

ESU report to the BFUG 86, 16th – 17th November 2023, Madrid

Highlights of EHEA-relevant ESU activities since BFUG 84

The European Students' Union (ESU) is the organisation representing 20 million students through our 45 National Unions of Students (NUSes) in 40 countries. ESU participates in most of the BFUG working structures, and it co-chairs the Working Group on Social Dimension and the Drafting Committee for the 2024 EHEA Ministerial Communiqué.

On the 1st of July 2023, a new leadership of ESU started the mandate. The Executive Committee members of ESU can be found [here](#). In the BFUG, ESU is represented by Horia Onița (Romania), Iris Kimizoglu (Germany) and Tanguy Guibert (France).

This short report looks into areas most connected directly to the work of the BFUG.

Bologna with Student Eyes 2024

Bologna with Student Eyes (BWSE) is ESU's flagship publication which outlines students' perspective on the implementation and impact of the Bologna Process. BWSE 2024 is an anniversary edition, marking 20 years since the first publication.

The data collection from the National Unions of Students has been finalised, and the publication will cover more than two thirds of Bologna member states and additionally separate jurisdictions for Belgium and the United Kingdom. ESU is now in the process of analysing the data and writing the publication, which is expected to be presented in winter.

The data collected has been compatibilized with the format within the Bologna Process Implementation Report, to ensure comparability. BWSE will feature the following chapters: General perspective about Bologna, Social Dimension, Student Participation, Quality Assurance, Internationalisation and Mobility, Key

Commitments, Learning and Teaching, Fundamental Values (including education in emergencies and Ukraine).

BWSE is part of a wider project, **Bologna with Stakeholders Eyes for an Innovative, Inclusive and Interconnected EHEA by 2030** (BWSE FOR2030), which is coordinated by ESU and includes as project partners ENQA, EUA, EURASHE and the ministries of education from Croatia and Netherlands. The outcomes of the three Peer learning activities organised in spring have been put in a report and the project consortium works now on policy recommendations stemming from the PLAs.

In the last Board meeting of ESU, which took place at the beginning of May in Tbilisi, Georgia, the representatives of National Unions of Students adopted a [statement on the Bologna Process](#).

Social dimension

In the upcoming Board meeting of ESU (encompassing the representatives of National Unions of Students), to be organised in Tallinn, Estonia, between 20th to 26th of November, ESU will adopt a revised version of our **Policy Paper on Social Dimension**, outlining the key messages from students related to promoting an inclusive and accessible HE system. The paper has been updated to reflect exogenous trends (e.g. inflation, housing crisis) and developments in EHEA and EEA, putting forward students' proposals. In the next Board meeting a **statement on gender-based violence** in academia will be adopted as well.

ESU has continued co-chairing the BFUG **Working Group of Social Dimension**, which worked on the revision of the draft indicators based on the received feedback. Since the last BFUG, two working group meetings took place and one online consultation with the BFUG. The work of the WG is supported by the [PLAR-U-PAGs project](#), of which ESU is a partner, whose aim is to support the national authorities and higher education institutions in the implementation of the Principles and Guidelines (PAGs). The third [PLA](#) took place online, in June,

organised by the Ministry of Education in Croatia, while the fourth PLA will take place in December, in Ghent, hosted by SIHO (registrations still open).

In the **SMILE project**, coordinated by eucen, we contributed to [Policy Recommendations for enabling a more inclusive and diverse world](#).

In InclusiPHE project, coordinated by the Mondragon University, we wrote [Policy Recommendations for inclusive student engagement in professional higher education](#).

We attended the Informal Council meeting of the ministers of higher education in the EU, where we conveyed a [policy message related to the social dimension](#) of EEA, using the frameworks built in the Bologna Process as a building block.

We are in close cooperation with the Council of Europe for developing an instrument on a **Student Rights Charter**. We are also closely collaborating with Eurostudent and look at ways for supporting the reactivation of the NESSIE network.

Learning and Teaching

In the area of **Artificial Intelligence**, ESU adopted a [Resolution](#) in the last Board meeting, while a more comprehensive statement on AI will be adopted in the upcoming Board meeting in November. The resolution was sent to the WG on L&T to contribute to the work of the sub-group on AI.

On the topic of **traineeships**, ESU adopted a [Resolution](#) on ensuring quality internships, traineeships and apprenticeships in Europe and met with Commissioner Schmidt on the topic.

