

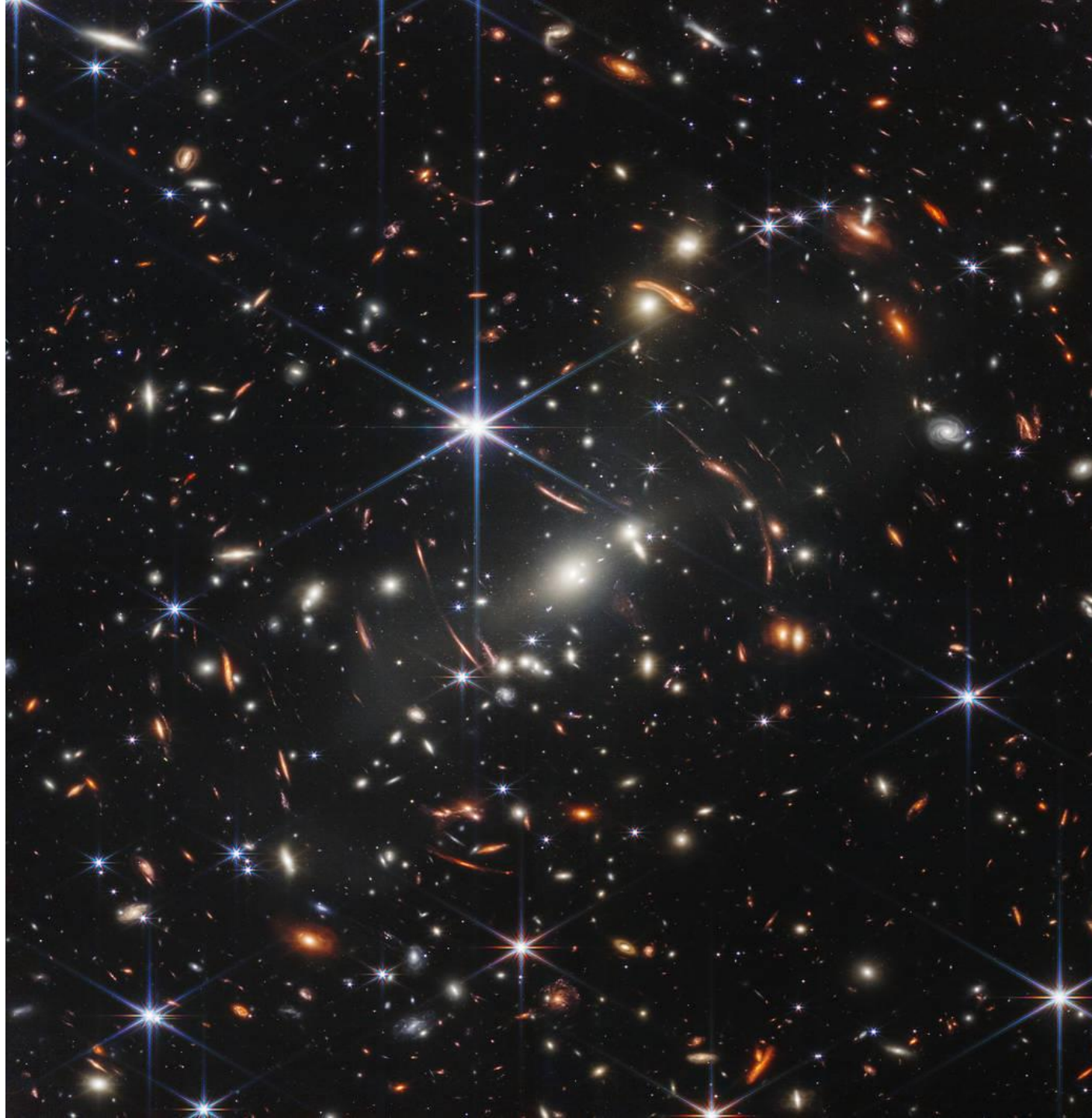
Organise and Implement a Student Parliament

