

# Work plan 2018

## **Introduction**

The purpose of this work plan is to outline the priorities of the Executive Committee (EC) and the National Forum during 2018. The work plan has not been organised in order of priority.

## **The discourse on students and education**

Education has become a highly political subject, which has led interchanging governments to use the educational area and especially the universities as a battlefield for political clashes. With the progress reform, dimensioning model, SU-reform, uddannelsesloftet, governance reform and massive cuts we have as students witnessed our day to day at the university, our living conditions and educational programs are constantly changing and deteriorating. This has already had specific, negative consequences in terms of the general as well as mental wellbeing among students, for example visible in the increasing cases of stress related issues for students.

Decision makers have managed to create an erroneous and condescending narrative of students as lazy, spoiled, privileged, slow and unable to choose the “right” thing. These are discourses that we should work against and fight throughout all of DSF’s work. Our external communications should therefore portray students as hard working, ambitious, deliberate, responsible and committed.

During recent years we have seen a new negative discourse about academics, which comes in the wake of many years of negative mentions of the humanities in particular. The negative image of students of the humanities and students in general and the need for more skilled manual workers is often part of the same narrative. Groups with common interests are being pinned against each other, and that is a story that DSF must actively counteract through emphasizing the value of all forms of education. This work can be done through the ESB and the Education Alliance, but also in the daily work with the press.

## **Education policy**

### **Cuts**

In 2017 there has been a proposal to prolong the yearly 2 percent cuts in the educational sector for the second year in a row. This will mean further cuts and massive consequences for the quality of our education. Therefore, DSF will continue to focus on the concrete consequences of the cuts in 2018. It will be a main priority for DSF in the campaign and lobby work to stop the cuts and make sure that the yearly 2 percent cuts

do not become the new normal. In 2017 the health sector was successful in removing the 2 percent cuts they were subjected to and we wish to make sure that the same happens in the education area. With the 2 percent reallocation of the taximeter rates that the institutions were subjected to before the reprioritization cuts there are currently cuts markedly higher than 2 percent, with some institutions reaching almost 4 percent a year. This is unacceptable, which is why DSF should fight against all cuts on higher education.

### **New grant systems**

DSF will push the work with a new grant system towards greater predetermined and predictable grants to educational institutions, as well as counteracting the result-based elements in the progress and employment taximeter.

### **Committee for better university education**

The ministry for education and research has set up a committee that will propose recommendations to how the university educational programs should improve. DSF has not been given a seat in the committee, but is monitoring their work closely.

Unfortunately, a lot of the work has been about measures such as the limitation of access to master's programs and the stripping of competences from the student councils. DSF will continue to monitor their work closely. Furthermore, DSF will be ready to provide our own visions for the improvement of university education when the recommendations of the council are made public. DSF will thus present our own recommendations for better education as a response to the committee and as a constructive and proactive input in the debate. These visions and recommendations will be developed in the Academic Affairs Committee.

### **Social affairs policy**

#### **SU**

To ensure that we as students can fulfil our education, there is a need for a decent livelihood and an important cornerstone in a decent livelihood is the SU-grant.

Unfortunately, we are expecting a new SU-reform to be introduced in 2018 and we are furthermore expecting that this reform will contain significant deterioration of the SU-grant as we know it. In DSF, we always work to secure better economic conditions for students and we are therefore actively working against a reform to the SU-grant that will deteriorate the living conditions and economic livelihood for the students. There is also a possibility that the progress reform will be reviewed in the upcoming year, and if that review leads to a retraction of the measure, DSF will be working hard to make sure that the SU-grant reform from 2013 is also retracted. The two reforms are closely connected, and there will therefore be a window of opportunity for us if one of them is retracted, which we will take advantage of.

Furthermore, it is unfortunately more and more common that students experience indirect fees on their education, for example through paying for materials or field trips. In DSF, we see this as a regrettable development that must never reach the point where it is normal for educational institutions to use indirect tuition fees as a way of making ends meet.

During the upcoming year, DSF will be working to improve the livelihood of students, opposing further deteriorations and fight for the retraction of previous deteriorating measures.

### **Housing and transportation**

It is continually growing harder to be a student in terms of housing and transportation as prices are increasing without subsequent adjustment of the SU-grant. Therefore, DSF will in the upcoming year be working to ensure that more cheap housing is made available to students. Specifically, the municipalities need to construct more small and affordable housing. This could for example be made possible by pushing the municipalities to make use of the rules in the new planning act, which states that municipalities can earmark up to 25 % of new construction to public housing. In addition to this, DSF will also work to ensure that more temporary housing is made available in the municipalities, such as container housing that can be moved every ten years. It is however important that DSF continually talks about the fact that containers are a temporary solution, or that they can be used to avoid the bottleneck in the beginning of the semester and that the problems with housing should be solved by permanent construction.

For the vast majority of students, it is also essential that you can get back and forth between housing and education and an important part of this is that the transport back and forth has to be affordable while on the SU-grant. Therefore, DSF will continue to work to improve the discount schemes that are present in the area.

### **Students with disabilities and long-term illness**

In the coming year, DSF will work to improve the conditions for students with disabilities and long-term illnesses. Specifically by working towards the possibility of a dispensation scheme exempting these students from the study time model and the SU-grant reform, which currently means that you lose the right to the SU-grant if your studies are delayed. This work must be part of a close dialogue and cooperation with disability organisations.

## **Working limits for students coming from non-EU/EEA (non-European Union/European Economic Area) countries**

Students from non-EU/EEA countries are currently not allowed to work more than 20 hours per week, with the exception of June, July and August. If they exceed the limit, they will be considered illegal workers and risk having their residence permit in Denmark revoked. The restriction on work is especially problematic for this group of students as they are subject to tuition fees and, consequently, are in high economic need. As long as non-EU/EEA are subject to tuition fees and cannot receive the SU-grant, we will focus our advocacy on fighting against the limit of 20 working hours imposed to students coming from non-EU/EEA countries who are enrolled in higher education.

