

A report provides comparable estimates of inequality of opportunity for tertiary education for about 30 countries in Europe. It exploits the two point-in-time observations available for most of the countries and analyzes the relationship between many institutional dimensions and inequality of opportunity in tertiary education. Although inequality of opportunity in tertiary education varies a lot across countries, parental education and occupation seem to be the most relevant circumstances for almost all of them. We also find evidence of positive correlation between inequality of opportunity for tertiary education and different features of the educational system.

Each country shows the combination of inequality of opportunity for tertiary education (EIOP) and inequality of opportunity for income (IOP). There is a clear direct and positive relation between the two dimensions, with a correlation coefficient of 0.634. Countries with higher inequality of opportunity for tertiary education are also characterized by higher inequality of opportunity for income. In particular, we can identify three clusters. The first is composed by countries with high level of both types of inequality, mostly Eastern-European countries, but it includes also Italy, Portugal and Luxembourg. The second cluster encompasses countries with average levels of both EIOP and income IOP, and it is made up of Mediterranean and Eastern countries. The third cluster is made of countries with low level of both EIOP and income IOP, a cluster encompassing only Northern-European countries. We argue that providing a fair system for tertiary education attainment also equalizes opportunities for income. Of course, there are other channels that operate and affect inequality of opportunity for income, but granting equity at the educational stage would increase the probability of facing more equality of opportunity in later stages of life. (F: F. Palmisano, F. Biagi, V. Peragine; Publications Office of the EU 19.12.19)