EUSA Twelfth Biennial International Conference
Boston, Massachusetts, March 3-5, 2011

Europeanisation of the "European Student Movement"

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Abstract

European Students' Union [ESU], representing through its member National Unions of Students [NUSes] from 37 countries over 11 million students in Europe, is one of major interest groups in Europe, and a recognised partner to European institutions and governments within European Higher Education Area [EHEA]. Yet neither ESU nor NUSes have gained much scholarly attention. The aim of the proposed paper is to shed light on this important actor through an investigation of ESU's and NUSes' participation in the Bologna Process [BP] towards establishment of the European Higher Education Area [EHEA]. The paper explores the 'Europeanisation' mechanisms in the context of ESU's and NUSes participation in the BP. It examines specifically how ESU and its member NUSes participate in and influence policy making within the BP and how they themselves are affected by this participation. Thus, it is concerned with meso-level analysis of Europeanisation mechanisms in a specific context of higher education policy making within the BP and with analysis of students unions as political actors.

The central thesis of this paper is that the two-way Europeanisation mechanisms are clearly present in the case of ESU's and NUSes' involvement in the BP. While some Europeanisation can be identified prior to the BP, this is marginal compared to the intensity of institutional and policy changes and changes in relational structures that happened after 1999 and continued to intensify in the course of the Process. The degree of these changes varies, however, between the both levels of student union system. Institutional adaptation is significantly stronger in ESU than in NUSes. Policy adaptation too is stronger in ESU. In fact, ESU policy agenda is almost 'hijacked' by the issues related to the BP. Again, this is less visible in NUSes where other issues of national concern – especially those related to welfare, such as introduction of tuition fees, feature as prominently. In many national systems, the "new governance" agenda on financing of higher education - especially the question of introducing tuition fees - was in fact launched as a "Bologna issue", thereby governments and HEIs misinterpreting Bologna recommendations. The most significant change induced by the BP for student unions in Europe was in terms of their relational structures, i.e. their involvement in the HE policy making. The BP legitimised student unions as "full members of the academic community" and recommended that these be involved in HE governance at all levels. ESU was effectively granted a monopoly of student representation in Europe. The NUSes also drew leverage from this recognition of ESU in the BP.

The overwhelming majority of NUSes report having been involved in Bologna-related policy making at the national level. The change in involvement was especially visible in the countries were more statist traditions of state-society relations and in those with relatively weak administrations. The latter were particularly interested in including student representatives in the early phases of the BP because these tended to have information and expertise resources on the BP issues gained through the ESU.

'Upward Europeanisation' in the sense of uploading of student preferences into the BP has been conducted almost exclusively through ESU, rather than by individual NUSes. In other words, there has been no individual policy preferences of NUSes uploaded to the BP. All NUSes policy preferences are formulated into common ESU positions following internal policy making procedures. These common positions are then launched in the BP. ESU managed to upload their most salient issues – the social dimension in the BP and student participation in HE governance – onto the Bologna agenda and had inserted them into the official documents. For the first time, however, NUSes effectively lobbied their respective government on ESU positions.

Finally, an unexpected – and certainly unintentional – effect of the BP on the student unions in Europe has been in terms of strengthening the "European student movement". Before the BP, NUSes involvement in ESU was relatively weak and varied. NUSes did not promote their membership in ESU nationally and have not lobbied their governments on ESU issues. The BP has created circumstances highly conducive to cooperation and empowerment of ESU to represent them on the European level.

Introduction

The task of establishing EHEA with began in 1999 has led to massive systemic changes in European higher education. Despite being essentially an intergovernmental process, the BP has gradually involved, and included the European Commission [EC] as a full member, and as consultative members 8 other institutions and organisations active in the field of higher education: EUA (European University Association), EURASHE (The European Association of Institutions in HE), Council of Europe, UNESCO-CEPES (The European Centre for Higher Education), ENQA (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education), BUSINESSEUROPE, Education International – Pan-European Structure, as well as ESU (European Students´ Union, formerly known as ESIB-The National Unions of Students in Europe). The BP introduced significant legal, systemic, program and curricular changes in European higher education. These have attracted much scholarly attention (Corbett 2005; Reinalda and Kulesza 2005; Haug and Touch 2000; Rakic 2001). Much less attention, however, has been dedicated to understanding the politics of education policy-making in Europe: how various political actors try to shape the European education agenda and how European processes might in turn shape their roles and identities (Bache 2006).

The BP has – arguably – dramatically altered the dynamics of European higher education policymaking and, especially, the role and influence of various interest groups active in the field of European higher education. Roberto Foa in his article in Café Babel stated that "[a]s the struggle over higher education shifts to the European level, so too must its combatants: governments, chancellors, and, not least of all, a small organisation called the ESIB" (Foa 2003). Foa also noted that despite the large membership of ESIB, its significance in European political arena had been small, but

> *"with the Europeanization of higher education reform in the wake of the BP, that could soon change. Indeed, it may have to: as the battle ground for higher education reform shifts from the national to the European level, it is inevitable that some of these responsibilities will transfer from the individual National Unions of Students to their collective European organisation" (ibid.).*

Following this statement, the empirical questions guiding the present investigation are: "What role have students played in the BP", and "How has the BP affected the policies and practices of ESU and its member NUSes?" and, indeed, "Did participation in the BP strengthen European cooperation among student unions?" This paper, thus, draws attention to ESU, the European representative platform of students and to its member NUSes, their involvement in and influence on the BP, and the implications this involvement had for the Europeanisation of the "European student movement". In other words, the paper examines the impact of the BP on opportunities, constraints, and incentives it provides for student interest representation as well as on the policy preferences and institutional change of NUSes and ESU.

