

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' UNION OF NORWAY

MINUTES ISU NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OSLO OCT 7-9th 2005

Abbreviations:

NA: National Assembly

AOB: Any other business

NP: National President

VP: Vice President

NSec: National Secretary

NSU: Norwegian Student Union

StL: The Norwegian Association of Students (Studentenes Landsforbund)

SAIH: Students and Academics International Help Fond

HiN: Narvik University College

HiO: Oslo University College

MiB: Council: MSc in International Business Council

NHH: School of Economics and Business Administration

NTNU: Norwegian University of Science and Technology

UiB: University of Bergen

UiO: University of Oslo

UiS: University of Stavanger

UiT: University of Tromsø

UMB: Norwegian University of Life Sciences

1.0 Reports and Orientation Cases

1.1-1.3: Arlene Pearce, ISU President, welcomed the assembly at 10.20am, which was 20 minutes after the time schedule due to technical problems. She then introduced the chair of the meeting, Stian Sand Christensen, who was accepted by the NA and also welcomed the delegates. For a list of participants, see *appendix 1*.

Arlene then introduced the meeting plan and procedure. Stian then explained who has voting, speech and proposal rights and explained the arrangement of showing the two respective sides of the voting card for comments (1 minute) or statements (2 minutes).

16 of the 19 delegates with voting rights were present, which ensured the necessary quorum of 80%.

1.4: Branch Reports

The branches presented their respective reports on Friday evening, many using power point. The reports focused on the previous and upcoming activities of the branches, as well as on their structure and composition of members. Since the two UiB delegates did not arrive until later that night, this report was postponed to Saturday. *Appendix 2*.

1.5 President's Report

Arlene reported on her activities since the last NA, and on the ISU issues that she feels are the most important in the time to come. In particular she focused on quota students issues, how to improve the ISU financial situation, the UDI case of last term and the close cooperation with NSU and StL, which has resulted in several joint proposals since the last NA. She also elaborated on the expansion project of including new branches; that NHH-MiB was welcomed as a new ISU branch at the last NA and that an expansion seminar is under planning for the winter.

The president then mentioned that she had had to be away a lot during the summer, and that she had to rely on the local branches at meetings etc. She finally addressed the structure/role of ISU National:

- The constitution was amended last assembly, so that a member of ISU national now is a local branch, and not an individual.
- Lobbying on the national level – that NSU is ready to provide the help and guidance that we need.
- ISU nationally will step in to help solving internal issues that branches are not able to cope with themselves.
- She also noted that the quality of the branches has improved substantially

See *appendix 3* for the full NP report.

1.5b: Vice President's Report

Elena Shelygina emphasised the two resolutions that she partook in writing last term: One on changes in the rules on establishing tourist visa and one on residence permits. She also informed the NA that in the UDI case, where there were sudden changes in the regulations regarding students' visa application, so that a full record of bank transactions for the previous six months were required, her Narvik-branch made it to the local newspaper. This resulted in UDI admitting to invasion of privacy, and hence changed the rule.

Elena is now leader of the Narvik Student Parliament. See *appendix 4* for her report.

1.6: Secretary's Report

Hanna Holmelin told the NA that she was employed as secretary in March 2005, and that this is the second assembly that she partakes in organizing. She explained that her position is mainly administrative, since she is hired and not elected. She still works closely with the rest of the national board.

Hanna emphasised two aspects of her job; firstly the administrative part of arranging assemblies, financial responsibilities, reports, projects and issues coming up, and secondly communication. This latter part comprises maintaining the links between ISU nationally and locally, as well as between ISU and NSU/StL and the Norwegian state administration.

Since the last assembly, Hanna has been filling in for Arlene when that has proved necessary; she has been present at the local ISU elections at UiO and at UMB-Ås, met with the international officers in several of the NSU branches, and participated at various NSU arrangements. She was also grateful for the close weekly contact with StL and NSU, who provides ISU with a space at their office. See *appendix 5* for the full NSec report.

