

# HYY'S GUIDE TO INTERNATIONALISATION IN ORGANISATIONS

In this guide, we will look at general themes related to internationalisation in organisations. Internationalisation in organisations here refers to taking international students into account, internationalisation at home for people involved in organisations as well as various phenomena, methods and processes related to the general internationalisation of the university field. In the guide, we have sorted the proposed measures into different sections according to how easy they are to implement. The measures deal with organisations' events, fresher activities, communication and general organisational activities.

International students, both exchange students and international degree students, enrich organisations' operation. They can give new perspectives and ideas on how to run and develop organisations' activities. Diversity inspires creativity and makes student organisations a more inclusive for all.

The University, society and the labour market have long been moving towards an increasingly international future. Everyone is not able to go on exchange during their studies or complete an internship abroad. By ensuring that international students can participate in an organisation's activities, its members get the opportunity to experience internationalisation at home.

Organisational activities also help international students get integrated into Finnish society. A lack of social relationships and networks along with problems getting employed are the biggest reasons for the difficulties international students have staying in Finland after their studies. Organisations have a key role in responding to these challenges, as organisational activities allow international students to learn about Finnish culture and meet Finnish students.

You should also remember that international students are not a homogenous group. Some of them are on student exchange, typically lasting for the autumn or spring term or one



academic year. International degree students, on the other hand, have arrived in Finland to complete an entire degree, usually at the master's level. A significant portion of the students coming to Finland to complete a degree are also planning on staying in Finland after their studies.

Reaching international students and changing your organisation's operating methods might seem like a daunting task, but it is possible to internationalise an organisation's activities gradually. The following guide shows different ways of adopting an international perspective in the organisation's events and operating methods. The guide is divided into three sections: the first one (A) features measures that are easy to implement, while the second one (B) contains changes that require a bit more effort. The third and final section (C) consists of internationalisation methods that affect the organisation's activities in a more holistic and comprehensive manner.

## A

- Appoint a person in charge of international affairs whose duty it is to ensure that international perspectives are considered in the organisation's activities. This person does not need to do everything themselves – the point is for them to ensure that internationality is taken into account in the organisation. If needed, you can also establish an international committee to support the person in charge of international affairs. This committee could, for instance, consist of international students operating in your organisation.
- Attend the opening events of the autumn and spring semesters that are aimed at international students. You can reach potential members at these events while also making your organisation known among international students. At the Opening Carnival and other large student events, you should also be prepared for international students being interested in your activities.
- Translate the main points of your communication into English, too. If the matter only concerns Finnish-speaking students, it is still polite to acknowledge international students with a text such as 'This article/event about x is only in Finnish/Swedish'. However, if your resources allow it, the best option is to let international students decide what they are interested in themselves.



- Follow the international activities of other organisations and take note of the best practices. What looks good? What seems interesting or easy to implement?
- Add English sitsit songs into your song printouts and songbooks. Well-known English sitsit songs already exist, but there is nothing to stop you from making your own translations as well.

## **B**

- Organise low-threshold events in English. For example, you could hold an opening event for the academic year for international students, providing them with an opportunity to learn about the organisation's activities and meet its members. Take into account, however, that the challenge of events aimed only at international students is often that Finnish students do not attend them. This means that international and Finnish students would not meet one another. In other words, you should try to ensure that Finnish students participate in international events, too. Events where the focus is on common activities, for instance games or sports, can make participation easier for both international and Finnish students.
- Contact the tutors of international students and ask for the opportunity to introduce your organisation. If you do this, your organisation should already have an event planned that you can invite international students to.
- Recruit students who have returned from exchange as international tutors or for other international activities.
- Cooperate with international organisations. There are several international student organisations operating under HYY. Contact them and organise a joint event, for instance, or ask for their help with marketing your organisation's events to international students.
- Expand your English communication. Translate event invites, news and statements into English. If you have an organisation paper, write articles for it in foreign languages, too. The articles could deal with an exchange student's experiences or cover the area of responsibility of one of the members of your board.



- Remember to take cultural differences into account in your communication and activities. For example, international students are not necessarily familiar with academic dinner parties and the related traditions. If needed, you could assign a 'cultural interpreter' for certain events to tell international participants about the background of songs and traditions, for instance. English should also be included in event communication and in speeches and instructions during the event, for instance. You should also be careful with humour to avoid offending anyone.
- Discuss and agree on what languages can be used in the organisation's existing social media groups (Telegram, Whatsapp). Include anything you decide in the group's rules. In Telegram, users can also translate messages themselves.
- Look after the international students who attend your events. You do not need to hold the entire event in English, but you should ensure that international students have people to chat with and someone acting as an interpreter for them.
- Try to create interactions which go beyond "where are you from?" and note that international students might be from several different places or have complicated relationships with their nation of origin. Be aware of stereotypes and approach cultural differences sensitively.
- Encourage people to use different languages side by side so that all participants can use the language they are the most comfortable with. Remember that all international students do not want to only speak English – they may also want to learn and develop their Finnish skills. It is always polite to ask which language a person wishes to use in conversation.
- Take international perspectives and the needs of international students into account in your advocacy work. For instance, you should account for the fact that some students arrive at the University only for master's studies and have fewer opportunities to become student representatives.



## C

- Ensure that people who do not speak Finnish can take part in running the organisation's operations, attend its meetings and serve on its Board or as an official by, for instance, changing your meeting language or translating your agendas and minutes.
- Translate websites and all the organisation's documents, such as rules and principles of safer space, into English. Use English also in social media posts.
- Hold all events bi- or trilingually if needed.
- Appoint international support persons who are each responsible for their own international students. The support persons take part in the organisation's events together with the international students, describing what happens at the events in advance and explaining matters discussed in the organisation's meetings, for instance.
- Invest in international tutoring and the reception of new students at the beginning of the spring term, too.
- Aim your organisational communication at postgraduate students too – and remember that a significant part of them have an international background.
- Organise corporate visits or other career events that are held in English.