On **digitalisation** in higher education, ESU put forward amendments for the Council Recommendation on digital skills ([here](#)) and on key enabling factors for digital education ([here](#)).

Quality Assurance, Recognition and Qualification Frameworks

In summer 2023 ESU has chosen new members of the **QA Student Experts Pool**. From around 150 applications, 80 were selected as members. First Introductory training was held in July, while the second follow-up introductory training was held in September in collaboration with one of our partner QA Agencies - SKVC, which was more practice oriented. The next training was held on-site in Rijeka, Croatia, with speakers from ENQA and other partners. Within E4 we are working on the upcoming **EQAF** in Aveiro.

Within the **QA FIT project**, coordinated by ENQA, we have published an analysis of student answers related to challenges, trends and perspectives on the status-quo and future of quality assurance in EHEA. You can read our QA FIT paper [here](#).

Within the **Bologna Hub Peer Support II** project, coordinated by DAAD, we are preparing counselling missions for local student unions to support them in their knowledge related to the Bologna Process and institutional advocacy for Bologna process reforms, while in the TPG-LRC CoRE project, coordinated by CIMEA, we worked with the partners on an analysis of the results of a survey related to institutional practices on the QA of Recognition and organised a session with students on the topic.

We attended **IMINQA** and **CALOHEE** activities, as well as **ENIC-NARIC GA**, and gave feedback on European **Degree projects**, especially related to the quality assurance systems and how they should not duplicate ESGs.

Fundamental Values

As members of the WG on FV, we have continued working on the statement on **Academic Integrity** and giving feedback for the NewFAV project on the development of a monitoring system for Fundamental Values. We attended several events related to academic integrity and wrote an article about the link between academic integrity and artificial intelligence for UNESCO's ETICO blog.

On **academic freedom**, we became part of the EP's STOA Sounding Board and proposed the introduction of academic freedom for education in the EU Treaties for the AFCO Committee, as well as attended events of the Fundamental Rights Agency of EU. We are coordinating a project on Academic Freedom, financed by the Open Society Foundation, that gives grants to students to promote academic freedom at institutional level.

On **student participation**, we created a new institutional body of ESU, a [Conference of student representatives from alliances](#), with the first event being organised in Coimbra in December. We are also partners in the UNICOMM project, which looks into ways of promoting student participation. The theme of our 46th **European Student Convention**, organised in September in Zaragoza, was student rights.

On public **responsibility**, we have worked within the Council of Europe on the Reference Framework of Competencies for Democratic Culture and on higher education in emergencies, while our Board adopted a [Statement on the Education for Sustainable Development](#).

Solidarity actions

On **Ukraine**, we continue engaging with our national union of students, UAS, for information exchange and support and applied for a common project that would support students' voice in the higher education legislation reform in Ukraine.

On **Belarus**, we have issued [a statement](#) together with our union in exile from Belarus, BSA, on their Instagram page being labelled as extremist by the Belarussian authorities.

We have issued two statements (one from the Board [here](#), and one from the Executive Committee [here](#)) on the conflict in **Nagorno Karabakh**, as well as a [statement](#) on the conflict in the **Middle East**.

Internationalisation and Mobility

In the previous Board meeting ESU adopted **the [Policy Paper on Internationalisation and Mobility](#)**, which also served as the contribution to the consultation on the Learning Mobility Framework.

We are working on the budget of **Erasmus** and its mid-term review, making sure that inclusive and sustainable mobilities are promoted. We've been invited to a hearing organised by MEP Milan Zver, rapporteur of the EP 'Implementation of the Erasmus+ programme 2021-2027'. One article from ESU on how to make Erasmus+ more carbon neutral can be found [here](#).

We are also advocating together with our member unions from Switzerland, UK and Faroe Islands on the accessibility of Region 14 to Erasmus+. For Switzerland, a discussion with Swiss partners will happen in Brussels in November (see our resolution [here](#)). A resolution on the UK accession to Erasmus can be found [here](#). We are part of the YEM Coalition supporting the UK's reassociation with Erasmus. A resolution on Faroe accession to EHEA can be found [here](#).

On **global affairs** issues, we have attended the first interparty conference of the Global Recognition Convention and were elected members of the Executive Committee of the SDG4 Youth & Student Network of UNESCO.

We continue working on the coordination of the ESC Academy PRO project, with an upcoming resolution on the **European Student Card** Initiative, and working within Erasmus4All project.