



2024

Resolution

International Students' Mental Health

The Baltic Organizational Meeting (hereinafter - BOM) is a regional cooperation network of the national student associations of the Baltic States - the Federation of Estonian Student Unions (Eesti Üliõpilaskondade Liit), the Student Union of Latvia (Latvijas Studentu apvienība) and the Lithuanian National Union of Students (Lietuvos studentų sąjunga). Its purpose is to promote the cooperation of student organisations at both the national and local levels and to ensure the transfer of knowledge on issues of political, economic, social, and educational processes in the Baltic States. 20 years after the signing of the BOM cooperation agreement, as student representatives, we must be at the forefront of finding solutions for emotional and challenging issues students face. This year, we call upon the higher education institutions (hereinafter - HEI) and student representatives to raise awareness of mental health issues, implement solutions, and work towards accessible mental health aid.

BOM takes a stand for the availability of support mechanisms for any and every student without discrimination. Mental health awareness has been brought into not only the higher education system but also our society as a whole. However, there is no significant emphasis on international students whose experience may differ from the students who study in their home country.

BOM stands against the prejudice and stigmas of mental health issues. Mental health aid must be provided to those who require it, taking preemptive measures to stop the problems from arising. Students, academic staff, and non-academic staff are part of the same institutional family and act as a whole. Therefore the aforementioned should be involved in the development of the support mechanisms and receive any aid available.

On the 18th of July, the re-elected president of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen called upon everyone to recognise the ongoing mental health crisis in Europe. With the rise of artificial intelligence, misinformation, ongoing wars, and

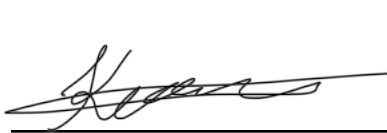
mounting international tensions there is a growing amount of pressure and an increasing number of stressors affecting the students upon other societal struggles.

BOM recognises the need to conduct preemptive measures. This means, creating a safe and inclusive higher education environment without any additional hurdles for students progressing into higher education and throughout it. Following in the annex of this document there are guidelines for the student unions and HEIs to follow.

It is vital to remove the language barrier for mental health assistance. This includes but is not limited to -leaflets, programs, appointments with professionals, and opportunities to join different social activities. All mental health aid should be available in English and other widely encountered languages in the corresponding region, along with the national language.

BOM also recognises the difference in resources and capacities different HEIs have. Therefore we invite HEIs to seek opportunities for cooperation spearheaded by the student organisations.

In conclusion, the Baltic Organizational Meeting (BOM) emphasizes the critical importance of addressing mental health issues among students, particularly international students, by promoting inclusive support mechanisms and raising awareness. The BOM urges higher education institutions and student representatives to take proactive measures, ensure the availability of multilingual mental health resources, and foster a supportive educational environment. Cooperation between HEIs and student organizations is essential to effectively respond to the mental health crisis and ensure no student faces discrimination or undue barriers in accessing necessary mental health aid.



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Tallinn, 2024

Annex 1. Guidelines for Student Unions

Directly to students

- Provide training and info sessions on students' rights to make sure that the student body is fully aware of their opportunities and can stand up for their needs.
- Make sure that actions rely on evidence-based approaches and certified specialists.
- Organize events to raise awareness about the topic of mental health.
 - E.g. People sharing their experiences
 - Different coping mechanisms
 - Importance of work-life balance
- Student unions should organize inclusive and accessible social events and other activities that involve different social groups.
- Support international hobby clubs and unions to make sure that the student body has access to social activities.
- Promote a healthy lifestyle.
 - E.g. Sport challenges
 - Provide healthier options in vending machines
 - Outdoor activities (hiking, walks)
- Raise awareness about mental health through different virtual channels. For example by sending out a monthly newsletter with information about mental health and where to get help. During the exam periods, it would be beneficial to raise awareness about different stress management tools that would help students get through the stressful period.
- Collaborate with other Student Unions to maximise the use of resources and increase the reach.
- Collaborate with local institutions to get different discounts for the student body to use if the free opportunities are not available or if there is a long waiting list.
- Promote European and national projects in the Student Union which can be used to improve the mental well-being of the students using external funds

For management

- Information about where to get help has to be readily available for the whole student body. Information can be made available in various ways. For example HEI's website, newsletter, survival guides for students, and presentation on orientation week.
- Help from psychologists should be available to every student in a reasonable time.
- Create a university-level buddy system with a proper structure that offers psychological assistance, and guides and also includes materials to prepare for consulting.
- Using available resources on students' mental health to argue positions to the HEI. One example of this is Eurostudent, but if the Student Union has enough resources, they can also conduct their own surveys to monitor the specific needs of students and the state of their mental health in their HEIs.
- Encourage the HEI and its administration to develop a mental health strategy that also identifies and monitors key performance indicators. This process should involve the student union representatives on every step of the way.
- Student Unions must be included in decisions made by HEI that involve the well-being of the student body.
- HEIs should work on developing the physical environment of the HEIs to reduce stress for students and staff. This includes but is not limited to quiet relaxing areas, living things on campus, natural light in rooms, and activity opportunities on campus. This should be financed from the budget of the HEI or/and through project funding.
- HEIs should work on developing elective courses that are focused on mental health and would provide students with the necessary tools and information.
- HEIs should look into possibilities to use mental health risk detectors which would use automatic resources to track the state of students' wellbeing and provide timely assistance. This solution should keep in mind all the required data processing rules and GDPR. Furthermore, the automated processes must not be used against students.
- Integrate stress management tools into the curriculum to ensure that the student body feels supported throughout their studies.

- Work on the personal and professional development of the academic staff by including for example courses to develop their emotional intellect.
- Work on developing cooperation projects with mental health professionals to offer help and guidance to students, for example offering group consultations for students.
- Available psychological help should be diversified for every student in need to find the best solution for them. Psychological help should be available in multiple languages, psychologists should have different areas of expertise and experience working with various social groups.