



ISU NORWAY EXECUTIVE BOARD REPORT 2017/2018, written in April 2018

- **Financial report**

In June the ISU Norway Executive Board (EB) received a total amount of 1.275.00 NOK from the Ministry of Education (KD) which was an increase of only 35, 000 NOK compared to the previous allocation. ISU also received 283,670kr from the National Council for Norway's Child and Youth Organizations (LNU) for Frifond distribution to the local branches. With the limited budget ISU will not be able to achieve all its projects and targets as indicated in the proposed budget and will have to find ways to manage the available resources with focus to the basic priorities first. Besides, this poses a challenge for the EB and NB to keep thinking of possibilities through which ISU can raise more revenue for future growth. The Executive board has already distributed and distributed Frifond money to the local branches that have complied with the process so far. A representative of LNU attended the Kick Off in September to train leaders on LNU funding. A few branches such as HIOA and Agder had not collected their Frifond allocation by the set deadline of December 2017, so the money was redistributed to the active branches.

- **Career development**

ISU-Norway believes that academic knowledge coupled with practical professional exposure is highly needed to prepare one for the transition into the Norwegian job market and beyond. It is in this light that we shall seek to ensure that we shall provide forums for international students to access career development opportunities. We are in the process of reaching out to embassies to keep tabs on possible internship opportunities. Besides the NP met with the President of Industri Energi and agreed further co-operation regarding international students` labor rights awareness. In this light, an official from Industri Energi attended the ISU LM2 in Bergen to speak about the Norwegian labor industry and working rights. Moreover, we have continued lobbying the embassies for internship opportunities for international students.

- **Visibility**

The executive has been worked on maintaining and increasing visibility of ISU on social platforms (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) to ensure our local branches and all stakeholders are properly informed about the work of ISU both nationally and locally. Other forums include publishing blogs articles in our website as well as sending articles for publishing to local Norwegian press. In July, we published an article in Khrono to emphasize the position of ISU on the need to maintain free education for all. We have contacted both NRK and Aftenposten who are major media companies to establish a working relationship which would enable ISU to share information across mainstream electronic and print media. In November, the National President published an article in Universitas about the need to advance internationalization further in Norway. This was followed by an written interview and a video recorded by the Center for internationalization (SIU) for the “Study in Norway” website. In January 2018, ISU has partnered with NSO in publishing an article opposing the recent unfair visa fee increment by the Norwegian Directorate of immigration (UDI). Recently in late March, we have published an article in Khrono regarding protecting international students against labor exploitation after a few incidents were reported to us. In general, we have maintained good relations with both Universitas and Khrono who have continually supported our work. It has however been more difficult to get audience from the mainstream Norwegian media outlets.

- **Quality of education**

ISU was invited by the ministry of higher education and research to present inputs on the experiences of international student when studying in Norway as part of an OECD working group on Norwegian higher education. Quality of education is a critical aspect and ISU will continue collaborating with stakeholders such as NOKUT and Universities to improve the quality of education in Norway. The recent report from NOKUT reveal that interactions between Norwegians and international students continues to be minimal and this is a challenge to internationalization at home. More efforts are therefore needed to reduce this gap. ISU will work closely with university administrations to lobby for more internationalization and inclusion of international students admitted in Norway. In this respect, we have held meeting with rectors and pro-rectors of UIO, NMBU and HIOA. In November 2017 we met the rectorate team of University of Bergen besides meeting officials

of SIU in Bergen. As a result, ISU was included as plenary contributors in the SIU conference in March 2018.

