS worked with definitions of success that are meaningful in their context. It has been able to embrace inspiring interventions that are newly established or that have limited resources for monitoring and evaluating.

The project has collected 57 in-depth case studies through its networks from across the world. These address local, regional and national barriers to equity in higher education. These include a variety of interventions from: The USA, Belgium, Australia, Latvia, Poland, The Netherlands, France, Germany, Portugal, Spain, Italy, The United Kingdom, Latvia, Finland, Canada, New Zealand, Egypt, Hungary, Ireland, Romania, Malta, Austria, Kyrgyz Republic and Kenya. The cases can be found on the project website [www.equityideas.eu](http://www.equityideas.eu).

An analysis of these cases has taken place which has identified different contexts, patterns in funding, duration, evaluation and monitoring outcomes, different levels of implementation and activities. The cases illustrate attempts at new ways of working in Higher Education and demonstrate will of local communities, institutions, staff and students to ensure Higher Education is a key driver for greater equity of society.

Based on these, an online tool kit was developed which lists lessons learned in terms of success factors for starting equity initiatives. In addition, a policy-paper targeted at decision makers describes methods by which grassroots initiatives can be better supported by the public sector and communities. These were disseminated through the project website and an IDEAS tour of 13 targeted workshops in 9 European countries and 2 non-European countries and 3 policy seminars in Brussels and The Netherlands. The analysis, toolkit and policy paper were brought together and published as a book entitled "Effective Approaches for Enhancing the Social Dimension of Higher Education".

Going forward, ECHO from the Netherlands will continue to look for ways to facilitate a next phase of IDEAS since the work on IDEAS is supportive to the work ECHO does on a national and international level. ECHO will moderately increase the number of cases in IDEAS with proven practices from Dutch institutions as well as with examples through her collaboration with the European Access Network based in London and GAPS, a Global Access to Postsecondary Education Initiative based in The Hague. ECHO maintains to collaborate with KIC Malta if possible, who has been responsible for the technical infrastructure.

The IDEAS project is implemented by a consortium of five partners: The National Unions of Students in Europe (ESIB), known also as the European Students' Union (ESU), The Knowledge Innovation Centre, ECHO a centre of knowledge, advice and innovation in HE. EURASHE: The European Association of Higher Education and The Tavistock Institute of Human Relations.

## Table of Contents

1. PROJECT OBJECTIVES.....	5
2. PROJECT APPROACH.....	5
3. PROJECT OUTCOMES & RESULTS .....	6
4. PARTNERSHIPS .....	14
5. PLANS FOR THE FUTURE .....	15
6. CONTRIBUTION TO EU POLICIES .....	15
7. DISSEMINATION, IMPACT AND EVALUATION .....	17

## 1. Project Objectives

The main objective of IDEAS was to expedite the eradication of those barriers that cause inequity in European higher education systems. IDEAS aimed to support this objective by creating an IDEAS Toolkit based on research material, good practices and the needs of stakeholders.

IDEAS aimed to:

- Create a database of programmes/initiatives/policies at micro/meso level for enhancing equity in access, participation and completion of Higher Education from across Europe;
- Screen the database for evidence of a causal link between the initiatives and improvements in equity for their target groups;
- Understand the environmental, social and political enabling factors which allow successful examples of practices to take root;
- Select a number of good practice examples based on criteria and success and disseminate these widely, through a tailor made toolkit, in order to promote scaling up and spread of the examples in institutions throughout Europe.
- Identify key policy enablers for grass root equity initiatives, and convey these to policymakers, with the aim of providing a fertile environment for the multiplication of these operations.

In the process of this the project aimed to:

- Interact, consult and engage with stakeholders, institutions and public authorities directly in order to provide them with the evidence-base, tools and support they need to justify investments in the implementation of more efficient and cost-effective initiatives aimed at increasing equitable access, participation and completion in HE.
- Provide a practical tool that contributes to enhancing access, participation and completion of students in Higher Education.

The project aimed to focus on interventions that were both innovative and inspiring and strongly suggest the possibility for replication or adaptation across Europe.

## 2. Project Approach

IDEAS was conceived as a practical (not academic) project led by stakeholders. IDEAS is not a traditional research project based on sampling techniques and scientific measures of causality. Rather IDEAS builds on the EQUINET project and uses the networks of partners to the fullest – for data collection; for inclusive consultation; for face-to-face and direct presentation and discussion; as well as dissemination. This engaged approach was considered the most efficient way to create a Toolkit tailor made for the needs of the sector. The IDEAS Tour (a collection of workshops) was designed to engage audiences both in the tool kit and the evidence and reasoning behind its development. Three policy seminars were held to develop the policy paper.

As the project learnt iteratively from engagement in the field it developed a more nuanced and practical approach to what constitutes good evidence in grass roots equity measures and what innovation and replication means in the current field. These concepts were developed into a more grounded approach to developing the toolkit and policy paper.

**The IDEAs approach was based on two key assumptions:**

1. In an age of austerity many countries are scaling down large scale investments in equity measures in HE to accommodate other priorities, such as balanced budgets or dealing with an aging population. Thus there is a need to highlight the success of grass roots initiatives that show potential for replication or projects that have been funded as part of large scale investments but have proven sustainable.