1.7: Presentation of Presidential Candidates

The two candidates to the presidential election were Ramil Aliyev, previous VP of ISU Tromsø, and Eton Williams, last year's president of ISU UiO. Each had about five minutes on the Friday to present themselves, their interest and dedication to ISU and their visions for the next year. Arlene Pearce did not run for re-election as she has already moved to the United States.

1.8 StL Report

StL was represented by their president, Øyvind Bakke, who informed the NA that StL work with lobbying and the media on a national level to represent students at most of the city colleges in Norway. He mentioned the two joint resolutions between ISU and StL that were accepted at their national congress, and told the NA that though cooperation between ISU and StL has not been really close until now, there is hope that this will change as ISU expands to more StL schools.

1.9 NSU Report

NSU was also represented by their president, Jørn A. Henriksen, who told the NA that NSU represents all students at the universities in Norway. There are five elected students working full time for NSU, and as they provide ISU with a space at their office, cooperation is close. NSU also guarantees ISU's existence, by granting us the rest up till 200 000kr if we receive less than this sum from the government. They are concerned about ISU's stability, and support us in our wish to be independent.

Among other issues, NSU work on student welfare, such as student housing, health and dental care, and financial issues such as travel costs and student loans. The issues they address often directly concern international, as well as Norwegian students.

2.0 Organizational Cases

2.1 Proposals for ISU National Policy and Procedures

a) Order of Business for National Assemblies

Arlene introduced her distributed suggestion to a proposed Order of Business for national assemblies, which is based on ISU's special needs with inspiration from other organizations. As ISU is now growing rapidly, the need for official procedures of the meetings increase accordingly.

It was proposed to establish a working group and thus postpone the matter, and this was voted on:

VOTING: On discussing the OofB at this assembly:

13 in favour, 1 against, 1 absent

VOTING: On voting on the OofB Saturday, as opposed to Sunday:

9 in favour, 6 against. The NA decided to vote on the matter the same day.

Arlene thus went through the proposed text point by point, see *appendix 6*. Discussions evolved around questions such as:

- Proposals to OofB must not be in conflict with the constitution
- Appointing the chair person
- Open and closed meetings
- Change of branch representative to NA

- Delegates with voting rights are responsible for being present during votings and obtaining the necessary information when this is discussed. Abstaining is always an alternative, but it is important that there is a quorum, and that the numbers are correct.
- Rules for discussions and voting
- Delegates' expenses

Several proposals for changes came in, see *appendix 7* which lists all incoming proposals at the NA. There was a vote on whether to accept the document as a basis, and consider the proposed changes on Sunday:

**VOTING: On accepting the proposed OofB as a basis:
16 in favour, carried.**

b) Procedure for accepting new branches

Elena introduced the topic, focusing on what ISU national and the local branches can do for expansion, and the rules that might apply to such procedures. Her main points were:

Nationally:

- Find the relevant information on potential new branches
- Prepare ISU documents and formalities, and create a standard presentation of ISU
- Meet/speak with local resources such as the student parliament, the international office and representatives of the potential branch.
- Provide a set of examples for the potential branch to follow when starting up or joining ISU, such as a branch constitution, useful guidelines and ideas, applications for office space, economic support, cooperation with local student democracy etc.
- Observe the new branches in the starting process, aid them when necessary

Locally:

- Focus on involving local student's democracy
- Secure wide representation of both nationalities and of students on the different programs

A discussion followed, which centred around the following issues, with no final resolves:

- That ISU need to be open to all international students at the school
- Whether or not and how ISU should be integrated in the name of the branches (this is a particular concern in cases of already existing groups of international students). One possibility is to include ISU in conjunction with the other name.
- The possibility of having subcommittees to represent Erasmus, Norad, Quota or self-financing students respectively, as these may have varying interests and concerns.

2.2 Consideration of HiM as a future ISU branch

Fell out due to lack of information. ISU National will work on gaining information on and contacts within the City College of Molde in the months to come.

