



## **BM71 - GDANSK**

### **European Students call on the Finnish Minister of Education to uphold access to higher education to all students on an equal basis**

European Students' Union, representative of over 15 million students in Europe, is appalled by the recent proposal to set further barriers to access for vocational education students to higher education in Finland.

A report released on the 1st of December by a working group of the Ministry of Education and Culture proposes to increase the weight of the Finnish upper secondary school final examination (matriculation examination) in access to higher education. This would indicate giving up on entrance examinations as the gateway to higher education. Matriculation examination only concerns students in upper secondary education and as such does not concern vocational students. The proposal from the working group is that vocational students could be required to complete one to three examinations of the matriculation examination. These examinations have a fee that the student pays. At the same time, the Finnish legislation stipulates that students with a vocational education degree are generally eligible for higher education. Adding additional demands on vocational students while easing access for students in upper secondary students is a clearly setting two groups of students on unequal standing.

The proposed actions will make it increasingly difficult for students that have completed vocational education, who already are underdogs in terms of access, to continue onto higher education. What makes this even more concerning is that migrant students and second generation migrants general tend to gravitate towards vocational education after basic education. Setting additional barriers to access to higher education to vocational students could potentially have grave consequences for the diversity of the student population. The proportion of students with a migrant background who are already underrepresented in higher education in Finland, is far below the European average.

This decision can have far reaching implications to the no dead ends –policy that Finland has for long treasured and at the very minimum it attempts to lower the barriers to higher education only for a specific group of students. This is unacceptable.

ESU believes that educational systems must be designed in such a way that the choices made during primary and secondary education do not hinder access to higher education. Ways of enabling wider access to higher education to marginalised groups must be implemented, in order to create an inclusive environment mirroring society and all its diversity. ESU stresses that in order to make education more inclusive, it must change to fit students, rather than students being shaped to fit

The European Students' Union (ESU) is being used to refer to "ESIB - The National Unions of Students in Europe" Belgian asbl BE0890.019.936, due to the fact that both legal entities are going through a merging process. Likewise the visual identity of ESU is being used instead of the one from ESIB.

education. ESU also believes that the diversity of the student population is a goal we should aspire to reach.

We, the European Students' Union, call on the Finnish Minister of Education to defend the value of lifelong learning, of no dead ends policy and enabling social mobility by breaking down barriers to access to higher education as in a way that treats students in an equitable manner.

**Proposed by:** \_\_\_\_\_SAMOK\_\_\_\_\_

**Seconded by:** \_\_\_\_\_SYL, VSS-UNES-USU, ANOSR, LSVb, LSS, ÖH, SKRVŠ, DSF, EÜL, USI