

MINUTES OF THE URGENT MEETING

Tallinn

September 30th, 2025 no 1

Start of the meeting at 18:02, end of the meeting 19:01

Chaired by Alexander Rein Robas

Minutes secretary: Kirke Piiskoppel

9 out of 15 were present: Jan Enriko Viidermets, Ketter Aljes, Iiris Aljes, Ander Mägi, Sander Roosimäe, Maksim Dolinin, Markus Käpp, Annemari Riisimäe (MS Teams), Saara Katarina Merioja (MS Teams)

Invited: Kristiina Vene, Kristin Liias, Mark Toomsalu, Karoliine Orav.

Absent: Arqum Shahid, Ramon Kulp, Karolina Perv, Hanna Savolainen, Maris Kortel, Sten Unt

**On the agenda:**

**I Discussions**

1. First reading of the TalTech Student Union budget 2026

*The agenda was approved unanimously.*

**I Discussions**

1. First reading of the TalTech Student Union budget 2026

The new Executive Manager of the Student Union, Kristiina Vene, gives a short introduction about herself.

Kristiina Vene: The budget for next year has been planned by me. For background, it must be submitted to the university by October 10th. For next year, the combined planned income and expenses of our two budgets total 556,441 euros, which is 36,448 euros more compared to this year. The explanatory memorandum clearly outlines what we plan to increase and why.

**Budget 01CV expenses**

Kristiina Vene: Three sub-blocks – general expenses, personnel expenses, and projects. General expenses include administrative costs, telephones, printer rental, Saku Läte water, gifts for staff members, acquisition of fixed assets, and symbols. This year, the total is about 13,800 euros, and I would like to increase it by 1,112 euros, making the new budget 14,979 euros. We would like to increase the fixed assets category, as I found out that the presentation equipment is outdated, and we want to improve it. Preliminary price quotes have been received from different suppliers. Since the Student Union office already has good technical equipment, ideally, this room should have the same – approximately 2,000–3,500 euros would be allocated for that. The remaining thousand would go toward refreshing the Student Union office space. For example, maybe during the summer we can refresh the appearance, but the exact plan will be determined once we sit down and discuss it. The next major block is personnel expenses: permanent employees, the Board, taxes, and scholarships. I would like to increase personnel expenses by 17,827 euros. Primarily because, after one month, I have gained a good overview of the workload, and there is a lot of work – my goal as a manager is to retain these people. I personally feel that there is very good synergy in the front office. We have a good secretary, and I would like to believe that a good secretary who understands their role is the foundation of a well-functioning document management system. Similarly, our marketing and communications specialist, Kristiina – one might think she deals only with marketing, but she actually has the most people in her field and is responsible for the entire marketing area. In my opinion, she deserves a slightly higher salary to retain people and make working at the Student Union more attractive. For example, if we find ourselves in a situation where we need to hire a new employee, we will have a competitive salary to offer. The higher the salary, the broader the selection of candidates, and we can attract more qualified people. I also want to raise my own salary – my experience may be limited, but I dare to say that I bring significant value to the organization through my background

as a student activist. I see potential in myself, and others are satisfied with my work — but I also need to be able to buy food.

Markus Käpp: In the explanatory memorandum, it said 17,626, but you said 17,800?

Kristiina Vene: Wait, give me a moment. I made a last-minute change — I will get to that shortly. The total amount changed by 200 euros, but it changed under the projects section. We will come back to this question. Should I also explain the scholarships? Why we are increasing them and how we are increasing them.

Kristin Liias: The Audit Committee would be interested.

