The power of students

A case study of the European Student's Union

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20.08.2013

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I.   List of abbreviations

BFUG   Bologna follow-up group
BP   Bologna Process
ENQA   European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
ESIB   European Student Information Bureau
ESU   European Student's Union
EU   European Union
EUA   European University Association
EURASHE   European Association of Institutions in Higher Education
HEI(s)   Higher education institution(s)
HE   Higher education
NGO   Non-governmental organization
WESIB   West European Student Information Bureau

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1. Introduction

1.1.   Problem statement

Higher Education (HE) policy lies very much at the core of nation state politics(Keeling, 2006, p. 203). With the creation of the Bologna Process (BP), an intergovernmental process, the Europeanization in the HE sector started with one of the main aims being the comparability of different national HE systems(Veiga & Amaral, 2009, p. 133ff). In addition, with the beginning of the BP new possibilities to govern European HE arose. One key issue of the BP is that the state was no longer considered having the monopoly of expertise and resources to govern HE(Newman, 2003; Veiga & Amaral, 2009, p. 133). In the BP not only nation states are key participants when it comes to the decision-making in HE on the European level, but also interest groups which represent the interest of different stakeholders in the HE sector like the European University Association (EUA) or the European Student's Union (ESU). Actors without any decision making power, such as interest groups, can indirectly participate in the decision making process by influencing the agenda setting(Joachim, 2007, p. 240ff).

The interest group representing students, the ESU has been very active in contributing to the objectives of the BP and lobbies for the students' interests such as equal access to HE or the improvement of access student mobility. In the BP which started in 1999, the ESU became a consultative member of the Bologna Follow- up Group (BFUG) in 2001, which is the main institution responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the objectives of the BP (BolognaSecretariat, 2013b)[1].

The ESU is representing one of the core participants within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)(Klemenčič, 2012, p. 77; Ministers, 2001) and therefore it is important to understand how the ESU can influence the agenda setting process of the education ministers meeting in the BP. This is why we ask the main research question *"How did the European Student's Union influence the agenda setting as regards the social dimension in higher education leading towards the Leuven/ Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué?"*. We pose three sub- questions which will help us to answer our overall research question. First of all we will pose the sub- question "*How did the social dimension of higher education become an agenda point for the ESU and when did this happen?"*. This question will help us to identify the origin of the social dimension as a topic that the ESU promotes. The second sub- question is: "*How did the ESU participate in the agenda setting process of the social dimension issue for the Leuven/ Louvain-la-Neuve conference?"*. With this sub-question we aim to identify the actions undertaken by the ESU in order to put the social dimension of HE on the agenda of the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Bologna conference. Our last sub- question "*How successful was the ESU in promoting the social dimension issue as seen in the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué?"* aims at identifying how successful the ESU was in promoting the social dimension as a topic for the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Conference.

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[1] The BFUG is also involved in preparations of the Education minister's conferences in the Bologna Process(Veiga & Amaral, 2009, p. 144)

When it comes to literature explaining how the ESU participates in the agenda setting process for the education ministers conferences in the BP, little evidence is provided. On the one hand, there is generally little research done on interest groups in European HE and on the other hand little research is done on the student body as a lobby group(Klemenčič, 2012, p. 3) Research on student activism is mostly conducted in the light of student protests and student movements (for example (Altbach, 1989; Lipset & Altbach, 1969)).

1.2.   The Bologna process and the social dimension of higher education

The Bologna Declaration is often described as a key event of European HE as it marks the start of developing a more attractive and competitive EHEA that can compete with other regions worldwide(Keeling, 2006; Voegtle, Knill, & Dobbins, 2011). As stated in the Bologna Declaration *"ensure that the European higher education system acquires a worldwide degree of attractiveness equal to [Europe's] extraordinary cultural and scientific traditions"*(Education, 1999, p. 2ff). In the following, this process will be outlined. In order to do so, the BP itself will be described by focusing on the development of the social dimension issue in the BP. Moreover, the BFUG will be introduced as the BFUG includes the most important actors of the BP.

In 1998 the four education ministers of Germany, Italy, France and the United Kingdom signed the Sorbonne Declaration, aiming at committing themselves to harmonizing their framework of degrees in order to increase and facilitate student mobility and employability (Veiga & Amaral, 2009, p. 134). In order to eliminate the fear of other European countries of a 'Europe of two speeds'(Veiga & Amaral, 2009, p. 134) the Bologna Declaration was drafted. The declaration was signed voluntarily by 29 European states with the goal to cooperate in coordinating national policies reforms in HE. Today, 49 European states have signed the Bologna Declaration(BolognaSecretariat, 2013a).

In contrast to the Sorbonne Declaration, the Bologna declaration was not aimed at harmonization and is not a reform or imposing any obligations on the states(Conferences & Universities, 2000, p. 3). To put it as Portuguese Minister of Education who signed the declaration *"[...]a declaration of an exclusively political nature"*(Veiga & Amaral, 2009, p. 135). This also seems to confirm that the individual fundamental principle and the diversity of education systems are guaranteed(Conferences & Universities, 2000, p. 3).

In the early years of the BP, little attention was paid to the social dimension of HE(Veiga & Amaral, 2009). The social dimension was firstly referred to in the agenda of the European education ministers meeting in Prague 2001 "[…] *ministers reaffirmed the need, recalled by students to take account of the social dimension in the Bologna process*.[..]"(Ministers, 2001, p. 3). However, this statement concerning the social dimension is very vague and it solely states that the social dimension is part of the BP.

In the Berlin Communiqué (2003) the social dimension was again referred to with outlining that the social aspects of HE and the increase of competiveness should be balanced and that education remains public good "*Ministers reaffirm the importance of the social dimension of the BP. The need to increase competitiveness must be balanced with the objective of*

improving the social characteristics of the European Higher Education Area […]Ministers reaffirm their position that higher education is a public good and a public responsibility." (Ministers, 2003, p. 1).

In the next meeting of the European education ministers in Bergen (2005), for the first time the social dimension issue was defined as an integral part of the EHEA "*to making quality higher education equally accessible to all, and stress the need for appropriate conditions for students so that they can complete their studies without obstacles related to their social and economic background. The social dimension includes measures taken by governments to help students, especially from socially disadvantaged groups, in financial and economic aspects and to provide them with guidance and counseling services with a view to widening access*" (Ministers, 2005, p. 4). Special attention is drawn to socially disadvantaged groups and the need to support them to access higher education institutions(HEIs). In addition, the social dimension working group was created in order to review the national work on the social dimension issue(Veiga & Amaral, 2009, p. 145).

In the London Communiqué (2007) it was focused on the fact that students should be able to study and graduate from HEIs irrespective of their socio-economic background *"We share the societal aspiration that the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels should reflect the diversity of our populations. We reaffirm the importance of students being able to complete their studies without obstacles related to their social and economic background"* (Education, 2007, p. 5).

The Leuven Communiqué (2009) was another benchmark as for the first time, the ministers stated that *"[…] each participating country will set measurable targets for widening overall participation and increasing participation of underrepresented groups in higher education, to be reached by the end of the next decade"* (Ministers, 2009, p. 2). This means within the Leuven Communiqué it was not yet decided upon what measures to be used to widen the access of the underrepresented groups, but the necessity of the issue and demand for measures were highlighted.

In the Bucharest Communiqué (2012) the education ministers decided to use national measures in order to improve the situation of underrepresented groups through developing a social dimension of HE(Area, 2013).

1.3.   The Bologna Follow-up Group

One key issue of the BP is that the participating states were no longer considered having the monopoly of expertise and resources to govern HE(Newman, 2003; Veiga & Amaral, 2009, p. 133). We can observe this for example with the creation of the BFUG. Other actors such as stakeholder organizations gained creditability as provider of expertise and resources in order to partake in the BP.

The BFUG consists of the states that participate in the BP and the European Commission (EC) as well as the Council of Europe, the ESU, EUA, UNESCO, Education International, the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and BUSINESSEUROPE as consultative members(BolognaSecretariat, 2013b).

The BFUG has the task to implement and monitor the decisions on objectives that have been made in the Education ministers conferences(BolognaSecretariat, 2013b).The BFUG meets every six months. Next to its implementation and monitoring duty, the BFUG is also responsible for preparing the Education ministers conferences and drafting the agenda discussed(Veiga & Amaral, 2009, p. 144). It is governed by the board which represents the key stakeholders in BFUG.

Since 2010 the board of the BFUG is composed of:
    (1) the EHEA Chairs double Troika[2]
    (2) the EHEA vice chair,
    (3) the European Commission and
    (4) four consultative members, amongst which the ESU is

                                                                                (BolognaSecretariat, 2013b).

The ESU has consultative powers in the BFUG and is seen as an integral part of the HE community (Ministers, 2001, p. 3). Since 2005, working groups on the different objectives have been established in the BP(Veiga & Amaral, 2009, p. 145) which are under the supervision of the BFUG. In the BFUG and its working groups the ESU provides reports, expertise and knowledge about the student's situation regarding European HE policies. To mention only one example of many, ESU produces the "Bologna with Student Eyes" report on a regular basis. This report has drawn attention to issues, such as the social dimension, that were barely dealt with within the BP(Veiga & Amaral, 2009, p. 145). These documents also help to fuel the decision-making process of the education ministers(Veiga & Amaral, 2009, p. 145).

1.4.   The social dimension of higher education

According to Maassen and Neave (2007) the understanding of the social dimension of HE has changed in the last decades, especially with the creation of the BP. Universities used to be considered as places of self- study for students(Neave & Maassen, 2007, p. 149), meaning that knowledge is produced for the knowledge sake. Nowadays, universities are seen as a provider of qualified, educated employees who are educated to help to foster the entrepreneurial culture of the state(Neave & Maassen, 2007, p. 150). This means it is put high emphasis on the universities task to produce highly qualified employees for the labor market in order to support the national economy.

