

International students and higher education in Norway

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Mer info: www.isu-norway.no

Why do we have Internationalization / international students in Norway?

- enhance the learning experience and academic quality at the school
- return what other countries have given Norway previously ?
- educate qualified students before they return home to contribute to their home country

A big issue for internationalization is integration between norwegian and international students:

- How do we make it happen?
- Integration: Developing a sense of belonging, inclusion
- This cannot be a concern for ONLY international students.

Academic Excellence vs. Tourism

- It is very important that students come here expect academic excellence and not just "nature".

A big barrier for integration is language. Not all international students are able to learn Norwegian and this is important for integration. The opportunity to learn Norwegian depends on how long the students are staying here and the availability of Norwegian classes. As the budgets of higher institutions get tighter classes in Norwegian are sometimes among the first things to be cut back. This is a real disaster for the prospects of integration between international students and norwegian students because we have seen that those international students *hvem kan norsk* integrate best. Housing is guaranteed. However we see situations where international students are often "encouraged" to live together, with the absence of norwegians.

How to "include" international students

- Translations into english of the important information from the school and samskipnadene, i.e. examination regulations and legal documents like housing contracts etc..
- Signs and menus in the canteens, relevant articles in the student newspaper.
- A local ISU branch, supported and recognized by the Student Parliament and Høyskoler.

What is ISU?

The International Students' Union of Norway is committed to the social, academic and political interests of all international students in studying in Norway. ISU is an independent, democratic, non-profit, non-partisan organization run for and by international students. It works closely with NSU (Norwegian Students' Union) and StL (Norwegian Association of Students). There are nine member branches in Norway, at all the universities and two university colleges.

The challenges that international students face, are best solved by cooperation between international and Norwegian students at the national and the local level.

Both political and social ISU branches organize differently. Some do political work with their norwegian colleagues by lobbying the administration and government and getting attention for their cases in the media. All promote a good social environment for international students. Current issues have been lobbying against fees for visas and work permits, long delays experienced by students in receiving a person number (needed in order to get their scholarship or student loans). At some schools, all international students are "encouraged" by the authorities to live in just one location, removing the possibility of any real contact with norwegian students.

What to do next?

What is missing from your student environment? Just ask the international students/ISU Branch at your university college what they have experienced and what they think could be improved.

Focus on the basics:

What needs to be translated?

Are there any activities or events where international and norwegian students are able to meet?

How is the housing situation for international students?

Are international students included in working groups? If not, why is that so?

How many international students study at your higher education institution? If there are more than 30, and most are present for more than a semester, then it is time to contact ISU Norway! They received funding in November 2005 from StL to set up local branches at StL member organizations.

Why establish an ISU-branch?

- For the same reasons with norwegian student democracy, ISU gives international students a chance to raise their concerns, and find solutions for these concerns.
- It is important to meet the basic needs of international students so that the goals of the internationalization process are met. International students who have had a positive experience in Norway are the best ambassadors for Norway!