2. Evidence on the conditions of success is currently lacking. The IDEAs project aims to collect case studies that have evidence for success and/or highlight the conditions for success in equity measures in HE in order to give confidence to new initiatives.

**Approach to evidence:** The original conception of the project was that projects do have a solid evidence base and that only those that show a clear link between equity initiatives and outcomes should be collected. In the collection of case studies we have found that evidence of success varies and many projects claim success because they are being funded, supported by local partners and are of judged of value to the target group. The consortium thus broadened the criteria to allow for a less rigid evidence base in order not to exclude projects that are newly established, have poor resources for collecting monitoring and evaluation data but are inspiring and contain what we concluded to be key success factors for replication/adaptation in equity in HE. Midterm of the project the IDEAs definition of what constitutes a good practice case widened from 'proven' to include:

- It has been replicated or is perceived to be a successful replication
- It is attracting resources (money or people/volunteers)
- It is still going (embedded / mainstreamed)
- It is inspiring.

**Approach to innovation:** The IDEAs project works with a model of 'disruptive innovation' 'the time is ripe for disruptive innovations to mobilise the cause forward by leaps and bounds, instead of through increments'. By definition 'disruptive innovation' means an initiative that works to disrupt an existing model or way of working in an institution. In the collection of case studies we have become aware that what is disruptive in Latvia (e.g. providing nursery care for students) is not disruptive in the UK. We therefore built into our model attention to social, political and economic context. We also embraced the outcome of 'Inspiring' and concluded that any comparative measure of value would do a disservice to potentially successful projects in early stages, without resources to evaluate or those working in challenging environments. In other words, we concluded from our analysis that some desirable long-term outcomes cannot be evidenced in the current stage of development of Equity interventions in HE.

IDEAS learnt that there are key success factors in innovation and replication in HE:

- A supportive national and European policy context, evidenced by policies and strategies that tie in with the widening participation intervention.
- A local context that is compatible with the innovative idea and where relationships with key stakeholders (gatekeepers, deliverers, stakeholders, potential partners) already exist or are created in the process of intervention design / adoption.
- An innovative intervention that is: easy to understand, has shown to work; has a clear model and is nevertheless adaptable to local circumstances and is compatible with existing practices and values in the HEI, its past experiences and the needs of potential beneficiaries.
- An organisation that: is supportive of the innovation, engages staff early and has a culture that permits and/or values risk taking, uses staff with the right skills to implement the innovation.

### 3. Project Outcomes & Results

#### Case studies:

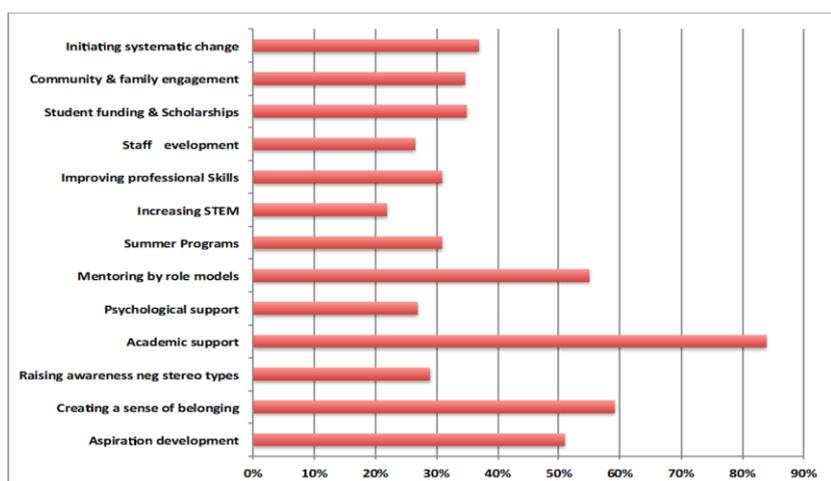
The case studies were the cornerstone of the project and without quality data it would be impossible to create a tool kit and a legitimate policy contribution. This was challenging for the consortium who found that institutions did not have capacity to complete the data collection tool themselves. As a

result extra resources had to be channelled into supporting organisations to complete the case study template. This involved telephone interviews, skype meetings and in some cases site visits. The 57 cases are as a result very in depth and in most cases involved a high level of stakeholder engagement. As a result the majority of the cases are a hybrid between the originally planned 60-70 cases for the data base and the 'in-depth studies of 8 featured cases'. Instead the toolkit identifies a list of 10 'good of good practices' but refers and gives online access to a database of 57 depth cases. The cases can be found on the IDEAs website.

**Analysis:**

For all of the cases developing indicators of success and measuring success in general was important but challenging for institutions. 54% of cases demonstrated quantitative success indicators, 72% demonstrated qualitative success indicators. These outcomes were a combination of student and institutional outcomes. The qualitative data was particularly important in providing information on process and learning.

The cases represent a range of different combinations of interventions and different levels and aspects of the organisation or wider system. Over 90% were targeted directly at students and just under 50% curriculum. Just over 30% targeted staff directly and only 20% intended to change the way an institution was managed or its culture.



