



ASEM National Equity Policies in Higher Education Study 2021

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BACKGROUND

- **Aim:** examine the approaches by governments from countries within the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) constituency to support equitable access/success in higher education for students from all social backgrounds and circumstances.
- **Method:** draw upon a survey of national policies in 47 ASEM partner countries over the period September 2020 and July 2021 focused on equitable access and success across the two continents assessing what strategies are in place, where targets exist and how they are being measured and whether COVID-19 has impacted on this work



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What is equitable access/success?

- Access to higher education refers to participation by students from all backgrounds.
- Equitable access/success refers to participation/progression by students who are either in the minority in a particular country or come from a 'disadvantaged majority' who on average earn less/experience greater social/economic challenges than a minority population.
- These groups are usually (although not exclusively) drawn from one of more of the following categories: a low income/socio-economic group, students belonging to ethnic and religious minority backgrounds, female students, students with disabilities, students belong to sexual or gender minorities, older students or those from rural backgrounds.





Key Findings

What is equitable access/success?

In all countries higher education equity features in government produced higher education policy documents e.g.

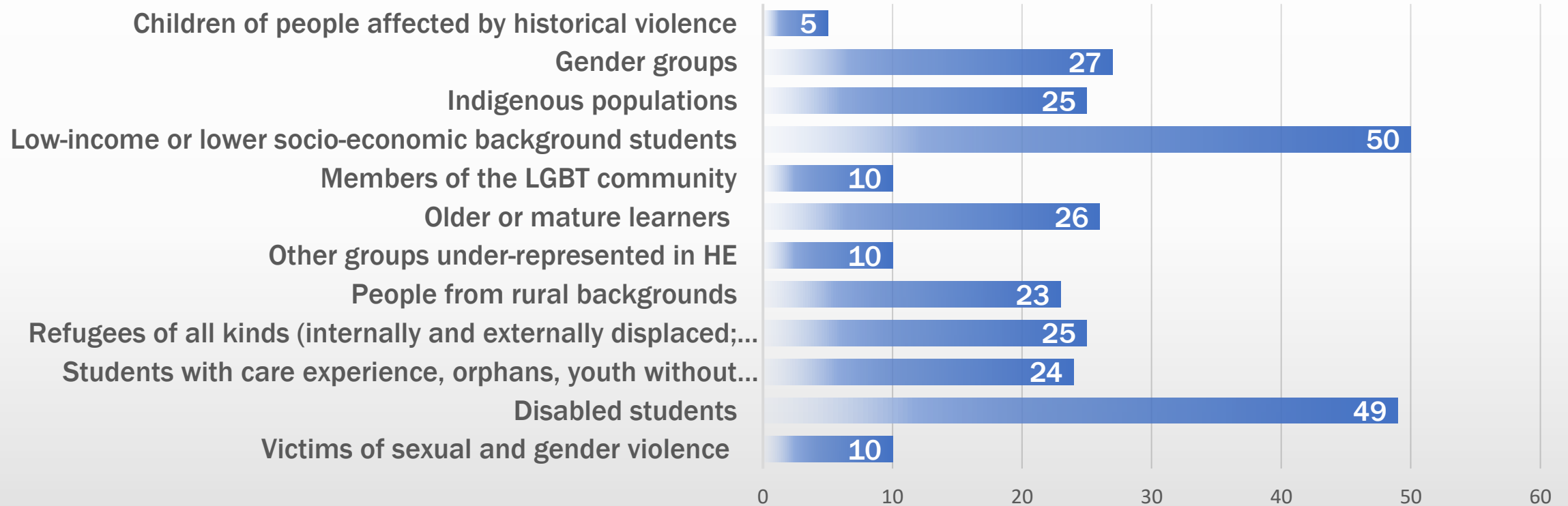
in the Bangladesh Strategic Plan for Higher Education 2018-2030 the following objectives are specified:

- Enhancing equal access to university education in terms of socioeconomic and demographic characteristics
- Making university education affordable for all qualified students
- Sizeable government budget for need-based scholarship
- Financial aids, grants for meritorious students from poor families.

