



INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE
ERASMUS STUDENT NETWORK

ESN NEWBIE DOCS

EVERY THING YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW
ABOUT ESN BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK



2012 EDITION



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ESN Newbie Docs 2.0

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INTRODUCTION ABOUT ESN

Erasmus Student Network (ESN) is one of the biggest interdisciplinary student associations in Europe. The organization was born on the 16th of October 1989 (and legally registered in 1990) to support and develop student exchange.

ESN is currently (June 2012) present in 397 Higher Education Institutions in 36 countries (Figure 1), annually offering services to over 150.000 students on a volunteer basis.

The general aim of ESN is a more mobile and flexible education environment. ESN works for this by supporting and developing student exchanges on different levels, providing an intercultural experience also to those students who cannot access a period abroad ("internationalization at home").

Name

Erasmus Student Network
AISBL

Founded

1990, Copenhagen

Headquarters

Rue Hydraulique, 15
1210 Bruxelles, Belgium

Members

397 ESN Sections in 36
Countries

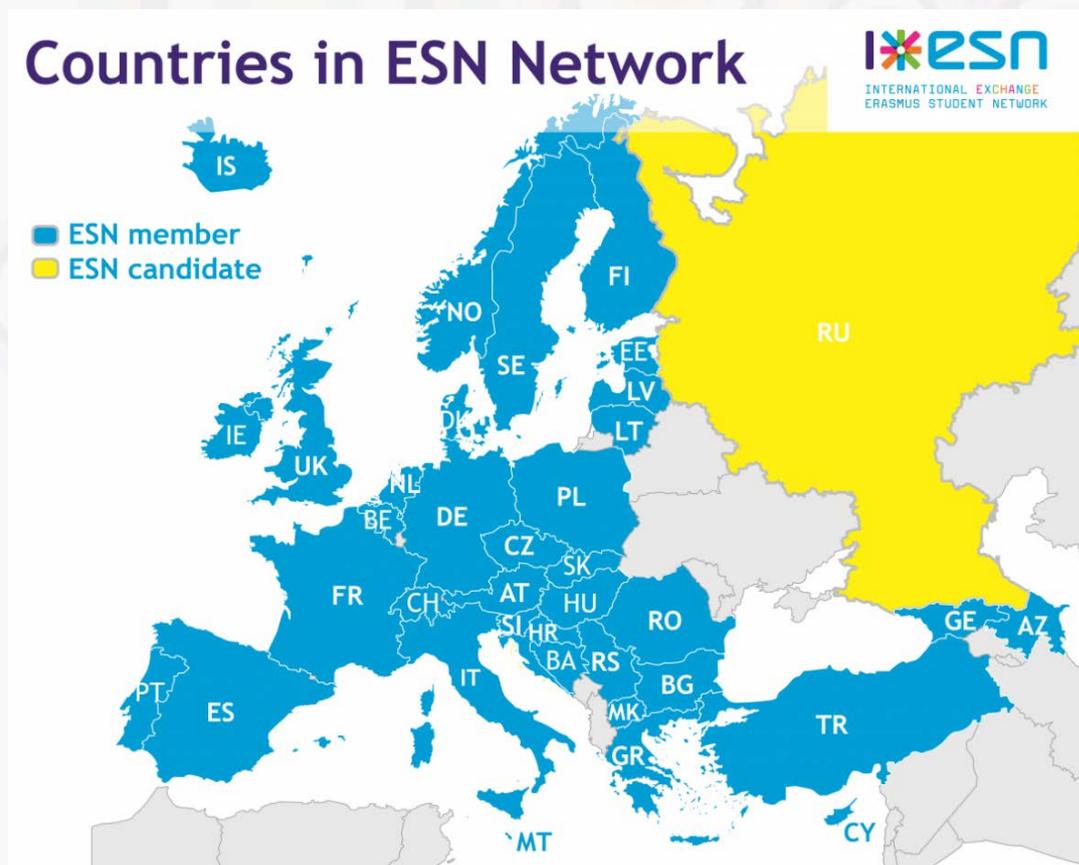


Figure 1: Countries in ESN (June 2012)





ESN and exchange students

The main focus of ESN is placed on **current exchange students**, who often face problems and feel abandoned in their new environments. ESN therefore offers help in the academic, social and practical integration process. This is mainly done through activities in the local sections, which include **cultural and social events** such as trips to various places within the country, film nights, courses, buddy groups, language projects and international food evenings and parties. In addition to that, many sections, sometimes in cooperation with their HEI, have introduced **mentor systems** to help and guide the international students mainly in their academic and practical integration.

