

# European Students' Union (ESU)

Fighting for students' rights since 1982

**Mundo-Madou.**

Avenue des Arts 7/8, 1210 Bruxelles

[secretariat@esu-online.org](mailto:secretariat@esu-online.org)

+32 2 893 25 45



## Gender Mainstreaming Strategy

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
What is Gender mainstreaming?	1
Why does ESU need a gender mainstreaming strategy?	1
<b>Measures taken by ESU</b>	<b>2</b>
Advocacy and external representation	2
ESU structures:	7
Monitoring the implementation of the Gender Mainstreaming Strategy	9
<b>Annex</b>	<b>11</b>

# Introduction

## What is Gender mainstreaming?

Gender mainstreaming can be described as a strategy towards realising gender equity. Fighting for gender equity means that we must recognise existing gender inequalities. Gender inequity disproportionately affects members of society that fall outside the cisgendered male identity, as that identity is seen as the norm and institutions and systems are tailored towards that “norm”. ESU maintains that there are in fact many gender identities and they should be recognised.

ESU’s Gender Mainstreaming Strategy is a framework for gender equity and therefore for all types of actions taken in ESU or by ESU. This Strategy must be used as a guideline for the daily work and policy development of ESU. Therefore, it has to be considered when adopting the plan of work and be in accordance with all statutory documents and regulations, and vice versa.

ESU commits to prioritising intersectionality in its work, recognising the way that issues influence people differently due to their race, ethnicity, cultural and economic background, sexual orientation, disability, genders, chronic illness, neurotype or mental health status, etc. It is therefore imperative to strive for equity and not just equality. Due to the various intersections of these identities and therefore lived experiences the obstacles an individual faces to reach a goal cannot be mitigated by a single mechanism but must take into account the additional burdens placed on an individual and alleviating those to even achieve the possibility of equal opportunities.

## Why does ESU need a gender mainstreaming strategy?

Gender equity is a core value of ESU. Higher education does not take place in a closed space. On the contrary, it is a fundamental part of a society and social mechanisms of discrimination are also reproduced here. Therefore, the fight against discrimination is a core task of the student movement. A human rights-based approach and democratic principles can only be realised with gender equity.

ESU represents over 20 million students through its members, and it is of utmost importance for ESU to take responsibility by advocating for gender equity and implementing policy towards this goal. ESU believes gender is a social construction

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 assigned sex or assumed gender.

Increased attention to gender equity 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 increasing attention to gender equity issues in ESU, NUSes gain networks and support to lobby these issues in their own country and improve the lives of students there. Due to the patriarchal structures of society being imbued in any institutions, people are not aware of the built-in sexism and the harm and dangers it causes an individual, including a students' access to education, and ESU has the responsibility to make all students' lives better, and tackle the specific barriers that students outside the cis-male identity face.

Gender equity is not an isolated issue and therefore the effects of working on gender equity are manifold. Gender equity cannot exist without LGBTQI+ liberation, racial justice, disability justice and all other forms of justice as our liberation is inherently interconnected. While working towards gender equity ESU reassures its commitment to defending a person's inalienable rights from any infringements. Continuous work on gender equity has benefits the internal knowledge and working environment. It further sensitises members on the impacts of gender inequity and enables joint work tackling discrimination.

## **Measures taken by ESU**

### **Advocacy and external representation**

By underlining the importance of gender equity and making it visible in ESU policy and outwards, ESU can serve as a role model and lead the way in the field of gender equity and within higher education. ESU also makes this clear by requiring members and prospect members to also take gender equity seriously, and have the vocabulary and minimal knowledge of the concepts regarding gender discrimination and gender binarism issues outside the cis-gender male gaze.

The following steps should be taken regarding advocacy for gender equity:

Objectives	Measures	Responsible Persons	Indicator
<p><b>Raise awareness for the topic of gender equity in ESU representation.</b></p>	<p>The gender mainstreaming strategy and its importance must be brought to the attention of all newly elected ESU representatives and staff members during their handover process.</p>	<p>Equality Coordinator and Hacks</p>	<p>The Equality coordinator provides a mandatory session during each handover process. For staff members, the coordinator is to organise a mandatory meeting with all new incoming staff. The Equality coordinator will draw up a guide with recommendations to be implemented by the member unions in order to improve gender balance.</p>
	<p>ESU's elected members must, in all representative activities, reflect on gender equity.</p>		<p>To be addressed in the reporting during EC meetings.</p>
	<p>Elected ESU members must consider and strive for a gendered balance in acts of external representation.</p>		<p>Any requests for outside representation must be forwarded to all Hacks members. The task division in the first EC meeting of a new mandate must consider this objective.</p>
<p><b>Gathering and disseminating data on gender inequalities in HE and HEI</b></p>	<p>ESU must advocate for data collection on gender inequalities and gender equity efforts in higher education by relevant stakeholders in cooperation with its members create an overview of the lived realities of</p>	<p>Hacks with the support of the Board and Associate members</p>	<p>ESU has clear data, freely accessible on their website, to underline advocacy work in gender inequalities.</p>