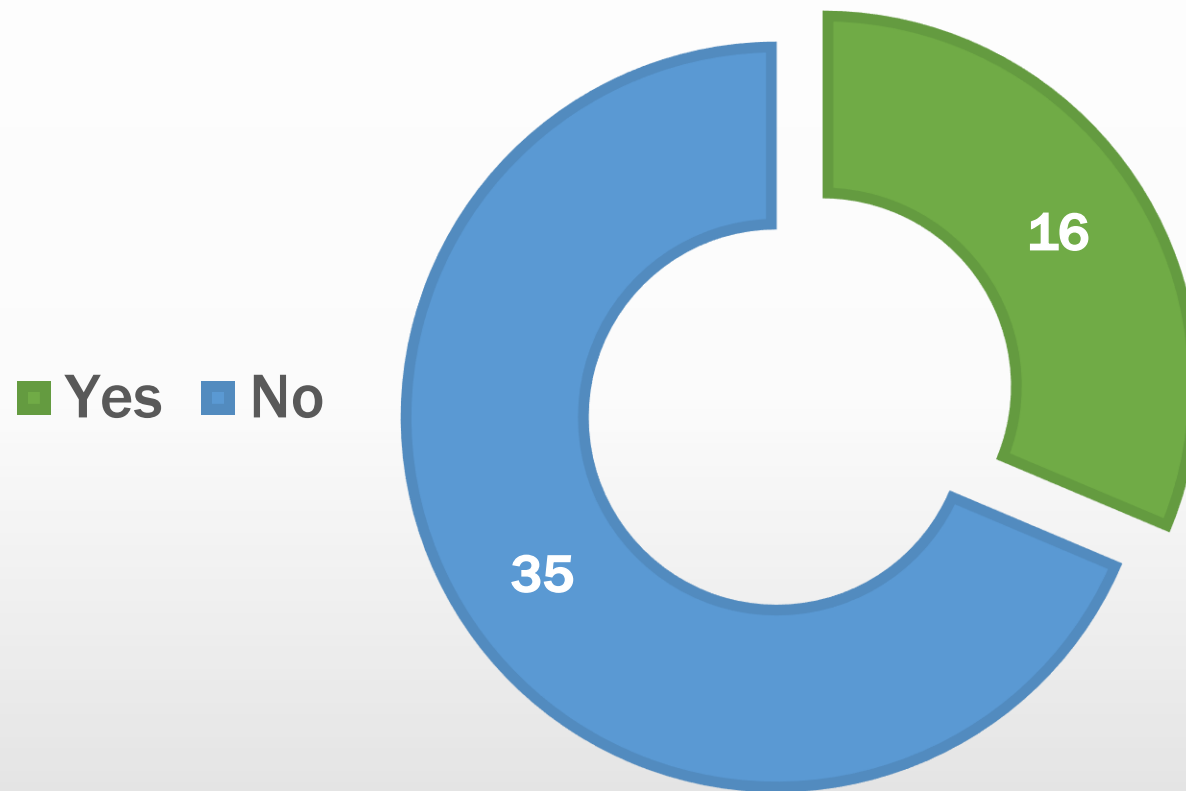


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The most common equity target groups are lower income/socio-economic background students and students with disabilities



Less than a third of countries have a specific higher education equity strategy



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Equitable access performance plans/agreements with universities

