



The role of student counselling for widening participation of under-represented groups in higher education

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Overview

- Students' unions and the social dimension in higher education
- Counselling as a key measure to widen access to higher education
- Students' unions' approaches to counselling
- Involvement of student unions in development of measures

Bringing the social dimension to the EHEA table

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- Advocating for the social dimension in higher education für more than 15 years
- Student population still not very diverse
- Social dimension still not high priority in many countries
- Contradicting measures in many countries



Underrepresented groups in HE

- definition, monitoring, data collection and measures developed differ by country
- diversity of society is not represented in higher education
- include: socio-economic background, physical/psychosocial disabilities, health issues, lgbtq*, students with children/dependents, migrant background, ethnic minorities, gender, mature students,....
- issues: adapt to HE environment, lack of social capital, financial issues, higher risk of drop-out,...

Measures to include unrepresented groups in higher Education



widening
access

specific target
groups

European/
EHEA

National

Regional

Institutional

Student counselling as a measure to empower prospective students and underrepresented groups



- Which counselling offers do students' unions have?
- Which channels do they use, which challenges do they face?
- And how are they involved in the development of national strategies for social dimension?
- Which role do students' unions have in widening participation of underrepresented groups in higher education through their counselling activities?

Student counselling as a key measure to widen access



- different actors and different types of counselling
- psychological counselling is often not available
- Student unions: peer & professional counselling
 - shared background, difficulties and challenges, low-threshold
 - quality especially in psychological or legal counselling

Approaches to counselling from student unions

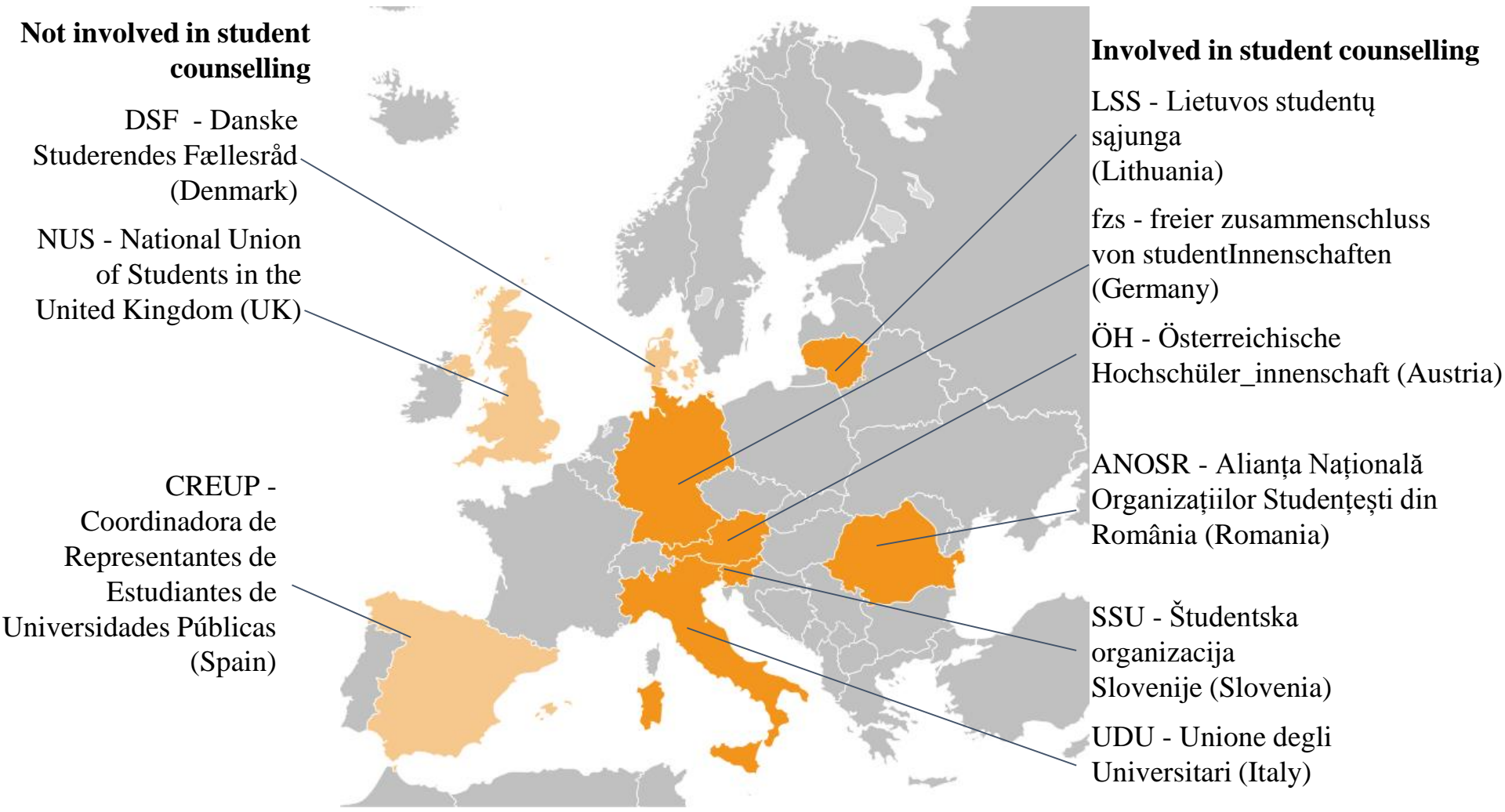


depending on the self-perception of the union:

