



***First in my family:
The contribution of higher education for reducing social
inequalities***

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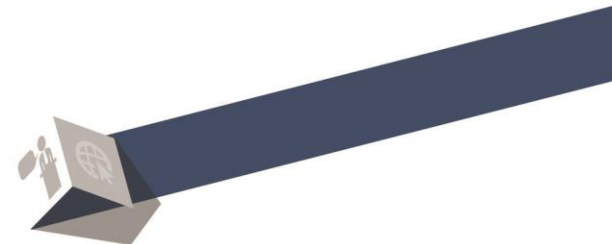
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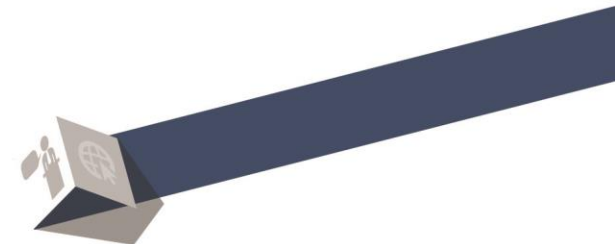




Introduction (1)

Background

- ❑ Despite the persistent worldwide trend of massification of higher education (Schofer & Meyer 2005), social inequalities in higher education (HE) remain among the major problems of contemporary societies.
- ❑ The crucial importance of this problem stems from the fact that HE is the cornerstone of contemporary knowledge-intensive societies and that inequalities in HE determine to a great extent other social inequalities, e.g. economic inequalities and inequalities in civic participation and social trust.





Introduction (2)

- ❑ The meeting of the European ministers of HE in May 2007 in London is a turning point in the pan-European understanding of the goals and nature of HE.
- ❑ **The social dimension of HE** was described as one of the priorities in the development of HE and all countries in the Bologna process were obliged to present their national strategies and policies.
- ❑ A real challenge is the goal to achieve a composition of students which reflects the diversity of the social composition of each country's population.
- ❑ The Rome Communiqué from November 2020 reaffirms that **“[s]ocially inclusive higher education** will remain at the core of the EHEA and will require providing opportunities and support for equitable inclusion of individuals from all parts of society.”





Introduction (3)

- ❑ According to the Communiqué from 2020, underrepresentation of students:
 - is defined in relation to several characteristics (e.g. gender, age, nationality, geographic origin, socio-economic background, ethnic minorities),
 - can refer to the admission, the course of studies or at graduation,
 - can impact at different levels of higher education – study programme, faculty or department, higher education institution, higher education system.

- ❑ The European Commission has also stressed that “[t]he Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted even more starkly the importance of inclusion and fairness in education”.





Introduction (4)

- ❑ **First in the Family, or the so-called first generation students (FGS)** are commonly defined as “students at universities/colleges whose parents did not obtain a university/college degree” (Spiegler & Bednarek 2013: 318).
- ❑ **FGS** can be considered undoubtedly as one of the underrepresented groups in HE.
- ❑ There is a huge academic research conducted on FGS (Pascarella et al. 2004, Saenz et al. 2007; Soria & Stebleton 2012; Ford 2018). It has shown that in many aspects FGS face some disadvantages compared to their counterparts (e.g. in terms of their access to the system, academic engagement and outcomes) but has mainly focused on the American HE.
- ❑ The studies of FGS in Europe focus mainly on selected countries (e.g. Ribeiro 2014 on Portugal; Bocsi 2020 on Hungary).





Introduction (5)

Aims:

- to conceptualise social equity in access to HE;*
- to reveal the trends of social equity of FGS across European countries;*
- to explore the influence of FGS on the subjective perceptions of fairness and if this influence differs by the socio-economic and political state of the country where they live.*





Theoretical considerations (1)

- ❑ There are different views about what is meant by social equity in (access to) HE, the direction of its change over time and the models to be used in measuring it.
- ❑ To a great extent differences in understanding social equity in HE reflect the variety of views on the very essence of social justice and how it can and should be conceptualised.

Among the contemporary perspectives on equity there are two very prominent:

- **the institutions-centred approach of John Rawls (1971)** – it is concentrated on identifying perfectly-just institutions and, in its essence, is arrangement-focused.
- **the human-centred approach of Amartya Sen (2009)** – it adheres to the idea that justice may be achieved on the basis of making comparisons between different ways in which people's lives may be led, and thus ascertaining which one is more or less just.

