



Gender Mainstreaming Strategy

1. Introduction

Gender mainstreaming was defined by the United Nations Economic and Social Council in 1997 as "a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of... the policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated." Gender mainstreaming is a process with the goal of achieving gender equality.

Gender is a social construction, not confined to, but rather created from, various cultural, political, social and psychological factors. This construct revolves around the roles that are seen as ideal or appropriate behaviour for a person of a specific sex. These constructions are products of cultural and political structures that typically impose the binary terms of man and woman or masculine and feminine. However, ESU maintains the belief that there are in fact many gender identities and this should be recognised.

The European Students' Union (ESU) is being used to refer to "ESIB - The National Unions of Students in Europe" Belgian asbl BE0890.019.936, due to the fact that both legal entities are going through a merging process. Likewise the visual identity of ESU is being used instead of the one from ESIB.

It is important that core to a gender mainstream strategy we are clear on the roots of gender inequality, to tackle this and move forward as an organisation. Gender inequality disproportionately affects non-male members, due to us living in a system which views men as the 'norm'. This is also the same with issues of sexuality, where heterosexual is seen as normal, and other sexualities as 'different' and 'other', as this is what gives cis-men advantage over women and other genders in the political sphere. For example, societal norms and socialisation mean people are more comfortable giving men authority and recognising this authority than women (who often get undermined in leadership roles). This gives cis-men a sense of privilege they do not necessarily know they have and it is why women are more likely to raise the issue of gender inequality (as they feel the effects more often).

It is important in any Gender Mainstreaming Strategy that we recognise these structural inequalities, so we can reach a point where we value our members equally as individuals, allow them to be themselves free from gendered expectations and this undue privilege no longer exists.

ESU's Gender Mainstreaming Strategy is a framework for gender equality and therefore for all kinds of ESU activities. This Strategy should be a basis guideline for the daily work and policy development, therefore it needs to be taken into consideration for the plan of work. Furthermore, there will be a yearly report about the latest developments and activities in this working area. The following text is written independent from the working areas of the European Students' Union to ensure a long-term document that fits to all challenges and activities in the future.

ESU commits to prioritizing intersectionality in its work, recognizing the way that issues influence people differently due to their race, ethnicity, cultural background, sexual orientation, class, disability or genders.

2. Goals

The Gender Mainstreaming Strategy for ESU shall attempt to tackle gender issues by providing more awareness on the benefits of having an environment of equal opportunity and access. In the short term we will focus on pre-existing gender issues aimed at reducing discrimination against the non-cis-male genders. In the long run we will train, educate and promote how to have a more gender inclusive working environment free from discrimination and prejudice contributing to gender inequality.

Reducing discrimination: Short term strategies

General actions:

- Raise awareness among all elected officials, staff and member representatives about existing gender inequality and discrimination;
- Help to overcome existing gender stereotypes and expectations that put people into categories where they do not identify, or force unfair gendered expectations on them;
- Assure an equal participation of all persons in every aspect of the organization both through participation and input;
- Assure that ESU events are a discrimination free area;
- Provide measures to handle offending and discriminating acts during work in a fair way;
- Provide safe space and supportive structure in cases of sexist discrimination or harassment and provide measures to combat this;
- Encourage everyone to be an active part of all policy work.

Focused actions:

- Empower women in the organization to take an active part in the organization in leading positions;

- Educate everyone on how to recognize discriminatory behaviour and atmospheres that prevent women from becoming active;
- Train individuals against discriminatory behaviour and harassment and assure that those behaviours are not acceptable in the organization;
- Encourage individuals to use the resources in place to file a claim of discrimination when necessary;
- Provide spaces and possibilities for discussion about the different perspectives on gender equality;
- Educate men, women and people of other genders on the implications of a patriarchal system that favours men, that can result in men holding positions of inappropriate authority, and other genders inappropriate subjugation;
- Encourage participants to act when discriminatory or oppressive behaviour are witnessed taking place.

Long term strategies

General actions:

- Encourage the NUS's to educate their representatives in gender equality and how to recognize discrimination and oppressive behaviour, how to act on it and how to facilitate a good environment for people of all genders to participate and have their voices heard, keeping in mind that the voices of oppressed groups have to be amplified;
- Enable those working on content issues to include gender specific views and aspects into the development of policies and actions;

- Assure the sustainability of the goals will be reached independently from a specific structure or a specific person and are embedded in the core values of ESU.

Focused actions:

- Gender-focused surveys aimed at learning the different perceptions and attitudes of the genders have on gender, equality and access;
- Empower women in the organization;
- Use the results of the surveys to implement new education campaigns targeting the differing needs of genders;
- Use the results of the surveys to create new campaigns to tackle gender inequality for the organization.

3.Arguments: Why is it important to ensure gender equality?

Justice and Equality

Most states are party of various normative documents and statements, which establish gender equality as a fundamental principle. States are obliged to fulfil these commitments. Justice demands gender equality, since we live in a community that espouses shared values.