Niall Smith and Frances McCarthy

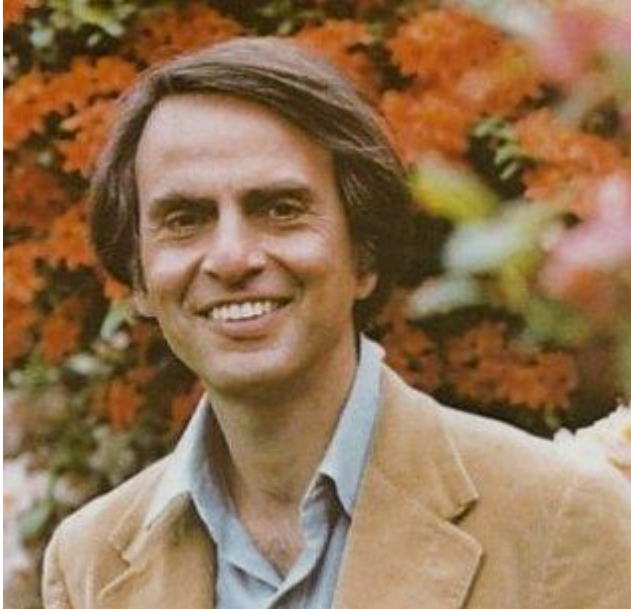
Munster Technological University / Blackrock Castle Observatory

SMACS 0723

4.6 billion years



My Inspiration (apart from my dad)



Carl Sagan

1934 - 1996

*"Science is a way of thinking
much more than it is a body of
knowledge."*

Carl Sagan

Student Parliaments

Flexible Structure

“Unique” ethos

What works from your
school's perspective?
Please share your ideas
during this summer school!

Fundamental Objective

Using evidence-based research, students develop resolutions around topics/themes, provided to them in advance, that they debate in a parliamentary setting amongst their peers.

Resolutions which are democratically adopted go into a [Resolution Booklet](#) which is given to the local Mayor or equivalent to affect local or regional policy-making.

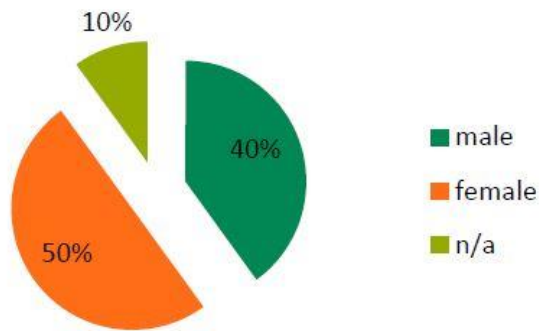
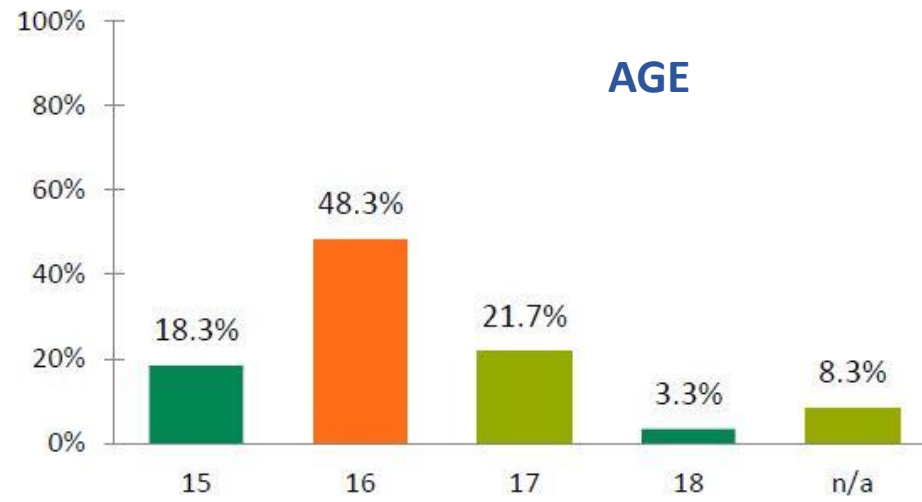
This is not a competition – though naturally students are defensive of their resolutions. The Parliament should seek to produce the **most impactful resolutions**.

"We live in a society exquisitely dependent on science and technology, in which hardly anyone knows anything about science and technology."

Carl Sagan

Idea came from Wissenschaft-im-Dialog

- We ran Parliaments in 2013 and 2015
 - 80 students in Cork
 - 15-17 years old
 - Preparation for the debates took place in our University over 1.5 days
 - Parliament itself took place in Cork City Council Chambers over 1 day
- Theme/topics for the Parliament **are given** to the students
 - **Experts** help to set the scene and answer scientific/research questions
 - Experts should NOT be involved in making or assessing resolutions
- Students develop their **own resolutions**



40 % of the participants were male and 50 % were female. 10 % did not respond to this question.

