

The 2021 municipal election platform of students of Tampere – round of comments

Introduction to reading and commenting this election platform

You are now reading the draft version of the municipal election platform of Group 35,000 (Ryhmä 35 000), TREY and Tamko's joint urban advocacy group. This election platform is under preparation for the electoral term 2021–2025. Our objective is to ensure that the students' voice is heard in the decision-making of the city of Tampere in the coming years.

This draft is based on the group's previous municipal election platforms and a spring 2020 survey for members of TREY and Tamko. We are currently collecting the students' opinions and ideas about this draft version.

After the round of comments, the text will be further edited by the Group 35,000. The final text will be then submitted to the executive boards of TREY and Tamko during autumn 2020, after which it can be approved by the councils of both organizations. The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that as many students as possible can accept and support the goals listed in the election platform and that TREY and Tamko will be able to promote the objectives during the period from 2021 to 2025.

This election platform is currently divided into four main themes: 1) Study ability, well-being and urban culture; 2) Employment policy and the university community; 3) Housing policy; and 4) Transport policy. Each theme starts by a short introduction, followed by a list of objectives related to the theme.

The commentary form is available via this link: <https://form.jotform.com/201522275970352>. The themes have been divided into different sections on their own pages. You will first have the chance to give comments on the theme introductions, and then you can move on to commenting on the objectives. You can give general comments or suggest changes, additions or deletions. Please note that you don't have to answer to every section. Instead, you can choose the themes and objectives that interest you the most. You can also comment on the selected themes and titles or the platform as a whole.

Urban advocacy is a slow, long-term project. Urban advocates work towards achieving the goals step by step by meeting with decision-makers and authorities. This means that not all objectives can be pursued actively. If you want to, you can tell us which parts of this election platform are the most important to you personally. Please let us know if you feel that something important has been left out!

Study ability, well-being and urban culture

Tampere is an attractive university city with a good image and high-quality study opportunities. It's no wonder that every sixth resident of Tampere is a student. We students are a large, diverse group of people, and we need and use the city's services just as much as everyone else.

As the best Finnish city for students, Tampere should actively invest in supporting study ability and well-being and ensure that social and healthcare services are accessible to all students, regardless of their situation. Maintaining thriving urban environment and culture and offering various activities are also important goals in order to improve the students' quality of life and the city's ability to keep its residents.

- **Parks, places for outdoor activities and open urban spaces contribute to well-being and help promote various recreational activities. The city invests in making the city centre welcoming and lively. The centre is a living room for the city's residents.**
 - **Main arguments:** These aspects are especially important in the everyday lives of people on lower incomes. At their best, urban spaces can offer many things to do to people with a low income. Shared urban spaces also offer many opportunities for promoting student culture and organizing events.
- **Students are viewed as an important part of urban culture. The city is flexible and excited to support even the wildest event ideas of students. Students are considered an important group in cultural policy-making, and local culture is actively promoted.**
 - **Main arguments:** The city can support student culture by offering students spaces and assistance and by creating a student-friendly atmosphere. Students are a large group of culture makers and consumers in Tampere, and the local

cultural field has typically involved many students. Tampere also has many students who study different art and culture subjects.

- **The city of Tampere offers various reasonably priced sports services to students.**
 - **Main arguments:** The university community's sports services are provided by SportUni, but the city also has an important role in creating a more diverse selection of services. The services should be affordable to make them truly accessible to students. Physical activity plays an important role in the promotion of health and well-being, and encouraging physical activity is an essential element in disease prevention.

- **Flexible early childhood education services help support students with families. Day care centres located near campuses have enough available places for children.**
 - **Main arguments:** Currently, there are not many available day care centre places near the campuses, which is why families may be offered a place in a day care centre located far from their home or campus. This is especially a challenge for student families who do not own a car.

- **Social services understand the daily lives, financial situations and well-being of both Finnish and international students.**
 - **Main arguments:** The social services of Tampere should offer support to everyone who is facing a difficult situation, students included. Some students have a particularly hard time making ends meet. Child welfare services should also be able to understand the particular circumstances in which students live.

