



Student Participation in Higher Education Governance

- State of student participation in Europe
- Introducing dual system of students' organizing in Serbia (Law on Students' Organizing)

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A brief history

West European Student Information Bureau

Minutes of the Board Meeting held in Stockholm, 18th October, 1982

Present:	<u>Members</u>	SFS	-	{ Sweden }
		NUS UK	-	{ United Kingdom }
		NSU	-	{ Norway }
		UNEF ID	-	{ France }
		SHI	-	{ Iceland }
	<u>Observers</u>	VVS/UNES	-	{ Switzerland }
		SYL	-	{ Finland }
		OH	-	{ Austria }

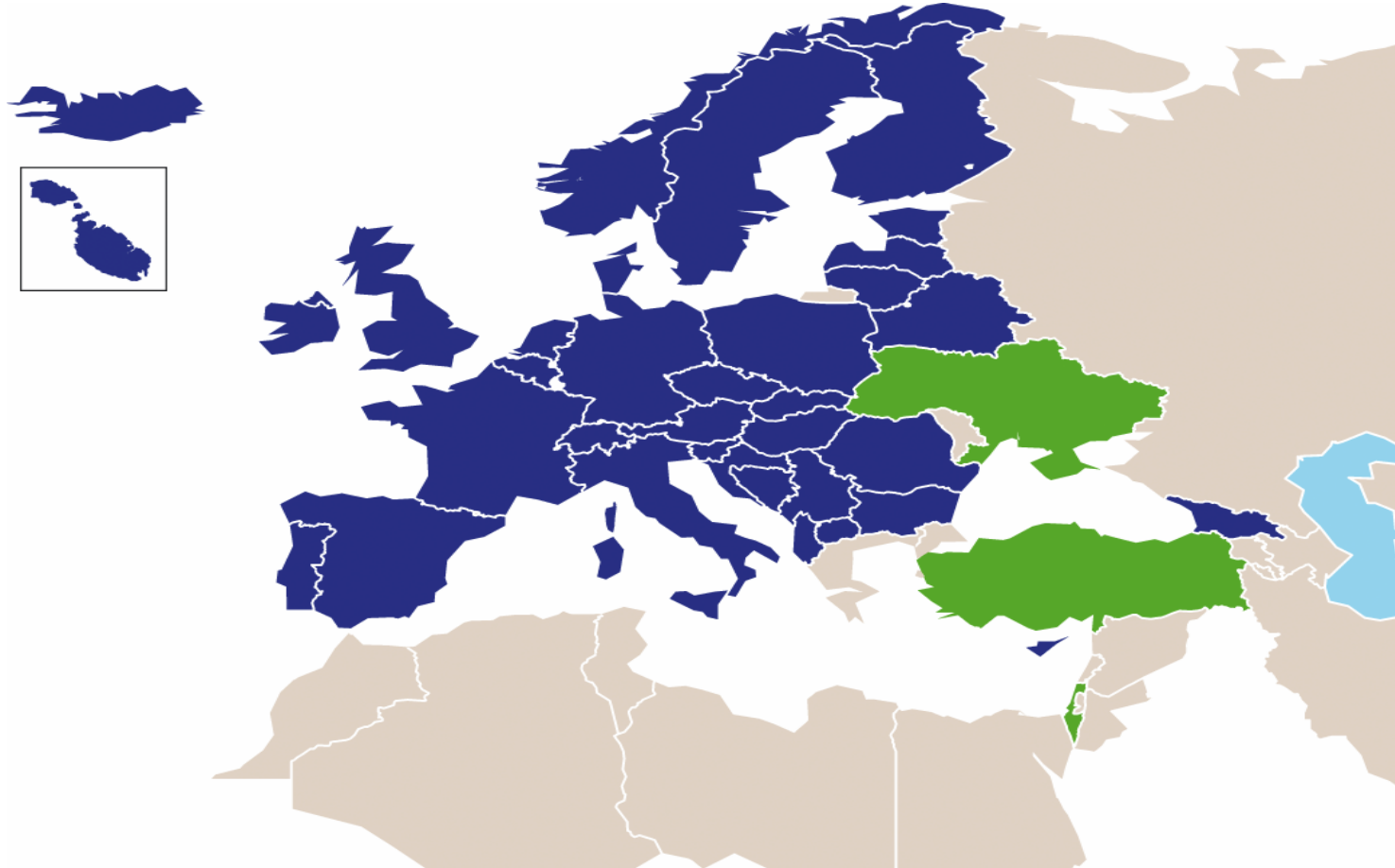
A long story short

- 1982: WESIB was founded by seven unions
- 1989: The Wall fell and WESIB changed to ESIB
- 1999: The Bologna Process starts and ESIB creates content committees
- ESIB turns into ESIB – The National Unions of Students in Europe
- 2007: ESIB is renamed into ESU
- 2009: The Bologna Process celebrates its 10th anniversary
- 2011: ESU updating itself...
- 2012: WESIB/ESIB/ESU turns 30 years old!



Over 11 million of students in Europe!

- 45 members = National Unions of Students from 38 countries.



ESU is recognised by

- European Commission
- Council of Europe
- UNESCO
- OECD

ESU is a Member of the European Youth Forum (YFJ)

Partners:

- European University Association
- Education International
- European Association for Quality Assurance in HE
- European Quality Assurance Register
- Magna Charta Observatory etc.

Main areas of work

- The Bologna Process
- EU2020 Strategy
- Equal opportunities
- Student & HE financing
- Students' mobility
- Development of the student movement
- Students' rights
- Values and social outcomes of education
- Higher education in a globalized world
- Quality Assurance





History of student participation

- Medieval times: students help to establish the University of Bologna.
