

A national strategy for increased student mobility: The case of Norway

The logo for SIU (Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education) features the letters 'SIU' in a bold, white, sans-serif font. To the right of the letters is a decorative graphic consisting of a series of white dots of varying sizes, arranged in a curved, upward-sloping path that suggests movement or a network.

NORWEGIAN CENTRE FOR
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION
IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Higher education in Norway

- Approximately 205,000 students enrolled in higher education (15,000 of them abroad)
- The public sector
 - six universities (Oslo, Bergen, Stavanger, Tromsø, Trondheim, Ås)
 - five specialized university institutions
 - 25 university colleges
 - two national institutes of art
- The private sector
 - varied but small

The Quality Reform of higher education

- Probably the most significant reform since WW2
- Implemented by all higher education institutions from the academic year 2003-04
- 3+2+3 structure (Bachelor + master + doctorate)
- Credit system: 60 study points equivalent to one year of full-time study; all courses are given a numerical value
- Grading scale A-F
- Less emphasis on comprehensive, final examinations, more on continuous assessment
- Diploma Supplement issued automatically and free of charge to all students

The Quality Reform of higher education - the degree structure

- Bachelor degree (three years)
 - could be a “fixed” study program or a combination of subjects
- Master degree (two years on top of the bachelor degree)
 - one or two semesters devoted to the writing of a thesis
- Doctoral degree (three years on top of the master degree)
 - theory and research methods
 - the writing of a dissertation, which has to be publicly defended

The Quality Reform – national bodies

- The Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance (NOKUT)
- The Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education (SIU)
 - A partner for the HEIs
 - Administrator of programs
 - Promotor of Norwegian higher education abroad

Internationalization in Norwegian higher education

- Post WW2: Many students abroad due to lack of capacity at home
- Mid-80s: Expansion of number of students going abroad for full degrees
 - Generous financial support (tuition fee grants)
- Late 80s: The Nordplus program
- 1992: Norway joined Erasmus
- These program provided models for student exchange agreements also to other parts of the world
- Since mid-90s: A political goal to increase the number of exchange students

The Quality Reform - internationalization

- All students should be given the opportunity to carry out an exchange period abroad, also at the bachelor level
- International cooperation as a quality indicator
 - A larger learning arena for the students
- A need to build strategic partnerships
 - Important to recruit students
 - Important to increase quality

The Quality Reform - internationalization

- Financial incentive
 - € 700 for each incoming and outgoing student if the mobility period lasts for a minimum of three months and is based on a bilateral agreement
- However, loss of funding based on credit point production, unless mobility is balanced
- Reporting requirements for international cooperation

Implications for HEIs

- Mobility a central activity
 - Incorporation of mobility periods into the study programs; increased responsibility for quality assurance
 - Streamlining of options
 - Emphasis on balanced exchanges
- Simplified procedures and better overview for students
 - However, also a danger of limiting opportunities

Conclusions

- Still too early to draw anything but tentative conclusions
- Erasmus increase of 13 and 11 percent respectively over the last two years
- However, still a long way to go before the academic staff can be said to be really engaged in student mobility
- Ministry, October 2005: "Several study programs still do not have good enough agreements to ensure that all students are offered an exchange period abroad"