The main aim of the paper is to complement the existing literature on interest group politics in Europe. It falls into the modes of analysis of European interest groups that are rooted in policy studies (in our case higher education studies) and the Europeanisation of interest groups. The main contributions are threefold. First, it seeks to fill the empirical gap in present research by shedding light on ESU and NUSes. In policy circles these organisations are widely acknowledged as important players in higher education policy making, yet completely neglected in scholarly literature. Second, the research moves away from the EU-centred concept of Europeanisation (i.e. "EU-isation", see Wallace 2000). It transposes the conceptual framework of Europeanisation to the institutional setting of the BP. The BP is a European intergovernmental process with subordinate role of EU institutions (and not an EU institution or an EU policy process). It has, however, a distinct institutional setting and governance method, as described below. Third, the observed impact of the interactions within this institutional setting goes beyond the emphasis on formal institutional adaptation and change (Knill 2001; Cowles et al. 2001) and includes also investigation of relational structures and policy adaptation of ESU and NUSes. Fourth, the paper investigates the vertical interaction of interest groups in multilevel systems by bringing forward the relations between NUSes and ESU in interest intermediation within the BP.

The paper is based on the empirical exploration of ESU's involvement within the BP since June 1999 until present. The data was generated from four major sources: (1) official administrative and legal documentary records; (2) interviews with a) primary actors, i.e. 19 student representatives involved in ESU since 1999 until present, and b) secondary actors, i.e. 10 representatives from other stakeholders in the BP including the CoE, EUA, Eu governments, the EC, and Bologna Secretariat; (3) focal group meetings on changing relational structures conducted at the ESU European Student Convention in Budapest (February 2011), and (4) personal records of the authors who was working as ESIB Secretary General from November 1998 until August 2001.[1]

The paper follows the following structure. First, it describes the multilevel system of European student representation focusing on the European and national levels. Next, it lays out the characteristics of the institutional setting and governance method of the BP. The following section analyses the upward mechanisms of Europeanisation following the question: "What policy preferences did ESU and NUSes manage to upload to the BP policy outcomes and how?" The subsequent section deals with 'downward Europeanisation' mechanisms broadly answering the question: "How did ESU and NUSes change institutionally, in terms of their policies and relational structures due to involvement in the BP?" The concluding section summarizes the findings from the previous sections.

[1] List of interviewees, transcripts of the focal group meetings and ESU internal documents in author's personal record can be obtained from the author.

The multi-level system of student representation in Europe

On the national level, NUSes are the institutionalised forms of student self-rule: they organize students to represent their interests and to provide student service (Altbach 1991: 1742-1743). They can be distinguished from other student interest groups in terms of their representativity: they hold affiliation – either statutory or voluntary – of the collective student body in their respective country or region. Other student associations organise students on the basis of their political, cultural, religious, academic and/or social interests (ibid.); but are not representative of a collective student body.[2]

NUSes qualify as interest groups in the sense that they possess the basic components that characterize interest groups: organisation, political interests and informality of interactions (Beyers, Eising, and Maloney 2008), and they aggregate interests of their constituencies. The NUSes vary considerably in terms of their organizational properties (Klemenčič 2011, adopted from Schmitter and Streeck 1999): (i) structures (including the electoral system, internal constitution and membership); (ii) resources (financial, personal and legitimatory); (iii) domains (interest and action space), and (iv) outputs (supply of services and modes of representation).

The overarching dichotomy that emerges from these differences in organizational properties is that of the "activists" versus the "professionals" (Klemenčič 2007; 2011). The student governments that have predominantly "activist" orientations tend to be tend to be loosely organised with volunteers rather than permanent staff, lack substantial secured financing, and have often more or less explicit linkages to leftist social movements. The salient issues advocated would most often revolve around: solidarity, student (and broadly human) rights, social justice, egalitarian values, democratisation, and anti-globalisation. Such student organisations are more likely to use revolutionary language and confrontational activism and resort to mass action, i.e. demonstrations as opposed to direct lobby and advocacy. They predominantly come from countries tending to statist modes of state-society relations.

In contrast, the political agenda of the "professionals" will often mirror the institutional and government salient issues directly affecting students. Their policies and activities thus revolve around: organisation, substance and processes of education and student social welfare. In their participatory mode they most often use dialogue and partnership. Their organisational structure tends to be characterised by highly-developed institutional structures backed up by extensive formal provisions and often significant funding mechanism. Within "professionals" we can find student governments that are more political and those that are more service-oriented. The former seek full participation in decision-making and extensively pursue political activities. The Nordic student unions typically fall into this category also reflecting the more corporatist models of interest group involvement in policy process. The interests of the latter revolve around accruing non-political and privatised benefits to students. A predominant part of their

[2] Student movements are a broader category from NUSes or ESU in the sense that both individual students and student groupings, both institutionalised and non-institutionalised, can be part of a student movement.

operations is to cater student facilities, organise activities for students and provide student services. Their participatory mode is predominantly consultative and student representatives often receive remuneration for their "services". NUS-UK most typically falls into this category. Most of the representative student organisations fall somewhere in the range between these extreme categories while displaying more characteristics of one or the other type. Their orientations may be changing with the changes in their environment.

