

Immigration of International Students to the EU/EEA

**Report to the European Migration Network from
the Norwegian Contact Point, August 2012**



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About the European Migration Network and its Norwegian Contact Point

The European Migration Network provides the main hub for gathering and spreading information in the region. The Network is supported and coordinated by the European Commission. Norway has been a member of EMN since 2010 as the only non-EU country.

The Norwegian contact point to the EMN (NO EMN NCP) consists of the *Ministry of Justice and Public Security*, the *Norwegian Directorate of Immigration* and the *Institute for Social Research*. In addition to providing and distributing comparable information on migration and asylum in Europe, it is the ambition of the NO EMN NCP to bring attention to the link between Norway and the EU in these politically sensitive areas.

INTRODUCTION

The aim of the study is to provide an overview of the immigration policies that are being implemented by Norway regarding international students. The study follows the specifications given in European Migration Network Doc. 255.

1.1. Methodology

This study is mostly based on secondary, desk-based research. Information has been gathered from Government White Papers and other policy documents, relevant laws and regulations, statistics and other information from the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI), as well as our own calculations based on data delivered from Statistics Norway. Information has also been obtained from individual civil servants in the immigration authorities.

1.2. Definitions

For the purpose of this study, ‘international student’ refers to ‘a third-country national arriving in the EU/EEA from a third country for the purposes of study’.

In the context of migration, the European Migration Network (EMN) glossary defines a third-country national ‘student’ as a third-country national accepted by an establishment of higher education and admitted to the territory of a Member State to pursue as his/her main activity a full-time course of study leading to a higher education qualification recognized by the Member State, including diplomas, certificates or doctoral degrees in an establishment of higher education, which may cover a preparatory course prior to such education according to its national legislation’, on the basis of the definition of ‘student’ under Article 2 of Council Directive 2004/114/EC.

The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED)¹ classifies education levels into six different levels, with higher education falling under Level 5 (First Stage of Tertiary Education) and Level 6 (Second Stage of Tertiary Education):

¹ Available at <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Library/Documents/isc97-en.pdf>

- Level 5 (First Stage of Tertiary Education) is defined as bachelors' and masters' degree level in the (Member) States, with programmes having a cumulative theoretical duration of at least two years from the beginning of Level 5
- Level 6 (Second Stage of Tertiary Education) is defined as doctorate degree level (Ph.D.) in the (Member) States, with this level typically requiring the submission of a thesis or dissertation of publishable quality that is the product of original research and represents a significant contribution to knowledge

This study will focus on international students on these two levels, as well as folk high school students (ISCED Level 3)².

² Note that in Norway the courses at the folk high schools usually last for a half or a full academic year only, and these do not qualify for ISCED level 4. Note also that the folk high schools do not issue formal graduation certificates, just certificates of satisfactory attendance.

2. THE NATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEM AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

2.1. Structure of national education system

In Norway, the Ministry of Education has the overall responsibility for all levels of education and research. Starting with the cohort born in 1991, compulsory education (the primary and lower secondary levels) starts at the age of six and is of 10 years' duration. Upper secondary education is of three years' duration – four for vocational programmes that include a two-year apprenticeship.

Higher Education

Through a reform of higher education in 2003, called the Quality Reform, the degree system was revised to comply with the requirements agreed in the Bologna Process³, with a three-year bachelor's degree, followed by a two-year master's degree and a three-year ph.d.. In a few fields, however, there are integrated programmes leading directly to a second cycle degree (either a master's degree or a degree where the title of the former degree system has been kept)⁴. Norway has also kept the first cycle two-year degree "høgskolekandidat".

Degree programmes and periods of study are specified in accordance with the ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) credit system, where 60 credits represent one year of full-time study. The grading system goes from A (best) to F (fail), where E is the lowest passing grade. In some cases, the terms 'pass' and 'fail' are used .

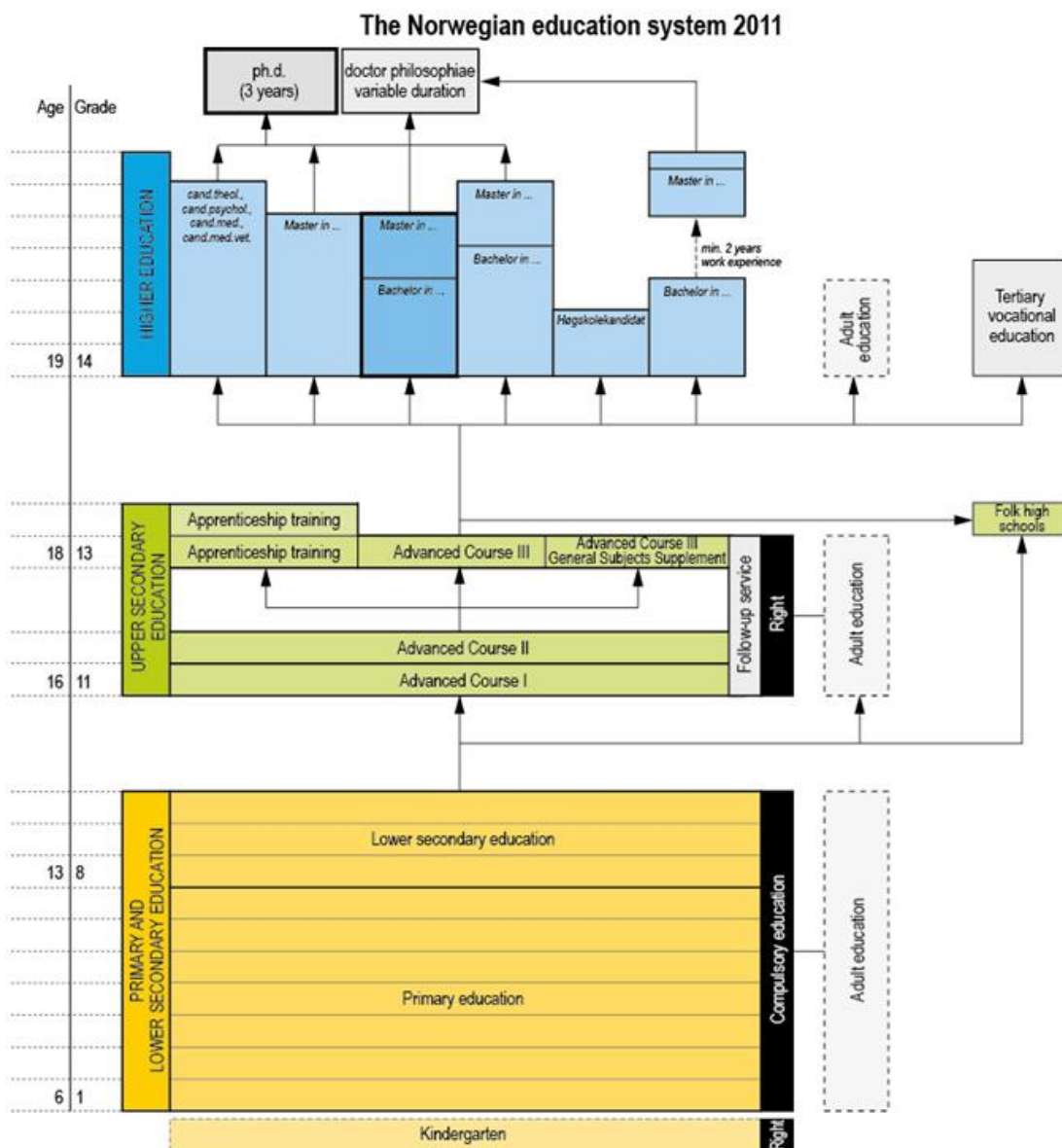
All in all, there are 77 higher education institutions in Norway – 43 state-owned, and 34 private: 8 universities, 9 specialised higher education institutions (of which 3 private), 23 university colleges (state), 6 higher education institutions under the auspices of other

³ The Bologna Process is a process of reform in higher education agreed between 47 European countries. The European Commission is also a full member, and there are numerous consultative members, including the Council of Europe, the European University Association, and the European Student Union. It started formally with the Bologna Declaration signed in 1999 by ministers responsible for higher education in 29 countries and saw the emergence of the European Higher Education Area in 2010. At the 2010 ministerial meeting, it was decided to continue this cooperation until 2020. The Bologna Process aims at making higher education systems more transparent, comparable and compatible, for instance through the use of ECTS, the two cycle degree structure, internal and external quality assurance etc. In addition to the more structural elements, the social and global dimensions of higher education as well as lifelong learning, mobility of students and staff, and employability are highly important action lines of the process.

⁴ This is the situation for students of dentistry, medicine, veterinary science, psychology, pharmacy, fish sciences, architecture and theology.

ministries (the Ministry of Defence has 5 and the Ministry of Justice one), and 31 private higher education institutions (in addition to the 3 mentioned above). The total student population is about 200 000 (196 000 were reported for the budget of the Ministry of Education and Research in 2011.)

The academic year starts in mid-August and ends in mid-June.



Source: Ministry of Education and Research

The Universities and Colleges Admission Service, NUCAS, coordinates the admission process. Admission is based on grades from the upper secondary level. The deadline to apply for admission is 15 April for Nordic citizens, and 1 March for applicants with an upper secondary qualification from outside of the Nordic countries (Meld. St. 14, 2008–2009).

Folk High School

Folk high schools are unique to the Scandinavian countries. There is a total of 77 folk high schools spread across Norway, offering around 300 different subjects, such as the Internet, multimedia, product design, visual art, pottery, music, dance and drama, photography, journalism, health, riding, outdoor pursuits and climbing, to mention a few. Folk high schools are not part of the formal education system but receive public funding. The duration of the courses differs, from a year (nine months) to summer courses (two months). Students typically live on campus.

Each folk high school has its own curriculum. Students usually choose a main subject, and a specialization. In addition the schools offer optional subjects and study tours. Courses are normally held in Norwegian but the majority of the schools offer Norwegian language courses for foreign students.

Studying at a folk high school does not lead to any degree but to a diploma specifying the subjects of completed courses. Students also obtain two credits for the admission to higher education that are added to the scores from the high-school diploma. The majority of the folk high schools do not operate with admission requirements. The tuition fee is on average NOK 75,000 for a full year. The most affordable courses cost NOK 60,000, while the most expensive cost NOK 100,000. The tuition fees cover boarding, materials, field trips and travelling (Folk high schools, 2012).