Credibility and accountability

The traditional binary classification of men and women divides the population in half (with women being the slight majority but underrepresented in most political spheres). Therefore, people who identify themselves in one category: male, female, women, men should have no bearing on how the organization treats them. People who do not define into this binary should also be treated with full respect and as

equals and should have equal input and participation in ESU, without facing barriers to this. When people are not addressed, recognized and treated as individuals in the organization, the organization fails to be credible or accountable to its members.

Efficiency and Sustainability

Fair representation of all genders contributes to an effective and sustainable society. Societies cannot afford to ignore the contributions and economic and social capacities that different people bring. Gender equality will pay off for the society as a whole because it recognizes the diversity in the sexes, frees students from being forced into gender roles which are harmful and empowers all students and people to aspire to and fulfil their own individual ambitions and our shared aspirations.

In the future, Gender Mainstreaming is inextricably about ensuring sustainability as well, since it adopts a human development perspective, which has the long-term objective of creating a socially just and sustainable society.

Quality of Life

Increased attention to gender equality issues will improve the lives of all students. In a democratic society based on principles of social justice, each individual member has the right to the best quality of life possible. Gender mainstreaming initiatives seek to further this objective, because by increased attention to gender equality issues in ESU, NUSes might start pressing these issues in their own country, which might lead to an improved life of students there. Discrimination, including invisible discrimination, which due to institutionalised sexism people are not always aware of, is harmful to students' access to education, and ESU has

a responsibility to make all students lives better, and tackle the specific barriers women students face.

Alliance

By underlining the importance of gender equality and making it visible in ESU policy and outwards, ESU can serve as a role model and leading the way in the field of gender equality and especially gender equality and higher education. ESU also makes this clear by requiring from members and prospect members that they also take gender equality seriously.

Further Impacts

Gender equality is not an isolated issue and therefore the effects of working on gender equality are manifold as well. When ESU works on gender equality it at the same time reassures ESU's commitment to human rights and equal opportunities for all. Continuous work on gender equality has positive effect on the image of the organisation, the internal knowledge and working environment as well as on the member's awareness and attitudes about gender equality and tackling discrimination against women.

Financial and Human Benefits

A working environment where there is gender equality is a much better environment than where there is discrimination. Researches have shown that both public and private companies and organisations, are more efficient and produce more if the company/organisation is gender mainstreamed. An environment where all feel equal, are treated equally,

have equal opportunities and where all perspectives are taken in account, has more financial and human benefits.

Human Rights and Democracy

Democratic principles and basic human rights demand gender equality. These values argue for equal representation and participation of all genders in various contexts, premised on the basic notion of their shared human rights.

Representation

The members of ESU are diverse in gender – all of them have the right to be represented, and to have a chance to be represented by someone they can identify with. This is an issue of inclusion as well as identification. Due to gender norms, we live gendered experiences throughout life and this makes some issues more of a priority for some groups, for example, we see that when more women are elected into national parliaments, the topics on the agenda change, to reflect issues which were previously side-lined and encompass the needs and interests of more of the population. Working to improve gender mainstreaming and improving women's participation in the leadership of ESU will lead to more important issues for students coming forward. As representatives of students, ESU and NUSes have a responsibility to tackle and remove barriers to women's participation and make sure that ESU is equally accessible to all.

Role Models within an Organisation

A scarcity of people who are not cis-men in influential roles leads to a lack of role models for people of marginalised genders. This leads to a negative spiral – if, for instance women, don't see women in all areas and levels within the organisation, they might (unconsciously) not feel welcome to even try to start working within that area or reaching a certain level.

4. Target groups

ESU member representatives

The representatives of ESU members need to be included in the strategy implementation. They need to know the main aims of the strategy and the main tools of implementation. As they are supposed to vote on the plan of work and the budget, which will be tackled by the strategy, they need to have a common understanding and agreement of the strategy. It is necessary, that the idea of having such a strategy is perceived positively among the members and that the communications enables a sustainable work on the topic. Tackling inequality and gender equality should be a core value of ESU.

ESU elected officials and staff

The elected officials of ESU need to know the general aims of the strategy as well as the specific measures and their implementation steps. As they have to take care of the implementation and are an active part of it, they need to be familiar with them and know how they can contribute. They also need to be able to defend the strategy against opposition – from members as well as from outside. The staff need to know the implications of the strategy in their working areas and ensure this is carried out. In

ESU this includes communication and PR, finances and project and event management.

Other organisations

Other organisations should at least know the existence of the strategy and the very basic aims. They should perceive ESU as an organisation with a strong gender focus and perceive it as a good example. The strategy can also be a factor in reputation and coalition building with other organisations.

5. Analysis

Analysis should be used as a measurement to make internal and external developments; therefore, the yearly report should include the following things:

- An overview of ESU's internal structure balance;
- A review of the gender implications of all topics named in the plan of work or the general reports and additional for the new position papers since the last report (also known as a gender audit) and specifically an analysis of any disproportionate impacts on women in particular;
- A report from all gender specific activities done since the last report;
- A presentation of the outcomes of the gender sessions since the last report.

