



ACTIVITY REPORT 2014

ESU ACTIVITY REPORT 2014

The European Students' Union



The European Students' Union (ESU) is an umbrella organisation of 47 National Unions of Students (NUS) from 39 countries (December 2014). The aim of ESU is to represent and promote the educational, social, economic and cultural interests of students at the European level towards all relevant bodies and in particular the European Union, Bologna Follow Up Group, Council of Europe and UNESCO. Through its members, ESU represents over 15 million students in Europe.

Until 2017, ESU will mainly focus on five specific objectives, as adopted four based on the policy clusters, namely Mobility and Internationalisation, Social Dimension, Quality of Higher Education and Public Responsibility with a fifth outlining the organisational and capacity building priorities.

Mobility and Internationalisation

ESU commits to working on the development of an international environment within higher education systems and the European Higher Education Area and making Europe an attractive and accessible place for all students free of all mobility barriers. On the global arena, ESU will strengthen their involvement in global student cooperation, focusing on quality and access to higher education and empowering students.

Social Dimension

Work towards a development of higher education as a means for democratic innovation 48 and social inclusion with the clear focus on the fight against discrimination of any kind.

Quality of Higher Education

ESU will work for improving quality higher education for a diverse student population, characterised by removing all obstacles to access, and facilitating progress and completion, implementing a student-centred approach to learning and fairly assessing students.

Public responsibility, financing and governance

ESU will strive to strengthen education as a public responsibility, free from commodification practices, , enhanced by increased public funding and governed by models which value the multiple purposes of higher education.

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WELCOME

“The situation in Syria, the student protests in Ukraine that lead to a revolution all became part of ESUs reality for various reasons. Higher education policies again also reached the global level.”

Elisabeth Gehrke, ESU's Chairperson
2014-15



Dear readers,

Welcome to the activity report of the European Students' Union (ESU) for 2014. I am glad you picked up this publication and I am sure it will offer an interesting read. 2014 was a difficult and exciting year for the European Students' Union and for the world as a whole. There were many new challenges for the organisation and for its engagement in policy.

2014 was the year that the future of the Bologna Process was in earnest a big part of the policy debate on a European level. Hopefully we will look back on 2014 as the year that sparked new energy into the process, the commitments of which are sorely needed. ESU took on a larger role in this debate as we did throughout the work in the Bologna Follow-up group. ESUs work on the new European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance and in leading the work on the Social dimension will surely have far reaching impact.

2014 was also the year of elections in the European parliament and a new European Commission was installed. For the elections ESU had its own campaign - a new experience for the organisation that we learned a lot from. All of these events have come to have a big impact on the policy debate regarding higher education in Europe. New policy priorities were shaped with the new people in Brussels entering into their positions.

It was also the year that the world outside Europe and outside the field of higher education came knocking on ESUs door in a much greater way than in the past. The situation in Syria, the student protests in Ukraine that lead to a revolution all became part of ESUs reality for various reasons. Higher education policies again also reached the global level. After years of disinterest in higher education, the topic came back on the agenda again with the post-2015 agenda. Access to higher education is increasingly seen as a global issue and not only a regional, national or local one. Human rights took a much larger focus in 2014 for ESU, the approach and engagement on these issues became issues for the entire organisation.

Internally some large changes were made to the secretariat, both in terms of physical location, management and persons. Change is always difficult but often necessary for an organisation to evolve. For ESU balancing the new challenges and existing commitments both externally and internally was challenging. In the end we are proud of our work in 2014 but at the same time glad to leave the year behind us and move into what the future will bring.

Sincerely,
Elisabeth Gehrke
ESU's Chairperson 2014-15

HIGHLIGHTS IN 2014

The European Students' Union (ESU) organises four major events every year that representatives of all its member unions are invited to. Those are the two Board Meetings, that act as the highest governing body of ESU where its policies are adopted officially and leadership elected, and the two European Students' Conventions, forums for students to discuss policies in higher education or related issues.

Furthermore, ESU organises several smaller events throughout the year, and its representatives are invited to participate in numerous events as speakers or observers. It would be exhaustive to summarise all external events. However, this chapter gives a summary of the main internal events organised by ESU in collaboration with its member unions, as well as the World Conference on Youth that brought 1500 young people to Sri Lanka.

EUROPEAN STUDENTS' CONVENTION 27

Around 150 people, of which most were representing national unions of students in Europe, gathered in Brussels from 19 to 21 March to debate the multi-layered meaning of employability, student participation in decision-making processes and the role of the European Union with key policymakers and other stakeholders in higher education.

The results of the research project Student Advancement of Graduate Employability (SAGE), run by the European Students' Union (ESU), were presented during the first day. The outcomes of this project were, among other materials, used to draft recommendations on the subject of employability that were introduced to its member unions.

The SAGE project found that students consider soft skills and non-formal education to be very



European Students' Convention 27

important in the learning process in higher education. However, they thought that those features were undervalued or unrecognised to a large extent in the higher education system. Many students also believed that employers undervalued education degrees in general and were pessimistic towards finding a meaningful employment following their graduation.

This project highlighted the importance of further strengthening student-centred learning and the continuing development of learning outcomes and peer learning assessment methods. The relationship between employability and various aspects of higher education were also discussed, such as quality assurance and enhancement, the social dimension, student representation in policy-making processes and teaching and learning methods. Members of the European Parliament, representatives of the European Commission, EU Member States, the European Economic and Social Committee

and stakeholder organisations in higher education joined this event and welcomed the findings of SAGE as well as other parts of the discussions.

The convention concluded that higher education was about much more than just employability of graduates and should prepare people for an active citizenship and a lifelong career, which is not limited to first employment. Employment measures and the higher education system should also give individuals a set of skills that enables them to transfer their knowledge and abilities easily. In other words, people should be prepared to adapt easily to a rapidly changing environment.

Students were also able to have their say on the proposal for a EU Youth Guarantee, the new framework programme for education and youth called Erasmus+, the Modernisation Agenda for Higher Education, the European elections in May and the political crisis in Ukraine.

The event brought the voice of European students even closer to the policymakers on the European level. ESU was very happy with the outcome and participation at this event. The convention concluded that much more needed to be done for students, so that they could be fully involved as equal partners in decision-making processes.

ESU was grateful for the support it received from the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Norway House in Brussels.

BOARD MEETING 66

Delegates of the 47 national unions of students, that are members of the European Students' Union (ESU), had an extremely productive meeting in Vienna, Austria, from 1 to 4 May. They adopted twenty resolutions on issues of their concern, as well as a new policy paper on European governing structures.

Many of the adopted resolutions shed light on national developments in higher education from the students' perspectives. ESU condemned the Spanish government for not consulting students about major policies in higher education, and called for full student participation in implementing the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the European Union. ESU also showed its concerns about students' rights, such as in relation to a new Maltese regulation that might infringe students' data protection. Furthermore, ESU demanded that Finnish authorities provided quality healthcare to all students, and denounced financial restrictions on the mobility of male students that did not perform military duties in Armenia.

Board Meeting 66, Vienna, Austria, 1-4 May 2014





Board Meeting 66, Vienna, Austria, 1-4 May 2014

Then, ESU adopted several resolutions on the financing of higher education, opposing systematic changes in the Netherlands, calling for refinancing of higher education in Belgium, denouncing cuts to disabled students' allowance in England, and supporting plans in Latvia to remove limitations to deductible student expenses. It also criticised Swiss authorities for their plans to triple tuition fees for foreign university students, as well as the Austrian government for merging the country's Ministry of Science and Research with the Ministry of Economics, which might have a negative impact on independent research in Austria and contribute to the commodification of higher education.

The meeting adopted a number of resolutions with a more global scope as well. It called for the abolition of so-called 'zero-hour' employment contracts, which require employees to be constantly available although they are only remunerated for a certain number of hours. Additionally, it supported actions against tax evasion and called for a fair tax distribution. Then, the meeting supported the Women in Leadership programme, urging national unions of students to tackle the underrepresentation of women in student bodies and decision-making bodies in higher education.

The students also stressed how important it was to include goals for achieving quality higher education in the post-2015 development goals of the United Nations. The participants showed their concerns about serious human rights violations, such as the ongoing incarceration of the Iranian student activist Bahareh Hedyat and kidnappings of 230 schoolgirls in Nigeria. The meeting supported initiatives giving persecuted students the opportunity to complete their studies.

