

The Action Plan of the Student Union of the University of Eastern Finland for 2016

Representative Council's preliminary debate on 19 Sep 2015
Further amended by the Executive Board 20 Sep–5 Nov 2015
Consultation Nov 6–20 Nov 2015
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Representative Council decision on 4 Dec 2015

1. Renewing ISYY

The structure of the Student Union (ISYY) will be clarified and its members will be encouraged to participate, organise events and to actively work towards achieving the common goals of the organisation. In 2016, the Student Union (ISYY) will start the process of renewing the operations, finances and strategy of the organisation with the purpose of strengthening the operating capabilities of the Student Union (ISYY) in eastern Finland and building a solid foundation for the future by taking on new fields and challenges.

2. Reorganising SYKETTÄ Services, and the Wellbeing of Students

The organisational structure of the SYKETTÄ services needs to be improved in order to ensure that these services may be provided in the long term. Areas of focus in 2016 will be organising the services better and more clearly, allocating funds more efficiently, and managing the distribution of the various tasks and responsibilities. In 2016, the ongoing development process of the SYKETTÄ services will continue based on user feedback.

3. Preparing for the 2017 Municipal Elections

The students of eastern Finland should start preparing for the municipal elections of spring 2017 well in-advance. ISYY, in cooperation with the stakeholders, will reach out to the municipal organisations of the political parties and try to achieve the municipal election goals set by the Representative Council.

In 2016, the Student Union (ISYY) will strive to ensure that the elections will be effectively promoted to students. Especially in 2016, the Student Union (ISYY) will focus on securing polling stations on the campuses and encouraging students to stand as a candidate in the elections.

4. Towards International Student Culture

In 2016, ISYY will push the University of Eastern Finland to raise the allocated funds for Finnish language courses and career planning services for international students. ISYY will actively support and communicate with the Finnish Friend Club to ensure its continuity. ISYY and UEF will join forces to help the asylum seekers of Savo-Karelia.

5. Students' Role in a Large-Scale Change of Operating Culture

The focal points of the project are adapting to the changing requirements of the university's

learning environments and working life, and the role of student representatives as a part of the constantly evolving university. ISYY will work closely with UEF in order to reach the goals set for a high quality learning environment. ISYY will continue to support the use and development of the flipped classroom model and push the university to implement practices which prioritise student interests. The Student Union (ISYY) will strive to improve the student services on the whole. In addition, the representatives of the university will be informed of the benefits of exercise and sitting less. Entrepreneurship will also be promoted more on campuses.

6. Home Sweet Home

In early 2016, ISYY will conduct a report on the need for additional student housing. ISYY will hire a person to carry out the project if necessary. If the results of the report are in favour of additional student housing, negotiations with student housing organisations and campus cities shall commence. The Executive Board will present the Representative Council a proposal for the budget and plan of action for 2017 based on the report and the negotiations.

1. Renewing ISYY

The future of the Student Union (ISYY) relies on a solid revenue base and predictable finances. ISYY will start the process of devising a new strategy. In 2016, ISYY will estimate the development of its membership in order to operate on a sustainable and predictable basis. In addition to working on the strategy, ISYY will devise a medium-term budget based on the estimated Student Union (ISYY) membership. Long-term finance management and a clear organisational structure enable ISYY to develop into an even stronger force in the field of advocacy in eastern Finland.

In 2016, the structure of the Student Union (ISYY)'s operations and the models of cooperation with stakeholders will be clarified. ISYY will scrutinise its operations and focus its efforts into work that truly serves the Student Union (ISYY) members. Active members at all levels of the organisation will be encouraged to work towards achieving the common goals of the organisation.

The Executive Board, campus committees and staff members will primarily focus on organising key events, and continuing their cooperation with sections and clubs in organising theme weeks and other events. The Executive Board and staff will concentrate their efforts on organisational development of the Student Union (ISYY). Organisers of these events will receive benefits in accordance with the current regulations.

ISYY will continue promoting its brand by having a stronger presence in its events. ISYY will offer its staff and active members training on graphic design in order to maintain the unified image of the organisation. ISYY will strengthen its collaborative efforts with student organisations in order to project a more prominent and welcoming image to its members. ISYY will build its brand by offering merchandise, such as clothes, cloth bags and embroidered patches. A working group will begin to draft ISYY's songbook at the start of the year. The sponsorship work of the student organisations will be further developed, and ISYY will provide the student organisations meeting rooms near the office, which should improve the communications between campuses.

