

# SYL's Plan of Work 2020

SYL's Plan of Work 2020 focuses on the key areas of its operations. The Plan of Work is a rather comprehensive description of how the organisation's resources will be used in 2020, but it is not a description of all ongoing operations.

The Plan of Work is divided into two sections: Advocacy and Organisational development. These sections contain thematic subsections, which are NOT arranged in order of priority. The subsections start with an introduction, which does not describe the actual operations, but rather provides background for the objectives and measures of the subsection. The most important elements of the Plan of Work are the subsections' objectives, the measures for 2020, and the measures for coming years.

## Advocacy

### Healthy students

The services of the Finnish Student Health Service (FSHS) will be extended to all higher education students in January 2021. The preparation of this major expansion will continue in 2020 in cooperation with FSHS, Kela, SYL and SAMOK.

Prime Minister Sanna Marin's government programme includes an objective of starting a free contraception experiment for those under 25 years of age. The results of the experiment will show whether it will be consolidated at the end of the parliamentary term. 10 million euros have been earmarked for the experiment.

In addition, the mental health strategy prepared by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health is expected to be completed by the end of 2019. This strategy will be used to guide mental health work until 2030, and the Marin government will base its own mental health programme on it.

Objective:

**Services used to support and care for students' overall health are accessible, and of high quality and open to all students. Students are taken into account in the free contraception experiment and in the mental health strategy and its implementation.**

#### Measures for 2020:

- SYL supports the high-quality expansion of FSHS's services. SYL will work to ensure the linguistic accessibility of all services in Finnish, Swedish and English in the FSHS expansion.
- SYL contributes to the success of the free contraception experiment for students together with FSHS.
- SYL continues the advocacy work started in 2019 to improve student mental health support structures and services for mental health problems. We pay special attention to the implementation of the national mental health strategy and the mental health programme of the Marin government.
- SYL continues cooperation with key stakeholders to promote mental health and to overcome the stigma associated with mental disorders.

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- SYL contributes to the data collection of the higher education student health survey by supporting the student unions in their communications. We make use of the survey results in the planning of advocacy work.
  - SYL will prepare for the transition of exchange students away from the scope of FSHS's services and will contribute to the continued availability of accessible and high-quality health services for exchange students.

43 **Measures for coming years:**

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- SYL monitors the success of the FSHS expansion, further promotes the development of services, and supports the student unions in their communication regarding the FSHS expansion.
  - SYL ensures that students are taken into account in the national mental health strategy implemented through mental health programmes until 2030.
  - SYL promotes the consolidation of free contraception after the trial period for all students covered by FSHS's services.
  - SYL ensures a smooth interaction and cooperation between FSHS and the student unions.

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52 **Social security reform and students**

53 The social security reform is one of the biggest projects of the Marin government. The current social security  
54 for students consists of the study grant and the general housing allowance. Students can also take out a  
55 student loan. The debt-free amount of money left over after housing expenses is currently not enough to  
56 ensure full-time studying. SYL's long-term goal is a basic income that enables normal living.

57 The Marin government programme also includes an entry about making the general housing allowance more  
58 individual-based while maintaining the same cost level. SYL will also look into the problems related to the  
59 general housing allowance and Kela's interpretation of students living together as well as the need to solve  
60 these problems.

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62 Objective:

63 **As a population group, students are involved in the general reform of the social security system and related**  
64 **experiments. Student social security will be developed to support full-time studying without the need to**  
65 **get into debt. SYL will map out the biggest problems related to the general housing allowance and**  
66 **contribute to solving them.**

67 **Measures for 2020:**

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- SYL influences the general reform of the social security system in its early stages to ensure genuine student involvement. SYL's primary goal in the reform is a basic income that enables normal living.
  - SYL will keep the biggest challenges related to the general housing allowance from the perspective of communal living in the spotlight and find solutions to these challenges. SYL will do advocacy work to ensure the implementation of these solutions.
  - SYL will work to make sure that the examination and harmonisation of the basic security benefits mentioned in the government programme will also concern study-related social benefits.
  - SYL will actively map out other lobbying, non-governmental and expert organisations in support of the public debate on student social security.

- 77 • SYL will keep the perspective of lifelong learning in the spotlight when reforming the social security  
78 system.

