

Defend an emancipatory, accessible and pluralist higher education!
Contribution thématique - Villeurbanne congress

The public service of higher education must allow every young person to have access to quality training, regardless of their place of residence or social origin. Moreover, in a context of profound economic, ecological and social changes, we believe that the public service of higher education must today do more to promote lifelong learning.

Also, the obtaining of the diploma, which is a determining factor for the access to individual emancipation and professional qualification must be possible without meeting difficulties.

However, the health crisis that we are going through today has for effect to make students pay a heavy price. In a survey published in July in partnership with the FAGE, IPSOS¹ presented very worrying figures: 74% of 18-24 year olds were reported to have met financial difficulties at confinement, nearly 35% of them gave up care and 72% lost their paid activity during it.

This 5th increase in precariousness and inequality is not new: while 20% of students live below the poverty line (IGAS, 2015), the annual UNEF survey, published last year, already showed that the cost of living as a student increased by 2.83% in September 2019².

In the face of such a situation, we cannot say that the policies of Emmanuel Macron's governments have made it possible to fight the growing inequalities between institutions, to fight against the economic precariousness of students and to improve the quality of our training. *efficacement*

The decrease in the APL at the beginning of the term of office, the abolition of the Alloca for finding a first job (ARPE), the massive increase in registration fees for non-EU foreigners, or the increased selection at the entrance to higher education via Parcoursup, are all indelible markers of this government's youth policy.

Faced with this observation, we are therefore convinced that the Socialist Party will have to defend a higher education system that :

- 1) Guarantees to everyone the right to an emancipatory and professionalizing training.
- 2) Allows each student to follow his or her studies in optimal conditions.
- 3) Promotes democracy and pluralism within the country.

¹ <https://www.ipsos.com/fr-fr/les-jeunes-face-la-crise-lurgence-dagir>

² <https://unef.fr/2019/08/16/enquete-le-cout-de-la-vie-etudiante-en-augmentation/>

1) Guaranteeing everyone the right to emancipatory and professionalizing training

Every young person must have the right to continue studying after the baccalaureate, regardless of his or her place of residence, or the filière of his or her baccalaureate. Parcoursup's fiasco shows us that the only viable solution today is to invest massively to create training places, especially in sectors under stress. In addition, the resumption of studies must be made easier, particularly by reinforcing the contribution to the personal training account and the professional transition facilities.

However, while the government is boasting about its future research programming law, which postpones the real increase in the research budget to the next five years and risks provoking competition between disciplines, higher education resources are currently stagnating. An investment of one billion euros over five years, afin that the share of GDP devoted to higher education is 2% by 2027, would be necessary in our opinion.

We are also opposed to university groupings dictated by budgetary logic and the desire to grab a few places in biased international rankings. Faced with the failure of the Community of Universities (ComUE), we support the implementation of new cooperative strategies based on territorial dynamics and which allow for easier exchanges between students from différents.

In addition, we defend universities that provide their students with education and services adapted to their needs. This includes better pedagogical support, afin to allow each student to build a career path consistent with his or her objectives, but also by taking better account of individual situations (especially for employed students). On the other hand, the right to one semester of international mobility should be further encouraged tomorrow.

The quality of teaching must also be a priority. In particular, it is necessary to rethink our training programs to integrate sustainable development standards. Our campuses must thus become true engines of ecological transition. In addition, we reject partnerships with fossil industries and believe that universities would benefit from strengthening their ethical watchdogs, particularly by integrating students.

Moreover, the health crisis, which has massively led institutions to develop distance learning, should not be a pretext for further savings in the future. As soon as health conditions allow it, present education should become the norm again.

2) Allows each student to follow his or her studies in optimal conditions.

The difficultés met by the students, accentuated by the policies carried out during this quinquennium, lead to a selection by money. The social elevator has now broken down, and a two-speed higher education system is gradually emerging, while the proportion of children of executives is 12 times higher than that of children of workers in business school 3 and the chances of the latter to reach the master's level are four times lower than the former.

In order to combat these phenomena and give everyone the right to study, particularly in the current context, strong measures must be taken today.

In the very short term, the CROUS scholarships, whose access has been greatly expanded during the previous five-year period, must be substantially upgraded. In addition, the minimum internship allowance, currently less than 600 euros, must be brought into line with the SMIC and the investment in the financement theses must be reinforced.

In the medium term, we advocate the implementation of an Allocation d'Études et de Formation. This would be distributed to all students, regardless of age, and would be modulated according to place of residence and the degree of independence from the family home. The Allocation would eventually replace the scholarship system and would guarantee everyone access to emancipation and the studies of their choice.

In order to fight against selfishness and the lack of social effort of certain grandes écoles, we also call for public subsidies and the recognition of diplomas by the State to be made conditional on the respect of a minimum number of scholarship students and the implementation of a progressive scale of registration fees.

On the other hand, the health crisis has shown difficultés many young people to equip themselves with computer equipment and to find decent housing. We must therefore defend an ambitious plan for the construction of public university residences, extend rent control to all metropolises and better control its application.

The investment in the renovation of buildings must also be the subject of a reinforced ambition, as well as the systematic provision of basic necessities (masks, hygienic protection, etc.).

3) Promote democracy and pluralism in higher education institutions

For finir, we believe that our role should be to defend the participation of users in the governance of their institutions, as well as pluralism within them.

³ https://www.inegalites.fr/Les-milieus-populaires-largement-sous-representes-dans-l-enseignement-superior?id_theme=17

Higher education must remain a place of exchange and debate, open to the greatest number, and where respect for each person is ensured. We are opposed to any form of censorship or muzzling of debate at the university.

Student commitment must also be valued and taken into account. In particular, the provisions created in this sense by the Law on Equality and Citizenship, voted in 2016, could be used more. Moreover, the increased support for the creation of parity budgets may represent a good opportunity to involve students more in the life of their institution and to reinforce their right to parity.

Enfin, the decision-making weight of central councils in universities must be increased, and the place of students, teachers and staff in the latter must be strengthened, afin to break with the logic of centralizing governance established by the LRU law of 2007. In particular, the role of the student vice-president must today be clarifié, afin to guarantee the student his/her real participation in the management team.

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