2.2. National policy framework regarding international students

From the point of view of the education system, all qualified applicants at competitive level are welcome to study at Norwegian higher education institutions, irrespective of where they come from. Restrictions concerning immigration, other than the purely academic ones, is the responsibility of the immigration authorities under the Ministry of Justice and Public Safety.

The policy for internationalisation of education at all levels was presented in White Paper no. 14 (2008–2009) *Internationalisation of Education in Norway*. The aim was to see the various schemes, programmes and measures in relation to each other and to reinforce internationalisation policies and efforts at all levels of education and training. The white paper devotes much space to strategies to promote student mobility. Norwegian students are encouraged to carry out part of their education abroad, and it is underscored that

international students are of great value to the Norwegian educational system. Problems related to obtaining residence permits are mentioned as one of the barriers international students may be confronted with and it is suggested that the processing of residence permits should be as rapid as possible. Other barriers that are mentioned are language, housing, financing, obtaining the national Norwegian personal identification number (PIN) needed for tax, banking and insurance purposes, and the establishment of international campuses that facilitate social interaction between national and international students.

As part of the efforts to develop and implement the strategies described in White Paper no. 14, the Ministry of Education and Research commissioned two projects from the *Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education (SIU)*, one to map administrative hindrances related to obtaining residence permits, and one to map local strategies for the international profiling of Norwegian higher education and research.

The mapping of administrative obstacles points to two matters of principle in the current system for administration of residence permits. One is related to the role played by the educational establishments. According to the report, the admission processes of the higher education institutions (HEIs) seem to be an important part of the case-work and quality control on which the decisions on residence permits at the Norwegian Directorate for Immigration (UDI) are based, for those third country citizens needing a residence permit. The authors of the report question whether the HEIs are financed and apt to perform this kind of task, particularly when it comes to exposing cases of fraud or human trafficking. The other matter is related to the condition that international students must each transfer substantial amounts of money to joint accounts owned by the educational establishments as documentation of their ability to support themselves while they stay in Norway. This condition is an administrative burden for the educational establishment, as well as a deterrent for quite a few students who do not find it particularly reassuring to be asked to transfer large amounts of money to a foreign country.

The report also makes concrete suggestions for simplifying the administrative procedures for residence permits and the renewal of such permits; it recommends establishing service centres for foreign workers in Bergen and Trondheim (there is already one in Oslo), making it possible to establish a bank account without having a PIN, and easing the requirements for family reunification for students.

The mapping of local strategies for international profiling concluded that a large majority of Norwegian higher education institutions prioritize the building of international alliances and include ambitions for international profiling in their strategic planning. Many institutions do, however, lack clearly defined strategies for international profiling.

Regarding non-state actors, the most outspoken participant when it comes to perspectives on international students has been the employer's federation, NHO, which has explicitly stated that international students should be a prioritized channel for permanent immigration.

Debates on the migration of international students are raised regularly and were part of the discussions preceding the new Immigration Act in 2007. NHO has repeatedly raised debates on these issues.

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3. LEGAL AND PRACTICAL CONDITIONS AT NATIONAL LEVEL THAT APPLY TO INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

3.1. Admission

Measures to encourage third-country nationals to study in Norway

It is a political goal to achieve more international cooperation in higher education, including more student and staff mobility – see, for example, White Paper no. 14 (2008–2009)⁵. The most important factor to encourage third-country nationals to study in Norway is probably that tuition at Norwegian state higher education institutions is free. In addition, through an aid scheme, a quota of a total of 1,100 third-country students per year get access to support from the *Norwegian State Educational Loan Fund*, a state agency.⁶ The ‘quota students’ are selected through bilateral cooperation between Norwegian and foreign educational institutions.

In addition, Norway and Norwegian education are profiled through different channels. According to SIU, the Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education (SIU, 2011a), the profiling can be divided into these three categories: Norway and its national values; Norwegian higher education and research in general; and individual universities and colleges.

Norway and its national values are promoted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This is done through different channels, such as its official website abroad: www.norway.info.no. In addition, Norwegian embassies and consulates provide information about Norway.

Profiling of Norwegian higher education abroad is carried out by SIU, on behalf of the Ministry of Education and Research. SIU is a public agency with an overall national responsibility for promoting Norwegian higher education abroad, in collaboration with the institutions of higher education. According to SIU’s website, some of the more important communication channels are the website www.studyinnorway.no and leaflets. SIU also has the responsibility for building Norway as a brand in the context of education, as well as

⁵ <http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/kd/documents/bills-and-white-papers/reports-to-the-storting/2008-2009/report-no-14-2008-2009-to-the-storting.html?id=581950>

⁶ Third country students who do not return to their home country following graduation must repay loans according to the same rules as those applying to Norwegian students.

participating in international educational fairs, such as EAIE⁷, NAFSA⁸, and other educational fairs.

Finally, several higher education institutions have developed English language websites and internal strategy documents specifically targeting international students. However, there is large variation in how much information is available in English and many institutions lack specific strategies for how to attract international students. These efforts do not specifically target third country nationals.

The *Research Council of Norway* plays an important role in the promoting of Norwegian research programmes, international research cooperation and funding⁹.

System for recognizing qualifications

Norway has ratified the Council of Europe and UNESCO Lisbon Recognition Convention, and the higher education institutions are required to follow the principles of the convention in their recognition work. The *Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT)* is an independent national agency for ensuring quality in higher and post-secondary vocational education. NOKUT was created as part of the Quality Reform in higher education in 2003 and it is regulated by the Universities and Colleges Act (Universitets- og høyskoleloven, 2005). NOKUT has the authority to grant general recognition of higher education qualifications from abroad and provides advice to the higher education institutions in recognition matters. NOKUT is also responsible for the national follow-up of the *Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications and Periods of Study*, one of the supplementary texts to the Lisbon Recognition Convention. . (Tilsynsforordningen, 2011; Rundskriv, 2010). The higher education institutions are responsible for recognition for admission of individual students, for further studies and for the right to use Norwegian academic titles.

⁷ The EAIE is the European centre for expertise, networking and resources in the internationalisation of higher education. EAIE is a non-profit, member-led organisation serving individuals actively involved in the internationalisation of their institutions. <http://www.eaie.org/home.html>

⁸ NAFSA is an association of individuals worldwide, advancing international education and exchange and global workforce development. NAFSA serves international educators and their institutions and organizations by establishing principles of good practice, providing training and professional development opportunities, providing networking opportunities, and promoting international education, cf. <http://www.nafsa.org/about/default.aspx>

⁹ The Research Council of Norway provides information on its website about Norwegian research, forskning.no. For an example, see Report no. 30 (2008–2009): Climate for Research – <http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/kd/press-contacts/Press-releases/2009/climate-for-research.html?id=557382>

Financing Options

Higher Education

The Norwegian State Educational Loan Fund administers loans and grants to Norwegian students. Some foreign citizens may also be eligible for this support, depending on whether or not they are quota students, on their countries of origin and on their type of residence permit. Additionally, a number of general requirements and conditions need to be met, such as having a PIN, approved admission to study in Norway and an established bank account.

Students on the Quota Scheme receive support through the State Educational Loan Fund, 2012a and b. It is worth noting that those undertaking ph.d. studies in Norway as a rule are employed by a higher education institution, the Research Council of Norway or a private enterprise. Therefore they are formally not students and hence not eligible for support from the Norwegian State Educational Loan Fund. An exception is made for international students admitted to undertake a doctorate in Norway through the Quota Scheme.

Other rules apply to international students who wish to study at folk high schools. (Norwegian Directorate of Immigration, 2012a and b).

Loans and grants through the State Educational Loan Fund can be given for a total of eight years of studies. The financial support amounts to NOK 92,500 for the academic year (10 months) of 2012–13 (e.g. about 12 500 Euro). The total amount is initially given as a loan but up to 40 per cent may be converted to a grant, depending on the timely completion of studies. In order to qualify for the maximum grant for 2012, one must not earn more than NOK 145,400 (e.g. about 19 500 Euro) within the fiscal year, must not have assets exceeding NOK 330,789 (e.g. about 45 500 Euro) and must pass all exams. The student loan is converted into a grant for every passed study unit. However, for the quota students the entire loan may be remitted as a grant if they resettle in their home countries after completing studies in Norway and document that they will stay there for at least one year (Norwegian State Educational Loan Fund, 2012c).

Another source of funding for international students is the term grants that the Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education (SIU) gives for exchange studies for 1–3 months in Norway, on behalf of the Ministry of Education and Research. To be eligible for such a grant, the student must take part in an exchange study course that is part of a bachelors', masters' or Ph.D. programme in Norway or abroad and the study topic must be either the Norwegian language or another Norway-related topic. The scholarship is NOK 9,080 per month (e.g. about 1 250 Euro). Private and non-profit organizations also grant scholarships to foreign students.

Furthermore, owing to numerous bilateral and multilateral agreements, there are other funding channels for foreign citizens who wish to study in Norway (SIU, 2007). This is described in Section 4.

Fast tracking of applications

Applications for study permits are handled with the intention to process all applications before the beginning of the term. Processing time depends on how complex they are.

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Simple cases which are decided positively by the Norwegian consulates or the police are typically decided within 11 to 21 days, while those that are forwarded to UDI are typically decided within 29 days from they are tabled.¹⁰

Information to international students on the terms and conditions of their studying at educational establishments in Norway

International students get their information regarding study terms and conditions through a variety of different information channels. In higher education, this type of information is normally sent out by the institutions themselves. The higher education institutions have their own information centres that offer personal guidance to students. In addition, they normally provide brochures and English websites¹¹. There are also others who engage in the task of providing information and support for international students, such as student welfare organizations¹², the independent International Students' Union of Norway (ISU)¹³, the Council of Europe and UNESCO European Network of National Information Centres (ENIC)¹⁴, the EU/EEA National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC), and other web-based agencies that provide information about studies, rules and law and other practical information (cf. Section 3.1a).

Folk high schools provide their own English websites where study terms and conditions are described (Folkehøgskolene, 2012).