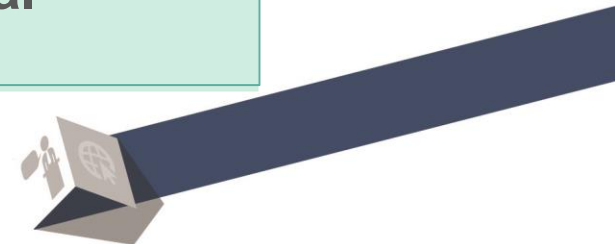




Theoretical considerations (2)

We conceptualise **social equity in HE** by differentiating two aspects of participation in it: inclusion and fairness (Marginson 2011) and argue that they need to be analysed separately for different types of HE and different social groups.

INCLUSION	FAIRNESS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase of the participation of one social group in HE regardless of the achievements of other social groups• Growth in the absolute number of people	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access to HE does not depend on circumstances like social status, gender or ethnic background• Proportional distribution of student places between different social groups





Data and methods (1)

Data

- ❑ EUROSTUDENT survey - rounds V (2012-2015) and VI (2016-2018)
- ❑ European Social Survey (2018)
- ❑ Official statistics (Eurostat & The Economist Intelligence Unit 2019)

Measures

- ❑ **Inclusion** – % of FGS (those whose parents' educational level is ISCED 0-4).
- ❑ **Fairness** – % of FGS divided by the % of people aged 45-64 with levels ISCED 0-4 in the general population.
- ❑ **Perception of fairness regarding educational opportunities***. G4:
Compared to other people in [country], I have had a fair chance of achieving the level of education I was seeking.
- ❑ **Perception of fairness regarding job opportunities***. G5:
Compared to other people in [country], I would have a fair chance of getting the job I was seeking.

*Both questions are answered on an 11 point scale from 0 *Does not apply at all* to 10 *Applies completely* and for the needs of analyses are dichotomised (0/6=0) (7/10=1)





Data and methods (2)

Variables

Dependent variables

- whether adults have had a fair chance of achieving the level of education they were seeking(1) or not (0).
- whether adults would have a fair chance of getting the job they were seeking(1) or not (0).

Independent variable at individual level

- Type of graduates: Secondary education, First generation HE graduates (FGG), Second generation HE graduates (SGG)

Independent variables at country level

- GDP per capita as of 2018
- Gini coefficient as of 2018
- Democracy regime as of 2018 (flawed vs. full)

Control variables

- gender – 0 for male, 1 for female and age (continuous)

