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**Abstract**

This article introduces the special issue of European Journal of Higher Education dedicated to the cross-national comparison of student representation in Western Europe. Student representative organisations, whose primary aim is to represent and defend the interests of the collective student body, are core participants in European higher education (HE) governance. Yet, these organisations are strikingly absent in scholarly literature. This special issue is guided by the question of how students as a collective body are organised, and how their interests are aggregated, articulated and intermediated into the national policy processes. The article develops the conceptual framework guiding the investigation of national student associations and systems of student representation and interest intermediation; and it introduces the five empirically-driven articles on student representation in Norway, the United Kingdom, Germany, France and Italy compared, and Spain.(HRK / Abstract

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