As opposed to great majority of NGOs with "diffuse interests", student unions in many of European countries are seen as possessing a political clout to threaten or enhance particular political actor's chances in election (compare Dür and De Bievre 2007). First, they tend to have large - and with mass HE ever increasing – constituency. Second, the political character of the traditional student cohort is conducive to mobilisation. Majority of students spend most of their time within the confines of the campus community, have relatively fair amount of free time at their disposal and age-related affinity to mass action. The ability to mobilise has often determined the ability to upload their policy preferences (Greenwood 2002). This is not to say that in every European country student unions possess of the same leverage or that they can infallibly shift policy outcomes in their favour. In majority of countries, however, students as a collective body are still seen as being an actual or potentially important political force.

European governments typically have relations to NUSes, however there are visible differences between countries. Students' right to organise has been incorporated into almost all HE laws in Europe and the basic formal provisions guaranteeing students' participation in HE governance are in place. However, the actual terms and extent of student participation vary considerably across Europe (Bergan 2004; Persson 2004). These differences can be explained also through the differences in state-society relations in general, and correspondingly the involvement of interest groups in policy process. The literature of interest group mediation refers to four different paradigms (Falkner 2000): statism where private actors do not have any significant role in policy making; pluralism where there are many interest groups which lobby individually; corporatism where few privileged interest groups are involved; and finally, networks, where interest groups participate within particular policy network or policy community. The typical classification of countries (e.g. France, Italy, Spain as statist; Austria, Germany, the Netherlands as corporatist, etc.) tends to broadly apply also in the case of student unions' and their involvement in the government higher education policy processes.

On the European level, these NUSes assemble in ESU, the European platform of the representative national student organisations. ESU represents interests of their constituencies towards organisations and institutions acting on the European-level, and it provides services – especially in terms of information and training – to its members. Since its creation in 1982, ESU extended its purpose: from an information-sharing bureau to a representative union. It also expanded its membership: from initial 7 founding member unions it today acts on behalf of 44 NUSes from 37 countries, representing over 11 million students in Europe.[3] ESU's main

[3] As of August 2010. This data is obtained from personal records and from http://www.edu-online.org [Accessed 20 February 2011].

decision-making body is the Board, which consists of representatives of national unions and meets twice yearly to decide on policy and internal issues. ESU's Board elects an executive committee and various other committees responsible for operationalizing the decisions taken by the Board.

ESU is not the only student interest group active on the European level. There is actually a large number of them and they can be categorized into four main types:[4] *discipline-based* (e.g., AIESEC [Association of Economics and Business students] and ELSA [European Law Students Association]); *political and religious* (e.g., EDS [European Democrat Students] and JECI-MIEC [International Young Catholic Students-International Movement of Catholic Students]); *interdisciplinary* (e.g., Erasmus Student Network [network of students taking part in Erasmus Program exchanges], AEGEE [Association des Etats Généraux des Etudiants de l'Europe, which promotes European cooperation among students]); and *representative*, which is ESU. All of these organisations are members of the European Youth Forum, which is a European platform of youth organisations. The various interests and roles of the European student associations are beyond the limits of this paper. The focus is on ESU and its member NUSes, exclusively.

The institutional setting of the BP

The BP is a voluntary undertaking by each signatory country to reform its own education system; all agreed Bologna measures are only recommendations.[5] Decision making within the BP rests on the consent of all the participating countries, and is carried out through an intergovernmental process by Ministers at biennial summits. The BP is not an EU-driven process, although increasingly interwoven with EU practices. Over the time, the EC has been granted a status of full member of the major policy making groups in the BP, but does not lead, direct or legislate (Bache 2006: 233). It does, however, provide financial support for many BP-related activities that are in line with its funding programmes, especially the development of the stocktaking for countries' to self-report progress in implementing the Bologna recommendations. There is no central budget for the BP.

The major policy making groups in BP governance are: Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) and the Bologna Board. The BFUG operationalizes the recommendations made at ministerial meetings. It is composed of government representatives from full member countries and the EC along with representatives from the 8 consultative members, including ESU. The BFUG has the possibility to set up working groups to deal with specific topics in more details and, also, receives input from Bologna Seminars. The Bologna Board is a smaller body. It oversees the work between the BFUG meetings. The Board's members are the EHEA Chairs double Troika (the succeeding EU Presidencies and the succeeding hosts of the EHEA Ministerial conferences) the outgoing, present and incoming Chairs of the EHEA); the EHEA Vice-Chairs; the EC and four consultative members, the so-called E4 (Council of Europe, EUA, ESU, and EURASHE).

[4] For a complete list see Klemenčič (2007). I have counted 26 European-level student interest groups.

[5] The information on the BP has been obtained from the website of the EHEA Secretariat at http://www.ehea.info/ [Last visited 20 February 2011].

In terms of the governance, the BP is "open method of coordination" [OMC] – like type of governance model. This method of governance is common in the EU especially in the policy areas – like education and training – which fall under the intergovernmental method of decision-making, i.e. where member states have not decided to pool sovereignty and transfer competencies to the European level. OMC is a new soft law procedure assuming that national policies in a particular policy area will converge as a result of soft-law instruments like common recommendations, i.e. voluntary policy objectives, benchmarking and peer pressure. The underlying expectation is that through communication, socialization and social learning non-coercive transposition of norms, ideas, and collective understandings will take place.

