

Meeting between UDI and ISU

Utlendingsdirektoratet (UDI) is the Norwegian Directorate for Immigration and they are responsible for handling all student residence permit cases that cannot be handled by the police. It is accordingly one of the Norwegian institutions that almost all international students in Norway will come in contact with. Lately the processing time for student residence permits have increased and ISU requested a meeting with UDI to discuss some of the problems international students meet when applying for permits.

ISU had a meeting with the Section for Student and Au Pair Cases at UDI on Wednesday 6 May, where we were able to discuss the main areas of concern for international students in connection to UDI. UDI is very interested in students getting as much information as possible prior to applying for permits, as this makes the process easier and shorter for both students and the UDI.

The first case was the work permit issue. Students that are granted a student residency permit and have had it stamped in their passport by the police, automatically get a permit to work for maximum 20 hours a week in the semester and full time during the summer and other ordinary vacation periods. Many employers would ask for a Norwegian personal number (personnummer), a tax card and a Norwegian bank account and the process to get these can be quite slow, but it is the Civil Register (Folkeregisteret) that is responsible for this process and not UDI. Students that are waiting for a renewal of their permit has the same rights as granted with the previous permit as long as they have applied one month before expiry. The letter you get from the police saying you have applied is only a confirmation that your application is registered. The student can get a confirmation from the police stating that the work permit is still valid if that should be necessary. It is also possible to call UDI and ask for this confirmation.

The renewal of permits can usually be granted by the police of the student's police district. If the police are in doubt about a case, they send it to UDI. The doubt is usually caused by lacking documents, mainly lacking documentation of sufficient finances. If the case is sent to UDI the average handling time of these cases in UDI is three months. Clear cases with well documented applications will be prioritized by UDI and the handling time for these cases is shorter. Applications that might be refused will take longer to process since UDI will need time to obtain all necessary documents before making a decision.

While a student is waiting for a renewal of the permit, he or she is advised not to leave Norway as he or she will most likely not be allowed to re-enter Norway. This also includes travels to other Schengen countries. Be aware that students can be detained, fined and deported if they visit other Schengen countries without a valid permit. If a student has to travel urgently, he or she can call UDI or the police and ask them to prioritize the case. They will then try to handle the application before the student has to leave Norway, or while the student is away, so he or she can get a visa to re-enter Norway from a Norwegian Embassy abroad.

In order to get an application handled as fast as possible, the student has to apply at least one month before expiry of the current permit with all the all the necessary documents included in the application (he or she will lose many benefits if the application is submitted later than one month prior to expiry). If the police or UDI have to ask for additional documentation, the

handling process delays considerably. All first time applicants that apply before 1 July will get their cases handled before 1 August (guarantee for 2009).

The section at UDI that handles student cases is also working on permits for au pairs and seasonal workers. The handling time may therefore vary according to the time of the year the student applies. The section is however not allowed to prioritize student cases without a political decision and mandate to do so.

Relevant links for more information:

UDI Homepage (information available in several languages):

<http://www.udi.no/defaultRedesign.aspx?id=30>

Student permit page of UDI:

<http://www.udi.no/templates/Tema.aspx?id=7415>

The English website of the Police (main page www.politi.no):

http://www.politi.no/portal/page?_pageid=34,49023&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL&articles7_mode=info&articles7_articleGroupName=Engelsk%20Versjon&articles4_mode=downloadinfo&articles4_articleGroupName=Engelsk%20Versjon&navigation1_parentItemId=3759&uicell=uicell08