



REPORT 11123

International Students' Union
of Norway (ISU)

Brief Report

23 November 2011

Prepared by

Emma Borgnas, National Secretary

Prepared for

Member Branches

and

Cooperation Partners

- Studentenes Landsforbund (StL)
- Norsk Studentorganisasjon (NSO)
- Studentenes og Akademikernes Internasjonale Hjelpesfond (SAIH)
- Association of Norwegian Students Abroad (ANSA)
- Spire

Meeting with Kyrre Lekve, State Secretary for Higher Education and Research, Wednesday, 23 November 2011

(i) **Increased (and equal) Access to English Medium Bachelor Programmes and Master Courses**

The official policy on this issue is more directed towards the master level and the State Secretary reports a significant increase in the number of English-Medium Master Courses throughout recent years (from 2379 in 2007 to 3967 in 2011). This has been the main priority and when it comes to Bachelor level, the main focus is on exchange students. Therefore, we will probably not see a significant increase in single-subject Bachelor programmes for international students, but rather a development of joint degrees, where some modules could be taken for a semester or two and students return to finish up in their home universities.

The State Secretary expresses the need for a *reasonable* number of English courses. The aim is to reach a suitable balance between the use of English and the use of Norwegian as academic languages.

(ii) **Residence permits & relevant administrative barriers/ Norwegian Personal (ID) Number**

The Ministry of Education (Higher Education and Research (KD) has been working on eliminating or reducing different kinds of barriers and they are working together with *CEU* to map out the main barriers that international students face. There is a general interest in cutting down the bureaucratic barriers and the extensive paper work for international students coming to Norway. One problem in connection to this is that Norway has international obligations that make some problems harder to solve.

The State Secretary expresses interest in the VISA renewal proposal, and he promises they will bear this in mind and work on it. He reports that the government is aware of the problems related to the administrative barriers and that there is a general positive will in the government to improve these issues. However, it requires a lot of consultation and work and will take some time.



(iii) Quota Scheme Students: Increase the number of beneficiaries (from 1100 to 2000), and the funding received per bursary (from 10 to 12 months/per year)

The number of quota scheme students is a general budget issue and an increase in number of beneficiaries is a suggestion competing with other suggestions. Therefore, the State Secretary advises us to find allies in other organizations, since this is basically a question of money allocation and prioritization.

When it comes to the suggestion for an increase in number of months funding received per bursary, it is a suggestion that will probably not bear in the government. The reason is that an issue that mainly concerns the ISU and our work with ensuring efficiency and continuity in the organization will probably not get through in negotiations. Issues related to promotion of internationalization of education are more likely to attract interest and more attention from the government.

The State Secretary informs that their general policy is that quota scheme students are prioritized where there is a bilateral agreement with Norwegian institutions. He also asks for ISU's opinion on the impact of the economic crisis; whether it will increase the amount of international students applying to Norwegian institutions of higher education. He also stresses that it is an ideologically important principle for the government that education is free or as cheap as possible. This could attract more students in the future, keeping the economic crisis in mind. If there would be a boom in international students choosing to study in Norway, the need for simplifying processes and practical issues will be even greater.

(iv) Other issues

John Ganyo reports that some of the prospective ISU local branches have encountered problems with getting started in universities/colleges. Kim, NSO President pledged support in this area, upon which the State Secretary suggests that NSO and ISU work on this together, but KD would, upon being duly informed, help ISU on this issue if NSO's support should not be enough to change the situation. KD is today asking from the institutions to have an international strategy, which has increased the interest on internationalization in many institutions.

(v) Conclusion

The suggestion about the VISA renewal issue was an interesting one for KD and it will be worked upon, possibly replacing the documentation of funding with documentation of academic progress. They will be monitoring the development in the English course issue and report to us accordingly. They will work to improve the system of administrative barriers. We should align with other organisations regarding the quota scheme and dive into what is basically a budget quarrel.