With the intent of having Uljas serve the Student Union (ISYY) members better, Uljas will be brought closer to students by offering student organisations more opportunities to produce material for the magazine. The usability and sharing options of the online version of the magazine will be developed so that Uljas may reach ISYY members better. ISYY will gradually move Uljas online so that by the end of the next term of the Representative Council Uljas will be ready and prepared to be moved online in its entirety.

2. Reorganising SYKETTÄ Services, and the Wellbeing of Students

In 2016, ISYY will continue to collaborate with its partners (UEF, SAVONIA, KARELIA, MAMK, SAVOTTA, POKA, MAMOK) with the intent of finding the best means to organise the SYKETTÄ services on the three campuses, all campuses together or as separate units. ISYY will lead the research, if necessary. The organising of these services in 2016 will be built on the groundwork laid in 2015.

The objective is to secure the future of the SYKETTÄ services, for many years to come, by early 2017. This will be achieved by making sustainable decisions and concluding contracts.

In 2016, the SYKETTÄ management groups in Kuopio and Joensuu will guide, supervise and lead the SYKETTÄ sports services on the campuses. Persons with decision-making authority on financial and operational matters within their groups, therefore able to exert their influence on decisions concerning the future, will comprise the management groups. ISYY will appoint its representatives for the management groups.

Student organisations will strengthen their collaborative efforts regarding sports services, so there may be a common consensus on the distribution of responsibilities and services and how to provide these services. Students who exercise rarely or not at all comprise an important target audience for the SYKETTÄ services.

The Executive Board will further develop the successful student peer and tutor method, in which students volunteer to organise sports events, cultural and physical activities, and culture tours around the campus cities. These activities strengthen the collaborative efforts between various parties, while keeping students motivated in their studies and everyday life. Sports 'appro', where students are encouraged to take part in sports activities, is one example of how ISYY promotes and organises low entry level sports activities.

Student focused activities enrich campus life and are an important part of a healthy student community. Community and students' club activities are born of students' needs, develop quickly and are important in introducing students to other social activities. Neither student organisations nor the Student Union (ISYY) alone are able to organise low entry level activities in the extent which would allow all members to find their place in the university community. Therefore, in 2016, ISYY will allocate more funds to clubs and encourage members to establish new clubs and to apply for general or project grants.

3. Preparing for the 2017 Municipal Elections

The window of opportunity for student activity to make an impact on municipal matters is prior to the elections, not during or after them. The purpose of this project is to recognise and take advantage of the specific opportunities that the Student Union (ISYY) has for making an impact in the municipal elections. What is learned as a result of this process may be used to the Student Union (ISYY)'s advantage in the future. This project also entails procedures which have already been set in motion in 2016, and which will help to promote the municipal elections among students as much as possible in spring 2017. The municipal election themes of ISYY and the student unions of eastern Finland have been detailed in the municipal policy platform.

The municipal organisations of political parties will draft their municipal election platforms throughout the year 2016, which means that this is the ideal window of opportunity for ISYY to make a significant impact. ISYY representatives will promote and advocate student interests by influencing the representatives of the municipal organisations of political parties to take students into account in their election platforms. For instance, students' role in building the future, and the fact that students represent a significant portion of all voters, should be emphasised in advocacy work. If the advocacy work is successful, and the parties address these matters in their municipal election platforms, these topics will also be a part of the public discussion prior to the elections. The municipal election goals set for higher education students have been defined in the municipal policy platform, approved by the Representative Council in 2015.

The Student Union (ISYY) will work with local student unions prior to the municipal elections whenever possible as the goals of all higher education students are nearly identical at a municipal level. ISYY will actively collaborate with SYL regarding municipal matters as SYL advocates student interests nationally, which in turn supports the municipal elections advocacy work done by ISYY and other local student unions.

ISYY should start the promotion of the municipal elections in autumn 2016 to ensure that the elections will gain enough publicity among students in spring 2017. In autumn 2016, ISYY will also actively work with the central election committees in order to secure a polling station on each campus of the University of Eastern Finland. This would help in increasing voter turnout among students. ISYY may also allow some of its facilities to be used as a polling station.