Source: IDEAS

The full analysis can be found at [www.equityideas.eu](http://www.equityideas.eu) and forms a key part of the final publication, "Effective Approaches for Enhancing the Social Dimension of Higher Education". The following is an overview of key messages:

**Enabling factors for successful practices**

The cases in IDEAS are a good mirror of how equity is perceived in different parts of Europe and the world. They show the intentions and determination of national and local governments, institutions, programme coordinators, student unions, faculty, local businesses, foundations, NGOs and many students. These cases started with a vision and intention, and developed themselves - through determination, ownership, accountability, collaboration, negotiation, representation and innovation, within a culture of evidence - to the success that they have become. We found the following to be key enabling factors for success:

**Understanding the context**

The reference to context is one of the most important conclusions of this analysis based on the cases in IDEAS. There is no 'silver bullet' nor 'one size fits all' solution to the many issues that were presented as challenges for institutions who are determined to improving equity and inclusion for a

diversity of students in their higher education institutions, schools, communities etc. All cases started with the intention to make a change for certain groups of students that are either underrepresented or for many reasons deal with barriers that are related to a specific political, institutional, national, regional, local and personal context. The more the specific context is taken into account, and the more targeted an intervention is, the more successful the intervention will be. That's why monitoring, evaluating and measuring impact are important parts of a strategy of introducing policy to improve equity and inclusion. In replication of interventions the barriers students encounter may be the same as well as aims, programmes and methodologies of an institution but for the process of implementation the specific barriers, background etc. matter.

### **Ownership and leadership**

Ownership and leadership on different levels are important elements to make a programme or intervention on equity and inclusion to be successful. The individuals that have the vision to start these programmes were intrinsically motivated and/or had enough proof why certain changes are needed to build the (business) case. Even though the rationale is sometimes so clear it still takes a different set of skills to persuade or inspire others that these changes are needed. So often a transformation took place from taking ownership to being an advocate for change, innovation and sustainability. Programmes often started in the margins of the institution and because of their success became part of the strategic aims of institutions.

### **Culture of evidence**

In a time where funding is limited but challenges of institutions remain the same, accountability becomes more important. The cases in IDEAS show that investing in a culture of evidence benefits many stakeholders committed to the programmes: students, their communities, schools, institutions, funders and on a longer term will also have a benefit for regional development in the case attainment is improving, communities have better opportunities to learning etc.

### **Successful Partnerships**

Successful partnerships of institutions within and outside of institutions are crucial to sustainable success of programmes. Within institutions there are many 'partnerships' with or without defined or mandated structures. The most common informal partnerships within institutions are with students who participate as volunteers in programmes. Institutions have partnerships with the outside world with governments, student unions, student communities, businesses, associations, foundations with different aims and different expectations. It is important to say that changing institutions towards more inclusive, more open and accessible institutions and more societal responsible institutions is a collective effort and has to benefit all stakeholders involved.

### **Policy**

It is difficult to make reference to the type of policy because policy whether national, regional or institutional is very much related to the local context of the cases in IDEAS. Although policy is often based on robust evidence it is important to remark that policy implementation does not always follow. There are many examples of policy on equity that in end did not have the effect on the target groups they were meant for. The IDEAS cases provide successful and effective examples on how policy and practice can strengthen each other as long as policy is developed for purposes that enhance change and innovation.

### **Funding**

An important conclusion is that targeted funding is inevitable and an important means to increase successful outcomes on access, retention and successful completion of underrepresented groups in higher education. This doesn't necessarily refer to the amount of funding that is involved but more the type of funding and how funding can be a means to enhance the process of creating ownership and (regional) collaboration among stakeholders. *It is naïve to assume that successful emancipation of underrepresented, non-traditional groups in education can be reached without the necessary financial commitment to targeted funding and without a sense of ownership.*

Financial contributions only however cannot achieve the kind of innovation and change needed. It is the type of funding and the combination of different types of funding that are necessary to enhance successful outcomes. Financial contributions for staff time, professional development of staff, curriculum development and programme development including resources to develop an infrastructure to create a culture of evidence, will become more important. Institutions tend to focus on developing programmes focussed on students. This is important but it is equally important to allocate financial resources for staff development. Institutional transformation to provide a more inclusive learning environment can only be achieved if the educational and support staff within institutions is aware of how this will impact their work. For instance by providing opportunities for faculty and teaching staff to further develop or being introduced to inclusive pedagogies.

### **Inclusive higher education**

The IDEAS database presents many ways to support institutions in their aim to provide good and inclusive higher education. There are a few institution wide programmes that managed to be successful in providing high quality higher education for *all* students as well as responding to their mission of 'serving' society as well. These programmes are often in regions with very diverse populations. In these super diverse areas higher education institutions are not a reflection of society. Therefore higher education institutions provide programmes as part of their general structure and system to enhance an inclusive curriculum to create an academic sense of belonging, which will have positive impact on retention and attainment rates. There were only a few examples of these institution wide programmes in Europe. Most of them were from outside of Europe. There are however many good examples of interventions at European institutions that provide similar activities and services but are not yet embedded in an institution wide strategy.

Sense of belonging is a valuable concept, studied and implemented in policy and practice in higher education, especially in situations of highly diverse student populations, often with the aim to increase retention and attainment. There are references made in the IDEAS cases to creating a sense of belonging through the presented programmes. Improving student's sense of belonging will have a positive effect on their level of engagement in their study specifically their level of social- and academic integration. Integration can be interpreted as engagement. The better the quality of engagement of students with other students is (social engagement) and the quality of engagement with faculty or teaching staff (academic engagement), the better students will be motivated academically and the more their academic self-confidence will grow.