Examples of Topics

1. Energy efficient houses and flats


The highest potential of saving energy lies in already existing buildings. They require three times as much energy as new buildings. Research strives after the zero-emission building – but can it be realised everywhere? Which reconstruction possibilities are there for existing houses? And who is supposed to pay for it at the end?

Expert Paul O’Sullivan, Munster Technological University

2. Smart City: Life in an urban network

Half of the world’s population lives in cities. The future belongs to urban regions. What challenges are posed to an intelligent traffic control? Will we be capable of controlling the interconnections in our cities similar to the way it is done in the computer game “Sim City”? How can intelligent electricity meet the requirements of an increasing population? Can cloud computing, smartphones and social networks reform the working environment? Which role do open data networks and data protection play?

Expert Dr Susan Rea, Munster Technological University



Given to students

*"Our species needs, and deserves, a citizenry
with minds wide awake and a basic understanding
of how the world works."*

Carl Sagan

Typical Schedule - I

Day 1: Opening and first working group session

- 11:00h-11:15h Welcome by the host. introduction to aims and schedule
- 11:15h-12:30h Introduction talk by an expert
- 12:30h-13:30h Lunch
- 13:30h-15:30h Group work begins: team-building activities, definition of terms → Moderator
- 15:30h-17:30h Visit to or guide through e.g. a museum
- 20:00h Dinner and get-together

Day 2: Working group sessions and expert hearings

- 09:00h-11:00h Group work: Preparation of expert hearings
- 11:00h-13:00h Expert hearings in working groups
- 13:00h-14:00h Lunch
- 14:00h-16:30h Group work: discussion on the topic, claim preparation
- 17:00h-19:00h Group work: Finalisation of position papers

Typical Schedule - II

Day 3: Parliamentary debates

- 09:00h-09:30h Group work: Preparation of the discussion
- 09:30h-09:40h Welcome talk by the host
- 09:40h-11:40h [Parliamentary debate](#): position papers of working groups 1 and 2
- 11:40h-12:00h Coffee break
- 12:00h-13:30h [Parliamentary debate](#): position papers of working groups 3 and 4
- 13:30h-14:30h Lunch
- 14:30h-15:15h [Parliamentary debate](#): position papers of working group 5

- 15:15h-15:45h Handover of the resolution to a policymaker

- 15:45h Closing and departure of the students

"It is sometimes said that scientists are unromantic, that their passion to figure out robs the world of beauty and mystery. But is it not stirring to understand how the world actually works – that white light is made of colors, that color is the way we perceive the wavelengths of light, that transparent air reflects light, that in so doing it discriminates among the waves, and that the sky is blue for the same reason that the sunset is red? It does no harm to the romance of the sunset to know a little bit about it."

Carl Sagan

Moderators

The role of the moderator

The moderator should:

- aim at accompanying discussions and help the students to structure their ideas,
- try to make sure that all voices are heard and taken into account by the entire group,
- not follow a personal target regarding the contents of the resolution,
- have enough knowledge of the topic to provide some factual information – if needed,
- assist the students with structuring their arguments, and
- help them to write the resolution.

Typical Parliamentary Debate Structure - I

- **1. Reading out the claims**

At the beginning of each debate, the proposing group has the opportunity to read out the group's claims which are gathered in the resolution booklet.

- **2. Proposers provide rationale for their proposition**

Subsequently, the proposing group has the opportunity to explain the existing resolution and its contents.

- **3. Clarification and observations by other groups**

Directly after, all other groups have the opportunity to argue why some of the proposed claims should not be accepted by the delegates.

Typical Parliamentary Debate Structure - II

- **4. Response by proposing team**

The proposing group has the opportunity to give answers and to allay doubts the delegates may have.

- **5. Open debate**

All members of all groups can raise their hands to address questions or remarks to the proposing group.

- **6. Summarising speech, response to last questions**

The proposing committee holds a summarising speech and answers the questions from the Open Debate.

- **7. Voting**

The chair of the debate reads out the claims and asks all delegates to vote for or against a claim.

"It is far better to grasp the universe as it really is than to persist in delusion, however satisfying and reassuring."