Application procedures regarding visas and residence permits for nationals of third countries

EU/EEA students only need to document that they have been admitted to full-time study at a recognized educational institution, sufficient funds for subsistence and that they have a valid health insurance. Nationals from countries that Norway requires visas from must have a visitor's visa to participate in summer school and school programs lasting up to three months (90 days). Students, Ph.D. candidates and self-funded researchers who plan to stay longer than three months do not need to apply for a visitor visa in addition to the residence permit. If they have been granted a residence permit for studies in Norway, they automatically receive an entry permit which gives the entitlement to seven days' stay in Norway. During these seven days, the third-country nationals must contact the police, in order to obtain stickers for their passports or travel documents confirming they have permission to reside in Norway. The residence permit is valid from the date the police are informed or from the date of the decision to grant residence (SIU, 2011b).

¹⁰ As indicated by the median case processing time during the period January-August 2012. Note that these numbers reflect all 'education' cases. Those concerning studies at institutions of higher education may typically be less problematic than other cases.

¹¹ Several institutions offer this, but to varying degree. For further information, see the universities' or colleges' websites.

¹² <http://www.sio.no/files/info/studentforside.htm>

¹³ <http://isu-norway.no/index.php>

¹⁴ <http://www.enic-naric.net/index.aspx?s=n&r=g&d=about>

Are there any additional terms/conditions in relation to Article 6.7 of Directive 2004/114/EC?

Apart from the fact that Articles 6 and 7 in the directive are followed, the students must be admitted to specific courses of study and study activities must be full time.

Students must document that they hold valid health insurance. Students and other migrants staying for less than three months must provide their own insurance. Students and self-funded researchers staying for between 3 and 12 months must also provide their own insurance, unless they apply and receive voluntary membership of the Norwegian National Insurance Scheme. For study periods beyond 12 months a special health insurance is not required as in such situations, the student automatically becomes a member of this scheme. However, it does not cover everything¹⁵ (Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration, 2012a). Ph.D. candidates who are employed become members of the scheme automatically.

Students must document that they have means of subsistence.

Third-country students must, in addition, document that they have access to proper housing and that it is likely that they will return to their home countries after the completion of their studies.

The rationale behind the requirement that studies must be full time is probably an intention to prevent student residence permits from being used by individuals who do not primarily plan to study. The rationale behind the requirement to document health insurance, means of subsistence and proper housing is obviously to prevent foreign students from becoming a burden on the Norwegian welfare system. It should be noted that Norwegian HEIs generally reserve for international students an important share of the housing provided by their local student welfare organisation.

For each study programme, the higher education institution determines what type of language requirements the student must meet. Students who satisfy the general academic requirements to follow programmes conducted in English, but who do not satisfy the language requirements, must pass one of the following examinations:

- Basic English course from upper secondary school in Norway, with Grade 2 or better
- TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), with a minimum score of 500 points on the paper-based test or 60 points on the Internet-based test
- IELTS (International English Language Testing System), with a minimum score of 5.0

Norwegian language requirements apply when the programme is conducted in Norwegian. To follow most of the teaching in higher education, a good working knowledge of written and spoken Norwegian is required. Students who follow programmes conducted in Norwegian, but do not satisfy the language requirements, must pass one of the following examinations:

- Norwegian (as a second language) in upper secondary school, third year, with Grade 2 or better

¹⁵ For detailed information, see the website <http://www.nav.no/English/Membership+in+The+National+Insurance+Scheme/National+Insurance+Coverage>

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- The Norwegian Language Test – Advanced Level, written examination, with the grade ‘passed’ (from the autumn 2009 on) or a minimum score of 450 points (tests taken in the spring of 2009 and earlier)
- Level 3 in the Introductory Programme for Foreign Students at the Universities (Norwegian Universities and Colleges Admission Service, 2012)

The time frame around the application procedure

According to UDI, the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration, the aim is to process all the applications for a residence permit to participate in higher education or a folk high school well before the studies start. The processing time for a student permit is estimated at two months. However, the number of applications received may influence the processing time. To ensure a processing time no longer than the estimated two months, the documentation submitted must be complete and correct.

The earliest entry in Norway for students and Ph.D. candidates enrolling in higher education is three weeks before the semester starts. The entry date may be brought forward for students participating in preparatory courses or other activities related to their studies. The last day for entry is set at two weeks after the semester begins. The same applies to folk high schools. Self-funded researchers do not have the same entry window. The last possible entry date is six months after the decision has been issued. Researchers with their own funds tend to have more flexible starting dates and do not risk losing their study places, even if they arrive too late (Immigration regulations, 2009; Immigration Act, 2008; Rundskriv, 2010).

If a last date is set by the educational institution for when students can enrol, UDI will use this date as the last entry date¹⁶.

Is information about conditions and procedures for entry and residence readily available?

This question is answered in Section 3.1b.

Is there any relationship between being qualified under specific programmes and the eligibility for a visa or a residence permit?

All third country international students must apply for first-time residence permits before they enter Norway. The regulations apply to everyone and there are no differences between regular students and students under specific programmes. The same applies to the admission process (Immigration Act, 2008; Norwegian Directorate of Immigration, 2007).

According to SIU (2011b), there are two views on whether or not international students under specific programmes experience a facilitated process with regard to residence permits/visas. Some claim that it is easier for students who seek residence permits/visas within the established arrangements, while others argue that there is no significant

¹⁶ Personal conversation with UDI (Norwegian Directorate of Immigration)

difference between different groups of international students. SIU's (2011b) impression is that the application process for students is considered easier, and with fewer obstacles, than for researchers or workers¹⁷.

Organized arrangements

All foreigners, including international students, must register with the local police if they are staying in Norway more than 3 months. According to SIU (2011b), many of the educational institutions have good contact and cooperate well with the police and facilitate the registration process. For a quicker and easier process, some educational institutions coordinate the registration of international students in cooperation with the local police and set aside a few days for this at the beginning of the semester. Ph.D. candidates must register themselves.

Submission of the application

International students, Ph.D. candidates and self-funded researchers who have not had access to Norwegian embassies/consulates in their home countries or their places of study for the preceding six months can apply at Swedish or Danish embassies/consulates that have representation agreements with Norway. If such an agreement is not in place, the person must contact the nearest Norwegian consulate (Norwegian Directorate of Immigration, 2012d). According to UDI, the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration, lack of contact points is rarely a problem. The reason for this is probably that the largest sending countries are well covered with Norwegian embassies and consulates¹⁸.

Personal attendance of the application process

It is required that international students, Ph.D. candidates and self-funded researchers personally appear before a Norwegian representative during the application process. The application process for foreign citizens is divided into three stages:

- Stage 1 – First, the person must apply for a student permit or working permit¹⁹. This is done to a Norwegian consulate/embassy and can either be done via the Internet²⁰

¹⁷ For example, a facilitated agreement exists for students under the quota scheme. They receive starting grants equal to two months' support from the Norwegian State Educational Loan Fund. This is to ensure subsistence while they wait for confirmation of their residence permit applications, applications for social security numbers and creation of bank accounts (SIU 2011b).

¹⁸ Personal conversation with UDI

¹⁹ Researchers, specialists and researchers with their own funds (from visa countries) must document work contract, guest invitations or their own funds (SIU, 2011b)

²⁰ UDI, in cooperation with other actors, has established an electronic application for registration at embassies/consulates (developed through the EFFEKT-program). For more information, visit the website <http://www.udi.no/Norwegian-Directorate-of-Immigration/Annual-Report-2010/Finances-and-priorities/Online-with-the-users/>

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or on paper. If the application is done via a Swedish or Danish embassy, then only paper applications are accepted.

- Stage 2 – The person then needs to book an appointment to submit all necessary and required documentation. Following a positive decision some applicants must pick up their passports with entry visas at the embassies/consulates, while others receive them in the mail.
- Stage 3 – All persons who are granted a residence permits in Norway, needs to obtain a residence card. The person needs to report to the police within seven days to submit fingerprints, signature and be photographed. The card will be handed out within 10 days (Norwegian Directorate of Immigration, 2011; SIU, 2011b)

Visa code

Students who intend to stay in Norway for a maximum of three months do not need to pay the application fee for a resident permit. Stays for more than three months require completion of the ordinary application procedure.²¹

Preparatory year

Students in higher education and Ph.D. candidates and self-funded researchers can obtain preparatory residence permits for up to one year, to study Norwegian at an accredited higher education institution. This kind of permit is typically used for students at bachelor level who have been admitted on the condition that they pass the preparatory course in Norwegian language. It is not available to folk high school students (Immigration regulations, 2009; Norwegian Directorate of Immigration, 2012d).

What are the most common grounds for the rejection of relevant authorizations to study in Norway?

According to the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI), very few applications are rejected. In 2010, 2,360 applications for student permits were submitted; 177 of these were rejected (i.e. 7.5 per cent). In 2010 and 2011 the most common reasons for rejection were that the subsistence requirement was not met, that the return conditions were not fulfilled and that the student had not been accepted for studies in Norway²².

In addition, of course, many potential applicants for student permits are rejected by the higher education institutions because they are not qualified or do not have sufficiently competitive qualifications for the study programme applied for.

Tuition fees

Norway differs from most other countries, in that in Norway public education is free. This applies to both national and foreign students. However, all students must normally pay

²¹ Conversation with the visa unit at UDI

²² Personal conversation with staff at UDI

small semester fees to student welfare organizations, which run student housing, canteens, sports facilities, medical services, etc.. The fees increase slightly each year but are low and vary from around NOK 600 to NOK 1,000²³ (e.g. 80 – 135 Euro). Because they are employed, researchers do not need to pay the semester fees. Students under the quota scheme and the NUFU and Norad programmes have an option to pay the fees (Forskrift om studentsamskipnader, 2008). There are some differences between educational institutions regarding this; for example, Ph.D. candidates at the University of Oslo (UiO) are not allowed to pay the fees but doing so is voluntary at the University of Tromsø²⁴.

Folk high schools operate with a different practice and require tuition fees. Private higher education institutions may require tuition fees, depending on the level (or lack) of state funding.

Statistics on the migration patterns of international students to Norway

Over the last decade, immigration to Norway has increased considerably and since the financial crisis in 2008 Norway has had the highest immigration rates in Europe (OECD 2012). The annual number of international students coming to Norway has almost doubled, from 1 900 in 2006 to 3 600 in 2010. However, there are few international students coming to Norway compared with the number of persons granted a resident permit following an application for asylum and labour- and family migrants (Figure 2).

