

STRATEGY OF THE LITHUANIAN NATIONAL UNION OF STUDENTS FOR 2016-2020

The Strategy of the Lithuanian National Union of Students has to bring two key changes to the organization. First of all, consolidate a clear organization identity, defined by the mission, vision and operational activities of the organization. Second, implement the identified key changes which are requisite in achieving the organization's vision within itself, as well as in the higher education system of Lithuania.

By representing students of all levels and forms of study, the Lithuanian National Union of Students looks after the quality of studies and the success of students, which is why it does not limit itself to merely initiatives aimed at the Lithuanian higher education sector. In pursuing its own mission, the Union may initiate changes in the Lithuanian primary or secondary education sectors or carry out activities pertaining to a nation-wide planning of human resources or the employment of persons with a higher education degree.

The Mission

Successful studies in the eyes of students

The Vision

A community of student governing bodies that advances Lithuanian higher education

The Values

Responsibility – a heartfelt and understandable duty to ourselves, the organization and the students.

Competence – constant improvement and the promotion of advancement of united members.

Freedom to openly express one's opinion, choose the direction, model and means of activity.

Continuity – upholding traditions by including former and current members of the organization.

Studenthood – being open to extraordinary methods and youthful maximalism.

Directions of activity and main goals of the Lithuanian National Union of Students

Advancements of higher education

Representing students is a key function of the activities of the Union of Students. The Union carries out this activity through participation in the process of legislation – the preparation of strategic documents of Lithuanian higher education, the changing of laws and regulations, public discourse regarding higher education, as well as meetings and conferences, where the direction of higher education is formed. The Union of Students aims to ensure that changes in legislation would translate to real changes in higher education institutions. This assurance manifests in changes of the community's culture. The Lithuanian National Union of Students must protect the lawful interests of students by making sure that legislature is upheld universally, in all higher education institutions of Lithuania.

Key goals of this direction of activity:

1. A National plan or agreement with regards to the development of teacher competences

The Union must initiate the creation of a national plan for developing teacher competences, related to their attestation done in higher education institutions, as well as ensure its implementation in Lithuania, while including all teacher competences that students find important.

2. Scholarships that satisfy the financial needs of the best students

The Union must carry into effect a nation-wide investigation that would analyse the current social situation, financial needs and typical expenditure of students. Having identified the financial needs of students, the Union must ensure that the students in Lithuania with the best grades receive appropriately sized scholarships that would meet the financial needs of these students.

3. External evaluation that positively and negatively influences the quality of studies

Each member of the Union must become responsible for the delegation of students to meetings with outside experts that evaluate the higher education institution, study programme and field of study. The Union also has to make sure that each member of the organization is capable of recognizing newly prepared study programmes of poor quality and prevent them from being approved.

4. A dormitory that ensures dignified living conditions

The Union must create a standard for student dormitories, which would state the ratio between inhabitants and living space, sanitary facilities, leisure rooms and work zones, as well as ensure student involvement in the governing of dormitories and making sure that they meet all hygiene norms. The Union must promote the construction of new dormitories in Lithuania and the renovation of old ones, as well as ensure that, during these processes, the created dormitory quality standard would be followed.

5. Students actively form their own study program and its schedule

The Union must ensure the right of students to form their own study programs. Undergraduate university study programs must offer students the possibility to choose study subjects worth 120 ECTS credits, colleges – 90 ECTS credits. Such study model must be based on proper consultation with regards to choosing study subjects, as well as on recommended sets of study subjects.

6. The improvement of the system for compensating studies in pursuing more social justice

The Union must pursue increased availability of Lithuanian higher education and ensure that the system for enrollment into higher education institutions is more socially just. To achieve this goal, two changes are needed in the system for compensating studies: firstly – linking the repayment of study loans with the moment from which the graduate's income reaches or exceeds the median national income; secondly – changes in the system of application, that would allow to take into account the social status of those applying for higher education.

The direction of changes to the process of forming and implementing positions

The most important internal process of the Lithuanian National Union of Students is the formation of positions. The organization seeks to optimize this process, ensure the compatibility of external positions, their rationale with regards to the higher education values fostered by the organization, which should be clearly identified and known, as well as understood by all members. The organization also has to develop its external communication and improve its activity towards the realization of these positions, seek its effectiveness and orderliness.

