

## Bologna at the Finish Line? New study structure seen with students' eyes

AG Hochschulforschung + FREREF Réseau Uni 21  
V. International Workshop at the University of Konstanz:  
*„The Bologna Process as a Challenge for the Students“*

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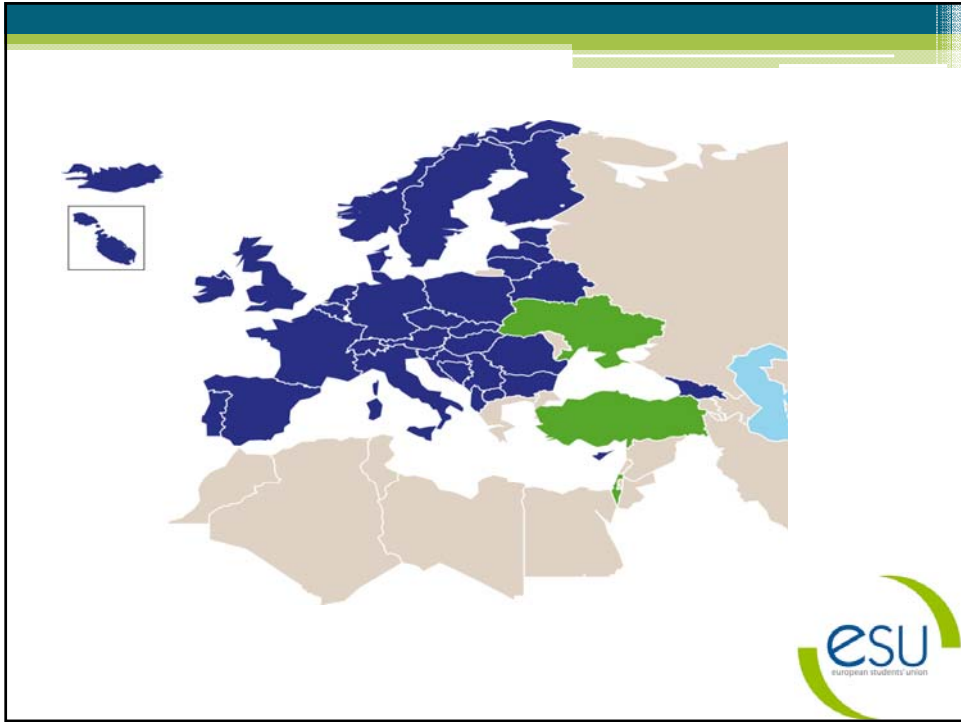


## 1) THE EUROPEAN STUDENTS' UNION (ESU)



## The European Students' Union

- Umbrella organisation of 45 national unions of students from 38 countries
- Represents more than 11 million students
- Founded in 1982 as Western European Student Information Bureau (WESIB), then changed to ESIB after 1989
- 2007: ESIB is renamed into ESU and celebrates 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary
- Promote the educational, social, economic and cultural interests of students at a European level
- Work towards relevant organisations and processes, for example the European Union, the Bologna-Process, Council of Europe, UNESCO and OECD.
- Office in Brussels; 17 elected representatives + small secretariat.
- Main priority in 2011: Financing of higher education and students



## 2) ESU IN THE BOLOGNA PROCESS



## Critical contributor

- Bologna 1999: protest
- since Prague 2001: critical but constructive partner: Member of the Bologna Follow Up Group (BFUG), its board and sub-structures
- writing of regular stocktaking reports on the students' perception:
  - next publication ready in March 2012 only



BWSE 09

## BAFL

### BOLOGNA AT THE FINISH LINE

An account of ten years of European higher  
education reform



### 3) THE BOLOGNA PROCESS: TENSION BETWEEN CHANCE AND DANGER, CHALLENGE OF POSITIONING FOR STUDENTS



### (Higher) Education versus just training?

- Trends of HE perception:
  - Public good -> private good
  - Social and societal concerns -> private interests
  - Long term needs -> short term demands
  - Bologna vision?
- ESU: students are not customers but members of the academic community
- Reality? HE customised, students being socialised as consumers?
- Role of the Bologna Process ambivalent



## European cooperation: Purpose?

- Education is a fundamental, integrative element of society -> Cooperation on education at the European level:
  - Emergence of a multiculturalist, tolerant European society on the basis of HE of comparable quality?
  - Reaching the mobile European human capital and disestablishing communities?
- Loose intergovernmental cooperation or binding targets?



