

International Relations

**Strategy Update
April 2018**

Progress so far on the Long Term International Relations Strategy 2014 - 2018

1. Introduction

This report provides a summary of progress made so far and the extent to which we have implemented the aspirations laid out in the international relations long term plan. The report should be read in conjunction with the "International Relations Plan of Work 2018-19", "Why International Relations are important for students and students' unions" and the "History of NUSUK's International Relations" all of which you can find on NUS Connect. This short report will be summarised under the six identified work streams.

- Working with the European Students' Union
- Working with the Commonwealth Students' Association
- Working with the Association of College Unions International
- Working in Partnership
- Solidarity and Human Rights
- Administration and Infrastructure

2. Working with the European Students' Union

The European Students' Union (ESU) is the umbrella organisation of 45 National Unions of Students (NUS) from 39 countries. The NUSes are open to all students in their respective country regardless of political persuasion, religion, ethnic or cultural origin, sexual orientation or social standing. Their members are also student-run, autonomous, representative and operate according to democratic principles. The offices are based in Brussels, Belgium. The overall aim of ESU is to represent and promote the educational, social, economic and cultural interests of students at the European level towards all relevant bodies and in particular the European Union, Bologna Follow Up Group, Council of Europe and UNESCO. Through its members, ESU represents almost 20 million students in Europe. ESU has a vision of *"Equal educational and social opportunities in an open and democratic Europe where students shape a sustainable future"*. ESU's mission is to represent, defend and strengthen students' educational, democratic and political and social rights. ESU seeks to work for sustainable, accessible and high quality higher education in Europe. The values of the organisation accord with our own:

- They represent all students in Europe, understanding the diversity of the students. ESU is inclusive and strives for solidarity within the students' movement.
- They are independent. ESU structures facilitate the accountability of the elected representatives, works with respect towards all members and their different opinions and functions transparently.
- They are unconventional and open for new thoughts. As experts of higher education, they bring in courageous and smart ideas through a fresh and spontaneous, but professional attitude.
- Since decisions concerning higher education are increasingly taken at the European level, ESU's role as the only European-wide student platform is similarly growing. Key activities include: Bringing together, training and informing national student representatives on policy developments in higher education at the European level.
- Organising seminars, training, campaigns and conferences relevant to students
- Conducting European wide research, partnership projects and campaigns
- Producing a variety of publications for students, policy makers and higher education professionals

NUSUK delegates have attended the following meetings of the European Students' Union. There are four meetings a year, two Board Meetings (BM) which is the decision-making body for the organisation and two Conventions (ESC) which focus on developmental activity and discussion. You can find out more about ESU here.

<https://www.esu-online.org/>

Meeting/Location	Dates	Delegates
ESC 28 and BM66bis. Florence, Italy.	September 2014	Megan Dunn – VPHE Charlotte Bonner – NUS Sustainability team Debbie McVitty – Head of Policy Mike Day – Director of Nations and International
BM67 Baku, Azerbaijan	November/December 2014	Katerina Humervoll Nordanger - Mike Day – Director of Nations and International

ESC29 Riga, Latvia	March 2015	Beth Button – President of NUS Wales Mike Day – Director of Nations and International
BM68 Yerevan, Armenia	May 2015	Beth Button, President of NUS Wales Mike Day, Director of Nations and International
EHEA, Yerevan, Armenia	May 2015	Toni Pearce, President of NUSUK Vonnie Sandlan, President of NUS Scotland Beth Button, President of NUS Wales Mike Day, Director of Nations and Internationalism
ESC30 Brussels, Belgium	September 2015	Teodora Teodorescu – International Students Committee Hannah Clarke – Development Advisor sparqs Mike Day – Director of Nations and International
BM69 Cluj-Napoca, Romania	November/December 2015	Beth Button, President of NUS Wales Richard Brooks, Vice President Union Development Eve Lewis, Director of sparqs Sarah Kerton – Policy Advisor Mike Day – Director of Nations and International
ESC31 Amsterdam, Netherlands	March 2016	Rob Henthorn, Vice President Education NUS Scotland Hannah Clarke – Development Advisor, sparqs
BM70 Bergen, Norway	May 2016	Beth Button - President of NUS Wales Rob Henthorn - Vice President Education NUS Scotland Katie Shaw – Policy Advisor Mike Day – Director of Nations and International
ESC32 Bratislava, Slovakia	September 2016	Beth Button – President of NUS Wales