Carl Sagan

Example of a Resolution Booklet

THEME



RESOLUTION OF THE GROUP - “Energy-efficient houses and flats“

(Note: Text below is as a result of background research and working with the expert assigned to the group)

We have assessed:

- You need to encompass a host of energy efficient technologies to make your home more energy efficient.
- We observed that in Cork there is not an energy efficient culture in the home due to public apathy.
- There is no service provided in which homeowners have access to a cheap and effective way to reduce minor energy losses.
- That there is no adequate quality-control of renovation contractors to ensure their buildings are energy efficient.
- Unfortunately many homes built pre 2006 require substantial improvements to their energy efficiency.
- We recognize that the majority of existing household appliances have poor energy efficiency ratings.

(Note: Text below represents the resolutions adopted by the Parliament)

We claim:

- There is a need to change public perception on energy efficiency in the home through an infomercial campaign and a national green community competition.
- The introduction of a government subsidised home servicing initiative where every 5 years minor sources of energy loss are repaired.
- Cork ought to incorporate certified energy inspectors in renovation projects from inception to completion.
- That all homes need to meet a minimum standard of energy efficiency before being placed on the property market.
- In line with the 2020 European Union energy target strategy we recommend the gradual phasing out of energy inefficient appliances by creating a minimum standard needed in the E.U. energy efficiency rating system.

"One glance at a book and you hear the voice of another person, perhaps someone dead for 1,000 years. To read is to voyage through time."

Carl Sagan



Debate science! www.student-parliament.eu



Certificate

European Student Parliament

Cork Institute of Technology & City Hall, Cork

15 to 17th January 2014

The project **European Student Parliaments (EUSP)** aims at strengthening the dialogue between students aged 16 to 19 and science research throughout Europe. About 20 student parliaments on the topic “The future of our city” will take place across Europe.

Danielle O’Donoghue

participated in the European Student Parliament in **Cork (Ireland)** in the committee “**Smart City: Life in an Urban Network**” and was actively involved in the following programme:

- Preparation of a scientific topic in committees
- Preparation and discussion of the topic together with an expert from the respective scientific field
- Wording of parliamentary resolutions in a committee
- Collaboration and problem-solving within a team
- Active participation in the debate according to parliamentary rules in a simulated plenary session

The participation in this project was voluntary and beyond school time. All participants have shown a high level of self-motivation and were extraordinarily dedicated.

Dr Niall Smith
Cork Institute of Technology

Dr Elena Luhrs
Wissenschaft im Dialog gGmbH

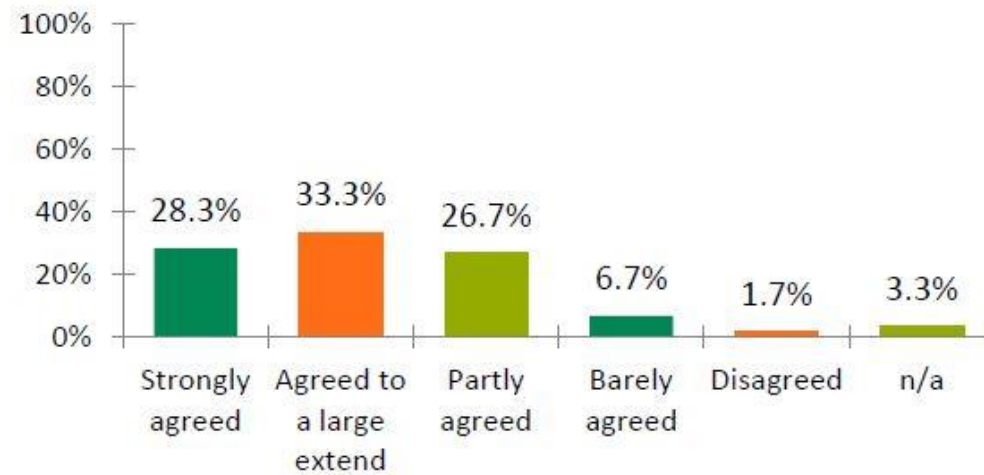
Evaluation

INTRODUCTION	2
I PREPARATION	3
Question 1: How did you find out about the Student Parliament?	3
Question 2: How do you assess the information material that you received prior to the event?	3
II EVALUATION OF THE EVENT	6
Question 1: Please evaluate the working group sessions!	6
Question 2: Please evaluate the parliamentary debates!	8
Question 3: How do you evaluate the collaboration with the scientists?	9
Question 4: How important were the following parts of the event to you?	11
Question 5: How satisfied were you with the event as a whole?	14
III IMPACT OF THE EVENT.....	16
Which lessons do you draw from this event? Please evaluate the following statements!	16
IV SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT AND OTHER COMMENTARY.....	19

Question 2: How do you assess the information material that you received prior to the event?

