

Towards 2020: A Student-Centred Bologna Process

European Students' Union

The European Students' Union (ESU) is the umbrella organisation of 49 national unions of students from 38 countries and through these members represents over 11 million students.

The aim of ESU is to represent and promote the educational, social, economic and cultural interests of students at a European level towards all relevant bodies and in particular the European Union, Bologna Follow-Up Group, Council of Europe and UNESCO.

ESU was formerly known as ESIB – The National Unions of Students in Europe.

National Unions affiliated to ESU retain autonomy over all policy areas, and may choose to make individual submissions based on national policy. ESU operates a democratic forum for policy and debate on national issues affecting students and ESU's role is to reflect the collective position.

Abstract

Although significant progress has been made since the inception of the Bologna Process, it is now widely regarded that the aims of the process will by no means be fully achieved by 2010. Countries have been selective in the implementation of the aims of the Bologna Process, and as such it is crucial that we continue to work on the current action lines post 2010.

Since the beginning of the Bologna Process the European Students' Union (ESU) has played a significant role in the conception and implementation of the Bologna Process goals. With this paper, ESU wants to make a contribution to the further development of the Bologna Process in a critical but constructive way and suggests concrete steps for progress, outlined below:

The Social Dimension

ESU believes in a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) that promotes high quality education for all, based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay. This paper underlines the social dimension as a fundamental cornerstone of the entire reform agenda in order to guarantee that the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels should reflect the diversity of our populations.

1. A target to increase participation across the EHEA by 2020 should be established,

implemented in a way that ensures participative equity, with such moves funded by society, not the individual

2. Independent research units should be in place to collect objective data on progress concerning the social dimension
3. Ministries should guarantee free education accessible for all, based on public funding
4. Tuition fees should be abolished and ministers must ensure that generous, accessible and parent-independent grants are available

Mobility

As mobility is one of the central goals of the Bologna Process and a major challenge and prerequisite for the EHEA, ESU promotes mobility for all, independent of the socio-economic background.

5. Recognising mobility as a barometer of the successfulness of the Bologna reforms, with the aim of 20% of all students mobile by 2020
6. Creation of a European level mobility fund steered by a coalition of relevant stakeholders

Quality Assurance

We believe that the Bologna Process should be a catalyst for enhancing the quality of education within Europe and a move towards treating students as co-creators of their educational experience. ESU believes in a EHEA that promotes and delivers high quality education accessible for all, putting the individual student at the centre of their learning experience.

7. Ensure that students are equal partners in all quality assurance processes, including their governance, external and internal procedures
8. The Social Dimension should be embedded by including student support services within quality assurance processes.

Qualifications Frameworks, Recognition & Lifelong Learning

In order to increase the quality of higher education all across Europe, ESU promotes the implementation of qualification frameworks and its recognition as well as lifelong learning as an essential aspect of the role of higher education in the development of a stable society with more social cohesion.

9. Continue work to ensure ECTS and qualification frameworks are used properly not just nationally, but at the student level, and are recognised across the EHEA

10. Acknowledgment that lifelong learning is an integral part of the education system and should be treated as a social good first and foremost, and not as an economic driver

Bologna in a Global Context, Stocktaking & Data Collection

ESU strongly opposes attempts to use the EHEA for globalisation on a competitive basis for commercial practices while stressing the importance of cooperation as the basis of the Bologna Process. ESU rejects the use of rankings as an aspect of quality assurance within the Bologna Process.

11. A commitment to ensure the current action lines are achieved before considering widening full membership of the Bologna reforms, whilst still being open to helping other countries interested in the reforms.

12. Opposing any moves to introduce rankings as an action line of the Bologna Process

The Process after 2010

Ministers should acknowledge that there has been inconsistent implementation of the reforms at a grassroots level and so it is necessary to ensure that students are full and equal partners in the next stages of the reforms, both at the European, national and institutional level.

13. The Bologna Process must continue as an intergovernmental, non-legally binding framework, based on cooperation

14. A fund should be created to support common projects and events on relevant topics approved by the Bologna Follow-Up Group, allowing a more diverse group of countries to participate and take the lead in the follow-up activities

15. Ensure students are full partners in the next stage of the reforms both at the European, national and institutional level.

16. Develop checks and measures to ensure the implementation of the Bologna Process at the national and institutional level is in a comprehensive and integrated manner.

