

# In the Making and Under Construction

*The dynamics of Nordic cooperation in higher education, in light of European and national developments*

**Therese Marie Uppstrøm Pankratov**



Master Thesis, Faculty of Education

**UNIVERSITETET I OSLO**

24.12.2007



## Abstract

This thesis concerns a study of the dynamics of Nordic cooperation in higher education, in light of recent developments in its various contexts, the European and the national.

Nordic cooperation in higher education is considered well established, not only as ad hoc cooperation between universities and colleagues across borders, but also as inter-governmental cooperation within the structure of the Nordic Council of Ministers. European cooperation in higher education is also well established, amongst other things through the European Union mobility program; Erasmus. However, in Europe, key decisions were made at the turn of the century that are currently forming the foundation for major reforms of European higher education systems. These decisions were made, amongst other things, in the framework of two important political agreements i. e. the Bologna declaration and the Lisbon agenda. The Bologna declaration formed the beginning of an intergovernmental process where European ministers responsible for higher education are coming together every other year to discuss a set of common developments for their national higher education systems. One intended outcome of this process is a regional integration of European higher education, referred to as the European Higher Education Area, to be realized by 2010. The Lisbon agenda is a development plan for the EU, intended to deal with the stagnation of economic growth in the union. Like the Bologna process, this process also includes a set of goals to be reached by 2010. Contrary to the Bologna process the Lisbon agenda reaches across several policy areas, amongst them education.

The rationale behind this thesis is found in the observation that Nordic cooperation in higher education constitutes an interesting case for discussing various aspects of multilevel policymaking in higher education. Nordic cooperation in higher education is currently facing the challenge of being integrated into, replaced by or perhaps complemented with European cooperation.

This is an explorative case study. The thesis is based on data from a study of the Nordic countries conducted by the Norwegian Institute for Studies of Research and Education on behalf of the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2003, and a document analysis and literature study conducted in 2007. The study is organized around the problem statement: How can the dynamics of Nordic cooperation in higher education be interpreted, given the developments in its European and national context? To answer this question, the policy content of European developments and NCM initiatives are investigated and analyzed, and the current state of affairs in the internationalization of higher education in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden is discussed.

The theoretical foundation is found in neo-institutional theory, in Gornitzka's (1999) description of policy content, and in theories on internationalization and the

development of ‘new’ internationalization. According to neo-institutional theory, an ‘institution’ will make choices of change and stability based on an interpretation of how to maintain conformity with its environment. In the case of higher education, there are new rules of action, principles and objectives related to internationalization of higher education observed in general, according to the description of ‘new’ internationalization, and at a European level specifically. Are these changes becoming legitimized at a Nordic level, and in the Nordic countries? And how is this affecting the dynamics of Nordic cooperation?

The regionalization of higher education in Europe and the Nordic region is characterized by continuous development. These are processes “in the making and under construction”. The thesis finds that there is a convergence in policy content of European developments and NCM initiatives, though cultural values and objectives still maintain a more central position in NCM initiatives than what is the case in European developments. A convergence is visible amongst other things in the rhetoric related to policy problems, in the choice of policy instruments, and in an increased focus on competition and the ‘external dimension’. There is also convergence in the focus on international cooperation as a quality enhancer and in seeing regional cooperation in higher education as a policy instrument in foreign policy. The latter is visible at a Nordic level with the inclusion of the Baltic countries as equal partners in the Nordplus program.

Nordic cooperation is only marginally visible in national policy, though NCM initiatives are appreciated and utilized in the Nordic countries. This could be related to Nordic cooperation being considered a separate issue from the internationalization of higher education in general; a regional rather than an international concern. This is not the case with respect to European developments, which play a very central role in developments at the national level. Another reason could be that Nordic cooperation in higher education is considered a matter of fact, and thus in need of less attention.

Developments in Nordic cooperation in higher education seem to be influenced both by international developments in general and by European developments in particular. Concerning the future role of Nordic cooperation in higher education, there is a certain danger that it will become redundant as a result of European developments. It is however supported by the general tendency of higher education institutions and countries to choose institutions in their neighboring countries as preferred partners. Research has shown that regionalization of higher education is increasing. There are new opportunities for Nordic cooperation to continue its former role as a pioneer in higher education cooperation. These may be found amongst other things in the need for more research in two areas: the role of international cooperation in quality enhancement of higher education, and the role of regional cooperation in strengthening the economy and social cohesion. Another area where Nordic cooperation might play a role is with respect to regional cooperation and the role of higher education in development/ developing countries.

## Acknowledgements

First and foremost I would like to thank my supervisor Prof. Dr. Peter Maassen, who not only has been an academic inspiration and great colleague and boss, but also a good friend and guide in contemporary music over the last few years.

Thanks to Peter I had the opportunity of participating in a study on Nordic cooperation in higher education conducted by the Norwegian Institute for Studies of Research and Education (NIFU) on behalf of the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2003. This study became a point of departure for this thesis.

A thanks also to Terhi Nokkala, who conducted the Finnish case study for the NIFU study, and with whom I wrote and presented a paper at the 2003 Higher Education Society (EAIR) conference in Limerick, Ireland, on the internationalization of higher education in the Nordic countries and the development of new internationalization.

A third thanks to Åse Gornitzka, who's articles I have read with great interest and who promptly responded to all my email inquiries. She is referenced extensively in this thesis. The title of this thesis is a quote from her article "The Lisbon-process: A Supranational Policy Perspective" in Maassen and Olsen (eds.) (2007) *University Dynamics and European Integration*, Springer, Dordrecht

I am also immensely grateful for the patience and support of my family; my parents, my husband and my daughter. A big big hug to Maxim and Maia Sophie. I am sure there is not one inch of 'Forêt de Saint-Germain-en-Laye' you are not thoroughly familiar with as you have set out to explore the forest weekend after weekend, leaving me to my computer. I love you.

A thanks also to my friends at the university, especially Claire Poppy, who read and commented earlier versions of the two first chapters of this thesis.

And last, but not least a thanks to all academics who publish their articles on the internet, making them widely available to all seeking knowledge.

“great things He hath done”

## Abbreviations

Bologna Follow Up Group	BFUG
Centre for International Mobility	CIMO
Danish Centre for International Cooperation and Mobility in Education and Training	Cirius
Danish Evaluation Institute	EVA
Directorate-General for Education and Culture	DG EAC
Education and Training 2010	E&T 2010
Education International Pan-European Structure	EI
European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education	ENQA
European Community	EC
European Credit Transfer System	ECTS
European Economic Area	EEA
European Free Trade Association	EFTA
European Higher Education Area	EHEA
European Institute of Innovation and Technology	EIT
Economic and Monetary Union	EMU
European Research Council	ERC
European Students' Union	ESU
European Union	EU
European University Association	EUA
European Association of Institutions in Higher Education	EURASHE
European Qualifications Framework	EQF
Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council	FINHEEC
Finnish-Russian Student Exchange Program	FIRST
General Agreement on Trade in Services	GATS
International Program Office	IPK
National Agency for Higher Education	HSV
National Union of Students in Norway	NSU
Norad's program for master studies	NOMA
Nordic Advisory Committee on Higher Education	HØGUT
Nordic Council of Ministers	NCM
Nordic Master Program	NMP
Nordic Quality Assurance Network in Higher Education	NOQA
Nordic University Leaders	NUS
Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation	Norad
Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education	NOKUT
Norwegian Association of Higher Education institutions	UHR
Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education	SIU
Norwegian Institute for Studies of Research and Education	NIFU
Open Method of Coordination	OMC
Research and Development	R&D

---

Swedish Foundation for International Cooperation in Research and Higher Education	STINT
Swedish Institute	SI
Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency	SIDA
UNESCO European Centre for Higher Education	CEPES
Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe	UNICE
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	UNESCO
World Trade Organization	WTO





---

# Content

Abstract.....	3
Acknowledgements.....	5
Abbreviations.....	6
Content.....	9
<b>1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<i>1.1 Background and rationale .....</i>	<i>15</i>
1.1.1 Aim and problem statement.....	16
1.1.2 Choice of cases.....	17
1.1.3 Background.....	18
<i>1.2 Methodology.....</i>	<i>20</i>
1.2.1 The methodology of the NIFU study .....	21
1.2.2 Limitations .....	22
<i>1.3 Structure.....</i>	<i>22</i>
<b>2. Conceptual framework .....</b>	<b>24</b>
2.1.1 Defining internationalisation .....	25
2.1.2 Analyzing internationalisation.....	26
2.1.3 New vs. old internationalisation.....	27
2.2 <i>Policy and policy content .....</i>	<i>31</i>
2.3 <i>Neo-institutionalism and resource dependency.....</i>	<i>34</i>
<b>3. The integration of European Higher Education - Europeanization.....</b>	<b>37</b>
3.1 <i>The Bologna process .....</i>	<i>38</i>
3.2 <i>The Lisbon strategy .....</i>	<i>42</i>
3.3 <i>The Open Method of Coordination .....</i>	<i>46</i>
3.4 <i>Trends in the Europeanization of higher education.....</i>	<i>48</i>

---

<b>4. European policy on higher education – a policy analysis.....</b>	<b>51</b>
4.1 <i>The Bologna documents</i> .....	51
4.1.1 Policy problem .....	51
4.1.2 Policy objective.....	51
4.1.3 Policy instruments.....	53
4.1.4 Normative basis.....	54
4.1.5 Policy linkage.....	56
4.2 <i>The Lisbon agenda</i> .....	56
4.2.1 Policy problem .....	57
4.2.2 Policy objectives .....	57
4.2.3 Policy instruments.....	58
4.2.4 Policy linkage and normative basis .....	60
<b>5. Nordic cooperation in higher education .....</b>	<b>61</b>
5.1 <i>The higher education policy of the Nordic Council of Ministers</i> .....	62
5.1.1 The Nordplus program .....	64
5.1.2 Joint Nordic Master Programmes.....	67
5.1.3 Nordic competitiveness in a global context .....	68
5.2 <i>NCM policy content</i> .....	69
5.2.1 Policy problem and objective .....	70
5.2.2 Policy instruments and normative basis .....	70
5.2.3 Policy linkage.....	71
5.3 <i>Practical arguments for Nordic cooperation in higher education</i> .....	72
5.4 <i>The NCM policy content and practical arguments of Nordic cooperation compared</i> .....	74
<b>6. The internationalization of higher education in the Nordic countries .....</b>	<b>76</b>
6.1 <i>Denmark</i> .....	76
6.1.1 Background .....	76
6.1.2 The Danish higher education sector, and support structure for internationalisation.....	77
6.1.3 Economic incentives for internationalisation .....	79
6.1.4 Danish mobility .....	79
6.1.5 Denmark and the Bologna process.....	80
6.1.6 New internationalization.....	81

---

6.1.7	The Globalisation Council .....	82
6.1.8	Danish views on Nordic cooperation in higher education.....	84
6.2	<i>Finland</i> .....	86
6.2.1	The Finnish higher education sector and support structure for internationalisation .....	87
6.2.2	Mobility .....	89
6.2.3	New internationalisation and the issue of tuition fees .....	90
6.2.4	Finland and the Bologna process.....	92
6.2.5	Finnish views on Nordic cooperation in higher education .....	92
6.3	<i>Norway</i> .....	93
6.3.1	The Norwegian higher education sector and support structure for internationalisation .....	94
6.3.2	Background .....	95
6.3.3	The Quality Reform and internationalisation.....	95
6.3.4	Economic incentives for internationalisation .....	97
6.3.5	Norway and the Bologna process and Lisbon agenda .....	97
6.3.6	Views on Nordic cooperation in higher education .....	99
6.3.7	The Future of Norwegian higher education, and its international engagement	100
6.4	<i>Sweden</i> .....	100
6.4.1	The Swedish higher education sector and support structure for internationalisation .....	101
6.4.2	Background .....	102
6.4.3	Mobility .....	102
6.4.4	Rationale for internationalisation .....	103
6.4.5	A new world – a new university .....	104
6.4.6	Views on Nordic cooperation in higher education .....	105
<b>7.</b>	<b>The dynamics of Nordic cooperation in higher education interpreted.....</b>	<b>107</b>
7.1	<i>Policy problems</i> .....	108
7.2	<i>Policy objectives</i> .....	109
7.2.1	Internationalisation as a quality enhancer.....	110
7.2.2	Language and culture as a policy objective .....	114
7.2.3	Aid as a policy objective and “the external dimension” of Nordic cooperation	116

---

7.3	<i>Policy instruments</i> .....	117
7.3.1	Mobility .....	118
7.3.2	New internationalisation and economic incentives as a policy instrument .....	120
7.4	<i>Policy linkage</i> .....	123
7.4.1	Geographical orientation and policy linkage with foreign affairs .....	124
7.4.2	Nordic cooperation and the Bologna process .....	125
7.4.3	Nordic cooperation, the Lisbon strategy, and the OMC .....	126
7.5	<i>Normative basis</i> .....	128
8.	<b>Conclusions</b> .....	<b>129</b>
	<b>References</b> .....	<b>134</b>
	<b>Appendix 1: Rethinking Nordic cooperation in higher education. Internationalization of higher education institutions in Northern Europe in light of Bologna - Protocol for institutional case studies</b> .....	<b>141</b>
	<b>Appendix 2: List of respondents for the case studies</b> .....	<b>152</b>
	<b>Appendix 3: Student mobility to and from the Nordic countries</b> .....	<b>155</b>
	<b>Appendix 4: Institutional experiences with the Nordplus programme</b> .....	<b>159</b>
	<b>Appendix 5: Conclusions and recommendations of the NIFU study</b> .....	<b>162</b>

## 1. Introduction

There seems to be general agreement amongst politicians, higher education researchers and practitioners in the field that the higher education sector is currently subject to pressures for change (Olsen 2007, Halvorsen and Faye 2006). As new knowledge is increasing in importance for the economy, the higher education sector has become subject to political debate at a more intensive degree than what was the case only one to two decades ago. The pressure for change is often justified by reference to globalization. Though this ‘globalization’ is often vaguely defined, it normally includes an understanding of a world with an increase in cross border dependence, cooperation and activity. Thus this pressure for change includes an increased political focus on the international activity and importance of the higher education sector. Whilst higher education used to be mainly a national policy issue, the increased focus on mobility, formalized networks as a basis for cooperation, discussions on ‘brain drain’ and ‘brain gain’ and debate on trade in education, has moved higher education also into the international policy arena. As a response to this debate we can witness the development of different forms of regionalization of higher education (Knight 2007).

In Europe key decisions were made at the turn of the century that are currently forming the foundation for major reforms of European higher education systems. These decisions were made, amongst other things, in the framework of two important political agreements, i.e. the Bologna declaration and the Lisbon agenda. These agreements are both distinctly different, and exceedingly interrelated.

The Bologna declaration formed the beginning of an intergovernmental process where European ministers responsible for higher education are coming together every other year to discuss a set of common developments for their national higher education systems. One intended outcome of this process is a regional integration of European higher education, referred to as the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), to be realized by 2010.

The Lisbon agenda is a development plan for the EU, intended to deal with the stagnation of economic growth in the union. Like the Bologna process, this process also includes a set of goals to be reached by 2010. Contrary to the Bologna process the Lisbon agenda reaches across several policy areas, amongst them education, and unlike the Bologna process, it is not an inter-governmental process, but a supra-national one.