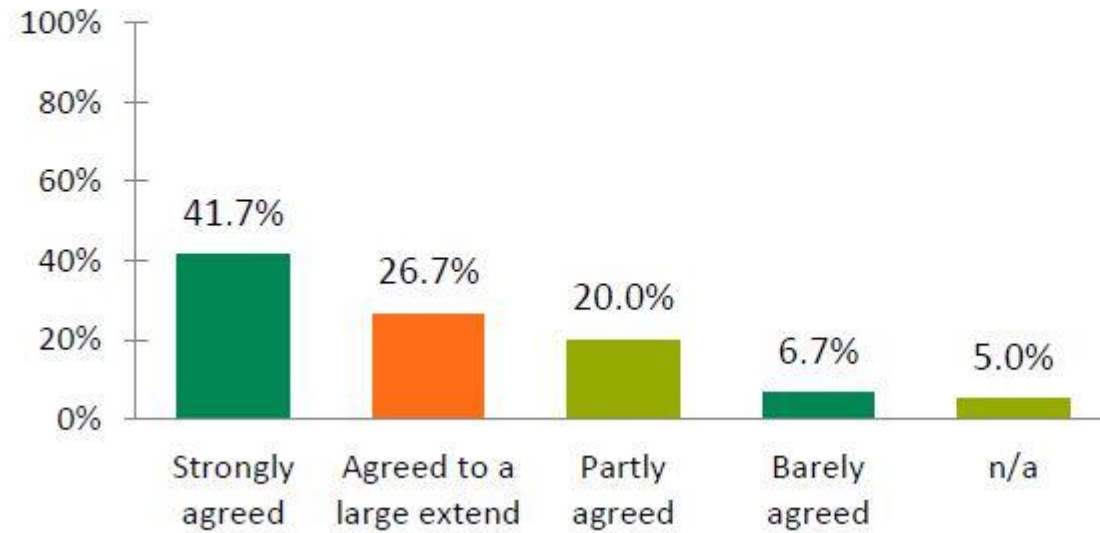
1. The information material provided sufficient scientific background information.

The calculated average value of this rating is 2.1.



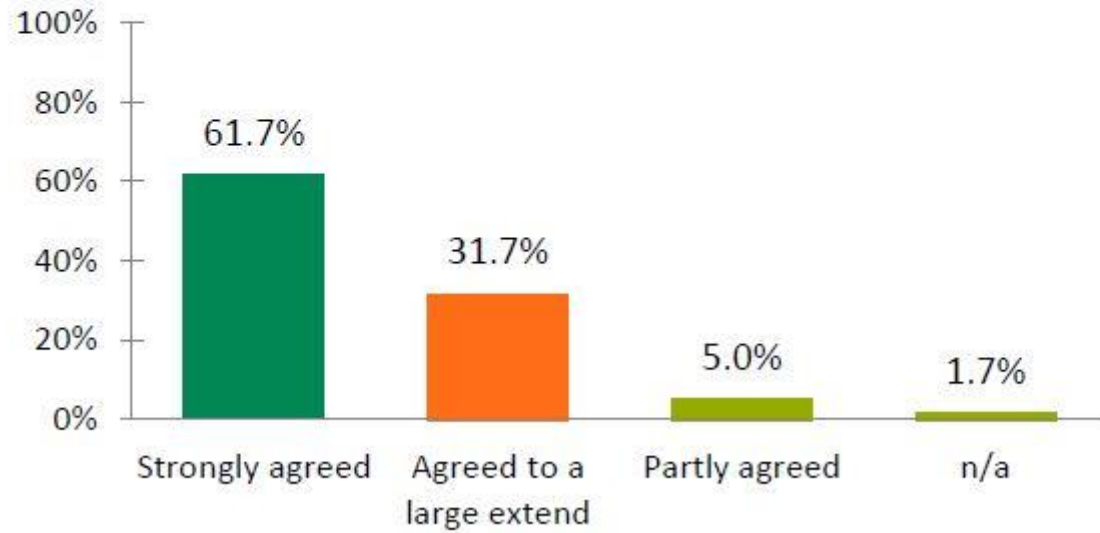
4. The information material was easy to understand.

The calculated average value of this rating is 1.9.



