



EUROPEAN **YOUTH** PARLIAMENT
SUOMI FINLAND

EUROPEAN YOUTH PARLIAMENT FINLAND – EYP FINLAND RY

OUTREACH & INCLUSION PLAN

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 Introduction	1
2 Planning process	1
3 Measures	
3.1 Socio-economic and educational background	2
3.2 Regional equity	3
3.3 Linguistic equity	4
3.4 Accessibility	5
4 Follow-up and assessment	6
Sources	7

1 Introduction

This is the European Youth Parliament Finland - EYP Finland's (hereafter EYP Finland) Outreach and Inclusion plan. The aim of the plan is to offer clear ways to promote equity and equality in the operations and activities of EYP Finland. Furthermore, the purpose is to foster an open, safe, and motivating organisational environment to the personnel, members, and participants in all events of EYP Finland as well as to make all the activities accessible for everyone.

EYP Finland is the Finnish National Committee of the European Youth Parliament (hereafter EYP) and a part of the pan-European network of EYP. The activities of EYP Finland act in accordance with and promote the aims and mission of EYP in Finland. Attention has been paid to the Outreach and Inclusion areas of the International Strategy of the EYP for 2016–2020 in creating this strategy. According to the International Strategy, our activities should be open to all young Europeans. To achieve this, we must actively strive to overcome any economic, social or cultural barriers to participation in our activities. Special attention must be paid to young people whose participation is constrained by these barriers. Additionally, we must focus on developing the organisation and further empowering active young people.

The Outreach and Inclusion plan of EYP Finland is guided by the Non-discrimination Act (1325/2014) by the Ministry of Justice in Finland. The purpose of the Act is to promote equality and prevent discrimination as well as to enhance the protection provided by law to those who have been discriminated against (1 §). EYP Finland is committed to promoting equality in its operations and ensuring that no one is discriminated against on the basis of age, origin, nationality, language, religion, belief, opinion, political activity, trade union activity, family relationships, state of health, disability, sexual orientation or other personal characteristics, regardless of whether it is based on a fact or assumption concerning the person themselves or another (8 §).

2 Planning process

The first Outreach & Inclusion Strategy of EYP Finland was published in 2017. The strategy was written in the autumn of 2016 and it was based on the results of a survey targeted at members as well as on the feedback from the participants of Regional Sessions. A working group was established to analyse the results of the surveys and write the strategy.

This updated Outreach & Inclusion plan is heavily based on the first Outreach & Inclusion Strategy. An open process was used to update the document, including an open online workshop and an open and anonymous possibility for comments. Results from the review of the original document were also used in the process.

This strategy takes into consideration all forms of discrimination and the aim is that there will be zero discrimination. The following four areas were raised as particularly important to develop in EYP Finland during the update process:

1. Socio-economic and educational background
2. Regional equity
3. Linguistic equity

4. Accessibility

3 Measures

3.1 Socio-economic and educational background

Definition

Everyone has an equal opportunity to participate in the activities of EYP Finland despite their educational or socio-economic background, such as wealth or family background.

Description of the current state

EYP Finland has aimed to include young people with different educational backgrounds for years. Despite these efforts, most young people involved in EYP Finland study or have studied in an upper secondary school. However, the activities of EYP Finland are not aimed only at upper secondary school students, which is why it is important to enable vocational students and young people not in education to participate equally. EYP Finland must actively strive to create a more open atmosphere where educational background will not be perceived as a barrier for participation and everyone will feel welcome.

EYP Finland aims to keep the participation fees for its events low so that everyone would have the opportunity to participate regardless of their financial situation. However, the International Sessions of EYP are very expensive, limiting the possibilities of some young people to participate. In some cases, the schools cover the participation fees of the delegates, but not in all. EYP Finland also changed its principles for events in 2019 so that sessions do not have a specific dress code.

EYP Finland has been able to support travel costs to the events only partially or not at all, which has limited the possibility of some young people to participate. According to the 2017 Action Plan of EYP Finland and the recommendation by the Outreach & Inclusion Strategy, a travel support fund was established in 2018. The Travel Fund aims to support the delegates by offering financial assistance for their travel costs to EYP events abroad. In 2019, the Board decided to allow decreasing or eliminating session participation fees situationally. From 2020 onwards, EYP Finland will not have a participation fee for session volunteers.

Measures

- Focus on the openness of communications, for example, avoid using terms implying a certain educational background such as 'upper secondary school student'.
- Connect more actively with vocational schools by acquiring contact persons from the teachers and study counsellors.
- Keep the participation fees of the events of EYP Finland low or, when possible, free of charge.
- Offer financial assistance for the participation fees and travel costs, when possible.
- Pay attention to the needs of youth in vocational education in marketing and planning of school projects.
- Pay attention to the needs and baseline knowledge of learners from different backgrounds at sessions.