Effective approaches to nurture belonging are:

- Supportive peer relations (social integration);
- Meaningful interactions between staff and students (academic integration);
- Developing knowledge, confidence and identity as successful HE learners;
- A higher education experience that is relevant to interests and future goals.

**Case Studies The good of the good practices':** The following cases represent combinations of success criteria as discussed above:

#### ***Schools Network Access Program (SNAP) and the I Belong Program, Australia***

The Schools Network Access Program (SNAP) is an access scheme developed in 2001 to enhance access of secondary students from low income backgrounds to Technical and Further Education (TAFE) and to University programmes at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT). The scheme has shown good outcomes: in 2014, 1,415 students from over 100 SNAP partner schools started their programmes at RMIT through the SNAP priority access scheme and SNAP students are represented across 98% of RMIT programmes.

I Belong is a programme of on-campus experiences for SNAP secondary school students designed to encourage aspiration for tertiary education.

#### ***Academic Advancement Program (AAP) at UCLA, USA***

The Academic Advancement Program (AAP) of the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) has been evolving for over 40 years. The programme improves the academic achievement of historically

underrepresented groups, which originally targeted particularly African Americans and Latinos but now extends to students from disadvantaged backgrounds of all races. AAP is holistic, targets students and staff and provides an array of services and programmes related to curriculum- and policy development, community- and parents engagement and professional development. One of the elements of success is the early outreach part of the programme through the Center of Community College Partnerships (CCCP) to prepare students for successful admission to selective universities like UCLA. Through CCCP, UCLA works with 21 community colleges from the LA area.

### ***Science Academy 2006, France***

Paris Montagne Association was created in 2006 and runs an annual science festival. Students and researchers at the École Normale Supérieure wished to share their passion for science by giving others, a diverse and younger generation in Paris, a chance to discover the world of research through a science festival. Paris Montagne works on a long-term basis with high school students, and with the students belonging to the “Science Académie” programme. The application forms are distributed in the Parisian suburbs. This case is highly inspiring and initiated by researchers and academic staff inspired by the Hungarian Kut Diak movement in order to address inequality exposed by the riots of 2005.

### ***Tū Kahika Programme Scholarship, New Zealand***

Tū Kahika is an award that supports young Māori students interested in a career in health, into and through the University of Otago’s Foundation Year health sciences course and beyond. Tū Kahika prepares students for further study in health sciences (particularly Health Sciences First Year) by providing wrap-around academic, cultural, pastoral and financial support over the year. As with other indigenous groups, Māori are significantly underrepresented in the health workforce relative to the population size (Ministry of Health, 2006). Tū Kahika provides a very effective first year tertiary experience for Māori students, preparing them for a later health science study. The programme’s success is founded on being culturally responsive, academically robust and strengths based. Tū Kahika is successfully contributing to increasing the Māori health workforce in New Zealand.

### ***ArbeiterKind.de, Germany***

Arbeiterkind.de is Germany’s largest community for first generation university students. The programme ArbeiterKind.de was founded in 2009 and aims to give first generation students a strength-focused positive identity in relation to higher education, via 70 local groups run by centrally supported volunteers. This involves one to one and group peer learning and counselling. ArbeiterKind.de’s vision is: every suitably qualified child from a non-academic family (first generation students) should have the opportunity for educational advancement. The programme quickly grew from a website to Germany’s Largest Community for First Generation University Students with presently about 6,000 volunteers in 70 local groups. The volunteers’ commitment lies at the heart of ArbeiterKind.de’s successful growth and is the guarantee for sustainability.

### ***Peer counselling, Germany***

The University of Mainz General Students’ Committee have provided a financial support service to students in crisis for the past 15 years. This includes grants and scholarships, financial counselling and free legal advice. Often students do not only face challenges and obstacles while enrolling in higher education, but also throughout their whole student life. The easy to access peer counselling offer is open for all students of the Johannes Gutenberg University and its future students. The main group seeking for help and the main target group of this intervention are students from a low socio economic status background. This programme is a student union led programme, funded by student membership fees and donations. It has been running for 15 years and exists in many German universities.

### ***KinderUni Wien, Austria***

The objective of KinderuniWien is to introduce children between the ages of 7 to 12 to the university system. By interacting with real scientists and researchers who are active on a rigorous academic level, the children get an idea of learning, teaching and research at university levels and the

relevance of a university for their own daily life. In this process children explore their curiosity and are encouraged to think critically and exercise other skills that are needed in an academic environment. KinderuniWien offers children a learning experience in an academic environment that fits their way of living and expands their frame of reference in terms of educational pathways.

### ***The Manchester Access Programme (MAP), United Kingdom***

The Manchester Access Programme (MAP) is The University of Manchester's social mobility programme for Y12/13 students in Greater Manchester. It is highly targeted at talented post-16 learners from backgrounds currently underrepresented in higher education and aims to support them into The University of Manchester and other research-intensive universities, thereby contributing to enhanced long-term employment prospects and social mobility. The programme targets groups that are less likely to proceed to higher education. MAP requires that students go to a state school and don't have a parental history of higher education. In addition to this, MAP examined whether the student received free school meals, are in receipt of the 16-19 bursary, and if they have ever been in local authority care. MAP recruits students who have the talent to succeed at The University of Manchester, and uses their GCSE grades (or equivalent) to measure this.

