



# How Do European Higher Education Institutions Recognise Student Engagement?

# European

## Student Engagement Project

## European STEP Survey Report

August 2019



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## Abbreviations

1. **CGE** – Conférence des Grandes Écoles (EN: "Conference of Grandes Écoles")
2. **COMUE** – Communauté d'universités et établissements (EN: Community of Universities and Higher Education Institutions)
3. **CNESER** – Le Conseil national de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche (EN: Communities of universities and institutions)
4. **CPU** – La Conférence des présidents d'université (EN: the French Conference of University Presidents)
5. **CSR** – Corporate Social Responsibility
6. **ECTS** – European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
7. **EUA** – the European University Association
8. **European STEP** – European STudent Engagement Project
9. **HEI** – Higher Education Institution
10. **NGO** - Non-government organisation



# INTRODUCTION

## About the European STEP Project

What role for youth engagement in Europe? In the current context where the active participation of young people in society is highlighted through the European Commission's youth strategy for 2019-2027 and mechanisms such as the European Solidarity Corps, the question of recognising young people's engagement arises.

Since September 2018, the French student associations network, [Animafac](#), is coordinating the Erasmus + **European Student Engagement Project (European STEP<sup>1</sup>)**, in cooperation with six partners: [the European University Foundation](#) (EUF) in Luxembourg, [the Office of Student Life of Dublin City University](#) in Ireland, [the University of Cergy-Pontoise](#) in France, [the University of Valladolid](#) in Spain, [the University of Vienna](#) in Austria and [the Volunteer Centre of the University of Warsaw](#) in Poland.

The European STEP focuses on the recognition of young people's active participation in student academic curricula. It will provide an overview of practices in the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) of the European Union (EU). In the long term, the project aims to contribute to the recognition and enhancement of student engagement in Europe, in particular as a factor in the development of transversal skills complementary to the academic path.

In order to carry out the project, the consortium is leading a major study on student engagement recognition in three steps.

1. The first step was the mapping of legislative frameworks for student engagement recognition in Europe. The results allowed for the creation of a map and classification of the countries in three categories: countries with a policy framework on the recognition of student engagement for higher education in particular; countries with other policy framework on the recognition of engagement independent

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<sup>1</sup> The European STEP project is an Erasmus+ co-funded strategic partnership project, for the period of September 2018 to June 2021.



from higher education; and countries without any policy framework on the recognition of engagement in non-profit activities<sup>2</sup>.

2. The second step consists of the identification of HEIs policies and practices for the recognition of student engagement. To this end, a survey intended for European HEIs was disseminated, with an online questionnaire on their recognition measures and policies. The present report outlines the results.
3. The third step is a qualitative study including interviews with students, teaching and administrative staffs in European HEIs to acquire a precise knowledge of the recognition issue and understand how the place of student engagement varies from one institution to another and from one country to another.

Four associated partners are involved in the project to ensure the dissemination of the project and its results: the French Conference of Grandes Ecoles (CGE), the French Conference of University Presidents (CPU), the Crous<sup>3</sup> and the European University Association (EUA).

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<sup>2</sup> The map is available here: [www.animafac.net/minisite/european-step/european-step-en/](http://www.animafac.net/minisite/european-step/european-step-en/).

<sup>3</sup> The Crous are the affiliates of the French national student service agency.





*Partners of the project*

# \* ANIMAFAC



*Associated partners*





## About the report

Is student engagement recognised and valued within academic curricula? What are the recognition and support mechanisms of student engagement in higher education institutions (HEIs) in Europe? How do the institutions organise the recognition of student engagement?

Coordinated by the partners from the University of Warsaw, with the support of the consortium, the present report outlines the results of the European STEP survey on the recognition of student engagement disseminated from February 19<sup>th</sup> to April 29<sup>th</sup> 2019. It interrogated institutions in Europe on their support mechanisms focusing especially on the recognition of student engagement. The purpose was to collect objective data on the institutions' strategies and policies in this matter: can students' activities in frames of the broadly understood topic of student engagement lead to formal validation in their academic life?

While completing the first results of the study<sup>4</sup>, this second part is a new step to identify the different practices and big tendencies regarding student engagement recognition, and determine whether institutions, despite the absence of specific legislative guidelines, choose to recognise the commitment of their students into extra-curricular activities.

This report emphasises the situation of student engagement recognition according to one hundred and twenty complete answers in a one hundred and four Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) from twenty-six EU countries<sup>5</sup>. It does not claim to represent the whole of European Higher Education Institutions.

After presenting the respondents, the origin and types of institutions represented in the survey, the report focuses on the place of student engagement within the institutions' strategies and policies: is student engagement part of the values and strategic plan of the institutions?, what is student engagement for the institutions and who takes care of it?

Moreover, the report highlights the different modalities of student engagement recognition from the validation of ECTS credits, to the integration of student engagement as part of the

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<sup>4</sup> The map of legislative frameworks for student engagement recognition in Europe that allowed to classify the countries in three categories.

<sup>5</sup> Except from Luxembourg and Slovakia, respondents from institutions from all the EU Member-States answered the European STEP survey.



curricula and the recognition of complementary skills acquired through the experiences of engagement.

Finally, it underlines the main reasons for success and limits to the implementation of student engagement recognition according to the respondents.

Considering the distribution of responses, there is a high rate of French respondents, in comparison to other EU countries. Therefore, it is possible that the high number of responses from France influences the overall results of the survey. This should be taken into consideration while reading and understanding the results presented in following report.



## DISSEMINATION OF THE SURVEY

The seven partners of the project disseminated the online survey through different networks. Each partner sent the online survey to the Conference of Rectors of their respective countries (Austria, France, Ireland, Poland, and Spain) to facilitate the dissemination to universities. The partners from the University of Warsaw reached out to the other European Conferences of Rectors. In addition, the European University Foundation (EUF) disseminated the survey to its network of around twenty European public universities through their newsletter and mailings.

On the other hand, as an associated partner of the project, the European University Association (EUA) disseminated the survey on its website, newsletter and reached out directly to some universities. Likewise, the French Conference of Grandes Ecoles also sent the survey to all its network of French Grandes Ecoles (Business and Engineering private schools mostly).

Lastly, the partners also sent direct mailings to the HEIs associated to the Conference of Rectors of their countries.



# OVERVIEW OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS WHICH ANSWERED THE SURVEY

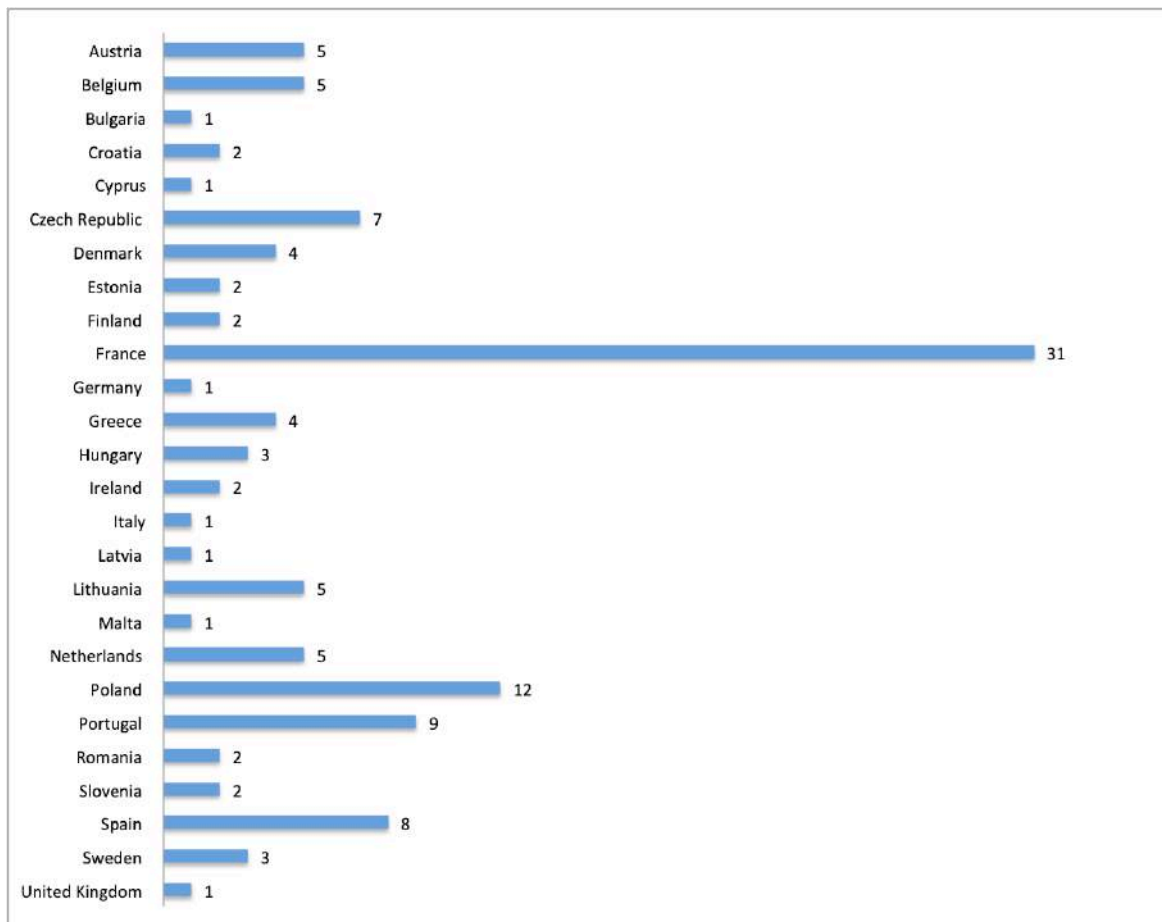
Survey platform: LimeSurvey

Responses:

- Total: 563
  - Complete answers: 120
  - Incomplete answers: 443
- Number of HEIs, which completed the survey: 104

## Country representation

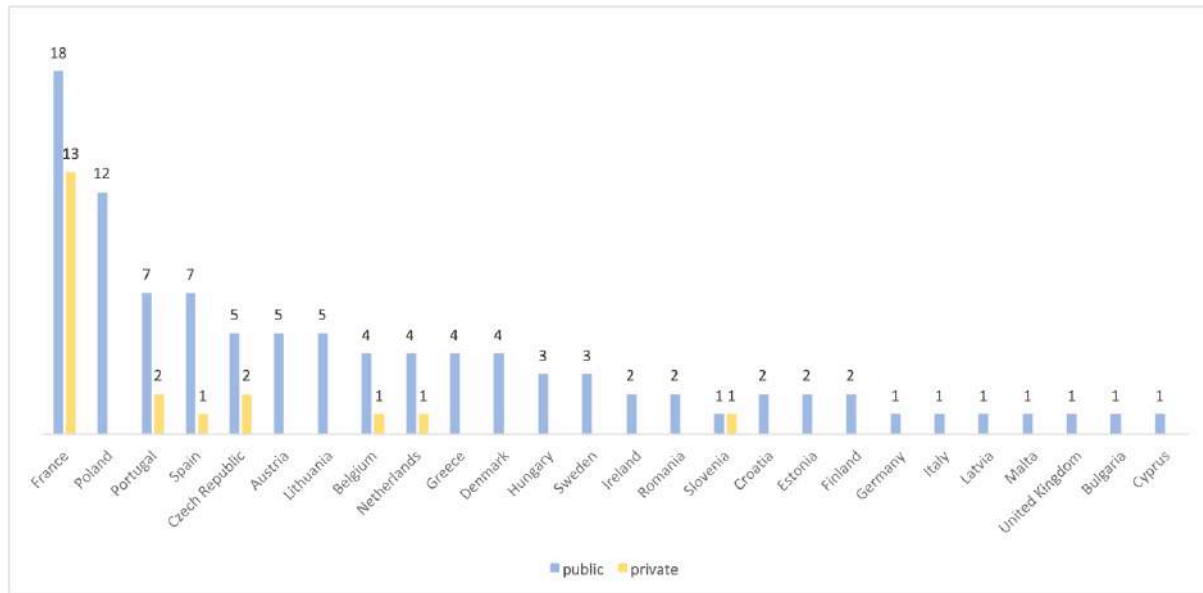
**Number of responses by countries (N=120)**





## Type of institutions represented in the survey

**Number of responses by type of educational institution (N=120)**



From 120 answers to the survey, the majority comes from public Higher Education Institutions: 82 universities and 16 other public organisations i.e. 81,7%.

From the 22 private institutions (18,3% of the total answers), most of them come from France - 13 out of 22 private institutions, which represents 42% of the French complete responses.

Other private institutions that responded to the survey come from the following countries:

- Belgium (1 out of 5 complete answers)
- Czech Republic (2 out of 7 complete answers)
- Netherlands (1 out of 5 complete answers)
- Portugal (2 out of 9 complete answers)
- Slovenia (1 out of 2 complete answers)
- Spain (1 out of 8 complete answers)
- The United Kingdom (1 out of 1 complete answer)

Four of these private institutions are private universities and eighteen represent other types of institutions such as colleges, French Grandes Ecoles Business and engineering schools, Superior school of Arts.



**NOTABENE:** *The French higher education system is particular in Europe. If the majority of the students goes to universities, some go to study in Grandes Ecoles mostly private business schools that benefit from private funds, sometimes in addition to public funds or engineering schools that can be public or private. The Grandes Ecoles are smaller than universities and produce less researchers investigations as many professionals count among their teachers.*

*Among the 2 680 400 registered students in 2017-2018, 1 525 500 go to universities. The rest is divided between short cycles of studies through IUT often integrated to universities (116 800) and BTS (256 600), and Grandes Ecoles: Engineering schools or institutes*

Some of the respondents pointed out that even though they are private entities, they cooperate with public bodies. For instance, the University of Vic - Universitat Central de Catalunya from Catalonia in Spain, cooperates with international institutions and municipality: "University with a specific model: it is private but also participated at a municipal level and with the help of the autonomous government."<sup>6</sup>

Lastly, sixteen answers come from institutions other than universities: university colleges, schools of applied sciences and polytechnics, agricultural schools (including veterinary faculty) and music and artistic.

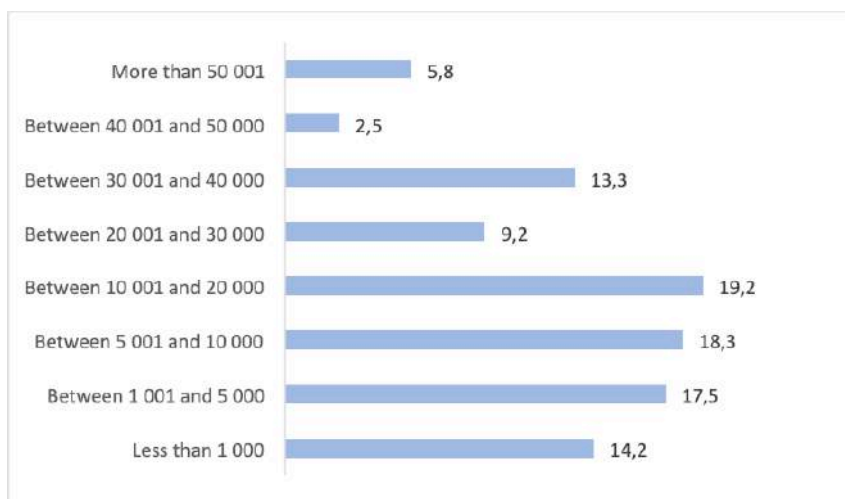
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<sup>6</sup> Quote from the survey in Spanish: "Universidad con modelo específico: es privada pero también participada a nivel municipal y con ayuda del gobierno autonómico".



