



**esu**  
european students' union

**Activity report 2009**



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## Introduction

This report tells a short story of ESU's work in 2009. It is, however, not an exhaustive list of activities. It highlights some of the key areas that ESU worked on, while giving some examples of each general area as outlined in the Plan of Work adopted by the ESU members –National Unions of Students– in November 2008. We have linked to relevant web documents and articles to make it easier to review ESU's work more in depth.

Full members of ESU can consult the Executive Committee reports to the Board Meetings 56 and 57 for a more comprehensive account of ESU's activities in 2009.

On behalf of the Executive Committees 2008-09 and 2009-10, I would like to thank the other ESU elected representatives as well as the ESU members and other organisations and individuals who contributed to a successful year for the European student movement.



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ligia Deca', written in a cursive style.

Ligia Deca

ESU Chairperson 2008-2010

## Defending students' rights through the development of the student movement

The development of the student movement was the overarching theme of the 2009 Plan of work. ESU members have had to face a number of external and internal challenges. Examples: the economic crisis, reforms in the institutional governance that reduced student participation, external pressure related to the definition of new educational agendas in the Bologna and Lisbon processes, as well as within the UNESCO framework for higher education debates.

Together with ESU's International Cooperation Working Group, ESU's Executive Committee worked hard to reinforce the global cooperation between student platforms. The final result was the full preparation of 2 meetings of international student NGOs and regional student platforms in Paris ([January](#) and July 2009), which increased the student message to the UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education (WCHE+10) through the [Global Student Statement](#). The meetings of the regional platforms was essential for the work on mainstreaming the students' voice into the [communiqué](#) of the UNESCO WCHE+10 . Also, it enabled ESU to start a structured work towards setting up a new global student dialogue system.



*Student representatives at the UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education in July 2009*

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The 17<sup>th</sup> European Students' Convention was titled *Student empowerment through participation at national, continental and global level*. Together with the [Student Union Development Handbook](#), which was published in 2009, the event was aimed at empowering the ESU members to be stronger partners in the national context. The event ended with the adoption of the Prague Student Declaration, a document outlining the European students' priorities for the next decade within the Bologna Process.

In 2009, the Student Union Development Committee did four study visits to look at and discuss the situation for student unions in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Luxembourg, Romania and Ukraine. The work on supporting the student movement did not stop here, as ESU also tried to show solidarity towards the student movements in Iran, Zimbabwe, Colombia and Moldova, where human rights were severely breached and students and student representatives' lives were threatened.

ESU continued the fight for students' rights and organised, jointly with [OBESSU](#), the "Lights on the rights" campaign, aimed at promoting both ESU's [Students Rights Charter](#) and the [Declaration of School Students Rights](#). On the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the International Students' Day on 17<sup>th</sup> of November, a [joint ESU/OBESSU conference](#) was organised, with the title *Remembering the students victims of the totalitarian regimes and re-launching the role of student democracy*.



*Some of the speakers at the November 17 anniversary (from left): Sjur Bergan (Council of Europe), Stavros Lambrinidis (Member and Vice-President of the European Parliament), Maroš Šefčovič (EU Commissioner for Education, training, culture and youth), Liliana Simionescu (UNESCO Higher Education Department), Luigi Berlinguer (Member of the European Parliament)*

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## Democratisation of Higher Education by fostering social dimension and equity

ESU's political aim was to move the national governments towards concrete commitments in the field of social dimension/ equity. Through the European Commission-funded [Equity project](#) we aimed at building the European and national student knowledge for a better impact of the students' views in the reform processes simultaneously happening in the European Higher Education Area and European Union setting. Furthermore, ESU aims to achieve a gender balanced student and academic staff body, while implementing our internal Gender Mainstreaming Strategy.



*Participants at the Equity training in Tallinn discuss processes and actors that influence higher education*

At Board Meeting 57, the [Equity handbook](#) was distributed to the ESU members. In addition, ESU organised the 18<sup>th</sup> European Student Convention in Stockholm with the topic “Social dimension – the lost dimension?” The event had a special focus on student support services and gender equality, and participants adopted the [Stockholm Student Declaration](#).

