

TO THE FATHERLAND FROM ITS HOPES

The 2027 Parliamentary Election Programme of the Student Union of the University of Helsinki

We students turned independent Finland into reality through our thoughts and were the first to sing the Maamme anthem. We have come up with great ideas about the direction of our society before. Building a better society for future generations is our dream, and we have been working for it with the aid of critical thinking provided by education.

Young people's faith in the future has collapsed, and it is no wonder that this is the case. We are experiencing environmental destruction, a public economy in a shambles and increased inequality, while war, genocide and nuclear threats run amok globally. Sustainable life, education and even concentration are becoming a luxury for the rich. This is the opposite of the world in which we want to serve Finland and humanity.

Finland has always wanted to believe in the next generation and has shown this by investing in education, research and the society's safety net.

Dear decision-makers, society once had faith in you too. Investments were made in your education and you were given space to experiment and try again, with re-education always possible after failure. Instead of efficiency, priority was given to the opportunity to find one's own place to serve Finland. You were supported during unemployment, you had a secure summertime subsistence and you did not have trouble finding internships. Why would you not have faith in us?

Our time needs faith in education, equality, patriotism that respects nature and getting all current and future students involved in rebuilding the welfare state. Investing in education and keeping it accessible to everyone is a service for the resilience, crisis tolerance and even economy of the entire society. Making cuts to education or ending free education would be an embarrassing disservice to all of Finland and to the work previous generations have done for our welfare state.

The Student Union always has faith in the next generation. We also want to make sure that the world is a better place for those who come after us. The measures in our Parliamentary Election Programme stem from the vision students of today have for building the Finland of tomorrow.

The façade of the Old Student House has the following inscription: *Spei suae patria dedit* ('Fatherland gave to its hope'). Now the hopes of the fatherland are giving back a vision of a future on which students, young people and all of Finland can pin their hopes.

On behalf of the hopes,

Chair of the Board

Emil Aarnio



EDUCATION IS THE MOTHER OF GOOD LUCK

Education, culture and research form the solution to the sustainability gap in Finland's public economy, to wellbeing created within the boundaries set by nature and to ensuring that everyone remains a part of society. [Investments in universities provide society with a fivefold return.](#)

Young people still retain a strong faith in the importance of higher education. At the same time, however, an increasing number of young people feel stressed about getting a student place and uncertain about [their chances of getting to share in the opportunities provided by education.](#) Equal opportunities to access higher education creates faith in your own possibilities regardless of your starting point, reinforcing the resilience of society, the creation of new ideas and societal stability.

Free degrees that are accessible to everyone are the foundation of the Finnish welfare state, the very reason why Finland is a stable and happy place to live in. An educated population also guarantees a society that can survive crises. The time and opportunity for critical thinking provided by higher education institutions helps produce healthy, capable employees who are able to create something new.

While Finland has fallen behind the OECD average for the number of higher education graduates, funding per student has also decreased. [Between 2015 and 2022, funding per student in Finnish higher education institutions has decreased by 14 per cent in real terms, whereas OECD countries on average experienced a 9 per cent increase in funding.](#) This means that the difference has already grown by over one fifth. Without the expenses of research and development, Finland is using around 9,200 euros per higher education student, which is below both the OECD average and the level of other Nordic countries, which invest over 11,000 euros per student. If we want to fix the trend of Finland's economy, we need to have the courage to invest in higher education.

Supporting basic research and academic freedom is the best way to provide security for the future and resolve unexpected crises. Investing in education is also a way to strengthen democracy as education provides citizens with information and develops their critical thinking, which are both needed to make decisions and actively participate in society.

The Open University is an important part of the Finnish higher education system. It provides everyone with opportunities to receive academic learning regardless of their previous educational background, which serves to strengthen the level of education, competence and lifelong learning. Higher education degrees should not be conferred through the Open University. Instead, the Open University's role is to supplement the field of higher education on issues related to continuous learning, for instance.



MEASURES:

- The Finnish government commits to keeping higher education that leads to a degree free and strengthens its role in Finnish civilised society.
- The Open University's role supplementing the field of higher education on issues related to continuous learning, for instance, is secured. Free routes to degree education are offered through the Open University.
- A long-term parliamentary plan is created to secure funding for higher education and to raise Finland's level of competence to 60% of young adults by 2040.
- The level of basic funding for universities is raised to the Nordic level.
- The university index is retained.
- The funding model for universities is changed to strengthen the financial autonomy of universities and to ensure our higher education system's ability to meet the challenges of the future by taking the following actions:
 - Moving the model from its current degree-based nature towards being more credit-based
 - Eliminating the unnecessary competition between higher education institutions encouraged by the model by, for instance, adopting a fixed share of the funding distributed based on the number of students
 - Introducing an indicator measuring the quality of teaching
- Teaching and research funding aimed at sustainable development in universities is increased.
- Investigations are conducted on what kind of model for support for learning could be introduced in higher education and how the model could be realised.
- An operational programme on strengthening academic freedom in Finland is drafted.



