



**Iris Kimizoglu**  
Präsidentin  
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### *What does student engagement mean to you?*

For me, student engagement means actively participating in the university community in line with the idea of active citizenship and representing the socio-economic, political and cultural interests and rights of students - especially those of underrepresented, vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. The aim is to improve study conditions and include the student voice in decision-making processes. In line with basic democratic principles, it is essential that all members of the academic community actively participate in order to develop it positively through co-creation and ultimately maintain resilience against anti-democratic processes. Ultimately, academic freedom and illiberalism are closely intertwined, as history teaches us.

### *What advantages do you see for yourself, your university and society as a whole in your commitment, which goes far beyond the university and federal politics?*

Internationalization processes have always been an integral part of European universities. Originally, studies were based on alternating stays at different institutions in Europe. Initiatives such as the Magna Charta Universitatum, the Bologna Process (European Higher Education Area), the Lisbon Convention (Council of Europe) and more recent initiatives for the European Education Area (EEA) illustrate the central efforts towards harmonization and cooperation in the higher education sector. Important decisions for higher education are increasingly being made at European level. It is therefore essential that students are represented at all levels - local, regional, national, European and international - and that they stand up for student rights and fundamental values. Education policy has a direct influence on individual life paths and on the ability of (knowledge) societies to deal with current and future challenges, be they socio-political, environmental, economic or democratic.

### *How did you get involved?*

At the beginning of my studies, I was introduced to the student representatives during the introductory week for active students. Experienced students, especially female students who were committed to the advancement of women and non-binary people, encouraged and supported me to get involved myself. The introduction of tuition fees for third-country nationals in Baden-Württemberg and the subsequent organization of student protests were

**particularly decisive at the beginning of my studies. On a personal level, my first steps were working class children in a academic world with a habitus that was alien to me, which was very challenging. I was also affected by student poverty for a long time due to the inadequate BAföG system. The BAföG system has always been passionate about educational equality at all levels.**





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That is why I have always been passionate about educational equality at all levels.

*What was the most decisive/important aspect (positive or negative) of your involvement?*

In university politics, I have repeatedly come across people with narrow world views, some of whom have even openly advocated discriminatory or anti-democratic positions. One person at my alma mater, whom I have always admired for her direct, honest and well-founded manner - especially when dealing with people in significantly higher positions - once told me in a conversation about this very topic that she still wanted to be able to look in the mirror at the end of the day. She was concerned with the well-being of the university and the students, which is why she also addressed the unpleasant topics. This conversation was perhaps not the most formative event in my active time, but it was an inspiration that will stay with me forever.