

The European Students' Union



# EQUITY HANDBOOK

How you and your student union can help give people equal opportunities in higher education



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme



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HOW YOU AND YOUR STUDENT UNION CAN HELP  
GIVE PEOPLE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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# IMPRINT

## EQUITY HANDBOOK

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The European Students' Union (ESU) is the umbrella organisation of 47 national unions of students from 38 countries, and through these members represents over 11 million students. The aim of ESU is to articulate and promote the educational, social, economic and cultural interests of students at a European level towards all relevant bodies and in particular the European Union, Bologna Follow-Up Group, Council of Europe and UNESCO.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

Dear reader,

*The Equity Handbook* is one of the final deliverables of the Equity in Higher Education from a Student Perspective—StudEq—project that the European Students' Union (ESU) has been running for the past two years with the support of the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme. The project, which started in November 2007 and ends in December 2009, is an initiative seeking to raise awareness



of current equity issues in higher education among key education stakeholders and decision-makers, and to increase the capacity of the student movement on the subject. We enjoyed the support of various partners in our work in this project:

- SCIENTER, a non-profit organisation, specialising in educational research & innovation,
- MENON, who has worked for 10 years to foster innovation processes in areas such as education and lifelong learning, international S&T cooperation, knowledge society, and social inclusion; and
- Our members ANOSR, ÖH, EUL and SRVS—the national student unions in Romania, Austria, Estonia and Slovakia.

This final publication is aimed at providing a simple, easy to use guide as to what equity is and how it can be achieved in the field of higher education. Most student organisations, at whatever level, are involved in fighting for students rights and for an equitable higher education system. Some understand equity to be a social dimension within the Bologna Process, others have in mind the definition from the Lisbon agenda, while most still confuse equity and equality as

concepts. This is why we believe that a straightforward publication that starts with a »What do we mean by »Equity«?» chapter after the project overview might prove very useful for the student organisations all around Europe. In addition, Increasingly international organisations influence the equity agenda, so a short overview of these will make it easier to put national and institutional policies on equity into perspective.

As student representatives, we often have to make our voice heard and hence the chapter on lobbying and campaigning for equity should be of interest to student representatives in Europe. As we are all fighting for equity, we must start from within our own organisations. Therefore, we have included a chapter on equity within the students' unions and examples on how this can be achieved.

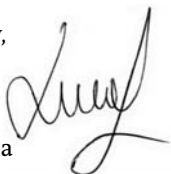
Finally, we outlined ESU's policies on equity and our recent history on the fight for more fair, quality based and accessible higher education systems.

I would like to thank warmly all the project partners, who have made this project tangible and effective in reaching its goals. I also have the honour of congratulating the members of ESU's Social Affairs Committee—Inge, Jenny, Yonatan and their coordinator Alma, together with Ben and Hartwig from our Equity Experts pool—who have made this publication possible. Finally, I would like to thank Olav, our Communications Manager who took all the necessary steps for this handbook to jump from text on a computer screen to the pages of a printed publication. Without all of your work, this handbook would not be in the hands of its readers.



We hope you enjoy the articles and that you share your thoughts with your colleagues. Please do not hesitate to send us comments or suggestions for future publications.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ligia Deca', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ligia Deca

Chairperson of the European Students' Union

*by Alma Joensen*

This handbook is a part of ESU's major project ›Equity in Higher Education from a Student Perspective‹. This two-year project started in October 2007 and ended in 2009. The main aim of the project is to provide training, argument and tools for student representatives to fight for equity on the national and local higher education level. Today, many of society's groups are still under-represented and excluded from higher education. Equity and efficiency policies, taking into account the broad, lifelong perspective of education should be developed on both the institutional and the national level, targeting those groups that need it the most.

The partners in the project are the national unions of students from Austria (ÖH), Estonia (EÜL), Romania (ANOSR) and Slovakia (SRVS). SCIENTER and MENON are also partners, helping with the setting up of an e-learning platform and creation of an online training.

The project has helped ESU putting equity on the top of the agenda for the past two years. In 2008, ESU organised a three-day seminar on equity in higher education, in cooperation with our partners from Slovakia, SRVS. IN 2009, in cooperation with the other national unions of students in the project, ESU organised three regional training sessions. They took place in Timisoara, Tallin and Vienna, and all in all around 100 student representatives from Europe gathered and gained more knowledge and tools to fight for equity in their home countries and universities.

In the summer of 2008, ESU set up a pool of trainers—a group of student representatives that have expertise in giving training. The trainers helped with the developing of the three regional training sessions and carried them out in cooperation with the members of ESU's Social Affairs Committee, who developed the content.

ESU's Social Affairs Committee has been working on creating the content package on equity in higher education. The committee has

been collecting existing research on equity in higher education and creating a full package with articles, summaries and data, used to support the content development of other parts of the project. The content package will be available on the e-learning platform so that student representatives can read it and learn more about equity.



Student representatives develop a campaign on how to achieve more gender equality in the field of nursing education

SCIENTER, one of our partners in the project has created a platform to be used for online trainings. Currently, SCIENTER, the trainers and members of ESU's Social Affairs Committee, are working on creating an online training on equity, similar to the three regional training sessions. ESU's members, the national unions of students, will get access to the platform, and be able to develop more expertise on the matter.

This handbook is a part of the project's dissemination process. The articles are written by ESU's current and previous elected representatives, and trainers from ESU's pool of trainers. The handbook, along with other training material, will be translated to the languages of the

three national unions of students that organised the regional training sessions (German, Estonian and Romanian). The content of the handbook is based on the main issues that have arisen during the period of the project, and includes some of the results from the regional training sessions on equity. This handbook is a tool for student representatives, a tool that highlights the problematic areas, suggests solutions to the problems and lays down arguments for why equitable higher education is not a reality today.

# 3 WHAT DO WE MEAN BY »EQUITY«?

*by Inge Gielis*

Equity can be defined as the quality of being impartial or fair. In order for treatment to be fair, issues of diversity need to be taken into account so that the different needs and requirements of individuals are met. An equitable approach in education identifies and takes account of difference in fairly distributing time and resources, and impartially assessing outcomes.

In equitable terms educational achievement should be an inclusive rather than an exclusive goal. Equity is an aspect of social justice which pertains to the recognition and redressing of discrimination, for example, through the mechanism of affirmative action. This is based on the principle of recognising that unequal power relations and obstacles to the advancement of marginalised groups embedded in social relations preclude the achievement of social justice. For this reason, the attainment of formal equality before the law is insufficient. Special measures to advance marginalised groups and to transform social practices are therefore preconditions for the attainment of social justice.

## 3.1 CONCEPTS

When discussing this issue we use many different words and concepts. In the Lisbon strategy it's called equity, but in the Bologna process they call it the social dimension. Others talk about equal opportunities. Are these all synonyms? Or do we use different words for different things? Here are definitions of some of the main concepts that we use in this handbook and in general:

- **Equality**

Parity of esteem, and access to opportunity, regardless of individual differences.

- **Participative equity in higher education**  
Higher education should truly reflect society. All target groups should participate in higher education to the same extent as their share in the population.
- **Widening access**  
Umbrella term for the efforts of higher education institutions, governments and others to increase the participation in higher education, especially for underrepresented groups.
- **Diversity**  
Diversity literally means »variety«. Valuing diversity means valuing people and recognising that everyone is unique/different but of equal worth.  
Democratisation of higher education  
Everyone, regardless of socio-economic and cultural background, has the right to participate in the education of his or her choice and according to his or her talents, without any barriers. Higher education institutions have to be democratically organised with real student participation.
- **Social dimension**  
The student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels should reflect the diversity of our populations. (the definition given in the Bologna Process—London Communiqué, 2007)

When reading the definitions, we see that they don't all have exactly the same meaning or same approach to the issue. Some have a more principle view (p.e. equality, democratisation), while others have a more instrumental, goal-oriented approach (p.e. equity). Some focus on solving a problem (p.e. widening access which focuses on solving underrepresentation), while others have a more positive approach (p.e. diversity, where the focus is on the added value).

