

SYL's Plan of Work 2021

SYL's Plan of Work 2021 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 2021, 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 2021 and the measures for coming years.

Advocacy work in 2020 was strongly marked by the coronavirus and its effects on issues such as student admissions, the organisation of education and student well-being. The effects of the coronavirus on students and higher education will be visible also in the advocacy work in 2021.

Advocacy

Healthy students

The coronavirus situation has affected the everyday lives and well-being of many students. The services of the Finnish Student Health Service (FSHS) will be extended to all higher education degree students studying in Finland in January 2021. The data collection for the Finnish Student Health and Wellbeing Survey (KOTT) will be carried out in spring 2021. The social and health care reform is moving forward on the basis of the draft law presented in 2020.

Objective:

Services used to support and care for students' overall health and well-being are accessible and of high quality. FSHS's student health discussion model is implemented and particular attention is paid to the effects of the coronavirus on the mental health of students. Communication regarding the FSHS expansion and the new health care payment practices is comprehensive enough and also linguistically accessible.

Measures for 2021:

- SYL will follow the accessibility of health care services for international exchange students with the expansion of FSHS and support the student unions in their local advocacy work.
- SYL will follow the effect of the FSHS 2021 expansion on student healthcare during the transition phase. We will react to any possible deficiencies or problems.
- SYL will follow the progress of the implementation of the student health discussion model in cooperation with FSHS and the student unions.
- SYL will do advocacy work to make students' mental health services more accessible by lobbying for sufficient resources for FSHS and accessible remote health care services, as well as by promoting sufficient personnel for student health care services and by emphasising the need to increase the relative number of medical doctors, among other things. SYL will

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- 39 pay particular attention to the effects of the coronavirus and the resulting special
40 arrangements on the mental health of students.
- 41 • SYL will help collect data for the Finnish Student Health and Wellbeing Survey (KOTT) by
42 supporting the student unions in their communication, among other things. SYL will make
43 use of research results when planning its advocacy work.
 - 44 • SYL observes the fluency of the student health care payments. SYL will do advocacy work
45 to ensure that the payment process is fluent and that students are kept informed, preventing
46 additional costs from incurring on students.
 - 47 • SYL will ensure a smooth interaction and cooperation between FSHS and the student unions.
48 The goal is that FSHS publishes its waiting times publicly at regular intervals.

49 **Measures for coming years:**

- 50 • SYL will ensure a smooth interaction and cooperation between FSHS and the student unions
51 and guarantees students sufficient opportunities to influence the various organs of FSHS.
 - 52 • SYL will be actively involved in the monitoring and development of the FSHS expansion
53 together with FSHS, Kela and SAMOK.
 - 54 • SYL will follow the implementation of the mental health policy strategy for 2020–2030 by the
55 Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.
 - 56 • SYL will follow the progress of the social and health care reform.
 - 57 • SYL will do advocacy work to make sure that students in all universities have access to a
58 study psychologist and can get an appointment within one month of contacting the
59 psychologist.
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61 **Social security reform and students**

62 The current social security for students consists of the study grant and the general housing
63 allowance. Students can also take out a student loan. The debt-free amount of money left over after
64 housing expenses is currently not enough to ensure full-time studying. Many students are covered
65 by other social benefits, and the suitability of these benefits for studying varies greatly. SYL's long-
66 term goal is a basic income that enables normal living. The Marin government programme includes
67 an entry about making the general housing allowance more individual-based. We will also look into
68 the problems related to the general housing allowance and Kela's interpretation of students living
69 together as well as the need to solve these problems.

70 Objective:

71 **As a population group, students are involved in the reform of the social security system and**
72 **related experiments. Student social security is developed to support full-time studying**
73 **without the need to get into debt, and different life situations are taken into account when**
74 **doing this. The general housing allowance is developed to a more individual-based direction.**

75 **Measures for 2021:**

- 76 • SYL will actively influence the reformation of the social security system and offer solutions to
77 various parties of the Social Security Committee through active communication.
- 78 • SYL will keep the biggest challenges related to the general housing allowance from the
79 perspective of communal living in the spotlight and offer solutions to these challenges. SYL
80 will do advocacy work to ensure the implementation of these solutions.

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- 81 • SYL will work to make sure that the examination and harmonisation of the basic security
82 benefits mentioned in the government programme will also concern study-related social
83 benefits.
84 • SYL will keep the perspective of lifelong learning in the spotlight when reforming the social
85 security system.

86 **Measures for coming years:**

- 87 • The reform of the social security system will be done in stages and will take several years.
88 The new social security system will make it possible for people to combine studies, work,
89 entrepreneurship, unemployment and family life even when they are ill without endangering
90 their basic livelihood. SYL will have an active influence on the reform throughout the entire
91 reform work.

