



Overview of Student Loan Schemes in the Countries of the European Union

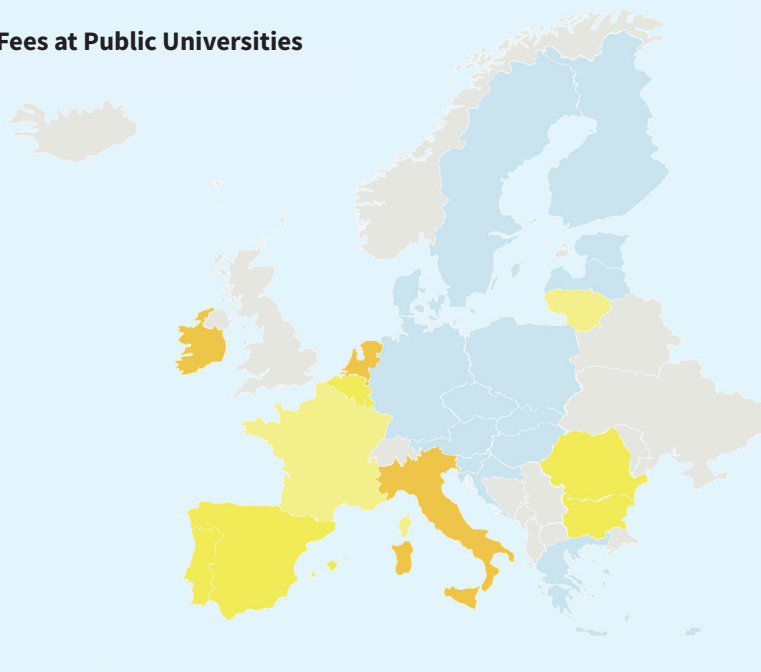


Student Chamber
of the Council of HEIs

Student loans represent a common instrument for supporting access to higher education in many European countries. However, their design, conditions and level of use vary considerably across Europe. The Student Chamber of the Council of Higher Education Institutions therefore decided to prepare an overview of student loan schemes in the countries of the European Union, drawing on publicly available sources as well as information provided by our international partner organisations. The aim of this document is to offer a concise and accessible overview of where student loans exist, what their basic parameters are, and what requirements are placed on students. More detailed information on individual national schemes is available on the online Padlet platform, which serves as a living space for updates and the sharing of practical experience. We consider the topic of student loans to be relevant also in the Czech context, where this instrument is not yet commonly used, despite its potential to represent one possible form of financial support for students. For this reason, the document also touches upon the broader context of higher education financing, in particular the issue of tuition fees, where in some countries a close link can be observed between their existence and the rationale for student loan systems. An overview of approaches from other countries may serve as inspiration for further expert and public debate on the possible introduction or revision of student loan schemes in your country.

Comparison of Tuition Fees at Public Universities

No fee
0–500 €
501–2000 €
2001–5000 €

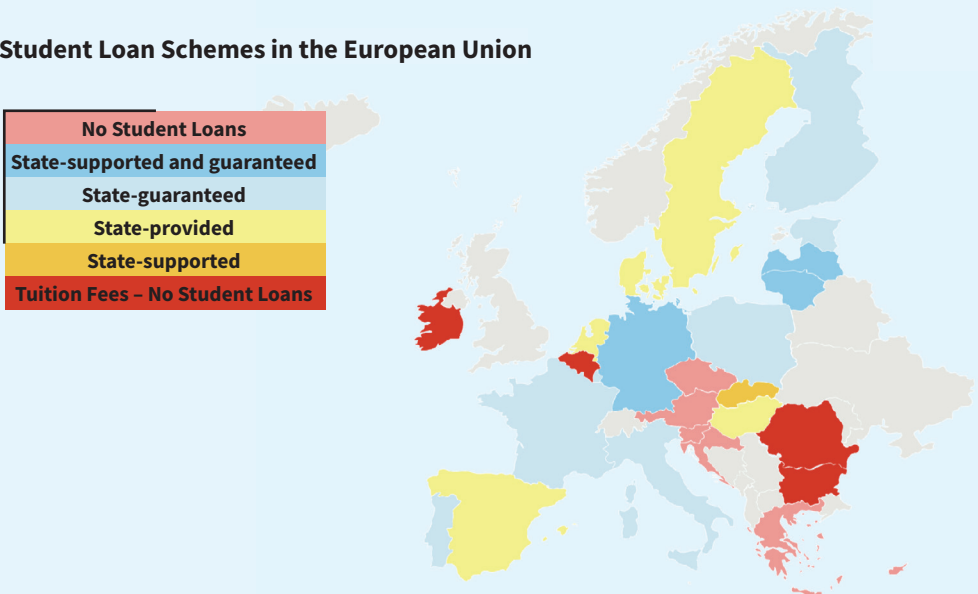


To provide a broader context for higher education financing and the potential need for student loans, we present an overview of tuition fees in European Union countries. The map shows the existence and amount of tuition fees at public universities in individual EU countries, with the colors of the map reflecting the diversity of tuition fees in these countries:

