**Equality guide for events**

**Introduction**

This is a guide to be used when arranging SYL events, such as General Assemblies, sector and alumni meetups, and seminars. The aim of the guide is to make sure that everyone can participate in SYL’s events in an equal way regardless of gender, age, origin, nationality, language, religion or conviction, opinion, political activity, trade unionism, family relations, disability, health, sexual orientation or other personal circumstances. Equality is one of SYL’s four values. The aim of this guide is to make sure that this value is also achieved in SYL’s practical activities.

The things listed in this guide relate both to participants and invited guests and speakers. SYL has a clear practice for how to go through equality matters at events. The responsibility for achieving equality lies with every participant, but as the organiser, SYL has the main responsibility for the equality and for intervening if problems arise. For every SYL event, one person will be given responsibility for the equality. SYL encourages student unions to make their own equality guides and supports them in doing so.

When organising events, the following should be taken into consideration:

**General**

* Special dietary requirements will be catered for, and participants will be asked about these when signing up for the event. For all diets, the focus is as much on quality as it is on quantity, and we will make sure that all diets are as easy to access. The ingredients of all foods will be clearly marked.
* There will be a variety of tempting non-alcoholic beverages available, and no one will have to choose not to attend an evening event, for example, because they do not drink alcohol.
* Political and religious opinions will be discussed in a respectful manner. Aligning oneself with a political party or being politically independent are respected as equal choices. This applies to the convictions and opinions of both the participants and the invited guests.
* Be aware that the actions of people may be motivated by their religious beliefs or their convictions. Be aware of this when planning the schedule of the event by accommodating breaks for prayer, different methods of transport, and the need for privacy.
* Everyone’s privacy will be respected, and no assumptions will be made about anyone’s private life. No one will be forced to share personal details, such as details about their family situation, against their will. The atmosphere must be one where everyone can share details about their lives and the choices they have made if they wish to do so, and no one feels the need to hide anything.
* Language and humour must be used in a correct manner that does not offend others, and it must be acknowledged that people react to humour in different ways. People have the right to point out if they find a term hurtful or offensive. We will intervene if inappropriate language is used or the humour misses the mark.
* This equality guide will be sent to participants and speakers ahead of time. At the start of the event, the equality guidelines will be repeated for the benefit of the participants and speakers.
* SYL’s equality guidelines and the needs these may lead to will be discussed ahead of time with the venue and any external parties (caterers etc.).

**Gender equality**

* We will avoid using heteronormative language and take gender equality into account both in our communications and during our events.
* Everyone has the right to express or not express their gender in the way they choose.
* If questionnaires include questions about gender, the options “I do not want to answer” and “other” or a free text field where people can fill out their gender themselves will also be included.
* The representation of different genders will be noted when speakers are invited to appear at events outside the office or at the community’s own events.
* We will pay attention to gendered division of labour (e.g. who moves tables in meeting rooms and who acts as secretary in working groups) and aim to reduce it.
* We will pay attention to the availability of unisex toilets.
* We will not accept sexual harassment or inappropriate behaviour in any form, and we will be aware of the fact that this can also take place outside the official programme. We will intervene as soon as we become aware of inappropriate behaviour. Those who are subjected to such behaviour will be given the chance to process their experiences with someone from SYL if they wish to do so. If needed, they will also be referred to further help.
* We will assess the effects that our activities and decisions have on different genders.

**Accessibility**

* We will make the aim of each section of the event clear to all participants ahead of time. Is the purpose for example to educate, brainstorm or make decisions, and should participants read up on the subject ahead of time?
* We will create an atmosphere where it is easy for everyone to ask questions and ask for more information.
* We will make sure that the schedules for the events leave sufficient time for discussion and questions.
* Exhaustive and informative invitations will be sent out well ahead of time. If the event requires registration or participation in advance, there will be clear instructions outlining this.
* We will inform participants of any changes ahead of time, and again at the start of the event. If changes occur during the event, everyone will be made aware of this. At the start of the event we will tell participants how they will be informed of any changes, e.g. via email. We will make sure that the chosen method of communication will reach all participants.
* If there are materials used at the event which the organisers want everyone to read before the event, these will be sent out well ahead of time, in three languages if required, so that everyone has plenty of time to read them. This will profit everyone, and it is also essential to enable those with visual impairments to participate.
* If possible, the slides and other materials used at the event will be handed out during the event to make it easier to follow the presentations.
* We will make sure the visual presentations and other materials are accessible, e.g. the contrast is sufficient and the font sizes are large enough.
* Whenever possible, we will offer the option to participate remotely.
* We will take into account that some participants are travelling from far away, and we will plan the schedule so that everyone can participate in the full programme. When planning the event, we will check public transport timetables ahead of time.
* We will include regular breaks in the events to meet people’s varying needs. We will include information about the breaks in the invitations, and at the start of any working group sessions we will let everyone know when the breaks will be held. We will avoid organising any programme or meetings during the breaks. We will make sure that healthy food is served regularly.
* The abbreviations used in discussions will be explained, and we will aim to always discuss things in as clear terms as possible.
* If the event includes an evening programme, we will make sure that everyone is able to participate in that.
* Participants will be given the option of staying in a single room e.g. for an extra charge, which may make it easier for everyone to attend.
* We will inform participants ahead of time what language will be used at the event.

