

IYSSE again wins seats in the student parliament at Berlin's Humboldt University

International Youth and Students for Social Equality, Humboldt University
25 August 2021

The university group of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) at Humboldt University (HU), Berlin has once again entered the student parliament with two representatives in this year's elections. The IYSSE received 2.7 percent of the votes cast.

The elections took place amid the pandemic that is also hitting thousands of students hard and bringing all the problems of capitalism to a head. "Our election result is therefore of great significance," explains Sven Wurm, spokesperson for the IYSSE at Humboldt, who himself won one of the two mandates.

"Millions of coronavirus deaths, job losses, climate change, the danger of war and fascism—all these issues move students here at HU and all over the world. We were the only university group to show a socialist way out of this impasse in our election campaign. That struck a nerve."

The IYSSE, the youth and student organisation of the International Committee of the Fourth International, has been represented in the HU Student Parliament (StuPa) for seven years, giving voice to the vast student opposition to the revival of right-wing and militarist ideology at the university. In our election statement, we advocated building an international socialist movement to stop "the rise of extreme right-wing forces and a renewed relapse into barbarism."

The urgency of this perspective was also evident in this year's election campaign. A few weeks before the election, Sven Wurm filed a disciplinary complaint against HU President Sabine Kunst for vehemently backing right-wing attacks on students.

In the last StuPa election in 2020, the right-wing radical HU professor Jörg Baberowski had marched around the campus in a rage, tearing down IYSSE election posters and physically attacking and

threatening our candidate Sven. Baberowski had already been agitating against students and colleagues on social media.

Despite his blatant trivialisation of Nazi crimes and his infamous neo-right "salon" in the middle of Berlin, Baberowski continues to hold the chair of Eastern European history at HU and has the full backing of the university management, the Berlin Senate (state executive) and the majority of the professoriate. Even three months after Wurm filed the disciplinary complaint, nothing has been done to investigate the allegations against Baberowski and the university president.

But students are not prepared to accept this right-wing conspiracy. The IYSSE campaigned strongly against it online and publicised the disciplinary complaint widely. Many fellow students reacted with shock at the extent of the falsification of history and ideological right-wing turn at Humboldt University, which is closely linked to the return of German militarism and the encouragement of far-right networks in the state apparatus.

Several student representative bodies, including the student councils at Humboldt and Bremen universities, supported the disciplinary complaint and expressed solidarity with the IYSSE.

The main phase of the election campaign coincided with the 80th anniversary of the German war of extermination against the Soviet Union, which began on June 22, 1941. The IYSSE introduced a resolution that was adopted by the student parliament to commemorate the millions of victims and made the monstrous crimes of the Nazis the focus of their first election campaign event. In an online lecture, we demonstrated in detail how Professor Baberowski today trivialises the Nazis' policy of extermination in the

Second World War. We warned that this falsification of history serves to prepare new wars and crimes.

Just how topical this warning is can be seen in the current Bundestag (federal parliament) election campaign, in which the bourgeois parties are crying out for greater military spending and want to use the catastrophe of the Afghanistan war as a pretext for new imperialist adventures.

At our second event, members of the IYSSE from Germany and Britain addressed the devastating consequences of the coronavirus crisis and explained why students and youth must base themselves on working-class resistance and a socialist programme to stop the pandemic.

This year's elections took place under extremely adverse conditions due to the pandemic. While members of the IYSSE used to be extremely active on campus, organising numerous information tables and discussions with fellow students, this time the election campaign shifted to the internet and social media. The postal vote was fraught with bureaucratic hurdles and even had to be repeated in the middle of the summer break because of irregularities. On election day, students could only vote at one polling station on the main campus.

The next semester begins during the fourth wave of the coronavirus pandemic. Although the highly contagious Delta variant threatens young people in particular, schools and universities are now reopening with almost no protective measures—a paradise for the virus, a nightmare for pupils and students who will infect themselves and their loved ones. Humboldt University and the other Berlin universities have also announced that they will return to face-to-face teaching. Those who have been vaccinated, tested, or recovered should be able to sit in full lectures and seminar rooms in the autumn without minimum distances, according to the authorities.

At the same time, thousands of Berlin students are struggling to make ends meet and have seen nothing at all of genuine coronavirus assistance and adequate support during the pandemic. At Humboldt University, the pandemic has also exposed what decades of cuts in teaching, staff, digital equipment and social support have resulted in. University President Kunst also played a leading role here. While systematically promoting right-wing professors, she imposed rigorous

austerity measures directly after taking office in 2016.

“The coronavirus pandemic acts as a trigger event that raises all existing crises to a new level. Students and young people are looking for a viable perspective against social inequality, war and right-wing radicalism,” says Sven Wurm. “We will use our strong election result as a prelude to intensive work at HU in the new academic year. We won't allow right-wing ideology and Nazi trivialisation to be tolerated, and we'll also oppose the dangerous policy of 'disease control'.”

Join a university group today, become a member of the IYSSE and fight for a socialist future!



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact