

The European Students' Union



ESU ACTIVITY REPORT 2012



THE EUROPEAN STUDENTS' UNION

The European Students' Union (ESU) is an umbrella organisation of 47 National Unions of Students (NUS) from 39 countries (December 2012). The aim of ESU is to represent and promote the educational, social, economic and cultural interests of students at the European level towards all relevant bodies and in particular the European Union, Bologna Follow Up Group, Council of Europe and UNESCO. Through its members, ESU represents over 11 million students in Europe.

Until 2015, ESU will mainly focus on four priority areas as adopted at the organisation's 63rd Board Meeting held in Malta.

ACCESS AND SUPPORT

ESU will work with the social dimension, aspiring towards widening access for underrepresented groups to higher education and promote the benefits of extensive and accessible student support systems.

EDUCATION AS A PUBLIC RESPONSIBILITY

ESU will strengthen the notion of higher education as a public responsibility and reduce commodification of the system in alliance with the educational policy community.

QUALITY AND TRANSPARENCY

Students will be empowered to improve quality provisions for higher education and increased focus will be placed on student centred learning. Transparency tools will be aligned with students' needs for information.

MOBILITY AND INTERNATIONALISATION

Sustainable funding, quality and accessibility must be ensured for European mobility programs. ESU will strengthen its involvement in Global Students' Cooperation, focusing on quality in and access to higher education and empowerment of students.

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WELCOME

—*Karina Ufert*

We cannot turn the clock back, but that is probably good. We can however keep certain things in our memory; write them down and share with others. That is what this publication is all about. It covers the most significant achievements of the European Students' Union (ESU) in 2012 and describes ESU's processes and structures. The publication gives credit to people, who have strengthened ESU's capacity to represent European students for the past thirty years with their hard work. ESU's diverse membership structure, a driving factor in the organisation's progress, is also described in the following pages.

In its thirtieth operating year, ESU went through an "identity crisis", when moving away from being merely an information bureau. Indeed, the organisation's voice changed in 2012, partly because discussions on higher education in Europe became more political, instead of being purely technical (for example, if all countries have certified quality assurance systems). In 2012, ESU fought to get education recognised as a public responsibility following-up on the Bologna Ministerial Conference in Bucharest. We spoke up for investments in education as a crisis recovery strategy and emphasised the need for active labour market policies. We challenged austerity policies in favour of smarter, context-sensitive investments (see pages 12–16). We made it clear that students wanted decision-makers to deliver their promises, especially regarding the Erasmus programme. We learned how to befriend the media (also the social media) and make the President of the European Parliament plea for saving investments in education. All in all, the year gave us an impetus to focus on the shared ideas and beliefs that really unite us.

ESU also adopted an important long-term strategic framework, highlighting four priority policy areas, namely: social dimension



Karina Ufert,
ESU's Chairperson 2012–13
Executive Committee 2010;
Vice-Chairperson 2011

and access to higher education; financing and public responsibility; quality; and mobility. ESU strengthened its position in setting the agenda in discussions on higher education as it was invited to co-chair the Social Dimension and Lifelong learning working group of the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG). In the area of quality assurance of education, ESU managed to secure a prominent position in the revision of the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG), which is based on an extensive consultation with students.

Discussions on membership issues continued in 2012. ESU's events provided an open platform for the national unions of students to present their experiences and realities, enabling them to learn from each other and enhance their solidarity and support in protecting students' rights.

Looking back at 2012, I keep on asking myself, what makes it a good year? If it is based on the number of sunny days, then Brussels does not score highly—where it has been raining cats and dogs. Growing investments for higher education? Well, you can read our publication *Compendium on the Financing of Higher Education* to find out that unfortunately this has not been the case. Wonderful teamwork? The implementation of ESU's new structure has since July 2012 been a consistent subject for internal debates.

But we made it to 2013 and I have a feeling that ESU will not be bored in the next twelve months. All the difficulties we encounter will become our best memories.

HIGHLIGHTS IN 2012

The European Students' Union (ESU) has the primary aim and responsibility to influence policy-making on higher education in Europe. It is therefore very relevant to go over the tasks and projects that kept ESU's representatives busy in the year 2012 and mention the most significant achievements. The ongoing Bologna process, Europe's Growth Strategy (EU2020) and the EU's Modernisation Agenda ranked high in ESU's activities in 2012. These plans to reform the higher education system in Europe are interconnected, as the EU hopes that 40 per cent of the young population will have a higher education degree by 2020 and the Bologna countries have committed themselves to widen access and improve the quality of education for everyone.

THE BOLOGNA PROCESS

The Ministers for Education from the 47 countries that are members to the Bologna process met in Bucharest in April 2012 to discuss the status quo in creating a European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The European Students' Union (ESU) is an active partner for consultations in the Bologna process and the results of these discussions were greatly influenced by observers such as ESU. These messages were presented in a document called the Bucharest Ministerial Communiqué, which summarised the main conclusions of the conference.

An economic downturn and budget cuts to educational policies set the background for the meeting. But the Ministers for Education listened to students and other partners that strongly emphasised the importance of strengthening public investments in education to support a smooth recovery of Europe's economies and to improve social equality.

EUROPEAN STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

The Ministers for Education listed several tasks that would play an important role in shaping the educational landscape in the future. One of those assignments was the revision process of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG) that ESU has been directly involved in along with other social partners.

E4—European University Association (EUA), European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), European Association for Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE) and European Students' Union (ESU)



A roundtable on the EU Master Degree Loan Guarantee Facility was organised in November 2012. From left to right: Carl-Albert Hjelmborn (Swedish Perm. Representation to the EU), Elisabeth Gehrke (ESU EC Member) and Adam Tyson (European Commission)

ESU took a seat in both the Steering and Drafting group of that process as was approved by the so-called E4 Group.

The work on the European standards and guidelines has enabled ESU to present the findings from the MAP-ESG consultation project directly to students and national students' unions across Europe, providing evidence to ESU's statements and suggestions. The main objective of the MAP-ESG project was to evaluate the success of the application and implementation of the ESGs.

In December 2012, ESU organised a consultation seminar on quality assurance together with the national union of students in Malta *KSU (Kunsill Studenti Universitarji)*. The seminar provided ESU's member unions with an opportunity to discuss what kind of quality assurance frameworks for higher education they would like to see implemented in the future.



ESU's Presidency 2012–13. From left to right: Taina Moisander, Rok Primozic and Karina Ufert

SOCIAL DIMENSION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

ESU was disappointed by the fact that the Bologna Ministers for Education did not commit to setting clear targets for the social dimension of higher education in 2012. Instead, they only recognised the importance of the issue and the need to support its structural implementation, by establishing a Social Dimension and Lifelong Learning Working Group.

ESU immediately expressed its interest in co-chairing the working group, recalling that ESU had earlier urged governments in Europe to “stop procrastinating” in adopting and implementing action plans on access to higher education. ESU's offer was unanimously accepted by the *Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG)* and since then, ESU has planned the working group's agenda for the next three years.

One of the first suggestions of the working group has already received support from national delegates, but it requires that a strategy on the social dimension and lifelong learning will be developed by 2015 for the whole European Higher Education Area. This strategy will identify clear targets that should be reached in the near future.

“THE EUROPEAN STUDENTS' UNION IS AN ACTIVE PARTNER FOR CONSULTATIONS IN THE BOLOGNA PROCESS”

MOBILITY WORKING GROUP

Additionally, ESU has actively contributed to other areas of the Bologna process, such as mobility and academic recognition. ESU is involved in the Mobility Working Group of the Bologna Follow-Up Group, which supervises the implementation of a mobility strategy for the European Higher Education Area and is regularly consulted in relation to automatic recognition of degrees and diplomas. This initiative has been supported by the European Commission.