79 **Measures for coming years:**

- 80 • The reform of the social security system will be done in stages and will take several years. The new  
81 social security system will make it possible for people to combine studies, work, entrepreneurship  
82 and family life even when they are ill without endangering their basic livelihood. SYL is actively  
83 involved in the reform work throughout the process.

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85 **Making free education a point of pride for Finland once again**

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87 The tuition fees for students outside the EU and EEA, which came into effect in the autumn of 2017, were a  
88 major setback for the work done for free education. There is still very little information on the effects of the  
89 tuition fees. SYL will follow the evaluation and research work done in the Ministry and the development of  
90 the open university from the perspective of free education, among other things.

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92 Objective:

93 **SYL's expertise in tuition fees and their effects is comprehensive and up-to-date. The long-term objective**  
94 **is to completely abolish tuition fees.**

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96 **Measures for 2020:**

- 97 • We work actively to abolish tuition fees in accordance with SYL's policies and based on researched  
98 data.
- 99 • SYL increases the appreciation of free education and highlights the negative effects of tuition fees in  
100 the public and political debate. SYL influences policy-making together with the stakeholders.
- 101 • SYL will increase its expertise on tuition fees through research and produce material for the student  
102 unions to support their advocacy work.
- 103 • SYL will monitor the educational and social policy implications caused by the possible Brexit. SYL will  
104 also advocate themes related to the Brexit process concerning students, which include tuition fees,  
105 residence permit issues, and study-related social issues.

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107 **Measures for coming years:**

- 108 • The importance of free education will remain a hot topic in the public discussion, and the political  
109 climate will turn clearly against tuition fees. SYL and the university student movement are prepared  
110 to campaign for the abolishment of tuition fees.

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112 **Developing competencies throughout life**

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114 When it comes to higher education, lifelong learning is one of the most important focus points of the Marin  
115 government programme. The platform-based model and the open university are becoming more and more  
116 important when talking about lifelong learning in universities. The key issues in lifelong learning are the

117 structures of the system, the resources available, and supporting the income of students, i.e. enabling  
118 learning.  
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120 Objective:

121 **Higher education is developed towards a student-oriented and platform-based direction. Lifelong learning**  
122 **is accessible to everyone, and there are enough resources to organise lifelong learning without taking**  
123 **funding away from the education of graduate students.**  
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125 **Measures for 2020:**

- 126 • SYL works together with the student unions and stakeholders to help higher education institutions  
127 offer their education more widely both as degree education as well as lifelong learning through a  
128 shared platform.
- 129 • SYL will do its part to make sure that adequate resources are allocated for lifelong learning for both  
130 education providers and students.
- 131 • As the role of the open university evolves, SYL will help make open higher education a meaningful  
132 part of lifelong learning and make sure that free graduate education is not endangered.  
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134 **Measures for coming years:**

- 135 • Structures supporting lifelong learning, such as free pathways for lifelong learning, and financing  
136 model indicators, such as the calculation of study credits, will be taken forward during the  
137 preparation related to lifelong learning.

## 138 **Education is for everyone**

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140 The Marin government programme emphasises education and equality. A report on educational policy and  
141 an accessibility plan for education will be prepared during the government term. The government will  
142 increase the number of new students admitted to higher education institutions and develop student  
143 admissions and alternative pathways to graduate education. The transition of higher education graduates to  
144 the labour market will also be made more fluent, and particular attention will be paid to the employment of  
145 international students.  
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147 Objective:

148 **The Finnish education system guarantees equal access to education for all regardless of background and**  
149 **equal opportunities for everyone to receive support for and guidance on completing their studies. All**  
150 **students have good opportunities to increase their working life skills during their studies.**  
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152 **Measures for 2020:**

- 153 • SYL will contribute to the creation of a report on educational policy and the creation of an  
154 accessibility plan.
- 155 • Together with the student unions, SYL will participate in the development of student admissions with  
156 an emphasis on the importance of equal opportunities and acknowledging disciplinary characteristics  
157 in the admissions. In the development work, SYL also emphasises the importance of lifting quotas for  
158 first-time applicants and making studying easier for transfer students.

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- SYL will contribute to making the transitions between education and working life as smooth and accessible as possible. When talking about the transition of students to working life, SYL will keep the value of education and working life skills in the spotlight.- SYL will facilitate the creation of national principles for good and equal internship support practices together with the student unions and other stakeholders.
  - SYL will do its part to make the transition of international students into working life and their integration into society easier.

