

# **Urban Policy Program for the Student Unions of University of Applied Sciences in the Helsinki Metropolitan area**

## **Foreword**

Dear reader,

You have received for reading the Urban Policy program of the Helsinki Metropolitan Area Student Unions. This program is intended as a tool for student influencers and to tell municipal decision-makers during the coming election period how students think the Helsinki metropolitan area should be developed.

This program has been updated on the basis of the previous version by Arcada studerandekår - ASK, Diakonia University of Applied Sciences Student Union O'Diako, Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences Student Union Helga, Humanities University of Applied Sciences HUMAKO, Laurea University of Applied Sciences Student Union Laureamko and Metropolia University of Applied Sciences Student Union METKA. The student unions have been making a joint influence on urban policy, which has been further intensified in other areas as well, in the spirit of the current Opku + co-operation. In order to update the program, a working group was appointed in late spring 2020, to which representatives from each student body were elected.

The working group of the Helsinki Metropolitan Area Student Unions' Urban Policy Program has included:

Sebastian Tolvanen - Arcada studerandekår - ASK

Sini Al-Musawi - Diakonia University of Applied Sciences Student Union O'Diako Iida Tervo,  
Erica Alaluusua, Nelli Pihlasviita ja Julia Tuuri - Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences  
Student Union Helga

Tiia Määttä - Humanities University of Applied Sciences HUMAKO

Miisa Tervala ja Nikolas Bursiewicz - Laurea University of Applied Sciences Student Union  
Laureamko

Tekla Kosonen, Nimo Samatar ja Sakari Tuomisto - Metropolia University of Applied Sciences  
Student Union METKA

The task of the working group was to update the Urban Policy program during 2020 on the basis of the program created in 2017. Our vision was to create a solid and good tool for both decision makers and student influencers. In the previous urban policy program, the areas of influence were divided into three: housing and planning of the city, services and transport. This year, we also

completed the fourth area of influence, inclusion, in the program. In addition to the trust representatives and experts of the student unions involved in the elaboration of the program, comments and development proposals were received from the student union boards, representative councils and students. The program was approved by the student councils in the fall of 2020. As in other co-operation between the student unions in the Helsinki metropolitan area, the solution-oriented, good team spirit and common desire to make a better everyday life for the student has also been reflected in the processing of the program. Good conversational connections with each other have ensured that it has been possible to discuss substantive issues and thus achieve an outcome that serves everyone.

Wishing you a profitable reading experience,

Iida Tervo

The Chairperson of the working group for the Helsinki Metropolitan area Student Unions' Urban Policy Program

## Introduction

The Helsinki Metropolitan Area includes four cities: Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa and Kauniainen. Together, they form a growth center of about 1.2 million inhabitants. Of this million inhabitants, there are about 100,000 university students. In relation to the population of the Helsinki Metropolitan Area, university students make up about 10 percent of the population. In addition, there are about 61,000 secondary students living in the area. The municipalities of the Helsinki Metropolitan Area have a statutory obligation to co-operate on waste management and public transport. In addition, co-operation will take place, for example, on land use, housing and transport with an agreement.

Arcada studerandekår - ASK, The Student Union of Diaconia University of Applied Sciences O'Diako, The Student Union of Haaga-Helia - Helga, Student Union of Humak University of Applied Sciences - HUMAKO, The Student Union of Laurea University of Applied Sciences LaureaMko and The Student Union of Metropolia University of Applied Sciences METKA are the mandatory advocates for students of the University of Applied Sciences in the Helsinki Metropolitan area.

The purpose of the student unions is to act as a link between their members and the university. In addition to this, student unions promote the social and intellectual aspirations of students, as well as the quality of studies and the student's position in society. The activities of the student union are based on section 41 of the University of Applied Sciences Act (932/2014). The student unions of the Helsinki Metropolitan Area are committed to the entities mentioned in this political program and their development.