The increase of international students to Norway applies to both 3rd country nationals and students from EU/EEA. For the EU/EEA students the increase was especially high in 2010. Simultaneously Sweden introduced tuition fees in their universities, and consequently the number of international students coming to Sweden dropped significantly.

Over the last ten years, more than 21 500 international students with background from 146 different countries came to Norway to study. China, Germany and Russia are the top sending countries of international students to Norway (table 1).

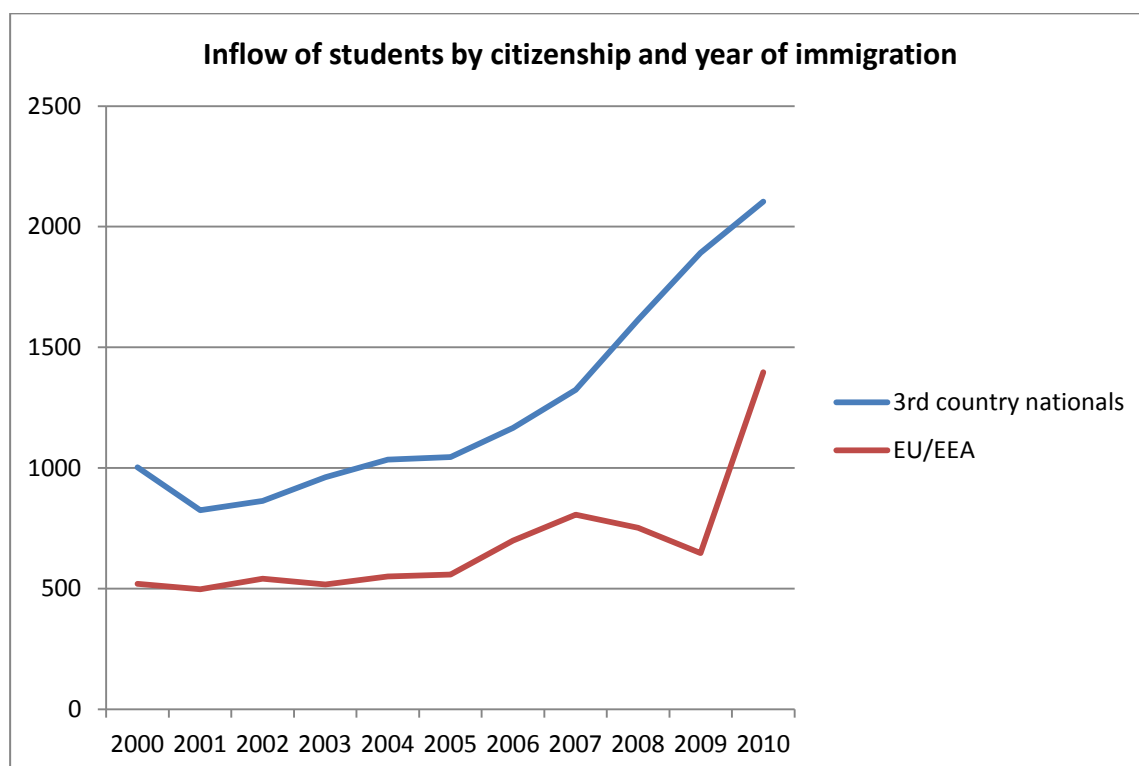
Most students (59 per cent) from 3rd countries are studying at graduate level and 15 per cent at post-graduate level. Of the EU/EEA students in Norway more than half study at first stage of tertiary education (figure 3). Since 3rd country nationals in general are studying at a higher level than students from EU/EEA countries they are also on average 2-3 years older (figure 4).

In 2011 there were 10 200 international students resident in Norway, 49 per cent were women and 51 per cent men. Natural sciences are the most popular disciplines, followed by the humanities and art, social science and business and administration. Natural sciences are more popular among men than women, and humanities and arts are preferred more by women (table 2).

²³ For more information, see the student welfare organisations' websites: <http://www.sio.no/files/info/studentforside.htm>

²⁴ Personal conversation with the staff at the Department of Research Administration at the University of Oslo

Figure 1. Inflow of students by citizenship and year of immigration. 2000–2010



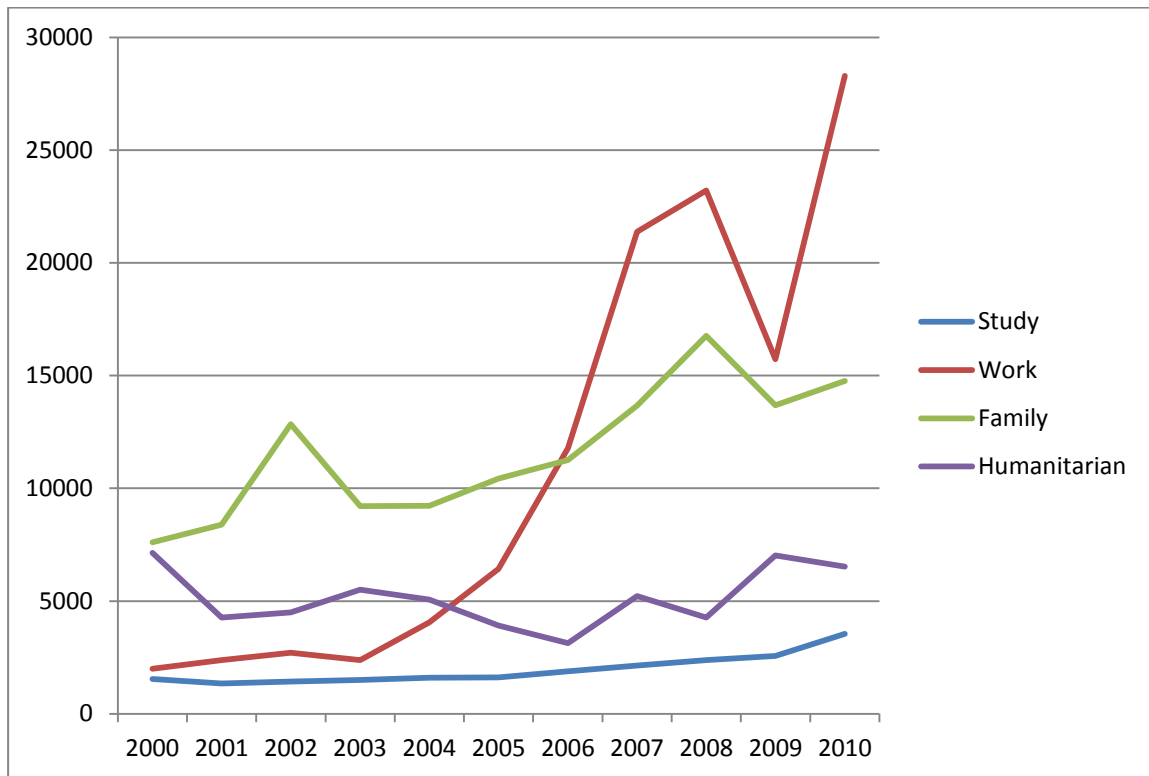
Source: Statistics Norway

Table 1. Top 10 sending countries 2000–2010

	Numbers of students 2000–2010	Percentages still resident in Norway, 1.1.2011
China	2 366	50
Germany	2 291	37
Russia	1 124	64
Spain	989	36
France	958	43
USA	865	38
Ethiopia	706	51
Nepal	597	62
Ghana	506	43
Italy	462	39
Other (136 nationalities)	10 674	50
Total	21 538	47

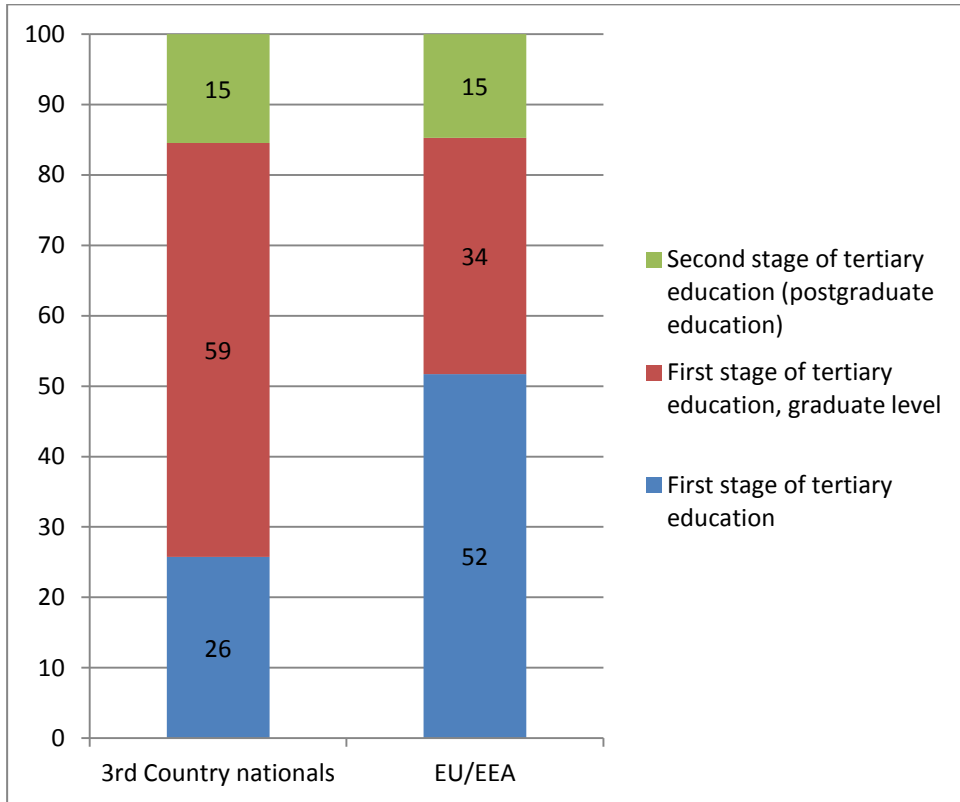
Source: Statistics Norway

Figure 2. Annual inflow of non-Nordic migrants by reason for immigration, 2000-2010



