

PART 4: CONCLUSION

4.1. SUMMARY OF THE ACCESS TO SUCCESS WHITE PAPER

The culmination of the Access to Success project, the White Paper, is an important statement by universities in development cooperation and is being tabled as a point of reference for the future engagement of various stakeholders in this agenda. It was a collaborative work of all project partners and project beneficiaries as well as an independent expert group, which was consulted regarding its content.

It consists of sections on:

- The contribution of higher education to development and the role of universities in Africa
- Africa-Europe university cooperation
- Strengthening intra-African cooperation in higher education and the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership
- The Way Ahead: an agenda for future action by actors responsible in both Africa and Europe

The final section outlines recommendations by actor: Governments, development cooperation agencies, university associations, universities, the EU Commission and AU Commission.

The White Paper's main conclusions are that:

- a) Universities and university cooperation are vital for overall socio-economic development
- b) Europe and Africa are facing common global challenges and need each other to ensure sustainable development.
- c) All countries must have the higher education capacity to respond to the domestic and global challenges of the future.
- d) Increased cooperation between universities in Africa and Europe can be seen as a way

to support capacity building and development activities, as well as to enhance academic performance

- e) These university partnerships must be mutually beneficial and sustainable and funding mechanisms must be found to enable this.
- f) A stronger emphasis should be placed on developing research collaboration in its two-fold function - as a contribution to knowledge generation and exchange, and as a capacity-building measure to support institutional development.
- g) Established partnership programmes have been identified as a reliable framework for the organisation of meaningful inter-university mobility, with clear benefits for individuals and institutions. The mobility of European students and staff to Africa has been identified as an under-explored possibility.
- h) Beyond government intervention, universities in Africa and Europe should consider institutional strategies to limit brain drain.
- i) More information and better communication regarding the rich variety of Africa-Europe higher education and research cooperation activities are needed to enable synergies, better coordination and exchange of best practice. The time is ripe for joint projects of different national agencies, identifying common priorities and designing joint evaluation procedures.
- j) Intra-regional higher education mobility is an important element of the regional harmonisation agenda in Africa. Though there are some successful programmes for student and staff exchange between African institutions exist, their visibility and scope is too low.
- k) The role of universities in advancing and shaping the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership should be made more explicit. They should not only be seen as beneficiaries, but should be consulted in the development of

new programmes, in order to ensure a proactive commitment to and awareness of the Partnership.

- l) Universities link education and research through their activities, driving teaching and learning as well as the science and innovation agenda. This important fact should be recognised under the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership and strengthened.
- m) University associations have an important role to play in creating fora for the sharing of practice and in providing input to joint political agendas, such as the Africa-EU Partnership.

Considering the outcomes of the Access to Success project, the overall question remains how best to follow up the results and ensure impact. The following is a summary of the concrete recommendations and actions that are critical to taking forward higher education cooperation between Africa and Europe. While each recommendation appears linked to a specific type of actor, it is of course assumed that they would have to be taken up simultaneously, and in coordination.

1. Governments should

- Consider the importance of higher education for social and economic development: education has to be approached from a holistic perspective, emphasising the interrelation between different education levels and sectors.
- Support the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership as an important policy instrument and strengthen the role of higher education within it.
- Develop concrete measures to mitigate brain drain: incentives such as improvement of research infrastructure and employment conditions for individual scholars and students, mobility and cooperation programmes that reduce the risk of brain drain and approaches that enable an active contribution of the Diaspora to higher education, such as incentives for expatriated scholars.
- Collect and publicise data on higher education.

2. Universities in Africa and Europe should:

- Integrate development cooperation into the overall institutional internationalisation strategy.
- Consider innovative partnerships models as a means to strengthen both North-South and South-South collaboration.
- Develop institutional strategies to mitigate the risks and impacts of academic brain drain.

3. Development cooperation agencies should:

- Enhance coordination, collaboration and exchange with other agencies: development cooperation agencies should seek ways to ensure complementarities, share practice and ensure better visibility and understanding of programmes and initiatives beyond the national context. The time is ripe for joint, European level projects in development, supported by European Union and national funding sources.
- Explore specifically joint projects to build higher education staff capacity.
- Prioritise long-term university partnerships that are needs-based and flexible enough to accommodate and advance the diverse activities undertaken by universities. These activities may cross-cut research, education, development cooperation, and institutional development, which should be embraced by funding mechanisms.