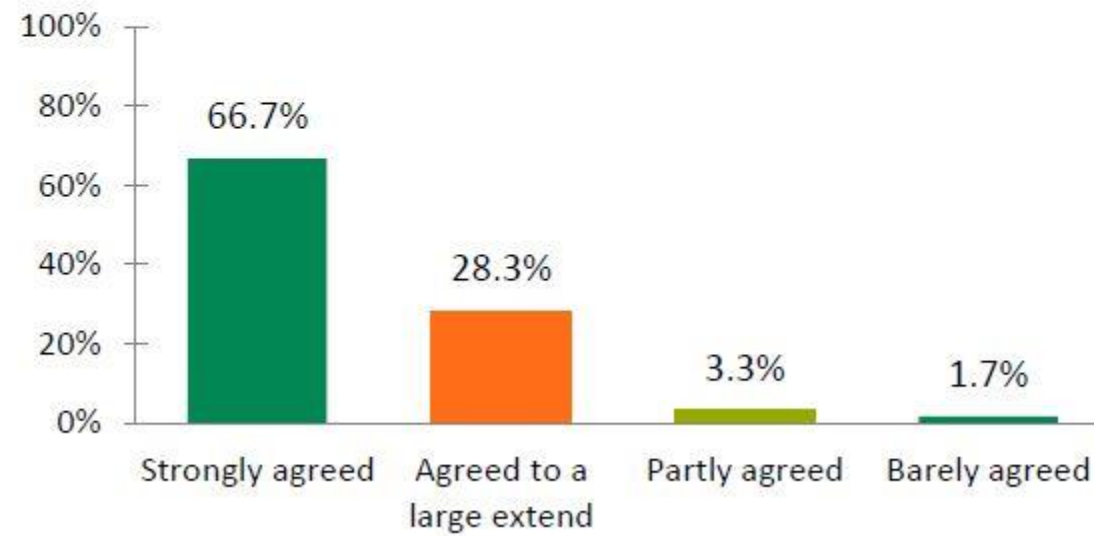
1. *The working group sessions were useful to investigate the topic.*

The calculated average value of this rating is 1.4.



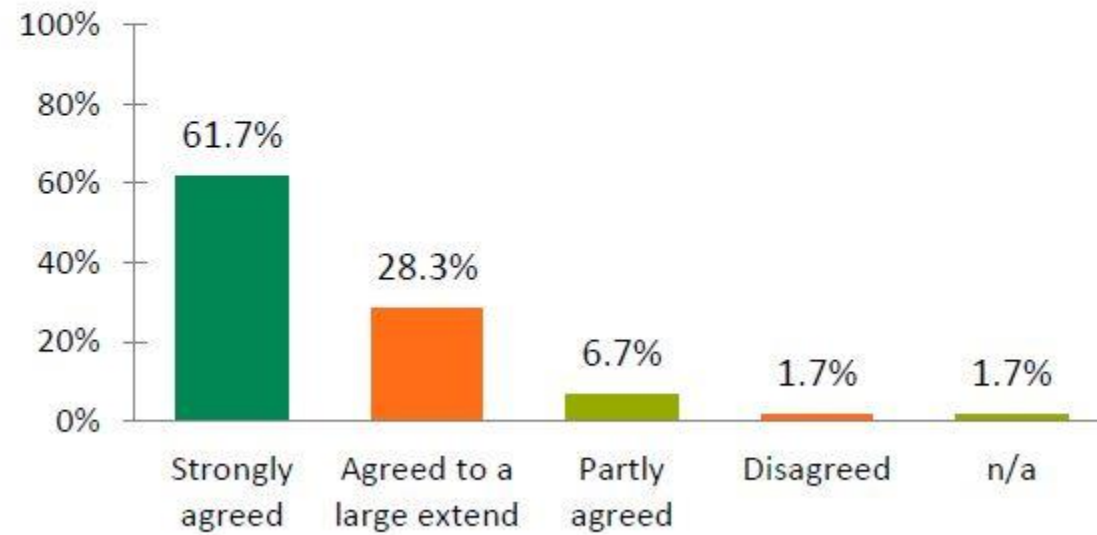
2. *The group work was interesting.*

The calculated average value of this rating is 1.4.