The education ministers in the Prague Communiqué (2001) link HE and research with the international attractiveness and competitiveness of Europe(Ministers, 2001, p. 3). This fostering of the economic rationale of HE links the HEIs directly with the economic sector. Following this view, the image of students and their role in HE changed. Whereas students used to be seen as cooperative partners in universities(Klemenčič, 2011b, p. 76), today

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[2] The double Troika consists of the outgoing, present and incoming Chairs of the EHEA

students are seen as individual costumers(Cemmell, 2006; Neave & Maassen, 2007, p. 149). Legislation of HE in different European countries highlight mostly the service of students to the public at large, meaning the teaching and training(Klemenčič, 2011b, p. 74) to become highly qualified employees. The social aspect of HE is understood as providing financial incentives to all students to reduce access barriers to HEIs(Banscherus, Himpele, & Staack; Neave & Maassen, 2007, p. 149) meaning to provide financial student support systems to start studying and to successfully graduate. In addition, the social aspect of HE also highlights the promotion of student mobility through funding systems, as loans and grants(Neave & Maassen, 2007, p. 143).

The leading rationale for the social dimension of HE in the BP working group on social dimension states that *"social cohesion, reducing inequalities, raising the level of competiveness in society and maximizing the potential of individuals in terms of their personal development and their contribution to a sustainable and democratic knowledge society"*(BFUG, 2012, p. 2). This rationale again highlights that the leading rationale behind the social dimension seems to be an economic one. Even though, this statement draws the attention to inclusion and the abolishment of access barriers to HEIs, tuition fees were introduced in several countries and increased in other countries where they already existed before the education minister's conference in Leuven(DICE, 2007a, p. 56; Klemenčič, 2011b). The CESifo DICE report[3] indicates that the number of tuition fee free countries dropped between 2005 and 2007 and new tuition fees were in introduced for example in Germany or Luxembourg(DICE, 2007a, p. 56). In other countries the tuition fees increased, for example in United Kingdom the fee for public universities increased from GBP 1,175 (DICE, 2005) to GBP 3,070(DICE, 2007b) or in Portugal where the fee increased from EUR 357 (DICE, 2005) to EUR 500 (DICE, 2007b).

Studies suggest that the introduction of tuition fees and the enrollment rates of students have a negative relationship, as the number of students in the federal states of Germany who introduced tuition fees dropped after the introduction of the fees(Hübner, 2012, p. 11; Leslie & Brinkman, 1987). Moreover, tuition fees and enrollment rates seem be positively associated with amounts spent on student aid, since student aid can be viewed as reducing net prices or increasing student money income(Leslie & Brinkman, 1987, p. 181).

Focusing on the Leuven conference, students were protesting before the Leuven Communiqué and during the conference against newly introduced and raised tuition fees all over Europe (ESU, 2009a, p. 1) which could indicate that also the ESU was highly involved in framing the social dimension before the Leuven Communiqué as a problem of access barriers to students, namely tuition fees. According to this, the understanding of the social dimension of HE as financial support for students in order to access HEIs, to carry out their studies and to participate in mobility seems to be appropriate for the purpose of this thesis. Hence, we understand the social dimension of HE as financial support for students such as funding, loans and grants which enable students to access HEIs and mobility in HE.

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[3] Published by the The CESifo Group, consisting of the Center for Economic Studies (CES), the Ifo Institute and the CESifo GmbH (Munich Society for the Promotion of Economic Research) is a research group unique in Europe in the area of economic research(Institute, 2013).

1.5.   Student activism in Europe

One example of interest groups which is active at the European level is the ESU. The ESU promotes the students' educational, social and economic interests in different European and international decision-making bodies as the European Council or the UNESCO (Reinalda & Kulesza-Mietkowski, 2005, p. 88). In the BFUG the ESU is considered a "full member of the higher education community"(Ministers, 2001, p. 2ff).

In 1982 the ESU was founded under the name West European Student Information Bureau(WESIB). It was founded by seven national student unions[4](ESU, 2011b) and its main tasks were information sharing and coordination. Since 2007, the interest group is called ESU[5]. This new name can be identified as a final step of the change in the self-image of the ESU from an information sharing and coordinating institution to an interest group(Nagel, 2007, p. 61); a political organization which represents the views and beliefs of the students in Europe (ESU, 2011b).

The ESU is a representative umbrella organization for the different national student unions on the European and international stage and is therefore a good example for student activism. At the moment, 47 national student unions from 39 European countries are members of the European Student's Union(ESU, 2011b).

Since 2001 the ESU is a consultative member of the BFUG(Ministers, 2001; Reinalda & Kulesza-Mietkowski, 2005, p. 88).The ESU issues statements to almost all issues that are dealt with in the BP and is especially keen about the inclusion of the social dimension into the BP and the reaffirmation of the HE as a public good(Prague Communiqué 2001)(Reinalda & Kulesza-Mietkowski, 2005, p. 89).

The ESU is a good example of student activism but also of an interest group which can have very concrete interests and great potential to mobilize their members(Klemenčič, 2011a, p. 6). Firstly, the ESU has the power to enhance or threaten particular political actors' chances in election(Dür & De Bièvre, 2007; Klemenčič, 2011a, p. 6). Next to this, traditionally the student body is conducive to mobilization, since students have a fairly amount of spare time and on top of that they have a age-related affinity to uphold and demonstrate for the political preferences(Klemenčič, 2011a, p. 6). In addition, students are key participants in HE (Klemenčič, 2012, p. 77) which makes them to an important stakeholder in the BP. This means that the ESU is a good example on the one hand for student activism in the BP as well as the ESU is a good example for an interest group acting in the BP.

1.6.   Preview of the Bachelor Thesis

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[4] NSU Norway, NUS-UK, SFS Sweden, SHÍ Iceland, UNEF-ID France, DSF Denmark and ÖH Austria(ESU, 2011b)
[5] From 1990 to 2007 was the ESU calles ESIB (European Student Information Bureau)(ESU, 2011b)

The thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter One introduces the problem that this bachelor thesis deals with as well as the literature review regarding the BP, the social dimension of higher education and student activism. In Chapter Two the conceptual framework is presented. Chapter Three presents the methodology used in the thesis and we will explain the research model and our data collection and analysis methods. Further, in Chapter Four we will analyze our data, followed by chapter Five in which we will answer our three sub- questions as well as our main research question.

2. Conceptual Framework

In this chapter the main concepts will be presented which we use to answer the research question *"How did the European Student's Union influence the agenda setting as regards the social dimension in higher education leading towards the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué?"*. In order to analyze how the ESU participated in the agenda setting process for the Leuven/Louvin-la-Neuve meeting we will first conceptualize the policy process and the agenda setting process. In the following we will explain what interest groups are and how they can participate in the agenda setting process. In order to do so we will conceptualize three key actions of the agenda setting process framing of the problem, softening up of opposing views and the mobilization of allies.

2.1.   The policy process

In order to explain what a policy process is we first should define what we understand under policy. "A policy is a broader notion than a decision. At a minimum, a policy covers a bundle of decisions. More generally, it reflects an intention to make future decisions in accordance with the overall objective"(Hague & Harrop, 2010, p. 367). In order to analyze policy process, the process is subdivided into different stages: the initiation stage in which the problem is framed which shall be tackled(agenda setting process), formulation stage in which concrete solutions to the problem are formulated, the implementation stage when concrete policies are put into practice and the evaluation and review stage in which the success of the policy is evaluated(Hague & Harrop, 2010, p. 371; May & Wildavsky, 1978). As the evaluation of the problem sometimes leads to a new problem definition of the same problem, the policy process is sometimes envisioned as a cycle(see for example (Bridgman & Davis, 2003; May & Wildavsky, 1978)).

In this thesis, we will draw our attention to the first phase of the policy process, the initiation stage or agenda setting process. In this stage of the policy process it is decided upon which problems will form the new agenda. Our thesis deals with a specific initiation process, the agenda setting of the Leuven Communiqué and how the ESU influences the agenda setting regarding the social dimension issue.

2.2.   Interest groups, lobbying and the influence on the agenda setting process on the European level

Interest groups are non-governmental organizations which seek as part of their purpose to influence public policies(Hague & Harrop, 2010, p. 227) which means they lobby for their desired topic(Klüver, 2011, p. 483). These groups aim to be a communication channel between society and government(Hague & Harrop, 2010, pp. 227, 234). Interest groups are pragmatic which means they can adopt to whatever power structure they are confronted and have more specialized interests as political parties(Hague & Harrop, 2010, p. 227), for example the representation of students in HE. Interest groups have a central role in all democratic political systems and civil society is much more developed and dense in Brussels than on the national level(Hix & Hoyland, 2011, p. 159). Since the 1980ies the number of private individuals and groups seeking to influence the EU policy process has increased dramatically(Coen & Richardson, 2009; Greenwood, Grote, & Ronit, 1992; Hix & Hoyland, 2011, p. 162). By mid 2000 the number has even more dramatically increased and is raised by quintupled(Hix & Hoyland, 2011, p. 162).

Interest groups became important to the European Union due to two factors *exchange relations* and *resource dependency*. Exchange theorists see the social structure as an series of social relation which involve the exchanges of valued items, which can be among others of material, informational or symbolic nature(Bouwen, 2002; Cook & Whitmeyer, 1992, p. 110). The series of social relations is based on two principles. First, all behavior can be seen as motivated by interest, rewards or punishment and second most interaction consist of the exchange of valued items(Cook & Whitmeyer, 1992, p. 114). These exchanges which happen between officials of the EU and interest groups are due to the *resource dependency* of expertise, information and reputation of each other(Bouwen & McCown, 2007; Broscheid & Coen, 2003; Coen, 2007, p. 334; Mahoney, 2007). This *resource dependency* exists as the EC is understaffed and therefore needs to receive information and data from the interest groups to be able to secure the policies it wants(Hague & Harrop, 2010, p. 237; Hix & Hoyland, 2011). The interest groups seek access in order to influence the policy process(Hague & Harrop, 2010, p. 227; Klüver, 2011). European interest groups can help national member organizations with the implementation and monitoring process of policies(Hix & Hoyland, 2011, p. 184). In return, the EC provides interest groups with access to the European legislation process(Broscheid & Coen, 2003; Coen, 2007; Hix & Hoyland, 2011, p. 183). Moreover, the ES is the key source for funding out of the EU budget(Hix & Hoyland, 2011, p. 172).