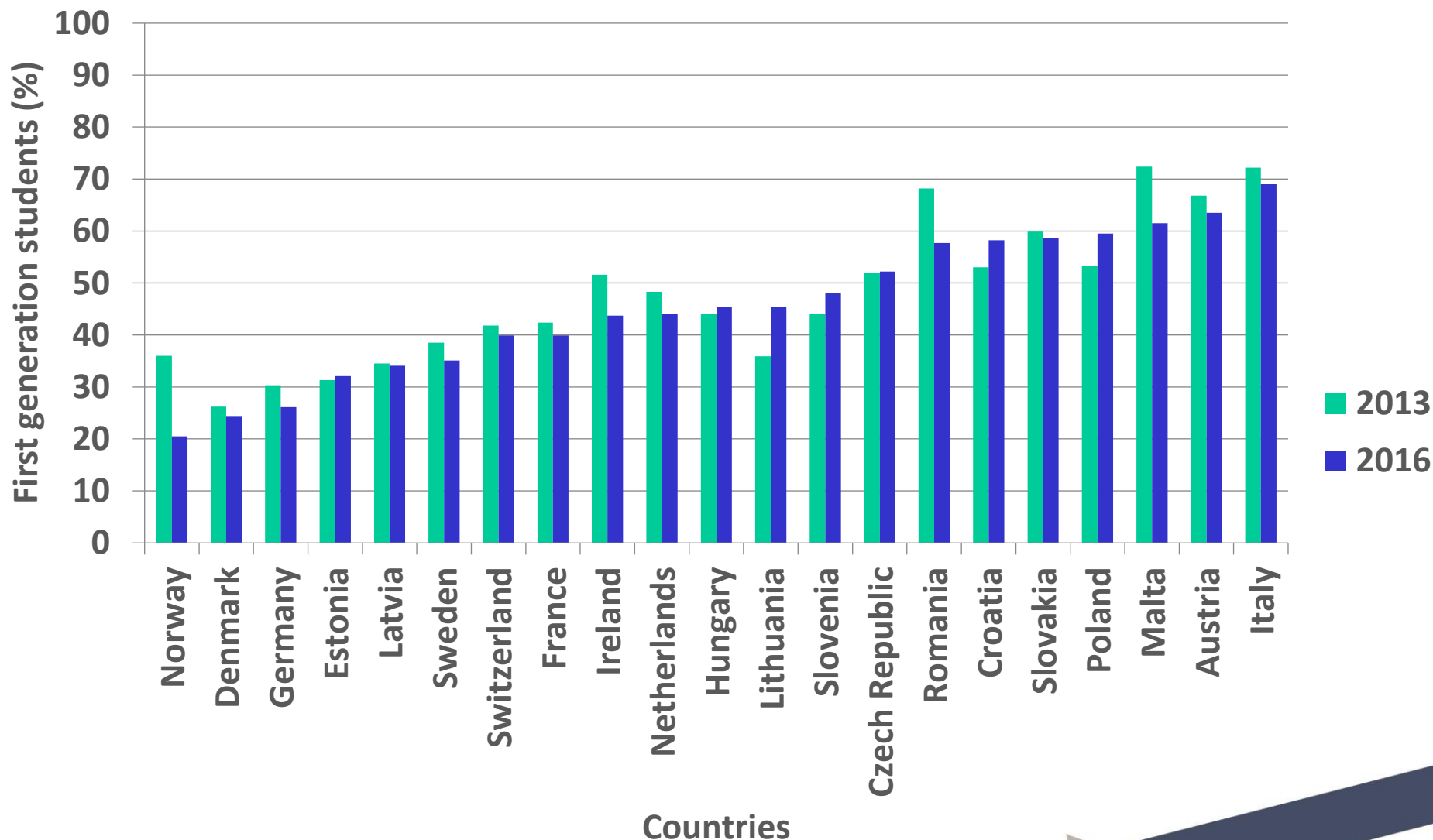
Methods

- Descriptive statistics
- Logistic regressions and random