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93 **Well-resourced and student-centred education system**

94 The report on educational policy, the accessibility plan for education and the report on university
95 democracy, all mentioned in the Marin government programme, will be completed during 2021. The
96 government aims to increase the relative number of higher education graduates in the population as
97 stated in the Vision for Higher Education 2030.

98 Objective:

99 **The Finnish higher education system has to be of high quality and adequately resourced. The**
100 **student perspective and focusing on the learners play an important role in the development**
101 **of the higher education system.**

102 **Measures for 2021:**

- 103 • SYL will work together with the student unions to ensure that the exceptional teaching
104 arrangements are appropriate in relation to the prevailing epidemic situation and that they
105 are retained in force only for as long as is necessary. At the same time, the functionality of
106 hybrid teaching, which combines classroom teaching and distance teaching, must be
107 ensured nationwide.
108 • SYL will influence the Higher Education Digivision 2030 project and ensure that the student
109 perspective and learner focus are taken genuinely into account in the development of
110 digitalisation in higher education institutions.
111 • SYL will lobby the government's mid-term review and budget preparation to make sure that
112 the investments in students and education are implemented in full, no cuts are made to higher
113 education and adequate resources are allocated to carry out the reforms despite the
114 exceptional circumstances and their effects. Higher education institutions will receive an
115 increase to their funding according to genuine additional financial requirements caused by
116 the increased number of new students accepted into higher education institutions.
117 • SYL will do diverse advocacy work to ensure that the student focus and the goals of the
118 student movement are taken into account in the report on educational policy, the accessibility
119 plan for education and the report on university democracy, prepared by the Ministry of
120 Education and Culture.
121 • SYL will take an active part in the discussion on the length of study times. SYL will break the
122 myths surrounding the actual length of study times in the discussion.

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Measures for coming years:

- SYL advocates for the development of accessibility in such a way that the universities include clear operational plans in their non-discrimination and equality plans.
- SYL will lobby the government's sessions on spending limits and budget to make sure that adequate resources are allocated for higher education also in the future.
- SYL will take an active part in the Higher Education Digivision 2030 project.
- Adequate resources must be allocated for increasing the number of new students accepted into higher education institutions also in the future. When deciding on the number of new students accepted into higher education institutions in the future, there is consideration for the legitimate need for them, and for the field specific allocation of resources.
- SYL participates actively in the discussion surrounding the financial model for universities.

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Education is for everyone

The importance of access to education is emphasised in times of economic uncertainty. In recent years, there have been many changes in the field of higher education when it comes to student admissions and the expansion of lifelong learning and the open university. At the same time, the pressure to acquire non-public funding grows. Equality in working life affects careers in many ways. For example, the difficulty of immigrants, people with immigrant backgrounds and ethnic minorities to find employment makes it challenging for entire groups of people to even start their careers. According to the Marin government programme, the transition of higher education graduates to the labour market will be made more fluent and particular attention will be paid to the employment of international students.

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Objective:

Free and accessible higher education will be the cornerstone of the Finnish society. Higher education offers genuinely accessible opportunities for re-education. Everyone has an equal opportunity to apply to university, regardless of their background. Internships for higher education students are accessible to all, regardless of students' backgrounds.

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Measures for 2021:

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- SYL will map out and highlight challenges related to the accessibility of higher education by meeting with various interest groups. SYL will take the challenges that have emerged into account in its own advocacy work.
- SYL will promote the access to education for students from various backgrounds, which is why higher education eligibility will be considered broadly.
- SYL will draw up a vision regarding the open university and its development as part of the Finnish education system in close co-operation with student unions.
- SYL will use researched information to influence the development of student admissions after the changes made in the spring of 2020 in order to make higher education more accessible and to promote the well-being of applicants.
- SYL will promote the free education of national and international students in a visible and multi-dimensional way together with the student unions. In the public debate, SYL will, in addition to tuition fees, discuss problems related to the paid nature of the open pathway and lifelong learning. SYL will raise awareness among students about the current situation and the necessity of free education.
- SYL will take an active part in the national development of lifelong learning and the project on continuous learning, emphasising the conditions and resources of higher education

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- 168 institutions in providing accessible lifelong learning solutions without compromising the
169 quality of degree education.
170 • SYL will create uniform criteria for accessible internships in collaboration with interest groups
171 by building on the work on internship support practices started in 2020.

172 **Measures for coming years:**

- 173 • SYL will highlight the necessity of free education for the welfare society and students, as well
174 as the ongoing challenges that free education is facing.
175 • SYL will contribute to making the transitions between education and working life as smooth
176 and accessible as possible.

