



**To:** State Secretary Mr. Kyrre Lekve

**From:** International Students' Union of Norway (ISU)

**Date:** September 20<sup>th</sup>, 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 destination<sup>1</sup>.

Such increase -which is currently attributed mainly to short-term exchange studying (3 to 10 months)<sup>2</sup>- 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**.

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<sup>1</sup> 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/](http://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).

<sup>2</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup>, 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.