



Board Meeting 66

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Chapter One

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Introduction to ESU's policies on higher education

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1. What is higher education?

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When higher education emerged in medieval Europe, the organisation of the *universitas* was essentially a medieval guild: a small number of masters training a small number of apprentices either to continue the work within the institution, or to serve King or church.

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The modern world has changed not only the institutions themselves, but the nature of education as well.

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During the last decades, European society has seen an increasing need of a more highly educated population. This has been both the result of economic development, where an increasingly advanced production requires more knowledge, but it has also been the result of social movements and democratisation. In essence: the fact that more and more jobs require more education, taken together with the increasing realisation that education is a human right and a vital tool for democratisation and emancipation, has reshaped higher education.

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Today, a purely self-sustaining and replicating higher education system can no longer function, due in part to a greatly increased student population as well as a change in the needs of society. This can be seen as part of the long-term transformation of higher education away from a tool for the elite to enable future generations of the elite to retain power. Therefore higher education in the 21st century should develop towards a multifunctional system that reflects different aspects and needs. This transformation is far from complete, and the needs and obligations of higher education in the 21st century and beyond will and do require constant attention. Higher education easily reverts back into a tool for preserving power structures when it is not accessible for all, and when the knowledge developed is not accessible for public benefit.

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Parts of this multifunctional system will of course include the traditional view of recruiting and preparing the next generation for academia, but it also includes societal, including

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28 economic, expectations that need to be taken into consideration. In addition, it is important
29 that higher education provides the tools and the knowledge for the development of the
30 individual. It can hardly be denied that some of these ambitions conflict with one another.
31 Nevertheless it is important that all of the different aspects are included in the higher
32 education system. Higher education must be able to serve different needs and targets at the
33 same time. Embracing different perspectives and needs is not only a learning target it is also
34 a competence that needs to be actively used inside higher education.

35 It is important to stress that learning itself is a key value of higher education. The
36 development of the individual must be enabled through higher education. However, there is
37 also a vocational/single-career-focussed side of higher education and this can be a challenge
38 for some higher education systems in Europe. These challenges are fundamental, as parts of
39 Europe still hold firmly to the concept that the traditional systems are the sole way higher
40 education should function. This not only leads to the denial of societal needs, but it also
41 excludes individuals. The vocational side of the higher education system needs to provide
42 the knowledge and tools an individual needs to design and develop during the course of her
43 or his working life. Additionally, the vocational side of higher education needs to provide
44 also applied knowledge and labour market related skills. This does not mean solely that
45 higher education provides preparation for a specific job; rather it is the intermediation of all
46 required competences that an individual can then adapt to the labour market. Accessible
47 and open higher education needs to deliver more options than just the reproduction of
48 academia, for instance through jointly entrepreneurial and life-skills such as
49 creativity. Beyond and including the vocational aspect of higher education the individual
50 must remain a core mission.

51 However, there can be different understandings and implementations of higher education
52 simultaneously. The important thing is that the multifunctional idea is implemented,
53 strengthened and focused on by those responsible for policy-making. The specific details of
54 how higher education is provided and run may differ in different contexts, but the essential
55 part that ESU stresses is that the purposes of higher education laid out here are preserved
56 and developed.

57 **2. Who is higher education for?**

58 Higher education is an inalienable and fundamental human right. As such it must be open for
59 all parts of the society, independent from background, age or any other factor. Whosoever
60 feels the commitment and interest to participate in higher education should get the
61 opportunity. Higher education should be affordable for everyone and able to respond to
62 each individual's needs, and there should be positive measures for vulnerable groups to
63 reduce the obstacles they face in access, participation and completion of higher education.

64 **3. Interaction within the community**

65 Higher education is neither a separate entity nor does it have its own sphere of reality
66 separate from the rest of society. On the contrary, higher education should be an integral
67 part of society. ESU believes that the higher education environment has to be inclusive and
68 mirror society and all its diversity. This emphasises the fact that higher education as a
69 system needs to implement measures to ensure that diversity is really taking place. The old
70 metaphor of higher education as an ivory tower must be overcome.

