

Peer-Learning Activity 1

Towards an inclusive EHEA by 2030

During the [2020 Rome Ministerial Conference](#), ministers for higher education set a vision of building an inclusive, innovative and interconnected European Higher Education Area (EHEA) that is able to underpin a sustainable, cohesive and peaceful Europe, by 2030. To support this process, the [BWSE FOR2030](#) project will kick off with three peer-learning activities (PLAs) that will bring together higher education ministries, higher education institutions, students and other relevant stakeholders. Each PLA will follow the theme of one of the three related goals outlined in the Rome Communiqué: an 1) inclusive, 2) innovative and 3) interconnected EHEA.

The purpose of the PLAs is to:

- focus on mutual learning and exchange of practices;
- identify potential solutions for existing barriers to inclusivity in European higher education;
- gather tangible recommendations to support the inclusivity of the Bologna Process in the long term.

The Dutch Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and the Dutch Center for Diversity Policy (ECHO) are organising the first PLA in **The Hague**, The Netherlands, from **16-17 February 2023**. The theme of this first activity is based on the keyword **inclusive**.

Diversity and inclusion in higher education

Diversity and inclusion in higher education are still often experienced as controversial topics: they tend to receive strong reactions and can lead to polarised discussions. Therefore, for many higher education institutions, working together with (targeted and non-targeted) groups of students can come with the discomfort that is inherent to fostering diversity and inclusion. Including students as equal partners, more than being invited as just a “critical friend”, asks for a new understanding of what inclusion in the context of higher education really means.

For example, in collaboration with the Dutch Ministry of Education, ECHO developed and coordinated the [Students-4-Students campaign](#) to develop an innovative approach to reaching out to and supporting marginalised, historically underrepresented and underserved students. As part of this campaign, for the past five years, ECHO has supported 27 projects in embedding their grassroots initiatives ‘by students, for students’, which foster inclusion and a sense of belonging. 16 institutional and 11 fully student-led projects have been granted a subsidy that contributes to their projects’ goals in their unique contexts. Interestingly, this has led to more students (in)directly contributing to the implementation of diversity and inclusion policies at different levels within their higher education institutions.





PLA programme

Based on existing knowledge – also generated through other EU projects (e.g. [MURAL](#), [#MultInclude](#), [#IBelong](#)) – in combination with demand-driven programs and projects such as the Students-4-Students campaign and the [ECHO Awards](#), ECHO will facilitate a Practice Driven Process to ‘translate’ existing ambitions and policy into sustainable grassroots ideas for implementation.

The translation from theory to practice will be facilitated, as well as the interpretation of the experiences and challenges of the organisation to strategy and policy. The interactive sessions will be based on knowledge development and the acquisition of skills related to:

- Frameworks and concepts: language, terminology and analysis frameworks associated with diversity and inclusion in policy and practice;
- Power and people: methods that provide insights into how power structures and people relate to each other and how to navigate them strategically and effectively;
- Experience and expertise: exchange of knowledge based on both experience and research.

As the PLA focuses on inclusion, the intended learning outcomes for this activity are:

- **Getting comfortable with the uncomfortable:** Participants will have reflected constructively on sensitive issues regarding diversity, inclusion and exclusion. To support this process, ECHO will outline relevant concepts and frameworks.
- **Policy and practice:** Participants will have gained insights and an understanding of inclusive approaches in theory and practice. ECHO will share lessons from the Dutch context and reflect on challenges and achievements in diversity and inclusion.
- **Ideas for specific contexts:** Participants will have formulated concrete ideas for follow-up steps related to diversity and inclusion in their context. This will take place through interactive sessions that focus on critical self-reflection, constructive dialogue regarding sensitive issues and exploring spheres of influence within one’s own context.