The Bologna Process & Lisbon Strategy

ESU underlines that the Bologna Process and the Lisbon Strategy must clearly remain distinct.

17. Ministers should avoid convergence of the Bologna Process and Lisbon Strategy. The two must remain distinct.

Vision

ESU is committed to a European Higher Education Area that promotes and delivers:

- High quality, student centred education
- Social justice, participative equity and opportunities for mobility
- Democratic Higher Education Institutions and societies, which create critical thinkers and active citizens

And recognises that these are all equally relevant and interlinked goals. Democratic Higher Education Institutions cannot exist without social justice and participative equity. Participative equity is a stimulating factor for high quality education because it is an enrichment for the educational environment. By letting the diverse student body participate in the higher education decision making processes, a student centred approach can be fostered. Therefore these goals are mutually reinforcing.

As such, the EHEA must:

- Embed a quality culture whilst enshrining academic freedom
- Reject the notion that Higher Education (HE) is a commodity or a tool for profit
- Work on the principle of cooperation, not competition
- Include students as co-creators and partners in the delivery and governance of the learning experience
- Recognise its own responsibility to society itself as a social good, and as such, be publicly funded.

Social Dimension

Context: □ □ □

ESU believes the Social Dimension of higher education to be the fundamental cornerstone of the entire reform agenda. ESU promotes the democratisation of Higher Education, so that everyone will be able to access and succeed regardless of their background. ESU states that all discrimination is equally objectionable. ESU considers education to be the main instrument for emancipation instead of embedding the existing inequalities present in our society.

The overall goal “that the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels should reflect the diversity of our populations” (London Communiqué of May 2007) must be the guiding element for defining future objectives and must be the indicator for monitoring the effects and the success of the reforms introduced.

Praise:

Through the Bergen and London Communiqués, ministers (as a result of efforts by students and other stakeholders) reaffirmed the importance of students being able to complete their studies without obstacles related to their social and economic background and promised to continue their efforts to provide adequate student services, create more flexible learning pathways into and within higher education, and to widen participation at all levels on the basis of equal

opportunity. They would also report on their national strategies and action plans and invite stakeholders to participate fully. Finally, the ministers asked for the development of comparable and reliable indicators and data to measure progress towards the overall objective of the social dimension.

The Bologna Follow Up Group (BFUG) has asked for National Action Plans on the social dimension, and ESU believes that mapping of the current situation can now take place. This could move the work of this action line forward, even if there are no common objectives to achieve, but only if ministers don't stop at the planning stage.

ESU supports the definition given to the social dimension in London and believes the governments should strive for participative equity in higher education.

Criticism:

The promises made by the ministers have been violated in many countries. Education funding and financial support for students has become the biggest area of concern for our member unions. Across the EHEA we see tuition fees being introduced or where they exist already, raised in value. Furthermore there are constant calls for a marketisation of education to substitute for absent public funding for institutions. These moves are contradictory to the ministers' intentions of "students being able to complete their studies without obstacles related to their social and economic background." (London Communiqué of May 2007).

The fear of debt and student hardship is a huge deterrent to entering Higher Education, especially for people from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Yet despite exactly this group being targeted in the 2005 Bergen Communiqués text on the social dimension, we continue to see little progress towards suitable student financial support systems. Despite the importance being given to the social dimension, their commitments remain vague. Ministers should for the coming years commit to lowering study costs and providing adequate support to students through sufficient student financing and student service systems.

There remain many barriers to education, including admission policies based solely on prior academic achievement and extra-curricular activity; in-accessible curricula, materials and estates and a lack of appropriate information available to first generation students. Yet so far the social dimension action line has failed to stimulate a debate on how the EHEA can work to remove these barriers after 2010. Please refer to ESU's policy paper, A Social Dimension to Higher Education. The next ministerial communiqués should agree on concrete measures to take progress the social dimension action line.

Proposals:

1. A target to increase participation across the EHEA by 2020 should be established in the Bologna Process, but must be implemented in a balanced way that ensures participative equity and fully accessible higher education, so that the expansion of higher education is

accompanied by real democratisation of HE participation.