		Rob Henthorn - Vice President Education NUS Scotland Mike Day – Director of Nations and International
BM71 Gdansk, Poland	November/December 2016	Rob Henthorn - Vice President Education NUS Scotland Carmen Smith – Vice President NUS Wales Mike Day – Director of Nations and International
ESC33 Galway, Ireland	March 2017	Rob Henthorn - Vice President Education NUS Scotland Carmen Smith – Vice President NUS Wales Mike Day – Director of Nations and International
BM72 St. Paul's, Malta	May 2017	Rob Henthorn - Vice President Education NUS Scotland Carmen Smith – Vice President NUS Wales Mike Day – Director of Nations and International
ESC34 and BM72bis Cardiff, Wales	September 2017	Amatey Doku – Vice President Higher Education Carmen Smith – Vice President NUS Wales Gwyneth Sweatman – NUS Wales Women's Officer Simon Blake – CEO of NUSUK Katie Shaw – Policy Advisor Mike Day – Director of Nations and International
BM73 Jerusalem, Israel	November/December 2017	Amatey Doku – Vice President Higher Education Carmen Smith – Vice President NUS Wales Mike Day – Director of Nations and International
ESC35 Tallinn, Estonia	February 2018	President Higher Education Carmen Smith – Vice President NUS Wales Mike Day – Director of Nations and International
BM74 Bled, Slovenia	April 2018	Amatey Doku – Vice President Higher Education Carmen Smith – Vice President NUS Wales Dean Pomeroy – Exeter University SU Mike Day – Director of Nations and International

		Eve Lewis – Director of sparqs Steph Kirkman – Development Advisor, sparqs
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NUSUK have contributed **motions and amendments** making sure that NUSUK policy is included in ESU policies on mobility and internationalisation, quality of higher education, public responsibility, finance and governance and the social dimension (widening access). The list below summarises some of the other issues we have proposed policy on or seconded as part of the policy development process.

- Strengthening ESU support for Global Student Voice and co-operation (BM67)
- Calling for campaign support for international students (BM67)
- Measures to support excluded groups in higher education as part of a wider HE strategy (BM67)
- Policy against tuition fees and the marketisation of HE (BM67)
- Protection of academic buildings during armed conflicts (BM67)
- Developing an ESU code of conduct (BM68)
- Policies emphasising the distinction between employability and employment (BM68)
- Support for IDAHOT International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia (BM68)
- Support for the Paris Declaration on building a more inclusive Europe (BM68)
- Marriage equality in Ireland (BM68)
- Education exchanges between Latin America and Europe (BM68)
- ESU statement on Refugees (BM69)
- ESU statement on LGBTQ rights (BM69)
- Against education cuts in Denmark (BM69)
- Attempts by the UK government to link quality assessment to tuition fees (BM69)
- UK to remain a part of the European Union – ESU to support our campaign to remain. (BM69 and 70)
- Support for the Bergen Declaration (see Appendix) (BM70)
- Publicly funded research should be available for public use (BM70)
- Education for sustainable development to be included in the curriculum (BM70)
- Education not to be linked to trade deals (TTiP) (BM70)

- Proposal to create a working group on sustainability (BM71) Statement on the role of education in promoting peaceful and cohesive societies (in particular amendments on diversity, and against xenophobia and racism). (BM71)
- Widening access (all BMs)
- Statement on the Experiences and rights of LGBT+ students – introducing the concept of liberation (BM72)
- Against tuition fees in Germany (BM71)
- Creating a working group on mental health (BM72)
- Creating a working group on sustainability (BM72)
- Support for LIS (NUS in Iceland) in their campaign against education cuts (BM72)
- Against compulsory work placements for Belarussian students (BM72)
- In favour of Switzerland's engagement in Erasmus+ (BM72)
- Against European wide increases in fees for international students (BM72)
- Better living conditions for students (BM73)
- Granting the Kosovo Students' an advisory support partner (BM73)
- Working conditions for ESU elected officers (BM73)
- Against compulsory military service for Armenian students (BM73) and solidarity with street protests (BM74)
- Solidarity with NUSUK on Brexit (BM73 and BM74)
- Collective work aimed at the EHEA in Paris (2018)
- Developing stricter guidance on ESU's acceptance of externally funded projects
- Minority language rights in Ukraine
- Support for the #metoo movement
- Reproductive rights in Ireland

NUSUK delegates have also played a significant role in helping to develop women's only spaces, the new membership strategy and financial affairs. We have received overwhelming support for our work on Brexit. The ESU Vice President, Caroline Sundberg, arranged meetings with the European Commission and supported the meetings of the Tri-Lateral team with Members of the European Parliament. You can download the report from NUS Connect here:

