

Policy Plan

Studentenraad der Vrije Universiteit 2023 - 2024



The 77th Board

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Foreword

Dear reader,

From September onwards, we have been officially installed as the 77th board of the SRVU Student Union! In the past few months, we have been working hard and passionately already to prepare for the year ahead of us. Therefore, we are very proud to finally present our Policy Plan to you.

This Policy Plan is an outline of the most important goals and ideas from the board, and therefore of the union. Since the Policy Plan must be voted in at a General Members Meeting, the members of the union have the chance to give feedback and share ideas on the SRVU policy as well. Since our union has a diverse group of members, and board members, we hope this Policy Plan reflects the different values and sentiments of the union. By this means, we hope that members (and other students) get motivated to become active within our beautiful university and therefore student participation in general will be stimulated.

In this Policy Plan you will find goals and ideas regarding the main portfolio's of the SRVU: Decolonisation, Education, Housing, Sustainability, Participation and Wellbeing. Furthermore, the Policy Plan contains an overview of the Internal and External structure and goals, along with the SRVU services (for example Studentend0k and Legal Aid). Hereby we hope that this document provides a good overview and impression of the structure and projects of the union.

We are very excited about the goals formulated in this Policy Plan and we hope to keep our members actively involved in the decision-making and execution throughout the year. In addition to all the goals described in this document, the board is always open to other insights and ideas. Do not hesitate to contact us!

We hope you will enjoy reading this Policy Plan, we are looking forward to a wonderful, eventful year!

Kind regards,

77th board of SRVU

1. Internal

1.1 Board meetings

The board aims to physically meet weekly for board meetings in the coming year, excluding vacation weeks. This serves three main purposes: 1) to ensure that each board member stays updated on portfolios and other ongoing issues, 2) to be able to pick up new issues in a timely and appropriate manner, and 3) to maintain enough space for exchanging ideas and having discussions with each other.

- ❖ Having weekly board meetings.

1.2 General Members Meetings (GMM)

A GMM is an open meeting to which general members of the SRVU are invited. At a GMM, members have the opportunity to ask questions to the board and give input on plans and ideas. Regularly, voting is required on certain topics. The board aims to hold a GMM approximately every two to three months. Specifically, this will be at least five GMMs during the academic year. To ensure that every SRVU member is aware of the GMM dates in a timely manner, the board strives to share a GMM annual schedule with the union members at the beginning of the academic year. By doing so, the board hopes to make GMMs more accessible to every member and, by doing so, hopefully receive more input from members. Regarding the GMM itself, the board hopes to make the board updates more insightful, and therefore transparent, by providing the board updates written down before the GMM. In addition, the board would like to add a *Fraction update* at the GMM agenda, so that members get a clear picture of what the union's fraction is concerned with in a student council. Finally, the board would like to appoint a technical chair for next year's GMMs. The board sees it as advantageous if the GMM is led from an impartial point of view by a technical chair (instead of a current board member) who does not comment on the content of the meeting.

- ❖ Hold a GMM every two to three months.
- ❖ Share a GMM annual schedule with members so that dates are known in a timely manner.
- ❖ Appointing a technical chair for the GMMs.
- ❖ Providing board updates written down before the GMM and add fraction update as a structural part to the agenda.

1.3 Coordinators and Committees

The board deals with the everyday business of the union. However, making a big impact and undertaking large-scale projects is impossible without the commitment of the union's members.

Therefore, to encourage and promote active participation from members, the board would like to expand and/or appoint several committees in the coming year. Examples of these committees are Housing, decolonisation, Wellbeing, Student Participation, Sustainability and Propaganda. The prerequisite for appointing a committee, is that there are enough enthusiastic members who want to participate as committee members. The board hopes to enthuse members to participate in a committee through social media posts, hosting (informative) events and especially approaching members personally. For each committee, the board also hopes to appoint a coordinator, who not a board member. The coordinator will coordinate all committee matters, including preparing and chairing committee meetings, keeping track of action points and staying in close contact with the board contact person. To work smoothly with this structure, the board holds regular coordinator meetings, to discuss relevant issues.

- ❖ Appointing committees for portfolios where there is enough interest.
- ❖ Appointing a committee coordinator for filled committees.
- ❖ Holding (approximately every two months) coordinator meetings between the board and committee coordinators.

1.4 Membership

Members are the heart of any association. The Board aims to improve communication, enhance, maintain and plan events and activities to attract new members and provide more advantages for current members of the SRVU.

Currently, the membership system is shared between the treasurer and the secretary. The board aims to improve the efficiency of the member administration system over the year by reviewing the way responsibilities are shared and documents are handled.

- ❖ Increase membership number to 85 members
- ❖ Maintain the current members
- ❖ Improve membership administration system

Activities and Events gather members for an opportunity to get to know each other. Both the members as well as the board have a chance to connect and expand their network. This opens a path to potential collaborations and even sponsorships for future events and activities. In addition to networking and learning about student interests, these activities and events serve another purpose, creating an atmosphere of solidarity to unite the Union members.

The SRVU has previously hosted events, such as Toasti Tuesday, and will continue to do so in the coming year. With these events, the SRVU aims to gain attraction, inform others and generally

connect with students. Depending on the opportunities, the board also aims to collaborate on events with other organizations and associations. Some of these included NewConnective, 3D, FSRs and the USR to name recent examples. Aside from the organized events, members are and will always be welcome to visit the StudentenD0k.

- ❖ Organize two or more activities/events for SRVU members concerning social and activist activities for member networking and unity.
- ❖ Contact and maintain good contact with other organizations and associations to broaden the SRVU network and promote a sense of community for activists all around.

1.5 Alumni

As the 77th year of the union starts there is much history to draw upon, yet the Union has not done enough to include past members in the Union network. This board will extend a hand to alumni and see how the board can keep the Union's past members connected to the current SRVU through social media such as LinkedIn, providing access to updates via mail or simply reaching out to hear personal histories of the SRVU.