71 Higher education does not just have a financial link to the community it also has a duty to
72 serve the community with knowledge and technology. This service takes place while
73 educating actual students, but also while conducting research and publishing scientific
74 results. Therefore, all outcomes of scientific activities should be considered at least as
75 partially owned by the community, and the availability of these outcomes should be free.
76 Higher education provides society with the fundamental basis, which allows for constant
77 development and improvement in living standards of the whole community. Higher
78 education should also contribute to the social development of the community by preserving
79 and developing active participation, critical thinking, freedom of speech and democracy in
80 general.

81 There is an obligation for all members of the higher education community to work as a
82 community, with each other's needs and best interests at heart. This demands innovation
83 and excellence in the process of teaching and learning, administration, staff-student
84 relations, quality assurance and both institutional and student self-governance.

85 **4. What is the outcome?**

86 The goal of higher education should be to provide the potential for as many different
87 outcomes and outcome combinations as possible. As education is a lifelong process, it is vital
88 that these outcomes are accessible at all times. The pace of change in the course of just the
89 last decades makes a very clear illustration that not only it is impossible, but even more so
90 inadvisable to attempt to predict what skills, competencies and knowledge will be needed in
91 the future.

92 The key capacity for participants in higher education that must be provided is the capacity to
93 think critically. Knowledge is a value in itself, and the capacity to effectively and usefully
94 analyse and evaluate information, while also developing a satisfactory way of life, is the key
95 to this. To ensure this, the process of teaching and learning must be student-centred. Higher
96 Education does not have the task to prepare for a single profession; in fact higher education
97 needs to educate students with the competences to adapt to different professions and
98 working environments. This could be seen as the employability component of higher
99 education.

100 Knowledge and the preparation for employment are just two out of many outcomes that can
101 be delivered by higher education. Higher education has the potential to dramatically
102 improve life quality for both the participant and for all of society - social and financial status,
103 improvement in general health conditions, acknowledgement of and attempts to tear down
104 inequalities. These skills are necessary for democratic development and participation, and a
105 society where these competences exist among more of the population is more likely to be
106 able to handle the challenges posed by an increasingly globalised, multicultural and
107 ecologically fragile world. In short, higher education equips people with tools to make more
108 informed choices.

109 **5. Who is affected?**

110 Everyone should be affected. In times of economic hardship the popular debate tends to
111 focus entirely on student employment and the economy. While this is one facet of the role
112 of higher education it is far from the only one, as it may sometimes seem. The effects of
113 higher education are wide reaching and not only to those who have the opportunity to
114 study. Individuals are naturally those who see the effects first hand. What higher education
115 should give individuals is opportunities for fulfilment. This fulfilment is often in the shape of
116 skills that give individuals better opportunities on the labour market. The very foundation of
117 the society we have built up today is based on a constant stream of choices. Higher
118 education and students play a big role in furthering democracy. This is one of the basic
119 goods of higher education. However it is important to remain vigilant in this ambition. ESU
120 does not assume that a higher education system will by default further democracy. Active
121 work must be done for this effect to flourish.

122 A public higher education system also affects society in a much broader way than a
123 privatised system. The benefits to society of a highly educated population, outside of purely
124 education-specific metrics vary from keeping the costs of health care and public school
125 systems down to much higher levels of social trust. Social trust is paramount if a society is to
126 build up functioning support systems and keep corruption as well as crime down.

127 Perhaps the most challenging to measure, but most valuable effect of higher education is
128 the proliferation of harnessed creativity. A graduate who has the capacity to react to and
129 develop their own innate creativity feeds into a global pattern of unprecedented advances
130 and innovations. This benefits everybody, not solely employers, NGOs or political systems,
131 but rather in increasing equality, developing healthcare, devising and improving on new
132 technologies, exploring and understanding our lives and our universe, extending and
133 improving human life, educating future generations to embrace and excel to their own
134 potential and advancing the fundamental goal of human equality.

