

# WORK PLAN 2020

*Adopted at DSFs Political Conference the 17<sup>th</sup> of November 2019*

## Introduction

This document describes the main themes in DSF's work for 2020. DSF's work is always based on our organizational strategy and our basic opinions and values, which are written in the Position Paper. The work plan should therefore not be considered as an isolated document, but in relation to DSF's agreed opinions, policies and strategies. Some themes are explained in detail and others in bullet points. This should not be understood as some topics being prioritized over others.

We students stand before a period with a new parliamentary situation with possibilities to make progressive educational politics and make improvements for students across the country. Yet there are still major challenges and we face a long list of agendas in which DSF plays an important role.

In 2020, we have to continue the work with making improvements for our fellow students and ensure a strong voice for students in all decisions regarding our everyday life and future. There are specific challenges with underfunding, harmful reforms and a decrease in well-being at our educational institutions. We must continue the fight for students' welfare, including, an SU at a decent living level and housing that is affordable. However, there are also new areas in which we must develop policies and start to work on, including students' role in the fight against climate change.

## Transectorial topics

### *A DSF that works with climate*

The ongoing climate crisis increasingly occupies and worries youth and students, who call for action politically, both on national and international levels, as well as locally at our educational institutions. In 2020, DSF has to continue working on addressing this by strengthening and representing our voices in society on matters related to the climate and the environment. Furthermore, it is important that DSF work towards sustainability becoming a part of the educational programs at the universities. We must also develop and provide political and practical initiatives regarding how different actors, both students, institutions, politicians and organizations can work with climate policy on different levels.

We must use and strengthen existing collaborations with organizations and movements that are working with climate and sustainability, especially youth-led organizations. Additionally, it is an important priority to bring up questions on the climate and the environment into fora we are already a part of, where this is meaningful and does not weaken our agenda on education, and use it strategically to increase the attention on both the student's worries and its proposed solutions. Because of the cross-border nature of the climate crisis, it has to be a priority to develop and strengthen international collaborations with a focus on development and sharing experiences on initiatives and projects, which can contribute to a green and just transformation of society. Because of this characteristic DSF want to in the coming year to support and accommodate activist researchers.

### ***Access to education***

Free and equal access is one of the main pillars in DSF's work. We favour equal opportunities and rights for all students. That applies both when we apply to a long higher education and the everyday life at our educational institutions. It is important to acknowledge that different students have different predispositions to enter the same community and therefore we have to work with access in different ways.

DSF must work on breaking the barriers that international students meet every day at their studies. This applies to, amongst other things, the structural issues such as reduction of english-language educations, which is especially affecting international students, but also societal issues such as the false narrative of international students as a burden to society. DSF must focus on how it can be made more accessible for international students to stay in Denmark after graduation. In this regard, it is especially important to focus on the legislative barriers, especially for non-EU/EEA students, and also to abolish tuition fees at Danish courses and other barriers that stand in the way of learning the language. DSF must again push for the introduction of the Students at Risk programme, which will ensure that students, who are being persecuted and expelled from their educations, can finish them in Denmark. DSF must follow the developments around Brexit with a focus on addressing problems that Brexit could create for British students in Denmark or Danish students in Great Britain.

We must use surveys on the conditions of students with disabilities in the educational system, such as the one think-tank Perspektiv has published, and to ensure that the recommendations made in the report will be fulfilled, so that students with disabilities may have the best possible everyday life at our educational institutions. DSF must also continue the collaboration with Perspektiv in regards to the development of research on access to education for inmates. DSF should be open to expand the areas in which we collaborate with Perspektiv.

DSF must again push for the introduction of the Students at Risk programme, which will

ensure that students, who are being persecuted and expelled from their educations, can finish them in Denmark. We must continue our work to ensure equal access to education in Denmark for refugees. This means, amongst other things, that we have to work for ensuring access to education for all refugees on equal footing to Danish citizens, and make education count at the same level as work in the process of gaining a permanent residence permit. Since many of the barriers, which refugees meet to access higher education, are found in other areas of the education system, it is important that we work broadly on the subject.

### ***Graduates, study jobs and internships***

In relation to graduates, DSF wants to force relevant stakeholders to create, and in larger scale develop good advisory boards. In addition, DSF will work to change the conditions for international students with regard to the minimum- and maximum work requirements being repealed, and work to make sure voluntary work and Danish lessons to be included in the current work requirement. Moreover, DSF will join the fight to provide more and quality internships in different academic fields, so that all students, who wishes an internship, have opportunity to get tone.

