A WELCOMING GUIDE TO OBESSU
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is OBESSU?</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to start your engagement in OBESSU</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Create an overview</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Communication</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What does OBESSU expect from you?</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tips and tricks</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How do I get started in OBESSU work?</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statutory events</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The AFC</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handover</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glossary</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who to contact?</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DEAR

INTERNATIONAL OFFICERS,

Welcome and congratulations on your new role! It is of great importance that member organisations have a strong and functional structure for international cooperation. This ensures a maintained quality of participation and better results for both OBESSU and the member organisation.

There are many different ways to create this structure, none which would suit all member organisations owing to the many differences between organisations’ sizes, capacities and focus on international affairs. The most important thing, however, is flexibility of the structure, and shaping it to suit your own organisation.

Some organisations have an international officer, some have a board member responsible for international work and others have a team of people working on international work, such as a working group for OBESSU.

With this document, we would like to smoothen the introduction to your new function and suggest how to make the transition as simple as possible. Last but not least, we explain what our expectations of an International Officer (IO) are and what you should expect from our side.

This introduction can both be seen as an informative guide you read all the way through, and maybe even alter some things or write some comments in it for your handover when your time as an IO is done—it can also be a reference document, where you go back and read specific chapters whenever needed, for example before a statutory event etc.
WHAT IS OBESSU?

The Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU) is the platform for cooperation between the national school student unions active in general secondary and secondary vocational education in Europe. It was founded in April 1975 in Dublin, Ireland and brings together Member, Candidate and Affiliate Organisations from all over Europe. All Member Organisations are independent, national, representative and democratic school student organisations.

Structures and democracy in OBESSU
What is your role as a member organisation, what can you do, how and when do you contribute to the organisation and who checks on OBESSU bodies? To find out, read the statutes and prose a bit around our website.

Where and how do you meet OBESSU and the membership?
Throughout the year, we organise different events and meetings which are agreed upon by the membership in a workplan and OBESSU membership is often invited. Moreover, we have working groups and our events have preparatory teams in which we also have representatives of the organisations.
WHAT IS OBESSU?

OBESSU represents your interest on the European level, but to do so, we need to know what you want and need. All our positions are approved at statutory meetings, and you can propose a whole document, propose amendments to the existing or proposed documents and you can vote to decide what will become a position of the organisation. Moreover, we always have discussions before the official voting part, either on Basecamp, through consultations, or in person.
WHAT IS OBESSU?

OBESSUs core value is to be democratic and representative of our members. To do so, we have a democratic structure, consisting of various bodies.

**Board**
The Board is responsible for leading and representing the organisation politically between the statutory meetings. To become a board member, you must be officially nominated by an organisation you have been active in, and then your candidacy is voted upon during a General Assembly. The mandate lasts for 2 years.
The official Board meetings are held about every second month and between the meetings the Board members take part in the continuous work of OBESSU.

**Secretariat**
The Secretariat is the co-ordination and information centre of the organisation. From the OBESSU Secretariat a big part of the preparatory work of the different projects is done as well as OBESSUs continuous lobbying work towards the European institutions. The work of the Secretariat is lead by the Secretary General.

**Monitoring Committee**
The Monitoring Committee is elected by the Member Organisations at the General Assembly to monitor the Board and their work in order to ensure that they follow the decisions made by the Member Organisations on the General Assembly. The Monitoring Committee will write a report on their work that is presented at the General Assembly.

**Working groups**
Working groups consists typically of a board member and several members, being nominated by on of our member organisations. The structure of the Working Groups depends on their aims and objectives, with some more ad hoc and some longer term.

**Pool of Trainers**
The OBESSU Pool of Trainers is a group of experienced trainers, educators and facilitators with insight in the world of OBESSU and school student activism. They are an active learning community with a key role for ensuring quality training, pedagogical development and training resource management in OBESSU.

Find an organisational chart of OBESSU [here](#).
HOW TO:
START YOUR ENGAGEMENT IN OBESSU
Okay, you have just been selected as the International Officer (or contact person) for OBESSU. What now?
OBESSU may seem confusing if you are being introduced to it for the first time, but all it takes is a bit of research and a good overview!
Before you start your actual OBESSU-work, take a look at www.obessu.org, go through the structure of OBESSU, what bodies it holds etc. and get an understanding of how OBESSU works as an organisation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples of good things to look through on the website:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• About OBESSU in general</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◦ How did OBESSU get to where it is today? Who can be members?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◦ How does OBESSU actually work? How big is the secretariat and board? What is the Pool of Trainers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◦ How many members are there? Are any of them fighting for the same thing as your organisation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Advocacy and Policy Statements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◦ What has been important for OBESSU this year? What is it they actually advocate for at events and to the policymakers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◦ How are the OBESSU statutes? What is in the Work Plan for the upcoming year?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is plenty to look at, and it is not expected that you have gone through every single document and that you know OBESSU from the inside-out. But having some prior knowledge of how the organisation works before digging into work can really help.
OBESSU is a wide-spread organisation with members all across Europe. With so many things happening in each country, in OBESSU and in your own organisation at once—it can be hard to keep track of information and being up to date. Luckily, it is very possible and intuitive once you get the hang of it. The key words for keeping up to date with OBESSU is: Consistency, prioritising and communication.