### ***The Brilliant Club, United Kingdom***

The Brilliant Club is a non-profit organisation that exists to widen access to top universities for outstanding pupils from non-selective state schools. The primary activity is to recruit, train and place doctoral and postdoctoral researchers in non-selective schools and colleges to deliver programmes of university-style tutorials to small groups of outstanding pupils. The aim is to develop the knowledge, skills and ambition of these pupils and secure places at top universities. This case is innovative using funding for PhD students to gain workplace skills to provide inspiration and support to young people from socio economic backgrounds that face barriers to accessing Higher Education. Pupils develop the skills, confidence and ambition that help them to secure places at top universities; schools develop a culture that champions excellence, hard work and progression to higher education; doctoral and postdoctoral researchers are paid for taking part in high quality development opportunities; and universities are given access to target schools and target students.

### ***The Mental Health Education and Employment Service, United Kingdom***

Thanks to this service which gives tailored support to students with mental-health issues, allowing them to gain access to, participate in and complete Higher Education, participating students are able to reach comparable outcomes as their peers. London Borough of Hackney has a high prevalence of mental health conditions in the population. There are also significant pockets of multiple deprivation. The aim of the service is to recruit and support students with mental health conditions through further education and beyond. The service advocates on behalf of students and is student led, the students set their own goals and support is tailored towards each on a case-by-case basis. This case is in Further Education but targets a group that is hard to engage in higher education and is a very good model strongly tied to local institutions addressing local need. The programme has good data and has a tool kit for replication. It is innovative in that it works with referrals from mental health services and raises awareness within the college amongst staff and pupils on mental health and wellbeing. This is felt to be an excellent model for HEIs.

### ***Borderless Higher Education for Refugees (BHER), Canada and Kenya***

A partnership between Canadian, Kenyan Universities and NGO's supports refugees in Dadaab, Kenya into gender equitable teacher training diplomas. The programme has 'stacked' discrete elements, which resulted in internationally recognised qualifications that can contribute to a full degree. Although this is not a grass roots case it was felt to be highly inspiring and innovative and demonstrates how HEIs can use online learning platforms to build capacity in very marginal communities through partnership working. The target group are first of all refugees. In the majority of cases, BHER is involving refugees from Somalia. Out of the overall amount of students attending the courses through BHER, 75% are refugees, while 25% are local students. At the same time, the target group of this project are young women – with a focus on gender equality.

### ***Opportunities for underrepresented Scholars (OURS)***

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OURS at The Chicago School of Professional Psychology aims to empower women, especially women of colour to aim for higher positions in Higher Education. The programme is provided online therefore academic professionals can participate as well. A special focus lays on the STEM disciplines. This is a leadership programme targeting Black and ethnic minority women. The Chicago School initiated the idea for Professional Psychology in particular by Dr. Orlando Taylor who has dedicated his life to access and equity in higher education. He and other university leaders identified the lack of women and especially women of colour in leadership positions in academia as a whole, but in STEM in particular.

***Development of complex services for disadvantaged students at Wlilocki Henrik Student College, Hungary***

This is a relatively new programme that builds links into the Gypsy Roma community through its existing students. Students are supported through mentoring and tailored modules of support during weekends and summer camps that build on learning, social engagement and communication competencies. Gypsy Roma students are supported into professional communities whilst building capacity in their own communities. Current students are organising their own programmes and applying for funding.

***School Within A College (SWAC) at George Brown College Toronto, Canada***

The focus of the programme is on motivating secondary students who are facing challenges in graduating or have left high school before graduating. The SWAC programme is intended to provide a model for the delivery of secondary credit courses by secondary school teachers and college dual credit courses taught by college professors within a collaborative learning community on a college campus. The SWAC primary focus is on students facing challenges in graduating: students who are disengaged and underachieving, but who have the potential to succeed in college. The rationale behind the action was that nearly a third of students were not completing their high school education in 2003-04. An additional impetus is provided by the graduation goal set up by the government comprising of an 85 percent graduation rate target.

***Mentors of Rotterdam (Mentoren op Zuid), Netherlands***

The objective of Mentors of Rotterdam is to improve the educational outcome and future of children from lower-income areas in Rotterdam through one-on-one mentoring, by matching every primary or high school student with a student mentor. Mentors of Rotterdam focuses on two target groups: students of primary and secondary education (the mentees) in Rotterdam South and students of Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences (RUAS) (the mentors). There are about 70.000 children living in Rotterdam South and about 32.000 students enrolled at RUAS. Over 70% of the people in Rotterdam South have a migrant background, 32% of them are under the age of 23. The project started out with the matching and cooperation of 110 student mentors and 110 primary/high school students. In 2015-2016 around 700 student mentors and 600 primary/high school students were trained, matched and had a mentor/mentee relationship. Evaluation and improvement of the methodology and of the programs execution are deeply embedded in the structure of the program.