*Mark Toomsalu entered at 18:10.*

Kristiina Vene: We would like to increase the scholarships in the range of 15–30 euros. This year the scholarships were increased by 30–50 euros, which was a very significant and very appropriate increase in my opinion. Why do I want to increase them? First, if we raise other salaries, I do not want to leave the scholarships behind. Together with the Board we distributed this according to how content-heavy each position is. There are positions with more activity and positions with less. Based on that, the distribution of 15–30 euros is reasonable. Next year, since the university is implementing cost-saving policies, we should generally review the positions, map out tasks and responsibilities. Maybe we can optimise positions and, if we have a good scholarship level, it can serve as a basis for reorganising positions. Briefly about the administrative manager role. I also wrote this in the explanatory memorandum — the topic is quite new, but the need is substantial. I have noticed that during events/projects we lack technical expertise. Our events coordinator has mentioned this, and the Board agreed as well. An administrative manager would bring a lot of technical competence. They would support various areas — events, sports, whoever needs assistance. We set the scholarship at 230 euros, which would start in May. If we select someone for the position, this budget line ensures we have the funds to pay the scholarship. At the moment, I placed it under my own field. But the procedural aspects still need to be worked through — who they report to, what their duties are, whose tasks they take over, etc. If we take someone into the position, we must clearly know what they will be doing.

Alexander Rein Robas: We call it “administrative,” but we really mean a logistics manager — someone who is the main point of support, who communicates with different university departments, including real estate, and who helps at events, e.g., finding electricity connections at the Opening Event. A necessary person who would make the event coordinator’s work easier.

Mark Toomsalu: We have been very lucky that our current event coordinator is Emilia, and previously Jete — both extremely capable people — but in reality the position needs two different types of people. At the same time, they must be a project and people manager, and also someone who knows everything about planning — structurally strong. It is very difficult to find such a person. Having two positions would make life easier.

Kristiina Vene: As for Markus’s question — I made a mistake with the number. It really was 17,626; I wrote the wrong number by hand. Maybe the question arises why these changes couldn’t be made

immediately, starting next year? I personally feel that I do not yet have a good enough overview of the Student Union as a structure, and making major changes hastily, only to reverse them later, would not be good for our reputation or our internal culture. Such decisions should be made when data has been collected and we can make a truly valid decision. Are there any questions about scholarships or salaries? Maybe briefly from further down — the stipends for the Audit Committee remain the same for now. Funding also remains the same. Project managers will decrease. Here we have the sports coordinator position — we previously had this person, the position was removed, but now there is a wish to bring it back. It became clear that this position is needed because external sports and internal sports are both very content-heavy roles. Because of this, project manager budgets decreased slightly, since previously the coordinator was paid from the project manager reserve. Translation remains the same for now — it is quite difficult to forecast. We will complete this year and then make the necessary adjustments for 2027.

Alexander Rein Robas: Any questions? Comments? Audit Committee?

Kristin Liias: I will have my part afterwards.

Kristiina Vene: So, moving on — we have the third block, the projects we organize, which fall under the O1CV source. The planned amounts were prepared together with the field managers. We reviewed everything, reduced some lines where possible, increased others. The project budget is 91,710 euros. Broadly speaking — should I go line by line about what was reduced or increased? HKT — last year it was 9,380 euros, we reduced it by 380 euros. Why? There is something called the “merit percentage,” for which the faculty receives money; since that process is currently lagging, the aim is to improve it. We saw that it is possible to conduct it with a slightly smaller budget, so we will try doing it with less. Student Parliament elections remain the same. You may be wondering why the lecturer gala is at zero. The project budget increased by about 7,000 euros. This year we received 17,000 euros for the lecturer gala from the Rector’s reserve fund — whether all of it will be spent is something we will find out as we go. As I was informed that the Rectorate and lecturers really like this event, we would like to continue receiving funding for it from the Rector’s reserve. Yesterday I met with Heiki, the financial director. We learned that the Rector’s reserve is also half the size this year. We’ll see what comes out of that. Unfortunately, the university’s cost-saving policy affects everyone. Mental Health Week increased by 250 euros. It became clear that it is a very important event. I haven’t been in the position long, but it seems to have a very noble purpose. Usually, the funds are used for the Mental Health Month, which starts tomorrow. With a small leftover of 250–300 euros, we can also organize Mental Health Week — for example, last year there was a Sleep Week. Since, apart from the Counselling Centre, we are the only unit involved in this topic, I believe it is a very worthy cause, which is why we decided to allocate a little extra. The “Voice of Students” event has not taken place yet, so I unfortunately have no expenses for this year. But we will continue with the same budget. Badges of Merit increased by 1,000 euros. This is also a line that is difficult to forecast, as the number of nominees can vary each year. Since this year the budget is going over and we had to request extra from the Rector’s reserve, we thought it would be better to request additional funding in advance — to manage the budget better, to avoid deficits and surpluses everywhere. As a financial person, my goal is to maintain balance — too detailed a budget is bad, too general a budget is also bad. I try to find the