<https://www.nusconnect.org.uk/resources/tri-lateral-lobbying-visit-to-brussels-nus-usi-nus-usi>



The Tri-Lateral Lobbying team in Brussels meet with Martina Anderson MEP at the European Parliament

An important part of our ESU re-engagement strategy is to put candidates for **elections** forward to serve on the ESU executive committee, so far:

- Beth Button was elected to the ESU Executive Committee for 2016 – 2017
- Rob Henthorn was appointed Membership Co-ordinator for ESU in 2017 – 2018 a post he retained for 2018 – 2019.
- Carmen Smith stood as a Vice Presidential candidate, but unfortunately was not elected.

The **Trainer's Pool** was created to complement the membership strategy, at present there are four members from the UK Mike Day (International and NUS-USI Director), Beth Pincher Campaigns and Projects Co-ordinator (Exeter University SU), Dougie Smith (NUS Scotland Development Consultant) and Chiron Hoosan (Development and Engagement Co-ordinator University of Goldsmiths SU). NUSUK delegates attended a fundraising weekend in 2016 (Ljubljana, Slovenia) and helped to deliver a training the trainer programme for the new trainer's pool in Ghent, Belgium in August 2018.



Members of the International Co-operation Working Group at a meeting in Warsaw (from L-R Poland, Norway, Spain, Germany, Austria, France, Norway, Denmark, Poland, UK and Poland)

A good example of levels of co-operation was the “Fund our Future” campaign which brought together actions that students were talking around rights and funding across the world. It included an interactive map showing where, when and how actions were taking place in and around the 17th of November – International Students’ Day. You can find out more here.

https://worldsofeducation.org/en/woe_homepage/woe_detail/4889/students-unite-behind-global-education-campaign-fund-our-future



NUSUK have also established and led working groups on **Sustainability** and **Mental Health**.

The **Sustainability Working Group** took on the task of mapping activity and sharing good practice, collaborating on research on student attitudes to sustainability to provide international evidence of demand and where feasible to apply for funding through ESU for the benefit of members. Levels of collaboration worked well with joint funding bids agreed and NUSUK's sustainability team securing a European base in partnership with DSF (Denmark) through the establishment of SOS.

The role of the **Mental Health Working Group** was to share research and best practice and new initiatives in this area, as well as challenging university strategies on mental health and the issues that contribute to mental illness.

There are a range of different co-operation groups who participate in ESU meetings, they are called factions but are not political ones like those who operate within NUS, but are broadly geographical, for example NOM is the Nordic Organising Meeting. NUSUK was not in any group in 2014, but seeing how much preparatory support groups gave each other before meetings we decided to create/join **NARC – Non- Aligned Random Countries** which consists of USI – Ireland, LSVb – Netherlands, ISO – Netherlands, VVS – Belgium, ANSA – Armenia, UAS – Ukraine and USK – Kosovo (who are not yet members). We hold skype meetings to prepare for the Board Meetings and meet regularly at BMs to ensure everyone is up to date with what is going on. We are an open group and often invite other national unions to join us for a meeting. In addition to this NUSUK delegates have been invited to conferences of NOM which take place twice a



Delegates from the NARC group at BM73, Jerusalem, Israel



Delegation to visit Palestinian Students



ESU delegates at BM71, Gdansk supporting the NUSUK "#LoveSU" campaign



Student Representatives at the EHEA Ministerial Conference Paris 2018

A key role is played by ESU in supporting student representatives that form part of the Ministerial Delegations to the European Higher Education. During the period covered by this update there have been two meetings, and working alongside other national unions

and ESU, NUSUK has been able to play a full part in lobbying and influencing the overall outcome – our focus has been on strategies around widening access or the social dimension. The **2015 Ministerial in Yerevan, Armenia** was attended by Toni Pearce (National President) and Vonnice Sandlan (NUS Scotland President). They were supported by Beth Button (NUS Wales President) and Mike Day, then Director of Nations and International who was able to cover Northern Ireland. The final statement of the conference can be found here.

http://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/2015_Yerevan/70/7/YerevanCommuniqueFinal_613707.pdf

The next meeting of **the EHEA 2018 was held in Paris, France**, the meeting was attended by Amatey Doku (VP Higher Education) and Luke Humberstone (NUS Scotland President) they were supported by Carmen Smith (Acting President NUS Wales) and Mike Day (International and NUS-USI Director). You can read the final communique here.

