



Higher education and human capital  
development: driving regional growth

Students' perspective

**The European Students' Union**

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## About ESU

- 45 member unions in 36 countries (EHEA)
- Students' participation in HE governance (Prague communiqué, 2003)
- Education as public good and public responsibility



## Driving the right direction?

- Multiple purposes of Higher education in a knowledge based society, under the pressure of current economic crisis – to stand still or move forward?

The crossroad?

Reaching excellence in diversity by building up a capacity to respond a range of social needs in a sustainable manner, maintaining the common cultural heritage.

## Responsibility *of* and *for* higher education

To seek excellence in meeting society's expectations and fulfilling the whole range of higher education purposes;

However, not serve as a *fast-food restaurant*.  
& multi-purposes, not multi-tasking!

Public responsibility for education: understanding the need for diversification.

Clear and comprehensive vision!

## Institutional autonomy (for and from?)

- The notion of trust
- Autonomy: *organizational, financial, staff and academic* for universities to fulfill their mission;
- Performance-based criteria as a strategic thinking trap?
- Autonomy comes along with responsibility

## Institutional responsibility (space for homogeneity):

- Quality as a state of mind (promoting quality culture)
- Democratic governance (stakeholders' involvement)
- Students' centered learning (responsiveness to the diversity in students' body)
- Focus on skills (balance: know-how & know-what, problem-based learning)
- Access and equal skills distribution (not only tuition fees – what about multicultural experience on campus, LLL?)
- “Context sensitiveness” and parity of esteem

## Students' responsibility

- Don't get misdirected by the Wizard of OZ:  
“Back where I come from, we have universities, seats of great learning, where men go to become great thinkers. And when they come out, they think deep thoughts and with no more brains than you have. But they have one thing you haven't got: a diploma.”
- Education is far beyond!

Thank you!

More information  
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