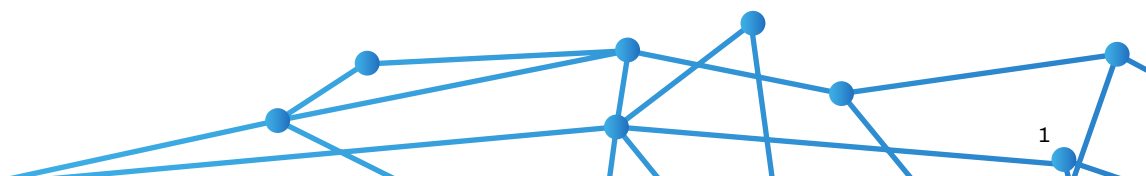


SEKEHE

CONDITIONS OF ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

Handbook Part 4/4



SEHEKE

Conditions of access to higher education

Handbook part 4/4

Main authors: Maria Benedetta Gambacorti-Passerini,
Katia Daniele

Co-authors: SEKEHE Consortium -

Tijs Van Steenberghe, Ielde Vermeir, Annick Vanhove,
Evelien Mommerency, Marianne Schapmans,
Jessica De Maeyer, Eliška Černá, Alice Gojová,
Jakub Černý, Evelien De Maesschalck,
Clara De Ruysscher, Wouter Vanderplasschen,
Danny Van de Perre, Didier Peleman,
Maria Benedetta Gambacorti Passerini,
Cristina Palmieri, Lisa Brambilla, Francesca Oggionni,
Paolo Macchia, Luca Boccanegra, Katia Daniele,
Siddhartha Canton, Alessandro Ferrante, Didier Contadini,
Ottar Ness, Karl Johan Johansen, Vebjørn Ørsjødal

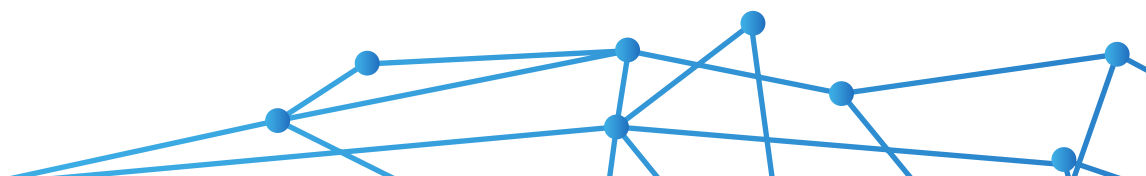
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1. Guidance on access to higher education methodology

1.1 Why do you want to explore this topic, and with who?

E Start by clarifying your motivation and defining the group you want to be involved in. We chose to work with students currently enrolled in our university, as they could speak from direct and recent experience. Depending on your goals, it may also be valuable to include other stakeholders such as prospective students, faculty members, or professionals with personal or institutional knowledge of the topic.

1.2 How are you going to collect data or generate insights?

There are many methods you can use – interviews, surveys, focus groups. In our case, we organized focus groups, which provided space for discussion, sharing, and mutual recognition among students. This method proved particularly effective in revealing both individual stories and collective patterns.

1.3 How will you create a safe and inclusive space for participants?

Make purposeful choices about who you invite and how you facilitate the process, ensuring that participants have experiences directly related to the topic you wish to explore. Before and at the start of the session, clearly communicate the goals of the inquiry, the types of questions that will be asked, how the data will be used, and the voluntary nature of participation. Emphasize that participants can withdraw at any time, and that all contributions will be treated as confidential and anonymized.

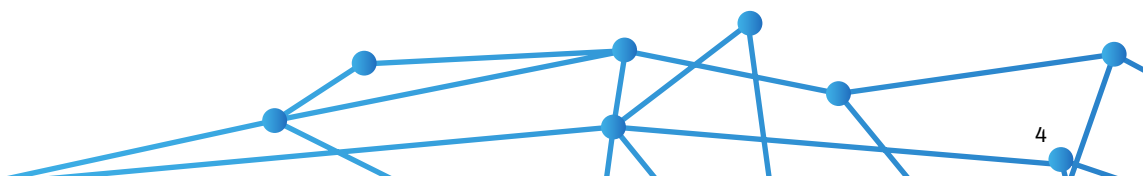
Creating a respectful and trusting environment is essential. Take time to welcome everyone, encourage active listening, and make it clear that every voice matters equally. Pay attention to group dynamics, ensuring that no one dominates and that quieter participants are encouraged to contribute. Foster a relational climate where participants feel heard, supported, and free from judgment. Using semi-structured questions can help guide the conversation while allowing participants the freedom to express what truly matters to them.

