Bharath Kannan Application

Application for Vice Chair of the Executive Board 2027, with a sector interest in Environment and Development Cooperation

Kuopio campus

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I am Bharath Kannan, a Master's student in Environmental Science at the University of Eastern Finland, and I am applying for Vice Chair of the ISYY Executive Board for 2027. In 2025, I ran for the Representative Council when there were no international voices on it. I won a seat, and in 2026 I became the only international student on the Executive Board, the first in six years. At the SYL annual ball this year, I heard Nelson Mandela's words about never losing hope that great change will come, and I thought about my own journey. Hope is what got me started.

This Vappu, I became the first international student to wash the Veljmies statue, a tradition at the heart of ISYY for more than 50 years. It showed me what it feels like to belong to something bigger. I want every student to feel that in everyday student life. UEF has about 2,000 international students and aims to triple that number by 2030. Still, Finnish and international students often stay in their own bubbles. I want to change that.

On the Board, I worked with International Affairs and Environment and Development Cooperation, and I learned a lot from student unions across Finland. A session on multilingualism showed me how much language decides who feels welcome and who takes part. I raised a smoother transition to working life for international students with our Vice Rector. Outside ISYY, as a board member of the North Savo Entrepreneurship Society, I work on bringing Finnish and international students together around entrepreneurship. This matters for Finland too. About half of international graduates find work here, so learning from each other already at the university is important. It carries into working life and into society.

ISYY has never had an international student as Vice Chair or Chair. I see that as a reason to make a bold decision. As Vice Chair, I will support the Chair and the Board in delivering the Action Plan and step in wherever the Board needs me. In the April parliamentary elections, I will work to make sure ISYY's election goals are heard and that students' concerns, including those of international students, are part of that conversation. I will also bring in the best practices other student unions use to include international students in their languages, working groups and stakeholder meetings. The goal is simple: more students taking part, and better decisions for all students.

As a Master's student in Environmental Science, I will build on ISYY's Environmental Programme. First, I will calculate ISYY's own carbon footprint, so our goals are based on real numbers. Then I will push for more plant-based options on campus and for sustainability studies in every degree, so all students learn what sustainability means and start taking action.

I am learning Finnish and will keep improving alongside the role. I am open to feedback, and I enjoy working with the whole Board, the Representative Council and the staff. I am ready to serve ISYY again and help make it a place where every student belongs. I would be proud to be the first international Vice Chair, and to make sure I am not the last.

Thank you for considering my application.