



## ISU Local Branch Report ISU UiO



Prepared by:  
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Prepared for:  
**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**  
**NAii09 – Narvik**

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### A) GENERAL PRESENTATION:

ISU UiO is a branch of ISU Norway, a well-established and non-profit organization run for and by international students. On a national level, we work in cooperation with the Norwegian Students Union (NSU), while on a local level, we collaborate with the Student Parliament of the University of Oslo.

Our principal aim and main goal is to represent international students, while serving reliably as a practical, social and cultural resource and –foremost- as a moral support base for our members, since we understand how being a student is challenging enough in itself. It is within this ambit that our organisation is providing the enabling academic, social and cultural atmosphere for a better and smoother integration of all foreign (so called ‘international’) students, enrolled in the University of Oslo, from countries all over the world, a student body that is being calculated to be formed by approximately more than 3.000 persons per year (according to University of Oslo’s figures, autumn 2009).

### B) ISU UiO (Local Branch) BOARD MEMBERS (*Period Autumn 2009*):

<u>NAME</u>	<u>POSITION</u>
<a href="#">George VLAZAKIS</a>	President
<a href="#">Bobby KAUFMAN</a>	Vice President
Mark ACHAW	Political Affairs Minister
<a href="#">Indrė DŪDĚNAITĚ</a>	Social Affairs Minister
<a href="#">Henry MAYMAN</a>	Sports Minister
<a href="#">Samuel SCHWEIZER</a>	Events Coordinator
<a href="#">Julie ROUSSEAU</a>	Chief Editor



*General Information:* ISU UiO Board members are being elected every semester, according to our Constitution, except from the President who is investing his office for a whole year.

*Important Information:* The ISU UiO Board initially consisted of eight (8) members, including a Trips Minister, who –in the course of his office- resigned; reason for such action has been the inability of such person to cope effectively with the duties of his office. The rest of ISU UiO Board has accepted such resignation, as well as the temporary investment of such office by the President, George Vlazakis.

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### **C) SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES during Academic Year 2009 (with emphasis given to the Autumn semester 2009):**

Since ISU UiO's principal aim and main goal is to represent international students, while serving reliably as a practical, social and cultural resource and –foremost- as a moral support base for our more than 3000 members, in this respect, we have already planned and executed some very successful social and cultural events, while -at the same time- we are in the middle of several on-going social, cultural and academic projects.

In fact, some of our activities include daily sports programmes, monthly big social events (parties), bi-monthly group-oriented smaller social events (food evenings, theme-based nights, parties, etc.), a series of high-profile seminars and workshops (bordering on issues such as the Global financial crisis, Climate Change, Internationalization of education: Pros and Cons, and an Open Day with UDI), monthly distribution of a recreational English-speaking magazine, and many other activities.

Additionally, we have also been politically sensitive by uprising and keeping up with issues of academic and social interest in front of different levels of University officials, safeguarding the rights of international students within Norwegian academic life and local society, always looking forward to the best interest of our members.



Behind the above projects and actions, and through everyday contact, we have also managed to share ideas and experiences, engage in academic discourses, make friends and establish good channels of communication with Norwegians.

#### **D) GENERAL ASSEMBLIES (with emphasis given to the Autumn semester 2009):**

A General Assembly has been convened, according to the ISU UiO Constitution, in August 28<sup>th</sup>, 2009, for the 2009/2010 academic year; the only issue discussed has been the election of the new Executives/Board members of ISU UiO.

Present during the elections have been, apart from the electoral body (it is estimated that there have been around 80-100 international students), a representative from the UiO Executive Board of the Student Parliament, the National ISU President and a representative from a local Radio station.

#### **E) SOCIAL ACTIVITIES (with emphasis given to the Autumn semester 2009):**

ISU UiO is very active towards the social integration of international students among each other, as well as with Norwegians, by organizing all kind of social and cultural events, together with sport-oriented activities.