2.3 National Constitution

Arlene informed the assembly that since ISU is rapidly changing, our National Constitution is in need of a thorough revision if it is to reflect ISU today. This process was started at the NA in April, but as 60 proposals for amendments then came in during the meeting, this proved to be too complex and time-consuming to be dealt with at an ordinary NA. Arlene therefore

suggested that the NA agree on procedures for future amendments; 1) proposals for constitutional amendments should be in at a stated time before each assembly; 2) the NA should appoint a constitutional revision committee who will go thoroughly through the document in the months to come, and present their suggestions for changes to the NA next spring; and 3) informed that there are certain problems in the constitution that require some interim solutions for the next assembly, and thus urged the NA to vote on procedures for these matters for the next assembly.

The NA agreed to appoint such a committee, and the following discussion centred around the size, who should be part of it, whether to allow non-delegates in and on the specific mandate that this should be granted. Jørn kindly offered NSU's assistance on a consultant basis, and reminded the NA of the trade-off between efficiency and democracy.

1) Decide the size of the committee

VOTING: On having five members in the constitutional revision committee.

11 in favour, 3 opposed, 3 abstaining

VOTING: On allowing only delegates onto the committee

11 in favour, 5 opposed.

VOTING: On choosing the committee members on Saturday (as opposed to Sunday)

4 in favour, 11 against, 1 abstain.

2.4 Financial Report 2005 and Budget 2006

Hanna presented the procedures of handling ISU finances, before turning to the budget for 2006 and the financial report for estimated spending in 2005. See *appendix 8*. This is a revised and realistic version which differs from the budget presented to the NA in April; it is based on the NOK 143 000 that ISU actually received over the state budget instead of on the NOK 300 000 that we applied for. ISU now operates with a budget of NOK 200 000, since NSU is kindly guaranteeing our existence by providing us with the rest up till this sum (NOK 57 000 this year) if we receive less from the government.

Hanna stressed that ISU has been running with an alarming deficit of approximately NOK 30 000 pr year for several years, and that the situation is turning irresponsible. Both she and Arlene hence urged the NA to decide on means to balance the budget.

The following debate thus addressed possible solutions to this problem. In particular the organizing of NA's was discussed, since this is a major post on the budget which is likely to increase as new branches are welcomed. Hanna informed the NA that for this assembly, the estimated costs are about NOK 25 000 – 30 000 in plane tickets, NOK 7000 for accommodation and NOK 8000 in food. Ideas centred around:

Local branches contributing to the cost of NAs:

- By paying travel costs – one way or both – themselves, since travel by far is the main cost of arranging NAs.
- By a fee for each participant to the NA
- By membership fees (most non-profit organisations receives membership fees from their local branches)

Arlene then pointed out that if so, the branches should state this cost in the budget, so that it is counted in when applying for funding locally. The NA was also agreed that there should be solutions for branches that are unable to find this money.

Fundraising: Both locally and centrally.

Cutting costs: Already the delegates are lodged in hostels instead of hotels, like they were only a year ago. However, the NA is now three days instead of the previous two, and the extra night is costly. Even cheaper options like sports halls and cabins were discussed. Though this is an undesirable solution, we may also be forced to arrange the NAs only in the Oslo-area for a while, as travel is far cheaper to Oslo than to other cities in Norway.

From these discussions, the voting came in the following order:

**1) Introducing some kind of a fee (either participant or membership-based)
OR**

2) Some kind of cut of costs (branches paying for accommodation or travel themselves)

VOTE: 12 in favour of a fee, 5 in favour of a cut, 0 abstain.

We thus introduce a fee

1) An annual membership fee

OR

2) A specific participant's fee for attending NA's

VOTE: 5 in favour of an annual membership fee, 12 in favour of a participants fee, 0 abstain

We thus introduce a participant's fee

1) On having a fixed fee

OR

2) On having a certain percent of the branch's budget

VOTE: 15 in favour of a fixed fee, 0 in favour of a percent, 2 abstain

We are thus introducing a fixed participant's fee

On adding a clause stating that branches that after substantive and documented efforts to find funding, still are not able to pay the whole or parts of the fixed participant's fee, may apply for help from ISU National.

