

## **Affirmative action in tertiary education-Intentions and reality**

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The dialogue on the role of the university in Europe of knowledge should deal with the issue of open and extended access to tertiary education jointly with the issue of equity and diversity. A differentiated system in tertiary education raises the issue of the allocation of the different groups into the system. The issue of equality is approached differently as far as it concerns excluded groups in the map of national policies in Europe. This paper shows that for substantial equality to be achieved an affirmative action plan should be applied in tertiary education. However, if positive results in terms of equality are to be expected for the previously excluded groups, adequate support should be provided once they gain access, so that they can deal successfully with it.

In light of the above and concerning Greece the paper examines:

- Affirmative action legislation for the access of special groups to tertiary education (including the significant changes made to the entrance process in the academic year 2011-2012)
- The conditions that would make the new measures effective
- Inclusive practices in the tertiary education system through examples from the University of Athens and Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, in order to answer the question if universities secure equal access to knowledge to all students

Finally, special reference is made to the Center of Inclusive Practice of the Faculty of Education of AUTH, as an exemplary paradigm for students that face difficulties.