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**STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN THE GOVERNANCE OF  
HIGHER EDUCATION IN EUROPE**

***A Council of Europe Survey***

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The present report was commissioned from the Council of Europe by the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research for the seminar on Student participation in Higher Education Governance to be held in Oslo on 12 – 14 June 2003 as a part of the official work programme of the Bologna Process leading up to the Berlin Higher Education Summit. The report was written by Annika Persson, mainly during her internship with the Council of Europe’s Higher Education and Research Division during September – December 2002. Annika Persson finalized the report in spring 2003, after she returned to her permanent position with the Swedish Ministry of Education. The report has also benefited from comments and suggestions by Per Nyborg, Chair of the Council of Europe’s higher Education and Research Committee (CD-ESR) and Sjur Bergan, Head of the Higher Education and Research Division.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Bologna Declaration was signed in 1999 by the Ministers responsible for Higher Education of 29 countries and has the creation of a European Higher Education Area by 2010 as its ultimate objective. The Declaration aims at more transparent and mutually recognized systems for higher education in order to increase the mobility and employability of students and staff, as well as promoting the attractiveness of European higher education.

Student participation in the governance of higher education is an important part of the Bologna Process. The Bologna Declaration underlines the importance of educational cooperation across boundaries and across organizations, aiming at developing and strengthening democratic societies.

At the ministerial meeting in Prague in May 2001 the ministers put increased emphasis on certain topics within the Bologna Process through the Prague Communiqué, one of these being student participation. Important steps forward were the statement that “students are full members of the higher education community” and the recognition of students as “competent, active and constructive partners” in the establishment and shaping of a European Higher Education Area. Ministers affirmed that students should participate in and influence the organization and content of education at universities and other higher education institutions. Further student involvement was explicitly mentioned in the Prague Communiqué as one of the themes for the seminars the Ministers encouraged the follow-up group of the process to arrange. The Ministers also appreciated the active involvement of the National Unions of Students in Europe (ESIB) in the Bologna Process.

On 12-14 June 2003 the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research will hold a seminar on the issue of student participation in the governance of higher education. The seminar is held within the framework of the Bologna Process and the topic of student involvement was, as stated above, explicitly mentioned in the Prague Communiqué. The seminar is one of the official conferences between the ministerial meetings in Prague in 2001 and in Berlin 2003.

To prepare the seminar, and to try to acquire a better knowledge of the situation in different countries, the Norwegian Ministry has commissioned the Council of Europe to carry out a survey on student participation in the governance of higher education.

### **Method and recipients**

The survey was carried out through a questionnaire to the three main groups concerned:

- Students
- Representatives of higher education institutions
- Ministries responsible for higher education

The questionnaire was sent to the member organizations of ESIB - The National Unions of Students in Europe. ESIB consists of 41 full members, 4 candidates and 2 consultative members from 35 countries<sup>1</sup>. Accordingly, some countries are represented by more than one organization. The questionnaire was also sent to the national delegations to the Council of Europe's Higher Education and Research Committee (CD-ESR). The CD-ESR is composed of both government and academic representatives from each of the signatory states to the European Cultural Convention (representing 48 countries<sup>2</sup>).

The questionnaire<sup>3</sup> was sent out in mid-October 2002, in English and French, and answers were requested by mid-November. Three reminders were sent out during November.

Student replies were received from 28 countries, which is a large majority of the 35 countries in which ESIB had members at the time of the survey. Academic replies were received from 24 countries, representing half the number of the countries that received the questionnaire. Ministry replies were received from 21 countries (44 percent of the countries receiving the questionnaire). It should be noted that the respondents sometimes represent only a part of the higher education sector in the country in question and that sometimes they have answered as individuals.

Replies from one or several group representatives were received from a total of 36 countries<sup>4</sup>. No answers from any of the three groups represented were received from Albania, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, Poland, Russia, the Slovak Republic, Ukraine or the United Kingdom.

From 25 countries, two or three group representatives have answered. In three countries, due to the structure of student organizations at the national level, two student organizations in each country answered. When the number of replies is counted all of these student answers are included.

The number of answers and therefore countries and groups represented may be limited in some of the questions or alternatives, especially in questions with many alternatives. Due to this fact, results presented as percentages have only been used in the report where the numbers have been considered large enough not to be misleading when converted into percentages.

It has not been considered methodologically feasible to systematically indicate the number of countries that give a certain answer, since respondents representing the same country often have delivered diverging answers.

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<sup>1</sup> See list of members at <http://www.esib.org>.

<sup>2</sup> See list of members at <http://www.coe.int>.

<sup>3</sup> The questionnaire can be found in annex 3.

<sup>4</sup> See annex 2.

## Definitions

The survey is focusing on the issue of student participation in the *governance* of higher education. Student influence on social issues, housing etc are equally important questions, but they are not the main focus of this survey. The issue of governance has been divided into three parts:

- formal provisions for student participation in higher education governance based on national legislation;
- other provisions for student participation;
- the actual practice of student participation.

The definitions of *higher education institutions* or *institutions* used in the survey cover both universities and other higher education institutions, such as *Fachhochschulen*. They also cover both public and private institutions under national law, even if these institutions may differ in governance regulations.

The term *country* in the report also covers parts of countries or communities responsible for higher education, such as the Flemish and French-speaking communities of Belgium.

When the term *respondents* is referred to all replies are counted, including the double answers from student organizations in three countries. A *country representative* can be a member of any of the three groups. *Group* refers to the three groups receiving the questionnaire; students, academics and/or Ministries.

The integral report is presented in Appendix 1.

## SUMMARY

- The survey shows a positive attitude within all three groups towards increased student influence in higher education governance, regardless of the present level of student influence in the different countries. The survey on this issue has also been welcomed by the participating groups.
- As a result of the survey some areas that need special consideration were identified:
  - The student representation and participation at *national level*, in relation to the governments as well as to other national bodies, is not as strong as at institutional level. This is true for formal as well as informal participation.
  - At *department level* student representation is also regulated to a lesser extent and student influence seems to be weaker at this level compared to the institutional and faculty levels.

- The *relation between formal provisions for participation and the actual practices* at the different levels needs closer examination.
  - The role of the *student organizations* at the different levels, their internal division of powers and organization, the support they receive from other stakeholders within higher education and the often low participation in the *election of student representatives* are issues that also need further examination.
  - Another finding is that all stakeholders within higher education need to focus on the dissemination of *information* about the rights of the students, how they can influence the governance of higher education and the results of decisions and discussions relevant to them.
- When treating the issue of student participation in the governance of higher education in Europe it becomes clear that a study on the governance of higher education in general, and the participation of all stakeholders, would be an important topic for further study.
  - Disagreement between representatives of the same country in the cases where two or three groups have responded is a common feature in the survey. This may be due to actual differences within the country, between regions or institutions for higher education. Universities and other higher education institutions may have varying sets of regulations and there may be dissimilar rules governing public and private institutions. Higher education is also governed and administered at different administrative levels within a country. Another reason for diverging answers from the respondents may be unclear regulations or a lack of information concerning student representation and participation in the governance of higher education.
  - There are no obvious differences between the answers from the three groups in the survey in general. None of the groups seem to have a clearly more positive or negative opinion of student participation in the governance of higher education in Europe.

### **Formal provisions for student participation in higher education governance based on national legislation**

- A narrow majority of respondents states that there are legal or constitutional mechanisms to ensure student representation in higher education governance at the national level. The areas they concern differ, but the most commonly mentioned are laws on the representation of students within national decision-making, advisory or evaluation bodies, the status of the national student organization and rules governing consultation procedures or meetings with the Ministry responsible for higher education.

- All of the respondents except two reply that student representation and participation is ensured by legal mechanisms at the institutional level (institutional, faculty and/or department levels). All countries that have such legal mechanisms answer that student representation at the level of the institutions is ensured by law, and most of them also regulate the participation at the level of the faculty. To regulate student representation at department level is not as common, even if a majority of respondents delivered an affirmative answer to the question.
- Most of the countries have minimum legal or constitutional requirements for student representation within the board of the institution. It is usually expressed as a minimum percentage of the seats and to a lesser extent as a minimum number of seats, or a combination of these two alternatives. The most common percentage interval indicated by the respondents is the 11-20 percent bracket, followed by the interval just above (21-30 percent) and the one just below (1-10 percent).
- The department level seems to be the level where student representation is regulated to a lesser extent. This is also the level where it is most difficult to find student candidates for elective positions and that receives lower indications than other levels concerning student influence.
- The students have voting rights in the governance bodies concerned. Only 4 country representatives (with compatriots disagreeing in three of the cases) in total replied that students do not have the right to vote in the governance bodies where students are represented. A majority of the respondents also reply that the right to vote covers all issues treated by the bodies concerned. 11 respondents, mainly students, reply that this is not the case. The areas that are not covered by the student right to vote are primarily staff matters and administrative and finance issues.
- A majority of the respondents answer that there are requirements for the higher education institutions to have a policy on student participation. However, 28 respondents representing 20 countries (in half of the cases compatriots are disagreeing) have answered that there are no such requirements. 40 percent of these respondents have indicated that there are no such regulations, but that most of the institutions nevertheless do have a policy on student participation.
- In most countries political student organizations are legal, even if there are quite a few countries where they are not (42 percent of the countries represented in the survey). Candidates for elections are in a minority of the cases presented through political student organizations. Nevertheless, political influence on student organizations is an issue that is raised and discussed by many respondents related to several of the questions in the survey.
- Student representatives are elected directly in a majority of countries represented in the survey. To a lesser extent they are elected indirectly. In the few cases where student representatives are appointed, the student organizations make the

appointment. In a vast majority of the countries surveyed there are also laws or regulations concerning how student representatives should be elected. These regulations mainly state that elections should take place through secret ballot, minimum requirements for the percentage of the student electorate participating in the elections, regulations concerning who can cast their vote, the number of candidates and the obligation to establish an election commission to monitor the election.

- Half of the respondents reply that student evaluation of courses and programmes are required by law or other regulations, while the other half consequently states that this is not the case.

### **Other provision for student participation in higher education governance**

- In a majority of the countries surveyed there are regular contacts between the government, or the Ministry responsible for higher education, and student representatives. Some respondents explain that the contacts might not be regular in the sense of weekly or monthly gatherings, but more of a situation-related contact when it is considered necessary. Very few reply that these contacts are restricted to certain areas within higher education policy. Still there are at least 10 countries where such regular contacts do not exist.
- A majority of the student representatives state that there is student participation or representation in relation to the national rectors' conferences or other equivalent bodies. The Ministry representatives that have answered the question, however, mainly give a negative answer. The academic replies were neither affirmative nor negative.
- The question as to whether student representatives or student bodies have regular informal or formal contacts with the national parliamentary assembly receives a narrow majority of affirmative answers from the students and the Ministry representatives. The academic representatives have a more positive opinion of the situation.
- A majority of the respondents replies that there are other formal and informal procedures to ensure student influence on higher education governance at the national level than those treated in the questionnaire. The most common forms of *modus operandi* are informal consultations and seminars, student representation in temporary working groups or projects of the ministry, informal contacts between the students and the Ministry and the parliament and representation in national councils or committees on higher education and student affairs. However, respondents representing 22 countries say that "other formal or informal procedures" do not exist.
- A majority, strongest within the student group, reply that there is no division of power between student organizations at national level and at the institutional level

concerning higher education governance. In a few countries there is no – or at least not an active – national student body. A very large majority, however, affirm that there is regular communication between national and institutional student organizations on governance issues.