**Physical accessibility**

When booking venues for events we must be aware of accessibility issues. We will focus on the following:

* A microphone will be used at events whenever possible.
* Everyone must be able to access the venue and move around it e.g. with a wheelchair.
* The signage at the venue should be clear, easy to read and not glossy. If the venue does not already have signage with information e.g. on accessible entrances, SYL will bring its own signage.
* The venue should have an accessible toilet.
* The venue should have step-free access.
* We will make sure that there are gently sloping ramps near any stairs at the venue.
* The lighting should be sufficient and glare-free.
* The acoustics of the venue should be good.
* The venue should have hearing aids.
* The indoor air and ventilation should be good.
* Everyone at SYL will be trained in using assistive technology and where the accessible entrances are.
* If the meals or evening programme of the event are organised in a separate location, we will also make sure that this is accessible.
* Finding accessible locations is a high priority. If we cannot guarantee full accessibility, we will explain in the invitation in which ways the venue is not accessible. In any case, the invitations will include information on whether the venue is accessible or not.
* Right at the start of the event, participants will be given the opportunity to leave their luggage in a safe place for storage.

**Ethnic and language minorities**

* We will respect people’s right to wear traditional dress or religious symbols.
* The communications for the event will show off the diversity of students and the student culture.
* We will not make assumptions regarding people’s language skills. Instead, we can ask on the invitation whether or not everyone can manage in Finnish. At the start of each year, SYL’s different sectors can discuss their potential need for translation and interpreting services.
* When taking registrations, we will find out if interpreting will be needed. Interpreting will be organised if required. If there are interpreters present at the event, the participants will be instructed to speak calmly so that the interpreters are able to interpret everything.
* Swedish-speakers will be encouraged to use their mother tongue. Attitudes towards other languages will also be positive, and it will be easy for people to use their mother tongue. Even if the material being discussed is in Finnish, participants can still comment or discuss it in Swedish.
* The event will be organised so that it is also possible to participate in English.
* The atmosphere is such that it is easy for people to ask questions to make sure they have understood correctly.

**The following checklists can be used at different stages of organising the event and during the event itself when we want to make sure that equality is achieved.**

**A checklist for planning the event:**

* The venue is accessible.
* Plan the schedule so that everyone can participate. Schedule a sufficient number of breaks.
* Send out detailed information about the event well ahead of time.
* Send out information about the event in three languages, and aim to provide all materials in three languages.
* Be aware of representing both genders when inviting in external speakers.
* Go through the equality guidelines and the needs that arise from these, e.g. when it comes to signage, with the venue and potential external parties.
* Make sure that special dietary requirements can be met.
* Decide which one of SYL’s representatives will be in charge of equality at the event.

**A checklist for inviting participants to the event:**

* Make a trilingual registration form (Finnish, Swedish, English).
* Ask participants about their dietary requirements when registering.
* Ask participants about their accessibility requirements when registering.
* Ask participants about their language, translation and interpreting requirements and other special requirements when registering.
* If questions about gender are asked on the registration form, include the options “I do not want to answer” and “other”.

**A checklist for during the event:**

* Go through SYL’s equality practice at the start of the event and announce the person in charge of equality.
* Make sure all technology is working before the participants arrive.
* Stick to planned breaks even if there are changes to the schedule.
* Inform all participants of any changes.
* Arrange the catering and make sure that those with special dietary requirements and those who do not drink alcohol are also catered for.
* Intervene if inappropriate behaviour occurs.

**A checklist for after the event:**

* Collect anonymous feedback in three languages.
* Also collect feedback on how well equality was achieved.
* Send the materials from the presentations to the participants straight after the event.