THE EUROPEAN UNION

Continuing with the role of the European Union in higher education, the discussions surrounding a new generation of education and youth programmes from 2014 to 2020 were among the main highlights in 2012. A new programme presented as Erasmus for all is supposed to merge all the individual plans for education and youth when the next multiannual financial framework takes over.

The European Students' Union (ESU) followed these negotiations closely in collaboration with other stakeholders, protecting the interests of students especially in relation to Erasmus grants. ESU expressed its opinion that those grants should reflect the needs of the student population in Europe and that there should be provisions made at the national level so that they will be tied to the country of destination.

As ESU's membership structure extends past the area consisting of the 27 EU Member States, the organisation believes it is important that mobility programmes will also be opened to non-EU members, giving priority to the Eastern Partnership and the Southern Mediterranean.



ESU's main office is located in Brussels, Belgium, at Rue de la Sablonnière 20

ERASMUS BUDGET CRISIS

The EU's annual budget for 2012 became the centre of attention for students as they discovered a funding shortage for mobility programmes in the academic year 2012 to 2013. ESU used all its communication channels to bring attention to that grave situation, demanding immediate action from the EU institutions. Students only received a last moment assurance from the EU that the commitments would be paid, but did not receive a guarantee that next year's budget would be safe, even though students were told that Erasmus was a priority policy.

“A NEW GENERATION OF EDUCATION AND YOUTH PROGRAMMES FROM 2014 TO 2020 WERE AMONG THE MAIN HIGHLIGHTS IN 2012”

EUROPEAN LOAN FACILITY

Although ESU has advocated for more funds for education and youth programmes, it has not applied to the proposal for the European Masters Degree Loan Guarantee Facility. Students voiced serious concerns about that proposal that they thought could have severe consequences. ESU believed that it would be irrational to introduce a new loan system at a time when students are faced with unemployment or unpaid internships, putting them into significant personal debt. Instead the member states should be encouraged to pursue the Bologna goals by improving portability of national grant and loan systems for education.

ESU explained the dangers involved in the loan proposal to the European and national media on a number of occasions. ESU also invited decision-makers for open debates on the topic, by organising policy roundtables in the Permanent Representation of Sweden to the European Union and the European Parliament. ESU made sure that its opinion got through to policy-makers both at the European and national level. The European Parliament took ESU's opinion into account and acknowledged that the proposal did not look at the possible impacts on the social dimension.



You can find a list of all our publications on our website esu-online.org

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

ESU engaged in close cooperation with the Danish and Cypriot presidencies to the European Council in 2012 highlighting employment issues at events such as the biannual European Students' Convention, but youth unemployment figures reached more than 50 per cent in countries such as Spain that year.

The European Commission has also invited ESU to many major policy debates on higher education, such as the automatic recognition of academic qualifications and the implementation of the ECTS credit system. In 2012, ESU also engaged directly in debates at the European Parliament where ESU's opinion was used by politicians such as Hannes Swoboda, President of the Party of European Socialists.

THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

Cooperation between the European Students' Union (ESU) and the Council of Europe reaches back to the 1980s when ESU (then called the Western European Students' Information Bureau) was first established. The Council of Europe has worked on issues related to the recognition of academic qualifications, public responsibility for higher education and research, higher education governance and

“MEMBER STATES SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO PURSUE THE BOLOGNA GOALS”

other relevant fields in establishing a European Higher Education Area by 2020. It has also supported reforms in higher education in South East Europe, South Caucasus and the CIS countries. The organisation has been a vocal advocate for more genuine students' participation in decision-making processes.

In 2012, following a proposal put forth by the Secretary General, the Council of Europe established a Committee on Educational Policies and Practices (CDPPE), integrating the former committees on general (CDED) and higher education and research (CDESR). ESU joined this committee with other key stakeholder organisations as an observer. ESU appointed Karina Ufert as its candidate to the CDPPE, fully enabling ESU to participate in the work with a mandate ending in 2014.

The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe also adopted a Recommendation on Quality Education. The document outlined a comprehensive framework of preconditions that must be met to improve quality and access to all levels of education.



ESU'S WORK ON PROJECTS IN 2012

The European Students' Union (ESU) runs three major research projects on higher education and students' engagement and participates in a number of others. This chapter covers the main achievements reached in 2012 in relation to ESU's involvement in these projects. ESU's major projects, called FinSt, SAGE and QUEST in short, have all been co-funded by the European Commission.

FINANCING THE STUDENTS' FUTURE—FINST



Public responsibility and financing of higher education are priority issues at ESU. In the past

few years, public funding of higher education has decreased and the situation of students has gotten worse, as tuition fees have been introduced or raised and student grants have been transformed into loans. That was the main reason why ESU started the FinSt project, aiming at researching the impact of various funding mechanisms within the European Higher Education Area on students, access, participation and completion of higher education. The project also helped empowering student representatives in debates about national funding reforms in higher education.

ESU started working on this project in October 2010 resulting in two major outcomes. Firstly, the research team mapped the qualities of funding systems for higher education used in the **Compendium on Financing of Higher Education**, the first publication on this issue from the perspective of students across Europe. The purpose of that publication was to increase knowledge on some of the effects that these financing systems have on students.

Five **student policy recommendations** were also prepared that provided guidance for student organisations in Europe and other stakeholders as to how to debate and adopt new policies on the funding of higher education. These recommendations also provided decision makers with an insight into students' view on related issues.

The second part of the project focused on building capacity among student representatives to influence policies on financing of higher

education. ESU organised a *training session* in Bucharest in April 2012 for this purpose, but four major events have been scheduled in total since the project was launched with the final conference planned in January 2013.

“NOT MUCH PROGRESS HAD BEEN MADE IN THE BOLOGNA PROCESS SINCE 2010”

An **Action Toolkit** was also prepared providing its readers with an introduction on how to plan and implement campaigns or policies related to the financing of higher education and identifying major actors and stakeholders contributing to or slowing down desired or undesired changes. The toolkit was supposed to empower students' representatives in debates on funding of higher education.

In addition, **three student exchanges** were organised where seventeen student representatives from different European countries had the opportunity to visit the project's partner organisations in the United Kingdom, Estonia and Austria. These representatives got to know the work of these organisations and to present their own opinions and experiences.

All the project outcomes and results have been made accessible to the general public on a special interactive wiki-style website, where readers are invited to contribute, available at:
<http://finst.esu-online.org>

STUDENT ADVANCEMENT OF GRADUATES EMPLOYABILITY—SAGE



ESU also runs a project called Student Advancement of Graduate Employability (SAGE) that aims to enhance the capacity of student representatives to take part in or influence and build policies to improve the employability of graduates at European, national and local level.



Allan Päll, ESU Chairperson 2011-2012, talks about quality assurance in higher education

The project's first publication was presented in April 2012, called **Bologna With Students' Eyes 2012**. The book presents students' perspectives and gives an overview of the Bologna process since 2010. This publication was distributed at the Ministerial Conference of the Bologna Process that was held in Bucharest, Romania, in April 2012, portraying students' view to the national delegates attending the meeting.

The research team concluded that not much progress had been made in the Bologna process since 2010 and recommended that the member states to the process would restate their past commitments to fulfil the benchmarks that were set in the beginning.

ESU organised two major events in 2012 in relation to the project. The project was officially launched at a conference in Brussels in May and a Consultation Seminar was held in October in Cyprus. Through these events, ESU managed to discuss the topic from various angles within its membership and bring topics related to the employability of graduates to the centre of attention in Europe.