- ❖ Establish a LinkedIn network of SRVU Alumni
- ❖ Host an alumni borrel at the D0k

1.6 Archive and History

The SRVU has a rich history every board builds and improves upon, though the full story is not publicly available yet. To highlight the journey of the union, the board will make efforts to collect documents, pictures, stories and internal files to form an archive for internal and external use. This will include digitizing paper files in the office over the duration of the year as well as talking to alumni and former board members for information regarding the Union's shared past. The history of the SRVU is part of the history of the VU and any other interested party should be able to read, in broad lines, what the union achieved thus far. Highlighted parts include the history of SRVU Boards, large initiatives like the opposition against Apartheid in South Africa, the origin of the SRVU, and more.

- ❖ Create a digital archive for internal use
- ❖ Publish more SRVU history on the website

1.7 Board change and knowledge transfer

In an organization where the board and committee members change every year, it is essential to retain existing knowledge and bring in new knowledge. The board wishes to improve the transfer period for new board members by arranging training from our partners such as the

National Student Union (LSVb) and the !WOON Foundation. With this, future board members gain fresh information and wisdom from other organizations. The board will also work on the union's ability to retain knowledge by ensuring the quality of function specific and portfolio transfer documents. This allows everyone in the organization to refer back to these transfer documents and so to the experience of previous years.

In addition to organizing training from the LSVb and providing transfer documents, the board aims to organize several transfer sessions. Depending on each topic, these sessions will be held with the entire new board or with portfolio holders only. For adequate function-specific handover, individual sessions will also play an important role.

Finally, the board would like to document this transfer process so that future boards can use this process as a basis for transfer to the new board as well. The board aims to have this overview established by the beginning of the calendar year so that the transfer period can start immediately after the new board is announced and it will go smoothly.

- ❖ To have established the plan and timeline for the transfer period at the beginning of the calendar year.
- ❖ Holding several transfer sessions with the new board.
- ❖ Offering training from external organizations to the new board.
- ❖ Creating standard transfer documents to serve as guides to new boards.
- ❖ Look into first aid training, for instance, "bedrijfshulpverlening" (BHV) training for board members.

1.8 Safety and Accountability

The Union values the safety of students and will always provide services for this. The board will open an Anonymous Tip Line which allows students to submit their questions or concerns directly to us without having to feel the obligation of a name or report. It will be set up to be a metal box with a lock and a slot for people to drop their tip in. Every two weeks an assigned board member will review the content of this box and update the board at the next board meeting and members at the next ALV about relevant content. The box will also have guidelines to encourage students to talk about what they have recently been concerned with, suggestions to improve the d0k and union as well as wishes for the SRVU to implement.

- ❖ Set up and maintain the Anonymous Tip Line at the front of the Studenten D0k.
- ❖ Assign a board member to maintain and manage this Anonymous Tip Line.

The review committee is also implementing the "safe persons project" which entails the presence of one or more safe persons who serve as a confidential trust person in addition to the Vice-Chair function. This person is implemented to listen, mediate and delegate in case of conflict among the D0k associations. They will be hired outside of the board to allow for less bias and conflict of interest.

- ❖ Implement the "Safe Persons Project" in the D0k.
- ❖ Appoint 1 - 3 safe person as point of contact for mediation and counselling.

1.9 Checks and balances

The SRVU is required to have an Audit Committee. As stipulated in the statutes and Internal Regulations of the SRVU, the Audit Committee consists of a minimum of two persons and its task is to advise on the financial policy of the SRVU. To ensure transparency towards the members, this year the board would like to appoint a new Audit Committee and keep building this committee up.

In addition, a new committee was introduced last year, the Review Committee. This committee consisted of board members and interested members and was engaged in reviewing and renewing documents such as the HR. It also looked at what gaps remained in internal regulations. For instance, the Review Committee worked on GMM bylaws, SoCo bylaws and a Code of Conduct. The board aims to continue the work of the Review Committee this year. To this end, the committee will meet several times during the academic year and actively provide feedback and suggestions for improvement at a GMM. Eventually, the board hopes to bring the work of the Review Committee to a vote at either a BAS or GMM.

- ❖ Appointing a new Audit Committee for this academic year.
- ❖ Contributing to the internal rules of the SRVU with continuing with the Review Committee and bringing its work to a vote.

2. External

2.1 National Student Union (LSVb)

The LSVb is the national student union of the Netherlands. The LSVb is a federation, which means that local student organizations can be affiliated as a member union. This large network is therefore able to take up certain issues on a national level. Contact with the LSVb and sister unions is very important for the SRVU, both to discuss local issues and to collaborate on large-scale themes. In addition, the SRVU can learn from other unions, which helps to professionalize and optimize the SRVU's own structure.

The board therefore strives to maintain good contact with the LSVb and sister unions this academic year. The board likes to do this by, among other things, attending and actively participating in the General Member Meetings, informal union meetings, working groups (such as Housing and the Election Working Group) and campaigns of the LSVb, sending delegates for committees (such as the Recruitment Committee), participating in app groups and, of course, maintaining personal contact with the board. One way to do this is through the bi-weekly contact moments with our LSVb board contact person. In this way, the SRVU can make its voice heard and hopefully influence government policies at a national level.

The board strives to be present at sister union constitution drinks and to reach out to sister unions at LSVb events.

In particular, the board would like to maintain good contact with ASVA Student Union, as it has many shared issues and interests on an Amsterdam scale. Thus, the board hopes to perhaps organize joint actions or events for Amsterdam students. An example of such an issue is housing.

Finally, the board will organize a constitution drink, where, among other things, the policy plan will be presented. The board will invite the LSVb and all sister unions to this. Student Councils, student organizations and VU employees will also be invited. This will put the SRVU in the spotlight and may perhaps generate new collaborations on certain topics.

- ❖ Maintain good contact with the LSVb and sister unions through attendance and active participation in ALVs, working groups, campaigns, etc.
- ❖ Maintain a good relationship with ASVA in the coming year by meeting up and working together, among other things.
- ❖ Organize a Constitution Drink and invite the LSVb, sister unions, Student Councils and organizations.

2.2 External representation

In addition to involvement at the national level, the board strives to represent the SRVU at a number of other meetings and wants to participate in external platforms.

2.2.1 University Associations Consultation (UVO)

The UVO is a meeting organized by the University Student Council that takes place several times a year. All VU associations can participate, including the SRVU. The board strives to be present at all UVOs and make the SRVU's voice heard here.

