

Interview with Stefán Óli, the Student Society's Treasurer (Financial Director).

Elín Margrét and Hrund met up with Stefán Óli and asked him a few questions about democracy and elections in Versló.

1. *Are elections important?*

Yes, of course they are. The Student Society has well over thousand members and its turnover is over six million kroner on annual basis. Therefore, it is very important to have responsible leadership.

2. *The election campaign is a big part of the election. It must cost a lot of money for those who are running for election. Do you think that all students in the school can afford to run for election?*

For the past years the students who are running for elections have financed their campaigns with grants from companies and other beneficiaries. Last year's candidates were the first generation of students who could feel the economic crises in the Iceland as there were fewer grants to finance their campaign. But this doesn't mean that the campaign has to be expensive as we have seen so often. You can go a long way on a few thousand kroner.

3. *But what about nepotism, is it really so that everyone has a chance to run?*

Yes I think so, but perhaps some students would not agree with me. Last year's elections showed that students who are perhaps not very well known among their peers can become prominent in the Students Society because of their charisma, ideology and simply because they are honest individuals.

4. *Through the years it has been noticeable how boys have been in majority on the boards, committees and organizations of the Student Society. What is the reason for this and do you think that we could change it?*

It has already changed. There are now more girls than boys on the board of the Student Society and the girls outnumber the boys in committees and organization. As the situation is now I do not see any reason to change any of the rules of the Student Society.

5. *But after the election, how do you make sure that democracy within the school continues to be the priority of the Student Society?*

Well, among other things, with the various decision makings on the Student Society board, its committees and organizations. All decision making is done by voting.

6. *What do think it is that affects how students vote?*

Number one the voter has to be able to trust the candidate, it is as simple as that. What makes some candidates more trustworthy than others it difficult to say but charisma and promises help without a doubt.

7. *What qualities does a candidate have to possess?*

They have to be knowledgeable about the activities of the Student Society, here experience can also help. They have to be interested in the job they are seeking, have a good judgement, be able to work in a group, delegate responsibility, don't be afraid of decision making, have

organizational skills and don't be afraid of taking initiative. As well as all this, they must have the ability to estimate what ideas are worth spending time on.

8. *Do you consider it democratic that only third year students can run for election?*

Yes and no. Of course it is not democratic to forbid students to run for election but on the other hand it is necessary that students who are elected on the board of the Student Society are not freshmen but have some experience. A third year student already has considerable knowledge of how the Student Society functions and is therefore in a better position than a first year student. This also has to do with respect, students tend to have more respect for their older peers. Personally, I think that the oldest students should pull the wagon and therefore it is my opinion that only they should be on the board of the Student Society.

9. *But is it democratic that the fourth formers who are in their last year and about to graduate have the right to vote?*

Many students have pondered upon this question. It is a fact that the fourth formers could easily ruin the election by voting for disqualified students as they are leaving the school anyway and do not have to suffer the consequences of bad election results. I was on the Electoral Committee in 2008-9 and found out that this fear does not stand grounds. Firstly, the fourth formers who are about to graduate have other things on their mind, so not many of them take the time to vote and secondly, they are very aware of the activities of the Student Society and its importance which is can best be seen in how they vote.

We thank Stefán Óli for the interview and wish good luck in his job as Treasurer.