177 **Integration and well-being of international students**

178 International students are a strength and a requirement for high-quality Finnish higher education.
179 International students also help promote the internationalisation of students at home. The integration
180 of international students into Finnish society and the labour market is essential for an international
181 Finland.

182 Objective:

183 **Tuition fees are eliminated and the conditions for internationalisation in universities will**
184 **improve. Finnish universities are attractive destinations for international students and the**
185 **conditions for integrating into Finnish society will improve.**

186 **Measures for 2021:**

- 187 • SYL will influence the political debate on tuition fees with the goal to eliminate them, while
188 taking into account the report on the effects of tuition fees produced by the Ministry of
189 Education.
190 • SYL will lobby for the adjustment of the cost burden of studying for non-EU and non-EEA
191 students to make the overall costs more reasonable, including residence permit process
192 costs and subsistence requirements.
193 • SYL will work together with the labour market organisations in order to promote the
194 integration and employment of international students.
195 • SYL will pay particular attention to the perceived well-being of international students and their
196 integration into and influence on the study environment.

197 **Measures for coming years:**

- 198 • SYL will lobby for a permanent residence permit for international students who have
199 completed a degree in Finland.
200 • SYL will do advocacy work in order to eliminate tuition fees for students from outside the EU
201 and EEA.
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203 **SYL as an EU advocate**

204 The political operating environment of the European Union has changed. The role of the European
205 Education Area project (EEA) will become more significant in the coming years as Erasmus+ funding
206 increases significantly. A significant number of Finnish universities are also involved in European
207 higher education networks. SYL's European umbrella organisation, [the European Students' Union](#)
208 [\(ESU\)](#), is a major player in EU's educational policy and SYL's primary partner in EU's educational

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209 policy. ESU advocates the matters of higher education students both in the European Commission
210 and in the European Parliament. ESU is an important and competent partner for SYL, and it will open
211 doors also for SYL's EU advocacy work.

212 Objective:

213 **SYL is a leading expert in Finland on EU's educational policy and SYL contributes to making**
214 **the European Students' Union an even more influential EU advocacy organisation.**

215 **Measures for 2021:**

- 216 • SYL will establish and maintain cooperation with Finnish Members of the European
217 Parliament and officials in various EU institutions.
- 218 • SYL will follow the development of the European Education Area and influence its
219 development.
- 220 • SYL will follow the development of the European Student Identifier and influence its
221 development.
- 222 • SYL will monitor the repercussions of the coronavirus pandemic on international student
223 mobility and develop safe periods of mobility with its partners.
- 224 • SYL will maintain and develop close relationships with ESU's management and Board and
225 help ESU stabilise its operations after the pandemic.

226 **Measures for coming years:**

- 227 • SYL will follow the educational policy carried out in the EU and influence it.
- 228 • SYL will work actively and systematically to develop ESU's EU advocacy work.
- 229 • SYL will highlight the importance of education and democracy at the EU level.

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231 **Regional elections**

232 The municipal elections will be held in April 2021, and the possible county elections will be held in
233 2022. The voter turnout of young people in the municipal elections has been very low: 35% of people
234 aged 18–24 and 43% of people aged 25–34 exercised their right to vote in the 2017 municipal
235 elections. Municipal elections play a key role in the local advocacy work of the student movement,
236 and SYL's role is to support the student unions in their own electoral advocacy work. The coronavirus
237 pandemic may pose challenges for both student unions and candidates during the elections, as
238 campaigning and meeting people is more restricted than normal.

239 Objective:

240 **Increasing the interest of students in regional elections. The student unions have**
241 **strengthened their involvement in local decision-making throughout the year. Increasing the**
242 **voter turnout and representation of students in municipal decision-making bodies.**

243 **Measures for 2021:**

- 244 • SYL will implement a nationwide municipal election campaign in cooperation with SAMOK,
245 OLL, Akavan opiskelijat (Akava Students) and STTK-Opiskelijat (STTK Students), based on
246 the preparations made in 2020. International students will also be taken into account in the
247 implementation of the campaign.

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- SYL will provide the platform and opportunities for student unions to exchange ideas to ensure the success of the municipal election advocacy work and to monitor the fulfilment of the related objectives.
 - SYL will support the student unions in their preparation for the county elections by providing training.

253 **Measures for coming years:**

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- SYL will keep an active eye on the preparations for the county elections and communicate with the student unions about the themes related to the county elections.

257 **Organisational development**

258 **SYL 100 years in 2021**

259 In 2021, SYL will turn 100 years old. The historical publication will be published in early 2021, and
260 the documentary film will be completed during the first half of 2021. The financial implications of the
261 anniversary year are described in more detail in the Medium-Term Financial Plan, which was last
262 approved at the 2019 General Assembly.

