

How to set up an ESN section?

How and where do you start? Who do you contact, when and where? We do not attempt to present you a set of rules or a plan, which you should follow, but we want to present a few tips and examples of how you could achieve your goal. Some of the following advice may already be familiar to you.

HOW TO SET UP AN ESN SECTION?	1
A STEP BY STEP GUIDE FOR FOUNDING A SECTION	2
First steps to take	2
The mentor system	2
How the ESN section can assist international students	3
Finding funding	3
BECOMING AN OFFICIAL ESN SECTION	5
CRITERIA FOR MEMBERSHIP	6
APPLICATION PROCEDURE FOR MEMBERSHIP	7

A STEP BY STEP GUIDE FOR FOUNDING A SECTION

First steps to take

First of all, you should form a group of a few enthusiastic people who wish to work on the ESN idea. Try your friends or place an advertisement in the student or university newspaper.

Former exchange students are also likely to be interested and may have valuable experiences. Find out if there are any (student) organisations with the same aims as ESN, such as ELSA or AIESEC.

Another source of contacts is the administration at your institutions, the international office in particular. They know the names of the former exchange students and have a list of the visiting foreign students. Perhaps they are willing to send out your information to the international students, or even help you with money, an office, and a place to host your activities.

A good way to begin is with a weekly information meeting with the international students to discuss the things you wish to do.

The mentor system

The mentor system is one of the central activities of ESN sections. The mentor is preferably a student of the same faculty who will help the international student find his way around the faculty and student social life. Practical help varies from filling in registration forms, buying books, or gathering study information to having a drink in the local student pub. To be able to link local and international students you have to get information from the international office about who is arriving and when. For the recruitment of mentors you can follow the procedure described above: friends, former exchange students or through announcements in student newspapers etc. It would be a good idea to write a short manual for the mentors in which you explain what you expect

from them.

How the ESN section can assist international students

Not only the mentor can provide the international student with information, the ESN section itself can be of great help by making information more accessible. This signifies translating study information into English, publishing a city/university guide containing practical information, or making an agenda of the social cultural events that one could attend among other things.

As an ESN section you also ought to be helping future (local) exchange students.

You can put them in contact with former exchange students. In this way they get better information on what studying abroad implies and on how they can prepare themselves.

Activities like regular trips, parties, sports and excursions are likely to be successful too. They can be organised by the ESN section itself or in co-operation with other organisations at your university. It is important to keep up your contacts with faculty organisations and students' associations and to stimulate them to organise activities, which are also suited for international students.

Finding funding

There are several possibilities to receive support. Four of them are mentioned here. In the first place you can ask your university for aid. They can support you by volunteering cash or by placing a room, telephone, fax and mailing facilities at your disposal. One of the most important things for a well-run ESN section is a good relationship with the university. They can provide you with significant information unavailable elsewhere.

Secondly, you can inform yourself about national grants. It might be a good idea to apply for a subsidy together with already existing ESN sections in your country. The Board and the International Administration hand dealings with the Erasmus Bureau in Brussels.

Applications for grants completed by individual sections are not awarded unless it deals with an application or a special project. Even in this case the Board or International Administration has to be notified of your intentions.

Thirdly, you can think of sponsorship. It is comparatively easy to get a newsletter or a brochure sponsored by advertising. All the same, looking for sponsorship is a serious business and requires considerable investment of time and effort. More detailed guidelines can be obtained from the International Administration. Lastly you can ask the students to pay, e.g. a contribution for specific activities. However, take into account that most students do not have a lot of money.

All these financial matters may sound complicated, but do not let them put you off. Setting up an ESN section is not necessarily that expensive. You can start with a mentor system, which is relatively cheap (only administration costs). In practice it usually turns out that the university is very reserved until you have proven yourself worthy of their money and attention. Patience, initiative and perseverance that is what it is all about!

BECOMING AN OFFICIAL ESN SECTION

When you organise activities on a more regular basis, it is a good idea to give your organisation a more formal character. This has several advantages, e.g. it is easier to get grants as a legal organisation, and it helps you to establish official contacts.

One of the major advantages is that you can become part of the ESN network. We offer you contacts with already functioning ESN members, which have the same aims as you do. They can help you improve your organisation.

ESN International publishes a Newsletter, which contains information and articles on relevant issues for all members. This Newsletter is sent to all members and official contacts of ESN International. Besides the useful contacts ESN International offers you, they organise an Annual General Meeting, where all the ESN sections are invited to participate. The next two paragraphs explain the procedure to be followed.

CRITERIA FOR MEMBERSHIP

1. A section works in accordance with the statutes of ESN.
2. A section should be participating in the reception and integration of international students and doing this on a continuous basis.
3. A section must operate legally. It shall have statutes and is strongly recommended to become a legal body.
4. A section should work in co-operation with their institution of higher education and recognized by the international office of the university.
5. A section should also realise that:
 - It is always welcome to participate in the work of ESN at a national and international level and will be expected to do so in relation to actions decided by the Annual General Meeting;
 - It shall identify itself as an ESN section in all its official activities and communications and adapt the corporate identity;
 - The use of the name ESN shall be done in accordance with the decisions and policies of ESN;
6. There can normally only be one ESN section per university. Participation in faculty-based organisations may be possible on the condition that the aims of these organisations comply with ESN's policy. Such participation has to be approved by the Board. An ESN section can be set up within a student union, if it is able to act independently to an extent that enables them sufficiently to work in accordance with the statutes and aims of ESN.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE FOR MEMBERSHIP

Once you have an organisation set up and working, you can apply for membership of ESN.

Contact the National of your country Representative (you can find her/his contact information from the website www.esn.org) or if your country doesn't have one contact the Vice President (vicepresident@esn.org) of the Erasmus Student Network. Check out that your organisation fits our criteria for membership, fill out the form below and send it for the person you have established a contact with.

The new sections are approved on base of the recommendation of the person in contact with the applicant and the application form.