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*Representatives of ESU's Swiss member VSS-UNES-USU march in Brussels with Belgian and international students in a campaign against commercialisation of higher education*

A [content package](#) with an overview of research on the topic of the equity is available on the ESU web site. An [e-learning platform](#) was developed by the ESU partner organisation SCIENTER, and has several trainings developed by the Social Affairs Committee and ESU's pool of trainers. Three regional equity trainings were organised in Romania (Timisoara), Estonia (Tallinn) and Vienna (Austria).

ESU lobbied for the inclusion of an indicator on equity in the EU's new strategic framework on education and training and within the future agenda of the Bologna Process , with the result of the inclusion in the [Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve communiqué](#) of the recommendation for countries to set up national targets for the social dimension. The progress will be monitored at the European level.

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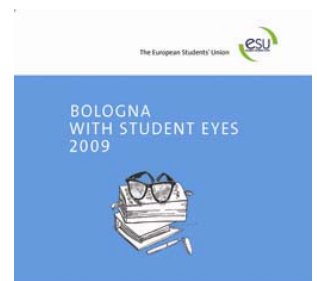
## Quality higher education for all with students in the centre

ESU has always been one of the biggest allies in the fight for more quality in higher education. In order to further empower students to be equal partners in this field, a study session was organised in July for a group of around 25 student experts on quality assurance. These experts will be consulted by ESU and will contribute to ESU's work and events on education quality, and do reviews of higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies, either in cooperation with other stakeholders or as a result of initiatives by ESU alone. The session was funded by the Council of Europe. As another part of the work on QA structures, ESU co-organised the fourth [European Quality Assurance Forum](#), together with the EUA, EURASHE and ENQA (these four organisations also form an informal network called E4).

At the seminar preceding Board Meeting 56 in Brussels, national student delegates prepared for the Leuven/ Louvain-la-Neuve ministerial conference. A doctoral students working group was elected at BM 56. In cooperation with the Executive Committee, the WG prepared the 57<sup>th</sup> ESU Board Meeting Seminar in Krakow on the third cycle, the link between higher education and research and doctoral students from an equity perspective.

Following the strategy and the coordination of the national student representatives in Leuven/ Louvain-la-Neuve, the Bologna Process ministerial communiqué featured areas such as student centered learning, emphasized the need for increased commitments in the fields of social dimension and mobility and reaffirmed the need for investment in higher education.

The [Bologna With Student Eyes \(BWSE\) 2009](#) publication was launched during ESU's Board Meeting 56 and disseminated in the Leuven/ Louvain-la-Neuve ministerial meeting. A [Stakeholders' Forum](#) was organized in early September to discuss the Leuven/ Louvain-la-Neuve meeting follow-up and to have a critical appraisal of the BWSE 2009 publication.



ESU hosted the February 2009 E4 meeting, in which a common position was reached at the E4 level upon 3 key paragraphs of the Leuven/ Louvain-la-Neuve communiqué: on quality assurance and the future role of the E4 group, on quality assurance in trans-national education and with regard to [so-](#)

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[called transparency tools](#). This position aided in reaching the final content of the communiqué. See also the chapter “Enhancing the student contribution to the Bologna Implementation” below.



*Participants discuss education quality at a quality assurance study session at the Council of Europe’s Youth Centre in Strasbourg*

ESU participated in the stakeholder consultations of the OECD AHELO (Assessing Higher Education Learning Outcomes) project, while expressing strongly the position against this project being used as a basis for a ranking of higher education institutions.

In the autumn, ESU developed a [financial crisis survey](#) to assess the effects of the economic downturn to students and student unions. Its results were made available at the 18<sup>th</sup> European Student Convention and will be used for raising the awareness on the dire need for investment in higher education as a solution to the crisis.

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ESU also signed a Partnership Memorandum of agreement with the European University Association that makes ESU the official partner in the selection of the student experts involved in the Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP).