## Enhanced quality or enforced regiment?

- Outcome orientation, workload measurement:
  - Stronger possibility of plannification and more effective learning for all students?
  - Disenfranchisement and policing of students and limit for interaction and flexibility?
- Assurance of quality:
  - Continuous improvement as an open process?
  - Constraint of academic freedom?



**4) AN ATTEMPT FOR A PRAGMATIC VIEW  
AS BOLOGNA IS HERE TO STAY:  
INSIGHTS FROM EVALUATION RESEARCH  
BASED ON PERCEPTIONS**



**4a) STUDY STRUCTURES**



## Formally, 3 cycles are in place...



● 0-50%    ● 50-70%    ● 70-85%    ● 85-100%

European University Association (EUA) 2010: 34-5



## ...but do they function properly?

- Bologna Process Stocktaking report 2009: “... there are two main challenges in fully implementing ECTS: measuring credits in terms of *student workload* and linking them with *learning outcomes*”
- EUA, Trends 2010: “Despite some very positive responses in institutional questionnaire responses, site visit reports indicate that course and module descriptions do not include a set of defined *learning outcomes* with an *estimated time* to achieve them.”





## ...but do they function properly?

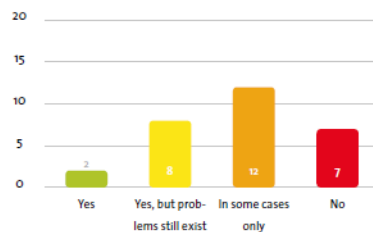
- ESU, Bologna with Student Eyes 2009:  
"Although 92% of the respondents that had ECTS in place declared that, in their country, this was formally based on *workload*, most of the unions commented that this was more in theory than in practice. (...) only 12% of unions reported that the workload was being estimated and re-adapted according to student surveys, which is (...) the same situation as identified in (...) 2007."



## Learning Outcomes?

European Students' Union (ESU): 2010: 107

fig. 15—Are the results of study programmes designed and measured based on learning outcomes?



## 4b) MOBILITY

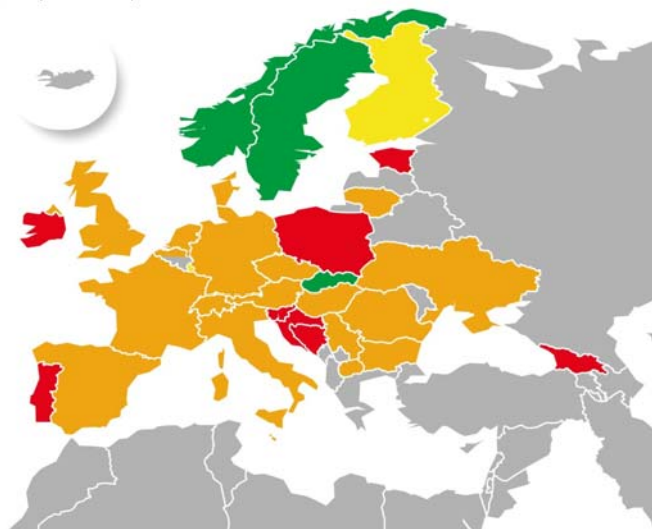


Can mobile students afford to cover their living expenses abroad?