- political actor: academic representation and raising awareness on student issues
- service-provider: counselling offered by peers / professionals

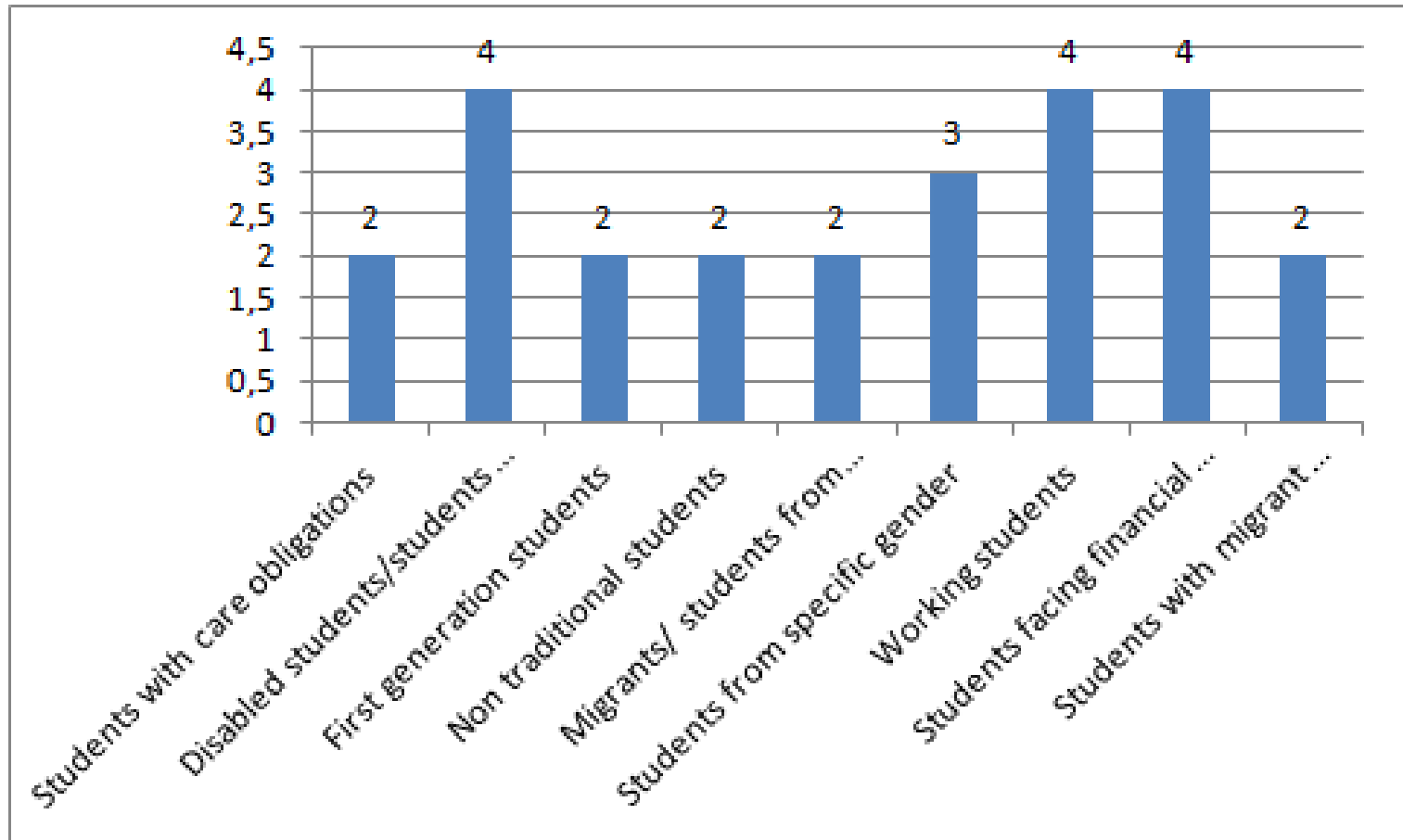
Counselling provided by student unions in europe

