

STUDENT COUNCIL AS A VEHICLE FOR YOUTH LEADERSHIP

YOUTH CASE STUDY: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NORWAY



SUMMARY

The Student Council of Amnesty International Norway was created to reinforce collaboration between their student groups and offer a space for young members to learn about the governance of the organisation and gain leadership experience. Through this model youth participation has been strengthened at all levels, supported by a culture of inclusion and diversity in the nomination process for board elections in Amnesty International Norway.



STORY OF CHANGE

12.7% of Norway's population are between 15 and 24 years of age. In 2017, approximately 7% of Amnesty International Norway's members were in this age range. The Student Council consists of one leader from each of Amnesty International Norway's 16 student groups, who meet in person three times per year. The Student Council is run by two leaders who are elected by the Student Council's representatives. Whilst members of the Student Council are all students and tend to be young people, it is not restricted to youth only. Members of the Student Council develop leadership skills, gain a deep understanding of Amnesty International, work across regions and discuss and decide on issues related to both activism and governance. This can be used as a stepping stone for a longer journey within the organisation. The strengthening of youth participation in governance is also supported through the nomination committee which, since 2012, considers diversity when nominating people for the national board. Age is one of the considerations in the guidelines and hence the inclusion of youth has become a deeply-ingrained practice. Since 2012, there has always been at least one youth member on the national board, either as a full member or a deputy member.

"Being part of the Student Council has been really rewarding for me. I have learned a lot more about the structure of Amnesty as an organisation, gained leadership experience and have been given the chance to meet other committed and talented student activists." – Grethe Kristine Olsen, Student Council deputy leader 2017

OBJECTIVES

- To offer opportunities for skill-sharing and enabling student groups to strengthen skills in speaking out about human rights issues.
- To provide ongoing support to student groups, create new student groups and induct new student leaders.
- To be a representative body on behalf of student groups and reflect their position to the secretariat and the national board.
- To advocate within Amnesty International at the national and global level on issues which are particularly important to student groups.
- To train student groups on the organisation's governance, strengthening understanding of its democratic processes, including on how and when they can influence the organisation internally.

IMPACT

- The Student Council has helped to enhance the position and strengthen skills of youth leaders within the organization.
- Youth leaders have learned more about Amnesty International's organisational structure, how to lead a student group, how to deliver campaign activities and how to participate in organisational democratic processes.
- Members of the Student Council, especially those in leadership positions, have developed skills and gained experience which could contribute to them becoming a board member.
- Members have found their experience of participating in the Student Council to be rewarding and inspiring, which has contributed to their commitment towards Amnesty International.
- This has resulted in the inclusion of youth member on the national board.

TIPS AND TRICKS

- *Include age as diversity criteria!* This can be included in the nomination committee's criteria for election of the board members. If there is no nomination committee, it could be formalized in another way.
- *Mix & Match!* Combine Student Council meetings with a short session on the organization's democratic process to illustrate how governance connects with their activism and campaigning efforts.
- *Time meetings strategically!* Make sure Student Council meetings and youth gatherings coincide with general membership meetings to encourage many young people to attend those as well.
- *Dedicate time and financial resources!* Creating a space for youth meaningful participation requires substantial resources and ongoing support from staff.



"By being part of the presidency of the Student Council I gained invaluable expertise within leadership and have come to know many truly talented youth activists. The youth of Amnesty work together towards a more sustainable and inclusive organization, which was truly inspiring to see" – Linnea Røsjø Johanssen, Student Council deputy leader 2016

STAKEHOLDERS

- *National Youth Coordinator (staff position)* provides the primary support for the Student Council.
- *National Board Members* will occasionally meet with the Student Council in order to consult the students and explain what the National Board is working on.
- *Regional Managers (staff positions)* work closely with activists across the country and will have some interest in what the Student Council does, as it has the ability to mobilize a lot of groups and people to carry out activities in their respective regions.



VIKTOR IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Viktor Johannes Matre was a member of the Bergen student groups for four years. In 2015 he was elected as leader of the Student Council for 2016. In this role he was responsible for preparing the Student Council meeting, considering the learning needs of the group, aligning the priorities of the Student Council with the movement's and section's priorities, communicating with the members and securing guest speakers. Following this, Viktor used his experience as leader of the Student Council when running for election as a deputy member of Amnesty International Norway's board, in which he was successful.

LEARN MORE!

Contact Frank Conde Tangberg from Amnesty International Norway for more information:

ftangberg@amnesty.no

SHARE STORIES OF IMPACT
#YOUTHPOWERACTION