## **The international area**

DSF will keep prioritizing our current work at the international level. This includes our international advocacy work, through the European Students' Union among others, and our partnership projects with the Palestinian Student Council Forum and the Zimbabwe National Students Union.

Furthermore, we will continue the efforts of sharing knowledge, experiences and skills gained through our international work with the rest of DSF. This includes working on our communication with the rest of the organisation and using international work as a tool for political and organisational development.

Free trade agreements have great significance for the Danish society. However, not all countries consider knowledge and education a free and public good. It is therefore important that DSF works to exempt the education sector from possible free trade agreements which can bring about the marketization of our education. It is important that DSF's work only deals with the implications for education.

## **European Higher Education Area Ministerial Conference**

In May of 2018, The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) Ministerial Conference will take place in Paris. This is an event where ministers from the EHEA will gather to evaluate and discuss the future of higher education in the region. The EHEA is the region that includes all the countries that are part of the Bologna Process, which sets common goals for higher education among the countries that are part of it.

Our participation in this conference will be an international priority, as well as the preparatory lobby work in the run up to it. DSF will work for both national and common European political objectives, set in cooperation with the European Students' Union, our European umbrella organisation. At the same time, we will work to secure that the common European goals do not contribute to an inexpedient standardization and alignment of higher education.

Among our national priorities, DSF will advocate for the creation of a National Access Plan. Such a plan will give opportunity to work with groups that are underrepresented in the education system and for example address problems with access to university for students with disabilities or who come from non-academic homes. The aim of this plan is to ensure that the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education reflects the diversity and social mix of the country.

### **Sustainable Development Goals**

In 2015, the United Nations (UN) adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which set different global objectives to be achieved by 2030 with the aim of building fair, peaceful and sustainable future societies.

Among those, goal number 4 focuses on quality education, including higher education. The inclusion of higher education in the SDGs, gives us an extra tool to fight for the values and principles for which we advocate. Therefore, the SDGs will be given importance in DSF's international lobby agenda by using article number 4 as a tool to advocate for national and international objectives.

### **Refugee's access to higher education**

Furthermore, we will fight against the barriers that limit the possibilities of refugees to access higher education. We will continue to develop our joint project with Studenterhuset, Student Refugees, which aims to facilitate the access of refugees into higher education.

## **Organisation**

### **The strategy**

The National Forum has in 2017 been working on the development of a 4-year strategy, which is expected to be done and ready for execution and implementation as per the start of 2018. This means that we will have a long term plan for our future organisational development. There will therefore be a job of ensuring the implementation of the strategy and letting it affect different aspects of our work process during 2018. During 2018 we will also work to develop a mechanism for adopting a strategy at the political conference.

It is furthermore important that the strategy is continually evaluated. The strategy should be evaluated by the National Forum twice a year. The evaluation will take its starting point in how the strategy is being used by the organisation and how the organisation is fulfilling the priorities put forth in the strategy.

## **Inclusion and ownership**

DSF will continue working with the inclusion of underrepresented groups as well as groups that are facing structural challenges in the organisation. DSF will especially be prioritizing an investigation into the language barriers that may hinder participation in our work. There will furthermore be a focus on continuing and developing the work that has been started by the Inclusion Network. It will be a priority to work towards an increasing sense of ownership of DSF on behalf of the member organisations as a way to support an even stronger sense of community and secure a forceful organisation.

## **Collaborators**

### **Pupil and student movement (ESB)**

The pupil and student movement is DSF's closest ally and it is therefore important that we in the upcoming year continue our already strong cooperation with the other organisations in the movement. It will be a central priority to push and develop the ESB-cooperation so that the common voice of students and pupils is strengthened in the coming year. The ambition is that the organisations can intensify their cooperation by staging more common efforts to strengthen the continuity and opportunities for action of the ESB. DSF will play an active role and contribute to the further development of this cooperation.

### **Uddannelsesalliancen (UA)**

In the coming year, DSF will continue to prioritise the work of Uddannelsesalliancen, which has existed since autumn 2015 when a majority in the parliament adopted the biggest cuts to education ever. The UA acts as a unifying voice against all cuts, giving DSF a unique opportunity to promote its agendas with other likeminded organisations. In the coming year, the UA go through a process where the organisations will find out how the cooperation is going to develop. DSF's member organisations are crucial to the execution of UA campaigns. Therefore, DSF must actively contribute to the development process, including making it clear how we believe that the alliance should develop, on a mandate given by its member organisations.

### **The Youth Island**

DSF has been invited to participate in the strategic group for the Youth Island Project. The island is funded by the A.P. Møller Foundation and the Nordea Foundation, and was given as a gift to scouts to facilitate youth development of the island's potential and vision. The island is located in Øresund, and on the island you will find the old Middelgrundstort, which is currently undergoing a major renovation. The strategic group will develop ideas and concepts to ensure that all young people feel ownership of the island.

### **Other collaborations**

DSF will continue to be open and on the lookout for new collaborations that can strengthen DSF's position.

### **Training sector and summer camp**

It will remain a priority to develop a training strategy, which will offer MOs the possibility of developing their skills and knowledge, based on their current and future needs and ambitions. It will offer a platform for MOs to share knowledge and build capacities with each other, and from which DSF can learn and become a stronger organisation.

The summer camp will also continue to be an organisational priority, where the focus will be on different key topics that we do not otherwise have time to discuss in depth throughout the year. Once again, the summer camp will emphasize social aspects in order to offer a space for participants from MOs and DSF to engage socially with each other.