



Kunnskapsdepartementet
Postboks 8119 Dep.
0032 Oslo

Oslo, 12.03.2018

Input on the consultation for the White Paper on Student Mobility

U.S. Embassy Oslo is hereby submitting our input to the consultation on the White Paper on Student Mobility (2018-2020). The U.S. Embassy is pleased to have the opportunity to input, as we share common goals to increase the number of Norwegian students studying abroad. While noting that the number of Norwegian going to United States reached a peak in 2014-15 and have since steadily decreased, we intend to work energetically and creatively to interest more Norwegian and American students in exchange experiences, and in fostering more collaboration between researchers. We deeply appreciate the opportunity to comment on the White Paper on Student Mobility, as this is a timely and much-needed strategy for Norway.

As the invitation to input suggests, the international cooperation and dialogue across national boundaries are important, and the U.S. Embassy supports the ministry's wish to make international mobility an integral part of education. We believe having the opportunity to study abroad will increase quality of education and international experience is strongly needed in today's workforce.

The U.S. Embassy works closely with partners to ensure that students who are interested in studying in the United States have the opportunity to do so, and ensuring that comprehensive and neutral information is provided, through ANSA or our own information channel, EducationUSA Norway.

1. U.S. Embassy concerns

The number of Norwegian students to the United States have decreased since its peak in 2015-16, and the U.S. Embassy is worried it might be the start of a longer negative trend.

In chart 1, using numbers provided by Lånekassen, there was another large decline after 1996/97, where the total number of students were similar to 2015-16. From 1997-98, the number of full degree students in the United States decreased with more than 58 percent in the next 10 years (to 2007-08), and it took an additional seven years before it was up to the same height as in 1996-97. The U.S. Embassy is concerned that the decline we have seen since 2015-16, is the beginning of another long-term decline and want to encourage the Norwegian government to make appropriate measures to reverse this.

As the number for full degree is declining, the number of students going to United States as a part of their degree in Norway, is of even more concern (chart 2). The number for exchange students to the United States (delgrad) declined with 32 percent between 2014-15 to 2017-18, vs. 8.9 percent of full degree students in the same time span.

Chart 1¹:

