

ANNUAL REPORT FISCIAL YEAR 2023/24

INTRODUCTION

Since VSZHdK essentially operates in personal union with VERSO, this annual report is primarily written from VERSO's perspective. All activities of the association and the student organization generally affect both entities.

The work of VERSO in the fiscal year 2023-24 was marked by changes at all levels of the student organization: a new co-presidency, revised committee structures, active departments, changes to the compensation system and budget distribution. The new co-presidency quickly gained the university's trust and continued productive exchanges. At the same time, the university experienced a particularly intense year: the new major_minor model was introduced, a new strategy process was initiated, the university had to respond to various media reports, and student protests shaped the second semester, presenting new challenges to the university. VERSO was able to actively position itself as the "voice of all students" advocating for the right to peaceful protest. This annual report provides a brief overview of the activities and developments.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Close cooperation with the university and regular exchanges with students form the foundation of VERSO's work. At the departmental level, VERSO DDE, VERSO DDK, VERSO DFA, VERSO DKV, and VERSO DMU successfully reached students with their work. The departments developed new formats to gather feedback and foster networking among students.

V-DDE regularly conducted studio tours to engage students on various topics, making their representation visible and approachable. VERSO departments held new events and networking opportunities to connect students across course and department boundaries. Events like V-DDE's Mario Kart tournaments, V-DMU's Halloween party, and DKV's get-togethers with aperitifs in a hosted studio were very popular. Establishing Instagram channels in nearly all departments allows low-threshold communication with students. V-DFA also created a Telegram chat, facilitating exchange among all DFA students, which is actively used.

Through the VERSO Project Fund, VERSO supported student initiatives over the past year. Financial support was provided for the annual workshop party, the Toni Beats party at Mehrspur, various student formats at ZHdK's Diversity Week, as well as projects like the "Restlab" by DFA students and the magazine "Potpuri: Gazeta02" from DKV. To support students, VERSO also compiled an overview of internal and external ZHdK contact points, available on the website and as a flyer for students.

VERSO also worked to represent individual students' rights to the university and supported student groups in their specific demands. VERSO DDK supported acting students with their open letter to the department management and subsequent discussions. A major challenge for VERSO in 2023/24 was the student protests at the university. VERSO actively engaged with various groups and individuals, working as a mediator to convey different perspectives and viewpoints to the university.

ENGAGEMENT WITH THE UNIVERSITY

VERSO managed to further intensify student participation and engagement with the university. Through a more active role in the university assembly, involvement in various university initiatives, such as the strategy process, and the active articulation of student concerns through university administration requests, VERSO positioned itself in university policy.

As part of a working group, VERSO actively participated in the realignment and restructuring of the university assembly (Hochschulversammlung, HSV) and deepened student participation in the process. VERSO contributed to the planning and implementation of the first mini-retreat, developing a new committee structure and rethinking the HSV workflow, positioning itself for more active representation in the HSV and demonstrating that the student organization is ready to take on more responsibility.

VERSO responsibly fulfilled its obligations towards the university. Besides regular representation in university committees, VERSO was involved in ZHdK's strategy process and submitted proposals to the university management (Hochschulleitung, HSL) to improve infrastructure, specifically for an in-house source for stationery products and a quiet room. In monthly meetings, the co-presidency strengthened exchanges with the university rector Karin Mairitsch. Additionally, VERSO followed university policy developments closely and intervened in student-relevant changes, such as the remuneration of students from third countries, always focusing on finding solutions together.

Student protests were highly present both in exchanges with students and the university. The student organization expressed its position in an open letter to the university community and initiated the "Let's Care" fundraising campaign, raising CHF 1,646 for the humanitarian NGO "Care International." VERSO also commented on the matter to the media and the public, actively helping to shape the discourse.

CANTONAL AND NATIONAL ENGAGEMENT

VERSO was also active in educational policy at the cantonal and national levels. Regular meetings with the presidencies of all student organizations in the Canton of Zurich, as well as the monthly sectional council in the Swiss Students' Union (VSS), politically networked VERSO. At the cantonal level, VERSO joined the Yes Committee for the Education Act, granting temporarily admitted refugees the same rights in applying for

scholarships. Additionally, VERSO collaborated with other student associations in legal consultations, such as the new scholarship law. Nationally, VERSO is involved in the Europe Initiative and represents the concerns of art students at VSS. Student protests at Swiss universities and colleges were also a major topic at VSS, where VERSO advocated for fair dialogue and active listening, shaping the demands submitted to university leaderships, including ZHdK's.

Student protests, compensation for third-country students, and the general federal and cantonal austerity measures will continue to shape the Swiss university landscape and VERSO's work in the coming fiscal years. VERSO aims to play an even more active role, forming a working group to find ways to counteract the precarization of student life. VERSO's work focuses on advocating for a university for all, not just a few.

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

On the organizational level, VERSO continued the previous year's activities and enacted new regulations. All legal frameworks were updated and adapted to existing structures. The VERSO general regulations (Geschäftsordnung, GO) were revised, and new ones for the VERSO departments were enacted. However, these remain pending with the legal service and the university administration and could not officially come into effect this year. VERSO also pushed for a revision of the performance agreement between the student organization and ZHdK, which is still awaiting approval from the university administration.

Internally, VERSO established a comprehensive voting and election regulation, standardizing processes across departments, enhancing election fairness, and strengthening VERSO's legitimacy as an elected student representative body.

In addition to regulatory changes, VERSO worked on internal exchange among different organizational units. Networking between VERSO departments and the student- and semester councils will be further strengthened through specific exchange meetings, access to membership lists, shared communication platforms, a shared calendar, and accessible data exchange options. Relevant measures have been initiated and are in progress.

FINANCIALS

Due to a financial deficit in previous years, VERSO had to implement various austerity measures. The budgeting process was re-evaluated, and prior decisions were reversed. VERSO also made changes to its funding structure and discussed prioritizing different activities. By foregoing or reducing compensation for meetings, wage costs were saved, allowing resources to be allocated more directly to work benefiting students. Financial controls enabled the office to monitor monthly expenses and intervene if necessary.

These measures led to a slight surplus across all departments, allowing VERSO to allocate more funds to the Project Fund and thus to students in the next fiscal year.

PERSONNEL

At the beginning of the fiscal year, Jonas Bernetta joined the previous co-president Laura Gubler in the co-presidency, succeeding David Bircher. Thanks to a well-structured handover, the new co-presidency quickly familiarized itself with operations, maintaining quality and continuity. The co-presidency will remain in office until the new fiscal year. The student council experienced an unusually high turnover both at the beginning and end of the fiscal year, leading to a strong focus on handovers and knowledge retention methods.

Paula Beck and Lilian Leupold stepped down from the management office at the beginning of the spring semester and left the organization. Seraina Saxer and Christina Cordett have taken over the office management roles.

We extend our thanks to Paula Beck and Lilian Leupold for their work as office managers, as well as to Louise Mayer-Jaquin, Timo Andenmatten, Maja Altermann, Kilian Schönenberger, and Catalina Paredes as members of the student council for their commitment to VERSO.

For the Board,

Jonas Bernetta,
Co-President VSZHdK

Laura Gubler,
Co-President VSZHdK