## Size of the institutions represented in the survey

### Number of students enrolled in the institutions, in percentage % (N=120)



The size of the institutions represented in the survey varies, with mostly middle-sized institutions, and rather small ones. Only three universities with more than 50 001 students are represented in the survey: the University of Vienna in Austria, the University of Barcelona in Spain and the University of Thessaloniki in Greece. Similar to this, three universities who have a student population of between 40 001 and 50 000 who responded to the survey: the University of Warsaw in Poland, the University of Copenhagen in Denmark and the Ghent University in Belgium.

## Who answered the survey?

### A majority of administrative staff

46,7% of the respondents identified themselves as “administrative staff”, compared to 27,5% from the leadership/management team and 25,8% from the academic staff.

### Mostly women from European HEIs

The majority of the respondents are female 65,8%, compared to 30,8% male. The most visible differences in gender are evident in the responses from France (23 female/8 male), Poland (10 female/1 male), and Spain (7 female/1 male).





### *Experienced respondents*

The answers to the survey come from people with experience and knowledge of their HEIs: 75,8% of the respondents have been working for more than 6 years in the institution, including 24,2% for more than 20 years and 25,8% from 10 to 20 years.

Only 4,2% of the answers (5) are from people who have been in the institution for less than a year, and 18,3% from 1 to 5 years.



# STRATEGY AND POLICY OF THE HEIS REGARDING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

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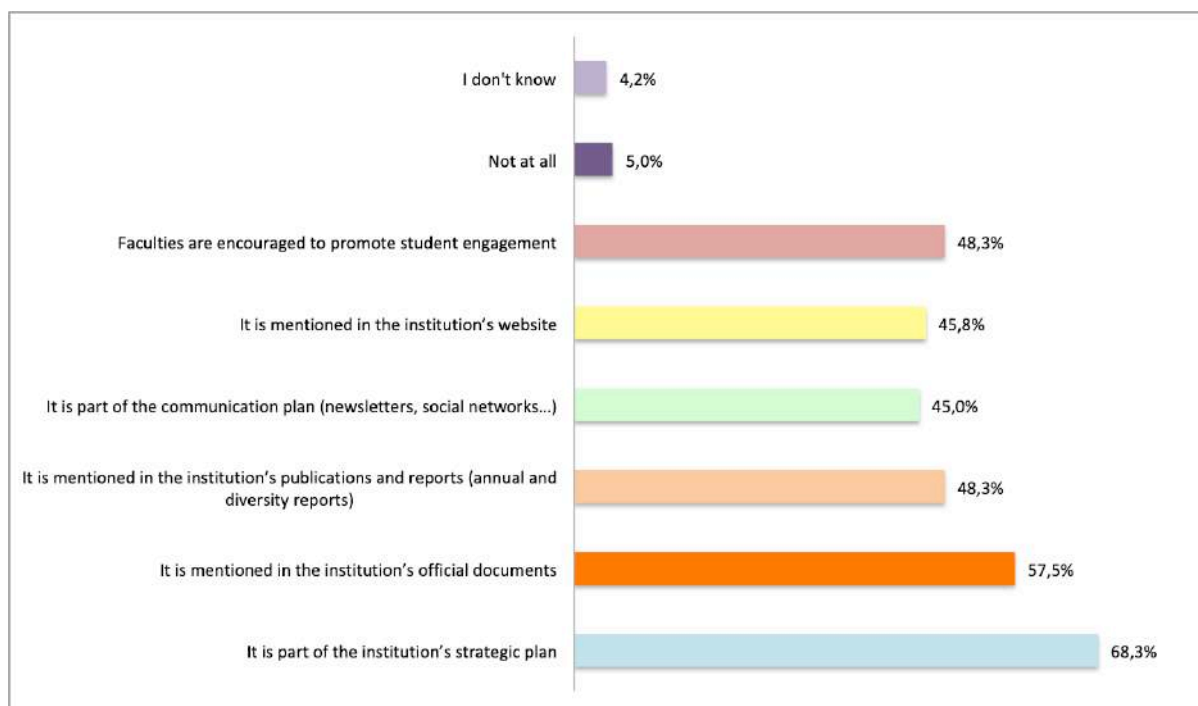
**65%** of the responding HEIS have a **policy on student engagement** and **9,2%** are in the process of implementing such policy.

For **90,8%** of the respondents, student engagement is part of the institution's strategy.

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## Strategic plan and policy on student engagement

**Is student engagement part of your institution's strategy<sup>7</sup>? (N=120)**



→ On the one hand, the answers to the survey demonstrated that most institutions with a policy on student engagement also include it in their strategic plan: sixty-two HEIs

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<sup>7</sup> It was a multiple choice question to which 120 respondents answered.



answered, "yes" to both questions. Accordingly, it is over half of the institutions that completed the survey.

- There is no such adequacy when comparing the answers "no" to these questions.
- Exactly half of the twenty HEIs that stated that they do not have a policy on student engagement recognition also stated that this matter is part of their strategic plan.

Assuming that policy is decision oriented, whereas strategy focuses on actions, the recognition of student engagement among European HEIs who completed the survey is well established, both in the set of rules and in the official plan of actions. Noticeably, there is a group of HEIs, which do not have a set of rules on this topic; however, it is a part of their strategic plan.

### Different approaches regarding the place of student engagement recognition in the institutions' strategy

- Some HEIs highlighted values and community-building aspect to describe their strategy on the recognition of student engagement:
  - "Student engagement and giving back to society is a guiding principle so appears in mission, vision and core values.", Howest, University College West Flanders, Belgium.
  - "Student-led initiatives are highlighted as ways for students to be part of the student community and part of the learning process.", London Business School, England.
  - "Student engagement is one of the components of the axis "Social Responsibility" of the institution's strategy."<sup>8</sup>, Paris-Dauphine University, France.
  - Opole Medical School in Poland, mentions community-building aspect centred on certain topics: "By formatting and organizing science Clubs, volunteering Club."

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<sup>8</sup> Quote from the survey in French: "L'engagement étudiant est un des composants de l'axe "Responsabilité sociale" de la stratégie de l'établissement."



→ Some French examples demonstrated rather pragmatic and more formal approaches in their strategy:

- The Veterinary School of Toulouse has specific part of the study regulations devoted to "citizen engagement of students"<sup>9</sup>.
- Kedge Business School states that student engagement is part of the various axes of the university strategy (humanity, entrepreneurship, etc.) and "of the studies' regulations and internal rules."
- ENGEES - National School for Water and Environmental Engineering highlights that student engagement is part of the engineering curricula and can be validated through ECTS credits<sup>10</sup>.
- At the Rennes 2 University, it is part of the charter ("Scoping / framework document").

→ Regarding the support for recognition of student engagement, in the context of the strategy, the examples of the Vives University of applied Sciences in Belgium and the Via University College in Denmark, two similar universities of Applied Sciences counting between 10 001 and 20 000 students, outline two different perspectives. Both relate to encouraging student engagement, however the Belgian University focuses on the institutional support of faculties, whereas the Danish institution takes a more personal approach, directed at students.

- "In the educational policy plan for the period 2017-2022, the validation of student engagement is part of one of the 4 main goals. We stimulate our faculties to validate student engagement in every study programme", VIVES University of Applied Sciences, Belgium.
- "Students are encouraged to become involved in the student organisations on each campus in our Institutional Policy", VIA University College, Denmark.

→ Noticeable number of respondents indicated that the recognition of student engagement is a topic presented in the HEIs' reports, as for instance:

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<sup>9</sup> Quote from the survey in French: "Dans le règlement des études (titre septième: engagement citoyen des étudiants)" (chapter 7 of the study regulations).

<sup>10</sup> Quote from the survey in French: "fait partie du cursus ingénieur - valorisé par ECTS".

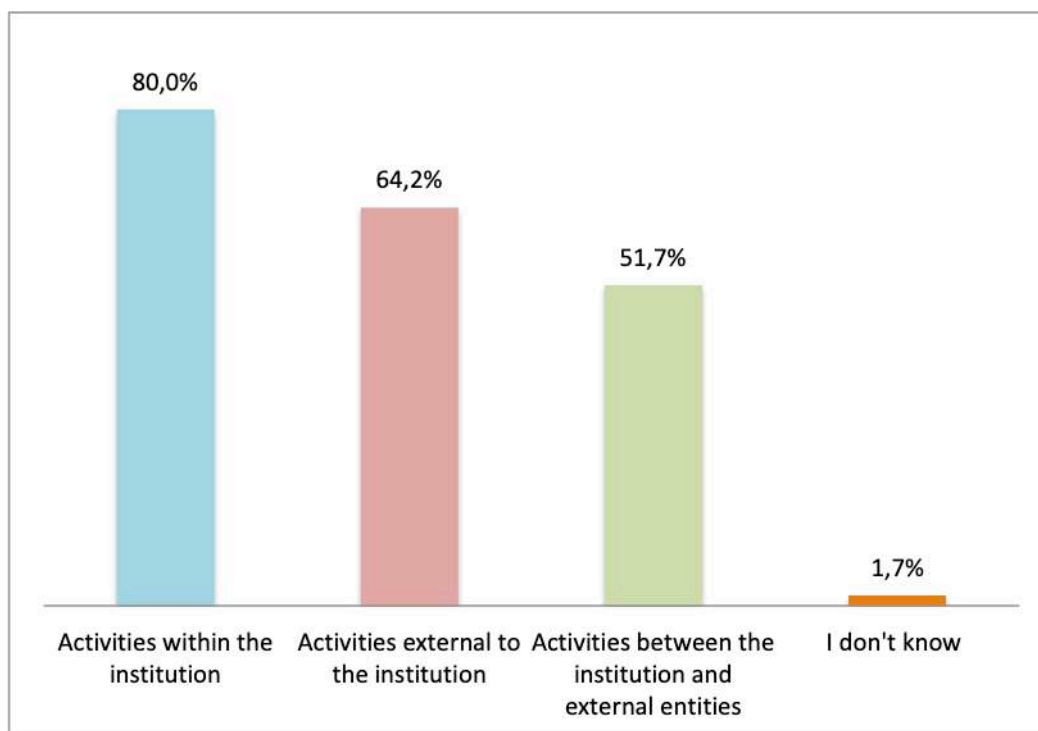


- ENSEA - Graduate School in Electrical Engineering, Computer Science and Communications Networks in France: it is mentioned in the activity report (“dans le rapport d’activités” in French).
  - Istia-Polytech Angers, the graduate School of Engineering of the University of Angers in France: in the activity report (“rapport d’activités” in French).
  - Mykolas Romeris University in Lithuania: in the annual University reports.
  - Faculty of Economics, University of Lodz in Poland: in the internal and external reports.
  - University of West Bohemia in Czech Republic: it is mentioned in annual reports.
  - Warsaw University of Life Sciences in Poland (SGGW): e.g. WULS-SGGW annual report on University's activities.
- In Lithuania there are legal acts concerning the recognition of student engagement, which higher education institutions may follow. This is visible in some of the comments from the Lithuanian respondents. For instance the comment from Mykolas Romeris University concerning the strategy and recognition of student engagement: “National Law on Research and Higher Education, Statute of the University, Study Regulations”. In addition, the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences placed recognition of student engagement in the “Guidelines for the strategic development 2017-2021”.



## What is student engagement according to the institutions?

### Activities considered as student engagement by the responding HEIs<sup>11</sup> (N=120)



80% of the respondents stated that they consider activities within the institution as student engagement, 64% stated that activities outside the institution are considered as student engagement, and 51,7% stated that activities in cooperation between the institution and external entities could be seen as student engagement.

Among these answers, the following subgroups have been identified:

- **Fifty two Higher Education Institutions** take into account all three areas of student engagement (within the institution, outside the institution and in cooperation between the institution and external entities).
- **Twenty four Higher Education Institutions** consider activities within the institution or outside the HEI, although not between the HEI and external organisations.
- **Eight HEIs** consider student engagement as activities within the HEI or between the university and entity outside it.

<sup>11</sup> It was a multiple choice question to which 120 respondents answered.



- **Only one university** takes into account activities outside the HEI and between university and external organisation, but does not consider activities within the institution as student engagement. That is University of Ostrava, in Czech Republic.
- **Eleven Higher Education Institutions** acknowledge only activities within the institution as student engagement. One University (HAN University of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands) states that activities between HEI and external entities are considered as student engagement, whereas none of the respondents' marked only external activities.

Albeit there are also high percentages for other types of activities, the distribution of answers outlined in the above points indicates that for most of the European universities that completed the survey, student activities must be somehow connected or related to their institution so that it could be considered as student engagement by the university.

*The examples of the countries of European STEP Project Consortium:*

- **Austria:** Two answers from Austria come from the University of Vienna, where according to the general university answer, all three kinds of activities are acknowledged as student engagement. However, the Faculty for Business, Economics and Statistics only considers activities within the institution. This also illustrates that in one institution there can be different policies inside the different departments.
- **France:** Among thirty French Higher Education Institutions, seventeen consider all three mentioned areas of activities as student engagement. Eleven acknowledge activities within the institution and external, but does not foster activities between institutions. Two HEIs take into account activities within the institution and between university and external entities. Distribution of answers from the French HEIs approximately reflects the overall distribution described above.
  - **Example of cooperation to develop student engagement activities:**  
The University of Côte d'Azur, one of the French Community of universities and Higher Education Institutions (COMUE)<sup>12</sup>, establishes partnership agreements with external entities that share common values and objectives.

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<sup>12</sup> In France, there are 19 territorial clusterings/groupings of Higher Education Institutions named COMUE, Community of universities and Higher Education Institutions. The objective is the coordination between the members of one COMUE of their training offer and their research strategy.



So far, a dozen of agreements were reached, with solidarity organisations (Amnesty International, the French Red-Cross), organisations promoting sustainable development (“les Eco-Charlie”), cross-border cooperation and gender equality.

- **Ireland:** Both of the Irish Higher Education Institutions, the University College Cork and the Dublin City University that completed the survey stated that they consider all three kinds of activities as student engagement.
  
- **Poland:** Polish answers are cumulated in one subgroup. Five out of six Polish respondents stated that they consider all three areas as student engagement. The Faculty of Law and Administration of the University of Lodz only considers activities within the institution (whereas general answer from this university is the same as the rest of the Polish universities, what also illustrates that approaches may differ depending on particular units of the HEI). For comparison, little more diversification can be noticed in the answers from Czech Republic, a neighbouring country. For five answers, there are two HEIs, which take into account all kind of activities. Two only consider activities within the institution and one, mentioned already, does not consider activities within the institution as student engagement.
  