ESN and homecoming students

Students who return from an exchange period are invited to join ESN to ease their reintegration process by keeping contact with an international environment. Many local sections are set up by former exchange students, often because they had good experiences during their exchange period or because they felt a lack of help during their own exchange. It is also true that these people understand the issues and challenges of a foreign environment. This makes them ideal to deal with these problems. Higher Education Institutions play a big role as with their support (and often “request”) students from different faculties come together and create a local section.

ESN and local students

To support internationalization at home, ESN provides relevant information about study opportunities abroad to motivate prospective future exchange students. ESN also encourages **future exchange students** to gain international experience and relevant insights in different cultures before departure. The local section is a place where it is possible to meet students from other countries and cultures, speak other languages and breathe a bit of Europe at home for local students that do not have the possibility or the will to study abroad. Moreover, being active in a local section develops soft skills which are important for the future working environment.

Aims and Principles of ESN

- works in the **interest of international students**.
- works to improve the **social and practical integration** of international students.
- represents the **needs and rights** of international students on the local, national and international level.
- **provides relevant information** about mobility programmes.
- **motivates** students to study abroad.
- works with the **reintegration** of homecoming students.
- contributes to the **improvement and accessibility of student mobility**.





- **cares** about its members.
- values **volunteering and active citizenship**.

HISTORY OF ESN

In 1987 a plan to create an extensive mobility scheme for higher education was approved by the European Community. One part of this was the Erasmus programme – which aimed to provide the opportunity to spend part of students’ studies abroad. In 1989 the Erasmus Bureau invited 32 former Erasmus Students for an evaluation meeting in Ghent, Belgium. This meeting was a starting point of Erasmus Student Network. During the meeting many issues arose about the Erasmus experience; these problems became the main tasks for the founders of ESN International to work on. “Students helping students” was the idea behind the entire project, and has remained one of the most important mottos in the work of ESN.

During the first year ESN sections were founded in various European universities. In October 1990, with financial support from the EC, a meeting for the official founding of

ESN is member of or has a special status in different organizations:

- European Youth Forum (YFJ) (full membership)
- EUCIS LLL (full membership, one representative in the steering committee)
- ESU (associate member)
- EAIE (courtesy member)
- Council of Europe (participatory status)
- Advisory Council on Youth (CoE, one representative)
- IFISO (full membership)

ESN International was organized in Copenhagen, Denmark with 49 participants from almost all member states of the EC. ESN International became a legal association and Desiree Majoor from Utrecht, the Netherlands became the first president in ESN history.

In 2003 and up to 2004 ESN was a remarkable network of local student clubs, or ‘sections’, working for the benefit of local and exchange students. However, ESN was still a ‘baby organization’ at the national and international level. There were only few national boards and the yearly turnover of the organization was tremendously





undersized (around € 5000) in comparison with the network's ambitions. The international level was not well organized and its main function was coordination among the sections without almost any international initiative. The next big step came in 2004, when it was decided to establish a permanent office in Brussels.

The International Board 2005/2006 led by Davide Capecchi, one of the historical Presidents of ESN, found a house and an office which made it possible for ESN to register in Belgium as Erasmus Student Network AISBL. Since 2005 the Board (at the beginning only President and Vice-President) works full time in Brussels for ESN; this huge step made it possible for ESN to become an important actor on the European level within the fields of international education and youth.

2005 was also a year of successful projects and steps such as the ESN card which became an international membership card, the new ESN Corporate Identity, the first long term strategy, the first big research project: the ESNSurvey, and the first successful application for an operating grant from the European Commission. Until 2007 the network was strengthening its structure, ensuring a basic financial sustainability, testing the network with the first projects ending with the 20th Anniversary of the Erasmus Programme and the special grant given to ESN to carry out the celebrations. More and more services were given to the sections from the international level such as PR material, a letter of support from the European Commission and one of the most successful projects of ESN: the ESN Satellite.