Inclusion to the policy formation process, meaning to become an insider in the policy process is a key issue for interest groups(Richardson, 2000, p. 1011). This is due to the fact that insider groups can on the one hand try to control the prevailing image and on the other hand try to alter the roster of participants who are involved in the issue by seeking out the most favorable venue for consideration of their issue(Baumgartner & Jones, 1991, p. 1045). Due to this, interest groups benefit from the fact that the EC is preliminary interested in long-lasting relationships with interest groups which is based on consistency for information exchange, wide consultation and conciliatory actions(Broscheid & Coen, 2003; Coen, 2007, p. 335;

Mazey & Richardson, 2006). However, in order to integrate in the closed circle of interest groups which have access to the policy process, interest groups need to create a specific reputation, a particular identity as an interest group(Bouwen & McCown, 2007; Coen, 2007, pp. 335,338; Mahoney, 2007). This specific identity is for example a representative for European national student's union as the ESU.

In addition, interest groups have understood that the main channels to lobby are the policy-making institutions(Hague & Harrop, 2010, p. 234). It is best to be focused on the agenda setting and formulation stage of the policy process and in the 'day to day' monitoring of the implementation in the member states(Coen, 2007, p. 338). In the EU legislative procedures, many actors are involved in the agenda setting process which means that interest groups are likely to find someone who listens to the interest groups interests and who is interested in receiving their information on a particular topic(Crombez, 2002; Hix & Hoyland, 2011, p. 181).

2.3.   Interest groups and their participation in the agenda setting process

Different authors argue that framing is an action in the agenda setting process in which interest groups are often involved(compare(Mazey & Richardson, 1997; Richardson, 2000, p. 1012)).

Kingdon(1995) highlights the importance of framing in the agenda setting process. According to Joachim (2003) framing is the production of a common problem definition and often also the suggestion of possible solutions. By finding a common problem definition of new topics or by rephrasing current problem definitions topics can change or new topics can be raised to the agenda(Kingdon, 1995; Mintrom & Norman, 2009). In addition, the framing process also incorporates the providence of possible policy responses to the problem(Kingdon, 1984; Majone, 1988; Mintrom & Vergari, 1996; Polsby, 1985). Framing is often done in the way that it is presented as there is a crisis(Mintrom & Norman, 2009, p. 652; Nelson, 1986; Stone, 1997), so that action are to be taken immediately. Another way to frame a problem is to highlight the failures of current policies that aim to solve the problem(Baumgartner & Jones, 2010; Henig, 2008; Mintrom & Norman, 2009, p. 652).

Another key action is the softening up. When it comes to softening up the resilient groups are slowly pushed towards a particular problem definition(Kingdon, 1995). To put it differently softening up is the process of "using different means of education"(Kingdon, 1995, p. 129). In order to persuade the different actors in the agenda setting process mediums of communications, speeches, panel talks, report, issue studies are used(Kingdon, 1995, p. 129). The problem at stake is dramatized or when politicians try to soften up other politicians in the parliament, they introduce a bill, just to see how the reaction of the members of the parliament is and to draw first attention to the topic(Kingdon, 1995, p. 129).

The last action is mobilization of allies and can be understood as a key action in the agenda setting process especially when it comes to interest groups(Foljanty-Jost, 2005; Joachim, 2003, 2007; Kingdon, 1984; Mintrom & Norman, 2009; Mintrom & Vergari, 1996). In this

context we understand mobilization of allies as the act of gathering other actors in the agenda setting process that will help to raise the topic on the agenda. Literature suggests(compare for example (Hix & Hoyland, 2011; Klemenčič, 2011a, p. 15) that interest groups get financial support from the EC in projects related to the BP and that the EC is interested in long lasting relationships with the inner cycle of interest groups which have access to the agenda setting process(Broscheid & Coen, 2003; Coen, 2007, p. 335; Mazey & Richardson, 2006). Hence, the EC is a potential lobby partner for interest groups. Moreover, the success of influencing policy makers to set a specific topic onto the agenda is also determined by lobby coalitions(Baumgartner, Berry, Hojnacki, Leech, & Kimball, 2009; Klüver, 2011, p. 486). This means that lobby groups do not lobby individually, but in groups, coalitions of interest groups(Hula, 1999; Klüver, 2011, p. 486). These coalition of allies than seek to translate their common problem definition in public policies or program(Mintrom & Vergari, 1996, p. 421), which means they lobby for the exact wording of their problem to be found on the agenda and later on in the policy document.

2.4.   The participation of the ESU in the agenda setting process

In the following paragraph, the agenda setting model by Kingdon(1984) is adapted to the case study of the influence the ESU on the agenda setting as regards the social dimension in HE. In Figure 1 one can see the agenda setting process. The main process is characterized by the blue arrows, meaning that it is the basic agenda setting process. The yellow arrows characterize actions that can impact the agenda setting process and lead to change in the agenda.

The first action in which the ESU participates in the agenda setting process is the framing of the problem(see Figure 1). This action is the foundation for the following softening-up of the other actors of the agenda setting process and the mobilization of allies(see Figure 1). When framing, the ESU needs to define what the ESU understands of the social dimension issue, what the concrete problem is and what possible solutions to the problem are.
As seen in Figure 1 once the ESU has framed the problem and possible solutions, it can start to soften up the opinions of the education ministers, the EC and other interest groups, meaning pushing them to adapt the ESU's definition of the social dimension.
Once the social dimension issue is introduced as a possible topic for the next agenda(see Figure 1), the ESU must mobilize its allies so that the pressure is very high on the education ministers put the top put the topic high on the agenda and to adapt the ESU's problem definition of the social dimension issue. The full adaption of the ESU's problem definition of the social dimension in the Leuven Communiqué is the goal of the ESU.

Figure 1 The agenda setting process and the ESU
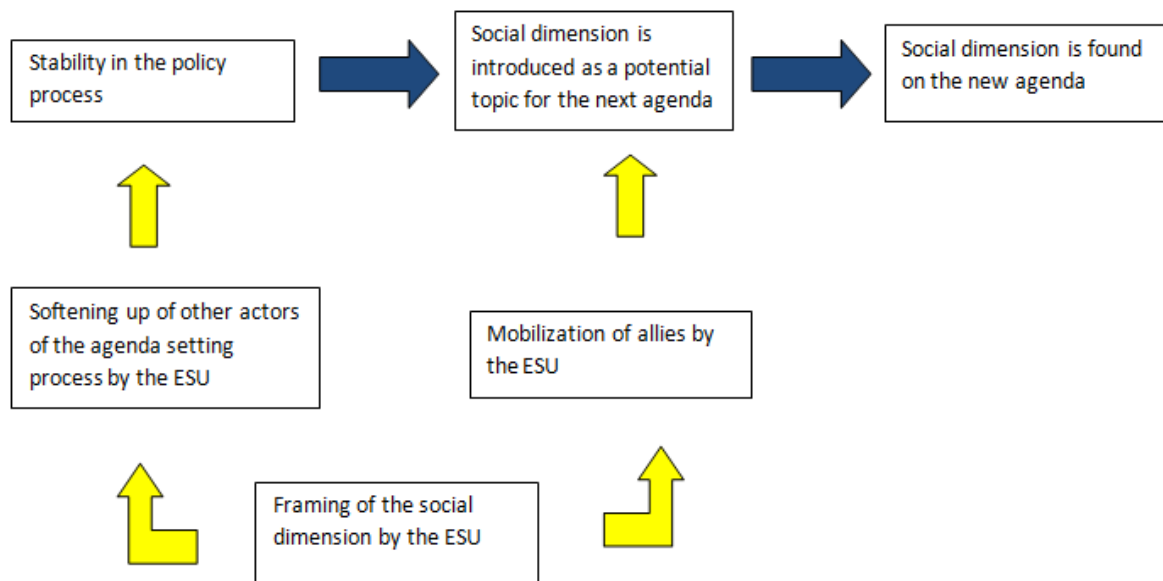
Source: adaption of John W. Kingdon (1984)

3. Methodology

In the Methodology part it will be defined *how* and *what* to observe in this study. First the research design and the case selection will be explained. In the following we explain the coding of the documents which are analyzed as well as the selection of the interviewees and the coding of the interviews. Lastly we operationalize the most important concepts in this thesis, the social dimension issue and ESU's influence on the agenda setting.

3.1.   Research design and case selection

In order to answer the research question *How did the European Student's Union influence the agenda setting as regards the social dimension in higher education leading towards the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué?* we need to use a research design which focuses on the in-depth study of a particular case(Yin, 2008). Since in a case study a social phenomenon is studied intensively, the attention of the research is limited to a specific phenomenon(Babbie, 2010; Gerring, 2004; Swanborn, 2010; Yin, 2008). In this study we focus on how the ESU influences the agenda setting process of the Leuven Communiqué. The lobbying behavior and influence in the BP of students is especially relevant as students are the core participants of HE(Klemenčič, 2012, p. 2) and a highly valuable partner in HE as noted by the ministers of education(Ministers, 2001, 2003, 2005). The nomination of the ESU as a

consultative member of the BFUG highlights the importance of the ESU on the European policy level. In addition, we have evidence that the ESU is involved in shaping the BP(Klemenčič, 2011b, p. 77; Nagel, 2007). The ESU participated in the agenda setting process of the education ministers meeting in the BP, it seems that the ESU agenda is almost 'hijacked' by the issues related to the BP(Klemenčič, 2011a, p. 18). As this suggests that the ESU has been involved in the agenda setting of several education ministers conferences we will now explain why we chose to concentrate on the agenda setting process of the Leuven Communiqué. In order to decide for a specific agenda setting process, we need to keep the following factors in mind: 1. The social dimension was subject on the agenda 2. The point in time of the communiqué 3. Receiving of usable data. These factors are outlined in Table 1(Appendix II).