VOTE: 15 in favour, 1 opposed, 1 abstain

It was clarified that this arrangement, as well as the amount agreed on, is open for discussion at each national assembly, and may therefore easily be changed if future NAs should find this desirable. It was also proposed to have a revote on the issue of fixed fees vs percentage of the budget, but 16 of the 17 delegates present voted against this.

Size of participant's fee: Three suggested options: NOK 800, 1000 or 1200.

1) NOK 800

2) NOK 1200

VOTE: 8 in favour of NOK 800, 9 in favour of NOK 1200, 0 abstain

1) NOK 1000

2) NOK 1200

VOTE: 14 in favour of NOK 1000, 3 in favour of NOK 1200, 0 abstain

We are introducing a fixed participant's fee for NA's of NOK 1000 pr delegate.

Budget:

On approving the revised budget of 2005 as it is

VOTE: 17 in favour, 1 abstain

**On approving the budget of 2006, including the new income of participant's fee
Unanimous in favour**

2.5 ISU Expansion Conference

Arlene explained that ISU aims at representing all international students in Norway. To reach this goal, expansion is a major priority, and she told the assembly that instead of focusing at one potential new branch at the time, we intend to invite international students and other representatives from all interested Institutions of Higher Education in Norway to an Expansion Seminar during the winter of 2006.

For this project, ISU has applied to StL for funding, and the application was first approved of by the assembly. *See appendix 9.*

2.6 ISU Plan 2006

This was covered during the President's report. *See appendix 3*

2.7 Approval of Minutes from the last Assembly

The minutes were unanimously approved of by the NA. *See appendix 10.*

2.8 Role of ISU at a National Level

This was also covered during the President's report.

3.0 Political Cases

3.1 Increasing Government Support for ISU

This issue fell out due to time constraints, but indirectly the point was touched upon during the assembly. ISU, NSU and StL are funded from the same post in the state budget, and we all thus work for this post to be expanded. As for the internal distribution within this post, both StL and NSU has promised to back us up whenever needed in terms of lobbying.

3.2 Quota update

As there was no particular quota news at the time of the assembly, this post fell out. The quota situation was however discussed in the beginning of the assembly, as the MiB-NHH branch forwarded this as a local issue. *See point 3.3.*

3.3 Issues forwarded by the local branches

Ås (UMB):

- VISA fees – these are high and there should be a fund set aside by the Ministry of Education for students who find this difficult to pay for. Arlene thus mentioned that this may be possible and that we are still pushing for the abolishment of these fees as they didn't use to exist.

- If direct funding from ISU to the local branches is possible. Arlene replied that the branches actually have more money than ISU national has, but we can help in finding alternative sources for funding.
- Quota and private personal number waiting times are too long – the quota students aren't able to receive funding until they receive this number and private students can't open a bank account. The President said she wants to take this to the national level, and the NA agreed to make this a priority.
- Leadership seminars – possibility of having someone go to individual branches for leadership training

Tromsø:

- An international student is in trouble with the police, and was imprisoned suspected of drug trafficking or terrorism because of having too much money in his bank account. ISU needs more information, and will follow up on this case.
- Work permit fees – and just as with the VISA fees, ISU works for total abolishment of such costs that did not use to exist.
- Bus fees for students is 450NOK per month – very high
- Quota students want to have extra support for health and dental issues (President mentioned that it depends on how well the program is funded in order to see whether they can get increased funding for these issues, the quota program is not as well funded as others)
- Possibility of organizing trips nationally

Stavanger:

- Voting rights in Student Parliament – feel that international students should have a seat and voting rights in all local student parliaments. A resolution will be written on this.
- International students studying in Norwegian have troubles following as classes or obligatory readings are frequently in Nynorsk, Danish or Swedish instead of Bokmål.