2.2.2 Public USR

The Public USR takes place approximately every two months and during these meetings topics are discussed that the USR takes up at the consultations with the VU Executive Board a few weeks later. This meeting thus gives students the space to provide input so that the USR can come to a good opinion. Again, the board strives to be present at these meetings, in order to have a voice heard for relevant topics for the SRVU.

2.2.3 Amsterdam Student Organization (ASO)

The ASO is a meeting organized several times a year by ASVA. Participants in this meeting include Amsterdam Student Councils, Student Associations and Student Unions. This makes it possible to adequately discuss and address overlapping issues. Also regarding ASO, the board strives to attend and provide input.

2.2.4 Bridging Success

Bridging Success is a collaboration between multiple VU (study and student) associations, councils, organisations and other groups within the university. The main goal of this platform is to organise events (accessible for all VU students) to unite the VU community and therefore stimulate an inclusive, diverse atmosphere at the university. The board strives to actively participate in Bridging Success and co-organise the events throughout the year, both to stay in contact with other VU parties and with the students.

- ❖ Be present at UVO.
- ❖ Attend the Public USR.
- ❖ Attend the ASO.
- ❖ Actively participate in Bridging Success.

2.3 Public Relations, Press and Social Media

Today communication shapes perceptions, and SRVU's Public Relations (PR) Policy stands as the beacon of the Union commitment to transparent, credible, and impactful engagement. Public Relations (PR) is not merely about propaganda; it's the art and science of building strong relationships and fostering positive perceptions. At SRVU, the board understands the significance of media, both traditional and digital, in amplifying the union's mission and values. In the past, the board has proactively connected with the press and media, and the board will maintain and further develop these meaningful conversations and partnerships. This means the board will support important causes and also assist students. The Union's aim is to connect people, share useful information, and make college life better for all students. Some of the board's goals in this area are:

- ❖ Social Media Growth – SRVU aims to increase its social media following through regular updates, engaging content, and audience expansion strategies to reach students, alumni, faculty, and prospective students.
- ❖ Advalvas Partnership – SRVU is actively fostering a partnership with Advalvas to address critical issues like affordable housing, mental health promotion, and transportation options on and around campus, ultimately promoting a healthier, more inclusive university community.
- ❖ College Experience Enhancement – SRVU focuses on improving student life by enhancing services, academic support, and campus facilities to create an environment where students thrive and feel a strong sense of belonging.

2.4 Website

The SRVU website is currently undergoing an extensive overhaul. The board's mission is to transform the website into the central hub of accessibility for all matters pertaining to SRVU. This included several key components:

- ❖ Content Expansion – The website will provide comprehensive information on SRVU's history, ensuring visitors can delve into the organization's roots. It will also offer easily accessible contact information, services offered, avenues for advocacy, and opportunities for active participation.
- ❖ Policy and Projects – The revamped website will serve as a repository of information on SRVU's policies, making it a valuable resource for stakeholders. Ongoing projects will be highlighted, keeping visitors informed about the organization's current initiatives.

- ❖ Events Calendar – A dynamic events calendar will be integrated, offering up-to-date listings of SRVU's activities and events, fostering engagement and participation.
- ❖ Student Newspaper – The website may include a dedicated section for the new SRVU student newspaper, providing a platform for student journalism and campus news dissemination.
- ❖ User Interface Enhancement – The board is keen on improving the user interface, ensuring that visitors can navigate the website effortlessly and access the desired information with ease.
- ❖ Room Reservation – An important feature will enable students to conveniently reserve rooms in the Studentend0k, streamlining the process and improving accessibility.

2.5 SRVU Newspaper & Monthly Member Newsletter

While social media provides short bursts of information, in the VU the long form of articles and newspapers still does the rounds and Ad Valvas writes about various topics relevant to the student experience. Just so, the SRVU has its own stories to write. In order to give not just SRVU members, but also other partners of ours, a look into how the SRVU organizes and functions, this year an SRVU newspaper will be released. The newspaper may include interviews with people who work with the SRVU, deeper looks into current topics, messages from partners like the national student union LSVB, important tenancy rights information or just fun bits of knowledge like student recipes and VU trivia.

The *newspaper* is separate from the *newsletters* which the board aims to mail out monthly. By sending out monthly emails, the board hopes to keep the members more updated about what is going on within the union.

- ❖ Publish an SRVU newspaper once, possibly twice a year.
- ❖ Send out a monthly newsletter to the members with updates from the union.

2.6 Sponsorship and Funding

Regarding funding, the board has requested LSVb for financial assistance for essential and not cost-effective projects and services. This can be achieved thanks to the union's close connections with LSVb, and we have proposed great ideas of how the money will be used effectively for the students at VU. The board aims to gain funding from the university as all boosts to the budget will vastly increase the effectiveness of the board's services. Additionally, the board will actively search for sponsorships in the corporate world provided SRVU values are in agreement.

- ❖ Acquire funding via the LSVb
- ❖ Acquire funding from the VU
- ❖ Look for sponsorships in the corporate world that align with SRVU values

3. Advocacy

The SRVU is a student union and as a union, it aims to amplify the voices of students and to advocate for the interests of students on issues that are important to them. Advocacy is done through various means, for example organising informational events, lobbying the municipality and other organisations, and being involved in local protests and nationally coordinated campaigns. The SRVU aims to cooperate with organisations that share its goals and values to better advocate issues that are important to students. This section consists of topics which the board believes are important to students and where the SRVU's advocacy can contribute to meaningful change.

3.1 Decolonisation

The SRVU is a big proponent of decolonisation of education and the VU as an institution. Decolonisation is understood here as a process by which the impact of past and present injustices related to racism, colonialism and imperialism, in this case mostly on education, are evaluated and re-examined. This section is called decolonisation because of the importance the SRVU attaches to this topic, but the range of issues covered under this section ranges much further than what is traditionally understood as decolonisation. Diversity of university staff, democratisation of education and commitment to human rights are also parts of this portfolio which, while they may not strictly fall under the definition of decolonisation, flow from the principles of decolonisation and therefore are grouped together in this section.