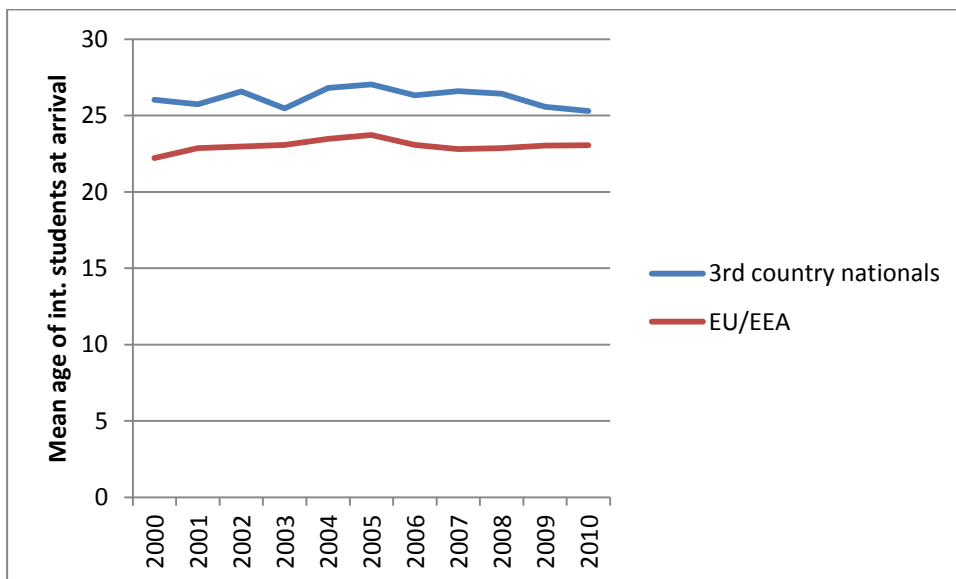
Source: Statistics Norway

Figure 3. International students by study levels, 1.1.2011



Source: Statistics Norway

Figure 4. Mean age of international students at arrival, by type of citizenship.



Source: Statistics Norway

Table 2. International students' field of education, by citizenship and gender, 2011. Percent

	3rd country nationals		EU/EEA	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Humanities and arts	10 %	19 %	15 %	27 %
Pedagogy/teaching training	3 %	5 %	2 %	4 %
Social sciences and law	11 %	14 %	15 %	19 %
Business and administration	11 %	16 %	11 %	11 %
Natural sciences	51 %	29 %	42 %	21 %
Health, welfare, sports	8 %	10 %	5 %	10 %
Primary industries	2 %	2 %	1 %	1 %
Transport and communication	2 %	1 %	1 %	0 %
Other	0 %	1 %	2 %	2 %
Below tertiary education	2 %	4 %	5 %	5 %
	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %

Source: Statistics Norway

3.2. Do they stay?

3.2 1. INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Duration and regulations

The possibilities for combining study and work is regulated by the issued permit. A study permit is only valid for the duration of the study programme or work relationship and only for the requested period. The duration of a first-time study permit is normally one year, with an opportunity for renewal. A quota student can receive permission for the entire prescribed study period – three years for a bachelor, two years for a master and up to three years at Ph.D. level (Immigration Act, 2008; Rundskriv, 2010). In general, a self-funded researcher may stay in the country for an indefinite period as long as the conditions for the permit are fulfilled. Special rules apply for folk high school. Students at folk high schools are not entitled to renew the residence permits and the permission to stay in Norway is given in accordance with the duration of the folk high school courses applied for, with a maximum time of one year (Immigration regulations, 2009).

Conditions and terms for renewal of student permits differ slightly from those of the initial entry:

- An account balance from a Norwegian bank from the first day of the preceding six months must be presented
- Satisfactory progress in the studies must be documented and a report from the school must be presented
- The renewal does not give an automatic right to work part time. Permission to work part time may only be given if the school gives documentary evidence that educational progress is acceptable.

Permits for the spring term are valid until 31 August. For the autumn semester, the permit lasts until 28 February. Study permits and their renewal do not form the basis for a permanent residence permit (Immigration regulations, 2009). Ph.D. candidates who are employed and the employment (not studies) is the basis for their permit, are eligible for a permanent residence permit after three years (Norwegian Directorate of Immigration, 2010a and 2012b). The same does not apply for PhD candidates who are students and have a student permit.

Successful completion

The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) follows Norwegian State Educational Loan Fund rules when it comes to the consequences of delays in studies. Students – both ordinary students and Ph.D. candidates with a student permission – may be allowed a delayed progress for up to one year. In case of illness, a change of study course or something else similar, UDI will make an assessment based on the individual's situation and in such cases a longer extension of the study permit may be granted. Self-funded researchers do not follow a regular education plan and may therefore apply for renewal many times, as long as the terms of the permit are fulfilled. Folk high school students cannot be granted renewals if delayed in their studies.

If an application is denied and the person does not apply for a new study permit or if a permit does not give the right for renewal, the person must return to his or her home country²⁵. Graduates may, however, obtain a six-month residence permit in order to apply for work in Norway.

Rules for the student's entrance into the labour market

International students who receive a residence permit do not need to apply for a work permit if the work is part-time. Students are automatically granted the right to work up to 20 hours per week and full time during public holidays. If the work is relevant to a student's studies, a full-time work permit can be issued for a limited period. The relevance for the current or future studies has to be documented.

²⁵ Personal conversation with UDI

As mentioned above, renewal of a student permit will not give automatic access to the labour market. Students who wish to apply for full time work must present documentation from the educational institution stating that employment is not an obstacle to academic progress. It is possible to apply for permission either for employment or for self-employment (Norwegian Directorate of Immigration, 2010b).²⁶ In 2010, the most common sectors for employment after graduation were: Professional, scientific and technical activities (21 per cent), public administration (15 per cent) and education (14 per cent)²⁷

Labour market rights

The Working Environment and Safety Act (Arbeidsmiljøloven, 2005²⁸) applies to all businesses, in both the public and private sectors. Its intention is to ensure a healthy and safe working environment for all employees. There are no differences in rights of Norwegian and international workers. The law applies from the first day at work. It is known that immigrants in general tend to have poorer working conditions than Norwegian workers, but no information is available concerning the working conditions of international students who participate in the labour market.

Welfare Rights

The welfare benefits and health care offered in Norway is a universal social security system administered by the public institution: Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV). Legal residents who stay for at least 12 months will, as a general rule, become members of the Norwegian National Insurance Scheme, which gives access to health care, unemployment benefits, etc. Students who stay for more than 3 months and less than 12, may apply for voluntary membership of the scheme while residing in Norway. Unless they apply and obtain voluntary membership, these students will only have access to emergency health care. Some countries do, however, have bilateral social security agreements with Norway, which may affect the welfare rights of that country's students (NAV 2012; NOU 2011).

The access to and size of a number of benefits depends on the student's former labour market participation. As was pointed out earlier, Ph.D. candidates are employed and automatically become members of the Norwegian National Insurance Scheme and therefore have rights from their first day at work, provided that all requirements are fulfilled²⁹.

International students at universities or colleges who have a valid student ID are also entitled to health services on the campus where they study³⁰.

²⁶ See Section 3.3 for more detailed information

²⁷ Source: own calculations from data delivered from Statistics Norway

²⁸ For an English edition of the law, see the website <http://www.arbeidstilsynet.no/lov.html?tid=78120>

²⁹ Personal conversation with NAV (contact centre)

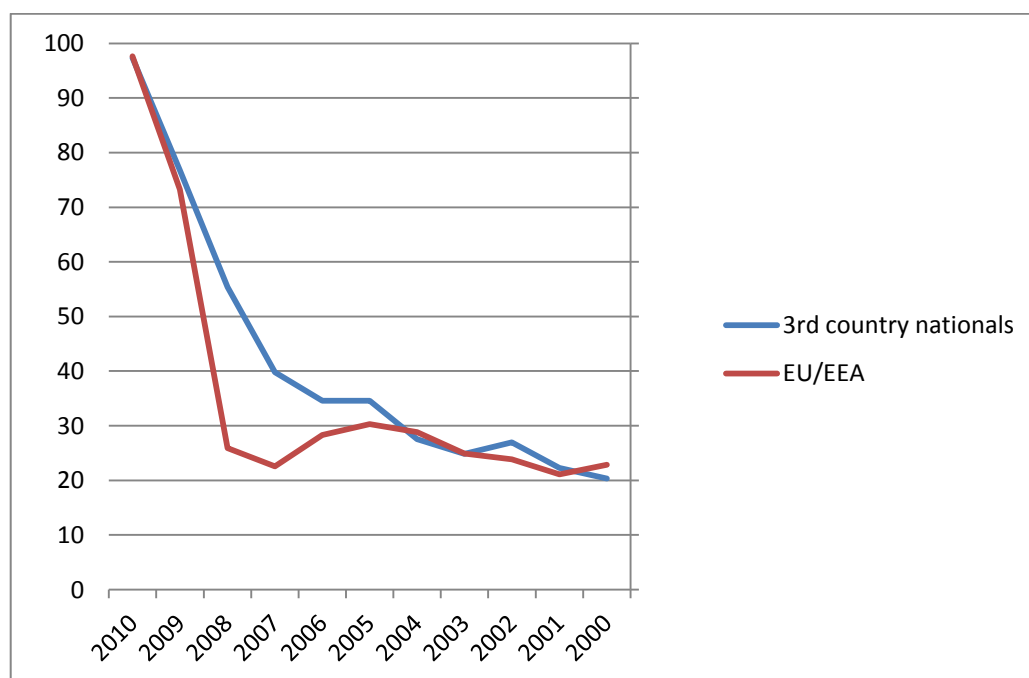
³⁰ See, for example, <http://www.uio.no/english/studies/new-student/health-insurance/>

Statistics on international students who remain in Norway

Figure 5 show that most international students leave Norway within a few years. Of the international student cohort who came to Norway in 2008, 55 per cent of the 3rd country nationals and only 25 per cent of the EU/EEA student were still resident in Norway at the beginning of 2011. Of the 2000 cohort of all international students, i.e. from either EU/EEA or a 3rd country, one out of five was still resident in Norway eleven years later.