QUEST FOR QUALITY FOR STUDENTS—QUEST

The European Students Union (ESU) launched the **QUEST** for Quality for Students' project in 2010 that will be brought to an end by 2013. The QUEST project aims to identify the genuine perception that students have on the quality of higher education from a pan-European perspective. ESU seeks to define a concept of quality that gives a better answer to the learner-centred high quality model of higher education students in Europe.

In the end of November 2012, students' representatives from all over Europe, policy makers and experts gathered for a consultation seminar in Valletta, Malta, to discuss developments in the area of higher education and quality assurance. The participants discussed the first outcomes of the project that aims at developing a student-based concept for quality of higher education. The event turned out to be a great success providing to stakeholders the possibility to exchange their views on the topic.



Students' contribution is an integral component in all of ESU's projects.

A new report named **Quest for Quality for Students: Going back to basics** was presented at the seminar but it contains the data that was collected during the first stage of the project research, from a survey among ESU's members, national site visits and focus group exercises focusing on the barriers in student participation in quality assurance processes. The report also outlines the main political and conceptual developments in quality assurance on the national and European level in the past decades and how students' involvement in these processes can be increased. The report also contains two case studies delivered by ESU's project partners, for the purpose of outlining good and interesting examples of practices where students are at the centre of quality enhancement and assurance.

“ESU ALSO PARTICIPATES IN A NUMBER OF PARTNERSHIP PROJECTS IN ADDITION TO RUNNING THE PROJECTS ON FINST, SAGE AND QUEST”

In 2013, the QUEST project will focus on developing an interactive website on quality assurance and students' involvement in the process. The project's results will also be wrapped up and presented to students, as will be described in further detail in the upcoming publication called the 'Quality Handbook'.

ESU'S PARTNERSHIP PROJECTS

ESU also participates in a number of partnership projects in addition to running the projects on FinSt, SAGE and QUEST and its long-term collaboration with partners in the higher education field.

The project on **Enhancing Access through a Focus on Equity (Equenet)** aims at increasing access to higher education in Europe for all groups of society, in particular those coming from non-traditional forms of education, and to bring together practitioners, experts and policy makers working on creating an organisational framework for intensive networking. ESU has been involved in all phases of the project.

ESU was one of the architects behind the establishment of a **Peer-Learning Initiative for the Social Dimension (PL4SD)**. The project maps the existing measures taken inside the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and facilitates peer learning between countries. The four partners involved in the project started working on it in October 2012.

ESU also agreed to contribute to the **"Students guidance at university for inclusion—STAY IN"** project focused on improving educational guidance and inclusion of disadvantaged social groups. It will develop an integrated guidance and counselling system for universities in this respect with the goal of lowering drop-out rates and increasing the participation of adults, students from disadvantaged backgrounds and those that are considered being at risk, in tertiary education. The project started in October 2012 and ESU will work on its implementation for two years in collaboration with its partners coordinated by Macerata University.

Uniting Europe through digital empowerment UnitelT is another project ESU is involved in as a partner, coordinated by the Foundation for Development of Democratic Rights. UnitelT aims at bridging the digital gap in Europe where thirty per cent of people are excluded from the information society online. ESU is one of nine members of the consortium coordinated by the Foundation for Development of Democratic Rights—DEMNET

The prime objective of the project on **Improving the Efficiency of Student Services (IMPRESS)** is to establish new management structures in four leading classical universities in Ukraine by creat-

ing fully operating and modern Student Support Service Centres. ESU joined the project, coordinated by Northumbria University, this year and it is expected to finish in three years.

Another project named **Building Capacity for University Management in the ENPI South Region (BUCUM)**, focuses on governance reforms involving ten universities in Libya, Morocco, Egypt and Lebanon aspiring at fulfilling the regional priorities of the 'University Management and Student Services'. The coordinator is Cardiff Metropolitan University, UK. ESU will implement the project together with its fourteen partners over the next three years.

"THE PROJECT'S RESULTS WILL ALSO BE WRAPPED UP AND PRESENTED TO STUDENTS"

ESU'S PARTNERSHIPS IN QUALITY ASSURANCE

Another area of great interest to ESU is the quality assurance in higher education and as a consequence, the organisation was involved in two projects with a focus on that topic in 2012.

The aim of the project on **Sharing Practice in Enhancing and Assuring Quality (SPEAQ)** is to connect teachers, students and quality managers in order to share and enhance the practice for quality assurance processes in higher education. The project started in October 2011 and will be finalised in 2013. Southampton University is leading the consortium behind the project. ESU concluded one of its main activities in the project by collecting data from students' focus groups facilitated by the members of ESU's experts' pool on quality assurance.

The project on the **Development of Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Moldova (QUAEM)** works on creating a national quality assurance strategy for Moldova in cooperation with higher education institutions, quality assurance agencies and students' representatives. The project is coordinated by Leipzig University, Germany, in collaboration with twelve other partners. ESU will provide a training session on quality assurance and raise awareness among students and university staff on quality from the students' perspectives.

ESU EVENTS IN 2012

This chapter gives an overview of the four major events that were organised by ESU in 2012, where the biannual European Students' Conventions and Board Meetings were the main attractions.

ESC 23—RECOMMENDATIONS FOR YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYABILITY

The participants in the 23rd European Students' Convention gathered in Copenhagen, Denmark, from 17 to 19 March 2012 to debate the employability of graduates. The meeting adopted a declaration of ten recommendations for national governments on how to overcome the difficulties that young graduates face when finding a job. These discussions were also used in ESU's project on the Student Advancement of Graduate Employability (SAGE).

The recommendations take both the short-term situation of the economic crisis as well as the long-term targets of the EU and the EHEA into account. The recommendations, in summary, are the following:

- 1 The quality of mobility programmes and learning outcomes should be recognised at European, national and institutional level.
- 2 Student mobility plays a crucial role in social enhancement and higher education institutions need to provide each student with an opportunity to study abroad.
- 3 Funds for the Erasmus programme should be prioritised to improve student mobility.
- 4 The proposed European loan scheme will not solve the problem of social mobility.
- 5 High quality work experience is a good way to develop skills and should be paid at least minimum wage where other forms of support are not available.
- 6 Education should be considered as a public good and students should be supported financially for their living and study costs and necessary transportation.
- 7 Employers should be made responsible for providing and supporting their employees with lifelong learning, respecting labour rights and shall maintain open dialogue with higher education institutions. Internships and work places should be of high quality and relevance.
- 8 Governments should be responsible for guaranteeing access to the labour market and preventing discrimination. They shall provide support and grants to programmes at higher education institutions that develop employability. Governments are also responsible for the development of the expanded and coherent labour markets. Governments shall initiate and mediate the dialogue between academia, government entities, business and industry to create coherent cooperation.

“HOW TO OVERCOME THE DIFFICULTIES THAT YOUNG GRADUATES FACE WHEN FINDING A JOB”

- 9 Institutions of higher education and labour markets shall cooperate to accomplish common goals. Access to and success in higher education shall be available to all who wish to study. Business and industry shall work together with higher education in a responsible manner.
- 10 The European Students' Union, National Unions of Students, and local unions shall be responsible for developing and communicating coherent strategies regarding these issues and shall use them in lobbying activities at the institutional and national levels.



BM 62—A NEW GOVERNING BODY FOR ESU ELECTED

Karina Ufert from Lithuania was elected as a new Chairperson of ESU on 22 April 2012 with a mandate starting on 1 July and ending at the end of June the following year. Next to a new Chairperson, ESU elected two Vice-Chairpersons: Rok Primozic (Slovenia) and Taina Moisander (Finland) and a new Executive Committee, consisting of Elisabeth Gehrke (Sweden), Liliya Ivanova (Bulgaria), Nevena Vuksanovic (Serbia), Tinja Zerzer (Austria), Blazhe Todorovski (Macedonia), Fernando M. Galan Palomares (Spain) and Florian Kaiser (Germany).