- **Spain:** There is noticeable tendency among the answers from Spain, which does not reflect the overall tendencies described above. Among six Spanish HEIs, which responded to this question half of them consider activities within the university or outside the institution as student engagement. Only one takes into account all three spheres of activities and one only considers activities within the institution as student engagement.
  - **Example of cooperation to ensure the quality of student engagement activities:** In the University of Valladolid, “activities within, external and between the institutions and external entities are valued. In the last category, the university develops collaboration agreements with different associations to guarantee a fair and ethical volunteering of the student.”



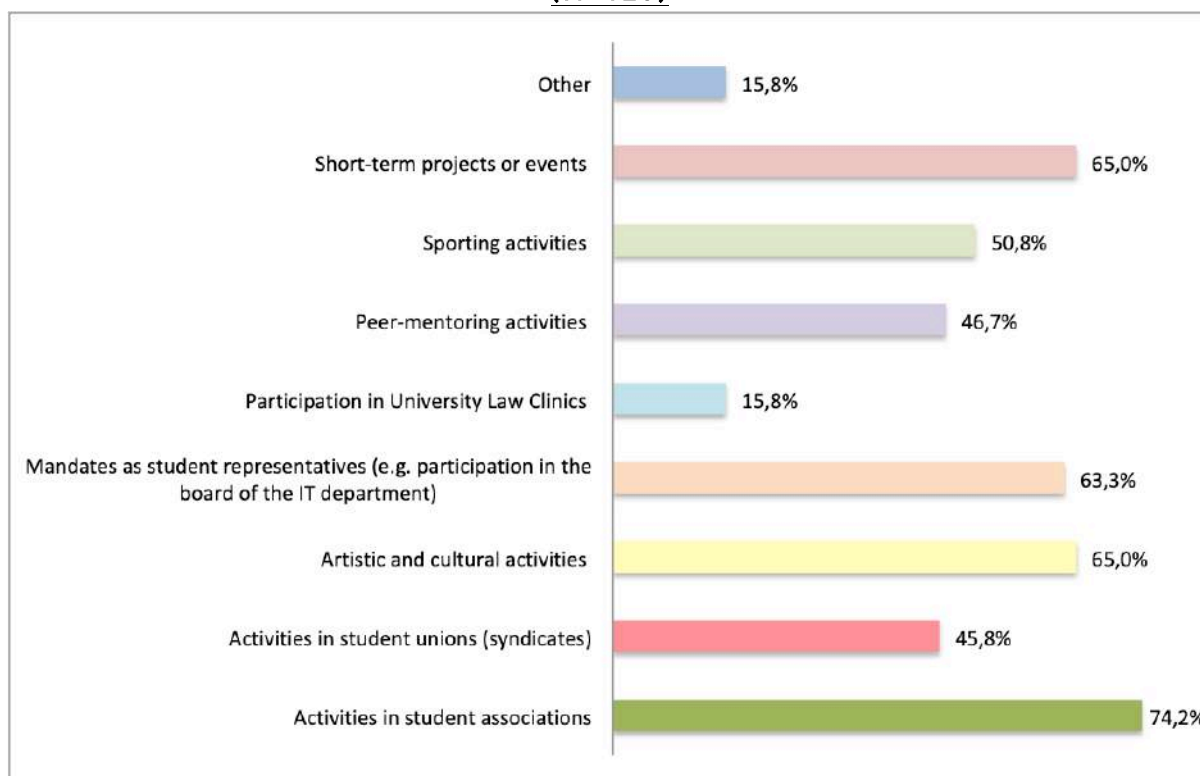


## Activities within the institution

### Principal activities within the institutions considered as student engagement:

- the activities in student associations (74,2%)
- artistic and cultural activities & short-term projects or events (65%)
- mandates as student representatives i.e. student with responsibilities within the institution (63,3%).

**Activities within the institution considered as student engagement<sup>13</sup>, % (N=120)**



### The example of France:

Almost all of the French HEIs, which answered the survey, consider activities in student associations as student engagement (28 out of 31 answers). Whereas interestingly, only ten French HEIs stated that they consider activities in student unions as student engagement. The response rate increases again for activities such as Mandates as students' representatives in boards of departments, etc. (22 out of 31 answers). One of the hypothesis explaining such approach is that in France, student unions have specific status connected

<sup>13</sup> It was a multiple choice question to which 120 respondents answered.



with historical events of May 1968 and further. Their main purpose is politically serious and essential for the institution, so it may be difficult to consider student union as a place for learning and skills-acquiring activities for the members of such organisations.

The lowest percentage of answers was given to the participation in University Law Clinics. One hypothesis is that among the universities that completed the survey, such activities are attributed rather to the field of professional training, than student engagement. Another hypothesis for such low rate of answers is that in comparison with the other examples of activities, Law Clinic is very concrete and specific activity and not all respondents might be familiar with it. Therefore, the respondents may not know the ways that the Law Departments face such engagement. However interestingly, three out of five HEIs from the Netherlands consider this activity as a type of student engagement. Likewise, the one German university that answered this question also considers such activity as a form of student engagement.

While analysing comments from the survey on the activities within the institution, three major tendencies emerge:

→ Focus on the skills that students could develop during the activities:

- “The activities that allowed them to develop soft skills - management and organization”, ENSEA - Graduate School in Electrical Engineering, Computer Science and Communications Networks in France.
- “Engagement into real business problem solving.”, Kaunas University of Technology, Lithuania.

→ Focus on the themes and topics related to student engagement:

- “Participation in projects and events in the strategic areas: Gender Equality, Eco-Campus, Discrimination, Disability and Orientation. (Precision: sports activities are valued in another frame, the “Bonus Sport”)<sup>14</sup>”, University of Côte d’Azur, France.

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<sup>14</sup> Quote from the survey in French: “Participation aux projets et événements entrant dans les axes stratégiques : Egalité Femmes-Hommes, Eco-campus, Lutte contre les Discrimination, Handicap et Orientation. (Précision : les actions sportives sont valorisées dans un autre cadre, le “Bonus Sport”.



- “Solidarity activities, raising awareness, nature activities, sustainable development”<sup>15</sup>, Agriculture Institute of Lyon ISARA-Lyon, France.
- “Fundraising for charity, NGO's, organising congresses about mental welfare, a visit at the cathedral, interreligious tour among different temples in the city, Think Pink action, Christmas event, Conference against death penalty (...)”, Kael de Grote University College, Belgium.

→ Focus on activities that enhance the academic community and impacts relations among members of this community:

- “Buddy mentor system; advertising the Institution next to prospective students; participating in projects with the community”, Polytechnic Institute of Beja, Portugal.
- “Buddy programmes”, Ghent University, Belgium.
- “Student Representation on all University Committees and Interview panels”, University College Cork, Ireland.

## Activities external to the institution

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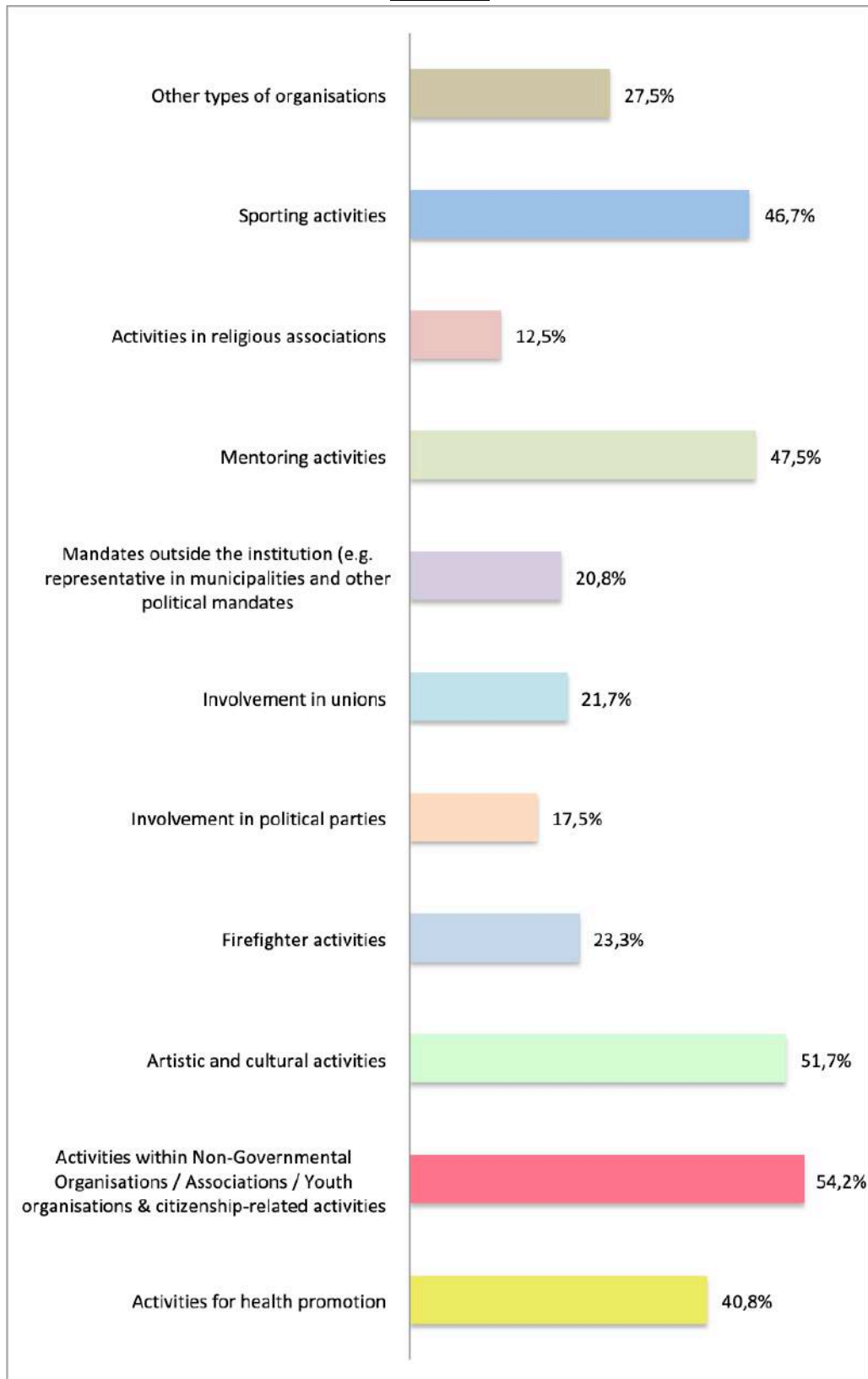
A majority of the HEIs that answered **consider activities in NGOs, associations, youth organisations, citizenship-related activities (54,2%) and artistic and cultural activities in external entities (51,7%)** as student engagement.

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<sup>15</sup> Quote from the survey in French: “Activités de solidarité, de sensibilisation, activités nature, développement durable”.



**Activities external to the institution considered as student engagement<sup>16</sup>, %  
(N=120)**



<sup>16</sup> It was a multiple choice question to which 120 respondents answered.



The results of the survey demonstrated that the tendency among the activities connected with personal and rather subjective views and beliefs are not considered as student engagement among HEIs that took part in the survey. Indeed, the most noticeable tendency is the rate for the activities related to political and religious activity, respectively 17,5% and 12,5% of the answers. Activities that are considered as student engagement are more related to general and universal values, than to personal views.

- “Elective mandate outside the university = world of higher education (CNESER, CNOUS) but not political parties”, University of Clermont-Auvergne, France.

However, while taking into account activities in religious associations, both Irish Higher Education Institutions stated that they acknowledge such as student engagement. This may be connected with the general view of Ireland, as country with strong religious traditions in society.

On the contrary, in Poland, which is also associated as a traditionally catholic country, none of the twelve respondents claimed that student engagement includes religious engagement of students. Therefore, even though both countries have similar general picture, the place of religious activities is considered in different ways among HEIs. While taking into account distribution of answers in the survey, Poland has a closer view to a rather secular France (where only five out of thirty-one HEIs stated that religious associations can be considered as a form of social engagement), and Ireland has similar views to rather secular Netherlands, where three out of five answers also consider activities in religious associations as student social engagement.

→ The National Institute of Higher Agricultural Studies of Montpellier (Montpellier SupAgro), in France also emphasises military activities, as a type of student engagement: “Professional activity; military activity in the operational reserve; volunteering in armies”<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> Quote from the survey in French: “Activité professionnelle ; activité militaire dans la réserve opérationnelle ; volontariat dans les armées”.



*NOTABENE: In France, since the 2017 Equality & Citizenship Law, the HEIs have to implement a recognition system to recognise the experiences of engagement of their students and the related skills, but the institutions can choose the modalities of recognition. Recognition measures must be proposed for students who have volunteering activities, a mandate as student representatives, military activities, volunteering in the army or as fire fighters, a professional activity, and a mission of civic service.*

- ENSEA - Graduate School in Electrical Engineering, Computer Science and Communications Networks in France again highlights the skills-approach: “provided that they have developed soft skills”<sup>18</sup>. While the Agriculture Institute ISARA-Lyon also from France consequently adopts value and topic-oriented perspective: “Solidarity, awareness, CSR, nature activities”<sup>19</sup>.
- Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) and the University College Cork in Ireland mentioned volunteering activities as a separate type of external activities considered as student engagement.

## Activities in cooperation between the institution and external entities

Respondents were asked to specify the types of activities that are considered as student engagement taken between the HEI and external entities. Four main perspectives presented in the answers from the Higher Education Institutions that completed the survey can be outlined:

- Focus on the acquisition of skills and learning:
  - “Active participation of type training, supervision, responsibility in terms of communication, financial responsibility”, University of Haute Alsace, France.
  - “Community service learning”. VIVES University of Applied Sciences, Belgium;

<sup>18</sup> Quote from the survey in French: “les activités qui leur ont permis de développer des soft skills - gestion et organisation”.

<sup>19</sup> Quote from the survey in French: “Activités de solidarité, de sensibilisation, activités nature, développement durable”.



- “Any activity requiring project management”, Agriculture Institute ISARA-Lyon, France.

→ Focus on the topics and issues not related with the academic matters:

- “Sports event, intergenerational home, active winter, and language support for refugees”. ISIT - School of Intercultural management, France.
- “Sports, animal welfare, humanitarian, sustainable development”, National Veterinary School of Toulouse, France.
- “Activities with EU organisations”, University of West Bohemia, Czech Republic.
- “Interreligious tour in the city organized by University of Antwerp, KdG, Thomas More, Sant Egidio and IJD”, Kael de Grote University College, Belgium.

→ Focus on highlighting the role of students and their agency, such as leading own projects, participation in decision making etc.:

- “Cordée de la Réussite” (coaching students, animation); representation in local bodies”, National Institute of Higher Agricultural Studies of Montpellier (Montpellier SupAgro), France.
- “There is an ENGAGE fund (ENGAGE - Small things matter). Students who are engaged and have a good idea to improve the world can earn 500 euros for the realization of that idea”, University College Ghent (HOGENT), Belgium.
- “Student Performance Coaching (SPC) resources made available to education for the intensification of student counselling and to promote study success at HAN”, HAN University of Applied Sciences, Netherlands.
- “Students' initiatives and projects led in cooperation with external partners”, University of Warsaw, Poland.
- “Activities in Student Council, in the Bulgarian association of medical students, sports activities within the University and etc.”, Trakia University, Medical Faculty, Bulgaria.