263 Objective:

264 **The SYL 100 anniversary year will make SYL a more well-known actor in society. SYL sparks**
265 **debate about the importance of education and studying in the Finnish society. During its**
266 **anniversary year, SYL will look into the future and continue to build a strong university**
267 **student movement also for the next one hundred years. SYL will take the effects of the**
268 **coronavirus pandemic into account in the anniversary year arrangements.**

269 **Measures for 2021:**

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- SYL will carry out the anniversary year in an economically, socially and ecologically sustainable way.
 - SYL will hold the anniversary party during the anniversary year.
 - SYL will hold a publication event for the historical publication in early 2021.
 - SYL will hold screenings for the documentary film in cooperation with the student unions.
 - SYL will implement a nationwide communication campaign together with the student unions. The target group of the campaign will be wider than just students.
 - SYL100 will be a part of all of SYL's events in 2021.
 - SYL will continue to raise funds for the anniversary year.
 - SYL will act as a platform for an education-themed social debate in the autumn of 2021.

280 **Measures for coming years:**

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- SYL will evaluate the success, financial impact and increased recognition of the anniversary year.

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284 **Influential SYL**

285 SYL's strategy was approved at the 2020 General Assembly, and it will be implemented in 2021 by
286 strengthening SYL's political and social influence. This is particularly relevant when considering the
287 2023 parliamentary elections.

288 Objective:

289 **SYL is a systematic, reliable and brave political debater and a well-known influencer in**
290 **society. SYL's communication and advocacy work are open and transparent.**

291 **Measures for 2021:**

- 292 • SYL will strengthen its political influence by examining and clarifying its communication
293 principles.
294 • SYL will become a more well-known social debater by e.g. investing in media communication
295 and networking.
296 • SYL will determine what kind of image interest groups have of SYL.
297 • SYL will develop its communication to make it even more interactive.
298 • SYL will invest in the internal communication between SYL and the student unions in its
299 advocacy work and develop communication processes.
300 • SYL will publish a meeting register to increase the transparency of its advocacy work.
301 • SYL will map out its communication from a linguistic point of view and develop it in a
302 genuinely trilingual direction. All SYL's official communication will be trilingual.
303 • SYL ensures that communication will be developed according to accessibility directives, from
304 the perspective of equality and accessibility.

305 **Measures for coming years:**

- 306 • SYL will continue to develop its communication and evaluate its success over the years.
307 • SYL will evaluate the realisation of the objectives during the strategy period.
308 • SYL will continue to strengthen its influence and communication regarding the 2023
309 parliamentary elections.
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311 **Sustainable SYL**

312 According to the Youth Barometer 2018, 67% of young people feel uncertain or insecure because
313 of the climate change. Successful generation policy requires ambitious efforts for a sustainable
314 development. As a student advocacy organisation, SYL does not possess particular climate
315 expertise, so cooperation with other organisations on climate and environmental issues is
316 necessary. In 2020, SYL has elaborated on its climate views and calculated the office's carbon
317 footprint. This provides a good basis for climate and environmental advocacy and follow-up
318 measures. Sustainability goals make up one section of SYL's strategy. We will address this section
319 in more detail during the theme year of 2021.

320 Objective:

321 **SYL calls for ambitious sustainable development actions in the social debate. SYL takes into**
322 **account and informs its members about the climate and environmental impact of its**
323 **operations and makes responsible domestic purchases whenever making a sustainable**
324 **domestic choice is possible. SYL manages its assets responsibly, for example by investing**

325 **in companies and activities that strive to prevent the environmental crisis. The sustainable**
326 **development sector has clear priorities and points of focus.**

327 **Measures for 2021:**

- 328 • SYL will establish natural connections with independent climate experts that fit in with SYL's
329 operations and support SYL's climate and environmental advocacy work.
- 330 • SYL will make the fight against the climate and environmental crisis a prominent part of its
331 political influencing, especially when lobbying the government's mid-term review and budget
332 framework and, as far as possible, on EU level.
- 333 • SYL will update its investment policies and examine its current investments from the
334 perspective of responsibility.
- 335 • SYL will establish practices for the annual measurement, reporting and communication of its
336 carbon footprint, responsibility and sustainability.
- 337 • SYL will update its development policy tasks and practices, as well as its longer-term goals
338 and priorities.

339 **Measures for coming years:**

- 340 • The fight against the climate and environmental crisis is an established, integrated and
341 permanent part of SYL's operations and advocacy work.
- 342 • SYL will measure and report its carbon footprint as part of SYL's annual clock for ongoing
343 operations and develop its operations towards carbon neutrality.
- 344 • SYL will implement its development policy in accordance with the updated tasks, practices
345 and long-term objectives and priorities.