These representatives were elected at the 62nd Board Meeting of ESU that was held in Bucharest, Romania, from 22 to 24 April 2012. Over 150 people from 45 national unions of students in Europe participated in the meeting.

The Board Meeting also approved to grant two new unions membership to ESU. Those were SKONUS from Serbia and ASYOU from Azerbaijan. Thus, 47 national unions of students from 38 countries were registered as full members of ESU following the meeting.

Several resolutions were approved at the Board Meeting. One of them was on the proposal from the European Commission on establishing a loan guarantee scheme for European students, where ESU clearly stated that students needed to be involved in the process and their concerns taken into account. Other resolutions included a call for more transparency among higher education institutions in Lithuania and for the government to focus more on students' employability, on the reform of the VAT system in Europe, on the reforms of the Hungarian education system and on free access to knowledge. ESU also approved resolutions on areas outside Europe, such as condemning LGBT propaganda laws in Russia, on tuition fees in Quebec in Canada and in support of the Syrian movement for democracy respecting human rights.

A European Training on the financing of higher education was held in the run-up to the Board Meeting. More than 120 student representatives gathered for the training from 19 to 21 April 2012, participating in workshops on different aspects of higher education.

The training started with an opening conference, where the impact of the financial crisis on the financing of higher education was discussed with different stakeholders. The second day focused on building capacity of the student representatives through five different workshops that dealt with the basics of higher education funding, funding of research and PhD studies among higher education institutions and student support systems. The last day was dedicated to building capacity and exchanging good practices on different kinds of actions and campaigns on financing of higher education.

ESC 24—MEASURING THE IMPACT OF THE CRISIS ON HIGHER EDUCATION

The 24th European Students' Convention took place in Limassol, Cyprus, from 17 to 20 October 2012 in relation to the Cypriot presidency to the European Union. ESU also used the opportunity to celebrate its 30th anniversary, where ESU's alumni members were invited (see page 17).

“THE BOARD MEETING ALSO APPROVED TO GRANT TWO NEW UNIONS MEMBERSHIP TO ESU”

The employability of graduates and the impact of the worldwide austerity measures on higher education were the main topics tackled by the 120 participants in the event. Those debates served as an input to ESU's project on the Student Advancement on Graduate Employability (SAGE) and to the economic situation in Cyprus.

The challenges that higher education, students and young graduates face against the backdrop of growing youth unemployment rates were investigated at the convention. National unions of students were also asked about the political debates and strategies being taken in their home countries.

The participants believed that generic skills equipped graduates and that experiences in work places were valuable for learning



Higher education has faced many challenges because of the economic crisis

specific skills. Diverse learning and teaching methods should be embraced and developed in order to prepare graduates for the changing needs of their societies.

“NO ECONOMY IN EUROPE WILL DEVELOP WITHOUT QUALIFIED GRADUATES”

The convention urged governments to recognise the opportunities that education creates for citizens. Young people are the first to take the hit from austerity measures where their rights to participate in the civil society and higher education are compromised. No economy in Europe will develop without qualified graduates and investments in higher education are of crucial importance.

BM 63—CONFERENCE ON QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Students' participation in quality assurance (QA) has been one of the key elements of the Bologna Process. It has also been one of the success stories in student participation. ESU has actively advocated for student participation in quality assurance processes and has also provided the necessary expertise.

Students' view on quality assurance in higher education and ways to enhance it were the main topics debated at a seminar organised before ESU's 63rd Board Meeting, taking place from 30 November to 2 December 2012 in Valletta, Malta.

This seminar was held in relation to ESU's project on Quest for Quality for Students (QUEST) focusing on the essential concerns that students have about the quality of education aiming at providing information and means for students to influence quality enhancement and assurance processes.

The seminar concluded that national policies and legislative frameworks are necessary but not sufficient tools for student participation in quality assurance. Internal quality assurance should also complement the external ones ensuring that appropriate measures are followed.

The seminar also examined the impact of quality assurance through visibility. The latest developments in EU policies have made reports on quality evaluation more available and visible, but it can be enhanced even more. It was also argued that students' involvement was a natural result deriving from students' responsibility as stakeholders in higher education.

ESU's Board Meeting was held directly following the seminar. There, the member unions adopted several resolutions, one of them being on the quality assurance system in Sweden.

The Board Meeting also adopted a new policy paper on the social dimension in higher education and resolutions on social issues such as on the economic crisis, youth and democracy.

ESU also supported its member unions in their fight for improved access to higher education by issuing resolutions for supporting grant reforms in France, supporting an immediate implementation of national qualifications frameworks in Serbia and in support of the Danish student grant system (SU). ESU also expressed grave concern about the political debate on possible tuition fees in Finland. Then, ESU encouraged the Icelandic government to increase investments in higher education and supported continued reforms of the higher education system in Lithuania.

As an umbrella organisation for the national student unions in Europe, ESU affirmed its solidarity with other international student initiatives. ESU approved unanimously a resolution in support of its fellow students in Chile and emphasised the importance of higher education in creating a dialogue between Palestinian and Israeli students.

STEPS TAKEN TO DEVELOP A GLOBAL STUDENTS' COOPERATION

ESU organised a Global Student Leadership Summit in London from 18 to 21 September 2012, together with the National Union of Students in the United Kingdom that also celebrated its 90th anniversary then. Among the main topics discussed were educa-

tion, sustainable development, peace and social justice. The event also examined possibilities in global cooperation among international student movements.

Leaders of regional and national student organisations from over 40 countries attended the Summit, including Russia, Armenia, Kurdistan, Cambodija, Taiwan, Nepal, New Zealand and the South Pacific, United States, Canada, Mexico, Colombia and Chile. The regional student organisations included OCLAE (Latin America), ASA (Asia), and USPSA (South Pacific).

The participants approved a joint statement summing up their shared values and aspirations around the summit's core themes. They believed it was important to safeguard public and free education, fight against the commodification of education and to promote student participation and representation. The statement also called on the United Nations Human Rights Council and UNESCO to continue monitoring attacks on education. It also claimed that regional and national student movements would do their part in shedding light on possible cases where students' rights are being violated.

The participants concluded that economies, social equality and democracy play a central role in education. While education had proven to be crucial in economic prosperity, equity and access need to be improved through investments in education. The participants called for a global commitment to new educational targets to follow-up on the 2015 Millennium Development Goals.

A plan for future cooperation among those student unions was outlined in an accompanying memorandum of understanding. That was a great achievement for ESU because it strengthened its cooperation with student movements all around the world.

Action points for a Global Student Cooperation Working Group were also adopted giving it the responsibility to organise another Summit and prepare policy debates. ESU was appointed as the chair of this working group.



A STRONG ALUMNI SOCIETY IS CRUCIAL FOR ESU

The European Students' Union (ESU) believes it is extremely important to keep close contact with its members. Many members of ESU's alumni society now work as researchers or for national authorities in higher education.

A meeting organised in Cyprus in October 2012 brought together the past and the present generations of student representatives involved in ESU's work. This meeting was held in connection to ESU's 30th anniversary that was celebrated that year. Around seventy people attended this meeting that was organised by the alumni society with the aim of enhancing this network and its contribution. Former elected representatives, board members and representatives of ESU's member unions took part in this meeting. Current and former student representatives had the opportunity to share their knowledge and experience in the field. They discussed their involvement in ESU and what they could learn from the past. The participants concluded that the alumni network should be strengthened and that a coordination committee should be formed that will take care of providing information and preparing a database of ESU's alumni.