<http://www.ehea2018.paris/Data/ElFinder/s2/Communique/EHEAParis2018-Communique-final.pdf>



The diagram shows the link between policy development at a national and international level and how it then impacts on policy change. Students' unions can raise issues locally but at the same time we can ensure that our views come to UKHE via the EHEA.

In our work with the European Students Union we have had – regular and effective input into policy development which in the long term can influence UKHE policy. We have shown ourselves willing to get involved in project work and share experiences and information. We have made connections and links between national unions and our own members and UK delegates have attended all conference sessions and have successfully served on the ESU Executive Committee. All this has enhanced our European reputation.

3. Working with the Commonwealth Students' Association

The Commonwealth Students Association (CSA) unifies and represents the needs and aspirations of national student councils and other student organisations in the Commonwealth. It was launched in 2012 at the 18th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (18CCEM) in Mauritius, where student leaders gathered to make recommendations on current issues in education and strengthen their role in the growing Commonwealth education sector. The main aims of the CSA are 'to promote unity among student

organisations in Commonwealth countries; to protect the rights of Commonwealth students and to contribute actively to the development of student movements; and to create an environment for student unions and student movements to build their respective and collective capacities, to freely express and advocate'. The CSA is supported by the Youth Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat and is led by a steering committee, which is currently chaired by Joshua Griffith of Guyana. It plays an instrumental role in the planning of the Commonwealth Students Congress, the largest gathering of students across the Commonwealth. The inaugural Commonwealth Students Congress was held in The Bahamas in June 2015.

NUSUK attended the 18th CCEM and Dannie Grufferty, the then VP Society and Citizenship, was elected onto the Steering Committee. NUSUK were then commissioned to conduct some research on the state of student governance in Commonwealth countries. The project editors were Mike Day, then Director of Nations and International, and Rebecca Maxwell-Stuart a Master's Student from Heriot-Watt. The report was presented to the 19th CCEM in the Bahamas May 2015), it was present in turn to the Commonwealth Youth Forum, Commonwealth Students' Association, Senior Education Civil Servants and Commonwealth Education Ministers. You can access the full report at: http://thecommonwealth.org/sites/default/files/inline/STATE%20OF%20STUDENT%20GOVERNANCE%20REPORT_FINAL%20PRINT%20VERSION.pdf

The outcome was that the final communique urged member countries to support and encourage the development of national student representative organisations. NUSUK were represented at the 19th CCEM by Toni Pearce (President) and Shreya Patel (International Students Officer) The next phase of the project was to develop a toolkit supporting student leaders in the process of establishing or revitalising their national students' union structures. The toolkit was piloted at a capacity building event in Nairobi, Kenya and saw activists from Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana and Tanzania in attendance to take part in the training but also to evaluate and give feedback on the materials. You can access the toolkit at: http://thecommonwealth.org/sites/default/files/inline/P15764_FI-NAL%20CSA%20Buiding%20our%20Future%20Toolkit%20V5_GL%20%28003%29_LoRes.pdf

The toolkit was presented (in our absence) to the 20th CCEM in Fiji. Unfortunately, despite having the allocated budget no authority was given to attend the conference in Fiji. Our work with the CSA will no doubt increase in the future as a post-Brexit UK seeks to develop new academic partnerships outside Europe.



Delegates to the CSA Capacity Building Development Training in Nairobi, Kenya

The International and NUS-USI Director also sits on **the Council for Education in the Commonwealth** (CEC) Support Group. There is no doubt that in a post-Brexit environment the UK will be developing closer academic partnerships with Commonwealth member countries. This is an area of work that could grow as we work with others to ensure that the student voice is represented and heard wherever decisions about their educational experience are made.

NUSUK has been able to engage in capacity building, supporting student leaders internationally whilst at the same time gaining valuable skills and experience in these areas as well as successfully delivering two externally funded projects to help build the international student movement. NUSUK officers were part of the founding group of the CSA. Our relationships here will be of vital importance in the future.