### **Actual practice of student participation**

- In a large majority of the cases it is in *general* possible to find enough candidates to occupy all elective positions reserved for students in the case of legal provisions for student participation. Only five respondents in total answer negatively. The respondents were also asked to *specify* if there is any level where there are particular problems in finding candidates to occupy the seats. The levels where in some countries there are problems are primarily faculty and department level. Respondents representing 14 out of the 36 countries in the survey show difficulties on at least one of the levels. In nine of these countries, however, compatriots answering do not agree that there are difficulties.
- Candidates for student elections are in a majority of the cases presented through non-political organizations or individually. The least common way of presenting candidates according to this survey is through political student organizations. If all answers are added the largest group answer that candidates are only presented through non-political student organizations regardless of level. The second largest group replies that there is a mixture of all three ways of presenting candidates at different levels. At institutional and faculty level candidates are mainly presented through non-political student organizations. At the department level, however, a majority of the three groups have indicated that candidates are presented individually.
- In order to be a candidate in student elections a minimum number of signatures from the student electorate is required on at least one level, mainly institutional and faculty level, in 15 of the 36 countries represented in the survey (some of these having compatriots answering that do not agree). The age of student representatives is in general between 20 and 27.
- The average percentage of students participating in the election of student representatives to university bodies or student organizations varies greatly between countries, regions, institutions and levels of governance. The bracket most frequently indicated is that between 16 and 30 percent, followed by the interval just below (0 to 15 percent) and the one just above (31-45 percent). Only two respondents representing the same country indicate that the percentage is higher than 76.
- In most of the countries protocols and decisions from meetings of university governance bodies are public. Respondents representing 15 countries state that this is not the case. More than half of these do, however, have fellow nationals that do not agree. A majority of the respondents reply that both the university

administration and the student organizations take steps to disseminate information about such protocols and decisions. The students, however, seem to have a lower estimation of the dissemination activities of the university administration than the other two groups.

- Student influence appears to be strongest on social and environmental issues at the institutions, at institutional level generally, on pedagogical issues and educational content issues. The weakest influence is exercised on budget matters and on the criteria for employment of teaching staff and admission of students. There are no large differences between the estimations made by the three different groups. Students seem to consider their influence to be slightly stronger at national level, concerning the institutional level generally and social and environmental issues at the institutions compared to the other two groups. The academic representatives estimate the student influence on educationally related issues and budget issues to be stronger than the students and Ministry officials do.
- The strongest levels for student influence seem to be the institutional and faculty levels. Both the students and the Ministry representatives answering the question consider these as the levels where influence is strongest. Student influence is also considered to be the lowest at national level by both students and Ministries. The academic representatives agree that the faculty level is quite strong, but consider the national level to be just as strong. Student influence is by the academics considered to be the weakest at department level.
- A large majority of the respondents (90 percent of the students, 70 percent of the Ministry representatives and 72 percent of the academic representatives) consider that student influence on higher education governance should increase. Most of the respondents in all three groups that have answered negatively consider that the student influence on higher education in their country is strong enough as it is today. Nevertheless, some of these respondents say that the actual student influence should increase.
- The respondents stating that student influence on higher education governance should increase say that the students have a right to influence decisions and practices since they are the largest group within higher education and the main stakeholders. The students are well informed and their influence enhances the quality of higher education. Students may also be a driving force behind changes. It is also important to enhance democracy within the institutions. Some of the respondents consider there to be a difference between the formal and actual influence of students on higher education. Where the influence is not very strong formally it may still be very strong in practice. The opposite situation may also be true. There are no large differences between the three groups concerning the reasons behind wanting to increase student influence.
- Concerning the question of how student influence should increase all three groups focus on the formal aspects of governance influence such as a higher number of

seats reserved for students at all levels, stronger rights to vote and speak within the bodies concerned and regulated rights to participate in evaluation procedures. Some Ministry representatives emphasize that the present legal framework should be applied to a larger extent. All three groups mention the large responsibility of the students and student organizations to use the possibilities for influence and to organize themselves accordingly at the different levels. The students say that they need support from other stakeholders and the legal framework in order to be able to increase their participation in and influence on higher education governance. The national level is mentioned as the weakest level for student influence because of a lack of regulation at that level and sometimes no or weak national student organizations.

## APPENDIX 1

### Integral report

# **Student Participation in the Governance of Higher Education in Europe**

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# 1. Formal provisions for student participation in higher education governance based on national legislation

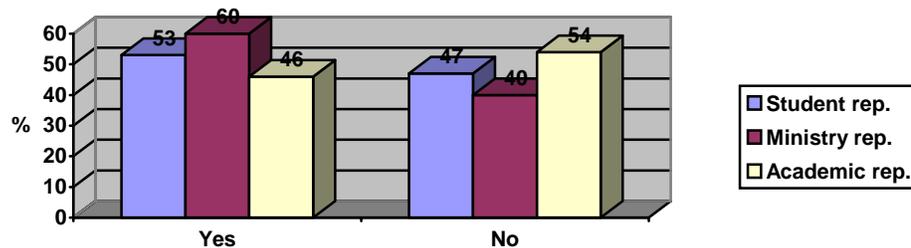
## 1.1 Legal mechanism at the national level

### *Question 2.1*

More than half of the countries replying, 22<sup>5</sup> out of the 36 countries represented, have at least one group representative answering that **legal or constitutional mechanisms to ensure student representation in higher education governance at the national level** exist. A majority of the student and the Ministry representatives, and 46 percent of the academic representatives confirm that this is the case.

*Question 2.1 Does your country have legal or constitutional mechanisms to ensure student representation in higher education governance at the national level?*

Percentage



The areas the legal or constitutional mechanisms concern differ, but those most commonly mentioned are:

- laws on the representation of students within a national higher education council or other decision-making, advisory or evaluating bodies relevant to higher education,
- the status of the national student organization, and
- rules governing consultation procedures or meetings with the Ministry responsible for higher education.

In 12 of the 25 countries with more than one group answering the respondents differ in their reply, but there is no visible pattern in the diverging answers according to the groups the respondents represent. In some cases divergences can be explained by actual differences between regions, communities, between public and private institutions or within binary systems of higher education. In some countries new legislation is also on its way, which may cause diverging answers. The divergence may also be due to a lack of knowledge of the system or of a common understanding of the situation in a specific country.

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<sup>5</sup> In 12 out of 25 countries with more than one representative answering the respondents do, however, not agree. See below.

In a few cases the diverging answers can also be the result of a misinterpretation of the question. Some respondents in their comments appear to have thought that the question was whether there was a law or another mechanism on national level to ensure student representation within higher education in general. The question was, however, whether there are legal or constitutional mechanisms to ensure the *representation* of students at the *national level*, in national committees or councils for example.

Some of the countries - representing different actors within the higher education community - that have answered that there are no legal or constitutional mechanisms to ensure student representation at the national level have stated that even if there might be a lack of regulation at the national level, the participation of students within national bodies is ensured by practice.

## 1.2 Legal mechanism at the higher education institutions

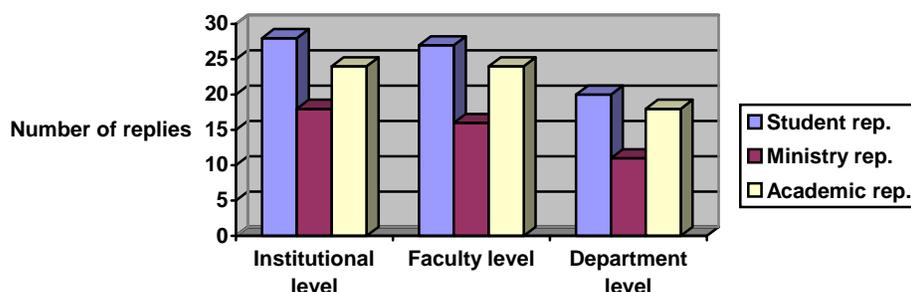
### *Question 2.2*

All of the countries but 2 that have representatives replying to the questionnaire do have **legal mechanisms to ensure student representation and participation in the governance of higher education institutions**. The countries that have given a negative reply are small with a limited number of higher education institutions.

### *Question 2.3*

The respondents answering affirmatively to question 2.2 were also asked to indicate **at what levels of governance within the institutions student representation is regulated by law or other means**. All country representatives within all three groups<sup>6</sup> answer that student representation at the level of the institutions is ensured by law, and most of them also regulate the participation at the level of the faculty.

*Question 2.3 If yes, at what levels of governance is student representation regulated by law or other means?*



<sup>6</sup> One student representative in one of the countries with two students replying has a diverging opinion.

To regulate student representation at department or institute level is not as common, even if the majority of respondents had an affirmative answer to the question. 69<sup>7</sup> percent of the students, 61<sup>8</sup> percent of the Ministry representatives and 75<sup>9</sup> percent of the academic representatives indicate that there is legislation concerning student representation at this level.

In 10 of the 25 countries where several group representatives have answered, the respondents have diverging opinions as to whether student representation is regulated by law on a certain level or not, primarily whether there are regulations at department level or not. No pattern according to group adherence is visible.

8 country representatives from different groups also stated other levels of governance where student representation is ensured by law. Examples mentioned were doctoral schools, official advisory bodies other organizations and committees within the institutions such as committees on learning environment, study plans etc. In one of the countries presenting examples, each university has a student vice-rector at the institutional level and each faculty has a student vice-dean at faculty level.

#### ***Question 2.4***

All country representatives but 9<sup>10</sup> state that they do have **minimum legal or constitutional requirements for student representation within the board of the institution**. 2 of the representatives answering “no” explain the answer as being due to the fact that such legislation is the responsibility of administrative levels below the national level. This might be the case for several countries and a reason for some representatives not to answer the question at all. In three cases the student representatives have answered “no” where other representatives (Ministry in one case and academic in all three cases) of the same country have indicated “yes”.

The most common requirement among the alternatives given in the questionnaire is by percentage, being far more frequently used than a minimum number of seats reserved for student representatives. In at least 12 countries a combination of percentage and number is used.