The municipal election nominations should be in full swing near the end of 2016. ISYY will encourage students to stand as a candidate or participate in the elections by supporting other candidates in order to ensure that student interests will be well-represented in the decision making of the campus cities from 2017 to 2021.

We will also keep in contact with municipal decision-makers and collaborate on projects such as Eastern Finland for Students (Opiskelijan Itä-Suomi) and services aimed to help students in seeking employment (Opiskelija töihin).

4. Towards International Student Culture

There is a common consensus in Finland that international students should remain in Finland after their graduation and spend their working life here. Similarly, international students wish to remain in Finland and find employment which would match their degrees and education. There is a course available on Kuopio campus, which offers career planning skills for master's students. ISYY demands more courses like this to be offered across all campuses.

Finnish language courses will further help international students in finding their place in Finnish society, and enable them to succeed in the Finnish labour market. ISYY will continue to push the University of Eastern Finland to allocate more resources towards career planning and counsel services for international students. ISYY will stress the importance of Finnish language courses and push the university to increase both the quantity and quality of these courses to meet academic and professional standards. ISYY will demand the Finnish language courses to be compulsory and sectoral for international students.

ISYY will support and actively engage with the Finnish Friend Club in order to ensure the continuity of the activity and to enable Finnish Friend Club to strengthen its ties with ISYY. ISYY will also support ESN Joensuu and ESN KISA in their negotiations with the University of Eastern Finland concerning the future of Language Café activities. The main objective is to gain more recognition for the Language Café activities, and to ensure that students who have been active in Language Café related activities would gain credit points in return for their efforts.

ISYY will continue their cooperation with the University of Eastern Finland and SYL to help asylum seekers and refugees arriving to Savo-Karelia. SYL will play a key role in achieving the goals set for higher education institutions. ISYY will use these shared objectives and guidelines in its efforts to develop the models and practices used in Savo- and North Karelia. ISYY will push the philosophical faculty to focus more on collaborative efforts and to draw up trainee contracts with the reception centres. Preschool teacher students should have the opportunity to teach asylum seekers reading and writing skills, and class teacher and counselling students should be given the chance to teach other important subjects to the asylum seekers.

5. Students' Role in a Large-Scale Change of Operating Culture

The requirements of higher education and working life are constantly evolving, forcing students to try their best to adapt to these changes. The mission of the University of Eastern Finland is providing the best possible university learning environment by the year 2020. ISYY will help in achieving this goal by continuing its operations and cooperating with stakeholders. The learning environment model is designed to emphasise the best possible physical, psychological and social learning environments for students. The interactive flipped classroom model will be promoted in order to build a better pedagogical culture at the university. Pleasant indoor and outdoor areas are a part of good learning environment, and the Student Union (ISYY) will try to push the university to take social aspects into consideration. For instance, hang-out areas are important for both studying and socialising.

ISYY will strive to be well-informed of university bodies' decisions, which directly and concretely concern students, to ensure that student interests may be looked after. This will be achieved by bringing the student representatives (hallopedit) closer to ISYY and by emphasising the importance of their role. In 2016, student representatives will be central to ISYY's advocacy work with the intent of implementing the practices used among student representatives as part of ISYY's operations.

There will be a group on social media where the 2016–2017 student representatives, and their vice members, may exchange thoughts and ideas. Various meetings and events will also be organised. The student representatives will be kept informed of ISYY's objectives and current events, and they will be encouraged to discuss these matters among their units. The vice members are encouraged to participate in meetings the same way actual members are. This is to ensure their commitment to their duties. Vice members who get involved during the term will be personally tutored by the Student Union (ISYY). It is recommended for student representatives in administrative duties to report to ISYY about matters discussed among working groups.

The Student Union (ISYY) will not only exert its influence with the university, but strives to expand its network to reach businesses. In 2016, ISYY will continue to expand its network to the local entrepreneurs and businesses via Finnish Chambers of Commerce and entrepreneur associations. ISYY will keep its members informed of events or training provided by these parties. ISYY will also promote entrepreneurship at large, thus offering students an opportunity to get acquainted with working life. Clear objectives and guidelines will be established for the working life sector in 2016. In 2016, ISYY will hire academy students as trainees giving students a valuable opportunity to gain work experience and skills.