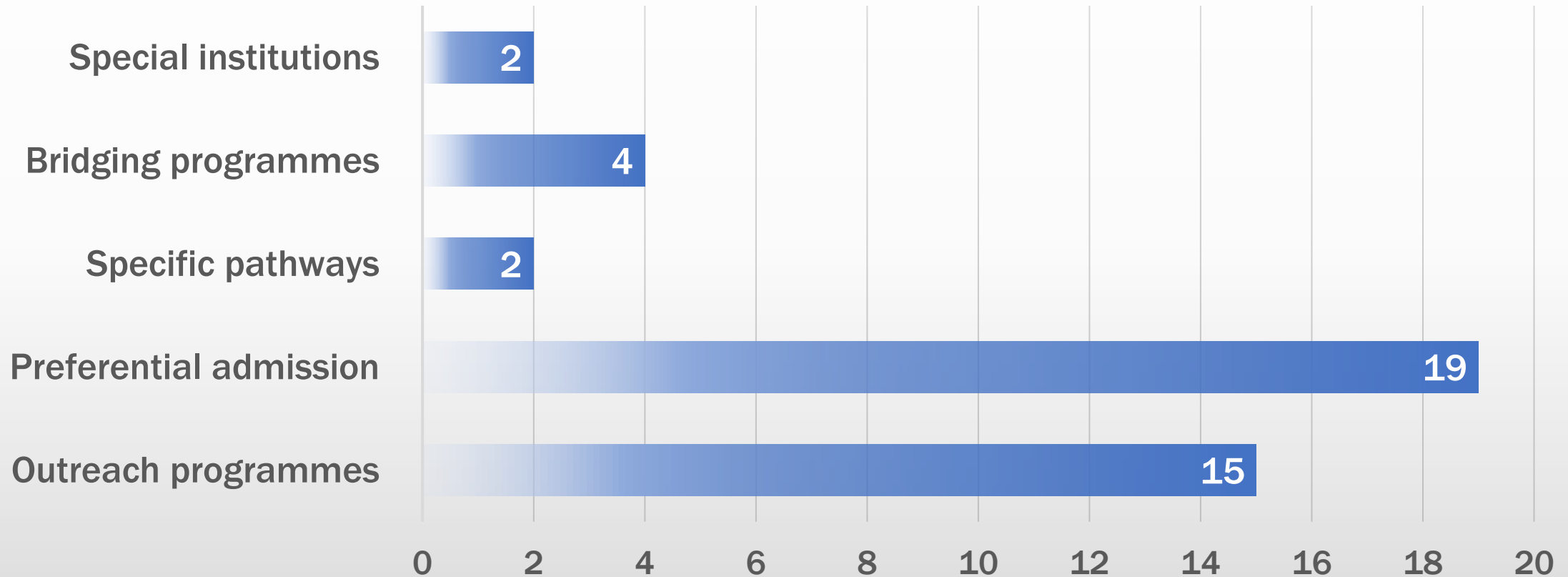
A small number of countries with a strong focus on equitable access/success in higher education have introduced plans/performance agreements specifically in this area:

- 6 are from Europe with the 4 nations from the United Kingdom and the others are Austria and Croatia
- 2 are from Asia being Australia and New Zealand.