135 **6. Who is responsible?**

136 Higher education is a public responsibility. The greatest benefit of a multi-functional higher

137 education system accrues to the society overall. Therefore a huge part of the responsibility is
138 going back to the society. This responsibility consists of two parts. On the one hand, it
139 includes challenging higher education and addressing clear needs towards higher education.
140 On the other hand, the overall society is the fundamental funding source of higher education
141 to a sustainable level, which does not impact on admissions or accessibility within the sector,
142 or equality of participation. Although other groups are responsible towards higher
143 education, these others are not related to the funding.

144 As the European Students' Union defines education as a right, access to education at any
145 level should be ensured by the overall society through their taxation systems and
146 governments. An important sub-group which is responsible for design, the developing
147 processes and sustaining higher education are all people directly involved in higher
148 education: students, researchers, teachers, institutional leadership, academic and non-
149 academic staff. Effective quality assurance and efficient governance and financing of higher
150 education are inseparable. Higher education's needs constant development and the groups
151 inside higher education must ensure that this occurs. But it should not be from the inside out
152 or the outside in; it is essential that both directions are taking place at the same time.
153 Another group or sub-group is employers in both the public and private sector, not in a
154 sense that this group should have influence on curricula or should be directly involved in the
155 decision making process, rather an exchange or a dialogue between higher education and
156 this group is needed on the terms of the stakeholders in higher education.

157 In the papers that follow, ESU seeks to outline our vision for a truly modern and collegial
158 higher education. Though it is simply not possible to address every aspect, we seek to
159 empower and enable ourselves and future generations of students, student representatives
160 and policy-makers to continue to strive for the 'better'.

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161 **Part 1: European governing structures**

162 I. The European Union

163 1. Introduction

164 In the past years, European integration has increasingly proceeded with more discussions on
165 the European level and more competences being transferred to the EU or shared between
166 the EU and it's member states. The process of redefining basic values and principles needs
167 extensive discussions and strong involvement of all stakeholders. These processes
168 increasingly involve the field of education: not only is higher education subject of numerous
169 conferences, papers and communications, it is also affected by other agreements and
170 regulations. This includes for example the EU2020 strategy, more specifically the
171 Modernisation Agenda, as well as austerity measures imposed by the European Union on
172 countries in crisis. The purpose of this paper is to outline the European students' approach
173 towards these far-reaching changes on the EU level as well as the developments we wish to
174 see in the approach to policies and structures of the European Union.

175 **2. Concentration of power within European institutions**

176 ESU supports transparent, democratic and academically free conditions in the EU. ESU is
177 therefore committed to the national responsibility for education and decisions on
178 educational policies.

179 ESU sees that the EU also influences countries outside the EU, especially through its
180 partnership and neighbourhood policies. Therefore, when touching upon higher education,
181 these policies should reflect commitments made by countries within the Bologna process
182 and partnership countries.

183 European cooperation and support can have a positive impact on education. When it comes
184 to higher education, ESU believes that the EU should be a tool to enhance development and
185 cooperation and not a goal in itself. Therefore, the EU should focus on supporting the
186 countries and their commitments set out in the Bologna process, for example through
187 financial and political incentives.

188 ESU firmly believes that the EU should reflect the interests of the countries and the
189 academic community throughout its policies. These policies should not contradict other
190 European agreements or structures; the EU should support the Bologna process for instance,
191 and *not* create alternative structures when it disagrees with the countries of the Bologna
192 process. Policies should also be in line with each other throughout the EU.

193 **3. Economic and social perspectives**

194 There is pressure on all parts of society and politics to reach and fulfil the EU2020 goals. So
195 far the European Commission has taken on more than a coordinating role and acts more like
196 a governmental structure. Undue pressure is put on the EU Member States through
197 demands, rather than open discussions on national higher education systems. It has become
198 clear to ESU that the Commission wants to be prescriptive towards the member states in
199 addition to taking on a supportive role. ESU believes that the EU is suited for a supportive
200 role. This can be seen through the mobility grants encouraging recognition throughout the
201 member states as well as the project funding.

