



Equity plan 2025-2026

I. Introduction

Equity¹ among all our community members is a core value of AYY. At Aalto University Student Union (AYY), we are committed to fostering an inclusive and equitable environment for all our members. AYY is an intersectionally feminist² and anti-racist³ organization. By recognizing the diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and needs of our members, we have developed a 2-year Equity Plan for 2025– 2026 aimed at promoting equity, fairness, accessibility⁴, and respect within our community. This internal plan outlines strategic initiatives and actionable steps to advance equity across all levels of our student union and affiliated associations. It encompasses a range of measures designed to address systemic barriers, enhance representation, and ensure that our policies and practices reflect our core values of diversity and inclusion.

Building inclusivity does not only mean embracing diversity but actively working to recognize and dismantle the structural inequalities that may exist within our community. We understand that these inequalities can manifest in various forms—such as unequal access to resources, representation, or opportunities.

To address these challenges, AYY is dedicated to implementing policies and initiatives that promote equity and inclusion across all levels of our organization. This includes ensuring that our events and decision-making processes are accessible and welcoming to everyone, regardless of their background, identity, or circumstances. We are also committed to educating our community about the importance of equity and the ways in which systemic barriers can be overcome.

AYY stands firmly against all forms of harassment, bullying, racism, ableism, sexism, and discrimination. We believe that every member of our community deserves to live, learn, and engage in an environment that is free from fear, hostility, and prejudice. To uphold these values, AYY has implemented comprehensive safer space⁵ policies designed to protect and support all students.

AYY is proudly a very international community, bringing together students from a wide array of cultural backgrounds and experiences. We recognize the richness that this diversity brings to our student life, and we are committed to ensuring that all members, regardless of their nationality or language abilities, feel welcome and are able to actively participate in our activities and decision-making processes. AYY is a trilingual student union with Finnish, Swedish and English as working languages.

This document has been written to have as concrete and achievable objectives as possible and is meant to be a tool for improving equity within AYY while giving leeway for pursuing potentially unfinished actions beyond the two-year-period of the document. Proactively searching for fields to improve is encouraged. We recognize that this equity plan cannot be comprehensive to tackle all equity issues, as new ones can arise at any time. While specific sectors, teams or people are appointed as responsible for implementing the actions defined for objectives, the responsibility of achieving these goals is with everybody.

This document has been approved by the Board on x.x.2024 and by the Representative Council on x.x.2024.

2. AYY as an organization

2.1. Internal practices

This section focuses on integrating the principles of equity and inclusivity into the core functions and everyday operations of AYY. It encompasses efforts to ensure that all employees, Board members, Representative Council members, and volunteers (further referred to as operatives) are well-versed in and committed to the Equity Plan.

Objective: AYY's Board, Representative Council members, employees, volunteers, and others associated with AYY's everyday operations are familiar with Equity Plan and are committed to it.

Action: Board, Representative Council members, employees, and volunteers are introduced to the Equity Plan during their on-boarding. Operatives are trained on equity, intersectionality and anti-racism at least twice a year.

Responsibility: Management team, equity sector, Representative Council chairs.

Objective: Everyone in the AYY office community feels welcomed, respected, and valued for who they are and the work that they do. AYY's office and internal communication is respectful and free of harassment.

Action: The office follows the policies of Safer Space Policies. Safer Space Policies are updated regularly to reflect the current needs. Inappropriate behavior is dealt with immediately.

Responsibility: Management team, equity sector.

Objective: AYY has activities and spaces that are accessible. AYY recognizes different forms of accessibility issues and actively works to diminish them.

Action: Operatives are trained in accessibility. Different types of accessibility (physical⁶, cognitive⁷, auditory⁸, visual⁹ and social¹⁰) are considered in everyday life. AYY's inaccessible facilities are modified to become more accessible within AYY's resources.

Responsibility: Management team, housing and real estate sector, members service and facility team, equity sector.

Objective: Giving feedback about equity-related matters is easy and it is proactively collected.

Action: Feedback is collected, for example via surveys, about equity in all areas of AYY's operations. Feedback can be given in-person or anonymously, for example via surveys.

Responsibility: Management team, equity sector.

2.2. Decision-making

At AYY, transparency, inclusivity, and diversity are at the core of our operations and decision-making processes. AYY's commitment to these principles ensures that all members can participate meaningfully in our community, feel heard, and contribute to shaping our collective future. This chapter outlines the key objectives and actions that guide our efforts to enhance transparency, create a safe and respectful environment for decision-making across AYY.