ESU: 2009: 73

fig. 18—Situation of national students spending a period abroad that encounter problems meeting their living expenses from their grant or loan

- None or almost none have problems
- Few have problems
- Some students have problems
- Many students have problems

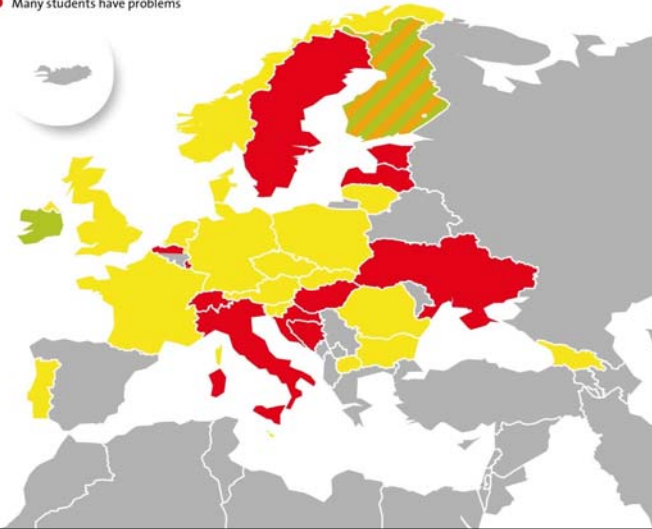


## Do ECTS credits get recognised back home?

ESU: 2009: 77

fig. 21—Situation of national students returning from a period of study abroad encountering problems with the recognition of their credits

- None or almost none have problems
- Some students have problems
- Depends on where they were studying
- Many students have problems



## EU/ non-EU mobile student treatment

ESU: 2009: 154

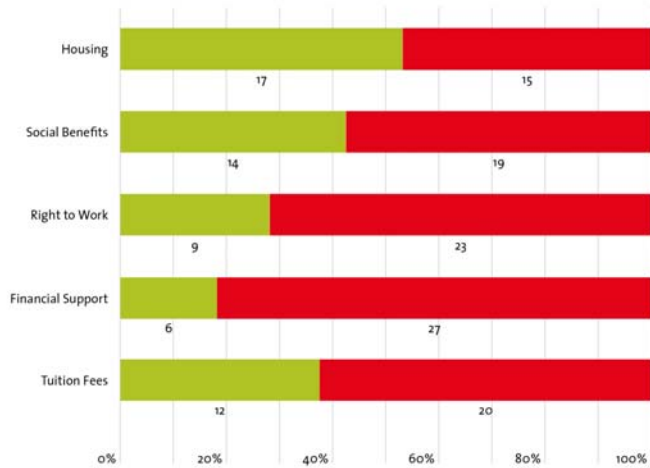


fig. 58—Treatment of non-European/non-EU students in home higher education institutions

- same
- different

## 4c) THE SOCIAL DIMENSION

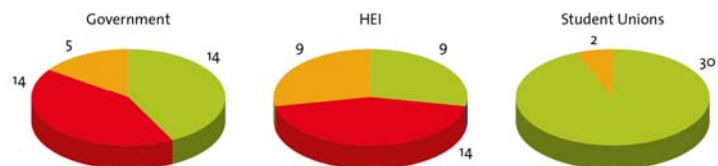


## The social dimension - a Bologna priority?

*fig. 1—Is the social dimension a priority, according to the student unions, for the government, the higher education institutions and the student union?*

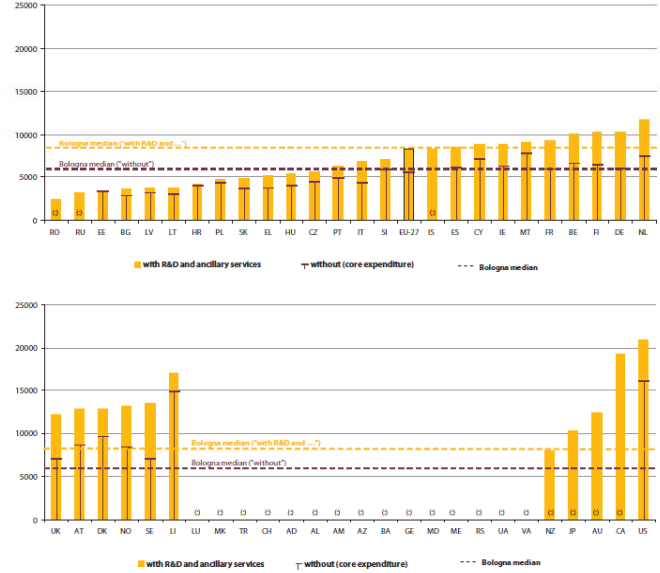
European Students' Union (ESU): 2009: 21