→ Focus on volunteering in general, without specification:



- “Scholarships and voluntary work programs.”, University of Lodz, Poland.
- “Volunteering, training, mentoring”, Kaunas University of Technology, Lithuania.
- “Volunteering and Work Experience”, Dublin City University, Ireland.
- “Volunteering, solidarity, cooperation, collective activities...”, University of Vic - Universitat Central de Catalunya, Spain.

Respondents were also asked to specify the external partners in the context of student engagement. The majority of respondents indicated entities such as NGOs, enterprises, associations, public institutions, municipalities, and educational institutions.

→ Some of the respondents mentioned student national and international organisations as external partners. Lithuanian University of Health Sciences specified external student associations as partners related to the subject of student engagement: “E.g. LUHS Student's union is a part of Lithuanian Student's Union. Junior doctors association is a part of association of European Junior Doctors”. Likewise, Linköping University mentioned various external student organisations in this context: “activities organised by different student associations. Activities through sport clubs. Student orchestras. Student companies.”

#### *The example of France:*

French HEIs, like other European universities that answered the survey, list external entities such as Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), public institutions, local and regional authorities, enterprises etc., and all the variety of organisations from fields other than higher education. However, it is interesting to note that there is a noticeable number of French HEIs that name other universities and Grand Ecoles as the external entities that they cooperate with in the field of student engagement. Some of these respondents consider only other HEIs as partners, and not NGOs nor other types of organisations. A similar tendency is not noticeable in other countries that participated in the survey.

- “Partner universities, other grandes écoles, companies”, Kedge Business School.
- “Other national veterinary schools, professional associations, NGOs”, National Veterinary School of Toulouse.





## The different types of structures supporting student engagement

58,3% of the respondents (seventy answers) indicate that there is a “unit/structure/department” in their HEI responsible for the topic of student engagement: for 40% (forty-eight institutions) this unit takes charge of student engagement among other responsibilities and for 18,3% (twenty-two institutions) this unit/department is entirely devoted to support student engagement. Eight answers state that the institution is planning to create such unit.

### A specific unit dedicated to student engagement

The HEIs that declared that there is specific unit responsible for student engagement are from the following countries:

→ France (4), Belgium (1)

- French Air Force Academy (L'Ecole de l'air);
- Kedge Business School in France: “the Learning by Doing unit attached to the Programs Department supervises all initial training students in the definition and implementation of their projects, with the objective of personal and professional development. This service encourages and supports student engagement as a vehicle for learning and professionalization. Student projects (Pro-Act) are part of the diploma requirements for all Undergraduate programmes, and the Grande Ecole Program”;
- University Côte d'Azur in France: “The unit, very new and with 1,5 full time equivalent employee, is attached to the Direction of Student Life of the University”;
- ECE Paris in France (Ecole Centrale d'électronique, Graduate School of Engineering);
- Kael de Grote University College in Belgium;

→ Denmark (1), Sweden (1)

- VIA University College in Denmark;
- Halmstad University in Sweden;

→ Greece (1), Croatia (1), Bulgaria (1)

- University of Thessaloniki in Greece;



- Polytechnic of Rijeka in Croatia;
  - Trakia University, Medical Faculty in Bulgaria;
- Spain (2), Portugal (3)
- Universidad de Valladolid in Spain;
  - University of Zaragoza in Spain;
  - Nursing School of Coimbra in Portugal (Escola Superior de Enfermagem de Coimbra);
  - School of Nursing of Porto (Escola Superior de Enfermagem do Porto) in Portugal;
  - P. Porto (Polytechnic Institute of Porto) in Portugal;
- Poland (3), Hungary (2), Estonia (1)
- Wroclaw University of Environmental and Life Sciences in Poland;
  - The State University of Applied Sciences in Elblag in Poland;
  - The University of Lodz in Poland (“The office of careers as a link between students and future potential employees (although not only to help look for work also as a voluntary engagement”));
  - The University of Warsaw in Poland;
  - The Hungarian University of Fine Arts in Hungary;
  - The Semmelweis University in Hungary;
  - Tallinn University of Technology in Estonia.

## The departments of student life responsible for student engagement

In most HEIs that answered having a unit in charge of student engagement among various responsibilities, it is often the responsibility of the Department of Students Life (or Office of Student Life):

- “In addition to the management of the Citizenship Module, the Office of Student Life is in charge of relations with student associations (financial and material support), social assistance to students, monitoring the attendance of scholars, the accompaniment of international students for residence permit



procedures, disciplinary sections, etc.”<sup>20</sup>, Polytechnic University Hauts-de-France.

- “There is a Department of University Life which deals in particular with student engagement.”<sup>21</sup>, University of Clermont-Auvergne, France.
- “The team Student Life and Mobility (part of the Department Students and Academic Affairs)”, Utrecht University, Netherlands.

## Managing bodies as a reference for student engagement

There are also HEIs, which place managing bodies as the reference instance for the topic:

- “Directorate of Studies, Directorate of External Relations”<sup>22</sup>, Istia-Polytech Angers, the graduate School of Engineering of the University of Angers, France.
- “Student's Affairs Office substantive care is executed by the Vice-Rector for Didactics and the Rector's Plenipotentiary for Student Academic Circles”, Warsaw University of Life Sciences (SGGW), Poland.

## Various departments in charge of student engagement at the same time

Student engagement is also often a matter of concern of various departments of one HEI:

- “Student engagement is promoted throughout all study programs, via student services, via alumni work, via the international office. It's not structured but it exists in all facets”, Howest, University College West Flanders, Belgium.
- “We have university students union and different associations. Also, we have Students Counselling Centre”, University of Zadar, Croatia.
- “The College has a Student Outreach Services and Events Dept. that works to engage students”, Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST).
- “There is a Vice-Rectorate for Students, Employment and Mobility”, as well as some other units and offices dedicated to cooperation or Erasmus matters,

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<sup>20</sup> Quote from the survey in French: “En plus de la gestion du Module Citoyenneté, le Bureau de la Vie Etudiante est chargé des relations avec les associations étudiantes (soutien financier et matériel), de l'aide sociale aux étudiants, du contrôle de l'assiduité des boursiers, de l'accompagnement des étudiants internationaux pour les démarches de titre de séjour, des sections disciplinaires, (...)”.

<sup>21</sup> Quote from the survey in French: “Il y a une Direction de la Vie Universitaire qui s'occupe notamment de l'engagement étudiant.”

<sup>22</sup> Quote from the survey in French: “Direction des Etudes, Direction des Relations Extérieures”.



among others, however, there is no comprehensive service that encompasses these issues, nor any department responsible for promoting student associationism and its involvement in university life and management”<sup>23</sup>, University of Extremadura, Spain.

## A quantitative approach for student engagement management in Czech Republic

Two of the Czech universities adopted a quantitative perspective for the management of student engagement. Indeed, the existence of a unit in charge of topic depends on the size of the university / number of students:

- “Regarding the number of students our college is too small for having an own unit for this purpose.”, Medical College of Prague.
- “We are a small college, we are not going to have an extra department.”, College of Logistics.

## Student unions and volunteering units in charge of student engagement

Two institutions indicated student union as a unit responsible for student engagement:

- “The student union is engaged in student engagement”, Linnaeus University in Sweden – however, this university did not respond to the question whether it considers activities in frames of student unions as student engagement.
- “University has no specific department for student engagement. In University is Student's Union, which is responsible for representation of student opinion, rights”, Lithuanian University of Health Sciences - this university answered that they acknowledge participation in student union as a form of student engagement.

Spanish HEIs also mentioned units dealing with volunteering, as the department handling student engagement:

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<sup>23</sup> Quote from the survey in Spanish: “Se cuenta con un Vicerrectorado de Estudiantes, Empleo y Movilidad, así como con algunas otras unidades y oficinas dedicadas a temas de cooperación o Erasmus, entre otras, no obstante, no hay un servicio integral que englobe estas cuestiones, ni ningún departamento encargado de promover el asociacionismo estudiantil y su implicación en la vida y gestión universitaria.”



- “There is a “volunteer” unit within the UHub. Service to the University Community”<sup>24</sup>, University of Vic - Universitat Central de Catalunya.
- “The Office of Solidarity Action and Cooperation also manages local volunteers, internships in development cooperation, international volunteering and the European Solidarity Corps page”<sup>25</sup>, Autonomous University of Madrid.
- “In our institution, we have divided the volunteer management process into two services: UVaVOL is an association that is responsible for all training, student liaison and volunteer activities, dissemination of volunteering ... etc. Social Affairs Service: it has a part dedicated to volunteering (but also works on other issues), whose function is to manage the administrative part of volunteering: collaboration agreements with associations, administrative management of students, insurance ... etc. Both services are part of the Vice-Rectorate for Students.”, University of Valladolid.

## Committees and commissions in charge of distributing funds for student engagement

Other examples of structures related to student engagement within HEIs are committees and commissions:

- In France, since 2011 and the “Circulaire n° 2011-1021” on the development of student life and initiatives, Solidarity and Development Funds for Student Initiatives (FSDIE) have been progressively implemented in universities and other HEIs to fund students projects and student associations projects, as in the University of Tours for instance.
- “There is a committee that evaluates the entries for the ENGAGE fund”<sup>26</sup>, University College Ghent (HOGENT), Belgium.

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<sup>24</sup> Quote from the survey in Spanish: “Hay una unidad de “voluntariado” dentro del UHub. Servicio a la Comunidad Universitaria”.

<sup>25</sup> Quote from the survey in Spanish: “La oficina de Acción Solidaria y Cooperación maneja además de voluntarios local, prácticas en cooperación al desarrollo, voluntariado internacional y Cuerpo europeo de solidaridad page.”

<sup>26</sup> At the University College Ghent (Hogent), students are encouraged to make social commitments and can use the fund to support their initiatives (500 euros maximum): [www.hogent.be/fondsengage/](http://www.hogent.be/fondsengage/).



## Student engagement as a project

→ The Center for Key Qualifications University of Freiburg in Germany (Zentrum für Schlüsselqualifikationen (ZfS) der Universität Freiburg) considers student engagement as a part of the specific Project: "Student engagement takes place within the framework of a project: "Service Learning - Engagieren, Lernen, Reflektieren (since winter semester 2017/18), funded via student proposal budget Innovative Studies and since 2019 via funding line 2 "Lehr- und Lernlabore" (FEST-BW) of the Ministry of Science, Research and the Arts of Baden-Württemberg.

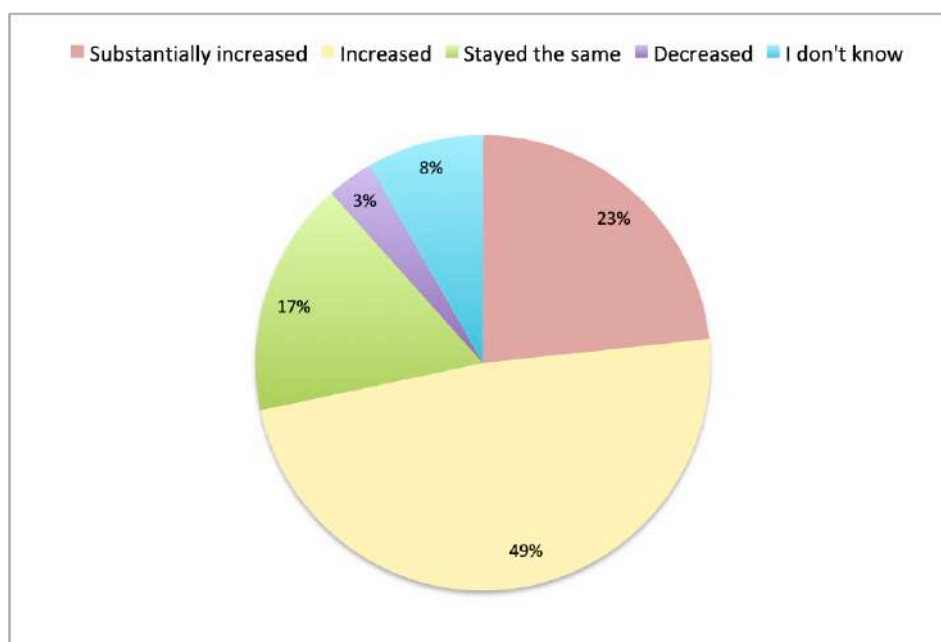
## The importance of student engagement within the institutions

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**For 72% of the respondents, the importance of student engagement within the institution has increased or substantially increased over the past six years.**

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**How has the importance of student engagement changed over the past six years for your institution? % (N=120)**





When asked whether the importance of student engagement changed over the past six years, majority of HEIs stated that it has increased (49%) and substantially increased (23%)<sup>27</sup>. The respondents highlight the efforts of the institution to enhance and facilitate student engagement:

- “VIA is working on several initiatives to increase student engagement and has established a new department “Student Life” working on improving the student journey.”, VIA University College, Denmark.
- “As there are more opportunities for engagement, there is natural growth towards it. The push for entrepreneurship also helps to create more-involved students.”, Howest, University College West Flanders, Belgium.
- “Newly appointed Director of Student Experience and a Head of Student Life. New Student Hub promoting student facing activities near completion.”, University College Cork, Ireland.

#### The example of France:

In France, some of the HEIs are relating to the “*Loi Egalité et Citoyenneté*” (“Equality and Citizenship”) from 2017, as an important trigger for the increase of the importance of student engagement. As this law represents a binding framework for HEIs in France, an increase of students' commitments is already noticeable in the period of two years since the act was introduced. However, there are also institutions that have a much longer tradition of student engagement and with the introduced recognition mechanisms such as the validation of ECTS, they notice a rate of 100% of student engagement.

- “Increased considerably following the law and decrees of 2017”, National Institute of Higher Agricultural Studies of Montpellier (Montpellier SupAgro), France.
- “Mainly because of the combined action of several people in elected positions and strengthened by internal factors (structural reorganization in the framework of the Idex and soon the EUR) and external (Equality and Citizenship Act)”, University of Côte d’Azur, France.
- “Over 30 years we value the commitment of all 100% of our students. 3rd year by 3 ECTS”, Agriculture Institute ISARA-Lyon, France.

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<sup>27</sup> Six years ago, in December 2012, the EU Council adopted a recommendation to encourage Member-States to set up validation measures for informal and non-formal learnings – [www.eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2012:398:0001:0005:EN:PDF](http://www.eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2012:398:0001:0005:EN:PDF) [20/08/2019].



The University of Clermont-Auvergne states that “We do not have any indicators on the increase in student engagement, but on the other hand, the recognition mechanisms of engagement have increased considerably”, what is interesting perspective on the qualitative approach towards the student social engagement. Likewise, Lithuanian University of Health Sciences draws attention to the quality of the increase.

Only four HEIs indicated that the importance of student engagement has decreased over the past six years and none that it has substantially decreased: the College of Logistics in Czech Republic, the Business University Nyenrode in the Netherlands, and the Universities of Extremadura and of Coruña in Spain.