*Question 2.4 Is there are minimum legal or constitutional requirement for student representation, for example as a percentage or a certain number of seats that have to be reserved for students within the board of the institution?*

*If yes, what percentage?*

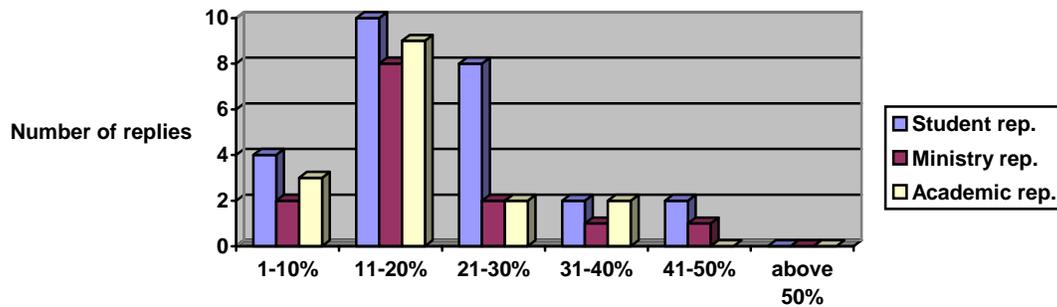
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<sup>7</sup> 20 out of 29 students answering the question.

<sup>8</sup> 11 out of 18 Ministry representatives

<sup>9</sup> 18 out of 24 academic representatives

<sup>10</sup> 4 students, 1 Ministry representative and 4 academics, 2 from the same country.



23 students (representing 21 countries) and 13 representatives from each of the other two groups have indicated that there are minimum requirements and that these concern a percentage of seats that have to be reserved for students within the board of the institution.

The most commonly indicated bracket is that between 11 and 20 percent. The 11-20 bracket has been indicated by 38 percent of the student, 57 of the Ministry and 56 of the academic respondents. The level just above (21-30 percent) is the second most common, at least according to the students. The academic and Ministry groups have a slightly higher number indicating the 1-10 percent level. A few countries have indicated several alternatives. Representatives from 10 of the countries do not agree on the level, but in all but 1 country they have marked the percentage levels next to each other. In 6 of these cases at least one of the representatives of a country has marked “number” instead of “percentage” as requirement.

6 students, 4 Ministry officials and 9 academics have replied that the requirement concerns a number of seats reserved for students. Not even half of these, however, have indicated the total number of seats on the board, so it is difficult to draw any conclusions from their answers.

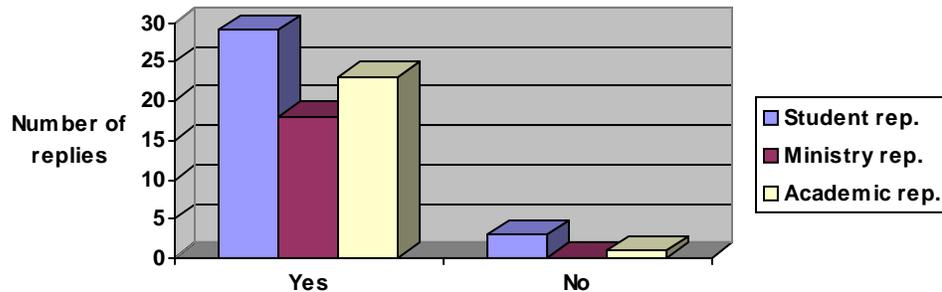
In at least one country the percentage requirement is not a minimum requirement, which appears to be the most frequent, but a maximum requirement. In this particular case, none of the three stakeholders - professors, other teachers and staff, students - can occupy more than 50 percent of the seats in the governing body. In another country the student representative cannot be a first or a last year student. In yet another country the students have a veto right within the board of the institution for issues directly concerning students.

### ***Question 2.5***

Only 4 country representatives in total replied negatively to the question of whether **the students have the right to vote in the governance bodies concerned**. In 3 of these it is student representatives that have answered no, while other representatives of the same country in all 3 cases have given a positive reply. In one case the student’s negative reply is explained by this not being a legislative issue at the national level, but on the regional level, which may well be the case in several countries. The fourth “no” answer is an

academic representative without any compatriots answering. One Ministry representative who does not answer the question says that this depends on which body is concerned.

*Question 2.5 Do the students have the right to vote in the governance bodies concerned?*



Concerning the question of **whether the right to vote covers all issues treated by the bodies concerned** the majority of respondents give an affirmative answer.

8 student representatives (2 representing the same country), as well as 1 Ministry and 2 academic representatives, answer “no”. These in total represent 8 countries. In 6 of the countries the student “no”, however, differs from other answers from the same country. The student representatives answering “no” have in 6 cases given examples of issues on which students do not have the right to vote. These concern:

- staff matters,
- administrative and finance issues,
- issues related to doctoral degrees and theses (notably when the student representative has not reached that level of study),
- the issue of employability,
- educational processes,
- curricula, and
- the recognition of academic degrees.

In one country the right to vote is said to be general on institutional level, but not within the governing bodies of faculties and departments. The 2 academic examples of issues on which students representatives do not have the right to vote concern votes when filling vacant academic posts.

### **1.3 Policies on student participation**

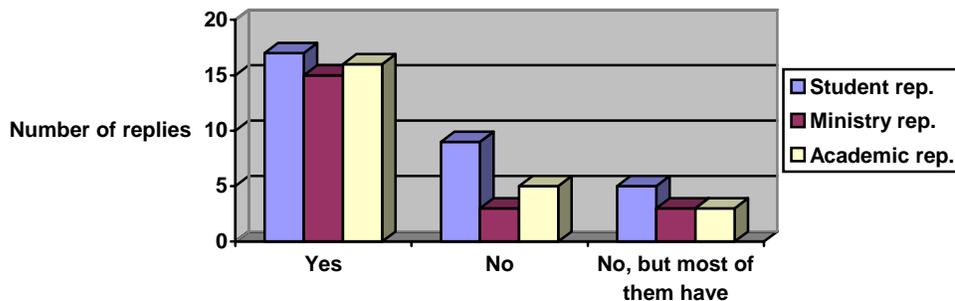
*Question 2.6*

In a majority of the countries in the survey the **higher education institutions are required by law, constitution or agreement to have a policy on student participation.** However 17 respondents, representing 12 countries, have given a negative answer. 11

respondents, representing 9 countries, have chosen the third alternative, “No, but most of them have”.

The majority, 14 out of 25, of countries from which several different representatives have replied disagree on this issue. The only visible difference between the groups that could be mentioned is that in 3 of the cases the academic representative has answered “yes” and the others “no”.

*2.6 Are the higher education institutions required by law/constitution/agreement to have a policy on student participation?*



### ***Question 2.7***

The following question asks **if, to the knowledge of the respondent, there are policies within higher education institutions that ensure a *stronger* student participation in the governance than those required by law.** A majority of the students and the Ministry representatives have answered this question negatively, most notably in the Ministry group where 12 out of 19 (63 %) answered “no”. 18 student representatives out of 31 answering the question (58 percent) gave the same reply. In the academic group there was an equal amount of positive and negative answers (12-12).

There was disagreement on this issue within 10 of the 25 countries from which several different groups have replied, which is not surprising since the question asks for the personal experience of the respondents. None of the groups seem to have a more (or less) favorable view of the situation than the others.

The examples of a stronger student influence than required by law include higher percentage of student representatives in governing bodies or that students themselves are organized in a different way in order to have a stronger influence on the governance of the institutions. One country representative also mentions the veto right for the students in the boards of the institutions of the country in question.

## **1.4 Becoming a student representative**

### ***Question 2.8***

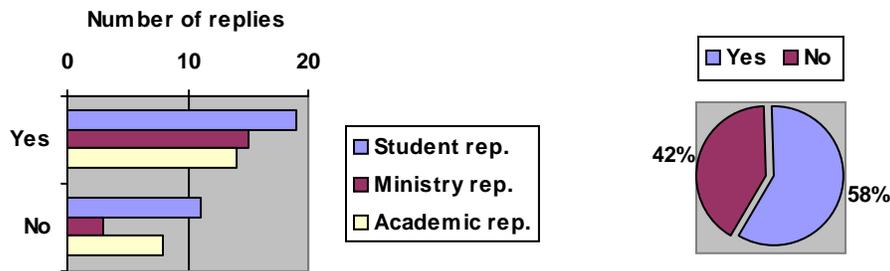
A majority within all three groups has replied that **political student organizations at the higher education institutions are legal.** There are, however, quite a few countries where

this is not the case as representatives of 15 out of the total of 36 countries (42 percent) represented in the survey have given a negative answer. In 2 countries there is disagreement on this issue, but no pattern that can be tracked to the groups they represent. With 2 exceptions, the countries that have replied negatively are located in Eastern or South East Europe.

The term “political” was not defined in the questionnaire, but according to the answers it seems to have been interpreted as party political, which also was the intention in the survey.

*Question 2.8 Are political student organizations at the higher education institutions legal?*

Total percentage of the countries represented in the survey



*Question 2.9*

On the issue of **how one becomes a student representative** a large majority<sup>11</sup> of the total amount of respondents have answered that this is done through direct election. Many<sup>12</sup> have also answered indirect elections. 8 students, 5 Ministry officials and 4 academics have stated that both ways are possible.

8 respondents from 5 countries have replied that student representatives are appointed, in most cases by the student unions at different levels. In one case student representatives are said to be appointed by the departments and in another by the university or faculty board. In the latter case, however, a legal change is on its way. In one country students are sometimes nominated by the student unions, but formally appointed by the government if representation within a national body is concerned.

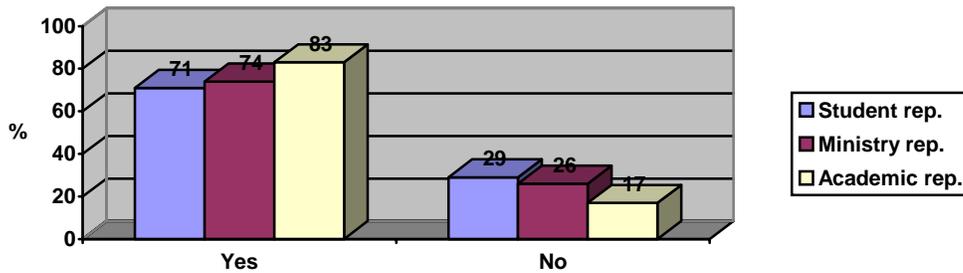
*Question 2.10*

In a vast majority of the countries replying to the questionnaire there are **laws and regulations concerning how student representatives should be elected.**

<sup>11</sup> 73 percent of the students, 72 percent of the Ministry officials and 74 percent of the academics.

<sup>12</sup> 43 percent of the students, 44 percent of the Ministry officials and 35 percent of the academics.

*Question 2.10 Are there laws or regulations concerning how student representatives should be elected?*



These regulations mainly state that, out of the alternatives given in the questionnaire, student representatives should be elected by secret ballot. In many countries a minimum percentage of the student electorate participating in the election is required and for some both are valid. Other laws and regulations added by the respondents concern who can vote, the number of candidates, the requirement of an election commission or a monitoring forum, timetables, deadlines, the campaign etc. These regulations may differ between higher education institutions and local student unions. In one country the local student union statutes have to be approved by the board of the institutions, which is seen as a guarantee against non-democratic statutes. In another country there has to be a proportional representation of all the political organizations active within the student unions.

About half of the countries with several respondents, 13 out of 25, have not reached an agreement on whether there are laws and regulations concerning how student representatives should be elected. This may primarily be due to whether the respondents have had national or local regulations in mind or to differences between parts of the country.