If you are consistent in reading updates, mails and anything else, it will be manageable to keep track of what is going on. This does not mean that you have to open every single email the second you receive it, but just simply taking a couple minutes once every now and then. Let’s be honest, we all know how overwhelming and unmotivating it can be when emails and messages pile up on you.

If you learn what kind of communication to prioritise, and how you organise it, it will help you along the way to have a great overview of what is going on. Perhaps you find email with invites to events to be your number one priority, or maybe changes in policies and statutory events is what you focus on. Whatever it is, find a smart way to organise it - it could be through different mail-categories, to-do lists on your desk or whatever way floats your boat.

In OBESSU we are always trying to make our communication the best it can be—which can be quite a challenge trying to cater to so many different structures. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any ideas/examples from your own organisation!
COMMUNICATION

OBESSU uses various communication channels to disseminate our messages as much as possible. Some are relevant only for International Officers while others are for anyone interested in OBESSU.

Email list
OBESSU has an email list consisting of all of the International Officers and other relevant contact persons. We use this list diligently whenever we send information that is important to receive for all, like open calls for events, working groups and statutory meetings. Make sure to inform us when the contact person changes so we always are up to speed on who to contact.

Basecamp
Basecamp is OBESSU’s membership base, where we also post everything that we send via the email list. Here, all calls and important documents are gathered one place and easy to find. There is also a “campfire” where members can chat with each other, exchange experiences and ask for advice.

WhatsApp Community
After an abundance of group chats for every event, we have finally decided to gather it all in to one group: OBESSULand on WhatsApp community. The chats here are used more informally, and are for all bodies of OBESSU to use and enjoy. Join the community here.

BOO!
The Bi-weekly OBESSU Overview is a small newsletter sent out every 2 weeks, providing an update on what has been going on in the past 2 weeks and with opportunities for members, e.g. open calls for events, invitations to events organised by other organisations etc. There is also a “save the date” section with all important upcoming dates.
The newest edition to the BOO! is the Boardie Blog, where the board will add a small report on what they have been working on for the past 2 weeks. To sign up for the BOO!, click here.
WHAT DOES OBESSU EXPECT FROM YOU?
WHAT DOES OBESSU EXPECT FROM YOU?

As International Officer you are the main contact point between your organisation and OBESSU. OBESSU is its member organisations, so it is crucial that you partake in or delegate others to participate in all aspects of the work of OBESSU. Without your input, we cannot be a truly representative body and the work of the board and the secretariat might be less effective.

Statutory Meetings and Other Events
There are many different events taking place throughout the year, covering a wide variety of topics, depending on that year’s workplan. The International Officer should attend the two statutory meetings of OBESSU, the General Assembly (GA) and Council of Members (COMEM). At these events OBESSU Member, Candidate and Affiliate Organisations come together to discuss policy and vote in elections. Here the organisations can propose amendments to papers OBESSU already has, both political and internal papers—but also propose completely new papers that you want to be a part of OBESSU.

Other events occur throughout the year, where participants from all organisations can attend. Sometimes it makes sense for an International Officer to attend, and other times another member from your organisation might participate and gain more for your organisation from attending a particular event. The International Officer should coordinate the selection of this person within their organisation, and aid in their preparation for attending an event. This can involve speaking to them about OBESSU, using this guide and discussing any relevant OBESSU policy papers related to the event.
WHAT DOES OBESSU EXPECT FROM YOU?

**Input to Policy Work**
The OBESSU Board attends meetings and events with stakeholders throughout the year to represent school students on a European level. Sometimes they will need to share good practices, and will ask the membership for those. Similarly, surveys are carried out throughout the year which feed into OBESSU campaigns and advocacy work. In order to shape the best campaigns and truly represent members, it is essential that the International Officer feeds into these surveys and consultations.