The College of Logistics, explained that student engagement decreased, because “students are not interested”. In Spain, the University of Coruña explains the decrease of student engagement with the introduction of the Bologna system: “The Bologna Plan has meant that student participation, far from increasing, has been reduced”.

## Types of data collected on student engagement

Regarding the data gathering, 45% of the HEIs are collecting information about student behaviour and kind of activities. On the one hand, French HEIs present more of a formal and pragmatic approach on that matter, by collecting data through reports (the National Superior School of Electronics), engagement booklets (ESAIP - Graduate School of Engineering) written by students, and by application files filled by students in order to receive benefits (National Institute of Higher Agricultural Studies of Montpellier (Montpellier SupAgro)). On the other hand, other European universities seem to receive data through career centres like the University of Ljubljana in Slovenia or through student organisations like the Utrecht University in the Netherlands: “Every three years we evaluate all student organisations and ask how many members they have, what activities they have organised in the past three years, and how many active members they have”.

French HEIs also present rather formal and specific approach when asked to specify the data they collect, such as for example:

- “We expect 3 out of 4 choices between:





- community activities
- prospecting and communication
- international activities
- activities related to companies.

In each activity, about 3 working days”, EISTI - Graduate School in Computer Science and Mathematics Engineering, France.

- “All student cadets ensure an activity related to the module “training by Engagement” is an integral part of their curriculum and takes about 10 tutoring sessions a year and special events as well as the preparation of all these sessions”, French Air Force Academy (Ecole de l'air), France.
- At the University of Clermont-Auvergne, the attribution of a status for engaged students allowed the institution to collect figures on the number of students: “For the moment, and for only 2 years, we have figures for students who have requested access to specific statuses.

Student Status Artist: 15 / year

Associate student status: 50 / year

Volunteer firefighter student status: 15 / year

Student status committed to serve in the reserve: 30 / year

Sport status high and good level: 100 / year

Students must apply to have these statutes, so a large number of students who can claim to have these statutes but have not made the request do not fit in our numbers”.

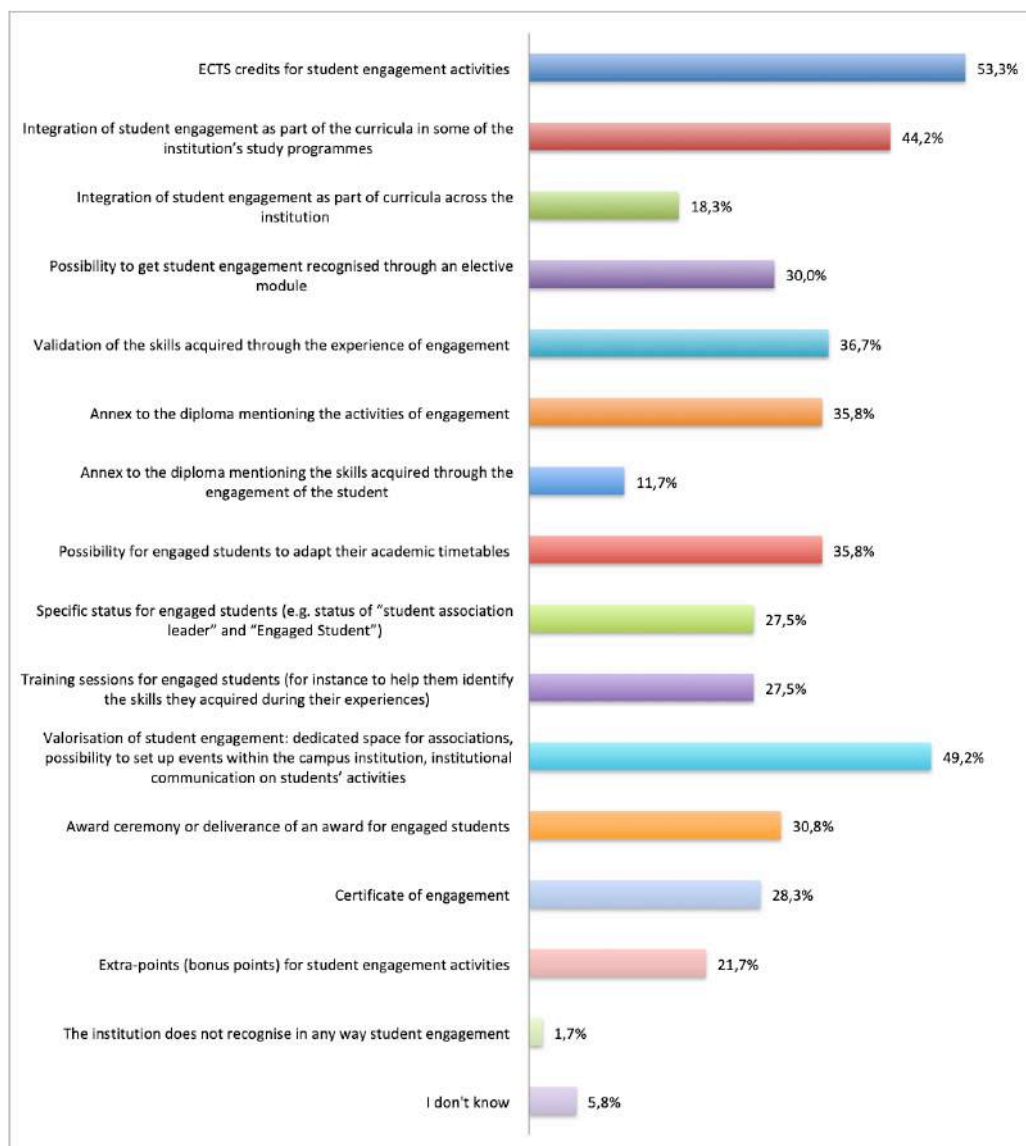


# MODALITIES OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT RECOGNITION

## General Overview

The results of the survey demonstrate that student engagement recognition is a concern of the responding HEIs. Moreover, the recognition can take different forms, depending on the institutions, the fields of study, the types of students and the activities fulfilled.

### How does your institution recognise student engagement?<sup>28</sup> (% , N=120)



<sup>28</sup> It was a multiple choice question to which 120 respondents answered.



## Different forms of recognition

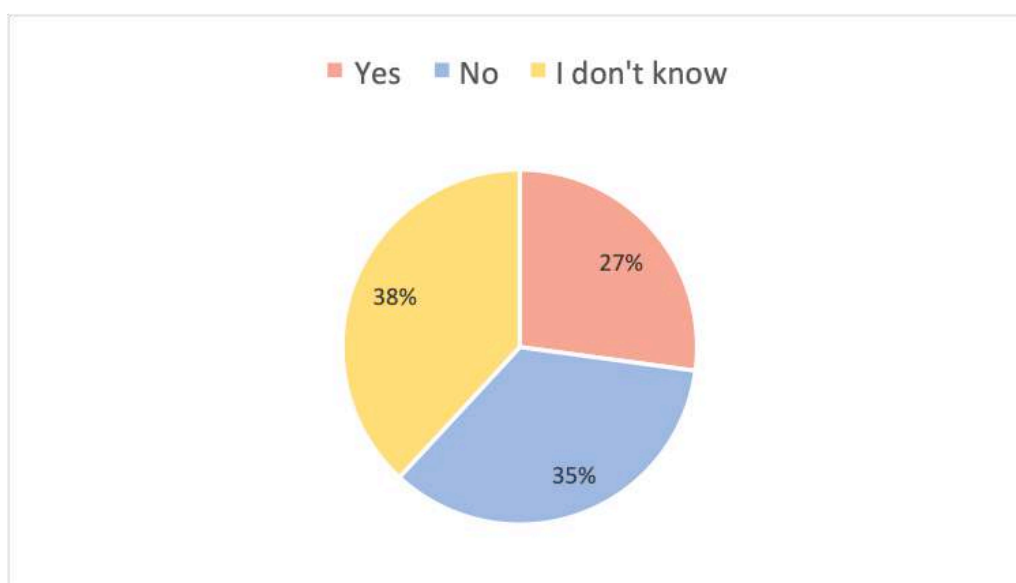
111 respondents indicated that there is at least one modality of recognition for student engagement in their institution: it represents 92,5% of the answers. The three most common recognition measures in those HEIs are:

- ECTS credits (53,3% of the cases i.e. 64 answers);
- Valorisation of student engagement: dedicated space for associations, possibility to set up events within the campus institution, institutional communication on students' activities (49% i.e. 59 answers);
- Integration of student engagement as part of the curricula in some of the institution's study programmes (44,2% i.e. 53 answers).

## Focus on the recognition of skills

36,7% of the respondents indicated the "validation of the skills acquired through the experience of engagement" as a recognition measure implemented in their institution. Nevertheless, the answers to the survey did not allow for the determination of the form of the skills validation in the HEIs. The next step of the European STEP study will be the occasion to investigate on this validation.

**Does (will) your institution recognise competences that are not explicitly mentioned in learning outcomes or other official documents on curriculum expectations through student engagement recognition? % (N=120)**





In 26,7% of the cases, the institutions recognise (will recognise) engagement skills that can be different and complementary to the academic skills. The general tendency among the institutions of the survey is to recognise “soft skills”<sup>29</sup>, intercultural competences and employability skills. More examples are detailed further in the report. However, it is a minority of institutions from the survey. Indeed, 35% of the institutions do not recognise competences that are not explicitly mentioned in learning outcomes or other official documents, and 38% of the respondents did not know the answer. Thus, the matter of engagement skills recognition is still to be further explored.

### Recognition for regular engagement

Regular engagement in one activity or more for at least one semester is recognised in 61,7% of the institutions whereas event-based engagement for one-two days in different fields is recognised in 30,8% of the responses, and semi-regular engagement in different activities during one semester in 36,7%.

Hence, it appears that the idea of engagement is linked to a certain commitment in terms of time dedicated to one activity and in terms of choice of activity.

### Different types of students concerned by the recognition

Depending on the institutions, the engagement recognition is possible for different types of students: 72,5% indicated that all students can demand it; in 12,5 % of the cases it is only full-time students; in 10% part-time students and in 10% of the cases, it is only international students that can benefit from it.

Moreover, 84,2% of the respondents indicated that student engagement is possible for the first cycle of studies, 72,5% for the second cycle of studies and 30,8% for the third cycle of studies. Therefore, the survey demonstrated that student engagement is less recognised for PhD students, whereas students are encouraged to get engaged in the early stages of their training.

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<sup>29</sup> Definition of “soft skills” from the Erasmus + Elene4work project: “Soft Skills represent a dynamic combination of cognitive and meta-cognitive skills, interpersonal, intellectual and practical skills. Soft skills help people to adapt and behave positively so that they can deal effectively with the challenges of their professional and everyday life”. [www.elene4work.eu/el4w-project/](http://www.elene4work.eu/el4w-project/).



## Centralised strategies

In 61,7% of the institutions, the strategy is centralised, which means that it is the same for all departments and fields of studies.

17,5% indicated that the recognition strategy is decentralised. In those cases, it is first in the field of social sciences and humanities that student engagement is recognised and second in the field of science and engineering.

## Legislative frameworks in the EU countries

According to the [Map of legislative frameworks of student engagement recognition in the European Union Member-States<sup>30</sup>](#), European countries can be divided into three groups:

→ Policy frameworks on the recognition of student engagement in non-profit activities, for higher education in particular.

- Croatia
- Estonia
- Finland
- France
- Hungary
- Ireland
- Lithuania
- Slovenia
- Spain

A total of fifty-seven universities from these countries answered the question about the modality of recognition of student engagement.

→ Other policy framework on the recognition of engagement in non-profit activities independent from higher education.

- Austria
- Belgium

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<sup>30</sup> This Map was the first step of the study in the context of the European STEP project: [www.animafac.net/minisite/european-step/european-step-en/](http://www.animafac.net/minisite/european-step/european-step-en/).



- Czech Republic
- Denmark
- Germany
- Italy
- Malta
- Portugal
- Romania
- UK

A total of thirty-six universities from these countries answered the question about the modality of the recognition of student engagement.

→ No policy framework on the engagement in non-profit activities.

- Bulgaria
- Cyprus
- Greece
- Latvia
- Netherlands
- Poland
- Sweden

A total of twenty-seven universities from these countries answered the question about the modality of the recognition of student engagement.

In further part, the description of the answers from the survey will present the results from the above-mentioned groups.

## Modalities of student engagement recognition

There are various possibilities for the recognition of student engagement that are related to different spheres of the students' academic and professional development. In the survey respondents could choose among different options concerning:

→ Formal recognition for individual student, related to the academic life:

- ECTS credits for student engagement activities.



- Integration of student engagement as part of the curricula in some of the institution's study programmes.
- Integration of student engagement as part of curricula across the institution
- Possibility to get student engagement recognised through an elective module (and validate this module with ECTS or extra-points for instance).

### Examples from France:

**University Paris 8** in France: possibility to choose an open module called "student engagement" that allow students to validate 3 ECTS credits at the end of the semester. To validate this module, students have to prove that they are engaged in an activity, participate in 3 training sessions (such as associative project management, skills identification, communication), and complete an activity report that will be evaluated by a specific commission.

**University of Cergy-Pontoise** in France: possibility to choose an open module called "student engagement" that allow students to validate ECTS credits.

- Forms of recognition of the skills acquired during the activities of student engagement:
- Validation of the skills acquired through the experience of engagement.
  - Annex to the diploma mentioning the skills acquired through the engagement of the student.
  - Training sessions for engaged students (for instance to help them identify the skills they acquired during their experiences)

### Examples from France and Ireland:

**University of Aix Marseille** in France: Students can be exempted from following classes or making the end-of-studies internship because they acquired the requested skills during their engagement. The skills acquired must be in line with those expected in the training.

**University College Cork** in Ireland: the skills acquired during the experience of engagement are mentioned in the annex to the diploma.

- Recognition of student engagement as a form of facilitation of students' academic life:
- Possibility for engaged students to adapt their academic timetables.
  - Extra-points (bonus points) for student engagement activities.



**Examples from Spain and France:**

**University of Barcelona** in Spain: high level athletes' students can adapt their timetables.

**Paris-Dauphine University in France:** extra-points in the overall average of one student for its activities of engagement after the completion of an activity report.

→ Less formal recognition of student engagement as a form of non-academic distinction for students and community-building tool:

- Valorisation of student engagement: dedicated space for associations, possibility to set up events within the campus institution, institutional communication on students' activities.
- Award ceremony or deliverance of an award for engaged students.
- Certificate of engagement.

**Examples from the UK and Lithuania:**

**London Business School** in the UK: they deliver student awards based on impact every year.

**Kaunas University of Technology** in Lithuania: mentoring activities can be recognised through an award ceremony or the deliverance of an award to the students, or a certificate of engagement.

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**Specific status for engaged students (e.g. status of “student association leader” and “Engaged Student”)**

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**Examples from Portugal, France and Ireland:**

**University of Porto** in Portugal: Specific status for students engaged in political activities.

**University Paris 3 Sorbonne Nouvelle** in France: Status for “associative leader” that allows students who have responsibilities in an association (or NGO) to adapt their timetables and validate their experience of engagement as the end-of-studies internship (i.e. they don't have to make an internship. Their experience of engagement replaces).