As shown in Table 1(Appendix II) we need to keep in mind that we are interested in the agenda setting of a particular issue: the social dimension of HE as this policy issue is most relevant to the ESU(Klemenčič, 2011a, p. 11). Due to this, we draw our attention only to the minister's conferences which had the social dimension issue on the agenda. This includes among others the Bergen Conference (2005) and the Leuven Conference (2009). In addition, as the availability of informants such as interview partners is an important consideration(see Table 1, Appendix II). The Bergen conference took place in 2005, almost 10 years ago, which has an impact on (a) availability to contact possible interviewee and (b) receiving usable data. The availability to contact interviewees refers to the fact that it is more difficult to get into contact with possible interviewees. This is due to the fact that the contact data of the interviewees is provided by the ESU. Former members however not always update their latest email address and therefore it is likely that after almost 10 years email addresses have changed and therefore possible interviewees cannot be reached.

Receiving usable data refers to the fact that that the ESU members who worked on the social dimension issue in 2005 might not remember detailed and complex operations during their work in the ESU. The agenda setting process of the Leuven Communiqué appears to be more appropriate for the purpose of our thesis, as in this case the ESU members preparing for the Leuven meeting participated in the agenda setting process about five to four years ago, which means the likelihood is higher to receive usable data. The interviewees are more likely to remember the activities they were involved in preparation for the agenda setting of the Leuven Communiqué. Hence, we will focus on the agenda setting process of the Leuven Communiqué as, first of all, the social dimension of HE was topic to this agenda setting. Second, the Leuven conference took place about five years ago which means that we are likely to be able to contact all the former ESU members who participated in the work on the social dimension of HE. Moreover, as the former members participated in the ESU five years ago, it is still likely that they remember details of the work on the social dimension for the ESU.

3.2.   Data collection

In this section we will explain how the data is collected. In order to do so we will explain our selection of the documents analyzed and shortly introduce the documents. In addition, we will explain the selection process of the interviewees and why we picked especially our interviewees out of the pool of potential interview partners.

3.2.1.   Selection of the documents

In order to answer our first sub research question "*How did the social dimension of higher education become an agenda point for the ESU and when did this happen?"* we will analyze literature dealing with the development of the ESU in the BP. Furthermoer, we will use reports provided by the ESU to receive additional data on the history of the ESU:

1. ESU report: About us
2. ESU report: History of ESU.

In order to answer the second sub-research question, we will analyze three different sets of reports as the sub-question "How did the ESU participate in the agenda setting process of the Leuven Communiqué?" deals with three different dimension of the participation of interest groups in the agenda setting process: framing, softening-up and mobilization of allies. In order to analyze if the ESU participated in the framing process of the social dimension issue all published policy papers of the ESU between 2007-2009 will be analyzed, as we assume that once an issue is promoted it appears in all published documents (Kingdon, 1995, p. 129). This time period is selected as it is the period between the London Communiqué (2007) and the Leuven Communiqué (2009) and this is the time when the agenda for the Leuven Communiqué was prepared. Concerning the second process, the softening up, we will analyze all speeches available which were issued by the ESU between 2007-2009:

1. Prague Students Declaration towards the 2009 Ministerial Conference of the Bologna Process
2. ESU position paper 2007-2009
3. Social Dimension – the lost dimension? (2008).

In order to identify if the ESU mobilized allies at the BFUG board meetings we will analyze all BFUG board meeting minutes between 2007-2009. This is done as in this period the mobilization of allies must have been undertaken in order to lobby together for the social dimension issue to be raised on the agenda leading towards the Leuven Communiqué.

3.2.2.   Selection of interviewees analyzed

In the following part we will explain the process of the selection of the interviewees. In order to do so, we will first explain the criteria used in order to identify possible interviewees,

followed by a short description of the actual interview partners who participated in the research project.

In order to find accurate interviewees for the research project, we established a set of criteria which is shown in Table 2 (see Appendix II) that helped identify possible interviewees. As the Leuven Communiqué took place in 2009, the first criterion is that all persons who were members of the ESU between 2008-09 were possible interview partners (see Table 2, Appendix II). However, in order to receive usable data, the ESU members should also be involved in the social dimension issue. This criterion helped to narrow down the possible pool of interviewees. However, there is a third criterion that is needed to be fulfilled; the member should have been involved in the social dimension issue and representing the ESU on the European level (see Table 2, Appendix II). This means possible interviewees should have been working in the working group on the social dimension of the BFUG or other representing the ESU on official meetings dealing with the social dimension.

In order to identify people that fulfilled all the criteria, different documents of the BFUG as for example the "Social Dimension Mobility Report 2007" or the "Bologna Stocktaking Report 2009" were scanned for the names of the ESU members involved. In addition, also ESU documents dealing with the social dimension as "Bologna with Student Eyes 2009 "were looked through to identify possible interviewees.

Moreover, the current ESU board was contacted in order to receive (a) contact data of the persons identified in the documents and (b) additional names of former ESU members that could be accurate to interview in this research project.

In the pool of possible interview partners were seven former ESU members who worked on the social dimension issue during 2007-2009.The former ESU members were contacted by e-mail, as phone numbers could not be provided. However, only four out of these seven former ESU members responded to the e-mails. Two of these four persons refused to participate and thus only two former ESU members, Ligia Deca and Alma Joenson who worked on the social dimension issue could be interviewed(see Table 3, Appendix II).

As Table 3(Appendix II) shows, both persons can be identified as key persons involved in the social dimension between 2008-2010. Ligia Deca was the chair of the ESU 2008-2010. She represented the ESU on the official meetings as for example the Leuven conference itself(see Table 3, Appendix II). Alma Joenson was the coordinator on the social dimension issue in the ESU. Moreover, she was involved in the social dimension working group of the BFUG(see Table 3, Appendix).

3.3.   Data analysis

The reports, speeches and interviews will be analyzed by a content analysis. We will code the different paragraphs of the reports, speeches and interviews by looking what the main topic(s) of the paragraphs are. Having done this, we can study which topics were promoted together. To study our different dimensions we developed a coding system based on the propositions by

Glaser and Strauss(1967). All policy papers, speeches and interviews were analyzed in the same way. Additionally, while coding the interviews, we will pay attention whether or not we can identify other key categories rather than the ones operationalized in Table 5(see Appendix II).

The interviews were conducted via Skype, which means they were telephone-based interviews. The questions were formulated as open-ended questions as we expected each interviewee to tell a 'unique story'(Stake, 1995, p. 65). In addition, the questions were formulated according to the different functions the former members had in the ESU. The interviews took around 20 minutes during which about 10 questions were posed.

The interviews are transcribed by the windows audio record tool and by the audio record function of the Canon EOS 600D. Two record devices were used to ensure that the interviews were recorded, if one of the two devices not had functioned properly.

The interviews have the function to check the outcomes of our content analysis. In order to do so the interview questions were designed (see Appendix I). The interview protocol is divided into two different main blocks of questions. The first block of questions (1-3)(see interview protocol, Appendix I) addresses the ESU and the social dimension issue in order to identify when the ESU start to lobby for the social dimension of HE. The second block of questions (4-8)(see interview protocol, Appendix I) is addressing how the ESU participated in the agenda setting process as well as it particularly aims to identify allies and platforms on which it was lobbied together for the social dimension issue. Moreover, the protocol was adapted to the interviews, as for example in the first one concrete ally and also the platform where the social dimension was promoted was identified. In the second interview, it was aimed to receive additional data on these allies and the platform to lobby. The last question aims at a closing question for the interview.

3.4.   Operatioanlization of the social dimension of higher education

The social dimension of HE will be divided into two sub dimensions. As we can see in Table 4(Appendix II), our dimensions are access to HE and student mobility.

As seen in Table 4(Appendix II) the dimension access to HE is defined as the financial support so that every citizen can access HEIs. Indicators for this dimension are the words financial support, funding, loans and grants(see Table 4, Appendix II).

Student mobility is defined as the providence of financial assistance for students who are abroad as well as the support for foreign students who are not supported by their home country(see Table 4, Appendix II). The indicators are the words financial assistance, loans and grants, if mentioned in the context of student mobility.

3.5.   Operationalization of the ESU's influence on the agenda setting process of the Leuven Communiqué

In order to determine how the ESU influenced the agenda setting process of the Leuven Communiqué, we need to operatioanlize the concept influence. This concept has four dimensions: framing, softening up mobilization and the concrete phrasing of the definition of the social dimension in the Leuven Communiqué. In the more dimensions the ESU participated the more has the ESU influenced the agenda setting process.

As seen in Table 5(Appendix II), we define framing as the concrete defining the problem and solutions. We plan to study framing using the following sources: all ESU policy papers published between 2007 and 2009 and expert interviews(see Table 5 Appendix II). Specifically, we use the following indicators, the presence of specific words in the ESU policy papers: support, loans, grants, mobility and access. These indicators derive from our literature review on the social dimension of HE. The indicators are particularly relevant because they describe the two dimensions of the social dimension of HE.

As further seen in Table 5(Appendix II), we define softening up as getting other actors of the agenda setting process acquired to the desired topic and building acceptance of the problem definition. Therefore, we study how the ESU on the one hand highlights the importance of the social dimension of HE and on the other hand criticizes other actors and current policies. We study expert interviews and three speeches published by the ESU: ESU position paper 2007-2009 speech in Leuven, ESU position paper and the Prague Student Declaration (2007)(see Table 5 Appendix II). As indicators for the criticizing of other actors of the BP and the current policies we will use the words: failure, lack of, little process and lost/forgotten dimension. These words are particularly relevant as these words express criticism. As indicators for highlighting the importance of the social dimension issue we will use the following words: (top) priority, fundamental to, center to and (most) important. We choose these words as indicators as they express the act of drawing importance to an issue.

As seen in Table 5(Appendix II) we define mobilization as the gathering of allies. We study mobilization by using the following sources. We study the BFUG board minutes and expert interviews. We use the mentioning of the ESU together with other actors in the BP such as the E4[6], EUA or specific country names(see Table 5 Appendix II). These indicators are especially relevant as they already name the allies of the ESU.