- 1969 student protests: one of the main aims was to increase student participation in HE governance.
- 1999 Bologna declaration: student involvement not mentioned.



History (2)

- 2001 Prague Communiqué: student participation first mentioned as a part of the Bologna Process and the Ministers agreed that:
 - “students should participate in an influence the organisation and content of education at universities and other higher education institutions”
 - “students are full members of the higher education community”



History (3)

- 2003 Berlin Communiqué: European Ministers of Education stated, “students are full partners in higher education governance”.
- 2008 London Communiqué: ministers reaffirmed the importance of stakeholder involvement for the success of the bologna process and restated the importance of “preparing students for life as active citizens in a democratic society”.
- Budapest Declaration (2011): “Students are the main actors in higher education.”



Student involvement

3 levels of student involvement in HE:

- Local
- National
- European



No Student Left Out

Whatever the level is, student representation is a challenge based on the following principles:

- Openness
- Democracy
- Representativeness
- Independence
- Accountability
- Accessibility to all students



Stages of student involvement

- Accessibility to information (transparency)
- Consultation
- Dialogue
- Partnership and decision making



Why student involvement (1)

- Students generally have a wide and significant knowledge of the HE system due to their involvement as student representatives at the institutional, national level or European level.
- Students are the largest stakeholders in HE.



Why student involvement (2)

- Students are co-responsible for management of higher education as higher education is developed for students.
- Quality culture cannot be reached without the sustained effort and sense of ownership.