golden middle ground so that expenses flow as they should and we don't see huge positives or negatives, except for the lecturer gala. "Best of the Year" – 3,200 euros – stayed the same. Student Union Scholarship Competition was 3,300 euros. This year the budget stated 3,000, but actually the Student Union provides 3,000 euros itself and 300 euros is the...

Maksim Dolinin: Administration fee.

Kristiina Vene: Exactly. I confirmed this with Elinor. She said that if it has been different in previous years, then this year the Student Union gave 1,000 + 1,000 + 1,000 euros. And each scholarship has a 10% administration fee — hence 3,300. Student Organizations Development Program stayed the same at 1,000 euros. This year, they wanted to do it with lower costs and succeeded. Previously the concept was slightly different, which is why it used to cost more. Opening Day Orientation — we will continue with the same amount. Mass Freshmen Event — same. Roundtable — same. Student Body Birthday — last year the initial budget was 11,000, we requested an additional 2,500, and it is still slightly over. I initially wanted to set it at 15,000, but since we do not want to request unrealistic sums, we set it at 14,000, which is still workable. Why not ask for too large sums? Anna gave me a good idea: if we expect student organizations to economize and seek sponsors, the Student Union cannot be swimming in money. We must also manage with limited budgets. Tipikas March increased by 300 euros, because according to information, it is a very popular event with growing participant numbers; it is a patriotic event involving the Rectorate as well. We gather together and go drink beer — a fun, purposeful event, so we can justify adding funds. EASL trainings – 840 euros, this has been calculated. The budget increased by 240 euros; last year it was 600 euros. The increase matches the exact cost of two sports seminars for three participants — we now have three sports people. Summer Games +500 euros, as it will surely go over — a very popular event. Winter Games remain the same. Ylipall is a new line, added by reducing some other lines. As I said earlier, the idea is to manage budget lines better. This line covers tickets for sports coordinators, the mascot, and marketing team members. Previously this was marked as Sports Week, but Sports Week is moved under indoor sports and therefore becomes zero euros. SELL Games remain the same. Indoor sports projects increased by 1,500 euros due to the TalTech Sports Week. The input came from people in the sports field and the Student Life Board member — the idea is to consolidate a bit, as previously there were surpluses and deficits. Outdoor sports projects – 1,000 euros. We increased it by 500 euros from the championship line, which we no longer have. Expenses there were very unclear, and to address these uncertainties, we now have a consolidated sports budget that will be used across different projects.

Marketing and Communication – Studioosus, this year's cost was 5000 euros. The previous academic year was the last year with 3 issues; going forward, only one issue will be published, which reduces the cost by 2000 euros because fewer physical copies need to be printed. In general, the marketing and communication expense, which includes various advertisements, Canva annual fees, posters, etc., remains the same: 4000 euros, and we can manage well with this amount. Juulius Tipikas mascot general expenses decreased by 50 euros because it appears that the costume does not need to be washed as frequently. Student Union branding/merch is a new budget line; the input came from our marketing and communication specialist, who received input from the project manager of the freshman bags. This amount is compiled by transferring part of the Studioosus budget and part of the

mascot budget here; previously there was also a line for video projects, which no longer exists because we do not need to purchase video services externally. A total of 2450 euros comes from other lines, and we will try to acquire the rest. Primarily this relates to the freshman bags – this year it was not possible to put the Student Union logo on them, but we feel that for Student Union promotion it would be very nice to have our own branded bags. This money would be used to design and produce them.