Day 1 – 16/02/2023	
09.00 – 10.15	Session 1 : Introduction <i>Goal: Getting to know each other.</i>
09.00 – 09.15	Arrivals and registration
09.15 – 09.20	1.1 Welcome by Helene Peterbauer (EUA) and Nuria Portero (ESU)
09.20 – 10.15	1.2 Opening and introduction of participants by ECHO Brief explanation of the program followed by an introduction: Where did your journey, both personal and professional, with regard to the topic of inclusion begin?
10.15 – 10.45	Coffee break
10.45 – 13.00	Session 2: Inclusion <i>Goal: What does inclusion mean in the context of higher education? Creating a shared language and exchanging frameworks and concepts.</i>
10.45 – 11.45	2.1 Expert readings

	<p>Zakia Essanhaji is a PhD candidate and researcher at the Department of Sociology of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Her research focuses on the politics of diversity in Dutch academia and in knowledge production more generally (examples of her work: 1, 2). In doing so, she studies the different problems that diversity can present in and across universities and how diversity policies, which may aim to tackle these problems, may end up reproducing them.</p> <p>Bette Berends represents the Dutch Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, where she is part of developing the ministry's initiatives to counter discrimination and racism. She is also responsible for different programmes and projects (such as Students-4-Students) on diversity and inclusion in the Dutch higher education system.</p>
11.45 – 12.30	Lunch break
12.30 – 13.15	<p>2.2 Diversity and inclusion frameworks and concepts by ECHO An introduction to the differences between diversity, inclusion and exclusion in policy, approaches and practices, followed by an interactive conversation.</p>
13.15 – 14.15	<p>2.3 Workshop fishbowl dialogue by ECHO A dialogue to discuss the need to embed inclusion in education, as well as practice in inclusive communication skills.</p>
14.15 – 14.45	Coffee break
14.45 – 17.30	<p>Session 3: Bringing inclusive education to the next level <i>Goal: Which policies for inclusive education are already in place in Europe, and for whom? Creating ideas for one's own context.</i></p>
14.45 – 15.30	<p>3.1 Panel on good practice in the Netherlands: Students-4-Students (S4S) campaign by ECHO Both students and staff from the higher education institutions where projects from the S4S campaign took place will discuss why it is necessary to develop and implement social inclusion together with students.</p>
15.30 – 16.15	<p>3.2 World Café exercise by ECHO After hearing the example from the Netherlands, a brainstorm will follow to get a sense and understanding of different diversity and inclusion policies and good practices in Europe.</p>
16.15 – 17.15	<p>3.3 The inclusivity of the Bologna Process by ESU This interactive session sets the scene for Day 2 of the event by inviting participants to identify and discuss national and European policies that support – or hinder – inclusive higher education.</p>
17.15 – 17.30	End-of-day reflections by Helene Peterbauer (EUA)

Day 2 – 17/02/2023	
09.00 – 12.00	Session 4: Outcomes <i>Goal: Outcomes and policy recommendations.</i>
09.00 – 09.05	4.1 Opening by Helene Peterbauer (EUA)
09.05 – 10.00	4.1 Expert reading Further details on this session will follow at a later stage. Caroline Sundberg is a former elected representative of the European Students' Union (ESU) and was involved in the creation of the Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA. In this session, PLA participants will learn more about the context and rationale behind the Principles and Guidelines, and discuss which steps are still needed to turn the text into reality. Selected participants will receive the Principles and Guidelines ahead of the event, so to enable them to actively contribute to the discussion.
10.00 – 11.00	4.2 Think Tank exercise by ECHO A brainstorm activity to develop ideas for policy improvement/development at the institutional, national and EHEA level that support inclusion of marginalised perspectives and voices.
11.00 – 11.30	Coffee break
11.30 – 12.30	4.3 Towards shared recommendations by EUA/ESU/ECHO In this session, participants will build upon the input from the previous Think Tank exercise to work towards a shared vision for the policy recommendations.
12.30 – 12.45	Wrap-up and final reflections by Helene Peterbauer (EUA)
12.45 – 13.30	Lunch
13.30 – 15.30	<i>BWSE FOR2030 project consortium meeting (upon separate invitation)</i>