

Bologna Follow-up Group meeting, March 2013

## European Students' union (ESU) update to the Bologna Follow-up Group

### ESU marks its 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

On 19<sup>th</sup> October 2012, ESU has celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, since the establishment of then WESIB (Western European Students' Information Bureau). Celebrations took place in Limassol, Cyprus, together with the Alumni meeting, bringing in total over 170 people, current and former student representatives. Over past decades ESU has grown in its size and outreach, how it all begun and where year 2012 brings us, can be found in **ESU's 30 Years publication**: <http://www.esu-online.org/news/article/6068/ESU-publishes-30th-Anniversary-Publication/>

### ESU sets its strategic policy priorities for 2013-2015

During its 64<sup>th</sup> Board meeting in Malta on 2-4<sup>th</sup> December, ESU has adopted its first 3-year strategic policy framework. ESU members agreed to define **its key priority working areas as**: financing and public responsibility of higher education; social dimension of higher education; quality and transparency; internationalisation. Within those policy areas ESU has set a number of strategic objectives to reach by 2015. ESU's yearly plan of work for 2013, adopted at the same Board meeting, corresponds the priority framework.

### ESU's enlargement

During its 64<sup>th</sup> Board meeting, ESU has welcomed a new member – the National Students' Association of Armenia ANSA. Also a new candidate member, Students' Council of Turkey SCT, has been voted in favour and the site visit on the subject of their fitness for ESU's membership criteria is yet to take place in mid-March. Currently **ESU represents 47 National unions of students in 39 countries**, signatories of the European Cultural Convention.

### ESU on Erasmus for All

One of the core ESU's interests over past few years have been process of designing and implementing the new EU Education programme, "Erasmus for all". This programme has been proposed in frames of the EU Multiannual financial framework for 2014-2020. Past half a year has been crucial to liaison with the representatives of the member states, the European Parliament and the Commission. ESU's Board, generally supportive to the initial proposal from the Commission, has agreed on the number of key points, we would like to see in the final agreement. These include better funding for Erasmus grants, which are a success story of the European union and should remain a priority funding area; opening Erasmus for non-EU students and securing access to operating grants for the European associations.

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ESU is having a specific focus on one particular element of the new proposal, which is **EU Master loan scheme**. Earlier, ESU has presented [its opinion on the proposal](#) and critical points towards it. In late November 2012, ESU has organised a round table discussion at the premises of Swedish permanent representation, which brought together representatives of more than 15 member states, international organisations and students to discuss the relevance of a pan-European loan scheme. Later on, in February 2013 ESU together with MEP Thomas has organised a [discussion in the European Parliament](#) on why students see the shift to loans as a potentially dangerous. A third roundtable with a clear focus on technical aspects of the proposal for EU loan scheme is planned in April 2013.

### **ESUs involvement in the implementation of the Bologna process**

ESU is taking its role in the Bologna process responsibly and aims on making students' voice heard in all its aspects. Since the BFUG meeting in Cyprus, ESU together with the Irish co-chair has organised a Social dimension and Lifelong learning working group meeting in Brussels, which gave a clear idea of the working agenda for the next 2.5 years. ESU co-chair met the Irish co-chair 3 times during the period, also to prepare the next working group meeting in April and see, whether synergies are possible with another important process, which is Council Conclusions for Social Dimension in higher education, which will be adopted under Irish Presidency. At the same time, ESU is involved in the managing the "Peer-learning for Social Dimension" project, which allows pioneering first peer reviews in the context of Bologna process on the subject of national access plans in at least 3 countries.

During the past 6 months, ESU has participated in all steering and drafting group meetings for revision of the European standards and guidelines (ESG). An interim result of this work has been presented to BFUG. ESU representatives have been actively participating in all BFUG working groups and other relevant processes, such as revising ECTS guide.

Promoting student-centred learning got back on ESU's agenda, we have had an opportunity to present the toolkit on promoting SCL during the Director General meeting in Cyprus in 2012 and to the high-level working group on Excellence in teaching. What is more, ESU has applied for a long-term LLP project on promoting quality and innovation in teaching.