Our last dimension is the concrete phrasing of the definition of the social dimension. We define this dimension by having the same phrasing of the social dimension in the Leuven Communiqué as the ESU promotes. This dimension is especially relevant as it determines in how far the definition social dimension of the ESU is found in the Leuven Communiqué and therefore a key dimension for the success of the ESU in promoting the social dimension. We study the success of the ESU's lobbying using the following sources. We study the ESU policy papers published in 2007-2009 as well as the ESU speeches 2007-2009 and expert interviews(see Table 5 Appendix II). We use the mentioning of words as loans, grants, access and mobility as indicators. These indicators are especially relevant as they are indicators for

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[6] This group consists of the ESU, EUA, EURAESHE and ENQA

the social dimension issue and help us to observe if we find the same definition of the social dimension of HE in the ESU policy papers and speeches and in the Leuven Communiqué.

4. Analysis

In this chapter we will present and analyze our data. We will firstly analyze how the social dimension issue became relevant to the ESU. After that, we will analyze how the ESU participated in the agenda setting process of the Leuven Communiqué 2009. We will study how the ESU framed the social dimension issue 2007/09 and how the ESU softened up other actors of the agenda setting process. Moreover we study how the ESU mobilized allies before the Leuven Communiqué in order to raise the social dimension of HE as a topic to the agenda of the Leuven Communiqué and whether we find the same wording of the social dimension in the Leuven Communiqué as promoted by the ESU.

4.1. The ESU and the social dimension of higher education

The ESU is representing the student's interests and beliefs in the BP. One of the core interests of the ESU is to promote "accessible and high quality higher education in Europe"(ESU, 2011a). In this statement of the ESU it seems that promotion of accessible HE is one of the central aims for which the ESU strives.

Ligia Deca, chair of the ESU 2008-2010(personal communication, 26 June, 2013) argues that most of the ESU policies derive from the social dimension of HE. In addition, Alma Joenson, the former coordinator of social affairs of the ESU(2008-2010) points out that the work of the ESU is focused on how to ensure that all different groups of society can have equal access to HEIs(personal communication, 19 June, 2013). Moreover, the ESU does not understand access to HE as a privilege, but as a right to all citizens(Alma Joenson, personal communication, 19 June, 2013).Thus, the social dimension can be described as one of the most salient issue of the ESU besides student participation(Klemenčič, 2011a, p. 2).

When it comes to analyzing at what time the ESU started to lobby for the social dimension, it is important to highlight that the ESU's predecessors were created as an information and coordination center(ESU, 2011b) and changed its mission with the creation of the BP(ESU, 2011b)[7].

When the preparations for the Bologna Declaration (1990) started, the ESIB[8](European Student Information Bureau) was not part of the negotiations and the students had to demand their participation in the BP(Klemenčič, 2011a; Nagel, 2007, p. 61). With regard to this the ESIB benefited from the structure of the BP and from the fact that for the first time a common place to promote objective of higher education was established in Europe, namely the

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[7] For more information see Chapter 1.5. student activism in Europe
[8] The ESU was called ESIB from 1990-2007(ESU, 2011b), for more information see Chapter 1.5 student activism in Europe

BP(Ligia Deca, personal communication, 26 June, 2013). The BP was created with the approach of creating "participatory governance" meaning that stakeholders' involvement was a key issue from the creation of the BP(Klemenčič, 2011a, p. 8). This means stakeholder groups of the HE policies were invited to partake in the agenda setting and policy formation processes (Klemenčič, 2011a, p. 8; Schmitter, 2002). Due to lobbying national education ministers of national student associations and the ESIB's lobbying the Swedish presidency the ESIB was invited to the enlarged BFUG meetings in 2000 and 2001(Klemenčič, 2011a, p. 9). Two years later in 2001, the ESIB became a consultative member of the BFUG(Reinalda & Kulesza-Mietkowski, 2005, p. 88).

When the ESIB became a member of the BFUG, the ESIB also concentrated on making the social dimension of HE part of the BP(Ligia Deca, personal communication, 26 June, 2013). In 2001 the ESIB was for the first time a member of a centralized European HE, namely the BFUG.

The ESIB intensively lobbied for the inclusion of the social dimension of HE in the BP since in the Bologna Declaration (1999) the social dimension issue was not incorporated(Klemenčič, 2011a, p. 10). In the Bologna Declaration (1999) it was mainly drawn attention to the increase of the international competiveness of European HE which means competitiveness became the driving rationale for the creation of HE(De Wit, 2006, p. 477; van der Wende, 2000).

At the Prague conference in 2001, the ESIB had the chance to participate in the policy development and promoted its flagship issue, the social dimension of HE(Klemenčič, 2011a, p. 11). Due to this, social dimension of HE was for the first time referred to in the education ministers communiqué: "*Ministers also reaffirmed the need, recalled by students, to take account of the social dimension in the Bologna process.*"(Ministers, 2001, p. 3). This statement of the education ministers (2001) suggest that the social dimension of HE was introduced by the students into the BP.

All in all, we can conclude that the social dimension of HE has been a salient topic of the ESU from its creation. However, before the Bologna Declaration and the BP there did not exist a centralized place to lobby for the social dimension of HE(Ligia Deca, personal communication, 26 June, 2013). Moreover, the ESIB lacked the structure to lobby for the social dimension issue. The BP created a centralized place for discussing HE reforms and this encouraged the ESIB to adapt its internal structures and transform from an information sharing and coordination institution to an institution which could promote the students interests and beliefs(ESU, 2011b). The ESIB further benefited from the fact that the European ministers understood that the close co-operation between the different actors in HE as education ministers and different interest groups is necessary in order to guarantee a successful implementation of the BP(De Wit, 2001; Klemenčič, 2011a, p. 8).

4.2. The participation of the ESU in the agenda setting process leading towards the Leuven Communiqué

4.2.1. Framing of the social dimension of higher education

The ESU promotes both dimensions of the social dimension of HE, access to higher and student mobility, in the reports. They are promoted with a range of different issues.

Access to HEIs in general is very much intertwined with the claim for financial support of students, as many students lack the financial capacities in order to access HE(ESU, 2008e, pp. 2,4). When it comes to accessing HEIs one of the biggest problems for students are tuition fees. Alma Joenson(personal communication, 19 June, 2013) points out that in many countries the student body exist of students from a higher classes who can afford HE and that these students mostly have a specific race, ethnicity and gender. Tuition fees are therefore a form of selection by which students with a good socio-economic background are better off and hence tuition fees promote elitism in HE. The ESU aims to overcome this elitism in HE(Alma Joenson, personal communication, 19 June, 2013). Due to this, the ESU promotes the abolishment of tuition fees and a financial support system for students so that the students basic needs (accommodation and food) as well as the needs for the academic career are covered(ESU, 2007a; 2008e, pp. 3,5).

However, not only tuition fees are a barrier for students to access HE, also loans are framed as a threat to access of HE(compare(ESU, 2008c, 2008e)). In this context, loans pose a much higher threat to women than to men, as women are likely to gain less money after their graduation and due to the fact that some will not participate in the labor market due to pregnancy which can result in difficulties to pay back the loan(ESU, 2008b, p. 8).

Besides that, the ESU frames the problem of increasing competiveness in HE. HEIs support especially well performing students which is a thread to social mobility and equity(ESU, 2008a, pp. 1,2). In addition, nontraditional learners are often facing problems when entering HEIs(ESU, 2007b, pp. 1,2). This is especially true for students applying for a doctorates and who attained their qualification and competences in non- university HE(ESU, 2007a, p. 5). The ESU understands this as discrimination and a barrier to access when all necessary competences for the doctorate were gained in the non-university HEIs and the student is however not accepted to the doctorate(ESU, 2007a, p. 5).

In general, the situation of accessibility to the three study cycles[9] is framed as a problem for students. Access limitation between the cycles decreases horizontal mobility[10], as the curricula of the different cycles are not properly adapted to each other(ESU, 2007a, p. 1). Moreover, there is the problem that some degrees are designed in order to provide the competencies for entering the labor market after the cycles. Other degrees are designed in order to prepare the students for the next cycle(ESU, 2007a, pp. 3,4,5). The ESU claims that it should not be differentiated in this context and the universities should prepare students for both(ESU, 2007a, p. 4).

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[9] Bachelor-Master- Doctorate

[10] Horizontal mobility here refers to non-degree mobility: studying for a short period as an exchange student mainly abroad.

When it comes to specific groups and access to HE the ESU is framing the problem that some groups as women (with children) and disabled students face special access barriers of which are not yet taken enough care by the education ministers and European HE policies(ESU, 2008e, p. 7).

The ESU frames further the problem of access barriers for students which hinder them to participate in horizontal or vertical mobility[11]. The main problem that needs to be tackled here is the lack of funding and financial support for students who want to study abroad(ESU, 2008c, pp. 1,14; 2008e, p. 14).The first barrier in this context to actually participate in mobility is the socio-economic background of students(ESU, 2008c, pp. 2,14; 2008e) which refers to the fact that if the parents have small income and cannot support their children, the children do not have the financial capacities to study abroad. This can again be understood as a form of elitism, as mostly student from higher classes have the financial capacities to participate in mobility programs. This is one explanation for the little mobility rates of students(ESU, 2008c, p. 1; 2008e).The demand of the ESU is that financial support should be made available by public funding or grants(ESU, 2008c, p. 6). The ESU opposes loans as they can develop into a burden after the studies for graduates who do not participate in the labor market such as women during pregnancy(ESU, 2008b, p. 8). In addition, the financial support should be independent from the income of the parents(ESU, 2008c).

When talking about mobility and financial support the ESU draws attention to the fact that international students mean prestige for the institutions(ESU, 2008c, pp. 12,13). Therefore, the ESU demands that foreign students from countries with lower economic capacities and living costs should be supported by the hosting government if the domestic governments cannot provide any financial support for the students they send abroad(ESU, 2008e, p. 7). In addition, a central fund for these students should be made available(ESU, 2008e, p. 7).