## 3.2 DISCRIMINATION

Discrimination is a concept that is often misunderstood. Sometimes it is limited to treating people differently, but it's important to note that we talk about discrimination when the different treatment is not justified. Discrimination is every legal or factual, direct or indirect differentiation and unequal conduct (giving privileges, excluding, imposing limitations) based on race, skin colour, social, national and ethnic background, descent, birth, language, class, religious or political beliefs, sex/gender, sexual orientation, disability, marital status or any other basis, when this is not relevant.

There are different kinds of discrimination:

- **Direct (overt) discrimination**

Direct discrimination is less favourable treatment on grounds of race or ethnic origin, age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, religion or belief, etc. when this is irrelevant.

- **Indirect (covert) discrimination**

This is treatment that appears to be fair and is applied to everybody equally, but has an unjustifiable adverse impact upon a particular group or person, with particular characteristics, attributes or circumstances. Indirect discrimination can also be a provision or practice that everyone has to conform to, but which some groups cannot meet so easily.

- **Individual discrimination**

Refers to the behaviour of individual members of one race/ethnic/gender or other group that is intended to have a differential and/or harmful effect on the members of another group.

- **Institutional Discrimination**

A case where discrimination is carried out by the behaviour of individuals who control the institutions and implement policies that are intended to have a differential and/

or harmful effect on minority race/ethnic/gender/or other groups.

- **Structural Discrimination**

This term refers to policies or practices that are discriminatory. In many cases the policies or practices might even look neutral but because of the different starting points are inherently discriminative.

### 3.3 DISABILITY THEORIES

The concepts we use seem to be more than just words. A good example for this is the shift in terminology regarding disabilities. A disability can be defined as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. In the past, people spoke about ›the handicapped‹. Many people oppose this wording, as it limits people to their handicap. They prefer the term ›person with a handicap‹. This is known as ›people first‹ terminology. Some people reject the term ›handicap‹ as it is seen as something negative and it leads to stigmatisation. They prefer the term disability.

The terminology used is linked to the way people view disabilities. There are many different theories regarding disabilities. These lead to different points of view, but can also lead to different policy and are therefore crucial. Here are some examples:

The medical model is characterised by ›labelling‹ via diagnosis, focusing on the misfortune of the disabled person and seeking to ›cure‹ the disability.

The charity model is based on sympathy for the disabled person from the ›normal‹ society, which provides services and support because they feel pity. Again, the disability is the domain of the individual, associating disability with shame and low self-esteem.

The social model is founded on the central belief that an individual with an impairment is disabled by society, which creates and fosters attitudes that prevent people with different abilities from functioning equally within it. This model removes the emphasis from the disabled person and places the responsibility on society to adapt for



integration, rather than adapt to discrimination. It also removes the onus from the impairment, as a wheelchair user and a mental health service user could both be discriminated against by discriminatory employment practices.

The handicap creation model from Fougerollas is a theory, which states that a handicap situation is created by the interaction between personal factors and external/social factors. The handicap situation leads to a limitation of the realisation of life habits. These habits are often recurring activities or social roles necessary for survival or development of a person in society during one's life.

# 4

## REALITY CHECK: UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS AND OBSTACLES

*by Yonatan Green*

### STUDENTS FROM A LOW SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

#### Problems of Access to HE

- Financial barriers keep potential students away from HE—high fees, cost of accommodation, transport etc.
- In certain cases, these students are not encouraged in the same way as other students to participate in HE.

#### Problems during the time of studying in HE

- Face less chance of succeeding in HE compared to students with higher socio-economic backgrounds. For example, students with low socio-economic backgrounds may not be able to afford private lessons, extra curriculum activities and have less time dedicated to studies because they must work at the same time.
- Sometimes student financing is insufficient to cover all the costs of studies.
- In certain cases, students cannot get loans if they come from a low social economic background.
- Students that come from a low social economic background tend to have a greater debt aversion, leading them to give up on taking a loan.
- In certain cases, these students cannot prepare equally for exams because they have to work and hence have less time for studying.

## ETHNIC—CULTURAL MINORITIES

### Problems of Access to HE

- Usually come from lower socio-economic background.
- In some cases, institutions reject applications of graduate students from certain cultures because some group-difference research suggests that they are less intelligent than candidates from other cultures.
- Facing discrimination in the labor market, which leads them to forfeit good education.
- In many cases, minority groups are less likely to participate in early childhood education and care, more likely to be in special education and drop out or end up in low-status streams.

### Problems during the time of studying in HE

- Facing educational difficulties arising from language barriers (as some students in this group are not native speakers).
- Facing lack of support as oppose to other students.

## STUDENTS WITH MIGRANT BACKGROUNDS

### Problems of Access to HE

- Usually come from lower socio-economic background.
- May lack of information about the benefits of HE.

### Problems during the time of studying in HE

- Face educational difficulties arising from language barriers (as some students in this group are not native speakers).
- Have difficulties adapting to their new surroundings.
- Experience pressure to be like "the normal students", not different.



Student representatives discuss lifelong learning at ESU's conference on »Social Dimension: the Lost Dimension?« in Stockholm, October 2009.

## STUDENTS FROM LESS ECONOMICALLY DEVELOPED REGIONS

### Problems of Access to HE

- Often experience a lesser quality of teaching in secondary education.
- Usually there is an absence of HE institutions in their region.

### Problems during the time of studying in HE

- When moving to a city, face a high cost of living, poor transport links, and a shortage of student housing.

## STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

### Problems of Access to HE

- May have difficulty being accepted, as some universities may fear that including students with special needs will lower the average test scores.

### Problems during the time of studying in HE

- Possible refusal of institutions to implement academic accommodations recommended by the disability resource centre to ensure students with disabilities have equitable access to course materials and evaluation procedures.
- Possible refusal of institutions to modify existing facilities to make them physically accessible to people with disabilities (for example, accessible washrooms).
- Lack of awareness from other students and teaching staff.
- Lack of necessary provisions.

## GENDER

### Problems of Access to HE

- In certain cases, only female applicants asked about their child care arrangements.
- Facing stereotypes and gender segregation in study choice. Females or males can have limited ideas about what kinds of job are appropriate for them and therefore dismiss some study options.

### Problems during the time of studying in HE

- Research conducted in OECD countries found that generally more males than females receive additional resources to access the curriculum.

## LGBT STUDENTS (LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSEXUAL)

### Problems during the time of studying in HE

- Often experience (documented) harassment and violence because of their sexual preference.
- Facing homophobia and heterosexism.
- Receiving less support and guidance regarding academic and career decisions in contrast to Heterosexual students.

- Face discrimination in terms of social norms and constructions. For example, they may not talk about their social life as openly as other students and therefore be left out of some social events.
- Education itself can include heteronormative assumptions that LGBT students may find offensive.

## STUDENTS WITH JOBS

### Problems during the time of studying in HE

- May face inflexible curricula, lack of evening lectures and an absence of part-time programmes.
- Could have higher tuition fees in certain cases.
- Might lose grant funding when earning they earn too much.
- Lack time and energy for studies because of their work.

## STUDENTS WITH CHILDREN

### Problems of Access to HE

- The child care obstacle—a financial need.

### Problems during the time of studying in HE

- Facing difficulties of time management and financial needs (child care for example).
- Facing inflexible curricula.
- Sometimes receive more student financing but it often not enough to cover the extra cost of child care.