3.1.1 Awareness and Information on Decolonisation

The 77th SRVU board recognises the importance of decolonisation. Decolonisation in this context can involve changing educational systems, institutions, and curricula in order to promote diversity, inclusiveness, and equal representation while addressing and redressing colonialism's historical consequences.

This effort aims to increase awareness of decolonisation among all of the Union stakeholders, including employees, students, members, and the larger community. The board wants to create a safe space where people from various cultures, histories, and viewpoints could feel included.

- ❖ Increase awareness of decolonisation.
- ❖ Create a safe space for students to celebrate and embrace their backgrounds.

3.1.2 Human rights-based academic relations

The SRVU is proud of its history of pressuring the VU to join the boycott of Apartheid South Africa and intends to continue to act in accordance with this legacy in the coming year. The

board believes that the VU should strongly consider the human rights records of academic and other partners before it enters into external relations with these organisations. Furthermore, the board believes that the VU should reconsider its current ties by the same standards. The VU has in the past acted in accordance with this principle by cutting ties with Russian universities which directly or indirectly facilitated the invasion of Ukraine. The SRVU applauds this decisive action, but believes this condition for academic ties should be applied universally and consistently by the VU. As such, the board advocates for the VU to adopt a consistent and transparent human rights based policy as a precondition for academic ties with external partners.

During the year of the previous board the SRVU decided, in accordance with this principle, to internally adopt the principles of the Boycott, Divest and Sanctions (BDS) movement. This motion entails that the union takes a strong stance against the violation of Palestinian human rights and international law by the Israeli government and will advocate for the VU to engage in an academic boycott of organisations with ties to the perpetrators of these violations. The board and the new decolonisation committee, which the board plans on forming, intend to respect this decision and to continue the work of the previous board.

- ❖ Advocate for the VU to adopt a human rights-based evaluation and re-evaluation of academic ties with external partners (such as universities) that have ties with systemic perpetrators of human rights violations.
- ❖ Set up informational events to clarify the board's position on BDS and promote awareness on the violation of Palestinian human rights.
- ❖ Look for ways to advocate in the press for the BDS motion and the adoption of this issue by the VU, which has academic ties with universities with ties to organizations responsible for the violation of Palestinian human rights.

3.1.3 Decolonisation of Education through historical accountability and justice

The board will advocate for decolonisation of curricula, which would among other things mean that the contributions of people from marginalised groups are properly acknowledged and taught. The board will also advocate for the elimination of outdated and harmful eurocentric narratives from curricula. The board will consider organising or helping other organisations organise workshops and educational events on decolonisation of curricula (for example by providing them space in the StudentendOk). The SRVU will also keep track of student initiatives on this subject and look to support these initiatives. The board will furthermore advocate for the VU to adopt a firmly anti-racist stance in its policies and to recognise and take accountability for its ties to historical injustices, for example the commemoration of an active NSB-member in a VU building which was removed last year.

- ❖ Be aware of and support (student) initiatives and to decolonise curricula
- ❖ Advocate for the VU to commit to anti-racist principles
- ❖ Continue advocating for the VU to take accountability for its ties to historical injustices

3.1.4 Celebration of marginalized religious, cultural or spiritual practices/holidays

This year the board aims to create a more inclusive and safe space for students with different backgrounds by celebrating marginalized religious groups, cultural or spiritual practices, or holidays. This goal can be achieved by collaborating to provide events such as iftar with other unions such as FAM or posting stories on SRVU's Instagram account celebrating different religious and spiritual holidays. The board believes that enhancing culture and recognizing and honoring these traditions helps encourage inclusivity and understanding among different groups. It would be easier for people to recognize the religious, cultural, and spiritual holidays and practices that are marginalized. Additionally, the SRVU aims to host events or provide other means online that give students space to express and share their ideas, initiatives as well and feelings. This can be done through open group discussions, online posts that highlight brilliant minds and events in collaboration with other associations around the university and outside sharing the same goals (e.g.: Women in Stem, Enactus, FAM, ISA, etc.)

- ❖ Host event for students to help them express and share their ideas, initiatives as well and feelings.
- ❖ Collaborating with other unions to celebrate different religious and spiritual holidays.

3.1.5 Diversifying the University Staff

In the previous year the SRVU had started talking to other POC (Psychologists of Color) Initiatives around the Netherlands for the purpose of setting up support groups for marginalized students. These talks involved publicized incidents of racism and marginalisation around the VU and what options were available to process these. Having organized Workshops with teachers and staff of color, many important points were brought up about the issues minority groups were facing at the VU – among which was the lack of diverse staff. It is easier for marginalized groups to talk openly about issues surrounding discrimination when their counselor or psychologist is also of color which is why the SRVU will work further with the VU on implementing this.

- ❖ Host at least one safe space event for students from marginalized and minority groups to talk about their experiences and struggles at the VU.

3.1.6 Democratisation of the VU and education

The SRVU deeply values democratic principles and believes that students and employees know best what the issues are that affect them and should have more say in what policies should be adopted to deal with these issues. This is why the board supports increased participation and input of students and employees in decisions that affect them. The board will cooperate with sister unions in the LSVb, council members in the USR and UvA Central Student Council (CSR) and civil society organizations to advocate for a better and more democratic governance structure of universities, with a more democratic distribution of decision-making power between the student councils, workers' councils and the Executive Board.

- ❖ The SRVU will cooperate with other organisations and sister unions on a possible campaign aimed at the democratization of universities
- ❖ The SRVU will lobby the LSVb to make democratisation of education and more participation of students in the creation of university policy a point of priority and will assist the LSVb in actions on this topic

3.2 Education

3.2.1 Accessibility Task Force

The SRVU has picked up the Accessibility Task Force which tackles all areas of accessibility from physical to mental. The board wants to continue to work, think and implement ways to make the university campus as well as the StudentenD0k more accessible to people.

3.2.2 Hackathon

This year the SRVU has participated in the 2023 Hackathon to compete for a 3000€ prize. The challenge entailed creating a solution for problems in education or educational institutes while utilizing artificial intelligence (AI). Team SRVU has come up with a solution to tackle the issues surrounding lack of study space and accessibility and was awarded the reward for placing first and granted the prize money to develop this idea.