3.2 Regional equity

Definition

Regional equity means that everyone can participate in the activities of EYP Finland as equals regardless of their place of residence or travel distance to the events.

Description of the current state

As of 2020, there are five Regional Committees in EYP Finland: EYP Helsinki, EYP Eastern Finland, EYP Northern Finland, EYP Tampere and EYP Turku. Regional Committees are free to organise events and activities for their members according to the aims of EYP Finland. However, the role of the Regional Committees has decreased significantly during the last few years to the point that the activity of some Regional Committees has almost ceased to exist.

Attention has been paid regarding remote participation in the general meetings of EYP Finland. The autumn meeting of 2019 was broadcast on Facebook and the spring meeting of 2020 was organised completely remotely. The exceptional situation in 2020 overall increased the number of events organised online, which made participation from all over Finland easy. In 2020, the first digital session of EYP Finland was also organised.

The responsibility of school contacting has shifted from the Regional Committees to individual volunteers and through separate school projects also to hired project workers. In addition, the Secretary General helps in school collaboration. The aim is to reach as many secondary education schools and junior secondary schools as possible. A second aim is to visit as many schools as possible but it is especially challenging to visit remotely located institutions.

Currently, EYP Finland organises four Regional Sessions and one National Session annually. In addition, EYP Finland organises training and other member events and implements two school visit projects. The goal is to spread out sessions in a way that every session has the required number of delegates and the distance to the session is reasonable from a broad area.

Participation can be difficult especially for participants from remote locations due to long distances. This may also lead to high travel expenses and can, therefore, prevent participation. Long distances may also lead to cliques as participants are eager to socialise with existing friends that they do not often see.

Measures

- Offer the possibility of remote participation in the general meetings of EYP Finland.
- Aim at distributing events regionally in such a way that distances to the events are equitably shorter for members from a certain area.
- Continue to distribute sessions regionally in a way that the distance to sessions is reasonable from as broad an area as possible.



- Pay attention to the starting and ending times of events whenever possible in order to make participation easier regardless of long travel times.
- Emphasise that teambuilding is an important way to prevent regional cliques in the events.
- Emphasise through communications the possibility to participate in any regional event as a member of EYP Finland.
- Continue the procedure of having the Presidents of Regional Committees in the same internal communication channels with the Board of EYP Finland.
- Organise training for the Boards of Regional Committees in which the trainer is a member of the Board of EYP Finland.

3.3 Linguistic equity

Definition

Everyone has the possibility to participate in the events of EYP Finland without language barriers.

Description of the current state

The official language of EYP Finland is Finnish according to the statutes of the association (14§). The Board is cooperating with many Finnish and Swedish speaking partners and sponsors. Using too much Finnish language might be a barrier for, for example for Swedish speakers to participate in activities. Keeping in mind the population of Swedish-speaking Finns (5%) and other minority languages it is important to also communicate in Swedish and English. Therefore, EYP Finland tries to offer possibilities to participate in activities without having any Finnish skills. The use of English used in our internal and external communication has been increasing in the last few years. In 2019 and 2020 the Board of EYP Finland communicated internally almost completely in English.

The official language of EYP Finland's sessions is English which offers the possibility to participate regardless of Finnish skills. Other events are almost always held in English too. EYP Finland informs participants about the official language when promoting the sessions but it might come as a surprise to some of the new delegates. However, the aim of the sessions is to learn and encourage young people to use a foreign language. Thus, no one is being discriminated against based on language skills.

Measures

- Aim to publish news and updates on EYP Finland's website and social media also in English.
- Aim to communicate about EYP Finland's main events, such as sessions, in both Finnish and English and partly also in Swedish.
- Seek to give the possibility to take part in different volunteer roles also in English.
- Aim to organise more presentations as a part of a national school tour in Swedish-speaking schools to attract more Swedish-speakers to EYP Finland's activities.
- Mention in an encouraging manner that the sessions will be held in English. The sessions are meant to be an equal platform for learning.
- Encourage participants to use and learn English in sessions. The eagerness and desire to learn are more important than existing language skills.

- Aim that annually at least one session would have a Swedish-speaking person as a patron.

3.4 Accessibility

Definition

Accessibility consists of both physical and social accessibility (Vammaisten oikeudet 2016). Physical accessibility stands for the possibility to participate with others in diverse environments with the chance to utilise aids for disabled persons, environmental features, and the help of another person (Esteettomyys: fyysinen esteettomyys). Social accessibility signifies an open, non-discriminatory, inclusive, and safe atmosphere where everyone can be themselves. Attitudes significantly affect the realisation of social accessibility. (Esteettomyys: sosiaalinen esteettomyys.) Accessibility is one of the most important conditions for guaranteeing equity.

