Does free university really mean equal access for all?

ESTONIA



LONGITUDINAL EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS: REDUCING INEQUALITIES
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It's easy to assume that removing tuition fees makes higher education equally accessible based on students' abilities.

When Estonia introduced tuition-free higher education in 2015, the expectation was that it would reduce inequalities in access to higher education.

Research from the Estonian case study in LEARN project shows that while the tuition cost matters, this is only part of the equation.

Key takeaways

Students' family background still matters.

The share of students from disadvantaged backgrounds entering university has remained largely unchanged.

Where you live still matters.

Students from remote areas face more barriers compared with than those living near universities.

Adequate needs-based support is the missing piece.

Targeted support is essential to make access more equal.



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