4. Working with the Association of College Unions International

ACUI describes itself as the professional home to thousands of campus community builders around the world. Primarily focused on the work of those within the college unions and student activities field, the Association strives to provide an inclusive, welcoming community for all those who choose to belong

ACUI's mission is to support its members in the development of community through education, advocacy, and the delivery of services. They have a vision which shows they are committed to becoming the innovative, responsive, and inclusive leader in creating progressive education, training, and research in college unions and student activities to excel in meeting member needs, impacting student learning, and enhancing campus communities. Their core values demonstrate a strong commitment to diversity and inclusion. They are unconditional human worth, joy, learning, caring community, innovation, diversity, and integrity. ACUI provides programs and services that actively affirm, embrace, and infuse multiple systems, values, and cultures. Driven by principles of mutual respect, common purpose, and equity for all persons, the Association is committed to creating and maintaining a sense of community and inclusion for all its constituents and raising awareness regarding issues of oppression. Their goal is to enhance the state of inclusiveness within the Association by engaging in ongoing processes:

- Systemic acts of inclusion and social justice at all levels of the Association
- Purposeful and authentic communication, informed by core competencies
- Continuous reexamination of structures, programmes and services for inclusiveness

Education and experiences that enhance participants intercultural proficiency



Ian King former CEO at Birmingham Guild and Director of NUS Services pioneered NUSUK links with ACUI (he is 4th from the left). The picture shows Ian alongside members of the ACUI Board.

ACUI values diversity, including that of race, color, religion, ability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, family status, veteran status, age, national origin, culture, appearance, generation, caste/class, ancestry, political beliefs, education, job function, and institution type, and does not engage in or tolerate discrimination in any of its activities or operations. Accordingly, all who are involved in the Association as volunteers, employees or guests of the organization, shall use practices and modes of communication reflective of this commitment.

NUSUK and students' unions from the UK have attended the following events and conferences. These events are also well attended by colleagues from Irish students' unions.

- 2013. March. Annual Conference. St. Louis
- 2013. November. Region 1 (VIII) Conference. Boston
- 2014. March. Annual Conference. Orlando
- 2014. November. Region 1 (VIII) Conference. Vermont.
- 2015. March. Annual Conference. San Antonio.



• 2015. November. Region VIII Conference. Boston
national union of **students**

- 2016. March. Annual Conference. New Orleans.
- 2016. November. Region VIII Conference. Boston.
- 2017. March. Annual Conference. Philadelphia
- 2017. November. Region VIII Conference
- 2018. March. Annual Conference. Anaheim.

It is not anticipated that anyone from NUSUK will attend any conferences in 2018 – 2019 due to financial constraints.



Simon Blake, NUS CEO with other UK delegates at ACUI Annual Conference.



Working with delegates at ACUI Conference, St. Louis

NUSUK have delivered conference sessions on “The history and development of the International Student Movement” (Orlando), “Similarities and Differences between USA, Ireland and the UK”, Lobbying and Influencing work, sustainability topics and sessions on how NUSUK works.

NUSUK was represented on **the ACUI Council for International Engagement, the group** was established by the ACUI Board of Trustees in 2016 as an effort to explore questions related to the engagement of international members of the Association. Members for the CIE were recruited through an application process that began after the 2016 annual conference in New Orleans. Membership was to consist of two members coming from regional leadership teams, two members at-large, and a Central Office liaison. The CIE was established to serve for two years. Zack Wahlquist, Director of Education for ACUI serves as the liaison and conducted the interview process to choose the CIE members, who were Mike Day, NUS Scotland, DJ Fox, Missouri State University, John Ginsburg, Clackamas Community College and Una Redmond, Dublin City University. The committee began its meetings in autumn 2016, and started with a review of the charge it was given, which was to:

- Collaborate on the strategic development of international engagement initiatives for ACUI.
- Examine avenues and best practices for each region to develop international and cultural experiences and programs.
- Ensure that international and cultural programs that are facilitated by individual regions be coordinated with other regions and the Central Office.
- Explore opportunities to connect international members to volunteer openings, programs and educational services.
- Encourage cross-cultural learning for college union and higher education issues such as student development, leadership, social justice, sustainability, higher education funding, and human rights initiatives.

The Council met roughly every 2-3 weeks by video conference call and worked on a survey of the existing arrangements, four separate surveys addressed the various components of the charge, querying preferences for action. They were delivered to: ACUI members outside the United States ("international members"), ACUI members within the United States, Regional Leadership Team Directors and other higher education professional associations. The results of these surveys were analyzed and presented at the annual conference in Philadelphia in 2017, and further feedback was collected at that time from attendees. After delivery of the final report the Trustee Board agreed the following:

- A membership recruitment mailing is planned for April to non-US institutions who were once in ACUI.
- Current online program offerings will be assessed, including timing and opportunities for international participation.
- The current international reception hosted by the CEO at the annual conference will be examined to see if a different format or additional invited guests might encourage non-US members to network with one another & US members at the annual conference.
- The Central Office will explore creating a separate portal for non-US members on the ACUI website.
- The Central Office will consider how a regular international feature can be incorporated into the Bulletin.
- The CEO will reach out to executive leadership at NUS and TAG as a starting place, to explore whether there is reception to creating an international consortium of college union associations.
- Members of Region VIII will be approached to create a model for facilitating pre-conference activities.
- A conversation will be initiated with Regional Directors about how Non-US location programming might be supported.