202 Clear and open discussions on the diversity of higher education systems are a requirement in
203 order to mutualise the benefits of this diversity. These talks must include representatives of
204 all stakeholders in the decision-making process.

205 EU policies are often contrary to our vision of how education should function in Europe.
206 With the Lisbon strategy, ESU foresaw that the Commission would become a driver for
207 commodifying education in Europe. That has been the case since the EU has approached
208 education solely from its function to optimise the competitiveness of the EU economy.
209 Higher education must never merely be used as a tool for economic goals. The EU must
210 accept that education's broadest primary purpose is for the development of societies, and
211 reflect this in all legislative actions that have an impact on education systems.

212 Education is not a service that can be bought and sold between countries. Education should
213 not be included in international trade agreements.

214 Transnational educational provision should not be used for the purposes of generating
215 profit. For example, allowing foreign countries to sell 'brand-name' education especially in
216 emerging European economies can put national education systems at risk. Ideally these
217 systems will benefit society in the respective countries. However, this would not be the case
218 when a foreign higher education institution establishes itself in a new national context for
219 reasons of profit making. Higher education institutions should not be considered companies
220 for the purposes of EU legislation dealing with the freedom to compete in second markets.

221 **4. Democracy and transparency**

222 The work that the EU does must become more stakeholder-driven in the spirit of modern
223 collegiality as outlined in ESU's policy paper on Financing, Commodification and Governance.
224 This means that educational initiatives and decisions should be developed with relevant
225 stakeholders. It should be students, teachers and institutional representatives and their
226 organisations that are consulted in education issues. It is important that the EU's internal
227 structures create sustainable and representative stakeholder engagement structures to
228 govern its educational initiatives.

229 ESU believes that large programmes that profoundly affect students, such as the Erasmus+
230 programme, should be co-governed by educational stakeholders. Not only for the sake of
231 democracy, but to ensure the quality of the programmes. Educational stakeholders have a
232 vested interest in creating the most responsible policies for those they represent. The
233 European Union needs access to the information that stakeholder organisations have at
234 their disposal.

235 The European Commission should choose its working groups according to democratic
236 principles and relevant stakeholder expertise. There should be no preferential treatment of
237 organisations whose opinions align themselves with those of the Commission. Policy should
238 not be defined by the organisations that spend the most funds. The EU should engage with
239 all stakeholders relevant to the issue under discussion.

240 The EU's structures are changing as they grow, and therefore it is vital to have an open
241 dialogue with stakeholders and allow their input and criticism without their feeling
242 threatened by a loss of funding or influence.

243 By ruling on matters connected to higher education and students, the European Court of
244 Justice (ECJ) clearly crosses the line between matters governed by the EU law and domestic
245 matters of EU member states, such as education and responsibility over the national
246 educational budget. Education is a subject for respective national governmental decisions
247 and national legal frameworks. The ECJ should respect its role within the power division
248 framework of the EU, and it should not attempt to impose new principles contributing and
249 changing the face of the legal framework of the European Union or its member states. ECJ
250 rulings may be used as an excuse to cut national educational budgets and hinder the
251 internationalisation and mobility efforts of EU member states. Therefore, the ECJ should
252 refrain from guessing what is in the public interest of society, as has been seen in recent
253 cases where the ECJ has ruled in the area of education and educational support.

254 **5. Abuse of research for political aims**

255 The EU should, in its every interaction with research, support, encourage and welcome free,
256 academic and rigorous research and policy debate. Very often when deciding on policies in
257 higher education, the Commission hides behind recent studies that suggest policy solutions
258 that fit a certain political and economic understanding of the value and beneficiaries of
259 education very well. Too often the studies the Commission uses are strongly biased towards
260 their desired opinions.

