

Addressing the proposed discriminatory tuition fee increases for non-EU students in France

The European Students' Union, representing over 20 millions students at European level and the Federation of General Student Associations in France (FAGE) express strong concern and condemn the proposed increase in tuition fees for non-EU students in France under the newly announced "Choose France for Higher Education" plan.

The proposal represents an alarming step regarding the commitment to equitable access to higher education. By significantly increasing tuition fees for non-EU students, the French government risks institutionalising a system in which access to education is increasingly determined by nationality and financial capacity.

ESU and FAGE emphasise that the right to education must remain a fundamental right. The introduction and expansion of differentiated tuition fees directly contradict the accessibility and inclusion of higher education and contribute to a major barrier for non-EU students. Policies that impose higher financial burdens on international students - in this case, a sixteen-fold increase - risk excluding them from academic opportunities and ultimately contribute to undermining internationalisation efforts.

Framing higher education through such measures contributes to its marketisation, treating students as sources of revenue rather than recognised, equal members of the academic community. We underline that education must be recognised as a public good and a long-term societal investment, not as a tool for financial compensation.

ESU and FAGE stress that international students in France are an integral part of the academic community, contributing to its intellectual, cultural and social life and must not be treated as sources of financial gain. Upholding their rights and ensuring fair access to higher education strengthens not only the quality and integrity of the French higher education system, but also the cohesion and credibility of the European Higher Education Area as a whole.

Therefore, ESU and FAGE call for:

- The immediate withdrawal of the proposed discriminatory tuition fee increases for non-EU students;
- The protection of equitable access to higher education regardless of nationality and socio-economic backgrounds;
- Sustainable public investment in higher education that addresses underfunding without shifting the financial burden onto students;
- The reinforcement of internationalisation policies that promote inclusion and recognise international students as equal and valued members of the academic community.