Specific to the recommendation to create a Non-US institutions Community of Practice, we would ask if a member(s) of the Council is interested in championing this effort, and if so to contact Scarlett Winters for assistance with setting up the COP.

Charlotte Bonner, NUS sustainability team, was also a co-founder and co-chair of the ACUI **Sustainability Community of Practice (COP)**. The purpose of this was to enhance our relationships with relevant institutions, look for opportunities for partnering on

programmes and campaigns, and enable ACUI members to mutually support the sustainability journey across higher education. The COP is still in its fledgling years, but is growing in capacity and membership.

A **study tour** for colleagues from ACUI was organised by NUS Scotland in partnership with Region VIII of ACUI from Monday 8 June to 12 June 2015.

08 June. The tour began with visits to NUS Scotland's Offices and sparqs followed by a welcome meal in which the after-dinner speaker, Malcolm Cuning, gave a short history of Scotland.

09 June. Queen Margaret University Students' Association in which officers and staff explained the role and activities of the students' association, provided a tour of the university and focused in particular on sustainable facilities management in the university.

09 June. Edinburgh University Students' Association, provided lunch, a tour of the students' association as well as an introduction to its role and purpose and a seminar on student representation.

10 June. University of Strathclyde Students' Association after a tour and introduction to the students' association delegates heard about collective work to promote student elections and democracy throughout Glasgow. This was followed by a tour and introduction to Glasgow Caledonian University Students' Association.

10 June. University of Glasgow Student Representative Council and Queen Union combined to introduce delegates to their facilities and their overall role in the fifth oldest university in the English-speaking world. The focus of the seminar discussion was support for Postgraduate students. QMU provided the evening meal and entertainment.

11 June. Aberdeen University Students' Association provided the usual tour and welcome as did the students' union at The Robert Gordon University. After a quick historical tour of Aberdeen delegates returned to Edinburgh.

12 June. Heriot-Watt Students' Association for a professional development seminar between staff/officers from students' unions in Scotland and Ireland alongside ACUI visitors, looking at trends in our mutual programmes and services, sustainability, leadership training and student representation. The seminar ended with an insight into European wide collaboration followed by a tour of Heriot-Watt Campus.

13 June. Stirling University Students' Union. The Stirling team gave a full presentation on the range of activities supported by the union along with a tour of the university campus. Participants had some time before looking around Stirling Castle. The next stop was St. Andrews, sadly the students' union were unable to welcome the participants, so they enjoyed the town and an evening meal at St. Andrew's Golf Course.



ACUI Study Tour organised by Region VIII and NUS Scotland 2015

NUS and our students' union members have much to learn and share with our US colleagues especially in the areas of design and use of space, volunteer management, developing professional stands and including marginalised groups.



Sarah Purves and Alex Munyard of Edinburgh University Students' Association at the inaugural meeting of the SIEHEKU project

One of the most significant partnerships over the past three years has been the involvement of NUSUK with the SIEHEKU project established through EU-TEMPUS financial support, to create a national students' organisation in Kosovo. The project group was led by Professor Peter Eckl of Paris-Lodron University, Salzburg with partners from NUSUK (with sparqs), Edinburgh University, University of Alicante, the Austrians Students' Union at Paris-Lodron University of Salzburg and Vrije Universiteit Brussels. These partners joined with Kosovo based organisations and institutions: the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, the Higher Education Department (HED), the Kosova Center for International Cooperation in Higher Education, the World University Service Kosova – WUS Kosova, the University of Prishtina, the University of Prizren, the University "Haxhi Zeka" in Peja and the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA). A series of meetings and development seminars made recommendations on the legal framework for the union, its constitutional documents and the basis for membership. The inaugural conference and elections for

USK took place in April 2016. The final event of the project was a capacity building semi-national union of students. Harled by NUSUK and sparqs for the USK Council. Since then NUSUK have been acting as a “buddy” for USK in supporting their continued development and candidacy for the European Students’ Union. You can find out more about the progress of the project at their website <https://www.facebook.com/siheksutempus1/>



Participants in a training event for members of the USK Council September 2017

We have also hosted **study visits** from other countries including Australia, New Zealand, South Africa (in partnership with the Foreign Office), Belarus (in partnership with the British Council), Armenia (in partnership with sparqs), Netherlands, USA and Romania. NUSUK speakers have made inputs to events in Ireland, Germany, France, Norway and Demark. Some staff at a European level whose role it is to support international activity have formed a Community of Practice to exchange ideas, information and learning – the members are SYL (Finland), SAMOK (Finland), USI (Ireland), NUSUK and NSO (Norway). They meet annually.