Internal events field. The first item is the summer trip for student representatives; we increased the budget by an additional 500 euros. The information came from this year's event, indicating the need for a larger budget. The number of participants has increased. The Student Parliament spring trip is 4500 euros. Costs have always remained below 4300, but 4500 provides a buffer. The Student Union summer outing is 4000 euros. In terms of participant numbers, the Student Parliament and Student Union trips are balanced, so the cost is nearly the same. The Board's summer trip remains the same, the appreciation evening remains the same, and the Christmas party also remains the same. For the last three items, the amounts do not change, but together with the HR manager and the Student Parliament coordinator we changed the content. Internal trainings could include both Student Parliament and Student Union trainings, because it has become clear that two trainings per semester are somewhat too many. Conducting training for the sake of training is not reasonable. Team events were divided into two – Student Parliament and Student Union. The line is again managed by the Student Parliament coordinator and the HR manager. Since the first joint motivation event between the Student Union and Student Parliament went well, the idea emerged that the first motivation event of the semester could be held together, to reduce the separation between the two bodies. As can be seen, the total planned cost for projects is 91,710 euros, which is about 7000 euros higher than this year's 84,000 euros. Since the 2022/2023 academic year, the project budget has gone into deficit, therefore in my view this is a very good amount to operate with in order not to remain in deficit. Any questions?

Maksim Dolinin: Let's take this theoretically — if a project goes over budget, where do we take the reserve from?

Kristiina Vene: From other lines, because our budget is one part of the university's budget. Meaning, if we go into deficit, then the surplus must come from elsewhere — and if it does not, then the entire budget ends up in deficit.

Maksim Dolinin: Do we have a general reserve for next year?

Kristiina Vene: At the moment, not yet.

Maksim Dolinin: Because right now we are using the reserve from previous years.

Kristiina Vene: That 21,000-something. Yes, I'll go and ask the university whether they actually allow us to use it — I don't know yet. But the Rector told the Board that we may count on that leftover amount in next year's budget. Meaning that even if we do not receive any increases, we can still operate with the 2025 budget figures, taking the 21,000 reserve into account. So we would not need to cut the budget. Let's hope for the best. Any further questions?

Kristin Liias: The Audit Committee reviewed the budget at a joint meeting yesterday, so the questions are not individual concerns. First, contextually, we fully support the increase in permanent staff salaries and Board scholarships. However, we have a concern — could continuous scholarship increases cause certain individuals to remain in positions simply because of the pay? There has been feedback from the university as well. The fact that these scholarships keep rising creates, to some extent, among students the impression that the Student Union has people sitting comfortably on high cushions. From the outside, whispers start appearing that we claim to be volunteers, but are in fact generously compensated.

Kristiina Vene: First of all — if such concerns arise, please share them with me. It's a very good point; it can indeed look that way. My belief is that people receive their compensation when they deserve it. Yes, this is volunteer work, but it is also highly purposeful work — for permanent staff, for the Board, and for the staff members. Scholarships may increase, but that does not mean I must pay them out if a person does not deserve it. That is why we have field managers, and that is why you have me — watching closely. Increasing pay does not mean we are swimming in money. It raises the level of expectations. Yes, it is volunteer work, but if you do it well and with dedication, then you have the possibility to be compensated. Considering that most staff members are not working full-time, it is a nice additional income. But regardless — if you do your job well, you can earn that compensation. And if we have doubts that someone is not working, the field manager will inform me. If I have doubts, we talk. A high scholarship or raising scholarships does not mean that everyone will automatically receive them. They must be earned.

Kristin Liias: You answered my second question as well. Regarding the Lecturer Gala — what happens if the Rector's reserve decides not to allocate 17,600 as before? What happens to the project then?