3.2.3 Learning Support

The VU has learning support services that aim to support students with their studies, should they ever need or request such. These Services include additional examination time, extra examination opportunities and chances, special examination space/room, low stimulus environments as well as pen and paper in examinations where it is not permitted. At first glance these seem sufficient for students with special conditions and learning disabilities but it is very limited and can not be generalized to the larger student population. The SRVU will be working on improving and refining these tools, raising awareness for the importance of learning support

as well as contacting other Unions and Organisations that want to work on implementing more of these.

- ❖ Working with Academic Advisors from various faculties on the current facilities offered to students in need of learning support.

3.2.4 Mandatory Attendance and Hybrid Learning

The board would like to work on improving the current policies surrounding this topic as well as raise awareness for the issues surrounding it. Currently, the Mandatory Attendance policy differs for every Faculty and Study Programme, which also means it depends on them to implement such. Students feel pressure to attend and then enter the campus either sick with the risk of infecting others or physically limited and then at risk of fainting. COVID may no longer influence the way of learning and therefore remove most hybrid learning opportunities, but that does not mean that more people require these. From physical limitations to learning disorders, hybrid learning should be an essential part of every education facility.

3.2.5 Binding Study Recommendation (BSA)

The BSA abolish campaign was also in the works last year, and continues to be a relevant and active point of discussion. The board will keep a close eye on this topic and the developments that follow in the coming year.

3.2.5 Study spaces and rooms

The VU is still facing big challenges regarding campus space and therefore scheduling of classes. With a growing number of students, the board thinks it's important to keep an eye on this situation and look into how, especially, the quality of education is impacted by this. The board will actively reach out to students to stay informed about the situation in different study programmes.

Also affected by this, are the associations that are located in the WN-building. This building will be demolished in the future, and as a consequence, the associations will be moved to rooms in different buildings. However, the amount of space per room will decrease drastically, which has major consequences for the social activities that they host. The SRVU supports these associations and wants to keep helping them where possible next year, in their negotiations with the Executive Board.

3.2.6 Numerus fixus

Very recently (as of Sept. 1, 2023), a legislative amendment to the Higher Education and Scientific Research Act includes the lottery as a selection tool. This means that as of this

academic year, bachelor and master programs with a numerus fixus can change their selection procedure and use a lottery. Of course, this will not only play out at VU but also at other educational institutions in the Netherlands. The board strives to 1) support the fraction in the USR where possible regarding advice requests and passing on signals from students and 2) in a national context (e.g. LSVb meetings) make the union's point of view (resulting from that of the students and the Union members) heard.

3.2.7 Training and Development

This year SRVU is planning training opportunities for the student body. Providing training is important for establishing guidelines and principles enhancing the knowledge or skills that could help be useful for student's personal or professional lives. This will be accomplished by hosting (or collaborating with different organizations) workshops or seminars on various topics of development. These topics can range from career development to personal development.

3.2.8 Faculty and Programme-related issues

Besides the topics mentioned above, during the academic year some new issues might arise. The board hopes that students and members reach out to the board when facing such issues, but the board will also actively try to signal faculty and programme related issues. Our fraction members (in both USR and FSR) make this possible, along with our union members. In case of an issue arising, the board hopes to contribute to the issue being picked up by signaling the right party, working together with the USR (or other) or trying to find a solution with the student itself.

3.3 Housing

There is an ongoing national housing crisis in the Netherlands and students are especially affected by this. According to recent data there is a shortage of over 20,000 homes for students, not to mention the general population, and according to conservative estimates this number is expected to nearly double by 2030 with the current policies in place¹. The board believes that the government and housing corporations will need to play a more active role in building more, social and affordable housing to address this housing crisis. The housing crisis is also forcing students to live further and further away from their universities, which is why free and accessible public transport for all students is essential and something the SRVU will advocate to maintain and expand.

3.3.1 International students and homelessness under students

International students are especially vulnerable to the housing crisis, since they arrive in a foreign country likely without proficiency in Dutch. They are also less likely to have a network of

¹ <https://studentenhuisvesting.incijfers.nl/mosaic/lms/factsheet>

friends and family to fall back on in case they have trouble finding housing. The SRVU has in previous years cooperated with ASVA on the NoRoomForUS service for emergency housing and housing advice for international students. Sadly, it struggled to find hosts and the service has been in decline. The board will look at working with ASVA to potentially revive the NoRoomForUs service or find alternatives to alleviate the problem of homelessness among students.

- ❖ Look at reviving the NoRoomForUs platform, by actively recruiting hosts. Possibly look for alternatives for homeless students if this is not feasible.
- ❖ Research the extent of the student housing crisis at the VU and look to create and promote ways for students to share their experiences with us.

3.3.2 Cooperation with partners on tenancy rights and affordable housing

The SRVU has built up a network of partners on housing policy and advocacy and the board aims to sustain this network and work together with these partners to address the housing crisis. The board will maintain its collaboration with !WOON and keep up efforts to inform students about their rights as tenants. Additionally, where possible, the SRVU will aim to have students' voices heard in municipal politics.

- ❖ Actively participate in (student) housing consultations with the municipality and other groups (such as Coalitie Kennisstad) to maintain and grow the union's lobbying network.
- ❖ Improve the union's relations and cooperation with and participate in training by housing support organizations such as !WOON.

3.3.3 Housing Action Campaign

Ensuring proper housing for students is both a collaborative and a local effort. The board collaborates with its sister unions via the LSVb to pressure the national government for more action on the housing shortage as this is a political problem students all over the Netherlands face. SRVU will also look to contribute to actions that address local issues in Amsterdam and the surrounding area. There will be a nationally coordinated campaign run by the LSVb this year aimed at influencing political parties during the election and formation period. The campaign's focus will be to advocate for more and more affordable housing for students. The board aims to set up a committee to cooperate with the LSVb to make this a successful campaign. The board will especially put effort into collaborating on this issue with ASVA, the SRVU's sister union also from Amsterdam.