**Participation in Working Groups & Other Structures**
Every year working groups are formed around particular topics. This is a great way to get a more internal look into OBESSU and also gain experience both personally and for your organisation. When a call is launched for a working group and you believe your organisation can input positively, apply yourself or send the call to other people in your organisation who you think might be suitable.

**Dissemination of Knowledge**
It is essential that learnings from OBESSU events don’t stay at the event. The International Officer should ensure that the follow-up stages to an event do happen, and that the rest of your organisation also benefits from being an OBESSU member. This might mean producing a report and presenting to your Board at your next meeting, using some methods and workshops that you have learned from your own organisation, or doing a follow-up activity after an event using the knowledge you have learned to create a multiplier effect.

In OBESSU it is not only important to give knowledge to your own organisation, but OBESSU is a place where all of our members go together and share each other’s best practices and whatever experience we get from our own organisation. A lot of the organisations fight for the same things and work similar in many ways—use this platform to give and receive an endless amount of knowledge on student- and youth activism.
WHAT DOES OBESSU EXPECT FROM YOU?

To summarise, the roles of an International Officer is to:

- Attend Statutory Meetings and other events, and delegate for others to do so where appropriate.
- Input into OBESSU policy work.
- Participate in working groups and other structures.
- Disseminate knowledge and experience gained at OBESSU events.
TIPS AND TRICKS:

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO KNOW TO BECOME A SUCCESSFUL IO?
HOW DO I GET STARTED IN OBESSU WORK?

When there isn’t an event or something else specific to look forward to, a lot of encouraging and interesting OBESSU-work can be done on your own initiative.

But before starting, make sure you get a good handover from the International Officer before you, so you know who in OBESSU to contact, what your organisation voted at the last statutory meeting etc.

Things you could do that aren’t related to preparing for an event/working group etc:

- Look at the different member organisations on OBESSU’s website and see similarities and differences between you.

- Schedule a call with a board member to hear what is going on in OBESSU and how you can contribute.

- Schedule a call with other international officers and get to know other organisations (and maybe even plan a trip to visit them!)

- Look at OBESSU’s political and internal papers and see if you find something to be missing /something your organisation wants to add.
As mentioned, it is essential that someone represents your organisation at OBESSU’s statutory events, or else it is hard for OBESSU to represent you in the best way possible, if you don’t vote on the matters discussed at COMEM and the General Assembly. But how do you get ready for a statutory event?

**Before the event:**
As soon as you know the dates for the event, make sure to save it in your calendar so you don’t double book yourself. Remember: Statutory events are typically Saturday & Sunday but there is also two travel days included - so make sure you also book Friday and Monday as occupied. Make sure you have a nomination letter from your organisation that fills all the requirements—the quicker you get this fixed the quicker you can register for the event!

Book your travel as soon as possible—there can be a lot of money to save especially for the General Assembly in the summer, where flights tend to be more pricy.

When you receive the email with all the papers and other matters that are being voted on, make sure to have a meeting with whomever necessary in your organisation where you discuss these, therefore you make sure that you are representing your organisation in the best way possible—and it is also a great opportunity to go through everything that needs to be voted on and prepare any questions and/or arguments.

International Officers should become familiar with the OBESSU internal documents, such as the Political Platform (core political beliefs of OBESSU) and the Policy Papers (more topic-specific documents outlining OBESSU’s beliefs and aims) and propose amendments, amendments to amendments, and even new documents for OBESSU to adopt. Becoming familiar with these documents is essential to having an informed debate during statutory meetings.
STATUTORY EVENTS

Have a close eye on the deadlines for sending amendments and newspapers. Sending in amendments beforehand makes the entire process way more structured and easy for all parts involved. There are also some things you can not make amendments for on the spot, but you need to do it before the event. Read the statutes of OBESSU to make sure that you have all deadlines where you need them.

Tip:
Make a folder on your computer with all of the documents that are important for the event. Here you can add any paper that will be voted on, including notes from your organisation, all the information from the info-pack, your travel itinerary etc.
STATUTORY EVENTS

During the event:
During the event the most important thing is to stay focused and engaged. Some debates might not be your cup of tea, and you will probably feel tired from new impressions and travelling.
Make sure to try and stay engaged under the event and under debates—and then in the breaks make sure to take time to talk about something else than politics and rest when needed. Other than that: Have fun! Make sure that you talk to all of the other participants and make your organisation proud!

After the event:
Follow up on all of the new things that happened in the weekend. This can be anything from new friends which you need to reach out to, ideas for an event in your organisation and whatever else that might be on your mind.
On your way home write everything down, so you don’t forget anything.*

*P.S. remember to keep anything important related to your travel, so the reimbursement process is as easy and smooth as possible.
ANNUAL FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION
Annual Financial Contribution (AFC)

Annual Financial Contribution, of the AFC, is the system of fees paid by Member Organisations to OBESSU in order to allow OBESSU to pay for projects, operations and other various expenses.