THE HISTORY OF ESU IN BRIEF

The roots of ESU go back to the year 1982 when seven national unions of students (NSU Norway, NUS-UK, SFS Sweden, SHÍ Iceland, UNEF-ID France, DSF Denmark and ÖH Austria) established WESIB, the West European Student Information Bureau. Following political transformations in Eastern Europe, WESIB changed its name to the European Student Information Bureau (ESIB) in February 1990. As the European community in higher education grew with initiatives such as the Bologna Process, the organisation also needed to change from being an information bureau to a political union representing the views and interests of students in Europe.

Thus, it was decided in May 2007 that ESIB should change its name to the European Students' Union (ESU) to describe better the main responsibilities of the organisation.



ESU IN THE PRESS

ESU's dissemination was at the centre of the organisation's political strategy and goals as agreed in its plan of work for 2012.

ESU does update its target groups regularly with its positions towards various topics of concern, mainly in its monthly newsletter the Student Voice, by sending out press releases, letters or e-mails in case of major happenings, by organising or participating in various conferences and events and engaging or encouraging open discussions online.

Social media channels, such as Facebook and Twitter, became the core of ESU's dissemination activities in 2012. ESU gained a number of followers in the year on both Twitter and Facebook which also increased web-traffic to ESU's official homepage extensively.

HOW CAN YOU FOLLOW US?



On Twitter @esutwt



By looking for the European Students Union on Facebook



By looking for the European Students Union on LinkedIn



By looking for the European Students Union on Pinterest



By looking for the European Students Union on Youtube

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

ESU has used social media strategically in order to create awareness about its activities, ranging from meetings and conferences to published reports, press releases and relevant articles in the media. All representatives of ESU have been encouraged to contribute in this respect, by promoting events they participate in or take part in open discussions on matters of higher education.

In 2012, several new publications were also introduced that managed to get attention. The biggest ones being ESU's anniversary publication called *ESU 30 years: Fighting for student rights since 1982* and *Bologna with Student Eyes 2012*.

European Students Union
www.esu-online.org

esueuropean students' union

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NEWS

05 Jul 2013
student support is key in Iceland's continuing recovery, says ESU's Chair
REYKJAVIK – The European Students' Union (ESU) believes that Iceland's future and Iceland's education sector will be pro (read more)

30 Jun 2013
Five new Executive Committee members start their mandate at ESU
BLEED – A new political leadership at the European Students' Union (ESU) starts its mandate on 1 July. The Executive Comm (read more)

30 Jun 2013

EVENTS

20th-22nd September
European Students' Convention 26
Kaunas, Lithuania

7th-10th October
World Congress: Access to Post-Secondary Education
Montreal, Canada

25th November - 2nd December
ESU Board Meeting 65 and Board Meeting Seminar
Zagreb, Serbia

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ESU, 2

WHAT HAS BEEN SAID ABOUT US?

"Students studying abroad enrich their skills and gain culturally from mixing in such an international environment," said Marianne Slegers, a spokeswoman for the [European] student union. "Clearly globalization plays a big role when it comes to students moving away from their own countries."

New York Times, 23 January 2012.

The prospect of rising tuition angers European students, who say they had no role in causing the financial collapse but are being made to pay for it. "What caused the debt?" Allan Päll, head of the Brussels-based European Students Union, said in a speech at the European university conference. "Did we spend too much on higher education? We should ask that question instead of rushing to cut the first thing we see, the thing that creates jobs and growth."

Bloomberg, 23 April 2012.

Plans are being worked out to ready a fund worth €100 million from which EU citizens can borrow money to complete a Master education abroad. Allan Päll, leader of the European Student Union (ESU), criticized these plans stating that they would create "tomorrow's indebted generation of graduates". "We need to admit that rising youth unemployment and an increasing graduate debt burden might become an explosive mix, leading to greater social divisions between young and old," Päll commented in an opinion article.

Science Guide, 23 April 2012.

In addition, among European countries which host world's top 100 universities, the UK, Sweden, Switzerland, Finland and Flemish side of Belgium were criticised by the European Students Union for either reducing national higher education budgets, increasing tuition fees or both, contrary to policy-makers' mantra.

New Europe, 30 April 2012.

The European Students' Union (ESU) highlights the need for incoming students to have enough money in the bank for a whole year before a visa is granted. "This is a problem for many non-EU students who come from low-income countries or backgrounds," says Taina Moisander, ESU's vice-chair.

European Voice, 6 September 2012.

Karina Ufert, chair of the European Students' Union, argued that support based on loans has major pitfalls as students can accrue large debts: up to € 30,000 in England for a bachelor degree, for instance.

University World News, 23 September 2012.

ESU chair Karina Ufert urged the EU executive to "solve the current financial shortcomings of the European Social Fund by using money from underspent EU funds." Over 2 million students have used the Erasmus programme in its 25 year existence.

EU Observer, 5 October 2012.

A GLIMPSE INTO STUDENT CAMPAIGNING IN 2012

FEBRUARY AND MAY 2012

Spanish students suffered badly from the economic crisis as youth unemployment figures reached new heights and further budget cuts were introduced in higher education. Demonstrations were organised in Valencia and Madrid where students remained at their universities over many nights, up to two weeks in the case of Valencia, where the police was unable to intervene. A demonstration representing the death of public universities was also organised in Hueva.



MARCH 2012

LSVb, the national union of students in the Netherlands, organised a series of demonstrations from 19 to 23 March because of the government's plan to introduce a study fine, increase tuition fees, abolish student grants for master studies and additional grants for students from a lower socioeconomic background and to cut free access for students to public transportation. LSVb wanted to make a statement with the demonstrations that students did not accept these reforms and that they had had enough. Approximately two thousand students attended the event.

NOVEMBER 2012

Thousands of students marched through central London on 21 November to oppose budget cuts for education policies. The demonstration was organised by the National Union of Students in the United Kingdom. The protest highlighted the anger students had

because of irresponsible policies, such as trebling tuition fees and withdrawal of direct public investment in teaching for higher education.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' DAY

The International Students' Day was celebrated on November 17. The overarching theme was "education as a response to the crisis". A demonstration was organised by FEF, the French speaking union of students in Belgium, in cooperation with the Flemish union VVS, ESU and the Organising Bureau of School Student Unions.

DECEMBER 2012

The national union of students in Hungary HÖÖK organised a big demonstration starting at the Technical University of Budapest on 12 December. After speeches had been given, thousands of students, teachers and other supporters marched to the Ministry of Education. After arriving at the Ministry, the group decided to continue its march to the Parliament where it was stopped by a police force. The group was demonstrating against a possible introduction of tuition fees, decreased funds and student contracts.

One week later, Dávid Nagy, the President of HÖÖK, went on a sitting strike outside the Parliament. Soon after, the government announced that the same number of young people could seek higher education without paying tuition fees as before and that a part of the planned budget cuts would be withdrawn.

ESU MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY IN 2012

Several unions have requested and have been granted membership status in ESU over the years, so many that today the European Students' Union (ESU) is the umbrella organisation of 47 national unions of students (NUS) from 39 countries (as of December 2012). Nevertheless, ESU still lacks representatives from a number of eligible countries that could join ESU such as Albania, Andorra, Greece, Liechtenstein, Turkey, Russia etc.

The networking and development function of ESU is still an important beacon as ESU unites unions that are truly representative, independent, democratic and open to all students. This means that interest among new unions in ESU membership is still very high which explains why ESU still receives requests every year from unions that want to join ESU.

In 2012, ANSA from Armenia, SCSU from Serbia, and ASYOU from Azerbaijan, unions that all had the status of candidate members before, were granted full membership following study visits. These study visits are conducted to verify if the candidate unions comply with ESU's membership criteria. At the end of 2012, three unions had candidate status. They were SCT from Turkey, KKS from Albania and NSS from Ukraine. It is expected that ESU will deal with those applications at its Board Meeting in 2013.