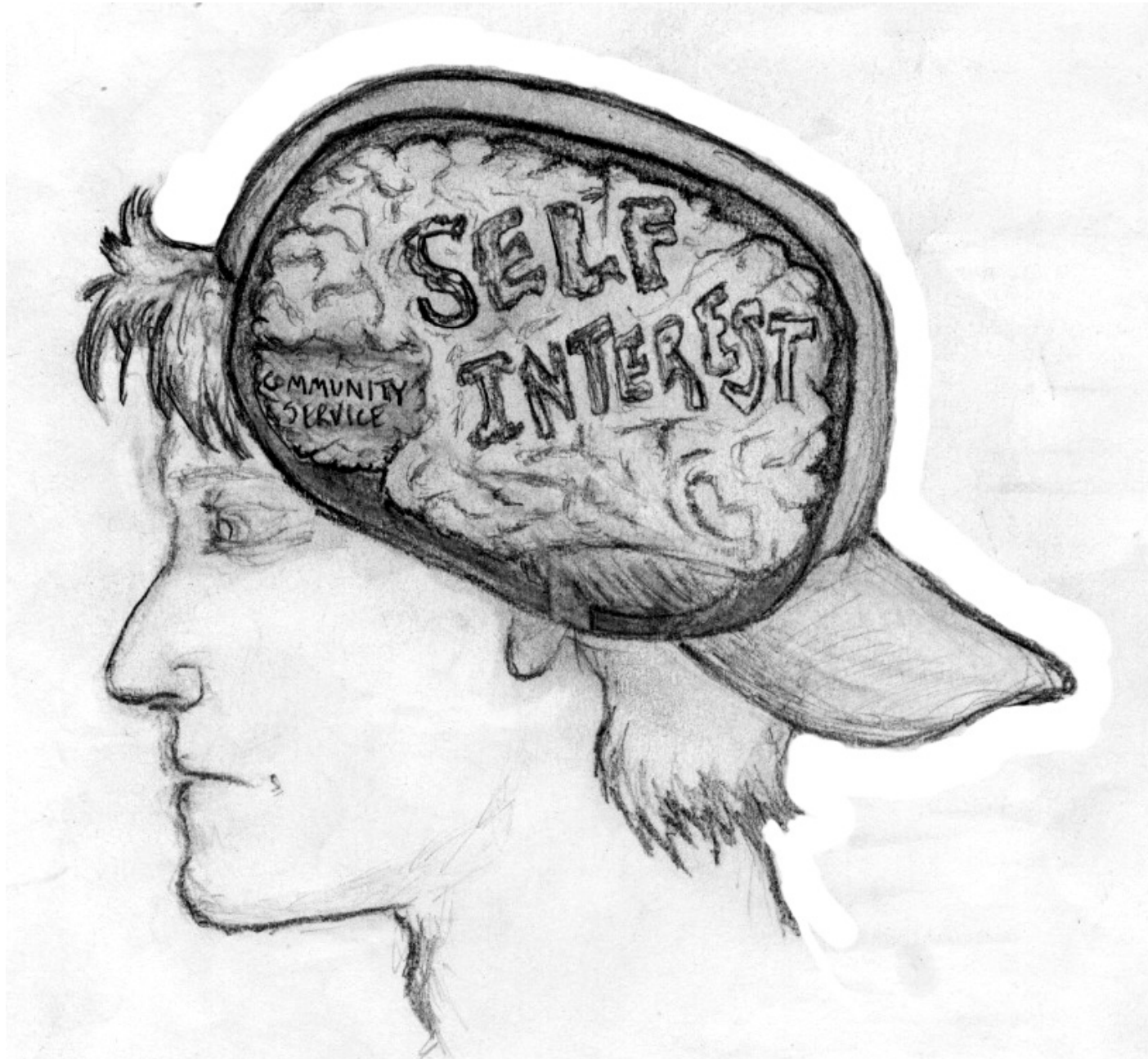
Why student involvement (3)

- Student participation is the key for fair higher education, which is the only way to secure social development and sustainable economic growth.
- Student involvement in governance is essential in preparing students to be active citizens in democratic societies.
- Students are an important catalyst for reforms.



Public good

- Higher education is a public good.
- Thus it involves public responsibility.
- Therefore students have the right but also the duty to make sure that such public good is running in the right way.



Student rights charter (2008)

Student rights form the **fundamental basis** of ESU actions and policies.

Student rights are derived from **human rights**, considering:

- the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948),
- the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966),
- the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) and
- the authoritative interpretations of these acts.

Student rights charter (2)


35 rights grouped in the following main categories:

- Access to higher education
- **Student involvement**
- Social aspects of study
- Academic aspects to study
- Right to privacy and access to knowledge and information



Student Involvement

- 10. All students have the right to organise themselves freely in legally recognised entities. Students must not suffer academic, financial or legal consequences stemming from such involvement.
- 11. All students have the right to co-governance in all decision making bodies and fora relevant to their education directly or through democratic representation.

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- 12. Students have the right to be informed about all higher education affairs in a transparent manner.
 - 13. All students have the right to have their opinion considered as that of a stakeholder on equal footing in higher education.
 - 14. All students have the right to freely express themselves and this should not be limited to academic matters.

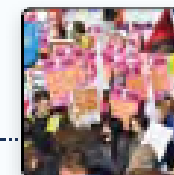


Consumers or participants?