- **The city of Tampere, the university community and the Finnish Student Health Service act in close cooperation in matters related to the health and well-being of students. The service providers are able to refer students to services they need, regardless of which institution is responsible for providing those services.**
 - **Main arguments:** In addition to the FSHS, students use the services of municipal health care centres. To ensure that the services of FSHS and the city's health care centres meet their objectives, the communication between them should be efficient. All institutions offering services that support study ability should have sufficient knowledge of other services. They should also be able to refer students to the right services. In 2021, the FSHS will also be

providing the health care services of universities of applied sciences. However, international students will no longer be entitled to the services of the FSHS: some of them will use municipal services, while others will be using private-sector services. This means that the situation will become more complicated. To ensure that everyone can easily access reasonably priced health care services, all actors in the social and health care sector should be aware of which services everyone is entitled to.

- **The free contraception policy is extended to cover all young people under the age of 25. Different forms of contraception are offered free of charge, taking the diversity of gender and sexuality into account.**
 - **Main arguments:** At the moment, the city of Tampere offers free contraception to people under the age of 22. The free contraception policy would be the most cost-effective when it is applied to all people under 25 to cover the age groups most vulnerable to sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies. Understanding the diversity of gender and sexuality is necessary to make sure that young people belonging to sexual and gender minorities can also get the type of contraception they need.
- **All of the city's services offer English-language service. The website of the city of Tampere is fully translated into English.**
 - **Main arguments:** International students should also be entitled to the services of the city of Tampere and receive information about these services. Currently, the ability to offer services in English varies greatly, and not enough of the website of the city of Tampere has been translated into English.
- **The city's climate policy is goal-oriented and takes the future of the students' generation into consideration. The climate policy ensures that the city will become carbon neutral by 2030.**
 - **Main arguments:** The current city council has stated that Tampere should become carbon neutral by 2030. Making political decisions to achieve this objective has been a slow process, and it is currently unsure whether this goal can be reached.
- **Decisions are prepared openly and democratically to allow everyone to participate in decision-making.**

- **Main arguments:** Open and democratic decision-making is an important element in protecting the interests of students. The active inclusion of residents in municipal decision-making also enables individual students to act independently and allows different population groups to be heard.

Employment policy and the university community

The students of Tampere are studying to become future experts in various different fields. Many of us students would like to complete our practical training in Tampere and also find employment here, but are often forced to move elsewhere for work. We believe that our local employment opportunities can be improved, as there are still many opportunities for cooperation between the city of Tampere and the university community. To allow the city of Tampere to harness the expertise of its students, we should be offered different kinds of internships and practical trainings as well as thesis work and course project opportunities.

However, we students are a lot more than just future workforce: we are part of the university community, a community whose knowledge and expertise should also be utilized in the city's decision-making.

- **Students are offered various paid training opportunities in the city's different departments.**
 - **Main arguments:** This objective stems from the fact that the number of offered traineeships varies greatly between sectors. The practical trainings should be paid because unpaid trainings remain a standard in some fields, for example in the care sector, which means that students have to apply for a student loan or have a job on the side to earn a living. This objective is especially relevant to students in universities of applied sciences. We should also make sure that unpaid trainings will not become the norm in higher education.
- **The city works in cooperation with the university community to organize courses and actively commissions projects and theses.**
 - **Main arguments:** Course projects, final projects and thesis work are a great way to make course contents more concrete. Cooperation benefits the university, the city and the students. In some sectors, cooperation is already done on a daily basis, but in other sectors, it is still in its early stages. All sectors can find opportunities for cooperation with different departments of the city's organization.