The BP has several OMC characteristics. There is a clearly defined, though voluntary, set of objectives that members freely decide to pursue. The Bologna Declaration and the subsequent communiqués by the Ministers contain a public expression of will that implies a degree of commitment to meeting them. At least some benchmarks at defined fairly clearly to measure national performance and progress towards common goals. Monitoring is conducted through various "stocktaking" reports solicited from the BFUG and delivered every two years as part of the preparatory material for the ministerial summits.[6] There is an iterative process of joint process evaluation – through the BFUG - which in principle triggers reactions from other national leaders and thus exerts peer pressure. Benchmarking may exert influence through naming and shaming weak performers especially when such data reaches public opinion and mass media. However there are at least two challenges. First, the targets are not always concrete enough (even if better than EU education policy which tends to provide merely reference levels of average European performance). Second, autonomy of national governments and HEIs allows these to interpret the implementation of Bologna recommendations on their own terms. This is where most of the problems with misunderstandings – or intentional misinterpretations – of the BP stem from.

The BP has obviously sought to develop a "participatory governance" approach seeking stakeholders' involvement for its contribution to effective policy-making and implementation as well as legitimization of the Process. Thus, the representatives of "collectivities" that will be affected by a policy are invited to participate in the process of policy preparation and formulation (Schmitter 2002: 62-63). The stakeholders are chosen on functional terms, i.e. on the basis of the resources thy can introduce to the political process according to the substance of the policy issue at stake (ibid). Arguably with this motivation in mind, the governments granted ESU and other interest groups the status of consultative members. As De Wit writes, "[t]he close cooperation between ministers, institutions, and students in the realization of the European higher education area, is probably the most striking aspect of the BP and crucial for its success" (De Wit 2001).

[6] Examples include "Bologna Stocktaking" reports, Eurydice studies, "Trends in Higher Education" reports by EUA, and "Bologna with Student Eyes" by ESU. See the website of the EHEA Secretariat for information on key documentations: http://www.ehea.info/article-details.aspx?ArticleId=73 {Last visited 20 February 2011].

Upward Europeanisation

ESU representatives attended the inaugurating conference of the BP via an informal invitation obtained from the Rector of the University of Bologna with whom a local branch of member NUS - UDU Italy - had good relations. In the course of the meeting, ESU representatives participated in the workshops sending a message that students had to be involved in the process. The student presence at the meetings generated so much pressure already in Bologna that the organisers changed the agenda to accommodate a talk – previously not scheduled – of the ESU Chairperson. ESU also issued an alternative Bologna Student Declaration (1999) expressing a general support for the process and requesting student participation:

> *"Finally, we would like to state that we deeply regret that the students were not involved in the drafting of the Sorbonne and Bologna declarations and in the definition of their objectives even though we are one of the most important populations concerned by the potential reforms. Transparency is needed in the process. Otherwise it will only create unnecessary opposition and confusion. We hope that in future discussions, NUSes will be consulted at the national level and that ESIB will be consulted at the European level."*

In the Tampere Ministerial Meeting in 1999, the Ministers agreed on a general structure for the BP: "the consultative group" consisting of a network of national contact persons, and "the steering group" to function as an operative task force in charge of the practical work and consisting of representatives from the EU troika countries, the country hosting the next "follow-up" meeting (the Czech Republic), the EC, and representatives of higher education institutions (Prague Communiqué – Appendix, 2001). ESU's participation was not foreseen at the time. In 2000, by the decision of the consultative group, the Council of Europe, a Student Platform[7] and EURASHE were added as observers to the enlarged group (Lourtie 2001). All other decisions concerning the participation in the follow-up groups and their mandate were postponed until the next Ministerial Meeting in Prague in 2001. ESU began to be invited to the enlarged follow-up group's meetings during 2000 and 2001 until the Prague Summit.

The breakthrough in terms of ESU role in the BP was achieved at the Prague Ministerial Summit in 2001. In the course of the preparatory meetings preceding the Summit, ESU lobbied for support especially the Swedish Presidency to the EU, who was jointly with the Czech hosts, presiding over the Summit.[8] The lobby effort took place directly from ESU representatives, but also by NUSes through their respective governments. Swedish Presidency along with several other – especially Nordic governments – and Council of Europe, a vocal voice in favour of student participation, forged an informal "coalition" in favour of ESU's formal involvement with the BP.[9] In addition, the key Report to be submitted to the Ministers in preparation for the

[7] Note that the at the time participation was under recommendation of the Commission granted to the Liaison Group of Student Organisations which was established in 2000 under encouragement on the Commission. It was clear that ESU had most competencies to participate in the Process, but the European Commission had been eager to promote the Student Platform not ESU individually.
[8] Personal record.
[9] Interviews with former ESU representatives, a representative of the BP Secretariat and the Council of Europe.

Prague Summit prepared by Pedro Lourtie and commissioned by the BUFG (Lourtie 2001) first mentioned ESU's participation in the follow-up groups, and also referred to ESU's Student Convention and the Student Göteborg Declaration which had a specific objective "to create input to the Ministers' Meeting in Prague". Louitier included the Declaration in the annex of the report and summarised in the text its main points: the fact that the Bologna Declaration failed to address the social implications of the process for students and that education should be considered a public good; that system of credits should be based on the workload; that there should be a common European framework of criteria for accreditation and a compatible system of degrees; the need to remove both academic and social, economic and political obstacles; and finally that student should be recognised as partners in the BP (Lourtie 2001). Apart from that, ESU received a formal invitation to attend the meeting with a 10 member delegation and deliver a speech to the Ministers.