2. This aspiration must be recognised as a benefit to society, not just the individual, and therefore be publicly financed.
3. Comparable data on support provisions such as living conditions, guidance, counselling, financial support and socio-economic backgrounds of students must be independently collected from all Bologna signatories and used to map progress of this action line and spread best practice.
4. Working towards generous, accessible and parent-independent system of grants that supports the student as a learner, meaning covering all costs of living and learning, should be committed to by ministers.
5. Tuition fees must be abolished. Where tuition fees exist, they should be debated. Also measures should be taken to compensate for the burden of tuition fees on lower socioeconomic backgrounds, through grants, sliding scales of repayment, bursaries etc. Furthermore, studies on the impact of the introduction of tuition fees should be undertaken.
6. Bologna events should be a platform to debate initiatives to remove barriers to Higher Education and ministers must commit to giving the social dimension the same amount of attention as is given to the other action lines.
7. The United Nations Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which states that “Higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, [...], in particular by the progressive introduction of free education”, should be respected by all Bologna countries.
8. Study costs should be monitored regularly and student financing should be based on covering all costs of living and learning. Student financing must be adapted to the outcomes of this.
9. Students’ services should be subsidized sufficiently to provide student housing, transportation discounts, healthy food provisions, sport facilities, medical care, discounts for cultural activities, etc. Students’ services must be accessible for all students, including international students. These services must pay special attention to making studying and student life accessible for disabled students.
10. Anti-discrimination legislation covering higher education must be set up so that all kinds of discrimination can be fought.
11. The ministries must deliver on their National Action Plans.

Mobility

Context:

Ministers identified that “mobility of staff, students and graduates is one of the core elements of the Bologna Process, creating opportunities for personal growth, developing international cooperation between individuals and institutions, enhancing the quality of higher education and research, and giving substance to the European dimension” (London Communiqué of May 2007).

ESU believes that mobility for all members of the EHEA can have an immense academic value and is vital in promoting wider awareness of the European diversity, fostering the development of intercultural skills and making tolerance and peace the core values of the European societies.

ESU believes mobility should not be only a statistical issue, but a real instrument of reaching a permeable EHEA, both vertically and horizontally, as an essential precondition for equal freedom of choice for every student

Praise:

Since 1999, mobility has increased with 51,600 more students becoming mobile through Erasmus mobility programmes and it could be argued that the Bologna Process has dramatically raised the profile of student mobility across a number of stakeholders, with initiatives such as ESU's Lets Go! campaign in October 2008, becoming common place.

The working group on Portability of Grants and Loans has concluded that "introducing or expanding the portability of grants and loans is possible and generally within the capacity of individual countries."

Criticism:

Considering the expansion of Higher Education, the increase we have seen since the inception of the Bologna Process has been minimal. The challenges the Bologna Process was meant to tackle remain today, including; visa obstacles, lack of recognition of qualifications, no training in language and culture of the hosting country, low financial support and obstacles to portability of loans and grants when existing, unbalanced flows of mobility across the continent (affecting in particular the Eastern European countries) and inequitable composition of the mobile students.

47% of institutions admit that their students face difficulties in having their credits gained abroad recognised on their return, which has been the case since 2003. Various stakeholders often view mobility, albeit still in a positive light, simply as a 'gap year' or a personal development type of activity. The academic value should be far more prominent and recognition of credits gained during periods of mobility at accredited Higher Education Institutions should never be questioned.

Mobility should not be about turning higher education into a commodity. At the moment we have seen developments that some institutions charge higher tuition fees for students from outside EHEA. There is also a risk of higher education institutions promoting and marketing education as a commodity instead of creating transparency and focusing on quality of education

The financial barriers to mobility still remain. Although ministers have already committed to the portability of student finance (Berlin Ministerial meeting, 2003) in many countries this is limited or not possible at all. Regardless of portability, financial gaps remain in support available in to students from countries or European regions which have lower living costs and economic capacities. There exists no central source of support in such situations to level the mobility playing field.

Academic structures and curriculum have made some, but not substantial, progress to creating 'mobility windows' – periods within the duration of a course where shorter periods of time studying out with the home country can take place. Making our structures flexible enough to allow for a mobile semester or term would be beneficial to many traditionally non-mobile students.