This Urban Policy Program for Student Unions in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area has entered into force on 1 December 2020. The program is always updated in the year before the municipal elections.

This policy program is divided into four areas of influence relevant to students:

- Housing and zoning
- Services
- Transport
- Participation

These areas of influence cover the most important areas for the development of the city in order to support students' well-being. All students and residents of the city have the opportunity to participate in the development of the city as easily as possible. The discussion with the city and decision-makers is open. As many different population groups in the city as possible will be involved in the discussion on urban planning.

## **Housing and planning of the city**

*Students are a diverse group with different housing needs. Therefore, the provision and construction of student housing must take into account the different wishes, needs and family situations of students, as well as accessibility. The most important goals for student housing is that it is affordable, high-quality, comfortable and ecological. Adequate student housing must be built.*

*The construction of student housing must take into account the changing trends in housing and the varying and diverse housing needs of students. Instead of shared housing, we need to invest in the construction of studios and apartments suitable for living with friends. Students in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area have the right to affordable student housing in the vicinity of their own campus and with good transport connections. Student housing should not be concentrated in large student housing concentrations. Instead, housing should be located in diverse residential areas close to good services and campuses. Prevention of segregation must be taken into account in the zoning of new residential areas and supplementary construction.*

*The urban environment must be clean and safe, and efforts must be made to make it comfortable. In the development of urban culture, attention must be paid to community, for example by improving the conditions for organizing events in residential areas. Green spaces should not be built at the expense of nature, and nature must be preserved as part of the cityscape.*

### **Goals**

#### **Housing**

- Sufficiently affordable student housing must be available to meet the diverse needs of students.
- The production volume of new student housing must be increased, taking into account different population groups, such as families.
- The cities of the Helsinki Metropolitan Area must set an annual target of 600 student dwellings to be completed.
- Accessibility must be taken into account in construction so that everyone can use and visit

apartments and common areas without restrictions.

- Temporary housing must be developed, while ensuring that temporary housing does not become permanent.
- Solutions need to be found for student homelessness and hidden homelessness, such as increasing low-cost mini-housing and developing an urgency system.
- New development and renovation must take into account sustainable development and the circular economy, for example in material choices and energy solutions.

## Planning of the city

- Student housing must be zoned in the vicinity of campuses and good transport connections, especially with regard to growing campus areas. The need for students and the demand for housing guides where student housing is built.
- Differentiation must be prevented during the zoning and construction phase by building diverse residential areas, taking into account the needs of population groups and cultural backgrounds.
- Green spaces need to be preserved and developed. New ways of bringing nature to the city must be promoted, for example through roof gardens and urban plantations.
- Cities must allow the market to define the need for parking in the context of buildings so that fewer parking spaces can be built than required by the parking standard.
- Safety must be taken into account in urban planning, for example through lighting and good visibility of public areas.

## Services

*Students must receive preventive and comprehensive health care, regardless of where they live or study. The health care for the University of Applied Sciences students is primarily organized by the Finnish Student Health Care Service. City services must be available in high quality in at least Finnish, Swedish and English. All services must have qualitative criteria and indicators to ensure and develop the quality and availability of services.*

*Cities must offer a wide range of free leisure and leisure opportunities. Cities must take a positive and encouraging approach to organizing public events and other self-initiated activities.*

*City services must always be as accessible and ecological as possible.*

## Goals

### E-services

- Wireless and free internet access is available in the city areas.
- Urban services must first and foremost be implemented without paperwork.
- Urban e-services need to be easily found on a single website. City services need to communicate seamlessly with each other and the customer does not have to provide the same information more than once.