THE SWAMP, THE HOE AND A HABITABLE PLANET

Students' sustainable future includes several building blocks. It is created through policies that foster nature and the environment, a duration of studies that allows students to manage their finances sustainably and an international and open Finland. The foundation for a sustainable social structure is laid now – from domestic food production and innovation to sufficient student housing production.

Finland cannot exist without our unique and diverse nature. The loss of Finnish biotypes and the extinction of Finnish species must be prevented at home in order to preserve our nature for future generations.

[Young people's faith in the future is undermined by the discrepancy between words and actions.](#) This discrepancy is obvious when discussing climate and environmental policy, as the scientific community has highlighted the necessity of climate measures for decades now. The scientific community, young people, indigenous peoples and the entire civic society must be involved in decision-making processes concerning the environment more than at present.

Climate change, technological development and other societal changes are rapidly changing the labour market and our society. For this reason, everyone must have the opportunity to update their skills and move on to new duties to ensure a just sustainability transition.

Only an international Finland can be a financially sustainable and globally impactful Finland. International students are already an integral part of Finnish society during their studies as well as being a key part of Finnish working life in the future. We can strengthen the role of international students in Finland by supporting them learning the languages of Finland during their studies and ensuring that they have equal opportunities to be included in the labour market.

**MEASURES:**

- The government's activities comply with the Climate Act. Measures that research data agrees ensure that Finland can become carbon neutral by 2035 are decided during the parliamentary term.
- A support model that supports education, employment and competence is developed for continuous learning. Re-education is offered to ensure a just sustainability transition.
- Investments are made in education, research and development related to the production of Finnish leguminous plants and plant proteins. The operating conditions for the production chain of Finnish plant protein products are ensured in order to increase the number of available jobs and the security of supply.
- Staying in Finland is made easier for international experts by ensuring support for career planning and looking for career opportunities corresponding to their competence, including entrepreneurship.
- Students who wish to come to Finland or are arriving in the country are guaranteed seamless permit processes and immigration.
- Sufficient resources are reserved for the integration of international students and studies in the languages of Finland.
- The Finnish education system must not be built on tuition fees from students from outside the EU and EEA countries.
- [The rights of future generations and intergenerational justice are secured by passing a law including them as binding obligations.](#)
- The taxation and subsidisation systems must be rapidly changed to strongly incentivise the reduction of emissions and environmental conservation. A carbon tax for companies is introduced to supplement emissions trading.



NO STUDENT LEFT BEHIND

The Finland of the future cannot exist without the students and young people of today. For this reason, it is of primary importance to ensure that students have the conditions for studying, developing their critical thinking and increasing their expertise in internships and working life as well as the opportunities to foster their own wellbeing.

Raising the level of education remains an empty measure if young people enter working life and the stage of life that comes after studies burnt out and in poor health. Students having sufficient income is the prerequisite for full-time studies, a smooth graduation process and raising the level of education. Students' monetary benefits are at their lowest level since the early 1990s, and the student loan stock has got out of hand.

Independent life starts with a student apartment. Student housing production has not kept up with the increasing number of students, and there is a shortage of affordable housing. We can only increase the level of education by ensuring that there are enough student apartments for the growing number of students. According to a study on [housing trends among young people in 2026](#), 62% of responding students believe that a reasonably priced student apartment speeds up graduation.

The impairment of social benefits for students has made it necessary for many to work more during their studies. Although working alongside studies helps accumulate work experience, combining full-time studies and work puts a major strain on many students. Extending the target times for graduation can help ensure that students can have a better balance between studies, work and leisure. More flexible integration of studies and work supports students' health and wellbeing.

Worries over subsistence impair students' wellbeing and impede their study progress. Students' problems related to wellbeing are structural, and solving them thus requires far-sighted policies. The long-term goal must be an overall reform of the benefit system that serves this purpose. The reform must also include decreasing the focus on loans in student benefits to ease the debt burden that has already been created.

Fears over future employment erode young people's faith in the future. Generative artificial intelligence is displacing an increasing number of entry-level jobs. These are the very jobs that have made it possible for students to have internships and a route to working life.

We need solutions that secure students' subsistence during their studies and provide a smoother transition to working life after studies.



MEASURES:

- Student housing is supported with interest subsidy loans and investment aid for special groups, with a sufficient level of authority given to grant them.
- The maximum amount of housing supplement for students residing in Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa and Kauniainen is raised.
- Students' monetary benefits are tied to the national pensions index.
- The target time for higher education degrees is extended by one year.
- The number of months of student aid is increased to 55 months. On fields where the study time differs from five years, the number of months is increased proportionately to this. The additional months of aid would help with the major subsistence problems in summertime.
- The time limits for student loan compensation are extended.
- A report is made on measures that could be taken to reduce students' indebtedness.
- The internship grant model for higher education students is reformed in such a way that it supports students with getting internships as well and expediently as possible.
- Students' transition to working life is supported by creating incentives for employers to offer internships, theses and entry-level positions.
- A 'Students at Risk' grant system is established to support students fleeing war, political persecution and violence.
- The therapy guarantee for children and young people is extended to cover everyone under 30 years of age.
- Restrictions on the available methods covered by the therapy guarantee are dismantled, with service providers allowed to choose the treatment method and pathway that best serve each patient.