

# The defined role of students #ESU definition

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**Student Participation without borders (STUPS)**

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**Fighting for  
students' rights  
since 1982**



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# What is our role as students?

# European Students' Union (ESU)

- 1982
- 45 National Unions of Students in 40 European Countries
- 20 million students!

>> Represent and promote the **educational, social, economic and cultural 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.



**The European Students' Union considers student participation in higher education governance to be one of the core values in European higher education and a prerequisite towards the democratic governance of public institutions by all politically significant constituencies.**



**We learn**

**We advocate**

**We create or co-create projects**

**We do research**

# ESU's three dimensions of student participation

## LOCAL

Representative of your:

- field of study
- faculty
- local student union

OR

Participation in:

- meetings
- elections
- co-creation of documents and policies



## NATIONAL

Representative of:

- group of students in your country
- a specific area

Activities:

- collaboration with representatives from other HEI
- co-creation of documents and policies
- open meetings with different stakeholders, HE bodies, organisations, other students, etc.

## INTERNATIONAL

-informing and training national student representatives on policy developments on a European level

-actively lobbying for student rights in Europe

-producing a variety of publications for students, policy-makers and higher education professionals

- conducting European-wide research

# Through the years..

**Bologna Process has recognised students as crucial stakeholders who should take part in shaping their education.**

-> The Prague Communiqué from 2001 declared that students are to be considered full members of the higher education community.

-> The Paris Communiqué from 2018 included students' participation as one of the fundamental values of the process.



# Student Participation in Higher Education Governance

We reaffirm our commitment to promoting and protecting our shared fundamental values in the entire EHEA through intensified political dialogue and cooperation as the necessary basis for quality learning, teaching and research as well as for democratic societies. **We commit to upholding institutional autonomy, academic freedom and integrity, participation of students and staff in higher education governance, and public responsibility for and of higher education.**

**Rome Ministerial Communiqué 2020**





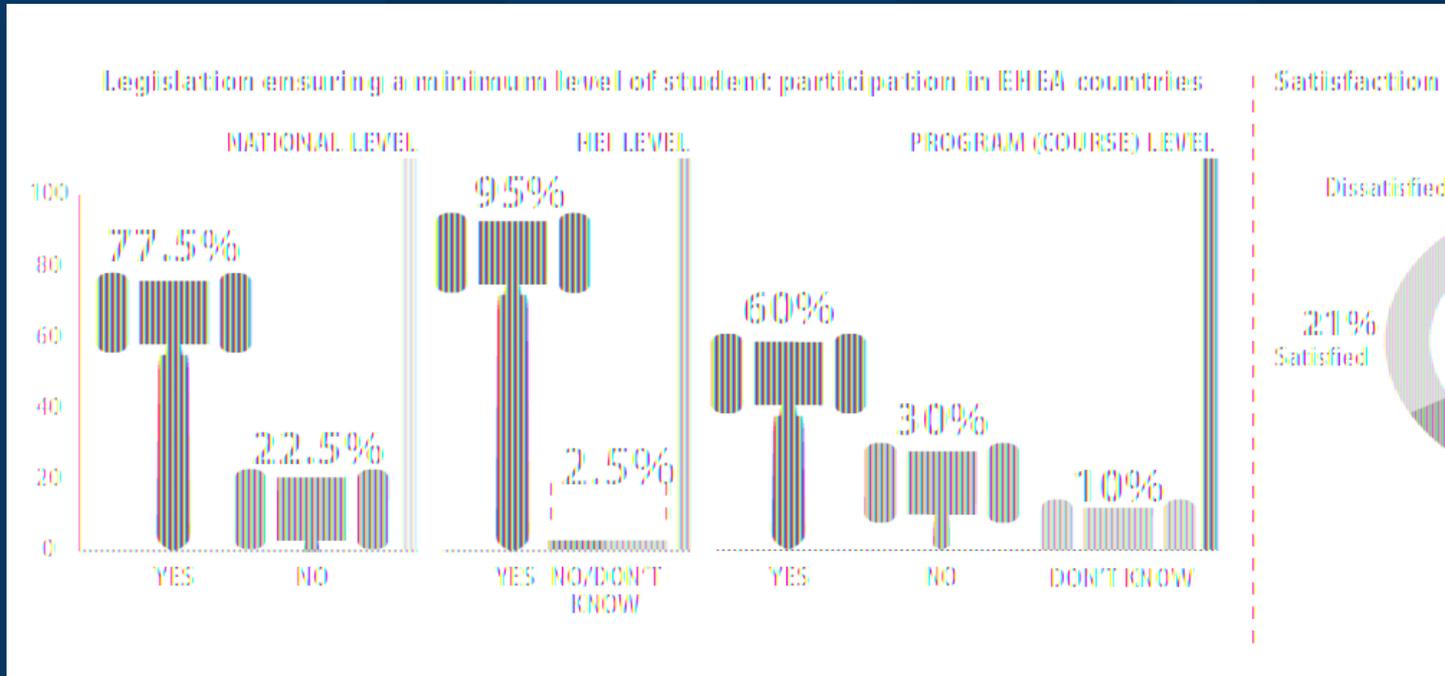
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**Students' participation is not only fundamental for the well-being of democratic institutions but also for our democratic society as a whole.**

# Student Participation - European-wide student perspectives



# Let's speak about numbers



Figures 4.1. and 4.2.