**University of Dublin City**, in Ireland: Specific status for engaged students who have mandates as student representatives (e.g. participation in the board of one department).





The specific status for engaged students or students with responsibilities within the institutions can be considered as a formal form of recognition or a less-formal one depending on the institution. When this status allows students to adapt their academic life and be exempted from making an internship (i.e. the experience of engagement replaces the end-of-studies internship), it represents rather a more formal recognition. However, in other universities it is a less formal way of recognition because it represents a “title” for students but does not imply formal recognition.



## Countries with a legislative framework on student engagement recognition for higher education

Fifty-seven answers from Croatia, Estonia, Finland, France, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Slovenia and Spain.

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**All the HEIs of this group stated that they recognise student engagement.**

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In the group of countries that introduced a framework on the recognition of student engagement for higher education, all the HEIs, which completed the survey, stated that they implemented forms of recognition of student engagement.

### *Various modalities of recognition among the HEIs of this group*

#### **1. The validation of ECTS credits**

Among the possible answers, the most common form of recognition of student engagement is attributing ECTS credits for activities in NGOs, non-profit associations, students' organisations & citizenship-related activities; twenty-nine HEIs state such form of recognition. Among these twenty-one is from France, four from Spain and one answer per country from Lithuania, Ireland, Finland, and Croatia.

#### *Student representation and the example of the University of Extremadura*

The University of Extremadura in Spain highlighted that they only recognise the contribution of students in the institutions' bodies and student representation within the university with ECTS. The university does not recognise other forms of engagement in any other ways.

#### *No recognition for political activities*

In the previous part, in which respondents were asked what kind of activities they consider as student engagement, the lowest rate of answers was for the political activities. Such approach is confirmed in the group of countries that introduced a legislative framework on engagement recognition specific for higher education. Only nine HEIs are attributing ECTS



for activities in political parties (five from France, one from Ireland, three from Spain). A low rate of answers for any kind of recognition for political activities is constant in this group.

Thirteen HEIs do not admit ECTS credits for student engagement activities, among them are all three Lithuanian HEIs that completed the survey.

### *The example of Lithuania:*

According to the Map, Lithuanian law acts encourage Higher Education Institutions to recognise student engagement. From five Lithuanian HEIs, which completed the survey three are unlikely to admit ECTS for any kind of activities<sup>31</sup>. There is however interesting pattern emerging from the Lithuanian answers. All three universities put strong emphasis on recognition of mentoring activities.

- Mykolas Romeris University recognises Mentoring Activities in following forms:  
Integration of student engagement as part of curricula across the institution,  
Possibility to get student engagement recognised through an elective module;  
Valorisation of student engagement (dedicated space for associations, events,  
communication campaigns); Certificate of engagement; Extra benefits.
- Kaunas University of Technology recognises Mentoring Activities in following forms:  
Award ceremony or deliverance of an award for engaged students; Certificate of  
engagement.

Therefore, Lithuanian students of these HEIs who participate in mentoring activities can expect less formal types of distinction and confirmation of their engagement.

## **2. The integration of student engagement as part of the curricula**

Noticeably high rate of answers is for the integration of student engagement as part of the curricula in some of the institution's study programmes, for activities in NGOs, non-profit associations, students' organisations & citizenship-related activities. Twenty-six HEIs admitted that form of recognition.

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<sup>31</sup> Three answers come from one university – Kaunas University of Technology, and one of the answers states that students may receive ECTS for activities in NGOs, non-profit associations, students' organisations & citizenship-related activities; the third one states "don't know".



On the contrary, the form of recognition of student engagement such as integration of student engagement as part of curricula across the institution is not popular for any kind of activity in this group. Such form of recognition may depend on the particular program of studies; therefore, it would be difficult to introduce it across the institution. That might be a cause of such low rate of answers for this type of recognition. It is similar for "the possibility for engaged students to adapt their academic timetables". In addition, twenty-three HEIs do not offer elective module to get student engagement recognised.

#### *The example of Ireland:*

There is interesting point emerging from both Irish answers about the forms of recognition. Irish universities that completed the survey present wide range of forms of recognition. Moreover, if some type of recognition is practiced, often it is applicable for most types of student engagement (including political activities). Engaged students, regardless the type of their activity, have possibility to get student engagement recognised through an elective module (whereas in University College Cork only mandates outside the institution are not included in this form of recognition). The same situation is for forms of recognition such as annex to the diploma, valorisation of student engagement (dedicated space for associations, events, and communication campaigns), award ceremony or deliverance of an award for engaged students, and certificate of engagement. Furthermore, University College Cork also admits extra benefits for students who participate in all mentioned activities. Thus Irish respondents present variety of modalities of recognition without concentration on certain topics and forms of student engagement.

### **3. Award ceremonies for engaged students**

One more popular form of recognition in this group of respondents, which is less formal but distinguishes students from the rest of the community, is an award ceremony, especially for activities such as mandates within the institution, mentoring activities and engagement in NGOs, non-profit associations, students' organisations & citizenship-related activities.

### **4. Other forms of recognition**

HEIs also developed their own forms and mechanisms of recognition:



- Grenoble Ecole de Management in France highlighted that they recognise the overall engagement of student<sup>32</sup>.
- The University of Barcelona in Spain admits that the high-level athlete students can adapt their timetable. Student engagement is also part of trainings in some courses<sup>33</sup>.

### *Favouring the recognition of regular engagement*

Considering levels of student engagement, whether it is regular, episodic or event-based engagement in one or various activities, the majority of the HEIs recognise regular engagement in the same activity for one semester or more (fourty-five out of fifty-seven HEIs for this group).

There is a noticeable group of French HEIs that highlights that the institutions require a certain number of hours of engagement in a specific period to recognise the engagement of the students. As mentioned before, with the different answers to the survey it appears that the French HEIs adopted formal and pragmatic policies and strategies to recognise student engagement.

- “The already achieved engagement can be validated in the 2nd or 3rd year of the Bachelor degree if it lasted at least 40 hours”; and “a volunteer mission can be validated from the moment it is carried out in 20 hours (including 4 hours of training by the association), which could be done in 2 or 3 days if necessary (example of participation to a festival)”<sup>34</sup>, University of Tours.
- “35 hours minimum over the year”<sup>35</sup>, ESAIP - Graduate School of Engineering.
- “24 hours per semester”<sup>36</sup>, Rennes 2 University.

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<sup>32</sup> Quote from the survey in French: “Reconnaissance globale et pas pour chaque action effectuée”.

<sup>33</sup> Quote from the survey in Spanish: “Los estudiantes considerados deportistas de élite tienen la posibilidad de adaptar sus horarios a las actividades que realizan. Además anualmente se realiza una ceremonia de reconocimiento a su labor. En determinadas formaciones se promueve el aprendizaje como servicio a la sociedad y, por tanto, el compromiso estudiantil queda integrado en la formación.”

<sup>34</sup> Quote from the survey in French: “L’engagement “déjà réalisé” peut- être validé en 2<sup>e</sup> ou 3<sup>e</sup> année de licence dès lors qu’il s’est déroulé pendant au moins 40h. Une mission bénévole peut être validée à partir du moment où elle est réalisée en 20h (dont 4 heures de formation par l’association), ce qui pourrait se faire en 2 ou 3 jours si nécessaire (exemple de participation à un festival)”.

<sup>35</sup> Quote from the survey in French: “35h minimum sur l’année”.

<sup>36</sup> Quote from the survey in French: “à raison de 24h par semestre”.



## *Focus on the recognition of engagement skills*

*The majority of the HEIs in this group do not recognise competences that are not explicitly mentioned in learning outcomes or other official documents on curriculum expectations.*

Nevertheless, eighteen out of fifty-seven of these HEIs do and recognise different competences than the academic ones.

### *The example of the University of Clermont-Auvergne in France*

At the University of Clermont-Auvergne, they work on a system of recognition of the competences acquired through engagement. It plans to include these skills to the annex to the diploma. Moreover, the university emphasises the importance of such competences, and distinguishes them from the academic skills acquired by students. This university is planning to differentiate these two types of competences<sup>37</sup>.

### *Focus on the students' competences and tasks*

Two types of answers emerged from the results of the survey:

→ HEIs highlighting the competences and their role in students' life:

- “Any competence(s) (know-how, interpersonal skills) that could enable students either to build their academic career or to complete the skills base acquired during their training to prepare their professional integration”<sup>38</sup>, Paris-Dauphine University, France.
- “They can be different: from innovation creation, participation in different competitions (which are not included into curriculum), participation in research projects, etc.”, Kaunas University of Technology, Lithuania.
- “Teamwork; Leadership; Communication skills; Awareness of Self and Others; Resilience”, University College Cork, Ireland.

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<sup>37</sup> Quote from the survey in French: “Nous travaillons (pas encore mis en place) sur la certification des compétences de l'engagement. Qui dans un second temps serait inscrite dans l'annexe descriptive au diplôme. Même si ces compétences ne sont pas attendues dans la formation. L'idée est de faire la différence entre les compétences attendues dans la formation et les compétences développées lors de l'engagement pour mieux les mettre en avant”.

<sup>38</sup> Quote from the survey in French: “Toute(s) compétence(s) (savoir-faire, savoir-être) pouvant permettre à l'étudiant soit de construire son parcours académique, soit de compléter le socle de compétences acquises pendant sa formation pour préparer son insertion professionnelle”.



→ HEIs, especially French, considering the tasks accomplished by students and the associated competences acquired:

- “The list of soft skills developed is not exhaustive: treasurers who correctly manage accounting, (rigour and communication), those who will look for sponsors (communication), those who will federate students for the realisation etc.(leadership)”<sup>39</sup>, ENSEA - Graduate School in Electrical Engineering, Computer Science and Communications Networks, France.
- “Mission of civic service, military engagement, reservist (fire fighter), artists and high-level athletes”<sup>40</sup>, University of Cergy-Pontoise, France.
- “The skills acquired as a student representative and/or as association representatives”<sup>41</sup>, Rennes 2 University, France.

#### Specific tools to recognise engagement skills

- Some HEIs also pointed out specific tools they use to recognise the skills: The University of Tours in France tested the “engagement Open Badges”<sup>42</sup> (digital badges), during the academic year 2018-2019, for engaged students, volunteers, army reservists, or volunteer firefighters. One badge corresponds to one competence acquired during the experience of engagement of one students. Students can collect different badges online associated to their new engagement skills. Likewise, the University College Cork in Ireland recognises student engagement in the form of Digital Badges.
- The University of Clermont-Auvergne uses the transversal competences from the skills referential eLene4work<sup>43</sup>.

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<sup>39</sup> Quote from the survey in French: “La liste des softskills développée n'est pas exhaustive : les trésoriers qui gèrent correctement la compta,(rigueur et communication), ceux qui vont chercher des sponsors (communication), ceux qui vont fédérer les étudiants pour la réalisation etc...”

<sup>40</sup> Quote from the survey in French: „Mission de service civique, engagement militaire ou réservistes (pompiers), artistes et sportifs de haut niveau”.

<sup>41</sup> Quote from the survey in French: “Les compétences acquises en tant qu'élus et/ou représentants associatifs.”

<sup>42</sup> More information on the Open Badges at the University of Tours: [www.openbadge.univ-tours.fr](http://www.openbadge.univ-tours.fr).

<sup>43</sup> More information on eLene4work: [www.elene4work.eu](http://www.elene4work.eu).



→ The University Côte d'Azur mentioned [www.karutaproject.org](http://www.karutaproject.org)<sup>44</sup>. *“This Community of Universities and Higher Education Institutions (COMUE) also emphasised the need of unified system of recognition of skills acquired during activities considered as student engagement”.*

### *The implementation of the recognition driven by the rectorate and direction of the institutions*

In most of the HEIs of this group, different actors of the institutions working in cooperation initiated the implementation of the recognition process: rectorate, staff, teachers and students.

The majority of the institutions of this group (30) indicated that the rectorate and direction of the institutions are the initiators of the implementation of recognition measures.

Among eighteen HEIs, which identified students and student organisation as initiators of the recognition process, two universities (the National Institute of Higher Agricultural Studies of Montpellier (Montpellier SupAgro) in France and the Lithuanian University of Health Sciences) explained that it was student union that initiated the recognition of student engagement in their institution. In every case, it was in cooperation with teachers, staff and/or the rectorate.

Seventeen universities indicated that professional and support staff was at the origin of the process. It is in general staff from the department of Student Life, with the support of other members of the institution. In three cases (Grenoble Ecole de Management, ECE Paris - Graduate School of Engineering in France, and the University of Dublin City in Ireland), the staff initiated the process by themselves.

In nine cases, it was the teaching staff together with the rectorate/direction of the institution. For the University of Zadar in Croatia and ESAIP - Graduate School of Engineering in France, it was also with the contribution of students and student associations; and for the University of Cergy-Pontoise in France, the department of student life was also involved.

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<sup>44</sup> Following the website [www.karutaproject.org/about-karuta/](http://www.karutaproject.org/about-karuta/) "tool that provides the means for portfolio practitioners, as well as students, to customize their own portfolio workflows in order to foster increased awareness and control of one's own learning."





## *A centralised strategy for the institutions*

75,4% of the HEIs in this group state that they have a centralised strategy for the whole institution in order to recognise student engagement (fourty-three out of fifty-seven HEIs).

Four HEIs from France, two from Spain and two from Lithuania indicated having a decentralised strategy. In those cases, the fields of study where HEIs tend to recognise student engagement are first humanities and social sciences, then science and engineering and health. (seven respondents indicated that they do not know the nature of the strategy.)

### *Mostly students from BA and MA benefiting from student engagement recognition*

Considering the cycle of the studies, in almost every HEIs both bachelor (1<sup>st</sup> cycle) and master (2<sup>nd</sup> cycle) students can benefit from the measures of recognition.

Only in two institutions, the IEDC Bled School of Management in Slovenia and the Semmelweis University in Hungary, bachelor student cannot benefit from recognition measures. The University of Tours in France is the only one where the recognition of student engagement is not possible for Master students. Nevertheless, in this institution engaged students and employed students can benefit from timetable adjustments and choose the evaluation method of their academic training.

Twenty-one HEIs also recognise the engagement of third-cycle students. Among these are all of the respondents from Hungary, Estonia, Lithuania, Ireland, also Croatian university from which there is one answer to the survey, comparing to only three universities from France.

Some French HEIs tend to have stricter rules determining which students can obtain recognition for their engagement. At some universities, college students are expected to engage into social activities only in the first year of Master (e.g. EISTI - Graduate School in Computer Science and Mathematics Engineering, the Polytechnic University Hauts-de-France and the University of Haute Alsace), or only in the second year of Bachelor (e.g. University of Orléans).

### *The example of Spain*

Four out of seven HEIs from Spain that completed the survey state that they introduced recognition of student engagement before the year 2000. Interestingly, Spanish HEIs claim



such long traditions regarding the student engagement recognition, which is notable as before 2000 there was no law regulating recognition of the student engagement, yet the need to recognise student engagement was highlighted. Some universities decided to start this process and share it among all HEIs. Therefore, in 2001 the Conference of Rectors of Spanish Universities (CRUE) approved the first document "University: Social Commitment and Volunteering" where the role of the university in the processes of human development and in its responsibility for supporting citizen participation in the voluntary action is emphasised.