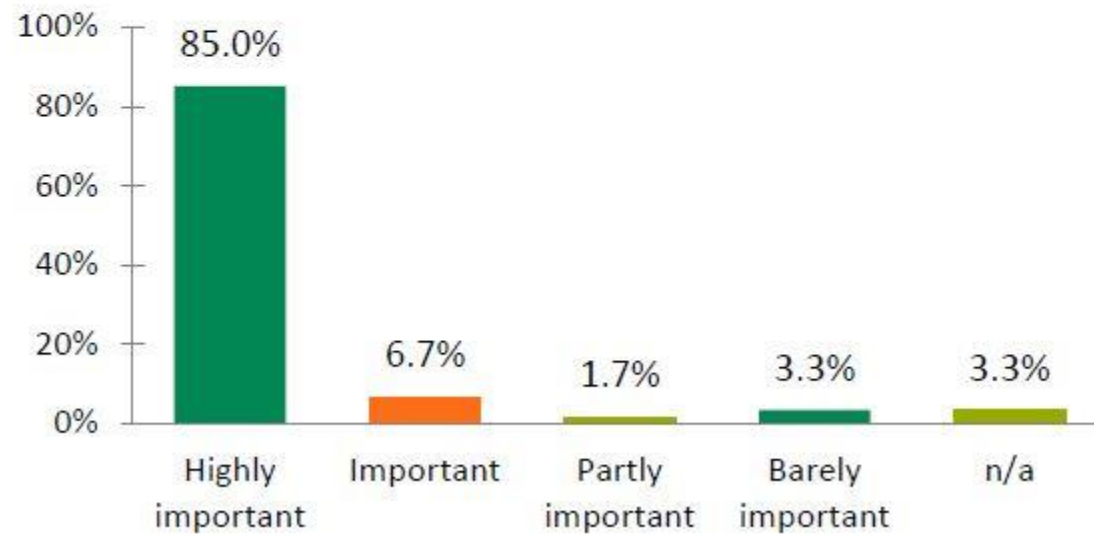
3. *I could contribute my opinion well.*

The calculated average value of this rating is 1.4.



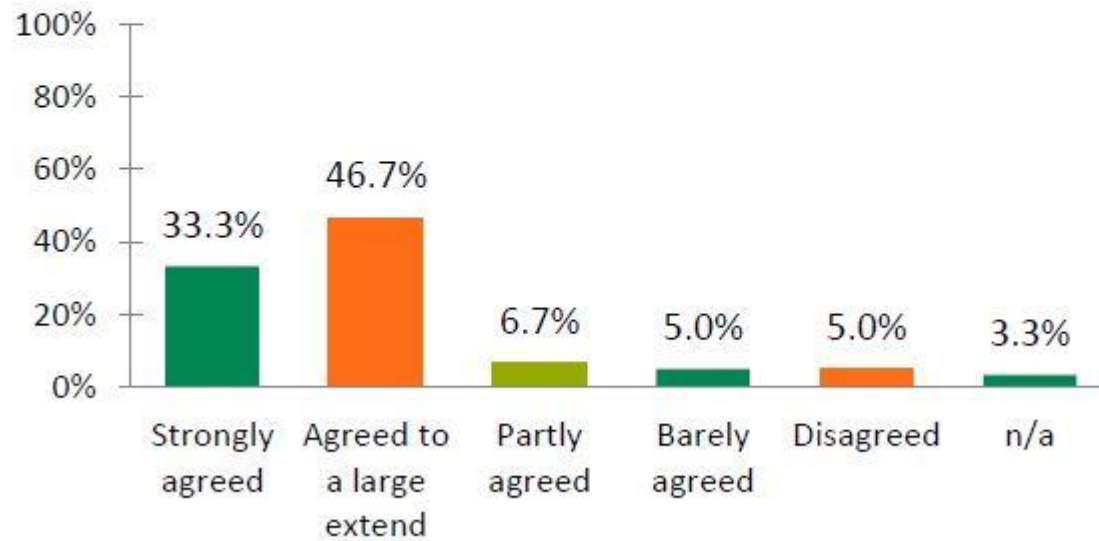
4. *The parliamentary debates*

The calculated average value of this rating is 1.2.