167 **Measures for coming years:**

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- SYL will contribute to making access to higher education easier, especially for immigrants, people with immigrant backgrounds, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, and to creating structures that promote this.
  - SYL will lobby the government’s mid-term framework and budget preparation to make sure that the investments in students and education are implemented in full and that adequate resources are allocated to carry out the reforms.

176 **SYL as an EU advocate**

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178 The political operating environment of the European Union has changed. A new European Parliament was  
179 elected in the spring of 2019, and a new Commission will be elected in the autumn of 2019. The role of the  
180 European Education Area project (EEA) will become more significant in the coming years as Erasmus+ funding  
181 increases significantly.

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183 Objective:

184 **SYL is a leading expert in Finland on EU’s educational policy.**

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186 **Measures for 2020:**

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- SYL will establish direct and confidential relationships with Finnish Members of the European Parliament, other politicians and officials in various EU institutions.
  - SYL will follow the development of the European Education Area and influence the development.
  - SYL will create an advocacy programme for EU’s educational policy.
  - SYL will influence the funding of the Erasmus+ programme.
  - SYL will follow the development of the European Student Identifier and influence the development.

194 **Measures for coming years:**

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- SYL will follow the educational policy carried out in the EU and influence it.
  - SYL will implement its advocacy programme for EU’s educational policy.

198 **2021 municipal elections**

199 The municipal elections will be held in April 2021. The voter turnout of young people in the municipal  
200 elections has been very low: 35% of people aged 18–24 and 43% of people aged 25–34 exercised their right

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201 to vote in the 2017 municipal elections. Municipal elections play a key role in the local advocacy work of the  
202 student movement, and SYL's role is to support the student unions in their own electoral advocacy work.

203 Objective:

204 **The student unions and SYL are prepared to carry out a municipal election campaign at the end of the year.**

205 **Measures for 2020:**

- 206 • SYL supports the student unions in local preparations and municipal election advocacy work by e.g.  
207 organising training.
- 208 • SYL plans the actions to be carried out during the election spring and the election campaign so that  
209 the campaign will be ready in early 2021.
- 210 • SYL works together with the student movement to prepare for the elections. We consider other  
211 potential partnerships.
- 212 • The university student movement will influence the municipal election programmes of the different  
213 political parties.

214 **Measures for coming years:**

- 215 • SYL will support the student unions in the implementation of their electoral advocacy work.
- 216 • SYL implements an election campaign before the municipal elections, which is also targeted towards  
217 international students with the right to vote.

## 218 219 **Organisational development**

220 **Making the fight against climate and environmental crises a natural part of SYL's**  
221 **operations**

222 According to the Youth Barometer 2018, 67% of young people feel uncertain or insecure because of the  
223 climate change. Climate change and other environmental problems are the biggest challenge of the 2020s,  
224 and tackling them is a major intergenerational policy issue.

225 As a student advocacy organisation, SYL does not possess particular climate expertise, and climate issues  
226 have so far been addressed on a small scale and separately from other activities.

227 Objective:

228 **Fighting climate and environmental crises is an integrated and natural part of all of SYL's operations. SYL's**  
229 **own operations are as environmentally friendly as possible, and the environmental aspect is taken into**  
230 **account in SYL's advocacy work.**

231 **Measures for 2020:**

- 232 • SYL maps the operations of all sectors from a climate and environmental perspective. SYL brings up  
233 the fight against environmental problems in existing advocacy work where appropriate.
- 234 • SYL develops a plan for reducing and offsetting emissions environmental impacts caused by SYL's  
235 own operations.
- 236 • We develop opportunities to participate in SYL's events remotely.

237 **Measures for coming years:**

- 238     • Fighting climate destruction and environmental problems has become an integrated and permanent  
239     part of SYL's operations and advocacy work where appropriate.  
240     • SYL's own operations are carbon neutral and cause as little harm to the environment as possible.

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242 **SYL's strategy**

243 The purpose of the strategy is to determine SYL's development needs and the key areas of its operations at  
244 any given time to make advocacy work as effective and well-resourced as possible.

245 In the document hierarchy, the strategy is at the same level as SYL's Policy Paper, but it focuses on different  
246 things. The strategic work was started in 2019 in accordance with the Plan of Work. The student unions are  
247 also represented in the strategy working group.