6. Home Sweet Home

Affordable student housing is an efficient social political means of improving the social security, wellbeing and standard of living of students in the long term.

The availability of affordable student housing in eastern Finland has long been in need of improvement. Studies have shown that Joensuu is one of Finland's most expensive cities to rent an apartment in. Elli, Joensuu's student housing organisation, has faced many issues, such as the lack of private funding and limited capacity, in its efforts to build new student apartments at an adequate pace.

Meanwhile in Kuopio, a project called Savilahti is underway, which will develop the Savilahti campus area into a busy, diverse centre of business, education and recreational activities. Public and private sectors have been estimated to invest nearly a billion euros in the project. The construction work will begin in 2018, with the end date somewhere in the 2020's. Land-use planning is currently underway, and KUOPAS, Kuopio's student housing organisation, will manage the planning of the student apartments.

In early 2016, ISYY will conduct a report on the necessity of additional student housing. If necessary, additional personnel will be hired to help with the project. If the results of the report are in favour of additional student housing, negotiations with the student housing organisations and campus cities shall commence. The Executive Board will present the Representative Council with a proposal for the budget and plan of action for 2017 based on the report and the negotiations.

Report of Continuing Operations

Main Sector

- Stakeholder cooperation: ISYY will actively engage with the administration and management of the university and cities. This will enable the Student Union (ISYY) to maintain its low profile communications and strengthen its profile in decision making. ISYY will seek out new partners.
- Periphery cooperation: ISYY will actively take part in periphery cooperation by attending meetings.
- Recognising members' needs: ISYY will conduct a survey which will collect feedback on Student Union (ISYY)'s services. The survey will cover subject matters such as ISYY's facilities, advocacy work, office services, events and theme weeks.
- Alumnus: ISYY will support and actively develop the alumnus operations.
- Anniversary: At the start of 2016, ISYY will recruit the anniversary organisers (vuosijuhlamestarit), update the invitation list and devise a fundraising plan for the 2017 anniversary.
- Developing the Executive Board: At the start of the year, there will be a discussion on which working practices have proven to be best. Members of the Executive Board will evaluate and report their performance throughout the year, and the main sector will adjust and make improvements based on these reports.

Sector for Academic Affairs

- Learning environments: The Student Union (ISYY) will participate in the development process of university's learning environments and fully support the university's mission to provide the best possible learning environment by 2020. (Learning environments should be ergonomic, unobstructed and modern.)
- Feedback models: The teaching staff of the University of Eastern Finland will be encouraged to gather student feedback and respond to it by improving their teaching methods, for instance. The Student Union (ISYY) will continue to develop its feedback model by strengthening the status of the Smiles and Complaints Week (Hymy- ja valitusviikot) and by improving the website's design to make it easier to give

feedback.

Student representative network: Student representatives and the Student Union (ISYY) will continue their collaborative efforts. ISYY will organise and develop events aimed for the student representatives. The handbook for student representatives will be continually improved.

No tuition fees: ISYY will fight to keep education free for all students. ISYY will also participate in the programme striving to make an impact at a national level, alongside SYL and other national unions.

Sector for Social Policy

Municipal engagement: ISYY will continue to actively engage with the policy and decision makers and important stakeholders in Joensuu, Kuopio and Savonlinna. ISYY will meet with the decision makers and high level officials, especially young people and city councillors who are ISYY members, in all UEF campus cities.

Equality: ISYY's equality programme will be monitored and amended if necessary. ISYY will inform members of the equality programme and keep the programme up-to-date. Student organisation members who are in charge of matters related to social policy will be educated on the subject of equality.

Campaigns: ISYY, collaborating with SPR (Finnish Red Cross), will offer students an opportunity to donate blood. ISYY will participate in UNICEF's Janopäivä (Thirst Day) fundraiser and SPR's Nälkäpäivä (Hunger Day) fundraiser and Nenäpäivä (Red Nose Day).

Sobriety: ISYY will organise alcohol-free hang-out nights and further develop this concept and its marketing. ISYY will actively cooperate with Nyyti. Student and campus organisations will be encouraged to take sobriety into account in their events. ISYY will oversee UEF's sobriety programme and its implementation.

