



Admission to higher education IN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE EFTA/EEA COUNTRIES (Extracts from the EURYDICE Study on financial support to higher education students in Europe - to be published in June 1999)

From the budgetary point of view, trends in financial support for students are directly connected to trends in the number of students. The greater the number of students, the greater the amount needed to guarantee the same average level of support to them. It is therefore interesting to examine how countries regulate this growth in the student population, and to compare the quality of the support provided to students with the mechanisms for regulating their numbers. To do this, it is important to know what systems have been introduced in the countries to limit the numbers of places available.

Admission to higher education can be subject to various types of conditions. All intending students are usually required to hold at least a final certificate of upper secondary education, or an equivalent qualification. There are, however, other specific requirements in addition to this general rule (for greater detail, see Figure 9).

- It may be a *numerus clausus* set at national level. In such cases, the government limits the number of places available. The *numerus clausus* may be laid down in relation to courses in certain subjects or all courses.
- Institutions may decide to limit the number of admissions in the light of the number of places they have available either in some programmes or in all programmes. The funding of institutions can be a determining factor: if institutions are funded to a large extent on the basis of the previous year's budget, and only to a small extent on the basis of student numbers, the number of places available will change little from year to year. On the other hand, if institutions are funded largely on the basis of student numbers in the current year, they can more easily accommodate greater numbers, within of course the maxima laid down by the authorities.
- Moreover, regardless of the number of places available, institutions can decide to select students on the basis of ability. This happens particularly in certain art, technical or medical courses.
- Finally, only the certificate awarded on satisfactory completion of upper secondary education, or an equivalent qualification, may be required, with admission being totally free and institutions accepting all applicants.

Selection procedures and limits on the numbers of places available do much to regulate the student population. The political will to increase the population in higher education is matched by the need for financial management of this increased population. The reasons for altering the number of places available can of course also be related to labour market conditions, when too many – or too few – young people are graduating in particular subjects relative to the jobs available.

In certain countries, places are limited on all courses, either at national level, as in Norway, or by the institutions themselves, on the basis of their capacity (Ireland, Portugal, Sweden and the United Kingdom); this can in turn be determined by national policy (for example, target numbers of graduates in Finland, maximum and minimum numbers of graduates in Sweden and target numbers of students in the United Kingdom).

In other countries, however, institutions have to recruit ever-increasing numbers of students without necessarily receiving additional resources even when the numbers actually increase (for example, in Belgium and Austria). In Belgium, where there is a very strong tradition of free access, any attempt to introduce an entrance examination is resisted. In Austria, universities are legally obliged to admit all students who register, although the *Fachhochschulen* are more selective.

Finally, in the majority of the other countries, admission to certain courses of study is regulated either by the institutions in the light of their capacity (Denmark, Germany, Spain, the Netherlands and Iceland), or by the government by means of a *numerus clausus* (France, Italy and the Netherlands). In these countries, most courses – and more especially general courses in universities – have no special entrance requirements.

**FIGURE 9: HIGHER EDUCATION
ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS, 1997/98**

	LIMITS ON THE NUMBER OF PLACES AT NATIONAL/ REGIONAL LEVEL	LIMITS IMPOSED BY INSTITUTIONS IN THE LIGHT OF THEIR CAPACITY	SELECTION ON THE BASIS OF ABILITY	UNRESTRICTED ADMISSION
EUROPEAN UNION				
B fr			Some courses: Civil engineering, translation/ interpreting (selection: examination set by the institution)	Most courses
B nl			Some courses: Civil engineering, architecture and, since 1997, dentistry, medicine, nautical science and some art (selection: examination set by the institution or the government)	Most courses
DK		Certain courses (selection: by the institution)	Photography, film studies	
D	Generally no <i>numerus clausus</i> , but a supraregional selection procedure for some disciplines (such as medicine) based on an inter-state agreement between the <i>Länder</i> (selection: average mark in the <i>Abitur</i> , the period spent waiting between the <i>Abitur</i> and the application, and social criteria)	Almost all <i>Fachhochschulen</i> (selection: by the institution, generally on the basis of the average mark in the <i>Abitur</i> , and the period spent waiting between the <i>Abitur</i> and the application) In courses to which admission is limited at federal level, around 20% of the places may be allocated by the universities themselves. (selection: on the basis of ability, motivation or specific conditions)	Art and sports courses (selection: test of ability)	Most university courses
EL	All courses (selection: national examination)			
E		All courses (selection: national examination)	Some courses in art, translation or interpreting and physical education (selection: test of ability in addition to the national examination)	
F	Medicine, paramedical subjects (selection: competitive examinations organised by each institution)	Applicable to some courses in certain institutions (selection: priority to students resident in the <i>académie</i> , with a <i>numerus clausus</i> for the rest)	Certain courses (IUT, CPGE, etc.) (selection: by the institution, based on school record and interviews)	General university courses
IRL	Medicine and education	All courses (selection: by the institution, based on results in final upper secondary school leaving certificate)		
I	Courses in medicine and surgery, dentistry, veterinary medicine, architecture. All university <i>Diploma</i> (D.U.). All specialisation courses. (selection: organised by the government)	Certain university courses		Certain university courses
L	Teacher training			Other courses
NL	Certain courses as decided by the government each year (6 university courses and 26 non-university)	Certain courses (selection: by the institution)	Certain courses (selection: study of two specific subjects at secondary level – national decision)	
A		Certain courses (<i>Fachhochschulen-Studiengänge</i>)	Certain courses (<i>Kunsthochschulen</i>) (selection: test of ability)	Most courses
P		All courses have a <i>numerus clausus</i> fixed by each institution in accordance with its capacity. Furthermore, institutions have to specify a minimal intake for their different qualifications (selection: national competitive examination for candidates with satisfactory school and exam results: candidates' marks to be above a minimum set by each institution)		
FIN	Graduate quotas fixed by the government for each discipline	All courses (selection: in the case of universities, on the basis of school results and/or an entrance exam; in the case of AMK institutions, on the basis of school results, work experience, an entrance exam or an aptitude test)		
S	Graduate quotas fixed by the government for each discipline	All courses (selection: by the institution; specific requirements in relation to prior knowledge and, if the number of applicants exceeds the number of places, selection on the basis of school results, the results of a national university aptitude test, other tests, vocational experience)		
UK	Target number set for each institution	All courses (selection: by the institution)		
EFTA/EEA				
IS		All non-university courses (selection: by the institution on the basis of final upper secondary school exam results, or an entrance exam) Some university courses (selection: open competition, final results of upper secondary schooling and/or work experience)		Most university courses
LI		Some courses: <i>Fachhochschule Liechtenstein</i>		
NO	Most courses (selection: school results and work experience). Nber of places fixed by government		Some courses (generally university)	

Source: Eurydice.