## STUDENTS 35+

### Problems during the time of studying in HE

- There are certain benefits that apply to students only up to a certain age. For example, loans and grants, no more student discounts, etc.

- In certain cases, these students pay higher fees than others.
- Generally, these students have more financial responsibilities and the loans they get do not cover them.

## STUDENTS FROM RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

### Problems of Access to HE

- These students are often linked to ethnic minority students and experience the same barriers.

### Problems during the time of studying in HE

- Usually, their beliefs and practices are not taken into consideration.

## REFUGEES/ASYLUM SEEKERS/STUDENTS WITHOUT A RESIDENCE PERMIT

### Problems of Access to HE

- In certain cases, their earlier qualifications are not recognized.
- In certain institutions, these students cannot get accepted if they don't have a visa or a permit to stay in the country.

### Problems during the time of studying in HE

- In certain cases, they can't get student financing and often don't have a permission to work.
- In certain cases, they have to pay higher tuition fees than other students.

# 5 CAMPAIGNING FOR EQUITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

by Ben Vulliamy

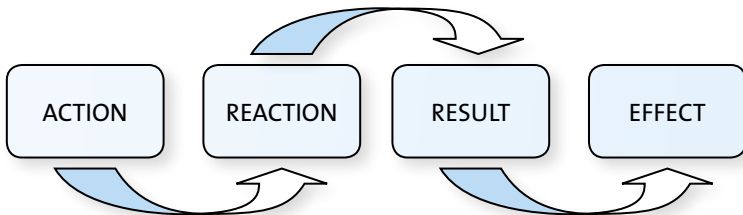
In this chapter we explain how you can campaign for equity in HE in 9 easy steps.

## 5.1 STEP 1—WHAT IS A CAMPAIGN?

Campaigning is defined as a process designed to bring about a change. A change must be an impact—someone sees, feels or does something different. A person or a community's life is different, its better in some defined way. Controlling and achieving positive change is hard and therefore campaigning is a difficult skill to master but its power is huge. Effective campaigning enables people to change their environment, to alter their experience, to improve their lives or the world around them.

*»A process designed to bring about a change«*

A simple diagram can demonstrate the path of a campaign and show that change, outcome and impact are critical to any campaign.





**Action:** What is done by the campaigners?

**Reaction:** What is generated by these actions?

**Result:** The outcome of these actions

**Effect:** The impact of this

Example:

**Action:** Students send the University chancellor emails and letters asking »would I have got a place at university if I was black, poor, transsexual, female or disabled?

**Reaction:** The chancellor is uncomfortable with the question and their normal business is disrupted

**Result:** The chancellor agrees to review university admissions procedures

**Effect:** The University starts to widen participation admitting more diverse students

## 5.2 STEP 2—WHAT DO YOU WANT TO CHANGE?

Because change is an essential focus for any campaign it is vital to clearly define exactly what you want to change. Think about what it is that really frustrates you, what it is that really causes the problem you experience. Do you want to have different assessment criteria for particular students? Do some students need a different type of or additional support for their learning? Should lessons be structured or delivered in a different way to enable participation from a wider group of students?

*»Clearly define exactly what you want to change«*

There is a wide variety of change objectives for campaigns but usually the campaign change objective will be one of the following:

**Introduction:** it will introduce a new issue not previously considered

**Reiterate:** it will reiterate an existing issue that may need more emphasising

**Remind:** it will remind people of a historic event that needs recalling

**Highlight:** it will highlight and up and coming issue

**Boost:** it will boost an existing campaign issue that is not being solved

### 5.3 STEP 3—KNOW YOUR ISSUE

Knowledge of your issue will ensure that you can be strategic about your campaign. Doing your research will make you better armed to win your campaign. It is important you understand your problem and the context of it, the range of solutions available, the arguments for and against it, how you can prove to supports and opposition your solution or change will make things better. It can be helpful to perform a »PEST« analysis to research your issue. A PEST analysis is outline below.

*»Doing your research will make you better armed to win your campaign«*

**Political context:** what policy currently exists? Who has the power to change that policy?

**Economic context:** who will lose and gain financially if your campaign is successful? What investment might be needed to achieve the change and where would this economic investment come from?

**Social context:** What does society think about the issue you are campaigning on? What is their experience of the problem you have identified? How many people are affected? Which parts of society will support or oppose your campaign?

**Technical context:** What is the technological impact of the problem you have identified? Is the technology in place to support your outcome?

When doing your research, try to identify some »killer evidence«. Killer evidence will be the thing you have found which provides irrefutable support to your campaign, it doesn't use spin or over exaggeration, it just clearly and definitely proves that the change is achiev-

able and will make something better. It could be a first hand story, a personal account which is supported by facts and figures.

## 5.4 STEP 4—SET YOUR AIMS

The best campaigns have clear, simple and achievable aims. Having a series of well-identified campaign aims, a »critical path« to campaign success, will help you communicate your campaign effectively and take gradual steps towards success.

*»A critical path to campaign success«*

Critical aims path example:

**Aim 1:** Chancellor to agree admissions policy needs to be reviewed

**Aim 2:** Student representatives to be included to in review group

**Aim 3:** New admission policy to be submitted to University board

**Aim 4:** New admissions policy agreed and implemented by University board

**Aim 5:** Following year has increased number of minority group students

Following your critical path and not progressing to the next objective until you have fulfilled each stage will help you build your campaign gradually towards its change conclusion. By having clear, simple, small and achievable aims at each step you will gradually achieve success having clear milestones and measures of how the campaign is developing at each stage of the »critical path«.

## 5.5 STEP 5—BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER

The majority of campaigns need you to mobilise people, bring them together in a unified action or series of activities that help achieve your campaign result. There are many different ways to get people to work together collaboratively but what is important is to be creative when thinking about how who to approach and how to do so.

Here are some ideas about how to identify and target people and get them to support your campaign:

- Contact student groups, societies and social groups. If there are already large groups of students sharing and interest or congregating together they may be a good way of gathering lots of people with a shared interest who already want to work together.
- Search and contact relevant online forums. Facebook, Bebo, online chat forums etc can be good tools to identify and contact large groups of people. There is lots of evidence that young people have increased conviction in the power of campaigning when they are contacted and engaged with via virtual and online methods.
- Contact other campaign groups that might share your objective. Are there local residents associations, trade unions, campaigning organisations etc who are already active within your community who might work with you? How can you use their solidarity to access other resources or communication channels?
- Identify and talk with community leaders. Who do you know who has the biggest network of friends? If you can get them to support your campaign they can help you mobilise a larger group of people through their people skills and contacts because they are already respected by a large community. Perhaps a course rep, the rugby team captain, the pastor or the friend who organises the biggest and best parties.

*»Campaigns need you to mobilise people«*

Once you have identified and made contact with the people you want to support your campaign you need to think about how you can get their interest, how you can convince them to support your campaign. There is a technique for getting their support called »Anger,

Hope, Action». The idea is that if you make them angry about your campaign problem, then give them hope that solution exists they will then agree to take the action you suggest to support your campaign.



Inspiration is important if you want to get your fellow students into the streets

Anger, Hope Action example:

**Anger:** you tell the disabled students society that despite the fact that 32% of the local community are defined as disabled only 6% of the students admitted to the university are disabled. They are angry—they have a sense of injustice.