- Gray: Data were not collected as these are countries outside the EU.
- Blue: Countries where tuition fees are not charged, which is common in Scandinavia and most Central and Eastern European countries. Examples include Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Czech Republic, Germany, Poland, etc., where education at public universities is free.
- Light Yellow (0–500 €): Countries where tuition fees are very low, ranging from 0 to 500 € per year. Examples include Lithuania and France.
- Dark Yellow (501–2000 €): Countries where tuition fees range from 501 to 2000 €, representing a broader spectrum that may mean a higher financial burden for students. Examples include Romania, Bulgaria, Belgium, Spain, Portugal, where tuition fees vary by study program and student income.
- Orange (2001–5000 €): Countries where tuition fees are higher, ranging from 2001 to 5000 € per year. Examples include Ireland, Italy, and Netherlands, where tuition fees

This map illustrates the different approaches to financing higher education in Europe. While in some countries, tuition fees are not charged at all, in others, tuition fees are low or moderately high, which may influence the need for additional support tools, such as student loans. In countries with higher tuition fees, it may be difficult for students to finance their education without additional support, making loans an important tool for ensuring access to education.

Student Loan Schemes in the European Union



To further illustrate the possibilities of financing higher education, we present a map showing the forms of state support for student loan schemes in European Union countries. Unlike the previous map, which focused on the existence and level of tuition fees, this map illustrates whether and how the state intervenes in student loan systems and to what extent it helps students bear the financial risks associated with studying.

Countries marked in grey represent those where student loans do not exist and where the state provides no form of intervention in this area. Students in these countries do not have access to a dedicated student loan system and must rely either on other forms of support (such as scholarships or social benefits) or on standard commercial loans. According to the map, this applies in particular to the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Croatia, Greece, and other countries in Southeastern Europe.

Countries marked in dark blue represent the State supported and guaranteed model. Under this model, loans are provided either by a state-owned bank (e.g. Germany, Latvia) or by commercial banks (e.g. Lithuania), while the state fully or partially covers the interest and simultaneously guarantees the loan in case the student is unable to repay it. This model significantly reduces financial risks for students and makes loans more accessible, particularly for students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds.

Countries marked in light blue follow the State guaranteed model. Loans are provided by public or private banks, but the interest is not subsidised by the state, either fully or partially. The state acts primarily as a guarantor, ensuring that the bank recovers its funds in the event of the student's insolvency. This model operates, for example, in France, Luxembourg, Portugal, Italy, Poland, Finland, and Estonia, and represents a compromise between full state support and a purely market-based approach.

Countries marked in light yellow follow the State provided model, where loans are provided directly by the state from the public budget, often through the Ministry of Education or a dedicated public institution. This model is typical in Denmark, Hungary, the Netherlands, Spain, and Sweden. Its main advantages include strong public control over repayment conditions, often low or zero interest rates, and a strong emphasis on social accessibility.

Slovakia, marked in orange, represents a specific State supported model. The state has established a non-state special-purpose fund that administers student loans. The state does not provide the loans directly, does not subsidise interest rates, and does not guarantee the loans. Loan guarantees are provided either by a guarantor or, in the case of loans without a guarantor, any potential losses are covered by the fund itself. Nevertheless, interest rates remain significantly more favourable than those offered by commercial banks, making this model relatively unique in the European context.




Countries marked in red represent cases where tuition fees are required, but the state does not offer any student loan scheme that could be used, for example, to cover tuition costs. According to the map, this applies particularly to Belgium, Ireland, Bulgaria, and Romania. When combined with the existence of tuition fees, this creates a highly unresponsive environment in terms of financial accessibility to higher education, as students receive neither free education nor access to state-supported loan instruments.

Overall, the map shows that approaches to student loan systems across the European Union are highly diverse and closely linked to broader models of higher education financing. While some countries combine tuition fees with robust state-supported loan schemes, others leave students without systematic financial support. These differences are crucial for further discussion on the accessibility of higher education and the role student loans may play as an instrument of public policy.

Overview of loans by type of support

The following tables provide a concise overview of individual countries, grouped according to the type of student loan support model in place. The tables also include information on interest rates, maximum loan amounts, the loan provider, the start of repayment, whether a guarantor is required, and whether loans are available regardless of creditworthiness.









