**European Students' Union (ESU)**
Fighting for students' rights since 1982

**Mundo-Madou.**
Avenue des Arts 7/8, 1210 Bruxelles
secretariat@esu-online.org
+32 2 893 25 45

# Plan of Work 2022-2023

## 1. Social Dimension

### 1.1. Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) Working Group

ESU will work to ensure that the Social Dimension remains a priority for the working period 2021-2024 of the Bologna Process and especially will focus on the monitoring of the implementation of the Principles & Guidelines (PAGs). For the sake of continuity, ESU will co-chair the work of the Social Dimension Working Group on (1) defining indicators and benchmarks for the principles for SD and (2) developing a system of monitoring of the Principles and Guidelines and ESU will further support the development, piloting and dissemination of tools to support the implementation of the PAGs, primarily through the projects we are partners in (PLAR-U-PAG, InclusiPHE, SMILE and ENTRANTS).

### 1.2. Mainstream and operationalise the Students' Rights Charter European wide and globally

ESU will continue working on the Students' Rights Charter, this entails working on options to operationalise it and mainstream it in a European setting, towards important other stakeholders in the EHEA as well as towards the EU. Further, ESU will - together with the Global Student Forum - work on a global implementation of a students rights charter based on the charter voted upon by ESU in order to mainstream a set of students' rights globally - for example towards UNESCO - on equal footing with other students around the globe, as well as develop tools to help implementation on a national and local level.

### 1.3. Quality internships

The topic of quality internships is becoming prominent in the European Union, especially after the several resolutions by the European Parliament and the beginning of the process of revision of the Council recommendation on the quality framework for traineeships. ESU will work together with other European organisations in advocating for the ban of unpaid internships and for a quality framework along the lines of ESU's statement on quality and fair internships. In line with the European Quality Charter on Internships and Apprenticeships, ESU's efforts will include both internships outside and internships within formal higher education.

**1.4 Access to Mental Health aid**

Mental Health issues are an increasingly severe problem among students in Europe. It has been a priority on the ESU agenda for a long period but now it is more important than ever. Most of the national healthcare systems don't offer sufficient and appropriate services and neither do HEIs, while all students should have free access to Mental Health aid and proper information. ESU will monitor the progress on this and approach stakeholders in order to further students' access to Mental Health aid and advocate for an EU mental health strategy to be developed and implemented.

**1.4.1 Mental Health in a digital reality**

Mental Health has reached a new peak of importance during the pandemic, and mental strain due to additional workload and the inability of social interaction makes us question how transferring support services of HEIs in a digital form reflect on the general well-being of the academic community. We will investigate good practices in assuring students` access to online mental health services in a safe, confidential, and beneficial way and give out recommendations on how to establish and/or access them wherever and whenever needed.

**1.5. Mitigating the barriers for minority, underrepresented and/or disadvantaged students**

ESU will be monitoring and evaluating the situation of underrepresented students, disadvantaged students and vulnerable students in higher education. ESU will identify and proactively contact stakeholders in higher education that work to improve the situation of these student groups. Together with ESU's members research and data shall be collected and used to advocate for sufficient student support systems especially fostering equal access and opportunities, retention and completion. ESU will encourage its member unions to exchange on the barriers that those student groups face in their respective countries and develop anti-discrimination strategies to mitigate the barriers.

**1.6. Reforms on the topic of students with disabilities**

ESU will also map legislative frameworks and examples of good practices, in order to lobby for dedicated reforms on the topic of students with disabilities and possible recommendations at all levels within Higher Education.

**1.7. Affordable Housing and transportation**

ESU will further advocate for affordable housing and transportation for students. As stated in ESU's statement of Housing and Transport (passed at BM79) in the current context of rising student precarity across Europe, housing and transport play a central role in the quality of the living conditions of students. High costs related to accommodation create one of the main barriers to accessing higher education. ESU will identify stakeholders working on housing and transport and explore possible cooperation such as joint campaigns; secondly, ESU will analyse the actual dimension of the problem, consulting the NUSes in this regard.

## 2. European Education Area (EEA)

### 2.1. Mapping of student rights and conditions within European Universities

ESU will continue working with the students` councils established under the European Universities to map out student rights and conditions within member HEIs of the alliances, analysing the possibilities and the obstacles toward the bottom-up improvement of student rights and conditions within the alliances.

### 2.2. Democratic student participation within European Universities

ESU will strongly advocate to ensure meaningful, democratic student participation in the governance of the European Universities, as outlined in ESU's resolution "European Universities: it is about the students". Within the TF on Alliances, ESU will explore the cooperation opportunities with the student representation of the alliances and work on how to strengthen and support democratic student involvement within European University Alliances

### 2.3. Legal Statute and European Degree

ESU will monitor the developments on the legal statute and the European Degree by following the pilot projects and ensuring that social dimension, student-centred learning, quality assurance, ~~and~~ student participation in governance and avoiding the creation of unnecessary new administrative structures are included in the discussion. ESU will also organise capacity-building activities and discussions for the members on these topics.