261 When acting like this, the Commission maintains the public image of technocrats while
262 pushing a hidden agenda. Too often it argues that evidence suggests there is no alternative
263 to the proposed policy, but that is simply not true. As the EC is such a large funder of
264 research on higher education, its role of commissioning research can lead to consultancy and
265 research institutions finding results that flatter the inherent biases of the EC. Therefore,

266 more often than not, the Commission is effectively hiding behind biased studies that will
267 allow them to push their agendas and mark it as undeniable.

268 The EU needs to stop acting in this manner. It would be much more honest if the
269 Commission simply acknowledged their political goals and how their proposed policies
270 contribute to them. Only then a broad public discussion of higher education policies and
271 strategies can become reality.

272 **6. EU2030**

273 **ESU's future EU:**

274 - Education is a public good and a public responsibility and therefore public funding should
275 be the standard. Higher education contributes to development in the broadest sense and
276 should not only focus on economic purposes;

277 - Education is separated from culture, youth and sports in the EU structures and put
278 together with research;

279 - Educational policy remains a national competency with legitimate support from the
280 European Union through consultation with all affected stakeholders;

281 - A European Higher Education Area is a reality, where EHEA norms are fully harmonised
282 and all internationally accepted processes, such as the Bologna process, are accepted;

283 - Funding for higher education has increased and is on a stable footing, where the EU
284 increasingly supports mobility through increasing grants rather than loans, as well as
285 supporting countries in developing their higher education policies on a national and
286 institutional level;

287 - Educational policy on both national and EU level is made in cooperation with relevant
288 stakeholders where students are a central part in order to ensure legitimacy. It should be
289 clear to all citizens how decisions are made and how to influence them.

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290 **Part 2: The Bologna process and the European Higher Education Area**

291 **1. Introduction**

292 ESU acknowledges that the Bologna process has a great influence on higher education in
293 Europe, as many European countries are reforming or have reformed their higher education
294 systems in light of the Bologna declaration and following communiqués. However, we
295 believe that we are still far from achieving a fully functioning European Higher Education
296 Area.

297 The main challenges of the current process from the students' perspective have been:
298 inconsistency or lack of implementation at the national level; Pushing of national reforms
299 under the pretext of the Bologna Process; poor follow-up on previous commitments and lack
300 of independent reporting on its progress.

301 Nevertheless, ESU is committed to a European Higher Education Area that promotes and
302 delivers high quality, accessible and student-centred education; social justice, participative
303 equity, opportunities for mobility and serves as the foremost way to fix a broken social
304 ladder; and autonomous and democratically led higher education institutions, which create
305 critical thinkers and active citizens in democratic societies.

306 ESU recognises that these are all equally relevant and interlinked goals. Autonomy of the
307 academic sector is a tool to protect the right to freedom of expression, diversity of methods
308 and content of education and research. Therefore, autonomy must not be used as a way of
309 putting universities in a competition based development. Democratic higher education
310 institutions cannot exist without social justice and participative equity. Participative equity is
311 a stimulating factor for high quality education because it is enrichment for the educational
312 environment. By ensuring participation of a diverse student body in higher education
313 decision-making process, a student centred approach can be fostered. Therefore, these
314 goals are mutually reinforcing.

315 Thus, the European Higher Education Area must embed a quality culture whilst enshrining
316 academic freedom; recognise that higher education is a human right, public good and public
317 responsibility; work on the principle of cooperation, not competition; include students as co-
318 creators and partners in the delivery and governance of the learning experience and
319 recognise its own responsibility to society itself as a social good, and as such, be publicly
320 funded.

321 **2. From the Bologna Process to the consolidation of the European Higher Education Area**

322 Due to the nature of the Bologna process, the goals are often formulated in an abstract way
323 in order to make it possible for every member state to agree to such a goal and for it to be
324 acceptable in the national context. This created a problem for implementation on the
325 ground, as the Bologna goals are rather disconnected from the reality at institutional and
326 national level. ESU believes that such problems need to be addressed through the use of
327 national actions plans that specify the action lines in more details for each national context.

