The Social Impact of Universities after the COVID-19 crisis

By The European Students Union

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1. The Social Impact of Universities

- Higher Education as a public good : higher education should not be considered a mere commodity
- HEIs are « one of the most important mechanisms to steer our way through social, cultural, and economic changes in our societies » (ESU Social Dimension Paper 2019)
- Higher Education needs to be accessible, inclusive and reflective of the diversity of the society

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1. The Social Impact of Universities

- **Equal Opportunities :** Responsibility of Institutions and Higher Education Systems → many barriers are remaining (i.e. housing, grants...)
- **Student support systems** need to be in place and accessible
- **Diverse student body → diversity in academia → benefit for research as well**

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2. The challenges raised by the COVID-19 crisis

- The pandemic showcased preexisting and new challenges : blended learning, blended mobility, access to resources, student support systems
- **Housing** remained an issue for national and mobile students
- **Access to grants**
- **Access to learning resources, tools, and material** (10 % not having always access to a computer, 60 % not always having access to a good internet connection nor a quite place to study… - *ESU survey with Unviersity of Zagreb, Ministry of HE in Croatia and the Institute for the Development of Education*)

2. The challenges raised by the COVID-19 crisis

- **Blended education :** presential and digital → access to the right tools, from the university BUT must not lead to a two speed higher educaiton

- **Access to mobility :** rethinking mobility after the pandemic (inclusion, blended mobility, grants, housing)

- **The experience of higher education** « away » from the university : what solutions ?

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2. The challenges raised by the COVID-19 crisis

- **Increase in the use of digital tools :** security of students and of their data → new software for exams, alternative, choice given to students
- **New needs :** efficient support systems related to these new needs, otherwise barriers will still be there for the same groups of students
- **Integrating sustainability in this transition**
- **Mental Health as a priority**

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ANY QUESTIONS ?

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