



International Students' Union of Norway
(ISU)

**Minutes of ISU Leaders' Meeting in
Telemark,
February 5 - 7, 2010**

Prepared by
George Vlazakis (ISU National President)

Prepared at
February 11, 2010

- Prepared for**
- ISU local branch Presidents
 - Studentenes Landsforbund (StL)
 - Norsk Studentunion (NSU)

Place:University College of Telemark (Porsgrunn)

Date and Time: .February 05 – 07, 2010.....

Participants: ISU National Board (Pr. George Vlazakis, 1st VP Karen Lisperguer-Contreras, 2nd VP Mark Achaw), ISU Telemark (Pr. Sahar Lotfi), ISU UiB (Pr. Mateusz Paprochki), ISU NHH (Pr. Milda Juronite), ISU Bodo (Pr. Hanlin Huang), ISU HiO-OUC (Pr. Felipe Diaz), ISU UiO (Pr. Robert Kaufman), ISU Tromso (Pr. Amalia Rylander), ISU Narvik (Pr. Nikita Konovalov), ISU NTNU (VP Jonathan Brugge), ISU UMB As (VP Wilson Asiimwe), ISU Agder (Treas. Vladimir Kamovich).....

Absences: ISU BI (Jessica Ling/Maria Bourmani), ISU Stavanger (Meria Ronge).....

Purposes of the Meeting: To discuss prioritization of ISU work in the local and national level, tackle challenges of the spring semester 2010 (mainly in the local level), strengthen local cooperation between SP/SO (NSU/StL), SAIH, Spire and establish a culture on new cooperation schemes (ANSA, Red Cross Youth, etc), enhance understanding on Student democracy and representation in the local level as well as enhancing Volunteerism and Inclusion.

The following subjects were discussed / presented:

SUBJECT	COMMENTS
Welcoming speeches (Friday 5/2/10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mrs. Trine Ellefsen, Head of Intl Relations Office, UC Telemark ▪ Christoffer Holt, Chairman, SiTel (Studentsamskipnaden I Telemark) ▪ Mona Grønnerud, President, Student Council, School of Engineering, UC Telemark
ISU National Report presentation (Saturday, 6/2/10)	(Please refer to attached Annex II)
Volunteering presentation (Saturday, 6/2/10)	(Please refer to attached Annex III, as well as to material from Frivillinghet Norge which has been distributed)
Regional Cooperation Groups (RCGs) meeting (Saturday, 6/2/10), (evaluation of past work, future agenda)	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Future activities planned (RCG IV):</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Next ISU Leaders Meeting in April. 30th-May 2nd ,2010. 2. Denmark ship trip (organized by Ås) ca. 15th March 3. International Charity Auction (organized by UiO) around March. 4. Next meeting: February 25, 2010.



SUBJECT	COMMENTS
<p>Local Branch Challenges Presentations (Saturday, 6/2/10)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Narvik: funding, effective communication channels, scholarships' opportunities. ▪ Bergen (UiO): previous debts, management, campus expansion, inclusion and integration, local cooperation with SP, access to other campuses' members. ▪ Bergen (NHH): representation, integration and inclusion, support, student participation, quality of studies, financial matters. ▪ Tromsø: organisational no., constitutional issues, inclusion and integration, UDI prerequisites. ▪ Bodo: finance and scholarships, integration and inclusion, welfare. ▪ Trondheim: cooperation, accommodation, welfare, motivation and human resources. ▪ Telemark: employment and scholarship opportunities, accommodation, language courses, UC requirements (laptop). ▪ Agder: continuity, cooperation, funding, communication with Univ., motivation and involvement, inclusion and integration, promotion and branding. ▪ Oslo (HiO/OUC): guidance, focus, cooperation, past debt, motivation. ▪ Oslo (UiO): integration and inclusion, budget, cooperation, branding, motivation and support. ▪ UMB As: constitutional issues.
<p>Micro-politics - Tackling challenges and strengthening cooperation in the local level (between local democracies and local ISUs) (Saturday, 6/2/10)</p>	<p>Common proposals favoured have been</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - contact SP and HEIs for help and support on various occasions - future political prioritisation locally and regionally - training courses for the new Board. - Celebration –nationally, but with local focus- of an Intl Students in Norway Day on April 21st, 2010.
<p>Leadership presentation and workshop (Sunday, 7/2/10) Student Democracy & representation (Sunday, 7/2/10) Announcements, Discussions, Q & A (Sunday, 7/2/10)</p>	<p>(Team-building based activities, discussion, decision-taking on national political agenda and prioritization) Frifond, next LM & NA organisers, LNU Board member nomination, LNU Exchange, Volunteering award, ISU national site update, etc.</p>