The Nordic countries, Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, have all played an active role in these European integration processes. At the same time these countries, together with Iceland, have been involved in, and continue to develop a Nordic regionalization of higher education, mainly organized through the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM). This Nordic cooperation has been referred to as a role model for Europe as a whole. Maria João Rodrigues, advisor to the European Commission and nicknamed ‘the mother of the Lisbon agenda’ for her role in drafting the blueprint to the strategy, has paid attention to this and claims in an interview (European Voice 2005) that the Scandinavian countries’ ability in achieving competitiveness whilst preserving social inclusion proves that the goals of the Lisbon agenda are realizable. Rodrigues suggests that “the key question to Europe’s success is whether the ‘Nordic model’ is exportable”.

Thus the Nordic region has been a pioneering region with respect to political cooperation in higher education, and is currently a (potential) role model for Europe. But what will happen to Nordic cooperation when Europe becomes increasingly integrated, when the same ease of cooperation might be established within all of Europe? Will there continue to be space for formal Nordic cooperation in the European Higher Education Area, or might European integration of higher education make Nordic cooperation redundant?

## 1.1 Background and rationale

Institutionalized political cooperation between the Nordic countries has existed for more than 50 years, with the establishment of the Nordic Council in 1952 and the Nordic Council of Ministers in 1971. Compared to the history of European cooperation in higher education, the Nordic region has been a pioneer in its initiatives and agreements. A regional passport union and an open regional labor market are examples of forms of cooperation that existed on a Nordic level before they were developed on a European level (norden.org). Cooperation in higher education is an integrated part of NCM cooperation.

The rationale behind this thesis is found in the observation that Nordic cooperation in higher education constitutes an interesting case for discussing various aspects of multi-level policy making in higher education. Nordic cooperation is considered to be well established and well functioning, and is currently facing the challenge of being integrated into, replaced by or perhaps complemented with European integration.

The year 2010, featuring prominently in both the Bologna process and the Lisbon agenda as the big deadline, is still a few years away. The European Higher Education Area is not a reality yet, nor is it clear what exact shape this area will take. Since the initiation of the Bologna process, there has been a continuous refinement of the original Bologna objectives, and new areas and considerations have been included in the process. With respect to the Lisbon agenda, as a supra-national effort, the EU still has a limited formal authority for reforming the higher education systems of its member countries, so also with respect to this process, the end state is unclear. Even so, the context of the higher education systems of Europe, and of the Nordic region, has undergone and is undergoing significant change. The NCM is just about to launch its new plans for Nordic cooperation in higher education, and it is of relevance, also at this stage, three years before 2010, to discuss the possible consequences and influence European developments have for Nordic cooperation in higher education.

### 1.1.1 Aim and problem statement

Based on the above considerations the aim of the thesis is to discuss the dynamics of Nordic cooperation of higher education and reflect upon the relationship between Nordic cooperation in higher education and recent developments in its various contexts. The overall problem statement is formulated as follows:

*How can the dynamics of Nordic cooperation in higher education be interpreted, given the developments in its European and national contexts?*

The problem statement is formulated based on the assumption that higher education systems and policies cannot operate in isolation of their environments, and that Nordic cooperation in higher education, as an inter-governmental policy effort and practical activity of cross-border cooperation between higher education institutions operating within national systems of higher education, is influenced by its changing contexts. It can be argued that these changes are caused by the development of the internationalization of higher education in general, and the integration efforts of European higher education in particular. Therefore the thesis attempts to address the research problem by:

- Investigating developments in the internationalization of higher education.
- Examining developments of the Bologna process and the Lisbon agenda.
- Analyzing key policy documents with respect to the Bologna process and the Lisbon agenda.
- Investigating and analyzing the efforts of the NCM in higher education cooperation.
- Explore and analyze the internationalization of higher education in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden.
- Discuss the efforts of the NCM in light of European and national developments.



The problem statement is supported by the following research questions:

- What are the main policy developments in Nordic cooperation in higher education? What are the main policy problems, objectives, instruments and the normative basis of the policy initiatives of the Nordic Council of Ministers?
- What are the main policy developments in the integration efforts of European higher education? What are the main policy problems, objectives, instruments and the normative basis of European supra-national and inter-governmental higher education policy initiatives?
- What are the current policy developments with respect to the internationalization of higher education in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden?

### **1.1.2 Choice of cases**

The thesis is focused on Nordic cooperation in higher education, at the inter-governmental level, as expressed through NCM initiatives, and at the national level, as practiced in the four Nordic countries Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden. The changing context is described through the general literature on the development of 'new' internationalization, and the European integration of higher education as expressed in the Bologna process and the Lisbon agenda.

Nordic cooperation takes place both as overarching political cooperation within the structure of the NCM, and as bilateral and multilateral initiatives at different levels. With respect to higher education we find, in addition to NCM cooperation, cooperation between the Nordic quality assurance agencies, Nordic Quality Assurance Network in Higher Education (NOQA), between the Nordic rectors; Nordic University Leaders (NUS), as well as formal cooperation between different consortiums of Nordic higher education institutions, and more or less formal cooperation between academic employees. This thesis focuses on and compares regional efforts made at a supra-national or inter-governmental level. Therefore, the

main focus with respect to Nordic cooperation is placed on the initiatives of the NCM.

The Nordic region consists of the countries of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and the autonomous areas: Greenland, the Faroe Islands and Åland. This thesis focuses on the internationalization of higher education in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden. Iceland is not included in this thesis as the size and shape of the Icelandic higher education sector is so small and unique, it differs considerably from the other four countries.

The choice of the Bologna process and the Lisbon agenda to describe European integration of higher education is an obvious one. These processes are currently where the core efforts to integrate European higher education are placed. Other European networks related to higher education, like the European University Association (EUA), the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and the European Student's Union (ESU) have all chosen to become members of the Bologna Follow Up Group (BFUG) and invest within these frameworks.

### **1.1.3 Background**

My interest to study Nordic cooperation was spurred by my participation as a researcher in a study conducted in 2003. This study dealt with the relationship between Nordic cooperation in higher education and trends in internationalization in general. The study was conducted by Norwegian Institute for Studies of Research and Education (NIFU, now NIFU-STEP) on behalf of the NCM and the Nordic Advisory Committee on Higher Education (HØGUT). The study was conducted by Professor Dr. Peter Maassen, researcher Terhi Nokkala and myself. HØGUT was interested in a closer analysis of the main underlying research problems and issues with respect to internationalization of higher education in the Nordic context. The study was intended to provide HØGUT with information to support the further development of their activities. The study analyzed the current trends in internationalization in the

five Nordic countries, and discussed this in light of the development of internationalization of higher education in general, with a particular focus on Nordic cooperation. The study was conducted both at an institutional and a national level. A considerable part of the study dealt with the general attitude to Nordic cooperation in higher education at the institutional level, and issues that promoted or hindered the practice of Nordic cooperation.

The study concluded, amongst other things, that there is a general appreciation of Nordic cooperation, both in general, and with respect to the initiatives of the NCM. However, there is a clear distinction between the positive appreciation of Nordic cooperation in higher education and the importance attached to it in the day-to-day practice of the Nordic higher education institutions. Nordic cooperation in higher education is a successful, internally oriented regionalized version of the internationalization of higher education. As such it has until now been able to develop relatively independently from the more externally oriented national policies on the internationalization of higher education in the Nordic area. However, recent developments in Europe make it of interest to discuss and analyze the way in which Nordic cooperation is currently organized, implemented and being developed (For information on the recommendations made in the report, please see Appendix 5.

The study is published as:

Maassen, Peter and Uppstrøm, Therese Marie 2005, *Rethinking Nordic cooperation in higher education. Internationalization of higher education institutions in Northern Europe in light of Bologna*, TemaNord 2005:520, Nordic Council of Ministers, Copenhagen

Maassen, Peter, Nokkala, Terhi and Uppstrøm, Therese Marie 2005, *Rethinking Nordic Cooperation in Higher Education. National and Institutional Case studies*, TemaNord 2005:523, Nordic Council of Ministers, Copenhagen

One fascinating aspect of analyzing higher education policy in the Nordic countries over the last decade is that in the area of internationalization, there has been

continuous activity. Several new policy papers have been published since the NIFU study. With respect to the international context of Nordic higher education, one clear development since the NIFU study is the ‘re-launch’ of the Lisbon agenda. At the midterm evaluation of the Lisbon agenda in 2005, it became clear that progress had been less than desired. The EU decided to re-launch the process to stimulate increased efforts by the participating countries. It is therefore especially interesting to see if this is causing any particular change in Nordic internationalization policies.

## 1.2 Methodology

This thesis is based on data gathered in two rounds of investigation. First as part of the NIFU study in 2003/04, second as part of a document analysis and literature study conducted in 2007. The thesis is a case study, the case being Nordic cooperation in higher education as found both at the inter-governmental and national level. Yin (1994) points out that a case study is a useful research design, amongst other things, when the problem statement is a “how” or “why” question, and when the aim is to investigate a contemporary phenomenon. The research of this thesis is focused around the question of how the dynamics of Nordic cooperation in higher education can be interpreted given the developments in its European and national context, thus it is a “how” question looking at a contemporary phenomenon.

This is an explorative study. The data is qualitative, gathered in an explorative manner, and is not necessarily comparative in nature. The focus of the study is education. Matters concerning research have only been considered in so far as it has seemed of relevance to shed light on challenges and opportunities for Nordic cooperation in higher education. The literature referred to has been identified in an explorative manner, based on recommendations, references and internet and library searches. The policy documents have been selected based on information taken from the EU, Bologna process, NCM and national governmental web pages, according to these pages’ identification of key policy documents. Levels of analysis for this thesis are the national and supra-national levels. References to the institutional level are

---

based on data gathered for the NIFU study, and are included to shed light on national and supra-national developments.

### **1.2.1 The methodology of the NIFU study**

The NIFU study included all the five Nordic countries, including Iceland. The study was conducted both on a national and institutional level. The basis of the NIFU study was the need for systematic information on various aspects of ‘new’ internationalization, both for national authorities and for higher education institutions. The two main research questions were:

1. How are academic goals of higher education institutions in general and of their internationalization strategies in particular, influenced by the growing ‘economization’ and ‘marketization’ of the activities of higher education institutions?
2. What are the main factors that stimulate or hamper Nordic cooperation in the area of higher education?

In addition to document analysis, interviews were conducted at the ministerial level, as well as at national bodies involved in internationalization of higher education (CIRIUS, CIMO etc). Interviews were also conducted at nine institutions of higher education: the University of Aalborg and Copenhagen University College of Engineering in Denmark; the University of Tampere and Espoo-Vantaa Institute of Technology in Finland; the University of Bergen and Oslo University College in Norway; Linköping University and Södertörns University College in Sweden; and the University of Iceland in Iceland. The institutions included were chosen by a national member of a reference group that was established for this study. The chosen institutions included one traditional university and one "non-university" institution, i.e. college or polytechnic, except in the case of Iceland where only the University of Iceland was represented. The chosen institutions were considered "active" institutions with respect to internationalization and thus a source of as much information as possible. In total more than 60 informants were interviewed. These included

representatives from ministries responsible for higher education, employees of national agencies responsible for supporting the internationalization of higher education, central and faculty level university and college employees, including rectors, employees in the international offices, faculty and institute administrators and professors, researchers and teachers. For a full list, please see Appendix 2. These case studies gave a valuable insight into the value of Nordic cooperation as seen from a national and institutional level, and an insight into what seems to hamper and promote Nordic cooperation in higher education. For more information on the methodology of the NIFU study, please see Appendix 1.

### **1.2.2 Limitations**

The current changes in the internationalization of higher education in Europe are extensive, and could be, are and will continue to be the topic for a lot of higher education research. It has not been possible to give a detailed description of all European developments, nor go into depth on the implications of all changes and proposed developments. The issues included are included to shed light on the development of Nordic cooperation. This thesis is limited by being mainly a document analysis and literature study. A follow-up study including further interviews would make it possible to shed more detailed light on some of the issues discussed.

## **1.3 Structure**

The thesis is organized as follows:

Chapter 2 – Conceptual framework

This chapter provides a conceptual framework for the thesis. The chapter is divided in three and includes a literature study on the development of internationalization in higher education, a discussion on policy and policy content, and a discussion of new institutionalism.

### Chapter 3 – The integration of European Higher Education – Europeanization

This chapter presents the development of the Bologna process and the Lisbon agenda, including the new European steering approach; the Open Method of Coordination (OMC).

### Chapter 4 – European policy on higher education – a policy analysis

The focus of this chapter is on key policy documents in the Bologna process and the Lisbon agenda. The policy content of these processes is analyzed, with an emphasis on policy problem, policy objective, policy instruments, normative basis, and policy linkages.

### Chapter 5 – Nordic cooperation in higher education

This chapter discusses both the general initiatives of the NCM in higher education, with a focus on the new plans launched in 2007, and the general rationale of Nordic cooperation as found in the NIFU study.

### Chapter 6 – The internationalization of higher education in the Nordic countries

This chapter provides a presentation of current developments in the internationalization of higher education in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden.

### Chapter 7 – The dynamics of Nordic cooperation in higher education interpreted

The seventh chapter is devoted to a comparison and discussions of Nordic policy content at the three levels in question.

### Chapter 8 – Conclusions

The final chapter draws the thesis to an end, by returning to the problem statement and consider the future for Nordic cooperation in higher education.

## 2. Conceptual framework

This chapter provides a conceptual framework for the subsequent discussions and analyses. It is divided in three. It starts with a literature study on internationalization, followed by a discussion on policy and policy content, and ends with a presentation of neo-institutionalism as an analytic tool to study internationalization of higher education.

Higher education is often described as international by its very nature. Still the internationalization of higher education, as a process of change in higher education institutions and systems, has received increasing attention over the last decade. A reason for this might be that the university, against all claims, in reality has not been so international throughout its history, and that to become international is a new and fundamental development. An alternative reason for this increased focus could be that the characteristics of being international are taking on a new shape, thus what is new is not the 'internationality' of the university, but what lies in the content of this term.

Scott (1998) would be a signatory to the first claim, though not by contradicting the second. His point is that the historical image of the international university is a myth. He bases his statement on the fact that most universities were created by nation states, and have been, and are instruments of certain national interests. Examples of such national interests could be, and have been, to reproduce national elites (Muller et al 2001), to be an instrument of social mobility, to develop knowledge of importance for national security, and/ or, as might amongst other things be the case today, to position a country in the knowledge economy. Scott also argues that science is not international, as all knowledge is colored by the context where it is discovered, studied and developed. Thus the university can not be characterized as international by its role as a keeper, discoverer and communicator of universal knowledge either. Several scholars have provided counterarguments for Scott's position, and would rather be signatories to the second claim. This claim is further elaborated below.



---

### 2.1.1 Defining internationalisation

Over the last two to three decades the shape of international engagement by higher education institutions, employees and students has shown an indication of change. This has happened at the same time, or perhaps rather as a consequence of the fact that internationalization has been raised higher on the political agenda both at the national and supra-national level (Trondal et al. 2001; Huisman and van der Wende 2004). To describe ongoing changes, terms like internationalization, globalization, regionalization and Europeanization are used, or perhaps abused, frequently. The lack of commonly agreed upon definitions can cause confusion, or at least inaccuracy in policy dialogues.