Lastly, the meeting strongly encouraged all students to use their democratic rights and vote in the European elections from 22 to 25 May 2014 and urged a new parliament to work according to a list of students' wishes throughout its political mandate.

The policy paper, adopted at the meeting, enlists ESU's opinions on what role the European Union and national governments should play in higher education. It also contains students' perceptions on the current status and further development of the Bologna process. Additionally, the students' unions adopted amendments to a policy paper that was introduced in the previous year on the quality of higher education.

EUROPEAN STUDENTS' CONVENTION 28

Around 120 student representatives, policymakers and experts in higher education gathered in Florence, Italy, on Sunday 28 September for the 28th European Students' Convention. This was also the first annual conference of the Peer Assessment of Student-Centred Learning (PASCL) project.

Student-centred learning was a cross-cutting theme of this conference co-organised by the European Students' Union (ESU) and the National Union of Students in Italy (UdU), with support of the European University Institute (EUI). The participants of this conference were introduced to various approaches to student-centred learning taking place at the European, national and institutional level. The PASCL project pushes student-centred learning, a core principle in ESU's policy, to the top of the agenda. It provided students with important data and analysis on the subject. Additionally, it was important to recognise the inclusion of student-centred learning in the so-called European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) in higher education.

This conference in Florence challenged existing assumptions about higher education systems in times of an economic crisis, and how it would be impossible to talk about the future of education without student-centred learning. Such a system could not be implemented without a proper student participation. This event was streamed live via the video sharing website YouTube. All recordings from the sessions of this event were uploaded to PASCL's website www.pascl.eu, as well as a detailed agenda and abstracts.

The project's website was presented to the participants, where they could access useful information about student-centred learning, the background of the project and the tasks to be carried out by the project team.



Summer Camp 2014,

All of the project's deliverables will eventually be made available on the website.

The PASCL project received co-funding from the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Union. The event was concluded with breakaway sessions, where the participants were invited to group discussions about issues of particular concern in student-centred learning.

BOARD MEETING 67

ESU's member unions adopted a new plan of work for the following year that was expected, among else, to greatly enhance the organisation's engagement in human rights related activities.

ESU organised a two-day seminar on human rights preceding the Board Meeting, which was held from 1 to 5 December 2014. The participants of this seminar were invited to discuss relevant international conventions,



how they were applied and how they functioned in practice. This was the first time that ESU held a seminar dedicated to human rights preceding its Board Meeting.

The participants were invited to discussion groups, to examine subjects such as how schools and universities could be protected from conflicts. That discussion looked into the new initiative called "Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use During Armed Conflict."

It was decided that ESU would hold another session on human rights at one of its major events in 2015. Moreover, ESU would formalise its partnerships with organisations and networks that work on human rights in higher education. ESU would do more to promote the importance of human rights at the global level, especially the freedom of opinion, access to education and the rights of LGTBQ people.

Many threats to academic freedom and human rights were observed by ESU in 2014. Therefore, this Board Meeting provided an important platform to take this policy area forward, with the aim of raising awareness and deepening the understanding of the student movements' role in debates about human rights.

ESU also adopted new strategic political priorities, which will guide ESU's work all the way through to 2017. It was decided to further advance ESU's work within its four core policy areas, namely: mobility and internationalisation, quality, the social dimension; and public responsibility, financing and governance of higher education.

Additionally, ESU adopted resolutions on a few global issues, including two on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), protection of schools and universities during armed conflicts. ESU, together with its associate member, the Erasmus Student Network, also proposed a resolution on a European directive on student visas and mobility.

That resolution was adopted unanimously.

The participants agreed to give Alianta studentilor din Moldova (ASM) candidate status for membership of ESU. ESU will follow-up on this application by examining whether ASM's operation fulfils the criteria needed for membership.

SUMMER CAMPS AND TRAININGS

Representatives of the European Students' Union attended a couple of summer camps held by national unions of students in Italy and Finland. Those events were excellent platforms for student representatives to meet, spend time together and get to know each other. During two weeks in July in Italy, student representatives from all over Italy were invited to the locality of Paestum. Elisabeth Gehrke, ESU's Chairperson, and Fernando Miguel Galán Palomares, ESU's Vice-Chairperson, attended this event and participated in several debates together with other guests at the camp and Italian policy-makers. Around five hundred people from local students' unions in Italy got the opportunity to meet their colleagues during this event.

This summer camp was organised by Unione degli Universitari (UdU), ESU's member union in Italy, in partnership with Rete degli Studenti Medi, the Italian students' union for secondary education level.

The Union of Students in Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences (SAMOK) held its summer seminar on 8 and 9 August 2014 to kick-start the year with its local member unions. Erin Nordal, ESU's Vice-Chairperson, attended the event to present its policy on the Bologna Process, as adopted at the 66th Board Meeting of ESU this spring.

During her presentation, Nordal talked about the structural changes that ESU wants to see implemented to reinvigorate discussions in the Bologna Process and

Nordal also presented ESU's priorities for the upcoming ministerial conference of the Bologna Process to be held in 2015. Among the presented priorities, was to follow-up on ESU's work in revising the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance of Higher Education and giving more leverage to issues such as student-centred learning. ESU's priorities for the future of the Bologna Process were also discussed as well as a strategy on the social dimension and lifelong learning that makes sure that countries take responsibility for access to higher education.

ESU was very happy to get the opportunity to participate in these events and to get to know better the opinions of these national and local unions of students on priorities in higher education. From 5 to 7 September 2014, ESU also joined the Training Stage event organised by the national union of students in Spain, CREUP, in the city of Toledo. The training was divided into three different parts. The first one was concerned with education in Spain. The second one was dedicated to the quality assurance of higher education, that also included a training for their pool of quality assurance experts. The last part was on the Bologna Process following the economic crisis and new reforms.

WORLD CONFERENCE ON YOUTH IN SRI LANKA

Equally accessible quality higher education should be a clear goal in the post-2015 development agenda of the United Nations. This opinion was expressed by representatives of the European Students' Union (ESU) at the 2014 World Conference on Youth, held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, from 6 to 10 May, with 1500 youth delegates present.

The post-2015 development agenda follows-up on the work carried out under the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), that expire in 2015 and define aims to reduce inequalities and poverty in the world.

Gabriela Bergan, ESU's Human Rights and Solidarity Coordinator, attended the conference in addition to representatives of national unions of students in Denmark, France, Iceland and Latvia. They pushed for this wish of students that was communicated in a resolution adopted at ESU's 66th Board Meeting in the beginning of May.



WORLD CONFERENCE ON YOUTH 2014
COLOMBO, SRI LANKA
MAINSTREAMING YOUTH IN THE POST-2015 AGENDA



BACK TO SCHOOL IN BRUSSELS

The European Students' Union (ESU) moved to a new office building in the beginning of July 2014, at Rue l'Industrie 10, 1000 Brussels, Belgium. ESU had previously shared office facilities with the two national unions of students in Belgium, that are also members of ESU, as well as the Organising Bureau of School Student Unions (OBESSU), an associate member of ESU. An office project called Mundo-J, managed by Ethical Property, runs the new building that manages the new office building gathering about 35 organisations engaged in policy areas such as youth, education and sustainability. Among them are ESU's associate members and partners that share the sixth floor of the building. In addition to OBESSU, they are the European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning (EU-CIS-LLL), the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer Youth and Student Organisation (IGLYO) and the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA). The Flemish Union of Students (VVS) also followed, as well as the European Youth Forum (EYF), a network ESU is member of.

This new office facility places ESU in the heart of Brussels, much closer to the European institutions than its previous location. It also intensifies ESU's collaboration with other organisations in the field of education and youth based in the same building.

For this occasion, ESU invited its partners and stakeholders in higher education, including Members of the European Parliament, representatives of national governments and the European Commission, to a networking event at its new address in September. This event was entitled "Back to School" as it also marked the beginning of a new academic year for many students and policymakers in Europe. Furthermore, it was an opportunity for key stakeholders to discuss new programmes such as Erasmus+, as well as the status of continuing negotiations like the Bologna Process. It was also a chance for ESU to present its research projects and other activities, many of which are co-funded by programmes of the European Union.