Description of the current state

The sessions of EYP Finland are often organised inside buildings of educational institutions. The National Building Code of Finland specifies conditions concerning the suitability of certain public spaces for people with physical disabilities. Therefore, physical accessibility is generally well guaranteed inside school buildings (RakMk FI 2005). However, further attention should be paid to physical accessibility from a practical organising perspective when selecting event venues. Additionally, accessibility could be further addressed in the annual training of EYP Finland.

In the events of EYP Finland, the goal is to create a supportive and open atmosphere where each and everyone can have a sense of belonging. Each session starts with teambuilding in both large and small groups with the aim of welcoming everyone and building a group in which everyone dares to speak their mind and can be themselves. During the sessions, everyone's opinions are taken into account without discrimination. EYP Finland is also non-partisan and one can participate in its activities regardless of one's political opinions. In addition, the activities aim at being as socially accessible as possible in spite of language skills.

Different personality types of session participants are all equally valuable. This and diverse communication skills are taken into account during the delegate selection process after the session. The goal is to build a socially accessible environment that does not favour certain personality types. The sessions are not meant to be competitive and everyone has an equal opportunity to continue in EYP Finland regardless of the outcome of the selection process.

Equal participation opportunities for gender and sexual minorities are an important part of social accessibility. The equity of these groups can be improved by taking the plurality of genders into further consideration in both registration forms and organisation of events.

To foster social accessibility, a National Safe Person was appointed in 2019. Larger events, like sessions, also have their own Event Safe Persons.

Measures



- Take into account the wellbeing and stamina of all members as factors to a positive organisational environment that should be fostered.
- Set physical accessibility as a criterion when selecting event venues.
- Add a section to all event registration forms where participants can state their personal accessibility needs.
- Expand the gender options of registration forms by adding options "Other", "I do not wish to define" and "I cannot define".
- Pay attention to personal accessibility needs in event organisation whenever possible, including, but not limited to, physical restrictions and gender-based division of facilities. Address accessibility as one subject of the Head Organisers' Training of EYP Finland.
- Increase the readiness of volunteers to take into account the accessibility and diversity of participants by asking the trainers to cover the subject in the training events of EYP Finland.
- Take accessibility into consideration as a part of the communication strategy of EYP Finland for example by informing about the accessibility of events.
- Solidify a socially accessible atmosphere by paying attention to the choice of words in both spoken and written communications.
- Build a perception of EYP Finland as an anti-discriminatory organisation for example by joining national and non-partisan campaigns for equity whenever possible, informing about events being discrimination-free, and intervening severely in suspected discrimination inside EYP Finland.
- Encourage members and participants to actively bring up encountered issues regarding social accessibility in the activities of EYP Finland.
- Aim to bring out the diversity of the participants in the communications and media material of EYP Finland's events as well as acknowledging the power of pictures so that they do not portray EYP Finland as a closed organisation involving only young people from distinct backgrounds.
- Appoint an Event Safe Person that is trained for the role for each event lasting over a day.
- Make sure that event participants are given the contact information of both the National and Event Safe Persons.
- Ensure physical accessibility to improving the website by adding alt-texts to images.
- Investigate the possibility to move to anonymous recruiting of employees.
- Utilise positive discrimination in recruitment of all employees.

4 Follow-up and assessment

The main people responsible for ensuring the follow-up and assessment of the plan are the Board of EYP Finland and the Safe Persons. The aims and measures outlined in the plan are actively followed-up annually. The measures introduced are straightforward and concrete so their follow-up and assessment can be done easily. To further assess the measures, surveys targeted at members can be used.

The plan will be made publicly available and it will be shared with new Board Members of EYP Finland and others in roles of responsibility such as the Head Organisers and leadership of sessions, so that the principles outlined in this document are fully realised. The plan will be published on the website of EYP Finland and shared with all the members in online form. The aim is to ensure an open atmosphere where members and other participants will actively intervene in situations where they feel that the Outreach & Inclusion principles

are compromised. The plan will be translated in English. The plan will be communicated in English and, resources permitting, in Swedish, to communicate the equity values of EYP Finland to all our members.

Any breaches of the Outreach & Inclusion principles must be reported as soon as possible. If the matter needs further solving, it will be solved confidentially with the President and Secretary General of EYP Finland. Event Safe Persons are responsible for individual events. EYP Finland's National Safe Person is in regular contact with the Board to promote equality, equity, and non-discrimination.

This plan is valid until further notice but is reviewed annually by the Board and updated if needed.

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