Ten organisations were also registered as associate members of ESU in 2012, giving them rights to follow policy discussions at ESU but not voting power. ESU plans to strengthen the role of its associate members and rebuild its relations with them.

For the first time, ESU appointed a special Coordinator for Membership issues to focus especially on related topics, including drafting a policy paper on the way forward. ESU has also worked on increasing its membership capacity through the concept of quality enhancement visits to be implemented in 2013.

ESU provided support to many of its member unions in 2012 in relation to national debates on higher education, such as controversial reforms in Hungary and introduction of tuition fees for foreign students in Finland. Additionally, ESU has established contacts

with student organisations all around the world through the Global Student Cooperation Working Group. ESU believes in a strong and a united student movement as the way forward in high level student representation in Europe and is committed to pursuing a sustainable growth.

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS TO ESU



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



Association of Norwegian Students Abroad (ANSA)



Erasmus Student Network (ESN)



European Dental Students Association (EDSA)



European Pharmaceutical Students' Association (EPSA)



European Union of Jewish Students (EUJS)



International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA)



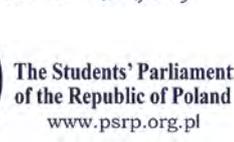
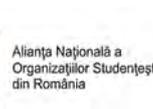
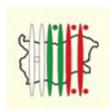
Network of Students of History and Related Sciences (ISHA)



Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU)



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



Armenia Armenia National Students Association (ANSA)

Austria Österreichische HochschülerInnenschaft (ÖH)

Azerbaijan Azerbaijan Students Union (ASU), Azerbaijan Student Youth Organisations' Union (ASYOU)

Belarus Belarus Student Association (BSA)

Belgium Fédération Des Etudiants Francophones (FEF), Vlaamse Vereniging van Studenten (VVS)

Bulgaria Barski Studentski (UBS), Nacionalno Predstavitelstvo na Studentskite Saveti v Republika Balgaria (NASC)

Bosnia & Herzegovina Studentska Unija Republika Srpska (SURS)

Croatia Hrvatski Studentski Zbor (CSC)

Cyprus Pagkypria Omospondia Foititikon Enoseon (POFEN)

Czech Republic Studentská Komora Rady (SKRVS)

Denmark Danske Studerendes Fællesråd (DSF)

Finland Suomen ammattikorkeakouluopiskelijakuntien liitto (SAMOK), Suomen Yliopilaskuntien Liitto (SYL)

Estonia Eesti Üliõpilaskondade Liit (EÜL)

France Fédération des Associations Générales D'Etudiants (FAGE) Union Nationale des Etudiants de France (UNEF)

Georgia Students Organizations League of Georgia (SOLG)

Germany Freie Zusammenschluss von StudentInnenschaften (FZS)

Hungary Hallgatói Önkormányzatok Országos Konferenciája (HÖOK)

Iceland Stúdentaráð Háskóla Íslands (SHÍ)

Ireland Union of Students in Ireland (USI)

Israel National Union of Israeli Students (NUIS)

Italy Unione degli Universitari (UdU)

Latvia Latvijas Studentu Apvienība (LSA)

Lithuania Lietuvos Studentu Sąjunga (LSS)

Luxembourg Union Nationale des Etudiant(e)s du Luxembourg (UNEL), Luxembourg University Students' Organization (LUS)

Macedonia National Union of Students of Macedonia (NUSM)

Malta Kunsill Studenti Universitarji (KSU)

Netherlands Interstedelijk Studenten Overleg (ISO), Landelijke Studenten Vakbond (LSVb)

Norway Norsk studentorganisasjon (NSO)

Poland Parlament Studentów Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej (PSRP)

Portugal Fórum Académico para a Informação e Representação Externa (FAIRE)

Romania Alianta Nationala a Organizatiilor Studentesti din Romania (ANOSR)

Serbia Studentska Unija Srbije (SUS), Student Conference of Serbian Universities (SKONUS)

Slovakia Študentská Rada Vysokých škôl (SRVS)

Slovenia Studenska Organizacija Slovenije (SSU)

Spain Coordinadora de Representantes de Estudiantes de Universidades Públicas (CREUP)

Sweden Sveriges Förenade Studentkårer (SFS)

Switzerland Verband der Schweizerischen StudentInnenschaften, (VSS-UNES-USU)

Ukraine Ukrainian Association of Student Self-government (UASS)

UK National Union of Students (NUS-UK)

THIS IS HOW ESU WORKS

Over the past decades, ESU has gradually moved from being a regional information exchange bureau to a strong and an established voice representing students in Europe. This development has followed external factors such as the emerging European higher education system and improved student mobility.

ESU's work has mainly focused on political institutions based in Brussels, aiming at shaping policies in higher education and guarding the interests of students in Europe. To serve this purpose, ESU has undergone an exhaustive self-evaluation process that came to an end in mid-2011. These changes reflected the need for an organisation such as ESU to have flexible working methods while strengthening its role in Europe at the same time.

ADAPTING TO A CHANGING CLIMATE

Earlier, ESU operated several working groups whose responsibilities were later integrated in one common Executive Committee composed of ten members including one Chairperson and two Vice-Chairpersons. Those representatives are elected every year at ESU's Board Meeting, which acts as ESU's highest governing body. Their mandate starts in July and ends in June the following year. The Chairpersons are full-time employees based in Brussels.

ESU's work is also supported by three Coordinators who are selected by the Executive Committee with a mandate of one year and a half responsible for topics such as human rights, solidarity, equality and membership issues.

“ESU’S WORK HAS MAINLY FOCUSED ON POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS BASED IN BRUSSELS”



ESU participated in a demonstration in Brussels on 17 November 2012, in relation to the International Students Day

ESU'S STRUCTURE

BOARD MEETING

Each country is given two votes regardless of the national unions that are registered there. At the end of 2012, unions from 39 countries were registered as full members to ESU. All of them appointed their representatives to this body.

COMMISSION FOR INTERNAL AUDIT

Acts as an independent financial advisory body to the EC and the Board. The CIA carries out internal audits of ESU and presents them at every Board Meeting.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Ten representatives elected by ESU's Board Members on a yearly basis responsible for executing policies and decisions taken by the Board.

SECRETARIAT

Unpolitical staff responsible for running the organisation and supporting the policies or decisions taken by ESU's political representatives.

VICE-CHAIRPERSONS

Two members of the Executive Committee are elected to be fully employed to represent and support the work of the organisation.

CHAIRPERSON

One elected member of the Executive Committee who acts as ESU's highest full time political representative and spokesperson.

COORDINATORS

Three individuals selected by the Executive Committee with a mandate of one and a half year responsible for specific policies.

