

BM75 - Budva

Resolution: Student's debt

In Europe, more and more countries are heading towards a system which forces young people to get into high debt. Education should be seen as an investment in society as a whole and not merely as an investment in yourself. By introducing loan schemes we normalize being in debt for young people, which has a negative influence on their financial behaviour for the rest of their lives. Especially people from disadvantaged backgrounds tend to be more afraid of taking out a loan. This way it excludes some of them from higher education. As the financial pressure of higher education is clearly having an impact on students.

Students should not have to get into debt in order to access education in general. Instead, they should all get appropriate financial support.

In Italy during the summer of 2018, a lot of universities shared a survey from the Ministry of Education and Research about the possibility of the introduction of student loans. The survey was made by a private society in such a way that it could bypass the opinion of academic representatives and the Nation Council of University Students. Furthermore, the survey was shared as a Google Survey, which did not have any system to prevent the same person filling it multiple times. UDU started a campaign encouraging students to boycott the survey which leads to the Minister of Education retracting the survey.

In The Netherlands, the government got rid of the basic monthly grant for students in 2015. Since then, research is pointing out that education became less accessible for young people who are first-generation students, students with a migration background and students with disabilities. Also, it increased the average student debt by 6.000 euros per student. Students now have an average debt of 21.000 euros. The government has not made significant improvements in order for the participation of these groups to recover to levels of before 2015. Instead, they are even raising the interest on the student loans.

In England, tuition fees were introduced in 1998 and were intended to ensure that higher education institutions were adequately funded, and enable them to provide students with the best standard of education possible in a way which would still be accessible to students from low-income families. But reality has not met those expectations. In 2011 universities in England tripled the maximum amount which could be paid in tuition fees. Students are

being asked to contribute more towards their education whilst direct public investment is slashed. Far from providing students with higher quality, students end up paying more for a service which is receiving less funding.

In Ireland, the student contribution charge is abnormally high in comparison to other European countries at €3,000 per annum, second only to England. This cost represents a significant portion of the cost of attending higher education in Ireland. While the student charge has doubled since 2011, government funding provided to HEI's has steadily reduced failing to meet the required investment. This decline has been observed across the board: reputation has suffered; student-teacher ratios have climbed; casualization of academic work; and the cost of attending a third-level institution is as high as €12,495 per year for a domestic student. The two highest costs faced by students when attending higher education are the cost of accommodation and the student contribution fee. Massive cuts to grant for students since 2011 has left students in a very difficult position where many are forced to miss class to attend low paying jobs to try pay for their living costs and fees.

ESU calls upon all the European governments and especially the Italian, UK and Dutch government to intervene and take a stand against loan schemes and to plea for an appropriate financial support for all students. Let's keep our educational systems accessible for all students with the capacity to study!

Proposed by: LSVB, UDU, NUS UK, USI

Seconded by: ÖH, ISO