effects logit models



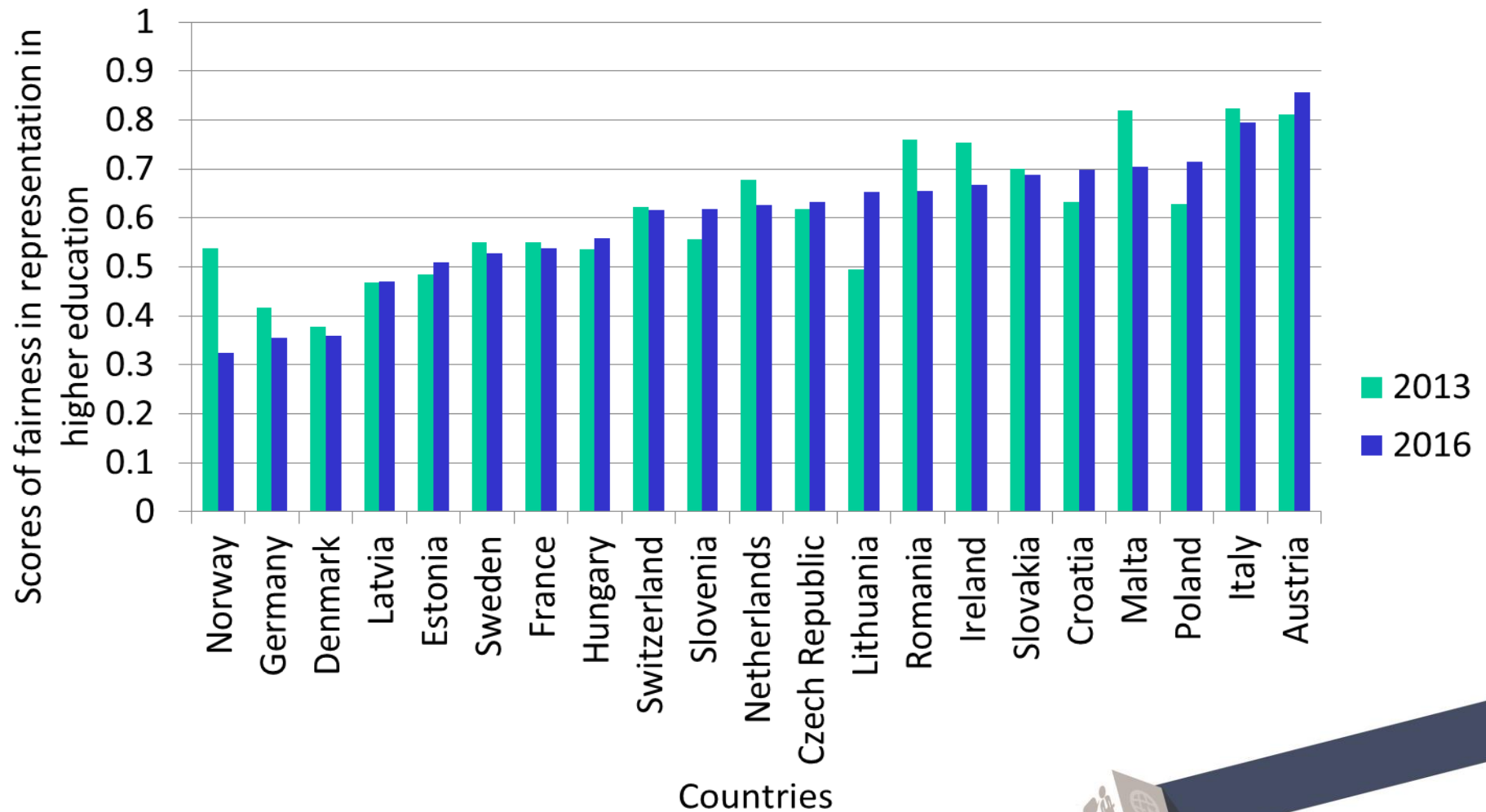
Inclusion of FGS in 2013 and 2016 (%)