Key goals of this direction of activity:

1. The creation of a system for planning long-term positions by the Lithuanian National Union of Students

The Union requires a system that would allow it to effectively form and change broad, long-term and values-based positions that would be of use when tackling the more minor matters of higher education and would serve as the collection of key Union's provisions pertaining to higher education. The formed system ought to be simple, easily understandable and should allow for all members of the Union to get involved in the process.

2. The forming of long-term positions of the Lithuanian National Union of Students

By using the system for forming long-term positions, the Union has to form a collection of its key provisions that encompasses all essential national-level matters of higher education, such as the purpose, financing, social dimension, study model, quality assurance etc. of higher education. By the end of 2017, the Lithuanian National Union of Students will need to have formed long-term positions pertaining to the purpose and social dimension of higher education, as well as the quality of studies.

3. Increasing the effectiveness of lobbying

In the pursuit of external goals that it has set for itself, the Union has to form long-term plans for lobbying, which would cover external communication, the Union's position, main arguments for the justification of this position, and the foreseeable roles of all governing bodies and members of the Union in achieving its own goals. It is key for the Union to be analytical, above all else, in its activity, i.e. positions based on evidence and statistics, communication that forms public opinion.

4. Systematic solving of student problems

In seeking student well-being, the Lithuanian National Union of Students must improve the mechanisms for solving the problems of students: each problem ought to be solved thoroughly and completely. Having solved an occurrence of an individual problem, it is necessary to find out if a basis exists for this problem to repeat itself. The Union also has to take initiative when solving problems of national importance, in order to protect the rights of students when they are infringed in the country. The Union has to collect information pertaining to the problems tackled by all of its members, the information has to be organized and used as best practices of problem solving.

5. Increasing the number of students represented by governing bodies

Members of the Union must strengthen their function of representation and seek to effectively represent not just undergraduate students, but also postgraduate and doctorate students, residents, as well as students of non-consecutive studies. Student governing bodies ought to integrate international students in their activities in order to represent their interests. The Union has to establish an advisory structure that would be made up of representatives of organizations that bring together doctorate students of higher education institutions. This structure should strengthen the connection between the Union and doctorate students, and help the Union form positions and seek changes pertaining to the well-being of doctorate students.

The direction of activity for strengthening human resources

The pillar of the Union's activity – the people united by its members, student governing bodies. It is the competence and motivation to act of those people that is the interest of the entire Union. It is for this reason that the Lithuanian National Union of Students must take care of the education of these people by organizing training sessions, seminars and various other activities.

Key goals of this direction of activity:

1. Creating a culture of an organization that is always learning

The Union has to purposefully create a culture of an always learning organization among its members. Various measures may be used in the pursuit of this goal: debates, conferences, discussions, mentorship programs etc. These measures ought to motivate the members of the organization to study independently, accumulate knowledge relevant to the activity of the Union and teach other members of the organization. By successfully creating such a culture, the organization would set itself on a path of constant progress.

2. Creating measures that form institutional memory

In the pursuit of improving the direction of activity for strengthening human resources of the Union, it is imperative to come up with new means that would allow the members of student governing bodies to study independently. These means must be accessible to all members of the organization and encompass not only knowledge from various fields, but also conspectuses of past activities, best and worst practices of the organization.

3. Strengthening the bond with other student organizations

Members of the Union must seek to strengthen their bond with other student organizations, ensure the possibility for student organizations to be established and flourish by providing them aid, oversight and consultations, as well as including them in the activities of student governing bodies.

The direction of activity for strengthening financial resources

The activities of the Union would not be possible without financial resources, which are used to pay for the activities of the Lithuanian Union of Students and student governing bodies, as well as the staff of the offices of the Union.

Key goals of this direction of activity:

1. Increasing and diversifying financial resources by creating social businesses

The Union ought to seek financial security, which would guarantee its continuity, by creating social businesses that are aimed at the needs of students and generate revenue for the organization. These businesses ought to be separated from the Union's governing bodies and formed through the activity of legal entities that are separate, yet inherent to the Union. In the pursuit of creating such businesses, student governing bodies have to be granted the opportunity to become investors and contribute to the forming of the activity of these businesses.

2. Increasing financial resources by participating in public procurement and projects

The Union has to make effective use of its specific competences, communication network and connections with government institutions when participating nation-wide project development and providing government institutions services through public procurement. Such activity would not only allow for the development of the Union's competences, but would also contribute to the formation of its budget, as well as the general advancement of higher education.

The strategy of the Lithuanian National Union of Students for 2016-2020 was approved on the 2nd of April, 2016, in the electoral and reporting conference.