1.4 How will you analyse what emerges?

In our experience, the research team conducted a thematic analysis, strongly anchored in participants' actual words and expressions. Although the analysis was not co-constructed with participants, this approach helped preserve the authenticity of their perspectives. If time and resources allow, involving participants in the interpretation process, such as through feedback or validation sessions, can be a valuable addition, though its feasibility should be assessed in each context.

1.5 What do you plan to do with the results?

Think about how to share the insights meaningfully within your institution. This could take the form of a written report, presentation, or participatory workshop. The aim is to move from individual experiences to collective awareness and, where possible, to inform institutional reflection or concrete actions around inclusion and access.



2 Key Findings from Focus Groups on Vulnerability and Inclusion

2.1 Introduction

This report presents the findings of focus groups conducted in 2024 as part of the ERASMUS+ SEKEHE project, aimed at exploring how students experience vulnerability and inclusion in higher education. The analysis focuses on understanding the meaning of vulnerability, the challenges students face in their academic environments and potential strategies for fostering inclusivity and support

2.2 Methodology

The data was gathered through focus groups conducted across all universities participating in the ERASMUS+ SEKEHE project, in Italy (the University of Milano-Bicocca - UNIMIB), Norway (the Norwegian University of Science and Technology - NTNU), Belgium (The University of Applied Sciences and Arts Ghent - HOGENT, Ghent University - UGENT) and Czech Republic (the University of Ostrava - UO). Students from diverse academic and social backgrounds were invited to share their experiences and perspectives on vulnerability and in conditions of access to higher education for students in vulnerable situation, both in personal and academic contexts: Italy (UNIMIB): 6 students (Educational Sciences); Norway (NTNU): 6 students (Strength-based Learning Environments), 6 students (Relational Welfare and Wellbeing) Belgium (HOGENT): 6 students (social work (4), primary education (1) and retail management (1); Belgium (UGENT): 9 students (second master's students involved in a thesis (5) and in a podcast on experiential knowledge (4); Czech Republic (UO): 9 students (bachelor's and master's degrees of Social Work and bachelor's degree of Health-Social Care).

The focus groups were conducted in a semi-structured format, allowing for both guided discussion through an ad hoc questioning route (table below) and open-ended input from participants. Theme:

“Support for the Vulnerability of Students in the University Context”
Introduction to the research theme:

First of all, we want to thank you for agreeing to participate in this meeting. This is a group discussion that we have organized to gather your opinions on the theme of vulnerability in the university context. We believe that your thoughts as university students can provide us with various insights into this issue.

We do not intend to evaluate anyone, and no sensitive or personal questions will be asked. Everything you say will be kept completely anonymous. Regardless of your initial consent, if you do not feel comfortable or for any other reason, you can leave the discussion at any time. Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. I would like each of you to introduce yourselves to the others, even if it's just stating your name (you can also choose to use a nickname) and, if possible, adding something about yourself (such as your passions or your favourite series, sport, favourite subject, etc.).
2. What does vulnerability mean to you? Could you provide some examples?
3. If I mention “vulnerability” and “university”, what comes to your mind?
4. Thinking about your university context, what experiences of vulnerability do you think could most significantly influence the access and inclusion of students in the university?
5. Thinking about your university context, where do you believe students can feel their vulnerability welcomed? Probe question: If listing only “physical” places, delve into specifying that it can also refer to “informal” places (such as shared meals with peers, etc.) and/or “virtual” places (like WhatsApp groups, etc.).
6. In your opinion, how can the student population contribute to supporting the vulnerabilities of students in the university?
7. What is your opinion on the idea that experiences of vulnerability can open up new learning opportunities for oneself and others?
8. In your view, what specifically can facilitate this learning?
9. From our discussion, it seems to have emerged that... Is that correct? Is there anything else you would like to add?
10. To conclude our discussion, I would like to ask each of you for a key message/slogan that you would like to share regarding the support of vulnerabilities of students in the university environment.