Bergen (UiB):

- There should be a national internet forum for all the branches to keep in touch and present their issues and progress. Tromsø volunteered to arrange this. Great idea and great initiative!

Bergen (MiB-NHH)

- Quota student problems: Students were accepted at the school and told that they 'may' receive quota grants, and in the end, some of them did not get one and ended up with a self-financing status which they cannot afford. The NA agreed to follow up on this, but we need more information. Arlene also suggested that the student parliament gets involved.

Oslo (UiO)

- Wanted to make a note that we are guests in Norway and that we need to keep this in consideration – we need to earn this respect
- Should publish something that we can leave in Norway, like a free academic journal each semester where academic achievements by international students are published. This will make it visible how international students contribute to

the local academic environment, and it would prove a factual result of the internationalization process within Norway. A proposal was submitted which never came to a voting due to time constraints, but this will be further discussed at the next NA. UiO intends to start up this project in the meantime at its own initiative.

4.0 Elections and Appointments

4.1 Election of National President 2005-2006

The two candidates had two minutes each for their closing presentations, after which the floor was opened for direct questions to the candidates. Ramil and Eton left the room as the voting commenced by secret ballot. Jørn and Hanna were approved of as vote-readers.

VOTE: 2 in favour of Ramil as President, 15 in favour of Eton as President, 1 blank vote.

Eton Williams is the 2005-2006 President of ISU Norway.

4.2 Election of National Vice President 2005-2006

Ramil and Ricardo forwarded their candidature, and both were allowed to present themselves.

VOTE: 6 in favour of Ramil, 11 in favour of Ricardo, 1 blank vote.

Ricardo Duque Escobar (UiO) is the 2005-2006 Vice-President of ISU-Norway.

4.3 Appointment of Alternate Vice President 2005-2006

Andrea Lawseth (UmB) was approved of by acclamation, as she was the only candidate.

4.4 Appointment of a Constitution Revision Committee

The ISU National Constitution is in need of revision and update. It was argued that it was too time consuming to really deal with this at NA by delegates who participated at the previous NA in April 2005. Arlene suggested that a committee is established to forward clear suggestions before the first NA in 2006. The committee should elect a leader within the group.

Five delegates were approved of by acclamation, and now constitute the constitution revision committee: Susana, Abar, Anna, Sally Ann and Anastassia.

5.0 Guest Presentation

SAIH (Norwegian Students' and Academics' International Aid Fund) was invited to hold the guest speech, and they were represented by SAIH President Kathrine Sund. Her presentation centred around:

- SAIH as a development aid organization:
 - Focus on youth as potential of being change agents
 - Support formal and higher education
 - Bolivia, Nicaragua, Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa
 - Work with indigenous people and ethnic minorities
 - Influence Norwegian and international development strategies
- Raising awareness among Norwegian students and academics
 - Cooperation between organizations in North and South
 - Spread knowledge about the south

- 11 local branches at Universities and University-Colleges in Norway
 - 20 student parliaments as members
 - 120.000 students support their work
- SAIH cooperates with local organizations and institutions within the five countries
 - Basis for all of their work is the UN Declaration for Human Rights
 - Arlene questioned how to get involved with SAIH – Contact them directly at the central office in Oslo or visit their webpage (mostly Norwegian).

6.0 Any other Business

When this post was addressed on Sunday afternoon, some delegates had already left in order to reach their flights. The NA thus did no longer have the necessary 80% quorum to continue. Several of the main achievements of the assembly were summarised, and a request for monthly news from ISU national regarding the follow-up on these cases was put forward.

Several proposals never came to a voting due to time constraints. For a full list of these, see *appendix 11*. The National Assembly was adjourned at 5.30 pm.

This report was written and submitted by Hanna Holmelin, ISU National Secretary

Eton Williams
ISU National President

Hanna Holmelin
National Secretary