**Tool Kit:**

The online toolkit at [www.equityideas.eu](http://www.equityideas.eu) focussed on 3 key types of interventions that may help students from under-privileged backgrounds to achieve success:

**Give Students a better life map**

Often, one of the greatest issues involving access to higher education is the fact that potential students don't see themselves as the type of persons who would follow HE, or the type of persons that would follow careers which would follow on from Higher Education. The overall solution to the issue, is to work with communities to directly engage potential students, and persuade them that a life-plan involving Higher Education is feasible and realistic. Specific strategies which have been found successful by initiatives working in this vein include building confidence, creating role models, providing individual support and reaching out to communities.

### Give students the skills they need to thrive in Higher Education

Higher Education, especially in cases where an institution has limited diversity, often entails the adoption of a series of social norms. Just to give a few examples, in Higher Education a student may be expected to:

- have certain pre-existing cultural/social knowledge which wasn't imparted by their background
- participate actively or challenge lecturers in lessons, but come from a top-down educational culture
- participate in social and sports activities to which they previously had no exposure
- adjust to environment where their own religious practices are not integrated into everyday life
- complete Higher Education, even without significant support from their family and/or community

These sort of difficulties often mean that students who overcome the barrier of accessing higher education, drop out early due to a feeling of lack of belonging or due to an inability to adapt to life in higher education. They are alleviated by interventions designed around helping students adapt to life in Higher Education, including through information, counselling and support. Successful strategies here include providing safe spaces for these students to socialise; striving to supply holistic support services including information, psychological counselling and study-skill support; and the provision of easily accessible reference points to ensure students can find help when they need it.

### Bypass structural barriers

System-level structural barriers can be hard, expensive and time-consuming to dismantle completely, and often require policy change at governmental level. However, from a micro-innovation perspective it is often possible for actors much further down the line to create solutions which bypass the structural barriers, by neutralising their effects or finding ways to avoid them entirely

#### **Key Policy Messages:**

IDEAS analysis, policy paper, toolkit and database of good practices provides inspiration, vision and tested knowledge to support the policy aims of the EU related to the Social Dimension of the Bologna Process and the Paris Declaration.

The IDEAS policy paper supports the Yerevan Vision in recognising the uneven spread of policy to practice across the EU and raises a sense of urgency. This is particularly the case for countries that have seen large influxes of refugees. Also IDEAS supports the Paris Declaration in its findings that sense of belonging in Europe, integration and equity is essential and that HEIs have a crucial role to play in this. The policy paper concludes with the key message that there are achievable models for Equity in HEIs but there is 'no silver bullet' for the complexities of common issues in European countries.

Cultural and ethnic diversity of newcomers to Europe is currently an 'elephant in the room'. A sense of belonging in Europe will not be possible without acknowledging difference. Organisations need to be reflective and work with a 'theory of change' as an ongoing learning process that is context specific. Organisations need to be able to develop an understanding of what inclusion means to them, as professionals and students. They need to develop cultures of inclusion and appropriate teaching and learning strategies. There needs to be a combination of funding and evidence-based interventions.

Finally IDEAS highlights that collective effort does address barriers to equity in Higher Education. This is through the determination and commitment of leaders from any level of the organisation that challenge the status quo, understand the needs of target groups and the local social and economic

context and are able to work collaboratively and use evidence to effect change.

## 4. Partnerships

The consortium includes organisations that have networks and partnerships across Europe. These networks are part of the key approach to IDEAS.

**The project partners:** The National Unions of Students in Europe (ESIB), known also as the European Students' Union (ESU) is an umbrella organisation of 47 National Unions of Students (NUS) from 38 countries. ESU has been actively involved in developing the social dimension of higher education. ESU has played a key role in promoting project results both to students as well as to policymakers. By co-authoring the policy paper they ensured that those most affected by inequity – students, will have their voice directly reflected in the project conclusions. ESU collected case studies, promoted the project among networks, held seminars and workshops, and contributed to the analysis, policy paper and toolkit.

The Knowledge Innovation Centre is a dynamic consultancy focusing on knowledge brokerage and innovation of knowledge transfer processes. The Centre has forged close relationships with a number of stakeholders in the regional innovation and Higher Education fields, and is active in leveraging such relationships to build multi-disciplinary, multi-country networks for knowledge transfer and capitalisation. The Centre also offers a variety of online solutions geared at maximising quality assurance mechanisms, public relations and services. The Centre coordinated and monitored the dissemination activities, collected case studies, converted the results of the research analysis into an easy-to-use toolkit for institutions, and was co-editor of the final published analysis and policy paper.

ECHO was established as a centre of knowledge, advice and innovation with the primary objective to increase the participation of ethnic minorities in higher education and to improve successful completion among ethnic minority students. ECHO developed a broader concept over the years to what diversity means. This broader concept was a result of its research, its project activities and learning of good practices of (inter) national partners. The productive reciprocity between research and practical experience gained from being involved in numerous implementation trajectories and projects with national and international partners. ECHO's role in IDEAS has been pivotal. The organisation collected the majority of cases, validated results with experts and played a key role in the dissemination of deliverables of the project through their network of universities in the Netherlands as well as through partner organizations and networks in Europe. ECHO led on the authorship of the analysis and of the policy paper.