### ***Working partners***

DSF's partnerships play a role in ensuring that we students have a stronger voice in the public debate and therefore they are an essential part of our work. We must continue with taking responsibility on and setting the direction of the partnerships we are a part of. It will, among other things, be a priority for DSF to continue to take on leadership in the Pupil and Student Movement and in the Education Alliance and actively use these platforms to push progressive agendas for students. It is important, in that context, to work for such partnerships to be locally rooted and to create value and activity for the student movement. Likewise, there is a number of other partnerships that are essential to maintain and strengthen, in order to benefit students in Denmark. We will actively try to build alliances, where it is an advantageous for the students to have a voice and where we can fight for shared goals. It is especially important to build a strong relation to the labour union movement and the business community, as well as strengthen DSF's position in the Danish Youth Council.

## **Welfare and Social policy**

### ***Well-being***

Way too many students are suffering from stress, depression, experience loneliness and a generally reduced quality of life. This dissatisfaction is a growing problem that cannot be resolved with a single initiative. DSF must oppose the false narrative of individual students being themselves the cause of these phenomena, and fight for us students being heard in questions regarding student welfare. This requires that we have a holistic understanding of

such problematics, and work to place focus on the fundamental structural issues that cause them. It is central that DSF continues to be a leading and alliance-building actor, with the goal of creating action in the wellbeing sector. Student wellbeing is a value in itself for DSF. Wellbeing is a necessary starting point to ensure a good education. In 2020, we must also work with LGBTQ+ students and their inclusion and wellbeing at our educational institutions. DSF must investigate what kind of challenges LGBTQ+ students face in their studies. Moreover, DSF must facilitate the exchange of knowledge between the MO's that actively wants to/already works with this field.

## ***SU***

The SU grant is a foundation that ensures that we as students no matter background have the opportunity to get an education. To ensure students better economic conditions is central for more well-being and for ensuring that we have the possibility to fully dedicate ourselves to our studies. Therefore, it is problematic that the SU grant every year is being undermined as a consequence of the SU-reform from 2013. DSF must remain vigilant and defend the SU grant system when it is under attack, but must also be ready to play a progressive hand in the debate. The SU-reform and the study progress reform are closely related. There have been made promises to revise parts of the study progress reform from multiple sides. DSF must work on affecting the debate in a progressive direction, so the SU-reform from 2013 with time can be abolished. Because the reform's regulation of the SU expires in 2021, there is also, within this governmental term a special opportunity to make a move on this agenda and draw attention to the reforms damaging implications.

## ***Housing***

Unfortunately, there is still a lack of truly affordable and sustainable student housing in and around our study cities. In DSF, we fundamentally believe, that all students must have the possibility to find accommodation near their respective education institutions. The accommodation must be affordable for us students living on the SU grant, while at the same time being able to pay for other everyday life necessities. In DSF, we recognize with worry that the uneven housing market gives venture capital funds and profit-seeking landlord easy access to take advantage of the situation, therefore we will work towards changing the laws on the housing market. This affects particularly, among others, international students, who often have worse possibilities to know what normal price levels in the market are and which rights they have as tenants in Denmark. In the coming year we need to put the lack of student housing on the political agenda and, in cooperation with Danish Students and Pupils Residence Council (DSK), we will explore the opportunities to publish a new housing survey in 2021. Pension funds and common good funds needs to be looked into, concerning helping with the construction of more payable housing.

### ***DSF must also work with:***

- Ensuring access to cheaper and better public transportation for students.
- Good conditions for graduates and students in study jobs and internships.
- Ensuring students consumer political rights, their possibilities of making transparent consumption choices and ensuring students general access to student friendly prices.
- A good and inclusive physical, psychological and social study environment.

## **Education politics**

### ***Funding***

Proper funding of our educational institutions is a foundation for good quality in education, which is why DSF must actively work for a general increase in basic funding. Last year's cutbacks have had general consequences for the entire educational sector and it is therefore positive that the annual 2% cutbacks are planned to be stopped by 2020. It is also essential that DSF works to ensure a reinvestment in the entire education sector and works against redistribution of existing funds within it. Furthermore, it needs to be made a priority that the increase of funding per student in the fields social sciences and humanities is made permanent. Especially since making such increase permanent, will result in us not having to spend time and political capital to push for such increase every single year during the national budget negotiations. It is also important to look at other structures around the university economy, including ownership of buildings in ways that makes sense locally, as well as looking into the deeply problematic limit on universities' investments.

### ***Enrolment system and grades***

Both the enrolment system and the grading scale have had a lot of political attention in the last year. It is important that DSF in 2020 continue to prioritize following both very closely and proactively contribute with suggestions on how a new enrolment system can increase social mobility and fit the individual educations. Today the grade scale is strongly linked to the enrolment system. Increasing entry requirements for higher educations has contributed to an increased focus on grades and subsequent pressure and lack of well-being amongst future and present students. DSF needs to work against education institutions using grades in a speculative way – for example in regards to artificially high enrolment quotients or minimum grade demands. DSF must therefore work towards a lesser focus on grades both in a new enrolment system and at the different educations. Instead, the necessary resources should be prioritised to ensure students meaningful and adequate feedback after all assignments and examinations, as well as during their education.