Source: EUROSTUDENT V & VI



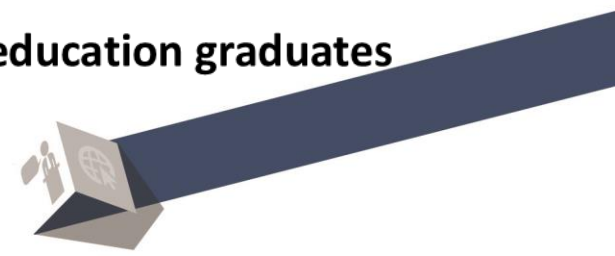
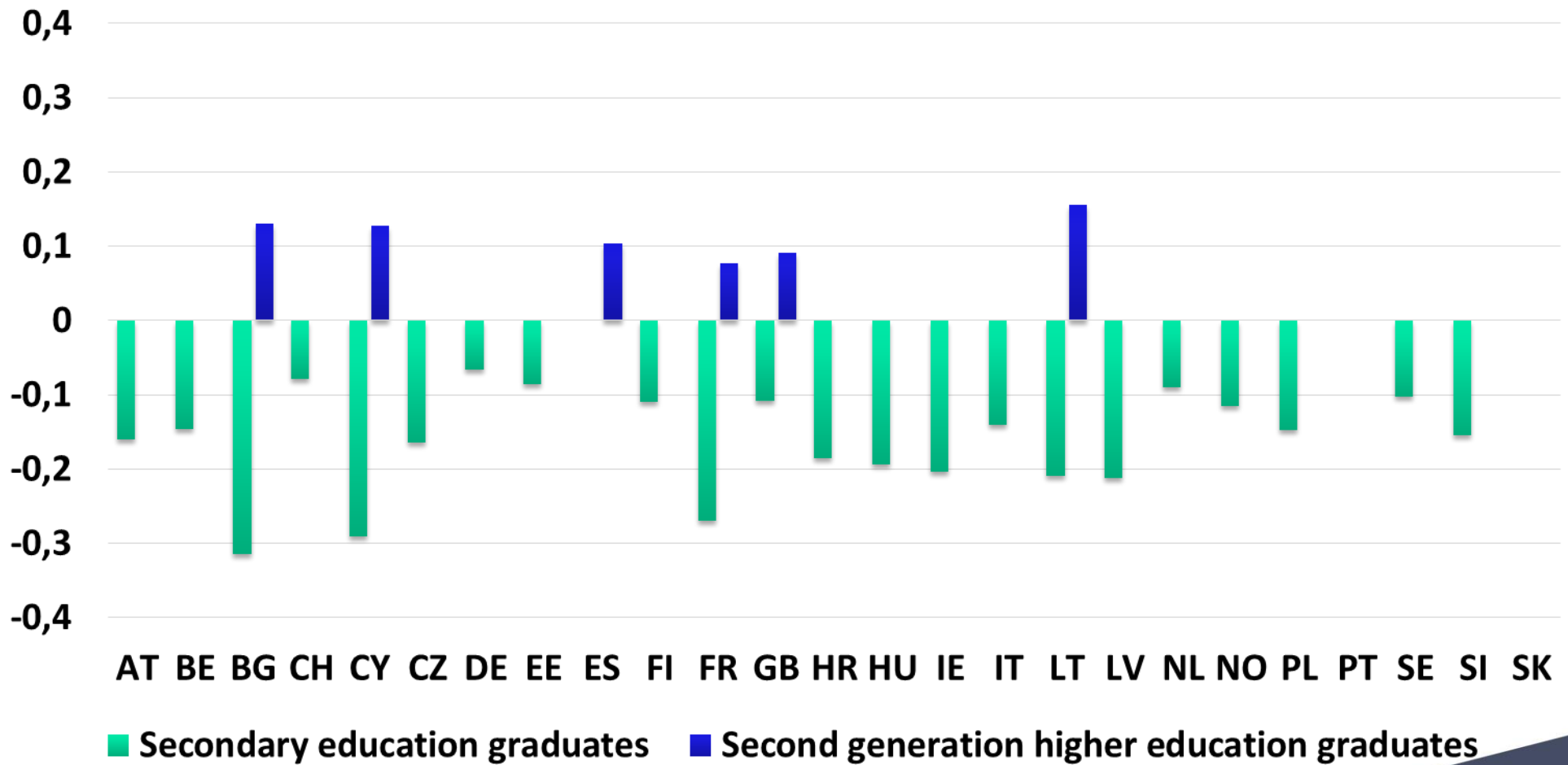
Fairness in representation in HE of FGS in 2013 and 2016

