



NORTH AMERICA STRATEGY FOR HIGHER EDUCATION COOPERATION 2008-2011 OF THE NORWEGIAN MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

The North America Strategy consists of the following four elements:

- Collaboration at government level
- Strengthening of student exchange
- Establishment of partnership schemes
- Strengthening of information and network arenas

1. INTRODUCTION

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. It continues to be so, and the Ministry of Education and Research will make continued efforts to maintain and strengthen these relations. We wish to strengthen the connections between Norwegian and North American higher education institutions. There are many reasons why the United States and Canada should have a central place as collaborators and knowledge sources for Norwegian academic institutions. The institutions in this region are predominant as regards innovative power and knowledge development. A common asset of leading researchers throughout the world is the network that they have built up through their contact with North American academic institutions, where they derive new inspiration from collaboration on research and higher education. The resources available at major North American research institutions place them in a class of their own. The universities have some of the best educational provisions available, although there are variations there too.

Norwegian universities and university colleges agree that it is necessary for Norway to secure a continued sound participation in these networks and continued access to the knowledge generated there. It is the Ministry's view that this is best secured by further developing relations in both research and higher education.

At the start of 2006, the Minister of Education and Research therefore decided that a strategy should be developed to endeavour to strengthen the contact with North America. Such a strategy already exists for collaboration in the area of science and technology. The objective is to supplement this with a corresponding plan for collaboration on higher education.

The basis for this was prepared by a national working group appointed by the Ministry, which has assessed measures to increase educational collaboration with North America. This strategy involves follow-up by the Ministry of Education and Research of the working

group's report and the consultative comments on this report.

2. A STRENGTHENED DIALOGUE

In the Ministry's view, there is a fundamental need to strengthen the contact and communication between appropriate partners and contributors in the field and with students who may be interested in applying for studies at North American higher education institutions. A number of initiatives have already been taken, which will be further developed within the framework of this strategy.

2.1 Transatlantic Education Forum

The two North American embassies in Norway, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education, the Fulbright Foundation, the Association of Norwegian Students Abroad, the Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions, and the Research Council of Norway all participate in a coordination group called the *Transatlantic Education Forum (TEF)*, which is to meet 2–3 times a year to discuss common challenges and develop common measures. The Ministry of Education and Research will attach particular importance to closer follow-up of and contribution to the embassies' work on higher education. There is for instance close collaboration between the Norwegian Embassy in Washington DC, the U.S. Embassy in Oslo and the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research on common measures for strengthening bilateral collaboration.

2.2 The Norwegian Government's North America Strategy

A closer collaboration has also been initiated with the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which administers a national strategy for collaboration with North America including knowledge collaboration. The Ministry of Education and Research is represented in the interministerial steering group for follow-up of the Government's North America Strategy under the chairmanship of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The two ministries have stressed the need to give priority to coordination and collaboration on the initiative regarding the United States and Canada.

2.3 Declaration by the United States and Norway

Norway approached the United States authorities with an initiative to follow up the bilateral agreement on science and technology cooperation with a common steering document in higher education. This was given a positive reception by the United States, and a common declaration was drafted. The Norwegian Embassy in Washington holds an annual conference for research, innovation and higher education (Science Week) to provide a meeting place for researchers, academics and the authorities. During the opening of Science Week in Washington DC in October 2007, the United States and Norway signed a common declaration to encourage and strengthen student and teacher exchange between our countries. The Declaration also involves a mutual obligation to endeavour to remove existing obstacles to exchange.

Thomas Farrell, the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Academic Programs at the U.S. State Department and Tora Aasland, the Norwegian Minister of Research and Higher Education, signed this “Washington Declaration” on higher education in order to underline the importance of collaboration right up to government level. It is intended that the Declaration shall be associated in an appropriate way with the bilateral agreement on science and technology cooperation.

In order to follow up the Declaration and to promote a strengthening of student mobility from Norway to the United States, the Ministry of Education and Research will increase the annual allocation to the Fulbright Foundation for Educational Exchange. In 2008, the Ministry has already planned to allocate NOK 5.4 million to this scheme. The increase will be additional to this basic funding from 2008 and for four years ahead.

2.4 Information measures

On the basis of input received in connection with the review of the working group’s report, the Ministry considers that information must be one of the most important areas of the strategy. Measures will now be implemented to strengthen information concerning studies in North America. By means of relatively simple information measures, it will be possible to stimulate greater interest among North American students. A need has also been expressed for provision of better information and guidance to Norwegian students who plan to study in the United States and Canada, and to the Norwegian higher education institutions responsible for assisting them.