Internationalization of higher education is often defined by describing international activities conducted by higher education institutions; e.g. student and staff mobility. It can also be defined by referring to a certain aim, as Trondal et. al. (2001 p.7) suggest when describing internationalization as:

*“a process that includes increased cross national contact, activity and networks, [] a process that causes borders to become less visible politically, culturally and economically”.*

It seems reasonable to question if internationalization always causes, or aims for borders to become less visible. Perhaps they rather become more visible through intensified cross national contacts. Knight (2003) defines internationalization at a national and institutional level as:

*“the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education”*

This definition leaves open the question of what is meant by international, intercultural or global, but indicates an added value to the activities of higher education. For the purpose of this thesis, internationalization of higher education will be defined as

*a process that increasingly places “processes of knowledge production and dissemination, research and higher education organisations, and the public*

*policies with respect to higher education and research sectors [] in an international context.” (Gornitzka 2007a p.1)*

This definition includes the content and organization of higher education, as well as higher education policy. The inclusion of higher education policy is an interesting development, as will be further elaborated in the next chapter when discussing European integration efforts in higher education. The definition focuses on the context of higher education, rather than on the aim or an added value.

### **2.1.2 Analyzing internationalisation**

Internationalization of higher education is a complex, multilevel process, affecting complex, multilevel higher education systems. In line with the fact that the university was established and developed within the boundaries and needs of the nation state, it is reasonable to conclude that higher education is not a trivial matter to the nation state, and that a process of internationalization will be considered important, especially if it seems to threaten national sovereignty. It is also reasonable to assume that the higher education sector is linked to other sectors in society, and will be influenced by ongoing developments in these sectors; the economy, labor market, business and industry, etc. (Gornitzka 2007a).

Internationalization processes can be differentiated according to level of action, nature of connections, and territorial constellations (Gornitzka 2007a). The process of internationalization can exist and take place at four different levels: the individual level (micro), the institutional level (meso), the national political-executive level (national-macro) and the international level (international-macro).

Internationalization processes can be differentiated according to the nature of connections; e.g. informal networks, formal networks, market based transactions, etc. And thirdly internationalization can be analyzed according to territorial constellations, that is, how the geographical pattern of international connections vary.

### 2.1.3 New vs. old internationalisation

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to make a comprehensive analysis of general internationalization processes. As a backdrop to the following chapters I will however present some of the observations that have been made in the relevant literature.

The internationalization activities of European universities and colleges around the mid-1980s were in general characterized by the efforts and enthusiasm of individual academics that were at best supported by a moderate institutional infrastructure. Since then, we can observe a substantial development and change in the level of action, from individual to institutional, national and supra-national, in the nature of connections, from informal to increasingly formal, and in territorial constellations. These changes can be interpreted as consequences of change processes in other sectors of society. Gornitzka (2007a) argues that internationalization can be understood as a sum of four overarching change processes: technological change, economic change, political-institutional change and cultural change.

The process of *technological change* refers to technological developments that have contributed to the compression of time and space. This includes developments that can move people physically, like discount airlines, and the opportunities brought about by ICT, facilitating virtual movement. These developments increase and improve the opportunities for cross-border interaction. The state-of-the-art of knowledge in any area has become easier accessible thanks to the development of new technologies and the media. The consequence of this has first been that international agreements concerning cooperation, specialization and division of labor in scientific research can be realized more easily today than in the recent past. Second internationalization has also either directly or indirectly become a condition for public funding of research in most fields. International research cooperation has become a characteristic of 'high-quality research', according to many key actors at the macro level. The growing importance of formalized international cooperation as a prerequisite for prestige and funding can be seen, amongst other things, in the 6<sup>th</sup> and

7<sup>th</sup> Framework Program of the EU, and the establishment of the European Research Council (ERC).

The process of *economic change* refers to changes in world trade and industry. As stated above, higher education, as a key sector for the nation state, is ultimately connected to other key sectors in society and will be affected by major changes in these sectors. We are currently living through the transition from the industrial to the post-industrial/ knowledge economy. According to Castells (Muller 2001) this new economy is based on knowledge-production and characterized by multilateral trade liberalization and capital flow. This new economy places pressure for change on national labor markets and industries, and consequently on knowledge development and dissemination. One effect is increasing cross-border connections in higher education, another could be knowledge being considered a tradable object in an international, competitive market. The internationalization of industrial production, labor markets, capital flows, media, the entertainment industry, etc., make it necessary for many higher education teaching programs to prepare their students for professional activities in an international/global, rather than strictly national setting. Consequently, the number of providers of higher education programs that are aiming at international students is growing. These are either traditional public institutions with an effective international marketing strategy, or new private providers, many of whom are for-profit. This leads to an intensifying international competition for a growing segment of the student body.

With respect to the internationalization of teaching, the Anglo-Saxon countries (USA, UK, Australia and to a lesser extent Canada and New Zealand) profit the most from the growing international mobility of full-degree students. On the other hand, temporary student mobility as part of an exchange agreement is far more developed in the European context. The latest 'trends' are that the USA wants to increase the number of exchange students (meaning especially stimulating more US students to take part of their credits abroad), while the European countries want to increase the number of incoming non-European full-degree students, especially through the

---

Erasmus Mundus program (Maassen and Uppstrøm 2005). The Erasmus Mundus program is also an example of how structural international cooperation is a determining factor for prestige and funding in education as well as in research.

*Political change* refers to processes that weaken the politically constructed borders around a knowledge system. Examples of such processes are decreased public investment in higher education and reforms aimed at increased institutional autonomy. A de-bordering of higher education can take place by political design, meaning that the government explicitly encourages internationalization and facilitate processes that marginalize or remove national borders. Currently there seems to be a process of growing internationalization of political decisions, and the emergence of regional and global governance actors and arrangements that increase the complexity of political orders. Examples of such arrangements are international funding opportunities, like the Erasmus Mundus program for education and the EU framework programs as well as the ERC for research, and international trade regulations like WTO/GATS. Where earlier the need for higher education institutions to modernize and be innovative, efficient and responsive in the national context was emphasized, now internationalization seems to have become one of the driving forces behind the higher education policies of many countries, e.g. Australia that considers higher education to be an important export industry (Meek 2003), and the signatory countries to the Bologna process, who reform their higher education systems based on decisions made in an common, international policy arena. The efforts to professionalize institutional management, to steer higher education more through contracts and incentive-based mechanisms, and to formalize and intensify the evaluation of teaching, research and services, are generally based on the assumption that national universities and colleges will have to operate more and more in international arenas. It is argued that they can only operate effectively in an international context if they adapt their ways of organizing, funding and steering along the lines of the internationally dominant reform models (Olsen and Maassen 2007). In these models stronger inter-institutional competition, more emphasis on

institutional and individual performance, and the need to professionalize institutional leadership and management are important elements (Olsen and Maassen 2007, p. 4).

A fourth type of change is *cultural change*. This refers to processes of change in the values, norms and identities of the actors and institutions in the higher education sector, leading to increased international orientation. The debate on a global homogenization of culture versus a re-emphasis on local cultures and traditions would be an example of this type of change.

Based on these observations, it is possible to draw a distinction between the more 'traditional', or 'old' forms of internationalization and the 'new' forms (Trondal et al. 2001; Huisman and van der Wende 2004).

The traditional, or 'old' core of internationalization consists of mobility of students and academic staff, primarily on their own initiative. It is mainly bilateral and not institutionalized. Student mobility is motivated by a search for what is different, and thus does not challenge national and institutional autonomy and administrative, financial, juridical and cultural difference between institutions and national systems.

The so-called 'new' internationalization is characterized by economic and competitive considerations of higher education. Rather than focus on what is different, it has become important to facilitate international contacts by standardization, that is, take away barriers that hinder, for example, student and staff mobility. The main tendency is that supra-national and international agreements cause an institutionalization of internationalization and that national higher education increasingly is adapted according to such agreements. This new internationalization consists of (Maassen and Uppstrøm 2005):

- a) New student and staff mobility patterns funded and regulated through specific international or national programs.
- b) New geographical destinations for students and staff.
- c) New forms of cooperation as part of formal institutional agreements.

- 
- d) New providers coming onto the scene, many of them dependent on ICT, many of them for-profit oriented in their international teaching activities.
  - e) New conditions for internationalization, for example, formulated by the EU, by the Bologna Declaration, by the WTO/GATS negotiations. Also new motives for internationalization can be observed, emphasizing economic arguments instead of cultural and academic ones.
  - f) New realities for universities and colleges in their national context as a consequence of the greater national emphasis on internationalization, including in the public funding mechanisms and quality assessment structures.

While the new forms of internationalization have become more important, the traditional forms continue to exist parallel to the ‘new’ internationalization. This implies that a large part of the current internationalization in higher education still takes place outside programs, national or institutional strategies, in other words, without being steered by international, national or institutional actors or bodies.

## 2.2 Policy and policy content

The main object of study for this thesis is policy, and the influence, the potential diffusion of values and objectives, or tensions between different levels of policy making. The thesis takes the following quote as a point of departure:

*“policies are not simply guidelines for action, but also expressions of faith, values and beliefs and instruments of (civic) education” (Gornitzka 1999, p. 15)*

In the following chapters a number of policies, on a European, Nordic and national level, are presented, as well as some of the policy processes that surround these policies. The presentation refers to political discussions and debates, texts and decisions that are all part of different policy processes. In the midst of these procedures it seems fair to wonder; what exactly is a policy? A conservative reply to this question would be: a policy is “an object of legislative choice, linked to a

decision in an elected assembly at a national level and with a parliamentary stamp of approval” (Gornitzka 1999, p.14). This would rule out decisions made in the Bologna process and the Lisbon agenda as policy. This thesis will instead define policy as

*“a public statement of an objective and the kind of instruments that will be used to achieve it”. Gornitzka (1999, p.14)*

This definition excludes government objectives that are not followed up with a concrete plan for implementation, but includes intentions expressed by authorities without a national legislative power, like the declarations of the Bologna ministerial meetings.

The following gives an outline of what characterizes a policy and a policy process. In political theory, there is often a distinction drawn between policy formation and policy implementation. According to Pressman and Wildavsky (1971), policy can be defined as a hypothesis, whilst a program is the conversion of a hypothesis into government action. However, in empirical studies of policy, this distinction can be hard to draw, as adjustments of both hypotheses and programs tend to take place continuously. This is evident with respect to the policy processes analyzed in this thesis.

The content of a policy can be described as built up of certain sets of attributes and dimensions. A policy addresses certain societal problems (policy problem), it contains a statement of desired outcome (policy objective), it has a normative basis, according to our definition above it contains a set of policy instruments designed to reach the stated objective, and it has a certain policy linkage; a degree of coherence and consistency with previous reforms and policies (Gornitzka 1999).

The first two attributes relate to the type of change a policy aims at; the main social challenge that has been targeted, the *policy problem*, and the desired outcome of a reform or program. The desired outcome, the *policy objectives*, can be stated explicitly and clear, or be implicit and ambiguous. Outcomes of policies tend to succeed better if they are explicit, but because a policy process is characterized by negotiations between parties of different interests and values, most policies contain a



certain degree of ambiguousness. This ambiguousness can create room for institutional movement and institutional transformation of policy (Edelmann 1992), but it also makes it harder to measure the outcome of the policy implementation. Policies will vary according to whether the aim is to change, adjust or maintain behavior. A policy can be innovative, taking the shape of a social experiment, or it can be simply a maintenance policy. One might claim, for example, that there currently are several attempts at social experiments in the internationalization of higher education at a European level. Policies also differ according to the level of a system that they aim at – the whole system or individual institutions – and in the complexity of breadth; how many different aspects of the sector are affected by the policy, does the policy consist of one or several programs?

The next attribute refers to the underlying beliefs and values of a policy, the *normative basis*. This is a topic that has been much in focus in higher education research lately, due to the acclaimed shift towards a more economic rationale for investment in higher education. The identification of the normative basis of a policy makes it possible to identify a possible normative match between a policy and the targeted institutions (Gornitzka 1999). The normative basis can be explicitly stated, or not, making it harder to identify.

The *policy instruments* are the means by which an authority aims to encourage and pressure conformity with a given policy. Policy instruments normally contain one or more of the following attributes: information, funds, new laws and legal sanctions, and changes in the public bureaucracy for the implementation and monitoring of new programs.

A new policy will either break with or continue previous policies. This attribute is referred to as the *policy linkage*. The policy linkage describes how a policy is connected to broader trends in society and public policy. Research seems to indicate that the more a policy differs from already established procedures and behavior, the more resistance it will meet. Cerych and Sabatier (1986) claim that the

implementation of programs will have the highest degree of success if they aim at mid-level change, both with respect to breadth and depth of the reform/program.

According to a neo-institutional perspective it can be argued that a reform has a better chance of reaching its objectives if it follows long-term trends in society. However, to add to the complexity of policy analysis, an institution often finds itself relating to different policy actors whose expectations are not necessarily unitary and coherent. This thesis does not consider policy linkages historically, but it does point to policy linkages between contemporary processes. Neo-institutionalism provides a framework to analyze how rules of action, principles and objectives are transferred between policy processes. Though not used to its full extent in this thesis, neo-institutionalism is applicable when analyzing the dynamics of Nordic cooperation in light of its changing context. It is therefore further elaborated below.

## 2.3 Neo-institutionalism and resource dependency

Policies aim at changing, adjusting or maintaining behavior. The claim that policies are an expression of faith, values and beliefs (Gornitzka 1999, p. 15) reflects a neo-institutional perspective on policy and organizational change, where the focus is on how policy processes “attempt to affect the values and beliefs about the nature of higher education and knowledge production and its role in society” (Bleiklie et al 1995; Gornitzka 1999, p. 15). Another approach to policy studies is a resource dependency approach, which would rather emphasize policy change as a result of changes in political coalitions and the result of bargaining and redistribution of resources.

Both approaches draw on the assumption that “an organization does not and can not exist in a vacuum, but depends on interaction with its environment for survival and for reaching its objectives” (Gornitzka 1999, p.2). Resource dependency theory focuses on how organizations make strategic choices to optimize access to vital resources and manage their relationship with actors that control these resources. Neo-

institutional theory focuses on how organizations adapt to norms and beliefs in their environment. These two approaches are not necessarily in conflict, but emphasize different aspects of organizational change and stability (ibid).

At an abstract level an 'institution' is defined as a set of objectives and rules of action placed in a structure of meaning and resources (March and Olsen 2005). More tangibly, the term 'institution' can refer to an ideal; e.g. the university, or the concrete approach to such an ideal; e.g. The University of Oslo. 'Institutionalization' can be defined as a process leading to new rules of action, principles and objectives being perceived as obvious, natural and legitimized. The effect of this is a decreased need for incentives to motivate a certain action, and the establishment of a common vocabulary, a common perception of reality, and common expectations and criteria for success. The opposite process, that an area is 'de-institutionalized', is evident when the existing division of roles, authority and responsibility is challenged, when the purpose of an activity, its normative standard and the perception of reality is increasingly subject for debate. When an area is de-institutionalized routine allocation of resources is suddenly questioned, and there is an increasing need for incentives to motivate action (ibid).

According to neo-institutional theory, "organizations operate in an environment dominated by rules, requirements, understandings, and taken-for-granted assumptions about what constitutes appropriate or acceptable organizational forms and behavior" (Gornitzka 1999, p. 9). It is assumed that an institution will make choices of change and stability based on an interpretation of how to maintain conformity with its environment. The chosen strategy can, however, be one of actual conformity, or symbolic conformity, meaning that the organization constructs symbols of compliance rather than make actually changes. The higher degree of institutionalization, the more robust the organizational culture will be against external processes of change and reform. Requests for change and action that are compatible with an organization's identity and culture can be responded to in a routine and non-upsetting manner. The opposite is the case for major reforms that challenge existing

norms. Chances of successful reform are increased if a normative match is found (ibid).