## **“20% mobile students by 2020” – moving towards the European Dimension of HE through making mobility of students a reality**

ESU’s main strategy in this field was to actively promote the results of the “Let’s GO!” campaign and to start a follow-up initiative that includes a stakeholders’ coalition (teachers, students and higher education institutions) for developing a European strategy for mobility. At the same time, ESU pushed for the adoption of the “20% mobile students by 2020” at the ministerial conference in Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve.

The strategy was successful, and the above mentioned benchmark was adopted as an official European Higher Education Area benchmark. After the ministerial conference, ESU, Education International (EI) and the European University Association (EUA) set up an informal Working Group on mobility aimed at contributing to the Bologna Follow-Up Group discussions on mobility indicators and benchmark monitoring and draft a commonly agree set of mobility principles.

Mobility was also one of the key elements in the [Election Manifesto](#) presented by ESU ahead of the European Parliament elections in April.

## **Enhancing the student contribution to the Bologna process**

ESU has been undergoing a continuous activity of enhancing our contribution to the Bologna process, which includes a general project framework on the issue: Enhancing the Student Contribution to the Bologna Implementation (ESCBI), a project funded by the European Commission.

Bologna-related issues have been included among the topics of discussion at all ESU European Student Conventions and Board Meetings across the year. There was also work on assessing and forming a student point of view on what the achievements of the first decade of Bologna have been.

Top among these activities was a European Training Conference titled "European Higher Education Area 2020: Making it a concrete reality!" in Brussels, and the preparation and coordination before Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve ministerial conference. ESU and students from the national delegations successfully brought forth issues such as the need for equity, fostering of a functional social dimension and the importance of having more student-centred education.

One of the other major lines of activities was the preparation of the [Bologna at the Finish Line](#) (BAFL) publication, which was a follow-up of ESU's Bologna With Student Eyes publications that were launched for every ministerial conference from 2003 onwards. The BAFL publication included a chapter on every single area of the Bologna process implementation, as well as political recommendations on future development and a series of opinions by other important stakeholders involved in shaping the future European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

Complementary to BAFL, a documentary called «Faces of Bologna» was filmed at several locations across Europe in order to get a grassroots perspective on the process's implementation. This was meant to gauge the practical impact of policy decisions at a European level. Both the documentary and BAFL were published in 2010.

## Finances

ESU's spending totalled 673,359,46 EUR in 2009. ESU is still dependant on various donors and projects to supplement the income from the membership fees (EUR 105 000 in 2009). Among other sources, ESU received funds from the European Commission and from the Council of Europe. Education International and UNESCO contributed in particular to support ESU's work on bringing together other regional student platforms.

The various student conventions and the board meetings were supported by the respective governments of the Czech Republic; the Flemish and French Community of Belgium; and Sweden.

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If you wish to support ESU's work financially, please ask for more information about our fundraising programme via [support@esu-online.org](mailto:support@esu-online.org).

## ESU representatives in 2009

ESU's representatives are elected by the ESU members and belong to one of ESU's committees. Below are the people who in 2009 were members of the [Executive Committee](#) (EC), [Academic Affairs Committee](#) (AAC) [Committee for Internal Development](#) (CID), [Social Affairs Committee](#) (SAC) or [Student Union Development Committee](#) (SUDC) and the Commission for Internal Auditing. The mandate period normally runs for 12 months, with some exceptions and overlaps due to occasional replacements in the middle of a mandate.



### **ESU committee members, January 2009**

*Back row from left: David Troxler, Alessia Cacciagrano, Bergþóra Snæbjörnsdóttir, Anita Līce, Inge Gielis, Jenny Björk, Alma Joensen.  
Front row from left: Jens Jungblut, Liam Burns, Ligia Deca, Kate Chachava, Bruno Carapinha, Olav Øye*

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The Executive Committee is responsible for the execution of the decisions of the Board Meeting, political affairs and the overall finances of ESU.

#### **Executive Committee 2008-09**

Ligia Deca (Chairperson, Romania)

Anita Līce (Vice-Chairperson, Latvia)

Bruno Carapinha (Portugal)

Alma Joensen (Iceland)

Olav Øye (Norway)

#### **Executive Committee 2009-10**

Ligia Deca (Chairperson, Romania)

Allan Päll (Vice-Chairperson, Estonia)

Andrea Blättler (Switzerland)

Alma Joensen (Iceland)

Bert Vandenkendelaere (Belgium)

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The Academic Affairs Committee is responsible for developing expertise and representation regarding academic affairs. It deals with issues such as quality assurance, qualifications frameworks, ECTS and student centred learning.