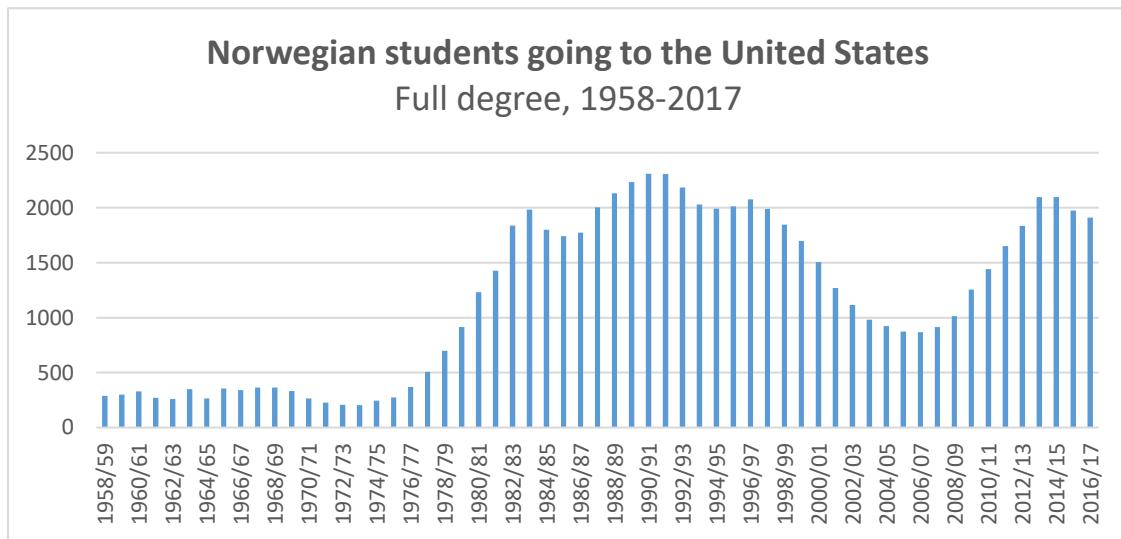
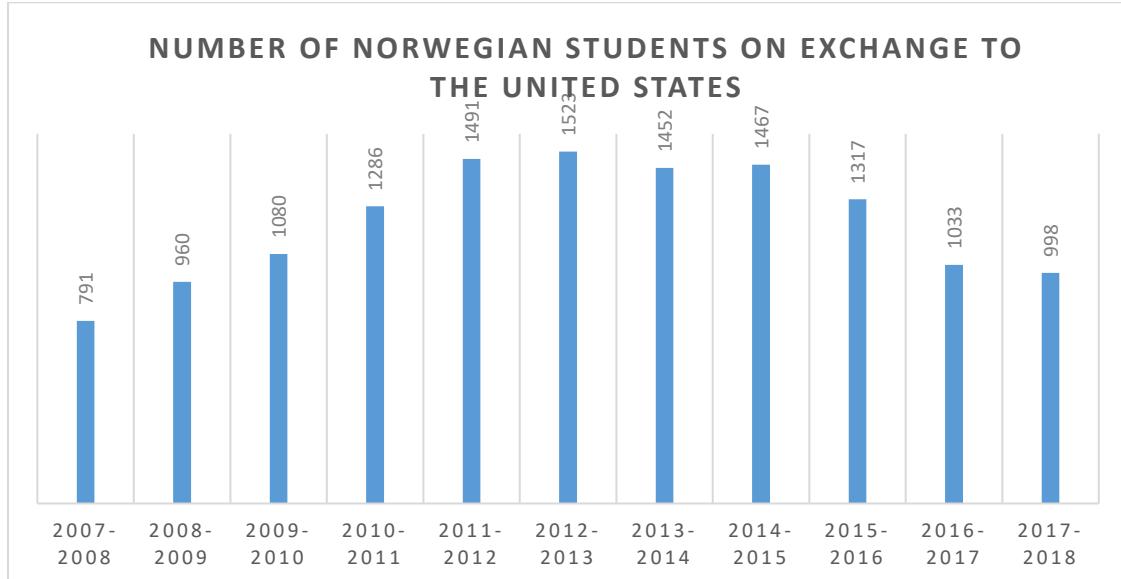


Chart 2²:



2. U.S. Embassy's input to targets and objectives for the White Paper on Student Mobility

The U.S. Embassy in Oslo have worked with educational partners and governmental agencies such as DIKU, Lånekassen and NOKUT for a long time to promote and facilitate for student mobility to and

¹ Statistics provided by Lånekassen upon request to the U.S. Embassy in Oslo.

² Statistics provided by Lånekassen upon request to the U.S. Embassy in Oslo.

from the United States. It is in both of our national interests to promote people-to-people exchanges and we believe educational exchange is an excellent method.

2.1 Where to focus, full degree vs. exchange students?

The Embassy would suggest to give equal focus to full degree abroad and exchange students in the coming White Paper, as both aspect of student mobility is important. Full degree students will get a different network and knowledge to their host country as they spend longer time at a place, allowing them to absorb culture, language and educational knowledge in a different way than if a student is on exchange. Students undertaking a full degree in the United States will gain a unique experience and more varied academic degrees as there is more choice between fields than in Norway. Lasting contact with professors and fellow students are often highlighted as one of the greatest assets of American education as it is benefits future research cooperation and networks. Critical thinking, social consciousness, self-reflection, and communication skills were identified in Meld. St. 16 (2016-2017)³ as skills to make students better equipped to meet a society and work life that is expected to be changing drastically in the coming years. The U.S. Embassy would like to stress that American education is designed to fit the future of work and help future employees to readjust by offering a wide variety of subjects to study as well as more flexibility to do independent research. Full degree students should therefore have good economic conditions for their studies, if the Norwegian government would want more students to get long term international experience.

Internationalization at home through student and researcher mobility is also important and brings added benefit to institutions. As stated in Meld. St. 16 (2016-2017), internationalization is precondition for academic quality⁴. Norwegian educational institutions are often targeting the same American universities for exchange agreements, and the Embassy would like to encourage the Norwegian government and the institutions to broaden the list of universities to work with. The Embassy often see a large number of Norwegian universities collaborating with the same universities in the United States. There are more than 4000 institutions in the United States, including several hundred universities in the top 500 in the world⁵, and several of them are interested in exchange partnerships that would benefit both universities as well as the student. Our experience with advising students is also that a greater number of choices for different academic degrees is also more interesting for students and the United States features universities and colleges in all sizes and locations.