## Health and family services

- The services of the Finnish Health Care Service must be regionally equal and free of charge. Treatment paths must be smooth between FSHS and public services. • Low-threshold mental health services need to be increased and the first treatment contact must be made within a month of seeking treatment.
- All under-29s and all university students must receive free psychotherapy if needed. • Prevention of sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy must be free of charge for under-29s and university students. They must receive genuinely free contraception with no time limit. You must be able to choose the type of contraception yourself. • Prevention counseling must be of high quality and easily accessible.
- Exchange and full time students in open UAS must be guaranteed the same level of health care services as other university students.
- Early childhood education must be of high quality and free of charge, and day care must be provided flexibly around the clock. Child day care and afternoon activities must be carried out as a local service, either close to home or on campus.

## Spare time activities and hobbies

- Each student must have at least a playground, library services, bookable workspaces and a service to use or borrow occasionally needed goods as local services.
- Organizing public events and other spontaneous activities must be effortless.
- The metropolitan area must have a wide and high-quality offer of cultural services that must receive a significant student discount or that are otherwise affordable. • Every resident of the Helsinki Metropolitan Area must have parks, jogging trails or local sports facilities in the vicinity. The city's green areas and sports fields must be available to residents free of charge.
- Urban youth activities must also provide targeted services for 18-29-year-olds.

# Transportation

*In the Helsinki metropolitan area, students and other people move easily, effortlessly and ecologically using public transport. All students receive a substantial discount on public transportation services. The public transport network is comprehensive and connects campuses, making getting around easy.*

*New ways have to be invented to make bikes and private cars a natural part of public transport. Biking is smooth and safe throughout the Helsinki metropolitan area. Public transport focuses on tracks. Car-sharing and similar services are accessible to all and they are being framed by the cities.*

## Goals

- The public student discount must be at least 50% on all ticket types.
- Accessibility, ecology and safety must be taken into account in the planning of public transport.
- Cities need to create a framework and encourage car-sharing.

- Efforts must be made to provide access to parking and safe storage of bicycles, and the combination of different means of transport must be smooth.
  - It must be safe to travel on public transport at all times of the day.
  - The rail network must be extended beyond the city center to make it more attractive, for example by implementing the Tiederatikka project from Otaniemi to Myllypuro. ●
- Cross-border public transport needs to be improved, with particular regard to the links between campuses and student housing.
- Cycling must be developed by designing and implementing safe, sensible and clearly distinguishable routes.

## Participation

*According to the Student City survey (2019), 70 percent of respondents felt that more participation opportunities should be offered to local residents. The voice of young people must be heard in urban decision-making. Young people need to be given opportunities for influence that do not require large-scale commitment and are meaningful. Candidacy and voting in Municipal elections must also be as effortless as possible.*

*In the same survey, 38 percent of respondents felt they did not know enough about their own opportunities to influence. Communication on opportunities for influencing needs to be more visible. All citizens must be offered equal opportunities to make a difference in their hometown.*

### Goals

- The city's education council must organize a vote for the city's university students on decisions that affect the university students, such as the budget.
- The city's educational activities must involve the city's student unions in the preparatory phase.
- Young people under the age of 18 must be actively involved in urban decision-making by for example giving the youth council a right to speak and be present at the city council and committee meetings. *(This goal varies by student union)*
- Students must play a significant role as candidates and voters in the municipal and provincial elections.
- All college campuses must have a polling station.
- The city must actively communicate opportunities for influence in its channel , such as municipal initiatives and open preparatory consultations.
- Meetings of city councils must be open and residents' question hours must be added to council meetings.
- Cities need to communicate their decision-making processes and opportunities for influencing.
- It must be easy to make an impact, for example by giving feedback, participate in events organized by the city and participatory budgeting, and signing petitions.
- The city must provide open working spaces as well as educational and counseling services for students interested in entrepreneurship.
- The integration and employment of international students and graduates must be promoted

through cooperation between the cities and the Universities of Applied Sciences, for example by providing language studies and supporting employers in employing international professionals.

- The metropolitan area must have sufficient internships placements for University of Applied Sciences' students. The internships must be free of charge to organize for the universities, and students must be paid for the internship.