

Statement of the Austrian Council for Research and Technology Development on the draft for the “National strategy for the social dimension in higher education”

Position of the Austrian Council for Research and Technology Development

An extensive process to improve university access was initiated with this draft on the “National strategy for the social dimension in higher education – for more integrated access and broader participation”. The Austrian Council has already voiced its opinion in earlier statements on the implementation of capacity-oriented study place funding with fair access regulations and improved study conditions. With regard to “socially just” access, the Austrian Council emphasizes the importance of performance-oriented study funding. This draft deals with and illustrates these aspects in detail.

The Austrian Council believes it is important that the framework conditions in university access reduce social selection, rather than increase it. This should not contradict performance-oriented selection of suitable students at the beginning or in an early study phase either. As the Austrian Council has often specified, an education-minded society must also be created in all development phases, from pre-school development right through to tertiary study age. Family, social and education policies are required here as one to enable socially just access to education. The scholarship system must also be further expanded to increase the percentage of “non-traditional admissions”. A significant increase in income limits would significantly improve the situation for many students. The lines of action illustrated in the document correspond in content with the Austrian Council’s position and for implementation should be equipped with a specific measures plan, which is also reflected accordingly in the budgets. A clear definition of the responsibilities to implement the measures must be defined in the next step. A further burden on the tertiary sector without beefing up the funds to meet the objectives would be counterproductive and would result in restrictions in other areas of higher education operations.

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