In the resulting Prague Communiqué (2001) the Ministers for the first time explicitly recognised the role of ESU, and gave it an equal status in the BP as that of the European University Association:

> *"Ministers took note of the Convention of European higher education institutions held in Salamanca on 29-30 March and the recommendations of the Convention of European Students, held in Göteborg on 24-25 March, and appreciated the active involvement of the European University Association (EUA) and the National Unions of Students in Europe (ESIB) in the BP."*

The description of students as "competent, active and constructive partners" came almost literary from ESU's Göteborg Declaration (2001):

> *"Ministers stressed that the involvement of universities and other higher education institutions and of students as competent, active and constructive partners in the establishment and shaping of a European Higher Education Area is needed and welcomed."*

Ministers also – for the first time in a formal document – formalised the principle of student participation in HE governance and introduced the notion of students as "full members of the academic community":

> *"Ministers affirmed that students should participate in and influence the organisation and content of education at universities and other higher education institutions."*

And

> *" […] and that students are full members of the higher education community."*

Both of these two statements have been momentous for ESU's and NUSes' continuous strive for more student involvement in HE governance and have been referred to extensively by student unions across Europe since (e.g. see Budapest Student Declaration 2011). These statements effectively meant formalisation of the conception of students as full members of the academic

community as opposed to being conceived as stakeholders or customers.[10] At the same time, the Communiqué confirmed EUA, EURASHE, Council of Europe and ESU should be consulted in the follow-up work of the BP and act as observers in the follow-up policy groups (Prague Communiqué 2001).

In addition, Prague Communiqué (2001) included also the second most salient issue of ESU: the notion of higher education as a public good and importance of addressing the social dimension in the BP (ibid.):

> *"They supported the idea that higher education should be considered a public good and is and will remain a public responsibility (regulations etc.), And "Ministers also reaffirmed the need, recalled by students, to take account of the social dimension in the BP."*

Both subsequent Ministerial Summits in Berlin (Berlin Communiqué 2003) and Bergen (Bergen Communiqué 2005) reiterated the points on the importance of the involvement of ESU and others in the BP. In Berlin, the Council of Europe, the EUA, EURASHE, and ESU were promoted from "observers" to "consultative members", together with a new consultative member, UNESCO-CEPES (Berlin Communiqué, 2003). They also reiterated its "participatory governance" approach to the BP (ibid.):

> *"Ministers welcome the commitment of Higher Education Institutions and students to the BP and recognise that it is ultimately the active participation of all partners in the Process that will ensure its long-term success."*

The issue of student participation in the BP and in HE governance in general was also reinforced (ibid.):

> *Ministers note the constructive participation of student organisations in the BP and underline the necessity to include the students continuously and at an early stage in further activities. Students are full partners in higher education governance. Ministers note that national legal measures for ensuring student participation are largely in place throughout the European Higher Education Area. They also call on institutions and student organisations to identify ways of increasing actual student involvement in higher education governance."*

Following this statement, Council of Europe undertook an in-depth survey of student participation in HE governance as part of the preparations for the Bergen meeting (Bergan 2004, Persson 2004).

Also, ESU's other flagship issue - social dimension - was further reaffirmed (Berlin Communiqué, 2003):

> *"Ministers reaffirm the importance of the social dimension of the BP. […] Ministers reaffirm their position that higher education is a public good and a public responsibility."*

[10] For an elaborate discussion on different conceptions of students and their implications for students-HEIs/governments relations see Klemenčič 2011.

Basically all subsequent Communiqués had referred to both: enhancing student participation and social dimension in the EHEA as continuous priorities for the BP. "Bologna With Student Eyes" reports (2005, 2007 and 2009) as well as ESU Declarations stemming from European Students Conventions became to be included in the official preparatory material for the Ministerial Summits. In the EHEA Budapest/Vienna Declaration (2010) ministers again reaffirmed their commitment to:

> *" […] working towards a more effective inclusion of higher education staff and students in the implementation and further development of the EHEA. We fully support staff and student participation in decision-making structures at European, national and institutional levels".*

While it is typically rather difficult to establish effective influence of interest groups on policy-making (Dür and De Biévre 2007), the case of ESU is rather revealing. These examples show not only that ESU had gained monopoly over student representation in the BP, but also that it had effective influence on the BP policy recommendations. This status was not enjoyed by any other student organisation in Europe or other regional student platforms. Government representatives adopted a "participatory governance" approach to the BP because they realized that the policy implementation will be more effective – especially in view of the unbinding character of recommendations – if the key stakeholders are on board. They have also foreseen that there could be resistance from the side of higher education institutions to undertake the substantial reforms of degree programmes and curricula foreseen in the BP. Thus, they created opportunity structures for participation of stakeholders, which ESU successfully seized. Since ESU had been from the outskirts in principle supportive of the idea of establishing the EHEA and the higher education reforms suggested, governments saw students as an important ally, not to say a pressure group, in seeing these reforms taking place on the institutional level.

Change in ESU's and NUSes' institutions, relational structures and policies: the case of "downward Europeanisation"

ESU's and NUSes' participation in the BP did not leave these organisations unaffected. This section reviews the major changes that took place in ESU and NUSes after 1999 in terms of their institutions, relational structures and policies.