Within the almost 2-month delegation of the new Board, we have (so far) organized the following activities/events:

1. *B.I.G. (Beauty Is Great) party*: A no participation/entrance fee party, with around 500 participants, thrown for the beginning of the semester (Sept.26<sup>th</sup>, 2009), which, according to the owner/managers of the club, has been an 'unexpected (financial) success'.
2. *Monthly Moose launch party*: A no participation/entrance fee party, with around 30 participants, all contributors and close friends of the Monthly Moose magazine.
3. *Sports tournaments in football and table-tennis*: No participation fee sport activities, with an award provision for the winners.
4. *Sports activities*: Organization of basketball and volleyball weekly sessions.
5. *Social – cultural events*: Facilitation and active support of the International Coffee Hour, a social initiative of the University of Oslo where international students feel at ease, and where informal gatherings -with free coffee/tea and cookies served- is being held every Friday evening.

In this respect, we established and integrated a new initiative under the title “Grand Gamers Republic”, where attendants of the International Coffee Hour are being entertained and socialize through board games (such as UNO cards, Chess, Backgammon, Checkers, Ludo, Nine Men’s Morris, Monopoly, Risk, etc.) that are being provided to them –for free- during such event.



6. *Alexander Rybak concert*: Planning and execution of a typically-Norwegian music song writer and player, who became internationally famous when winning the 1<sup>st</sup> place in the Eurovision 2008 song contest.
7. *Monthly Moose magazine*: Editing, publishing and distributing a free recreational magazine to international students.

## **F) POLITICAL ACTIVITIES (with emphasis given to the Autumn semester 2009): Cases, Campaigns and Student Politics**

ISU UiO is very active and busy in the political arena as well. Being aware of the University's policies, as well as the Student Parliament's priorities, we have seen ourselves dealing with the following issues:

- a. NRK's article under the title "International students are cheaters", 22/9/09: We asked for a meeting with the Director of the Student and Academic Affairs and the Head of the International Education Office of the University of Oslo, after which we provoked a reply from the University to NRK's article, published in the Universitas (local newspaper) of September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2009, where the University at first admitted its "regret [for] the feeling of unfair treatment the headline [of NRK] must have created", and consequently, stated that "the University of Oslo had no intention of describing the situation for international students as it appeared in the news". Finally, there has been a follow-up by Uniforum, the University's newspaper, on October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2009, with Professor of Medicine Akthar Hussein and study coordinator Vibeke Christie from the International Health and General Practice being interviewed regarding the above issue.
- b. Universitas' article under the title "No control over own money", 7/10/09: We have been asked to comment (and, in fact, we published a Press Release, which has been published in Universitas of October 21<sup>th</sup>, 2009) on the issue of inability to fully access own money for students coming from countries outside the EU/EEA-area; such problem arises because of the difficulty to open a bank account until owing a D-number, which takes more than a month. Up to that time, a student is obliged to transfer the money to the University's account that administers the money until everything is in order.
- c. Establishment of the basis for a close cooperation with SAIH: After fruitful discussions with the leader of SAIH in the University of Oslo, we managed to get their Board's consent and promise for a close cooperation scheme that will include common organization of seminars and workshops, as well as actual contribution to both associations' goals and aims, and will start materializing from the oncoming month (November 2009), producing its results from the oncoming semester (spring 2010).



SAIH is the solidarity organization of students and academics in Norway and focuses on education in development cooperation, as well as North/South information and political advocacy in Norway.

SAIH was established in 1961 as a part of the Norwegian students' anti apartheid movement. Today there are local SAIH chapters all over the country.

SAIH's work is financed by the contributions paid by students over the semester fee, the SAIH-academics, Norad, Operation Day's Work, LNU and FOKUS. Approximately 130 000 students in Norway annually contribute –voluntarily- with over 6 million Norwegian kroner to SAIH's work. A minimum of 70% of this funding is distributed to their partners in Zambia, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Bolivia and Nicaragua, whereas a maximum of 30% is spent on North/South information, advocacy work and administration in Norway.

- d. Formal Meetings with Velferdstinget, SiO Director, International Education Office (SIS) team, Studentliv, Carrer Center's Vice Director and discussions about issues of their competence.
- e. Participation to the plenary meetings of the Student Parliament as observer, and active contribution to the working groups/committees regarding integration, the celebration of the 200 years Jubileum of the University of Oslo and many more.
- f. Contacting different sources of possible job offers, scholarships, internships, etc., and informing our members for their possibilities and options.
- g. Amendment of Constitution and applicable Regulations in order to reflect current reality and needs of the student body.