### ***Student influence***

The internal voices at the universities should have a greater influence on the strategic management of the institutions, and DSF will therefore in the coming year work purposefully to give the students and staff of the institutions the possibility of choosing whether the decisive mandate of the board should be external or internal. There is a worrying tendency that we as students are not included in important decisions, which is why DSF should map student involvement at the educational institutions in order to give recommendations as to how we students gain real influence at all levels of decision making. The coming year DSF should work toward giving more influence over choosing the division between internal and external representatives in the strategic leadership of the institutions to the employees at the educational institutions and to the students.

### ***Narratives on differences in education qualities***

DSF will work against the narrative that there is differences in the quality in education between the different study-cities and institutions. This narrative contributes to e.g. raising grade-means and pressure future students, as well as distort the demand on the housing market.

### ***DSF must also work with:***

- All harmful study progress mechanisms must be abolished, to make flexibility and immersion in studies a possibility for students again.
- To abolish the limit on double education.
- To strengthen democracy and student influence on all of our educational institutions.

## **Organizational**

### ***A united DSF***

DSF is a united movement that comprises all member organizations and their members. It is therefore important that DSF works towards making member organizations feel as a part of an active participant in the movement. The wide differences in working and organizing forms of the member organizations makes this a challenge, but also very rewarding task, since every organization has something important to contribute with to the DSF community. The role of the board and the committees is very central in contributing to good communication in the movement. We must work towards getting every part of DSF to understand the importance of their role in creating a strong movement. It is only through a strong and united DSF, that we can together set the political agenda that students of today and tomorrow need.

### ***Development of skills and capacity building***

To ensure that we continue to be a strong and coherent student movement, it is vital to work strategically and targeted towards increasing political awareness and developing our fellow student, as well as the volunteers in DSF's member organizations. We must continue working on transforming our course sector and work towards building capacities in the movement. This means rethinking new ideas for developing and learning amongst our active students and make sure to use the committees and fora, we are already a part of to spread knowledge and skills amongst our active students. We must also keep in mind that the rapid generational change in the student body makes a constant focus on mobilizing and training vital. DSF must be in the front of the fight to give students opportunities and skills to influence our everyday lives and make a difference both at our educational institutions, in student driven associations and initiatives, and broadly in society.

### ***DSF must also work with:***

- All groups of student having equal access to the organization and to continue efforts to be an including community for all students.
- To keep DSF finances stable and to research possibilities to enlarge our financial frames. Including supporting the Cooperative of Danish Student Unions in their work to create value for the student movement.
- To ensure that our secretariat capacities remains a strength to the organization.
- To anchor our campaigns and political work widely in the organization and create value locally.
- Actively develop the cooperation with radio LOUD to promote the youth and the students voice in the media landscape.

## **DSF's role as an international actor**

### ***Nordic and European***

Just like our national work, it is important to stand together as students across national borders. Both because we can in this way work on those cross-sectoral student political agendas, which cannot be solved nationally, as well as because through this cooperation we can have an impact on different structures that impact us as students. As members of the Nordic as well as the European student network, we must keep on working towards building a stronger European student movement.

We must follow the development in the broad European work on education, like the Bologna process, and the new focus on common educations in the EU closely. DSF must contribute to and be a part of developments in such areas.

In 2020, Denmark will take over the chairmanship of the Nordic Council of Ministers. DSF must take this an obvious opportunity to put education and students on the agenda at the Nordic Cooperation.

### ***DSF's international sector as a tool for learning and development of skills***

There is an enormous potential of learning within the collaboration with students in other countries. We must continue and further develop the new direction, which DSF has taken of inviting our member organizations broadly to join international events, so that knowledge from the outside can get all the way into our organization. The international sector should not be a separate part of the organization, but rather run across the organization to make all parts of DSF benefit from the new knowledge and inspiration from our many partners internationally.

### ***DSF must also work with:***

- Continuing the work with our partnership projects in Palestine and Zimbabwe.
- Educational politics on a global scale, among others through our work in UNESCO and Global Campaign for Education.

## **Epilogue**

DSF is a versatile organization just as we students we represent. This Work Plan is therefore also versatile in its content without being comprehensive. Since DFS's work is fundamentally political, this will change according to what agenda is current and according to the changes in the political landscape. We cannot always predict the future but we must work towards building a strong organization and always keep the students welfare in mind in all of our work.