### **Students' numbers growing – financing for higher education not**

One of the key outcomes of ESU's project "Financing the Students' Future – FinSt", supported by the LLP, has been a comprehensive analysis on the state of the art of higher education financing through students' eyes. The publication has been presented to the Brussels-based stakeholders and students at the end of January and final version of it can be found here:

<http://www.esu-online.org/news/article/6068/Compendium-on-Financing-of-Higher-Education/>

### **Students' participation in Quality assurance: State of the art**

During its conference in Malta at the end of December, ESU has presented its findings on the current situation with students' participation in quality assurance and their awareness about quality assurance processes. The findings are available for downloading here:

<http://www.esu-online.org/news/article/6068/Quest-for-Quality-for-Students-Back-to-Basics/>

### **ESU establishes its pool for experts to support students' participation in Europe**

Despite the importance of being a strong player in higher education on European level, ESU has a strong responsibility towards strengthening its members. At the beginning of 2013, ESU with

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the support of Youth Department of the Council of Europe organised a study session, named “Stronger students' participation for the open society: sharing practices and developing innovative approaches”. The study session took 5 days and brought together 30 experts in training and capacity building with a background in students' organisation. This session helped to understand better the context of ESU work and its cultural diversity, which has to be addressed through its working methods, especially in policy-making processes.

Also it helped to come up with a number of tools to improve knowledge management in the organisation, such as **establishing its own pool of trainers and facilitators**. The purpose of such pool will be to support member and candidate organisations to become stronger representatives in their respective contexts. Already in the next few months, ESU is planning to pilot its first quality enhancement visit to the national students' union, to bring some peer insight on improving the quality and efficiency of its work. More information about the pool will soon be available on ESU website.

### **Upcoming events:**

#### **The 25<sup>th</sup> European Students' Convention: Equality through Diversity: Social dimension and Equality in Higher education in EHEA Today**

On 7-11<sup>th</sup> March, ESU and its Irish member USI are hosting the 25<sup>th</sup> European Students' Convention in Dublin. This convention aims to explore an area, which of utmost importance of all students and covers aspects of access and success in higher education. During the conference there will be a session dedicated to the work of the BFUG Social dimension and LLL Working group, currently co-chaired by ESU. Participants will also be invited to look, whether their countries have adopted national access plans and if there is any progress with their implementation (in case if any monitoring tools exist). Convention will also look into aspects of quality teaching and its impact on raising completion rates. Last, but not least, participants will be confronted with the issue of diversity in higher education and how student representative body can improve the conditions for the students with special needs. More information about the event can be found here: <http://www.usi.ie/esc25/>. BFUG members are invited to join the event, for information please contact [karina@esu-online.org](mailto:karina@esu-online.org).

#### **European training on EU2020 role in higher education**

On 23-25<sup>th</sup> April, ESU and its Hungarian member HÖÖK are hosting the European training on EU2020 and its relevance to higher education, mainly through the Modernisation agenda in higher education. The training aims to equip student representatives with general understanding of the role and competences of the European Union with regards to higher education and place it into the context of national reforms. During the training participants are expected to learn better the structure and working agenda of the European Union in higher education, which will help them in later stage actively participate in relevant debates on the national level. Participants are also invited to discuss the content and potential impact of the recent Communication on Rethinking education and upcoming on Internationalisation of higher education.

Right after the training, ESU will host its 65<sup>th</sup> Board meeting, which will elect new Executive committee for the mandate 2013/14. Also, the Board meeting will discuss policy renewal proposal and a number of other relevant policies. All adopted ESU policies are available on the website: <http://www.esu-online.org/documents/statements/>.

### **Upcoming publications:**

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- Toolkit on Strengthening students' participation in Quality Assurance – March 2013 – QUEST project
- Student Quality Concept – May 2013 – QUEST project
- EU2020 through students' eyes – June 2013 – SAGE project

For more information about upcoming publications please feel free to contact [presidency@esu-online.org](mailto:presidency@esu-online.org).

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