



International Students Union of Norway (ISU)

Establishment of ISU in Norway

The International Students Union (ISU) has up till now represented the international students studying at five universities in Norway: University of Oslo, University of Bergen, University of Trondheim, Tromsø University and Agricultural University at Ås and two university colleges: University College of Oslo and Narvik. ISU did not have any local branches at the university colleges in Norway (i.e. Høgskoler) till the NA, which was held in Tromsø in October 2003 when the University College of Oslo and Narvik were formally declared as ISU branches. Though ISU has its branches in Oslo and Narvik, there are still a few important institutions in Norway where we do not have local branches and thus these international students are not represented in Norway at the moment.

As the ISU began the process of getting financially independent from the Norwegian Students Union (NSU), it was agreed that the ISU should engage a co-operation with Studentenes Landsforbund (StL) and establish new local branches at the StL institutions. In general, it would be prudent and reasonable if these organisations worked together for their common interests. StL institutions are also higher education institutions and they also have international students.

It was primary representatives of the Department of Education who encouraged ISU to begin this co-operation with StL in order to succeed in receiving a direct financial assistance from the Department of Education.

In this respect, ISU and StL have made an important step forward:

National ISU and StL signed an agreement in 2002 on co-operation. According to the agreement “ISU are obliged to work actively for local branches on StL’s member institutions, and StL are committed to inform all local StL unions about ISU and to encourage the unions to start local ISU branches”.

ISU continues working on establishing ISU local branches in University Colleges in Norway. ISU distinguished the viable institutions/university colleges, which are our target in establishing ISU branches and divided them into 2 groups:

Group A: Group A consists of the colleges located in the towns where there is an already existing ISU branch. The existing ISU branch will then be used to establish the ISU in the university college through collaboration, share/exchange of knowledge, skills, facilities, etc. The existing ISU branch will take up the responsibility of the establishment of the ISU branch in the university college. The following university colleges fall in this category:

Høgskolen i Sør-Trøndelag (Trondheim)
Høgskolen i Bergen (Bergen)
Høgskolen i Tromsø

Group B: Group B consists of colleges in towns where there are no ISU branches (i.e. no universities). National ISU and StL will work with these institutions:

Høgskolen i Agder (Kristiansand)
Høgskolen i Stavanger (Stavanger)
Høgskolen i Telemark (Porsgrunn)
Høgskolen i Østfold (Halden)

Though it was formally declared that **Narvik** had ISU branch, there was no existing branch at that time: there was no ISU board and no activities. With the help of Elena Shelygina (International Coordinator in Høgskolen i Narvik) the ISU board was elected on the 29th of January and started working quite efficiently. ISU-Narvik organized Russian week which was a big and successful event I went to Narvik within 'Russian Week' in order to explain the board about ISU and see how the board is working.

I started working on establishing of ISU in other University colleges from January 2004. I made the following steps:

1. After Bård Mjåland made first contacts with the College Universities and I have sent the information to all the universities in group A and B. The constitution of Norway and local ISU-Tromsø Constitution were sent together with the plan/first steps of establishing of ISU.
2. After that I have contacted them in one week time by phone, explained one more time about the ISU
3. After getting responses I continued contacts with the Colleges.

The situation in the University Colleges according to the groups:

Group A:

Høgskolen i Sør-Trøndelag does not have 326 foreign students I was told instead they have only 22 students. But anyway I have sent them information about ISU and we agreed that the president of ISU-Trondheim will contact them and try to integrate the students from the College into ISU-Trondheim system. For doing this they have to get e-mail addresses of the students and try to arrange a meeting where the representative from Høgskolen i Sør-Trøndelag will be chosen and get the seat in the ISU-Trondheim student board. Thus we can see how the things are going in this school and what problems the international students face there. I have contacted Jose and he has agreed to work on it.

Høgskolen i Bergen and ISU-Bergen University already work together.

Høgskolen i Tromsø. I have contacted the international coordinator from Høgskolen and we agreed on integrating International Students into our system.

Problem: the main problem is that University Colleges in group A don't have a lot of international students and they (Administration) do not see any need in establishing ISU in the Colleges when the students can be just integrating into the ISU of the local University. Another problem is e-mail addresses; it is quite difficult to get them.

Group B:

Høgskolen i Stavanger. I was invited to Stavanger by Anne-Marie (vice-leader in the local parliament) on the 10th of February. I had a meeting with the international students and Stavanger student board. I informed the international students about the ISU and with the help of Anne-Marie we held General Assembly the same day (I was the chairperson). So, ISU Stavanger branch was established the same day☺. The student board is represented by 8 people. We have managed to apply for money to SiTo the same evening. After the elections I had one more meeting with the board, where I explained the way ISU should work, the main ideas etc. I should mention that international students already had something similar to ISU (just informal meeting organised by active students), but inside a small group of students, now they have an opportunity to involve more students into it. I am keeping in touch with them.

Høgskolen i Agder. (Kristiansand). While I was down in the South I made a trip to Kristiansand on the 11th of February. I had 3 meetings (with International Office, Student board and International Students). The situation is that International Office is doing the same job as ISU (organization of social, cultural life). International Office showed worry that ISU might over take the responsibilities International office has. But still they agreed on establishment of ISU if the students show the interest. So, after that I had a meeting with the Student board, they accepted the idea of having ISU in Høgskolen i Agder and said that they would help in establishing of it if we need any. They are also ready to admit one representative from ISU into the Student parliament (like it is in ISU-Tromsø). After that I had a meeting with the International Students. International office has problems with e-mail address and with informing the student via mailing list, so I met a few students and they showed interest in ISU.

Høgskolen i Telemark. The situation is the same as in Høgskolen i Agder. International Office is very active and they are sure that they are taking a good care of international students. But I am going to contact the Students Parliament now (before I talked to the International Office)

Høgskolen i Østfold. I contacted Anne-Mette Dalum – international co-ordinator. As I understood Høgskolen i Østfold is interested in having ISU branch there. Both Student board and Administration is looking positively on it. Anne-Mette Dalum was invited to attend National Assembly as she can get more information about the ISU.

Problem: Colleges in group B have the same problem as the colleges in group A: they do not know how many international students (some students are registered as Norwegians) are in the College and how to get their e-mail addresses.

We have also contacted **Norges Handelshøyskoles** which will fall into group B. I have sent them information, waiting when they discuss it with the NSU representative.

This is the situation with establishment of ISU in the university Colleges.

The main problems they have:

1. Informing the International Students

(which can be solved by following:

- E-mail addresses (which is a problem)
- Local student newspaper
- Presentation of ISU within introductory week

- Leaflets around the campus
- Informing the students on some common events)

2. *Continuity*. Most of the students in the University Colleges are Erasmus students who study in Norway only for one semester. But there are also some Quota Students and students who immigrated to Norway. The solution I propose for this problem is the Election on the posit of the President or/and Vice-President those students who are staying in the country more than one year, that they can present ISU in the beginning of the academic year and work on integrating more foreign students into ISU.

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