



Memo on the Policy Paper Reform

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Memo by:

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1. Summary

The Representative Council will undergo a preliminary discussion at its meeting on the 22nd of March on the implementation of the policy paper reform. The Representative Council needs to form an opinion on two questions in particular:

What direction should the reform take? The memo lists three options:

- i) One policy paper with all policies
- ii) One policy paper with theme-based programs
- iii) Several theme-based policy papers (current situation)

How much will the Representative Council, volunteers and/or members be involved in the process? The memo lists three options:

- i) Preparation done only by the staff and the Board
- ii) The Rep. Council, volunteers and/or members involved lightly
- iii) The Rep. Council, volunteers and/or members involved directly

The timetable and incurred costs are dependent on the wishes expressed in the preliminary discussion.

2. On Policy Papers

What is a policy paper? A document or a series of documents that underlines how the organization feels about certain things or issues. Various policy papers are typical to student unions, advocacy organizations and political parties. Differentiating from strategies, action plans or

office plans, policy papers do not lead to operative actions on their own, but rather guide the direction of operations. Policies can also be made on issues that AYY does not actively engage in.

There is no need for policies on everything, only issues that are relevant to the members. Policies do not need to be realistic or easy to achieve: AYY can aim for a perfect University or society while understanding everyday realism in its advocacy goals.

An array of policy papers is a two-fold tool: At the same time, it i) gives the Rep. Council the power of decision in what messages AYY will pass onwards and ii) eases the work of the staff at the Central Office (meaning the staff doesn't need to check or ask everything from the Board or the Council, but can rather check the policy papers for answers).

2. The Current Situation

AYY currently has a collection of 12 separate policy papers, which amount to 35 pages of text. The structure of the policy papers varies from short and to the point lists like the environmental policy, to prosaic texts like the housing policy. The oldest policy papers in use are from 2010, when AYY was established.

The Advocacy Committee reviewed AYY's policy papers in 2017. The Committee decreed that the text of the policy papers is partially outdated and partially in conflict with itself, ending with the conclusion that the idea of combining policy papers would have merits.

3. Policy Paper Structure: Three Possible Models

The policy papers can be reformed in various ways. In this memo, three clear options have been provided, along with strengths and weaknesses and points of view on carrying out the suggested reform, updating and maintaining it.

i) One policy paper with all the policies

A single policy paper to combine all of AYY's central advocacy policies. This does not mean taking a stance on everything: The scope of the policy paper can correspond to the extent of the current combined array of policy papers. Thematic subsections would naturally be good for the policy paper in order to keep it manageable and easy to read.

Strengths:

- Clarity and transparency
- Ease of use to all parties
- Updating is easier to control, keeping policies relevant

Weaknesses:

- Does one format suit all themes? Sectors have different needs
- Will inevitably only brush the surface of things: A lack of concreteness is a possible risk

POV on the process:

- Requires a lot of work to put together, but is easy to maintain afterwards

ii) One policy paper with theme-based programs

The model would correspond to the suggestion above (most things in one policy paper), but in addition there would be a selection of more detailed thematic sub-policy papers or programs on the issues that the Student Union wishes to have a more detailed opinion on.

Strengths:

- General policies in one document, but with the possibility to gain a more detailed level on thematic programs
- Sector-based needs are easier to fulfill – the policy paper on corporate relations, for example, is different from the policies that support advocacy work

Weaknesses:

- Possibly messy: Thematic additions can become overshadowed by the policy paper and/or be forgotten
- Possibility of overlapping contents and internal conflict in the material

POV on the process:

- Easy to create by utilizing the current documents, but hard to update and maintain

iii) Theme-based policy papers (current situation)

Maintain the current situation. In the reform, the total amount of policy papers can be cut down in addition to updating existing ones, and new policy papers can be added to the collection.

Strengths:

- Policy creation is based on operational needs
- Enables more detailed or program-oriented policies

Weaknesses:

- Hard to control as a whole
- Reality will not fit nicely inside the themes. It's not always clear what policy paper should be examined to find the information sought
- Individual policy papers get outdated fast
- Possibility of overlapping contents and internal conflict in the text

POV on the process:

- No specific costs to implement, because it only requires updating the current policy papers

What is done elsewhere?