This successful event enhanced further ESU's cooperation with organisations active in the field of higher education. Among these partnerships is the so-called E4 group, consisting of ESU and the European Association of Higher Education Institutions (EURASHE), European University Association (EUA) and the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). ESU interacts regularly with other similar organisations such as Education International (EI) and the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

ESU POLICY WORK

EUROPEAN UNION

One of the main activities of the European Students' Union (ESU) is to advocate the students' interests at the European level. This was no different in 2014, as ESU took a position on many issues under discussion and monitored policies developed by the European Union. For example, ESU organised a successful campaign called Vote For Education for the European Parliament elections in May 2014. That campaign is covered in more detail in a separate chapter in this booklet.

In March, ESU joined forces with the teachers' federations Education International (EI) and the University and College Union of the United Kingdom (UCU). Together, the organisations voiced their concerns about the ongoing negotiations for a Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). They believed that the agreement may have negative consequences by increasing the commodification of the higher education system in Europe among other things. This statement was confirmed at ESU's 67th Board Meeting in December, where student representatives adopted two resolutions on the subject. They demanded more transparency in the negotiation process, as most of the documents under discussions are kept secret. Furthermore, the student representatives agreed to take concrete actions if their demands would not be heard, for example by organising demonstrations against the TTIP.

ESU welcomed the incoming European Commissioners that started their mandate in November 2014, and sent a message in regards to their work with education-related issues. The message reminded the European Commissioners about their responsibility and how they could have a positive impact on education.

However, ESU also expressed its concerns about several issues under discussion at the European Commission, such as its justification of so-called 'cost-sharing' practices in higher education. ESU encouraged Tibor Navracsics, the new European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, to reconsider the approach that the students' union in Europe believe that education is and must remain a public good and therefore a public responsibility.

A new Committee for Education and Culture also started its work at the European Parliament. Silvia Costa, from the Socialists and Democrats party (S&D), was appointed Chairperson of the committee. ESU entered an active dialogue with the newly elected Members of the European Parliament, focusing on issues such as student-centred learning, the social dimension and the public responsibility of higher education.

Education is and must remain a public good and a public responsibility.

Positive developments were also observed in the entry of third-country nationals to the European Union for the purpose of research or studies. The Court of Justice of the European Union ruled on 10 September that third-country nationals should be treated in a fair and non-discriminatory manner. Important discussions were also launched with the aim of revising a visa directive that would facilitate the entry of third-country nationals for study and research purposes.

The new framework programme for education and youth, Erasmus+, was introduced in 2014. The programme brought several changes not only to the popular Erasmus student exchange scheme, but also to the work carried out by youth organisations and funding. Mobility still remains a privilege for the few, as was confirmed by an Erasmus Impact Study in September. More than fifty per cent of non-mobile students said that financial challenges were the biggest obstacles. Therefore, the programme is still largely accessible only to students from higher socio-economic backgrounds. Twenty per cent of students claimed that the supporting grant was insufficient to cover their costs. However, the real impact of the Erasmus+ will only become clear in the coming years. It is believed that it will remedy many of the earlier shortcomings, and give more attention to the social dimension of higher education. More must be done however, and ESU pointed out in September that an Erasmus accessibility strategy is still lacking. A second report from the High Level Group on the Modernisation of Higher Education was also published in 2014, highlighting new modes of learning and teaching, and how students are unique in the way they learn. ESU welcomed this report and how it recognised the importance of student-centred learning.

BOLOGNA PROCESS

ESU continued its active involvement in the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG). Not only did ESU co-chair a working group on the social dimension of higher education, it also closely monitored the development in other fields of the Bologna process. As explained in more detail in a separate chapter in this report, ESU presented a proposal for the revision of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) in February. The proposal was drafted jointly by the E4 group, consisting of the European University Association (EUA), the European Association for Quality Assurance

DG EAC Meeting, October 2014



in Higher Education (ENQA), and the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EU-RASHE), in addition to ESU. The proposal was also supported by the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR), Education International and BUSINESSEUROPE.

It was a great recognition for ESU when the BFUG endorsed this proposal at its meeting in September. The proposal will therefore be subject to approval at the upcoming ministerial meeting of the Bologna process in Yerevan, Armenia, in 2015.

ESU also attended meetings of the BFUG in Athens, Greece, in April and in the Vatican in July. The main purpose of those meetings was to frame the discussions on the future of the Bologna Process. ESU was among the main advocates calling for a reboot of the Bologna Process to get countries actively involved in its implementation. It was therefore important to survey what topics were missing and if its internal structures were functioning properly.

One of the main outcomes of these meetings was a draft for a social dimension and lifelong learning strategy that ESU took an active part in. This was an important milestone to implement national access plans in higher education.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

ESU's partnership with the Council of Europe intensified in 2014, after the European Youth Foundation decided to co-fund ESU's upcoming convention in Riga, Latvia, in March 2015.

ESU has, moreover, supported a bigger role of the Council of Europe in discussions on higher education at the European level. An ad-hoc working group on higher education of the Steering Committee on Educational Policy and Practice (CDPPE) was established as a result of those



Presidency 2014 and EU Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou, the E Culture, Multilingualism and Youth

discussions. The group will advise the CDPPE on issues related to the democratic responsibility that higher education institutions have. ESU supports this move, and was also a co-organiser of and key speaker at the event organised by the Council of Europe in Belfast, Northern-Ireland, on Democratic Innovation.

Integrity and ethics are a top priority of the Council of Europe in higher education. It was therefore a pleasure that ESU was invited to participate in a committee for the development of a platform for ethics and integrity.



European Commissioner for Education,

UNITED NATIONS

ESU became much more involved in discussions on education related issues and human rights at the United Nations. Its representatives attended several meetings throughout the year to present access to quality education as a priority issue that should be underlined in the post-2015 development agenda of the United Nations. A resolution that paved the way to a stronger engagement with the United Nations was adopted at ESU's 66th Board Meeting in Vienna, Austria, in May. It clearly stated that quality education would help eradicate inequality and poverty. Therefore, it should

become a key priority of the United Nations to support a stronger and representative student participation, student-centred learning systems, inclusion, and quality. This wish was presented at the World Conference on Youth 2014 in Sri Lanka, which is covered in more detail in a separate chapter in this report.

Furthermore, ESU supported global initiatives aimed at giving scholars and students increased protection in the case of armed conflicts. ESU advocated for schools and universities to be safe places for learning activities, that should never be used for any military purpose or as targets of any such action. It supported the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict introduced in December 2014.

MEMBERSHIP OF NETWORKS

ESU became a member of the EUCIS-LLL network, a platform organisation for the promotion of lifelong learning. It represents 36 European organisations from all EU member states and beyond that are active in the field of both formal and non-formal education and training. Through its members, the network represents more than 45.000 educational institutions. As a member of this network, ESU benefits from greater cooperation with other organisations active in the education sector through the exchange of information and discussions on European policies. ESU formalised its partnership with the SIRIUS network, engaged in the education of children and young people with migrant background. As a partner, ESU has contributed to several policy briefs and documents on migrant students and higher education, including the final outcome document of a project that has financed the SIRIUS Network entitled "Agenda for Migrant Education and Recommendations". ESU also shared a toolkit prepared by its Ethnic Minority Working Group with SIRIUS.

ESU had a meeting with the European Women's Lobby to discuss possible cooperation in the future on gender issues. ESU also strengthened its cooperation with its associate member The International Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Youth and Student Organisation (IGLYO) on subjects such as the International Day Against Homophobia or Transphobia (IDAHOT).

ESU continued to strengthen its cooperation with The Norwegian Students' and Academics' International Assistance Fund (SAIH) and Scholars at Risk (SAR), that provided the setting for ESU's human rights seminar at its 67th Board Meeting in December.

ESU'S WORK ON PROJECTS

ESU's general activities are supported by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union, through an operating grant for European non-governmental organisations.

Projects that ESU runs

Peer Assessment of Student-Centred Learning



In 2014, the European Students' Union (ESU) coordinated a project co-funded by the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Union. This project is called PASCL, Peer Assessment of Student Centred Learning. ESU's partners in this project are the University of Jyväskylä, Finland, Central European University, Hungary, the Knowledge Innovation Centre, Malta, the Network of Universities from the Capitals of Europe (UNICA) and Melius, Italy. This year the project's consortium developed a methodology to conduct its upcoming peer assessments.