In the following years, up until today, the network has had a huge growth, previous projects were strengthened and new projects were created every year, such as ExchangeAbility, SocialErasmus, PRIME, Eduk8 and Responsible Party. Moreover, the services to the sections were increased with more material and entire teams working to support the network (e.g. graphics team, webteam, Facebook report team, etc...). This led to the birth of the ESN Committees which are working structures focusing on different topics (eg. communication, finance, IT, ect...). In 2011, ESN was awarded the Civil Society Prize of the European Economic and Social Committee in 2011.





STRUCTURE OF ESN

The 3 levels of ESN are: local, national, international.

The local level

The local level is composed by our 397 (June 2012) ESN Sections which are the basis of the network. Each section is completely independent and focuses on the exchange students as well as the local students for internationalisation at home.



Figure 2: ESN Structure

The national level

The national level is composed by:

- National Platform (NP): the meeting of all the sections. Each country has 1 or more meetings per year. The decisions of the national platform are binding for all the sections that are part of it. New sections in the country must be approved by the National Platform.
- National Representative (NR): the NR is elected at the national platform and is the person representing the country at the international level in the Council of National Representatives (CNR), which is composed by all the NRs of the ESN countries. The CNR represents the AGM during the ESN year and is one of the strategic bodies of ESN International. The CNR collaborates with the Board on a joint approach for the strategy and the policy making of ESN, acts as the primary contact of the Board and facilitates the communication between the Board and sections, voices the needs of the sections at the International Level, advises and checks upon the work of the Board, expresses its opinion and gives feedback on issues concerning the network.
- National Board (NB): although it is not compulsory, all the countries with 3 sections or more can set up a National Board if desired. It is important for the country development and as well empowers the communication between the international, national and local levels in the network.

The international level

The international level of ESN is quite complicated to understand but consists of the following bodies:





- Annual General Meeting
- International Board & Secretariat
- Council of National Representatives
- Committees
- Liaison Officers
- International Coordinators

Annual General Meeting

The AGM is the highest decision-making body of ESN International. It is composed of all the official ESN section representatives from all the member countries and meets once a year on the general assembly. The AGM makes statutes changes, elects the new International Board, decide the strategy, evaluates the work of all the bodies, etc....

International Board & Secretariat

The International Board of ESN is composed by 5 people working and living in Brussels: President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Communication Manager and Web Project Administrator (WPA). The Board Members are volunteers and have the executive power in ESN.

The Secretariat is currently composed by a Director, a Fundraiser and a Secretary. All are paid are paid positions , they do not have any decision power, but work really closely with the Board. Some projects and tasks of the Board are delegated to them. Sometimes there is as well a Project Manager in ESN who changes each year for the most important Projects. In 2011 this was PRIME, in 2012 this is SocialErasmus.

Committees

There are 5 Committees in ESN, each of them working on a specific topic. There is a Board member in charge of every committee. The work of the committees is explained in more detail in the chapter 'Opportunities'.

- ICE (International Committee for Education) – President
- NEC (Network and Events Committee) – Vice-President
- FiCo (Finance Committee) – Treasurer
- ComCom (Communication Committee) – Communication Manager
- IT Committee - Web Project Administrator

Liaison Officers

The Liaison Officers help the Board of ESN International to represent ESN towards key European institutions, organizations and alliances - the European Youth Forum (YFJ), the Council of Europe (CoE), the European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning (EUCIS-LLL) and the Informal Forum of International Student Organizations (IFISO).