Important societal change can also come about through collision of institutions. The consequence of this can be that principles, logic and resources from one institutional sphere invade another, causing processes of institutionalization, de-institutionalization and re-institutionalization. Such processes include changes in dominance and power structures, which is visible through movement of rules, norms, perceptions of reality, organizational structures and resources (March and Olsen 2005).

Looking at changes in the internationalization (policies) of higher education at a European, Nordic and national level, can we observe an institutionalization of new internationalization? Or can we identify a Europeanization taking place at a Nordic or national level? Are there new rules of action, principles and objectives being perceived as obvious, natural and legitimized? Can we observe a common vocabulary, a common perception of reality, and common expectations and criteria for success being transferred between the different levels?

### **3. The integration of European Higher Education - Europeanization**

The following gives a description of European processes in higher education since the turn of the century. It is organized in two sections, one focusing on the Bologna process and one on the Lisbon agenda. Current European cooperation and transformation in higher education can be interpreted as a specific form of internationalization – regionalization. According to the definition of internationalization above, regionalization can be defined as the process of increasingly placing higher education in a regional, or in this case European setting.

European involvement in higher education has not been an uncontested issue. The national hold on higher education as a strictly national issue has been strong. Corbett (2005) shows how joint efforts in higher education have been on the agenda of the EU at different times through the union's history, but until the launch of the Erasmus program in 1987 the different suggestions and initiatives did not materialize. The position of the EU member states has been that higher education is a national policy area, much as a consequence of national protection, rather than strategic union considerations. With the launch of the Erasmus program, this changed to some extent. The Erasmus program was the first European Community (EC) initiative in higher education to be approved under EC legislation. The Erasmus program was, and is mainly a mobility program aimed at stimulating a more qualified, European minded labor force. It is based on trust between the national systems in recognizing credits from other higher education systems, rather than a homogenization of systems (ibid.). Throughout the existence of the program it has been continuously developed. In 2007 the program celebrates its 20th anniversary.

An important new EU higher education program is the Erasmus Mundus program, launched in 2004 and aimed at stimulating the creation of joint European Master degree programs, and the recruitment of bright, non-European students to these programs. A new generation of educational programs has been launched this year,

under the heading of Lifelong Learning. The Lifelong Learning program replaces the so-called Socrates program, and just like its predecessor, it includes programs for different levels of education. Higher education still resides under the heading of Erasmus.

The European mobility programs have undoubtedly played an important role in paving the way for current developments in European higher education. When studying the regionalization of higher education in Europe, there are currently two processes that are central to development, and unique in a world context: the Bologna process and the Lisbon Agenda. The two processes were initiated around the same time, and both aim at reaching their goals by 2010. Their initiation was, however, distinctly different. The Bologna process is an intergovernmental process, whilst the Lisbon Agenda is a supra-national, i.e. EU process. The Lisbon Agenda covers several policy areas, whilst The Bologna process focuses solely on higher education. It is possible to interpret the initiation of the Bologna process as a way of regionalizing European higher education, without EU involvement. However, as the two processes have evolved, EU influence on the Bologna process has progressively increased.

### 3.1 The Bologna process

The Bologna Process refers to an intergovernmental process at the start of which (1999) ministers responsible for higher education in greater Europe came together to sign the so-called Bologna declaration. The Bologna declaration consists of a set of common policy issues for the involved national higher education systems, with the intended result of a regional integration of European higher education. The overall aim is to create the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2010. The implementation of the Bologna Declaration (referred to as the Bologna process) is expected to lead to a EHEA that is going to be recognized by high quality higher education offered within a Europe of transparent systems and ease of mobility and transfer of credits. Overall the EHEA is supposed to contribute to economic progress, a better functioning labor market and a larger internal social cohesion in Europe. As

---

of the last Bologna meeting in London, May 2007, 46 countries have joined the process. The list of signatories includes not only the EU member states, but reach as far east as Azerbaijan and Georgia.

It seems reasonable to say that the process was initiated by the then Minister of Education in France. In an attempt to find European solutions to challenges the French higher education system was facing, he invited the ministers responsible for higher education in the UK, Germany and Italy to the 800th anniversary of Sorbonne in 1998 (Corbett 2005). As a result of the meeting they signed the Sorbonne declaration (1998) urging their European colleagues to join them in working towards an "open European area of higher learning", with a common degree structure of two cycles; undergraduate and graduate, and removing barriers for mobility. The declaration points to the importance of internal and external recognition of credits and qualifications, as well as employability of graduates. In the declaration the signatories declared that:

*"Europe is not only that of the Euro, of the banks and the economy: it must be a Europe of knowledge as well. We must strengthen and build upon the intellectual, cultural, social and technical dimensions of our continent. These have to a large extent been shaped by its universities, which continue to play a pivotal role for their development." (Ministers of Education in France, Germany, Italy and the UK 1998)*

A year later ministers from 29 European countries, including the five Nordic countries, met in Bologna ready to sign what was to be the Bologna Declaration. The aims of the process are expressed in six action lines included in the original Bologna declaration; four have been added during subsequent biannual ministerial meetings. Since the meeting in Bologna, the ministers have met every second year to assess their progress and to discuss further developments. So far they have met in Prague in 2001, in Berlin in 2003, in Bergen in 2005 and in London in 2007. In 2009 they will meet in Leuven. For each meeting new countries have joined the process.

The initial six commitments of the Bologna declaration were (European Ministers of Education 1999):

1. Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees

2. Adoption of a system based on two cycles – essentially a bachelor/ master structure. (PhD as the third cycle was included in the Berlin communiqué.)
3. Establishment of a system of credits – such as the ECTS system
4. Promotion of mobility - overcoming obstacles to the effective exercise of free movement for students and teachers, researchers and administrative staff.
5. Promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance - with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies.
6. Promotion of the European dimension in higher education - particularly with regards to curricular development, inter-institutional co-operation, mobility schemes and integrated/ joint programs of study, training and research.

In the Prague Communiqué (2001) the ministers declared that higher education is to be considered a public good and should remain a public responsibility. They agreed to include the following action lines to the process (European Ministers of Education 2001):

7. Support for a strategy of lifelong learning,
8. Recognition of higher education institutions and students as vital partners in creating the EHEA
9. Promotion of the attractiveness of the EHEA to other parts of the world.

In Berlin two years later the ministers added the tenth point and agreed to include the PhD as the third cycle in the degree structure as well as stressing the importance of linking higher education and research systems and developing synergies with the European Research Area (ERA). They also agreed to consider the social dimension of higher education as an overarching or transversal action line, stating that:

*“The need to increase competitiveness must be balanced with the objective of improving the social characteristics of the European Higher Education Area, aiming at strengthening social cohesion and reducing social and*



---

*gender inequalities both at national and at European level.” (European Ministers of Education 2003)*

In Bergen in 2005 the ministers made a mid-term assessment of the process, focusing on quality assurance, the two-cycle degree system and recognition. Promotion of the attractiveness of the EHEA was further elaborated under the heading of the external dimension of the Bologna process (European Ministers of Education 2005). This latter aspect became one of the main topics for the following meeting in London in 2007. The London ministerial meeting adopted a strategy for "The European Higher Education Area in a Global Setting". The core policy areas of the strategy are: improving information on, and promoting the attractiveness and competitiveness of the EHEA; strengthening cooperation based on partnership; intensifying policy dialogue; and improving recognition (BFUG 2007).

Another topic that was central both at the Bergen and the London ministerial meetings was quality assurance. In Bergen the ministers adopted a set of common European standards and guidelines for quality assurance in higher education (ENQA 2005) and in London they agreed on the establishment of a European register for quality assurance agencies. These developments are significant. With the register, there might be a development of a European body evaluating the quality of higher education. This is a long step away from the national protection of the higher education domain.

Decision making within the Bologna process rests on the consent of the participating countries, and is thus conducted outside the formal decision making framework of the EU. However, whilst starting out as an intergovernmental process, an increasing number of interested parties have become involved during the course of the process, including the European Commission. Initially the Bologna process can be seen as an attempt to keep higher education as a policy area outside the EU system. However, the lack of an institutionalized administrative support structure for such an intergovernmental process made implementation of the political goals uncertain. This opened the way to involvement from the European Commission who could support initiatives with some funds and administrative capacity (Olsen and Maassen 2007,

p.10). The European Commission was invited in as a member of the Bologna Follow Up Group prior to the meeting in Berlin in 2003. For the meeting in Prague the European Commission had also become a member of the board.

The follow-up process after each ministerial meeting and the preparation for subsequent meetings is conducted by the BFUG. The BFUG meets twice a year and is comprised of representatives of all the signatory countries, the European Commission and a number of consultative bodies representing amongst other stakeholders the students and the higher education institutions (EUA, EURASHE, ESU, Council of Europe, UNESCO CEPES, the EU employers' body, UNICE, EI and ENQA). There is also a board that is responsible between BFUG meetings, currently consisting of representatives from three participating countries, the European Commission and representatives from the previous, current and future EU presidencies. The host of the forthcoming ministerial meeting holds the secretariat (Corbett 2005).

The Bologna process is inter-governmental. Decisions made are thus not binding in a legal sense. For each ministerial meeting the ministers report on the progress made in their country. One of the foci of the London meeting was on the need for methodologically sound and comparable data, amongst other things, to monitor development. As stated in one of the preparatory documents for the London meeting:

*“One of the success factors of the Bologna Process so far has been the close cooperation demonstrated by all higher education stakeholders in an atmosphere of trust. One of the greatest strengths of the Bologna Process is that governments have joined forces with institutions of higher education and their national and European associations, as well as with students and staff and international organizations and institutions.” (BFUG 2007)*

### 3.2 The Lisbon strategy

Whilst the ministers of education across Europe came together to lay the foundation for the EHEA, the heads of state of the European Union met in Lisbon to discuss the current and future challenges of the union, and to find a strategy to face these

---

challenges. The chosen strategy was launched during the Lisbon summit (March 2000) and is called the Lisbon strategy or the Lisbon agenda. The aim of the Lisbon strategy is to make the EU

*“the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion” (European Commission 2007).*

It is a strategy that reaches across several policy areas, including education. The Lisbon strategy is an ambitious strategy. However, the midterm evaluation in 2005 showed that progress had been “mixed” and that unless urgent reforms were undertaken by the EU member states, the EU would not be able to attain the set of objectives decided upon (European Commission 2004, Barroso 2005). Such urgent measures were also identified with respect to higher education, especially the need for a European qualifications framework and increasing mobility. Faced with the choice of leaving or lowering ambitions, or urging for more intensive reform, the European Commission has chosen the latter:

*“The challenges we face are even more urgent in the face of an ageing population and global competition. Unless we reinforce our commitment to meeting them, with a renewed drive and focus, our model for European society, our pensions, our quality of life will rapidly be called into question.” (European Commission 2005)*

The Lisbon strategy marks a new path for EU involvement in education. To realize the ambitions agreed upon in Lisbon, the role of education and training is considered crucial. Since the Lisbon summit, education has been on the agenda at each consecutive summit. A high quality education and training system is considered a key factor for economic competitiveness and growth, and for successful transition towards a knowledge society and competitive participation in the knowledge economy. The role of education is stressed with respect to labor market policy and social cohesion (Gorntizka 2007b). Also the work with education under the heading of the Lisbon strategy shows an initial shift in EU involvement in education, from primarily higher education and vocational training, to primary and secondary levels of education. Initially higher education played a minor role in the Lisbon strategy, possibly a consequence of the Bologna process, which had already “captured” this

policy area. This has changed as the two processes have developed, perhaps as a consequence of increasing European Commission involvement in the Bologna process.

In addition to an increased focus on education, and a wider involvement with respect to levels of education, the focus taken by the EU in the Lisbon strategy also differs from previous European cooperation initiatives in education. The focus is placed on common concerns and priorities, rather than on a “celebration of national diversity of education and research systems” (ibid.). This changes the point of departure for cooperation.

To follow up the general Lisbon strategy, the Lisbon European Council gave the Education Council a mandate to formulate future objectives for the education sector. The follow up work has developed into the “Education and Training 2010” program, a program that is intended to “modernize” the European education systems (Gornitzka 2007b).

At the Stockholm European Council summit in March 2001 the Education Council presented three broad strategic objectives (Education Council 2001):

- Increase the quality and effectiveness of education and training systems in the European Union.
- Facilitate the access of all to the education and training systems.
- Open up education and training systems to the wider world.

These aims were refined into a ten year working program. The three overall objectives were further described in 13 associate objectives relating to topics like teacher training, basic skills, ICT and efficiency in education, language learning and access. May 2003 the ministers of education agreed upon five European benchmarks, or “reference levels of European average performance” (Education Council 2003) to be attained by 2010. To avoid conflict, and in accordance with the Open Method of Coordination (OMC – see section below), they emphasized that the reference levels

---

do not define national targets, nor do they describe decisions that should be taken by national governments. The benchmarks relate to early school leavers, mathematics, science and technology graduates, completion of upper secondary school, basic skills and lifelong learning. The only benchmark that directly involves higher education is the aim of increasing the number of graduates in mathematics and sciences. Some countries have translated these benchmarks into national objectives as a contribution to attaining the European reference levels (Gornitzka 2007b).

Initially the work with education under the Lisbon heading was referred to as the “objectives process”, and was organized around the 13 stated objects. But from 2004 other parallel processes were added, including the EU’s and EU member states’ work with the Bologna process in higher education and the Copenhagen process in vocational training. After this move, the process took on the title “Education and Training 2010” and covered European cooperation in education and training as an integrated policy framework. This move represented an increased focus on higher education also under the heading of the Lisbon strategy. Though the formal role of the EU in higher education policy has not changed, its methods of influence certainly have. The Commission writes:

*The Commission is not a direct actor in the modernization of universities, but it can play a catalytic role, providing political impetus and targeted funding in support of reform and modernization (European Commission 2005).*

It seems the work with education under the Lisbon agenda has both attracted and become a catalyst for several policy initiatives in the education sector in the EU. The new generation of mobility programs, replacing the Socrates program, has been integrated with the overall objectives of Lisbon. The program is called the Lifelong Learning program, and the Commission describes the aim of the new program as

*...to contribute through lifelong learning to the development of the Community as an advanced knowledge society, with sustainable economic development, more and better jobs and greater social cohesion. It aims to foster interaction, cooperation and mobility between education and training systems within the Community, so that they become a world quality reference. (ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/newprog/index\_en.html)*

Thus the rationale is clearly taken from the Lisbon agenda. Other related initiatives are the development of a European Qualification Framework and the establishment of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology.

### 3.3 The Open Method of Coordination

With the launch of the Lisbon strategy, the EU also further developed a new policy instrument: the open method of coordination (OMC). Gornitzka (2007b) suggests that the Lisbon summit not only became a venue for “setting the agenda for the EU as an economic and as a social project”, but also a venue for “rethinking governance issues in the European Union” (Gornitzka 2007b, p.225).

Initially the OMC had been created as part of the preparation for the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), and further developed as part of the Luxembourg process, a process aimed at dealing with growing unemployment in the EU at the end of the 1990s (Trubeck and Mosher 2001). As a consequence of its general introduction in the Lisbon strategy, the OMC has been introduced in an increasing number of policy areas, including education and research.

The intention with the OMC is to provide a framework for reaching common objectives amongst the EU member states in areas where the EU has limited legal power; such as employment, social protection, social inclusion, education, youth and training.

The OMC is in principal based on:

- Jointly identifying and defining objectives to be achieved (adopted by the Council).
- Jointly established measuring instruments (statistics, quantitative and qualitative indicators, European reference levels), fixing guidelines combined with specific timetables for achieving set goals in the short, medium and long terms.