Change in institutions

ESU's institutional adaptation included first and foremost structural adjustments to improve its capacity to deal with the numerous and complex issues covered by the BP. At the BM36 in October 1999, ESU established an Expert Committee on Prague 2001 [CoP2001] as well as an Ad Hoc Working Group on Prague 2001.[11] Both bodies should support the Executive Committee and the Secretariat in pursuing ESU's involvement in the BP. CoP2001 was primarily responsible for collecting and analysing information on the developments in the Process as well

[11] Personal records: ESIB BM36 Minutes. Obtainable from the author.

as on the situation in the individual countries from the NUSes. CoP2001 distributed questionnaires among NUSes with the aim not only to collect the information, but to ensure that student representatives at national and local level were paying attention to the developments and take an active part in them. CoP2001 was renamed into the Bologna Process Committee [BPC] and expanded to 6 elected members at BM40 in Slovakia (ESIB BPC Newsletter August 2001). The CoP2001 and later BPC members have presented the ESU Board with the plan of work, started a regular newsletter and a separate website targeting not only member NUSes, but also all participants in the BP (ibid.). Both, the Newsletter and the Committee website soon became the most visible part of ESU externally; in a way, ESU became recognizable through its new Committee structure. [12] This visibility was achieved for two reasons. First, the information provided was a straight-forward and quality description of key concepts and issues in the BP. Second, there was a shortage of such information within the Process in absence of a "central" BP website. In addition, the EUA – which could potentially provide such information - was in process of radical organisational reforms (merging two organisations - CRE and Confederation of EU Rectors Conferences - into one) and thus able to play such role.[13] So the information that was initially intended for NUSes became increasingly used by other participants in the BP – government representatives included.[14]

ESU Board adopted the plan of work of the CoP2001/BPC granting it an effective mandate to approach NUSes to actively seek information within their respective countries on reforms undertaken in view of the BP, and also – at the same time – introduce to their governments ESU and lobby for its formal involvement in the BP as the representative voice of students.[15] This was a major change in the relation between ESU and NUSes. As, Aerden writes in (ESU BPC Newletter August 2001):

> *"[T] this was an important shift in the policies of most NUSes. Most of these had never presented ESIB in that way in their own country."*

Furthermore, ESU sought ways to improve its relations to the NUSes and create opportunities for them to meet. It has created a new form of meetings through the European Student Conventions taking place during each EU Presidency term. This effectively meant that as of 2000, the full Board of ESU began to meet four times yearly: at both ESU Board Meetings [BM] (which traditionally also included a short seminar) and at both European Student Conventions. The Convention are qualitatively different gathering from the BM. Conventions attract many more NUS delegates. They typically cover Bologna-related topics in-depth and prepare policy input for the BP. They are more policy focused as they do not deal with statutory questions.

Several other changes took place in the size and composition of ESU's statutory bodies.[16] First, Both the ESU executive committee and expert committees enlarged in the following years

[12] Interviews with former ESU representatives, a representative from Bologna Secretariat, two government representatives, a representative from EUA and a representative from Council of Europe.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Personal records: ESIB BM36 Minutes. Obtainable from the author.
[16] Interviews with former ESU representatives.

reflecting ever increasing scope and depth of the BP agenda. Thus, more officers were elected from the NUSes to serve on behalf of ESU further intensifying the bonds between their respective NUSes and ESU. These ESU officers present an important bond between their NUS and ESU even if during their mandate act on behalf of ESU. Also, ESU ran several large projects with Bologna-orientation for which it recruited officers from NUSes. Second, ESU BMs and Conventions became more frequently attended by NUS Presidents rather than NUS international and education secretaries only.[17] The meetings of NUS Presidents in the BMs and the Conventions have, hence, contributed to strengthening the relations among the NUSes. They have also contributed to increasing the number of NUSes that were fully committed to contribute to the work of ESU. In the past, the international secretaries would have to persuade their NUS President and their Board on the importance of NUS involvement in ESU. With NUS Presidents present, commitment to a specific joint action was more likely and could be made, at least in principle, at the spot.

Finally, there was a trend towards more "professionalization" to meet the demands for expert input in the BP and other institutions and processes in ESU especially, but also NUSes.[18] The scope and degree of demands for expert input on both levels – European and national – increased dramatically with the enlarging and deepening policy agenda of the BP. Both ESU and NUSes experienced a dramatic increase in invitations for expert input.[19] There was also a dramatic increase in the number or meetings, surveys, publications and trainings conducted on the national level through initiative of ESU and its EU-funded projects. The change towards professionalization was especially visible among the more activist-oriented NUSes. For example the German fzs has in the course of BP (especially in the run up to the Berlin Ministerial Summit in 2003) released a number of publications, organised seminars and trainings, improved their relationship with the government and in general become more active member in ESU than before.[20] Similar effects have been seen with the French UNEF-ID and La Fage during their organisation of the 1st Student Convention in Paris in 2000, and VVS and FEF in the run up to the Brussels Ministerial Meeting in 2001 and while organising the Brussels Student Convention in 2001.[21]

Most NUSes also underwent institutional adjustments by introducing a position of Bologna officers within their structure (or even Bologna working groups). These were responsible for information and communication flows with ESU BPC, participating in ESU events, and coordinating NUS BP-related activities: trainings, position papers, and participation in governmental and institutional Bologna-related WG. In most NUSes, the existing academic affairs working groups or their equivalents were still the primary responsible for the position papers. Thus, this new position was added to complement rather than replace the existing structures.

[17] Interviews with former ESU representatives.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.

Change in relational structures

The BP had a tremendous effect on ESU's relational structures. From all aspects of institutional change, the change in ESU's legitimatory resources was arguably most prominent. As mentioned earlier, ESU was effectively granted a monopoly of representation of student constituency within the BP. Consequently, its status as the representative voice of students extended to relational structures towards all major actors on the European level in the area of higher education: EU institutions as well as other HE actors (e.g. OECD, other partners associations).