Participants at the European Staff Seminar Fatim Diarra (SYL Finland), Ben Archibald (USI Ireland) and Wenche Åsheim and Marie Gjerde Rolandsen (NSO – Norway)



Participants on the Scandinavian Study Tour 2018

In January 2018 the University of East Anglia organised a **Study Tour** of Scandinavian universities and students' unions, NUSUK provided support with contacts for our national union partners DSF (Denmark), SFS (Sweden) and NSO (Norway). The participants focused on:

1. SU Democracy and Representation Models. The student movement is on a much smaller scale, but no less effective. National events are similar in size to NUS Scotland or Wales and manageable as such. Students submit CV's for election rather than manifestos – policy has already been agreed. Candidates are vetted during a weekend "assessment centre" process. There are both formal and informal links to government and the sector.
2. Services and Social Enterprise. There is not much national co-ordination of commercial services and other areas. Student accommodation – Nations in Sweden for example – are student run, they provide catering, bars and social space – almost all run by volunteers, who in return get deals on food or accommodation.
3. Education and Rights. In Denmark there was a separate organisation for international students, a bit like International Student House, in Norway there is an entirely separate organisation focused on student welfare. Whilst there is a strong commitment to and understanding of LGBT+ rights, women, black students, disabled students and what we would refer to as liberation, it is very clear that other – separate – organisations take up these issues. The focus of all three national unions is education they will deal with any and all issues as they relate to the educational experience.

We have also participated in some of the **international programmes** coordinated by sparqs, speaking at their international dinner which included guests from as far apart as Japan, Australia and Lebanon.

Our international capacity building work strengthens the range of work that we do and allows us to reflect on how we organise student representation, campaigns, learning and development which in turn helps to provide enhanced support for our member students' unions.

6. Solidarity and Human Rights

The focus of the VP Society and Citizenship has, out of necessity, been focussed on getting out the vote in the referendum and the general elections. The other key priority for NUS is securing votes at 16. As a consequence, work on international solidarity has taken a back seat although our various democratic events will pass motions expressing support and solidarity on a range of social justice issues. More recently we have worked closely with the Union of Students in Ireland over their "Love Equality – Make Gra the Law" campaign and the campaign to the repeal the 8th Amendment. NUSUK attended the ESU "Together Moving Forward" capacity building conference in Brussels which discussed ways that student organisations could support refugees keen to continue or embark upon tertiary education. The programme was linked to a funding stream managed by ESU. NUSUK and Student Action for Refugees successfully applied for a grant and were able to put on a conference of higher education stakeholders to look at ways we could better co-ordinate our support for refugees across the higher education sector.

Our work on access to education for refugee and migrant students is an important cross over with the NUS International Students Campaign and debate on the future shape of student mobility and the transferability of qualifications

7. Administration and Infrastructure

The aims set out in the long term strategic plan were to secure officer buy-in to international relations work, secure an agreed budget, adequate staff support and engagement with funding bids. There has been a great deal of support from officers and, following Brexit, a determination to increase our international links. A budget code for international work has been created, it is shared with the International Students Campaign from where the staffing costs come for both areas of work. It has not been possible to secure additional staff support for our international relations work, it has remained as 0.33FTE.. We have been approached for partnership funding by Moldova and Armenia, and joined with colleagues in the sustainability team and sparqs in a bid to the SPHEIR funding stream looking at partnerships within African countries. Following the announcement of the NUS Turnaround project, our work has been significantly scaled back and certainly over the next year (so there is currently no staff support) the main focus will be working with the European Students' Union.

Appendix One: The Bergen Declaration on Global Student Voice.

Preamble

Education is a Human Right, as recognized by global covenants, and one of the world's greatest social equalizers. In reality, in too many parts of the world this is far from being the truth. Rather than education becoming progressively free and accessible to everyone in the spirit of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural rights- we are witnessing the commodification of education, a neglect for quality, a lack of accessibility, and attacks on student's fundamental human rights. Nowadays, increased international communication has created a renewed opportunity to share our experiences as students, including our respective successes and the challenges we face in our various political contexts. Simultaneously, we are experiencing global threats to exercise this human right in terms of access, academic freedom and student's rights to organize, including the commodification of our tertiary education system. As a result, we the students of the world, wish to express a desire for universal cooperation in the defence of students' rights, public tertiary education and access to education for all. Working together, through our shared principles, will ensure that globally, students voices are heard and that united we are stronger in the face of threats to our education. These are the fundamental building blocks for an ongoing students' global discussion, introduced by and for students and facilitated through the establishment of a global forum.