- 
- Benchmarking, i.e. comparison of the Member States' performance and exchange of best practices, i.e. peer pressure (monitored by the Commission).
  - Periodic monitoring, evaluation and peer review.

According to the logic of the OMC it is a national responsibility to take the measures necessary to reach the commonly agreed upon objectives. The formal role of the European Commission is to monitor development. In the context of the Lisbon strategy, the OMC requires that the member states draw up national reform plans and forward them to the European Commission. This is referred to as a “soft-law” measure, as different from “hard” measures like directives, regulations and decisions ([europa.eu/scadplus/glossary/open\\_method\\_coordination\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/scadplus/glossary/open_method_coordination_en.htm)).

The OMC makes it possible for the EU to reach into national sensitive areas. It is a template for coordinating public policies within the EU, without transferring legal power and budgetary means from the national to the supra-national level.

The OMC as a policy instrument has played a different role within different policy areas. For education it seems to have played a decisive role. Gornitzka (2007b) shows how the OMC has contributed to the creation of new political space within the education sector in the EU. Though she argues that the entire concept of the OMC has not been fully institutionalized, she has identified a development of shared rules of procedure with respect to the OMC, permanent staff within the EC's DG Education and Culture (DG EAC) are assigned to OMC activities, there are established reporting procedures, and there is a reserved budget item for OMC activities. This has contributed to European cooperation in education which previous to the Lisbon agenda had not been possible (ibid.).

One of the challenges in the OMC in education has been to define rules and standard operating procedures for organizing peer review and defining criteria for best practice. It is taken for granted that policy learning organized as peer review is mutually benefiting, but not how to best organize this process. This has brought about “solutions” like setting benchmarks for average European performance, rather than

for national performance in areas like investment in education. However, over the course of the Lisbon agenda the question has shifted from “should” national policies be coordinated, to “how” can national policy be coordinated. Though there are challenges, there is now an emphasis on common challenges and a common diagnosis (that Europe is lagging behind in the knowledge economy and that the modernization of the education system is a key factor for future success), rather than national uniqueness (Gornitzka 2007b).

The OMC has also brought about a stronger legitimacy for quantified objectives. Quantitative indicators are believed to communicate a stronger message than qualitative indicators. This is obvious with respect to several initiatives from the DG EAC, amongst other things, the new generation of mobility programs, where the overall aim is set in the number of participants for each sub program.

### 3.4 Trends in the Europeanization of higher education

Over the last half a decade we have seen a rather radical development in the Europeanization of higher education, starting with the Bologna process and then supplemented with the Lisbon strategy. In addition to a formalized intergovernmental cooperation in the Bologna process, we can observe an enabling of the EU within the higher education sector, through the Lisbon agenda and the OMC, and through EU influence in the Bologna process. Both Corbett (2005) and Gornitzka (2007b) argue that this is a result not only of strategic action by policy entrepreneurs in the right positions with a certain agenda, but also due to a general legitimization of a world view; of the belief that Europe was losing grounds in the global knowledge economy.

*“The Europe of Knowledge is an idea whose time has come”  
(Corbett 2005, p.204)*

The Bologna process can be described as an “unprecedented experiment” in intergovernmental cooperation. It relates directly with issues that prior to 1999 were



---

considered sensitive, such as the structure of higher education, recognition of qualifications and degrees, and quality assurance (Gornitzka 2007b, p.235). A criticism of the process is that the overall agenda is unclear; who shapes the process, and what will the main outcome actually be (Corbett 2005)? For the Lisbon strategy, European cooperation in higher education is not a means in itself, but an instrument in reaching another goal: sustainable economic growth. “For the Lisbon process, the Bologna process has been a source of inspiration, competition and support” (Gornitzka 2007b). For the Bologna process, the Lisbon process might have been vital for the progress of the process, both in keeping the urgency of reform high on the agenda of the EU members, and in providing needed administrative capacity (Maassen and Olsen 2007). As the policy analysis in the following chapter will show, the rationale used in the Bologna documents seems to be growing closer to the rationale of the Lisbon agenda as we are approaching 2010.

What will happen after 2010? This is not clear, but with the amount of effort invested in these processes, it seems reasonable to assume that there will be a follow up process of some sort. What is characteristic for European cooperation in higher education at the moment is an institutionalization of cooperation in an increasing number of fields. What started out as cooperation with student and staff mobility has spread to cooperation in areas like quality assurance and the establishment of a European structure – the Register – to continue this work after 2010. What we also see is not only an internationalization of higher education, but an internationalization of higher education policy.

There has also been a shift from a focus on culture and a celebration of differences, to a focus on the role of higher education in the economy, in the competitiveness of Europe in the global market, and in a stable European labor market and society.

There are certain similarities between the methods applied in the Bologna process and the OMC, with respect to setting a common agenda, requiring biennial reports and encouraging change through peer pressure. National governments still hold the legislative power and budgetary means for education, but new political space has

been developed with respect to setting the agenda and developing quantitative indicators to compare performance. How this affects national policy and the potential effects of policy transfer remains uncertain (Gornitzka 2007b). It is however reasonable to believe that these methods have affected national higher education policy in the Nordic countries.

## **4. European policy on higher education – a policy analysis**

The following gives a brief analysis of key policy documents in the Bologna process and the Lisbon agenda.

### **4.1 The Bologna documents**

The key policy documents in the Bologna process are the declarations that have been signed during the ministerial meetings, starting with the initial meeting in Sorbonne 1998, followed by the Bologna declaration itself (1999) and the communiqués of each biennial ministerial meeting; Prague (2001), Berlin (2003), Bergen (2005) and London (2007). These documents are supported by reports and proposals.

#### **4.1.1 Policy problem**

The policy problem in the Bologna documents is a changing world and a higher education system that is not quite up to speed on new demands from a changing labor market and opportunities and challenges that have risen from increasing international competition. This observation is made at the same time as Europe is recognizing the important role of the university sector in the international competitiveness of Europe, and in securing social cohesion and economic growth for its population. The documents propose that the fragmentation of the European higher education landscape is a weakness for the region and that addressing this issue would prepare Europe, to better meet the “challenges of the new millennium” (European Ministers of Education 1999)

#### **4.1.2 Policy objective**

The overall objectives of the Bologna process have been added to and the focus has shifted during the course of the process.

*Mobility* is both an objective and an instrument in the Bologna documents. Several of the communiqués point to increased mobility as the main Bologna initiative. Mobility is believed to create “opportunities for personal growth, developing international cooperation between individuals and institutions, enhancing the quality of higher education and research, and giving substance to the European dimension”. In addition to mobility, the objective of strengthening the *European dimension* of higher education is emphasized, and believed to come through curriculum reform and development of joint degrees.

A second objective is improved *employability* of graduates. The main focus with respect to employability seems to be that the first cycle degree, the bachelor degree should be considered an entrance level to the labor market. Secondly it is believed that the institutions need to be more responsive to the needs of the labor market, though this issue is less stressed in the Bologna documents than in the E&T 2010. Thirdly increased mobility is also believed to be a key in the employability of graduates in a European labor market.

The objective of *international recognition and competitiveness* has grown in importance during the course of the Bologna process, and currently goes under the heading of the “external dimension” of the Bologna process. This objective relates to a number of other Bologna objectives, e.g. improved *transparency and readability* of sectors and degrees, and quality assurance. It is a brain gain strategy to enhance attractiveness of European higher education for students from other parts of the world.

High *quality* higher education and sound *quality assurance* are two other objectives that have received increasing attention as the process has developed. Equally so with the so called *social dimension* of the Bologna process, that relates to amongst other things equal access to higher education, in spite of social and economic background. This also relates to the objective of facilitating for *lifelong learning*, which includes objectives like improved admission procedures to higher education based on informal education and the use of new technologies in teaching and learning.

### 4.1.3 Policy instruments

Policy instruments have been added to the Bologna process as the process has evolved. A key instrument that has been important all along is *student and staff mobility*. Several of the communiqués emphasize this and encourage the signatory countries to increase their use of the EU mobility programs. The ministers have set as a goal that all students should be encouraged to spend one semester of their degree at a different university than their home university. In addition to mobility programs, an instrument that is encouraged is the portability of national loans and grants, and better facilitation of the delivery of visas, residence and work permits.

Secondly there are a number of instruments related to *transparency and readability* of the higher education systems. Important instruments in this respect are:

- A harmonization of degree structure, with initially two, the three cycles; undergraduate (bachelor), graduate (master) and PhD.
- The use of an ECTS compatible credit system
- An academic year divided in semesters
- The Diploma supplement
- A European framework of qualifications : describing the workload, level, learning outcomes, competences and profile of a degree. Bergen, supplemented by national frameworks for qualification.
- Increased information efforts

With respect to the objective of increased *Europeanization*, the main instruments suggested are the development and support of joint degrees and integrated programs, promotion of a European dimension with regards to curricular development, inter-institutional co-operation and mobility schemes.

With respect to *Lifelong learning*, important instruments are considered to be less rigid admissions procedures allowing students to enroll 'at any time in their professional life and from diverse backgrounds', to improve recognition of prior learning including, where possible, non-formal and informal learning for access to, and as elements in, higher education programs.

Cooperation in *quality assurance* is a topic that was introduced in the Bologna declaration, but that has received more attention as the process has developed. The initial objective was to develop comparable criteria and methodologies. The two instruments that have been developed to obtain this is

- The standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area, as adopted by the ministers at the ministerial meeting in Bergen.
- The Register of European Higher Education Quality Assurance Agencies, as adopted by the ministers at the ministerial meeting in London.

Elaborated the most in the Bergen communiqué, the *social dimension* includes measures taken by governments to help students, especially from socially disadvantaged groups, financially and with guidance and counseling services with the overall aim of widening access.

The strategy for the so called "external dimension" of the Bologna process, "The European higher education area in a global setting" focus on enhanced information efforts, cooperation based on partnerships and policy dialogue as instruments to achieve the objectives.

#### **4.1.4 Normative basis**

The normative basis in the Bologna documents is plural. It is possible to find a number of underlying and explicitly stated values in the documents; political, economic, academic, cultural and social. Some of the explicitly stated values are:

institutional autonomy, academic freedom, equal opportunities and democratic principles, and higher education as a public good and a public responsibility.

Cooperation is an important norm in the Bologna process; both inter-governmental and between different stakeholders in higher education. At the same time, the process is motivated by the desire to increase the international competitiveness of Europe. Cooperation is therefore a means, amongst other things, to compete. The Berlin communiqué stresses that this desire to increase competitiveness must be balanced with the objective of strengthening social cohesion and reducing social and gender inequalities (European Ministers of Education 2003).

The process balances between attempts to respect diversity in systems, at the same time as promoting a harmonization of certain aspects of the sector (e.g. the degree structure). The Bologna declaration states explicitly that the EHEA should be developed in “full respect of the diversity of cultures, languages, national education systems and of University autonomy”. The rhetorical argument is that they aim to “remove barriers” between national higher education sectors, by increasing transparency, “building on the similarities and benefiting from the differences between cultures, languages and national systems” (European Ministers of Education 2001).

One international asset of Europe is stated to be Europe’s cultural richness and linguistic diversity. One aim of promoting increased mobility is to let students and staff benefit from this diversity. This is believed amongst other things to add a European dimension to higher education and therefore increase employability of graduates. Thus there is an underlying cultural basis as well.

Politically, cooperation in higher education is believed to strengthen Europe as a region.

*“The importance of education and educational co-operation in the development and strengthening of stable, peaceful and democratic societies is universally acknowledged as paramount, the more so in view of the situation in South East Europe”. (European Ministers of Education 1999)*

Though the documents include a number of points on especially cultural and social values, the underlying main motivation seems however to be one of increased international competitiveness, and increased employability of European graduates, both to prosper the European economy.

#### **4.1.5 Policy linkage**

It is outside the scope of this thesis to investigate the historical policy linkage of the Bologna documents. However, there are a number of links to parallel processes of relevance for higher education. The Bologna documents stress the importance of institutional autonomy and higher education as a public good and a public responsibility, and refers to the Magna Charta Universitatum signed by rectors throughout the world in 1988, proclaiming the importance of academic freedom.

All signatories to the Bologna declaration are encouraged to ratify the Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region. All signatory countries must also be parties to the European Cultural Convention. There is also a link to the OECD and UNESCO and their Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education in the strategy for the global dimension of Bologna.

With the introduction of the PhD as an important aspect to the Bologna process, there are also close linkages with the ERA. This is not the only linkage with the Lisbon agenda. It seems that through the development of the process, the rhetoric of the Bologna process grows closer to that of the Lisbon agenda.

## **4.2 The Lisbon agenda**

There are a number of policy documents that address the aims and objectives of the European Commission with respect to the Lisbon agenda. Currently the key policy documents with respect to higher education are titled “*Mobilising the brainpower of Europe: enabling universities to make their full contribution to the Lisbon Strategy*”



---

(European Commission, 2005) and “*Delivering on the modernisation agenda for universities: Education, research and innovation*” (European Commission, 2006). The following gives an outline of the policy content of the two documents.

#### **4.2.1 Policy problem**

The main policy problem targeted in the Lisbon agenda is the transition of Europe to the knowledge economy, combined with challenges created by the expected aging of the population. Comparing Europe to other high achieving countries in the world, Europe is performing lower in areas like percentage of working-age population with tertiary education (EU (21%), US (38%), Canada (43%), Japan (36%), South Korea (26%)), and average gross enrolment ratio in tertiary education (EU (52%), Japan (49%), Canada (59%), US (81%); South Korea (82%)). This affects Europe’s ability to compete in the global knowledge economy. The European higher education sector is described as under-funded, over regulated, undifferentiated, and inefficient, including overlong study durations, high drop-out rates and high graduate unemployment (European Commission 2005). The two main issues in the European Commission’s urge for reform are *overregulation*, which is believed to jeopardize both institutional diversity in the sector and quality of higher education, and *underfunding* (European Commission 2006).

#### **4.2.2 Policy objectives**

Currently the Education and Training 2010 program is focused around nine objectives:

- Break down barriers around universities in Europe
- Ensure real autonomy and accountability for universities
- Provide incentives for structured partnerships with the business community
- Provide the right mix of skills and competencies for the labor market

- Reduce the funding gap and make funding work more effectively in education and research
- Enhance interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity
- Activate knowledge through interaction with society
- Reward excellence at the highest level
- Make the European higher education area and the European research area more visible and attractive in the world

Though the European Commission believes there is a general agreement on these objectives within the European Union, the work conducted to reach them by the member states is considered not to be prioritized high enough (European Commission 2006).

### **4.2.3 Policy instruments**

With respect to initiating reforms and activities to reach the above objectives, the European Commission is limited by the subsidiarity principle. The main policy instruments are therefore organized either within the OMC process, or as economic incentives in the shape of programs and funds available to institutions and member states. The European Commission also uses their participation in the Bologna process as a means to achieve the E&T 2010 objectives. Through the OMC process the European Commission wish to facilitate the exchange of best practice, surveys and studies, and mutual learning between policy makers. Examples of economic incentives are the new EU programs for 2007-2013 in education and research (the 7th EU Framework Program for R&D, the Lifelong Learning Program, the Competitiveness and Innovation Program), as well as different sources of grants and loans. The European Commission also invests in educational structures that are intended to be structures of excellence, like the European Institute of Innovation and Technology.