- Yes
- No
- Some degree



The reality check...

**Figure B.1c:** Annual total expenditure on tertiary educational institutions per full-time equivalent student (in EUR PPS) including and excluding expenditure on research and ancillary services, ISCED 5-6 — 2005



Eurostat/Eurostudent  
2009: 79

Note: DK, 2004 data; CA, 2002 data.  
Source: Eurostat, UOE.

4d) WHO'S RESPONSIBLE?



## Public responsibility? Bologna / EU

EHEA 46 Minister of Education, 12<sup>th</sup> March 2010;

- Higher education is a **public responsibility**. We commit ourselves, notwithstanding these difficult economic times, to ensuring that higher education institutions have the necessary resources within a framework established and overseen by public authorities.

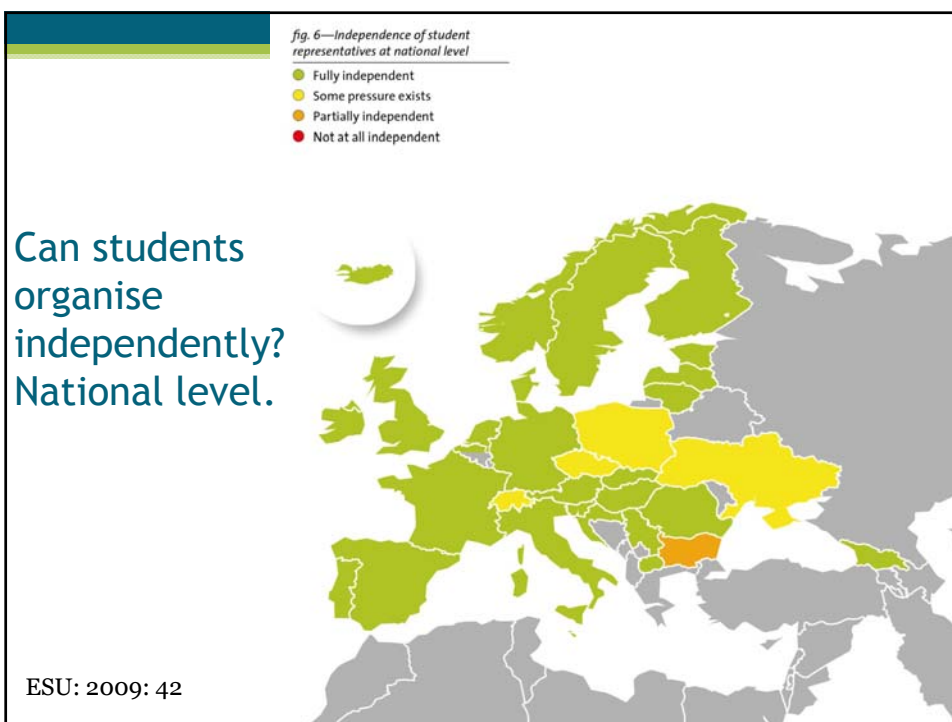
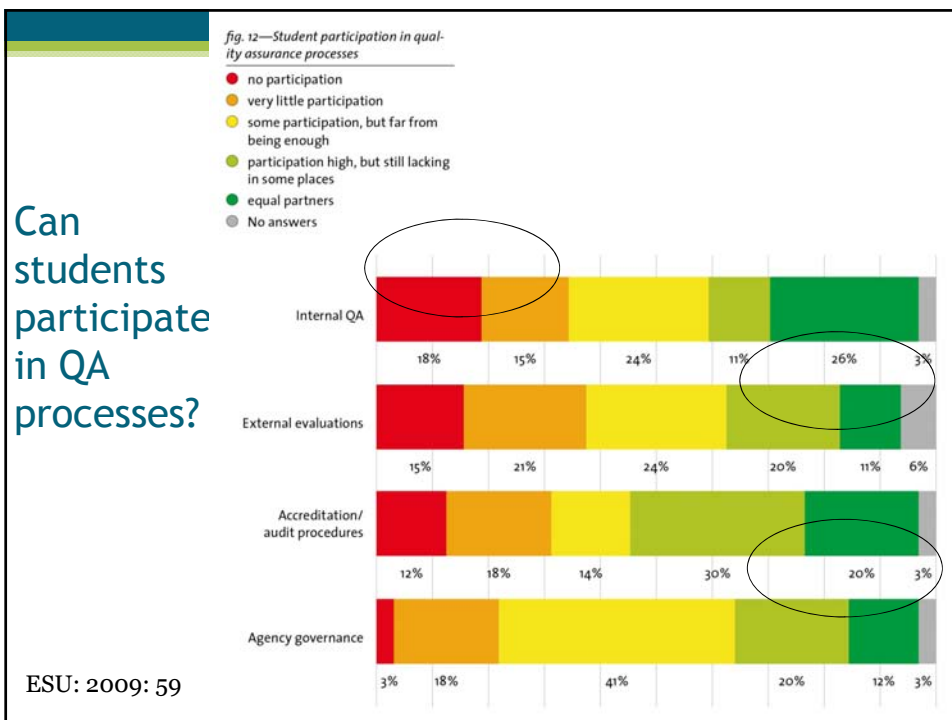
EU 27 Ministers of Finance, 19<sup>th</sup> October 2010;