Other student unions make for a good target for comparison. Currently, the student unions using a single policy paper are SYL, HYY, TYY, Tamy, OYY, ÅAS, LYY, ISYY and LTKY. Separate policy papers are used by TTY and JYY, while Taiyo only has policies on art policies and VYY does not have a policy paper at all.

The trend in student unions in the latest decades has been one out of the following two: i) defining policies with policy papers, decided formally, instead of making policies ad hoc and ii) eventually moving from several policy papers to a single unified one. This does not of course mean that AYY should follow suit without discussion. However, one should note that the collection of policy papers

should be as clear as possible and easy to control, and follow the example of other student unions where this has been achieved.

4. How Policies are Formed: A Process Perspective

The array of policy papers can be prepared in many different ways, regardless of the aim. The biggest factor in the preparation is how many parties do we want involve in the preparation work in its various stages. The groups concerned can be divided into four: i) the office staff ii) the Rep. Council iii) the volunteers and iv) the members.

Office participation

- The office has the work resources to reform and update the policy papers. The operative responsibility in preparing the documents lies with the central office, unless the Representative Council decrees otherwise.
- The Board, the Advocacy and Communications Manager and the advocacy team experts are inevitably involved in the process in one way or another, because they will be the same people who will end up utilizing the policy papers
- If there is a wish to involve the Rep. Council or the member base more broadly, this would practically mean utilizing the office resources

Representative Council participation

- The Representative Council decides the policies
- How does the Council participate in forming the policies? Through the Advocacy Committee, or by involving all the members through evening school meetings? Involve the Council in the process of writing and drafting the policies?

Volunteer participation

- The volunteers who do advocacy work are intensely involved with the experts of the advocacy team, so participation in the policy paper reform is easy and natural to implement.
- Involving other volunteers (e.g. culture and corporate relations) requires more work from the office, like facilitating separate sessions.
- Volunteers represent the different schools broadly, and can bring in a fresh perspective.

Member participation

- The Representative Council represents the entire member base of AYY. Do we also want to involve the members directly?
- Involving the members could be possible with e.g. open workshops, questionnaires and brainstorming sessions online.
- On the other hand, the additional value might be quite insignificant. The Council, with its 45 members, already represents a large and varying group of people and opinions and represents all the members.

So the case is of conflicting issues, where on one hand we can complete the reform faster, and on the other hand involve the whole community and end up with a more democratic solution. The benefits of involving the members could be seen in a series of policy papers more in line with the will of the community and possible new content, which could be left out of a more fast-paced

process. The price to pay for this is reflected in the hours of work spent: All time spent on reforming the policy papers is also time spent away from other advocacy work that AYY does.

5. Cost of the Policy Paper Reform

The more cooks there are, the longer the soup will take to make, as the Finnish proverb goes. The greatest expense of the reform is the time spent on it by office staff and the Board. The amount of time spent on the reform is determined by many factors (e.g. the structure and how busy the office is), but the rule of thumb for involving other parties can be defined as follows:

- i) If the process is done by the **staff and the Board** and the Rep. Council will only receive the prepared decisions, we can be ready **by the end of May**.
- ii) If the **Rep. Council, volunteers and/or members are lightly involved in the process**, the different iterations of policy papers and facilitation of events will stretch the project until the **end of October**. Volunteers can be heard easily through existing organs of trust, for example by hearing from the study and social policy committees.
- iii) If the **Rep. Council, volunteers and members are intensively involved in the process**, the different platforms of discussion and stages of the policy drafting process will create work to last **for the rest of the year**. A large-scale facilitation also requires hiring a project worker or a trainee.

The Advocacy Committee wished to receive the prepared policy papers from the office for their review two weeks before presenting them to the Representative Council. This will add a month to the process, when taking into account the reiteration at the office based on the Committee's commentary. Implementing this would basically mean that the first option is impossible due to timetable constraints, but the second option is still open.

The exact number of work hours is hard to predict or evaluate, but the rule of thumb is that organizing a facilitating workshop would require one full day of work from one staff member (7.5 hours). Similarly, drafting a new iteration of a policy paper would require about 20 hours of staff work. The less phases the preparation has, the less work hours are spent.

The hiring of a part-time project worker or a full-time trainee for three months would incur about 3500-5000 euros in excess costs.