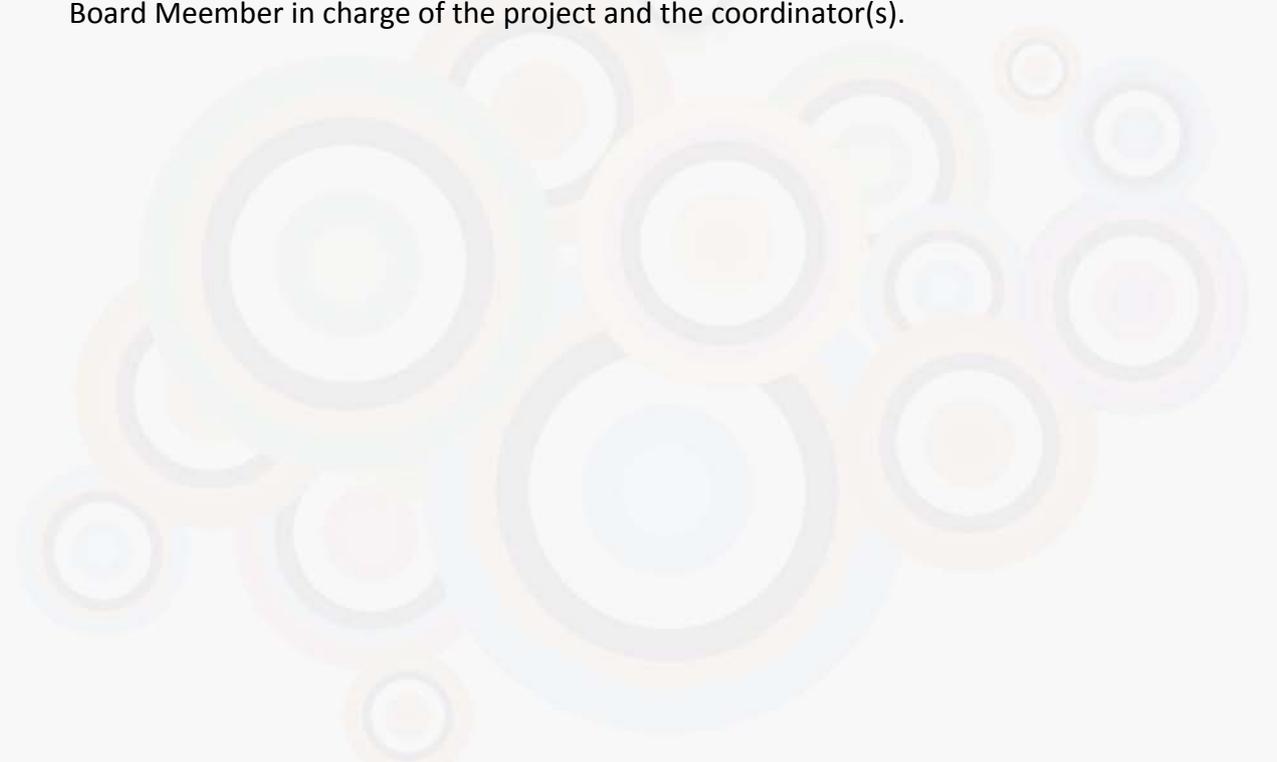


Liaison Officers participate in policy consultations, working groups, seminars, meetings and conferences that concern ESN priorities – international and non-formal education, mobility, volunteering, cross-cultural collaboration and others. They network with other organizations, help to start cooperation projects and partnerships, and promote ESN as a key contributor in its fields of expertise at the European level.

The Liaison Officers always represent the opinion of the network and is not a decision making body of ESN. The Officers work in close collaboration with the Board and the International Committee of Education.

International Coordinators

The International Coordinators are nominated by the Board and take care of single projects for ESN. When decisions are being made, there are discussions between the Board Member in charge of the project and the coordinator(s).





GET IN TOUCH WITH ESN

In between an ESN event and another you can still be in touch with ESN. How? Let's discover it together!

esn.org

ESN.org is the main external source of information. Information on ESN as a network, its mission, projects and events, but also information on exchange programs can be found here. Last year the information was (partly) revised. For visits and to keep the website listed on google it is important to have frequent updates and revisions. ESN.org is also used as an internal information provider, spreading important news to the network in between the newsletters. It is also a place for open calls and vacancies.

Events.esn.org is the place for event registrations for statutory and non-statutory international ESN events. A more detailed explanation on these events can be found in the next chapter. *Esncard.org* is where you can find all the discounts and offers associated to your ESN Card. You can see there which discounts are available in your city and also some other European wide discounts and offers.

[ESN Galaxy](#)

Galaxy.esn.org is an internal management tool where section members, national board members and internationally active ESNers are assigned to different roles, allowing them to manage certain things and content. It takes the feed from all satellite events and news to show what is going on in the network.

