



**REPORT 091026**

**International Students' Union  
of Norway (ISU)**

**Bi-Monthly Report**

**26 October 2009**

**Prepared by**

Farshad Tami, National President

**Prepared for**

Member Branches

and

Cooperating Partners

- Studentenes Landsforbund (StL)
- Norsk Studentunion (NSU)
- Studentenes og Akademikernes Internasjonale Hjelpefond (SAIH)
- Utviklingsfondet Ungdom (Spire)

### **ISU General Info and Objective**

The International Students' Union of Norway (ISU) is an independent, democratic, non-profit, non-partisan organization run for and by international students. ISU is committed to the social, academic and political interests of all international students studying in Norway. ISU's national administration is located in Oslo, with a National President, two Vice Presidents and an Organizational Secretary. ISU member organizations are located at 13 institutions of higher education around Norway. ISU's basic funding is from the Norwegian Government with the annual amount of NOK 300.000,00 (July 2009 – June 2010). ISU is in partnership with NSU, StL & Spire, and members of SAIH & LNU.

### **Overview of Report Period**

The solution for the challenges of Quota Scheme Students (QSS) marked a milestone for student welfare in Norway. ISU and partners StL and NSU are content and happy with the solution proposed by the Ministry of Education and Research – [Kunnskapsdepartementet](#) (KD), approved by the Norwegian Parliament and that will be implemented by [Lånekassen](#). ISU is also preparing for its yearly National Assembly (NAii09) at Høgskolen i Narvik – Narvik University College (HiN) from October 30th to November 1st 2009. During the past two months or so, all ISU Local Branches successfully held their General Assemblies and elected new branch boards.

### **Previous and Current Activities**

ISU has been actively involved in finding a solution for the challenges faced by Quota Scheme Students (QSS). These students are on a scholarship from the Norwegian government and when they arrive Norway, they have to wait at least two months before they receive their scholarships from [Lånekassen](#) (The Norwegian State Educational Loan Fund). ISU started the campaign prior to ISU National Assembly in Bergen (Autumn 2007) and continued networking with StL and NSU, KD, Lånekassen and some members of the educational and financial committees of the Norwegian Parliament. The solution that the KD proposed and included in the suggested Norwegian Annual Budget, is that Lånekassen will have to send all institutions of higher education that have applied for QSS positions a check worth two months of scholarship (around 17,000 NOK) before the student arrives and when he or she identifies himself or herself to the institution they will receive the check. Lånekassen and KD decided that this check is considered a full grant, and not a loan due to the legal difficulties of granting loans to persons that have not yet received a Norwegian personal number. This implies that from January 2010, two months of the Quota Scholarship will not be considered a debt to be repaid to Lånekassen even if the quota student decides not to return to his or her home country (please refer to attached news articles as well as the Thank You letter to the ministry). There is subsequently no solution for quota students for this academic year, but for the next, so ISU will strive along with its partners to follow up on this matter and monitor how it works, whether it is successful and report back to KD.

ISU National President (NP) met with Heikki Holmås (Socialist Left Party member, Parliament member and finance committee member responsible for overlooking the National Budget) along with Anette Iversen Cvijanovic (StL) and Magnus Malnes (NSU) to discuss challenges for approving and including the QSS case in the National Budget and possible involvement in the discussion with KD and Lånekassen (Please refer to attached minutes) as per suggestion of [Åsa Elvik](#), State Secretary to the Minister of Higher Education and Research. ISU also met with the Socialist Left Party Youth prior to August 2009 as to get more support from their side since the Minister of KD is from the same party.

NP attended: (a) a seminar arranged by KD titled: "Migration, recruitment and labor: challenges and visions for the Norwegian education and research"; (b) two ISU Local Branch General Assemblies (University of Oslo and UMB); (c) a Spire cabin trip; and (d) participated in Spire Campaign (Global Wake Up Call). NP also had a meeting with: [candidates](#) for the National Presidency in order to answer their questions, the Association of Norwegian Students Abroad ([ANSA](#)) to discuss and introduce ISU to the new ANSA leader, the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion –Arbeids- og inkluderingsdepartementet ([AID](#)) to discuss possible cooperation, as well as with The Directorate of Integration and Diversity – Integrerings- og mangfoldsdirektoratet ([IMDi](#)) for the same latter reason. IMDi agreed to send their newest publication: New in Norway to our National Assembly to be distributed to our participants. NP also implied that this document is not important for work immigrants only but also for international student and should be available at offices at all institutions of higher education.

ISU National Office, conducted training in 'Team Building' and 'Leadership' for ISU branch members of ISU University of Oslo, ISU University College of Oslo, ISU BI and ISU UMB. The ad hoc training came after some discussions with some ISU local branch members that wanted such training to take place.