## 1.5 Student evaluations of courses and programmes

### *Question 2.11*

Half of the total amount of respondents, 53 percent, states that **student evaluations of courses and programmes are not required by law or other regulations.**

Among the students 16 answer “yes” and 16 “no”(one representative gives both replies). Within the Ministry group 7 countries answer “yes” and 13 “no”. In the academic group 13 reply “yes” and 11 “no”.

The relatively large number of negative answers among the Ministry representatives may indicate that the regulations are not normally decided at national level, but at regional or institutional level. This is also found in some of the statements made and might explain the fact that respondents from the same country sometimes differ in their answers. The regulations may not be legally binding.

One country indicates that there are regulations concerning student evaluations of courses and programmes, but that these evaluations are not carried out in practice. The opposite is also true since another country states that students and graduates are consulted during external evaluations/peer reviews of programmes. Yet another country says that evaluations of courses and programmes are not regulated, but on the other hand student evaluation of teachers are required by law.

## 2. Other provisions for student participation in higher education governance

### 2.1 Contacts at national level

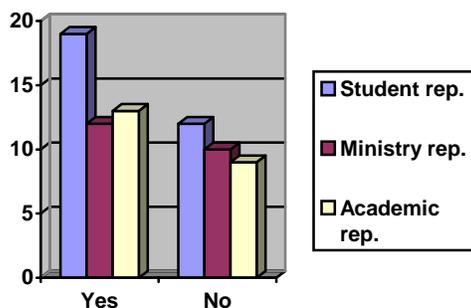
#### *Question 3.1*

A majority of the respondents reply that there are **regular contacts between the government or the Ministry responsible for higher education and student representatives**, for example within a national forum on the Bologna process. The student representatives give the strongest affirmative answer, 19 students representing 17 countries answer “yes”, while 12 students representing 11 countries answer “no” to the question.

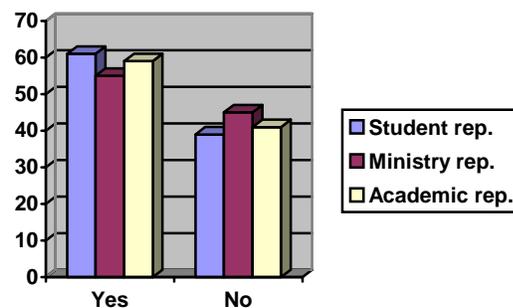
The answers from the Ministries have a slight majority answering yes (12-10) and academic representatives from 13 countries confirm that there are regular contacts and 9 that there are not.

*Question 3.1 Are there regular contacts between the government or the Ministry responsible for higher education and student representatives, for example within a national forum on the Bologna process?*

Number of replies



Percentage within each group



Some countries explain that the contacts might not be regular in the sense of weekly or monthly gatherings, but more of a situation related contact when it is considered necessary.

Countries from Eastern or South East Europe dominate the group of countries answering “no”, while no Nordic countries appear in the same category.

Another way to present the result is to say that at least one representative from 26 of the 36 countries answering the question gave a positive answer, but answers from representatives of different groups from the same country diverge in 12 of the countries. Where the answers from the same country differ no difference due to the group the respondents represent can be seen.

Among the countries giving an affirmative reply to the first question in 3.1 only 6 respondents (4 Ministry and 2 academic) state that these contacts are **restricted to certain areas**. Where the contacts are restricted the areas of contact concern specific student related issues such as study loans/financing, housing etc, but in 2 cases the contact is claimed to be restricted to questions like the Bologna Process and the quality of study programmes.

### *Question 3.2*

A majority of the student representatives (17 answers representing 17 countries) state that there is **student participation or representation in relation to the national rectors' conferences or other equivalent bodies**. 13 student representatives from 12 countries have answered "no" to the same question. The Ministry replies only show 5 affirmative answers and 12 negative. The academic replies show 11 "yes" and 13 "no".

The difference between the replies of the students and the Ministries might depend on the fact that Ministries are not involved when students and rectors' conferences meet. Still, a slight majority of the academic representatives are also answering negatively, which is harder to explain. Discrepancies in the answers from the same country (in 12 cases) may be due to sectoral or regional/local differences. In one case the participation of students is said to be very recently introduced, which may also provide an explanation to diverging answers.

### *Question 3.3*

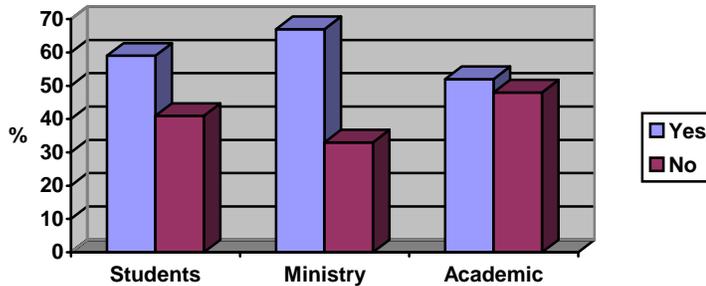
The question **if student representatives or student bodies have regular informal or formal contact with the national Parliamentary Assembly** receives a majority of affirmative answers from all three groups, narrow in the case of the students and the Ministries. 16 students, 11 Ministry officials and 15 academics answer "yes". 15 students give a negative answer as compared to 9 Ministry officials and 6 academics. Not many representatives from the same country disagree on this issue.

### *Question 3.4*

The last question in this section concerns **any other formal or informal procedures, besides the ones discussed previously, to ensure student influence on higher education governance at national level**. A majority of the total amount respondents reply that their countries have other procedures.

*Question 3.4 Are there any other formal or informal procedures to ensure student influence on higher education governance at national level?*

Percentage within each group



45 respondents representing 24 countries answer “yes” and 31 respondents representing 22 countries answer “no”. Respondents from 11 countries disagree on the issue and in 6 of these the students differ from the other respondents by making a more positive estimation of the situation.

Many respondents have given examples of how these formal or informal procedures are carried out. The most common forms of procedure seem to be through:

- informal consultations and seminars,
- representation on non-permanent working groups or projects of the Ministry,
- informal contacts with Ministry officials,
- written or oral contact with members of parliament and
- representation in national councils, agencies or committees in charge of student affairs, quality assurance etc.

Individual representatives mention collective manifestations of the students and contacts between students and employer organizations or trade unions at the national level. In 2 countries student unions are said to be a part of the political system or being members of Parliament and thus maintaining contact at the national level.

## 2.2 Student organizations at national and institutional level

### *Question 3.5*

A majority of the respondents state that there is no **division of powers between student organizations at national level and at the institutional level concerning higher education governance.**

Among the student representatives 11 countries answer “yes” and 16 “no”<sup>13</sup>.  
 Among the Ministry representatives 7 countries answer “yes” and 13 “no”.  
 Among the academic representatives 10 countries answer “yes” and 10 “no”.

<sup>13</sup> The representatives from one of the countries with several student replies do not agree on this issue.

The respondents were encouraged to **describe the division of powers** if there is such a division. Most of the examples concern a system where the local student unions are autonomous and responsible for the participation and representation at the local level. The local student unions elect or appoint members to a national student union that is responsible for issues of common concern at national level, in relation to the government etc. There might also be an intermediate regional union elected by the local unions. One country explains that the division of powers is carried out in practice, but not by statute.

In a few countries, however, there is no – or at least not an active – national student body.

In 11 of the 25 countries from which several representatives have answered the respondents do not agree – or are not familiar with – that there is a division of power between the local and national level of student organizations.

### *Question 3.6*

A very large majority of the respondents affirm that there is **regular communication between national and institutional student organizations on governance issues**. 27 of the student representatives belong to this group, while 4 have replied negatively. Negative answers have also been received from 4 representatives in the academic as well as the Ministry group, even though the countries are not the same in any of the groups. 12 Ministry officials and 13 academics have answered “yes”.

The communication is carried out through regular meetings and assemblies at national level, conferences on a specific topic, information activities on behalf of the national student unions, such as newsletters and internet sites, and contact through telephone, e-mail etc. In one country a minimum of four meetings per year between the president of the national student union and the presidents of the local unions is required by law. Another country describes how proposals from the government are always transmitted to the local student unions for consultation and yet another offers training to the local unions on important issues.

## **3. Actual practice of student participation**

### **3.1 Candidates for elective positions**

#### *Question 4.1*

The first question in this section concerns whether it is in general **possible to find enough candidates to occupy all elective positions reserved for students in the case of legal provisions for student participation**. Only 5 respondents in total answer negatively, and in 4 of these cases compatriots answering to the question do not agree.

Comments to this particular question by student representatives show that student bodies within faculties, programmes and subjects are important in motivating the students to act as representatives of the student body. The role of the institutions in motivating the students is also important. The same people do, however, show up as representatives in

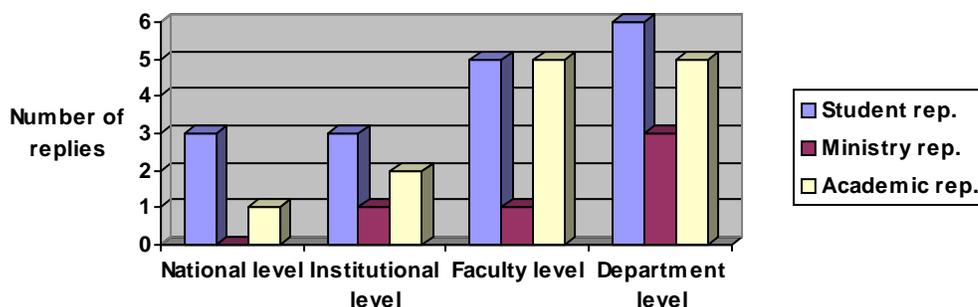
different contexts and the unions are often dependent on a few very active students. This indicates a problem regarding how the student body in general is represented and the democratic base of the elected students.

One Ministry representative states that the financial support from the government to the national student union and from the institutions to the student representatives at the local level may be an important factor in motivating students to run for representative posts. 2 respondents, 1 Ministry and 1 academic representative, also argue that the students are motivated because active participation gives a good experience in preparation for a future political or other career.

#### **Question 4.2**

The next question asks the respondents to specify this issue a bit further and **indicate if there is any level where there are particular problems to find candidates to occupy the seats reserved for students.**

*Question 4.2 Is there any level where there are particular problems to find candidates to occupy the seats reserved for students?*



Out of 31 students answering the question representatives of 9 countries (32 percent of the representatives) have indicated a certain degree of problems at different levels, mainly faculty (4 countries) and department (6 countries) level. At the national and institutional level students representing 3 countries show problems.

Out of 16 Ministry representatives answering the question 4 countries (25 percent) have indicated some problems, mainly at the department level as well.

Out of 21 academic representatives answering the question 7 (33 percent) have demonstrated difficulties, even though only 1 country shows problems at national level and 2 at institutional level. One academic country representative not indicating problems at any particular level does, however, state that there are sometimes problems with students not being active enough in their positions.