Furthermore, the Executive Committee and/or the Equality Coordinator should regularly evaluate the existing structures and methods of

operation of ESU and its implications towards gender equality. This includes also the decision-making process during the Board Meetings.

If students request information or the right to collect data for research work referring gender equality, ESU has to provide them with it if the research is not opposing the statutes, standing orders or the gender mainstreaming strategy.

6. Organizational perspective/activities

Gender equality aspects should be considered within every decision-making process. All genders should have the right to their input and it must be ensured that all decisions are based on an equal treatment of gender. The European Students Union believes that language is a strong and influential tool, therefore a gender equal language must be used in any communication of the organisation, for example general statements should not say 'For this type of student, he will face difficulties in this', but 'For this type of student, they will face difficulties in this'.

The elected representatives and the staff of the European Students' Union has the liability to identify underrepresented genders groups and to empower them to react as an equal voice. The elected representatives are free to organize specific trainings or events to empower this groups or to ensure a discrimination free exchange of knowledge and experience.

All people no matter their gender or other basis of discrimination should have equal opportunities to run for elected positions in ESU. We recognize that factors such as implicit bias make it easier for cis men to get elected for positions. **We therefore want to have a quota that ensures that ESU's elected positions are not male dominated.** We recognize that our current quota system is binary and not inclusive to those who identify outside that system. ESU strives to continuously evaluate and improve the election system.

If a woman sees the necessity for a women's only meeting, she has the right to request for a meeting. This right should ensure that there is a chance to raise issues within a safe space e.g. on sexual harassments, but furthermore it should be guaranteed that the women can discuss their view on anything and everything independent from a male's perspective and in a format where women are making their own decisions about issues affecting them specifically.

On every event of the European Students' Union will be a gender related session. This session will be organized by a member of the Executive Committee and/or the Equality Coordinator. The target of this session is to raise awareness, enlarge the knowledge and empower the members in this field. These sessions should take the diversity of members and their specific background into consideration.

7. Good Practises for Event Organising

ESU should strive for creating inclusive and welcoming events for people of all identities. Practical measures for this should be a priority in the discussions between the Executive Committee and hosting unions. **ESU should ensure that the handbook for event organizing is in line with this policy.** The handbook must be provided to hosts for any event. The EC must ensure that these good practices are followed when there are events.

Examples of good practice includes:

- Having a space on name tags, where people can write the pronouns they prefer to be called;
- Planning meetings for people who identify as women and for people who identify as LGBT+ at all Board Meetings and Conventions;
- A time slot for a women's meeting should be in the agendas of the events, preferably parallel to sessions on being an ally, but not the gender session;
- Making sure that the gender sessions are to be held at a time that ensures the maximum attendance of the delegates;
- Being gender-sensitive in the moderation of debates and chairing of meetings. For example, by mixing the speakers list and creating awareness of gender statistics of participation;
- And, panels hosted at ESU events should as a rule be gender balanced, to ensure women's representation, except for cases where this is not possible due to practical circumstances or the nature of the panel.

ANNEX

Gender refers to the socially constructed characteristics of women and men – such as norms, roles and relationships of and between groups of women and men. It varies from society to society and can be changed. The concept of gender includes five important elements: relational, hierarchical, historical, contextual and institutional. While most people are born either male or female, they are taught appropriate norms and behaviors – including how they should interact with others of the same or opposite sex within households, communities and work places. When individuals or groups do not “fit” established gender norms they often face stigma, discriminatory practices or social exclusion.

Gender identity (used in the document interchangeably with "gender", dependent on context) refers to each person's internal and individual experience of gender. It is their sense of being a woman, a man, both, neither, or anywhere along the gender spectrum. A person's gender identity may be the same as or different from their birth-assigned sex.

Sex refers to the different biological and physiological characteristics of males and females, such as reproductive organs, chromosomes, hormones, etc.

Sexuality or sexual orientation refers to an individual's sexual interest and desires towards others.

Cisgender (often abbreviated to simply cis or cis-male/cis-female) is a term for people whose gender identity matches the sex that they were assigned at birth. Cisgender may also be defined as those who have "a gender identity or perform a gender role society considers appropriate for one's sex". It is the opposite of the term transgender.

Transgender refers to people whose gender identity does not match with the sex they've been assigned at birth.

Privilege is understood as the advantage that only one person or group of people has, usually because of their position or because of their socio-economic status, race/ethnicity, or gender identity.

Patriarchy is a social system in which cis men hold primary power and predominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, socio-economic privilege and control of economic resources. Patriarchy as a phenomenon exists in every society, with varying strength and intensity. Cultural norms, traditions, institutions such as education and media, etc. reinforce the status quo and thus reproduce male domination.

Empowerment is the process of becoming stronger and more confident, especially in controlling one's life and claiming one's rights.