

SYL's Recommendations for Student Representation in European Universities Alliances

12 Finnish universities currently operate in the European Universities networks (later in this document, European Universities alliances). According to a report by SYL, there are some similarities in alliance administration models, but there are also differences in e.g. administrative structures, student participation in different administrative bodies and the ways student representatives are selected. The active participation of student representatives in university alliances is key to ensuring student-oriented pedagogy and strengthening European university communities. Active student representatives who are selected by democratic bodies strengthen the link between students at each university and the activities of the university alliance, increase their representation, and make decision-making more transparent and inclusive.

In order to guarantee democratic participation, it is important to define the role of student unions in European Universities alliances. Student unions should be responsible for the following in Universities alliances:

1. Selection of student representatives to local university working groups and student councils, student boards or other similar bodies across European Universities alliances
2. Engaging in and supporting dialogue with student representatives
3. Strengthening students' voices in alliances and related university communities

These recommendations enable European Universities alliances to create strong and inclusive student representation systems that benefit both students and university alliances and their individual member universities.

1. Tasks and representation of student councils

The primary task of university alliances' student councils (student council, student board or similar body) is to act as a link between students and other administrative bodies. The councils elect student representatives to sit on other alliance-level bodies and support them in communicating student views to decision-making bodies by discussing topical issues regarding the university alliance at regular meetings. This ensures that students' needs and wishes are taken into account at all levels of decision-making.

2. Participation of student representatives in decision-making

Student representatives must be involved in all bodies where decisions concerning students are made. At the university alliance level, these bodies include strategic bodies steering the activities of the entire alliance as well as bodies related to the planning of education and student mobility. In member universities, these bodies include the steering group and other groups under the responsibility of the local university. It is important that students' voices are heard both in individual member universities and in the entire university alliance. To ensure representativeness, the student bodies of the university alliances must have at least two student representatives per member

university. We also recommend that a staff member be hired in each university alliance to support student representative activities.

3. Selection process for student representatives

The student unions of the member universities select representatives for the student councils of the university alliances and for the local-level working groups of their own universities. Student councils of university alliances elect student representatives to other university alliance-wide bodies, such as the highest decision-making bodies of university alliances.

The selection of student representatives is a democratic and transparent process implemented autonomously by the university student unions.

4. Roles of student ambassadors and democratically elected representatives

Decision-making and representation must be in the hands of student representatives selected by democratic bodies. This ensures that student participation in administration and decision-making is transparent and representative. Student ambassadors from higher education institutions and local student communities can still be used to support marketing and student consultation.

5. Remuneration, travel expenses and meetings in person

University alliances must invest financially in the activities of student councils. University alliances should strive to pay the student representatives a fee. This would promote the equal status of student representatives in alliances with student representatives from Finnish universities. Reimbursement of travel and accommodation expenses to representatives also increases the attractiveness of the activities and enables the participation of all student members. Student bodies should have the opportunity to organise at least two meetings in person per year. In the budgeting of the alliance or its member universities, the costs of student representative activities must be taken into account and sufficient prerequisites guaranteed.

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