ESU carried out desk research and conducted a survey among its member unions and European higher education institutions used to provide an update on the status of the implementation and policy developments of student-centred learning. Student-centred learning was also the overarching theme of the 28th European Students' Convention that was held in Florence, Italy, in September 2014. Inputs from these discussions and the conclusion of the conference were collected by the project team.

Student Advancement of Graduates Employability



ESU presented the final outcomes of its project called Student Advancement of Graduates Employability (SAGE) at the 27th European Students' Convention, held in Brussels, Belgium in March 2014. This project studied the employability of higher education from the students' perspective. The study was well received by students and stakeholders in higher education, as it includes several case studies of national examples and a handbook for students to train them in discussions on employability. All deliverables of this project were uploaded to a specially designed website for the project which can be found here <http://sage.esu-online.org/Home>, where they are accessible for download for free.

Enhancing Students Participation in Quality Assurance in Armenian Higher Education

Enhancing Students Participation in Quality Assurance in Armenian Higher Education (ESPAQ), initiated by ESU, was launched officially in February 2014 at a partners' meeting in Yerevan, Armenia. The aim of this project is to improve the quality of higher education in Armenia and involves thirteen partners in total. ESU contributes to the project, using its previous expertise in the field, including the QUEST project that ESU finished in October 2013 and its Students' Experts Pool on the Quality Assurance of Higher Education.

Partnership Projects

In December, the FP7-funded **SiSCatalyst** project was successfully concluded.



The project's aim was to empower children as change agents in science, technology and math teaching. ESU engaged students in the project's activities as "generational go-betweens" who had a crucial role in this process. The work led by ESU improved and implemented the student internships' programme created within the framework of the project. As a result, twelve students from nine different countries were given an opportunity to gain practical experience through internships in six countries in Europe, Africa and North- and South America. Their experiences were compiled in a report available on ESU's website for [download](#).

ESU continued its involvement in several other projects as well that started in previous years in accordance with their work description and in support of ESU's four priority policy areas. For example, the social dimension and lifelong learning areas were covered by the PL4SD, IDEAS, StayIn and ESPRIT.



Peer learning for Social Dimension (PL4SD) is a direct result of the Bucharest commu-

iqué of the Bologna process, where member states of the European Higher Education Area committed themselves to share international experiences and practices in the social dimension of higher education. ESU spoke on behalf of students in Europe and fed the project with valuable data from its member unions.

The IDEAS project (Identifying Effective Approaches to Enhancing the Social Dimension of Higher Education) promotes equitable access, participation and completion of higher education by collecting best practices in the

area from all over Europe. ESU provided nine case studies to this project, with the help of its member available on the [project's website](#).



In 2015, ESU will further contribute to the analysis, a white paper and events that have been planned as part of the project.

Student Guidance at University to Support Inclusion (StayIn), a project co-funded by the Lifelong Learning

Programme, was successfully finalised in 2014. A StayIn guidance platform was launched to help students and reduce drop-outs.

The StayIn platform gives students support to find the information they need, to tackle practical problems they encounter, and to give them counselling service that responds to their needs.



ESU is also involved in **Enhancing the Social Characteristics and Public Responsibility of Israeli Teaching through Student Alliances at Higher Education Institutions (ESPRIT)**, co-funded by the TEMPUS programme of the European Union. The aim of this project is to analyse, map and strengthen the social and public roles of higher education institutions in Israel. It is coordinated by the Ben Gurion University of Negev. ESU has been working on developing a model for a social benchmarking tool.



ESU has also been working on several other projects that focus on the quality assurance of higher education, another key policy area at ESU.

Development of Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Moldova (QUAEM) is

a project led by University of Leipzig that aims to assist Moldovan authorities, teachers, students and rectors to re-establish a national quality assurance agency. ESU prepared and provided trainings for students interested in becoming experts in the field. A second training session is scheduled in the first half of 2015.



The **IMPRESS** project is co-funded by the TEMPUS programme to improve student services in Ukrainian universities. It is coordinated by the University of Northumbria, in the United Kingdom. ESU works working closely with students' unions in Ukraine, and is preparing a capacity-building programme for student representatives from a large number of Ukrainian universities. At a partners' meeting in December 2014 held at ESU's premises in Brussels, it was agreed that the training will be organised in late spring 2015 in Kyiv.



BUCUM
Building Capacity in University Management

Building Capacity in University Management (BUCUM) is another

TEMPUS project coordinated by the Cardiff Metropolitan University. It gives trainings and re-training for university staff from universities in North-Africa by organising short-term and master's level courses. It plans to establish centres of good governance and train students in university governance and leadership. ESU contributes to the training programme on quality assurance, as well as to make sure that students' needs are taken into account.

Impact Analysis of external quality assurance processes of higher education institutions (IMPALA) is a project coordinated by Evalag, Germany. This project hopes to close the gap that exists between requests from stakeholders and quality assurance agencies in terms of efficiency and effectiveness on the one hand, and knowledge about the impact of external quality assurance of higher education institutions on the other. ESU participated in the panel forum "Can impact evaluation contribute to resolving conflicting stakeholders' expectations of quality assurance in higher education" in 2014.

ESU has also contributed to the development of national policies for higher education and their implementation by participating in a few advisory boards.

The main aim of the **EUROGRADUATE** project is to collate comparable data on the social dimension of higher education in Europe. The project examines the socio-economic background and living conditions of students, as well as temporary international mobility. In November 2014, the main findings of this project were published providing reliable and insightful cross-country comparisons. The Eurograduate project aims to establish a European-wide study on higher education graduates that paves the way for monitoring their progress following graduation. ESU contributes to the development of a method to overcome the gaps through joint action of countries and data providers. The project's coordinator is Hochschul-Informationssystem GmbH (HIS).

eurograduate.eu
feasibility

Higher Education Reforms in Spain (HERE-ES), co-funded by Erasmus+, started in the end of 2014. It supports the implementation of a modernising strategy for higher education in Spain. In this two-year project, ESU will provide valuable advice to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport and design a peer-learning activity for student-centred learning, in line with the national strategy for modernisation of higher education in Spain; a model that is also followed by the universities in South America.

Streamlining institutional recognition: a training platform for admissions officers (Stream) is a project to improve the knowledge and skills of those officers, in order to support a fair and smooth recognition of applicants. It is co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme and coordinated by Nuffic.

CeQuInt

ESU is also an advisor in the
**CeQuint Lifelong Learning
project coordinated by
Nederlands-Vlaamse**

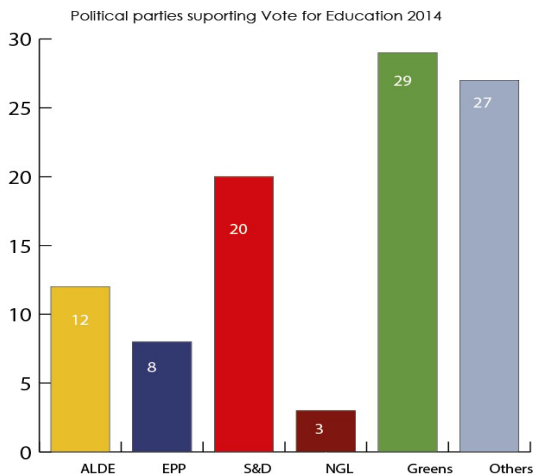
Accreditatieorganisatie (NVAO). It aims at developing a methodology to assess the quality of internationalisation of higher education. In 2014, major outputs were completed, such as: Frameworks for the Assessment of Quality of Internationalisation, a Guide to Assessing the Quality in the internationalisation, templates for self-evaluation reports and templates for assessment reports. This will help to introduce concrete procedures for quality assurance in the internationalisation of higher education.

VOTE FOR EDUCATION

One of the major activities carried out by the European Students' Union in 2014, was a campaign for the European Parliament elections held in May 2014. This campaign collected 120 signatures from candidates for the European Parliament for a student-based manifesto of ten points. These candidates represented a wide variety of nationalities and political affiliations.

Many of the confirmed supporters, 48 in total, were based in France and Finland, an equal number of signatories from each country. Slovakia also ranked high with 18 pledges and Denmark had 13 pledges from candidates for the European Parliament.