328 National-specific objectives should be clearly formulated, which will increase its relevance
329 and state clearer goals for the institutions, students and other stakeholders.

330 Nonetheless, ESU warns that the Bologna Process' aims cannot be reached as long as
331 member states are approaching the implementation in an "a la carte" manner. National
332 governments shouldn't be able to handpick the reforms and action lines they want to work
333 on and must make an effort to achieve more fundamental changes or address those areas
334 that are of lower priority for governments. The action lines of the Bologna declaration and
335 the subsequent communiqués are all interconnected and interdependent, so the reforms
336 must be done in a comprehensive way. Countries need to make an express commitment to
337 implement all the Bologna action lines equally. A fully functioning European Higher
338 Education Area cannot be achieved without reaching minimum standards of commitment
339 and integration.

340 ESU believes that there should be a control mechanism that would verify that governments
341 and institutions are not misusing the name of the Bologna process to justify policies that are
342 unrelated to the Bologna implementation. The Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) should find
343 a way to ensure this.

344 Moreover, ESU believes that Bologna signatory countries should commit to implement
345 commonly agreed pan-European benchmarks stated in the Bologna process action lines. The
346 Bologna Process needs to be rebuilt on an approach based on targets for minimum expected
347 standards of implementation. For example, a European Higher Education Area "label" could
348 be reserved for areas where countries have properly implemented envisaged policy
349 measures. Ignoring minimum standards risks affecting the coherency of the European Higher
350 Education Area, thus a possible consequence of a country breaching the minimum standards
351 would be to lose the EHEA "label".

352 While the structure of higher education systems is being reformed, little is being done to
353 make it understandable, clear and comprehensible to the wider public, especially
354 prospective students. ESU thinks that it is crucial to enhance the communication and
355 outreach of the European Higher Education Area, putting in place adequate and accessible
356 transparency and information tools about the European Higher Education Area. Ministers
357 should commit to establishing credible and easy to use guidance systems and to
358 communicate what the academic opportunities in the European Higher Education Area are
359 about to everyone. The European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR) would be a suitable
360 institution for providing information if supported adequately. A true shift to a European area
361 will not happen without these support structures, rendering the European Higher Education
362 Area as a myriad of systems that are incomparable while still carrying the same labels.

363 Students should also easily have access to information concerning universities, courses and
364 student supports available in every country through the creation of a set of European
365 guidelines on the description of study programmes.

366 **3. Policy scope of the Bologna process**

367 While the structural reforms, for ensuring comparability and compatibility of national
368 systems of education, have been at the core of the Bologna process and the European
369 Higher Education Area, ESU believes that the scope of the Bologna process needs to be
370 expanded if the process is to remain relevant to all the signatory countries and ESU member
371 unions. Therefore ESU encourages more discussion on overarching issues such as social
372 dimension, mobility, recognition, funding, E-Learning, governance or research in the
373 European Higher Education Area.

374 ESU acknowledges that different countries have joined the process at different times, and
375 there are differences in the extent to which different member countries have implemented
376 the action lines. While some countries are focusing on the implementation of the structural
377 reforms, those who have already implemented them are willing to continue the further
378 development of the cooperation within the European Higher Education Area. ESU believes
379 that a two-speed process might be considered for the future of the Bologna Process and the
380 sustainability of cooperation in the European Higher Education Area.

381 **4. Structures and governance of the EHEA and the Bologna process**

382 More attention needs to be put on the governance of the Bologna process and the European
383 Higher Education Area. The decisions on the steering of the process should be reserved for
384 the Bologna ministerial meetings; however ESU believes that the Bologna Follow-Up Group
385 (BFUG) should be given an even stronger voice during the entire process. The working
386 groups should discuss the issues in-depth, prepare the background information and propose
387 the issues to be discussed in the Bologna Follow-Up Group, while the visionary decisions are
388 made at the ministerial conference.