	non-cis-male students. All data collected must take intersectionality into account.		
<b>Institutional arrangements to support gender mainstreaming such as but not limited to gender units.</b>	ESU must lobby HEIs to establish these arrangements. By pushing this subject in BFUG, CoE and others..	All Hacks members, the Board, and NUSes.	To be addressed in the reporting during EC meetings.
<b>Project submissions/ fundings and co-operations on the subject of gender equity.</b>	The Equality Coordinator must work closely with members of the project team and support or propose projects.	Equality Coordinator and Project Team	Employment of all these projects to implement the goals of this strategy.
<b>Promote and propose strategies against discriminatory mechanisms.</b>	ESU representatives must engage and encourage their members to fight for gender equity, by leading by example, and by providing structures and platforms of exchange of experiences and points of view.	Equality Coordinator and all hacks	ESU will compose an exhaustive questionnaire, permanently open, in order to give the board the opportunity to share suggestions and feedback in regards to the existing meetings. The questionnaire will be drawn up by the equality coordinator.

## Mainstreaming efforts at ESU statutory meetings:

Objectives	Measures	Responsible Persons	Indicator
<p><b>Understanding and recognition of systemic gender issues, simultaneously fortifying members' efforts, and skills in equity advocacy.</b></p>	<p>Every European Students' Union statutory meeting will feature a gender-related session. These sessions should take the diversity of members and their lived experiences into consideration and respect the privacy of every delegate, that doesn't wish to actively exchange on their personal experiences. The gender session cannot be held in parallel to any other session. It also must take at a time that ensures the maximum attendance of the delegates. The sessions are organized during an appropriate time frame.</p> <p>Gender sessions must take place in a space that is shielded from the main rooms (including the conference room, toilets, other frequented rooms) of the respective event. It is also important to ensure that the rooms are closed and soundproofed as far as</p>	<p>Equality Coordinator with the support of EC Members in cooperation with the hosting Union</p>	<p>The equality coordinator shall report in an EC meeting if all the conditions listed in the measures have been fulfilled.</p>

	possible, so that it is not possible to look in from the outside.		
<b>ESU must be gender-conscious and respectful interpersonal conduct</b>	Name tags need to be equipped with a space, where people can write in the pronouns to be used. This extends to online meetings and screen names. This is not to be filled by the organisers as not everyone might be comfortable or feel safe in sharing pronouns at all. Therefore, ESU will not mandate the disclosure of pronouns.	Organisers <sup>2</sup>	There is space for pronouns in every meeting. Participants are addressed by the disclosed pronouns. If no pronouns are displayed pronouns can't be assumed and the person is referred to only by name.
<b>ESU offers meeting spaces for people who identify within the GSM umbrella<sup>1</sup> in conjunction with spaces for allies.</b>	The provided space needs to be enclosed sessions and cannot be parallel with any other sessions. Where possible, meetings for GSM of colour, disabled GSM and other minoritized GSM will be considered.	Organisers	Meetings are organized and there is possibility to give feedback on just the organisation about the session.
	The details of these meetings are imbued with discretionary actions, to allow for adjustments to the current wants and needs of participants.	Equality Coordinator	Privacy of the participants is respected. If the privacy is not strictly respected the Equality Coordinator should report that in the following EC meeting.
<b>Equitable opportunity to</b>	The moderation of debates as well as the	Moderators/ chairing team.	The Hacks team and/or organisers must gather

<sup>1</sup> gender and sexuality minorities

<sup>2</sup> organizers are Equality Coordinator, hosting union and Hacks

<b>participate in debates</b>	chairing of meetings must be gender-sensitive. As language is a strong and influential tool, gender-sensitive language must be used in statutory meetings		data on gendered statistics of participation and provide it to the TF on Statutory Meetings.
<b>Balanced representation in panels</b>	When organising panels at ESU events, gendered balance among their participants will be strongly advised to ensure representation beyond cis-men. This must take intersectionality into account.	Organizers of panels and Equality Coordinator	If the representation beyond cis-men isn't met, the equality coordinator has to be informed and should report it at the next EC meeting.
<b>Accountability</b>	Should Board members feel that a statutory event did not meet these standards, they are able to anonymously report this to the Trusted Persons Team.	TPT/Equality Coordinator	This has to be addressed at the following EC meeting.

## ESU structures:

Objective	Measures	Responsibility	Indicator
<b>Gender equity in all areas of work</b>	ESU will create awareness of existing problems and propose anti-discrimination strategies.	Equality Coordinator with the support of all Hacks members and where applicable	Every elected ESU member has been made aware of-the importance of gender equity.
	The Equality Coordinator must work closely with members		Every other month meetings with staff, with recorded minutes

The European Students' Union (ESU) is the umbrella organisation of 45 National Unions of Students (NUS) from 40 countries. The aim of ESU is to represent and promote the 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.