QUALITY ASSURANCE STEERING COMMITTEE

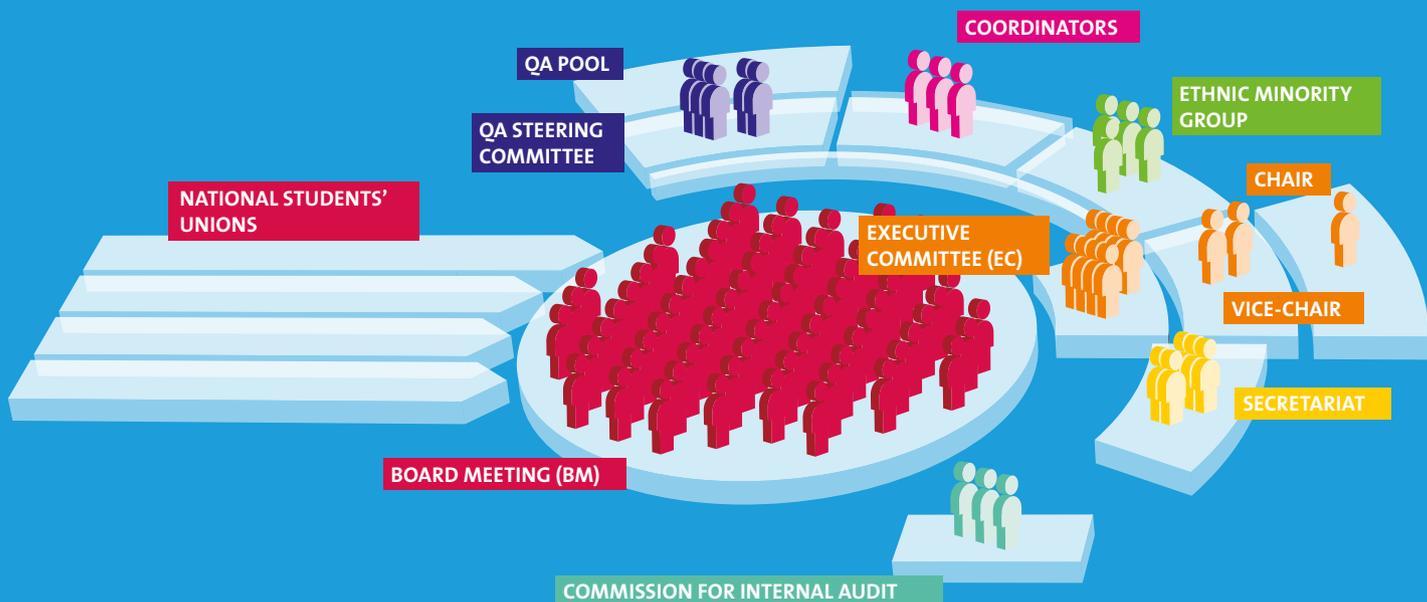
Five members responsible for coordinating the work of the quality assurance pool and launching calls for new members.

QUALITY ASSURANCE POOL

At the end of 2012, there were 76 students registered in the pool from 29 different countries in the Europe (see pages 26-27).

ETHNIC MINORITIES WORKING GROUP

Representatives of three national unions and a representative of ESU participate in this working group.





ESU's political representatives 2011–12

THE PEOPLE BEHIND ESU

MANDATE 2012–13

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Karina Ufert (Chairperson), Rok Primožic (Vice-Chairperson), Taina Moisander (Vice-Chairperson), Fernando M.Galan Palomares, Florian Kaiser, Blazhe Todorovski, Tinja Zerzer, Nevena Vuksanovic, Elisabeth Gehrke, Liliya Ivanova.

MANDATE 2011–12

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Allan Päll (Chairperson), Karina Ufert (Vice-Chairperson), Rok Primožic, Nevena Vuksanovic, Kaloyan Kostadinov.

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Fernando M.Galan Palomares, Magnus Malnes, Mari Simola, Rahel Siegrist

SECRETARIAT AT THE END OF 2012:

Beate Espenes (Executive Assistant), Stela Stancheva (Project Assistant), Natalia Tarachiu (Project Officer), Karoline Helldorff (Financial Officer), Robert Hlynur Baldursson (Communications Manager)

COORDINATORS AT THE END OF 2012:

Gabriela Bergan (Human Rights and Solidarity), Karl Agius (Membership Issues), Aengus Ó Maoláin (Equality)

Additionally, ESU is supported by a professional secretariat of five staff members consisting of a project officer, project assistant, financial officer, executive assistant and a communications manager.

ESU WORKING GROUPS

ESU operates two working groups that are responsible for handling specific topics.

An Ethnic Minorities Working Group (EMWG) was established at the 57th Board Meeting of ESU, held in Krakow, Poland, in 2009. The working group is chaired by the Dutch student union LSVb. The unions SAMOK, Finland, and ANOSR, Romania, also take part in the working group that is coordinated by one ESU representative.

One of the main focus points of this working group has been immigration issues and the respect for diversity in relation to the economic crisis.

ESU also seeks to develop its actions in collaboration with students from all around the world. Thus, ESU believes its participation in the Global Student Cooperation Working Group (GSCWG) is very important to tackle issues such as access to education and student rights. ESU focuses on working together with regional and national student representations in its effort to create a sustainable international dialogue among students. You can read more about the GSCWG in the chapter on ESU events in this booklet.

STUDENTS' CONTRIBUTION TO QUALITY ASSURANCE IN EUROPE

In 2009, ESU established a pool of committed and well-trained students with the aim of contributing to improving higher education provision in Europe through quality assurance procedures. The pool is renewed once a year where an independent Steering Committee is responsible for launching calls for members and selecting the applicants based on public criteria.



A part of ESU's Executive Committee and Coordinators 2012-2013. From left to right: Blazhe Todorovski, Gabriela Bergan, Elisabeth Gehrke, Taina Moisander (Vice-Chair), Aengus Ó Maoláin, Karina Ufert (Chair), Florian Kaiser, Rok Primozic (Vice-Chair), Fernando M Galán Palomares

“ESU ALSO SEEKS TO DEVELOP ITS ACTIONS IN COLLABORATION WITH STUDENTS FROM ALL AROUND THE WORLD”

ESU has actively promoted and developed student participation in quality assurance all over Europe this way in the past years. At the end of 2012, there were 76 students registered in the pool from 29 different countries in Europe.

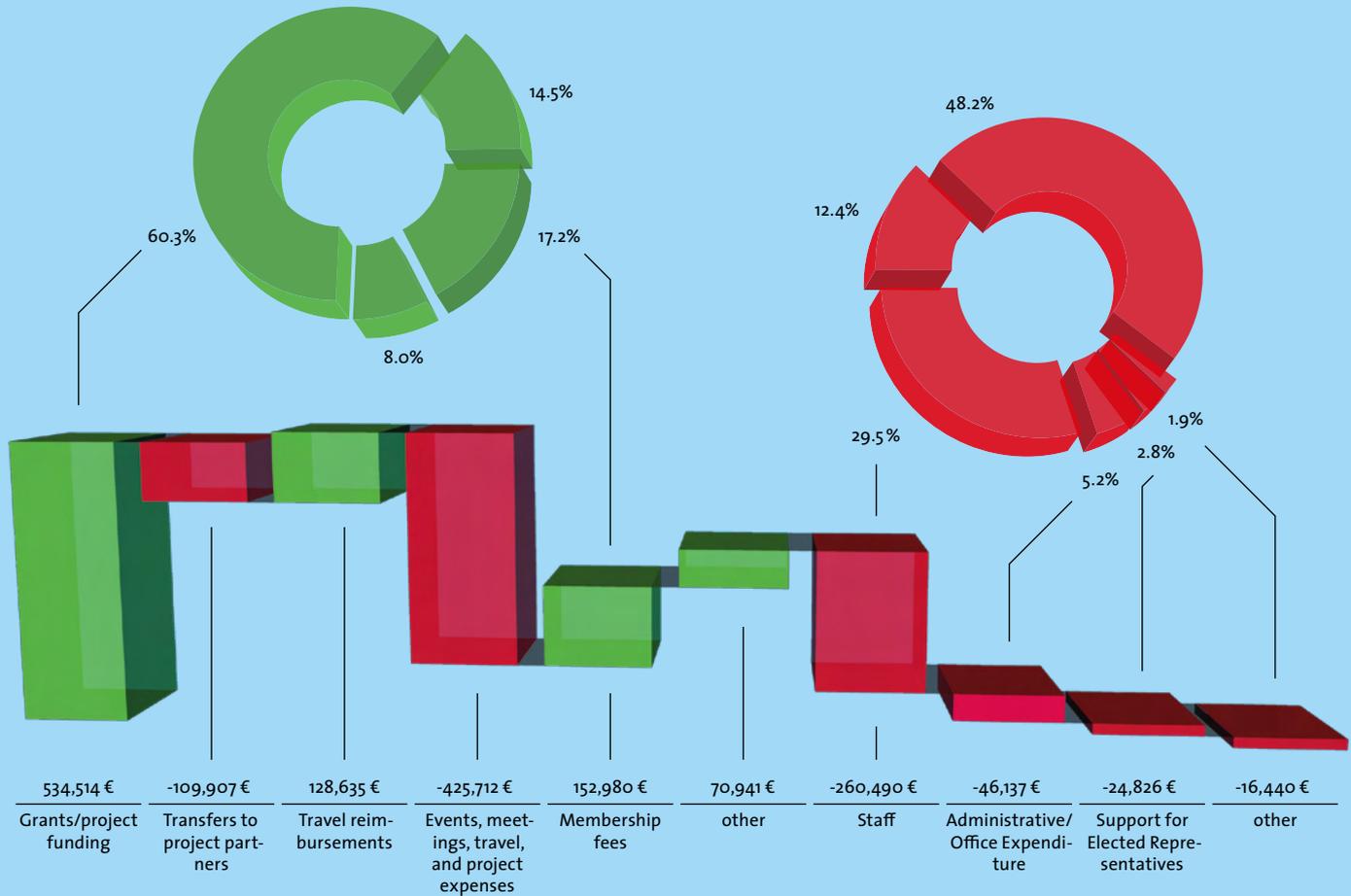
ESU organises regular study sessions, workshops and other events for the members of the pool to strengthen their capacity in quality assurance provisions on a systematic basis. The pool has proven to be an excellent initiative, as it brings together the experience and knowledge of students from all over Europe, creating a platform for debates, sharing different opinions and learning about quality assurance. These students also contribute to ESU's policy making, act as multiplying agents in their respective countries, collaborate in several projects, participate in Quality Assurance reviews, etc.

