

Lund **”** **Debate** Society

Annual Activity Report 2017-2018

With a fresh board in place and a lot of sparkling ideas, the board of 2017-2018 began its year with energy and a desire to take Lund Debate Society to new heights! Some of the main focus points were: to improve the recruitment and retainment process in order to get members who stayed long-term, to increase cooperation with both non-student and student organizations in order to make the society more known amongst students in Lund and to improve the social environment - to make it more like a family.

Board process improvements

In order for that to work, we first had to improve the board working process. One of the first implementations of the new board was the introduction of monthly meetings held the first wednesday of the month with agendas put in the board group weeks before the meeting so that board members could add points that they wanted to raise. With a “discussion, decision and delegation”-format, the board now had a clear system for efficiently dealing with tasks.

Policy proposals

During the first couple of months, several policy proposals was up for discussion in the board. Those included a sustainability policy, tournament funding policy and gender inclusion strategy. Even though drafts were written to some of them, the policies and strategies did not result in any concrete decision. However, the discussions eventually lead to the equity policy and the tournament funding policy that we now have.

Media presence and Public relations

One of the important parts for recruiting more members was the image and profile of Lund Debate Society. It was therefore important that we not only had events published well in advance, we also created an Instagram so as to be better able to connect with members and show students in Lund what we do. Thanks to Jakob Norén, architect student, we have been able to continually produce professional looking posters for all our events, from the September intro month and Lund Novice tournament to the Lund IV posters. That has likely increased the awareness of Lund Debate Society and its image amongst students in Lund and internationally.

International debate tournament presence

After a very active year of competitive debating, this year was less active. With a championship title from Istanbul Open taken home by Matti and Ernest and the Helsinki Open championship title in the novice category won by Simon together with Viggo, LDS were off for a good year. LDS' delegation to the European championships did not result in any quarter final despite having an overall good performance.

After the summer and until march Lund Debate Society has had teams at several tournaments including the SOAS IV, Cambridge IV, Kyiv Open, Budapest Open and Riga IV. All of which have been a developing and fun experience for our debaters.

Hans Gustavsson and Elsa Hesslow was part of the team from Youth Debate Society of Lund that won the Nordic Schools Debating Championships. As they regularly come a debate at our debate cafés, we are very glad for their success and hope that future cooperation between the high school debate community can render further success for debaters from Lund.

Cooperation with other organizations

There were many attempts to cooperate with other organizations over the course of the year even though it ultimately led to only a few successful partnerships. During the spring, there were talks with the organization Herbert Felix who were interested in organizing debates centered around integration. We also approached Studentafton with the idea of organizing a true Oxford Union style debate with invited academics and politicians mixed with student debaters. However, we were able to successfully get contact with the political science faculty as well as the philosophical faculty resulting in us visiting their introductory lecture for 1st year political science students every semester in the former case and in the latter case, us being able to send a welcoming letter to new practical philosophy students. We were also able to establish contact with the academic advisors (studie och yrkesvägledare) at LUSEM - school of business and economics - which resulted in us able to talk at their novice fair.

During the autumn semester, there was attempts to re-establish contact with UPF Lund. Since Lund Debate Society started as a committee in UPF Lund, we had ideas that could tie the two organizations together again. It did not result in any significant partnerships even though we believe that we should try to once again raise the idea of synchronizing debate café topics with the lecture themes of UPF Lund. That would stimulate debaters to go to UPF lectures and it would potentially attract UPF members to come to debate cafés.

IDEA debate exchange 2017

By participating in the 10 day training camp for debate trainers and debate organizers we were able to accrue a lot of beneficial knowledge for the society. As a member of the IDEA debate exchange project, Lund Debate Society had the privilege to send two participants with food and housing plus 50% of travel expenses paid for. During the ten days in Turku (Finland) Simon and Sofia received both practical training on how to teach debate and on how to organize a debate association whilst establishing ties with other debate associations from all over Europe.

September introduction month (recruitment)

As the main focus of the new board, recruitment was indeed important. Thanks to dedicated members such as Måns and Olle, we were able to scramble a team at the Student Association Fair which took place in mid-august already. Similarly, Hälsningsgillet was also a great success thanks to a team of members that spoke about the value of debating to innocent freshers for many hours. The board also visited political science and BIDS lectures to talk about why debating is important and which events they can come to. It was difficult because Swedish students have no idea what BP debating is and which pitch was more effective. Thus, the new board should work through trial and feedback to optimize the pitch they use for presenting debate.

The regular events - debate café and training - were very successful the first month. This was partly thanks to professionally designed posters made by Jakob Norén, Student Association Fair, Hälsningsgillet, our investments in Facebook advertisement, studentlund.se and interesting topic choices. Measured in amount of attention the events received on Facebook, all events were very popular. Six out of seven events had at least 50 coming or interested with the most popular reaching 90! The 'spread' of the most popular four of those events ranged from 1.600 to 3.700 meaning that up to 3.700 our event "popped up" in their feeds on Facebook. At each of those debate cafés we had usually three full rooms of fresh debaters along with older members as judges. However, we recommend that this is not repeated as older members should have the opportunity to debate during the first weeks as well even though a few of them inevitably will have to coach the freshers.