Students' rights

We believe that quality education should be free and inclusive for all, and our education systems should be democratic, built on the principles of academic freedom, and where all students have the right to representation and to self-organize.

We believe all students have the right to be represented by and able to participate in a democratically run, autonomous students' union in their institution- membership of which must be accessible and free to all students. Students' union's democratic structures should reflect the diversity of the student population, in particular, equal participation of women must be ensured. A democratically elected student organisation should represent students nationally, through which students are able to participate in relevant national decision-making processes- and which is recognised as the national student voice by the government and other stakeholders.

The freedom to self-organize- from the classroom to the campus- is a basic right, and all students should have the space and tools available to do so. Students should be free to

participate in public displays and demonstrations without repercussion. Students' ability to self-organize must be reflected in their learning experience, where students have the right to be represented by democratically elected representatives. A democratic education system promotes and protects student representation on every level of governance within the institution, and students should be treated as equal partners in their education.

Unless academic freedom is upheld in our education systems, education is not truly free. We believe that campuses must be places for debate and discussion, where freedom of speech is fostered and freedom of ideas is encouraged. Students have the right to self-determined and self-produced media on campus.

The rights of students to self organise must extend to wider society - we believe all members of society should be free to demonstrate their democratic right, to be active participants in society, and be partners in social justice, for example able to participate in peace processes. We believe students, as active participants in society, should stand in solidarity with student struggles globally, whilst also being free to join and organize with other movements locally, nationally and internationally.

Access to tertiary education

We defend that education at all levels is a human right, regardless of an individual's' political views, religion, nationality, gender, race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, beliefs, health status, disabilities, socioeconomic background, or any other characteristics. Everyone should have the right to access, retain and complete tertiary education in order to unfold their potential, and to support the progress and equality of society.

We believe that tertiary education should be a public and universal good, and for that we defend a tertiary education system free of tuition fees and any other cost, guarantee the access to every citizen of the world, regardless of their socioeconomic background.

We believe that access to tertiary education is about all the processes from the beginning of the education journey until the academic success. Because of that, we defend that the students should be provided with all the necessary requirements and support

Education is a public good

Knowledge and education are public goods, and have the power to emancipate those who benefit from them, equipping students with the tools necessary to take power over their lives and wider society. We therefore believe that education must be a right of the people, and should not be a privilege for the few.

Education is a public good that benefits all of society, not only the student as an individual. With this in mind, each state should take responsibility for ensuring that all have access to free quality education.

Tertiary education must be democratic and transparent, and should be open to the society and embedded in the community. We believe in universities that promote progress of the people and serve society instead of become closed communities of their own, isolated from the outside world.

We believe in free and open access to research- all should be able to benefit from its findings and further work on developing it.

Sustainability, Mobility and Safety

We acknowledge that the current model of society is not respecting the environment and that this causes dramatic consequences. These effects include climate change, deforestation, mass extinctions of animals, and other plant based species, notwithstanding the alarming effect this has on humans globally.

In light of this, we must acknowledge the serious nature of the issue and act immediately to address it. For this reason, we welcome all global initiatives that share these principles and support them to continue working to enhance global environmental sustainability, and demand students' voices should be heard.

Further, we also claim that education is one of the most important tools for providing global citizens with the necessary skills and opportunities to fight climate change, empowering individuals and building resilient communities that will challenge the current development model which is causing harm to the planet and its people.

Global Students Voice

As students, we highlight the importance of establishing global frameworks to support the internationalisation of education, science and culture. Because of that, we demand that Governments should work actively towards the development of global frameworks of recognition of qualifications in the area of tertiary education. However, we also highlight the importance of developing these frameworks in accordance with the principles of equality, plurality, social justice and democracy.

Education is increasingly becoming a target in conflicts around the World, hindering access to education, and peace development efforts during and after conflicts. We condemn any attack on education institutions and particularly call for States to commit to initiatives that protect them.

We, the signers of this document, intend to further develop cooperation to defend these principles. Indicative strategies include to host further meetings with students, exchange information in support of our common struggles, and expressions of support to national and regional actions.



