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EUROPEAN STUDENTS' UNION

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The European Students' Union (ESU) is an umbrella organisation that represents and promotes the educational, social, economic and cultural interests of nearly 20 million students in Europe.

Our full and associate members are national unions of students and transnational student organisations from across the continent.

Since its founding in 1982, ESU has been a key player in shaping higher education, actively working and fighting for a sustainable, accessible and high-quality education system.

We advocate on behalf of students, particularly towards the European Union, the Bologna Follow-Up Group, the Council of Europe and UNESCO.



ESU's 2022 in review

As 2022 is coming to an end, we are reflecting upon what the year brought to the European student movement and how ESU developed in response to various opportunities and challenges. On the last day of the year, we highlight the **key activities and results of ESU for 2022**, with an eye for what we take with us and will further enhance in 2023.

In 2022 we kindly welcomed our membership, alumni and partners to celebrate the **40th anniversary of ESU in Paris**. A lot happened in terms of the organisational development of ESU, with:

- **The main events of ESU coming back in person** after two years of online activity due to COVID. We organised two Board meetings – in **Paris** (together with FAGE) and in **Prague** (together with SK RVŠ) and two European Student Conventions – in **Malta** (together with KSU) and in **Aveiro** (together with FAIRe).
- A [new Hacks team](#) assumed their leadership position of the organisation in July.
- A new **Head of Secretariat** (Maria) and 4 new enthusiastic people joining our staff (Nuria, Vasiliki, Florine, Dussu).
- A **new and fresh visual identity for ESU**, adopted in November.
- Further development of our **Pool of Trainers**, which reopened for applications this December, and our **Quality Assurance Student Experts' Pool**, which renewed its membership and organised a training in Romania.
- A new [Gender Mainstreaming Strategy](#).
- **6 Task forces** with members of our National Unions of Students and other students.

With the illegal Russian invasion of Ukraine in early 2022, our advocacy efforts swiftly turned to supporting students from Ukraine in the country and across Europe. Among others, ESU coordinated the students' response to help fleeing students, demanded and obtained the suspension of Russia and Belarus from the Bologna Process, created an online [Helpdesk](#), led discussions on the [Erasmus+ funding for students from Ukraine](#), highlighted the exclusion of the international students fleeing Ukraine from the EU rules in the Temporary Protection Directive, as well as the situation of the Ukrainian students regularly enrolled in the rest of Europe and denied the possibility of joining their colleagues abroad.

In the second part of the year, another crisis demanded ESU to take action: the intertwined inflation and energy crises in Europe and their impact on the cost of living of students. With Higher Education Institutions considering closing for winter because of the energy bills, ESU launched the campaign '[Education is freezing](#)', focusing on measures to be adopted at European, national and institutional level to support students which struggle to make ends meet and to end student poverty. The campaign also highlighted the context being conducive to boost our sustainability demands, through increasing the energy efficiency, for example through [REPowerEU](#).

Along with these priorities, ESU continued the active presence and essential voice in European structures, both in the **Bologna Follow-Up Group** and its Board and towards the institutions of the European Union and the consultative bodies of the EU's **European Education Area**, such as the Working Group on Higher Education and the meeting of meetings of the Directors General in Higher Education. More concretely:

- With ESU as co-chair, the BFUG Working Group on Social Dimension **finalised the first list of indicators for implementing the Principles and Guidelines in Social Dimension.**