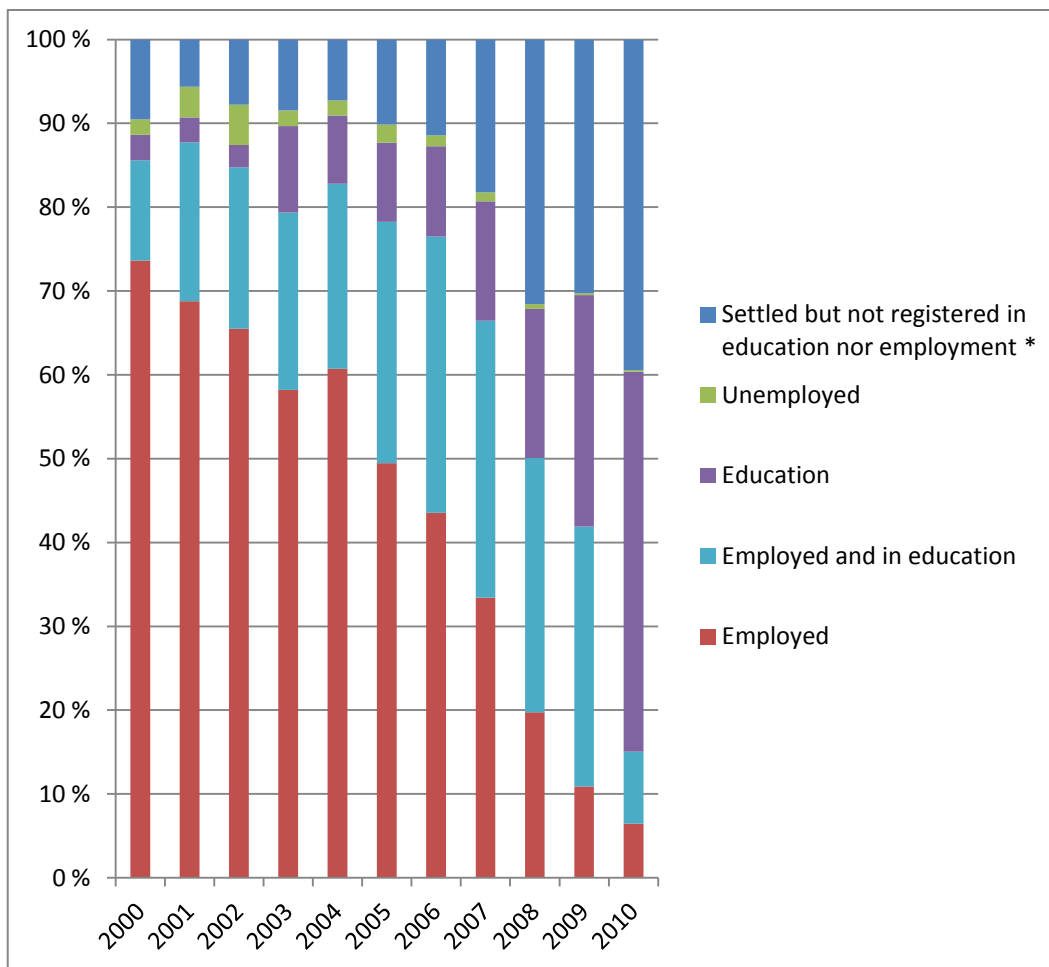
International students who are resident in Norway have high rates of participation in the Norwegian labour market following graduation. Almost 90 per cent of students who came to Norway in the period 2000-2002 were either employed, employed and still in education or actively seeking a job. Figure 6 shows that employment level drops for recent arrivals of international students since they are more engaged in their studies.

Figure 5. Residents in 2011, as percentage of the annual foreign student cohorts 2000 – 2010



Source: Statistics Norway

Figure 6. Labour market situation for international student cohorts 2000 – 2010 still resident in Q4, 2010), by year of entry. Percent of original cohort



Source: Statistics Norway

* International students who were found in the population register as residents by the beginning of 2011, but found neither in employment nor education registers. The relative high number for recent arrivals might be explained by delays in the registration of emigration.

3.2.2. INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' FAMILY MEMBERS

Family immigration permit

The student's immediate family can apply for a family immigration permit. For the family to be granted such a permit, a number of criteria must be met:

- As a rule the student must follow a masters' or Ph.D. programme at a university and have more than one year's study left
- Family members who may apply are children and spouses, as well as cohabitants of the student when they have lived together for more than two years or have or are expecting a child together

- The student must ensure financial support and housing for the family member(s)³¹. If the child is below the age of 15 and lack care providers in the home country, then this does not apply.
- The family members and the student must live together during the period of study.
- The student should not have received needs based support from the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV) the year before a family member applies for family immigration permit
- Family members must return to their home countries when the student has completed his or her education. The permit does not provide the basis for permanent residence permits (settlement permits).
- The family member is entitled to work full time for the duration of the permit (Norwegian Directorate of Immigration, 2010c).

Family members' rights

Family members will have access to health care and welfare rights on the same basis as for the students themselves. Family members who stay in Norway for less than 12 months and do not work in Norway are regarded as tourists and must purchase private insurance to cover medical expenses. However, if the stay is between 3 and 12 months, voluntary membership of the Norwegian system may be applied for, and one can obtain either full or limited rights. Children up to 18 years of age are included in their parents' membership of the Norwegian National Insurance Scheme. This also applies to international students when their children join them after themselves entered.

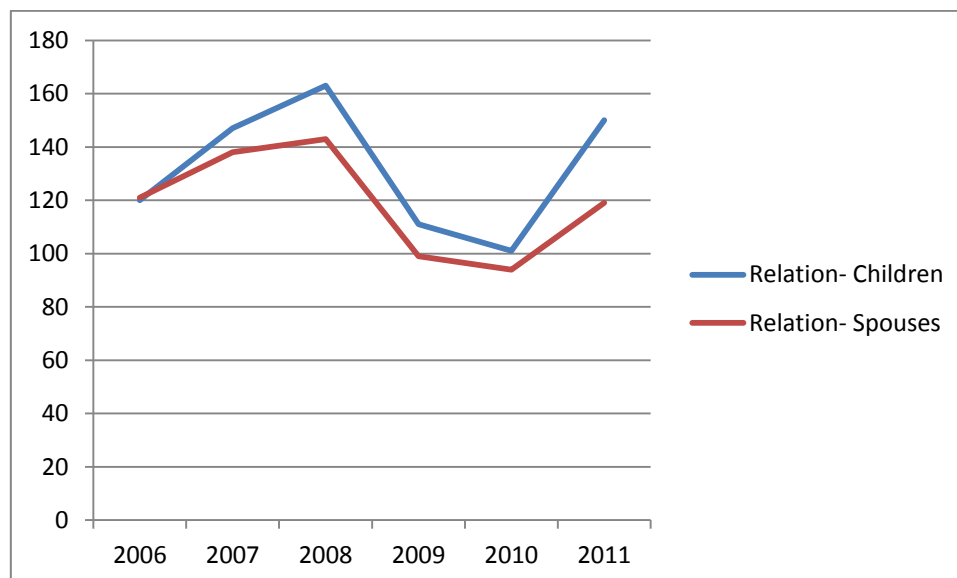
Is there any evidence that family immigration is an important reason that students come to Norway?

There is no documentary evidence that family immigration is an important reason that students come to Norway. In 2011, there were 227 people who received family permits to reside with students in Norway. Half of the migrants who came to accompany students were children. According to the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI), people from countries such as Nepal, Bangladesh and Ethiopia are over-represented among students who apply for family reunification. This means that there is reason to believe that students with Norad scholarships and quota students take along their families more often than other international students from third countries. This is probably also the case for the Ph.D. students.

From 2006-2012 there were in total 1687 family members granted permission to accompany international students. Thus an average of approximately 235 family members were granted permission to accompany international students each year. Figure 7 show that the number of children granted permission has been higher than for spouses.

³¹ According to SIU (2011b), there are challenges related to the tightening of the subsistence requirements when third-country students want to bring their families. To bring along their family, students must be able to provide an income equivalent to NOK 217,600 (e.g. about 29 500 Euro) – corresponding to Salary Grade 8 on the Norwegian government pay scale. The student must document previous income and should not have received support from social services within the preceding year.

Figure 7. Number of family members (children and spouses) granted permission to accompany international students, 2006-2011



Source: UDI

3.3. PERIOD FOLLOWING THE COMPLETION OF STUDY FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Staying in Norway after completing studies

The study permit does not form the basis for a permanent residence permit. The student can renew the study permit³², seek a job for a six-month period or apply for permission to work in Norway on the basis of a specific job offer or in self-employment.

Jobseeker period

A qualified, skilled graduate or researcher may apply for residence during a period of six months to seek work in Norway. The permit is not renewable. To get this permit, there are several conditions that one must fulfil.

Firstly, the graduate or researcher must have the intention to seek employment as a skilled worker or specialist in Norway. Secondly, they must have sufficient funds for the period

³² According to SIU (2011b), the renewal of a residence permit takes extremely long time. Meanwhile there are restrictions on the submission period and there are also movement restrictions during the processing time.

they intend to stay in Norway. The jobseeker permit gives the right to work full time (as either a skilled or unskilled worker), but does not form the basis for a permanent residence permit (Norwegian Directorate of Immigration, 2012e).

Workers and the self-employed

Students who have completed their degree in Norway may be entitled to work here as a skilled worker or in self-employment.

Skilled workers

A skilled worker may be granted a work permit for a period of up to three years or for the duration of employment if this is less than three years. The permit is renewable and, if the employment ends, it is possible to stay in Norway for a period of up to six months to seek a new job. Permits issued after 2010 are valid for change of employer but not a change in occupation. As a rule, the employment must be full time. The permit will form the basis for a later application for a permanent residence permit in Norway.

The employer may apply for work permits on behalf of skilled students or specialists if they are covered by the early employment scheme, i.e. that employers who fulfil certain criteria may recruit labour directly and let the employees start working before the application has been processed. The employer may also apply on behalf of the skilled worker, if he or she has given the employer the authorization for this. Before the student can start working, a residence permit must be presented. If it is likely that the application will be granted, the police may provide a preliminary confirmation that allows the student to work before the application has been processed (Norwegian Directorate of Immigration, 2012b; Immigration regulations, 2009).