Throughout the campaign, ESU worked to promote the campaign and collect pledges. With the generous contribution of the campaign's task force and its coordinators, it was able to reach success and have an impact on the debates surrounding the European Parliament elections. It raised awareness about the main issues of concern in higher education from the students' point of view, and what values policymakers should work for in the coming years.



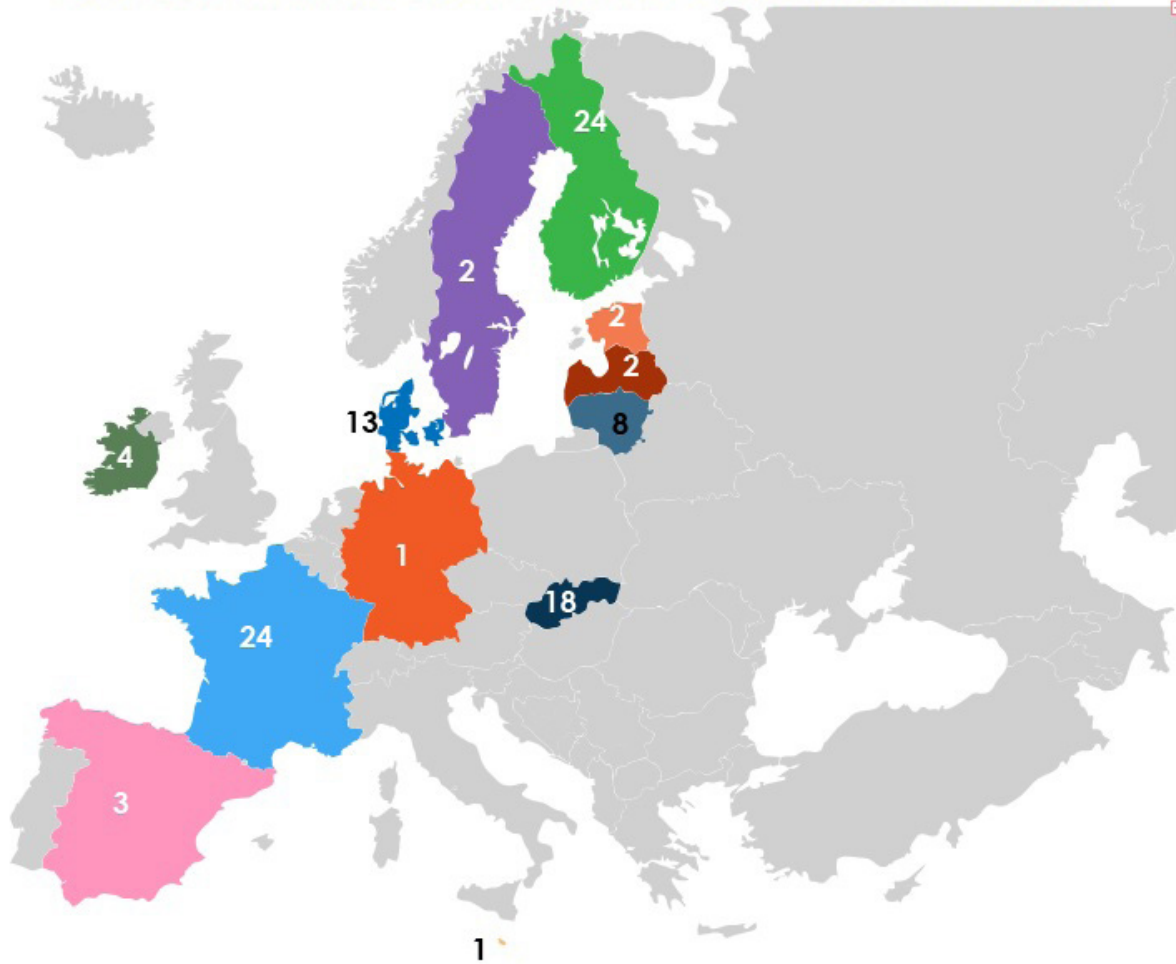
Vote for education

Quality Higher Education for all


THE STUDENTS' MANIFESTO

1. The financial crisis is not an excuse for cuts in education! Free education, public funding and student support must be provided to ensure genuinely equal access to and support during education - regardless of background. I pledge to keep education free from austerity measures.
2. The independent work of students and youth improves participation in society and promotes active citizenship. European student and youth organisations' work must be supported in the EU budget with both operational grants and project grants. I pledge to preserve the operational grant for student and youth organisations in the EU budget.
3. Mobility and cooperation is the foundation of a successful Europe, and must be a possibility for all European students. ERASMUS+ is the flagship mobility programme of the European Union. I pledge to work for a solid and stable funding of the programme and increased grants for mobility.
4. Europe is multicultural and diverse. A racist society limits resources and threatens the security and well-being of the population. I pledge to condemn any form of racism, discrimination and hate speech.

Number of confirmed MEP Candidates who supported Vote for Education, 2014



* In order to qualify as a confirmed supporter, the candidates needed to confirm their pledge in an e-mail to the campaign's task force and state their support publicly, for example in a Facebook status.

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a pencil, writing on a blue-lined notebook. The pencil is positioned diagonally across the frame, with the tip pointing towards the bottom right. The background is a blurred blue surface, likely the notebook cover or another page. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the paper and the metallic tip of the pencil.

5. Graduate unemployment is a European problem and needs collective actions. Higher education is a vital element of the economic recovery underway in Europe, and essential for societal development. All European graduates should have the opportunity to find decent and relevant work within their respective field. I pledge to raise awareness on the issue, to work for sustainable job creation in Europe.

6. I pledge to ensure a broad and critical evaluation of the ERASMUS+ loan guarantee facility for Master's students before 2018, paying special attention to the long term social effects of the loan scheme. The European Students' Union must be a key stakeholder in that evaluation.

7. International students are major contributors to the quality of higher education. European higher education and European society gain valuable perspectives from students from outside EU/EEA-countries. However, they often face discrimination, in particular in the form of higher tuition fees. I pledge to ensure equal treatment of third-country nationals, and to improve and facilitate visa and residence permit procedures for students and researchers.

8. The European Union was founded on the inherent and absolute values of freedom, liberty and equality. I pledge to defend and uphold the equitable treatment of all people, and support all legislation aiming to increase the representation in higher education, of people from an underrepresented or a minority background.

9. I pledge to work for increased transparency of how decisions concerning higher education are made. Students have to be an equal partner in the decision making process. I pledge to work on "establishing a continued dialogue with student representatives and to support the free participation of students in every decision concerning students and higher education.

10. Education is not a commodity! I pledge to oppose policies and language that reduces higher education to a mere resource to be traded and acknowledge the multifaceted purpose of higher education.

The European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area

The European Students' Union presented in March, together with the E4 Group, a proposal for a revision of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area. The presentation was delivered to a full house of participants at a meeting hosted by the Permanent Representation of Austria to the European Union in Brussels. Stakeholders in higher education, representatives of national governments and European policymakers, showed great interest in the proposal that was forwarded to the Bologna Follow-Up Group. Later in 2014, the Bologna Follow-Up Group agreed to put the proposal up for the ministerial meeting of the Bologna process, to be held in Yerevan, Armenia in 2015. This was a great recognition of the proposal prepared by the E4 Group.

The revised version presents a clearer structure of the ESGs, in order to limit the scope of their interpretation. It also presents the views of stakeholders in higher education on the way forward and the main changes in the European Higher Education Area in the past years. It makes a more explicit link to the learning and teaching process, by defining the relationship between quality assurance and other developments of the Bologna process since 2005. The current ESG, adopted in 2005 by European Ministers, are used by institutions and quality assurance agencies as a reference document for internal and external quality assurance (QA) systems in higher education. Moreover, they help to contribute to the common understanding of quality assurance for learning and teaching across borders and are also used as criteria by the European Quality

Assurance Register (EQAR), responsible for the register of quality assurance agencies that comply with the ESG.

Since 2005, considerable progress has been made in quality assurance as well as in other Bologna process action lines such as qualification frameworks, recognition and the promotion of the use of learning outcomes, all contributing to a paradigm shift towards student-centred learning and teaching. Given this changing context, the 2012 Communiqué of the Bologna process invited the E4 Group, as well as Education International, BUSINESSEUROPE and EQAR, to prepare an initial proposal for the revised ESGs "to improve their clarity, applicability and usefulness, including their scope".

