Opportunities for Inclusion: A Critical Analysis of Higher Education in Flanders

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What does the **EURYDICE** report tells us?

Towards equity and inclusion in higher education in Europe (2022)

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Strategies for HE with a Social Dimension

Current status in Flanders:

No Strategy

Flanders lacks a top-level strategy for equity in higher education.

Positive Steps

Quality assurance organizations consider equity, diversity and inclusion policies.

Room for Improvement

Need for specific, measurable goals and broader social dialogue.

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Current status of Inclusive Higher Education in Flanders:

Flemibility

Part-time Study

Limited options for part-time bachelor's programs.

Distance Learning

Few distance or blended learning opportunities available.

Alternative Entry

Admission without secondary diploma possible but challenging.

Current status of Inclusive Higher Education in Flanders:

Lifelong Learning

1 **Coordination Mechanisms**

Lack of overarching coordination between education levels in Flanders.

2 **Adult Education Support**

VDAB provides incentives for adults pursuing additional education.

3 **Teacher Training**

Focus on equity, diversity and inclusion in initial teacher education.

Current status of Inclusive Higher Education in Flanders: Financing

10-49%

Grant Recipients

Percentage of full-time first-year students receiving universal grants.

0

Indirect Support

No top-level support for accommodation, transport or meals.

0%

Funding Growth

Government spending on education remained stable from 2013-2018.

A major limitation:

Data Collection and Usage

Limited Data

Flanders collects minimal data on student characteristics compared to other European countries.

Graduation Data

Data on first-cycle graduates collected, but lacks specific student characteristics.

Survey Participation

Flanders did not participate in the Eurostudent survey VII project.

What are the **needs** and the **solutions** to create an effective inclusive learning environment?

Solution? Guidance and Support

Legal Requirement

1

Higher education institutions must provide psychological guidance to students.

Universal Approach

2

Support services focus on all students, not specific groups.

Quality Control

3

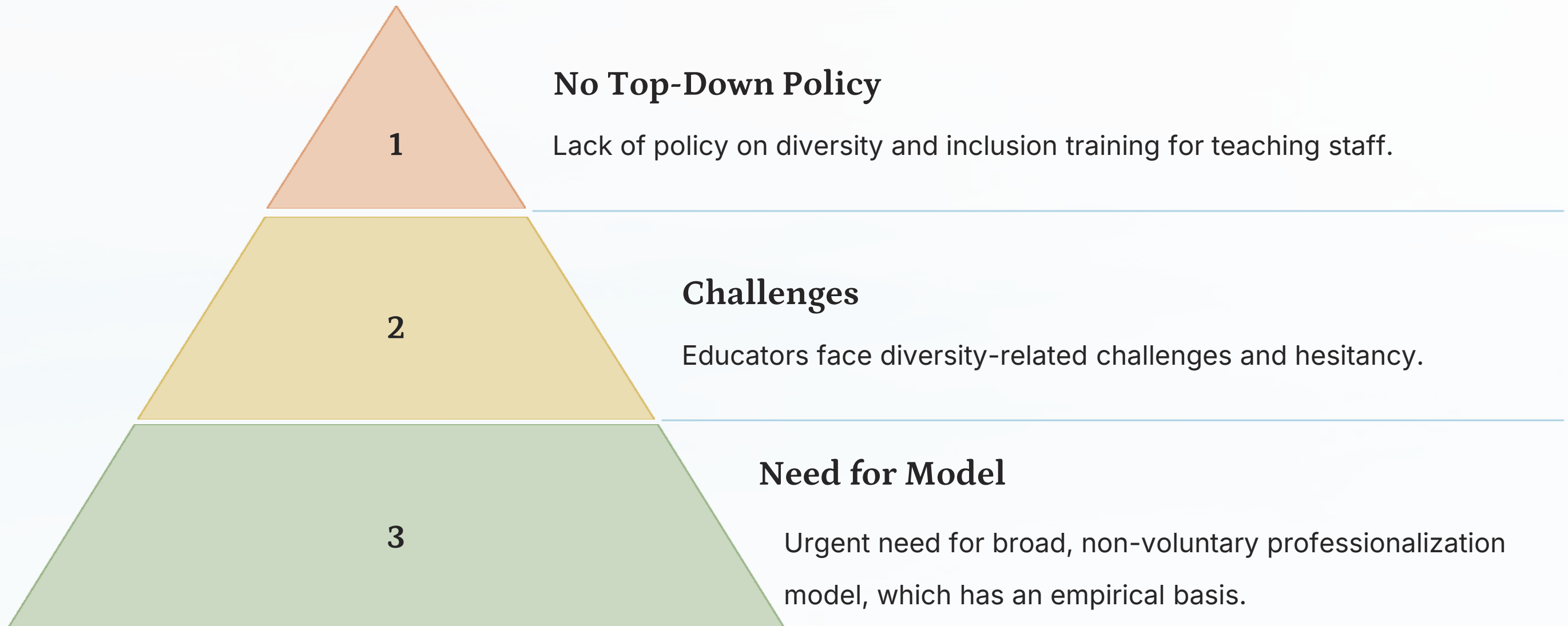Legal quality control of these services is in place.

Mediation

4

At the level of Flanders: Lack of neutral ombudspersons for equality-related conflicts.

Solution? Educator Training and Institutional Mission

No Top-Down Policy

1

Lack of policy on diversity and inclusion training for teaching staff.

Challenges

2

Educators face diversity-related challenges and hesitancy.

Need for Model

3

Urgent need for broad, non-voluntary professionalization model, which has an empirical basis.

Solution? Mobility and Internationalization

Policy Focus

Flanders has monitoring mechanisms for specific student characteristics in learning mobility.

Progress

21.22% of mobile diplomas achieved by underrepresented groups, but below 33% target.

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Recommendations

Transition Priorities for Inclusive Higher Education

1 — **Common Language**

Develop shared definitions for key concepts.

2 — **Multi-Level Accountability**

Implement responsibility at national, institutional, and individual levels.

3 — **Holistic Approach**

Move beyond narrow definitions to embrace broad inclusivity.

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Thank you!

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Further reading (in Dutch)

Emmers, E. ., Stevens, R. ., Doumen, S. ., Everaert, L. ., Decabooter, I. ., Engelen, I. ., Jansen, D. ., & Pulinx , R. . (2023). Lessen uit het Eurydice-rapport: een Vlaamse reflectie over kansengelijkheid en inclusie in het hoger onderwijs. *Tijdschrift Voor Hoger Onderwijs*, *41*(4). https://doi.org/10.59532/tvho.v41i4.18319

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