There are several criteria that need to be fulfilled before a work permit may be issued:

- A concrete offer from a Norwegian employer must be presented, describing the type of work, hourly wage, number of working hours per week and the duration of the employment
- The working conditions must at least correspond to what is stipulated in relevant, current collective agreement or the usual pay scale for the industry and location³³. If the work is in a profession in which formal qualification requirements are demanded, then the necessary authorization must be obtained.
- If the work is with a recruitment agency, this enterprise must be registered in the Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority register for such agencies. A plan for forthcoming assignments must be presented. A salary must be paid also during any periods when work is not available.
- A passport, a passport photograph, educational information, information about relevant work experience, housing and offers of work and, if the employer applies

³³ This means that tertiary education (short or long) must at least result in Salary Grade 45 for a master or Ph.D. (NOK 372,700 per year, corresponding to about 50 000 Euro) and 42 for a bachelor (NOK 356,000 per year, or about 48 000 Euro) on the pay scale for Norwegian government employees

on behalf of the student, an authorization form must be provided (Norwegian Directorate of Immigration, 2012b; Immigration regulations, 2009).

The self-employed

An alternative to a work permit is to apply for a permit to start a new business in Norway. A permit for self-employment is initially granted for one year, with the possibility of extension, and applies only to skilled workers, i.e. who have a recognised qualification. After three years, it is possible to apply for a permanent residence permit (settlement permit). A temporary permit is also a possibility while the application is being processed. A number of criteria apply, and a few are mentioned here:

- The company must be a sole proprietorship, and the student must have a central and active position
- The student cannot have limited liability for the financial commitments of the company. In other words, he or she must be personally liable for the business commitments.
- For the establishment and continuation of the company, the student must stay in Norway, i.e. be a registered resident
- It is required that the financial operation of the business is secured. The minimum subsistence requirement corresponds to Salary Grade 1 on the pay scale for Norwegian government employees. Subsistence must mainly be secured through the business activities.
- A specific business plan, a market analysis and evidence of sales potential must be presented (Norwegian Directorate of Immigration, 2012f; Immigration Act, 2008; Immigration regulations, 2009).

Policy to match the needs of the national labour market with the skills of international students

There is no policy to ensure that the skills of international students are matched with the needs of the Norwegian labour market. However, some initiatives for cooperation between specific industries and educational institutions exist, targeting both national and international students.

e) Applying for a work permit without leaving Norway

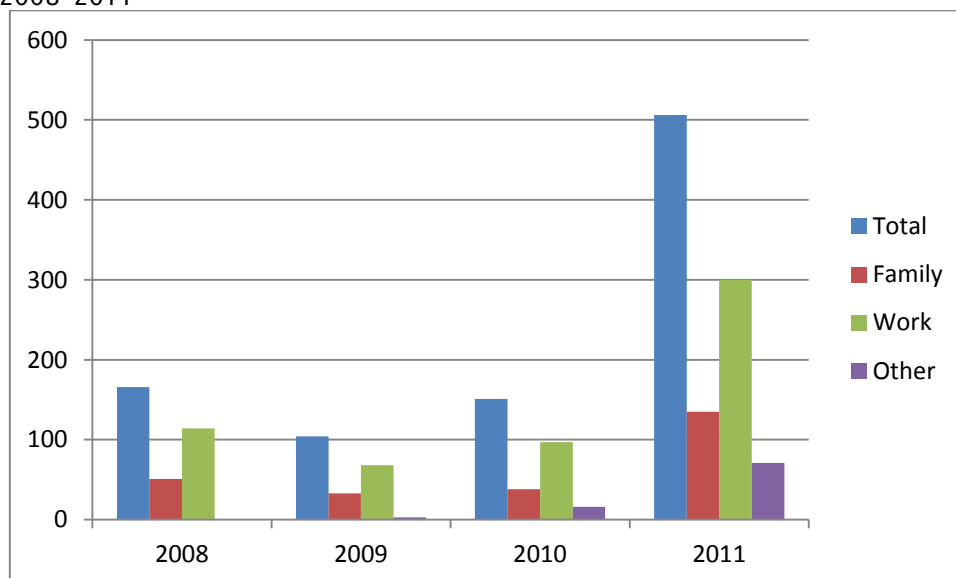
In 2001, the quarantine provision was repealed in Norway. This means that international students in Norway no longer are obliged to leave Norway for five years before entering the Norwegian labour market (Meld. St. no. 18, 2007–2008). Today it is possible for international students to apply for work after graduation when still in Norway. This only applies to people who have been in Norway for at least nine months legally (Norwegian Directorate of Immigration, 2012b).

Possibilities for to changing to other migration statuses

A student permit does not qualify for a permanent residence permit in Norway. However, in some cases, third-country nationals may change to a qualifying type of permit. As mentioned above, students with completed degrees can apply for residence as an employee, self-employment or as a jobseeker. (Norwegian Directorate of Immigration, 2012b, e and f). There are also other ways to settle in Norway – for example, through marriage.

Figure 8 shows that there is a sharp increase of person who initially came on education permits that has changed to other status over the last four years. Most of the international students changes to a work or family related permit.

Figure 8 The number of changes of immigration status from an education* permit to another status 2008–2011



Source: UDI

*Includes also au-pairs

Statistic on international students occupational distribution in the labour market

Labour market statistics show that many international students who have a job while studying, are employed in occupations that require higher education (table 3), but among the 3rd country national students who were employed and still in education 32 per cent were employed in elementary occupation. The corresponding proportion is 10 per cent for those who were not registered as students any more.

The same pattern of occupational distribution can be identified also in the distribution of students across different industries. The majority of both students and graduates were employed in professional and scientific activities, in public administration or in education (table 4).

The mean age of international students employed in Norway is around 30 years. Men are on average a somewhat older than the women, and the 3rd country nationals on average some months older than the EU/EEA students who are employed (table 5).

Table 3. Employed international students and former students by occupation (ISCO-88) and type of citizenship

	3rd country nationals		EU/EEA	
	Employed former students	Employed and still in education	Employed former students	Employed and still in education
1 Managers	1 %	0 %	3 %	0 %
2 Professionals	40 %	27 %	45 %	45 %
3 Technicians and associate professionals	29 %	8 %	27 %	16 %
4 Clerical support workers	5 %	5 %	4 %	4 %
5 Service and sales workers	13 %	23 %	13 %	22 %
6 Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers	0 %	0 %	1 %	0 %
7 Craft and related trades workers	1 %	1 %	1 %	1 %
8 Plant and machine operators, and assemblers	1 %	3 %	2 %	0 %
9 Elementary occupations	10 %	32 %	4 %	10 %
0 Armed forces occupations	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Total	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %
N=	1371	1391	964	402

Source: Statistics Norway, Labour Force Survey

Table 4. Employed international students and former students by type of citizenship and industry (NACE), Q4, 2010

	3 country nationals		Eu/EEA	
	Employed	Employed/Education	Employed	Employed/Education
Professional, scientific and technical activities	21 %	17 %	22 %	13 %
Education	15 %	8 %	16 %	14 %
Public administration	13 %	21 %	16 %	38 %
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	9 %	1 %	6 %	1 %
Information and communication	8 %	3 %	5 %	2 %
Accommodation and food service activities	8 %	24 %	6 %	12 %
Manufacturing	7 %	3 %	4 %	1 %
Transport	6 %	14 %	2 %	4 %
Wholesale and retail trade	4 %	5 %	5 %	4 %
Administrative and support service activities	3 %	1 %	5 %	3 %
Human health and social work activities	2 %	1 %	4 %	4 %
Financial and insurance activities	1 %	0 %	2 %	0 %
Arts, entertainment and recreation	1 %	1 %	3 %	3 %
Construction	1 %	0 %	1 %	1 %
Electricity, gas and water supply	1 %	0 %	1 %	0 %
Real estate activities	0 %	0 %	0 %	1 %
Other service activities	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Activities of household as employers	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Total	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %
N=	1549	1763	1100	479

Source. Statistics Norway, Labour Force Survey

Table 5. Mean age of employed international students and former students, Q4 2010, by gender and type of citizenship. Years

Mean age		3rd country nationals		EU/EEA	
		Men	Women	Men	Women
		Employed	31,4	30,7	30,7
	Employed/Education	29,3	27,9	27,9	27,2

Source: Statistics Norway, Labour force survey

3.4. MISUSE OF THE 'STUDENT ROUTE' TO MIGRATION

What are the main forms of misuse of student status and what is the extent of (these types of) misuse?

According to the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI), there are a few examples of third-country citizens' abusing the student permit as a way of getting into the Schengen Area. Case-workers at UDI suspect that misuse is most frequent with permits for folk high schools, since the requirements for admission are the weakest for these institutions.³⁴

However, the misuse of a student permit does not seem to be a major concern for the Norwegian immigration authorities, nor is there any documentation of substantial misuse. One type of abuse may be that some students work more than the permitted 20 hours per week. Of the students who work, 30 per cent says that they work more than 30 hours a week (see table 5)

Measures to prevent and control the misuse

Efforts to prevent and control misuse are reflected in the general regulations for student permits, on the admission to specific fields of study, possibilities for full-time study, documentation of means of subsistence and the likelihood of the student's return to the home country. Case-work at UDI, the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT) and the individual educational institutions is aimed at checking that these requirements are satisfied.

It is the higher education institutions that are responsible for ensuring that applicants are actually qualified for the studies. NOKUT is responsible for quality assurance, evaluation and accreditation of Norwegian post-secondary and higher education institutions. If a university or college does not fulfil the national standards and conditions, the accreditation will not be given or can be withdrawn.³⁵ This is to ensure that only provision of sufficient quality is accredited. . In turn this will contribute to preventing potential abuse of study permits (Universitets- og høyskoleloven, 2005).

Table 5. Employed international students and former students by type of citizenship and whether they work more than 30 hours per week. Percent, Q4 2010.

	Employed	Employed and in education
Per cent working fewer than 30 hours week	28	69
Per cent working more than 30 hours per week	72	31
Total	100	100
N=	2□658	2□244

Source: Statistics Norway, Labour Force Survey

³⁴ Personal conversation with staff at UDI

³⁵ Note that this does not mean that the institution has to close, and that some institutions, also serious ones of high quality, chose to not seek accreditation.

4. Bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the area of international students

The aim of this chapter is to describe Norwegian bilateral and multilateral agreements with third countries (countries outside the EU and EEA), with the focus on the facilitate studying in Norway for third-country national, and to analyse how these transnational agreements are transposed into admission rules and policies.