2.4.1 The Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education

The Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education has a national responsibility for providing information to the higher education sector regarding internationalization measures and provisions. In the view of the Ministry, it will be necessary to make special efforts with regard to North America. This is therefore a priority task in collaboration with other relevant parties.

Part of this work will aim to provide guidance and coordination of information measures in relation to the North American market, for example participation at higher education trade fairs, such as NAFSA. During a four-year period, the Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education will be responsible for following up the information measures in this strategy.

2.4.2 The Association of Norwegian Students Abroad

The Association of Norwegian Students Abroad already holds considerable responsibility for providing information to Norwegian students who wish to study in the United States and Canada. The organization also has very close contact with its members in North America, and is expected to be able to disseminate information about study opportunities in Norway via this network. In its dialogue with the Association of Norwegian Students Abroad, the Ministry will discuss the role of the organization in more concrete terms.

2.4.3 Handbook on the potential for collaboration

As a result of its work on strengthening relations with North America, the Ministry calls for more guidance and information for higher education institutions on the potential for collaboration with North America. The Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education will be requested to prepare such a guide, probably as part of its net-based information work, possibly supplemented with printed materials.

Measures for a strengthened dialogue

- *Strengthen the dialogue between the North American and Norwegian authorities, particularly through the Transatlantic Education Forum.*
- *Follow up the Declaration on Educational Exchange within higher education under the bilateral agreement on science and technology cooperation with the United States.*
- *Increase allocation to the Fulbright Foundation for Educational Exchange.*
- *The Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education is to be assigned a special responsibility for informing both Norwegian and North American higher education institutions about study provisions, collaboration arrangements and funding possibilities.*
- *Develop a net-based handbook for educational collaboration.*
- *The Association of Norwegian Students Abroad has responsibility for providing information to Norwegian students who wish to study in North America, particularly by means of its network in the United States.*

3. OTHER MEASURES

3.1 Establishing a partnership programme

It is desirable to establish long-term arrangements to encourage collaboration between Norwegian and North American higher education institutions. By encouraging academically based collaboration rooted in the management of higher education institutions, the collaboration is expected to involve greater commitment and durability.

The Ministry of Education and Research will therefore establish a partnership programme for the time being for four years in order to provide for academic collaboration. The programme is intended to encourage increased collaboration between institutions by building sustainable academic networks and strengthening exchanges between our countries. Such a partnership programme should contain elements such as student and faculty exchanges, common curricula, intensive programmes, summer schools and common course modules and programmes.

It is particularly desirable that the instruments of the Strategy for Norway's Scientific and Technological Cooperation with North America will be viewed in relation to the instruments of the partnership programme so that both durability and synergy can be derived from these investments. It is also desirable that this programme should stimulate educational

collaboration promoting innovation and entrepreneurship. It is furthermore desirable to include the perspectives concerning research schools and PhD programmes from the strategy for science and technology cooperation.

The Ministry of Education and Research will also continue the work on national exchange schemes. In the follow-up of the Norwegian Government's Strategy for the High North, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on behalf of the Government has established a Fellowship Programme for Studies in the High North offering studies at higher education institutions in northern Norway. The programme period is three years with an annual budgetary framework of NOK 3 million. Half of these funds are to be earmarked for students from the United States and Canada. The programme is to be used strategically to strengthen the partnership between North American higher education institutions and higher education institutions in northern Norway. In addition, The north2north student exchange program of the Arctic University provides opportunities for student exchanges between Norway, Canada and the United States, among other countries.

3.2 Reinforcing the embassies' work on higher education

Norwegian higher education institutions have long expressed a wish for a strengthening of the embassies' competence in the education area. In this connection, questions have been raised as to whether the post of Student Adviser in the United States is used in an adequate and relevant manner. The Ministry of Education and Research will therefore review the terms of reference and job description of the Student Adviser post at the Norwegian Consulate General in New York. The terms of reference for this post have remained unchanged since the beginning of the 1980s. Developments may have reduced the need for this type of student guidance since students now use the Internet for gathering information, and because Norwegian students are more widely scattered than they used to be when they studied at a small number of universities. The Association of Norwegian Students Abroad and the Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education will be able to attend to other important aspects of the post. A review and updating of the job description is therefore desirable so that the adviser can comply with the intentions of the Washington Declaration, work more systematically to strengthen connections between higher education institutions in Norway and North America, maintain the valuable network constituted by the Norwegian Researchers and Teachers Association of North America (NORTANA), and provide general information on Norwegian higher education.

