



To: State Secretary Mr. Kyrre Lekve

From: International Students' Union of Norway (ISU)

Date: September 20th, 2010

Subject:

- (*Increased and equal*) access to english-speaking Bachelor programs and Master courses
- Student explosion and *accommodation*
- ISU funding – extraordinary request for cost of office premises

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Access to english-speaking Bachelor programs and Master courses

Norway's involvement in, and firm commitment towards, a number of political processes has been implemented during the last decade in such a way as to result in an undeniable *rise in the number of foreign students* who chose Norway as educational destination¹.

Such increase -which is currently attributed mainly to short-term exchange studying (3 to 10 months)²- boosted unexpectedly the **need for** (and thus, Higher Institutions' obligations towards) supplying **additional study programs and single-subject courses taught in english**.

At the same time, though, after ISU's consultations and research about the current situation, the following conclusions have been safely reached:

[A]. The total number of *English-speaking Bachelor programs* offered to both international and Norwegian students by all higher education Institutions in Norway amount to nine (9), out of which three (3) are performance-based (dance, music).

The number is considered surprisingly low in respect to both international but also Norwegian students interested in having an english-speaking education (either in view of the developmental work they are/will be undertaking as part of their program/personal development, and/or in view of the further studies to be undertaken abroad).

[B]. At the same time, higher education Institutions seem to restrict international students from the possibility of (*equally*) *accessing single-subject courses at a Master level* if not being admitted under an exchange scheme or a program of study, requirement which is not necessary for Norwegian students.

In this respect, Norwegian and international Master students and PhD researchers do not get a fair opportunity to mutually benefit from the interaction and communication/information flow between them and their work.

In view of the *central importance* of the issue towards the improvement of the quality of internationalisation offered for/by Norwegian higher education Institutions, and thus, consisting of *ISU's main priority*, we would like to **suggest** to the State Secretary **and kindly ask** from the Government to:

- Ensure (allocation to and earmarking from the State budget for 2012 of the necessary funds for, and active promotion of) a **significant increase** of the number of **degree-oriented English-medium instructed programmes** taught by Norwegian higher education Institutions, and also,
- Ensure that international and Norwegian students will have the possibility of being **admitted to single subject courses** by Norwegian higher education Institutions **on an equal footing**.

¹ The number of international/foreign students studying in Norway doubled within the last decade (from 7.490 in 1997/1998 ["Minifakta about Norway" (Education), published by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on March 2009, available at www.ssb.no/english/subjects/00/minifakta_en/en/ to 15.008 in 2009

[<http://dbh.nsd.uib.no/rapporter/nokkeltall/studentervisning.action>], while, according to the data provided by the Database for Statistikk om høgre utdanning (National Statistics on classification of education- NUS system), international students percentage rose by 13,4% within one (the last) year (from 13.240 in 2008 to 15.008 in 2009).

² According to data found at the Report 14 to the Storting (p.12), "in 2008 there were 5.054 foreign exchange students" attending Higher Education Institutions, while the total number of degree-oriented Quota scheme students amounts to 1.100 (according to SIU data).



Student explosion and accommodation

The *increase of the number of foreign students* who choose Norway as educational destination boosted not only the need for additional study programs taught in English and (equal) access to single-subject courses, but also the *need* of attention to the issue *of accommodation*.

Since the number of international students in Norway is expected to double (and reach the quota of 20% of the student body) in the next few years, among a parallel increase of the percentage of Norwegian students,

In this respect, ISU would like to *support* the Ministry's work, and *suggest* to the State Secretary and *kindly ask* from the Government to:

- Ensure *continuity* of the good solution offered by the Ministry of Education regarding the *funding of (at least) 1000 student housing units per year*, for the following year(s).

ISU funding – extraordinary request for cost of office premises

ISU was previously provided with an office from Norsk Studentunion (NSU). As a consequence of the *merger between NSU and Studentenes Landsforbund (StL) in May 2010*, this office is no longer available for ISU. From July 1st, 2010, Norsk studentorganisasjon (NSO) is located in StL's former premises, where there unfortunately is no room to provide ISU with an office facility. With the help of NSO, ISU found a new office space near the NSO office, but lack the necessary funding to stay in this office.

Despite *every effort has been made to ensure a viable result*, either by addressing ISU's main partners (NSO and ANSA) for their financial and/or in kind support, or by reorganising the activities and costs of ISU's annual budget/funding, as received in July 2010 from the Ministry, it has not been possible to reach a solution which would allow ISU to continue its existence and effective representation of international students, and be able to continue its work towards internationalisation of Norwegian education.

In this respect -and in view of the fact that ISU's current reorganised budget (with the aim to cover basic necessities) is still dependent on additional financial support- which is currently estimated to be 100.000 NOK,

ISU would like to *kindly ask* the State Secretary and the Ministry of Education to:

- Reaffirm their sensibility, as well as allow ISU to continue to support the Ministry's challenging efforts towards better internationalisation of Norwegian education, by *providing ISU the necessary -for the organisation's further existence- amount (of 100.000 NOK)* to cover the necessary expenses for an office premise.