248 Objective:

249 **The strategy will be approved at the 2020 General Assembly.**

250 **Measures for 2020:**

- 251     • SYL actively involves the student unions in the preparation of the strategy in all stages.  
252     • SYL and the strategy working group established in 2019 will work on the strategy to present it to the  
253     General Assembly for approval in 2020.

254 **Measures for coming years:**

- 255     • SYL's strategy will be used as a tool for planning all of SYL's operations.  
256     • The realisation of the strategy will be monitored using indicators defined during the planning work.

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258 **SYL 100 years in 2021**

259 In 2021, SYL will turn 100 years old. The manuscript of the historical publication will be completed in the  
260 spring of 2020, and the final book will be ready for publication in early 2021. Fundraising was started in the  
261 autumn of 2019.

262 The financial implications of the anniversary year are described in more detail in the Medium-Term Financial  
263 Plan, which was last approved at the 2018 General Assembly.

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265 Objective:

266 **The fundraising for SYL's 100th anniversary is profitable. The 100th anniversary party has been planned  
267 and prepared well in advance. The project will make SYL more well-known.**

268 **Measures for 2020:**

- 269     • SYL allocates sufficient staff resources for the coordination of fundraising.  
270     • SYL hires an anniversary party coordinator to organise the 100th anniversary party.  
271     • SYL communicates actively about the upcoming anniversary year. Communication is goal-oriented  
272     and reaches the academic communities and key stakeholders.

273 **Measures for coming years:**

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- The *SYL 100 Years* historical publication will be published in early 2021.
  - The anniversary party will be held at the Finlandia Hall on 6 March 2021.
  - The jubilee year will be carried out in a sustainable way from an economic, social and ecological perspective.
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278 **Developing the operations of the European Students' Union**

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280 SYL's European umbrella organisation, the European Students' Union (ESU), is a major player in EU's

281 educational policy. ESU has 45 member organisations in 39 countries. ESU advocates the matters of higher

282 education students both in the European Commission and in the European Parliament. ESU is an important

283 and competent partner for SYL, and it will open doors also for SYL's EU advocacy work.

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285 Objective:

286 **SYL will contribute to making the European Students' Union an even more influential EU advocacy**

287 **organisation. The European Students' Union is a close partner to SYL.**

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289 **Measures for 2020:**

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- SYL will maintain and develop close relationships with ESU's management and Board.
  - SYL will work actively and systematically to develop ESU's EU advocacy.
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293 **Measures for coming years:**

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- SYL will monitor the success of the advocacy work in 2020 and set new development goals if needed.
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296 **An equal and feminist university student movement**

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298 In 2016, SYL stated in its Policy Paper that it is a feminist organisation. SYL's operating principle is to provide

299 an equal opportunity for participation and influencing. With this in mind, it is also important for SYL to

300 promote and maintain multilingual operations and accessibility so that every member of the university

301 student movement has an equal opportunity to participate in the movement.

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303 Objective:

304 **Equality work is a consolidated part of all of SYL's and the university student movement's operations, and**

305 **it is actively promoted. Every member of the university student movement is able to participate in and**

306 **influence the activities of the Union under the same conditions as everyone else in Finnish, Swedish or**

307 **English.**

308 **Measures for 2020:**

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- Discussing themes related to equality from a feminist point of view in all SYL events.
  - Following the realisation of SYL's equality guidelines and utilising feedback to promote equality at SYL's events and in its operations.
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GENERAL ASSEMBLY 15–16 NOVEMBER 2019, LAHTI

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- SYL will find appropriate practices to support the student unions' harassment contact persons by e.g. working together with the Finnish youth cooperation organisation Allianssi. SYL enables regular peer support for the harassment contact persons.
  - SYL will develop its practices to enable even better participation in the Union's activities in Finnish, Swedish or English.
  - SYL will develop the General Assembly practices and personal selections at the General Assembly together with the student unions. In the spring of 2020, SYL will evaluate how successful the process of personal selections was at the General Assembly 2019. SYL asks the student unions' representative councils for their opinion about the personal selection procedures of the General Assembly 2020.
  - SYL will communicate more in English. SYL also demands that the Ministry of Education and Culture communicates in English.

324 **Measures for coming years:**

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- SYL consolidates and develops new practices further to promote equality in SYL's and the university student movement's operations. The development work will be based on new information, received feedback and the needs of the student unions.
  - SYL offers the student unions support and training to develop the activities of the central election committees so that the student unions can prevent and encounter inappropriate electoral behaviour and promote equality.