	<p>of staff in their respective areas and support or propose efforts for furthering the implementation of this strategy.</p>	<p>staff</p>	
	<p>ESU's statutory documents and regulations must be reviewed regularly to reflect on their compatibility with the gender mainstreaming strategy.</p>		<p>After the end of a BM and at least 30 days before the start of the following ESC a report must be addressed to the board.</p>
	<p>ESU must proactively network with other stakeholders committed to gender equity and intersectionality to use common synergies</p>		
	<p>Gender equity aspects have to be considered within all decision-making processes. Perspectives and experiences from diverse gender identity need to be heard.</p>		<p>Creation of a knowledge base accessible to ESU's members</p>
	<p>Gender-neutral language must be used in all communication of the organisation. Conducting training on gender equity - ESU should also permanently ensure a list with gender equity trainers within the Pool of Trainers, but also free online materials</p>		<p>All documents need to be reviewed and updated to the standards set forth in this strategy.</p>

The European Students' Union (ESU) is the umbrella organisation of 45 National Unions of Students (NUS) from 40 countries. The aim of ESU is to represent and promote the 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.

	available for the NUSes.		
<b>Gender sensitive election system</b>	ESU will explore the options for a non-binary election system	working group/ task force	ESU has an amended and implemented the election system before BM86.

## Monitoring the implementation of the Gender Mainstreaming Strategy

The implementation of the Gender Mainstreaming Strategy must be monitored and evaluated on a constant basis to ensure that the measures taken to fight for gender equity are effective and adapted to the needs of the organisation.

The following steps must be taken by the Equality Coordinator, and supported by elected representatives and members of staff, to ensure the implementation effectively:

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Responsible Persons</b>	<b>Indicator</b>
<b>Upkeep and evaluation</b>	The Equality Coordinator must quarterly revisit the gender mainstreaming strategy, analyse its implementation in writing at the EC meetings, and report about the current status after each statutory meeting to the Executive committee members and fellow coordinators.	Equality Coordinator	Quarterly or otherwise necessarily report to the board and report to the Hacks after statutory events
	The Equality Coordinator must establish structures for sustained exchange with	Equality Coordinator	

	<p>member on issues of discrimination outside of statutory meetings and propose, if necessary, changes to the Executive Committee or upcoming Board Meeting.</p>		
	<p>In case the Equality Coordinator finds that ESU is not taking enough steps to fight for gender equity the Executive Committee must be informed and notifying to all members about the course of action.</p>	<p>Presidency/ Equality coordinator</p>	
<p><b>Yearly reporting</b></p>	<p>The yearly report must include an overview of</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. ESU's internal structure balance,</li> <li>2. 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 persons outside the cis-male</li> </ol>	<p>Equality Coordinator</p>	<p>The yearly report is presented at the spring BMs, and time is allotted for the board to discuss the results.</p>

	<p>identity in particular,</p> <p>3. a report from all gender specific activities done since the last report and</p> <p>4. a presentation of the outcomes of the gender sessions and meetings since the last report.</p>		
--	--	--	--

## Annex

**Gender identity** refers to each person’s internal and individual experience of gender. Gender is a social and cultural construct of identities. As such gender is not an immutable category, but rather subject to constant change throughout time and space. Gender identities are therefore manyfold and are determined by a person’s sense of being and identity. 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 the sex assigned to at birth.

**Sex** is a medical term designating a certain combination of gonads, chromosomes, external gender organs, secondary sex characteristics and hormonal balances. The medical establishment set a binary system (man/woman) usually based on genitals and sometimes chromosomes, omitting the existence of intersex bodies, meaning any characteristics deviation from the binary’s categories .

**Sexuality or sexual orientation** refers to an individual’s sexual interest and desires towards others. Some of the examples of categories describing sexual orientation are homosexuality, heterosexuality, androsexuality, gynosexuality, asexuality and others.

**Cisgender** is a term for people whose gender identity matches the sex that they were assigned at birth. It is often abbreviated to cis or cis-male/cis-female, as the assignment of sex at birth is often limited to male or female

**Transgender** refers to people whose gender identity does not align with the sex they've been assigned at birth. Their gender does not have to fall into the binary category of sex, as a person might be non-binary and trans.

**Non-binary people** are those who identify as a gender that is neither man nor woman or who are not men or women exclusively. Non-binary may refer to a specific gender identity or function as an umbrella term which can include people who are genderqueer, agender, bigender, neutrois, and others.

**Privilege** is understood as the advantage that only one person or group of people has, usually because of their position or because of their socioeconomic 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.

**Gender units** are groups of people designated to monitor issues of gender within a certain field. Gender units can serve many roles including data collection, policy formulation and implementation, etc.

**Equity** refers to fairness and justice and is distinguished from equality: Whereas equality means providing the same to all, equity means recognizing that we do not all start from the same place and must acknowledge and make adjustments to imbalances.