

The Union for University Teachers and Researchers YLL
Membership letter June 4, 2019

Dear member,

YLL 50's jubilee year is at full swing. I have met with many of you as I have visited different universities and associations and heard your concerns and issues to be addressed at a higher level. Many concerns have been expressed and they have been heard.

Government negotiations

For a change we have heard good news from the government negotiations—it would appear that universities may see an increase in resources. While we are not talking about the “billion in education” as was the talk during the election, the signal is positive. It has been promised that the increases in funding that are bound to indices would return after having been put on hold for many years. Big cuts have been made in higher education, and the hopes are that some of the resources would be returned to the universities.

In addition, the government agenda includes mention of revisiting the tripartite university democracy and increasing the staff members' involvement in decision-making, which has been a long-term goal for us. A particular problem in this respect has been those universities that are organized as foundations; the situation is worse in these universities.

A further positive development can also be seen in the strengthening of the autonomy of higher education institutions and promoting a greater transparency of strategic funding of universities.

General meeting May 17

YLL's general meeting was held on May 17. The general meeting covered all set issues and Jonna Kangas and Eila Matikainen were elected as vice-members in the board to replace Jari-Matti Vuorio and Heli Ketovuori, respectively.

OAJ's science and innovation policy guidelines

The board of OAJ passed the new science and innovation policy guidelines in its meeting on May 7. YLL has played a central role in drafting the guidelines concerning universities. The guidelines can be accessed on the OAJ website (in Finnish only):

https://www.oaj.fi/contentassets/afb70e727bf5410eb22ca1b5f80eed57/oajn_tiede__ja_innovaatiopoliittiset_linjaukset_nettiin.pdf

OAJ Council

The OAJ Council convened in Helsinki on May 8–10. The central themes were the ongoing trials concerning salary and working hour systems of the primary school teachers and vocational school teachers; the trials have been received with varying degrees of enthusiasm, some of the critical voices have surfaced in the national media. The chair of our councillor group, the first vice-chair of YLL Erja Kosonen delivered the group speech in which she emphasized the importance of research-based university education. The speech can be accessed on the YLL website (on Finnish only):

<https://yll.fi/ylln-ryhmapuheenvuoro-oajn-kevatvaltuustossa-9-5-2019/>

PedaForum

YLL's science policy work group will hold a workshop on research-based teaching on Thu June 6 from 8:45 a.m.–10 am in Pedaforum. If you participate in PedaForum, I invite you to attend the workshop.

YLL seminar

The traditional YLL seminar will be organized in conjunction with YLL's 50th anniversary celebrations on August 16. I cordially invite you to attend the seminar and concurrent anniversary celebration. The invitation to the seminar is attached. Places are limited so I recommend that you sign up early.

Changes in YLL's office

YLL's longterm office manager (in recent years employed by OAJ's unit for national associations) Ulla Vana will retire this summer. We thank Ulla for all the work she has done for YLL and we wish her all the best. She will be replaced by Annika Eklund (annika.eklund@oaj.fi, tel. 020 748 9681). We welcome Annika to the team!

Wellbeing theme year

2019–20 will be a theme year for wellbeing at work. This will also be reflected in YLL and will be separately communicated. An essential part of wellbeing at work is recovery, and I hope that you will be able to take a longer period off from work over the summer.

I wish You a great and relaxing summer!

Santeri Palviainen
chair, The Union of University Teachers and Researchers in Finland