



Semester report from International Students' Union – Stavanger Branch

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National Assembly in Oslo University College

Overview

The International Students' Union (ISU) – Stavanger is located at the University of Stavanger (UiS). ISU-Stavanger is a young branch of ISU Norway and has been submitted to several positive transformations since its establishment in 10th of February 2004.

Semester by semester ISU-Stavanger has improved its strategy and quality of services offered to students, which is a demand in order to accomplish its main aim: “*give ISU members a home away from home*”. This *home* is a solid platform along their permanence in Stavanger with some fun in between.

The community of members in ISU - Stavanger grows every semester. In order to promote and foster a quality service to the international students, which satisfies and is inclusive to all students, we've been submitted to several changes - as an organisation - in our goals, values and culture.

One of the milestones achieved was a stronger cooperation with the international department / international relations from UiS. In august ISU had the great opportunity to welcome 122 new students from 41 countries. In addition of having place in the welcoming week, ISU participated in the integration of the students at the dormitory and Stavanger surroundings, once there were officers involved in the pick-up service.

ISU continues to be engaged actively in students' issues, trying to learn with the missteps from the past and with organisations with more experience in student politics. Cooperation with the StudentOrganisasjonen (StOr) has shown very relevant and brought lots of advantages to prosecute our work. With its help ISU has grown politically and reached more tools to help students confronted with issues in their student life.

Even tough, the students need that we strive for an even more international UiS. The so-called small community of international students has now a higher number (around 350) and a louder voice, a voice that we are going to try to take to the right persons, in the right way.

Rewind

Since February 2005, ISU reached the “top of the world”. The strong leadership and good coordination inside the union, towards our members and between the other unions / organisations in UiS campus, conducted the branch in the right way to reach and accomplish



several of the proposed goals and challenges to this period. ISU revived and expanded significantly its role on campus.

From the goals that were proposed for last semester, just two of them are still to accomplish. The new board executives will continue striving to reach them. Those are a suitable office accommodation and more space to our web domain.

Harmonious power transfer

ISU hold elections in the 13th September. Our election process was coordinated by a third party, StOr. None of the candidates were involved in this process. The previous board officially transferred their positions to the new executives in 14th of September.

All the ex-officers were contacted by the new, in order to receive a job description and projects up to finish. This was made to promote continuity in ISU work and also to the welfare of the members.

As most part of the board is constituted by new students in UiS / Stavanger, which experience a period of integration, the need to hold an informal meeting to better inform the new board members and orientate them in their duties, before the first board meeting, was necessary. Since then, the officers met for three times.

During this period of accommodation of the new officers, ISU-Stavanger has been striving for more conditions to perform its work at UiS campus. Again, StOr and international department helped ISU on getting the needed material better perform its work.

Challenges accomplished

ISU got the opportunity to show that it is not only a party union, and that students can contact its services for every single matter that affects their integration in Stavanger. ISU is now considered the second bigger and second most important union in campus - after StOr - once we have the same objectives as StOr, but canalised to the international students.

This promoted image of ISU, being a relevant union in UiS, led ISU to get some facilities in our office. In September ISU was secured a PC and a printer from UiS / IT department. The phone is up to come. While that, officers were offered the opportunity of using phone at StOr office.



Infrastructures Created:

The invitation from StOr to ISU be a part of *engasjert* campaign (second week of classes) revealed it self very determinant for the integration of students in UiS. *Engasjert* campaign consisted on joining hands and effort with all organisations from UiS campus. In harmonious cooperation, the unions prepared four amazing days to students. ISU got the opportunity to engage at least 45 international students preparing food from all over the world, gather music from their countries, make live performances and provide a trip around the world to the audience.

ISU got several activities to facilitate the students' presence in Stavanger. By developing a campaign to collect kitchen / room material, from students that were going back home, ISU can now provide to the new students with no costs involved this material. Becoming a tradition, student life will become cheaper.

Costs of books are the main complains by international students. ISU-Stavanger thought about it and created an easy solution, we dedicated some space on the board with a list of persons buying / selling literature with the information of study programs and contacts. It has been a success for both parts.

Strategy of uniting efforts with all the organisations/unions in campus has also revealed very positive in what concerns integration aspects as well to the short ISU budget once we divide costs of arrangements and students have the opportunity to bland with non-international students. The *engasjert* experience revealed such an importance that ISU is trying to continue with the project all year long. A partnership network, with StOr, SHCLOBROCKS, Folken, STIL, and Sudentsangforening has been done. IAESTE is also one of the targets to partnership.

The relevance of ISU to students has shown concrete profits to the union - students are getting more and more involved. A record 107 international students voted in our elections (last semester 77). 17 persons applied to the 15 positions available and ISU counts with 10 resource persons to help the board when needed.

Open office to students one and a half hour a day. At this time students can come with different questions / needs. Open office is going to be announced Monday in Hugin – student newspaper. Each day of the week takes involves a different subject. Answers, advices, nice



conversation, happy face, candies, gums, coffee and tea are included in the list of things that students can get by visiting us.

We are also developing a communication system where we intend to capture attention from students. SiS gives us all the necessary support to publish announces and some articles as announcements in the students newspaper.

Budget

Multiplication miracles have been done by ISU officers. The “scarce” funds of 17.500 NOK were not impeditive to perform all the planned activities. Donations of diverse material from UiS, SiS, international department and from the students, encourage us to go forward even without money to do all the things we wanted. SiS is also an open resource to us. When needed, SiS never closed a door to ISU.

Upcoming Events:

Pyjama party;
Trip to Denmark;
Trip to Lysefjord;
Dinner at Turkish restaurant;
Hiking trips;
Football tournaments (all semester);
Table tennis tournament.

Bigger aims / proposals to discussion

■ **ISU in Student Parliament**

The importance of having a voice in the highest institution of student politics has been shown to be necessary and compulsory. Due to the cultural differences or through lack of knowledge in the matters that affect the international students, there are many cases that are overlooked by the parliament. ISU should have a voice in the parliament.

■ **Equality of opportunities in studies with a crystal clear program**

In order to provide greater equality in the studies to the foreign students, more care should be taken in providing reading material in Bokmål, avoiding the added difficulties presented by the Danish, Swedish or Nynorsk languages.