2.2 Who should study abroad, bachelor or master students?

U.S. Embassy Oslo works to promote both bachelor and master opportunities to Norwegian students, as there benefits and strengths for each academic level. We will therefore ask the Norwegian government to continue supporting both bachelor and master students in their attempts to study abroad, for full degrees and exchange opportunities.

Bachelor students are often assimilate better and quicker to the university and the academic programs. Bachelor students also have greater flexibility to explore different academic opportunities than students in master programs. Both bachelor and master students have great research opportunities at U.S. academic institutions, and are often encouraged to undertake independent research projects. An experience worth noting is from SIU's report; *the Partnership Program for*

³ Meld. St. 16 (2016-2017) Kultur for Kvalitet i Høyere Utdanning, page 14

⁴ Meld. St. 16 (2016-2017) Kultur for Kvalitet i Høyere Utdanning, page 63

⁵ Universities ranked by Times Higher Education and Academic Ranking of World Universities – ARWU, lists used by NOKUT and DIKU to identify universities for the Supplementary Grant from Lånekassen.

*Collaboration in Higher Education with North America*⁶ is that undergraduate students (bachelor) are more likely to study abroad for a semester if there were an experimental/internship component in the program. The report also mentioned that mobility from Norway to North America on graduate level was hard, as master students' preferred short-term mobility. We believe there are several reasons for this, one being that graduate programs often have more rigorous course schedules, and it is harder to facilitate a semester exchange without delay in their degree completion. Not completing on normative degree time will affect a student's financial situation and could be seen as a hindrance for master students studying abroad, as well as the structural set-up of exchange semesters at universities.

2.3 Who studies abroad, and from where?

According to Lånekassen, 998 students were on exchange to United States in 2017-18, but the Embassy see a large difference from which institutions the students are coming from (figure 1).

NTNU has almost 40 000 students, while University of Oslo has close to 28 000 students, but send a few more students on exchange to United States. Third largest university is Handelshøyskolen BI with 21 000 students, who do not have a high number of students to the United States. Fourth largest is OsloMet with 20 000 students, and they only sent 39 student to United States last academic year. We therefore see a large disparity of how many students institutions send, and how large their institutions is.

Figure 1 - Number of students on exchange to United States 2017-18

Academic Institution in Norway ⁷	Number
Universitetet i Oslo	196
NTNU	187
Norges Handelshøyskole	99
Universitetet i Bergen	65
Høgskulen på Vestlandet	64
Universitetet i Agder	55
UiT - Norges arktiske universitet	39
OsloMet - Storbyuniversitetet	39
Universitetet i Stavanger	36
Universitetet i Sørøst-Norge	32
BI Oslo	27
Høgskolen i Østfold	23
Norges miljø- og biovitenskapelige universitet	20
Nord universitet	19
Høgskolen i Innlandet	16
Høyskolen Kristiania, høyskole og fagskole	13
Høgskolen i Innlandet - Lillehammer	Not available
Høgskulen i Volda	Not available
BI Bergen	Not available
Det teologiske menighetsfakultetet	Not available
VID vitenskapelige høgskole	Not available
NLA Høgskolen	Not available

⁶ SIU, Review of the Partnership Program in Higher Education with North America, page 9-10

⁷ Statistics provided by Lånekassen upon request to the U.S. Embassy in Oslo.

Norges Idrettshøgskole	Not available
NSKI Høyskole	Not available
BI Stavanger	Not available
Høgskolen i Molde	Not available
BI Trondheim	Not available
Dronning Mauds Minne høgskole	Not available
Arkitektur- og Designhøgskolen i Oslo	Not available
Høyskolen Kristiania - Westerdals	Not available
Ansgar teologiske høgskole	Not available
Bjørknes høyskole	Not available
Sámi Allaskuvla / Sámi University College / Samisk Høgskole	Not available
Total	998

*Not available - fewer than 10 students, number not disclosed due to GDPR regulations.