- **Political work**

The previous board worked to establish contact with UDI to address issues of visa renewal for international students. The current board has established continued dialogue with UDI and other agencies towards lobbying for re-considered of the current legislation regarding immigration procedures. In this light, an official from the UDI attended the LM1 in November to give a workshop on immigration procedures but also respond to questions from international leaders. The representative promised to investigate issues raised by delegates. It is therefore very disappointing that the study visa fees have been reviewed upwards by 65% which is completely against the spirit of internationalization in Norway. In this regard, ISU through the political committee released a statement opposing the measure and has since engaged NSO and other stakeholders on the way forward. Regarding the Visa issue we have received significant solidarity from the Norwegian Student Organization who have passed meaningful resolutions regarding immigration, housing and banking for international students. At this year's national assembly, we have organized a demonstration at the Stortinget and hope that we shall have media to cover the event. During their recent NA, NSO passed resolutions on visa, housing and financial demands by UDI to make it more flexible for international students coming to Norway. We expect the ISU NA will further pass resolutions and the work plan that will ensure the political work remain strengthened in ISU.

- **ISU partnerships**

ISU continues to have mutually beneficial partnership and collaboration with its partners and other stakeholders. This year ISU had meetings with leaders of all our partner organizations such as AIESEC, SAIH, Changemaker, Industri Energi, NSO, Spire and ESN among others. In this regard we participate in the commercialization of higher education campaign by SAIH in March 2018. Industri Energi sent an official to our LM2 in Bergen while Changemaker participated in our Kick off camp in September 2017. ISU partners have assured us of their support especially on political issues such as Visa fee and introduction of tuition fees in Norway.

- **Local branches**

The local branches are the back bone of a union since without them the union would not stand. In August and September, most branches held elections and now have new leadership teams overseeing their progress. Most of the new leaders attended the ISU kick off camp recently. In October and November 2017, branches such as Narvik, UIO, Bergen and Trondheim held their local branch elections. By December all branches had conducted elections. Nevertheless, there have been challenges regarding the stability of branches such as Haugesund and Lillehammer while Bø have been completely inactive so far. During the leadership meeting 2 in Bergen, delegates voted Volda, UIO and NMBU as the best 3 branches for ISU due to their well organized and exciting events. Check the detailed report of the local branches from the Union Development Officer.

- **ISU Kick off camp 2017**

Following a vote by the national board in August 2017, the ISU executive called for a vote from the local branches to decide about the kick off camp. More than two thirds of local branches voted for the Kick Off. This year's Kick off camp was held on the weekend of 29th Sept-1st October at Oslo and Akershus University College in Oslo. Almost all local branches were represented at the Kick Off with a few branches missing to send a delegate citing lack of elections for new board members or in active branch. It is our hope that the NA will approve the Kick Off to be an annual event.

- **ISU Leadership Meeting 1, 2017**

In November 3rd to 5th, 2017, ISU held a successful first annual leadership meeting. Among the invited guest included the rector at Nord University, a representative of UDI and the deputy head of the higher education department at SIU. Besides, delegates had fun moments, local branch presentation and more importantly all ISU committees held their elections.

- **ISU Leadership Meeting 2, 2018**

The ISU LM2 was held from 23rd-25th February at the University of Bergen. Exciting presentations from the local branches, coupled by speeches from Rector Dag Rune and an

official from SIU were among the highlight of the meeting. Moreover, the delegates voted in Amine Fquihi as the new Political Affairs Officer for this semester after the resignation of the former. Delegates also formed a constitutional committee which was mandated to work on the review of the ISU constitution to make it more relevant and clear. The NA will decide whether to approve the changes or not.

- **Inclusion**

In November 2017, ISU during the international students' day coordinated the Free Hugs for Inclusion campaign in which most of our local branches went out to give coffee and snack to fellow international students and university community to enhance student interaction in higher education institutions in Norway. As the executive we hope this will continue in our branches in this year's day of the international students.

- **ISU committees**

During the LM1, ISU conducted elections for all committees. The political and elections committee have been significantly active while the editorial committee became inactive. The political committee held constant meeting and their highlight was the statement against UDI visa fee increment in January 2018. The election committee also met to develop election guidelines.

ISU Norway Executive Board 2017-2018

Eric Kimathi (National President)

Amine Fquihi -political Affairs Officer

Md Shifat Ullah (Union Development Officer)