During the first month this year we had some special events. First off was the Debate Speed Date which was very successful with around 50 participants enjoying the adrenaline rush of debating. Even after the debates finished at 20:30, a lot of people stayed for mingle and we were able to get 16 sign-ups and payments during that time! The public debate wherein the audience got the choice to vote between one out of three choices using mentimeter was very efficient and increased interaction with the audience. We improved this system during the spring version of this public debate by allowing one or two questions from the audience after each speech. There was also a before-and-after debate vote using mentimeter which we think is a more engaging way for the audience and an alternative to BP judging for comparing two teams.

The september introduction month was wrapped up with a novice debate tournament. The tournament had 16 debaters participating, meaning we had two rooms. We used a system where individuals were given debate scores depending on how their team did in the last debate (0-3 points) and individual speaker scores. We used this method in order to create a more meritocratic system so that the best debaters would end up in the final. As in every tournament, some debaters feel like they were matched up with poorer debaters than others and some debaters felt the judging was poor. In the end, we do recommend the same system as it was a success overall. Many of the finalists became our most dedicated members during the autumn semester, for example William, Alaa and Måns.

Venues

An important note was that the AF borgen rooftop, which as a sauna, is very popular. The thursday we booked and announced that there would be a sauna party afterwards was also the most popular one. On the event for that debate event, we also announced that there would be free food which is inadvisable mostly due to that being very impractical to make for more than 6 people. Offer snacks instead! Unfortunately, we were only able to book the rooftop once as it is very popular - thus, we recommend the next board to be very early in booking it.

For four of the september events, we were in "Eden" which is the political science faculty building. This was possible after Simon approached the head of the political science faculty, Jakob Gustavsson, during May. Although the venue is closer to the university, had a lot of rooms and a lot of open space, it had some drawbacks. One of them was that there was no coffee machine so we had to make coffee at AF and then transfer it to Eden. Furthermore, the main door locked after 18:00 meaning that we had to have someone guarding the door. The last potential drawback is the fact that you have to email the janitor your LU-id so that he could give your LU-card access to the rooms. However, the venue could still be useful for debate training.

The use of the free of charge venues in AF borgen has been very successful. As long as Ann, the responsible person at AF, was contacted around one month in advance then we could get good dates and times for our events. During the spring we learned that Björckska rummet can be used by us student organizations for free and for any amount of time which we now have used once for preparation prior to the annual meeting.

October, November, January, February

During October the debate café were still quite popular. Debates about reforming democracy, feminism and the environment attracted an average of 40 attendees on Facebook with either two or three rooms with debates every week. October ended with a members meeting that featured a lot of by-law changes including most importantly the addition of an equity policy. Other than continually successful debate café with two rooms every week as well as a Lund Mini. As the mini featured three consecutive debates in a row, our members were able to develop a lot from this one-day event.

The January recruitment month was similar to the September one. However, as we had not fulfilled all responsibilities of participation in Hälsningsgillet, we were temporarily banned from this time. Other than that the debate speed date and public debate worked very well although we weren't as good at getting sign-ups and payments this time. The rooftop sauna was again a popular thing. As usual, the spring term has fewer new attendees but overall we now have a handful of new paying members who started to come to our events on a regular basis this spring!

Lund IV 2017

This year's Lund IV was very successful with 52 teams came from almost 20 countries. One of the major changes this year was having only one social at a rented venue, instead of two. This had the drawback of not allowing the people who work in the kitchen on Saturday to participate in the tournament socials at all. Some said it's better to do the sitting on a Friday so that at least part of the kitchen staff could also participate in the debate.

We were able to put on high quality video streaming this year which was well received. Although we didn't have a professional photographer, we still had a team of people taking photos which was very well received. People loved the sitting but unfortunately we weren't early enough to be able to book the rooftop sauna, we recommend the next board to book it already in the summer which also applies to the venue "Källarsalen" and "Källarköket".

There were many delays this year and this could've been avoided by cutting teams that were late. Another solution would've been to make sure we had a car available at least the entire Saturday and Sunday.

Due to an incident, it was also agreed that there should be a legal contract between Elite Ideon hotel and Lund Debate Society for the next Lund IV.

For the future, we recommend that the Lund IV has an organizing core. This could be composed of a head of food, head of socials, crash officer, treasurer and the two conveners. They would then meet regularly in the months preceding the tournament. Such a committee would likely remedy many of the above mentioned and other not mentioned issues that arose before, during and after the tournament. Overall, we think that the last words by one of the chief adjudicators sums up the strength of Lund IV in a good way.

“When we think about competitions we often think about things like whether they run to time, whether the tournament is competitive, the quality of the judges and motions and so on. One thing that we don’t often think about is hospitality – and that is what really strikes me about this competition. One thing that we don’t often think about is hospitality – and that is what really strikes me about this competition. Every year, and this year was no exception, the folks at Lund don’t merely organise a competition, they welcome us into their community and their home: from the care that goes into every detail of the tournament, to the warm welcome we all received, to the expanded family supper complete with what could loosely be defined as singing. That’s something very rare: genuine hospitality – and I think we should collectively take a moment to recognise how wonderful and special that is.”

- Michael Dunn Goejikan, WUDC best speaker 2016 and Lund IV 2016 and 2017 chief adjudicator