### 2.4. Governance of the European Education Area (EEA)

ESU will advocate for a systematic involvement of student representatives and student related stakeholders in the EEA governance framework, namely in the High-Level Group on Education and Training as well as in Inter-EUA- Forums/Networks.

### 2.5. Financing of the European Universities

ESU will work on the issue of the mid-term funding of the European Universities, the role of national and European funds supporting the initiative, and the consequences between and within national HE systems. ESU

will advocate for funding that does not undermine current mobility opportunities or pose danger to free, accessible and public higher education.

### 2.6. Student-centeredness in EEA initiatives

ESU will advocate for student-centeredness in the European Commission's proposals for Council recommendations on Digitals Skills and Digital Education. In addition, ESU will actively promote the interests of students towards the EU institutions in regards to the development and proposals related to the EEA.

# 3. Quality

### 3.1. QA Pool – a pool of talent, knowledge and proactive student participation

3.1.1. ESU will take over the chairing of the European Quality Assurance Forum (EQAF) 2023 once again, and will make sure to implement some of the work important from the perspective of the QA Pool on the topic of the event.

3.1.2. Rules of Procedure of the QA Pool will be revised and updated and necessary changes will be agreed upon with the EC, in order to update the Rules of Procedure of the hacks. ESU will invest an additional effort to increase the involvement of the QA Pool members in all its activities.

### 3.2. Financial stability of the QA pool

The financial Rules of Procedure will be written for the QA Pool, in order to track the Pool's finances and to plan ahead for the activities of the Pool, especially in terms of physical participation in events. Financial Rules of the procedure will be consulted and adopted by the EC.

### 3.3. Development and possible revision of the European Standards and Guidelines.

Through the activities within the QA-Fit. The role of the project is to form the way towards the ESG revision) The project will conclude with the development of a policy message to be taken up further in national, European Union and EHEA policy discussions. In particular, the project findings will feed directly into the discussions leading up to the next Bologna Process Ministerial Conference in 2024 and, if appropriate, into the drafting of the 2024 Tirana Communiqué.

### 3.4. Multifaceted automatic recognition

ESU will work on promoting automatic recognition treaties, including through the Review of the Council Recommendation on promoting automatic mutual recognition of qualifications and learning periods abroad, but also highlighting the need for automatic recognition of all degrees obtained under the EUI initiative on all national levels whose HEI are parts of individual EUA's.

### 3.4. Micro-credentials

Micro-credentials continue to be at the centre of the Commission's plans for the upcoming years. More and more countries are working on their plans to implement micro-credentials in their respective national contexts. In the upcoming years within EHEA and beyond, the need for ESU is to keep up with the developments (linking micro-credentials with QFs), implementations, and contribute to the discussion on them being as learner-oriented and learner-friendly as possible.

### 3.5. External Quality Assurance Results (EQAR)

ESU will further work with EQAR within the EQAR Executive Board on the daily matters as well as contribute to the development of Database of External Quality Assurance Results (DEQAR), which is in the expansion phase of the tool, it is of importance that ESU also is involved in the discussions and help promote the digital database and the opportunities that come along with its implementation to the students (student representatives and QA experts). ESU will monitor the developments of the digital credentialing system developed under the Europass, ensuring that the supportive tools and initiatives are designed in a student-centered way. Additionally, ESU will further cooperate with EQAR to further develop the DEQAR database in order to build trust within the EHEA QA system, institutions and stakeholders.

### 3.6. QA of European Universities

Participation and actively lookout for opportunities in conducting review processes in EUNIS. The European Universities initiative is just kicking off - more and more initiatives start their operations, but with that, the issue of quality is also increasing in its relevance. The EUNIQ project has just ended leaving several questions still unanswered due to the nature of the alliances still evolving. ESU as the student representatives continue to keep a firm eye on the developments of QA in the EUAs perspective and highlight good practices that take place. By outlying good practices, it will be possible for others to follow the ensuite.

### 3.7. Learning and Teaching

The quality of learning & teaching is an important topic in European higher education - with the quality of assessment receiving more attention recently. ESU remains committed to Student-Centred Learning and will continue to work on raising awareness about this philosophy among all stakeholders. One of the principal avenues of this work is through ESU's continued collaboration in the BFUG Working Group on Learning & Teaching on developing tools to monitor and encourage enhancement and innovation in learning & teaching.

