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**Title**

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**Abstract**

Student support schemes are one of the main policy instruments that can be found in the European Higher Education Area which aim to enhance equity and help those with an underprivileged background to acquire an university degree. Access to higher education is significant because at individual level it leads to higher income and a better social status, while its absence is a pathway to social polarization. As education inequities lead to social inequities, the lack of national policies for reducing the social gaps (or inefficient implementation of such policies) creates the context for higher education to contribute to the entrenchment of inequalities between different social groups. In Romania, household income of families where the head of the family has a university degree is almost three times higher than in those where the head of the family has only primary education. This article assess whether Romania's existing student support schemes, as one of the main tools to improve

**16.9.2025**

access and participation to higher education, are relevant in terms of public efforts to meet the social need of specific under-represented groups in Romania. In this context, the article looks both at the scholarship system from a national, legislative and implementation perspective and also the living cost with an emphasis on the student body characteristics. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)

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