It is important that each ESN member has an account on the ESN Galaxy as signing up for events requires to have an active account, ask your NR for more information on this!

On the Galaxy you can find the internal contact list, who to contact for what, information about the sections and its members, download the welcome pack & satellite pack and read the section guide. This is also the place to fill out the section questionnaire and to keep track of some mailing lists.

[Newsletter](#)

The ESN Newsletter is released twice a month, generally in the beginning and in the middle of the month. It is sent to the relevant mailing lists and published on esn.org.

Generally the topics that are included are a topic of the month (which can be anything worth emphasizing or thinking about), ESN news, youth news, opportunities and Europe news. There is also a reminder box and a column presenting past and future ESN events.





Research Publications/Publications

ESN produces research publications such as PRIME and ESNSurvey report, which are distributed to the sections and other stakeholders. ESN also has other publications with guidelines for the sections, visual identity and ExchangeAbility; some in printed form and others not. All of the publications can be found on esn.org.

eXpress: the ESN Magazine

eXpress has been the official ESN Magazine since October 2007, is published three times a year in a printed and digital version. It is a great place for the sections to showcase themselves, but also for sharing information with the network.

Social Media.

ESN is present on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube and Flickr.

Facebook. ESN has both a network and a page. What are you waiting for? Like it!

Twitter. ESN has a Twitter account. Don't miss the latest ESN twitt, visit twitter.com/esn_int.

LinkedIn. ESN is present on LinkedIn and has a group where internationally ESNers are present.

YouTube Channel. Do you have a cool video to add to the ESN Youtube page? Write to video@esn.org and of course, don't forget to check out the page on youtube!

Flickr. You can also find us on Flickr where we share the best pictures from all our events. Stay tuned at www.flickr.com/photos/esnint.





OPPORTUNITIES

Meetings and events

ESN International organizes numerous international events throughout the year. These can be divided into statutory meetings and non-statutory meetings. The events are organised by local sections with the coordination, help and support from the National Boards and the International Board.

Statutory meetings

The **Annual General Meeting (AGM)** is ESN's general assembly, where all official ESN sections of the member countries come together to take decisions for the future and strategy of the network. As the AGM is a perfect opportunity to exchange information between all the sections, a lot of time is dedicated to different plenary sessions and workshops concerning the local, national and international level of ESN.

The **Council of National Representatives (CNR)** takes place five times a year, when the NRs of ESN countries and the Board come together to discuss all important issues and make decisions which concern the current situation and future of the network.

The **Council of National Delegates (CND)** is constituted of NRs and two additional delegates (ND) from each country as well as the Board. It is an annual meeting which takes place in December. The main aim of the event is to integrate all the ESN levels better and to show the work of the CNR and Board to all the NDs.

Board Meetings (BM) take place on a monthly basis. The IB members discuss during these meetings all relevant issues and focus on the planning of further actions in the whole network.

Non-statutory meetings

National Boards Meeting (NBM) is an informal meeting for the NB members of countries belonging to ESN. The goal of the meeting is to create an opportunity for National Boards to get to know each other, communicate and cooperate, share experience and best practices and to involve National Boards in the activities of the international level of ESN.

Section Meetings (SM) were established thanks to the growing cooperation between sections from different ESN countries. It is an informal meeting with the goal to share ideas and knowledge, develop common projects and new activities and enhance their mutual understanding and cooperation by building personal relationships between ESN members.





Cultural Medley (CM) is an annual event, taking place in the summer time. Here, a section, a city or a country presents itself culturally to the rest of ESN through many exciting activities and lectures about the local culture, history and traditions.

CoMeet is the meeting of all the committees, giving the committee members the opportunity to exchange information between committees, actively work within their own committees as well as between different committees on the different projects and fields and develop joint projects.