4. Regional and national university associations should:

- Establish inter-regional dialogue between university associations and universities in order to contribute as active stakeholders to the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership.
- Enhance understanding and exchange in the area of graduate and specifically doctoral education: university associations are well placed to promote the development of joint masters and PhD programmes that is sensitive to brain drain .

- Support the internationalisation of universities and promote the integration of internationalisation and development cooperation strategies.

5. The European Union and African Union Commissions should:

- Include a framework for Africa-Europe higher education exchange and collaboration within the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership: this would generate multiple benefits for the university community and society at large, and would also send a strong signal towards member states and donor organisations.
- Support regional higher education integration in Africa through bi-regional university cooperation.
- Establish a multi-stakeholder dialogue platform that would facilitate communication, sharing of practice, identification of synergies and promotion of initiatives.
- University exchange and cooperation should be based on mutual benefits; this includes the facilitation of two-way academic mobility and general cost coverage under partnership programmes which should be accounted for in European Union and African Union funding programmes.
- Support the development of national structures that would be in charge of follow-up and promotion of the Arusha Convention.

4.2. REFLECTIONS ON WHITE PAPER — ENHANCING EUROPE-AFRICA UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP: A CONTRIBUTION TO DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

Outcome report of the dissemination event for the Access to Success project, Brussels, Belgium, 28 September 2010

Objectives

This final dissemination event of the Access to Success project served a two-fold purpose: to present the project White Paper and its recommendations to a wider political and academic community and to discuss and critique the paper, identifying ways in which its recommendations can be taken up.

Beyond a more general discussion on the contribution of education to development and particularly the role of higher education was timely, given the upcoming Africa-EU Summit (November 2010), the discussion on the future of the Millennium Development Goals, and the various higher education initiatives launched in the framework of the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership.

Structure

The event was divided into two major sessions: a closed morning session targeting past beneficiaries of the project workshops and surveys, and an open public session in the afternoon, targeting political leaders and the wider university community. The morning session was an occasion to speak amongst project peers, addressing critical points that the White Paper had raised and brainstorming project follow-up. The discussion was taken into the afternoon, when, after welcoming addresses of high level representatives from the European Commission, the Belgian Senate (the hosts), the Belgian Ministry for Development Cooperation and the presidents' of the EUA and AAU, a panel engaged a debate on the White Paper recommendations with the audience (approximately 140 people). This panel consisted of Olusola Oyewole (African Union Commission), Sigmond Grunmo (Rector of the University of Bergen), and Tolly Mbwette (Vice-Chancellor of the

Open University of Tanzania) and was moderated by Lesley Wilson (Secretary General of EUA) and Pascal Hoba (Head of Communications of AAU). The programme was closed with an enthusiastic word from the Director General of Education and Culture of the European Commission, Mr. Jan Truszczynski.

Morning stakeholder session

The morning session opened with a discussion on the White Paper, primed by two presentations. **Ronnie Munck, Irish-Africa Partnership and Dublin City University** extracted several points from the White Paper that were of direct significance to the Irish context, particularly regarding the partnership platform for research capacity development they have been building with all Irish universities. While this Irish initiative has been an interesting example of internal Irish partnership, Mr. Munck cited the difficulty in establishing cross-continental partnerships in Europe, and the importance of bringing the Irish efforts to the European level. In Africa, he observed a need for more effective southern coordination, and proposed a southern parallel 'hub' to help to coordinate the institutions in the South that benefit from their projects.

When asked what he learned from the Access to Success project, he referred again to the need to 'scale up' from the national level and broaden out to Europe: economies of scale can have a more marked effect in development cooperation, particularly with small countries such as Ireland. That said, he reiterated an important lesson from the Oslo workshop, that agencies or actors funding university collaboration with the south 'don't want to be coordinated' but rather need to look for practical ways of collaborating while maintaining their autonomy and creativity.

In terms of suggestions for the future, Mr. Munck proposed several concrete possibilities:

- The Irish universities found that they had seven different Memorandum of Understanding-MoUs (on seven different projects or disciplines) with the University of Makerere in Uganda. As a result, they have developed an all Ireland MoU. One proposition would be to develop a template at European level that could be promoted as a useful tool, and help universities in the

South and the North to coordinate better internally.

- He also suggested mapping the various modes of collaborative PhDs across Africa, so as to identify and promote practices.