# Let's speak about numbers

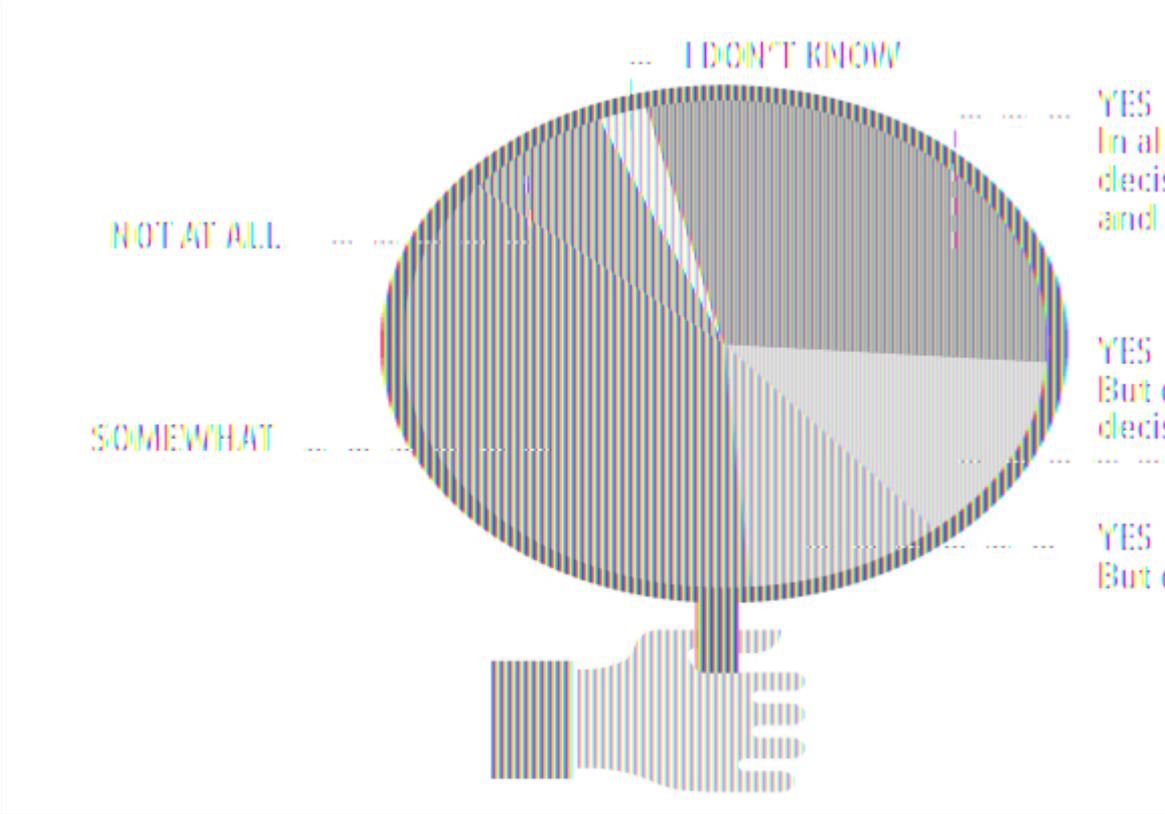


Figure 4.3.

Student representation in the decision-making and preparatory processes of higher education policies

# Let's speak about numbers



**Map 4.4.**

Average percentage of students represented in HEI decision-making bodies in the EHEA

# What are the challenges?

- Commodification of higher education (too few students able to participate)
- No influence where it matters (student representatives only consulted and often too late)
- Too few seats provided (proportion of students to stakeholders)
- Threats to democratic student participation
  - Cherry picking and tokenism
  - External pressure
  - Financial impact on autonomy of student representation

## The Bologna Process should be more engaged and crucial when it comes to foster students' participation in the national context.

### Factors that legitimize and enable student governance and student participation in decision making:

- Conception of student (“*community members*”, “*citizens*”, “*stakeholders/constituency*”) by the HE community
- Formal and informal provisions (levels of participation)
- HE environment (diversification of student body, HE management practices, support and resources)
  - Good governance of representative student organisations
- Training of student representatives

# How to build a better student representation?

# STEP #1

fostering students' participation  
= all related processes are  
extremely transparent

# STEP #2

The student voice needs to be autonomous from every power and every influence at any possible level.

# STEP #3

Students' participation must be recognised in its crucial democratic value by the whole society

# STEP #4

Ensured representation to all diverse voices within the student body, safeguarding the role, engagement and enrolling of underrepresented groups

# Thank you for your attention!



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