Regional Platforms (RP) give the section members from a certain region the opportunity to come together to share knowledge, establish partnerships, learn about new developments within the network and talk about matters which concern their sections on the local and national level. The member countries of ESN are divided into 5 regions and there is one RP each year:

- Northern European Platform (NEP) : Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Norway, Sweden
- Central European Platform (CEP): Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia
- South-Eastern European Platform (SEEP): Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Georgia, Greece, Italy, F.Y.R.O. Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Turkey
- South-Western European Platform (SWEP): France, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Spain
- Western European Platform (WEP): Belgium, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Switzerland, United Kingdom

Do not worry – ESN meetings are not just about working! All the Organising Committees (OC) of these events are trying their best to secure a fun and unforgettable evening programme. You will get to know more about leisure time in the next chapter.

Participating in an ESN event

After the previous chapter you should have a good overview of all the ESN meetings and you are hopefully anxious to participate in at least one, or better in as many as possible! There are still a couple of things that you should keep in mind about the working and leisure time at the meetings before you book your tickets for the next meeting.

Working time means working time! The participation in different sessions is not compulsory, but it is the expected behavior of a participant. Through active participation you can also benefit personally by boosting your knowledge about ESN and gaining overall skills. There usually are different types of sessions on the agenda. Here comes the short explanation about them:





Presentation (P) – a speaker presents a specific topic or project. Presentations are purely informal and usually only questions are allowed.

Discussion (D) – the presented topic needs further clarification and other ideas, which will be gathered through discussions. That means your input and feedback is really wanted to continue working on the idea and develop it.

Small Session (SS) - a way to discuss some topics more in detail. They are similar to discussions with the difference that SS's take place in smaller groups. They can also be held in a rotation system – participants will be divided into groups and every group will cover every topic.

Workshop (WS) – is a usual workshop in the sense we all know it. This is your opportunity to learn something new, boost both your general and ESN-specific knowledge and skills!

Meet your colleague – session which takes place usually during a RP. The section Board members are given the opportunity to meet their colleagues from other sections and can discuss issues and share knowledge relevant for their field of responsibility.

Proposal – this word you will hear mostly during a CNR, CND and AGM. A participant, usually one of the NRs, proposes a new idea, rule or statute change. The proposal will be finalised with a voting.

Yes, **LEISURE TIME!** This is also an important part of all ESN meetings, because the OCs usually do their best to make the evening programme of the highest quality! Of course, having fun does not need a lot of explanation and the activities are also really diverse from event to event. However, for the real newcomers amongst you:

Eurodinner - gives you the special opportunity to discover the dishes and beverages of all ESN countries. Do not forget to bring traditional food and drinks to show people your country from the culinary side. You can also bring flags and other gadgets with country symbols.

Gala Dinner - formal dinner with an official opening ceremony. Please bring nice formal clothes (dress/suit!) for this event!

Country Evening – usually the host country reserves one night to present their country, the regions and the culture including the food, beverages, music and sometimes even games or typical activities. They might even give you some typical gadgets or ask you to dress in the country colors.

When you know what the Ice-Cube game is, what 'limonare' means, how to use Ahoj Powder and can no longer count the number of Eurodinners you have participated in – then you are a qualified as an ESN leisure time professional.





International projects

ESN International has launched different short- and long-term projects and labels over the years. Additionally, we have many different activities, but here we will concentrate on the ongoing and long-term projects you should know. Motivated people also have the opportunity to participate in these.

PRIME – Problems of Recognition in Making Erasmus

Students in Europe enjoy great opportunities of mobility through exchange programmes such as the Erasmus Programme. However, they still have to face various barriers and obstacles and among these recognition is a continuous problem.

For this reason, ESN is conducting an in-depth qualitative research to point out the true causes of the above mentioned obstacles and to provide suggestions for improvements to the European Union and HEIs. The first research was launched in 2009 and concluded in January 2010, the second edition was finished in 2011. More information can be found on prime.esn.org.

ESNSurvey

Every year ESN launches a survey that explores the current issues connected to academic and non-academic mobility. This is one of the biggest and most successful projects of ESN. The topic of the ESNSurvey 2009 was “Information for Exchange”, 2010’s topic was “E-Value-ate Your Exchange” and in 2011 “Exchange, Employment and Added Value” the provisional title of the next edition is “Employability and European Citizenship”. Through the gathered opinions of students, ESN gets a better insight into the issues and is able to represent the students’ real needs. ESN passes the results on to the main stakeholders in higher education and mobility programmes, higher education institutions and all associations concerned with the topic. More information can be found on www.esn.org/survey.