**Hope:** You tell them that another university in a near by city has 35% disabled students through investing in additional teaching support and resources for disabled students and that the same could work at your University. There is hope that the problem can be fixed

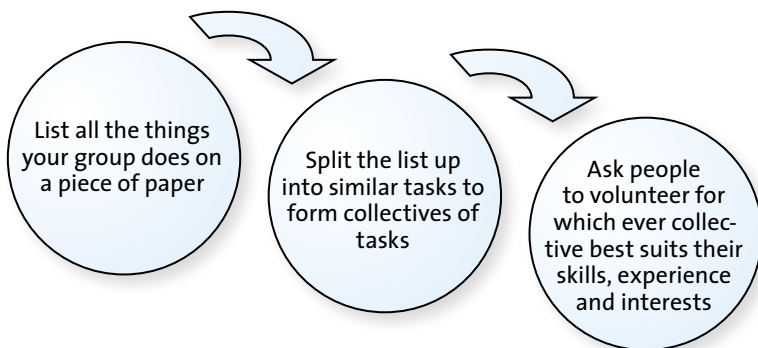
**Action:** You ask them if they would write an article for the local press explaining that their access needs are not being supported by the University. You also ask them to write to the University Chancellor asking why their University doesn't provide the same resources for disabled

students that other Universities do. They understand the action they can take to change the injustice.

## 5.6 STEP 6—ORGANISING

Key to a successful campaigning is making sure everyone feels included in some way, that they are all taking responsibility for an activity. This is called organising. Organising people for your campaign means commonly agreeing on actions and/or responsibilities for different people involved in your campaign. It can often be helpful to set up collectives of people who deal with a specific action or responsibility together. This enables them to share skills, ideas and actions. There is a suggestion for how you might organise working collectives in the diagram below.

*»Key to a successful campaign is making sure everyone feels included«*



Organising people to take on separate responsibilities and actions to help you achieve your campaign goal will build the strength of the campaign. You will need to consider how the separate collectives report back on their activity and share their success. You may need a series of campaign meetings to do this and it will also help monitor

the progress of the campaign and make sure all aspects of activity are working properly.

## 5.7 STEP 7—GETTING RESOURCES

It may be that you have all the resources you need to run your campaign although often this will not be the case. Putting aside the need to build people resources (which is covered in steps 5 and 6) you might also need to consider how you fundraise, how you publicise your campaign and how/whether you use the press. A few hints and tips are included below.

*»You might need to consider how you fundraise, how you publicise your campaign and how you use the press«*

### FUNDRAISING

Often people spend too much time planning and running fundraising activity in order to build a campaign fund and find that all their time or energy is used raising the funds and no time spent on delivering the campaign! If you must build a campaign fund then try to find quick and easy ways to build your fund. Be creative, but also be direct and prompt. Are there campaign allies who may have resources they can invest if they support your objective? Before you approach them make sure you are clear about what you need and what you will use it for. You could consider approaching trade unions, churches, mosques, community groups etc if they are likely to support your campaign. You can consider holding a one-off fundraising event or activity such as a film screening, an art exhibition, a comedy night etc. You might consider selling a small campaign support item such as a badge, a wrist band, a poster etc. Events or product sales can be a good way of promoting the campaign and building a group of campaign supporters at the same time as raising funds for the campaign. But remember not to spend too much time fundraising.

## PUBLICITY

There are some ideas above under the fundraising section about how you can publicise your campaign. Publicising the campaign can in some cases be the key to the campaign. The biggest tip is that you should be creative, inventive and brave. Everyone makes posters and leaflets but if you want your campaign to get people's attention you must do something remarkable. You will need to spell out your campaign slogan in rubbish outside the main university reception, get groups of people to chant the campaign message outside the town hall, hang the campaign banner on the bridge over the main student accommodation, print a full size cardboard cut out of the campaign target and ask people to write messages of support on it etc. Be different to get your campaign seen. It is also worth mentioning that there is lots of research that shows that the most effective way of promoting something is through one to one communication. If you are trying to promote your campaign to students, get students to go and talk to students.

## PRESS

If you can get messages about your campaign included in editorial features within the press it can be a very powerful tool. Consider how you can find a press ally who is sympathetic to your campaign. Provide them with case studies of how people are being disadvantaged, of statistical evidence of the injustice, with photographs of dramatic activity. Press is proven to be a very powerful tool both for mobilising people but also for influencing people.

## 5.8 STEP 8—DOING YOUR CAMPAIGN

Having done all of the steps above to plan and research your campaign aims, to work out how to mobilise campaign support and to identify the necessary campaign resources doing your campaign should be easy!



The hardest thing about actually doing the campaign can be about maintaining morale and momentum. Below are 5 tips on making sure you and your campaign team keep up your morale and momentum through the highs and lows of your campaign.

*»The hardest thing about campaigning can be maintaining morale and momentum«*

Five ways of keeping up campaign morale:

- 1 Use a communication action network to keep campaign members talking to one another, sharing campaign problems and successes
- 2 Have a 'buddy' system where everyone involved in running the campaign has someone else to support them, help them out and keep up their spirits
- 3 Keep your sense of humour. The mood of the campaign should ideally be happy but determined
- 4 If things go wrong don't panic. Look at what you learn from that and how the campaign can resolve the problem or achieve the outcome it wants.
- 5 Keep reviewing the progress of the campaign and sharing the results showing everyone how well the campaign is progressing and all the success you have achieved along the way.

## 5.9 STEP 9—EVALUATING YOUR CAMPAIGN

If you don't evaluate your campaign how do you know you have succeeded? You should evaluate your campaign as it progresses and also at its conclusion. This is partly about measuring your success and learning from it but also about sharing it. ESU would love to know all about your campaign, what worked, what didn't, what change has been achieved and how was it achieved. We may also be able to help you out if the evaluation shows that something hasn't worked.

The most simple way of evaluating your campaign is often to go back to the campaign diagram in step 1 and look at action, reaction, result and effect retrospectively. Ask yourself if at each step of the critical path from step 4:

- Did you take the action you originally planned?
- Did this get the reaction you anticipated?
- Did this cause the result you wanted?
- Did the result have the effect you aimed for?



By answering all of these questions for each of your campaign aims you will be able to either prove objectively your campaign success or identify where it went wrong and fix the problem.

## 5.10 A FINAL COMMENT

Campaigning can achieve change. By running effective campaigns you can change some of the injustices that exist within your communities or change some of the more unjust rules and practice of your universities. Campaigning can create a more equal higher education that provides for a diverse society.

# 6 THE INTERNATIONAL INFLUENCE

*by Inge Gielis*

National higher education policy is increasingly influenced by international processes and organisations, like the Bologna Process, the Lisbon Strategy, GATS, EU policy, OECD, UNESCO etc. These can have a negative effect on equity, but they can also have a positive impact and serve as a lobby tool for student unions. In this chapter we look at the opportunities and threats coming from the international arena.

## 6.1 INTERNATIONAL INFLUENCE

There are several international organisations and processes that have an impact on higher education. In this part, we give a short overview of some of the important factors and players.

### BOLOGNA PROCESS

In 1999 several European education ministers decided in Bologna to work together in higher education. Their aim was to create a European higher education area (EHEA) by 2010. The ministers agreed on concrete action lines they would work on in the coming years. They agreed to meet every two years. In between, the Bologna Follow-Up Group and a secretariat coordinate the process. ESU is a consultative member. The last Ministerial summit took place 28-29th of April 2009 in Leuven and Louvain-La-Neuve, where the ministers set out goals towards 2020.

One of the current action lines is the social dimension. At the start of the process, in Bologna 1999, the social dimension was missing. It is only in Prague 2001, when students got involved and asked ministers to pay attention to the social dimension, that it became part of the process, as the ministers stressed the importance of it. But it was only

in Bergen in 2005 that the ministers stated that the social dimension would become an action line of the Bologna Process.

The ministers defined the social dimension in 2007 in London as followed: »the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels should reflect the diversity of our populations.« This means that the ministers commit themselves to the goal of participative equity. Higher education should truly reflect society, so that all target groups participate in higher education to the same extent as their share in the population. Also in 2009 the social dimension was stressed at the ministerial summit.

## THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE LISBON STRATEGY

The EU has very little mandate in the field of education. The role of the EU is limited to encouraging the cooperation between the Member States in the field of education and vocational training, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content of teaching and the organization of education systems and vocational training. The European Commission has integrated its various educational and training action programmes under a single umbrella, the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP). It has a budget of nearly €7 billion for 2007 to 2013. This includes programmes like the Erasmus programme for student exchange.

The past few years, the European Union has increased its work in the field of education. This has to be seen in the light of the Lisbon Strategy. In 2000, heads of state of the European Union gathered in Lisbon to set out an ambitious goal: to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion. A strategy was set out to reach this goal. Education plays an important role in the strategy. The education reform is stimulated by the Education and Training programme. In the centre of this strategy is a reform agenda of higher education, in order to give higher education institutions the conditions to fully achieve »excellence« in education and attract the most talented students and researchers.



Students protest against tuition fees and lack of public financing for higher education in Brussels, April 2009.

In order to achieve this goal, actions need to be undertaken in areas that are not within the EU's mandate. A tool was set up to coordinate action between the member states: the Open Method of Coordination (OMC). This is based on the naming-framing-shaming principle. The European Commission and the Council of Ministers agree upon a common goal and set out some benchmarks. Progress is measured at regular intervals and reports are published. The group pressure should stimulate low-scoring countries to improve. Important to note is that the European Commission is the driving force (which is not the case in the Bologna Process). The decision making power, however, remains with the ministers.

## OECD

The Organisation for Economic Development and Cooperation (OECD) is located in Paris. It unites countries that believe in democracy and market economy. They represent countries with a strong share

in the world economy. The OECD makes analyses and acts as a think tank. They have over 700 officials, going from lobbyists to academics. The OECD also works on education. They often produce reports, like ›Education at a Glance‹ and their ›Reviews of tertiary education‹. These contain interesting data. But the reports also contain recommendations.

## GATS

The General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) is one of the trade agreements of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The logic of GATS is that of a progressive liberalization of trade in services through successive rounds of negotiations. GATS applies for all services except those supplied in exercise of governmental authority, i.e. »supplied neither on a commercial basis, nor in competition with one or more service suppliers«. This means that also education is covered by GATS, as one of the vertical sectors in which countries can make commitments. The European Commission is leading the negotiations for the EU member states.

GATS recognises four different modes of supplying services. In terms of education the following examples could be made: 1) Cross-border supply, e.g. distance learning, 2) Consumption abroad, e.g. travelling abroad to study, 3) Commercial presence, e.g. university branch campuses or partnership agreements and 4) Presence of natural persons e.g. teachers or professors.

## UNESCO

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was founded in 1945. UNESCO believes that education, science and culture are the means to a far more ambitious goal: to build peace in the minds of men. In July 2009 UNESCO organized a new World Conference on Higher Education, where an agreed framework and objectives for higher education at a global level in the coming years were set out.



Student representatives at UNESCO's World Conference on Higher Education in Paris, July 2009.

## 6.2 THREATS

The international influence on higher education is often perceived as a threat. In this part, we list two elements that are often seen as harmful for the social dimension of higher education: the commodification agenda and tuition fees.

### COMMODIFICATION

Commodification refers to the increasingly commercialised way in which higher education is being dealt with. In this context, higher education is perceived as a knowledge industry and higher education institutions as service providers. Students are looked upon primarily as consumers of education and human capital for the labour market. Programmes focus mainly on preparation for the labour market and possibilities for maximising personal financial returns upon graduation.



The commodification agenda promotes political reforms that put higher education institutions in competition for financial resources, for the »best« students, teachers and researchers, and that strive for establishing elitist institutions. Instead of providing for a well-balanced development of higher education, this approach creates and expands the gap between different higher education institutions. Those who benefit are high-ranking HE institutions with international prestige and a sustainable financial basis, and which are accessible for some students only. Those who lose are underfinanced institutions that will have to cut down on teachers, research projects, and on the long run experience heavy losses in the quality of education.

A major threat in this regard comes from the GATS negotiations, which aim at liberalising the trade in services. Only public services are excluded from GATS. Public services are defined as »supplied neither on a commercial basis, nor in competition with one or more service suppliers«. For many countries in the world this does not hold true for higher education, where various private elements can be found, like tuition fees or research for a fee.

The consequences can be far reaching, as according to GATS, barriers to free trade must be abolished. For example domestic regulations such as quality assurance mechanisms may not be »more burdensome than necessary«, which might compromise the quality of education. State subsidies for education institutions may be considered as hindrances to trade and thus may have to be abolished or—according to national treatment requirement—given to domestic and foreign providers alike. Also measures in the frame of positive action, aiming at providing equal opportunities, can be regarded as hindering free trade.

## TUITION FEES

A returning recommendation from both the OECD and the European Commission, that is not very popular with students, is to increase tuition fees. The OECD calls this cost sharing. The focus on employability and the personal benefits of higher education is used to rein-

force these recommendations. This is argued with three points: That tuition fees provide an extra financial resource to close the funding gap; that they would create an extra factor of student motivation and raise the quality of higher education; and that they would, combined with student support schemes, create greater social equity among the students.

Since 2009, funding of higher education was also put on the agenda of the Bologna Process. After much discussion, a compromise was agreed on by the ministers. Whilst recognising public funding as main priority to guarantee equitable access, they stated that greater attention should be paid to seeking new and diversified funding resources and methods. In this we can read a call for more private funding.

## 6.3 OPPORTUNITIES

Even though there are some clear threats coming from the international arena, it is not all bad. Policy makers on international level also have made statements stressing the importance of the social dimension, and they even made promises for improvements in this area. In the next part, we give some examples.

Firstly, the right to education has been recognised in international treaties. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights identifies free access to education as a human right. In 1966, the United Nations, in the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights was signed, which states that »Higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, [...], in particular by the progressive introduction of free education« (article 13).

Also in the Bologna Process, the importance of the social dimension has been a returning aspect. In the latest communiqué, under the header »priorities for the decade to come«, we read: »9. The student body within higher education should reflect the diversity of Europe's populations. We therefore emphasize the social characteristics of higher education and aim to provide equal opportunities to quality education. Access into higher education should be widened by fostering the potential of students from underrepresented groups and

by providing adequate conditions for the completion of their studies. This involves improving the learning environment, removing all barriers to study, and creating the appropriate economic conditions for students to be able to benefit from the study opportunities at all levels. Each participating country will set measurable targets for widening overall participation and increasing participation of underrepresented groups in higher education, to be reached by the end of the next decade. Efforts to achieve equity in higher education should be complemented by actions in other parts of the educational system.«

At the World Conference on Higher Education, it was recognised that access, equity and quality as interlinking objectives are of primary importance, with an understanding that, »the objective must be successful participation and completion, while at the same time assuring student welfare,« including »... appropriate financial and educational support to those from poor and marginalised communities.« The communiqué also clearly stresses the place of higher education as »a public good and a strategic imperative«, and adds that, »higher education must be a matter of responsibility and economic support of all governments.«

## 6.4 WHAT CAN STUDENT UNIONS DO?

As student unions, there is two things we can do with the international influence. On the one hand, we have to use it at national and even institutional level. On the other hand, we have to try and influence it.

### USE IT!

As said before, the international influence can be both positive and negative. As student unions, we can use the international agreements or promises that are made as a strong argument for our case. If your minister wants to raise tuition fees, you can find several communiqués stressing the importance of public funding.