- ❖ Actively participate in the LSVb housing workgroups and national housing campaign workgroups.
- ❖ Organize, coordinate and participate in actions with ASVA and the LSVb for the national student housing campaign. Set up a committee to this specific end as well.
- ❖ Look out for cooperation with organizations combating the housing crisis for the wider Amsterdam population and keep track of their actions.
- ❖ Create and promote easy to understand information flyers, social media posts and possibly informational events to promote knowledge of housing rights and specific useful rights, regulations and grants related to students and housing

3.3.4 Public Transport

Accessible, affordable and properly functioning public transport is essential for the transition away from fossil fuels towards more liveable cities. The municipality of Amsterdam and the government of the Netherlands are supposedly committed to these goals, but Amsterdam has plans to reduce the number of public transport services, and while Dutch public transport is already the most expensive in the European Union the NS has plans to increase the price for peak hour train tickets significantly. Public transport for students specifically may become an issue in the coming board year, as the government is planning a massive budget cut for “student OV”. There are proposals by government officials to make public transport cost a discounted monthly fee instead of free for students because of this.² The board will pay attention to civil society groups taking actions on the aforementioned issues and aims to cooperate with them. Furthermore, the board will consider working with sister unions within the LSVb to promote accessibility of student OV to international students and to make free student OV work all week long instead of forcing students to choose between free public transport during the week or weekend.

- ❖ Pay close attention to civil society and sister union actions on public transport and cooperate on these actions
- ❖ Raise awareness of budget cuts and service cuts in public transport and advocate against these cuts
- ❖ Advocate for expansion of student OV to work on both weekdays and weekends, and for more access to student OV for international international students

3.4 Sustainability

We are committed to fostering sustainability within our local community and campus. We believe that meaningful change starts at the grassroots level, and to achieve this, we have some

² <https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2023/09/21/ov-vreest-fors-lagere-vergoeding-van-het-rijk-voor-studenten-a4175084>

tangible goals in place. These objectives align with our vision for a greener, more sustainable future, where every member of the VU community can actively contribute to positive change.

- ❖ **Book Exchange Expansion** – SRVU aims to significantly increase number of books exchanged annually within the next academic year. We will actively promote the book exchange program to increase participation and facilitate the sharing of educational resources among students, thus reducing the need for new purchases and promoting sustainability.
- ❖ **Clothing Exchange Market Growth** – Our goal is to organize at least four clothing exchange markets each semester, providing opportunities for students to exchange and repurpose clothing items. We aim to increase participation by 20% over the next year, reducing textile waste and promoting sustainable fashion choices.
- ❖ **Green Spaces Enhancement** – SRVU is committed to making the D0k more green over the next year. These spaces will not only enhance the aesthetics of but also provide areas for relaxation and reflection, promoting a sense of well-being.

These goals reflect our dedication to sustainability at SRVU and our determination to make a positive impact within our local community and on the VU campus.

3.4.1 Book Exchange/Book Safari

Last year SRVU members visited the VU library in the Union's very own “Book safari” to fill the new D0k book closet, and over the last year, it's been kept well stocked with a variety of books from course literature to novels. This year the board strives to keep the Union books diverse, be they fun, useful or both, while promoting reading in the d0k.

- ❖ **Maintain a diverse, useful and fun book collection**

3.4.2 Clothing Exchange Market

Since last year, students can donate their old or unwanted clothing in the D0k in our clothing donation bin, which is subsequently sorted and sold during our clothing exchange market for very low prices. The clothing market has been a great success so far, bringing in much-needed income for the SRVU while promoting the D0k and the union to students. The current throughput of clothing works well, and with sufficient attention, the board feels there is room for expansion. By being mindful of clothing prices and keeping a regular schedule the board aims to attract even more people to the clothing exchange market. More activity in the clothing exchange market may also bring in more and more diverse types of clothing as well as encourage engagement with the union while bringing in some welcome cash.

- ❖ **Host monthly clothing exchange markets**

- ❖ Improve security of cash storage and cash accounting

3.4.3 Fossil fuel industry ties

Nationally the campaign to end fossil fuel subsidies has gained traction, while locally the VU and its fossil fuel partner Shell have been a hot topic of discussion during the last academic year. In recent news, the VU along with UvA have decided to refrain from new cooperation with fossil fuel industries. While the discussion regarding fossil fuel ties continues, the SRVU will use its network to pressure the VU towards a sustainable policy indoors and outdoors by supporting the end ties with the fossil fuel industry.

- ❖ Communicate our standpoint regarding ending fossil fuel industry ties at the VU

3.4.4 Sustainability in the D0k

Sustainability requires individual action and collective action. The SRVU strives to use sustainable goods and methods to promote the Union cause by reusing our inventory, critically reviewing our purchases, our footprint and also making the Dok more greener. By communicating with our partners, the board aims to bring in and share sustainable practices among interested parties.

- ❖ Improve sustainability in the D0k by reviewing current union practices.

3.4.5 Recycling on Campus

SRVU is taking steps to foster an environmentally responsible campus culture by partnering with the Green Office on an upcoming recycling project. While the precise project details are currently in the planning stage, SRVU and relevant university departments will collaborate to identify and manage an initiative focused on reducing waste and advancing sustainability. The Union will allocate necessary resources, promote awareness and education about recycling, and ensure transparent monitoring and reporting of the project's progress.

- ❖ Cooperate with university partners on improving recycling on campus

3.4.6 Reusable cups

Introducing recyclable coffee mugs adorned with the SRVU branding presents a great opportunity. Not only would this initiative align with the Union's commitment to sustainability, but it would also significantly expand the Union's brand presence. By offering these eco-friendly mugs, the board can encourage the adoption of sustainable practices among the Union campus community and beyond, while simultaneously promoting the SRVU identity. This innovative approach not only reduces waste associated with disposable coffee cups but also fosters a sense

of pride and engagement among SRVU members, creating a win-win scenario for sustainability and brand recognition.

- ❖ Introduce recyclable coffee mugs with SRVU branding

3.5 Participation

3.5.1 ActivismHUB

ActivismHub is an open concept, primarily functioning as a platform for enabling and facilitating the inception of new initiatives, specialized task groups, or associations. It entails delivering legal guidance on association law, offering advice on public relations and social media strategies, the workings of the VU, suggesting methods to attract more members, and granting complimentary access to D0k, without requiring D0k membership. The board aims to make ActivismHub accessible for everyone who would like to use this service and promote it on social platforms to raise the awareness of the ActivismHub.