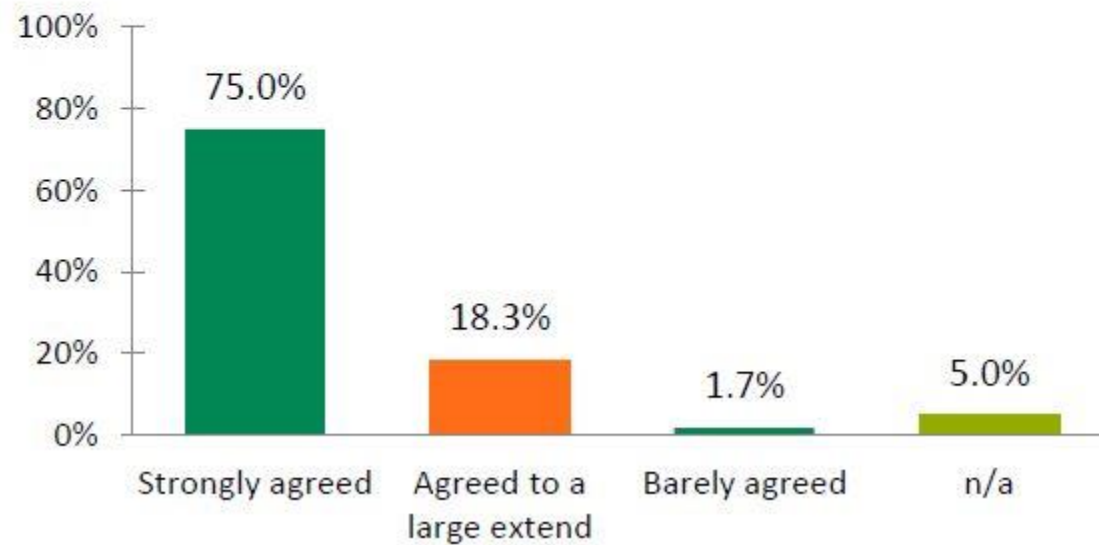
2. *I would like to continue to deal with scientific topics more thoroughly.*

The calculated average value of this rating is 1.9.



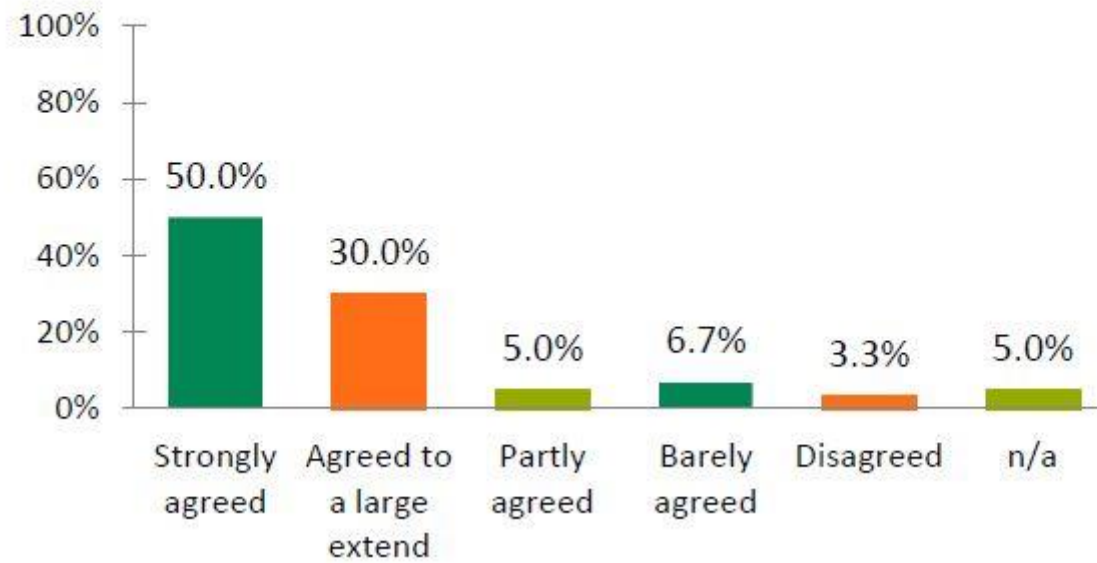
4. *I have learned how parliamentary decision-making processes take place.*

The calculated average value of this rating is 1.2.



5. *I got motivated to start university studies.*

The calculated average value of this rating is 1.7.



Summary

Student Parliament has basic elements to do with evidence-based, science informed, democratic policy making which puts to the fore societal needs alongside commercial and technological possibilities.

We can tailor it as best fits the scale of activity and budget available within Clic-Polit, whilst not losing the essence of what makes it an impactful initiative.



..... So let's keep discussing to get the recipe for success