ANNEX I:

POLITICAL WORK PRESENTATION on the national level *February 6th, 2010*

ISSUES RELEVANT TO INTERNATIONALISATION and BETTER EDUCATION

1. Expulsion of international students on nationality and study/research subject campaign (PST case)

Discussion on any news from PST or elsewhere, as well as on the relevant issues (meeting to be arranged at everyone's convenience, presentation of UNSC Resolutions and Norwegian legal regime, findings provided from other countries on ways of dealing with the issue, implications for norwegian students deciding to work abroad, future steps and expectations, etc.)

2. Quota scheme (new + old case/keep up):

A new issue seems to have come up very recently in NHH regarding Quota funding, which will not be (anymore) available for any time spent on exchange.

Background information: The Quota Programme awards NOK85,000 per year - with an additional amount to cover travel expenses - to students from certain developing countries that will be studying in Norway. Various requirements must be met before someone can be considered eligible for a Quota Bursary and only a limited number are made available - through the SIU and Lånekassen - to each Norwegian university. (Full details on the Quota Programme can be found here: www.siu.no/en/Programme-overview/Quota-Scheme).

As ISU (and SIU) have been recently notified by a group of Master students, a ruling has recently been made to the effect that Quota students will not have access to their funding for any semester spent abroad. (For example, if you spend one semester on exchange, you will not receive the NOK42,500 that would otherwise have been allocated to you.) The group's understanding is that this money will not be available AT ALL. (In other words, you will not receive this money after you return from exchange.) This is new ruling - that, according to the students, has not applied to Quota students in previous years, contravenes the ethos of the Quota Programme and the efforts for better education and does not seem to provide Norwegian and international students (eligible under the Quota scheme funding) an equal footing. Finally, according to the students, their school (NHH), is in support of their stance and has written an appeal to SIU of its own.

3. INCLUSION - Mandatory provision for Norwegian students that at least one/two (obligatory) taught subject(s) of their academic curriculum -for both Bachelor and Master courses- to be undertaken (and examined) -exclusively and fully- in english:

ISU strongly emphasises that such solution would favour both Norwegians and international students, since (a) on the one hand the latter will be facilitated with a greater availability of academic resources in english (since more material is going to be published and translated in english), resulting in the quality of courses and programmes for foreign students to be developed and improved (=better education), as well as favour a better social and academic integration and inclusion of international students (please refer to NSU's Input to the White Paper on the Interantionalisation of Education of 4/3/2008, found at www.isu-norway.no/docs/INFO_NSU_INTER_07_EN_NO.pdf), but also (b) on the other hand it will



provide the Universities with incentives to facilitate Norwegian students to go abroad as part of their academic curriculum (and thus lead to the approval and study abroad period as a natural part of a degree), thus also facilitating the relevant procedures, and in addition, will result in the promotion of an increased internationalisation in research through increased citation of Norwegian research (because of more results being published in English and/or because of an increased international co-authorship). It goes without saying that the advantages of such a campaign are obvious also in terms of satisfying the future needs of the Norwegian labour market/working life/society.

ISSUES of FACILITATION OF STUDYING WHILE RESIDING IN NORWAY

1. Social security number and (b) VISA for international students campaign:

A two-fold campaign intended (a) to face the issue/challenge faced by all international students arriving in Norway, who -despite the fact that there is an urgent and basic need of getting access to a bank account, financial institutions, university and other services-, do not receive a social security number earlier than a month and a half from the application date (processing time of fully completed applications in Oslo is -according to the instructions provided to students- 3 weeks, after the first 3 weeks needed for the issuance of a residence permit). Additionally, in case the application is not been processed for some reason, the students are not being informed (not even electronically, through an e-mail), thus aggravating the feelings of stress and anxiety for students (many of whom are staying for a short period of time, 6 to 10 months). Finally, the legal regime which provides the possibility to international students staying less than 6 months to receive a provisional number (called D-number), is also very slow (needs also 3 weeks processing time), and is not supported practically by banks (which avoid easing students apply for such number, as they are supposed to).