Lillian Tibatemwa-Ekirikubinza, Makerere University, then presented her commentary specifically on Section C of the White Paper: Recommendations for Africa-Europe University Cooperation. The White Paper talks about the importance of mutually beneficial partnership. However, the benefits for European universities in such partnerships are not explicit enough, and this is critical in convincing university leadership to invest in such partnerships. Dr. Tibatemwa-Ekirikubinza then touched upon several areas in which collaboration is critical, areas mentioned by the White Paper but in need of further elaboration:

- Regarding doctoral education, issues of intellectual property and open access need a more explicit recommendation; and a framework to govern collaborative research would be highly useful.
- Regarding retention after training, it was suggested that mentoring programmes embedded in partnerships could be a productive way to encourage graduates to stay in their home institutions.
- Regarding mobility, one should think of creative ways to compensate the sending university if a graduate leaves (instead of restricting movement).
- In terms of low mobility within Africa, this is very much driven by a perception of low quality- African universities and there is a need to combat this stereotype with marketing and visibility measures.
- Quality assurance (QA), and sharing of practice in QA should be one of the focus areas in collaboration.
- Partnerships can also be used to deal with issues of equity and recruitment of ethnically marginalised groups.

After the initial presentations, a wide range of comments and constructive criticism came from the audience, grouped below according to theme.

The White Paper: a focus on management capacity building

A number of participants commented on the need to orient partnership programmes towards capacity building in HE management in Africa. Many of these points underpinned the White Paper or stretched it further:

- Building capacity to implement change is a critical point of the White Paper: the professionalisation of management of HE and research into HE are greatly needed.
- Partnerships should not simply be aligned to industry needs but should encourage community development. There is a need to train people to manage local resources better and generate knowledge around those local resources.
- Future funding programmes for mobility between the N and S should also consider management capacity building measures.
- There is a concern that science and technology are dominating the education development agenda whereas African universities need to prioritise institutional management.

White Paper: what is missing

It was commented that open and distance learning needs greater attention than given in the White Paper, given its potential transformative role in Africa. It is indispensable in meeting enrolment needs. It was also noted that the role of the private sector in creating wider access in Africa has been left out.

Taking it forward

Many participants look critically at the question of what comes next after the White Paper. One participant asked about the status of a 'White Paper' and where it is taken next, given that she had already seen many lofty statements launched in Africa before but which had remained without tangible follow-up. EUA responded by indicating that the recommendations were there to be taken up by the actors they address: universities, development agencies, governments, university

associations, and the African and European Union Commissions. EUA will use the White Paper for its own mandate and subsequent programming in the field of development cooperation, and has already taken on two bi-regional follow-up projects in the field of QA and doctoral education. EUA and AAU will continue to follow up on developments under the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership, which relate to higher education and research, and expect to give concentrated feedback on future funding programmes and initiatives in higher education. What is more, both organisations will now take up this agenda with their membership and their governing bodies, and be able to provide a regional level platform for future discussions and partnership building.

Another participant commented that, though the White Paper expresses a lot of hope, there are also many concrete answers to be found within it; it is simply a matter of university leaders interpreting the document as a challenge to reinvent the logic of their institutions.

Ronnie Munck (Irish-Africa Partnership and Dublin City University) commented that, though the White Paper discussions produced a sort of a shopping list of issues to be tackled, each country or institution needs to prioritise: it is suggested that a SWOT analysis be undertaken to identify the most important needs and priorities and invest in very concrete initiatives that make a real difference.

Concrete suggestions for new initiatives

- ‘Emerging’ institutions need access to research cooperation opportunities as well. In the current scheme of the European programmes, nothing exists for existing research cooperation between European and African institutions. Such a programme at European level would help to grow research actors in the South.
- There are few N-N partnerships in research for development. The Irish and Danish have done this within their countries, but there is a need for mechanisms to support this more broadly across Europe.
- Developing Guidelines for Collaboration or a Code for Collaboration could be an interesting AAU/EUA project.

- There needs to be greater recognition for socially responsible/ethical partnerships. A European or African mechanism for this would be welcome as it may help Northern universities find further incentives to engage in development.

Break-out sessions

In the break-out session different speakers addressed the same two critical questions:

1. What are the lessons and opportunities for institutions and countries that are new to university development cooperation?
2. How can the relationship between development cooperation and university internationalisation strategies be better conceived?