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

If you want to find out more about the work of the students' experts pool, you can visit ESU's homepage or send the Steering Committee an e-mail at qapools@esu-online.org.

ESU FINANCES IN 2012

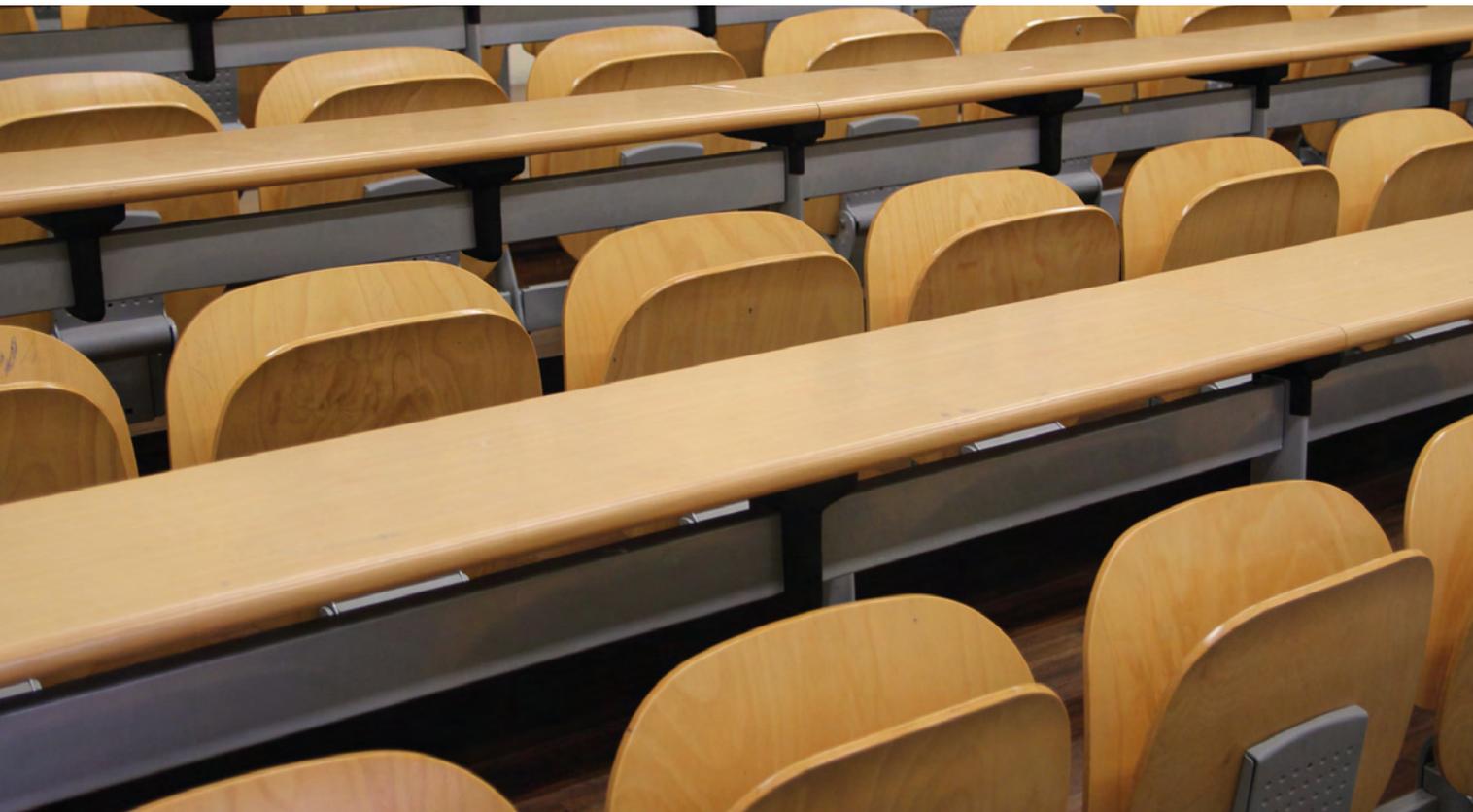
As a non-governmental organisation, ESU relies heavily on funds from European and international institutions for continuing its operation. The European Commission accounts for the majority of project grant income received in 2012. The Commission also provided an administrative grant to support ESU's core functions and overall sustainability. Additionally, ESU received a grant from the



Belgian organisation Fonds Maribel Social du Secteur Socioculturel to fund a part-time Executive Assistant position as well as a part-time project Assistant for the period from September 2011 until February 2012.

ESU would like to thank the Commission and Maribel for their continued support. ESU also wants to thank its external partners for their financial support that enabled ESU's elected representatives to participate in dozens of higher education conferences, meetings and workshops in 2012. ESU would not have been able to participate in all these tasks without their support.

The 2012 budgeted expenditures follow the pattern of previous years with the majority share allocated to projects and activities. This enabled ESU to deliver on its aims, objectives and plan of work for the year. The number of staff at the main office in Brussels increased in 2012 by one Vice Chairperson. The three elected members are supported by a secretariat. The cost of maintaining an office in Brussels and other administrative expenses is a small portion of ESU's annual budget. ESU also provides a modest support to its elected representatives to cover a portion of the expenses that are related to their work.



THE EUROPEAN STUDENTS' UNION

The European Students' Union (ESU) is an umbrella organisation of 47 National Unions of Students (NUS) from 39 countries (December 2012). The aim of ESU is to represent and promote the educational, social, economic and cultural interests of students at the European level towards all relevant bodies and in particular the European Union, Bologna Follow Up Group, Council of Europe and UNESCO. Through its members, ESU represents over 11 million students in Europe.

This report covers the main activities and events of ESU in 2012, including the research projects that the organisation is engaged in. The report also portrays the main significant developments and achievements in higher education policies in Europe, from the viewpoint of students.



ESU celebrated its thirtieth year in operation in 2012.