But also when it comes to the threats to the social dimension, it can be useful. By following the international processes, student unions will be much more aware of the context the national policy is decided in. Several trends in national policy are first noticed on the international level. By following the international debates and listening to the arguments, student unions can be better prepared for debates at national level.

## INFLUENCE IT!

Student unions have an important role to play in the decision making process. As a European stakeholder, ESU can actively take part in the debates and try to influence the decision makers towards more student friendly policies. National student unions have an important role to play also. In all organisations and processes, the national ministers are the ones that decide in the end. It is up to national unions to follow what their ministers do at national level and try to influence them as much as possible. Together we can put the social dimension on top of the agenda.

# 7

# EQUITY IN THE STUDENT UNION

*by Jenny Björk*

The groups that are underrepresented in higher education are usually underrepresented in the student union as well. If the student union, at all levels, wants to be credible in its work on equality issues, it should also make sure that the union itself is open for all students and doesn't have discriminative structures. In this chapter we will present some useful information on working with inequalities internally, inside your own student union. This is not always as easy as we want to, we might get a little blind to defects in one's home. This might be because we work in youthful student organizations and would like to think that we are broad-minded and actually fight for equity in the society. As long as discrimination and harassment are present in our societies they can and they do happen all the time in all organizations. When you've accepted this fact you can really start working on the problems and create systems on how to improve equity. Discrimination can be visible or quite invisible in structures of the organization or behaviour of people. To fight discrimination you need to analyse your structures, you may need to create new structures and policy and be attentive to yours and your colleagues' behaviour. In this chapter you're going to get some good tips on how you can work against discrimination and harassment, and towards equity in your own student union.

## 7.1 MASTER SUPPRESSION TECHNIQUES / DOMINATION TECHNIQUES

These techniques are used between people when someone wants to suppress a person or a group. It's also obvious that these, in a discriminative way, can be observed between people of different gender and different backgrounds, including for example social status and ethnicity. Before describing the methods, it should also be stated

that they're often used unconsciously, since they are ways of expressing prejudices and generalizations (which often are unconscious). Through showing they exist, the work on eliminating them can start, in order to create a more including climate where everybody gets respected and listened to.

Following are descriptions of the five techniques: Making invisible, Ridiculing, Withholding of information, Double punishment and Heaping blame and putting to shame.

### MAKING INVISIBLE

Among many different ways of making another person invisible, are to whisper, look through papers and similar ways of showing lack of interest while someone is speaking. Other ways of neglecting people are to totally ignore someone's contribution and to repeat what someone just said without referring to that person or showing the suggestion really came from someone else, and then taking all the credit. Another way is when a chairperson at a meeting »forgets« about suggestions, or when a question at a meeting is left unanswered.

### RIDICULING

To ridicule someone can both happen behind someone's back as well as in front of the person. To make fun of proposals or to diminish people by saying »don't you have any humour?« are other ways of ridiculing as well as to reduce someone to being sexual object, or less important because (s)he is »only a student«, rather than an intellectual person.

### WITHHOLDING OF INFORMATION

To be able to participate in a decision, it's really important that everybody gets access to the same information. Ways of withholding information can be when a group of people already before the actual

decision-making have decided together upon what to vote for, as well as not making sure that everybody understands a specific decision or what's going on. Formal and informal pre-meetings, where everybody involved in the decision-making isn't invited, are other examples. People without the right contacts or possibility to join are then left far behind. In Swedish this is referred to as sauna-meetings: a physical place where not everybody's included merely depending upon their sex. As politics are about building alliances, this is a difficult technique to tackle. But this shouldn't be an argument for the withholding to continue.

#### DOUBLE PUNISHMENT—DAMN IF YOU DON'T AND DAMNED IF YOU DO

Whatever you do is wrong! For example: if you're quiet during a meeting, you're seen as not interested in what's going on, and if you're talkative you're seen as taking over. If women don't grab power they're portrayed as wimps, but when they grab power they're regarded as not feminine. Men can also be accused for not participating in working on increased gender equality, and if they do they're ridiculed as not knowing enough by female members.

#### HEAPING BLAME AND PUTTING TO SHAME

When saying to someone that they have to blame themselves for something that has happened, this person obviously gets diminished. For example telling a rape victim that it was her own fault by wearing provocative clothes or acting in a certain way is an extreme way of explaining the technique. This works in other areas as well; sexual harassments towards a woman can as well be seen as her own fault, since she's so pretty. Not to take someone for serious by judging of the clothes is another way of expressing this technique.

## WORKING TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY IN YOUR STUDENT UNION

### STUDENT UNIONS ARE POLITICAL ORGANISATIONS AND ACT IN THE SOCIETY

As long as that society remains patriarchal, student unions will have these problems as well. Gender Equality inside the structure of an organisation becomes more important, if the organisation becomes more important. It could be said that the development into a more powerful union comes together with a more patriarchal development of the structures. Since organisations in a society are always mirroring the society itself, we can find also the societal power structure there. Even though very different kinds of organisations have different organisational challenges from a gender perspective, some aspects remain the same in possible unequal distribution of chances among men and women.

### STRUCTURAL CHALLENGE

The structure of an organisation is one of the main questions when it comes to gender specific impact. This is less due to structures that naturally fit better to women or men than rather due to a current understanding of »high quality of work« and stereotypes that influence the behaviour of the people. Structures can be really hierarchal or rather flat. They can be quite blurry regarding the task division or obvious and clear. Structures can expect a high level of self-confidence, leading to arrogance and the will to suppress. This is of course also a matter of the people that are filling in the structures. But it foremost comes along with the structures that allow those behaviours or not. As women are usually educated in being more silent, less self-esteemed and trained to serve others' needs, they will suffer much more from a blurry and hierarchal structure that does not give clear responsibilities. If they at least manage to get elected, they are more endangered to be perceived as not doing a good job.



## WORK DISTRIBUTION

The work distribution in organisations is a good reference to measure the real equality there. Questions that need to be raised are:

- Who is working in which areas? (Subjects, administrative work vs. representation)
- Who is working in »appreciative« areas that do not require a lot of work, but can easily give opportunities to have good results?
- Who is assisting whom?
- Who is doing »voluntary« additional work, such as taking minutes in meetings, preparing the agenda, etc.?

## PUBLIC VISIBILITY

Since an organisation that deals within politics is highly measured by its public visibility, the external representation (e.g. press contacts, interviews, conference delegations) is a field that is very sensitive towards an equal distribution of the work. The organisation can have an impact on the development of gender equality in the political arena in which it works.

- A clear strategy on external representation should take into account who is going to speak for the organisation: Is it always a man, or always a woman? Are the subject responsibilities based on gender specific stereotypes, e.g. is the woman responsible for social affairs and the man for international issues or financing?
- External representation should also be considered in terms of the current surrounding. If an organisation can send two persons to an important meeting that consists mostly of men, also an all-female delegation can be important for enhancing gender equality in that part. It can change the perception and the subconsciousness of the others.

## DECISION MAKING

The decision making process is one of the most important things in an organisation. It influences the further working environment, the policy, the way, subjects are tackled etc. So the gender equality within decision making is a key to gender equality in the organisation in general.

Questions remain:

- Who is formally deciding? Which body? Or which single person? How balanced is the decision making body?
- Are there informal decision making processes? Are they including or excluding? (E.g. is the president deciding and the executive structure never decides against him/her, even though they have the formal power; is the executive structure deciding, but won't decide against the staff?)
- Are decisions based on significant knowledge of the issues, do they take different realities (of men and women) into consideration?

To further work on gender equality, student unions can create a gender mainstreaming strategy. Gender mainstreaming was defined by the United Nations Economic and Social Council in 1997 as »a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of... the policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated.« Gender mainstreaming is a process with the goal of achieving gender equality.