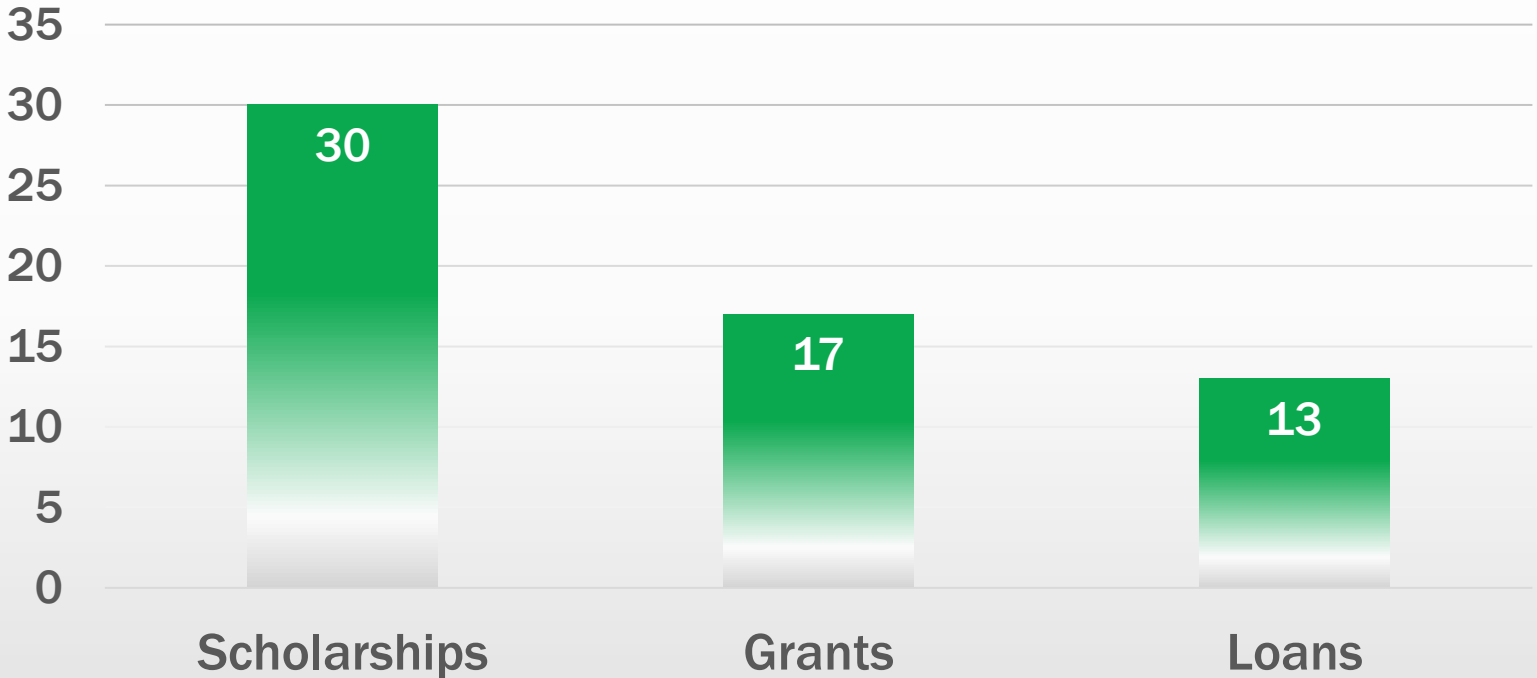
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Most common 'non-monetary' instruments are preferential admission arrangements followed by national outreach programmes