Respondents representing 14 out of the 36 countries show difficulties. In 9 of these cases compatriots answering do not agree. 4 do not have compatriots answering. The Nordic countries demonstrate slightly larger difficulties to find candidates to occupy the seats reserved for students than the other countries.

## 3.2 Presentation in election

### *Question 4.3*

In the elections at different levels **candidates for student representatives** are normally **presented** through non-political student organizations or individually. In a number of countries students are also presented through the third alternative in the question – political student organizations.

If we add all of the answers from the respondents, the largest group (22 respondents representing 16 countries) answers that candidates are presented *only* through non-political student organizations regardless of level.

The second largest group, 16 respondents (representing 10 countries), replies that there is a mixture of all three ways of presenting candidates at different levels. All Nordic countries belong to this group.

The third largest group, 14 respondents (representing 10 countries), is the one where candidates are only presented individually, regardless of level. 12 respondents, representing 10 countries, show a mixture of presentation through non-political organizations and individually.

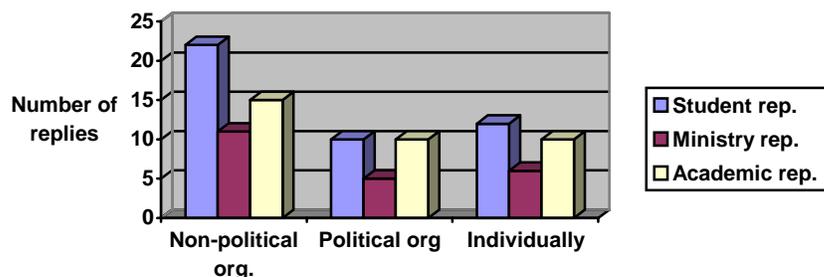
The least frequent model is where the candidates only present themselves through political student organizations, 6 respondents representing 4 countries belong to this group.

In half of the countries from which several representatives have replied, the respondents do not agree on which of the above mentioned groups they belong to, which makes it difficult to draw any conclusions from the result above.

*Question 4.3 How are candidates for student representatives in your country normally presented in the elections at the different levels?*

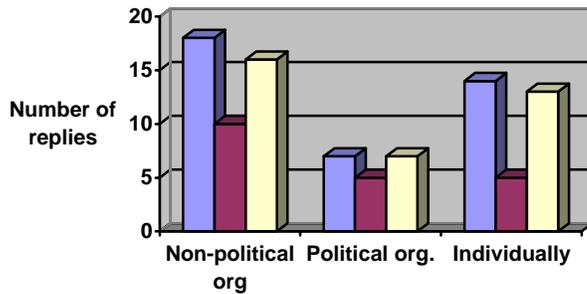
Number of replies<sup>14</sup>

### *Institutional level*



<sup>14</sup> It is theoretically possible for a respondent to choose all of the alternatives given.

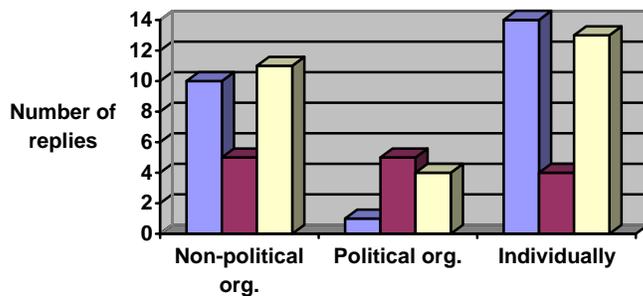
### *Faculty level*



At the institutional level a majority of the respondents reply that the candidates are presented through non-political student organizations. Among the student respondents 22 indicate non-political student organizations, 10 political student organizations and 12 individually. Among the Ministry representatives the numbers are 11, 5, 6 and the academic representatives 15, 10, 10.

With slight differences, the same pattern was shown for the faculty level with a tendency towards stronger emphasis on individually proposed candidatures and not as many in the alternative for “political student organizations”.

### *Department level*



At the department/institute level only 1 student representative has indicated that students are presented through political student organizations together with 5 of the Ministry and 4 of the academic representatives. There is a total majority of representatives of the three groups that at the department level mark individually as the main way of presenting candidates, but the Ministry replies differ. However, the department level seems to be the level which the respondents are least familiar with, or that to a lesser extent fits the alternatives given in the questionnaire, since there are fewer replies at this level in total<sup>15</sup>. This seems to especially be the case of the Ministries as only 10 Ministry representatives have answered at the department level.

<sup>15</sup> 101 indications in total at institutional level, 95 at faculty level and 67 at department level.

The Ministry representatives seemed less inclined to choose the “individual” option than the other two groups for any of the levels.

In order to be a candidate in student elections, **a minimum number of signatures from the student electorate** is required on at least one level, mainly institutional and faculty level, in 15 of the 36 countries represented by one or several respondents. Taking account of the answers in all of the groups, only 6 countries require a minimum number of signatures at national level and 5 at department level. In both categories 3 country representatives disagree. In 2 of these cases, academic representatives state that signatures are needed at the level indicated, while the students do not.

Apparently the institutional and faculty levels are more strictly regulated, or has a stricter practice known to the country representatives, than the other two levels, since the national and the department level get the least amount of indications in the questionnaires.

Very few countries disagree on whether signatures are needed. There are, however, a few more disagreements concerning at what level these are needed. 6 out of 21 Ministry representatives have chosen not to answer this question.

#### ***Question 4.4***

The **age of the student representatives** is in general between 20 and 27. The respondents were asked to indicate a maximum of two alternatives and a majority in all three groups chose the 20-23 alternative. Only 3 representatives have chosen “under 20” as their only alternative, but the compatriots of one of these respondents do not agree with this answer. According to the answers to the questionnaire the student representatives seem to be slightly younger in eastern and southern Europe and older in the north. No representative, however, has indicated the two last alternatives, 28-31 and over 32.

#### ***Question 4.5***

**The percentage of students participating in the election of student representatives to university bodies or student organizations** varies greatly between countries, regions, institutions and levels of governance. The most frequent answer to what percentage is normally the case is 16 to 30 percent, followed by 0 to 15 and 31 to 45 percent. Only 2 representatives (from the same country) indicate that the percentage is more than 76 and not many have indicated a number higher than 45<sup>16</sup>. 16 respondents, representing 10 countries, have replied that the percentage normally is 15 or lower. Among these appear some of the northernmost and some of the southernmost countries of Europe.

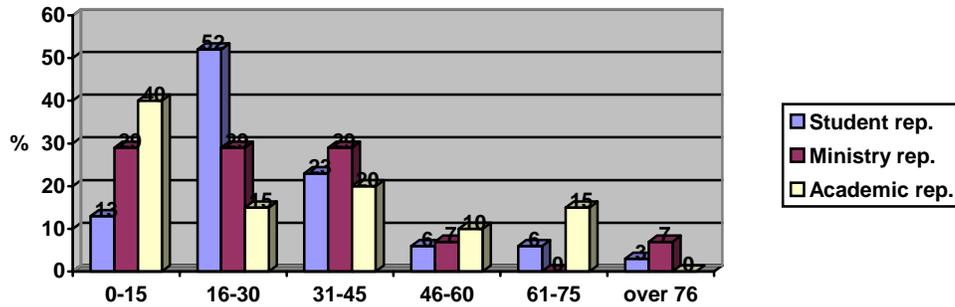
The students and the Ministry representatives generally have a lower estimation of the percentage participating the elections than the academic representatives. Quite a few, 8 out of 21, Ministry representatives have abstained from answering the question.

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<sup>16</sup> A total of 11 respondents representing 9 countries.

Question 4.5 What is normally the percentage of students participating in the election of student representatives to university bodies or student organizations?

Percentage per group<sup>17</sup>



### 3.3 Dissemination of information

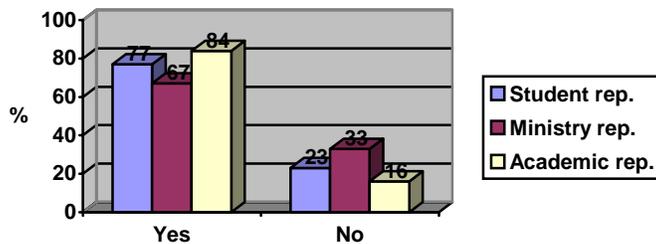
#### Question 4.6

A large majority in all three groups has answered “yes” to the question of whether **protocols and decisions from meetings of university governance bodies at different levels are made public.**

17 respondents, representing a total of 15 countries, state that this is not the case. More than half of these do, however, have compatriots that do not agree with their answer. One of the representatives with disagreeing compatriots explains that the rules concerning which decisions or protocols are public depend on whether it is a public or private institution. Another country representative states that the answer to the question differs according to the category of decisions or protocols. These two representatives therefore answered both “yes” and “no” to the question.

Question 4.6 Are protocols and decisions from university governance meetings at different levels made public?

Percentage per group answering



<sup>17</sup> Student representatives answering the question : 31, 1 rep. indicating several alternatives.

Ministry representatives answering the question: 13

Academic representatives answering the question: 20

#### *Question 4.7*

**Does the university administration take steps do disseminate information about such documents and decisions?** A large majority of the respondents answer affirmatively<sup>18</sup>. 6 student representatives, representing the same number of countries, say that the administration does not disseminate this information, but in the cases where those have fellow countrymen or women answering, these do not agree. 3 student representatives have added a third category, “not always”. The students seem to have a lower estimation of the dissemination of information from the university administration than the other two groups. Only 2 academic and 2 Ministry representatives answer “no”, or in 1 case “not always”.

#### *Question 4.8*

**Do student organizations take steps to disseminate information about such documents and decisions?** Only 3 student representatives declare that student organizations do not take such steps, along with 1 within each of the categories Ministry and academic. 2 Ministry and 2 academic representatives, but no students, have added and marked the category “not always”.

The academic representatives seemed to have a slightly higher estimation of the dissemination activities of the university administrations than the students, but in the case of the students’ activities the appraisal is similar.

### **3.4 Estimation of influence**

#### *Question 4.9*

The respondents were asked to estimate **the level of student influence on higher education** within a number of given alternatives by indicating a number from 1 to 5. 1 indicates the influence as very weak and 5 as very strong.

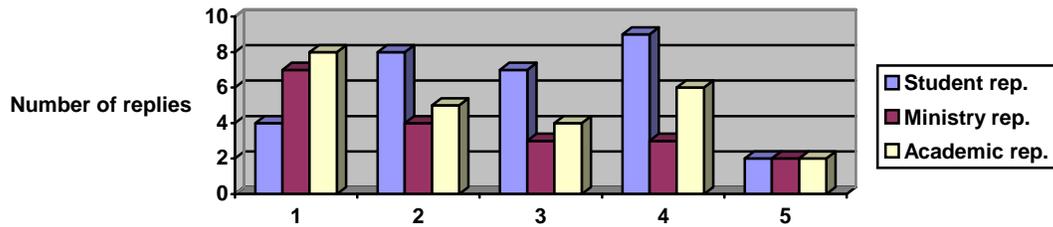
As mentioned above the number of respondents and country representatives within the three categories varies. 31 student organizations (representing 28 countries) 21 Ministry and 24 academic representatives (representing the same number of countries) have replied to the question. They represent a total amount of 36 European countries. Not all of them, however, have graded all of the alternatives below.