ESN Satellite

Satellite is the free website template for ESN sections, developed and maintained by ESN International and Youth Agora. The latest version is Satellite 3.2 and can be downloaded on the Galaxy.

ExchangeAbility

The main aim of this project is to make ESN as an association accessible for disabled students on all the levels of its activities and to advocate for appropriate conditions and opportunities for the students with disabilities to actively participate in the student life. Through participation and involvement in the activities of an ESN section, disabled students will be given an opportunity to experience the international and





intercultural atmosphere associated with the exchange programmes. The long term vision of the project is to encourage an increase in the number of disabled exchange students and to create the best conditions for them during their stay abroad. More information can be found on exchangeability.esn.org and via exchangeability@esn.org.

SocialErasmus

SocialErasmus is a project created by ESN Poland aiming at actively involving Exchange students in the local communities under three main fields: Environment, Education and Charity. The project is ESN's new flagship project in the framework of the 25th anniversary of the Erasmus programme in 2012. More information can be found on socialerasmus.esn.org and via socialerasmus@esn.org.

Committees and open calls

Now you have seen on which levels of ESN you can be active, in which international events you can participate and in which projects you can get involved, but you still do not have enough of ESN? No worries, we have more ways for you to enjoy ESN. Have you ever considered participating in a regional or national event of another country? Have you thought about working in a Committee to do more for the network, boost your skills and enjoy more responsibility? Maybe it is time to do so!

Committees

Committees are the implementing bodies of ESN and composed of ESNers from all the levels. It is the opportunity for local ESNers to get involved on the international level and to contribute directly to international projects. Joining a Committee can benefit you from a personal development perspective. As an example, being the chair of a committee can be a good practice for your future working life; or when you are studying statistics – why not use the data or work on one of the ESN researches like ESNSurvey for your university projects or homework? Or you can also write your bachelor thesis on the example of ESN in the field of Communication, there are plenty of possibilities!

You see there are several reasons to join the Committees, so let us have a closer look on the different domains. In general, the Committees are an advisory and implementing body of ESN. They are composed of Chairs, max. 2 Vice Chairs and active members working on different tasks. The Committees are actively supporting the work of their respective Board member.

The Committees and their working fields are:

International Committee for Education - ICE (President): developing and stating the positions of ESN regarding the educational policy, research related projects (e.g.





ESNSurvey and PRIME), active participation in international education initiatives, consultation from European institutions, education of ESN members, etc...

Network and Events Committee - NEC (Vice President): network cooperation, network development, knowledge management, coordinating the statutory and non-statutory meetings, etc...

Finance Committee - FiCo (Treasurer): advising management and auditing of the budget, partnership development, marketing and financial strategy.

Communication Committee - ComCom (Communication Manager): external communication strategy, communication with media, social networks, ESN Newsletter, eXpress, provision of service for the sections (e.g. graphics team, promotional material, etc...), Corporate Identity screening and support.

IT Committee (Web Project Administrator): external IT tools as websites, internal IT tools as Info-Centre, Satellite, Galaxy, etc...

Open calls

Sometimes there are nice opportunities thanks to ESN such as European events, training workshops, open positions in the network, internships, job opportunities and much more. Take a look at the ESN Newsletter and esn.org. Don't miss out on what the network has to offer to you!