How?

At the General Assembly the Members agree on the AFC. The calculation is then published on the website in the Documents section. In short, you must declare to OBESSU your annual turnover, and from here OBESSU will invoice your organisation for the relevant contribution.

Your turnover is calculated in two parts; firstly, your core funding is valued at 100%, but any project funding is calculated at 50%. Any microgrants or funds received by OBESSU to organise a national event are exempt from this calculation.

You can see an example below for the fictional member XYZ:

- Core Funding: 100,000€
- Project Funding: 50,000€

Total Contribution: 100,000 + (50,000/2) = 125,000€

Once this is calculated, you find the corresponding bracket. In this case, XYZ falls within the bracket 120,000-200,000€, and their contribution is 1760€
What do we use the AFC for?

The use of the AFC varies depending on the year, due to projects, costs, and other factors.

For example, it is projected that in 2024 the AFC will be primarily used for paying our membership fees to external platforms such as the YFJ, CSE and LLLP. The other most common use of the AFC is for co-funding projects. Often for OBESSU to join projects and support them, we are required to pay a percentage of the budget.

Without the AFC, OBESSU would not be able to do a lot of the work we currently undertake. It allows us to grow, develop and advocate for our membership.

Why Pay?

It is your organisation's obligation to pay the AFC to OBESSU. Failure to pay may result in a loss of voting rights at statutory meetings.

We understand that this is confusing, so if you have questions, reach out! Every year we will open the call for payment, and detail the exact details. It is also possible to set up a payment plan with the OBESSU Board.

Please note that the AFC can change between statutory meetings if it is voted on by membership.

*Information correct as of 26.02.2024. Always refer to the direct motion passed by GA 2024 here.
HANDOVER
Are you an international officer who is leaving the post? Handover! Make sure that before you leave your post, you update the new international officer and help them prepare for the role. Let us know (you, your organisation or the new officer) that there has been a change so we can update our mailing lists and contact list on Basecamp, and we will share the IO welcome pack with the new person.

Having a good handover ensures a good flow, that also will continue the work your organisation does with OBESSU at a better standard than if you had to start over every time a new IO takes over.

Having a Google Drive with all the information, notes etc. that is nice to know for a new IO is a good way of maintaining a good handover. Another way could be to have a document that gets updated every time a new IO leaves the position.

There are many ways of doing a good handover, but the most important thing to remember is: You have to start preparing your handover the second you become an IO. Make sure to write down any tips and tricks you learn along the way. In that way, you will remember a lot more you can tell the next IO (and yourself).

Good things to have in your handover:

- The organisation’s history with OBESSU
- What kind of work did your organisation do with OBESSU in the last mandate?
- What was and are our opinions politically (fx what did we vote at the statutory meeting)
- How to structure OBESSU work
- How to get started
- Advice, tips and tricks
- How to handover
Here are some words and abbreviations you probably will meet along the way:

**IO**: International Officer, the person that represents an organisation on an international level.

**Statutory meetings**: The two highest decision making bodies in OBESSU, where we vote on important matters, both politically and internally. The highest being the General Assembly and the second-highest being the Council of Members.

**COMEM**: Council of Members, one of the two statutory meetings OBESSU has. COMEM is the second-highest decision making body in OBESSU. It takes place once a year, typically around November/December.

**GA**: The General Assembly is one of the two statutory meetings OBESSU has, and is the highest decision making body in OBESSU. It takes place once a year, typically around June/July.

**MO**: An abbreviation for Member Organisation - typically in the context of an organisation being a member of OBESSU.

**Statutes**: The statutes of OBESSU is a document with all of the rules for the organisation. Find our statutes here.

**Amendment**: A change to addition to improve a sort of text. For example an amendment could be to add an important point to a policy paper or to delete something that shouldn't be in an internal document. You can propose amendments at the statutory meetings.
WHO TO CONTACT?

There are many different ways of getting in contact with OBESSU.

On our website, www.obessu.org, you can find a list of contacts to different bodies that take care of different subjects in OBESSU:

- Board contacts
- Staff contacts
- MC contacts
- PoT contacts

If you are ever in doubt, contact the Secretary General at: sg@obessu.org

Political matters often concern the Board, you can reach out to them at: board@obessu.org

Our address:
Rue de l'Industrie 10,
1000 Brussels
Belgium