



## REPORTS 211011

International Students' Union  
of Norway (ISU)  
Annual National Reports  
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### Prepared for:

National Assembly (NAii11) at Bodø

- ISU Local branches
- Cooperating Partners
- Associated Organisations

## ISU General Information and Objective

The International Students' Union of Norway (ISU) is an independent, democratic, non-profit, non-partisan organization run for and by international students and now embracing Norwegians, interested in working for international interest, into our fold. ISU is committed to the social, academic and political interests of all international students studying in Norway. ISU's national administration is located in Oslo. ISU member organizations were located at 13 institutions of higher education around Norway, and are to be found in University of Oslo (UiO), University College of Oslo (HiO), Norwegian School of Management (BI), University of Bergen (UiB), Norwegian School of Economics and Business Administration (NHH), University of Trondheim (NTNU), University of Stavanger (UiS), University of Tromsø (UiT), Norwegian University of Life Sciences (UMB Ås), University of Telemark (UiT), University of Agder (UiA), University College of Narvik (HiN) and University College of Bodø (HiB) – now University of Nordland. The number has increased to 19 on the interim, as it appears later in this report. ISU's basic funding is from the Norwegian Government with the amount of NOK 500,000.00 received covering the period, 25<sup>th</sup> May 2011 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012. Local branches also receive funding mainly from LNU, the Student Parliaments and international offices of their various institutions. ISU is in partnership with NSO, ANSA, Spire & UngInfo and members of SAIH & LNU. The National Assembly is the highest decision-making body of the organisation, where approval of past political work and finances and the election of a National President and a National Board take place. It is also the place where all political priorities affecting all international students in Norway for the next year(s) are set.

## Current Activities and New Developments

**National Board:** The current National Board remained at 3 elected members and an employed National Secretary due to the resignation of 2 members: the National President,



Karen Lisperguer Contreras and the Vice President of Union Development, Vilma Vaitilaviciute (both due to personal reasons). There was an Extraordinary National Assembly from 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> May with the intention of electing replacements. This turned out unsuccessful due to the aggravated academic programmes of the constituents. The 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President constitutionally and organizationally assumed the role of Interim President till October 2011 where there were formal elections for a newly mandated National President. The Vice Presidents for Public Relations and Academic Affairs and Welfare remained in their positions. The interim Board took training during a one-month overlapping period from the past President till 11<sup>th</sup> May when the latter finally handed over. They have continued to work till a new board was elected October 2011. The board actively planned the National Assembly in conjunction with ISU Bodø.

**National Secretary:** ISU Norway also hired a new National Secretary, Ms. Emma Borgnäs, due to the resignation of the previous National Secretary, Bente Faugli, as a result of change in academic programme. Emma started work at the National Office on May 1<sup>st</sup> 2011 and took training from Karen till 11<sup>th</sup> May. The National Secretary position is 33% part time. After sincere efforts have been made by the National President and National Board to make effective an increase in percentage employment of the National Secretary's position, in view of ISU needs as presented in the latest Four Year Action Plan, good effort still needs to be further effected for achieving the desired outcome.

**Opening Of New Local Branches:** Soon after taking over from May 11<sup>th</sup> the National Board assessed the Action Plan for the year and realised that great efforts were to be effected to reach the outcomes mandated for by the National Assembly of October 2010. Pragmatic measures were set up to put some of them into action. The board first of all saw the need to expand our local base to build a stronger organisation, since there were still most of our colleagues in institutions in Norway who did not know about the existence of ISU Norway. The board therefore launched a campaign: "Operation New Branches", setting a target of opening at least 5 new local branches before the National Assembly (NAii11) in Bodø (21-23 October, 2011). These efforts resulted in the establishment of new local branches with duly adopted constitutions and executive boards duly elected in 6 institutions, namely: Oslo International Bible College (ISU OIBC), Østfold University College (ISU HiOF), Norwegian School of Veterinary Sciences (ISU NVH), Nord-Trøndelag University College (ISU HiNT), Oslo School of Architecture and Design (ISU AHO) and Norwegian School of Leadership and Theology (ISU HLT). The profiles of these local Presidents appear on our website after they were officially accepted (by voting) into ISU Norway at NAii11. A 7<sup>th</sup> branch which was opened at former Akershus University College (ISU HiAk) has been merged with that of Oslo University College (ISU HiO) with 2 Vice Presidents, one from the Kjeller (Akershus) campus since the two university colleges have officially merged into Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences (ISU HiOA). Plans are underway to further merge a budding branch at Norwegian School of Sport Sciences (ISU NIH) with ISU HiOA. Organisational work with opening of more branches in Norwegian School of Theology (MF), Vestfold University College and a few more are underway. If activities progress at the present pace about four more local branches would open soon after the National Assembly.