Samuel Darkwah, Mendel University, Czech Republic, presented an interesting portrait of a Czech university that is on the road to deeper internationalisation. Of Ghanain origin, Samuel Darkwah was determined to generate more collaboration and student mobility between his institution and the developing world. This entailed travelling to Nigeria and Ghana to launch some initial partnerships in 2000, which faced their own set of challenges to get off the ground: internally, the university had language problems, specifically in expanding international programmes in English. Visa issues surrounding the exchange of students and staff have been taxing - different ministries need to coordinate better and the university has to be an advocate in this regard. Today, Mendel University has increased its number of partnerships dramatically and are soliciting more projects from the Czech ministry of foreign affairs (development programmes on rural development, water, etc with Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Zambia, South Africa as well as partnerships in Thailand). Samuel Darkwah is presently forming a consortium with some European universities which will entail exchange and joint research with Africa. To conclude, Samuel Darkwah stressed the need for activating partnerships as opposed to letting them rest dormant; Mendel University had an agreement with an institution in Nigeria for five years before it pushed to exchange a few students. Since then, the relationship has only grown.

Several comments were made in response: it was questioned why sign MoUs when an institution does not first have capacity to implement them. This includes infrastructure (to welcome students and staff) and people to drive the partnership.

The role of rectors' associations in supporting new universities in development cooperation was mentioned: these associations can potentially bring different ministries to the table to discuss the more macro-level problems impeding student exchange, starting with visa issues.

Josep Vilalta, Catalan Association of Public Universities, Spain. The public universities in Catalonia, Spain, are working together on internationalisation, which includes university cooperation for development. They focus on three topics: (1) Capacity building; (2) Research and innovation management; (3) establishing academic common platforms. The collaboration with African universities is relatively recent. Josep Vilalta presented ten lessons learned by his association, while engaging in these activities. They ranged from the need to establish more mid and long-term partnerships, to the question of cooperation at the European level and the need to demonstrate achievements better. As one participant confirmed, with results come resources. A representative from Sokoine University, Tanzania, issued a warning regarding long-term partnerships. It should be avoided that one party becomes dependent on another. Collaborators need to look for opportunities genuinely to work together.

Nan Warner, University of Cape Town, South Africa, made a short input statement on the compatibility of development cooperation and internationalisation from the perspective of her institution: UCT has a strategic paper on their development mission in the region, which is inherently linked to how they internationalise: it concentrates on research specialisations that are locally relevant, being 'Afropolitan' (offering a base of expertise in African issues), serving as a 'bridge' by developing the credibility of Southern partners in Africa to Northern hemisphere partners, and prioritising the recruitment of international post-grads from Africa.

In response, an important comment was made from the University of Maastricht, the Netherlands, reflecting a northern perspective on the topic:

European universities tend to know what internationalisation should bring them, but lose sight of what they can bring to it (for example, what can Maastricht University bring to the world?).

Kay Svensson, Uppsala University, Sweden. Uppsala University is committed to making the world a better place, as described in one of its board statements. This has a direct impact on the university's international engagement. Although the context is very competitive, cooperation remains a priority. This is also because good science requires a global context. The university is therefore looking for new models to become international, taking into account sustainability, while creating a global classroom. In the discussion that followed Kay Svensson's presentation, points were made on better communicating to the university leadership about university activities in development cooperation.

Looking forward

The final session of the stakeholder meeting provided an outlook on upcoming initiatives. EUA presented two new Erasmus Mundus-funded projects taking up specific themes of the White Paper: N-S-S doctoral education collaboration and Europe-Africa cooperation on quality assurance.

CODOC (Cooperation on Doctoral Education between Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe) will establish links between the EUA Council for Doctoral Education and doctoral education actors in emerging countries. It will run for two years, first surveying doctoral education trends in three regions and then taking up a workshop series on key issues. It will look particularly at the strategic interest in N-S doctoral education cooperation as well cross-cutting partnerships across Southern countries.

Europe-Africa Quality Connect, a project led by EUA and AAU will test the methodology of an EUA quality audit programme in Africa- the Institutional Evaluation Programme. It is a 'flexible tool for change' that prioritises the university self-evaluation, conducts a mission assessment process and provides constructive feedback from an international pool of experts. Five visits will be carried out to African universities in different regions and a dialogue series will analyse the results.

