

# **TREY's statement on the amendments to the Government Decree on fees charged in the operations of universities of applied sciences and universities**

## **Maximum fee for open higher education in universities and universities of applied sciences**

We object to raising the maximum fee for open higher education to 45 euros per study credit. We are particularly concerned about how the proposal will affect the accessibility of open higher education. It is important that opportunities for continuous learning are accessible to everyone, regardless of their educational background and socio-economic or labour status.

Open universities have students from many different life situations. Studying at an open university has been a natural option for many young people, for example, who dream of a study place and want to get to know a certain field. On the other hand, there are university graduates studying at an open university who want to update their knowledge. For these students as well, it is good to note that a university degree does not guarantee a certain level of income, and among those updating their knowledge may well be people working in low-paying fields or people who are unemployed. In addition, many who study at an open university are in that position, above all, for wanting to educate themselves without necessarily having goals for a better position in the labour market. For this reason, significant increase in the fees of the open university reduces the opportunities for many to update their

own knowledge and thus increases inequality. The Ministry of Education and Culture has also stated in the memo that the opportunities for low-income students to take more expensive open studies than what is currently available are diminishing. We do not deem this is as an acceptable starting point.

While universities still retain the option of charging fees that are lower than the maximum fee, it is important that the maximum fee is also kept reasonable. Therefore, we do not deem a sudden tripling of fees as appropriate in any way.

## **Fees for extension application and re-registration in universities**

We do not support setting a fee of 50 euros for applying for an extension to complete the degree in universities. This proposal in question is justified only by the fact that this fee is already in use in universities of applied sciences, which we do not think is sufficient. If the practices in universities of applied sciences and universities are to be harmonised, it would also be possible to abolish the fee for applying for an extension in universities of applied sciences.

There are many reasons why graduating is delayed. One of the most significant factors is students working during their studies, and on the other hand, the increase in mental health challenges. It would be more appropriate to ensure sufficient support for students in completing their studies, rather than punishing them if for one reason or another their graduation is delayed. The fee for applying for an extension may also result in the degree no longer being completed, especially if the student has already been employed during their studies.

We also do not support an increase in the re-registration fee from 35 euros to 50 euros. The fact that the increase has already been made in universities of applied sciences is not a sufficient reason for increasing the fee in universities, not even in this proposal.

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