- Students are increasingly being viewed as passive customers.
- Students are not consumers of higher education but significant components within it.
- Students as consumers, as opposed to members and active participants, will have severe impacts on HE systems as well as greater society.

February 2010

1-3/2/2010 • *The Netherlands (LSVB) Demonstration against 10% higher education budget cuts*



March 2010

11/3/2010 • *Austria (ÖH) Bologna burns*

18-22/3/2010 • *The Netherlands (LSVB) blocking ministry of education with bikes*

22/3/2010 • *UK (NUS Scotland) »Reclaim Your Voice« Demonstration against tuition fees, against cutting graduate numbers and for higher student support*

April 2010



14-15/4/2010 • *Serbia (SUS) Kalimero campaign for »Transparent elections for students' parliaments«*

21/4/2010 • *Finland (SYL & SAMOK) »YES to tuition-free education!« Demonstration*

23/4/2010 • *Serbia (SUS) »Second big protest of pupils and students— We would like to study if you don't mind!«*

May 2010

19/5/2010 • *Slovenia (SSU) national student demonstrations on 19th of May 2010 against the introduction of a new labour law for students*

21/5/2010 • *The Netherlands (LSVB) Demonstrations against budget cuts education picture*

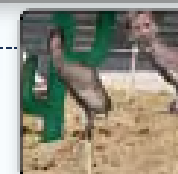


Juni 2010



8/6/2010 • *Denmark (DSF) demonstration against the governments proposal for »re-establishment« in Denmark*

30/6/2010 • *Austria (ÖH) media action – an education desert*



July 2010

This timeline of demonstrations from 2010 reflects some of the demonstrations that were organised by ESU members, all around Europe. Besides these demonstrations, the 45 national unions of students carried out many more activities and protests in 2010.



August 2010

September 2010



18/9/2010 • Austria (ÖH) more money for education



10/10/2010 • UK (NUS-UK) organised a national demonstration »Fund Our Future—Stop Education Cuts«

12/10/2010 • Ukraine (UASS) protest of more than 20,000 Ukrainian students against the act on introduction of extra fees for student

5/10/2010 • Denmark (DSF) protest against the Danish finance Act

20-21/10/2010 • Austria (ÖH) small protest in Bad Loipersdorf where the government had a meeting

November 2010

2/11/2010 • Israel (NUIS) protested in Jerusalem on the Yeshiva students law

19/10/2010 • France (UNEF) More than 150,000 students protested against the reform of the French pension system

28/10/2010 • Austria (ÖH) big demonstration against cutting family support money with 20,000 people

23/11/2010 • Denmark (DSF) protested against reduction of the Danish state education grant.

December 2010

7/12/2010 • Austria (ÖH) occupation of the social democrats office for an evening

4/12/2010 • The Netherlands (ISO & LSVB) national demonstration in The Hague against budget cuts



27/11/2010 • Austria (ÖH) against Budget cuts, cutting the family support money

9/12/2010 • UK (NUS-UK) Lobby of Parliament on the day of the vote on college grants in Parliament and protest



Student protests as a solution?

- Several protests in the last months.
- Decisions taken, students not consulted, or students not taken enough into consideration.
- In most cases such decisions do not favor the students.