Data was analysed thematically to identify commonalities and differences across institutions.

2.3 Key Themes from Focus Groups

The focus group discussions revealed four primary themes, reflecting the students’ diverse experiences of vulnerability and inclusion:

1. Vulnerability in Personal, Social, and Contextual Aspects
2. University and Vulnerability
3. Inclusion and Accessibility
4. Responses to Vulnerability

These themes are further elaborated in the Findings section.

2.4 Findings

This chapter explores the different dimensions of student vulnerability and their implications for inclusion in higher education. Sections 4.1 and 4.2 examine the various forms of vulnerability experienced by students – both in their personal and social lives, as well as within university systems. Sections 4.3 and 4.4 then analyse the barriers to accessibility and inclusion, along with the strategies proposed to enhance students’ experiences and opportunities in higher education.

In this chapter, we present a synthesis of the most significant themes that emerged from the individual focus groups (FGs) conducted at UNIMIB, NTNU, HOGENT, UGENT, and UO, structuring them to highlight connections and commonalities across different institutional contexts.

2.4.1 Vulnerability in Personal, Social, and Contextual Aspects

Student vulnerability is not a singular experience but rather a complex interaction of personal, social, and contextual factors that shape an individual’s ability to navigate academic and personal challenges. Across different institutions, discussions from the focus groups (FG) highlighted how vulnerability is influenced by individual circumstances, societal expectations, and family dynamics, often affecting students’ sense of belonging and well-being. More specifically:

At UNIMIB, participants described vulnerability in terms of personal fragility, particularly when facing more or less familiar situations without adequate resources. Anna directly linked vulnerability to fragility, stating, “Vulnerability... it makes me think of something very much related to fragility, more than anything else, when someone feels vulnerable”. Sonia expanded on this idea, emphasizing the connection between vulnerability and individual sensitivity: “Maybe vulnerability is not exactly a synonym for fragility, but it is something closely connected to one’s own sensitivity; depending on how sensitive I am, I might feel more or less vulnerable”. Similarly, Dante highlighted that vulnerability is not solely tied to new experiences but can also emerge in familiar situations when internal or external conditions shift: “It is not necessarily about facing something new; even in a situation one has always been in, a change in oneself or the context can suddenly make it feel vulnerable”. Gaia further reinforced this perspective, pointing out the influence of past experiences on one’s perception of vulnerability: “I never enter a situation empty-handed; I always carry with me an experiential baggage of past experiences, of things that make me more or less vulnerable to certain situations”.

At NTNU, students emphasized social isolation as a key challenge, often linked to difficulties in adapting to the academic environment.

At HOGENT, students discussed the pressure of societal and family expectations on self-esteem, which significantly influenced their sense of vulnerability.

At UGent, students discussed vulnerability as a layered and dynamic experience, shaped by personal history, sensory triggers, and social stigma. They described vulnerability not only as the loss of protective factors, but also as a feeling of loneliness that persists even in the presence of others. Students highlighted how vulnerability is often hidden, yet they viewed it as a strength that fosters authenticity and connection.

Experiential knowledge was seen as deeply intertwined with vulnerability. Students described it as nuanced and evolving – a puzzle with many pieces, shaped by both direct and indirect experiences. Students emphasized the power of this knowledge, but also the risks: it can be misunderstood, reduced to a story, or even turned against them. Several students had encountered situations where their experiential knowledge was seen as a liability. They stressed the need for autonomy in how and when to share it, and underlined the importance of intent, self-care, and institutional support. For them, experiential knowledge enhances empathy, promotes strength-based practice, nurtures a gentler view on the world, and can inspire critical engagement and activism within professional contexts.



