



BM72 - MALTA

Membership Strategy

Following the European Students' Union's (ESU) values and visions, which state equal educational and social opportunities in an open and democratic Europe, where students develop a sustainable future, there is a need to shape the Membership policy of our organisation.

ESU, as a diverse and democratic organisation, should faithfully reflect the current situation; whereby organisations coming from different European states have diverse conditions and origins. Because of the organisation growing, there is a need to have useful tools for following members' activities, which can be used to assist them to meet, and ensure their constant fulfilment of the membership criteria.

The Strategy outlines the main political priorities within the broader meaning of membership issues, mainly tackling the understanding of membership criteria, standards for study visits, reassessment procedures, and support to National Unions of Students (NUS).

Reassessment

Due to the need to continuously strive for a strong and solid organisation, unions must ensure they embrace the core values of ESU, and continue to uphold and preserve these values whilst in membership. Continuous reassessments of unions provides ESU with a good platform to learn from each other, and for discussing democratic values and sustainability within student unions.

Reassessment is based on a **five-year** self-evaluation of every ESU member, with the board having oversight over the fulfilment of membership criteria and overall acting according to ESU values. The reassessment process is based on transparency and open access for full members of ESU to all information given by NUSes.

The proposed method:

Every NUS will be obliged to deliver a written self-evaluation report, consisting of:

- Native + Original and English version of up-to-date NUS Statutes and Standing Orders *Official English translation might be costly for some unions, so the translation can be done without an official translation agency. These documents should provide information on NUS structure (incl. membership), working patterns, and legitimacy.*

- Self-evaluation on each membership criterion
NUS will provide self-assessment on each membership criteria defined in the ESU Statutes, following the methods used in Study visits.
- Activity report
The Activity Report should consist of highlights of the NUS activities for the past 5 years. It should also include an overview of the main present and future activities.
- Financial Statement
The Financial Statement to be delivered for the reassessment procedure differs from the one delivered for the TDI. It has to elaborate only on main sources of income main expenses and contain a self-evaluation of NUS financial sustainability.

Every NUS should be reassessed once in a timeframe of 5 years (10 Board Meetings - BMs). Distribution of re-assessed NUSes, in this period, will be decided by the EC with regards to regional balance. The most recently accepted NUSes will be reassessed the last, the same as all newly accepted NUSes. Selected NUSes should be formally informed about being selected for the reassessment process, no later than 120 days before the respective BM, in order to ensure that the self-evaluation report is sent to the ESU Presidency 30 days prior to the respective BM, which will assure its accessibility to the Board. The Board will discuss the report with the respective NUS during the Board Meeting and then vote on the document. The report is adopted by a simple majority.

a) If the report is accepted, the reassessment procedure is over, and the obligation of delivering a report starts again within the timeframe.

b) If the report is not delivered, the respective NUS is granted the possibility to deliver the report to the following Board meeting in order to be voted upon again. If the report is not accepted the respective NUS is granted the opportunity to improve the organisation and deliver a new report the second Board meeting after the report was rejected.

c) If the second report is accepted, the reassessment procedure is over and the obligation of delivering a report starts again within the timeframe.

d) If the second report is not accepted or not delivered, a study visit will take place under the current provisions stated in the ESU Standing Orders. The Study visit team delivers their own report and Board votes on this report with a simple majority. In consequence, the board will vote about the revoking of membership of the respective union with a $\frac{3}{4}$ majority as foreseen by the Standing Orders.

Supporting NUSes

An important part of ESU's mission is to support NUSes in developing their capacities, and in gaining skills for stronger and more skilled student movement representation. The Trainers' Pool should be a tool for developing both full and candidate members, in order to develop their capacities to strengthen ESU as a result. Capacity-building seminars should regularly take place during ESU events, alongside the projected agenda. ESU will also look for ways of supporting NUSes, which do not require physical meetings, in order to cut the costs of such support, and making it accessible for all NUSes, such as on-line platforms for delivering trainings to ESU members. ESU will develop a project on its members' development, which

will serve as a kick-off tool for further use of the Pool of Trainers. This project will also enable ESU to establish a broader pool and its steering committee.

Membership Criteria

Every NUS must be open and accessible to all students from all higher education institutions in the country, regardless of their political conviction, religion, ethnic or cultural origin, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, social standing or any disability they may have.