Participants were then asked to share ongoing or planned initiatives that support the Access to Success recommendations. The following initiatives were shared:

- The Vice-Chancellors of the African Council for Distance Education will be convening at the Open University of Tanzania. A large focus has been put on QA in distance teaching and coordination between universities in distance teaching.
- The Commission Universitaire pour le Développement (CUD) reported that a meeting will be held in South Africa on social responsibility in graduate schools.
- Mozambique will be undergoing a self-evaluation on joint programmes, especially at PhD level. This has been sponsored by SIDA, the Swedish development agency.
- Both Nuffic (Netherlands organisation for international cooperation in higher education) and the VLIR-UOS have taken part in a first meeting of higher education agencies involved in funding the Africa partnership programme. This was intended to be a platform to share initiatives and seek synergies. Meetings will be systematic and the initiative will hopefully evolve into a larger joint project.
- The Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) Working Group on Higher Education will be sponsoring a large study on the African Higher Education Space - this will involve a team of African and European experts to provide concrete suggestions to take the space forward.
- A new platform for African private universities has been established.
- AAU announced the next COREVIP (African Rectors' Summit), a large bi-annual meeting of African Vice-Chancellors.
- The International Association of Universities (IAU) reiterated their present work on the issue of access and retention in Africa. A conference will take place in Nairobi next year on this topic. IAU is also releasing a case study focused report on doctoral education in Africa.
- University of the Western Cape, South

Africa, announced that it has been awarded a chair in astrophysics - a major advancement for the research prestige of this institution and an opportunity to become an international research partner in this field.

The Dissemination event: Promoting the White Paper to an academic and policy focused audience

The public afternoon session opened with several speeches from high-level colleagues across the higher education and development sectors, both at national and European level: Marleen Temmerman, Belgian Senator, Professor at the University of Ghent and long-time contributor to the VLIR-UOS programmes, commented that:

“ Universities are complex and multifaceted institutions. University leaders in Europe and in Africa should embrace opportunities to consider the various international activities of their institutions holistically, and in a development perspective, and should use platforms such as the one created by this project to exchange practice and build networks”.

Luis Riera, DG Development, European Commission reiterated the importance of higher education to the development agenda and stated that “It is increasingly clear that donor aid alone does not make it”. Jean-Marc Rapp, President of EUA, presented the importance of the Access to Success project from the university perspective, emphasising that “It was important for us to demonstrate that, at a time when global competition in higher education is on the rise, the imperative is to promote Europe as an attractive and strategic partner, sensitive to the realities of brain drain”.

After a presentation of the main White Paper recommendations by Lesley Wilson, Secretary General of EUA and Dr Pascal Hoba of AAU, a **panel debate** ensued, taking up the following topics:

- The panellists view of the growing interface of the education, research, international relations and development agendas. Do current programmes and policies reflect this interface?

- How can the EU development agenda energise the university community? Is it sufficiently promoted to the university community? Can universities and university associations be more active partners in accomplishing this? How?
- How can universities be drivers of development? How can this be supported further by European Union and African Union policies and programmes?
- How can the university community as part of civil society play a more active role in the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership? Is this Partnership tangible, or more a political discourse?
- What concrete steps can be taken to improve the flow of information and overall relationship between development cooperation actors and higher education actors?

Sigmond Gronmo, Rector of the University of Bergen, Norway, attested to the dual challenge of universities: attracting partnerships from all over the world and engaging in global challenges. He proposed that the current bi-lateral partnerships between European countries and Africa could and should be developed to become multilateral.

Tolly Mbwette, Open University of Tanzania, suggested that a change in mindset was needed for global partnering and that the EU has a critical role to play. He noted that few European rectors were present at the dissemination event, which is indicative of where Africa partnership stands on the list of priorities. Regarding the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership, this relationship needs to mature. While higher education may receive more and more attention, it tends to fall off the agenda at political level or be pushed out by competing and immediate interests.

Olusola Oyewole, African Union Commission, applauded the White Paper for taking up issues of access, retention and relevance of teaching when constructing partnerships. His main call for action was for African universities advertise themselves as partners and to market themselves as credible. This will be crucial both in generating greater inter-university cooperation within Africa and beyond. This point was highly supported across the audience and Tolly Mbwette made a call to African universities to use various international fora, such as

the Access to Success project, to promote their strengths.