In addition to these policy instruments, the European Commission suggests a number of policy instruments that can be used by the member states. Some of them are (European Commission 2005, European Commission 2006):

- A funding model for higher education with a balance between core, competitive and outcome-based funding, including tuition fees and funding from the business and industry sector, and based on good quality assurance methods.
- A focus on increased student and staff mobility, with optimal usage of the EU educational programs, a fully portable student loan and grant system, a legal system that does not punish staff mobility by ways of pension rights regulations, and improved systems for academic recognition.
- Full implementation of all Bologna policy instruments
- A legal framework that ensures autonomy as well as accountability for higher education institutions.
- Incentives for structured partnerships with business and industry.
- Inclusion of labor market success of graduates as an indicator of the performance of higher education institutions.
- Increased competition
- A focus on lifelong learning through greater program diversity, flexible admission policies, and customized learning paths
- A focus on internal and external instruments for quality assurance in higher education

#### **4.2.4 Policy linkage and normative basis**

The normative basis of the E&T 2010 is economic and market-oriented. The higher education sector is seen as an important factor in Europe's success in the knowledge-based economy, and this is a central importance for the European Commission. European integration of higher education is believed to increase both cooperation and competition between institutions, and competition is seen as the key aspect for enhanced quality. "Excellence emerges from competition" (European Commission 2006).

There are explicit and obvious policy linkages with other international processes in higher education, especially the Bologna process.

## 5. Nordic cooperation in higher education

The Nordic region consists of the countries of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and the autonomous areas: Greenland, the Faroe Islands and Åland. Denmark, Finland and Sweden are EU members, whilst Iceland and Norway are part of the European Economic Area (EEA) and European Free Trade Association (EFTA), thus the whole Nordic region is well integrated into European reform and cooperation initiatives (Maassen et al 2007). All the five Nordic countries were part of the original group of Bologna signatories, and even though Norway and Iceland are not members of the EU, as EFTA members they also participate in the Lisbon strategy.

The Nordic region has a long tradition of cooperation in various policy areas, including in higher education. The Nordic countries signed an agreement on a common Nordic labor market in 1954. This has been an important aspect of a feeling of Nordic cohesion, and a pioneering initiative in a European perspective. A common Nordic higher education area is an important piece of a true Nordic labor market, and efforts have been made and agreements signed to make this a reality. Nordic cooperation in higher education takes place both through initiatives of individual higher education institutions and their representatives and employees, and through the initiative of the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers. The ease and strength of Nordic cooperation is often explained by the historical, cultural, political and economical similarities of the Nordic countries, often referred to as the 'Nordic model'. With respect to higher education this would refer to characteristics like state-owned higher education institutions, high state investment in the higher education sector, a large degree of institutional autonomy and a generous student support system (Maassen et al. 2007). This chapter will focus on the initiatives of the NCM, as well as present some of the results from the NIFU study on perceptions of Nordic cooperation in Nordic higher education institutions.

## 5.1 The higher education policy of the Nordic Council of Ministers

Political cooperation between the Nordic countries is conducted through the Nordic Council and the NCM. The Nordic Council was established in 1952 and is the forum for Nordic parliamentary co-operation. The NCM was established in 1971 and is the official forum for cooperation between the Nordic governments. The Prime Ministers of the respective countries have the overall representative responsibility in the NCM, but each policy field is represented by the minister responsible in each country.

Overall there are eleven different councils, one of which is in education and research. The NCM is not a supra-national body and decision making is based on mutual consensus. Decisions are binding, but in some cases they need to be approved and ratified by the national parliaments (Maassen et al. 2007). The initiative for the first larger scale cooperation in higher education was taken in 1988, with the launch of the Nordic mobility program Nordplus and the establishment of the Nordic Advisory Committee on Higher Education (HØGUT). But also prior to this, an important agreement had been made in Nordic higher education cooperation. In the Sigtuna agreement of 1975, the Nordic countries agreed to recognize university and college exams and credit points granted by a public institution in any of the other Nordic countries (Nordic Council 2003).

HØGUT is the advisory body for the NCM on higher education. The aim of HØGUT was and is to strengthen and develop Nordic co-operation in higher education by involvement in education policy debates, monitoring and supporting the implementation of Nordic agreements, contributing to co-ordination of joint courses, and by acting as a contact forum for mutual exchange of information. The overall objective is to contribute to adding Nordic value and high quality to higher education co-operation. HØGUT is also responsible for the Nordplus program ([norden.org/hogreutbildning/sk/index.asp?lang=1](http://norden.org/hogreutbildning/sk/index.asp?lang=1)).

The NCM adopted a Nordic agenda and strategy for Nordic cooperation in 2000. The intention of the strategy is comparable with that of the Lisbon agenda. The Nordic

---

agenda emphasizes five areas of special importance for Nordic cooperation (Maassen et al. 2007):

- Technological development with special reference to the information society and Nordic research.
- Social security and the possibility for Nordic citizens to live, work and study in another Nordic country. Questions of demography and migration.
- The international Nordic market and cooperation for abolishing border obstacles.
- Cooperation with neighboring countries and neighboring regions.
- The environment and sustainable development in energy, transport, forestry, fishery, and trade and industry (NCM 2002).

The current cooperation in higher education as initiated and/ or supported by the NCM is framed in a three year strategy for Nordic cooperation in education and research called “The Nordic region as a pioneering region for the development of human resources (*“Norden som foregangsregion for utviklingen av menneskelige ressurser”*) (NCM 2005a). This strategy is up for renewal as of the year 2008.

Cooperation in education has until now consisted of mutual recognition of degrees and study programs, simplified admission requirements for Nordic students, various mobility programs for pupils, students, teachers and researchers, and various expert committees for the discussion of policy issues and cooperation initiatives (Maassen et al 2007).

The Sigtuna agreement was the first Nordic agreement with respect to higher education. It was signed in 1975. By agreeing to mutually recognize university and college exams and credit work approved by a public institution in any of the other Nordic countries, the Nordic region was more than 20 years ahead of the Lisbon convention (Council of Europe/ UNESCO, 1997). All the Nordic countries have by now ratified the Lisbon convention, and the Sigtuna agreement has later been

replaced by the Reykjavik declaration on the recognition of higher education qualifications (NCM 2004), confirming the intention of the Nordic countries to continue to improve mutual recognition of higher education qualifications, as well as work towards improved recognition of vocational qualifications.

The NCM strategy for education and research for 2005-2007 focus on quality in education and research, the removal of obstacles for cross border cooperation, students and staff mobility and higher education networks, sustainable development, ICT and flexible learning, lifelong learning, and Nordic languages. It is stated that the aim of the Nordic cooperation is to find Nordic solutions, advantages and added value to national challenges (NCM 2005a).

It seems fair to say that the Nordplus program has been the most important tool for the NCM in their current strategy for higher education. In 2007 the NCM launched a new program for the development of joint Nordic masters, and the NCM expectations with respect to this program are considerable. So much so that the budget was doubled at the announcement of the first successful applications, allowing the support of six programs instead of earlier announced three. In addition to these two policy instruments, the NCM organized a seminar on the Nordic region and globalization. During this seminar, the participants discussed other possible policy instruments that the NCM might want to consider.

### **5.1.1 The Nordplus program**

The Nordplus program was established as part of a new plan for Nordic cultural cooperation. The program was aimed at creating a foundation for a Nordic interdependence in higher education. The basis for creating such interdependence was stated to be the common Nordic culture, democratic tradition and value system. The program was intended to be an instrument for increased quality and efficiency in Nordic higher education, to promote Nordic culture, language and values, and to strengthen Nordic identity in a larger European integrated higher education environment. The Nordplus program for 2004-2007 was built up of several sectoral



---

programs covering different levels of education (Nordplus - junior, Nordplus - higher education, Nordplus – adult), cooperation with the Baltic countries (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, as well as Northwest Russia (St Petersburg)) in Nordplus neighbor, and a focus on the Nordic languages in Nordplus-language.

Nordplus - higher education had three specific goals:

1. To support and intensify the cooperation between Nordic higher education institutions in order to establish a Nordic educational higher education community.
2. To increase the number of Nordic higher education students that studies or takes part of their studies in another Nordic country.
3. To increase the exchange of teaching personnel for improving the quality of higher education in the Nordic higher education institutions.

The main instruments for achieving these goals have been student and staff mobility, and grants for the planning and implementation of cooperation networks. Priority has been given, amongst other things, to small fields that would not survive without a joint foundation, to applications with a clear and balanced division of labor between the various participants, and to applications that show a good balance between student- and staff exchange.

In 2007 the program has been up for evaluation and revision. The new Nordplus program was launched November 2007. The new Nordplus program is reorganized into a new framework program, which is comprised of a cross-sectoral element and three sectoral programs. The sectoral programs (Nordplus Junior, Nordplus Adult Education and Nordplus Higher Education) are maintained much as in the previous Nordplus program, Nordplus neighbor has been excluded as the Baltic countries are included in the Nordplus program on an equal footing as the Nordic countries, and Nordplus language will be developed as a separate program (NCM 2006).

The overall aims of the Nordplus program for 2008-2011 are:

- Contributing to the development of quality and innovation in educational systems for life-long learning in the participating countries, by means of educational co-operation, development projects, exchanges and the building of networks;
- Supporting, developing, drawing benefit from and spreading innovative products and processes in the area of education through systematic exchanges of experiences and good practice;
- Promoting Nordic languages and cultures alongside mutual Nordic-Baltic linguistic and cultural understanding;
- Strengthening and developing Nordic educational co-operation and contributing to the establishment of a Nordic-Baltic educational area (NCM 2006).

In addition to these general objectives, the objective of Nordplus – higher education is:

- Linking higher education institutions in the participating countries, establishing a network for exchanging best practice and innovation.

This is to be achieved through networking on mobility, intensive training programs, co-operation on quality control, and development of common curricula.

The intention of the cross-sectoral aspect is to link together the sectoral programs and provide a more wide-ranging opportunity for co-operation in the area of lifelong learning. The cross-sectoral program is also intended to provide a basis for creating synergy with the Bologna process and the Copenhagen process, and it is intended to support cooperation with countries beyond the Nordic and Baltic regions. Examples of policy instruments for the latter ambition is cooperation with Nordic university and study centers abroad and scholarships for foreign students enrolled for future Nordic Masters programs (NCM 2006).

### 5.1.2 Joint Nordic Master Programmes

The most recent initiative launched by the NCM in higher education is the joint Nordic master programs. Nordic higher education institutions have been invited to apply for funding to develop joint Nordic master programs. The NCM received 41 applications, a larger number of applications than they had expected. The Nordic governments have high expectations with respect to this program and upon the announcement of the successful applications the NCM also announced a doubling of the budget, allowing the funding of six programs rather than first announced three. Based on the relative similarity of the Nordic countries, the long tradition in Nordic research cooperation and experience with Nordplus, as well as the developments in the Bologna process, the conditions are believed to be good for the creation of high quality programs. The new joint Nordic masters are expected to accept students as of fall 2008 and the funding provided by the NCM is focused on the development of the programs rather than scholarships and mobility as in the Erasmus Mundus funding. Joint Nordic master programs are believed to make the Nordic region a more coherent unit, boost its competitiveness, encourage Nordic students to remain in the region and attract non-Nordic students to the region. The joint Nordic master programs (NMP) are supposed to become a trademark for the Nordic region.

The selected projects are required to:

- Stimulate co-operation between educational institutions and other relevant bodies and make the Nordic Region a more coherent unit
- Enhance the international profile of Nordic HE and spread 'good practice'
- Develop new models for Nordic co-operation in education
- Develop new areas of academic study
- Generate specialized knowledge in areas where expertise is needed.
- Provide positive models for ongoing academic collaboration.

The programs are expected to be English language programs. They should include cooperation between three countries and three different higher education institutions as a minimum. The institutions involved must also have the right to confer doctorates within the discipline concerned. The call for applications seems to encourage collaboration with commercial businesses. Programs should prove that they through cooperation provide an added Nordic value, and that they contribute to excellence. Programs should also be research associated, innovative and examples of good practice. The NMPs are intended to be a spearhead initiative. Competitiveness is an important motivation, as well as academic excellence and Nordic coherence.

The successful applications were in the fields of ICT, energy engineering, religion, gerontology, plant pathology and marine ecosystems and climate. Each program will receive up to 1 mill DKK to develop the program.

### **5.1.3 Nordic competitiveness in a global context**

In March 2007 the Nordic Council and the NCM organized a seminar on Nordic competitiveness in a global world. The conclusions of the seminar were formulated as ten initiatives that can contribute to a stronger Nordic region. The conclusions relate to the areas of education and research, climate and energy, the Nordic economy and the branding of the Nordic region. Two suggested initiatives relate directly to education and research: the establishment of a Nordic elite university – the Nobel University, and the creation of an “idea bank” for Nordic innovation.

The Nordic elite university is thought of as a network university with institutes in all the Nordic countries. The university is intended to attract the best professors and students in the world. The idea makes use of names that can brand the Nordic region and link the thought of the Nordic region with world famous research, like naming the university the ‘Nobel University’ and establishing ‘Niels Bohr professorships’. The suggestion also includes a plan to link the university to the business world through, for example, the establishment of NOKIA chairs sponsored by the industry.

A further development of this idea might develop a similar structure and purpose as the one proposed for the European Institute of Innovation and Technology.

The suggestion of an idea bank is based on the observation that Nordic values like social responsibility and sustainable development are a good foundation for innovation, and that the Nordic region has a responsibility, as well as an opportunity to promote this.

## 5.2 NCM policy content

The NCM is currently revising its strategy for higher education. The launch of the new Nordplus program signifies some changes in the overall NCM policy content on higher education. The following gives an outline of NCM policy content, as it seems to be taking shape.

The main, formal rationales for general Nordic cooperation are based on the elements that are argued to shape the Nordic identity:

- Common geographical location and climate
- Common language and religion
- Comparable politics
- Specific societal dimensions, such as a mixed economy, a focus on equality, the welfare state notion, a focus on a clean environment, and a common legal conception.

With the introduction of the Baltic countries as equal partners in the Nordplus program, the NCM is increasing the focus on the first aspect, common geographical location. The NCM also increases a focus on strengthened regional cooperation to increase international influence and perhaps also competitiveness.

### **5.2.1 Policy problem and objective**

The policy problem in the NCM policy documents that refer to cooperation in higher education seems to be moving in the same direction as the Lisbon agenda. There are references to the general challenges of globalization, the need for strengthening cooperation to meet increased competition, the possibility of brain drain and opportunity for brain gain in Nordic higher education and the labor market, and to the general aging of the population and the need to ensure a high level of education in the population as a whole (NCM 2002, Asgrimsson, 2007).

The main policy objectives of the NCM in higher education have traditionally been to increase the quality and efficiency of Nordic higher education through an increased interdependence, as well as to strengthen the Nordic identity and promote Nordic languages and culture. In addition, Nordplus is driven to some extent by academic objectives, pulling resources in small fields and strengthening fields of particular Nordic interest. The initiatives of the NCM are also aimed at promoting common Nordic interests internationally, with a special emphasis on the neighboring areas; the Baltic countries and North West Russia, and with a focus on the role of the Nordic region in Europe as a whole.

The overall policy objective has for 2005-2007 been:

*The Nordic region should be a pioneering region for the development of competency and research, with emphasis placed on the development of human resources. (NCM 2005a)*

### **5.2.2 Policy instruments and normative basis**

NCM policy instruments in higher education are the Nordplus mobility program, including support of Nordic networks in higher education, and the new initiative of joint Nordic master programs. In addition, there are different agreements signed between the Nordic countries, as mentioned above (the Reykjavik declaration, the agreement on simplified admission procedures etc.). The Nordic countries also

encourage each other in the participation of European processes, like the Bologna process and the ratification of the Lisbon convention.