#### **Academic Affairs Committee 2008-09**

Liam Burns (United Kingdom)

Alessia Cacciagrano (Italy)

Mark Sciriha (Malta)

Bergþóra Snæbjörnsdóttir (Iceland)

#### **Academic Affairs Committee 2009-10**

Kristine Bak Nielsen (Denmark)

Daniela Bartolo (Malta)

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Christian H. Bjerke (Norway)

Love Hansson (Sweden)

Robert Santa (Romania)

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The Social Affairs Committee is tasked with researching, training and representing students in the field of social affairs of higher education. This work includes areas such as students' financial situation, students' health and accommodation.

#### **Social Affairs Committee 2008-2009**

Jenny Björk (Finland)

Inge Gielis (Belgium)

Yonatan Green (Israel)

Damien Ramage (France)

Igors Grigorjevs (Latvia)

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The Student Union Development Committee is tasked with supporting the development of student unions in Europe. It carries out this work in cooperation with the other working structures of ESU as well as the national unions of students.

#### **Student Union Development Committee 2008-09**

Kate Chachava (Georgia)

Jens Jungblut (Germany)

#### **Student Union Development Committee 2009 (June-December)**

Valentina Boskovic (Serbia)

Matej Hotovcin (Slovakia)

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The Committee for Internal Development is tasked with developing ESU's finances, public relations and internal working conditions.

#### **Committee for Internal Development 2008-09**

Antigoni Ioannidou (Cyprus)

David Troxler (Switzerland)

Daniela Cassar (Malta)

#### **Committee for Internal Development 2008-09**

Oron Dov (Israel)

Anna Sigridur Hafliðadóttir (Iceland)



#### **ESU committee members, July 2009**

*Back row from left: Alma Joensen, Bert Vandenkendelaere, Ligia Deca, Daniela Bartolo, Andrea Blättler, Matej Hotovcin, Love Hansson. Front row from left: Jenny Björk, Daniela Cassar, Igors Grigorjevs, Allan Päll, Inge Gielis, Robert Santa, Kristine Bak Nielsen.*

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The Commission for Internal Auditing (CIA) regularly reviews the finances of ESU. At least once a year the CIA overviews the bookkeeping and the report of the external auditor. After closing the books of a fiscal year they report to the BM.

### **Commission for Internal auditing 2008-2010**

Ask Holme (Denmark)

Maria Noleryd (Sweden)

Viorel Proteasa (Romania)

## **ESU plans for 2010: "Towards true student centered learning"**

In 2009, ESU applied for, got approved and started planning the implementation of the project Time for a paradigm change: student centered learning (T4SCL). The planning included the preparation of a survey on teaching and learning methods among ESU member organizations.

This is a joint project with Education International, and it is based on the long-standing need to clarify and deepen the academic community and policy makers' understanding of the practical implications of the recent paradigm shift from teacher to student centered learning. The call for the shift in philosophy is explained by the increasingly diverse profile of the learner, the demand for increased educational quality and the drive to increase equity in learning.

Among the priorities and activities in the PoW: pushing for recognition of prior learning without financial burdens for students; organising conferences on SCL in Romania and Belgium; participation in the "Access to Success: Fostering Trust and Exchange between Europe and Africa" project of the European University Association (EUA) to gain knowledge on the situation regarding access and retention in Africa; mainstreaming student participation and thus pushing for a more democratic approach in the implementation of the Lisbon agenda priorities; continue the mandate of the doctoral students working group on the third cycle and the link between higher education and research.

## ESU in the press

ESU appeared in various global, European, national and local press in 2009. For more month-by-month information about ESU in the media in 2009, consult the ESU newsletter archive via [esu-online.org](http://esu-online.org). Below are a few article excerpts.