- NUS is controlled and run by students. Only students should have a decisive power control over the organisation. This does not exclude students on academic leave, or recent graduates from taking part in the organisation, but the major power distribution should lay with actual students.
- NUS holds democratic elections and runs on a democratic basis. Transparent, frequent, cyclical and non-corrupted democratic elections should be an essential part of every NUS. Democratic decisions on day-to-day issues must be assured.
- NUS is representative. NUS is built on a solid ground with legitimacy coming from students, NUS should represent a large number of students and at the same time have at least an ambition to influence national higher education policies.
- NUS is autonomous and independent in decision-making. NUSes must be financially and politically independent in decision making from any political parties, governments, and financial donors.
- NUS' objectives are in accordance with ESU objectives and values, stated in the Statutes. Organisation should stand for the rights of students and student communities.

ESU as a diverse organisation understands and accepts NUSes with specific higher education system country patterns, and bears in mind country's specifications whilst assessing a NUS in a broader context.

Associate Members

Associates should be partners and supportive bodies to our activities. Associates should provide their expert input on areas they are involved in. Mainly the Executive Committee members with enough time in advance should seek further input in the work on policy papers and statements. Associates can attend ESU events, especially those events where they can contribute with their expertise.

Both Associates and ESU should reinforce each other's messages on topics of common interest by promoting and supporting policy papers and statements. The information flow and communication from both parties should be improved in order to ensure more efficient and effective reaching of mutual goals.

Handbook for Study Visits

A handbook for conducting study visits should be followed by study visit teams, and used by the Board to oversee the minimal standards for the study visit procedures. The aim of this document is to secure comparable and reliable study visits reports guidelines, a mutual understanding of membership criteria and furthermore standards for study visit procedures, in order to assess whether an organisation meets the necessary conditions for joining the European Students' Union as full member.

Guidelines for the Study Visit team

The members elected to do the study visit should nominate their representatives respecting a gender balance. Representatives should be chosen to ensure a regionally balanced study visit team.

Guidelines for the Study Visit procedure

1. The purpose of study visits is to determine whether an NUS fulfils the ESU membership criteria and, consequently, to provide the Board with a recommendation about NUS membership. In order to do this, the study visit team should use all opportunities at their disposal to check how the member in question operates.

2. The study visit must be carried out in accordance with the highest professional and ethical standards, respecting confidentiality of information received.

3. During the study visit, the study visit team must be familiar with, and constantly comply with, the ESU Statutes and Standing Orders, which are the documents according to which the whole procedure is to be done. The study visit team must evaluate the organisation in accordance with ESU membership criteria as stated in the Statutes and developed in the Membership Strategy.

4. The study visit team has the right to request any documents related to the functioning of the assessed NUS. All the necessary documents must be requested at least 60 days before the date of the study visit, and they must be delivered at least 30 days before the study visit.

5. The study visit team must study the delivered documents, and prepare notes about available information before the study visit. Provided documents must be available to the Board with respect to the assessed NUS to keep a document or documents confidential

6. In order to determine all the necessary information about an NUS, the study visit team should consider holding meetings with the following stakeholders, whilst it is important that the gathered information is evaluated in its entirety in regard to the report:

- NUS presidency and executive committee, NUS board members or equivalent bodies
- Relevant organisations in the country related to student issues
- Partner organisations of the assessed NUS
- Representatives of various local students' unions that they find relevant, but preferably not only those recommended by the assessed NUS
- Students who are not members of the candidate NUS, and representatives of other student organisations, if they exist in the country
- State education institutions, such as ministry of higher education, stakeholders involved in education, quality assurance agency, research institutions
- Representatives of other relevant organisations working in the area of higher education
- Independent NGOs engaged in higher education
- International institutions working for education, such as local UNESCO or Council of Europe department, foreign embassies.

7. The schedule for the study visit is to be proposed by the study visit team at least 30 days before the study visit, and it should be agreed upon between the team and the candidate NUS at least 14 days before the visit.

8. The study visit report must be done as an unbiased report, which will be easily comparable with other study visit reports, and it should consist of at least the following elements:

- Overview of the current political situation in the country, in relation to the higher education system, which has to include the overall structure and financing of the higher education system and any recent major changes in the national higher education area
- Reports from all the meetings held
- Reports on each of the membership criteria
- Constructive feedback to the assessed NUS identifying areas to develop.
- Conclusion and recommendations and any additional information that might be worthwhile for a more objective assessment of NUS membership

In case of dissenting opinions amongst the study visit team, each team member has the right to write a statement that has to be included in the study visit report.

9. The study visit report should be finished no more than 30 days after the study visit ended, and delivered to the assessed member, which has the right to comment on the report until 15 days after the delivery of the report.

10. The Study visit report, together with the assessed members' comments, must also be delivered to the ESU Board the latest 30 days before the next BM.