- ❖ Aiding in the launch and coordination of associations inaugural events
- ❖ Permitting usage of the D0k for formal and informal events.

3.5.2 Student Council Elections

Student Council Elections

This year the board will prepare and assist SRVU party members for the annual student council elections of the USR (University Student Council) as well as various FSR (Faculty Student Council). Election week usually happens in April which means the board begins recruitment of party members in February. This allows for time to prepare, brainstorm, inform and generally set up a timeline and action points with and for the candidates to then utilize during election week.

Activities for election week include campaigning (online, physical or hybrid), holding lecture talks, and setting up an election booth with non-transactional incentives for students (flyers, merchandise, food/drinks, etc) as well as a photoshoot to debut and brand the image of the new party.

For the campaign, candidates establish the manifesto which includes common policy spearheads, individual spearheads and campaign buddies. This is written with an overlap of candidates' goals but also SRVU values.

To reach the campaign goals, the SRVU largely depends on the budget for elections provided by the VU. Since the funding system for elections parties will change next year, the board will make sure to follow the guidelines and requirements to receive funding for the campaign.

- ❖ Recruit 8 - 10 candidates for the SRVU elections party.
- ❖ Guide the candidates through the election process.
- ❖ Inform candidates about resources and possible activities.
- ❖ Follow the guidelines to receive the funding for election week from the VU.

3.5.3 Fraction

The council year of the University Student Council and Faculty Student Councils start in September and run throughout the academic year. This academic year, the SRVU has several fraction members in the USR and one member in the FSR for Humanities and for Beta Sciences each. During this year, the board would like to maintain close contact with the fraction members in these councils. This is important for cooperation with the councils, timely identification of problems and in the process of searching for new council members for the elections in April. The board would like to maintain this contact well through the group chat with all fraction members and regular (both formal and informal) meetings with the fraction members. The board also hopes to collaborate with fraction members within a number of portfolios, such as Education and Wellbeing.

- ❖ Maintain good contact with the SRVU fraction members in the USR and FSRs through regular meetings.
- ❖ Collaborate with the fraction members within overlapping portfolios.

3.5.4. Introduction week (Bachelors and Masters)

Previously, the board participated in the bachelor Introduction days by collaborating with !WOON in an information market booth. There the board advertised the Union with flyers about the Union mission, active campaigns and more information about the services the board offered. Additionally, the board also opened up the D0k doors for an open stand on free face paint and makeup to attract students and inform them further about the Union events, activities and actions.

The Introduction week(s) is a great opportunity to meet new students, advertise the Union and direct them to the Union office location within the StudentenD0k. Therefore, the board will have an Introduction Committee which focuses on what options the board can utilize in terms of being involved for that time period. The board also requested and set aside a budget to sponsor these activities and hopefully be more active too.

- ❖ Recruit 2 - 4 potential introduction committee members in addition to 2 board members.
- ❖ Contact the Introduction Board in a timely manner about potential activities.
- ❖ Contact LSVb in a timely manner about funding for the Introduction Days.
- ❖ Contact potential collaborators and sponsors to invite and strike deals with.
- ❖ Promote the D0k to new associations and advertise the current associations during Introduction Days.

3.6 Wellbeing

Student wellbeing is essential to the success of any student's academic career. This is why the SRVU works on many projects parallel to ensure that every student is sufficiently supported and cared for, leaving them to focus on their studies with less worries than before. In this portfolio, members utilize many means to learn more about the current wellbeing of the student body and their concerns. From conducting student focus groups to destigmatization and finally implementation and improvement of current learning support and accessibility, the SRVU will continue to advocate for student wellbeing and health.

3.6.1 Student Focus Groups and Survey Analysis

In the coming year the board wants to host Student focus groups, surveys and group interviews that allow students to speak about their needs and concerns. In addition to the Union Anonymous Tip Line, the board also utilized the Union social media platforms to reach the student body. The Surveys conducted can then also be analyzed so the board has a better understanding of how to prioritize the Union projects and what needs to still be worked on. This will also establish hard figures which can be used to back up statements, concerns and claims if we start initiatives surrounding these focus groups.

- ❖ Conduct at least one focus group in the year.

3.6.2 Destigmatisation and information of wellbeing

Since the Covid-19 pandemic, the majority of the population has increased their awareness about well-being. However due to cultural backgrounds, religions or upbringings, there is a negative stigma surrounding someone's struggles regarding well-being. Hence, the board will focus on reducing stigma associated with problems of one's mental, physical, and emotional well-being, inform them more about the importance of wellbeing and encourage a friendly, accepting environment where people can ask for assistance and support. This will be done through information sessions and workshops that provide a safe space for learning and discussing these topics.

- ❖ Host at least one workshop as a safe space opportunity for students to voice their concerns and get educated about wellbeing.

3.6.3 Menstrual poverty, awareness, and cabinets

SRVU collaborates with Neighbourhoodfeminists to supply free sanitary products for students at VU. The Union mission is that the board will maintain this initiative to ensure the widespread availability of these products in the bathrooms of each campus building. We would like to host several events related to menstrual poverty and awareness to enhance knowledge towards students. We are planning to collaborate with a back to school campaign to get funding for our menstrual cabinets. The board truly believes that people, especially students should have access to free sanitary products and the board would like to advertise the Union free products more throughout the university, so more students are aware of this.

- ❖ Maintain the functioning of the current menstrual cabinets.

3.6.4 Sexual Wellbeing

As previously mentioned there can be a negative stigma about talking about well-being especially when it comes to sexual well-being. As SRVU, the board would like to create an atmosphere free from stigma, harassment, or discrimination based on a person's gender, sexual orientation, or expression of their identities. To achieve this goal the board will provide access to workshops, seminars, or other information materials about topics such as safe sex practices, sexual consent, menstrual health, and sexually transmitted infections (STI's).

- ❖ Hold at least one workshop about sexual wellbeing in the year.