Hand in hand with this goes the claim that students from outside the EHEA should not face additional barriers by immense tuition fees. The fees for foreign students should be the same as for European students(ESU, 2008c, pp. 7,8); (ESU, 2008e, p. 7).

Another barrier which hinders students from studying abroad are the highly bureaucratized processes which are involved in order to study abroad, as for example the application for a visa or a residence permit(ESU, 2008c; 2008e, p. 7). This means when aiming at increase the number of mobile students this processes needs to be facilitated and made more student-friendly.

Overall, we can see that when it comes to financial needs of students studying abroad the ESU sees the main responsibility laying within the governments in order to ensure that the students receive enough financial assistance to cover the costs of all basic needs (accommodation, food) but also all study-related needs(ESU, 2008c, p. 6; 2008e). Since this is at this point in time not the case the ESU promotes to loosen the working permit restrictions and to facilitate it for mobile students to work(ESU, 2008c, p. 8). Moreover, it should be highlighted that the ESU outlines the need to support particular groups in order to access mobility such as students with partners(ESU, 2008c, p. 8) or in women with children(ESU, 2008b, pp. 4,5).

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[11] Vertical mobility here refers to degree mobility: studying mainly abroad for a full degree.

Our analysis suggests that the ESU aims to overcome elitism in HE and wants to make HE accessible for every group in society. It seems that the ESU in order to do so highlights very much the need of financial support for students in order to access HE, irrespective of whether or not they are studying in their domestic country or abroad. Tuition fees and the costs of a mobility semester are posing a threat for students to access higher HEIs. Hence, a key burden to overcome is the financial needs of students which should be ensured by grants and public funding of the mobile students. In addition, the ESU draws special attention to groups which are likely to encounter special difficulties when it comes to accessing HEIs or studying abroad such as women with children or students who do not receive support from their domestic governments and which therefore should receive special treatment as for example money out of special funds.

4.2.2. Softening up of the views of the other actors in the agenda setting process

In the speeches, ESU highlights that the social dimension issue is for the students and the ESU the most important part of the BP(ESU, 2008d, pp. 1,2)(ESU, 2009a, p. 2). Along with this, the ESU outlines particular reasons why the social dimension issue is so important for the BP. The ESU explains that the social dimension is essential for the successful implementation of the whole BP and for the development of European societies(ESU, 2009a, p. 2). This is due to the fact that the ESU does not understand higher education as a privilege which only should be accessible to elites as a human right(ESU, 2008d, pp. 1,2)(ESU, 2009b, p. 4)(ESU, 2009a, p. 1). We can see that the ESU criticizes the current situation in which elites are especially supported for example when it comes to mobility(ESU, 2009b) since not all students have the possibility to access higher education.

There are two main things which the ESU criticizes in speeches: 1. the lack of financial support systems for students(ESU, 2008d, pp. 1,3; 2009b), and 2. the *pick and choose approach* of the implementation approach by the education ministers(ESU, 2009a, p. 1)(ESU, 2009b, p. 1).
Fousing on the lack of financial support systems the ESU points out that still too many potential students cannot access HE due to obstacles and barriers(ESU, 2008d, p. 1); (ESU, 2009b, p. 2) Hence, the socio-economic background and access to HE are still highly linked to each other, which make HE to an elite project.
In addition, when it comes to students who want to access and participate in mobility, financial support is still low(ESU, 2009b, p. 3). The ESU criticizes especially the lacking financial support systems for mobile students, as the ESU understands mobility as a barometer for the success of the implementation of the BP(ESU, 2009b, p. 3).
Another point which is strongly criticized by the ESU is the fact that national governments see the Bologna reforms as an *à la carte* menu(ESU, 2009b, p. 2) and the social dimension of HE has therefore a "backseat in the implementation [process]"(ESU, 2009a, p. 2). This point

refers to the fact that national education ministers do not see the Bologna action lines[12] as a full package to implement(ESU, 2009b, p. 2) and therefore only some points of the action lines are implemented into national policies. For example the issue of underrepresentation of specific groups of society has not been prioritized by the education ministers(ESU, 2009a, p. 2) even though the Bergen (2005) and London Communiqué(2007) affirmed that importance of the student body to represent society(ESU, 2008d, p. 2), meaning that students from all socio-economic backgrounds should be able to access HE in order to tackle elitism in HE.

Thus, ESU highly criticizes the *pick and choose* approach as it leads to delays, failures and missed opportunities to implement the Bologna action lines and therefore calls for an implementation of all action lines of the BP(ESU, 2009a, p. 1). In addition, the ESU criticizes that member stats of the BP have a tendency of not reporting very well on the social dimension issue(Ligia Deca, personal communication, 26 June, 2013).

According to Ligia Deca(personal communication, 26 June, 2013) little process is so far seen of implementation of the social dimension action line in the member states. This lack of implementation of current action lines makes it difficult to agree to further policies on the social dimension of HE after 2010 as the ESU argues that the current action lines should be implemented first, before talking about new action lines(ESU, 2009b, p. 2). One example for this is the fact that some groups of society are still underrepresented in HE even though the Bergen (2005) and the London (2007) Communiqué already highlighted the need for inclusion. These action lines are however barely implemented in national politics(ESU, 2008d).

Overall, we can see that the ESU promotes the issues access and mobility to HE as fundamental to the social dimension and the BP. The analysis suggests that the ESU highlights and promotes a prioritizing of both issues in the BP. In addition, the ESU criticizes the little process in implementation of social dimension issues such as financial support systems for students, representation of minority groups in HE and the support of mobile students. This analysis suggests that the ESU aims to make the BP to a structure which incorporates European values such as equity and access to education(Ligia Deca, personal communication, 26 June, 2013) and pushes for a full implementation of the social dimension action line in national policies.

4.2.3. Mobilization of allies

When it comes to mobilizing allies, our analysis suggests that the ESU seems to particularly work together with the EUA. Mostly when the ESU was named with another actor of the agenda setting process in the BFUG board meeting meetings, it was the EUA (for example (BolognaSecretariat, 2007, 2008, 2009). We can see that on the one hand concrete suggestions, comments and questions to the others members of the BFUG board are brought

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[12] The Bologna action lines are the main issues that have been treated in the Bologna process; for a list of the concrete action lines in the different communiqués, please see: (*The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) beyond 2010:main achievements, priorities, gaps and challenges* 2011).

forward together(BolognaSecretariat, 2008, pp. 5,6); (BolognaSecretariat, 2009, p. 7) and on the other hand the ESU and EUA work together on different project as the organization of a seminar of learning outcomes(BolognaSecretariat, 2007, p. 3) or the ministerial ministers meeting(BolognaSecretariat, 2008, p. 8). Alma Joenson(personal communication, 19 June, 2013) points out that the EUA is a key actor for the ESU which the ESU successfully mobilized in order to promote the social dimension of HE. Moreover, Alma Joenson(personal communication, 19 June, 2013) explained that in the BFUG and its working groups and board meetings the ESU hardly mobilizes other actors of the agenda setting process, as all the participants of the BFUG board meetings were already politically situated. In the E4 however, the ESU could lobby for the social dimension issue(Ligia Deca, personal communication, 26 June, 2013; Alma Joenson, personal communication, 19 June, 2013). In this group the ESU gained the EUA as an ally in order to promote the social dimension of HE(Alma Joenson, personal communication, 19 June, 2013) as well as the other members. Overall, when the ESU was mentioned in the BFUG board meeting minutes it was mostly mentioned together with a member of the E4(for comparison see (BolognaSecretariat, 2007, 2008, 2009)).

The E4 is an important institution when it comes to joint co-operations. The creation of the E4 highlights the integration process of the four participating stakeholder groups(Nagel, 2007, p. 59). Alma Joenson(personal communication, 19 June, 2013) describes the E4 as a platform for the ESU and the other three interest groups involved, to discuss the issue that the four will focus on and will lobby for together; it is the institutions were coalitions are made. Thus, the E4 group meetings were the most important institution in order to pursue other lobby groups, especially the EUA, that the social dimension issue should be one of the main priorities to focus on(Alma, Joenson, personal communication, 19 June, 2013, Ligia Deca, personal communication, 26 June, 2013). This co-operation is not limited to one issue; the group should be understood as a partnership in which standpoints on a catalogue of issues are formulated. For these issues it is lobbied together. Ligia Deca(personal communication, 26 June, 2013) stated that the ESU was able to promote social mobility as one of the main pillar for the E4. This means for example that regarding the E4's work on the European Quality Assurance Register(EQAR)(EURASHE, 2011) the ESU was also able to pursue national quality assurance agencies that were involved in the creation of the EQAR of the importance of the social dimension issue(Ligia Deca, personal communication, 26 June, 2013).

Our analysis suggests that the ESU does not mobilize its allies in the BFUG group meetings; the BFUG board meetings is the place where ESU and its allies to lobby together for the social dimension issue, but also other topics which are important to the E4.
The E4 is the main institution in which the ESU lobbies for priorities under which the social dimension issue has been. Projects as the EQAR which were initiated by the E4 therefore also contribute and incorporate the most important issues of the E4, which includes the social dimension of HE.

4.3. The ESU's influence on the wording of the social dimension definition in the Leuven Communiqué

In our last section we analyze in how far we can find the same wording of the social dimension of HE in the Leuven Communiqué and in the ESU reports and speeches. We compare the ESU's definition of the social dimension of HE to the definition as seen in the Leuven Communiqué. This will show us how much of the problem as framed by the ESU can be found in the Leuven Communiqué.

In the Leuven Communiqué it is formulated "*We therefore emphasize the social characteristics of higher education and aim to provide equal opportunities to quality education. Access into higher education should be widened by fostering the potential of students from underrepresented groups and by providing adequate conditions for the completion of their studies. This involves improving the learning environment, removing all barriers to study, and creating the appropriate economic conditions for students to be able to benefit from the study opportunities at all levels.*"(Ministers, 2009, p. 2). The definition suggests that the education ministers understand the social dimension of HE as the providence of access to HEIs. A particular focus is drawn to the underrepresented groups in HE who face special access barriers. This definition is very broad and does not define the concrete underrepresented groups of the student body.