389 Furthermore, ESU encourages the Bologna Follow-Up Group to explore possibilities for a
390 permanent Bologna/EHEA Secretariat that would be responsible for supporting other
391 structures of the Bologna process and European Higher Education Area. ESU believes that
392 the Bologna Secretariat should not be handed to any European institution, but should rather
393 rely on the collective support of the Bologna participating countries and organisations.

394 ESU believes that a fund should be created to support the permanent structures and
395 common projects and events on relevant topics, allowing a more diverse group of countries
396 to participate and take the lead in the follow-up activities.

397 **5. Stakeholders' involvement in developing and implementing the Bologna Process**

398 One of the distinctive features of the Bologna Process has been the involvement of
399 stakeholders, especially of students, in the process since its really initial stages. ESU
400 recognises that the stakeholders, through being consultative members of the process since
401 its initial stages, have contributed significantly to the discussions and the developments of
402 the different action lines. ESU stresses that trust, participation and ownership from the
403 stakeholders has led to a better implementation of the reforms. A clear example is the
404 Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, one
405 of the most successful Bologna tools, which were developed by the E4 group (ESU, ENQA,
406 EUA and EURASHE) and have also been revised by them in cooperation with the social
407 stakeholders. It is of utmost importance that the path taken regarding student participation

408 in the development and implementation of the Bologna Process should be continued and
409 enhanced on all levels.

410 **6. Follow-up and monitoring of the Bologna Process**

411 While the current implementation and progress reports have contributed to accelerating the
412 reform by exposing the countries' evolution, ESU sees the need for an independent
413 monitoring and reporting mechanism. Objective indicators, based on the above-mentioned
414 student values of Bologna Process, should be developed. Together with improved data
415 gathering and analysis, this would present the basis for further discussion and actions,
416 however these indicators should not be used as a tool for incentive management of students
417 or institutions. Furthermore, ESU encourages the Bologna Follow-Up Group to develop the
418 methodology to complement the current reports with better data gathering from different
419 sources of information at the national level and not just ministerial officials. Additionally, the
420 possibility of organising on-site visits by experts from other countries should be considered,
421 which would allow for proper evaluation of the implementation of the Bologna reforms as
422 well as the effect that they had on the higher education system of the country.

423 **7. Bologna implementation on national level**

424 In order to achieve proper implementation on the national level, all member countries
425 should establish (or continue) a structure with decision-making power that would include all
426 stakeholders (akin the Bologna Follow-Up Group) and would be responsible for the
427 implementation and follow-up of the reforms while respecting the autonomy of higher
428 education institutions. ESU is absolutely certain that consistent consultation and
429 involvement of stakeholders at national levels is essential for a successful implementation of
430 the Bologna reforms. Students, academic staff, institutional leadership and management as
431 well as other stakeholders are the ones bearing the brunt of any change and thus should be
432 part of any discussion and decision.

433 Governments need to establish special incentives and provide a significant level of financial
434 and regulatory support for institutions that are trying to implement various elements of the
435 Bologna process. There should be a system of scrutiny for the implementation of Bologna
436 while focusing on improvement rather than penalisation. An additional "EHEA-label" for
437 institutions with corresponding minimum standards should be developed as a tool for
438 encouraging institutions to implement the Bologna process effectively.

439

439 **Annex**

440 This policy draws from sections of the following policies, statements and strategies of ESU. In
441 case any conflict arises with any other policy of ESU, this policy shall take precedence.

442 **Related briefings:**

443 EU2020 Review

444 2000 Policy paper "Guideline on future discussions on European education"

445 2002 Policy paper "Student visions on a common Europe"

446 2004 Policy paper "Social objectives and the economic perspective of the Lisbon Strategy"

447 2005 Policy Paper "The General Agreement on the Trade Services – GATS"

448 2006 Policy paper "The Students' Opinion on the Lisbon Strategy of the European Union"