We also see a large geographical disparity in where students are coming from, for both full degree and exchange. As seen in figure 2, the number of students studying abroad from Oslo and Akershus are statistically higher than the number of youth in the same counties. While for Troms and Finnmark, the numbers are statistically lower. The Embassy would therefore like to encourage the authors of the White Paper to address how to engage with youth outside of large cities and Oslo.

Figure 2: Geographical overview of students

	Lånekassen, Students by County ⁸				SSB numbers 16-17 year olds by county ⁹	
	Full degree		Exchange		Number of youth	
	Oslo	3 475	21%	1 698	20%	11 659
Akershus	2 745	17%	1 216	15%	15 715	12%
Troms	238	1%	218	3%	4 205	3%
Finnmark	84	1%	61	1%	2 042	2%
Total	16 635		8 312		129 159	

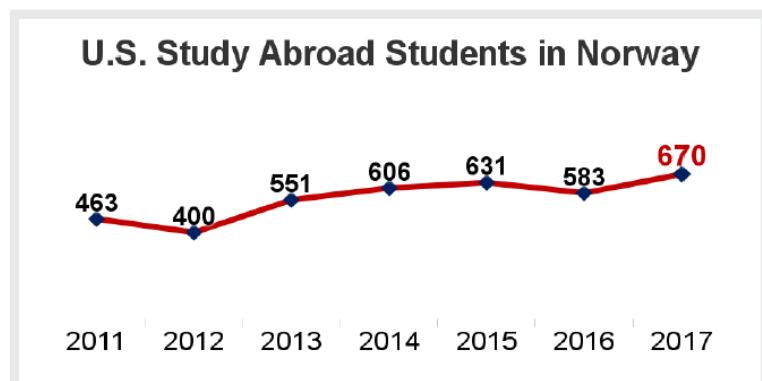
2.4 American Students in Norway

According to the Open Doors Report 2018, the number of American students in Norway increased with 14.9 percent from 2016 to 2017. The U.S. Embassy in Oslo would like to take note of this positive number of Americans studying in Norway, and encourage the White Paper to address structural issues that hinders a smooth transition to Norwegian society, such as delayed D-numbers, problems for opening bank accounts, and increased fees for student and researchers visas.

⁸ <https://data.lanekassen.no/statistikk/temasider/hoeyere-utdanning-i-utlandet/#Gradsstudenter-per-fylke>

⁹ <https://www.ssb.no/a/barnogunge/2016/tabeller/befolknings/bef0000.html>

Chart 3¹⁰:



Source: 2018 Open Doors Report (published by IIE, funded by the U.S. Department of State)

3. Tools to improve student mobility

U.S. Embassy Oslo would like to mention three tools and instruments to for increasing the number of students studying abroad and we encourage these issues to be considered for the development of the White Paper on Student Mobility.

3.1 Empower Lånekassen and ease the loan burden from students

The U.S. Embassy in Oslo recognizes that the establishment of Lånekassen in 1947 is one of Norway's biggest successes in creating educational opportunities for all, regardless of a student's socio-economic background. Lånekassen provides students with enormous opportunities and is an important tool for internationalization and student mobility.

However, our experience is that students are given a disproportionately high loan burden after ending a degree in the United States or elsewhere, and would therefore encourage the White Paper to address these challenges by reviewing Lånekassen. The increasing loan burden is generating a divide based on students socio-economic background, as the support is either not sufficient for some of the best education opportunities in the world, or it leaves the students with high loans at the end of a really good education.

The Embassy understands the purpose of the supplementary tuition loan, which was created with the intention to enable students to attend high-quality and high-cost university, but there is little information provided to students about this intention, as well as the consequences of receiving this large loan. Unfortunately, our experience is that students become discouraged from studying abroad, or end up with a lot more in loans than they were aware of. Strengthening of the financial support for students, is the best incentive for internationalization of higher education, and will be the issue that encourages or discourages students from going abroad.

The Embassy supports the input on Lånekassen presented by ANSA – Association of Norwegian Students of Norway.

3.2 High School Exchange opportunities

United States of America has been a popular country to go on exchange on high school level, but notes that the number of students going abroad for exchange year for upper secondary school have declined with more than 20 percent the last four years. The U.S. Embassy believes that there needs

¹⁰ Open Doors Report 2018 <https://www.iie.org/>

to be placed more emphasis on internationalization for lower and upper secondary schools (VGS), as our experience is that it creates a positive ripple effect as the same students often choose to study abroad for higher education.