NP also participated in and gave a presentation at the following partner meetings: NSU and StL Landsstyre, Spire Annual General Meeting and SAIH General Assembly.

ISU National Office spent the last months preparing the National Assembly in Narvik along with ISU Narvik's former President, Ilya Sizov. ISU National Office also prepared new guidelines entitled: National Board Activities, Tasks and Conduct. ISU National Secretary, Solveig Aamodt, also followed up on the ISU Local Branch application for Frifond and

successfully received all 13 applications. ISU National then distributed Frifond funds according to each branch's proposal and relevancy to the ISU Inclusion Strategy.

Finally, ISU became member of [Frivillighet Norge](#) - the Association of NGOs in Norway. Frivillighet Norge is an umbrella organization for the voluntary sector in Norway, founded in September 2005. The mission of the Association is to coordinate the voluntary sector's dialogue with the authorities on issues that are common to the voluntary sector, and to voice the voluntary sector's opinions to the public and the authorities. Another important task is to produce information and give advice to the member organizations. Through this membership we will increase our cooperation with other organizations, and we will be able to attend seminars and courses to help us in further developing our organization by lobbying for the interests of international students.

Table.1 Summary of official meetings that ISU have been invited to and attended:

Meeting	Date	Place
Heikki Holmås	05 August	Oslo
ISU UMB/Ås General Assembly	07 August	Ås
KD Seminar	21 August	Asker
ISU UiO General Assembly	28 August	Oslo
StL International Committee	28 August	Oslo
Spire Cabin Trip	9 – 11 September	Nesodden
Spire Campaign	21 September	Oslo
NSU and StL Landsstyre	25 – 27 September	Oslo
Spire Annual General Meeting	26 September	Oslo
Meeting AID	29 September	Oslo
Meeting IMDi	02 October	Oslo
Meeting ANSA	02 October	Oslo
ISU Local Branch Training	08 October	Oslo
SAIH General Assembly	24 – 25 October	Oslo

### Up-coming Activities and Meetings

The main upcoming event is the ISU National Assembly (NAii09), where ISU will hope to further discuss our concerns, priorities, challenges, success stories, and establish strategic steps to ensure better democratic representation at each of our 13 local branches. ISU will be electing a new leadership (ISU National Board: consisting of National President and 2 Vice Presidents) and further strengthen ties with our partners. After the elections take place, there will be a one month overlap between the old board and the new board. This overlap is a training period and updating of past events and preparing the new board of the coming year. Afterwards, NSU and StL will conduct an introduction for the new board on Norwegian student democracy, and student organizations.

During the upcoming month, we will be distributing funds for the Frifond applications that the ISU Local Branches have prepared before end of November.

ISU will attend a conference on “17th of November, the International Students’ Day: Remembering the students victims of the totalitarian regimes and re-launching the role of student democracy” that will take place in Brussels (Belgium) from the 16th to the 18th of November organized by Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions. ISU has been indorsed by partners NSU and StL for ISU NP to participate as a delegate. It would be a valuable opportunity to bring insights back to Norway and share Norway’s achievement in the conference’s area of discussions.

Finally, ISU will participate at the NSU and StL Landsstyre that is taking place end of November where the National President will report as well as introduce the new ISU National Board.

### **Acknowledgments**

ISU would like to extend its hand in thanks for the following ISU Local Presidents that served ISU during the past year and that were not mentioned in the previous report, Tsehay Hailemichael, Emma Micklem, Ilya Sizov, Michel El Ghaba, Syed Haris Ali, Mohammed Mahbubul Kabir, Tim Findlater and ISU BI (GSS Leader) Per Erling Walle. A very special appreciation goes again to Eimantas Matulaitis a resonating contribution that made ISU Agder a very successful new local branch. ISU appreciates the contribution of the current and soon to be leaving Vice Presidents Maria Korotkova and Isaac Mensah.

ISU would also like to thank those outside of the organization that contributed actively for the success of the QSS case: Ina Tandberg, Anne Karine Nymoen, Øistein Ø. Svelle, Ingvild S. Reymert, Marte Sendstad, Karsten Werner Nielsen, Anette Iversen Cvijanovic, Magnus Malnes, Nils-Ener Lundsbakken, Maja Stade Aarønæ, Ben Holan, Jeanine Bruun, Heikke Holmås, Odd Einar Dørum, Åsa Elvik and HE Tora Aasland.