Image 1 Photovoice exercise
Student01 UGent

“... that society demands that we study more, that we go to school, but they want us to work and that we have some permanence, stability early on in our lives in my opinion and actually it’s such a pressure that sometimes it happens, that like there’s this self-doubt and we start to shy away from people and I feel for me it’s like, we start to worry about what’s going to happen because I’m afraid that I’m not so secure yet, I think personally, I’m still studying, so now I’m hesitant about what to do.” (UO, Participant 1)

“I’m also thinking about how we’re all terrified that you’re not going to have a pension anymore, you’re going to be awfully late for that retirement. Or the climate, it’s going to destroy you, your kids like this, they’re not going to be here anymore and things like that too, I hear that all the time from all sides. Both from the media and of course grandmothers, they know best.” (UO, Participant 3)

“...maybe the older generation will tell us, what are you young people just traumatized by, or like that? So it’s even worse to come out with it or to deal with it at all, because the person is like, you know, I can’t be mentally unwell because I’m still young.” (UO, Participant 4)

2.4.2 University and Vulnerability

Universities play a complex role in shaping student vulnerability. Insights from the focus groups (FGs) with students revealed that, in some cases, institutional structures and expectations can create or intensify vulnerability by demanding high levels of autonomy, adaptability, and prior knowledge of academic systems. In other cases, vulnerability stems from the absence of adequate support or opportunities to engage meaningfully within the university community. More specifically:

At UNIMIB, students described vulnerability as closely tied to the transition from school to university, where the shift toward self-directed learning and independent decision-making exposed them to uncertainty, self-doubt, and the fear of making mistakes. Dante noted that entering university meant learning to engage in critical dialogue, including with professors and peers – something rarely encouraged in secondary school: “We come from high school, where what the teacher says is basically the truth... but at university, you can question the professor, disagree. And if you’re not yet confident in your ideas, or if you’re too malleable, that can make you vulnerable. It’s part of entering adult life, where you’re expected to have a structured mindset, but not everyone arrives with that”. Students also highlighted the challenges of managing academic responsibilities and deadlines, often without sufficient support or prior preparation. Paolo reflected: “There are so many things to do, both essential and optional... deadlines are a huge struggle for me. I almost always missed them or only noticed them at the last minute. That made me feel vulnerable”. A related theme was the lack of awareness or understanding of the university system, especially in the early stages. As Paolo shared: “I associate vulnerability with a lack of awareness. For much of my degree, I didn’t know what opportunities were available. I wasn’t taking initiative; I let things happen to me rather than being proactive. That made me vulnerable to anything unexpected, because I didn’t know how to manage it”. Some students linked this sense of vulnerability to the broader difficulty of navigating complex social and institutional systems as young adults. Dante explained: “You hit 18 and suddenly the whole world comes at you – you’re expected to know how everything works. Open a bank account, handle bureaucracy, make decisions. You don’t always have the skills yet, and it’s overwhelming”.

NTNU participants reported academic workload pressures and insufficient institutional support.

At HOGENT, the lack of structured networks forced students to rely on personal connections, increasing isolation.

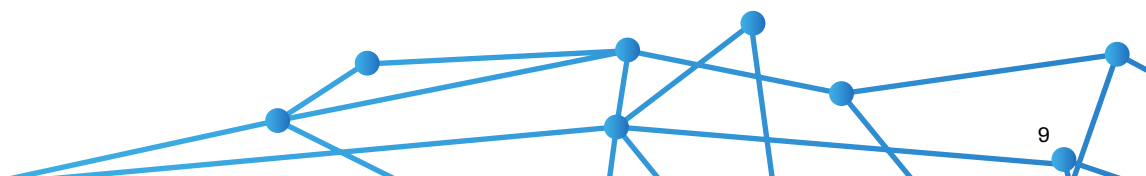
At UGent, students highlighted how academic structures often prioritize professional distance over personal openness, leaving little space to express vulnerability. They described the university as a mirror of broader societal norms: as long as vulnerability remains stigmatized in society, it is unlikely to be normalized in the classroom. While institutional psychological support and peer-led initiatives exist, students reported rarely using these services, relying instead on personal networks for support.

