

Plan of work for 2026

Parliamentary election 2027

Background: The next parliamentary election will be held in 2027. During 2026, political parties, advocacy groups and the authorities will be preparing themselves for the election. So will SYL, whose task is to represent and highlight the voices and values of university students, building a better tomorrow with knowledge based on research and without commitment to any political parties.

Goal: SYL prepares for the election by drawing up its own election programme and by preparing a campaign representing the voice of students together with its key stakeholders – student unions and other student organisations. The message aiming at a better future for university students is heard and noticed by political parties, the media and the most important advocacy organisations.

- SYL will prepare an election programme in cooperation with student unions and on the basis of the policy paper.
- The objectives, message and communication content of the electoral campaign will be prepared for the implementation in 2027 on the basis of an agreement drawn up together with the other implementers of the campaign.
- We will support political parties and other influencers in the preparation of their parliamentary election programmes by producing information on matters that are key issues for students and offering solutions to them.
- We communicate about the goals in social media and traditional media.

Economic policy for education in Finland in the 2020s

Background: In the past few years, expansion has been at the core of education policy: the aim is to increase the educational attainment of the younger age group to 50 per cent, in line with the OECD reference countries. At the same time, there has been no political will to systematically increase funding for education in order to achieve this goal. Instead, cuts have been made to the basic funding for education. In 2026, SYL will focus on the relationship between education policy and economic policy.

Goal: SYL produces and publishes information and analyses on education policy in the context of economic policy. Awareness of the relationship between education policy and economic policy will be increased.

- Information and analyses will be produced on education policy in the context of economic policy in today's Finland.
- The information and analyses produced will be published to be used freely.
- Information about the topic will be communicated to stakeholders, decision-makers and members.

Creating future solutions for the deteriorating student housing situation

Background: The support system for student housing will be comprehensively reformed during the 2023–2027 parliamentary term as a result of the decisions made by Petteri Orpo's Government. In 2027, investment grants for special groups will in practice no longer be available for student housing. They will be replaced by a 100% interest-subsidised loan, but the authorisation to grant subsidised loans will fall to a fraction of what it was before. At the same time, the demand for affordable housing will increase as the number of both international students and domestic students will increase and housing support will direct students to more affordable forms of housing. However, with the current support for housing production, the provision of affordable housing cannot meet the growing demand.

Goal: To raise awareness with up-to-date information on student housing and outline the principles of future housing policy through open discussion. To respond to the situation that has resulted from the change made to housing support, as students' income and housing situation have deteriorated even further.

- SYL's housing policy will be reformed as necessary. Student unions will be engaged in the process.
- A publication about the challenges, development needs and future vision of student housing will be produced.
- An advocacy campaign will be implemented to promote the adequacy, affordability and allocation of student housing.

'True Cost' advocacy campaign on the livelihood and employment of international students

Background: The financial position and employment situation of international students have deteriorated in Finland in the past few years. In November 2024, the income threshold for a residence permit based on studies increased to EUR 800 per month. Since August 2025, students from outside the EU/EEA have paid the full tuition fees themselves, which has led to changes in the grant system. International students face challenges in finding employment

both during their studies and after graduation. These challenges have been highlighted through the survey *'At What Cost? Being an International Student in Finland'* carried out in 2024. It is also more difficult for international students to find employment than for Finnish students: only 55 per cent of the international students in higher education institutions find employment in Finland one year after graduation (Vipunen statistics service, 2024). In 2026, SYL will highlight the personal experiences of international students with regard to their financial situation and employment.

Goal: Awareness of the financial and employment challenges faced by international students is raised among decision-makers, higher education institutions, labour market organisations and other stakeholders. The financial and employment situation of international students is highlighted through genuine experiences.

- A 'True Cost' campaign will be produced on social media to highlight the challenges faced by international students with regard to finding employment and the living costs in Finland.
- A communication campaign based on interviews with international students will be implemented on social media. Student unions will be engaged in finding persons to be interviewed.
- Material on concrete proposals for facilitating the employment and livelihood of international students will be created and distributed to stakeholders.

89th Nordiskt Ordförande Møte (NOM89), Helsinki

Background: The Nordiskt Ordförande Møte (NOM, Nordic Presidential Meeting) is a cooperative body for the national organisations of higher education students of the Nordic countries and the Baltic States. The cooperation began in 1946 in Aarhus, Denmark, and SYL was one of the founders of the network. The NOM convenes twice a year for a joint seminar in which topical advocacy issues in the different member states are discussed and an official meeting of the network is held. The cooperation plays an important role in increasing knowledge of the practices, challenges and successes in the development of the higher education system and the position of students in different countries. In autumn 2026, SYL will organise the 89th joint meeting of the Nordiskt Ordförande Møte in Helsinki.

Goal: To strengthen cooperation between the Nordic countries and the Baltic States in higher education policy and student policy and to increase understanding of the special features and strengths of different areas and their possible solutions to shared challenges at the European level.

- The 89th Nordiskt Ordförande Møte will be organised in Helsinki.

Strengthening sustainable development work

Background: SYL and the student unions carry out activities related to sustainable development both internally and externally. Peer support and the sharing of information are key elements in the development of the activities. It is also important to make sustainable development activities an established practice.

Goal: To strengthen members' know-how on the themes of sustainable development and sustainability among student unions and students.

- To carry out a communication campaign on students' sustainable everyday life by drawing on information such as the report on the situational picture of climate action in student unions produced by SYL's Climate Network. Volunteers from the Climate Network and the Advisory Board for Development Cooperation will be engaged in the planning and implementation of the campaign.
- Actors in the student movement will be trained on development policy and the practices of sustainable development.
- A material bank will be created to support the sustainable development work of student unions.
- SYL communicates about environmental crises as an emergency.