

BM66 – VIENNA

7b17



Internal motion

Resolution

Amendment

Title: Students oppose the commodification of higher education and science

Point of the agenda: 7b

Proposed by: ÖH

Seconded by: FZS, UDU, FEF, VSS-UNES-USU

Text:

1 In December 2013, the newly elected government in Austria decided
2 to merge the Ministry of Science and Research with the Ministry
3 of Economics, abolishing thereby the former Ministry of Science
4 and Research that had operated separately and existed in Austria since the
5 1970s.

6 A concept in which higher education institutions are regarded as places
7 where young people are formed into individuals fit for the labour market,
8 has recently become dominant and thus, neglecting the benefits that the
9 society can gain. In the light of these developments, ESU strongly
10 criticises the integration of the country's Ministry of Science and Research
11 with the Ministry of Economics. This demonstrates the lack of importance
12 given to this area by the new government.

13 At the same time, higher education institutions in many countries are facing
14 the necessity to become suppliers for corporations not only in their
15 educational activity, but also in their research. While there is no reason why
16 an economy should not benefit from conducted research, a strong
17 dependence on private stakeholders to finance it can negatively influence
18 the independence and diversity of research and education. Science does
19 rely on a sceptical approach to prevalent assumptions and methods, which

BM66 – VIENNA

7b17



20 can be difficult to maintain if the methods in question are the business
21 model of the financial backers of higher education institutions. For science
22 to be truly innovative, it must be allowed to stray away from a
23 straightforward path, to try new things, and quite often to find nothing but
24 something that does not work. Unfortunately, the freedom to try new
25 things is profitable only in the bigger picture; a single private corporation
26 would be ill advised to fund an institution without a clearly defined output.
27 Therefore, ESU sees it as a duty of the government to guarantee the
28 diversity and freedom in research that is needed for any society to develop.
29 In contrast, the lack of an independent ministry responsible for science and
30 research invites the threat of further commodifying this field.

31 Moreover, science and education at higher education institutions require
32 an adequate foundation of public funding. Higher education should be
33 given increased significance in political decisions and should be
34 acknowledged as a prosperous asset, not only for economies, but also for
35 the society as a whole.

36 ESU stands in solidarity with ÖH and fully supports its pledge for
37 a separate Ministry of Science and Research to ensure the independence of
38 scientific research and higher education.

39

Passed: **YES** **NO**

(for use of board meeting chair only!)