It shall also be considered whether the student adviser can play a role in the planning and organization of Science Week in Washington DC, which places higher education and research on the agenda. The purpose of this would be to follow up collaboration on science and technology and to view this in the context of the strategy for higher education collaboration. Emphasis shall also be placed on designing the job description so as to ensure that the work in the area of higher education carried out by the Norwegian Embassy in Ottawa is satisfactorily followed up.

3.3 National coordination

The Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education has already devised a plan for measures that can be implemented within the framework of existing activities. The

plan is based on adaptation of already planned initiatives and on priority of North America within current activities. The Ministry will maintain a dialogue with the Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education concerning priorities and the use of resources in further coordination. In this work, the Centre will need to collaborate with partners at home and abroad, particularly the Association of Norwegian Students Abroad.

3.4 Financial support to students

Various financial support schemes for students were assessed by the working group whose report on which this strategy is based. Particular assessment was made of the freshman year, but also of an extension of the supplementary grant scheme. The group's conclusion was that measures in this category should be further assessed before being considered for inclusion in the strategy during a later phase.

In connection with the Ministry's targeting of the United States and in our dialogue with American universities, we have mainly experienced a willingness to admit Norwegian students directly to the second year of the bachelor's degree (the sophomore year). Provisions shall be made to ensure that Norwegian students are given a satisfactory translation and explanation of the level of Norwegian upper secondary education. For this purpose, we will use the Certificate Supplement, which is a common European standard for explaining education at the upper secondary level.

Organizations that coordinate higher education in the United States stress that the Pan-European Bologna Process has clarified the differences between the education system in the United States and that of Europe and that American universities emphasize good connections and compatibility with the European system. There is therefore a positive attitude to admitting European students directly to the sophomore year. Higher education institutions are willing to provide special courses, if needed, to prepare Norwegian students for admittance to the sophomore year.

It is preferable that Norwegian students study in North America through agreements between Norwegian and North American higher education institutions. This is because these agreements provide for lower tuition fees or exemption from tuition fees, simplified application and admittance procedures for individual students, exemption from a language test and from insurance, advance approval of the study programme and full credit in the degree provided in Norway. Moreover, this strengthens the partnership concept and may stimulate academic collaboration. Besides this, for the above reasons, priority is given to students at the MA/graduate level for studies as exchange students in North America.

Beyond this, the Ministry of Education and Research has decided that a White Paper shall be submitted to the Storting (the Norwegian Parliament) concerning internationalization of education, including studies abroad. In this connection, both funding of the freshman year and the supplementary grant scheme will be considered. The State Educational Loan Fund has made an analysis which shows that the fall in the number of Norwegian students in the United States did not start with the discontinuation of funding of the freshman year, but 10 years later, when Norwegian students were given the right to use their financial support from the State Educational Loan Fund for studies in all foreign countries.

3.5 Collaboration with the private sector

The Ministry of Education and Research has noted an interest in many commercial undertakings that collaborate with American companies for providing financial support to Norwegian students to study at high-prestige American universities and to North American students to study in Norway. The Ministry of Education and Research will investigate the possibility of contacting parties interested in developing a privately financed scholarship fund for Norwegian and North American students.

3.6. The ISEP collaboration

The network collaboration ISEP – *International Student Exchange Program* is described in the working group's report, and the Ministry agrees that this is a concept that should be able to provide opportunities for many Norwegian universities and university colleges, particularly because it eliminates the need for tuition fees. The Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education will be requested to coordinate participation, particularly with the aim of including small institutions with limited potential for establishing partnership on their own.