Students noted that within the curriculum, there is limited explicit recognition of experiential knowledge. Professionalism is often equated with emotional restraint, making it difficult to bring one's full self into academic or training contexts. Opportunities to connect personal experience with academic work, such as thesis topics or internships, typically arise only late in their studies. Students emphasized the importance of seeing and engaging with peers or experts by experience who share similar vulnerabilities. These moments of recognition can be deeply affirming, especially in an environment that tends to overlook the emotional and existential weight of certain course content. Some students found that not being able to share their own story—or wanting to but feeling unable—had a real impact on their professional and personal identity. While the university offers entry points for vulnerability, they remain fragmented and fragile, often emerging only when students are already nearing graduation.



Image 2 Silenced

Unknown student of UO



UO students pointed to the possible breach of physical safety (in relation to the mass shooting that happened at the Charles University in December 2023), poor communication with academicians, bureaucratic barriers, inconsistent evaluation methods, and poor media profile of social work as key challenges.

“Well, I guess I see it as a breach of some kind of security. I see, for example, how everyone gets into the school here. I imagine the tragedy that happened in Prague in December (note: deadly mass shooting at the Charles University Faculty of Arts in December 2023) and I think, well, who is guarding this place? If the lady at the reception is smoking, we’re actually just walking by ourselves, so who’s guarding us? Or, like, if practically everyone on the street gets in here. (UO, Participant 8)

Participant 8: *Also in the media, it’s also a mockery, like.*

Participant 7: *Our profession in general.*

Participant 1: *Like I’ve met really, we’ve been told we’re social cases. And like the reaction all of a sudden, like what please?*

Participant 3: *You’re the one taking the kids away? And you’re the one who gives benefits to gypsies? (UO)*

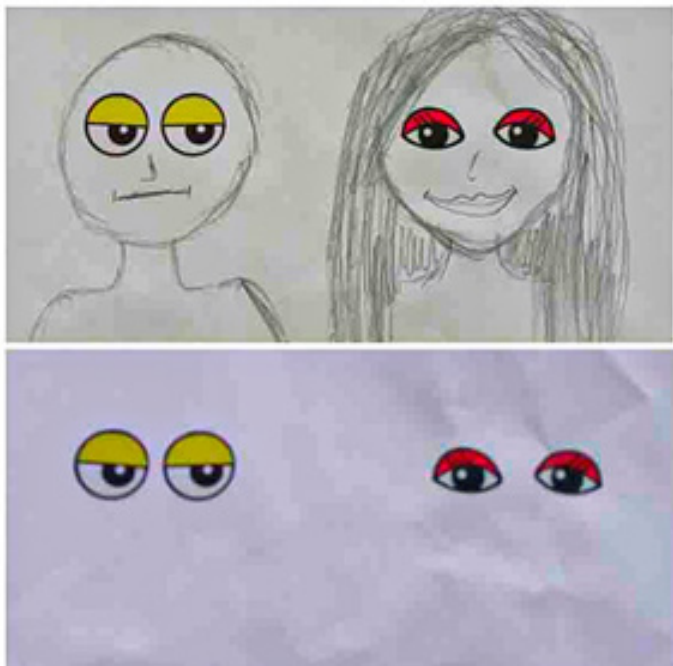


Image 3 Looking at people in stigmatising way
Unknown student of UO

2.4.3 Inclusion and Accessibility

Barriers to inclusion and accessibility, understood as students' ability to access university resources, spaces, information, support systems, and social opportunities, were identified across all institutional contexts. These barriers, though varying in nature and intensity, often influenced students' sense of belonging and their capacity to participate fully in academic and social life. Financial hardship, bureaucratic confusion, lack of clarity around procedures, limited disability inclusivity, and the inaccessibility of both physical and social environments were among the most frequently mentioned obstacles.