From among the EU institutions, ESU had closest ties to the EC. Before 1999, ESU was regarded by the EC as one of the key associations in the field of education and was typically invited to different consultations.[22] However, EC's approach towards student associations was clearly pluralist: on issues pertaining higher education it insisted on consulting all three interdisciplinary student associations – ESU, AEGEE and ESN, and the European Youth Forum which has other student associations among its members. There were several initiatives from the EC in the past to create a "Student Forum" within the European Youth Forum, and in 2000, to create a Liaison Group of Student Associations to the European Commission consisting of ESU, ESN, AEGEE and the European Youth Forum (Liason Group 2000). The Commission saw this Group to extend to other organisations in the future, representing the "voice of students associations" at European level and opening the door to several European initiatives for them (working and steering groups, consultative meetings, information activities) (ibid.). Hence, in the initial stages of the BP, i.e. before the Prague Summit in 2001, the EC suggested the Liaison Group, not ESU alone, to be represented in the BP. Following the Prague Summit, the idea of the Liason Group (or "Student Platform" as also called) faded away. ESU became recognized as the only student organisation to become consultative member of the BP together with other key stakeholder associations.

This ESU's recognition in the BP also gave it access to more project funding for BP-related activities from the EC. Over the last decade, ESU coordinated several Bologna projects with EC grants: e.g. Bologna With Student Eyes – ESIB's Bi-Annual Survey on BP Implementation from a Student Perspective (2005, 2007, 2009); Equity in Higher Education from a Student Perspective (2003), Enhancing the Student Contribution to Bologna are just some of such flagship projects.[23] In addition, together with other key European associations active in the field of education, ESU was granted an administrative grant from the EC education budget following the establishment of a Community action programme 'to promote bodies active at European level and support specific activities in the field of education and training'.[24]

[22] Personal record and interviews with former ESU representatives.

[23] Data obtained from the http://www.esu-online.org and from an interview with a representative of the EC.

[24] Decision No 791/2004/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 April 2004 establishing a Community action programme to promote bodies active at European level and support specific activities in the field of education and training [Official Journal L 138 of 30.04.2004]. In 2006 the basis for this budget line became the Decision No 1720/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 November 2006 establishing an action programme in the field of lifelong learning (OJ L 327, 24.11.2006, p. 45).

While ESU's relationship to the EC enhanced the same did not apply for the NUSes. As a rule, NUSes would not have direct contact to any of the EU institutions except through ESU. This lack of influence can again be attributed to the relatively limited powers of especially the EC (and the EP) in the area of education. In addition, the budgetary allocations in the area of HE tend to target HEIs (within the large programmes such as before Socrates and now Lifelong learning). The marginal funds available within the so-called transversal and accompanying measures where in principle NUSes would be eligible to apply they would almost necessarily need to involve ESU as a partner in order to comply with the required geographical coverage of project partners.

Despite its legislative position in policy process pertaining education areas, Council is rarely lobbied in Brussels (Eising 2008). The reasons lie in relatively few meetings, composition of national delegations (heads of state and government) and relative inaccessibility of its administrative buildings in Brussels. Prior to 1999, ESU would occasionally rather than typically meet the Council Presidency. NUSes from the EU member states holding the Presidency would normally have contacts with their governments, but would rarely – if ever - speak on behalf of ESU.[25] Although, the agenda of the troika Presidencies would be discussed in EC meeting, it would rarely be prioritised or concrete strategies prepared to influence it.[26] ESU's participation in the BP gave it an opportunity to address for the first time - European Ministers responsible for education. In addition, in November 2000, ESU delegation was invited to attend and speak at the meeting of Council of Ministers for Education in Brussels.[27] The session was followed by a press conference where Jack Lang, the French Minister of education, and Viviane Redding, EU Commissioner expressed their support for student involvement in the higher education decision-making processes. Also in 2000, CoP2001 met in 2000 with representatives of the Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, which was in charge of organisation of the Prague Ministerial Summit.[28]

At the same time there were other new opportunity structures opening up within the BP. For example, ESU became formal partner in the new European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies (ENQA). An informal E4 group was formed within the BP consisting of (ESU, ENQUA, EUA and EURASHE) to represent the views of the stakeholders and to offer expert participation within the various Bologna-related processes, such as the developments of the European qualifications Framework, EUA's Institutional Evaluation Programme, the European Register for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (the so-called 'EQAR'), etc.[29]

On the national level, the NUSes reported generally increased if not improved contacts with their respective governments (Bologna with Student Eyes 2005, 2007, 2009).[30] The recognition of NUSes as partners in the BP was seen also in the composition of national delegations attending

[25] Interviews with former ESU representatives.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Personal record.
[28] Personal record.
[29] Interviews with former ESU representatives.
[30] Ibid.

the Ministerial Summits. ESU's recommended that national delegations included next to a government representative and a representative from academia, also a student representative.[31] In the Prague Summit in 2001 this recommendation was observed only by 8 countries.[32] By comparison, at the Ministerial Summit in Bergen in 2005 student participants were included in national delegations almost as a rule. There were only few "odd" countries standing out not having students in delegations.[33]

The effect of the BP on student union legitimatory resources does not extend to the institutional level, though. Most NUSes reported no change in their relational structures to the HEIs due to the BP (Bologna with Student Eyes 2005, 2007, 2009). It appears that on institutional level other developments – most importantly the new governance approaches in the direction of "new manegerialism" (Scott 1995) – take priority to the BP. New manegerialism implies a distinct organisational culture which conceives students as "customers" or "clients" and solicits student participation for the purposes of feedback for improved quality performance (Klemenčič 2011). Furthermore, new governance approaches call for direct participation of key stakeholders in HE governance, thus increasing the number of stakeholders in governance bodies and accordingly decreasing the relative leverage of student representatives (ibid.). During the focal group meeting in Budapest Convention (2011) student representatives reported that the trend on the institutional level is towards lowering influence of students in governance, i.e. a trend that opposes the principles set in the BP.[34]