In addition to contributing to quality, the Nordplus program is considered an important policy tool for increased cross boarder understanding. The promotion of inter-Nordic understanding of the Nordic languages is considered an important advantage as it facilitates easier access to knowledge in the neighboring countries. Challenges figure both with respect to Finnish and Icelandic citizens, and the increased use of English in many contexts. The NCM considers the Nordic region to have a potential to solve this challenges by conducting pioneering research on language technologies.

The normative basis for a specific Nordic cooperation agreement is geographical ('closeness'), cultural ('commonness'), political ('democratic tradition'), and social ('equality and welfare') (Maassen and Uppstrøm 2005). Though there seems to be an increased focus on competition in the NCM policy documents, traditional values still play an important part in the normative basis. Knowledge on culture and language is still emphasized as important reasons for cooperation, as well as the promotion of the Nordic welfare model and education for lifelong learning and sustainability. There seems however to be a shift towards a rationale more in line with new internationalization than what has been the case before. Examples of this are aspects of the NMPs, the encouragement for cooperation between higher education institutions and the business and industry sector, and the shift from a mainly internally oriented focus on Nordic mobility, to a more externally oriented, competitive orientation. This new focus on an external dimension of Nordic cooperation is being developed parallel to the increasing focus on the external dimension in the Bologna process.

### **5.2.3 Policy linkage**

There are clear linkages between the policies of the NCM and other international processes, like the Bologna process, the Lisbon agenda, efforts by supra national

organizations like UNESCO (e.g. the Education for All and Education for Sustainable Development). This is said explicitly, both in that the Bologna process is paving the way also for Nordic cooperation, and in that the new Nordplus program will work specifically for a synergy effect with the Bologna and Copenhagen processes.

### 5.3 Practical arguments for Nordic cooperation in higher education

The NIFU case study included interviews with more than 60 practitioners in higher education, both academic and administrative. They were all asked to reflect upon what they felt were the main arguments for a special focus on Nordic cooperation in higher education, compared to a general focus on internationalization. All the universities and colleges included in the case study were involved in cooperation activities with other Nordic institutions and had experience with the Nordplus program.

The main arguments given for Nordic cooperation, as seen by the interviewees were (Maassen and Uppstrøm 2005):

1. The 'historical and cultural ties' between the Nordic countries.
2. The quality of higher education in the Nordic countries, which makes cooperation with the 'neighbors' attractive and natural.
3. In a number of academic fields, for example, health care and nursing, educational and pedagogic sciences, and law, there are specific Nordic aspects that distinguish the Nordic teaching and research programs from non-Nordic programs, and make cooperation obvious.
4. Especially in Denmark, Iceland and Norway, the size of the Nordic countries was mentioned as an issue. It was argued that for small countries it was difficult to be good in all academic fields.



---

5. For some 'the common Nordic languages' also form an argument in favor of Nordic cooperation in higher education. However, for the interviewees in Iceland and Finland the use of any of the 'core Scandinavian languages' (Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish) was felt as a hampering factor for Nordic cooperation. They would prefer English as the language of communication also in Nordic cooperation.

Only a few of the interviewees (all of them academic staff of universities) expressed doubts about the importance and relevance of Nordic cooperation in higher education in comparison to other forms of internationalization. In their opinion the Nordic countries feel historically committed to Nordic cooperation and hold on to its historical roots. Though this might be important for political and cultural reasons, from an academic point of view Nordic cooperation was not seen by these actors as very relevant. These voices of doubt were however exceptions. Overall there was broad support for and appreciation of Nordic cooperation in higher education among the people interviewed. The Bologna Process does not seem to have influenced the appreciation of Nordic cooperation; the positive attitude seems to be an intrinsic part of the basic academic and organizational cultures in Nordic higher education. However, despite the general appreciation of the Nordic cooperation, it forms nowhere the 'core' of the internationalization focus, neither at the national policy level, nor at the level of the individual higher education institutions. Several of the interviewees voiced a desire to increase Nordic cooperation, but there was no specific initiatives taken at the stage of the case study, to reach such a goal. Most of the interviewees felt the general focus on Nordic cooperation was low, borderline non-existent, unless they were passionately involved in a network or Nordic oriented program themselves. The latter group voiced a concern that much of the work was based on their willingness to do the needed overtime work, and that if they were to pull out, their Nordic network would cease to exist.

The interviewees were also asked about the Nordplus neighbor program. While the national authorities involved have been strongly in favor of this program, the Nordic institutions involved in the study were somewhat more skeptical. While most

interviewees at the institutional level supported the principle of involving Baltic institutions and individual academics in cooperation projects, not all of them were in favor of an approach aimed specifically at stimulating the Baltic – Nordic cooperation in higher education. This had to do in their view with the language differences, and the differences in quality (of academic activities and facilities) between the Baltic and Nordic institutions. Some of the main arguments for Nordic cooperation, as mentioned above, seemed to disappear with the inclusion of Baltic institutions, and thus Nordic Baltic cooperation might be more beneficial in an inclusion in larger, more diverse European networks.

## 5.4 The NCM policy content and practical arguments of Nordic cooperation compared

Previously there has been a large overlap between the arguments for Nordic cooperation, as mentioned in the practice of higher education, and the formal arguments in NCM policies. Specific Nordic geographical, cultural, political and social characteristics or certain academic aspects have been underlying all practical and formal arguments for a Nordic cooperation program in higher education. In the practice of higher education the academic arguments are emphasized more, while the notion of a Nordic identity has been getting more attention in the formal rationale for Nordic cooperation.

What have been lacking in the institutional response justifying Nordic cooperation in higher education have been arguments related to ‘new’ internationalization. Economic arguments were not mentioned directly and explicitly, despite the formal importance of the link between higher education and the Nordic labor market. Only indirectly when referring to the Nordic characteristics of certain fields, such as nursing and pedagogics, some interviewees mentioned the labor market link. The competitive, and in some respects commercial orientation of the ‘new’ internationalization have until now not been elements in the Nordic cooperation at the

institutional level, and there were at the time of the case study (2003) no signs that the institutions would change this in the near future.

The new initiatives of the NCM might be an effort to pull Nordic cooperation along the same lines as what is the trend in Europe and the world in general, in line with 'new' internationalization. At the same time, they seem to want to keep the focus on Nordic identity and promotion of Nordic language and culture. If this effort will strengthen Nordic cooperation, or make the role of Nordic cooperation less distinct, and thus less necessary, remains to be seen.

## **6. The internationalization of higher education in the Nordic countries**

It has been interesting to follow the development of policies on the internationalization of higher education over the last decade. One reason for this is that this topic has gone from being a minor issue to featuring very high on the higher education policy agenda. Another is that the number of topics that are included under the umbrella of internationalization have increased; from being concentrated on student and staff mobility in the late 80s, to touching upon overarching topics like quality and steering at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

This chapter presents the internationalization policies of Denmark, Finland, Sweden and Norway. As mentioned above, Iceland is not included. The aim of the chapter is to give an indication of the direction in which the four Nordic countries are moving, when it comes to the internationalization of higher education. The data are explorative and not necessarily comparative in nature, though certain comparisons may certainly be drawn.

### **6.1 Denmark**

At the time of the NIFU case study, Denmark was perhaps the Nordic country that most explicitly had included an economic rationale in the development and internationalization policies with respect to its higher education sector. This development seems to have been continued. The last indication of this is the strategy “Progress, Innovation and Cohesion – Strategy for Denmark in the Global Economy” (Danish Government 2006), where higher education plays an important role.

#### **6.1.1 Background**

The institutionalization of internationalization in Danish higher education began as a reaction to external influences, mainly the development of the European mobility

programs in the 1980s. The Ministry of Education played an important role by setting up a special fund for internationalization and supporting the institutions through a committee for internationalization of higher education. The committee supported, amongst other things, the implementation of COMETT, ERASMUS and Nordplus. It was abolished in 1989 and its responsibilities were given either to newly established administrative bodies, with respect to the administration of the EU programs, or to the individual higher education institutions. The earmarked internationalization funds were in 1993 included in the general budget. However, in 1996 the Ministry decided to re-introduce financial incentives to increase student mobility. The latest policy initiative is the report from the Globalisation council, where internationalization of higher education plays an important part in equipping Denmark “to reap the full benefits from globalisation” (the Danish Government 2006, p.4).

### **6.1.2 The Danish higher education sector, and support structure for internationalisation**

The Danish higher education system is currently going through a reform that includes a reorganization of the college sector; large scale mergers, and the establishment of university colleges. The reform includes the establishing of more formal cooperation between the university and college sector, amongst other things to strengthen the research basis of college programs. Research is not conducted in the Danish college sector, and the NIFU case study found that this was experienced by the college employees as a limiting factor for the international recognition of Danish colleges and for establishing international partnerships. The reform is also encouraging formal cooperation between institutions of higher education and the business and industry sector, as well as the integration of independent, public research institutions into universities.

Currently there are 12 universities, 12 institutions for education in the arts, 22 university colleges and 17 academies of higher professional education in Denmark. The responsibility of higher education is divided between three ministries in Denmark; the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation is responsible for

research and the university sector, the Ministry of Education is responsible for the college sector, and the Ministry of Culture is responsible for institutions for the education in the arts.

A new university law came into power July 4th 2003. According to this law, Danish universities are, or are to become, public corporations, non-profit institutions. According to the law each university is lead by a board and the board should have a majority of external members. Each university should organize its activities according to a University Performance Contract that is signed by the chair of the board and the Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation.

To promote the internationalization of Danish education and training, the Ministry of Education established in 2000 the Danish Centre for International Cooperation and Mobility in Education and Training (Cirius). Cirius is the result of a merger of several smaller centers and is organized as an independent state organization. The intention behind the establishment of Cirius was to have a single, strong organization for all programs and activities concerning internationalization of education at all levels. This was based on the expectation that it would enhance synergy between sectors and programs, strengthen quality, and make it easier to obtain comprehensive advice and information. Cirius is the Danish coordination agency for the three main educational programs of the EU, i.e. Leonardo, Socrates and Youth. It also coordinates a number of other programs and schemes that contribute to international cooperation in education and training.

Another body that is of relevance to the internationalization of Danish higher education is the Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA), which was established in 1999. EVA is an independent institution in charge of initiating and conducting quality assurance of education at all levels in Denmark. EVA is a member of ENQA and is also part of the Danish coordination group for the Bologna Process. EVA underwent an evaluation in 2005. The intention of the evaluation was to prepare for an inclusion in the emerging European register of quality assurance agencies. The evaluation was conducted by the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education.

### **6.1.3 Economic incentives for internationalisation**

The funding system of Danish higher education is almost exclusively based on the taximeter system, a comprehensive financing system based on per capita grants to the institutions. One direct financial instrument to encourage international activity is the mobility grant. This grant was introduced in 1996 and allocates funds to the institutions based on the international mobility of their students (5.000 DKK pr mobile student). Otherwise the institutions are expected to be international actors without added economic incentives from the state budget. New financial instruments to encourage students to be international are however about to be implemented. This includes scholarships for excellent international students to come to Denmark to study, as well as a new system where Danish students can take their loans with them to take either a whole degree, or parts of a degree abroad. University funding in the future will also be based on the excellence of the institution and international activity will be among the criteria for excellence.

### **6.1.4 Danish mobility**

Key instruments of internationalization are still student and staff mobility, mainly within established exchange programs and bilateral agreements. Compared to the other Nordic countries, however, less Danish students travel abroad to study. This can be a consequence of a less favorable loan system than in Sweden and Norway, and might be one reason why Denmark has decided to adapt their loan system, allowing Danish students to take their loans abroad (Denmark's Ministry of Education 2005).

The number of Danish students that participate in the Erasmus program has been fairly stable over the last ten years, with 1793 students participating in 2004/ 05. The number of Erasmus students coming to Denmark has increased over the last ten years, with 3985 in 2004/ 05. With respect to teacher mobility, the activity has been stable over the last 5 years, with 325 Danish teachers going abroad as part of the Erasmus

program, and 349 international teachers coming to Denmark in 2004/ 05 ([www.ciriusonline.dk/Default.aspx?ID=9402](http://www.ciriusonline.dk/Default.aspx?ID=9402)).

With respect to degree studies 3680<sup>1</sup> Danish students were enrolled in a degree program abroad in 2004, whilst 4600 international students were enrolled in a degree program in a Danish institution. The same year 44% of the international students in Denmark came from one of the Nordic countries, whilst 42% came from outside the EU/ EEA area. The latter group must as of 2006/ 07 pay tuition fee. Europe is the most popular destination for Danish degree students abroad, with 81% in 2004. Outside of Europe the USA receives most Danish degree students (SIU 2007).

### **6.1.5 Denmark and the Bologna process**

Because the Bologna Process affects both the university and the college sector, it touches upon the responsibility of several ministries in Denmark. In order to coordinate the development and include each involved ministry's professional agencies and higher education institutions, the implementation of the Bologna goals is coordinated by a steering group, the so-called Bologna Follow-up Group, and a coordination group. The steering group is responsible for the implementation of the Bologna Process in Denmark and consists of representatives from the three ministries, as well as the rector's conference, labor market representatives, and the national student union. The coordination group oversees the process and coordinates the practical implementation of the Bologna Process. In addition to the above mentioned bodies, this group also includes representatives from Cirius and EVA (Denmark's Ministry of Education 2007).

Denmark prides itself of being ahead of the Bologna schedule. The implementation of the Bologna agreement in Denmark has consisted, amongst other things, of the

---

<sup>1</sup> The number refers to students with a funding from the Danish student loan system. It is in general hard to get an overview of Nordic freemovers as Nordic students studying abroad do not necessarily need to report their whereabouts and reason for staying abroad to any Nordic authority.



---

introduction of the ECTS system (September 2001) and the Diploma Supplement (September 2002) (Denmark's Ministry of Education 2007).

### **6.1.6 New internationalization**

Denmark is perhaps the Nordic country that has focused the most on aspects of market steering and competition with respect to higher education. The Danish Rectors' Conference published a study on the international higher education market and the marketization of Danish higher education abroad in 2005. Based on factors like the increased demand for higher education internationally, global competition for talent, the increase of 'for profit' higher education institutions, virtual institutions and corporate universities, and the debate concerning higher education and GATS, the working group behind the study recommended the development of a new, flexible funding system including both governmental funding to support innovation and the development of new programs, and tuition fees for students coming from countries with which Denmark does not have agreements. The working group also emphasized the importance of developing a national strategy with respect to the recruitment of international students (Danish Rectors' Conference 2005).

Higher education in Denmark has been tuition free for Danish as well as international students until 2006. The institutions have had the opportunity to charge tuition fees for some groups of students, but have mainly chosen not to. As of the academic year 2006/ 2007 government funding for none EU/ EEA students stopped and the universities are bound by law to charge a minimum fee equal to the cost of the program (typically 40.000-100.000 DKK). They may charge a higher fee (Danish Parliament 2003). The reluctance at the institutional level has been large. One reason is insecurity with respect to the competitiveness of Danish education. Danish education is believed to be of high quality, but Denmark is also a high cost country. Other challenges are considered to be the fact that Danish is a minority language in a world context and that the neighboring countries are still tuition free (Maassen et al. 2005).