### *Direct and indirect communication on the possibilities of recognition*

Among the HEIs from the countries with a legislative framework regarding the recognition of student engagement for higher education there are many ways of informing and making the academic community aware of the possibilities. Information meetings for students are the most common way of implementing the awareness on the opportunities of the mechanisms of the recognition: forty-two HEIs do and fifteen do not organise such meetings. Three of the French universities (The National Superior School of Electronics in France, Istia-Polytech Angers, the graduate School of Engineering of the University of Angers in France, the University of Cergy-Pontoise in France) also mentioned meetings for student associations. It is interesting to note that the tendency is reverse for information meetings for teachers and staffs: twenty-three HEIs set up meetings to inform the staffs and thirty-four do not. Thus, it appears that in this group, HEIs tend to favour the communication on the possibilities of engagement recognition for students rather than for the teachers and staffs. Online and traditional forms of campaigns across the institutions are also often marked by the respondents, which indicates that HEIs use both direct and indirect forms of communication to reach students and academics.



## Countries with a legislative framework on the recognition of engagement independent from higher education

Thirty-six answers from Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Romania and the United Kingdom.

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**None of the HEIs of this group stated that they do not recognise student engagement.**

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### *Favouring the integration of student engagement in the curricula to recognise student engagement*

Whereas in the first group the highest percentage of answers was for the recognition method of ECTS accreditation, in this group the highest rate (47,2%) of answers is for the integration of student engagement as part of the curricula in some of the institution's study programmes.

In the general overview of answers, HEIs representing this group of answers are unlikely to admit ECTS for activities considered as student engagement, although ten out of thirty-six respondents stated that they do not know if there is a form of recognition such as ECTS for student engagement at their university.

This group is rather diverse in distribution of the answers. There is a high rate of "none" and "I don't know" answers in questions concerning the type of recognition for particular activity (tendency that does not appear visibly in the previous group of countries). Fourteen HEIs indicated the type of recognition in the form of valorisation of student engagement (dedicated space for associations, events, and communication campaigns), for the mandates as student representatives within the institution, which is the highest number of answers for certain activity in this group.



### *The examples of Denmark, Czech Republic and Portugal*

The distribution of answers in this group however shows interesting tendencies that are noticed in countries such as Denmark, Czech Republic and Portugal. Whereas most of answers are diverse, there is one specific form of recognition in each country that repeats in most of the HEIs for the different types of student engagement.

- Most of the Czech HEIs recognise student engagement with the possibility to adapt timetable. This is not that popular in other countries.
- Danish HEIs highlighted the valorisation of student engagement (dedicated space for associations, events, and communication campaigns).
- Portuguese HEIs deliver annex to the diploma for engaged students. The Polytechnic Institute of Beja, The Nursing School of Coimbra (Escola Superior de Enfermagem), and the P. Porto (Polytechnic Institute of Porto) recognise all of the listed forms of engagement by mentioning the activities of engagement in the annex to the diploma.

### *The example of Portugal*

In Portugal, the mandates as student representatives appear to be well recognised in the HEIs that took part in the survey, under different forms - five HEIs implemented a specific status for engaged students, six HEIs use the valorisation of student engagement (dedicated space for associations, events, communication campaigns), four HEIs organise award ceremony or deliver award, and five HEIs established certificate of engagement.

Thus, the role of students' voice and implication within the academic community is appreciated and formally recognised.

### *Financial recognition of student engagement*

There is one additional form of recognition mentioned in this group, which has not been mentioned in the first group: **financial recognition of engagement**. For instance, FH Oberösterreich / University of Applied Sciences Upper Austria in the comment section stated "money for mentoring activities"; the University of West Bohemia in Czech Republic also explained that "Students can receive any kind of "stipendium" [scholarship]; the Howest, University College West Flanders in Belgium explained that for "local students who engage as buddies to international students, for example, they check off one of the many criteria for grant selection for study/internship abroad etc".



The example of University College Ghent (HOGENT) in Belgium, is also interesting in this regard: the institution does not specifically recognise student engagement in the form of financial benefit but supports student engagement in the form of 500-euro grant for student-led projects in the ENGAGE fund.

### *Different perspectives on the recognition of student engagement*

In this group, some examples illustrate noteworthy perspectives on the recognition of student engagement and acquired competences:

- Considering the recognised type of engagement (regular/semi-regular/event-based) London Business School in the United Kingdom presents interesting perspective, that is not mentioned by any other HEI in the survey: “Activity dependent: we give student awards based on impact every year”.
- The Faculty for Business, Economics and Statistics of the University of Vienna in Austria, emphasises that they do recognise competences acquired during the engagement on behalf of the community and student mutual support: “in the elective module: being part of the student union and helping with mentoring new students is not mentioned in the curricula, but will be recognised as ECTS reduction in the elective module”. This is interesting perspective of perceiving students' engagement as a tool to empower and support the community of the faculty.
- The FEP, School of Economics and Management of the University of Porto in Portugal also mentions that they are in a process of preparation a system of skills recognition.
- Kael de Grote University College in Belgium refers to the competences connected with CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility), and hands CSR certificates as a form of recognition of skills.

### *Cooperation to initiate the recognition of student engagement*

This group is rather diverse in terms of the actors who initiated the implementation of student engagement recognition. However, in general it was also a cooperation of different stakeholders that initiated the process, as in the previous group. For instance, in the University of Vienna in Austria, the initiators of the recognition were a combination of three different types of actors: students, teachers and administrative staff. Nevertheless, in the Faculty for Business, Economics and Statistics of the university, students alone initiated it.



Ten institutions (27,8%) indicated that it was the rectorate/direction at the initiative of the process. In four of these HEIs, it was the rectorate alone. For eight HEIs (22,2%) it was the teaching staff. In the Kael de Grote College University in Belgium and the Academy of Fine Arts (Accademia di Belle Arti) in Italy teachers were the only ones at the initiative of the recognition. In seven HEIs, students and student organisations (19,4%) launched the initiative.

Interestingly, in the Medical College Prague in Czech Republic, the initiative came from the Student Parliament, academic staff, “medical experts from extern institutions” and EDUCA, a consortium of Higher Education Institutions.

### *A centralised strategy for the institutions*

Most of the HEIs in this group of answers also state that they have centralised strategy regarding recognition of student engagement.

There is however difference between the recognition for different cycles of studies. 83,3% of respondents recognise the engagement of bachelor (1<sup>st</sup> cycle) students, whereas 55,6% recognise engagement for master (2<sup>nd</sup> cycle) students. Thus, in this group, it appears that engagement is more generally recognised in the early years of the curricular than when students advance in their studies and are more specialised. This is noticeable in comparison with the group number one where there were no such differences.

### *Favouring the communication for students*

In this group the most popular way to inform on the opportunities of student engagement recognition are campaigns on the campuses in the forms of flyers, posters, etc.

As in the first group, organising information meetings for students is also used to communicate on the subject. It is interesting to note that in twenty-two HEIs there are information meetings for students, whereas only thirteen HEIs of this group set up information meetings for academic and administrative staffs. The VIVES University of Applied Sciences in Belgium is a counterexample in this group. Indeed, the institution implemented “workshop for academic staff but no information meetings for the students”.



## Countries without any framework on the recognition of engagement

Twenty-seven answers from Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland and Sweden.

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**92,6%** of the answers from this group indicated that the HEIs **recognise student engagement**.

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### *Two institutions do not recognise student engagement*

In this group, two institutions stated that they do not recognise student engagement. One of the answers comes from the Linnaeus University in Sweden, and as a reason mentions the position that students' participation in extracurricular activities is a private, non-university matter and make a distinction between academic curricula and extracurricular life.

The second answer comes from one of the answers from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in Greece, and as a reason lists legal obstacles on the country level and bureaucratic approach of the university as well as the lack of means within it.

Interestingly, the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki states that they do recognise informal and non-formal learning and skills acquired through these types of learning as well as skills portfolio, while Linnaeus University does not recognise neither of these.

### *Different examples of recognition measures*

The overview of the answers in this group is rather similar to the second group, a high rate of answers "I don't know" and "none" for specific types of recognition and activities. However, there are some conclusions that could be presented:

- The most frequent forms of recognition of student engagement in Poland are valorisation of student engagement (dedicated space for associations, events, and communication campaigns) and award ceremonies. It is rather rare to recognise student engagement in formal forms such as the validation of ECTS. Polish HEIs also do not tend to provide annexes to the diplomas for student engagement.



- The University of Cyprus values student engagement (dedicated space for associations, events, communication campaigns) for political activities, which is rather rare in the general overview of the survey, and for mandates outside the institution. For the activities in NGOs, non-profit associations, students' organisations; citizenship-related activities, the university organises award ceremony and hands certificates of engagement.
- One answer (out of four) from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in Greece indicates that they give certificates of engagement for all of the kind of activities.
- The University of Latvia presents more complex forms of recognition of student engagement. Integration of student engagement as part of the curricula in some of the institution's study programmes is possible for activities such as mentoring, and for mandates as student representatives within the institution. There is also the possibility to get student engagement recognised through an elective module and to adapt student's academic timetables for the mentoring activities. Students who are engaged in political activities can expect recognition in the form of specific status for engaged students and award ceremony.
- Among the answers from the Netherlands, there is one HEI, which stands out from the rest with its modalities of student engagement recognition: the University of Amsterdam. It recognises all of the activities listed in the question in the forms of: ECTS; Integration of student engagement as part of the curricula in some of the institution's study programmes; possibility to get student engagement recognised through an elective module. Whereas less formal and less academic-related forms of recognition such as specific status for engaged students, certificates of engagement, and valorisation of student engagement are used for the engagement into NGOs, non-profit associations, students' organisations and citizenship-related activities. The University organises award ceremony for activities such as mandates as student representatives within the institution, mentoring, engagement into NGOs, non-profit associations, students' organisations and citizenship-related activities.
- Maastricht University from the Netherlands recognises student engagement in the form of valorisation of student engagement (dedicated space for associations, events, communication campaigns), for all of the activities except political engagement. Likewise, the Halmstad University from Sweden, which recognises all of the activities except political ones through the integration of student engagement as part of





curricula across the institution, and the possibility to get student engagement recognised through an elective module.

→ Utrecht University, the Netherlands also mentioned financial support as a form of recognition of the student engagement.

### *Focus on the recognition of the acquired skills*

In this group of answers, most of the respondents do not know whether the institution recognised competences not explicitly mentioned in the learning outcomes. Among these who know, nine state that they do not recognise such competences, whereas only four state that they do (two from the Netherlands, one from Poland, and one from Sweden).

- The HAN University of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands emphasises that they recognise intercultural skills for students who came back from exchange programs. In addition, University of Amsterdam lists intercultural skills among many other competences that they recognise: "skills like self-reflective learning, entrepreneurship, intercultural competences, design thinking, and other transferable/employability skills are recognised in various activities coordinated by UvA Student Services".

### *Engagement recognition for PhD students*

Five Polish HEIs recognise PhD student engagement (out of nine HEIs from this group, which states recognition of third-cycle student engagement), whereas for instance none of the Dutch HEIs recognise it. This might be the result of different perceptions of the PhD students/candidates, as in some of the countries they are perceived more as students, while in other countries they have a status of the researcher or academic.

### *Communication for the academic community*

Like in the two groups described above, in this group of HEIs popular ways of informing student community about the possibilities of the recognition is the organisation of meetings for students. However, what is different from the previous groups, the second popular ways are festivals, fairs and various promoting events on the topic (51,9%) equally with conferences, forums and other academic events on the topic (51,9%). Indirect forms of communication such as online and traditional campaigns, both across the university and on



the channels of particular departments, are little less popular with 44,4% answers for each. For instance, Utrecht University in the Netherlands, has a Facebook fan page on the topic: [www.facebook.com/bestuurlijkactiefutrecht](http://www.facebook.com/bestuurlijkactiefutrecht).

## Why do HEIs recognise student engagement?

While considering the main motivations of HEIs that completed the survey, there are rather similar opinions for most of the countries. The primary reasons are students and their future.

- The first reason is to “empower students for their future (professional and as engaged citizens), strengthening students’ academic backgrounds with the recognition of the experiences of engagement and the related skills”.
- The second reason is to help students develop soft skills (emotional & social intelligence, communication, teamwork, listening, etc.).
- The third reason is to facilitate student integration into the labour market.

The development of citizenship and the increase of engaged students within the institution are other reasons that the respondents checked<sup>45</sup>.

As the student-related points are often indicated as primary reasons, the institutional ones such as to “reinforce the institution’s social responsibilities and societal mission”, are often in the third and further position, which means that universities also keep in mind the enhancement of the academic community.

Interestingly there were only two HEIs out of one hundred and twenty that completed the survey, one from France (University of Orléans) and one from Hungary (Hungarian University of Fine Arts), which stated as main reason “to adhere to legislation”.

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<sup>45</sup> In the survey, the respondents were asked to classify the 12 following reasons by order of importance: Develop citizenship; “Empower students” for their future (professional and as engaged citizens), strengthening students’ academic backgrounds with the recognition of the experiences of engagement and the related skills; Facilitate access to extracurricular activities for all students; Facilitate student integration into the labour market; Give formal recognition to the non-disciplinary skills developed; Help students develop soft skills (emotional & social intelligence, communication, teamwork, listening, etc.); Promote student engagement and increase the number of engaged students within the institution; Reinforce the institution’s social responsibilities and societal mission; To adhere to legislation; Revitalise the university campus and the university student life.



# SUCCESS AND LIMITATIONS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT RECOGNITION

## Necessary components for recognition of student engagement

Respondents have been asked what are the necessary conditions to succeed in implementing student engagement recognition measures. The answers form few subgroups of opinions and perspectives on the matter:

- Cooperation and agreement between employees of different levels of the university.
- “An important consultation between all stakeholders (training departments, presidency and students) to define a roadmap voted in the various councils of the university (councils of training departments, council of training and student life, and board of directors)”<sup>46</sup>, Paris-Dauphine University, France.
- “Membership of all professionals in the university community (administrative and technical staff, research professors)”<sup>47</sup>, University of Tours, France.
- “In order for effective recognition to be implemented, it is first necessary to carry out a great deal of awareness among the teaching staff and the administration and services staff of the university.”<sup>48</sup>, University of Extremadura, Spain.
- “The support of the authorities. Staff whose roles are devoted only to this particular topic. Common mind-set of the academic community that the recognition of such engagement is valuable and important”, University of Warsaw, Poland.

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<sup>46</sup> Quote from the survey in French: “Une importante concertation entre toutes les parties prenantes (départements de formation, présidence et étudiants) permettant de définir une feuille de route votée dans les différents conseils de l’université (conseils de départements de formation, conseil de la formation et de la vie étudiante, conseil d’administration)”.

<sup>47</sup> Quote from the survey in French: “Adhésion de l’ensemble des professionnels de la communauté universitaire (personnels administratifs et techniques, enseignants chercheurs).