Change in policies

Since the involvement in the BP, ESU sought ways to improve its contacts to the NUSes and increase opportunities for the NUSes to meet and interact.[35] For most part of the history of ESU, the NUS involvement in ESU's work was rather weak: some NUSes participated and often majority did not. ESU was focusing its efforts to position itself on the European level rather than actively trying to mobilize national members and arouse their interests in European educational matters. The intensity of interests in European issues varied across the NUSes. While some were relatively ambivalent about European process and deeply involved with their national agendas, some were interested to the extent that ESU's political agenda correlated directly with their specific concerns and very few sought to actively influence European developments. What happened with the BP was that the "European issues" increasingly penetrated the national and institutional arena. Consequently, NUSes' and even local unions' interest in ESU's work increased.

[31] Personal record.
[32] Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, The Netherlands, Norway and Portugal (personal record).
[33] National delegations without a student representative were Azerbaijan, Armenia, Andora, Albania, Holy See, Greece, Liechtenstein and Russia, i.e. where ESU des not have a representative. Bulgaria, Italy and Ireland where ESU has a member. See http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Bergen/050519-20_Participants.pdf (Obtained 20 February 2011).
[34] Transcripts of the focal group meetings can be obtained from the author.
[35] See for example ESIB Plan of Work (2006) and from interviews with ESU representatives.

While the catalogue of ESU policy areas has not changed much since before 1999, we can witness a massive increase in policy papers on educational issues which are related to the issues stemming from the BP.[36] Basically all of these papers are ESU's reactions on the issues introduced by the Bologna Declaration, such as the degree systems, quality assurance, mobility, and recognition of qualifications. A particular concern of ESU and NUSes were, as mentioned earlier, social dimension in the BP and student participation. ESU tried to have a position on all key issues introduced by the BP. In order to develop a position, its members of the executive committee and CoP2001/BPC coordinated the work with NUS: obtaining information through surveys, conducting seminars and policy formulation within the ESU working groups consisting of representatives from NUSes. Since all policy papers of ESU are necessarily agreed (and voted on) by the Board of ESU, and since the Board of ESU consisting of NUSes, NUSes inevitably followed these issues.

Conclusion

The central thesis of this paper is that the two-way Europeanisation mechanisms are clearly present in the case of ESU's and NUSes' involvement in the BP. While some Europeanisation can be identified prior to the BP, this is marginal compared to the intensity of institutional and policy changes and changes in relational structures that happened after 1999 and continued to intensify in the course of the Process. The degree of these changes varies, however, between the both levels of student union system. Institutional adaptation is significantly stronger in ESU than in NUSes. Policy adaptation too is stronger in ESU. In fact, ESU policy agenda is almost 'hijacked' by the issues related to the BP. Again, this is less visible in NUSes where other issues of national concern – especially those related to welfare, such as introduction of tuition fees, feature as prominently. In many national systems, the "new governance" agenda on financing of higher education - especially the question of introducing tuition fees - was in fact launched as a "Bologna issue", thereby governments and HEIs misinterpreting Bologna recommendations. The most significant change induced by the BP for student unions in Europe was in terms of their relational structures, i.e. their involvement in the HE policy making. The BP legitimised student unions as "full members of the academic community" and recommended that these be involved in HE governance at all levels. ESU was effectively granted a monopoly of student representation in Europe. The NUSes also drew leverage from this recognition of ESU in the BP. The overwhelming majority of NUSes report having been involved in Bologna-related policy making at the national level. The change in involvement was especially visible in the countries were more statist traditions of state-society relations and in those with relatively weak administrations. The latter were particularly interested in including student representatives in the early phases of the BP because these tended to have information and expertise resources on the BP issues gained through the ESU. This transposition in most cases did not reach to the institutional level, where change in relational structures along the lines of the BP has not been marked. Actually, on institutional level the relational structures tend to be stronger influenced

[36] For list of ESU policy papers from 1999 to 2003 see Klemenčič (2007).

by the new manegerialism in governance which are reducing (rather than upgrading) the intensity of degrees of participation of student representatives in institutional decision making.

'Upward Europeanisation' in the sense of uploading of student preferences into the BP has been conducted almost exclusively through ESU, rather than by individual NUSes. In other words, there has been no individual policy preferences of NUSes uploaded to the BP. All NUSes policy preferences are formulated into common ESU positions following internal policy making procedures. These common positions are then launched in the BP. ESU managed to upload their most salient issues – the social dimension in the BP and student participation in HE governance – onto the Bologna agenda and had inserted them into the official documents. For the first time, however, NUSes effectively lobbied their respective government on ESU positions.

Finally, an unexpected – and certainly unintentional – effect of the BP on the student unions in Europe has been in terms of strengthening the "European student movement". Before the BP, NUSes involvement in ESU was relatively weak and varied. NUSes did not promote their membership in ESU nationally and have not lobbied their governments on ESU issues. The BP has created circumstances highly conducive to cooperation and empowerment of ESU to represent them on the European level. In other words, the more ESU got recognised on the European level, the more incentive NUSes have had to expose their affiliation to ESU domestically and draw leverage from it. ESU's increased recognition and influence on the European level, hence, reinforced NUSes' commitment to and involvement in ESU's work and hence ESU's internal ties. In turn, the strengthened internal ties among NUSes and ESU increased the legitimacy of ESU to represent the "voice of students on the European level" and strengthened its external recognition and influence.

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