



European Universities: It Is About the Students

Introduction

European Students Union (ESU) is thoroughly following the developments of the European Universities Initiative by regularly being involved in possible discussions and meetings that address the topic. We believe that due to our cooperation established with different stakeholders of this initiative, including with local student representatives, University Alliances, stakeholder representative organisations, as well as with the European Commission, ESU has accrued a wide perspective about the initiative, has taken actions to address our critical position with the stakeholders and created a ground for influencing the further developments of the European Universities Initiative.

Below we present crucial aspects which should be in the focus of the stakeholders and interested organisations while developing and monitoring the further actions of this initiative, especially within the Working Group of the third call for the alliances.

Student participation

Currently, there are many forms of student representation within the alliances. Even though the Commission has put more emphasis on student participation in the second call, ESU is still not convinced of the way the existing alliances are filling it in. By far not all university alliances have student representatives in the different alliances, not all student representatives for the alliances come from democratically elected positions of the local student unions, and not all student representatives are democratically appointed to be the representative within the alliance.

ESU strongly advocates for a democratically elected student body with representatives from all the different universities that come from local student unions. It is important to stress that the student representatives need to be elected by the students or appointed by the student body. These student bodies need to have the right of consent on important decisions within the alliances, need to meet regularly and be part of the highest decision-making body.



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The universities preparing their application for the call should include students in the establishment and design of the network and this should be a requirement in the calls. This should be proved by a report of the students' representatives on how they were involved in the process.

ESU is always willing to independently advise the alliances on student participation and support the students accordingly.

Student-centred learning and mobility

Student centredness of the programs offered by the alliances is another extremely important element. The alliances should foster and encourage innovative didactic concepts for student-centred learning and pay sufficient attention to sustainability in the programs and the conditions under which they operate. Alliances should share best practices and encourage each other to spread the innovative methods from the alliances throughout the universities in order to make student-centred learning a reality within the European Higher Education Area. Another element which contributes to the student centredness of the alliances is mobility. The Commission decided to have a quota of 50% mobility for the alliances, which we highly support. Alliances should be established in order to simplify mobility possibilities for students and to encourage mobility without study delays.

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The European Students' Union (ESU) is the umbrella organisation of 46 National Unions of Students (NUS) from 40 countries. The aim of ESU is to represent and promote the interests of students at the European level towards all relevant bodies and in particular the European Union, Bologna Follow Up Group, Council of Europe and UNESCO.