Measures

- *Establish a partnership programme between Norwegian and North American higher education institutions.*
- *Use the newly established Fellowship Programme for Studies in the High North strategically to encourage long-term networks.*
- *Reassess and update the job description for Student Adviser in New York.*
- *Exchange students and students at MA/graduate level are the priority target groups.*
- *The Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education, the Association of Norwegian Students Abroad, the Ministry of Education and Research and the Transatlantic Education Forum (TEF) work to obtain direct entry by Norwegian students in the sophomore year of bachelor's programmes.*
- *The Certificate Supplement to the Norwegian Upper Secondary School Certificate shall be used to inform higher education institutions concerning the level.*
- *In autumn 2008, a White Paper will be submitted to the Storting (the Norwegian Parliament) concerning internationalization of education, including an investigation of the financial support to students for studies abroad.*
- *Assess interest among relevant parties for establishing and funding a private scholarship fund.*
- *Norwegian higher education institutions are to be given the opportunity to apply for financial support to affiliate themselves to the ISEP collaboration.*

4. TARGETS

It is intended that these stimulative measures shall result in a change of course, so that in 2011, we will see a tendency towards increasing transatlantic collaboration between universities and university colleges, more partnerships and a growing number of students taking full degrees or partial studies in the United States or Canada. We aim to conduct a status assessment of the strategy in 2010, which, in the light of the results achieved, will provide a basis for assessing whether or not the measures should be continued.

Target for the strategy to be realized by 2011:

From Norway

A. USA

Students	2006–2007			Target 2011		
	Bachelor's	Master's	Total	Bachelor's	Master's	Total
Full degree	548	326	874	600	600	1200
Partial studies			580	600	600	1200
			1454			2400

B. Canada

Students	2006–2007			Target 2011		
	Bachelor's	Master's	Total	Bachelor's	Master's	Total
Full degree	166	26	192	200	100	300
Partial studies			144	200	100	300
			336			600

To Norway

Students	2006	Target 2011		
	Total	Bachelor's	Master's/graduate	Total
USA	237	250	150	400
Canada	54	60	40	100
	291			500

There shall be a greater focus on achieving an increase in the number of students taking partial studies than in the number of students taking full degrees. Besides this, greater

emphasis shall be placed on student mobility at graduate level. In many subjects at North American research universities, the degree structure is 4+4 years for respectively bachelor's degrees (*undergraduate*) and PhD (*graduate school*). The first terms at *graduate school* consist of introductory studies before research training begins in earnest. The target group at the graduate level must therefore consist not only of students in master's degree programmes, but also students in the first terms of *graduate school*. This strategic plan must thus be viewed in relation to the strategy for Norwegian collaboration on science and technology with North America.

The Ministry wishes however to stress that the aim of the strategy is not restricted to increased student mobility. Indeed, it is a basic premise that the flow of students both ways across the Atlantic is both a symptom of and a contribution to broad collaboration and to the development of the whole Norwegian higher education and research system. This is the long-term basis for the investment plan.

5. FUNDING

In its proposal, the Ministry aims at 2011 as the target date for its prioritization. It may however also be appropriate to allow the implementation to stretch over a longer period or to implement the measures more rapidly if budgetary or strategic conditions favour this.

From the outset, it is nevertheless clear that the investment is planned to be time-limited. With regard to the need for dynamic adaptability to the changing needs in higher education, it would be difficult to defend a permanent national budget prioritization of higher education collaboration with North America at the expense of other regions. It is therefore viewed as a requirement that all measures implemented must aim at long-term sustainability, so that a diverse transatlantic collaboration on higher education will continue to endure when it must be fully financed with ordinary funding via the institutions' budgets.

Reallocations of investments and funding have already been made in the budget for 2007. NOK 1.2 million has been allocated to arrangement of the partnership programme, ISEP and information measures at the Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education.

NOK 5 million has been allocated for 2008 and NOK 10 million per year for the next three years in order to follow up the measures in the North America strategy. The Ministry also expects universities and university colleges to make the necessary prioritizations in their own budgets so that they can follow up the intentions of the strategy.

6. SUMMARY OF THE MEASURES OF THE NORTH AMERICA STRATEGY

- Strengthen the dialogue between North American and Norwegian authorities, particularly through the newly established Transatlantic Education Forum, which also includes other relevant parties.
- Follow up the Declaration on Educational Exchange within higher education under the bilateral agreement on science and technology cooperation between the United States and Norway.
- Develop information materials on Norwegian higher education and on North American higher education in collaboration with relevant parties.
- Hold thematic seminars and workshops in order to develop academic networks between Norwegian and North American institutions.
- Establish partnership schemes between Norwegian and North American higher education institutions.
- Encourage increased student exchange between higher education institutions in Norway and North America, among other ways, by strengthening the Fulbright Foundation for Educational Exchange.
- Support Norwegian higher education institutions' affiliation to the International Student Exchange Program (ISEP).
- Consider general stimulative schemes, including financial support schemes to students in connection with the White Paper to the Storting (the Norwegian Parliament) on internationalization of education in autumn 2008.