

Change the way

more societal responsibility for education

At a time of great societal challenge and economic uncertainty, students around the world not only emphasize political struggles of the student movement today but are also remembering the struggles in the past.

Students still have to face political oppression in some part of the world, they struggle for example with human right and social issues, like very high youth unemployment rate. In addition, many governments and decision-makers around Europe have adopted massive cuts in education budgets and increased the financial burden on students and their families.

We, the Student Unions from Austria (ÖH), Belgium (FEF), France (UNEF), Germany (fzs), Italy (UDU) and Switzerland (VSS-UNES-USU) are united in believing and asserting that high qualified education is a fundamental human right, public good and public responsibility. We maintain that this right must be assured by the public institutions through means of public funding. All higher education institutions and the academic community should work collaboratively to create and foster equal access to and equal opportunity in education and after graduation.

With this in mind, we demand:

1) that higher education is treated as a public good and a societal responsibility

Education is a human right. The states and the governments have the responsibility to guarantee a real funding of public education. Only public funding can ensure an open, independent and sustainable system with a real impact on the entire society rather than serving private sector interests.

2) that higher education is open to everybody

Education should be the key to emancipation and social mobility. We want education to be open and affordable, without tuition fees or loans and with sufficient and appropriate student support systems. All minorities need to get strong support to access and succeed in education and after graduation. There should be special actions taken to increase participation rate of locally defined minorities. Areas like the student grant systems need to be urgently improved and we need to invest in social infrastructures, such as student housing and university canteens.

3) that education is not threatened by austerity measures

The austerity policies are forcing many countries to cut the resources for education and student support systems. Austerity policies have to be kept out of education. Financing education is ensuring a human right and a sustainable future and therefore should not be taken into account for any budget constrains.

4) that mobility is affordable for all students willing to be mobile

Mobility should be guaranteed for everybody as part of the educational process. Europe has to invest in the "Erasmus +" project as a priority. We need to have more public funding and fight back every attempt to change the grants into loans. The funding for student mobility covers only about 1,4 % of the total European budget today.

Since these demands require a consistent European solution, we conclude that the EU and other european countries need to develop a sustainable, supportive, inclusive and democratic governance structure for higher education. Education provides best chances to prevent future crisis. Instead of saving money and creating lost generations, Europe needs to become a symbol of unity and solidarity.