Student housing: ISYY will cooperate with the student housing companies in Joensuu, Kuopio and Savonlinna in order to provide affordable, unrestricted, ecological, easy to access, long-lasting and well-situated student apartments in all campus cities. ISYY will try to ensure that international students would have equal accommodation on all campuses.

Students' wellbeing:

ISYY will push the university to employ an additional student counselling psychologist to meet the risen demand for counsel. Mental health services will be prioritised among the services of the YTHS (FSHS).

Sector for International Affairs

Employment:

ISYY will continue to work towards offering better opportunities for networking and gaining work experience. The university will be pushed to offer more courses and guidance for international students on how to find employment or a trainee contract. The Student Union (ISYY) will increase its efforts with stakeholders regarding chambers of commerce, business organisations, cities, and Ely centres (the Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment).

Implementing Finnish language courses in international students' master's degrees:

ISYY will push faculties to implement compulsory Finnish language courses, which meet professional standards, in international students' degrees. The quality and quantity of these courses will continue to be monitored in collaboration with the language centre by conducting surveys, for example.

Supporting international training and exchange programmes:

ISYY will push faculties to distribute adequate funds and resources for students' international training and exchange programmes. All subjects should have functional exchange programmes. ISYY will support students to independently seek international training positions and faculties to maintain these contacts.

Sector for Recreational Affairs and Sports

Wellbeing Week:

There will be a wellbeing, culture and sports themed week across all campuses in autumn. The event will be held on the same week as the Sports Afternoon. Various services and events provided by the Student Union (ISYY), stakeholders and campus cities will be promoted during the week. ISYY will remind members of the dangers of sitting. One objective is establishing the position of Wellbeing Week as being a reoccurring ISYY event.

Sports Afternoon:

Sports Afternoon is held twice a year and the event will be

developed based on feedback.

Developing sports services: Development of the SYKETTÄ concept will continue. The long term goal is to raise the level of sports services provided on all the campuses to the same level, while keeping unique traits of the campuses in mind.

Sports tutoring: Sports tutoring will continue on all campuses and be developed based on feedback.

Section for recreational affairs and sports: ISYY will continue to develop the section for recreational affairs and sports with the intent of increasing the collaborative efforts between student organisations and clubs.

Communications Sector

Representative Council elections: Representative Council elections will not be held in 2016.

Informing members: Members will be informed via weekly newsletters, the social media and student organisations.

Graphic design guidance: The Student Union (ISYY) will provide training and lectures on graphic design to assist active ISYY members in their work.

ISYY's website: The development of the Student Union (ISYY)'s website will continue based on user feedback and suggestions.

Social media: ISYY will seek to gain a stronger presence on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. The platforms should each have distinctive objectives and roles.

ISYY calendar: ISYY's paper calendar will be improved based on user feedback. The implementation of membership benefits and coupons will be developed.

Tutoring Sector

'Kampusrysäys' and 'Kaupunkisuunnistus': Both events (primarily directed towards new students) will be improved on all campuses.

Tutoring services for master's degree students: Tutoring services for master's degree students will be developed, especially tutors of international master's degree students will receive additional training.

Development Cooperation Sector

Development Cooperation Week: All three campuses will participate in the Development Cooperation Week organised by SYL. At the start of the year, ISYY will appoint coordinators for each campus to plan and organise the Development Cooperation Week. The planning phase and actual content of the Development Cooperation Week will be improved based on prior experience and feedback. One goal for the event is to encourage members to seek information on the subject. In addition, ISYY will inform participants about development cooperation.

Environmental Sector

Theme weeks: ISYY will actively cooperate with UEF by participating in various theme day and theme week events, such as Vesipäivä (Water Day) and Energiasäästöviikko (Energy Saving Week). ISYY will take part in Fair Trade week on week 43.

Facilities: ISYY will cooperate with the facility services of the university to ensure that the Student Union (ISYY) is aware of any renovation projects that the university may undertake. Facilities will be developed to meet students' needs.

Stakeholders: ISYY will follow the guidelines of its existing environmental program and push Kuopio and Savonlinna to become Fair Trade entitled cities. ISYY will influence UEF to divest from fossil fuel producing companies and corporations invested in these companies.