Problems 1: dilution of student representation

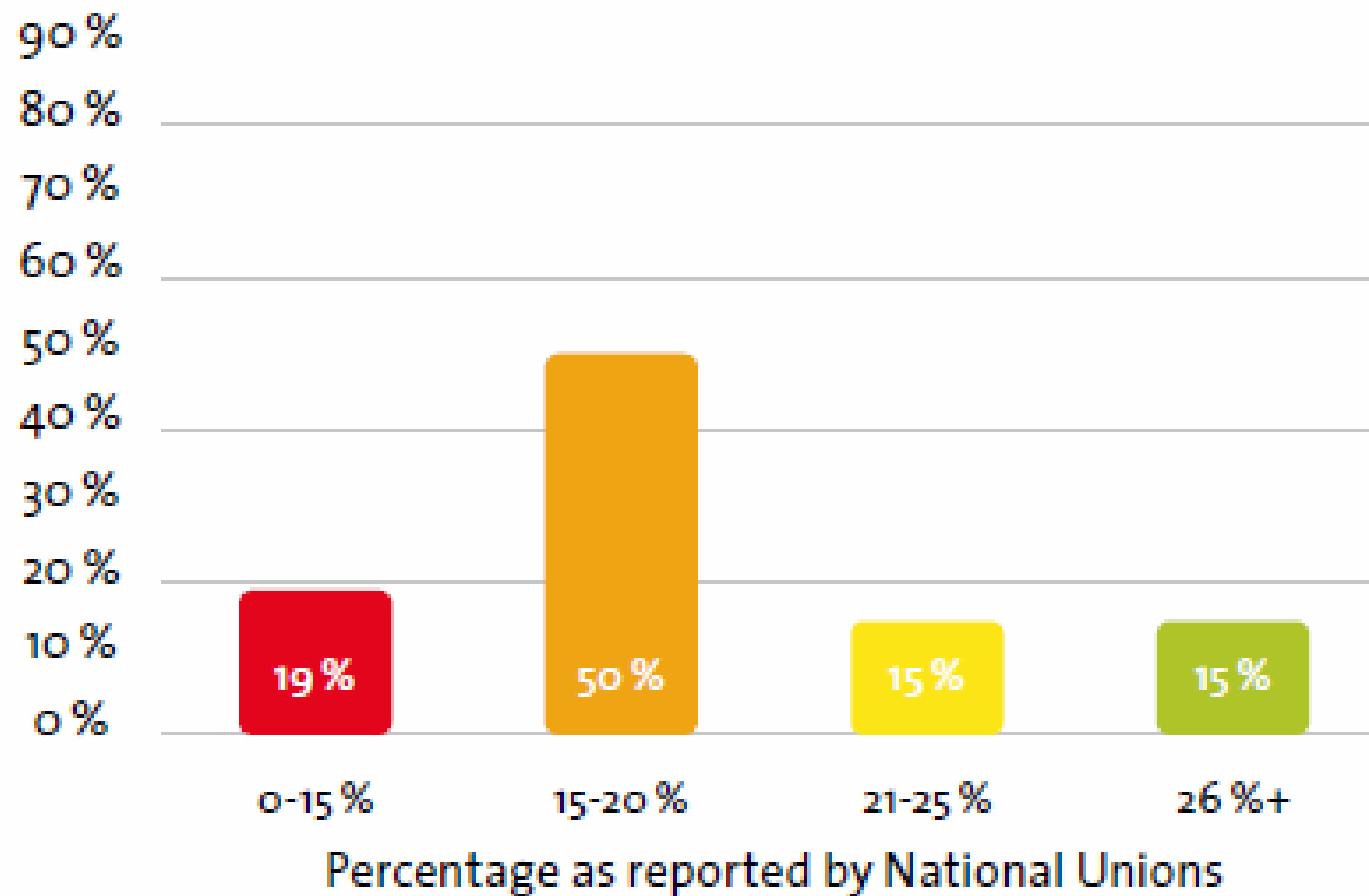
- **University of Malta Senate:** Education Act speaks about having 4 student representatives on senate. In addition there are also 2 academic representatives per faculty. Whenever a new faculty is initiated 2 academics therefore join in and the overall % of student representation decreases. This happened 3 times in the last 2 years.
- A need to speak about % and not numbers.



Challenges: Involvement for the convenience?

- **Switzerland:** students are mostly present in consultative bodies and not decision making bodies.
- **Bulgarian Student Union (NASC):** in some universities student councils are set up just for institutions to keep their **accreditation** and be in **compliance with the law**, without actually involving students in decision making.

