

# STUDENT PARTICIPATION in HE

## Case study: *Flanders*

Meeting Krems (23-26/03/2010)

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- Universities
  - legal settlement fragmentary, chaotic and different for each university
  - University Decree (1991): 1 general article
- University Colleges
  - University Colleges Decree (1994): uniform regulation, but huge differences regarding implementation
- Associations
  - Uniform in the Bologna-decree (2003)

### Bologna on student participation

- *"Ministers note the constructive participation of student organisations in the Bologna Process and underline the necessity to include the students continuously and at an early stage in further activities. Students are full partners in HE governance" and "National legal measures for ensuring student participation are largely in place throughout the European HEA".*

*Berlin-Communiqué 19/9/2003*

## *Student Participation Flanders* **Historical Survey/4**

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- Huge differences in nature and quality of student participation
- Student representatives in the Board of Directors  
*(Ghent University since 1971)*
- Student councils at level of departments/faculties: differences in structure, recognition, authority
- Implementation partly depending on goodwill

- Umbrella student non-profit organisation representing all students in Flanders

*VVS: National Union of Students in Flanders*

- Bridges the gap with the government
  - Officially recognised by the Flemish government (1999)  
Grant: 200.000 euro/year [*cf. 175.000 students*]
  - Since 1938, but went through different stages as the political focus changed over the years.
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- Defending students' rights goes along with democratisation of education and society
- Goals of VVS
  - *defending students' interests, without discrimination*
  - *developing instruments to stimulate and defend democratisation*
  - *striving for high-quality education*
  - *democratically organised HE institutions with student participation*

- General Assembly
    - meeting of elected representatives of student councils of all HE institutions: policy making
  - Executive Committee
  - Annual Congress
    - Giving binding guidelines for the years to come
  - Permanent working groups
    - social affairs; educational affairs; international affairs
  - Platforms
    - students with disabilities, students from ethnic minorities
  - Staff
    - 3-5 persons, continuity assured
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## *Student Participation Flanders* **Student Participation Decree/1**

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- Content
  - uniform and clear settlement for Flemish HE
  - student participation in governing 'umbrella' councils
  - minimal prescriptions for students councils
- Nothing about
  - student participation in advisory committees
  - student councils at the level of departments/faculties

## *Student Participation Flanders* **Student Participation Decree/2**

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- student council in every HEI
- Regulation of participation in agreement HEI - student council
- Financial, material & administrative support by the HEI
- Elections
  - organised in consultation with the student council
  - procedure set up by student councils
  - elections by indirect vote or direct vote
  - 10% of the student population has to vote (or: loss of rights)

## *Student Participation Flanders*

# Student Participation Decree/3

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- Final goal of this decree
  - student participation as co-government (member of board, right to vote)
- Obligation of the council
  - information of all students
- Obligation of the institution: consultation of student council
  - Every topic relating to student affairs
  - Written advice by students to institution
  - Written answer from the institution

## *Student Participation Flanders* **Student Participation Decree/4**

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- Evaluation of this decree
  - every 5 years, by commissioner of the government
  - 2010 for the first time
  - readjustments may be necessary

## **Student participation: not an easy matter...**

Effective student participation is a well-balanced mixture of having a voice, consultation, co-determination and a degree of self-determination