

European Students' Union (ESU)

Fighting for students' rights since 1982

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EEA governance: the triumph of intergovernmentalism, very little space for stakeholders

With no fanfare,¹ the Education EU Council of the 29th-30th November approved the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030)². The framework sets the *de facto* governance that will steer the prospective European Education Area.

The framework, which will last until 2030 with the possibility of revision in 2025, declares the 'ownership'³ of the Member States and the Council on the process: the latter is declared the main decision-making and policy guiding body. The resolution further establishes an informal High-Level Group on Education and Training which should bridge the technical and the political level to prepare the directions of work of the EEA and which is subordinated to the Education Committee (i.e. the EU Council preparatory body). In this High-Level Group, the only Member States and the Commission are involved: stakeholders are involved only in the technical Commission

¹ Despite being mentioned in the [main results](#) of the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council of 29-30 November 2021, the 'Council resolution on the governance structure of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030)' is not available there: it needs to be retraced from the [provisional agenda](#) and googling the code there associated with the resolution. Since [it](#) is a document aimed at the Council delegations (i.e. not the adopted one), it is needed to go to the [Official Journal of the European Union, C 497, 10 December 2021](#) to be sure of the final version.

² <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-14487-2021-INIT/en/pdf>

³ *Ibidem*, clause 7.

experts groups and might attend the meetings of the Directors Generals only upon invitation, 'if and as appropriate'⁴. No involvement of the European Parliament or of any other EU institutions is envisaged.

Within the framework of the Conference on the Future of Europe, the European Students' Union put forward its proposal of an EEA Council, where European stakeholders were involved and the national delegations comprised of stakeholders, 25% of which should have been students⁵. The proposal came forward by constating, on the one hand, how the involvement of the stakeholders within the Bologna Process has been proven crucial in the effective design of the policies of the European Higher Education Area and the higher success of its implementation measures by and within the academic community; on the other hand, how any attempts of using the Open Method of Coordination⁶, where the Council decides the targets, the Commission evaluates the progress, the European Parliament and the EU Court of Justice have no role and stakeholders have no clear role, were not acceptable and in the end, doomed to fail.

Therefore, ESU expresses deep dissatisfaction with a governance framework that falls short of the standards of the EHEA and does a disservice to the project of the EEA and will work together with all the interested stakeholders to make it publicly clear that without the structured involvement of stakeholders there is no EEA. In order to aim for a reform of the governance system by 2025, we cannot wait: the revision process must start now.

⁴ *Ibidem*, clause 9.

⁵ <https://futureu.europa.eu/processes/Education/f/36/proposals/129167>

⁶ The [Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond \(2021-2030\)](#) of 26th February 2021 mentions the Open Method of Coordination in several passages (first *Recalling*; *Further agrees* clauses 1.a, 1.b, 2 and 2.g; *Invites the Member States*, clause 1).