Due to the varying numbers of respondents within each group and each alternative, the analysis is based on where the emphasis is put within each group and not the comparison of the exact number of estimations within each alternative. The number of replies for each alternative is indicated at the bottom of the page.

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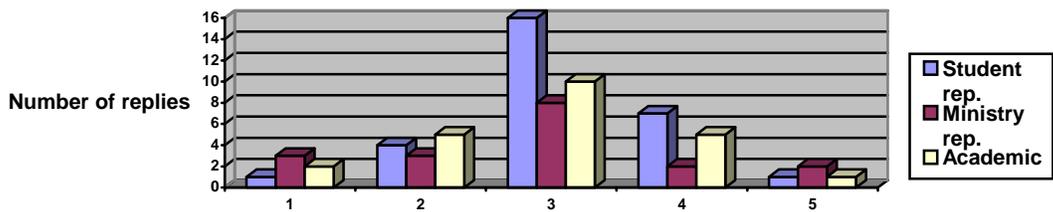
<sup>18</sup> 14 out of 23 students, 10/12 Ministry officials and 18/20 academic representatives.

*At national level<sup>19</sup>*



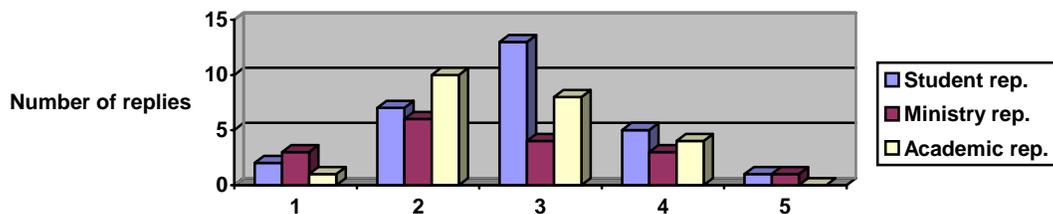
The student organizations seem to consider the student influence at national level to be quite strong, while the opposite is true for the Ministry representatives. The academic group is more divergent in their answers, but have an appraisal resembling the Ministry rather than the student opinion.

*At institutional level generally<sup>20</sup>*



Within this alternative similar estimations have been made within all three groups. They all focus on the middle of the scale, the level of influence being considered neither very weak nor very strong.

*Institutional governance<sup>21</sup>*



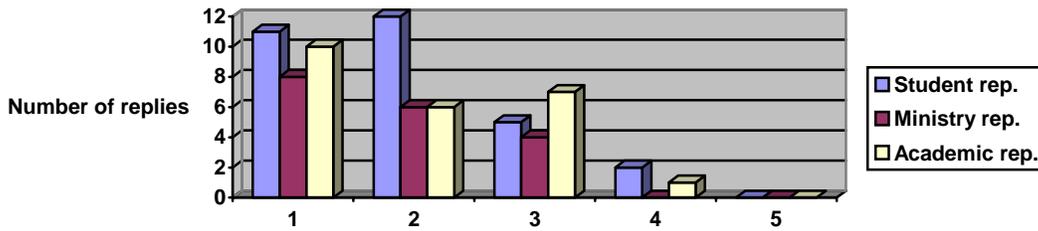
The appraisal of the student influence on the institutional governance is slightly weaker for all three groups compared to the influence on the institutional level generally. The Ministry representatives and academic representatives make a somewhat lower estimation of the student influence than the students themselves. No academic representative and only 1 student and 1 Ministry representative estimated the influence of students on institutional governance to be very strong.

<sup>19</sup> 30 student replies, 19 Ministry replies and 25 (one marking 2 alternatives) academic replies.

<sup>20</sup> 29 student replies, 18 Ministry replies and 23 academic replies.

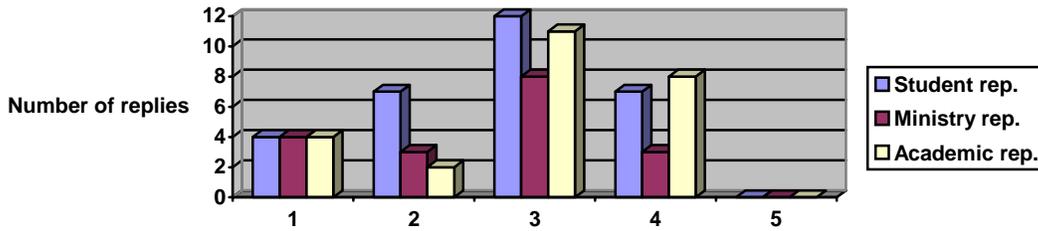
<sup>21</sup> 28 student replies, 17 Ministry replies and 23 academic replies.

***Budget matters<sup>22</sup>***



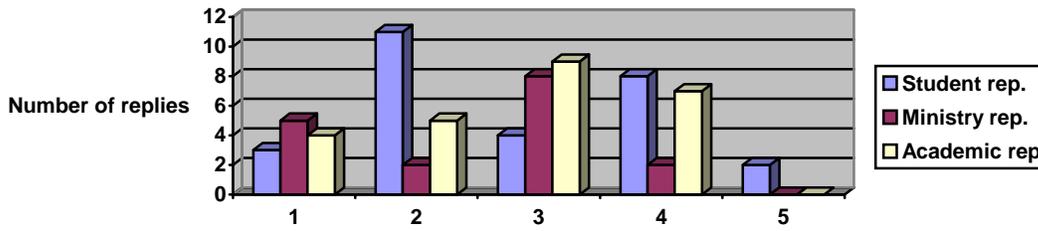
The student influence on budget matters within higher education governance is considered weak by all three groups, with a slightly higher appraisal of the situation by the academic representatives compared to the other groups. None of the groups consider the student influence on budget issues to be very strong.

***Pedagogical issues<sup>23</sup>***



The academic representatives have the most positive view of the student influence on pedagogical issues, looking at where this group has put its emphasis in the chart. However, none of the representatives of the different groups estimate the influence to be very strong.

***Educational content issues<sup>24</sup>***



The estimation of the Ministry and academic representatives resembles that within the pedagogical issues category, while the students are more negative. Once again the academics make a slightly higher estimation of the student influence than the students do.

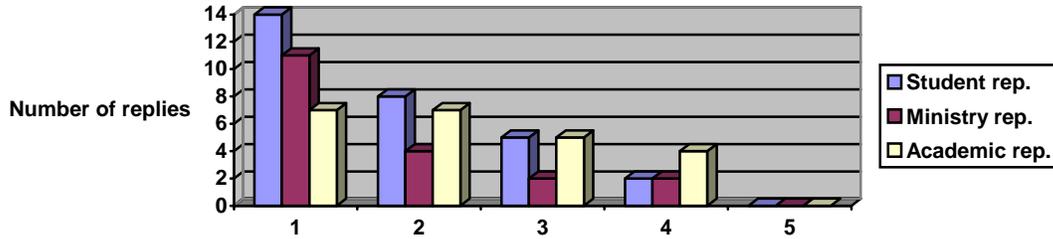
<sup>22</sup> 30 student replies, 18 Ministry replies and 24 (one marking 2 alternatives) academic replies.

<sup>23</sup> 30 student replies, 18 Ministry replies and 25 (one marking 2 alternatives) academic replies.

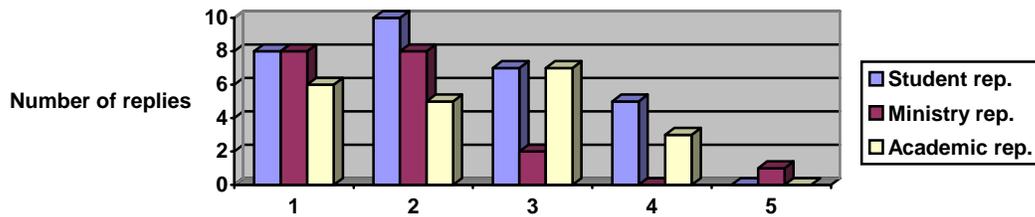
<sup>24</sup> 28 student replies, 17 Ministry replies and 25 (one marking 2 alternatives) academic replies.

The students, however, take a somewhat divergent position on this issue, but a more negative one compared to the alternative “pedagogical issues”.

***Criteria for the employment of teaching staff<sup>25</sup>***

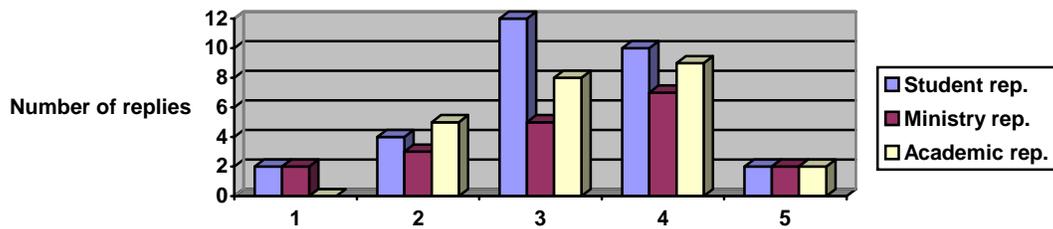


***Criteria for the admission of students<sup>26</sup>***



The student influence on the criteria for the employment of teaching staff is considered weak by all three groups. Their influence on the criteria for the admission of students is estimated to be slightly stronger. Still, the emphasis of all three groups remains on the lower half of the chart.

***Social and environmental issues at the institution<sup>27</sup>***



This is the alternative where the student influence is considered to be the strongest by all three groups of respondents. However, the student influence on social and environmental issues is not the main focus of this survey.

The alternatives with the strongest degree of student influence seem to be on social and environmental issues at the institutions, at institutional level generally, on pedagogical

<sup>25</sup> 29 student replies, 19 Ministry replies and 23 academic replies.

<sup>26</sup> 30 student replies, 19 Ministry replies and 22 academic replies.

<sup>27</sup> 30 student replies, 19 Ministry replies and 24 academic replies.

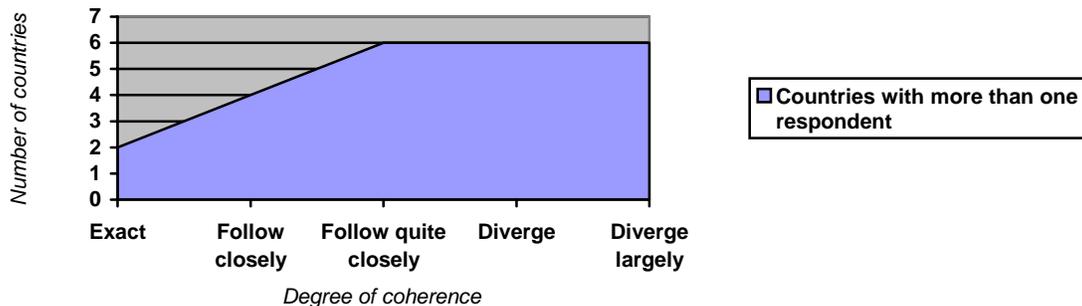
issues and on educational content issues. The weakest influence is exercised on budget matters and on the criteria for the employment of teaching staff and admission of students. The national level and on institutional governance occupy the middle positions. The institutional governance alternative receives the lowest amounts of replies, which may indicate that this particular alternative was more difficult to estimate than the others.