EURASHE is the European association of Higher Education Institutions that offers professionally oriented programs and are engaged in applied and profession-related research within the Bologna cycles'. Currently, more than 1200 higher education institutions are affiliated to EURASHE. EURASHE is present in a great number of countries within and outside the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), mostly through National Associations of Higher Education Institutions and individual institutions (HEIs), such as Universities, (University) Colleges and Universities of Applied Sciences, as well as through other professional associations and stakeholder organizations active in the field of higher education. EURASHE collected case studies and play a role in dissemination activities.

The Tavistock Institute of Human Relations (TIHR) is an Independent social science research, consultancy and training organisation. The Institute seeks to apply social science ideas and methods to problems of policy and practice; change and innovation; and organisational analysis and design. The wider aims of the Institute encompass the study of human relations in conditions of well-being, conflict and change, in the community, the work group and the larger organisation, and the promotion of the effectiveness of individuals and organisations. The TIHR coordinated the project, led on the evaluation, collected case studies and contributed to the analysis and policy paper.

**External partnerships:** The project is linked to other partnerships that will be of strategic importance in the next phase of the work. ESU is an active member of the Bologna Follow Up

Group which is charged with monitoring and guiding the implementation of the Bologna Process across 47 European countries. The consortium has so far identified the following groups who are making use of its results:

- European Access Network, based in London
- Global Access to Postsecondary Education Initiative, based in Den Haag
- The Integration of the European Second Generation, based in Amsterdam and Hamburg
- International Migration and Social Cohesion, based in Rotterdam

**The experience of partnership working:** Working in the partnership with a limited budget for face to face meetings has been challenging. The partnership has communicated at least once a month and often more via Skype. The five face to face meetings were extremely valuable particularly when designed creatively as workshops to collate all partners input to all outputs. The consortium has enjoyed cross learning and been able to work productively to understand the challenging environment that institutions delivering Equity interventions are working within. The peer review process has been particularly strong and helpful in maintaining a quality culture. In addition partners have met at seminars and events across Europe and are planning a future collaboration.

## 5. Plans for the Future

During the Seminar on Higher Education March 2016 in Amsterdam Minister Jet Bussemaker of the Dutch Ministry of Education as well as Officials of the European Commission all expressed the importance of evidence based practices to support realizing the aims of the social dimension to the Future of Higher Education of Europe.

The partners of IDEAS actively looked for opportunities to continue the work of IDEAS and explored opportunities to continue the IDEAS database. The database will be kept online for a minimum of 5 years from the current date, and will serve as an invaluable resource for actors within the field, as well as for the partners themselves in their ongoing research. In addition, negotiations are currently ongoing with three different organizations to secure funding to continue the expansion and enriching of the platform with new cases from across the globe, and possibly to extend its reach into other levels of education.

In case of new opportunities for funding the database will be continued and extended and hopefully transform to a 'living platform' where professionals from different parts of the world will be able to share, exchange and learn. This was recommended by the reviewer of the analysis, Marjolijn van der Klis, Senior Policymaker at the Dutch Ministry of Education. She stated: "*Particularly important in the IDEAS study is the attention paid to the evidence based monitoring of good practices, both in quantitative and qualitative ways. Beyond that, the information provided about the local contexts in which specific practices were successful provides crucial information for other Higher Education institutions that consider adopting good practices that have been developed elsewhere. In my opinion an important next step should be to create a 'living platform' on which sharing knowledge with others can inspire to enhance the social dimension in more institutions and local contexts within the EU.*"

The consortium believes that the IDEAS project validated a specific approach to good-practice collection and of extracting replicable lessons from them. To this end, within the field of education, we believe that the current refugee crisis could benefit through a similar best-practice identification and sharing approach. Thus, ECHO and KIC have initiated an application under KA3 – Policy Incentives of the Erasmus+ programme to do exactly this sort of methodology transfer, and intend to bring the methodology to more new applications in this field next year.

## 6. Contribution to EU policies

The Bologna Process set the goal that *'the diversity of students accessing, participating and completing Higher Education, should reflect the diversity of our populations'*. The **Education & Training 2020 Strategy** aims to create education and training policies that enable *'all citizens, irrespective of their personal, social or economic circumstances, to acquire, update and develop over a lifetime both job-specific skills and the key competences needed for their employability and to foster further learning, active citizenship and intercultural dialogue'*. As the Education & Training 2020 is being under mid-term revision in 2014, and as the results have shown at the latest Education, Training and Youth Conference (October 2014), the efforts have to be further strengthened in order to reach the targets envisaged for the year 2020.

Besides the ET2020, the IDEAS project can have an impact on the **Europe 2020** strategy influencing 3 key targets if all stakeholders take their responsibility on making higher education more inclusive to the growing diverse student population in Europe:

1. Education - Reducing the rates of early school leaving below 10%;
2. Education - At least 40% of 30-34-year-olds completing third level education;
3. Fighting poverty and social exclusion - at least 20 million fewer people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion

During past decades, some actions have been placed into improving equitable access and the social dimension of higher education. However, results from the EQUNET project show that outcome inequality remains stubbornly persistent, and that inequity, based on for example socio-economic status background, parental education, gender, country-of-origin, rural background, among others, continues to prevail in our Higher Education systems. Although some improvements within the field of equality work have been registered, the EQUNET project showed that it might take another 100 years for disadvantaged groups to catch up - if the improvements develop in the speed of the past 40 years. The first outcome of the IDEAS project identifies gaps and lacking commitment of several countries across the European Union to approach inequality. These outcomes encouraged the consortium to address the information gap in the second phase of the project even stronger. The second face of the project is aiming to provide evidence-based ideas and to support these stakeholders involved on the local, national and European level to implement them.