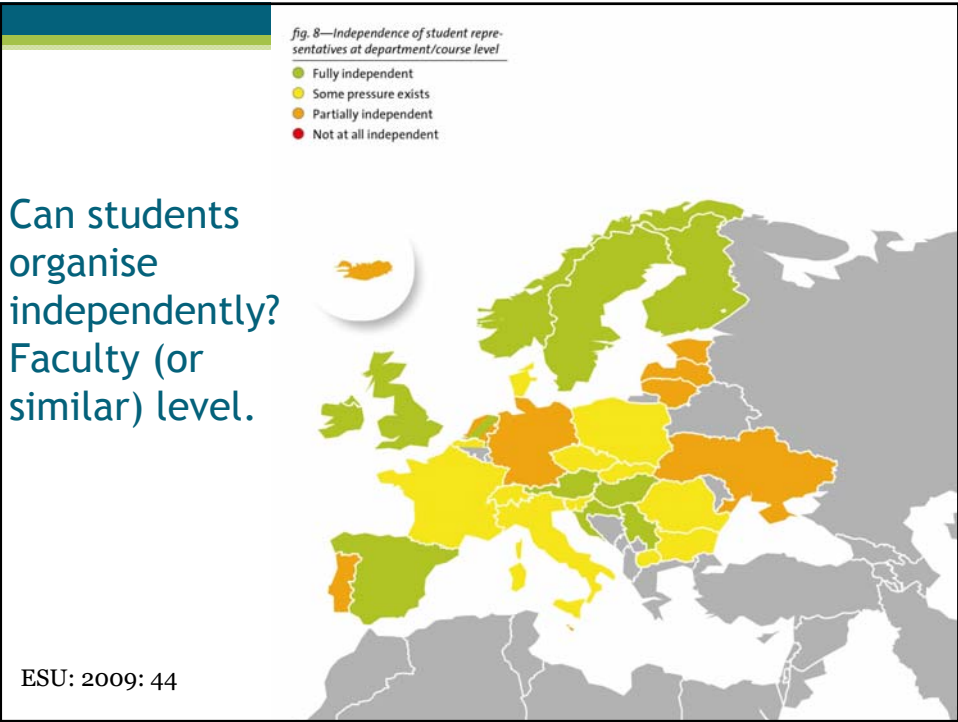
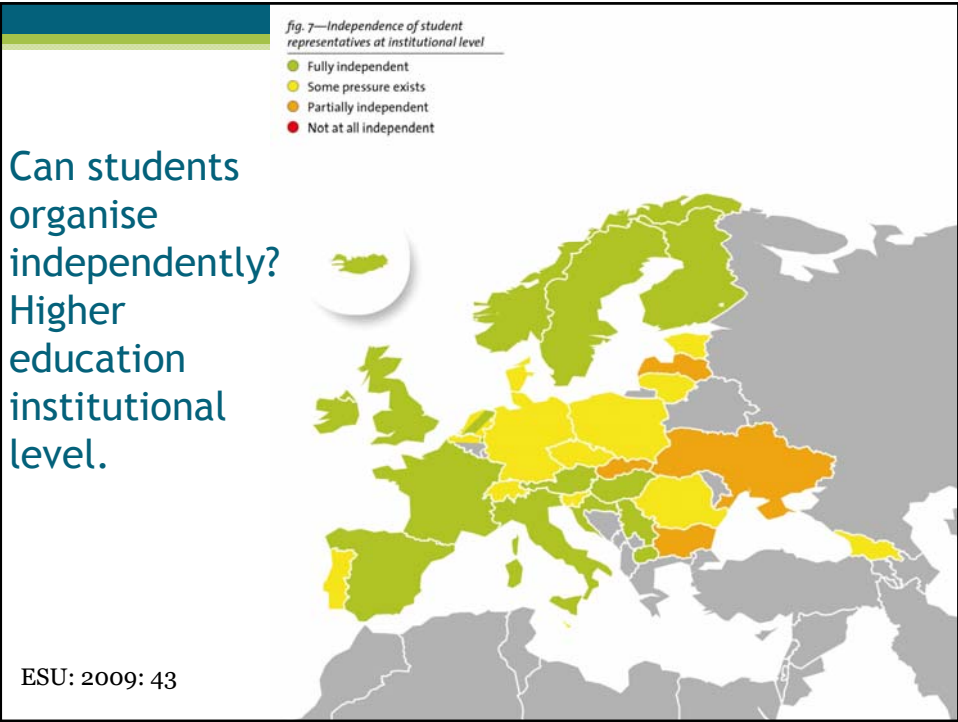
- The balance between private and social returns to tertiary education **could set the basis for public subsidisation** of higher education.