There are no large differences between the estimations made by the three different groups. Students seem to consider their influence to be slightly stronger on the national level, concerning the institutional level generally and social and environmental issues at the institutions compared to the other two groups. The academic representatives estimated the student influence on educationally related issues and budget issues to be stronger than the students and Ministry officials did.

If the answers from the different groups within the 25 countries where this can be done are compared, a varying scenario emerges. In 1 country the groups have given the exact same answers and in another country this is also true for all alternatives but one. Both of these countries have two groups replying.

In 4 countries the answers follow each other closely (2 groups and 3 groups answering in 2 cases respectively). In 6 countries the groups follow each other quite closely (4 countries with 2 groups answering and 2 countries with 3 groups answering).

In 6 countries the answers are diverging (3 with 2 groups answering and 3 with 3 groups). In yet another 6 the answers diverge largely (2 country with 2 groups answering and 4 countries with 3 groups).



There is a quite natural tendency that countries with two groups answering deliver replies that follow each other more closely than countries with three groups. This is, as can be seen above, not the whole explanation.

Among the countries with diverging answers it is not possible to determine which of the groups makes the most positive estimations. There is no discernable geographical pattern concerning which of these countries take a more or less diverging position.

### Question 4.10

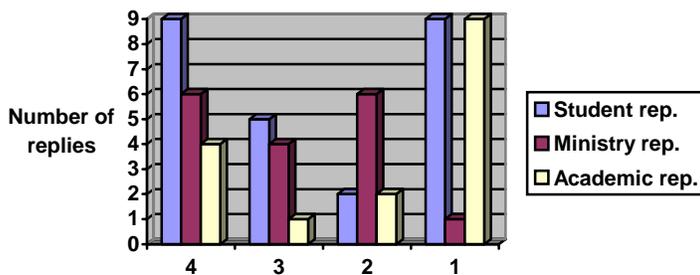
The respondents were asked to appraise **at which level of governance** they considered **students to have the strongest influence**. Number 1 should indicate the level where the students are estimated to have the strongest influence, 2 should indicate the level where they have the second strongest influence etc. Some countries interpreted the instructions in a different manner and indicated only the levels 1 and 2, or marked all the levels below level 1 with the number 2. Nevertheless, the appraisals made do give an indication of the level of student influence on higher education governance at different administrative levels.

The numbers have been reversed in the charts in order not to confuse the reader by the value of the numbers compared to the previous question. A high number to the right indicates strong influence.

*Question 4.10 At which level of governance do you consider students to have the strongest influence?*

*1 = strongest influence, 2 = second strongest influence etc.*

### National level<sup>28</sup>



Medium level student representatives: 2,56

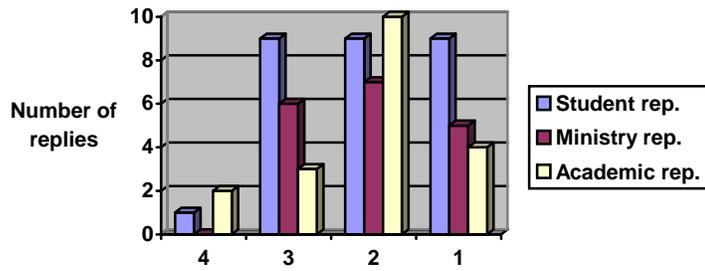
Medium level Ministry representatives: 2,8

Medium level academic representatives: 2,0

*(the lowest number indicating the highest level of influence)*

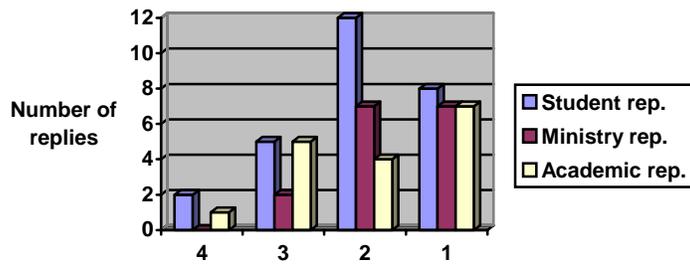
<sup>28</sup> 25 student replies, 17 Ministry replies and 16 academic replies.

*Institutional level<sup>29</sup>*



Medium level student representatives: 2,07  
 Medium level Ministry representatives: 2,06  
 Medium level academic representatives: 2,16  
 (the lowest number indicating the highest level of influence)

*Faculty level<sup>30</sup>*

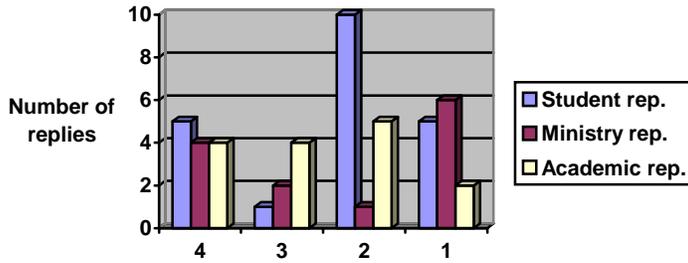


Medium level student representatives: 2,04  
 Medium level Ministry representatives: 1,69  
 Medium level academic representatives: 2,0  
 (the lowest number indicating the highest level of influence)

<sup>29</sup> 28 student replies, 18 Ministry replies and 19 academic replies.

<sup>30</sup> 27 student replies, 16 Ministry replies and 17 academic replies.

*Department/institute level<sup>31</sup>*



Medium level student representatives: 2,29  
 Medium level Ministry representatives: 2,31  
 Medium level academic representatives: 3  
 (the lowest number indicating the highest level of influence)

Both the students and the Ministry representatives answering the question consider the faculty and the institutional level to be the levels where students have the strongest influence on higher education governance. The national level receives the highest medium number – and is therefore the level where the student influence is the estimated to be the lowest – by both the students and the Ministry representatives.

The academic representatives estimate that the students have the strongest influence on national and faculty level of higher education governance and lowest on the department level.

The answers concerning the department level is, however, complicated to draw any conclusions from since the number of representatives that have ranked the influence on this level is lower than at the higher levels. The department level as the weakest or least considered level appears to be a tendency throughout the survey.

Most of the countries from which several different representatives have responded show some kind of coherence, at least concerning which level they consider to have the strongest influence. 8 of these 25 countries show larger divergences.

In the questionnaire there was also a possibility to indicate **other levels of governance** that were considered relevant. One student representative added the European level and ranked the student influence to be weaker on that level than at any of the other levels.

Two Ministry representatives added other levels, one of them concern institutional learning environment committees that were estimated to be the strongest level for student influence. The other Ministry representative added social and environmental issues in general and considered that these issues have the weakest student influence, which is not in consistency with the answers to question 4.9.

<sup>31</sup> 21 student replies, 13 Ministry replies and 15 academic replies.

The only academic representative that indicated other levels of governance than the ones given in the questionnaire, ranked programme committees to be the strongest level of influence for the students.

### 3.5 Future developments

#### Question 4.11

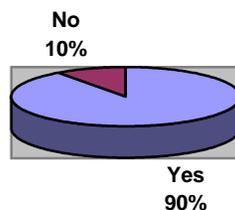
The last question to the respondents was **whether** they thought that **the student influence on higher education governance should increase or not**.

*Question 4.11 In your opinion, should the student influence in higher education governance increase?*

*If yes, why? How?*

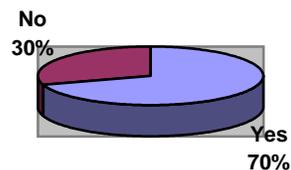
*If no, why not?*

#### Student representatives



Among the student respondents the “no” answers were very few. Only 3 (10 percent of the total amount of student answers to the question) have marked this alternative and one of them nevertheless estimates that more legislation is necessary. The two other consider the student influence to be strong enough at all levels. One of them, however, emphasizes that students participating in the governance of higher education need a better knowledge about higher education governance issues.

#### Ministry representatives

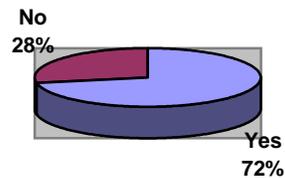


6 of the Ministry representatives (30 percent of the total amount of Ministry answers to the question) gave a negative response to the question. One of these have not commented on the answer. The others consider the student influence to be strong as it is, comparable to the influence on higher education governance of other groups in the higher education

community. One representative explains that the students are represented at all levels and that increased formal student participation within higher education governance would be difficult to formalize. Actual influence would however be welcomed through a better use of present legislation. Another Ministry representative states that students seem to be satisfied with their level of influence. They consider their influence to be dependent on their own activities.

One Ministry representative motivates the “no” answer by stating that there is a strong political influence on the student organizations that prevents them from having independent views of educational issues. The students are not very active in the bodies where they are represented if the questions do not have a “significant political relevance”.

#### Academic representatives



Among the academic representatives 7 (28 percent of the total amount of academic answers to the question) have responded “no”. These consider that students and their views are well represented at the different levels and in the bodies related to the matters that concern them. One representative states that the informal influence at his/her particular institution is much stronger than the formal influence. Another academic respondent asks if the student influence should increase within teaching and learning issues and perhaps decrease related to other issues.

Within the group that answers “no” due to the student participation being “strong as it is”, the Nordic countries are more frequently represented than other geographical areas. This is also to some extent confirmed in the answers to the questionnaire in general.

When comparing the countries from which several group representatives have answered, the student in only 1 country has answered that the student influence should not increase when the other two representatives have said “yes”. The opposite, when the Ministry and/or the academic representative has answered “no” and the student “yes” is valid for 9 countries. Only in 1 country does both representatives agree that the student influence on higher education governance should not increase. This is due to it being considered strong as it is. This is also the country where the two representatives have given the exact same estimations in question 4.9.

*If yes, why? How?*

**Why?** The students replying that their influence on higher education governance should increase in most cases emphasize that the students have a right to influence decisions that concern them both directly and indirectly. Their influence is needed to enhance the democracy and the quality of the different parts of the higher education system. The students are the largest group within the higher education community and possess valuable information about the education and the situation of the students. They also have a primary interest in the best possible education. Present problems raised by the student representatives are that students are not considered to be equal partners within the community and are sometimes confronted with a conservative mentality. Some representatives also emphasize the large difference in influence between institutions and some, primarily representatives from South East Europe, point to a very limited student influence on higher education today. One representative states that there is sometimes a difference between the formal and the actual influence of students and that there are no sanctions available if institutions break laws and regulations concerning student participation.