Proposals:

1. The level and accessibility of mobility should be formally recognised as a measure of success of the Bologna Process
2. Ministers should commit to the target of 20% of their students becoming outwardly mobile by 2020, whilst vastly improving participative equity within this 20%, and institutions must create measures to ensure that credits gained during mobility are recognised on return.
3. Where loans and grants exist, they should be to cover living and learning costs. Ministers should commit to portability of these finances during both horizontal and vertical mobility. There should also be no discrimination between students of different nationalities in having access to social services.
4. A central mobility fund should be created and contributed to by EHEA countries and financed according to the principle of public financing.
5. Work should be undertaken to support institutions in creating 'mobility windows' within their courses, but also work towards more flexible options so students are not tied to pre-defined "mobility windows".
6. Higher education institutions should be encouraged to offer substantial language education to their students to make mobility programmes more open and efficient.
7. Ministers should ensure that there are no barriers or disincentives to higher education institutions in facilitating cooperation between different institutions to support mobility.
8. Visa regulations must not hinder mobility
9. Resources should not be used on marketing strategies and campaigns, but on providing transparent and qualitative information

Quality Assurance

Praise:

Students have witnessed progress in the area of quality assurance, which has the potential of enhancing transparency and accountability in Higher Education. The European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance are becoming the reference for quality assurance procedures across the continent. The European Register for Quality Assurance Agencies was created in respect to the principles of partnership and mutual trust.

Criticism:

Student participation is still limited in some of these systems. Quite often the involvement is seen only as a mere source of feedback, treating students as costumers of a service. The

European Standards & Guidelines commit agencies to having students as members of external quality assurance processes only 'as appropriate'

A fundamental challenge remains in the development of internal quality assurance at the institutional level. ESU refuses mere formal, bureaucratic and repetitive procedures with no relevant effect in the institutional governance or culture to be sufficient for the improvement of the learner experience.

The quality of the educational experience for students transcends academic standards. Support services, both academic and welfare related, are essential in supporting students through their degrees, yet there is little evidence of processes to enhance these services.

Proposals:

1. Students should be recognised as full members of internal and external quality assurance processes by institutions and national quality assurance agencies by defining this in the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area.
2. The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area should become a more concrete and readable text, that defines the role of all actors in Quality Assurance and leaves less room for interpretation of what is mandatory and what is optional.
3. National quality assurance agencies should embed a quality culture based on enhancement rather than simply meeting minimum standards, across the EHEA.
4. 'students taking part in external quality assurance processes should be treated as full members of the review panel, financially and otherwise.
5. The Social Dimension should be embedded by including student support services within quality assurance processes.
6. Moves to increase the transparency of an institutions' quality must be done in coherence with the principle of the European cooperation that the ESG and the EQAR ensured, and must be entrusted to the E4 partners.
7. Rankings are not a substitute nor complementary to QA activities, as they introduce different logics and principles that contradict the ones enshrined in the ESG (such as peer review, stakeholder engagement, cooperation focus, enhancement instead of conformity and multiplicity of criteria, rather than responding to a narrow indicator list)

Qualifications Frameworks & Recognition

Praise:

The description of degrees and modules in terms of student workload and learning outcomes enables recognition, transfer and accumulation of credits by learners and the link between different streams of education.

Criticisms:

Many of our members report ECTS not being implemented properly with workload being wrongly calculated. Moreover, it seems to be a problem that the workload definition differs in several countries. Teachers keep sticking to old paradigms that do not meet the demand of the learning outcomes. As learning outcomes are being under communicated, the learner is not sure what they are meant to have learned.

Internal mobility should now be much easier with ECTS providing a common framework in countries with binary or private/public higher education systems; however this does not seem to be the case in some countries. Regardless of whether or not ECTS and quality frameworks have been embraced at a national level, it would appear that these tools are often not being implemented properly on our campuses and are not linked to the European level. Problems also arise from not recognising informal and non-formal learning, which thus restricts access to Higher Education.

As with so much of the reforms, the Bologna Process must remain a continuous process. However important, the establishment of ECTS, learning outcomes and national qualifications frameworks aligned with both the EHEA-QF and the EQF are not an end in itself. The ultimate goal of introducing these tools must be the creation of a system of student-centred learning, empowering and allowing the learner to be aware of the learning achieved, while making them take up a more active role in the learning process. Such a system requires appropriate support, tutoring and guidance structures that cater for the concrete needs of students.

ESU feels very concerned with the development of the ECVET system. Indeed, we consider that it can weaken the ECTS system and the transparency and recognition mechanisms in Europe. The focus should be on the proper implementation of the ECTS system rather than developing a new system.