#### **G) COMMENTS, EVALUATION and FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS (with emphasis given to the Autumn semester 2009):**

We have formed a solid team, which is committed towards our goals (which are, firstly, to serve reliably as a practical, social and cultural resource, as well as to provide a moral support base to international students; and, secondly, to integrate those students to Norwegian life and society in the most fruitful for both -Norwegians and international students- way), and we think we will succeed because we strongly believe in our team and in ourselves.

Despite the shortfalls and problems we have and still are facing, we strongly believe that so far things are going on well, even though the workload can be sometimes stressful and disappointing. Of course, the early resignation of one of the Board Members (Trips Minister) did not made it easier on us.

Evaluating our term of office til now, we noticed that initially some of the ISU UiO Board have joined the ranks of ISU with the expectation of changing the status quo overnight, but



we have come to realize that ambitions must be tailored along with patience, tolerance, persuasion and diplomatic tact.

Within our goals (and let's admit it, hopes!) is to strengthen the relationship between ISU UiO and the University authorities, as well as with the Student Parliament, and of course with the student body and Norwegian society, because we think that some issues are better addressed only with and through everyone's help and support.

With regards to future elections and GAs, we are exploring ways of having a more active student body participation, even if we definitely agree that all ethnicities and sexes have been very well/equally represented within our Board.

## **H) BUDGET (only for the Autumn semester 2009):**

ISU UiO budget (sources of income, expenses) can be summarized as follows:

### ***INCOME***

1. Regular *semester* funding from Student Parliament of 10,000.00 kroner (granted on September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2009)
2. Activity-based *semester* funding from the Student Parliament of 10,000.00 kroner (granted on September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2009)
3. Frifond *annual* funding from the National ISU of 14,500 kr (granted on October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2009).

TOTAL: **34,500.00 KR**

(of which 27,250 kr belong to the autumn 2009 semester, and 7,250 kr belong to the spring 2010 semester)

### ***EXPENSES***

#### ***A. Expenses so far occurred***

- I. BIG ISU party: 2,319.90 kr (renting the club Amatoren, guestbook, etc.)
- II. Monthly Moose launch party: 620.80 kr (providing snacks, soft drinks, Moose pigniata, decorations, etc.)
- III. Grand Gamers Republic: 529.10 (buying of UNO card games and table games)
- IV. Sports: 322.00 kr (booking of sports fields, indoors and outdoors, renting equipment)
- V. Monthly Moose: 156.00 kr (magazine promotion with cookies distributed)

TOTAL: **3,947.80 KR**

#### ***B. Future (expected) expenses***

- I. Planning of Halloween party (October 30<sup>th</sup>, 2009): estimated cost 1.500 kr
- II. Planning of a mid-term BIG party (November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2009): estimated cost 2.000 kr
- III. Planning of a Christmas party (December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2009): estimated cost 2.500 kr



IV. Planning of sports tournaments (booking indoor fields, awards for winners):  
estimated cost 1.250 kr

V. Planning of a Salsa/Latin night: estimated cost 600 kr

VI. Planning of a Freia chocolate factory visit: estimated cost 600 kr

VII. Planning of attending a concert/opera/theatrical play: estimated cost 600 kr

VIII. Planning of seminars/workshops: estimated cost 8,200 kr

IX. Magazine promotion/publication: estimated cost 500.00 kr

X. Running ISU UiO expenses: estimated cost 550.00 kr

XI. Special attire for ISU UiO members: estimated cost 5,000.00 kr

TOTAL (estimated): **23,300.00 KR**

EXPENSES –past & future- (ONLY FOR AUTUMN SEMESTER 2009):

[3,947.80 + 23,300.00 =] 27,247.80

ACTUAL BUDGET (ONLY FOR AUTUMN SEMESTER 2009):

27,250.00

TOTAL BALANCE (to be returned):

**-2.20 KR**

#### **I) OTHER ISSUES**

The Team-building exercise, conducted by the National office, has been very helpful and interesting experience. On these grounds, ISU UiO looks forward to more programmes of such kind, which are strengthening not only the links between local ISU associations, but also the feeling of responsibility towards National ISU, and thus, its importance and role in Norway's political scene, in favour –of course- of all international students.

Finally, ISU UiO appreciates the constant efforts of its National President, Farshad Tami, and would like to thank him for his advice, guidance and interest not only for his preparedness to respond in any difficult situation regarding international students in national level, but also his foresightness and care towards the needs of the local branch!

We, the ISU UiO Board, wish to him a safe and happy journey to his next destination!