Overview of loans by type of support

Country	Interest rate	Maximum loan amount	Guarantor required?	Lending regardless of creditworthiness?	Loan provider	Start of repayment
 Lithuania	The current interest rate is 2.5% + EURIBOR	If the loan is for living expenses, it is up to €5,600 a year. If for studies, the amount is equal to the most expensive study program, which can be up to €10,000 per year	No	Yes	Commercial banks	Two years after completing the studies
 Latvia	Not higher than 5%, 3.5% currently	€3,500 per year	No	-	State-owned banks	After completing studies
 Germany	Currently 6.85 % but it is adjusted every semester	€54,600 in total	No	Yes	State-owned bank KfW	Latest beginning is 23 months after receiving the last payment






Please note: EURIBOR (Euro Interbank Offered Rate) is a benchmark interest rate that reflects the average rate at which major European banks lend unsecured funds to each other in the euro area. It is published daily for different maturities and is widely used as a reference rate for loans, mortgages, and other financial products.

Interest is paid by the state for students performing military service or for single parents with a child under 3 years of age.


State-guaranteed

Country	Interest rate	Maximum loan amount	Guarantor required?	Lending regardless of creditworthiness?	Loan provider	Start of repayment
 Estonia	~1.9% + EURIBOR, not exceeding 5%. If the rate exceeds this limit, the difference is covered by the state	€3,000 per year, max 3 times for one student 	Yes	No	Commercial banks (LHV, SEB)	After completing studies
 Finland	~ 2.5-3.5 %	€8,500 per year	No	Yes	Commercial banks	A year after the last monthly student benefit has been used or a year after graduation.
 France	~ 1-2 %	Up to €20,000 in total	No	-	French public investment bank	-
 Italy	~ 3-5 %	Up to €20,000 in total	Yes	-	Banks with state support	-
 Luxembourg	2 % (regulated by the state)	Can vary greatly but around €10,400 per year	No	Yes	Commercial banks	After completing your studies, you have 2 years to start paying it back.
 Poland	~ 6-8 %	Up to 5,000 PLN (approx. €1,100) per year	Yes	-	Commercial banks	-
 Portugal	EURIBOR + maximum margin of 1.25 %, market-based	€25,000 in total, from €1,000 to €5,000 available per year	No	No	Commercial banks	After completing studies

State-provided

Country	Interest rate	Maximum loan amount	Guarantor required?	Lending regardless of creditworthiness?	Loan provider	Start of repayment
 Denmark	4 % during studies, 3.10 % after graduation	Up to €5 600 (= 41 868 DKK)	No	-	State	After completing studies
 Hungary	9.65 % for Diákhitel1, 0 % for Diákhitel 2 and Training Loan (Képzési Hitel)	Diákhitel 1: Up to €385 (150 000 HUF). Diákhitel 2: Up to the full amount of the tuition fee/semester; Training Loan is max. €1,285 (500,000 HUF) in total	No	Yes	State - Diákhitel Központ Zrt. (Student Loan Center) which is a state-owned, non-profit organization.	After completing studies
 Netherlands	Regulated, now 2,56 %	€3,050 per year	No	Yes	DUO (Ministry of Education agency)	After completing studies
 Spain	~ 0-2 %	Not specified	No	-	State	-
 Sweden	~ 0.16 %	Up to €50,400 in total	No	-	State	-

State-supported

Country	Interest rate	Maximum loan amount	Lender required?	Lending regardless of creditworthiness?	Loan provider	When does loan repayment begin
 Slovakia	According to the law, the interest rate is the European Central Bank rate increased by 3 percentage points but not exceeding 4% per annum	Loan with a guarantor: up to €7,500. Loan without a guarantor: up to €2,000. Loan for students at excellent universities: up to €40,000	Yes	No	Education Support Fund (non-governmental institution)	After completing studies

Summary and further information

Student loans represent an important and frequently discussed topic that evolves dynamically over time and is subject to ongoing changes. The overview presented in this document is static in nature and therefore cannot be continuously updated. For this reason, we have made use of the online platform Padlet, which can be accessed via the provided link or by scanning the attached QR code.

The Padlet platform allows users to add comments and supplementary information for individual countries, particularly in cases where the current situation differs from the data we were able to collect. At the same time, it provides more detailed descriptions of student loan conditions in each country, enabling us to keep this document as concise and clear as possible.

We therefore encourage you to visit Padlet and contribute to its further development and updating. The aim is to create a living platform for everyone, making it easier to work with and engage in this topic.



We would like to thank everyone who contributed to the student loan survey and provided us with valuable information. Without their cooperation, this document could not have been created. We believe that this document will serve both as an example of successful international cooperation and as a resource for further discussion and addressing student loan systems in your country.



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