

Model United Nations

Background

Students of our school have been participating in Model United Nations (MUN) for seven years now and the level of their participation improves every year. However, most of our best representatives have either already left the school or are in the 4th and 5th year and so will not be with us for very much longer. The tradition they have created needs to be sustained. This can only happen if we can find good 2nd and 3rd year students to replace them. Below I list a few questions and answers about what Model United Nations is and why students should participate in it.

What is Model United Nations?

You can find the long answer on wikipedia or other websites. Basically, MUN is a student 'copy' of the real United Nations (UN). Just as UN diplomats do, student delegates represent a country and work on a committee. They have to research, write formal documents (policy statements and resolutions) and negotiate and debate. The aim is to produce final resolutions, which are steps to solving real world problems.

How many MUNS does our school participate in?

At the moment we participate in three : BRATMUN (in Bratislava, in October), LEMUN (Leiden, Holland in November) and KARMUN (Budapest in March/April). Three is an appropriate number at present, considering the level of interest at school, but we regularly receive invitations to other MUNS so, if the level of interest increases, so may our participation.

What kind of students are right for MUN?

First of all, you do not have to be 'interested in politics' to be a good MUN delegate. However, it is necessary to have a curiosity about the world and an interest in trying to make it better. The confidence to speak and ability to listen to others are important. All the positive personal qualities you have will help you.

How good should my level of English be?

MUN conferences are held in English and the level of English is high. However, it is not necessary to be 100% fluent or grammatically correct to participate to a good level. In fact, many of our students believe that participation in MUNS improves their English. Certainly, you learn a lot of new formal words and phrases. Good students from our 2nd and 3rd year should not worry about whether their English is good enough for MUN.

How difficult is an MUN for a student who has not participated in one before?

It is quite difficult. However, you should have realistic expectations of yourself. A first-time delegate is not going to be the greatest diplomat the world has ever seen. However, first-time delegates can set themselves small targets – to make so many speeches, ask so many questions in debate etc. If you make a contribution to the conference, even if it's only quite small, you can feel some satisfaction. Students who say nothing will (and should) be disappointed with themselves. If your first MUN experience goes well, you will probably want to participate again and be better next time. The best delegates from our school have participated in three or more MUNS before.

How much does it cost to participate?

There is always a conference fee, usually at least 30 Euros per student, besides travel costs, spending money etc. Our school's Activities Fund (SZČ) usually pays some of the students' expenses, either the conference fees or travel costs. For LEMUN, the LEMUN sponsors also pay part of our travel costs.

What about accommodation, food etc?

At LEMUN and KARMUN, we live in host families and either they provide all food or you get food during the conference itself. At BRATMUN, we stay in a hotel (which means that the conference fees for BRATMUN are higher). Obviously, you have to provide your own food for the journey to or from the event.

How will participating in MUN help me in the future?

It is good in abstract ways, for 'personal development' etc and students learn about the world and its problems, about the UN itself and, almost certainly, some new English. These points should be quite obvious, however. Second and third year students should also be aware that there is an increasing trend for students to leave Slovakia to study or work in other countries. Universities in other countries will always be interested to know whether you will be able to live and study happily in an 'international' environment and participation in events like MUNs is evidence that you can. Large numbers of students are also interested in studying 'International Relations' or similar subjects at universities. The competition for these at the best universities is intense. Participation in MUN is a practical experience of this subject in action and will help your chances of getting onto a good course.