## 4e) STUDENT PARTICIPATION









## 5) ISSUES IN THE 2<sup>ND</sup> BOLOGNA DECADE ON THE EUROPEAN LEVEL



### Issues as seen from the inside I

- Lack of enthusiasm : Everything done?
  - Political perspective
  - Implementation perspective
- Evidence-based policy making?
  - Link between empirical research and policy making must be strengthened
- Conflicts within the BFUG:
  - “Our own little national version of Bologna...”: different paces of implementation, different interests, lacking solidarity
  - Consultative members versus governments



## Issues as seen from the inside II

- Lisbon and EU 2020 strategy, open method of coordination allowing European Commission to work in areas where they wouldn't have legitimacy to work on
  - Economic target of the EU instrumentalizing higher education and the Bologna Process?
  - Bologna as a scapegoat for national reforms that suit the national governments, amongst them Lisbon / EU2020 targets?



## Deciding questions for the decade

- New working methods? Stricter implementation?
- More institutional focus and more grass-roots cooperation?
- Completely different processes and standards within research supportable?
- New policy areas?
- More convergence with EU-policies? How about global the dimension?



## Deciding questions for the decade

- Will there ever be a functioning EHEA? New forms of governance needed?
- Has it actually made higher education and studying better?  
Is it worth the effort?



Thank you for your attention.

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