- ESU became again the **representative of consultative members** in the **Drafting Committee** of the Tirana EHEA Ministerial Communique.
- ESU was entrusted to **lead the drafting of the BFUG Statement on Academic Integrity** and contributed consistently to other statements drafted by the BFUG Working Group on Fundamental Values.
- At ESU's proposal, **a session on inflation and energy crises** was held in the **BFUG 82**.
- Our proposals on a [single EU digital HE platform](#) and of a [European Students At Risk programme](#) were included in the third interim and in the final reports of the **Conference on the Future of Europe**.
- In line with our priorities for the development of the European Education Area, **ESU coordinated a multi-level lobbying effort to include student representation within the European Alliances** as an element of the Council recommendation on building bridges and actively contributed to the development and support of the Alliances.
- We managed to have some of the **points of the [ESU statement on microcredentials](#)** to be included in the **Council recommendation on microcredentials**.
- **We worked on the improvement of the Erasmus+ programme** together with ESN, pointing out the delays in funding, voicing our support for the linearity of funding, managing to add a specific monitoring criterion on student support services (including student unions) in the Erasmus+ Student Charter and to have a specific mention to academic freedom within the ECHE monitoring guide.
- We continued our multi-level and multi-stakeholder advocacy for creating a **European Students at Risk programme**, including being speakers in a [CULT Committee hearing](#) on the subject.

- We contributed to the **public consultations of the European Commission on [Brain Drain](#), [Digitalisation](#), the [mid-term review of the Recovery and Resilience Facility](#) and [European Year of Skills 2023](#).**

In 2022 we continued our cooperation with countless partners that share our vision and interests in European Higher Education. With our main partners gathered in E4 (which along ESU includes EUA, EURASHE and ENQA), we co-organised the **European Quality Assurance Forum – EQAF** (where ESU was chairing the Programme Committee) and worked together in the **QA-FIT project** on the future of Quality Assurance and of the European Standards and Guidelines for QA. Within the annual Lifelong Learning Week of our partners from Lifelong Learning Platform, we continued our efforts towards strategic investment and monitoring of reforms in education by hosting an [event](#) on the **Recovery and Resilience Facility and the European Semester**.

We also strengthened our cooperation with many other partners, such as **OECD or the Council of Europe**. For the latter, we are involved in the Steering Committee on Education and contributed to the **Education Strategy of CoE**, engaged in the **preparatory group of the CoE Standing Conference** and were **elected for the [ETINED](#) Board**.

2022 was a transformational year for our projects' as well, with the revival of in person meetings and relevant developments in several projects ESU co-partners. Among them, we wrapped up a successful project on refugees, [Together Moving Forward \(TMF\)](#) and started the second cycle of our flagship project **Bologna with Stakeholders' Eyes ([BWSE FOR 2030](#))**. In a project funded by the Open Society Foundation, we launched a **survey on students' perception on academic freedom, institutional autonomy and academic integrity** and organised a capacity building seminar on the topic in Cluj-Napoca, Romania. We also organised the final event of the [ESC-tension](#) project on the rollout of the **European Student Card initiative**.

The year was also productive in terms of policy writing! ESU's Board approved, during the year, [ESU's vision on European Higher Education Policies](#), [Brain Drain Statement](#), [Statement on Academic Integrity](#), [Statement on the future of Student-centred learning](#) and several resolutions such as the [Resolution on the legal statute for alliances of Higher Education Institutions and on the European degree](#), [ESU's manifesto for the 2024 European Parliament elections](#), the [Resolution on Automatic Recognition](#) and the [Resolution on Financing European University Alliances](#). We also published an [analysis](#) on the student mental health policies in several European countries and expressed our solidarity with students and societies fighting for freedom – the [trial of Patrick Zaki](#), the [protests of students in Iran](#) or against the atrocities in Myanmar – and non-discrimination – the [attacks on the LGBTQ+ community in Slovakia](#) or [student participation in Croatia](#).

2022 has been a year with struggles and of a changing Europe, where the happiness to see each other again in person was paired with atrocities on the continent not seen for decades. In 2022 we have learnt and improved, and we are looking forward with hope and enthusiasm to a prosperous and safe 2023 for all students!



Executive Committee Members of the European Students' Union 2022-2023 mandate. (1st row l.t.r.) Antoine Bakhsh, Ana Gvritshvili, Matteo Vespa, Iris Kimizoglu, Horia Onița. (2nd) Oraz Myradov, Joanna Maruszczak, Emily MacPherson. (3rd) Katrīna Sproģe, Tór Marni Weihe, Tanguy Guibert. (4th) Andrej Pirjevec, Sandi Rizvić.