% of students in HEI decisional bodies





Student involvement on all matters and at all levels

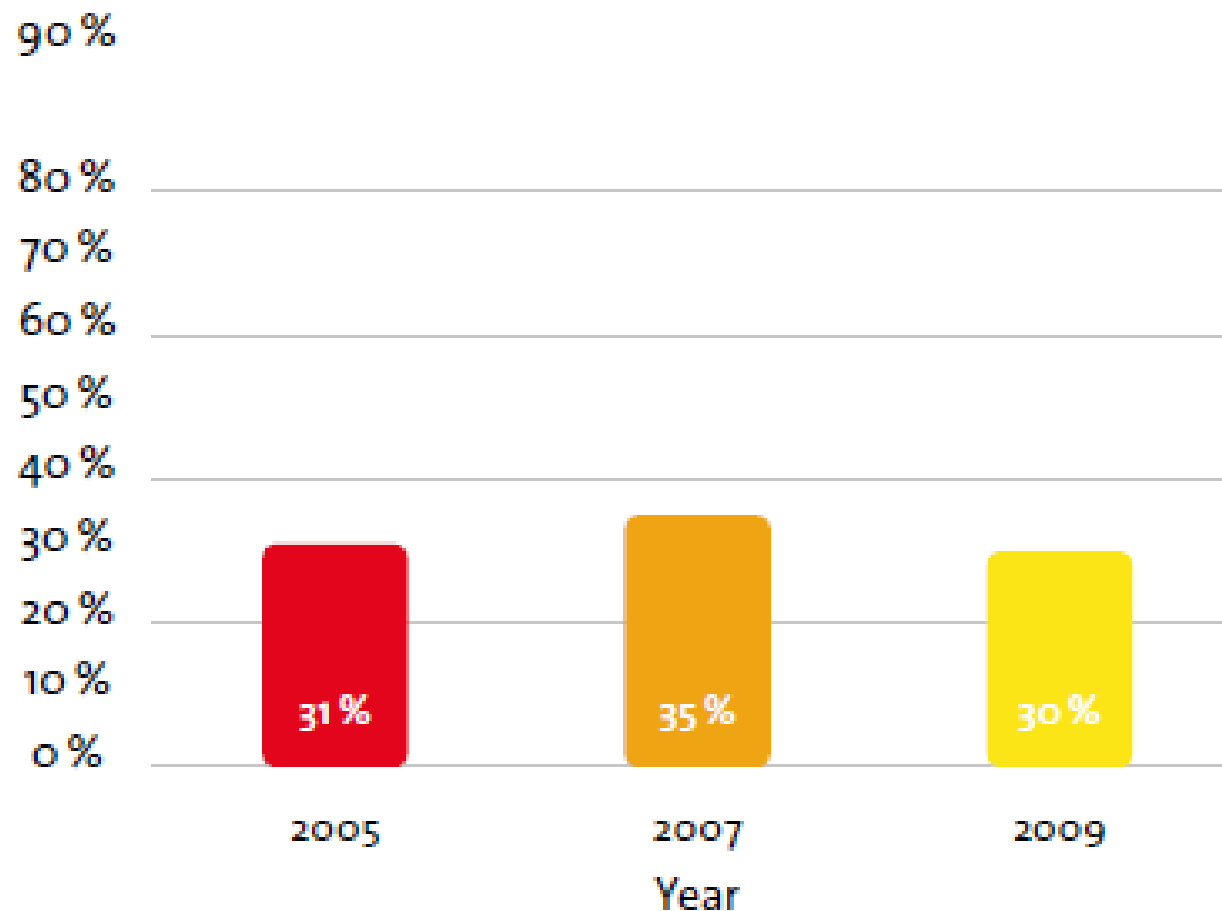
- All matters regarding HE issues have a direct impact on students.
- Therefore students should be involved in bodies dealing with academic issues but also in bodies dealing with financing and administration of the HEI.



