

Student Financing, Opportunity Growth, and Equity in Access to Higher Education.

A Czech-Dutch comparative study of student support systems and their effects on the development of inequality in access to higher education.

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The paper focuses on the relationships between student financial aid systems and the development of inequality in access to higher education. The authors focus on the effect of the financial conditions of study on the odds of attaining college or university education. The data from the most recent European survey of students (Eurostudent IV, 2009) and the EU-SILC Survey (2005) are used to assess differences in the developments of inequality in access to tertiary education between the Czech Republic and the Netherlands, countries whose systems of student financial aid have been evolving in very different directions over the last two decades (while their secondary school systems continue to share very similar features). The results of the comparative analysis prove that, in the Netherlands, the introduction of the direct student support mechanisms in the mid-1980s coincided with the notable opening of the system, particularly for those coming from lower socio-economic backgrounds. This happened despite the parallel increase of real tuition fees. By contrast, after the fall of the Communism, the relatively less open Czech tertiary education system relied more heavily on indirect forms of student financial aid and did not improve access for the incoming cohorts