

North America Strategy for Higher Education Cooperation 2012-2015 of the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research

Introduction

It is a fact that most of the world's knowledge production takes place outside Norway, and it is vital for the development of our society that we can benefit from knowledge that is generated elsewhere. It is also a fact that much of the world's innovative knowledge production happens at institutions in North America and this is the reason why knowledge collaboration with the United States and Canada has been a mainstay in the development of Norwegian higher education and research since the end of World War II. The U.S. and Canada are still two of Norway's most important strategic partners in higher education and research cooperation.

We see international cooperation as an instrument to increase the quality in Norwegian higher education and research: Only through comparison with others can we see our own advantages and weaknesses. Through an internationally oriented academia, we educate students who are competent for work in a globalized world, and researchers who can benefit from and contribute to the global community of knowledge.

To support the cooperation with the U.S. and Canada, Norway developed a Strategy for Norway's Scientific and Technological Cooperation with North America in 2005. In 2007, the Ministry of Education and Research (MER) supplemented this strategy by launching a North America Strategy for Higher Education Cooperation for the period 2008-2011.

The status assessment of the 2008-2011 strategy shows an upward trend in student mobility between Norway and North America, and the transatlantic partnerships established under the strategy have become models of best practice for institutional collaboration. The status assessment also points to the need for increased efforts regarding meeting places for cooperation with Canada, mobility at the Master's and Ph.D. levels and the recruitment of North American students to Norway.

The follow-up of this strategy will relate to the Strategy for Norway's Scientific and Technological Cooperation with North America and the Government's High North Strategy, when relevant.

Priorities and measures 2012-2015

The aim of this strategy for higher education cooperation is to support prioritized areas, in order to develop and strengthen strong and long-term cooperation structures between Norwegian and North American higher education institutions.

The main priorities in the 2012-2015 strategy are:

- Collaboration at government level and network arenas
- Institutional partnerships and stronger correlation between higher education and research collaboration
- Mobility of students and staff

Collaboration at government level and network arenas

Dialogue and contact at government level is fundamental in order to stimulate increased cooperation and to reduce formal barriers which hinder cooperation initiatives. Network arenas are also vital tools for dispersion of information and coupling of partners, and also for accommodating discussions.

The Transatlantic Education Forum was established under the 2008-2011 strategy. The Canadian and American embassies participate in the Forum, together with MER, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), the Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education (SIU), the Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions (UHR), the Research Council of Norway (RCN), the Association of Norwegian Students Abroad (ANSA), the National Union of Students in Norway (NSO)¹ and the Fulbright Foundation. This has proved to be an important arena for discussing mutual challenges and possible measures. The Forum will be continued and the Ministry will invite additional stakeholders to the meetings when relevant. There is also a need to establish other structures for dispersion of information between relevant Norwegian partners and stakeholders.

The yearly Transatlantic Science Week provides a meeting place for partnerships in research, innovation and higher education. Research frontiers are international, and collaborative networks are essential in finding solutions to global challenges. The Transatlantic Science Week will be used actively to promote higher education cooperation and to create synergies with the research cooperation.

The Ministry will further work to extend the dialogue with Canadian and American authorities and partners, including relevant student organizations.

The Ministry will support targeted measures towards creating meeting places between Norwegian and Canadian institutions and will consider supporting yearly higher education cooperation seminars in Canada.

The Ministry will seek to establish a dialogue with the business sector, in order to support their and the Ministry's interests in the enhancement of the higher education cooperation with North America.

¹ From fall 2010.

Institutional partnerships and stronger correlation between higher education and research collaboration

There are many ways to approach and organize international cooperation in higher education. This strategy prioritizes the development and strengthening of institutional partnerships which create fruitful synergies between higher education and research cooperation. It is the Ministry's view that the students should benefit from the research cooperation going on between Norwegian and North American partners, and that institutions which have discovered research areas of mutual interest will have a solid foundation also for higher education cooperation. The Ministry aims at an increase in the cooperation on education modules, sandwich programs and degrees, with a priority at the Master's and Ph.D. levels.