Kristiina Vene: I have thought about that too. I haven't yet come up with the solution, because it's not something I can decide alone. But in my view there are two main options. First, we could request less and make a conceptual change. I personally have not yet been involved with this event even once, so I don't know what it truly is like or what it should be like. But if the budget is small, a good event can still be made with less money. However, the largest cost of the Lecturer Gala is the fringe benefit tax, and that cannot be reduced. Catering is also a major expense — maybe we can scale that down. It all depends on negotiations. Since last year was our first time organizing this event, we do not have an established pattern. The event does not have to be exactly the same each year; we can change the concept. The main thing is that people enjoy it and that it is high-quality. The idea is what matters. So we could ask for less — for example, 10,000 euros. I'm saying this off the top of my head; it still requires proper analysis. Second option — we could take it from elsewhere, although at the moment I don't see a good opportunity for that. Third option — based on what I understood, the Rectorate really liked the concept of this event.

Karoliine Orav: The fact that we are organizing this event has partly come from the Rectorate as well. They are fans of this event; at one point Tiit mentioned it in every speech. It is highly appreciated by them. They want us to organize it, and it really resonates with lecturers too. If Tiit didn't allocate money for it, that would be ridiculous.



Alexander Rein Robas: I also believe that because of this, he keeps it in mind and values it highly. This is one of the things where he will definitely provide support compared to some other events. Lecturers must be acknowledged and appreciated.

Kristiina Vene: Exactly, which is why this is the only budget line that is completely at zero.

Kristin Liias: There is one more at zero — extraordinary expenses.

Kristiina Vene: Yes, in general expenses. It is there so that we have a separate line for better budget management. In short, Karoliine summarized it very well. Did you get your answer?

Kristin Liias: Yes, I did. What is happening with Voice of Students? Is it coming?

Alexander Rein Robas: It is coming. The date is set, and we are starting the process.

Mark Toomsalu: November 18th.

Kristin Liias: You are starting the process. We felt that marketing should get moving, but perhaps we don't know better — I'm not sure. What does the "smaller" development program for student organizations mean?

Kristiina Vene: I read it from this year's budget. It initially had a much larger budget, but for some reason it wasn't used; maybe Mark can help here, and we reduced it somewhat.

Mark Toomsalu: Essentially, the development program itself — throughout the year we have conducted trainings. For example, if it's a funding training, we take the money from that line, and it goes to the trainer. Last year it didn't take off, there were no such trainings, and organizations did not engage. Currently, we see it as a buffer line — if we have an idea, we can use it based on need. Sometimes food costs related to trainings also fall under this line.

Kristiina Vene: Thank you, Mark! As within the Student Union in general, trainings are not wildly popular. There is no point allocating a large budget if there isn't big interest. If we see increasing interest, then we can make adjustments again.

Kristin Liias: Studioosus — if it was 5000 euros for three issues before, how is one issue 3000 euros?

Kristiina Vene: There are all sorts of printing costs...

Kristin Liias: Has it really increased that massively?

Ander Mägi: I can comment as the author of it myself. The Freshers' Month issue has a much larger print run compared to the other two. Usually in September it was around 1700 copies, and in the past December and March issues were 500 copies. That's where the difference comes from — most of the cost goes to the autumn issue.

Kristiina Vene: The input came from our marketing and communication person; I trusted their information.

Kristin Liias: Do I understand correctly that focusing on designing the freshman bags means that we will, if necessary, print and order the bags ourselves?



Kristiina Vene: That is how I understood it.

Kristin Liias: So that you would acquire the rights to use the logo on them?

Alexander Rein Robas: Exactly. Previously we have also ordered bags, and the plan is to bring that back. In the future it would also be a very good thing to distribute as merch — it gives an extra Student Union touch.

Kristin Liias: Does that also guarantee an improvement in fabric quality?

Kristiina Vene: I have a Student Union tote bag from 2021, and it is my favourite tote bag. My favourite.

Alexander Rein Robas: The 2023 one was not as good...

Kristiina Vene: If we implement this, we will not produce any low-quality stuff, especially since our logo is on it. And it's especially nice if people walk around with our bags.

Kristin Liias: What is the current number of student organizations?