More specifically:

At UNIMIB, students described inclusion and accessibility as strongly affected by economic constraints, institutional complexity, and structural exclusion. Paolo noted that not all students have the freedom to choose their university path, as financial pressure often shapes academic decisions: "Not everyone has the chance to freely choose their academic path. You also have to consider what costs less, what you can afford, and whether you can work or not". Anna shared how her need to work to support her family limited her presence at university: "There are periods when I have to work to help my family. This obviously limits me, sometimes even in attending classes". A major barrier emerged around access to information and procedures: Sole explained the confusion of navigating multiple platforms when searching for deadlines or administrative details, saying, "You go on e-learning, and it sends you to the student portal, and that sends you to the main university website where it says, 'You will have information soon'... but I'm graduating in two months – I need the information now, not soon!". Anna also reported that key information is often scattered or not made explicit: "There are so many things to do and no one clearly tells you when or how. You have to figure everything out on your own". In terms of physical accessibility, Sole noted that "some university spaces aren't accessible at all. If I think of the older buildings, the more industrial ones... they're just not designed for people with disabilities", while Anna reflected on the lack of visible disability representation, stating, "I've never seen a person with a disability here. I don't know if it's because there aren't any or because you just don't see them – but it's strange". Geographical distance and inflexible timetables were also limiting factors. Dante, for example, said, "I live outside of Milan, and it takes me an hour and a half to get to university. That makes it hard to stay for events or to meet people. I just go home right after class".

NTNU participants called for more inclusive environments and alternative social opportunities.

At HOGENT, students highlighted the impact of economic barriers on access to higher education.

At UGent, students observed that vulnerabilities can significantly hinder access to higher education. They emphasized that these barriers often begin long before university and tend to accumulate over time, leading many potential students to opt out of academic pathways altogether. Those who do enter university still face a range of exclusionary dynamics. Students pointed to both external and internal factors: on the one hand, structural inequalities limit who gets to imagine themselves as a student; on the other, the university itself reproduces different physical, cognitive, and relational barriers that are difficult for people with vulnerabilities to overcome.

In UO, financial pressures and housing insecurity emerged as critical factors limiting accessibility

2.4.4 Responses to Vulnerability

Across all institutional contexts, students reflected upon not only on the challenges they face but also on the resources and strategies that could help address vulnerability in higher education. Many proposals focused on the need for clearer communication, stronger support systems, inclusive environments, and spaces for peer connection. These responses often emerged from direct personal experiences and highlighted what students themselves would find meaningful in fostering a more supportive and equitable university setting. More specifically:

At UNIMIB, students emphasized the importance of peer support and a sense of belonging to a learning community. Sharing vulnerability was not only seen as a challenge but also as a resource for building relationships. Anna explained, “I used my vulnerability to create connections... I remember preparing for an exam with a classmate I barely knew before. Talking, sharing, discovering we had similar stories – it became something beautiful. You have to decide how to use your vulnerability”. This relational dimension was reinforced by Gaia, who reflected on how being part of a cohesive cohort created a strong support network: “We’re not just classmates – we’re friends. And that’s not something common, not even in other universities. Most people I know say they feel like just a number. We feel part of something”. For many, this experience of community was deeply tied to their field of study. Gaia shared, “There’s no competition here. I think that’s something foundational in people who study education. That mindset allows you to be vulnerable”. Sole added, “It helps you grow, especially when you receive that kind of recognition and acceptance even in class”. The idea of not being alone was central to many students’ reflections. As Gaia described: “You never feel like you’re alone – you feel like you’re part of something bigger, like a set of concentric circles. If I fall, there’s someone behind me. And if someone else gets hit, that protection reaches me too. That’s what peer support means”. Sole summarized the experience clearly: “Community helped, especially at the beginning. The fact that we were able to support each other made me feel less vulnerable”.

NTNU participants called for stronger faculty-student relationships and greater institutional engagement.



Image 4 Escalators
Unknown student of UO

Image 5 Emerging
Unknown student of UO

At HOGENT, students advocated for safe spaces and increased institutional involvement. At UGent, students emphasized the importance of creating a learning environment in which vulnerabilities are both respected and normalized. While they appreciated the sensitive and non-judgmental tone used when discussing experts by experience, they noted that there was little explicit recognition of students who may have lived through similar experiences themselves. This lack of awareness—both from peers and teaching staff—made it difficult to share personal stories and/or connect theory to their own identities. Students believed that bringing experiential knowledge more regularly and explicitly into classroom conversations could foster mutual sensitivity and help reduce feelings of isolation.