### 7.3 AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

Having an equal opportunities policy means that your students' union is committed to providing equal access to services and benefits, and a safe space free from discrimination and prejudice to all of your members. Students' unions pride themselves on their diversity of

membership, but sometimes this diversity can come face to face with prejudice from the student body, or even the union itself. An equal opportunities policy is a simple and effective way of pledging your union's support for the principles of equality that are at the heart of the student movement.

#### WHAT DOES AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY MEAN?

- In practice, your equal opportunities policy will mean quite a lot—and sometimes the 'catchphrase' syndrome can be useful in that at least people know that you have one!
- It means that you are fully committed to combating discrimination against the groups of students highlighted in your union's policy.
- It means that when hiring staff and student staff, you are committed to a comprehensive policy of anti-discrimination, which will often pledge you to more stringent anti-discrimination rules than the law would.
- It means you have a responsibility to ensure that your union is a safe and welcoming environment for all students.
- It means that you are able to take disciplinary action against any member of your union or member of staff who does not co-operate with the policy.
- It means that your members will know that their students' union is committed to providing fair access to services for all students, and that their union is a place in which they are free from discrimination and harassment.

#### WHO SHOULD AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY PROTECT?

An equal opportunities policy should be as comprehensive as possible. It should protect all those who are discriminated against in everyday life; it should protect all those who may have less than adequate access to union services. A good equal opportunities policy will take

every step to discourage harassment, bullying or discrimination on any grounds in your students' union.

## 7.4 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES: IN PRACTICE

An equal opportunities policy is nothing but a piece of paper unless you implement it correctly. One idea is to print your policy in an eye-catching design, and display it at strategic points around your students' union building: e.g. in the bar or on the back of toilet doors. You could also read your policy out at the beginning of union council or general meetings. This will ensure that your members are as aware as they can be of your commitment to equality.

### DIRECT ACTION

The equal opportunities policy will require you to take some direct and some indirect steps to ensure that it is correctly implemented. Direct steps might include providing equal opportunities training for all of your sports club and society execs, making sure that they understand its importance in their group and the responsibility they have to implement it. You should definitely create liberation officers (black, LGBT, women's, disabled). Some people argue that it is discriminatory to have liberation officers because they discriminate against people who aren't in those groups. Actually, liberation officers are very much in the spirit of equal opportunities. Once your union has accepted the fact that there is inequality and discrimination within society, then it is only right that you should set up liberation campaigns to attempt to level the playing field.

### INDIRECT ACTION

You will probably need to take indirect steps to ensure that not only your students' union, but also your members, adhere to the equal opportunities policy at all times. You will be committed to creating a warm, safe and welcoming environment for all of your members,



Student representatives discuss equal opportunities during ESU's equity training in Tallinn in April 2009.

which means that you are responsible for ensuring that other members of your union don't abuse the facilities and services that you offer. The model harassment policy is a good step to take in making sure that bullying and abuse will not be tolerated in your union.

## ENTS

Entertainments are an important part of students' unions. They allow you to provide a safe and student-led environment in which your students can socialise, whilst sometimes raising revenue for your union. However, ents are often where equal opportunities policies are most often broken—whether by students or by the union itself. You should take steps to ensure that all ents that your union hosts are compatible with your equal opportunities policy. This does not mean that it's OK to have strippers if they are both male and female. It means that you have to strive to create a safe environment for all members. Think about the atmosphere in your union. Is it welcoming

to all students? Is there an over-emphasis on drinking? Bear in mind that some of your students will not drink alcohol, for personal or religious reasons, and many unions have specific 'alcohol free' spaces in their unions at all times. Also think about images that you use to advertise an event—are they sexually offensive?

## 7.5 AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES EMPLOYER

In practice, your policy will commit you to being an equal opportunities employer. This means that when you are recruiting staff, you are committed to recruiting purely on the basis of skills and experience; you cannot discriminate on any grounds outlined in your policy, even if this commits you to more than the law itself does. You will also be committed to allowing all of your staff equal access to staff development and promotion, regardless of any of the factors set out in your equal opportunities policy.

### PROCEDURE

In order for your equal opportunities and harassment policies to be meaningful, you will need to implement both formal and informal procedures to enable students and staff to report violations of the policies. You will also need comprehensive disciplinary procedures to enable you to fairly assess whether a student or staff member has broken the policy, and to discipline them if necessary. These procedures will be unique to every students' union, as each has different processes and procedures already in place. When implementing your equal opportunities and harassment policies, be sure to integrate them fully into your current disciplinary procedures.

### MODEL POLICIES

The following are 'model' equal opportunities and harassment policies. Please use these only as a guide for your own students' union

policy. Every single union is unique and faces different challenges to equality.

## MODEL EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

This students' union believes fundamentally in the principles of equal opportunities. We believe that every single student should have an equal chance to get involved in the social, campaigning, democratic, activities-based and commercial aspects of this students' union. We not only pride ourselves on promoting equal opportunities, but we also pledge to campaign against discrimination, both on campus and in wider society. No person that comes into contact with the students' union should receive less favourable treatment, be disadvantaged, or disadvantage others on the grounds of their ethnic group, nationality, gender, gender orientation, sexuality, age, disability, marital status, caring responsibilities or family commitments, trade union activity, or hiv status. This union regards such discrimination as unacceptable and promotes equal opportunities, both as an employer and as a representative and campaigning body and provider of services. Breaches of the equal opportunities policy will be taken seriously and may lead to disciplinary proceedings.

## MODEL HARASSMENT POLICY

Harassment is an unacceptable form of behaviour. This students' union is committed to protecting members, staff, and any other person for whom the union has a special responsibility, from any form of harassment, which might inhibit them from pursuing their work or studies, or from making proper use of union facilities. All members and staff have a personal responsibility to ensure that their behaviour is not contrary to this code, and are encouraged to ensure the maintenance of a working environment in the students' union which is free from harassment. For the purposes of this code, harassment may be broadly understood to include bullying, and to consist of unwarranted behaviour towards another person, so as to disrupt the work

or reduce the quality of life of that person, by means such as single or successive acts of bullying, verbal or physical abuse, or ill-treatment, or otherwise creating or maintaining a hostile or offensive studying, working or social environment for anyone. Bullying can be defined as any unsolicited or unwelcome act that humiliates, intimidates or undermines the individual involved. Bullying is threatening, abusive or intimidating behaviour. Forms of bullying behaviour include the following (this is not an exhaustive list):

- insensitive jokes or pranks
- insulting or aggressive behaviour
- setting unrealistic demands
- public criticism
- malicious rumour-mongering
- persistent ignoring
- substituting responsible tasks with menial or trivial ones
- constantly undermining someone
- making threats or comments about job security without foundation

Vigorous speech and comment, academic debate and legitimate management or staff performance should be distinguished from bullying behaviour. Other unacceptable forms of behaviour may include unwelcome sexual advances, offensive or unwarranted physical contact or verbal behaviour, or other hostile or offensive acts. The abuse of a position of authority, as for example that of a manager or student officer, is an aggravating feature of bullying, sexual harassment, and other forms of harassment. Being under the influence of alcohol, or otherwise intoxicated, will not be admitted as an excuse for harassment, and may be regarded as an aggravating feature. Complaints of harassment will be taken seriously and may lead to disciplinary proceedings.



**Sources**

Gender Mainstreaming Strategy, European Students' Union—ESU.

The equal opportunities policy is copied, with permission, from the UK National Union of Students

# 8 EXAMPLES FROM NATIONAL UNIONS OF STUDENTS

*by Hartwig Brandl*

This chapter will provide a few examples from national unions. On the one hand, the examples illustrate the NUSes internal approach to equity within their students' union. On the other hand, they provide details on campaigns for equity in their respective higher education systems and society as a whole.