---

Attachments:

- *Minutes of meeting with Heikki Holmås*
- *Quota Scheme Students Article*
- *ISU thank you letter to the Ministry of Education and Research*

International Students' Union of Norway (ISU)

Brief Minutes of Meeting with Heikki Holmås

05 August 2009

**Prepared by**

Farshad Tami (ISU)

**Prepared for**

- Studentenes Landsforbund (StL)
- Norsk Studentunion (NSU)

**Place:** Sosialistisk Venstreparti (SV) Office, Oslo

**Date and Time:** 05 August, 9:30 - 10:00

**Attendees:** Heikki Holmås (SV og Stortingsrepresentant), Anette Iversen Cvijanovic (StL), Magnus Malnes (NSU) and Farshad Tami (ISU)

**The purpose of the meeting:** To discuss the Quota Scheme Students (QSS) Case and to ask for support from the Norwegian Parliament's Finance Committee

The following subjects were discussed:

SUBJECT	COMMENTS
- Discuss why the QSS case has been a challenge for all three student organizations and present the lobby document (Refer to attached file):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Holmås agrees that the case needs a political decision;</li><li>▪ Holmås concludes that any possible formula that would solve this case does not need enough funds (endured by ministry and or Lånekassen) that would pressure the national budget and that would need to be addressed by the Parliament's Finance Committee;</li><li>▪ Holmås also concludes that it is mainly the role of <a href="#">Lånekassen</a> to come up with a solution and present it to the <a href="#">Ministry of Education and Research</a>.</li></ul>
- Can the QSS case be solved through the national budget?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ It is difficult to make new changes in the national budget priorities but only if the ministry has been actively involved in finding a solution formula where then the Parliament's Finance Committee can also prioritise;</li><li>▪ Holmås will contact <a href="#">Åsa Elvik</a> (State Secretary) to discuss this case.</li></ul>
- What does Holmås suggest the 3 student organizations to work on?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ NSU and StL to discuss this issue at the Lånekassen Board Meetings and pressure them to come up with a solution that will be approved by the ministry;</li><li>▪ Holmås will contact Astrid Mjærum from Lånekassen to inquire about the challenges of this case.</li></ul>
- Conclusion:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Holmås did not understand why should it be included in the national budget;</li><li>▪ The solution is not realistic to be included in the national budget because most of the priorities have been already agreed upon;</li><li>▪ Lånekassen should be actively involved in finding practical solutions that the ministry would approve.</li></ul>

(from News Article found on ISU website)

## **Finally a solution for quota students**

The Norwegian Minister of Research and Higher Education, HE Ms Tora Aasland came with good news to international students on the Election Day 14 September. It has for many years been a problem that quota students cannot get their scholarship from Lånekassen without a Norwegian personal number and bank account. From next year (2010) they will therefore get a check with a grant to cover living expenses for the two first month of their stay in Norway. The Ministry is pleased to have found a solution to this problem that has been a priority for the students' organisations for a long time. ISU is glad very glad a solution has been found for the quota students, and we would like to thank our cooperation partners, Norsk Studentunion (NSU) and Studentenes Landsforbund (StL) as well as the Ministry of Education and Research for working with us to solve this issue.

Read more (news articles related to the subject):

VG: <http://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/elevavisen/artikkel.php?artid=594419>

TV2: <http://www.tv2nyhetene.no/innenriks/politikk/valg09/studenterfraulandfaarpe/ngervedankomst2905180.html>

Universitas: <http://universitas.no/news/53718/towardsacashsolution/>

H.E. Ms. Tora Aasland  
Minister of Research and Higher Education  
Ministry of Education and Research  
Oslo

Subject: **Finding a Solution for Challenges faced by Quota Scheme Students**

Your Excellency,

The International Students' Union of Norway has been working to improve the conditions of Quota Scheme Students in Norway for many years. It is therefore great news to us that the Ministry of Education and Research has been able to find a solution to the financial challenges the first-year Quota Scheme Students face after their arrival. On behalf of all students, in particular the future Quota Scheme students, we would like to express our gratitude for solving this case.

We acknowledge and appreciate the fruitful dialogue that has been kept between the Ministry and ISU on this issue. We must also thank our partners Norsk Studentunion (NSU) and Studentenes Landsforbund (StL) for keeping the case of the Quota Scheme Students a priority in their political agenda, particularly towards the Norwegian Parliament and the Ministry of Education and Research. Finally, the valuable support and encouragement we received from Mr. Heikki Holmås reassured our trust in the possibilities for a solution during the current administration.

ISU would again like to thank the Ministry for considering our concerns and we are looking forward to further cooperation in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Farshad Tami  
ISU National President (2007–2009)

Cc: Mr. Heikki Holmås, SV at Stortinget  
Ms. Anne Karine Nymoen, NSU  
Ms. Ina Tandberg, StL