There is extensive research collaboration between Norway and the U.S. and Canada in many fields. Some prioritized fields of research cooperation are energy, health, ICT, polar research and climate and natural resources.

As circumpolar nations we have common challenges and mutual interest for issues concerning the High North, also in the fields of research and higher education.

The Ministry established the Partnership Programme for higher education collaboration between Norwegian institutions and institutions in the U.S. and Canada under the former strategy. The programme encourages collaboration between institutions by building sustainable academic networks and strengthening exchanges. There will be a new Partnership Programme for the period of 2012- 2015 with emphasis on synergies between higher education and research cooperation.

Project funding was introduced as a measure in 2009. The project funding is mainly seed funding for the establishment of new academic collaborations and for reinforcement of existing collaboration initiatives. Project funding will be continued in 2012-2015.

The Ministry will earmark parts of the Partnership Programme and project funds to cooperation with Canada.

Mobility of students and staff

It is a goal to increase the mobility of students and staff. First and foremost, the strategy will stimulate and support mobility as part of institutional partnerships, both mobility from Norway to North America, and from North America to Norway. However, the Ministry will also encourage an increase in the mobility of degree seeking students, especially on Master's and Ph.D. level.

ANSA plays an important role with regards to information and accommodation for students who want to pursue a full degree abroad, and the organization has a special focus on studies in the U.S. and Canada.

The Fulbright Program aims to increase mutual understanding between the peoples of the U.S. and other countries, through the exchange of persons, knowledge and skills and contributes to mobility of students and researchers between Norway and the U.S. The Fulbright Foundation received an increase in MER-funding in 2008-2010, and from 2011 the increase of 1 mill. NOK was made permanent. The Fulbright Foundation also receives funding from other Norwegian partners, and the different Fulbright scholarships support the overall goals of this strategy. As an example, the Fulbright Arctic Chairs, supported by the MFA, are highly relevant in the light of this strategy and the Government's High North Strategy.

The continuation of the Partnership Programme and the project funding mentioned above will contribute to increased mobility of students and staff through institutional cooperation.

There are a number of schemes which support mobility of students and researchers from North America to Norway and from Norway to North America, such as the Fulbright Program, the Fellowship Programme for Studies in the High North, the north2north student exchange program, the Nordic Research Opportunity, the Leiv Eiriksson mobility program – which all exist in addition to the regular student financial support schemes. Better coordination of information measures will contribute to a better utilization of these opportunities.

The Ministry will also support targeted information measures about the Norwegian higher education system directed towards North American students and higher education institutions in order to increase the mobility of North American students and staff to Norway.

The Ministry will work to reduce formal barriers which hinder cooperation and mobility of students and staff.

Goals

The success of the strategy will be measured by the development in the student mobility between Norway and North America². The Ministry will also monitor the development of e.g. joint study provisions between Norwegian and North American partner institutions. It is to be noted that the aims of the strategy are not restricted to these indicators.

² Unfortunately, the available statistics on mobility of students on Ph.D. level and of staff are not applicable for this purpose.

Student mobility from Norway to the U.S.³

Students	Statistics 2009-2010			Goals 2015		
	Bachelor	Master	Total	Bachelor	Master	Total
Degree students	725	245	1013	750	600	1350
Exchange students	636	442	1080	800	600	1400
			2093			2750

Student mobility from Norway to Canada⁴

Students	Statistics 2009-2010			Goals 2015		
	Bachelor	Master	Total	Bachelor	Master	Total
Degree students	157	20	184	200	100	300
Exchange students	99	74	173	200	150	350
			357			650

Student mobility from North America to Norway⁵

	Statistics 2010				Goals 2015		
	Bachelor	Master	Other	Total	Bachelor	Master	Total
USA	190	140	29	359	250	200	450
Canada	79	50	19	148	100	150	250
				507			700

³ Statistics from the State Educational Loan Fund. The total also includes Ph.D. students taking their full degree in the U.S.

⁴ Statistics from the State Educational Loan Fund. The total also includes Ph.D. students taking their full degree in Canada.

⁵ Statistics from Database for Statistics on Higher Education (DBH) on students with American and Canadian citizenship.