Source: EUROSTUDENT V & VI



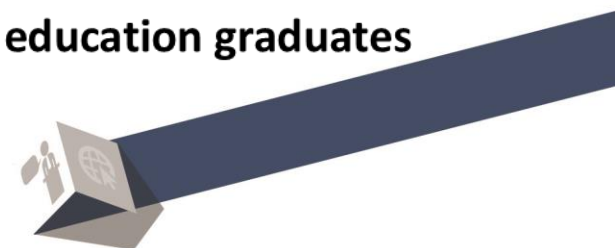
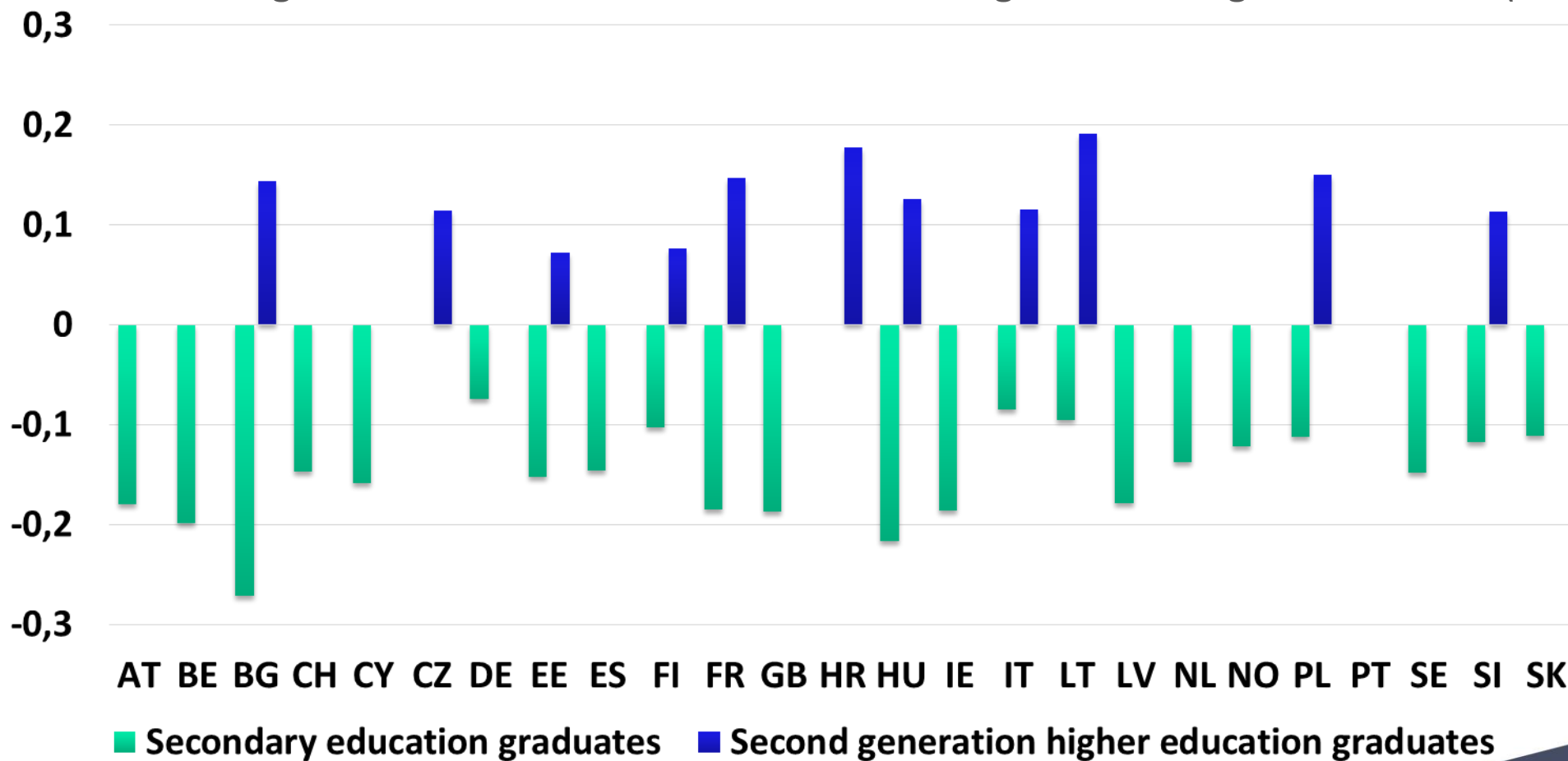


Average marginal effects on the adults' probabilities of perceiving that they had a fair chance of achieving the level of education they were seeking. *Notes:* The omitted reference category is First generation higher education graduates. The results are controlled for gender and age. *Source:* ESS (2018)





Average marginal effects on the adults (25-64) probabilities of perceiving that they would have a fair chance of getting the job they were seeking. *Notes:* The omitted reference category is First generation higher education graduates. The results are controlled for gender and age. *Source:* ESS (2018)



Random effects logit models estimating the likelihood of perceiving that they had a fair chance of achieving the level of education they were seeking

The results are controlled for gender and age, *Source*: ESS 2018, odds ratios (st. err.)

	Model1	Model2	Model3	Model4	Model5	Model6
FGG vs. SGG	0.286** (0.016)	0.285** (0.016)	0.286** (0.016)	0.291** (0.017)	0.287** (0.016)	0.327** (0.029)
Secondary education vs. SGG	0.678** (0.043)	0.675** (0.043)	0.678** (0.043)	0.691** (0.045)	0.678** (0.043)	0.732** (0.072)
GDP per capita	1.376* (0.174)	1.262+ (0.170)				
GDP per capita X FGG		1.094+ (0.059)				
GDP per capita X Secondary		1.132* (0.067)				
Gini coefficient			0.824 (0.107)	0.944 (0.132)		
Gini coefficient X FGG				0.858** (0.049)		
Gini coefficient X Secondary				0.863* (0.055)		
Flawed democracy vs. full democracy					0.443** (0.103)	0.526* (0.132)
Flawed democracy X FGG						0.801+ (0.093)
Flawed democracy X Secondary						0.870 (0.112)