Who to contact and when

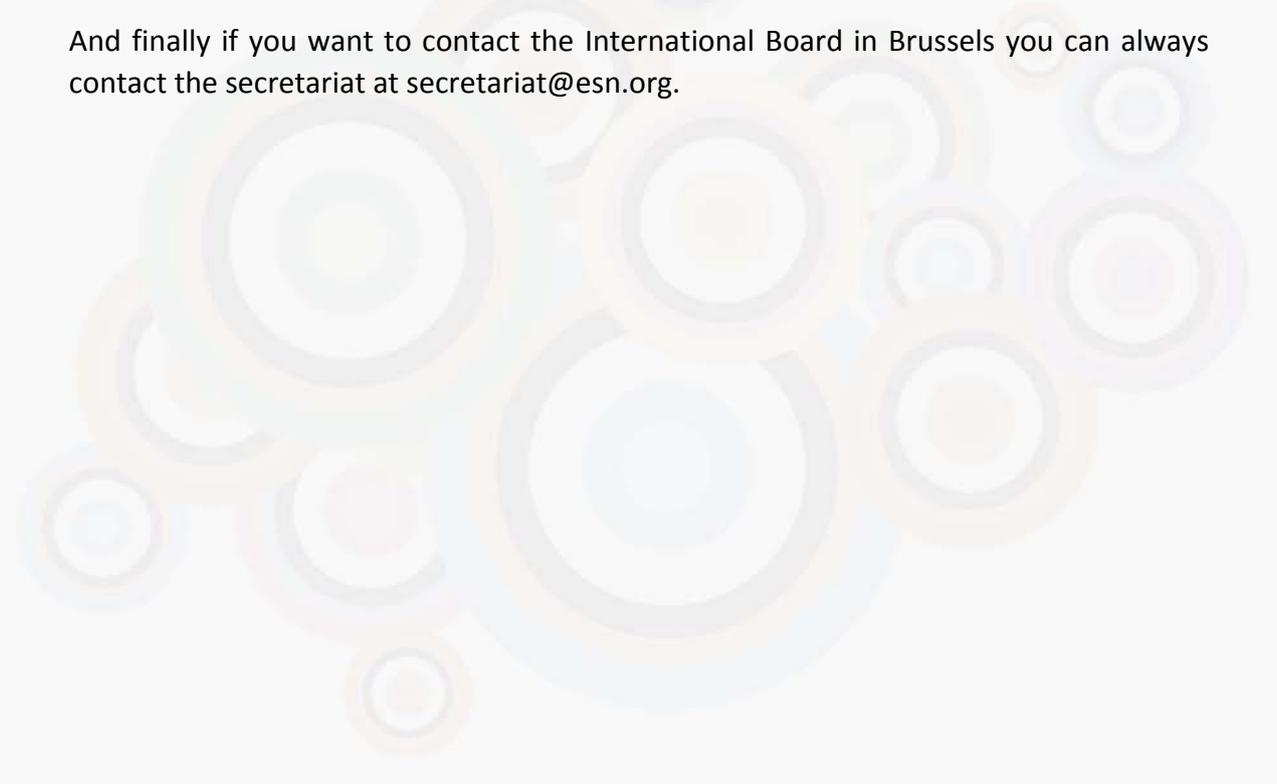
Do you have questions? That is perfectly fine! All of us we have been newbies at some point. Just ask!

First ask your local section buddies. The veterans of the section can help you with your questions and guide you during your first steps. Your President or **Local Representative** (LR) can help you as well if your section has implemented this position.

You can also contact your **National Board** (NB). You can find the contact information for the NB's at ww.esn.org

If your country does not have a National Board you can always contact your **National Representative** (NR). The email is always country@esn.org (e.g. austria@esn.org or italy@esn.org). The NR's have a deep knowledge of all the levels of ESN and would be able to either answer your question or find the person who knows the answer.

And finally if you want to contact the International Board in Brussels you can always contact the secretariat at secretariat@esn.org.





ESN ACRONYMS

ACA	Academic Cooperation Association
AEGEE	Association des États Généraux des Étudiantes de l'Europe
AGM	Annual General Meeting
AISBL	Association Internationale Sans But Lucratif (International Not-for-profit Organization)
BM	Board Meeting
CEP	Central European Platform
CND	Council of National Delegates
CNR	Council of National Representatives
CoE	Council of Europe
CoR	Committee of the Regions
DG	Direction Générale (General Directorate, EU Department)
EAIE	European Association of International Education
EC	European Commission
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
ESN	Erasmus Student Network
ESU	European Students Union
EU	European Union
EUA	European University Association
EVS	European Voluntary Service
EYF	European Youth Foundation of the Council of Europe
NB	National Board
NEP	Northern European Platform
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NP	National Platform
NR	National Representative
OC	Organizing Committee
PR	Public Relations
RP	Regional Platforms
SEEP	South Eastern European Platform
SWEP	South Western European Platform
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WEP	Western European Platform
WG	Working Group
YFJ	Youth Forum Jeunesse (European Youth Forum)