- **Research and the expertise of students are extensively utilized to develop the city and its services. The university community is an important cooperation partner in the city's development.**
 - **Main arguments:** The purpose of this objective is to fulfil the basic role of the university and to provide different kinds of employment and practical training opportunities to students. The purpose is also to include the point of view and expertise of students in the city's development.
- **Students form an important part of the city's workforce. The city develops its employment policy to allow employers to take students and recent graduates better into consideration.**
 - **Main arguments:** The purpose of this is to allow more students to find employment in Tampere during or immediately after studies. This is also in the interests of the city of Tampere, because when people leave the city to find employment, it also results in loss of tax revenue and expertise.
- **Companies are offered information about the students' degree profiles and expertise. The city offers opportunities for networking for Finnish and international students and businesses.**
 - **Main arguments:** The purpose of this is to improve the opportunities of students and recent graduates to find employment in the private sector in Tampere. When the degrees are more cross-disciplinary and unique, it is essential to make potential employers more familiar with the strengths of these degrees. Due to residence permit and scholarship conditions, international students have fewer opportunities for networking compared to Finnish students, and for this reason, it is vital to offer them assistance.
- **The employment services of Tampere are developed in cooperation with the TE Services to help highly educated people find employment and to take international professionals better into consideration.**
 - **Main arguments:** While organizing employment services is currently the responsibility of TE Services, not of the city of Tampere, the potential reform of regional government and health and social services or any potential related trials could change the body responsible for organizing these services during the electoral term from 2021 to 2025. TE Services do not really meet the service needs of people in higher education, which is an issue we want to address. The important thing is that the city of Tampere would take, within the limits of its role and capacity, responsibility for the development of employment services to make

them better suited to highly educated and international professionals. This would support both Finnish and international students in job seeking.

- **Tampere contributes to the employment and equal status of international professionals by introducing anonymous recruitment practices.**
 - **Main arguments:** Anonymous recruitment practices are an easy and effective means of reducing gender and ethnic discrimination in job seeking.
- **Tampere offers support services to start-up companies and academic entrepreneurs.**
 - **Main arguments:** The purpose of this objective is to help students become entrepreneurs and strengthen the local economy of Tampere.
- **A one-hour train service between Helsinki and Tampere improves the education, employment and practical training opportunities of people living in Tampere.**
 - **Main arguments:** Having a one-hour train connection between Helsinki and Tampere is an important project for the city of Tampere. We will not be involved in the details of this project, but this objective will remind the city that many students need train connections when they apply for traineeships or jobs. Fast train services will make Tampere a more attractive city to live and study in.

Housing policy

Housing has an essential role in everyday life. Reasonably priced quality housing improves the students' quality of life, supports their financial situation and creates a stronger sense of community. We students need different kinds of housing options in various locations: one prefers to share a flat in Hervanta, the other enjoys living in a family apartment in the city centre, whereas the third is happy to live in a studio in Kaleva.

Student housing services are not able to meet the needs of all students, and there are not enough student flats for everyone. For this reason, moderately priced and student-friendly housing should be offered by both the city and private landlords.

High-quality student housing is environmentally friendly. In order to respect the limits of the environment, housing policy and land use planning contribute to promoting a carbon neutral, sustainable Tampere.

- **Diverse student housing options are planned in central residential areas.**
 - **Main arguments:** Students should be able to live where they want to. With “central residential areas”, we are mainly referring to Hervanta and the city centre as well as the most popular student areas near campuses. However, using this term will allow us to identify other central residential areas later on during the electoral term. The purpose of this objective is also to prevent the unnecessary separation of student housing areas from other residential areas, so that we students could live among the rest of the population.
- **Densification is favoured in urban planning policy.**
 - **Main arguments:** This allows more people to live near the city centre or campuses. An alternative to densification is to expand the urban area beyond the city centre, which would, however, require more investments in public transport and parking infrastructure in the city centre and other major centres.
- **Ecological sustainability is taken into account in urban planning projects. Green urban areas are systematically increased.**
 - **Main arguments:** This is a question of both well-being and sustainability. By including this objective, we want to point out that university students are concerned about the carrying capacity of the environment and want the city of Tampere to take it into account.
- **The parking space norm is relaxed to free up space for useful purposes and to lower housing costs. The city is not required to regulate the number of parking spaces in student housing areas in the city centre or along the tram route.**
 - **Main arguments:** The parking space norm is a rule which determines how many parking spaces must be provided per square metre of a building’s net floor area in different parts of the city. At the moment, city centre student housing has more parking spaces than is necessary. Parking spaces are expensive to build and maintain, so they affect housing costs and rents. Making the parking space norm as loose as possible would mean that the number of parking spaces in new residential properties would be determined by demand. The parking space norm was relaxed to some degree in 2019, but it is still possible to make it less strict than it currently is.
- **The city is determined to support housing options that promotes community. Finnish and international students are living in the same residential properties.**