## 8.1 EXAMPLES OF EQUITY IN THE STUDENT UNIONS

First of all we want to have a look on a concrete example on how to improve equity within the students' union. We will have a look at what the Austrian union ÖH has done. While ÖH has been committed to ensure equity within itself for a long time, there are still a number of issues left. Concerning gender equality ÖH already has come a long way. Three out of the last five chairpersons were women and in recent years the gender balance of officers was roughly equal. As a result of the equity trainings, ÖH focused on improving conditions for three discriminated groups: students with children, students with disabilities and deaf and mute students, to ensure that they could participate as fully as possible within ÖH. They introduced three new measures, one for each of these three mentioned groups.

The first one concerns students with disabilities. For a long time, the board meetings of ÖH have been done at accessible venues. However, this was not advertised on the invitations send out to the delegates. From now on all invitations to the board meetings as well as committees will state clearly that the venue is accessible. The hope is that this lowers the barrier for people with disabilities, since they don't have to enquire whether a meeting place is accessible or not and thus increase participation.



Department sign at the headquarters of the Austrian national union of students

The second one concerns students with child care responsibilities. Board meetings of ÖH usually start around 1 pm and last well into the night. Student with children thus have to find adequate child care during those times. This often costs money. Starting with this autumn, delegates to the board meeting as well as the committees will be able to get a refund for the costs incurred. This fact will also be advertised on every invitation so as to ensure widespread knowledge of this measure.

The third new measure concerns deaf and mute students. Up until now, they were more or less excluded from participation due to their disability. From now on everyone (not only delegates) who is deaf or mute attending a board meeting (which are open to the public) or a meeting of a committee (of which most are open to the public) will be provided with translation services upon request. As with the other two new measures this will also be advertised on every invitation.

## 8.2 EXAMPLES FOR CAMPAIGNS FOR BETTER EQUITY IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM AND SOCIETY AS A WHOLE

We are now going to take a look at campaigns by Norwegian StL, NUS Scotland and Lithuanian LSS in the field of equity in the higher education system and society as a whole.

The first example is a campaign done by the Norwegian union StL, together with another Norwegian organisation called Young Disabled, to increase participation by disabled students in the higher education system. In Norway disabled students usually take longer to complete their studies and aren't able to work as much as non-disabled students while studying. Therefore, they have to face more expensive student loans (Norway has a mixed system of student grants and loans). They were able to come up with a detailed report outlining a way for the Norwegian government to ultimately save money by having disabled people educated better. This, they argue, is due to the fact that disabled people with a good education are much more likely to find a job than non educated ones and thus don't have to live off state subsidies.

After presenting the very detailed report, clearly detailing what specific changes for the financing of disabled students where needed and a detailed calculation on how this will save money in the long run, they where able to lobby the Norwegian State Education Loan Fund to support their proposal. It now been included in its demands for the state budget of 2010. While *The Equity Handbook* was being written, the Norwegian government was rechecking the assumption and conclusions outlined in the report and it seems likely that StL and Young Disabled will have success with their lobbying effort.

As a second example we will have a look at two campaigns by NUS Scotland. The black students' campaign addresses the fact that black students face a wide variety of discrimination during their studies and once they graduate. For example they face discrimination in admission to elite universities, have too little representation in parliament, are more likely to be unemployed, and earn less than white students

after leaving university. NUS Scotland plans to achieve the following milestones during its campaign: First the want to increase representation on their campuses to ensure that black students have someone to call when they require information or assistance, secondly they will try to give black students a competitive edge on the employment market by building up evidence-based skills in their chosen field and finally they will try to build up voter awareness, so that black students use their voting rights to their advantage.

The LGBT campaign by NUS Scotland focuses on three specific areas. The first one is campaigning for equal marriage rights. Currently same-sex couples are not allowed to get married but are only offered a 'civil partnership'. Thus there is one law for lesbian and gay couples and another one for heterosexual couples. NUS Scotland goal is that marriage and 'civil partnership' should be open to all couples. The second area is estrangement. If students get abandoned by their parents, they have to prove that this is the case to receive more money from the state. Often this leads to students having to provide a letter by their parents stating that they are not supporting their child. The obvious goal is to lobby for a better way to treat this problem. In the third area NUS Scotland is trying to improve the availability of sexual resources available around the country for LGBT students.

The final example will be the campaigns done by the Lithuanian union LSS to improve access to higher education for disabled students. LSS started to intensively work in this area in 2005/06. Since then they have done annual surveys about the accessibility of higher educations for disabled students. Due to this project they where able to have a solid understanding of the situation in Lithuania, and were able to back up their arguments with numbers. At the same time their research provided them with the means to measure the effectiveness of their campaigns. After a detailed analysis of the problems disabled students were facing, LSS in 2006 developed an action plan, identifying the main problems and steps to improve the situations as well as listing possible partners for each of them. In the following years, LSS undertook various national and international conferences

and seminars e.g. »Empowerment and participation of people with disabilities: inclusion in higher education and employment« (2008), »The power of difference—alliance. Disabled students in higher education: a privilege or a right?« (2007) or »is higher education accessible for the disabled in Lithuania« (2006). Combined with numerous visits to higher education institutions in the first years in order to understand the specific problems faced at each higher education institution and numerous other activities, LSS was able to raise participation of disabled students in higher education institutions steadily from 530 in 2005/2006 to 980 in 2008/2009 (an increase of 85 %).

## 9 ESU'S WORK ON EQUITY

*by Olav Øye*

Parity in formal rights does not mean that all have the same possibility to enter, participate in and complete higher education. The European Students' Union works on several levels to promote equity. First and foremost, it works with policy and awareness among higher education actors and institutions in general. Second, it works with attitudes and practices among its own structures and members in order to promote a better understanding of the challenges faced by people who want to participate in discussions and decision-making within the organisation.

### PUSHING FOR COMMITMENTS

ESU has consistently pushed for a more realistic judgement of the social conditions for students in Europe. One of the recent achievements is the goal set by ministers at the conference in Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve in 2009: »Each participating country will set measurable targets for widening overall participation and increasing participation of underrepresented groups in higher education, to be reached by the end of the next decade«. While social issues were not part of the Bologna discussion to begin with, ESU pushed for the introduction of the so-called social dimension as a part of the Process, and has fought for a better follow-up of this during the last decade.

### GENDER

While many groups of people need attention in the struggle for a more tolerant and equitable society, ESU puts a special emphasis on gender equality. ESU's Gender Equality Cross Committee is dedicated to work on gender issues, and has one member from each of ESU's four committees, plus a coordinator from the Executive Committee.



Panel discussion on gender equality during ESU's 18th Student Convention in Stockholm, October 2009.

At each major ESU event, there is an agenda item that includes discussions on gender issues in higher education and within ESU in particular. ESU has also published a Gender Equality Handbook, which can be downloaded from the webpage [esu-online.org](http://esu-online.org).

## THE LINK BETWEEN ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL ISSUES

ESU also tries to combine the academic with the social aspects of education. The Board of ESU has said that social standards should be part of quality assurance processes at higher education institutions. ESU is currently working on creating a set of social standards and will promote and lobby for the inclusion of them in the quality assurance processes.

## TRAINING STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

The main goal of ESU's project ›Equity in Higher Education from a Student Perspective‹ is to develop tools and arguments, and train



national and local student representatives on how to fight and lobby for equity towards their national governments and higher education institutions.

#### FURTHER READING

For a more extensive overview of ESU's work on equity, see ESU's policy papers, publications and news archive at *esu-online.org*.

You can find an electronic version of this handbook on the webpage *esu-online.org*. Here you can also download ESU's Equality Handbook, Gender Equality handbook and other publications about higher education.