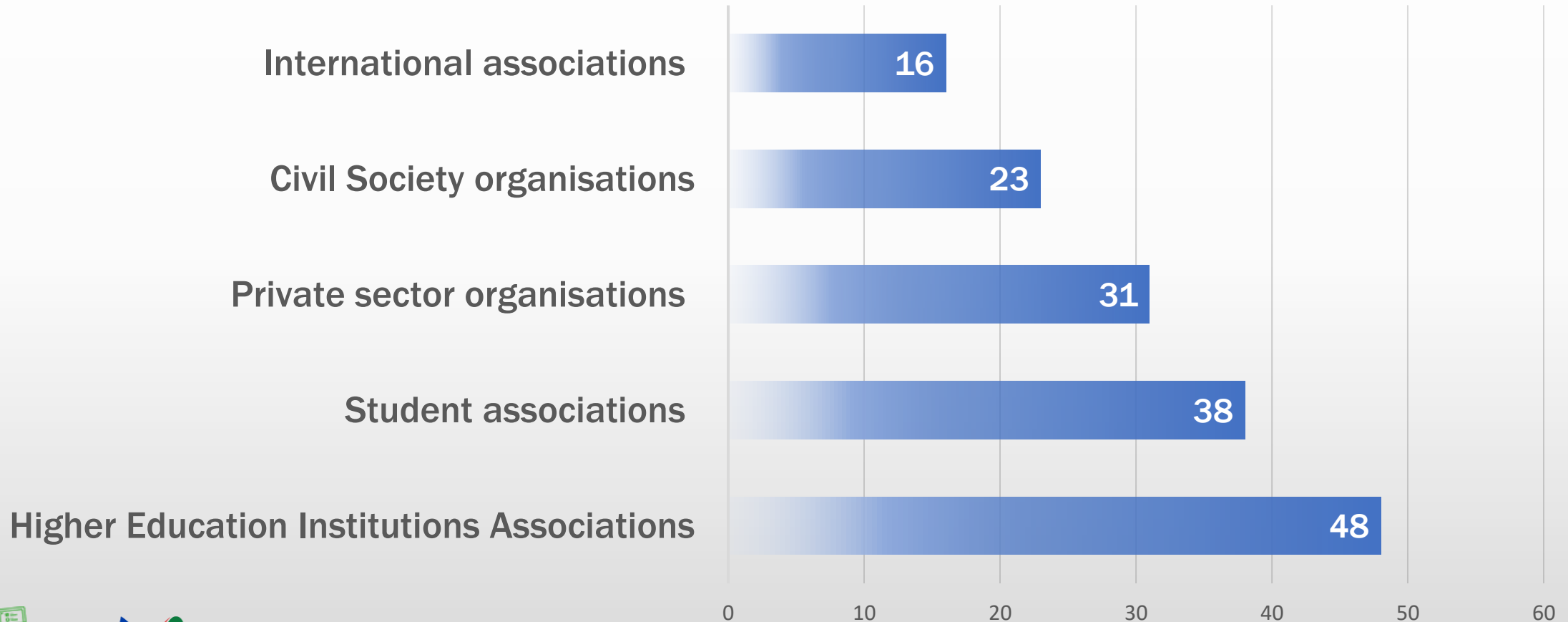
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Most common 'monetary' instruments are scholarships



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Over 90%, of countries consult with higher education associations in the formation of equitable access/success policy but less than half consult with civic society organisations



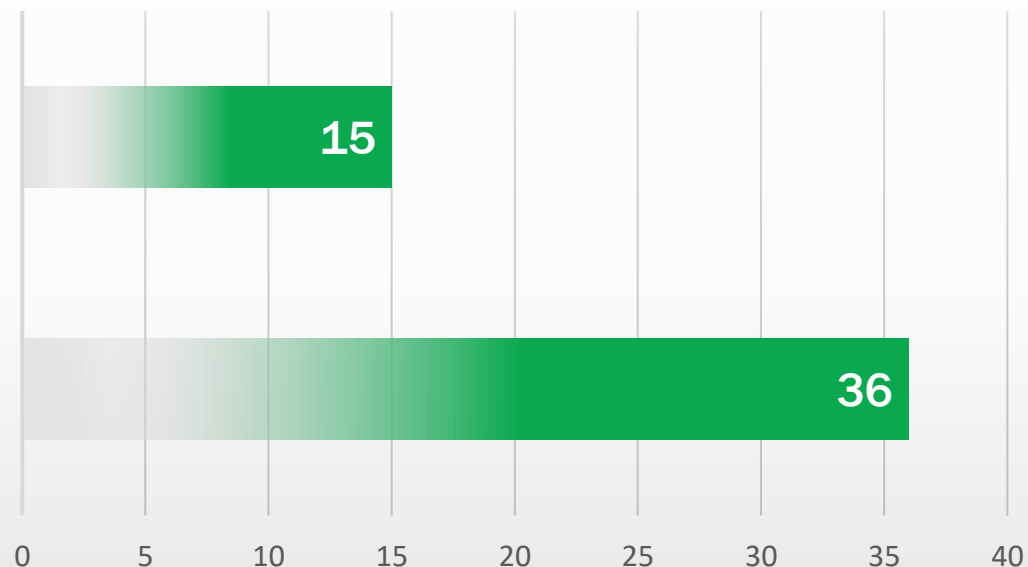
Less than a third of countries are collecting data on students from priority equity groups

Data collected on students from priority equity groups

15

Data collected on all students

36



Impact of COVID-19

- In 84% of countries COVID-19 has had a significant impact on policies related to equitable access and success.
- **Ireland:** In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government announced a €168 million once-off support package for higher education institutions and students in July 2020. This funding included a doubling of the Student Assistance Fund which is the money allocated for students who are experiencing financial difficulties when studying; a COVID-19 Contingency Fund to enhance the delivery of access and support services for vulnerable students from target groups and a COVID-19 grant to support disadvantaged students in accessing ICT devices.