- **Main arguments:** The separate housing of international students is one of the biggest long-standing issues in student housing raised by international students in Tampere. Communal indoor and outdoor spaces have an impact on housing comfort and make it possible to organize events and parties.
- **The increase in the rent level is controlled by prioritizing the planning of reasonably priced rental flats, so that students and recent graduates can also find housing in the free market.**
 - **Main arguments:** The city of Tampere has set a goal to ensure that one third of new housing is reasonably priced to prevent an uncontrollable increase in the cost of housing. However, this goal has not been reached during this electoral term, and on the free market, rents are getting higher. It should be noted that the target rent level of ARA-monitored non-profit housing providers is tied to the free market rent level. This means that rents in student housing could also go up. In Tampere, 30% of students live in student housing, whereas more than 40% find their rental flat elsewhere. Out of all objectives in this municipal election platform, this might have the most significant effect on the students' economy.
- **Students with families are also taken into account in land use planning.**
 - **Main arguments:** Unfortunately, generalizations about students are common and it is often thought that all students prefer to live in studios or one-bedroom flats. This is why we want to remind that reasonably priced housing should exist and be planned across the city for student families as well. The urban area as a whole should be family-friendly. Residential areas with a high student population also need playgrounds and services for families.

Transport policy

We students travel from one place to another primarily by bike, by foot or by public transport. These sustainable means of transport are also at the core of the city's transport policy.

Affordable public transport encourages people to explore the city of Tampere and opt for low-emission vehicles. For these reasons, the public transport services should have a good student discount that is applied to all students.

A city centre that is accessible to all walkers, cyclists and wheelchair users makes the city more pleasant and ensures that it remains lively 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

Taking usability and safety aspects into account in cycle paths and walkways will take us one step closer to a carbon neutral and more student-friendly Tampere.

- **All students, international students and students over 30 included, receive a good public transport discount all year round.**
 - **Main arguments:** Currently, international students are not entitled to the public transport student discount. Students over the age of 30 are required to provide a favourable decision of students' financial aid from Kela. This puts students in unequal positions.
- **The tram network is expanded, and all campuses can be reached by public transport at frequent intervals.**
 - **Main arguments:** The tram network expansion contributes to increasing the percentage of public transport usage (what proportion of all journeys are taken using public transport). The expansion also enables a more extensive bus network by freeing up capacity from the trunk lines. High frequency of services is an important element in facilitating the everyday lives of people.
- **Public transport services are also available at night. No night fares are charged.**
 - **Main arguments:** Students form a particularly large group of customers in nighttime public transport due to work and free time reasons. Improving public transport and giving up night fares would be justified to promote safety, employment and recreation.
- **The mobile ticket application allows the purchase of season and value tickets.**
 - **Main arguments:** Introduction of mobile bus tickets was a long-standing goal for student advocates of Tampere, and this goal has been achieved. However, the mobile ticket application is currently limited to day tickets and single tickets. The next step will be to enable the purchase of mobile value and season tickets.
- **The maintenance of routes is of high quality all year round. Winter cycling is promoted by prioritizing the removal of snow and ice from cycle paths and walkways.**

- **Main arguments:** It is important to promote sustainable and affordable means of transport throughout the year. At the moment, winter cycling is difficult due to poor maintenance of cycle paths during the winter.
- **People can move from one campus to another easily and safely. Cycle paths are developed in cooperation with those who use them.**
 - **Main arguments:** By making it easier to move from one campus to another, students can be given better chances to take courses from different campuses. Allowing cyclists to participate in the development of routes improves the quality of cycle paths and ensures that poor solutions are identified more quickly.
- **The city bike system is developed. City bikes are also available on campuses and in central student housing areas.**
 - **Main arguments:** Tampere currently offers bike rental services mainly to tourists. An official political decision on a city bike network was made, and the system was supposed to be implemented during summer 2020. However, the project is significantly delayed, and it is unsure whether the system will be realized. Students are an important group and should be taken into consideration when creating and developing the system.
- **Solid bicycle racks with frame locking are available everywhere in the city.**
 - **Main arguments:** Bicycle theft is a significant problem in the city. Thefts could be efficiently decreased by introducing more secure bicycle racks that make bikes more difficult to steal. Having a sufficient number of bicycle racks promotes cycling and increases urban safety when bicycles are not attached to traffic signs or left on walkways.