### 3.8. Learning and Teaching

Digital learning has to become more qualitative and accessible. The pandemic caused a radical shift in the use of digitalisation. ESU will advocate drawing from the lessons learned during the pandemic to achieve a sustainable long-term approach to digital learning. Tools that use Artificial Intelligence are receiving more attention lately, and it is a priority for ESU to make sure they are used with respect for ethics, privacy rights and data protection rights. ESU will monitor the developments of the EU Digital Education Action Plan (DEAP),

formulate demands about digital learning and teaching and advocate them through the policy processes and initiatives related to the DEAP.

# 4. Internationalisation and Mobility

## 4.1. Erasmus+ and Mobility

4.1.1. ESU will work with other organisations to ensure that inclusive physical mobility remains the main mobility format.

4.1.2. ESU will support Switzerland, Faroe Islands and the UK to lobby for fair mobility programmes with Europe, and continue to advocate towards making the Erasmus+ programme more accessible to all groups of learners in Europe.

4.1.3. ESU will continue to work on sustainable student mobility through the Green Erasmus project with Erasmus Student Network (ESN) and other partners, also advocating towards making the Erasmus+ programme more environmentally and socially sustainable.

4.1.4. Erasmus+ programme monitoring & evaluation

Concerning ESU's advocacy towards Erasmus+ programme, ESU will actively be engaged both in creating the monitoring and evaluation framework for Erasmus programme in 2021 and in Erasmus+ 2021-27 interim evaluation & Erasmus+ 2014-20 final evaluation starting in 2023 to assess whether Erasmus+ is working as intended from the students' perspective.

4.1.5. ESU will take into consideration aspects of mandatory Erasmus in its advocacy on Erasmus. In the long term, these elements will enable ESU to have a clearer position on the impact of mandatory mobility.

## 4.2. Internationalisation at home

ESU will actively monitor the developments in virtual exchanges and blended mobility to make sure they are not used as a discount solution to physical mobility, but rather as a tool for internationalisation at home, in a way that makes internationalisation more inclusive, and increases the accessibility of international competencies. ESU will continue to work with support ESN on the lobby of internationalisation at home.

## 4.3. Brain Drain in Higher Education

ESU will monitor the developments at the European level of the discourse around the topics of brain drain and balanced mobility and advocate for the contents of its Statement on Brain Drain.

## 4.4. Global engagement and solidarity

4.4.1. Promoting the broadening of the existing or setting new automatic recognition treaties for validated higher education degrees within EHEA and globally through tools such as the Lisbon Recognition Convention and the Global Recognition Convention;

4.4.2. ESU will make an effort to strengthen global partnerships and look to expand its network further. It will foster the current cooperation and collaboration with international student organisations and work towards engagement within the UN and its agencies.

**4.5. Revision of the Internationalisation and Mobility Policy Paper**

ESU will revise the Internationalisation and Mobility Policy Paper.

# 5. Public Responsibility, Governance and Financing of Higher Education

**5.1. Sustainability and Climate Education**

5.1.1. ESU will advocate for and campaign around climate education through Environmental campaigns by supporting and working with organisations such as SOS international, Generation Clime Europe and UNESCO. ESU will ensure that in its work, the response to the climate crisis is rooted in changing educational frameworks, and will advocate for the inclusion of climate education in HEIs curricula.

5.1.2. Advocating for cooperation between students and HEIs on a European and global level on sustainability as well as to encourage divestment from shares in fossil fuel companies;

5.1.3. Additionally, ESU will explore the possibility of finding funding to add the position of the sustainability coordinator, who will take charge of mainstreaming the climate and sustainability discourse within ESU's work.

**5.2. Belarus**

ESU will continue its support and advocacy work for the students and student organisations in Belarus demonstrating academic freedom and democracy, as well as supporting the diaspora of Belarusian student activists in exile due to the regime repression.

**5.3. Developing ESU's capacity and advocacy for Academic Freedom**

5.3.1. ESU will work alongside the BFUG towards the monitoring and implementation of the EHEA definition of academic freedom, as well as the definition of other fundamental values of the EHEA.

5.3.2. ESU, will work with its member unions and on the general European level to gather information on the level of understanding and engagement on the topic of academic freedom, institutional autonomy and academic

integrity, e.g. within the Task Force on Academic Freedom, which is working on a OSF (Open Society Foundation) ESU-project. Additionally, the Task Force on Academic Freedom in relation to the OSF funded project will look into different support mechanisms (such as capacity-building activities and advocacy training) that students can access in order to promote students' rights at the level of their HEIs, with a special focus on the role of student ombudspersons.

5.3.3. ESU will support its member unions in advocating for national scholarship schemes for Students at risk of persecution in their countries of origin, and will lobby at the European level to establish a similar framework programme at the EU level.

**5.4 Support for refugee students**

ESU, together with its member unions, will work on progressive improvement and assurance of complete access to HE and international mobility in all HEIs within the EHEA for all the refugee students. ESU will advocate for increasing the number of scholarships and other grants and services for refugee students who are studying or are going to study within the EHEA.