And in addition, the problem of VISA issuance for a limited period of only a year, challenge especially relevant to quota scheme students who are being accepted to undertake a 2-year master course study.

2. Housing and language courses guaranteed to students from the first semester of their study and for a year - more inclusive/better allocation of students in student accommodations:

The concentration of international students at the Samskipnaden challenges student housing and becomes problematic with respect to integration. The housing-issue, which is important for international students, is a very high priority for StL and NSU at the time.

Background information: The Norwegian government has granted 1.000 new housing units for students on the last two state budgets, and it is of our interest that this investment in student housings continue – seeing that there were 14.000 students waiting to receive access to student housings this August. Only 14 per cent of the total number of students receive access to student housings in Norway today. The result is that they have to rent apartments on the private market. When thousands of students are forced into the private market, the prizes increase, and students are even worse off spending most of their income on the rent (and of course they have to work in order to have a sufficient income).

Additionally, housing is important to be dealt in view of avoiding segregation and increasing the options by building student housings with a wide range of price levels in the same



residential area (see NSU's Input to the White Paper on the Interantionalisation of Education of 4/3/2008, found at www.isu-norway.no/docs/INFO_NSU_INTER_07_EN_NO.pdf).

3. Mature students campaign:

Students -both Norwegian and international- over the age of 30 ('mature students') are being called upon to contribute a higher amount of money in order to receive same services as the rest of the (non-mature) students, especially in transportation fees, and banking services. The fact is that, mature students face already higher expenses (most of the times, because of a different marital/personal status), and thus more financial obligations), and the question is whether such legal regime/policy treatment is being justified and should be continued.

NSU/StL have recently adopted a Resolution, which are planning to communicate it to their local Commune, through the local branches (the Resolution can be found at www.nsu.no/DesktopModules/ReadNews.aspx?ModuleID=400&ItemID=2595&tabID=593&subtabID=0).

ORGANISATIONAL ISSUES for/of ISU

1. Additional funding (for better representation) in the local level:

FRIFOND, Institution, local Student democracy (in progress)

2. STUDENT DEMOCRACY and REPRESENTATION - *More (effective) cooperation between the local Student Parliaments and local ISU's, as well as closer cooperation with SAIH, Spire, ANSA (both in local as well as in national level):*

In many cases, local branches (NSU/StL and ISU) express their concern regarding the lack of more/effective cooperation between NSU/StL and ISU. Additionally, and within the same possibility of local Student Parliament's providing some basic training regarding (a) important political issue(s) to be handled during a semester, (b) basic contact information and guidance on better and more effective organization of social events, based on the Student Parliament's experience, (c) funding possibilities and availability, and (d) expectations of local Student Parliaments by local ISU Presidents/branches and hopes for each semester.

Furthermore, ways of producing closer cooperation among SAIH, Spire and ANSA would be among ISU's interests and targets.

Finally, representativeness of the members and effectiveness in the activities provided in the local level needs to be addressed and tackled.

3. *VAT-return for NGO's and voluntary organizations campaign (in cooperation with Frivillinghet Norge-FN):*

An effort of FN to abolish (or, at least, to reduce) tax percentage/amount paid by voluntary organisations in respect of provided services, which ISU would definitely intend to join and support.

4. *Discussion and opinions about ISU's efforts in updating the ISU Continuity Handbook and/or Guide for Board members and/or Ultimate Study Guide, as well possibility of contribution from NSU, StL, SAIH, ANSA, Spire, Frivillinghet, and other organisations*



(visitOslo, visitNorway, use-it, etc.).

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY campaign

Partners common campaign on an International Day:

An idea has emerged on the possibility of Partners (NSU, StL, SAIH, Spire, ANSA) participation on a common campaign based on a officially/internationally accepted and characterized day ('International day', such as the the Human Rights Global Day on the 10th/12, or the AIDS awareness day on 1st/12, or the Students Day on the 17th/11 of every year). The aim behind such idea is to strengthen the student body's awareness and participation in student organizations, through a fun-to-attend campaign, as well as increased and more visible cooperation among student organizations.

ANNEX II:

ISU NATIONAL REPORT PRESENTATION *February 7th, 2010*
(no. of pages: 09)

ANNEX III:

VOLUNTEERING PRESENTATION *February 7th, 2010*
(no. of pages: 07)