Objective: AYY's decision-making is transparent on all levels and is easily understood.

Action: Documents are published in a timely manner and on easily found platforms. Documents are published trilingually in Finnish, Swedish, and English simultaneously. AYY's operatives are aware of the decisions affecting them and are being heard when decisions about them are being made. The Representative Council meetings are streamed and published online.

Responsibility: Management team.

Objective: Every Board and Representative Council member feel safe expressing their opinions.

Action: Board and Representative Council chairs ensure that conversations remain respectful and that no one is discriminated against based on their attributes such as their background group. Safer space policies are applied in the Board and Representative Council meetings. Inappropriate behavior, such as bashing and name-calling, are dealt with immediately.

Responsibility: Board chairs, Representative Council chairs.

Objective: Representative Council is self-reflective in its' decision-making processes and power dynamics.

Action: Division of speeches based on Representative Council groups is tracked. Special attention is paid to under-represented Representative Council groups.

Responsibility: Representative Council chairs.

Objective: AYY's Board and Representative Council are diverse decision-making bodies, for example, by having representation from all Aalto University schools.

Action: Applying for the Board and Representative Council is encouraged to all, with special attention paid to students in minorities, as well as to all study fields. Any minority/field-specific obstacles are dismantled. Positive action¹¹ is followed by the Former of the Board, when making a composition for the new Board.

Responsibility: Board, Representative Council chairs.

Objective: Non-Finnish speaking students are able to fully participate in the Representative Council meetings.

Action: Each Representative Council meeting has interpretation services to English and, if needed, in Swedish. Meeting agendas and official documents are sent to the Representative Council members and deputy members in a scheduled manner in Finnish, Swedish and English. Presentations aim to be trilingual as well.

Responsibility: Representative Council chairs.

Objective: AYY's Board closely follows and implements the values of diversity and equity.

Action: The Board has at least one board member responsible for equity.

Responsibility: Board chair.

2.3. Communications

At AYY, we are dedicated to ensuring that our communication is accessible, respectful, and representative of our diverse community. Our approach is designed to make information available to all members in a clear and inclusive way.

Objective: AYY's external communications is accessible.

Action: AYY's communication follows digital² accessibility guidelines. Communication content creators are trained in accessibility. Plain language is preferred. Jargon and abbreviations are avoided. Important information is published on multiple channels. AYY cross-posts information on various AYY's external communication channels. AYY communicates to its members trilingually.

Responsibility: Communications sector.

Objective: AYY's communication channels are safe and respectful.

Action: Safer space policies are implemented in all AYY's communication channels. Inappropriate comments on social media are moderated.

Responsibility: Communications sector.

Objective: AYY's communication is representative and respectful of AYY's diverse members.

Action: AYY's communication does not use stereotyping language. Gendered and field-specific terminology is avoided whenever possible. AYY's visual communication represents a diverse group of students.

Responsibility: Communications sector.

3. Community

This section focuses on the Aalto community including associations, volunteers, sections and committees working directly under AYY or affiliated with AYY. We want to ensure that our associations operate with principles of safety, equity, and accessibility at their core. Our efforts are designed to support our community in creating environments where all members can thrive and participate to their fullest extent. All AYY's community actives are considered equally valuable, and their work is appreciated and credited.

Objective: AYY's associations have safer space policies, code of conduct and/or equity plans.

Action: AYY provides information and training and helps associations with equity and harassment – related topics. A board member appointed to oversee equity within the association is recommended.

Responsibility: Associations sector, equity sector.

Objective: AYY's associations are free of harassment and inappropriate behavior.

Action: Associations are encouraged to have several harassment contact persons. AYY offers harassment contact person training frequently. Associations are provided with a guide on how to deal with harassment.

Responsibility: Associations sector, equity sector.

Objective: The events organized by associations are accessible.

Action: AYY trains and helps associations with accessible event planning. A written guide for accessible event planning is provided.

Responsibility: Associations sector.

Objective: AYY committees and sections are aware and know how to implement language guidelines in a multilingual group setting.

Action: AYY provides information and assistance to the volunteers about language negotiations¹³ and guidelines. AYY volunteers are aware of how to implement language guidelines in practice.