Alexander Rein Robas: Around 40.

Kristin Liias: But it has been roughly the same for a while. Do we need a larger space for the retreat if two people from each organization are invited? Is there a risk that more will come, requiring an increase in the budget and a larger procurement?

Mark Toomsalu: This year we got a complete jackpot with accommodation — timing and price-wise. It is very volatile, it depends on how well procurement goes. There have been years where it has gone over.

Alexander Rein Robas: Not to mention that we organize it in summer, when all companies want to hold their summer days on weekends. This year we did it during the week, which may not have suited many organizations, but well...

Mark Toomsalu: People still attended; it depends on how much we are able to push for participation. In total, 28 board members from different organizations participated, and there are 40 organizations — if there is space and opportunity, the number could be higher. It is flexible.

Kristiina Vene: It is such a line — within the development program. If these activities are not very wanted, then the retreat could be the popular one. We keep other lines tighter, but we still want to gather in summer.

Kristin Liias: Then I'm satisfied, thank you!

Kristiina Vene: Our CV2 budget — the funding budget for student organizations. Before I finalized the documents, some new thoughts came up, and I will explain them now. The total planned expenses and income for next year are 229,600 euros, which is 10,000 euros more than this year. The increase comes from annual support. I spoke to Anna to get context. Apparently, the quality of project applications has declined somewhat since the new regulation was adopted, and I believe there is no point raising money just for the sake of raising it. The Student Union wants to support organizations in doing great things and great events, but we also expect quality in return. We do not give money "just because", as

there are always many who want funds and always little money. Therefore, together with the Board, we decided that we want to raise annual support — with that, organizations can purchase fixed assets, directing resources there. Not to make it look like we are massively increasing the Student Union budget, but to allocate more to organizations. Here the distribution is: large projects 60,000, small projects 10,000. For now, I kept the distribution the same as this year. In the explanatory memorandum I wrote: “to raise the annual support budget, it is desired to receive funds from the university; additionally, the budget will be increased if needed from the Board reserve fund.” My gut feeling is that if we ask the university for +10,000, the likelihood is rather small. Initially, the idea was to take 10,000 from the university and 10,000 from the Board reserve. Yesterday I told the Board that my proposal would be to take the entire 10,000 only from the Board reserve, and if we see that annual support project applications are also weak, then in 2027 we can make new changes and consider whether to ask the university. Faculty Councils remain the same; we will return to their support next year. The permanent support is the Student Formula team; the support is allocated through us. The amount may stay the same or be slightly lower. In 2024 the support was 25,000; this year they received 11,600 extra. I took the same amount. It is technically processed through our budget. That’s it. Any questions?

Markus Käpp: Regarding the previous topic — the TalTech Sports Week, where 1500 was removed and moved under indoor sports — will the Sports Week still take place?

Mark Toomsalu: It can be pointed out that the Sports Week was a slightly broken project. The point here is that the actual Sports Week budget is 2000 euros, but realistically, for the sports team to organize sports events, if the Sports Week budget had been combined with the indoor sports budget, they would have had many more options to do other activities. Combining them seemed logical, especially if we want to develop indoor sports further and attract more participants. It also relies heavily on sponsors.

Markus Käpp: So the idea was to gain more flexibility, or that Sports Week needs more budget?

Mark Toomsalu: Rather flexibility. The Sports Week itself would not have needed that much budget last year — not an additional 2000, but 1500. Since we have not even decided yet if we are organizing the Sports Week, this way it is much more flexible going forward.

Markus Käpp: Thank you!

Kristiina Vene: If there is no strong objection, then this budget goes to the university. Will we get it? We don’t know, but we will try — yes. I will ask a procedural question myself: if I have to submit it on October 10th and the next regular Student Parliament meeting is on October 14th, will anything related to the budget happen there?

Maksim Dolinin: If no response comes, then nothing will happen.

Alexander Rein Robas  
Chair of the meeting

Kirke Piiskoppel  
Secretary of the Meeting