3.6.5 Social safety and security

The VU has services relating to social safety which include Psychological counselors as well as Confidential counselors. The SRVU wants to raise awareness for social safety in terms of who to call, what to do in certain situations, and how to handle and process things. The board wants to host events for this and create social media posts as well as posters around the d0k with information relating to this. Additionally, the board will maintain contact with Social Safety to discuss students' concerns and experiences while also providing input on how to increase awareness among students about the importance of this topic.

- ❖ Have good contact with the Social Safety Department about current events and ongoing.

3.6.6 VU Wellbeing Services

As a student union, our foremost concern is the well-being of VU students, fostering a safe and supportive university environment. Recognizing the various stressors that impact mental health, such as adjusting to a new country, environment, people, and academic demands, we aim to offer workshops and classes focused on stress reduction techniques, mindfulness, and meditation. To achieve this, we are exploring potential partnerships with SWP to assist individuals in finding a healthy work-life balance through providing specific workshops and resources throughout the year. Additionally, we encourage open communication among our students to ensure they receive the support they require. Finally, our foremost goal is to significantly expand and enhance the supportive environment for students with mental health problems.

- ❖ Organize collaborative workshops and resources with SWP
- ❖ Create a safe space for students with mental health issues

4. Services

In addition to initiating actions and representing students, the SRVU values the services we provide for all VU students. The premise is that these services are accessible to everyone. The board would like to maintain these services well in the coming year, improve them where possible and finally look at the possibility of setting up a new service.

4.1 Legal Aid

The Legal Aid is one of the most important services that the SRVU offers to students. Volunteers are available to provide free legal advice on a variety of topics, such as education issues, employment-related matters and rent/tenancy issues. Students can contact them by mail and the Legal Aid also has its own office, located in the Studentend0k. Because of the efforts of the previous administration, SRVU's Legal Aid was expanded and structuralised last year. In order to maintain this structure (and where possible expand and improve it even more), the board would like to appoint a new coordinator for next year. This coordinator will, among other things, oversee the handling of applications, identify problems and remain in contact with the volunteers and a contact person from the board. Since Legal Aid currently runs entirely on volunteers, it is very important for the maintenance and expansion of Legal Aid that new volunteers are also recruited this year. To achieve this, the board would like to cooperate with the Faculty of Law, for instance, the Faculty Student Council and the study associations. The board will also look into the possibilities to offer trainings to the (new) volunteers.

In order to ensure that basic information is readily accessible to students, and thereby make the service more efficient, the board would like to add an FAQ section on the Legal Aid page of the website next year. The board would like to create this in collaboration with the coordinator and volunteers. Finally, the board would like to increase the visibility of Legal Aid to students so that students know how to find this service if needed. Possibilities for this are to put more emphasis on the service on social media, highlighting this service more on posters and possibly announcements through Canvas.

- ❖ Appoint a new Legal Aid coordinator for this academic year.
- ❖ Seek new volunteers for Legal Aid.
- ❖ Look into possibilities for trainings for the volunteers.
- ❖ Have regular contact with the coordinator and volunteers about how things are going and possible improvements.
- ❖ Add the FAQ section on the Legal Aid page.
- ❖ Increase visibility of Legal Aid.

4.2 StudentenD0k

Both offices of the SRVU are located in the Studentend0k (Main Building) of the VU. Since numerous student organizations use this place on a daily basis due to their official recognition from the VU, the Studentend0k falls under Student and Educational Affairs (SOZ). Partly due to the efforts of the previous board, this year the role of D0k coordinator will once again be filled by a board member of the SRVU. The advantage of this is that there is a fixed and clear point of contact for the student organizations and there will be short lines of communication between the SRVU and SOZ. The newly appointed desk workers will also play a major role in this. They will be present on weekdays during the day and, among other things, act as a point of contact for questions. To make ourselves more visible to all D0k users and maintain easy contact, the board aims to 1) create a group chat again for this academic year (with at least one board member per organization) for better communication, 2) put up a poster in the Studentend0k with contact information and 3) organize a number of events during the year in cooperation with SOZ, to bring the D0k users together. Finally, the board will be involved in the D0k renovation, which is finally scheduled for this year. For this, the D0k coordinator will keep in touch with SOZ, join meetings and provide input based on the wishes and ideas of other D0k users.

- ❖ Have an SRVU board member fill the role of D0k Coordinator and assure a person from the new board will take up this role next year.
- ❖ Maintain good contact with SOZ's Student Organizations Coordinator on D0k-related matters through bi-monthly meetings.
- ❖ Being (more) visible to D0k users and giving them the opportunity to get to know each other better.
- ❖ To be involved in the D0k renovation.

4.3 Bike Service

The board will explore the option of restarting the bike service, which the SRVU used to offer in the past. A bike service would mean that, depending on available space and volunteers, the SRVU will offer bikes for sale to students either on demand, by appointment or on designated and promoted bike sale days. A bike service would provide a good incentive for new members to join and to raise the profile of the SRVU among VU students. The board has explored possible partners who can provide bikes at cheap prices and parties that can give advice on how to set up the service but nothing is set in stone yet. Storage of bikes is a potential issue that will need to be addressed first. If there is a lack of storage space close to/on campus, bike sale events, promoted beforehand, could be another way to sell bikes, raise awareness of the SRVU and gain new members.

- ❖ Explore with possible partners the financial feasibility of starting a bike service
- ❖ Find a suitable storage place for the bikes
- ❖ If the previous points are successful, have at least one bike sale event this board year

4.4 Complaints, Questions and Concerns

The SRVU board continuous to reflect, improve and develop. In addition to the union's internal board evaluations, the board will also hear from its own general members. By taking into account all reports, requests and suggestions the union ensures continuous improvement.

Epilogue

With great love and enthusiasm the 77th board of SRVU has presented this Policy Plan. This document represents the efforts and wishes from this board for the coming year. During the year there will undoubtedly be new topics that will require the attention of the SRVU. We hope that through good contact with members and students we can represent the students interests well at the local and central level. We look forward to achieving our goals in cooperation with our partners and as a team.








The SRVU has a long history of student representation and fighting for students rights. We are grateful to all our predecessors for their commitment to the union, and we are more than happy to continue with this commitment.

Any comments, feedback or other remarks are welcome in our inbox or by talking to us in the D0k.

To a good year and with love,

77th board of SRVU

The Board of 2023 - 2024

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