

## **Recommendation on the reorganization of the university entrance system in Austria**

### Executive Summary

The present system of “free access” has failed. Austria has neither been successful in creating a socially equitable system of university access, nor has the system been able to lead students to studies that best fit their inclinations and talents. European aspects such as the Bologna Process cannot be implemented in a serious way while there is unregulated open access to universities. Furthermore, the system itself is ineffective: from the perspective of efficiency, it is deficient, from the perspective of quality, it is not capable of encouraging competition. In international comparisons, Austria has one of the highest dropout rates. Because of this, and the study conditions which result from the ‘free access’ policy, which are in some cases appalling, the lives and career chances of young people are given scant attention. Responsible modern educational planning should treat social justice, personal development, efficiency and adequacy of preparation for the labour market as central objectives. To remain idle in the current situation would be an irresponsible act.

The Austrian Science Board recommends the introduction of admission procedures to regulate the access to all studies in Austrian universities; The underlying intention of this recommendation is to enable an increasing number of students to complete their studies successfully in a shorter period of time and to benefit from better tutoring throughout their studies. It expects this to lead to a significant increase in the quality of teaching, and of research, and thus to the indispensable ensuring of educational quality in those studies which currently do not meet this standard. The legislative body should therefore authorize universities to introduce suitability-oriented admission procedures, taking into account their institutional autonomy. Universities themselves should make comprehensive use of the possibilities which such authorization affords. Admission procedures should be introduced not only for disciplines where student demand exceeds the number of study places available, but also where particular abilities are required for the study programmes selected. In the view of the Science Board,

admission procedures should include elements of an expanded study advisory service and, depending on the study, should encompass decisions based on selection. The introduction of admission procedures should be linked with an evaluation of overall capacity (in terms of student numbers), based on full cost accounting for fully-funded study places.

Admission procedures can be applied either before the commencement of study or during an initial phase of the study. The procedures that are adopted should take account of scientific findings. A single criterion, such as the “Matura” grade, should never be used alone to determine an admission decision.

The University Act of 2002 is the most significant reform of the Austrian university sector. In this context a reorganization of university access is a necessary consequence of this highly regarded Austrian university reform.