Recommendations

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1. The production of specific strategies to address equitable access/success in higher education should be explored with clear progress targets learning from established practice in other Asian and European nations.
2. Schools and teaching unions should be more closely involved in the development of equitable access/success policies.
3. Monitoring/evaluation and data collection needs to be built into the development of equitable access/success policies and the production of international standards and practices in the field explored.



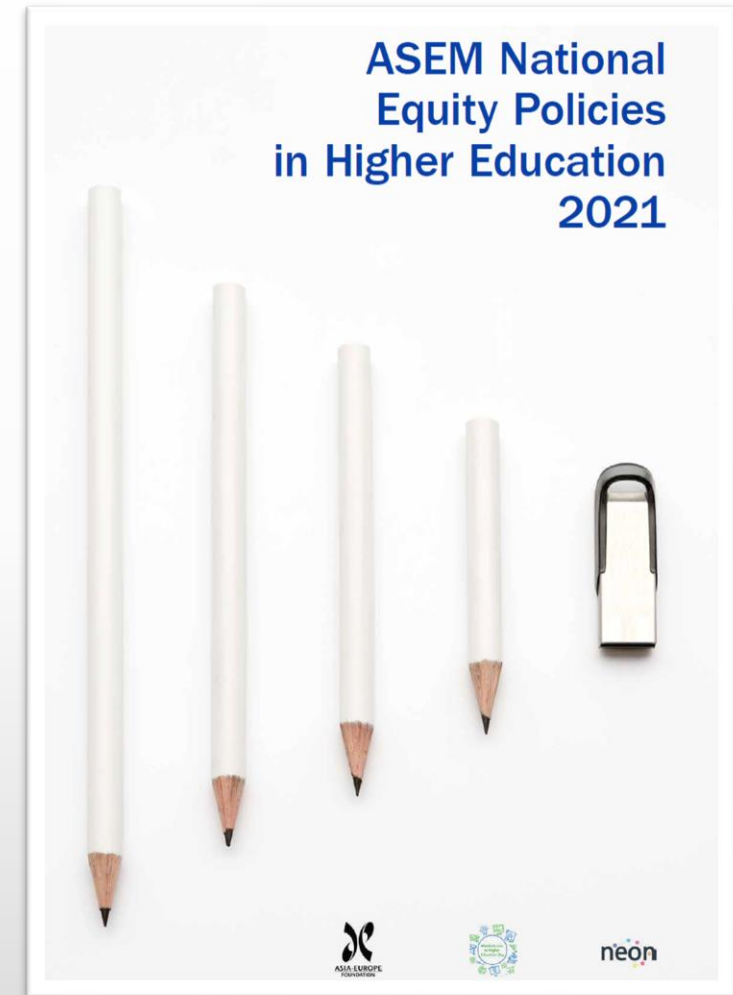
Recommendations

4. Non-monetary instruments and outreach work should be extended via pilot work led at the national/institutional level.
5. A suitable ASEM platform and forum to share practice and policy development in equitable access/success amongst policymakers should be established in partnership with appropriate inter-governmental/international bodies.
6. Progress in the development of effective equitable access/success in higher education policies should be reported on bi-annually via a Higher Education Policy Study report, to be presented at ASEM Senior Officials Meetings and ASEM Education Ministerial Meetings.



Download the Study

<https://bit.ly/ARC8OutlookReport>



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Thank You