To counter the negative trend presented above, the Embassy would like to point out that there are certain challenges facing students and parents who are interested in exchange opportunities. One challenge is socio-economic situation of families, and the limited financial support through Lånekassen which our experience as well as YFU and AFS is notice is a big obstacle.

Another challenge for students is getting the year abroad approved as VG2 equivalent in Norway. This is important to Norwegian students and youth, as this affects both financial support from Lånekassen as well as their chance of graduating on time with fellow students in Norway.

The third challenge for studying abroad in upper secondary schools is the lack of knowledge and access to information about opportunities. Increased knowledge about the opportunities to high school counselors as well as school leadership is important, so students receive accurate and quality information about VG2 abroad.

The Embassy also supports the input on high school exchange presented by AFS Norge Internasjonal Utveksling (AFS) and Youth for Understanding (YFU)

3.3 Strengthening the role of academic and career counselors

As previously mentioned, the U.S. Embassy in Oslo work to promote educational opportunities alongside several educational partners, such as ANSA, The Norway-America Association and American College of Norway. Our goal is to reach out to both students and counselors, but we often experience that the counselors in Norwegian upper secondary schools are not experienced in advising students about opportunities abroad, or they have limited capacity to help students. Our understanding is that many counselors are only working part time with academic counseling and part time as mental health counselors. We believe students need more academic counseling as the student's choices for studying abroad or in Norway are more diversified than ever before.

Students become very reliant on agents, ANSA or EducationUSA Norway. To ensure that students across Norway has equal information to study abroad opportunities, we recommend strengthening high school counselor's role.

4. Other issues to be mentioned

4.1 ANSA

ANSA plays an important role concerning information and advising of students who want to pursue a full degree abroad. ANSA's recognition from students, parents, counselors as well as international institutions is very important and the resources need to be strengthened if the Norwegian Government prioritizes a higher number of students studying abroad.

ANSA is the best possible way to encourage students to take quality decisions on where and what to study, while maintaining a network of current students abroad. ANSAs Information Center should get more resources and funding to maintain their high quality advising.

4.2 Recognition of credits from American College of Norway

American College of Norway is a recognized in the United States by several American universities as a study abroad partner. Academic credits earned at American College of Norway are granted by University of North Dakota the same way credits are earned at their own campus, as they recognize

the academic quality presented at American College of Norway by American professors and curriculum. Students who attend American College of Norway and continue on to another American institution and graduates, will receive a degree from a university who's regionally accredited, a requisite by NOKUT and others to get Lånekassen support and a degree recognized by Norwegian authorities. Unfortunately, due to strict admissions rules at University of Oslo, several students who have attended ACN do not get accepted as the institution itself do not recognize the year spent at American College of Norway as equal to an American education. The U.S. Embassy encourages the Norwegian Government to ensure that students with degrees with regional accreditation approved by NOKUT, will not be hindered in pursuing a graduate degree at University of Oslo.

4.3 U.S. Fulbright Foundation

The U.S.-Norway Fulbright program is the perfect example of a long and outstanding educational partnership between the U.S. and Norway, which the United States views as a very important pillar of our bilateral relationship. The U.S. Embassy is very pleased to acknowledge the generous support of the Norwegian government, and we hope this will continue this cooperation for our premiere academic exchange programs for years to come.

4.4 United States to remain a priority country for Norwegian

Since 2007, United States have been a priority partner country for Norway, and we wish to remain a priority country in the upcoming White Paper. We continue to be Norway's most important research collaborator, and have several of the world's best universities. All Norwegian academic institutions have American partner universities, both for exchange and in research projects, and the cooperation remains very important to both institutions on both sides of the equator. The U.S. Embassy is often contacted by American institutions to facilitate introductions for potential partners in Norway, and inform U.S. institutions about the generous funding opportunities through Norwegian Research Council and DIKU.

Thank you for the opportunity to send our inputs to this White Paper on Student Mobility.

Best regards,

U.S. Embassy Oslo

Morgedalsveien 36
0378 Oslo

Norway

osloedu@state.gov

21 30 89 26