**How?** The students mainly consider that the influence and participation should be increased by more seats in governing bodies at an increased amount of levels and stronger laws on student participation at all levels. The right to vote and to speak in the different bodies should also be enhanced as well as the student influence on budget matters and educational content issues. Three countries mention the national level as the main level for enhancing influence. Some student representatives stress that the responsibility of the students and student organizations to participate must be emphasized and encouraged. Conditions for integrating governance participation with other activities or regulations need to be secured. Some argue that students should be paid for their work as representatives. Other ways of increasing influence mentioned by single country representatives are to increase the transparency of the governance procedures, to increase the possibility for students to influence the agenda setting of governing bodies and the creation of a formal national education board with student representation.

**Why?** Several of the Ministry representatives answering affirmatively to the question motivate their answer by stating that an increased level of student influence and treating students as partners in higher education is needed to enhance the quality and effectiveness of the higher education system. Students are primary actors within higher education. Students are by some of the respondents seen as more reform minded than other groups and they may be a driving force behind necessary changes within institutions. Several countries mention that the actual influence of students on higher education governance is lower than the level of formal participation and one Ministry representative says that the student influence presently is very low. Two countries emphasize the need for student influence on labor market related issues. Another is concerned with the lack of appropriate structures for enhancing student participation and influence within the student organizations.

**How?** The Ministry answers on this issue are very varied. Two country representatives argue that the students themselves need to be more active and effective in the way they organize their participation. The students should focus on the issues that they consider

most important and the whole body of students needs to have a better knowledge of their rights and obligations. Two other countries state that the present legislation might not be in the need of reform, but the different levels need to make a better use of the existing legal framework. Other suggestions include that students should be represented in all the bodies and committees at institutional level and participate in the evaluation of their studies including the issue of the relevance of these on the labor market. Students should be better represented at the international level and in the Bologna Process. One Ministry representative also proposes more frequent consultations and discussions with the students on higher education issues and another the creation of political student organizations.

**Why?** Within the academic group several of the respondents are of the opinion that students are well informed and give valuable feedback to the higher education institutions on different issues, which increases the quality of the education and the governance of the institutions. Two representatives considered the students to be the main stakeholders of the institutions and therefore it is crucial to have their opinion. The students can also be important partners to enforce necessary changes, for example reforms as a consequence of the Bologna Process. Two academic representatives emphasize the role of students in bringing in new ideas and the importance of their often unbiased approach to challenges. The student involvement is also considered important in order to enhance democracy within the institutions.

**How?** The suggestions from the academic representatives are not very coherent, but emphasis is given to strengthening the legal basis for participation at the different levels, increasing the percentage of seats reserved for students within governance bodies as well as securing the participation of students in task forces, committees and discussion forums outside of the governing structures. The importance of increasing the commitment of the students to solve problems and push reforms is mentioned as well as their participation in the Bologna Process. Other suggestions from the academic representatives are to try to increase the number of students as members of Parliament and to introduce student questionnaires in order to evaluate the education and the lecturers.

#### ***Other comments to the questionnaire***

Both students, Ministry representatives and academics underline the differences in legislation and practice between institutions or regions concerning student participation. This is primarily highlighted by countries with binary systems – different systems for universities and non-university institutions – or with both public and private higher education institutions within the national systems. The particularities of the different systems provoke problems for some countries in answering the questionnaire and in the interpretation of the results of the survey. In some cases the legislation has recently been changed which also affects the answers to our questions.

Student and Ministry representatives from several countries have mentioned difficulties in coordinating student participation and influence at national level. In two of the countries this is said to be due to federal systems and two other countries describe problems in keeping a national student union with a political mandate active and together.

One of the Ministry representatives considers the lack of a student counterpart at national level a problem. In other cases there are well functioning national student organizations, but no legislation concerning student participation at national level.

One student representative state that the new higher education act in the country concerned actually decreases the student influence on the institutional level generally, on institutional governance and related to budget matters.

Both students and academic representatives mention that the students are not always as active in governance related issues as could be wished for. The actual student influence is also to a large extent due to the leadership of the institutions and the different governance levels.

One student representative raises the question of political pressures and influences on the student organizations at different levels. Student unions strongly dominated by political considerations at the institutional level are not considered to be of benefit for the development and protection of student rights.

## APPENDIX 2

Answers to questionnaire on Student Participation			021213
	<i>Students</i>	<i>Ministries</i>	<i>Academics</i>
Albania			
Andorra	---	X	
Armenia	X		
Austria	X		X
Azerbaijan	---		
Belarus			X
Belgium, <i>Flemish Community</i>	X	X	
Belgium, <i>French Community</i>	X	X	X
Bosnia/Herzegovina			
Bulgaria	X		X
Croatia	XX	X	X
Cyprus	X	X	
Czech Republic			X
Denmark	X		X
Estonia	X	X	
Finland	XX	X	X
France			
Georgia			X
Germany	X	X	X
Greece		X	
Holy See			
Hungary	X	X	X
Iceland	X		X
Ireland			
Italy		X	X
Latvia	X	X	X
Liechtenstein		X	
Lithuania	X	X	X
Luxembourg			
Malta	X		X
Moldova	X		X
The Netherlands	X		
Norway	XX	X	X
Poland			
Portugal	X		X
Romania	X		
Russia	---		
San Marino?	---		
Slovak republic			

Slovenia	X	X	
Spain	X	X	X
Sweden	X	X	X
Switzerland	X	X	X
FYR Macedonia	X		
Turkey	---		X
Ukraine			
United Kingdom			
Yugoslavia, <i>Serbia</i>	X	X	
<i>Montenegro</i>	X	X	X
<b>TOTAL 73/76</b>	<b>28/31</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>24</b>

36 countries represented.

2 answers from the same country in 3 student cases.

25 countries with more than one group answering.

## APPENDIX 3

### *QUESTIONNAIRE*

Part 1 Information on the respondent

**Country:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Function:*

- Student representative
- Ministry representative
- Academic representative

Part 2 Formal provisions for student participation in higher education governance based on national legislation

2.1 Does your country have legal or constitutional mechanisms to ensure student representation in higher education governance at the **national** level?

Yes  No

If yes, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

2.2 Does your country have legal mechanisms to ensure student representation and participation in the governance of **higher education institutions**?

Yes  No

*If no, please proceed to question 2.6.*

2.3 If yes, at what **levels** of governance is student representation regulated by law or other means?

*Please mark all relevant categories*

Institutional level   
Faculty level   
Department/institute level   
\_\_\_\_\_ (other)

2.4 Is there a minimum legal or constitutional requirement for student representation, for example as a *percentage* or a certain *number* of seats that have to be reserved for students within the board of the institution?

Yes  No

If yes, what percentage or number?

Percentage: 1-10  11-20  21-30  31-40  41-50  above 50

Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Other requirements: \_\_\_\_\_

2.5 Do the students have the right to vote in the governance bodies concerned?

Yes  No

If yes, does the right to vote cover all issues treated by the bodies concerned?

Yes  No , not at the level of/within the areas of \_\_\_\_\_

2.6 Are the higher education institutions required by law/constitution/agreement to have a policy on student participation?

Yes  No  No, but most of them have

2.7 To your knowledge, are there policies within higher education institutions that ensure a *stronger* student participation in the governance than those required by law?

Yes  No

*(Please feel free to describe any such examples on a separate page)*

2.8 Are political student organisations at the higher education institutions legal?

Yes  No

2.9 How do you become a student representative?

Directly elected  Indirectly elected  Appointed

If appointed, by whom? \_\_\_\_\_

2.10 Are there laws or regulations concerning how student representatives should be elected?

Yes  No

If yes, what issues do the regulations concern?

- Minimum percentage of student electorate participating in the election   
Elections through secret ballot   
Other \_\_\_\_\_

2.11 Are student evaluations of courses and programmes required by law or other regulations?

Yes  No

Part 3 Other provisions for student participation in higher education governance

3.1 Are there **regular contacts** between the government or the ministry responsible for higher education and student representatives, for example within a national forum on the Bologna process?

Yes  No

If yes, are these contacts restricted to certain areas?

Yes  which areas? \_\_\_\_\_ No

3.2 Is there student participation or representation in relation to the national rectors conference or other equivalent bodies?

Yes  No

3.3 Do student representatives or student bodies have regular informal or formal contact with the national Parliamentary Assembly?

Yes  No

3.4 Are there any **other** formal or informal procedures to ensure student influence on higher education governance at **national** level?

Yes  No

If yes, how? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3.5 Is there a division of powers between student organisations at national level and at the institutional level concerning higher education governance?

Yes  No

If yes, in what way?

---

---

3.6 Is there regular communication between national and institutional student organisations on governance issues?

Yes

No

If yes, please describe:

---

---

#### **Part 4 Actual practices of student participation**

4.1 If there are legal provisions for student participation is it – in general – possible to find enough candidates to occupy all elective positions reserved for students?

Yes

No

If yes, why? \_\_\_\_\_

---

4.2 Is there any level where there are particular problems to find candidates to occupy the seats reserved for students?

*Please mark all relevant categories*

National level

Institutional level

Faculty level

Department/institute level

\_\_\_\_\_ (other)

No

4.3 How are candidates for student representatives in your country normally presented in the elections at the different levels?

<i>Level</i>	<i>Institution</i>	<i>Faculty</i>	<i>Dep/Inst</i>
Through non-political student organisations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Through political student organisations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Individually	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4.4 Is a minimum number of signatures from the student electorate required?

- Yes, national level
- Yes, institutional level
- Yes, faculty level
- Yes, department/institute level
- Yes, \_\_\_\_\_ (other)
  
- No

4.5 What is, in general, the age of the student representatives?

*Indicate a maximum of two alternatives*

- under 20     20-23     24-27     28-31     over 32

4.6 What is normally the percentage of students participating in the election of student representatives to university bodies or student organisations?

- 0-15     16-30     31-45     46-60     61-75     more than 76

4.7 Are protocols and decisions from university governance meetings at different levels made public?

- Yes  No

*If no, please to proceed to question 4.9.*

4.8 If yes, does the university administration take steps to disseminate information about such documents and decisions?

- Yes  No

4.9 Do student organisations take such steps?

- Yes  No

4.10 In your opinion, how strong is the student influence on higher education:

*Please, estimate the level of influence by indicating the appropriate number (1=Very weak, 5=Very strong)*

- |                                  |   |   |   |   |   |
|----------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| At national level                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| At institutional level generally | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| On institutional governance      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| On budget matters                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

On pedagogical issues	1	2	3	4	5
On educational content issues	1	2	3	4	5
On criteria for the employment of teaching staff	1	2	3	4	5
On criteria for the admission of students	1	2	3	4	5
On social and environmental issues at the institution	1	2	3	4	5

4.11 At which level of governance do you consider students to have the strongest influence?

*Please rank the levels so that number 1 should indicate that this is the level where you consider students to have the strongest influence, 2 should indicate the level where they have the second strongest influence etc.*

National level	—
Institutional level	—
Faculty level	—
Department/institute level	—
_____ (other)	—

4.12 In your opinion, should the student influence in higher education governance increase?

Yes

No

If yes, why? \_\_\_\_\_

How? \_\_\_\_\_

If no, why not?

\_\_\_\_\_

Other comments you may wish to add: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

***Thank you for your kind co-operation!***