<sup>48</sup> Quote from the survey in Spanish: “Para que se pueda implementar un reconocimiento efectivo, es necesario realizar primero una gran labor de concienciación entre el profesorado y el personal de administración y servicios de la universidad”.



- “Institutional-wide support”, Dublin City University, Ireland.

→ Establishment of clear definitions of commitment, skills, and mechanisms:

- “Answer the following question: what are the personal contributions, qualities, defects, skills identified through this commitment”<sup>49</sup>, Agriculture Institute ISARA-Lyon, France.
- “Define the terms of recognition clearly and upstream.”<sup>50</sup>, EISTI - Graduate School in Computer Science and Mathematics Engineering, France.
- “Regulatory, legislative changes are needed. Institutional recognition methods need to follow a more simple criteria.”, Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary.
- “The existence of a framework that clearly explains the different methods and procedures for recognizing student engagement.”<sup>51</sup>, Rennes 2 University, France.

→ Perspective with focus on the students:

- “Communication, simplicity, coherence, accurate VA for the student”<sup>52</sup>, Grenoble Ecole de Management, France.
- “Student Information. Involvement of students, which is more and more likely to develop.”<sup>53</sup>, ENGEES - National School for Water and Environmental Engineering, France.
- “Explain the interest for the student: gain autonomy, management experience, budget management, project management etc. + credit ECTS.”<sup>54</sup>, ISTECH - Institute of Higher Education in Marketing and Business, France.

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<sup>49</sup> Quote from the survey in French: “Répondre à la question suivantes: quels sont les apports personnels, les qualités, les défauts, les compétences identifiés au travers de cet engagement.”

<sup>50</sup> Quote from the survey in French: “Définir les modalités de reconnaissance clairement et en amont.”

<sup>51</sup> Quote from the survey in French: “L'existence d'un cadrage qui explicite de manière claire les différentes modalités et procédures de reconnaissance de l'engagement étudiant.”

<sup>52</sup> Quote from the survey in French: “communication, simplicité, cohérence, VA précis pour l'étudiant”.

<sup>53</sup> Quote from the survey in French: “Information aux étudiants. Implication des étudiants ce qui a de plus en plus tendance à se développer”.



- “Students not academic/administrative staff have to communicate about the student engagement.”, Faculty of Economics, University of Lodz, Poland.
- “Students willingness to take part in offered opportunities.”, University of Hradec Králové, Czech Republic.
- “Student involvement in setting up the procedures.”, Ghent University, Belgium.
- “Embracing the potential of student leadership.”, University College Cork, Ireland.

→ Perspective with focus on cooperation of different actors:

- “Exchanges between the management of Polytech Angers and elected students during validation meetings / juries.”<sup>55</sup>, Istia-Polytech Angers, the graduate School of Engineering of the University of Angers, France.
- “It is necessary to gather students and teachers around the project and reach a consensus.”<sup>56</sup>, Grenoble Ecole de Management, France.
- “Strong links between students and school, financial means, time for students to carry out their projects, coaching and training to accompany them”<sup>57</sup>, EM Normandie - Business School, France.
- “There must be a support for classroom environment. Levels of academic challenge. Communication, collaboration, active involvement into learning activities, and enriching educational experiences. Interactions between students and teachers. Supporting family environment.”, HAN University of Applied Sciences, Netherlands.

→ Official integration of the recognition of student engagement into study programmes:

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<sup>54</sup> Quote from the survey in French: “Expliquer l'intérêt pour l'étudiant : gain autonomie, expérience de management, gestion budgétaire, gestion de projets etc + crédit ECTS.”

<sup>55</sup> Quote from the survey in French: “Echanges entre la direction de Polytech Angers et les élus étudiants lors des réunions de validation / jurys”.

<sup>56</sup> Quote from the survey in French: “Il faut rassembler étudiants et enseignants autour du projet et arriver à un consensus.”

<sup>57</sup> Quote from the survey in French: “liens forts entre étudiants et école, des moyens financiers, du temps pour les étudiants pour réaliser leurs projets, de l'encadrement et de la formation pour les accompagner”.



- “The valorisation integrated officially in the courses of formation of the students.”<sup>58</sup>, University of Cergy-Pontoise, France.
  - “Integration of student commitment into a course achievement.”, The Center for Key Qualifications University of Freiburg, Germany.
  - “There needs to be a direct link with the curriculum and a combination of engagement and reflection on the engagement is compulsory.”, VIVES University of Applied Sciences, Belgium.
  - “That can be incorporated into the mandatory academic curriculum.”<sup>59</sup>, University of Vic – Central University of Catalonia, Spain.
- Among the answers there were also two interesting factors unique for the Lithuanian respondents, that didn't occur in other HEIs:
- Focus on the future employers: “Proactive expression of demand for recognition by future employers, then students see the real value why they should dedicate their time to engagement.”, Mykolas Romeris University, Lithuania.
  - Country's legal matters: “Changes of reglementation of student engagement recognition in Lithuanian law system. Policy and support of university and initiatives from students.”, Lithuanian University of Health Sciences.

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<sup>58</sup> Quote from the survey in French: “La valorisation intégrée officiellement dans les parcours de formation des étudiants”.

<sup>59</sup> Quote from the survey in Spanish: “Que pueda incorporarse dentro del currículum académico obligatorio”.



## Main obstacles for recognition of student engagement

For the major barriers in implementing measures of the recognition of student engagement, the HEIs presented following subgroups of reasons and perspectives:

→ Perspective with focus on convincing different levels of staff in the institution:

- "Have a part of the faculty accept the importance of student engagement requiring significant academic recognition (bonus on the general average of the year)."<sup>60</sup>, Paris-Dauphine University, France.
- "Teachers"<sup>61</sup>, National Institute of Higher Agricultural Studies of Montpellier, (Montpellier SupAgro), France.
- "Lack of motivation for administration", Kaunas University of Technology, Lithuania.
- "The lack of adherence of all professionals in the university community. The lack of political will."<sup>62</sup>, University of Tours, France.
- "The way of understanding, by the different Rectoral teams, the importance of the role of students in the university, which does not allow implementing measures to raise awareness and recognize the work of committed students."<sup>63</sup>, University of Extremadura, Spain.

→ Perspective with focus on resources that are needed:

- "Willingness of the institution: human resources."<sup>64</sup>, Grenoble Ecole de Management, France.

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<sup>60</sup> Quote from the survey in French: "Faire accepter à une partie du corps enseignant l'importance de l'engagement étudiant nécessitant une reconnaissance académique significative (bonus sur la moyenne générale de l'année)."

<sup>61</sup> Quote from the survey in French: "Les enseignants".

<sup>62</sup> Quote from the survey in French: "L'absence d'adhésion de l'ensemble des professionnels de la communauté universitaire. L'absence de volonté politique."

<sup>63</sup> Quote from the survey in Spanish: "La forma de entender, por parte de los distintos equipos Rectorales, la importancia del papel de los estudiantes en la universidad, que no permite implementar medidas para concienciar y reconocer la labor de los estudiantes comprometidos."

<sup>64</sup> Quote from the survey in French: "Volonté de l'établissement : moyens humains".



- “Lack of all kind resources (both financial and not financial) for increase of students' engagement.”, Kaunas University of Technology, Lithuania.
- “Limited financial funds.”, University of Hradec Králové, Czech Republic.

→ Loss of “real” spirit of the engagement once it becomes recognised:

- “That engagement becomes an “obligation” and loses its meaning;”<sup>65</sup>, ESAIP - Graduate School of Engineering, France.
- “As long as the recognition is done through a diploma supplement, it remains based on individual wishes. On the other hand, the awarding of ECTS would make student engagement mandatory in order to validate the entire course. This subject is therefore under discussion within the institution.”<sup>66</sup>, National Veterinary School of Toulouse, France.

→ Perspective with focus on the students' lack of time:

- “Students have little time beyond their studies or already work part-time.”, FH Oberösterreich/University of Applied Sciences Upper Austria.
- “Students are very absorbed by their curriculum activities, which sometimes leave little time for social engagement.”, University College Ghent, (HOGENT), Belgium.

→ Perspective with focus on the students' lack of the interest:

- “Low interest of the students.”, Wroclaw University of Environmental and Life Sciences, Poland.
- “Students are more concentrated on their studies and work”, University of Latvia.

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<sup>65</sup> Quote from the survey in French: “Que l'engagement devienne une “obligation” et perde son sens.”

<sup>66</sup> Quote from the survey in French: “Tant que la reconnaissance se fait par le biais d'un supplément au diplôme cela reste basé sur les volontés individuelles. En revanche, l'attribution d'ECTS rendrait l'engagement étudiant obligatoire pour pouvoir valider l'intégralité de la formation. Ce sujet est donc en cours de discussion au sein de l'établissement.”





- “Students do not necessarily value their engagement(s) as part of their studies.”<sup>67</sup>, University of Haute Alsace, France.

→ Lack of centralised policy and/or strategy:

- “The study programs are not always familiar with the concept. It is seen as an add-on to the curriculum.”, VIVES University of Applied Sciences, Belgium.
- “[...] Rules should be specific enough while still allowing some room for the programme coordinators to find a good fit in the individual programs.”, University of Vienna, Faculty for Business, Economics and Statistics, Austria.
- “Precisely to be incorporated into the academic curriculum. It is currently an optional activity. The credits obtained can be achieved through electives as well. And more diffusion. *A change in the institutional conception of volunteering is also necessary.*”<sup>68</sup>, University of Vic – Central University of Catalonia, Spain.

→ Perspective with focus on rigid rules in the institution:

- “The variety of typologies and the rigidity of the curricula.”<sup>69</sup>, University of Barcelona, Spain.
- “Rigid credit recognition practices.”, Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary.

→ Interestingly, among French answers, the variety of possibilities to engage and to get recognition was mentioned by two HEIs as a barrier in successful implementation, whereas only one institution, EISTI - Graduate School in Computer Science and Mathematics Engineering, mentioned this as a necessary condition to succeed in recognition of student engagement.

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<sup>67</sup> Quote from the survey in French: “Les étudiants ne tiennent pas forcément à valoriser leur (s) engagement(s) dans le cadre de leurs études.”

<sup>68</sup> Quote from the survey in Spanish: “Precisamente que se incorpore en el currículum académico. Actualmente es una actividad opcional. Los créditos que se obtienen pueden realizarse a través de asignaturas optativas también. Y mayor difusión. También es necesario un cambio en la concepción institucional del voluntariado.”

<sup>69</sup> Quote from the survey in Spanish: “La variedad de tipologías y la rigidez de los planes de estudio”.



- “The multiplicity of opportunities to seize and the difficulty of making choices”<sup>70</sup>, EM Normandie - Business School, France.
- “Openness to all students (Diversity of profiles and curricula, levels and degree of commitment).”<sup>71</sup>, University of Paris, France.

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<sup>70</sup> Quote from the survey in French: “la multiplicité des opportunités à saisir et la difficulté de faire des choix”.

<sup>71</sup> Quote from the survey in French: “L'ouverture à l'ensemble des étudiants (Diversité des profils et des cursus, des niveaux et du degré d'engagement)”.



## FINAL REMARKS AND FURTHER ACTIVITIES

When asked about the awareness of the policies on the recognition of student engagement in Higher Education Institution, respondents are more aware of the national legislations (38,3%) than the European ones (only 16,7% stated that they are aware of legislation or policy framework for the recognition of student engagement by Higher Education Institutions in the European framework).

70% of respondents would like to be informed about the further outcomes of the European STEP project, what shows that HEIs are interested in the topic of the recognition of student engagement. Also sixty-five respondents agreed to be further contacted regarding their experience, which also shows the willingness of cooperation in developing the field and share the knowledge and good practices between the European HEIs.

Such approach is a good sign and encouraging for the future of the project, as according to the last part of the report, concerning the success components and main obstacles, there is a strong need for the cooperation between different actors of the academic life. In addition, there is a need for all the academic community to act on behalf of the topic to succeed. There are not only legal and institutional changes needed but also perspective changes, with consideration that there are different curriculums and approaches needed to be flexible and adjustable to certain study programmes.

The survey result shows that different institutions may understand some types of recognition and some types of engagement differently. One form of recognition considered formal for certain HEIs might be considered informal in a HEI from a different country or region. There are various perspectives on the topic of student engagement recognition. Some HEIs are task or competences-focused; there are also institutions, which are more topics or field-centred. In terms of the recognition mechanisms, many of the HEIs already have formal and well-established rules and structures, whereas some of the institutions approach the topic in less formal but more of a motivating and valorising form. There are also institutions that try to combine all of these forms and methods in order to recognise student engagement. This is a matter not only of the differences between various countries, with different traditions and cultural background, different methods and regulations are visible also on the national level, and institutions are aware of this fact, as for instance the



respondent from London Business School in the United Kingdom stated: "London Business School is a selective and expensive postgraduate business school. I think some of the answers/questions on this may not fit your intentions as student engagement is very different here than in a typical university."

However, the analysis of the answers from the survey also shows many similarities on the international and national levels. There are similar modalities of recognition for comparable activities, such as recognition of student engagement within the institution. There are also forms of student engagement, which are unlikely to be recognised by the Higher Education Institutions, as for instance religious or political engagement.

HEIs that answered the survey are also actively working on the development of the recognition of student engagement, as for example the University Paris-Est Créteil: "Our university is currently undergoing a reflection to encourage the engagement of all students; some components are already well advanced on this subject, others not at all."<sup>72</sup>

The answers to the survey presented interesting perspectives on the situation of HEIs in Europe; however, it is impossible to outline general remarks on the picture of student engagement recognition in European Union member states on this basis. The further activity of the European STEP project will be the occasion to explore this topic in more details. Therefore, to investigate the perspectives of the academic and administrative staff of European HEIs, and furthermore, to compare it with the students point of view, the consortium of the European STEP project started to lead semi-structured interviews from chosen institutions, to question students, teachers and staffs on their understanding of engagement, their needs and their expectations of the recognition processes. The main aim of the next activity of the European STEP project is to analyse how the recognition of student engagement in the higher education system varies depending on individual perspectives of a members of academic community. The outcome of the interviews, along with the survey results and map of legislative frameworks that rule student engagement recognition in the European Union Member-States, will lead to a report on the recognition framework within Higher Education Institutions.

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<sup>72</sup> Quote from the survey in French: "Notre université est actuellement en cours d'une réflexion pour favoriser l'engagement de tous les étudiants, certaines composantes sont déjà bien avancées sur ce sujet, d'autres pas du tout."



All the results of the major study will enable the consortium to develop tools to contribute to a better recognition of engagement across the EU.

The intellectual productions of the European STEP after the study:

- A “Guidebook of good practices” in the matter of student engagement recognition;
- A prototype for an ‘Engagement and Skills Platform’, a digital platform to help students identify the skills they acquired during their volunteering experiences;
- A ‘Training Kit European STEP’ including a training framework on student engagement recognition for the staffs of HEIs, a training framework for the staffs of HEIs to train engaged students, a training framework for engaged students, tutorial videos and a trainer’s guide;
- A ‘Booklet of recommendations’ based on the results of the study and intended for local, national and European public authorities.



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