### On rankings

*"We are afraid that a focus on rankings just moves the attention from quality assurance when we are just starting to implement European standards and guidelines, and that institutions would focus on fulfilling the rather limited criteria present in the rankings rather than work to build a coherent quality-assurance system."*

Ligia Deca in the European Voice, February 5

### On ERASMUS exchanges

*"Erasmus is a good opportunity for students, but the numbers are small and the amount the students get is not enough. Only students with a good economic background can afford to go on Erasmus."*

Anita Liice in the New York Times, February

### On the Bologna Process

*"Much has changed, bringing benefits to millions of students across Europe. And yet, many of the action lines will remain unfulfilled by 2010. A renewed and ambitious Bologna agenda is therefore essential to make the original vision of the EHEA an unequivocal reality for all European students, regardless of origin, background, means or ability, by 2020."*

Prague Student Declaration, quoted in University World News, March 8



*Ministers are due to meet this week in Belgium to discuss the progress of the Bologna Process. The ESU's chair, Ligia Deca, has warned them not to "cover up" the inadequacies with "new and superficial attractions".*

Times Higher Education, April 30

*The 20% target was one of the main demands of the European Students Union (ESU), and together with the other social dimension commitments its agreement makes this summit "the best in ten years," according to the ESU's Ligia Deca.*

The European Voice, May 7

## ESU's members

After the ESU's Board Meeting in Krakow, November 2009, ESU had 45 member unions from 37 countries. The full list is as follows:

- Austria - Österreichische HochschülerInnenschaft (ÖH)
- Belarus - Belarus Student Association (BSA)
- Belgium - Fédération Des Etudiants Francophones (FEF)
- Belgium - Vlaamse Vereniging van Studenten (VVS)
- Bosnia & Herzegovina - Studentska Unija Republika Srpska (SURS)
- Bulgaria - Nacionalno Predstaviteľstvo na Studentskite Saveti v Republika Balgaria (NASC)
- Bulgaria - UBS
- Croatia - Hrvatski Studentski Zbor (CSC)
- Cyprus - Pagkypria Omospondia Foititikon Enoseon (POFEN)
- Czech Republic - SKRVS
- Denmark – DSF
- Estonia – EUL
- Finland - Suomen ammattikorkeakouluopiskelijakuntien liitto (SAMOK)
- Finland - Suomen Ylioppilaskuntien Liitto (SYL)
- France - Fédération des Associations Générales D'Etudiants (FAGE)
- France - Union Nationale des Etudiants de France (UNEF)
- Georgia - Students Organizations League of Georgia (SOLG)
- Germany – FZS
- Hungary - HÖÖK
- Iceland - Studentarad Haskola Islands (SHI)
- Ireland - Union of Students in Ireland (USI)
- Israel - National Union of Israeli Students (NUIS)

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Italy - Unione degli Universitari (UdU)

Latvia - Latvijas Studentu Apvieniba (LSA)

Lithuania - LSAS

Lithuania - Lietuvos Studentu Sajunga (LSS)

Luxembourg - Luxembourg University Students (LUS)

Luxembourg - Union Nationale des Etudiant(e)s du Luxembourg (UNEL)

Macedonia - National Union of Students of Macedonia (NUSM)

Malta - Kunsill Studenti Universitarji (KSU)

Netherlands - Interstedelijk Studenten Overleg (ISO)

Netherlands - Landelijke Studenten Vakbond (LSVb)

Norway - Norsk Studentunion (NSU)

Norway - Studentenes Landsforbund (StL)

Poland - PSRP

Portugal - FAIRe

Romania - Alianta Nationala a Organizatiilor Studentesti din Roma (ANOSR)

Serbia - Studentska Unija Srbije (SUS)

Slovakia - SRVS

Slovenia - Studenska Organizacija Slovenije (SSU)

Spain - Coordinadora de Representantes de Estudiantes de Universidades Pcas (CREUP)

Sweden - SFS

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

Ukraine - Ukrainian Association of Student Self-government (UASS)

United Kingdom - National Union of Students (NUS-UK)

For more information, email [secretariat@esu-online.org](mailto:secretariat@esu-online.org) and see  
our web site [www.esu-online.org](http://www.esu-online.org)



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