They also stressed the need for follow-up spaces where students could talk about emotionally charged topics discussed in class. Whether through a chat function, one-on-one contact, or peer conversation, making these options visible would contribute to a sense of safety and recognition. The value of peer connection was repeatedly highlighted — not only as emotional support, but also as a space for professional growth. Students felt that vulnerabilities should be acknowledged as part of developing one's professional identity, and that more opportunities to reflect on this should be embedded earlier in the curriculum.

UO participants suggested skill-building workshops, peer support, and improved communication about counselling services.

I think it would be nice if the information was presented through the eyes of the students. That the teacher will say something, but as part of that he will actually say what he always says and he doesn't think it's important how we perceive it, because of course we perceive it differently, so it would be nice for the student to say with his own eyes what to look out for in some kind of a seminar. (UO, Participant 8)

...but the skills training is great, and as we were talking about the vulnerability, people there opened up. Even I opened up with some of my problems and now I found out that the colleague across the class shares that problem too. Or vice versa, the colleague there said something, and I felt the same way. Or I no longer felt alone... (UO, Participant 3)

2.4.5 Similarities Across Focus Groups

A The focus groups revealed several shared challenges and themes across the participating institutions, reflecting common struggles faced by students in navigating vulnerability and inclusion within higher education.

Across institutions such as UNIMIB, UGENT, and UO, students described how vulnerability is often stigmatized, compelling them to present themselves as strong and resilient.

Social isolation was another prominent theme, particularly at NTNU, HOGENT, and UGENT, where students noted a lack of institutional support for building social networks. The absence of structured community-building initiatives left many students feeling disconnected from their peers and unsupported in their academic endeavours.

Social media pressure was a recurring concern at HOGENT and UO. Students at these institutions reflected on how platforms exacerbate vulnerabilities by promoting unattainable ideals and reinforcing harmful behaviours, such as disordered eating. Social media was also described as commodifying precarity, creating a culture of comparison and heightened anxiety among students.

Economic barriers emerged as a significant issue at UNIMIB, HOGENT, and UO, where financial pressures such as tuition fees, housing costs, and the lack of sufficient financial support limited access to education. These challenges disproportionately affected students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.



Scheme 1 Vulnerability commonalities

Finally, university access and social stigma were identified as significant barriers to inclusion in Belgium and the Czech Republic. At HOGENT and UGENT, vulnerabilities tied to socio-economic backgrounds, mental health, and physical or cognitive challenges discouraged many students from pursuing higher education. In OU, these issues were compounded by societal expectations and systemic inefficiencies, further limiting opportunities for students with vulnerabilities.

Inclusion and disability were also recurrent concerns. Participants at UNIMIB, NTNU, and HOGENT highlighted the insufficient institutional attention to creating accessible environments for students with disabilities. While efforts to promote diversity were acknowledged, students often perceived these initiatives as superficial or lacking in concrete outcomes, further contributing to their sense of exclusion.

The theme of lacking social recognition was particularly evident at UNIMIB, UO and UGENT. Students at UNIMIB linked vulnerability to the perception of their academic field, particularly in disciplines such as Educational Sciences, where societal acknowledgment was seen as crucial.

Despite this, participants recognized vulnerability as a potential source of personal and relational growth, especially when linked to experiential learning and meaningful interactions within their academic communities.

At UGENT, participants emphasized the role of experiential knowledge in fostering growth and resilience, underscoring the importance of recognition within academic and professional contexts.

2.4.6 Context-Specific Insights

Each university presented unique insights and challenges, reflecting the distinct socio-cultural and institutional environments in which students navigate their vulnerabilities.