Several consultation rounds were organised as part of this process involving both the key stakeholder organisations and ministries for higher education. The resulting comments, proposals and recommendations were very useful and important for the revision process. They were reflected in the revised version.

Several consultation rounds were organised as part of this process involving both the key stakeholder organisations and ministries for higher education. The resulting comments, proposals and recommendations were very useful and important for the revision process. They were reflected in the revised version.

STUDENT CAMPAIGNING

UKRAINE

The European Students' Union continued to monitor the political transition in Ukraine that started already in November 2013. It supported the country's democratic transition while urging Ukrainian authorities to enter a peaceful dialogue with the opposition. When tensions increased, and brutal force was used against protesters, ESU advocated for the de-escalation of violence. It organised a candlelight vigil at the 27th European Students' Convention in March to honour the people that lost their lives or were injured during the demonstration. Following the occupation of the Crimea peninsula in March, ESU sent a letter to world leaders, encouraging them to end their interference in Ukraine and demanding



Ukraine Maidan Action in front of EP

that Ukraine's democratic development must be under the control of Ukrainians. It should only receive support upon request from the international community.

ISRAEL

ESU expressed its concerns about the escalating conflict between Israel and Palestine in August 2014. After two universities in both Israel and Palestine were hit in missile attacks, the organisation condemned acts that make education institutions targets. Students supported actions with the aim at improving the dialogue between the disputing parties and search for a solution to the conflict.

VENEZUELA

Massive student-led demonstrations were organised in Venezuela in the beginning of the year. Several demonstrators were reported killed and many more injured. ESU



Venezuela student protests

denounced the lack of respect for fundamental rights in Venezuela, especially the right to assemble and to protest peacefully. It condemned all acts of violence, cases of torture and illegal arrests targeted at students and other protesters. Moreover, it urged the Venezuelan government to start a peaceful dialogue with demonstrators.

BULGARIA

Students in Bulgaria fought for an independent and self-organised student organisation. ESU expressed its concern about the pressure that the Chairman of the Council of Rectors in Bulgaria put on the student movement. Political pressure, in particular from the right wing party ATAKA, was also used against ESU's member union in Bulgaria, the National Assembly of Student Councils (NASC). Bulgarian students had to fight against legal measures that limited the students' ability to assemble and influence the higher education system.

BELGIUM

New regional and federal governments were formed in Belgium following elections. They introduced several changes to the higher education system, including tuition



Protest for Quality Education in Belgium

fees and budget cuts that put a heavy financial burden on students. ESU supported the national unions of students in Belgium, calling for more investment in higher education. Students, teachers and researchers in Belgium organised demonstrations prior to those elections on 2 April, to underline how underfinanced institutions affect

ed the overall quality of education. The students also launched a petition campaign for the refinancing of education in Belgium.

SWITZERLAND

Students in Switzerland expressed their concerns in February about the consequences that the results of a national referendum on immigration quotas may have on academic cooperation and student mobility. European funds for research and exchange programmes were frozen due to this uncertainty. ESU backed up Swiss students, by criticising the immigration proposal and how it may limit Switzerland's educational mobility and participation in the Erasmus student exchange programme as a whole. This reaction to the referendum was widely covered by the national and global media.



Action for grants initiative in the Senate on . 6 June 2014

Furthermore, ESU supported the Swiss Students Union in their campaign for the referendum on the Swiss grant system that has been put forward by them.

ESU in the PRESS

The European Students' Union (ESU) is now a major contributor to the public debate on higher education with articles regularly appearing in the press.

Several issues were picked up by the media in 2014. ESU's comment on Switzerland's referendum in February went viral. Large television networks quoted this opinion and it was also included in a large article in the New York Times. ESU also had the honour to invite a few reporters to the European Students' Convention in March. ESU was then contacted by several reporters in May when the new university ranking system U-Multirank was launched. Those are many successful examples of news coverage that ESU had this year.

HOW CAN YOU FOLLOW US?

By looking for the European Students' Union on:



By subscribing to our newsletter - the Student Voice
By visiting our homepage www.esu-online.org

ESU tries to promote its four core policy areas as widely as possible, as well as supporting research activities, but is willing to answer any enquiries related to higher education or student affairs.

ESU's monthly newsletter The Student Voice continues to be the most important element in ESU's dissemination activities. Anyone can subscribe to this newsletter on ESU's official website to get updates on major developments in higher education from students' perspectives. Moreover, it includes updates of past and upcoming events attended by ESU's representatives.

Social media is a strategic tool used to create awareness about ESU's positions and activities, ranging from meetings and conferences to published reports, surveys, statements and relevant articles. This tool is also used by ESU's elected representatives to interact directly online with policymakers, stakeholders in higher education and the public society. ESU had more than 45.000 followers on Facebook at the end of 2014.

This year, ESU introduced several new things in its communication activities. It created accounts on the publishing websites Scribd and Issuu, in order to embed its publications into its web content and made them easily accessible to readers. This was very useful for ESU's events, that are now also always video streamed with the recordings uploaded online.

Lastly, ESU published several books on the employability of students and graduates. Those publications have all been made available for download at the website www.sage.esu-online.org

Although most of the negotiation papers in the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) talks are kept behind closed doors, the European Students' Union (ESU) has raised concerns about the fact that public education could be treated as an ordinary economic service.
Euractiv, 17 March 2014

The New York Times

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

Immigration Overhaul Puts Study Programs

CHUETZE FEB. 23, 2014

This month's referendum in [Switzerland](#) over tighter immigration laws is already affecting the country's role in, and access to, some European education programs.

Erasmus+, the newest iteration of the popular European student exchange program, and Horizon 2020, an 80-billion-euro, or about \$110 billion, research program led by the European Union that started in January, have

Student groups warn that unless funding for Erasmus increases and access is widened to students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, the programme could become a preserve of a small elite. "Lots of students don't apply for funding because they don't think they can cover their expenses," Fernando Miguel Galán Palomares, Vice-Chairperson of the European Students Union, told EUobserver.
EU Observer, 23 September 2014

The European Students Union, an umbrella organization that represents 47 national student unions in 39 countries, has publicly demanded that the immigration overhaul exclude students. "Switzerland is on a slippery slope of isolating its students and academics from the outside world," said Elisabeth Gehrke, the Vice-Chairperson of the European Student Union, in a statement.

New York Times, 23 February 2014

U-Multirank has been welcomed by the European Students Union, which represents more than 11 million students in 39 countries. Its Vice-Chairperson Fernando Miguel Galán Palomares said the U-Multirank will "highlight universities that have until now been disregarded in the existing measures used in global ranking systems, overlooking the strengths of those institutions".
Times Higher Education, 13 May 2014

ESU believes that the recognition of prior learning and transparency plays a crucial role in the internationalisation of education. Thus it welcomes the further development of learning outcomes and transparency tools.
University World News, 23 May 2014, issue 321

Differences in opinion on the role of university education are discouraging student bodies from engaging in employment issues, a new study suggests. The survey of European student unions, presented at the European Students' Convention in Brussels on March 19, shows that some have no involvement with employers, or seek to limit contacts. European Voice (now Politico), 2 April 2014

Debating Europe

Debates: Browse all debates | In Focus: Themed debate series | Schools: Student-led debates

Are young Europeans too reliant on credit and debt?
Started 09/01/2014 | Smarter

We've been looking at the [future of banking](#) here on Debating Europe, in partnership with

euobserver

focus

Erasmus students find love and jobs, EU research finds

Erasmus students find love and jobs, EU research finds

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Erasmus students find love and jobs, EU research finds

POLITICO

Life after graduating

What students think about the likelihood of gaining employment on graduation:

Likelihood	Percentage
Very low	4.1%
Low	17.8%
Medium	31.5%
High	9.6%
Very high	4.1%
Don't know	2.7%
No answer	30.1%

Source: Student Advancement of Graduate Employability (SAGE) study

EU students are wary of engaging with employers

Students across the EU believe hard skills and good grades are low on the priority list for employers.

EUROPEAN VOICE
By IAN MUNDELL | 4/2/14, 8:29 PM CET | Updated 4/18/14, 12:17 PM CET

Differences of opinion on the role of university education are discouraging student bodies from engaging on employment issues, a new study suggests. The survey of European student unions, presented at the European Students' Convention in Brussels on March 19, shows that some have no involvement with employers, or seek to limit contacts.