Discussion with the audience highlighted the following issues:

- More work needs to be done to *energise northern universities as development actors*. This can only be done by promoting common challenges. Prof Gronmo responded that an important factor in stimulating universities in the development agenda is funding. The problem is that funding in Europe is more and more about competition: it is difficult to prioritise sustainable development and global ethical interaction when competition for excellence drives funding.
- Comments were also made regarding the *new youth generation and the potential for Europe-Africa student exchange*. The University of Munich representative pointed to the increasing interest and willingness of young German students to take on global issues. He commented that we must harvest the energy of this generation by providing them with concrete opportunities to engage with Africa. Prof Gronmo supported this point by commenting that students must be brought into bi-regional dialogue and serve as ambassadors for partnerships.
- African universities need to *promote themselves*, but first they also need to be ready to tackle the problems and challenges facing them. If the leadership is prepared, then they can then turn to sources like the EU to fund partnerships and exchanges. Nan Warner of University of Cape Town mentioned three important words for universities in taking the Access to Success agenda forward: ‘champion’, ‘facilitation’ and ‘process’. This implies that motivated leadership and personal is a first ingredient, support structures and opportunities a second, and acceptance that change is a process is the third.

Presentation from the dissemination event can be found at www.accesstosuccess-africa.eu.

PARTNERS



The **Association of African Universities (AAU)** is an international non-governmental organisation set up by the universities in Africa to promote cooperation among themselves and with the international academic community. The AAU is a forum for consultation, exchange of information, and cooperation among universities in Africa. In addition to fostering contact and cooperation among universities and other institutions of higher education in Africa, the Association is charged with collecting, classifying, and disseminating information on higher education and research, particularly in Africa. It also promotes cooperation among African higher education institutions in curriculum development, post graduate training, research, quality assurance, and other matters of special policy or practical interest to African higher education. The Association endeavours to empower member universities to address developmental challenges and become an effective voice in national, regional and global institutions. As of July 2010, AAU has 225 members from 44 African countries. www.aau.org



The **European University Association (EUA)** represents and supports higher education institutions in 46 countries, providing them with a unique forum to cooperate and keep abreast of the latest trends in higher education and research policies. Members of the Association are European universities involved in teaching and research, national associations of rectors and other organisations active in higher education and research. EUA plays an essential role in shaping tomorrow's European higher education and research landscape thanks to its unique knowledge of the sector and the diversity of its members. The Association's mandate in the Bologna Process, contribution to EU research policy-making and relations with intergovernmental organisations, European institutions and international associations, ensure its capacity to debate issues which are crucial for universities in relation to higher education, research and innovation. www.eua.be



The **Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions (UHR)** is a co-operative body for higher education institutions in Norway. Founded in 2000, following the merger of the Norwegian Council of Universities and the Norwegian Council of University Colleges, UHR aims to promote the development of Norway as a knowledge-based society of high international standard. UHR facilitates co-operation and co-ordination among Norwegian higher education institutions. Furthermore, UHR advocates shared positions on central issues concerning higher education and research policy towards the Norwegian government, parliament and the wider society.

<http://www.uhr.no>



The Flemish Interuniversity Council, Department for University Cooperation for Development (VLIR-UOS) funds and facilitates academic cooperation and exchange between higher education institutions in Flanders (Belgium) and those in developing countries, which aims at building capacity, knowledge and experience for a sustainable development. As part of the Flemish Interuniversity Council, VLIR-UOS is responsible for managing and making policy on the university development cooperation funds of Belgium's minister of Development Cooperation. www.vliruos.be



The European Access Network (EAN) is the only European-based independent not-for-profit organisation with a mission to widen access and participation in higher education for groups who are under-represented whether because of age, gender, disability, ethnicity, nationality, socio-economic status, geographical location, or earlier educational disadvantage. Access, equity, diversity and inclusion are the four pillars of the EAN.

<http://www.ean-edu.org/>



The European Students' Union (ESU) is an umbrella organisation of 45 National Unions of Students (NUS) from 37 countries. The NUS are open to all students in their respective country regardless of political persuasion, religion, ethnic or cultural origin, sexual orientation or social standing. Members are also student-run, autonomous, representative and operate according to democratic principles. The aim of ESU is to represent and promote the educational, social, economic and cultural interests of students at a European level towards all relevant bodies and in particular the European Union, Bologna Follow-Up Group, Council of Europe and UNESCO.

<http://www.esu-online.org/>