Random effects logit models estimating the adults' likelihood of perceiving that they would have a fair chance of getting the job they were seeking

The results are controlled for gender and age, *Source: ESS 2018, odds ratios (st. err.)*

	Model1	Model2	Model3	Model4	Model5	Model6
FGG vs. SGG	0.394** (0.017)	0.392** (0.017)	0.393* (0.017)	0.395* (0.017)	0.394** (0.017)	0.415** (0.027)
Secondary education vs. SGG	0.720** (0.035)	0.716** (0.035)	0.720** (0.035)	0.720** (0.035)	0.720** (0.035)	0.806** (0.058)
GDP per capita	1.502** (0.147)	1.399** (0.144)				
GDP per capita X FGG		1.066 (0.046)				
GDP per capita X Secondary		1.136** (0.054)				
Gini coefficient			0.785* (0.088)	0.843 (0.099)		
Gini coefficient X FGG				0.897* (0.040)		
Gini coefficient X Secondary				0.971 (0.048)		
Flawed democracy vs. full democracy					0.385** (0.064)	0.431** (0.078)
Flawed democracy X FGG						0.907 (0.080)
Flawed democracy X Secondary						0.814* (0.079)



Discussion (1)

The presentation contributes to the literature by:

- revealing the trends in two aspects of social equity of FGS – inclusion and fairness – across different European countries;
- exploring the influence of FGG on the subjective perceptions of fairness and if this influence differs by the socio-economic and political state of the country where they live.





Discussion (2)

- ❑ The results show that inclusion and fairness capture different aspects of social equity. Thus:
 - the share of FGS has decreased in 14 of the countries, as this decrease differs by countries, and has increased in 7 countries.
 - FGS are underrepresented in all countries studied for both 2013 and 2016. In 2016 FGS was most underrepresented in Norway, Denmark and Germany and least underrepresented in Austria, Italy, and Poland.
- ❑ These results demonstrate that **FGS is a complex phenomenon** which could not be easily explained.
- ❑ A high share of FGS is an indicator of educational expansion. It is plausible that “[t]he higher the share of academic-educated parents becomes over time, the less likely it will be to find a high percentage of FGS” (Spiegler & Bednarek 2013: 318).





Discussion (3)

□ Being a FGG increases the chances to feel that you have just opportunities.

- The adults' odds of perceiving that they have a fair chance of getting the education and the job they were seeking among FGG are higher than those of adults with secondary education.

□ The effects of being a FGG are socially embedded:

- The likelihood FGG living in countries with high income inequalities of perceiving that they had a fair chance of achieving the level of education they were seeking is about 14% lower compared to those of SGG.
- In countries with flawed democracy FGG are less likely to perceive that they had a fair chance of achieving the level of education they were seeking than if they are SGG.
- FGG odds of perceiving that they would have a fair chance of getting the job they were seeking are lower than that of SGG in countries with high income inequalities.

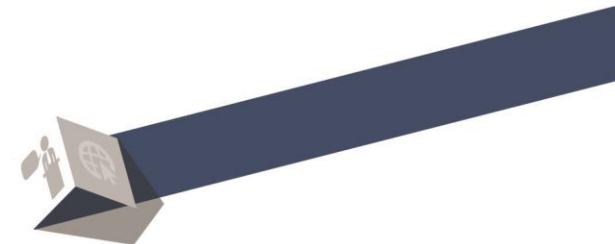




Further research (1)

The study raises several questions and outlines directions for further research:

- FGS is not a homogeneous group and it is worth studying intra-group variance.
- What are the factors – related to education system, but also to economic and social spheres – which influence on the level of FGS in different countries?
- How being a FGS and increasing the share of FGS influence on other subjective and objective goods, e.g. trust, income, social mobility?





Further research (2)

Methodological questions:

- Different countries apply different definitions of FGS which leads to problems with the comparability of international data on FGS (Spiegler & Bednarek 2013).
- There is a need to study FGS and FGG using mix-method approach and relying on both qualitative and quantitative data.





Conclusion

- FGS is not a label and this term does not convey any inferiority or deficiency. We stress the positive influence of being a FGS at both individual and societal levels.
- The FGS' problems should be studied and explained as structural rather than as individual problems (see also Spiegler & Bednarek 2013).





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<https://justedu2020.eu/>





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