**5.5. Financing and governance of Higher Education**

5.5.1. ESU will support its member unions in monitoring the spending of the funds from the National Recovery and Resilience Plans and the Higher Education reforms associated, and in advocating for the stakeholders' involvement in the implementation of the Plans.

5.5.2. ESU will be involved in the discussion on the reform of the European Semester in order to make sure that investments in education are included in its new framework.

5.5.3. ESU will monitor the current trends of reforms of the governance of Higher Education in Europe and support its member unions in advocating against any commodifying tendencies, diminishment of student involvement in HE governance or retrenchment of the EHEA fundamental values.

5.5.4. ESU will start working on knowledge-building of the different funding systems for Higher Education in Europe, including the different types of public funding, in order to highlight recent trends of reform in that aspect and their effects on the commodification of Higher Education.

**5.6. Strengthening academic integrity in Higher Education**

ESU will strengthen their position in the promotion of academic integrity values under several projects, in collaboration with PUPP and ENAI. ESU will work on the role of students in preserving academic integrity values, with particular care to define the role of students ombudspersons and the role they should have in the EHEA.

# 6. Support for Ukraine and Ukrainian Students

6.1. ESU will Strive towards the support integration of the community of the students from Ukraine with the Higher Education community in other European Countries.

6.2. ESU will continue to work on the area of providing a relevant communication stream for Students from Ukraine looking for study opportunities in Europe. At the same time, ESU will take into consideration the development of balanced mobility opportunities for Ukrainian students to mitigate the brain drain from the Country.

6.3. ESU will support Ukrainian Students' efforts to further the structural development of the Ukrainian HE system, will continue to do the advocacy and map the needs of Ukrainian Students during and after the war.

6.4 ESU will advocate for equal rights for all students in Ukraine who are affected by the war, regardless of their nationality. ESU will take a stance against any discrimination against third-country students in the context of the war in Ukraine.

# 7. Organisational Development and Capacity Building

## 7.1. Making ESUs management and internal processes sustainable

ESU provides its new presidency obligatory appropriate training on administrative matters such as office and staff management as well as financial matters and if necessary. funds are to be reallocated to make this possible. The presidency together with the Hacks and staff will work on documenting procedures of processing the most important tasks in writing, creating office, financial and project handbooks.

## 7.2. Developing internal Policy on accountability of the elected  and selected members

ESU will work on creating an internal policy document for the hacks, that will more clearly define the terms such as the conflict of interest, organisational integrity, damaging institutional reputation etc. The Policy will be developed by the hacks team as an internal document, but it will be discussed with the Board and amended according to the suggestions received.

## 7.3 Revision of the Code of Conduct

In addition, the Hacks together with the Board shall revise the Code of Conduct, in particular with regard to CoC breaches by ESU representatives in their official capacity outside of ESU events.

## 7.4. Enhancing ESU's institutional memory

ESU will work on the creation of a student movement library to strengthen institutional memory and continuity in the advocacy by ensuring easy and concise access to different European and global policies within higher education and advocacy.

## 7.5. Responding to membership's needs

ESU will reflect on data collected in the questionnaire on the needs of its members and through the reassessment reports from full member unions to build on shaping the transparency and support work towards the member unions.

## 7.6. Accountability of ESU nominated representatives

ESU will work on strengthening the feedback loop and accountability with ESU nominated representatives to external bodies and working groups, especially those representatives that are no longer in the hacks team to ensure continuity and conformity of the advocacy work. Nominated representatives shall submit a report of their work for each Board Meeting in written form.

## 7.7. Reviving ESU's Pool of Trainers

ESU will re-establish its Pool of Trainers and continue to seek opportunities for externally funded projects to support the activity of the Pool of Trainers to ensure accessibility of the capacity-building opportunities for the member unions and ESU representatives.

## 7.8. Revision of ESU's Financial Strategy

ESU will revise the Financial Strategy, focusing on transparent and clear reporting to its members as well as ways of ensuring diversified sources of funding for ESU by working towards building a financial plan that is sustainable and fit for the purpose.

## 7.9. Financial officer

ESU will investigate the possibility of hiring an employee (full-time or part-time) as a financial officer.

## 7.10. Creating equity plan

ESU will create an equity plan that is intersectional including but not limited to dimensions of inclusion, gender equality, accessibility, racism, homophobia, transphobia, ablelism and xenophobia. ESU actively works to identify and eradicate discrimination that occurs in its operations and structures. ESU will consult the board at least once before the first draft. E.g. Revisit the Gender Mainstreaming Strategy

### 7.11. Providing ESU members with materials

Upon request, ESU will provide its members with materials in order to equally enable the promotion of ESU's work at a European, national and regional level.

**7.12.** ESU will work towards creating structures that ensure synergies and better utilization of resources for the international lobbying and advocacy conducted by ESU and its members.