In the Leuven Communiqué it is further stated that *"Each participating country will set measurable targets for widening overall participation and increasing participation of underrepresented groups in higher education [...]"*(Ministers, 2009, p. 2). The BFUG is asked to provide measurement and monitor indicators for the social dimension(Ministers, 2009, p. 6).

As we have analyzed the framing of the social dimension of HE of the ESU, the ESU seems to draw the attention before the Leuven Communiqué to the access dimension of the social dimension issue. The abolishment of access barriers is highly promoted and a special focus is drawn to reducing the access barriers to mobility in HE. On contrast to the education ministers, the ESU definition of underrepresented groups is much more detailed as students from low socio-economic backgrounds, women (with children) and disabled people(compare (ESU, 2007a, p. 5; 2008b, 2008e)). Moreover, attention is drawn to the entry barriers for students with a nontraditional learning or non university background to enter graduate programs in HE(ESU, 2007b, pp.1,2). The definition appears to be similar compared to the definition in the Leuven Communiqué, even though much more detailed.

Ligia Deca(personal communication, 26 June, 2013) and Alma Joenson(personal communication, 19 June, 2013) explain that the ESU had the chance to participate in the negotiations of concrete formulations in the BFUG board meetings. One example is the formulation "each country needs to identify their underrepresented groups and set targets for inclusion and design strategies to reach these targets while the European level will monitor the process of each country in pursuing their strategies" which was introduced by the ESU(Ligia Deca, personal communication, 26 June, 2013).

In the Leuven Communiqué no reference is made to the mobility of students in the paragraph dealing with the social dimension of HE.

Drawing attention to this fact we can see that this issue is drawn attention to in the Leuven Communiqué in the section of mobility. "[…]mobility shall be the hallmark of the European Higher Education Area."(Ministers, 2009, p. 4). This statement of the education ministers outlines the importance of mobility to the EHEA. Moreover, the education ministers promote fostering of mobility in all three cycles and the facilitating of visa permits regulation among other administrative barriers to mobility(Ministers, 2009, p. 4). An easier application procedure for visa and working permits and a more student- friendly administrative net work can be identified as claims the ESU had before the Leuven Communiqué in order to reduce access barriers for student to in mobility(compare (ESU, 2008c; 2008e, p. 7)).

In the Leuven Communiqué we can find the reference to reducing access barriers to mobility which shall created by additional loans and grants for mobile students(Ministers, 2009, p. 4).

In this statement it seems that the ESU only partly succeeded in lobbying for its objectives. In different ESU policy papers the ESU has outlined that she is against loans as they produce new barriers to students to enter HEIs, due to the fact students will start their job in depth(compare(ESU, 2007a, 2008b; 2008c, p. 6; 2008e)). The ESU is in favor of grants(compare(ESU, 2008c, p. 6)) and the reference in the Leuven Communiqué to introduce more grants can seems to be a success for the ESU as the reference to the facilitation of receiving the visa and residence permits, as we can find exactly this claim in the ESU documents(compare((ESU, 2008c, 2008e)).

The outcome suggests that the ESU seems to have succeeded in promoting some of the parts of the definition of the social dimension of HE. Even though the ESU did not succeeded in lobbying for the adaption of the whole ESU definition of the social dimension issue, the ESU participated in the formulation of concrete wording of the social dimension issue in the Leuven Communiqué and was able to promote specific sentences.

When it comes to the mobility dimension of the social dimension our analysis further suggests that the ESU's claim for more grants for mobile students was incorporated in the Leuven Communiqué. However the ESU's claim for the abolishment of loans was no incorporated, since the education ministers also promote loans in the Leuven Communiqué.

The very concrete formulations in the Leuven Communiqué seems to indicate that mobility is understood in the EHEA as a key indicator for measuring the success of the BP(Ministers, 2009, p. 4). Due to this, education ministers might rather choose to concentrate on promoting the implementation of the mobility action line in their national policies. It seems that when it comes to the mobility dimension of HE the statements of the education ministers are more concrete and detailed.

Moreover, it seems that we can find parts of the social dimension of HE in other action lines. This is due to the fact that when talking about mobility one also considers the access barriers to mobility. Hence, even though the social dimension of HE has been issue to the education ministers since the Prague Communiqué(2001), our analysis suggest that little or no progress has been made concerning the social dimension of HE. Although the importance of the social dimension has been stated in several communiqués since Prague(2001), not very much has happened, and "the social dimension has more or less been forgotten, ignored or left aside, during the implementation of the BP"(ESU, 2008d, p. 2). It is questionable in how far there will be change to the current situation, as the ESU suggests that the social dimension has

taken a backseat in the implementation process of the BP and is barely implemented into national policies(ESU, 2008d).As Alma Joenson(personal communication, 19 June, 2013) states *"But that is the thing with social affairs, it has a soft approach so everybody can say that it is important but when it comes to implementing it than people hesitate. It felt a bit like it was just empty words"*.

Thus, when it comes to determining the success, Alma Joenson(personal communication, 19 June, 2013) explains that the focus should not lay on what is written in the Leuven Communiqué but the fact that the education ministers talked about the social dimension issue. Furthermore, the work of the BFUG social dimension working group continued, even though this working group was supposed to end in 2009(Alma Joenson, personal communication, 19 June, 2013). This statement strengthens the assumption that the social dimension of HE can be seen as a sideliner of the communiqué and maybe of the whole BP in order to satisfy the students. Alma Joenson(personal communication, 19 June, 2013) outlines all education ministers talked in their speech at the Leuven conference about the importance of the social dimension. In addition Alma Joenson(personal communication, 19 June, 2013) outlines that it seems as if the social dimension is not concretely defined as other action lines and therefore implementation into national policies is rare.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

In this chapter firstly, we will answer our three sub research questions. After this, we answer our main research question and explain in how far we can contribute to existing literature with our study. Our last chapter will be closed by stating the limitations of the thesis and the implications for further research.

5.1. Discussion of the results concerning the ESU and the social dimension of higher education

Our findings for the first sub research question "*How did the social dimension of higher education become an agenda point for the ESU and when did this happen?*" suggest that the social dimension has been the salient issue of the ESU since the creation of its predecessor in 1980 on. In addition, our results suggest that the ESU started to lobby for the social dimension of HE when a centralized place for lobby in HE, namely the BP, was created. Due to this the ESU adapted its internal organization in order to develop from an information sharing group to an interest group representing believes and needs of students in HE. The breakthrough for the ESU seems to be when the ESU was invited to join the enlarged BFUG meetings in 2000 and in 2001 when the ESU became a consultative member of the BFUG.

This further suggests that the ESU and the BFUG have an *exchange relationship* and *resource dependency*. It seems as if the BFUG needed expertise and information from the ESU and the ESU needed access to the inner cycle of interest groups in the newly evolved BP in order to

promote the social dimension of HE. The incorporation of interest groups in the BP offered the ESU in the BFUG a place and a structure in which the ESU can promote its most salient issue, the social dimension of HE. Therefore, the invitation to the enlarged and after 2011 to the regular BFUG meetings paved the way for the ESIB to promote the social dimension of HE on the European level.

5.2. Discussion of the results of the ESU's participation on the agenda setting of the social dimension for the Leuven/ Louvain-la-Neuve meeting and discussion of the success the ESU in participating in the agenda setting process of the Leuven/ Louvain-la-Neuve conference

The results concerning our second research question *"How did the ESU participate in the social dimension agenda setting for the Leuven/ Louvain-la-Neuve meeting?"* suggest that the ESU contributed by framing, softening up, mobilization of allies and the lobbying for a concrete wording of the social dimension definition in the communiqué to the agenda setting process of the Leuven Communiqué.

Our findings suggest that the ESU frames elitism as an essential threat to HE. The ESU frames among others tuition fees, loans, but also the absence of mobility in the three cycle degree system as barriers for students to access in HEIs. Hence, it seems that the ESU framed the social dimension by framing the problems of domestic and mobile students. In addition it is paid special attention to underrepresented groups in HE such as disabled students or pregnant women.
In order to increase the access to HE the ESU claims the abolishment of grants for domestic and mobile students, student- friendly administrative procedures for mobile students as well as the providence of a student friendly infrastructure (e.g. student housing).
Overall, the outcomes suggest that the ESU sees the need for more financial and nonfinancial student support which should be provided by national governments which are in charge of abolishing the access barriers of HEIs to students.

When it comes to ESU's softening-up of the views of other participants of the agenda setting process leading towards the Leuven Communiqué, our findings suggest that the ESU promotes the social dimension of HE as an essential part of the BP which is central to students but also to the successful implementation of other action lines of the process. Access to HEIs and mobility of students seems to be the key issue and the absence of a well-functioning student support system for domestic as well as foreign students is criticized. In addition, the results suggest that the ESU criticized the failure that too many member states see the BP as an *à la carte menu* as indicated for example by the absence identification of national underrepresented groups as decided in the Bergen (2005) and London Communiqué (2007). Thus, ESU seems to highlight the failure of the education ministers that social dimension action line and its objective are barely implemented in national politics.

Based on our results concerning the mobilization of allies we can say that the ESU does not seem to mobilize its allies in the BFUG board meetings, as our findings suggest that

mobilization is not possible in the BFUG board meetings. All participants of the BFUG board meetings seem to be already politically situated. It seems that the BFUG board meetings are the place in the BP where the ESU can push for specific formulation which the ESU wants to be incorporated in a specific communiqué such as the Leuven Communiqué.

Moreover our results suggest that the ESU was able to mobilize the other three interest groups which are member of the E4, namely the EUA, EURASHE and ENQA. In addition, it seems that the E4 is a group in which priorities are decided on and for which the interest groups lobby together. Hence, it seems that ESU was able to build up a small network of allies, namely the E4.This behavior could be explained by to the integration process of the four interest groups started(Nagel, 2007, p. 59) which promotes the co-operation of the four interest groups in HE.