Proposals:

1. A commitment from all higher education institutions needs to be made for the proper implementation of the ECTS system, with a real definition of learning outcomes and a proper evaluation of the workload.
2. Effective support mechanisms for supporting, training and empowering academics and students in implementing and understanding ECTS and EQF must be identified in a concrete manner.
3. When designing study programmes and courses, Learning outcomes must be put at their core and followed by a proper credit allocation based on overall workload, not comparisons with other programmes or courses. Study programmes and courses should not be accredited or approved unless their learning outcomes are formulated precisely enough, e.g. there are clearly identifiable and verifiable outputs. An open stress on learning outcomes should be a part of a quality culture.

Lifelong Learning

Praise:

Lifelong learning remains an essential aspect of the role of higher education in the development of a stable society with more social cohesion, and was re-affirmed at the 2007 London ministerial meeting where it was acknowledged that the action line would work “to improve social cohesion, equal opportunities and quality of life” by widening access, recognising prior learning, and promoting student-centred modes of delivery. The BFUG has been tasked with developing a common view of the role of Higher Education in lifelong learning.

Criticism:

However in increasing or introducing tuition fees, students in some countries remain wary that the lifelong learning agenda will be viewed as a market or source of additional private income for the institutions in the name of Bologna. Lifelong learning must be developed in the context of the public responsibility and must be regarded as a basic right alongside with the right to education in general.

Lifelong learning programmes need high quality and research-based education. Therefore there is a demand for sufficient public financing to reach this standard.

Recognition of prior learning remains a concern of many students, and we must ensure that lifelong learning systems do not reproduce social inequalities, especially by charging students for achieving credits through recognition of prior learning gained in formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts, but instead recognise prior learning from a range of settings, provide appropriate and empowering information for learners at any stage of education, and so will benefit equally adult learners and graduates.

Proposals:

1. Ministers should officially acknowledge the belief that lifelong learning is primarily concerned with the basic human right to education and not an economic or competitive imperative, through the next ministerial Communiqué
2. Institutions must be supported by public authorities and engage in a public debate about the mechanisms for the assessment and validation of learning achieved in different settings, fostering awareness about the mechanisms and the coherence of principles of the recognition of prior learning in the national systems.
3. These mechanisms should be subject to quality assurance.
4. Lifelong learning programmes must not be misused for concealing the introduction of tuition fees for any group of students.

EHEA in a Global Context

Context:

The External Dimension remains a difficult topic, trapped between a focus on marketing

Europe's higher education and promoting the academic cooperation between Europe and other regions of the world. Part of the motivation for triggering the Bologna Process was the concern with the brain drain of European students and the competition in the international students market with worldwide providers. The relative success of the Bologna Process in the eyes external to Europe; the demand for international experience both by studying abroad or within the context of domestic campuses contact; the perception of quality inherent to the level of internationalisation activities and the need for finding alternative sources of income has promoted an ever growing engagement of the European universities in the internationalisation activities. The Bologna Process has also been viewed with much interest in other parts of the world and has influenced initiatives in these countries.

Praise:

European students are in favour of expanding the achievements of the Bologna Process in the context of academic values such as cooperation, increased recognition of qualifications and intensified dialogue between institutions. The Bologna Process has increased the transparency and comparability of higher education. The Bologna Process has put increased focus on the quality of education across Europe and citizens from around the world should be able to access that education in the same spirit of social justice, equity and mobility that ESU believes should be the corner stone's of Higher Education.

Criticism:

However, attempts to use the EHEA for globalisation on a competitive basis for commercial practices are strongly opposed by students. Deliberate brain drain policies damage the overall development of the world, foster poverty and social and economic instability (that will ultimately affect Europe) and is contrary to the Bologna objectives. Although significant progress has been made since the inception of the Bologna Process, it is now widely regarded that the eleven action lines will by no means be fully delivered by 2010. Countries have been selective in the action lines they deliver on, and as such it is critical that we continue to work in a European context before we consider widening the scope to that of an even more international vision.

Several Bologna countries have recently introduced or raised tuition fees for non-European students. International students are seen as cash cows that can feed the university budget. The European higher education is attempting to compete in this market by raising the attractiveness of its education system. By charging high fees to foreign students, European countries take part in the higher education market.

Also HEIs are engaging in marketing activities that are taking away resources from teaching and research and do not provide truthful information that prospective students need.