Bilateral and multilateral agreements on student mobility

Norway cooperates and has entered into bilateral agreements on education and research with several different countries. The cooperation with the Nordic countries is comprehensive and institutionalized. The existence of the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers is an expression of how important this cooperation is. The partnership covers most of the educational and research institutions as well as various educational and research programmes³⁶. This involves extensive contact with other neighbouring countries and regional organisations such as the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) and the Arctic Council, and the Baltic countries³⁷. One of the major areas of priority in the Nordic Council is to reduce restrictions on cooperation and exchange between the Nordic countries in a number of sectors, including education and research. The Nordic masters' programme is an example of a measure to enhance cooperation and the mobility of students. Nordplus, where both Nordic and Baltic countries participate, is the most popular Nordic programme in terms of student and staff mobility.

The by far most important and popular programme in terms of numbers of countries, students and staff involved, is the EU Lifelong Learning Programme, of which the Erasmus scheme is particularly relevant for cooperation in higher education. Most of the international exchange students coming to Norway in fact come through Erasmus. Similarly, the EU Framework Programmes for research and technology are by far the most important for research cooperation, including mobility of staff and doctoral students.

For policy development to facilitate international mobility of higher education students and staff, the Bologna Process³⁸, with the further development of the European Higher Education Area, is of great significance.

Outside of Europe, the Norwegian Government has prioritized two regions in its strategy for the internationalization of education: North America and Latin America. In addition, education and research are important parts of the government's High North Strategy

³⁶ Description of Nordic cooperation in the area of education and research can be found at website of the Nordic Councils of Ministers. <http://www.norden.org/en/about-nordic-co-operation/areas-of-co-operation/education-and-research>

³⁷ Description of the Baltic cooperation in the area of education can be found on the website of CBSS. <http://www.cbss.org/Education-Culture/creating-an-accessible-and-attractive-region>

³⁸ See chapter 1

(2006). The Norwegian government has signed several agreements with other countries on research/technology and higher education respectively (e.g. Argentina, Brazil, Chile, China, India and Japan, and with some countries, e.g. Russia, there is just a memoranda of understanding on higher education and research. Every party has an obligation and a primary responsibility to initiate follow-up processes for the agreements and MoU and to involve the right actors for the specific cooperation. Without good follow-up, such agreements are of little or no importance. On the Norwegian side SIU mostly has this role.

Some of these programmes may be viewed as being a part of the development cooperation between Norway and countries in Africa, Asia and Eurasia. Other programmes are aimed at regional cooperation with neighbouring countries such as the Nordic and Baltic countries, and Russia. Other bilateral agreements more strategically target agreement on with important trading partners, such as China and India, but also with emerging economies in Latin America such as Brazil, Chile and Argentina.

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to go into the details on all these bilateral agreements and MoUs, but we will briefly summarize the most important elements and focus on the mobility aspects. At the end of the chapter, we give a tabular summary of the most important programmes for increased student mobility.

North America

Educational cooperation with North America is a priority for the Norwegian Government (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2011). In 2011 the Norwegian minister of education and research launched a new strategy for increased cooperation on higher education with North America. The strategy included a commitment of NOK 10 million (approximately EUR 1.4 million) each year from 2012 to 2015. The aim of the strategy is to strengthen cooperation in higher education between Norway and the USA and Canada and supplement the Strategy for Norway's Scientific and Technological Cooperation with North America. The cooperation is meant to take place both at government level and between institutions, to build stronger links between higher education and research and to increase the exchange of students and staff. Among the main measures is the Partnership Programme for North America. The strategy also includes calls for project funding and the establishment of new forums for strengthening cooperation with the USA and Canada (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2011).

Russia and the Barents region

Since 2006 the Norwegian Government's High North Strategy has emphasized the importance of international cooperation in education and research with Russia in the Barents Region. The strategy includes development of the joint Russo-Norwegian doctoral and masters' programmes, increasing the number of Russian students under the quota scheme and a separate scheme for Northern scholarships. In addition, the five Nordic countries, Russia and the European Commission work through the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) to coordinate the national objectives of the Barents cooperation. A task force for education and research has been established, encompassing work to promote mobility and exchange Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research (2011).

China

Education and research cooperation with China has increased in recent years and in 2011, Chinese students were one of the largest group (1,200) of international students residing in Norway. In 2008, one scientific and technological agreement and one memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between China and the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research.

The aim of the research and technology agreement is to stimulate increased research and technology cooperation between China and Norway. The aims of the MoU are wide-ranging and include collaboration in both basic and higher education. Several Norwegian institutions have signed agreements with Chinese institutions (ibid.).

The most important programmes enhancing the international student mobility of third-country nationals

Quota scheme

Under the quota scheme, the Norwegian Government annually provides financial support to study for a degree in Norway to a total of 1,100 students from developing countries in the South and countries in the western Balkans, Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The main objective of the quota scheme is to contribute to capacity building through education that will benefit the home countries of the students when they return. The quota scheme is also intended to strengthen relations between Norway and the selected countries and thus contribute to internationalization of Norwegian institutions of higher education.

Most universities and university colleges in Norway participate in the quota scheme. The institutions involved are each allocated a certain number of students under the programme each year. The scheme normally includes courses at masters' and Ph.D. level in addition to certain professionally oriented bachelor's degrees. Most of the Norwegian institutions offer courses and educational programmes in English.

High North Fellowship Programme

The High North Fellowship Programme offers scholarships to students from USA, Canada and Russia who attend an institution in Northern Norway as part of their higher education. The aim is that educational institutions use the scholarship programme for the area to strengthen the international contacts and establish new partnerships. The programme includes scholarships for students from USA, Russia and Canada to study at higher education institutions in Northern Norway and scholarships for academic and administrative staff at the Northern Norwegian educational institutions to travel to partner institutions in the three other countries. So far, nearly 100 students from USA, Canada and Russia have come to Norway with the fellowship programme and about NOK 7.5 million (EUR 1 million) has been awarded in travel grants and scholarships.

Immigration of International Students

Pakistan Ph.D. programme

In 2006, Norway was included as a country of destination for candidates in Pakistan's Overseas Scholarship Scheme for Ph.D. in Selected Fields. The scheme is financed and managed by the Pakistani Higher Education Commission (HEC). The stated aim of the programme is to improve Pakistan's national research capacity. Admission to Ph.D. studies in Norway is highly competitive and only candidates with outstanding academic records will be considered for enrolment.

NOMA, NUFU and NORHED

These are programmes for educational cooperation and research-based partnerships between higher-education institutions in Norway and in the south. NOMA and NUFU will be replaced by NORHED.

NORHED is a new programme for capacity building in higher education and research in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). The overall goal of NORHED is to build higher education and research capacities in LMICs as a means to enhance sustainable conditions conducive to societal development and poverty reduction. NORHED will be organized in sub-programmes with specific thematic and/or geographic focus and may support education at bachelors', masters' and Ph.D. levels, as well as joint research. The programme is financed by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad).

Table 6. Bilateral and multilateral programmes with other countries

	EU/EEA/Nordic nationals		3 rd -country nationals	
	Mobility	Capacity building	Mobility	Capacity building
Erasmus staff mobility	x	x		
Erasmus Mundus masters' and doctoral	x	x	x	
Erasmus Mundus partnerships with 3rd countries		n/a	n/a	n/a
Erasmus Mundus promotion				
Erasmus University Charter		x		
EEA grants	x	x		
Preparatory visits	x	x		
French-Norwegian masters' degrees	x	x		
Erasmus intensive language courses	x	x		
Erasmus Intensive Programme	x	x		
International joint degrees				
ISEP (USA)			x	
Quota Scheme			x	x
Erasmus teacher mobility	x	x		
Norad's Programme for Master Studies – NOMA			(x)	x
ACE Cultural Education				
Nordic Master Programme	x	x		
Russo-Nordic cooperation				
Northern Scholarship		x		
Nordplus Horizontal		x		
Nordplus Higher Education		x		
Nordplus Nordic languages and culture		x		
Norway Education Abroad				
NORHED			x	x
NUFU			x	(x)
Pakistan Agreement			x	
Partnership for North America				
Erasmus placement				
Project funding				
Project funding for cooperation with China				
Cooperation on Higher Education in Eurasia			x	x
Cooperation Programme with Russia 2011–2015			x	x
Cooperation Programme with Western Balkan Countries			x	x
Study visits				
Erasmus student mobility	x	x	x	x
Tanzania Agreement			x	x
Leonardo development				
One-year course in French	x			

5. IMPACT OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN Norway

- a) A major increase in student immigration took place in Norway in 2010. In 2011 about 8 per cent of the students at Norwegian higher education institutions were foreign citizens – EU/EEA included. The increase was strongest among students from the EU/EEA. Hence the ‘crowding-out’ of Norwegian students as a result of third-country students is increasing but still marginal.
- b) We know that 4,900 international and EU students and graduates remained in Norway in work or education as of the fourth quarter of 2010. Many of these are in professions with high qualifications (ISCO-68 major groups 2–3). The concern over a brain drain in sending countries seems to have had less impact on Norwegian policies over the past few years than earlier, as the quarantine rule was removed and former students may apply for six-month residence permits in order to apply for work. In order to obtain a student permit, an international student must, however, still fulfil the criterion that return to his or her home country is ‘likely’.
- c) Misuse of the ‘student route’ to migration does not seem to be a major concern for Norwegian policy-makers or immigration authorities. The strategies to prevent misuse are reflected in the design of the general regulations for student permits and in the control carried out by case-workers at the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI), the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT) and the educational institutions (see Section 3.4).
- d) Higher education is free in Norway, hence international students do not have any direct impact on the revenues generated by educational institutions in Norway. An increase in the total number of students may however affect public transfers to higher education, and the room for diversification of the study programs.
- e) The student population in Norway is increasing. International students are only marginally contributing to the increase.
- f) No surveys have been conducted on the public’s perceptions of international students in Norway. Norwegians are, however, generally positive towards immigrants and immigration in general and there is no reason to believe that they should be more sceptical towards students than towards other immigrants.

6. Conclusions

The immigration of international students to Norway has increased significantly over the past few years. The introduction of (or increase in) tuition fees in a number of other European countries is a likely reason for the sharp increase. A continuation of this development may impact the competition for admission to Norwegian educational institutions in the not too distant future.

Third country students in Norway come from a number of different countries. The largest groups come from China, Russia, Ethiopia, Nepal and Ghana. They are dispersed over a large number of educational institutions and fields of study. The majority of international students participate in the labour market. There is little evidence of misuse of

the 'student route' of migration to Norway. 30 per cent of the employed international students do, however, work more than 30 hours a week, indicating that studying is not a full-time activity.

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