The main message is clear: IDEAS provides evidence based good practice models which can encourage actors on all levels to implement approaches towards a more inclusive HE-system, while providing information towards a European (national) level to ensure that they provide a framework to enable local actors to be active.

The policy recommendations are being taken directly to policy-makers through the following initiatives:

- ESU will be presenting the policy-conclusions directly to the Bologna Follow-Up Group, as part of the 2015-2018 work-programme of the Bologna Process, which may lead to some refection of their principles in the documents leading up to the 2018 Bologna Ministerial Communique
- ECHO will be presenting the policy-recommendations to actors involved in the follow-up to the Paris Declaration on Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education, presenting them as ways to reach the objectives presented in this declaration
- Through its' participation in the Dutch Ministerial Conference on The Future of Higher Education, the recommendations have already been presented to the Dutch Presidency and reflected in the official conclusions of this event.

## 7. Dissemination, Impact and Evaluation

Dissemination: The dissemination and exploitation strategy combined partners networking activities with project online dissemination through the IDEAS website and Facebook page.

[www.facebook.com/ideasproject](http://www.facebook.com/ideasproject).

From the numbers presented below, we find that the project has recorded significant dissemination impact, despite the fact that it is only just releasing its' first results. The highlight metrics include:

- 30 different dissemination actions covering multiple media, successfully performed and registered in the online dissemination tool
- 2500 separate contacts made with persons, reaching approximately 1500 unique individuals.
- Recorded 9500 sessions (visits) and 18000 page views on our website [equityideas.eu](http://equityideas.eu).
- With 30000 contacts made through Social Media, we have reached approximately 8000 individual persons

We believe that these led to significant impact due to the fact that:

- More than two thirds of the actions organized primarily targeted Higher Education Institutions and Policy Makers
- 18 of the 29 actions were rated as having achieved high or a very high impact (i.e. 5, 6 or 7 out of 7 point scale)

**By the end of the reporting period on the project we have measured 45000 separate contacts, reaching approximately 15000 unique individuals.**

### Evaluation:

The IDEAS project was evaluated with an Action Learning approach combining both formative and summative evaluation to trace how the project learns and implements learning in the deliverables and how well the project has met its intended objectives. The tools for this included:

- Partners survey of key work packages
- Analysis of meeting minutes and communications
- Reflective forums (face to face and skype)
- Other embedded evaluative moments (e.g. website impact audit)
- IDEAs event participant evaluation forms
- Case Study Participants Survey
- Review of peer review processes
- 

### Formative evaluation results:

Through an evaluation of the project minutes, participant observation of 5 online meetings and 2 partner meetings, analysis of events feedback and the summative evaluative objects (case studies, analysis, toolkit, policy paper) it was clear that the IDEAS partners were reflective, worked in a genuinely co-productive way and adapted the final outcomes to the needs of the sector and in particular grass roots projects.

Key areas in which the project adapted to the needs of the stakeholders were:

Stakeholders/ sector issue	Project Action
In the first six months it became clear that many projects did not have resources to evaluate, were too new to be able to prove outcomes and what was mainstream practice now in the UK and would not be	Broadened the definition of good practice to fit the uneven development of equity measures across Europe and type of evidence.

<p>considered innovative good practice was disruptive innovation in Latvia for example</p>	
<p>In the first six months it became clear that projects did not have the resources to complete the case study templates themselves. As a result the case studies were not satisfying the internal peer review criteria.</p>	<p>The partners increased the resources used by the project to collect the quality of information required to conduct the depth analysis by following up case study requests with telephone, skype and face to face over a longer duration of time</p>
<p>In the analysis the different contexts of case studies and different types of data meant it was impossible to simply construct a typology of projects and select 8 that met the highest criteria for success.</p>	<p>The Malta project workshops worked through the cases and developed the concept of the 'good of good practices'. Because the majority of the cases were now already depth, using all the cases in a searchable data base and different aspects of cases in the tool kit, the original concept of 8 with highest measurable criteria was replaced.</p>

The partners faced financial difficulties and quality issues in the first year. These were difficult but the reflective forums, strong internal peer review process, brought the partners through to deliver all their outcomes to a high standard.

**Summative Evaluation Results:**

The project has collected 57 depth good practice case studies which have been internally peer reviewed and approved by the contributing institution. These are accessible on the project website and through links in the tool kit. Institutions can contribute case studies themselves.

A depth analysis has been completed with a policy paper. The three outcomes have been internally peer reviewed through project meetings and the working through of iterations and externally peer reviewed by experts. The online tool kit is translated into French and German and a final publication combines all three elements. This has been printed and is being distributed across libraries in Europe and is available free online as pdf. The evaluation concludes that IDEAS has adapted to the needs of the sector and delivered all its intended outcomes to a high level of quality.