ESU believes that higher education is a public good that should be publicly funded and strongly opposes making a market out of the European higher education area. Mobility is not a trade and education should not be seen as a commodity. The ministers have to make clear that mobility is about the exchange of students and not about selling education.

Although significant progress has been made since the inception of the Bologna Process, it is now widely regarded that the eleven action lines will by no means be fully delivered by 2010. Countries have been selective in the action lines they deliver on, and as such it is critical that we continue to work on the current action lines. However, we must also work with other parts of the world through consultation and cooperation. ESU sees the growing importance of both global research-cooperation concerning the complex issues the world society faces as a whole and the need for comparable education systems also outside Europe.

Proposals:

Ministers should commit to:

1. Following through on the current action lines. The BP should not be seen as a product, but as a package of coherent reforms that encompass principles and values like academic freedom, stakeholder participation, etc.
2. A commitment to resisting brain drain and calls to globalise the EHEA in a way to promote market values, and reaffirm cooperation as the basis of the Bologna Process
3. Exchange programmes for students and staff to and from developing countries with the aim of building competence without supporting brain drain
4. Reaffirm that no more commitments in GATS and other trade agreements will be made regarding education.
5. Support countries that want to engage in similar reforms, keeping the above mentioned principles and values in mind. Policy fora and support projects should be set up. This cooperation should happen with stakeholder involvement.
6. Refuse labels to countries implementing Bologna-like reforms

Stocktaking & Data Collection

Praise:

The official analysis of the progress of implementation, based on the ministries' own reports, has contributed to accelerating the reform by exposing the countries' evolution.

Criticism:

However, as the analysis remains subjective and focused on formal and legal implementation, countries were more successful in scoring when promoting the formal and legal face of change of the Bologna reforms. Very soon, the stocktaking exercise was turned into a source of legitimacy for the national reforms while having no basis to assess the truthfulness and accuracy of the data provided, or to if reforms had actually reached the student on the ground. In the stocktaking exercise stakeholders quite often have no chance on contribution, although this is strongly recommended by the BFUG. Furthermore, there aren't any further means of

assessing the reality.

European students strongly oppose recent calls to implement common European criteria for university classification in the EHEA. Rankings are completely against the spirit of cooperation over competition that ESU are calling for. They invite institutions to manipulate or redefine their targets so that they can make progress in tables without making any progress for students, put institutions under pressure to pick the path that leads to success, (however narrow that path might be) and do not provide objective information for students. The most developed quality assurance systems have purposely avoided defining institutional success in a way that can be ranked. ESU believes that national and institutional differences are EHEA's essence and strength. ESU is not opposing transparency of institutional diversity as such, but calls for more impartial information about institutions - information in such form that does not rank institutions or divide them in preferential categories.

In some action lines, across the majority of signatory countries, public authorities have developed reforms in a superficial or solely legalistic way. This "à la carte" approach has and will continue to damage the quality of education, a backlash in the equity of access, participation and completion of higher education.

Proposals:

1. Research unit(s) must be in place to analyse qualitative implementation of policy areas, as well as clear, comparable and objective goals and benchmarks to assess progress by, rather than vague political commitments made every two years. The BFUG should supervise that this research unit(s) work(s) independently.
2. Ministers should publicly commit themselves to not introducing rankings as an aspect of the Bologna Process. The focus should remain on quality assurance, without rankings. Institutional differences have to be made transparent without prejudice or preference, and the problems of Higher Education Institutions must be identified so that they can be fixed.

The Process After 2010

Praise:

The Bologna Secretariat plays a fundamental role, providing much of the dynamics and orientations to the work on the priorities decided upon by the ministers in the biannual conferences. ESU believes the Bologna Secretariat should not be handed in to any European organisation, but should rather rely on the collective support of the Bologna participating countries and organisations.

ESU recognises that the non-binding character of the Bologna Process and its loose follow-up structures at the European level have allowed for significant progress in setting up the agenda and the progress of countries.

Students, via ESU, have been involved in shaping the EHEA and we see ourselves as equal partners in the process. However, students also have to be involved as equal partners in the process at the national and local level.

Criticism:

With core concepts such as ECTS, student workload and learning outcomes, student centred learning and flexible learning paths, the Bologna Process intrinsically contains a paradigm shift from input to outcome based teaching. However, this paradigm shift has not arrived on the higher education institutions level. Therefore, these core principles can't have any effect on the study programs and the individual students. It is crucial that these principles are being implemented on the grassroots level. This has to be done in a meaningful way, upholding academic freedom of higher education institutions and opposing the tendency of overly structured, "school-like" curricula.