Our results suggest that this network has contributed to the success of raising the social dimension to the Leuven agenda. The E4 group seems to be an influential lobby co-operation when the four interest groups work together and promote the same objectives. Additionally, with the E4, the ESU has next to the BFUG another platform to promote the social dimension issue, as in the E4 the ESU also works on projects as the setting up the European Quality Assurance Register and thus the ESU can promote the social dimension in this projects.

Our results concerning the lobbying for the concrete wording of the social dimension in the Leuven Communiqué suggests that the ESU was involved in this action and pushed for specific references and phrasings in the BFUG board meetings. The social dimension as seen in the Leuven Communiqué seems to only refer to one dimension of the social dimension of HE, specifically to the access to HE. Based on our findings, it seems that the ESU has been particularly involved in phrasing the definition as seen in the Leuven Communiqué.

When talking about the mobility dimension of the social dimension issue it seems as if this dimension is incorporated in the mobility action line of the BP. Our analysis moreover suggest that this dimension of the social dimension issue is most relevant to the education ministers as we find more concrete and detailed references to the mobility dimension of HE. Our outcomes further suggest that the ESU was successful in lobbying for grants and more student-friendly administration, however at the same time loans are also promoted in the Leuven Communiqué which might be interpreted as a failure for the ESU as strongly against loans as financial support for students.

According to our results the ESU participated in all four actions which contribute to the success in influencing the agenda setting of the Leuven Communiqué. Based on our results we can speak of a successful participation of the ESU in the agenda setting process. It seems as if the ESU framed the social dimension of HE and contributed to the phrasing and formulations of the definition in the Leuven Communiqué. Our data moreover suggests that the ESU promoted the problem definition of the social dimension though the softening up and that the ESU was able to mobilize allies, namely the E4 and especially the EUA which helped to raise the social dimension issue on the agenda.

However, even though our data suggests that the ESU successfully participated in the agenda setting process, it seems as if the social dimension is barely implemented in national policies and hence it seems as if the statements concerning the social dimensions are only lip services

of the education ministers in order to satisfy the students. Hence, success in influencing the agenda setting does not mean success in pushing the education ministers to implement the social dimension action line, which in the end would lead to an actual change concerning the social dimension of higher education.

5.3. Conclusion

After having answered our sub research question, we will now answer our main research question *"How did the ESU influence the agenda setting leading towards the Leuven/ Louvain-laNeuve Communiqué?"*

Our analysis suggests that the ESU influenced the agenda setting of the education ministers meeting in Leuven (2009) by the framing the social dimension issue, softening-up of other participants of agenda setting process and the mobilization of allies and moreover by lobbying for concrete formulations of the social dimension in the Leuven Communiqué.

This study therefore moderately contributed to the existing agenda setting literature and the literature on interest groups in European HE and student activism in Europe. The study shows that not only actors with voting powers can initiate policy change, but also actors such as interest groups who do not have any decision making power when it comes to the agenda setting. These actors can influence the agenda setting process though their lobbying by policy papers, speeches, the mobilization of allies and lobbying for concrete formulations. With the ESU we gave an example how an interest group can influence the agenda setting process in an intergovernmental process without having any voting or veto rights.

Our findings are in line with findings which suggest that actors without any decision making power in the agenda setting process can influence agenda setting in international organizations as the OECD or the UN by framing their particular interest(Joachim, 2007; Panahirad, 2010).
Furthermore, our results suggest that coalitions of interest groups seems to be highly important when it comes to lobbying for a specific agenda point (compare (Klüver, 2011)). Klüver (2011) however also outlines that lobby coalition seems to be topic specific and therefore vary. Our findings however suggest that the E4 is a lobby coalition which was established to promote a set of topics which are particularly relevant to the E4 members.This implies that this lobby coalition is not likely to vary but rather remain stable.
In addition, the thesis contributes to existing literature on student participation in HE, as little research is so far done on how the ESU can influence HE politics by raising a topic to the next agenda of the BP. Therefore, this study also suggests that the student body has powers in the BP and has developed actions: framing, softening up other actor's views and mobilization, through which the ESU can influence the agenda setting process of the ministers meetings in the BP and especially raise specific wordings and phrases on the agenda concerning the specific action lines, as seen in the case of the social dimension of HE.

5.4. Limitations of the thesis and contributions to future research

Our study has some methodological limitations when it comes to the data collection. We could interview only two experts in order to collect additional data. Hence, the reliability of our findings in the interviews would have been better if we had interviewed more former ESU participants. As explained in chapter Three under section 3.2.2. this was not feasible. We compensated for this data triangulation, a method in which multiple sources of data (see Table 5, Appendix II) are used so that a 'converging lines of inquiry' can be developed(Yin, 2008, p. 115).

In addition, we need to keep in mind that the two experts' interviews have been interviewed concerning an event that took place about four years ago. Hence, it is hard to say how valid and reliable the data is, as the interviewees might have forgotten details. However, as we have conducted two interviews with a similar set of question and received comparable information from both experts, we can assume that the information received is relatively valid and reliable.

Moreover, our results of the interviews suggest that the main platform for the ESU to promote their views on the social dimension was the alliance of the E4. It would have enriched the study to interview experts of the other three interest groups who are members of the E4, however due to the limited time available for the data collection, this was not feasible.

Furthermore, the external validity of this case study is relatively low. External validity refers to the fact that conclusions drawn might not be generalizable to the 'real world'(Area, 2013; Babbie, 2010, p. 242). This is due to the fact that we chose to do a case study which has a small degree of representativeness and generalizability. This means we have to be cautioned when generalizing our findings to other agenda setting processes of the ESU or to other interest groups of HE operating at the European policy level by implying that they operate in the same way as the ESU did in the case of the Leuven Communiqué.

Hence, based on our finding, we would suggest to further research on how other interest groups in HE can influence the agenda setting process of the ministerial conferences of the BP and to analyze if there are similar results as in our thesis.

Appendix I

Example of an interview protocol

Title:

Date of the interview:

Name if the interviewee:

Venue:

Time:

Part One: Introduction of the interviewer

Explain my role as a student (first research project, topic: ESU, social dimension issue, agenda setting processes, Leuven Communiqué)

Explain the purpose of the interview (exploratory reasons, beginning of data collection, filling gaps of knowledge that was not available in documents)

Ask if audio type and verbatim quotes are in order.

Part Two: Getting acquired, the ESU and the social dimension

1. **What was your position in the ESU between 2008-2010?**

2. **What does the ESU understand of the social dimension of Higher Education?**

3. **Why did the ESU start to lobby for the social dimension? / Why is the social dimension of HE such an important topic for the ESU?**

Part Three: How did the ESU influenced the agenda setting process of the Leuven communiqué?

4. **What was the most important topic for the ESU to push for regarding the agenda setting of the Leuven Communiqué?**

5. **When did the ESU start to lobby for the social dimension issue?**

6. **Why did the ESU decide to especially try to push for the social dimension issue on the agenda for the conference in Leuven?**

7. **How and where was the ESU promoting the social dimension issue before the Leuven conference? (in order to mobilize other actors and to raise the social dimension issue as an agenda setting point? Meetings of the BFUG? Or other occasions?)**

8. **Can you tell me about the ESU's work in the E4 group / BFUG social dimension working group?**

   a. **In how far was this group a platform to promote the social dimension issue?**

Part Four: How successful was the ESU?

9. **In your opinion, what were the reasons that the ESU was successful in raising the social dimension issue on the agenda of the Leuven Communiqué?**

Thank you for this interview!

Appendix II

Table 1 Factors influencing the choice of the agenda setting process of Leuven (2009)

Factors
Social dimension issue on the agenda
Point in time of the Communiqué
Availability to contact interviewees
Receiving usable data

Source: the author

Table 2 Selection criteria of interviewees

Criterion
Member of the ESU between 2008-2009
Involvement in the social dimension issue
Involvement in the work on the social dimension issue on the European level e.g. Bologna follow up working groups, representation of ESU on official meetings, working on reports of the Bologna Follow- up Group

Source: the author

Table 3 Interview timetable

Name	Function	Date of interview
Ligia Deca	Chair person 2008-2010	26th June 2013
Alma Joenson	Coordinator the social dimension working group of the ESU; representative of the ESU in the BFUG social dimension working group	19th June 2013

Source: the author

Table 4 Operationalization of the social dimension of higher education

Dimension	Definition	Indicators
Access to HE	Financial support so that every citizen can access HE	Mentioning of the words: Financial support and access, grants loans, funding
Student Mobility	Providence of financial assistance to students abroad and foreign students, if necessary	Mentioning of the words: Financial assistance, loans, grants and student mobility

Source: adaption of Neave& Maassen (2007)

Table 5 Observation matrix of the ESU's participation in the agenda setting process

Dimension	Definition	Indicator	Source
Framing	Defining of problem and solutions	Presence of the words: - support, - Loans, - Grants, - mobility - Access - funding	- Expert interviews - All policy papers published by the ESU 2007-2009
Softening up	Getting other actors of the agenda setting process used to the desired topic and building acceptance of the problem definition	Criticizing other stakeholders and their social dimension issue policies : presence of the words as: - Failure of(implementation of policies) - Forgotten/ lost dimension - Lack of - Little progress Highlighting the importance of the social dimension, presence words as: - (most important) - (top) priority - Fundamental to - Center to	- ESU position paper 2007-2009 speech in Leuven - ESU position paper _student declaration 2007 - Expert interviews
Mobilization	Gathering of allies	- Presence of the words: ESU together with other actors of the BP such as: E4, EUA,	- Bologna Follow-up Group board meeting minutes between 2007-

			specific countries, or the European Commission		2009 - Expert interviews
The phrasing of the social dimension in Leuven Communiqué	the definition of the social dimension in the Leuven C. is the same as the ESU's definition	-	Presence of the same wording of the social dimension in the Leuven Communiqué as in the ESU speeches, keywords as: - support, - Loans, - Grants, - mobility - Access	- - - - -	Leuven Communiqué ESU position paper 2007-2009 speech in Leuven ESU position paper _student declaration 2007 All policy papers published by the ESU 2007-2009 Expert interviews

Source: the author

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