Example: Malta

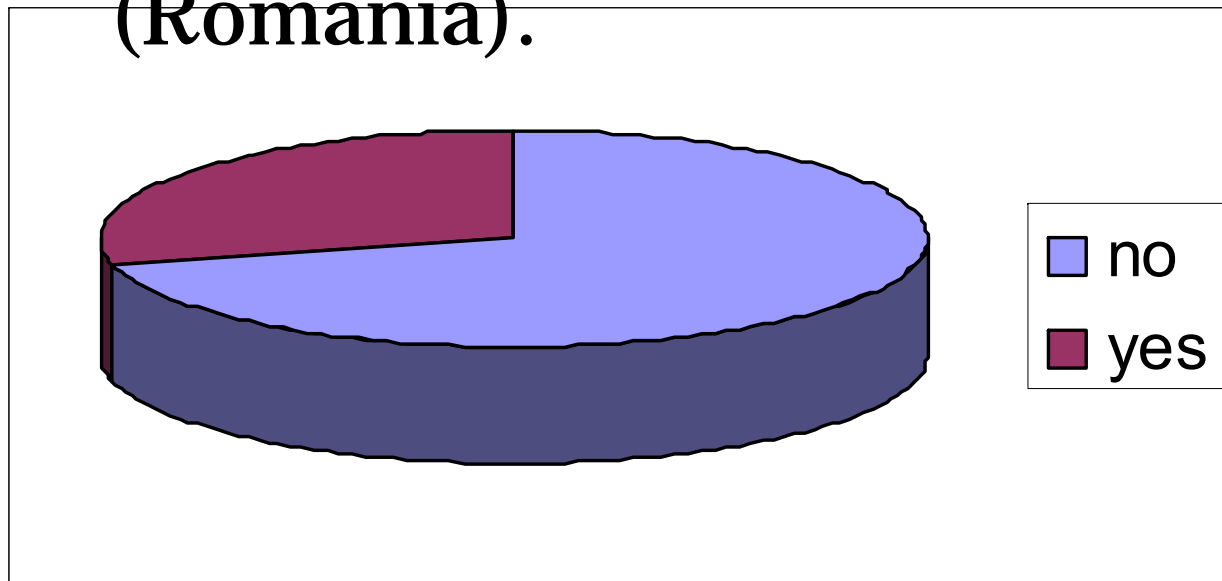
Body	% of students
Council (financing and administration)	7.7 %
Senate (academic body)	10.3 %

% of National unions reporting that the Bologna Process had a positive impact on student representation.



Progress and Change in student participation

- Slow change.
- Few cases of change also represent countries in which student representation decreased (Romania).





Good practices



Law

- University / Education Act ensures student representation in decisional bodies at different institutional levels.
- *“Even though students are represented in decisional bodies at almost all levels, the actual decisional power of these bodies often is very limited.”*



Sweden

- Sweden has a long tradition of student involvement in higher education.
- Swedish legislation entitles students to representation in all decision-making and preparatory bodies at universities.
- At Lund University this has evolved into a student partnership model where student representatives have full insight as equal partners in university management.
- This has been a successful and appreciated model.



Estonia

- 1/5 students are involved.
- Legal framework allows for student participation at all levels of institutional governance, including national bodies concerned with governance.
- Students involved in drafting the national report for stocktaking in the Bologna Process.



Latvia

- According to the student union of Latvia, student participation in governance of HE is appreciated as input from equal partners, rather than as formal execution of a legislative provision.
- Law gives students the veto right for any issue regarding students.



Slovakia

- Students, teachers, researches, staff and employees placed at the same level (Academia).
- Academia have the right to elect members of academic bodies and to be elected by them (HE Act, 2002).
- 1/3 of senate consists of students.



Switzerland

- There should be a new law in place – coming in the next few years (HFKG).
- VSS-UNES-USU (the Swiss NUS) got the right to be present at the meetings of the second highest organ of the new Swiss higher education Area.
- Furthermore, VSS-UNES-USU will be a full member of the new accreditation decision body.



Azerbaijan

- Students' participation became recognised.
- Students started to take part in more actively.



Spain

- The Spanish Government created the National Students Council as a platform that will try to act as a consultative body.



Way forward

- Where it does not already exist, **legislation** is needed to ensure a minimum level of student involvement in institutional governance, and where such legislation or other measures exist they need to be **fully implemented** so that students are fully involved in the decision making process related to their education. Students must be **considered and treated as equal partners** in institutional governance.



Why Dual System?

- **Enhancement and increase of the level of participation**
- Students' uniting for the common welfare
- Ability to gain expertise in the research field but in policy making as well
- More efficient enhancement of the active citizenship
- Learning Responsibility



How Dual System?

- **SUS (LSO)**

Student Alliances, Student Organizations, Student Unions, Student Associations, Student clubs, Student Societies, etc.

- **SCSU (LHE)**

Student Parliaments



Mutual Agreement

- **SUS**
- **SCSU**



Thank you for your attention!



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