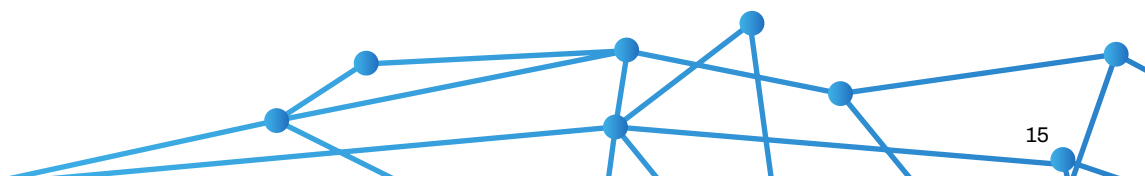
At UNIMIB, participants noted that support and orientation are often insufficient unless they are well-integrated into pre-university educational pathways. They emphasized the need for a greater focus on developing soft skills, such as communication and adaptability, rather than limiting preparatory efforts to specific competencies.

This perception reflects a broader challenge within the local context of the UNIMIB. Despite the availability of numerous orientation services and initiatives, both at the university level and within specific degree programs, these institutional channels are rarely utilized. Instead, they tend to rely on informal methods of information exchange, such as peer-to-peer interactions and direct communication, rather than engaging with university-mediated resources.

As a result, Bicocca faces the challenge of investing significant resources in orientation and student support while achieving limited effectiveness. This suggests the need to explore alternative communication and engagement strategies that better align with students' actual information-seeking behaviours, potentially increasing both the reach and impact of existing initiatives.

At NTNU, students called for the creation of inclusive social spaces that are not centred around alcohol consumption, as they felt this would foster a more welcoming and diverse university community.

HOGENT students discussed systemic barriers within the educational framework, particularly the “waterfall system” which disproportionately disadvantages those from non-academic backgrounds.



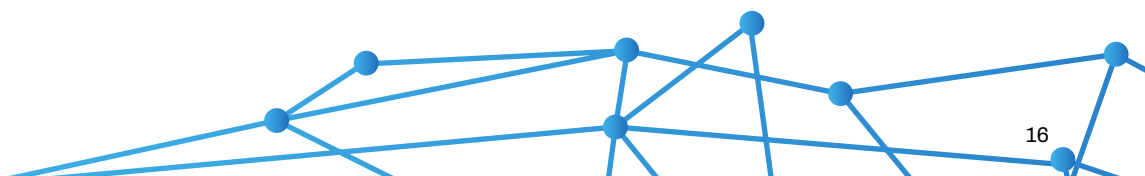
At UGENT, participants advocated for the earlier integration of experiential knowledge into their curriculum, arguing that this approach would help students better understand and manage their vulnerabilities.

While current opportunities to reflect on personal experiences mainly emerge during the second-year master's internship supervision, students felt that this comes too late in their academic journey. They emphasized the importance of embedding moments of reflection earlier on, for instance during the preparation for internships, to create space for connecting theory with personal identity. Despite the respectful way in which experts by experience are discussed during classes, students noted that their own experiential knowledge often remains unacknowledged. They believed that integrating this dimension more explicitly could foster a more inclusive learning environment and better prepare them for professional practice. Moreover, making support options more visible and accessible—beyond formal university services—was seen as key to helping students navigate emotionally challenging content and strengthen peer connection.

In UO, precarious living conditions, such as housing insecurity and financial stress, were cited as significant contributors to student vulnerability. These challenges were compounded by systemic inefficiencies within the University, which further complicated students' academic experiences. In the region, there is a multinational company, Heimstaden, which owns the majority of the housing stock and manages to keep rental prices high. As a result, it becomes particularly difficult for young people—especially students—to access affordable housing, adding another layer of pressure to their university life and limiting their overall well-being and participation.



Image 6 Crumpled Paper



3 Conclusion

The findings highlight the multifaceted nature of vulnerability in higher education, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions to address systemic, social, and economic barriers. Universities must adopt a holistic approach that includes fostering safe spaces, integrating experiential knowledge, and providing robust institutional support to meet the needs of all students.

4 List of images

Image 1 Photovoice Exercise
Image 2 Silenced
Image 3 Looking at people in stigmatising way
Image 4 Escalators
Image 5 Emerging
Image 6 Crumpled Paper

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