The gap developing between EU and non-EU Bologna signatories is significant and compounded by the blurring between the Bologna and Lisbon agenda.

At the national level, and to an even greater degree at the institutional level, the degree to which students are involved in the shaping the Bologna reforms varies significantly, ranging from being seen as full partners, through to being passively consulted and even outright excluded. Although students were not involved in the Bologna Process formally until the 2001 ministerial meeting, the value to which taking the reforms forward with all stakeholders as full participants is undeniable and their exclusion will lead to a technocratic process disconnected from its members.

Proposals:

1. The Bologna Process must continue as a intergovernmental, non-legal framework based on cooperation
2. A fund should be created to support common projects and events on relevant topics approved by the Bologna Follow-Up Group, so that a more diverse group of countries to participate and take the lead in the follow-up activities
3. Ministers should acknowledge that there has been inconsistent implementation of the reforms at a grassroots level, and develop checks and measure to ensure the implementation of the Bologna Process at the national and institutional level is in a comprehensive and integrated manner.
4. Ministeries must not only make a firm commitment to inclusion of students as full partners in their national reforms, but must ensure that this is also being implemented. Moreover, a commitment must come from ministries and institutions to include students in all decision making processes at all levels.
5. There needs to be developed a sustainable way of financing the Bologna Process by the member states.

The Tension Between the Bologna Process and the Lisbon Strategy

Context:

The Bologna Process and the Lisbon Strategy differ on many aspects:

1. Aims

The aims of the Bologna Process and the Lisbon Strategy differ greatly, as well as the rhetoric and policy proposals. The Lisbon Strategy has a very instrumental view on education. This strong understanding of education as a tool for the economic growth and hunt for economic benchmarks, organized after the need of the labour market, is undermining the responsibility of higher education to society, such as in the understanding of innovation and research, equity and solidarity. Some aspects of the aims and measures are contradictory. The merging of both processes results in confusion of their aims and measures with a tendency of the Lisbon Strategy to dominate the Bologna Process.

2. Geographical Scope

The geographical scope of the Bologna Process currently involves 46 countries, while the Lisbon Strategy encompasses only the members of the European Union, the European Economic Area, the European Free Trade Area and the candidates to the European Union.

3. Funding

In the Lisbon Strategy, the funding streams are diverse in addition to the financial support from the European Commission. While member states agreeing on action lines within the framework of the Lisbon Agenda can assign community funding throughout the signatories, no comparative instrument exists within the Bologna Process. The European Commission financing of Bologna action lines has resulted in their acceptance as full member in the process in Prague 2001, thus giving it influence on the concrete implementation and power to accelerate or slowdown certain policy areas in the Bologna Progress, while it's member states are members of the process themselves.

4. Stakeholders

In the Lisbon Strategy, stakeholders are limited to social partners and governments. In the Bologna Process on the other hand, representative organisations of the stakeholders in the field are involved, plus the national governments and the European Commission. The Bologna Process is far more inclusive and based on negotiation and joint development among the stakeholders. ESU believes that the impact of the European Commission has on Higher Education in the framework of the Bologna Process and the specific topics that it is dealing with, are effectively expanding beyond their agreed supporting competencies, such as promoting mobility, high quality higher education and cooperation between EU member states.

5. Policy Development

The Lisbon Strategy is developed and monitored by the member states without guaranteed involvement of the stakeholders in higher education, therefore it is less participative. The policy discussion is taking place rather topdown. Conversely, the Bologna Process is based on

inclusive representation including all stakeholders in higher education and in principle is open to input from bottom-up.

Proposals:

1. A clear distinction between both processes should be acknowledged in order to prevent the merging of rationales from the Lisbon Strategy and the Bologna Process. The economic rhetoric's of the Lisbon Strategy should be kept out of the Bologna Process. Actions to ensure that Non-EU countries are not marginalized through conversion of the two initiatives must be defined.
2. Moves should be taken to limit the role of the European Commission to their legal remit, according to the EU Treaties.
3. and increase the means of the European Parliament to exercise democratic control over the actions taken by the European Commission in the Bologna Process and the Lisbon Strategy.

Adopted at Board Meeting 55, Sofia, Bulgaria, November 2008.