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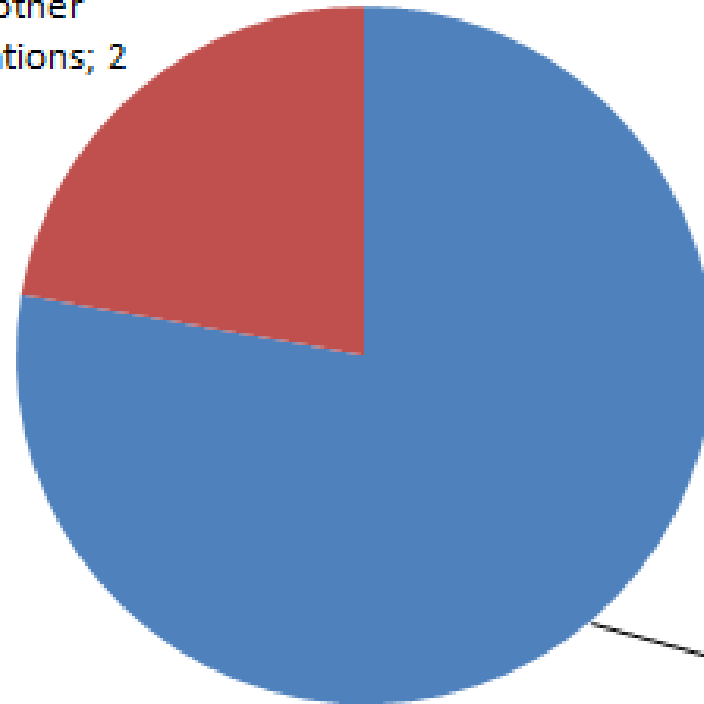
Counselling for specific target groups



Cooperation between student unions and partner organisations

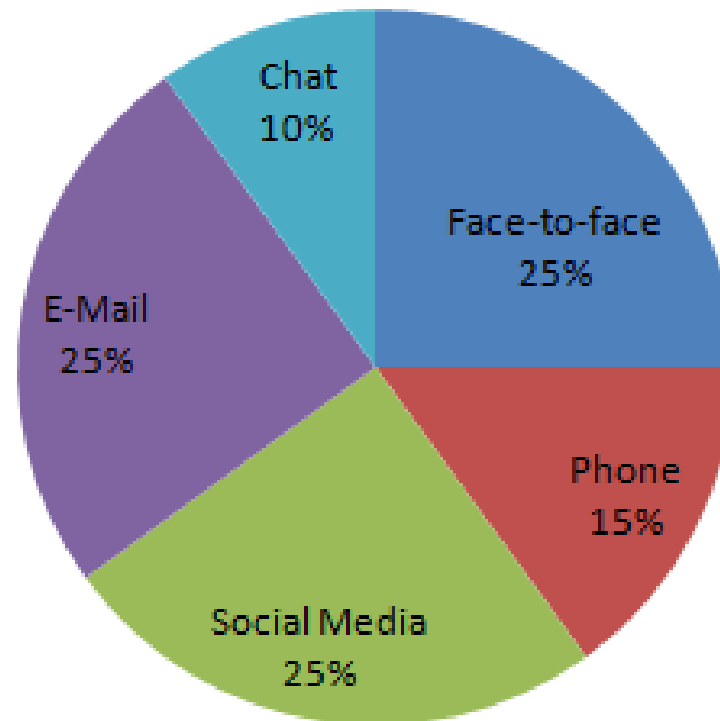


No cooperation
with other
organisations; 2

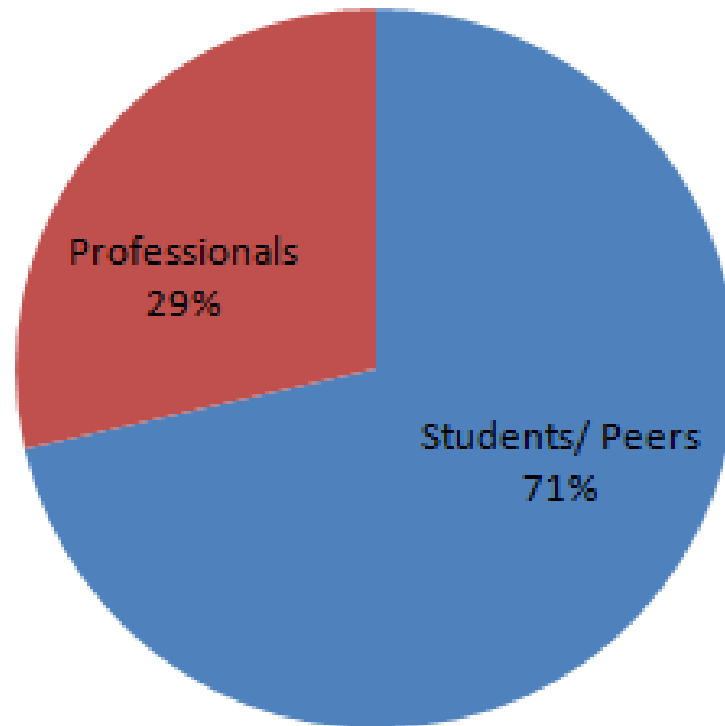


Cooperation
with other
organisations; 7

Communication Channels



Background of counsellors



Involvement in development of national strategies of social dimension



- all examined students' unions are involved except Denmark (DSF)
- involvement of students' unions differs a lot
- campaigning vs. being involved in commissions/implementation groups
- low satisfaction with outcomes so far



Conclusions

- students' unions are highly interested in social dimension
- peer counselling as a special approach:
 - peers and prospective students speak the same language
 - empowering effects: counsellors from underrepresented groups can be role models
- lack of data on underrepresented groups
- restrictions in legislation vs. widening access

Thank you for your attention!

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