At last week's European Students Convention (ESC27) in Brussels, which I was lucky enough to attend, the overriding theme of the conference was employability, and the role higher education can play in developing employability for both individuals and entire societies.

Top Universities blog, 26 March 2014

"Higher education, both research and teaching, is a public good and a public responsibility. It should benefit all of those in society. It is essential for democratic, cultural and social development," writes Erin Nordal, Vice-Chairperson of ESU.

University World News, 24 October 2014

ESU MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY

The European Students' Union (ESU) has not stopped growing since its creation under the name of WESIB in 1982. At present, the ESU counts 47 full member national unions of students from 39 different countries, three candidate members in the process of becoming full members, as well as 12 international organisations as associate members.

ESU's work on membership issues focused on two crucial parts in 2014. Firstly, a clearer internal structuring, with the establishment of a new membership questionnaire that will enable ESU to keep information about its member organisations up-to-date, as well as two renewed application questionnaires, focused respectively on national unions of students and associate members. Secondly, ESU strengthened its collaboration with its current associate members, succeeding in increasing their participation in ESU's policy work, as well as establishing contact with future candidates. ESU was proud to have four associate members attending its 67th Board Meeting in December 2014.

Following the policy of increased participation and dialogue with its members, ESU's representatives participated in events and general assemblies organised by the member unions during the year. A list of some of these events can be found in another chapter.

ESU's member unions decided in December 2014 to give the Students' Alliance of Moldova, Alianta Studentilor din Moldova (ASM), candidate status for membership. ESU will examine ASM's application in more detail in 2015 and report back to its members on the progress. This was the first students' union from Moldova granted candidacy for membership of ESU.

ESU has also moved forward on the pending study visits for the current candidate members. Study visits to Ukraine and Turkey are now set to take place, with completed agendas and designated delegates. This will finalise the process for two of ESU's candidate members, respectively NSS from Ukraine and T-Youth from Turkey.

The competency of the existing membership task force has been broadened as well, now including tackling communication and visibility, in order to get the ESU message out to an increasing number of students throughout Europe and beyond. The task force has been working to establish clear proposals on the future of ESU membership matters, a basis for the Board Members to debate and build a strategy on.

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS



Association of Nordic and Pol-Balt Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Student Organizations (ANSO)



Association of Norwegian Students Abroad (ANSA)



Erasmus Student Network (ESN)



European Dental Students Association (EDSA)



European Pharmaceutical Students' Association (EPSA)



European Union of Jewish Students (EUJS)



Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations (FEMYSO)



International Association of Political Science Students (IAPSS)



International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA)



International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Youth and Student Organisation (IGLYO)



International Students of History Association (ISHA)



The Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU)

- Armenia** Armenia National Students Association (ANSA)
- Austria** Österreichische HochschülerInnenschaft (ÖH)
- Azerbaijan** Azerbaijan Students Union (ASU),
Azerbaijan Student Youth Organisations' Union (ASYOU)
- Belarus** Belarus Student Association (BSA)
- Belgium** Fédération Des Etudiants Francophones (FEF)
- Belgium** Vlaamse Vereniging van Studenten (VVS)
- Bulgaria** **Bulgaria Barski Studentski (UBS)**
- Bulgaria** Nacionalno Predstavitelstvo na Studentskite Saveti v Republika Balaria (NASC)
- Bosnia & Herzegovina** Unija Studenata Republike Srpske (SURS)
- Croatia** Hrvatski Studentski Zbor (CSC)
- Cyprus** Pagkypria Omospondia Foititikon Enoseon (POFEN)
- Czech Republic** Studentská Komora Rady Vysokých Škol (SKRVS)
- Denmark** Danske Studerendes Fællesråd (DSF)
- Estonia** Eesti Üliõpilaskondade Liit (EÜL)
- Finland** Suomen ammattikorkeakouluopiskelijakuntien liitto (SAMOK)
- Finland** Suomen Ylioppilaskuntien Liitto (SYL)
- France** Fédération des Associations Générales D'Etudiants (FAGE)
- France** Union Nationale des Etudiants de France (UNEF)
- Georgia** Students Organizations League of Georgia (SOLG)
- Germany** Freie Zusammenschluss von StudentInnenschaf-ten (FZS)
- Hungary** Hallgatói Önkormányzatok Országos Konferenciája (HÖÖK)
- Iceland** Stúdentaráð Háskóla Íslands (SHÍ)
- Ireland** Union of Students in Ireland (USI)
- Israel** National Union of Israeli Students (NUIS)
- Italy** Unione degli Universitari (UdU)
- Latvia** Latvijas Studentu Apvienība (LSA)
- Lithuania** Lietuvos Studentu Sąjunga (LSS)
- Luxembourg** Union Nationale des Etudiant(e)s du Luxembourg (UNEL)
- Luxembourg** **University Students' Organization (LUS)**
- Macedonia** National Student Union of Macedonia (NSUM)
- Malta** Kunsill Studenti Universitarji (KSU)
- Netherlands** Interstedelijk Studenten Overleg (ISO)
- Netherlands** Landelijke Studenten Vakbond (LSVb)
- Norway** Norsk Studentorganisasjon (NSO)
- Poland** Parlament Studentów Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej (PSRP)
- Portugal** Fórum Académico para a Informação e Representação Externa (FAIRe)
- Romania** Alianța Națională a Organizațiilor Studentești din România (ANOSR)
- Serbia** Studentska Unija Srbije (SUS)
- Serbia** Student Conference of Serbian Universities (SKONUS)
- Slovakia** Študentská Rada Vysokých škôl (SRVS)
- Slovenia** Studenska Organizacija Slovenije (SSU)
- Spain** Coordinadora de Representantes de Estudiantes de Universidades Públicas (CREUP)
- Sweden** Sveriges Förenade Studentkårer (SFS)
- Switzerland** Verband der Schweizer Studierendenschaf-ten (VSS-UNES-USU)
- Ukraine** Ukrainian Association of Student Self-govern-ment (UASS)
- UK** National Union of Students (NUS-UK)

THIS IS HOW ESU WORKS

The European Students' Union (ESU) currently brings together the voices of 47 national unions of students from 39 countries in Europe. Its mission is to represent the interests of those students towards relevant bodies, such as the European Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations.

The history of ESU dates back to 1982 when seven national unions of students founded the Western European Student Information Bureau (WESIB). Following the political turmoil that swept across the continent this decade, WESIB changed into a wide European-based organisation. Thereafter, it was named the European Student Information Bureau (ESIB). That was the name of the organisation all until 2007, when it was changed to the European Students' Union.

This last name change is descriptive of the exhaustive organisational restructure that ESU underwent in the past years. It has gradually moved from being a regional information exchange office for students, to a strong and established organisation that represents students in Europe. External factors also pushed ESU in this direction, as more and more decisions are taken at the European level that directly affect students' interests. The emerging European Higher Education Area and student mobility are good examples of such policies that demand collective responses from students.

ESU's headquarters have been based in Brussels since the organisation was formed, and most of its work is carried out there due to the close proximity of many of the main European institutions. ESU's representatives regularly meet representatives of other organisations in higher education or policymakers at the national and European level.