Responsibility: Volunteers sector.

Objective: International and non-Finnish speaking students are encouraged to volunteer in AYY's committees and sections.

Action: AYY volunteer recruitment is open to everyone regardless of their nationality and language skills. International and non-Finnish speaking students are supported in their volunteering positions.

Responsibility: Volunteers sector.

4. Events

This chapter focuses on AYY's approach to organizing events that are accessible, inclusive, and safe for all members. We are dedicated to creating events where every individual feels welcome and valued, regardless of their background or personal circumstances.

Objective: AYY's events are accessible. AYY recognizes different forms of accessibility issues and works actively to diminish them.

Action: Events are organized in physically (including mobility, audio and visuals) accessible spaces. Forms of cognitive accessibility are considered to accommodate, for example, neurodivergent people by providing quiet spaces. Possible restrictions on accessibility matters are expressed in event descriptions.

Responsibility: Events sector.

Objective: AYY has different types of events to include all members, including minorities.

Action: Alcohol-free, free of charge, and/or daytime events are organized to include students with different life situations, for example, students with families. Different minority groups are recognized and paid attention to.

Responsibility: Events sector.

Objective: AYY's events are safe and free of harassment and discrimination.

Action: Events have appointed and clearly recognizable harassment contact persons (HCP) and, if needed, security guards with appropriate training. Inappropriately behaving people are removed from events when threatening the safety of others. The harassment contact persons' names and contact information are mentioned in the events' description on social media well in advance and during the event.

Responsibility: Events sector.

Objective: AYY's events are inclusive.

Action: Gender-neutral facilities, such as toilets, are provided. Dietary preferences are considered. Pressuring to do things people are uncomfortable with, such as drinking or nudity, is not permitted. Events are marketed to all members equally.

Responsibility: Events sector.

Objective: AYY has events that reflect the whole Aalto community. The events are equally attractive to students from all schools and campuses.

Action: Events are planned in consideration of students from different schools and campuses.

Responsibility: Events sector.

Vocabulary/ definitions

⁴ Accessibility

Accessibility refers to the design and creation of environments, products, and services that can be easily used by all people, regardless of their abilities or disabilities. It ensures that barriers are removed, allowing equal access and participation for individuals with physical, sensory, cognitive, or other challenges.

³ Anti-Racism

Anti-racism is the active practice of identifying, challenging, and opposing racism by promoting racial equity.

⁸ Auditory Accessibility

Audio content and communication, that are easily accessible to people with hearing impairments, including those who are deaf or hard of hearing.

⁷ Cognitive Accessibility

Information and social interactions that are easily understood by people with cognitive disabilities, such as neurodivergence.

¹² Digital Accessibility

Digital spaces and digital tools that are usable by everyone, including people with varying disabilities.

Equality

Equality means providing everyone with the same resources, opportunities, and rights, regardless of their individual circumstances, to ensure fairness and uniform treatment.

¹ Equity

Equity means ensuring fairness and justice by providing people with the resources and opportunities they need based on their individual circumstances, rather than treating everyone the same.

² Intersectional Feminism

A form of feminism which recognizes that overlapping identities, such as race, gender, and class, affect an individual's societal position and experienced discrimination.

¹³ Language negotiations

Language negotiations refer to the process of adjusting or adapting communication between parties who may have different linguistic backgrounds or preferences, ensuring mutual understanding. This can include choosing a common language, simplifying terms, or using translation to bridge gaps and facilitate effective interaction.

⁶ Physical Accessibility

The design and arrangement of physical spaces, facilities, and services to ensure that they can be used comfortably and effectively by individuals with varying physical abilities, including those with disabilities.

¹¹ Positive action

Positive action refers to measures taken by recruiters to encourage and support individuals from underrepresented or disadvantaged groups to apply for positions of trust or jobs. It aims to create equitable opportunities and address imbalances in the community, ensuring diversity and inclusion in recruiting processes

⁵ Safer Space

A welcoming and safe environment where all individuals regardless of their background or identity can exist and thrive as themselves without the threat of prejudice, hostility, or harassment.

¹⁰ Social Accessibility

Ensuring that all individuals, regardless of background or abilities, can participate fully and comfortably in social environments and activities without barriers or exclusion.

⁹ Visual Accessibility

Visual content that is easily viewable and understandable by people with visual impairments, including those with low vision or blindness.