

BM66 – VIENNA

7b20



Internal motion

Resolution

Amendment

Title: Resolution to condemn the imposing attitude and the denial of the Spanish government to discuss higher education

Point of the agenda:

Proposed by: CREUP

Seconded by: ANOSR, NUIS, SKONUS, POFEN, KSU, SUS, FAGE, FAIRe, SYL, SAMOK, LSA.

Text:

- 1 The European Students' Union (ESU) defends the essential importance of
- 2 students' participation in the development of and discussions about
- 3 national higher education policies. The students' perspective is absolutely
- 4 necessary to achieve high quality in a national strategy for higher education
- 5 and must be considered if these policies are to have the necessary
- 6 legitimacy for their implementation.
- 7 ESU defends a democratic state with an equal and comprehensive
- 8 participation of society as the basis of legitimacy in its actions. Therefore,
- 9 the legitimacy of government action cannot only be guaranteed through
- 10 the individuals' right to vote, but it must be continually reaffirmed through
- 11 an equal and inclusive participation of citizens and in the definition of
- 12 public policies, either directly or through institutions that represent the
- 13 interests of different social sectors. It is necessary so that public policies will
- 14 be legally entitled through voting in parliaments.
- 15 As student representatives at universities, we respect the current
- 16 legislation of Spain and the government emanating of its urns. However, we
- 17 would like to remind the Spanish government that legitimacy emanates
- 18 from the will of the citizens and government action must respond to this.
- 19 The current legislation aims at establishing a democratic model that will
- 20 imply that political participation is primarily expressed through political

BM66 – VIENNA

7b20



21 parties, and public authorities should provide full political participation, as
22 well as economic, cultural and social effectiveness of the citizens. So, during
23 all this time have mechanisms have been developed for participation,
24 which seek to increase the legitimacy of the policy decisions and aim to
25 achieve the highest possible social consensus.

26 When referring to an education policy, the legal framework established by
27 public authorities must ensure the right to public education for every
28 citizen, through a general plan on education, with all the stakeholders
29 taking part in the process. Higher education policy in Spain has some
30 mechanisms especially settled for students to directly affect national public
31 policies, such as the “Observatory for Student Scholarships” and the
32 National University Students’ Council (CEUNE), which ESU specially
33 celebrated.

34 According to these principles, we respect the fact that the Ministry of
35 Education, Culture and Sport is responsible for leading the process and
36 proposals for general policy guidelines in higher education. Nevertheless,
37 since the current government started its term, the Ministry has completely
38 lost its political legitimacy based on its commitment to citizens, despite still
39 having the legal legitimacy based on laws. This has been demonstrated in
40 their attitude, by not seeking an agreement or discussion with stakeholders
41 whatsoever, and maintaining a despotic attitude based on imposing policies
42 that change the Spanish Public Higher Education System.

43 In April 2012, the government agreed on a legislative decree, which implied
44 considerable changes to the public higher education funding system, where
45 families were the ones taking on a huge cost increase, up to 60% in some
46 regions. This decree was neither proposed nor discussed with the
47 stakeholders involved in education. The Spanish government has forced the
48 citizens into it. It was not shared with existing consultative institutions, such
49 as the CEUNE.

50 During the following months, an agreement was reached to change the
51 national scholarships system, with another decree that banished the notion
52 of scholarships as a right and instrument for social justice, and
53 simultaneously entailed several changes to both the academic and
54 economic requirements, as well as the number of the scholarships offered.

BM66 – VIENNA

7b20



55 The government reneged on its own rules, as the Observatory for Student
56 Scholarships wasn't asked for a report on this decree, although the
57 government created the observatory. In fact, this observatory has not been
58 involved in the current term in office, without any legal or political
59 consequences for the President of the body, the Minister for Education.

60 This approach lacks all legitimacy and occasionally implies illegal actions, as
61 the Minister turns a deaf ear to Spanish state laws, which establish some
62 imperatives for the government to ensure the participation of the entire
63 higher education community. This situation occurs for instance, when the
64 CEUNE hasn't been called according to its own regulation at the Spanish
65 Student Statute. The Minister has only requested a hearing with CEUNE two
66 times, in 2012 and 2013 respectively, when it should have been called in at
67 least three times a year. In exercise of the right given by the Statute, more
68 than a third of the members of CEUNE called for a session, which was never
69 answered by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport.

70 CREUP, and other student organisations from Spain, have voiced out the
71 basic need for having a permanent space for discussions and debates about
72 policies on higher education made by the government, receiving only
73 silence in response. This attitude collides with the way that something as
74 valuable as education should be treated.

75 Taking these situations into account, and empowered by the continuous
76 requests for discussions that CREUP has demonstrated during these three
77 years, the European Students' Union strongly condemns the behavior of
78 the current Minister for Education, Culture and Sports of the Spanish
79 government. We would also like to emphasise that it is of key importance
80 that governments are for the people, but through this action it effectively
81 turns its backs against its own citizens.

82 Moreover, ESU condemns any form of a public attack, as well as the false
83 accusations against public universities in Spain made by the Spanish
84 Ministry of Education and a range of politically biased national media. ESU
85 joins CREUP supporting universities' autonomy and stresses that Spanish
86 public universities cannot be blamed for consequences resulting from cuts
87 in public funding.

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BM66 – VIENNA

7b20



Passed: **YES** NO

(for use of board meeting chair only!)