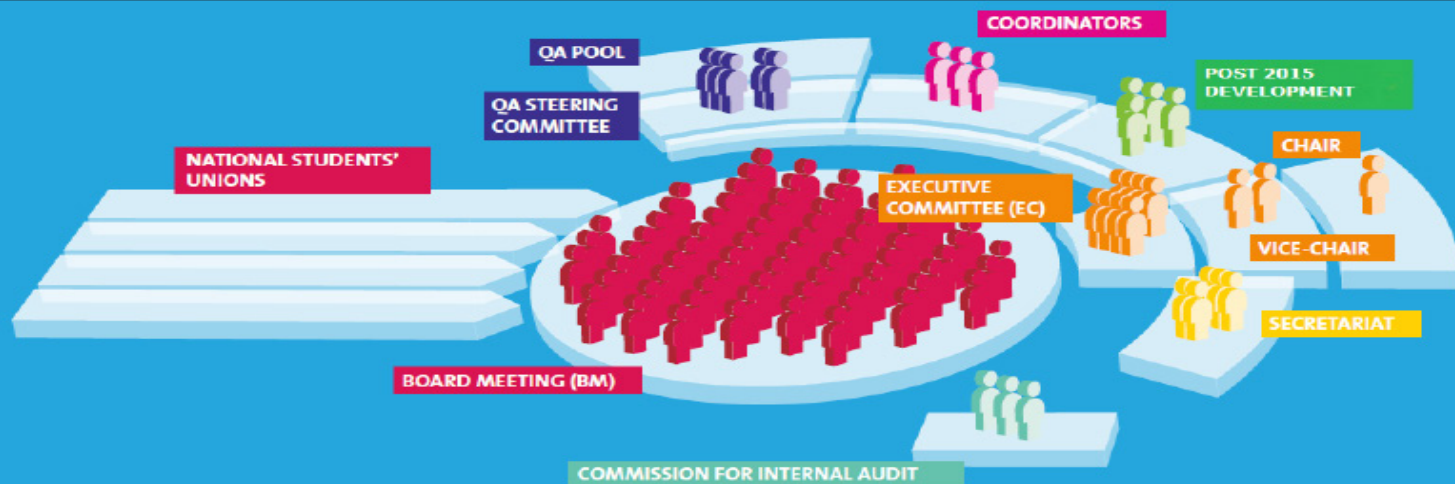
Their aim is to shape policies in higher education so that they reflect students' concerns, as they are expressed in ESU's policy papers and other internal documents.

ESU's exhaustive self-evaluation process came to an end in mid-2011 when it was decided to simplify the organisation's political structure. From that point on it was decided that the daily activities of the organisation would be run by a single Executive Committee that would be elected by ESU's member unions on an annual basis. That committee is led by a Chairperson and two Vice-Chairpersons that are employed full-time in Brussels to take part in its day-to-day responsibilities. Their work is supported by policy coordinators that are elected by the Executive Committee, as well as three coordinators selected by the Executive Committee.

ESU actively seeks new methods for students and to widen its network to provide crucial advice and consultancy in relations to higher education reforms and students' involvement. As the external environment demands action on behalf of students, it is incredibly important that ESU serves as a uniting platform for student unions fighting to reach sustainable, accessible and high quality higher education in Europe.

Achieving on the agreed priorities means that ESU must focus on building on the available resources, organising capacity building, managing internal and external communications, re-allocating as well as finding new resources.

ESU's elected representatives are supported by a professional secretariat, consisting of an office manager, project officer, project assistant, executive assistant and communications' manager. They are all employed by the organisation to support administrative tasks and carry



out decisions made by the elected representatives.

Organisational changes and task forces

Two internal task forces were active in 2014, with the help of representatives from ESU's member unions. One of them was established to work with ESU's campaign for the European Parliament elections in May. Its mission was to help prepare the campaign, which was mostly carried out with the contribution of volunteers. The second task force worked with the commodification of higher education, with the aim of delivering a report on the subject.

ESU held an extraordinary Board Meeting in Florence, Italy, in September 2014 where it was decided to dissolve its organisational predecessor ESIB Austria. This was an important move to a more centralised financial and organisational management, under ESU's name. ESIB Belgium still remains, but it is planned to dissolve that as well in 2015.

Students contribution to quality assurance

In 2009, ESU established a pool of committed and well-trained students with the aim of contributing to the

improvement of higher education provisions in Europe through quality assurance procedures. The pool is renewed once a year where an independent Steering Committee is responsible for launching calls for new members and selecting the applicants based on public criteria.

ESU actively promoted and developed student participation in quality assurance all over Europe this way throughout the past years. At the end of 2014, there were students registered in the pool from 28 different countries in Europe. This pool benefitted from a three-year long project that came to an end in October 2013, called Quest for Quality for Students (QUEST). Several new publications on quality assurance in higher education were introduced as part of this project, as well as a new website dedicated to students' engagement in quality assurance activities www.quest.esu-online.org. One of the publications is a Student Handbook on Quality Assurance, presenting the basics of quality assurance and enhancement activities to students.

ESU regularly organises study sessions, workshops and other events for the members of the pool to strengthen their capacity in quality assurance provisions on a systematic basis.

The pool has proven to be an excellent initiative, as it brings together the experience and knowledge of students from all over Europe, creating a platform for debates, sharing different opinions and learning about quality assurance. These students also contribute to ESU's policy-making, act as multiplying agents in their respective countries, collaborate in several projects, participate in quality assurance reviews.

ESU has also signed cooperation agreements with the European University Association (EUA) and the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), as well as six national quality assurance agencies to provide student experts for external reviews. These agreements have strengthened students' involvement and influence in quality assurance provisions to a great extent.

To find out more about the work of the students' experts pool, you can visit ESU's homepage or ESU's website dedicated to the quality of higher education www.quest.esu-online.org or send the Steering Committee an e-mail at qapools@esu-online.org.

Steering Committee QA Student Experts Pool

Asnate Kažoka, Blazhe Todorovski, Dan Derricott, Fernando Miguel Galán Palomares, Martynas Serys-Kubertavicius (until July 2014), Simona Dimovska (from July 2014)

Secretariat at the end of 2014

Beate Espenes (Executive Assistant)
Natalia Tarachiu (Office Manager)
Robert Hlynur Baldursson (Communications' Manager)
Stela Stancheva (Project Officer)
Eleni Boulomyti (Project Assistant)
Katarzyna Czyz (Project Assistant)



Executive Committee Mandate 2013–14

Rok Primožic (Chairperson), Elisabeth Gehrke (Vice-Chairperson), Fernando Miguel Galán Palomares (Vice-Chairperson), Erin Nordal, Elin Blomqvist, Nevena Vuksanovic, Blazhe Todorovski, Maroš Korman, Maksimas Milta, Michael Tolentino Frederiksen.

Executive Committee Mandate 2014–15

Elisabeth Gehrke (Chairperson), Fernando Miguel Galán Palomares (Vice-Chairperson), Erin Nordal (Vice-Chairperson), Blazhe Todorovski, Tijana Isoski, Tiago Estevao Martins, Cat O'Driscoll, Maksimas Milta, Karolina Pietkiewicz, Lea Meister.

Coordinators first half 2014

Gabriela Bergan (Human Rights and Solidarity)
Tiago Estevao Martins (Membership Issues)
Melanie Fröhlich (Equality)

Coordinators second half 2014

Viktor Grønne (Human Rights and Solidarity)
William Benn (Membership Issues)
Melanie Fröhlich (Equality)

ESU'S FINANCES IN 2014

To be able to develop its projects and continue its operation, ESU—as a non-governmental organisation—relies mainly on the annual contributions coming from its members and on funds from European and international institutions.

As in previous years, the main income sources for 2014 were project grants received from the European Commission as well as an operating grant to support ESU's core activities and overall sustainability. Additionally, ESU received a grant from the Belgian organisation "Fonds Maribel Social du Secteur Socioculturel" to fund two part-time positions: an executive assistant and a project assistant.

The expenditures' structure directly reflects ESU's projects and activities and supports the organisation in reaching the planned aims foreseen in its annual plan of work.

This was only possible with the valuable contribution of the team of professionals in the ESU Secretariat and the group of elected representatives working together. Thanks to the support of Maribel Social, the team grew by one member.

The cost of maintaining an office in Brussels and other administrative expenses represents only a small share of ESU's annual expenses. Due to ESU moving to a new office, these costs however increased slightly. ESU also allocated a modest financial support to its elected representatives to cover a part of their work-related expenses.

The overall financial result of 2014 was negative due to a change in the customer management and the connected accounting policies. ESU would like to thank the European Commission and Maribel for their continued support, as well as its partners for their financial support that enabled the elected representatives to participate in dozens of higher education conferences, meetings and workshops in 2014 and to voice the students' perspectives. Also, we would like to thank our members for their support and involvement in ESU's activities.

The European Students' Union (ESU) is the umbrella organisation of 47 National Unions of Students (NUS) from 39 countries. The NUSes are open to all students in their respective country regardless of political persuasion, religion, ethnic or cultural origin, sexual orientation or social standing. Our members are also student-run, autonomous, representative and operate according to democratic principles.

The aim of ESU is to represent and promote the educational, social, economic and cultural interests of students at the European level towards all relevant bodies and in particular the European Union, Bologna Follow Up Group, Council of Europe and UNESCO. Through its members, ESU represents over 15 million students in Europe.