**Official/Advertising Materials:** The process of opening new branches brought to light the fact that ISU Norway lacked official stamps, brochures and other forms of advertising material to make the organization visible and authentic. The board has therefore designed and acquired two official stamps for the National Office (one for the President, one for the Secretary). In addition to that, brochures have been designed and printed out for both new and existing local branches. Officially stamped Certificates were also developed and issued out to past local board members in recognition of their voluntary services to ISU, a practice which was not existent in past years. The board is still in the process of designing other forms of advertising material such as roll-up stand for ISU Norway, visiting cards for board members, T-shirts, envelopes, stickers, handbills, note pads, banners, cups and key rings for our local branches.

**Partner Organisations and Ministry of Education:** ISU was represented at the Annual General Meetings and Camp Meetings of our partner and member organisations LNU, NSO, Spire and already registered to attend that of SAIH from 28<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> October. The board also prepared a memo on three major campaigns from the Action Plan for 2010/2011 and sent an invitation to the Ministry of Education (The State Minister) for a meeting. These were:

1. (Increased and equal) access to English-Medium Bachelor programs and Master courses. This was tackled during previous year. We wanted a follow up on it.
2. Residence permits & relevant administrative barriers/ Norwegian Personal (ID) Number.
3. Quota Scheme Students: Increase the number of beneficiaries (from 1100 to 2000), and the funding received per bursary (from 10 months to 12 months/per year).

At the time of leaving for the National Assembly, information had not yet been received from the Ministry of Education due to pressure of time. A follow up is to be made soon after the National Assembly.

The board decided to take up the “Campaign Against the Imposition of Tuition Fees for International Students” as an educational campaign for 2012 and a celebration of victory. This was launched at a special ceremony at Bodø on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2011 upon approval by the National Assembly. The keynote address was delivered by NSO’s Executive for International Affairs, Mr Sebastian Bantow. The campaign would be carried out by the National Board and local branches throughout the year. Basically, this was to educate local branches about the situation, efforts made by NSO on the issue and the positive message from the Minister of Education that it was illegal to charge even application fees in Norway.

### **Challenges and Recommendations**

The National Board noted with concern that some local branches had no executive board members left since all of them had completed their studies and left. The board worked actively on reviving these branches and putting local boards in place. ISU Agder, which had been defunct for almost a year now, falls within this category. The board had now secured a reliable contact person, Magne Bartlett, a member of the international committee for Young Liberals of Norway, who was helping with organisation and planning of a General Assembly



for ISU UiA. Notable is the fact that ISU lacked the needed financial resources to effectively re-constitute former local boards, as well as open new ones. An expansion fund which came from Student Parliament (StL) for opening new branches had run out and so far attempts to secure some help in this direction has not been too successful mainly either because the funds were unavailable or because Student Parliament and Norwegian Student Union merged to become one organisation (NSO) so have new priorities. The board would be very happy if some funds would be accessed either from Ministry of Education, LNU or partner sources to enable them carry out their on-going goal of expansion and other such progressive projects.

In another development, due to the unforeseen resignation of our former National President, there was an Extraordinary National Assembly. However, since the yearly budget did not originally make provision for two National Assemblies in this year, ISU is still grappling with sources of funding to support the main National Assembly. ISU therefore needs more funding to be able to successfully organise the two Leaders Meetings (LM1, LM2). With the workload thus expanding more funding is required, so Vice Presidents could also receive a token of compensation for their voluntary service as instituted by our former President, George Vlazakis, in 2010.

### **Acknowledgments**

ISU National Board would like to express sincere appreciation to ISU Bodø and University of Nordland for accepting to host the National Assembly and working tirelessly to make it such a great success. We are grateful to the Ministry of Education for its continued financial support and considering us as partners in the process of internationalization of education in Norway. We also appreciate our partners: Norwegian Student Organisation (NSO), The Norwegian Children and Youth Council (LNU), Students and Academicians Help Fund (SAIH), Association of Norwegian Students Abroad (ANSA) and Spire for standing with us through recent unprecedented events that beset ISU. We offer great appreciation and special thanks to both the old and new executive boards of NSO for the support and guidance they continued to provide, given the new organizational re-shuffle, with focus on maintaining a mature, smooth-running and administratively independent organization. ISU would ever remain indebted to our past President, George Vlazakis, who spent so much time assisting with technical advice and information relating to Ministry of Education and other relevant administrative know-how. We specially appreciate Michelle Karevoll, the only member of the Support Committee initiated at the ENA, for her invaluable trust, contributions and assistance all along. To all our substantive local branches: we appreciate you for your patience, understanding and for standing with us all through the difficult recent past. And our newly established local branches: welcome onboard! Finally, we thank our former leaders, Karen and Vilma, for their contributions while they were with ISU and even after their resignations. We understand their situation and appreciate all their effort so much and hope to continue to enjoy the same measure of goodwill they have expressed towards the current leadership.

**Long live ISU Norway!**