A decline is expected in the number of international students from outside the EU/EEA area in the nearest future, and critics have asked why the introduction of tuition fees was not combined with a more comprehensive recruitment campaign of Denmark as a study destination. It can be doubted whether single institutions have the necessary funds to recruit non-EU/EEA students in an extensive and sensible way. When international students search for a study program outside their home country, it is important that the status of the institution and degree offered is easily understood and recognized. The structure of the Danish higher education system has been criticized for being too complex for international applicants to understand. The fact that credits taken in the Danish college sector not necessarily are recognized in the Danish university sector, is believed to make the status of the college degree questionable internationally (Rogers and Kemp 2006).

One initiative to recruit high quality international students to Denmark has been the introduction of a government scholarship system for non EU/ EEA students. This system consists of a set number of scholarships for university- and selected college programs , starting with 73 scholarships in 2006 and increasing to 245 in 2009. The scholarship is to go towards covering the tuition fee as well as cost of living ([www.studyindenmark.dk/Default.aspx?ID=2914](http://www.studyindenmark.dk/Default.aspx?ID=2914)).

Denmark is positive, but remains expectant with respect to the inclusion of higher education in GATS. According to the prevailing understanding, all Danish higher education would be considered public higher education and thus would not be affected by the agreement. Future development of regional and global trade in higher education might however affect Danish students wanting to go abroad in a less favorable way, and this is a cause for concern (Maassen and Uppstrøm 2005).

### **6.1.7 The Globalisation Council**

In 2005 the government launched a working group whose task it was to formulate a strategy for how Denmark best can prepare for the future ([www.globalisering.dk](http://www.globalisering.dk)). The working group was called the Globalisation Council and consisted of

---

representatives from key sections of Danish society, as well as five ministers. The council was chaired by the Prime Minister. The concluding report; ‘Progress, Innovation and Cohesion’, was published March 2006.

*“It is essential to ensure strong competitiveness, so that Denmark continues to belong among the wealthiest countries. And it is essential to ensure strong cohesion, so that Denmark continues to be an inclusive society without major divisions.” (The Danish Government, 2006, p.7)*

The report presents a strategy of 350 initiatives which entail a reform of the educational system as well as changes in the framework conditions for entrepreneurship and innovation. The latter include changes in the legislation with respect to immigration of skilled labor and in the taxation of new companies. The initiatives with respect to education aim to improve the efficiency of public spending on education and research, amongst other things, by allocating more public funds through open competition. The government wishes to increase the number of young people that take and complete a higher education program to 50% by 2015, and it aims to improve the graduation rate so that students in general complete their studies by the age of 25. The new strategy aims especially at increasing the enrolment in engineering, science and health studies. With respect to internationalization the report states that

*“All higher education institutions must set out relevant objectives for their participation in the global education market. And they should participate more in mutually binding cooperation with foreign educational institutions” (The Danish Government, 2006, p.18).*

Initiatives that are introduced to reach this goal are: scholarships for Danes to study at reputable higher education institutions abroad, defined internationalization strategies at the institutional level including institutional target numbers for student mobility and English language courses and programs. The Globalisation council suggests developing a national branding strategy for Denmark as an education-oriented country and scholarships for talented foreign students. The new strategy also includes a change in the funding system, allocating funds according to a measure of quality, and it encourages the establishment of special master’s programs for outstanding

students. It is possible to interpret some of the initiatives of the Globalisation Council as a Danish response to the Lisbon agenda.

Some of the initiatives that have been taken by the Ministry of Science, Technology and Development after the report of the Globalisation Council are:

1. So called 'bridges' to international knowledge environments – Several Centers of Innovation, or commercial embassies are planned to be established abroad. The first one will be established in Silicon Valley, USA and is meant to be a bridge between Danish and American research and investors.
2. Research office in Brussels – As of September 1<sup>st</sup> 2006 a research office was established in Brussels with the aim of securing increased Danish participation in EU's framework programs, as well as improved information to Danish research environments.
3. Marketization of Denmark as a study destination – The ministry is supporting a pilot project on the marketization of Danish education abroad with a budget of DKK 3 million in 2005-2007.

### **6.1.8 Danish views on Nordic cooperation in higher education**

Compared to the focus on EU cooperation in higher education, Nordic cooperation has been a minor issue in Danish policy. The respondents in the NIFU case study were in general of the opinion that more traditional Nordic mobility of students and staff is less important than European mobility in general. It was regarded as important to stimulate the institutions to engage in Nordic cooperation, but not at the expense of other international activities. Nordplus was, however, seen as especially preferable for the smaller universities, because of the simpler administration required, and for the college sector, where student and staff exchange within the professional programs have been easier within the Nordic area.

As the Bologna process is diminishing European differences, the ease that used to be significant for Nordic cooperation, is becoming a characteristic of European cooperation in general. The need for Nordic cooperation was therefore considered by the respondents to be diminishing. The Bologna process was however considered to also affect Nordic cooperation in a positive way, with the general 'harmonization' of degrees and credits also easing Nordic mobility. Thus the Bologna process was believed to be complementing Nordic cooperation, as well as perhaps replacing some of its historical and practical importance.

Nordic cooperation is, however, seen as significant within areas where a more in depth cooperation is desirable, e.g. more extensive networking and joint programs targeting non-European students. Because of geographical closeness, cultural and political similarities, and high quality higher education institutions, respondents expected that in the future we will see an increased number of free movers at a master level within the Nordic region. A respondent at the central institutional level suggested that students with a completed bachelor degree, seeking a high quality master program, might just as easily choose to go to Bergen as Aalborg, given the right conditions of available information and transferable funding opportunities. This increases student choice at the same time as it might lead to an efficient division of labor within the Nordic region.

The other Nordic countries are considered important political allies in international negotiations. One policy area that was pointed out by respondents at the national level, was quality assurance, where it was emphasized that Nordic cooperation is important. The other Nordic countries are also points of references with respect to the development of national education policies, and the open dialogue between the Nordic ministries of education was highly valued by respondents on a national level.

The EU initiative to support consortia and joint programs and degrees were observed with interest by most of the respondents. Some examples of similar Nordic cooperation already exist, like the Øresund University, and NOVA University. The first is based on regional cooperation between institutions in Sweden and Denmark in

the Øresund region (see section on Sweden), the latter is a cooperation between seven Nordic institutions in the fields of forestry, veterinary sciences and agricultural sciences. Respondents suggested that Nordic consortia will prove to be significant players in the globally competitive European higher education market, as aimed for in the Lisbon objectives.

Respondents also suggested that it might be beneficial for the Nordic countries to engage in a coordinated and more aggressive marketing of their national systems and institutions, focusing on the attractiveness of the area at large, the quality of education, nature, welfare policy, societal safety etc. Thus Nordic cooperation was not considered a direct source of revenue, but indirectly so as a potential instrument in the marketing of Danish higher education.

## 6.2 Finland

Finland is the Nordic country with the highest enrolment in higher education, as measured in percentage of the population aged 20-39 (20% compared to approx 15% in the other Nordic countries). Finland is also the Nordic country with the highest recruitment to the natural sciences. Finland is therefore one of the better students in the class, according to some of the benchmarks on the Lisbon agenda. However, at the same time as the internationalization of the Finnish higher education sector is considered key to the international competitiveness of Finland, the Finnish higher education system fails to reach the national goals for mobility (Finland's Ministry of Education 2005b).

There is a wide national consensus on the importance of international cooperation and internationalization of higher education in Finland, with a strong political emphasis on student mobility. The aim is that every third higher education student should take part of his or her degree abroad, and every post-graduate student is to spend some time studying abroad as part of the degree. However, at the moment the targets are far from being reached.

---

### **6.2.1 The Finnish higher education sector and support structure for internationalisation**

The Finnish higher education system has recently undergone a reform. Internationalization has been one of the main motivating factors behind the reform, with the Bologna process laying the template for several of the changes. The Finnish higher education system consists of 21 universities and 30 polytechnics (the college sector). Finnish universities are state owned public institutions governed by the Ministry of Education according to the University Act. The University Act was amended in 2004 as part of the above mentioned reform, introducing a two-cycle degree system compatible with the Bologna process, the possibility for universities to grant English language degrees and degree titles and an ECTS compatible credit system. Polytechnics are maintained by local authorities, municipal authorities or private foundations and governed according to the Polytechnics Act. This act was amended in 2005, introducing a second cycle polytechnic degree and an ECTS compatible credit system (Finland's Ministry of Education 2006).

The objectives of Finland's higher education policy are defined in a development plan entitled Education and Research 2003-2008. In line with the Lisbon agenda, two of the aims of the development plan are to raise the level of education in the population as a whole, and enhance the quality and effectiveness of the education and training system. As mentioned above, Finland does have a very good point of departure compared to some other European countries. The Finnish recruitment to scientific and technical studies is for example the highest in the European Union (37% in 2002) (Finland's Ministry of Education 2004).

Universities are state funded, whilst Polytechnics are funded by the state and by regional authorities. The funding is based, amongst other things, on performance agreements between the institutions and the state. Higher education institutions may obtain external funding, but currently not through tuition fees. Polytechnics may obtain project funding from the state e.g. for internationalization. However, recently the ministry has not considered their budget to allow for such project funding, and the

institutions have mostly had to cover costs related to internationalization through their basic funding (Finland's Ministry of Education 2005a). Businesses may deduct donations to higher education from taxes and in 2005 the government proposed that students who completed their studies within the standard time would be granted a tax relief upon graduation. Student aid may be used abroad for programs that correspond to Finnish programs, or for courses that are part of a Finnish degree program.

(Foreign students enrolled in Finnish institutions are not entitled to Finnish student aid.) Scholarships for study periods abroad are not counted when calculating a student's right to student aid. However, these incentives are considered limited compared to the needed investment, should Finland reach its potential with respect to internationalization. A possible introduction of tuition fees for international students has therefore led to much debate in Finland (Finland's Ministry of Education 2005a).

Most of the support structure for the internationalization of higher education in Finland is gathered at The Centre for International Mobility (CIMO). CIMO was established 1991 by the Ministry of Education. The centre's mission is to back up the international orientation of universities and polytechnics, to provide information about study opportunities abroad, and to advertise Finnish higher education for international students. CIMO administers most scholarship and exchange programs in Finland, including the EU programs. Finland has recently initiated several mobility programs to enhance mobility. Examples are the Finnish-Russian Student Exchange Program (FIRST); North-South-South, a network program between Finland and certain developing countries, two different mobility programs aimed at mobility with Asia, and North-to-North, a mobility program for the Arctic area.

The Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC) is another organization that plays an important role in the internationalization of Finnish higher education. FINHEEC is an independent expert body responsible for the evaluation of Finnish higher education. It is also responsible for the evaluation of the international activities of the institutions. One aim is to provide the institutions with feedback so they can increase the quality of their activities. Quality is emphasized as a key



---

normative basis for the internationalization of higher education in Finland. High quality is considered important not to lose out in the international market, and an international campus is considered a sign of high quality (Finland's Ministry of Education, 2006).

### **6.2.2 Mobility**

As is also the case for the other Nordic countries, international cooperation in Finland has been greatly facilitated by international educational programs, such as Nordplus, Leonardo and Socrates/ Erasmus. Finland is aiming at increasing mobility in general, and especially increased incoming mobility. The current development plan has as an aim to reach 12 000 international degree students enrolled in a Finnish institution by 2008. In 2004 there were approximately 8400 international degree students in Finland. This equals an increase of 40% and 2000 students since 2000. Compared to the student population in general, however, the percentage has only increased by 0.5%. In 2004 2,6% of the student population were international degree students. The aim set in 2003 was to reach 4% by 2008, an ambitious goal in light of the current situation (Garam 2006).

About half of the international degree students come from outside the EU/ EEA area. China and Russia represent the largest importers of Finnish education, and together with India these countries are considered important markets for Finnish higher education. Whilst the number of incoming students from China and Russia has increased considerably since 2000, the number of Swedish student has remained more or less the same. The Nordic countries account for 7% of the foreign degree students, compared to 17% and 14% for China and Russia. The Finnish-Russian Cross-Border University is an example of Finnish-Russian cooperation. This initiative is aimed amongst other things at creating joint degree programs.

Student mobility is one of the quantitative targets set in the performance contracts of Finnish higher education institutions. Even so, the number of Finnish exchange

students has declined. The number of incoming students has however increased and Finland is currently an importer of exchange students.

### **6.2.3 New internationalisation and the issue of tuition fees**

More strongly than before, the current strategy for internationalization of higher education emphasizes the importance of Finnish higher education institutions to be able to compete with foreign providers in attracting foreign students and researchers to Finland. Brain drain is perceived as a possible threat if the higher education institutions can not keep attracting Finnish and foreign students, and if Finnish students and graduates are searching for education and work abroad.

One of the key policy norms behind the internationalization of higher education is increasing the quality of higher education and research and ensuring the competitiveness of Finnish higher education system and institutions as well as of the whole Finnish society. An important feature of internationalization is the possibility of getting integrated into international research and education funding schemes and using them to facilitate the work done in Finnish higher education institutions.

However, as tuition fees on degree courses are not permitted by the Finnish legislation, internationalization of higher education has not until now been a funding mechanism for the higher education institutions.

The limited resources available to develop international programs are considered a danger to the general quality of higher education. It is also considered as limiting the institutions' opportunity to respond to an increasing international demand for higher education. These are two of the motivating factors for placing the issue of tuition fees for international students on the political agenda. A working group was commissioned by the ministry to study the possible effects of an introduction of tuition fees in Finland. They came with the following conclusions (Finland's Ministry of Education 2005a):

Currently funds available for the development of international programs in Finnish institutions are too limited. This is affecting the room to maneuver for Finnish institutions, as well as the number and quality of international programs. Tuition fees for international students can be one way of increasing funds to the institutions. The working group proposes that fees are introduced for non EU/ EEA students. The fees are to be within the range of 3.500-12.000 Euro. The fees are not intended to cover the full cost of the program, but should add substantially to the budget of the institutions. The fees should come as an added income for the institutions, and not affect the basic funding that the institutions now receive. This system would introduce an economic incentive for the institutions to engage in international education, as well as ensure the added finances needed for high quality investment.

The tuition fees should be introduced together with a scholarship scheme, to ensure that Finland remains attractive as a study destination for the brightest students, and that students with less financial means are not prevented from enrolling. The scholarship scheme should be partially financed through funding from the state, partially from business and industry, and partially from Sitra; the Finnish Innovation Fund.

The report of the working group also touches upon the lack of Finnish involvement in higher education development cooperation. Though Finland considers education a key factor for development, higher education has not been an instrument in Finnish involvement in development cooperation. The report refers to several invitations that institutions in Finland until now have not been able to accept. One is investment in higher education in Kenya, a country Finland has been engaged in development work in for a longer period of time. Secondly there have been several requests from Pakistan for tailor made master and PhD courses, and thirdly, UNESCO has requested Finnish involvement in the building up of higher education in Iraq. The working group considers all these opportunities as interesting for the higher education sector in Finland. The working group therefore suggests a separate scholarship scheme for students from developing countries where Finland is otherwise involved.

The suggestions from the working group are as follows: A scholarship scheme built up of two parts. The budget for the general scholarship scheme should be 7 mill Euro a year, whilst the suggested budget for the development cooperation scholarship scheme should be 5 mill Euro a year. Secondly, the working group suggests focusing recruitment on three groups: particularly bright students that might remain in Finland upon graduation, students from developing countries that will return home upon graduation, and students that attend tailor made programs commissioned by an external part. Finland aims to increase the number of international graduates who become employed in Finland upon graduation. In addition to aiming recruitment at this group, Finland also wish to make it easier for foreign graduates to stay in Finland to apply for a job.

The commission suggested that tuition fees should have been introduced as of 2007. This did not happen. Finnish lobbying against tuition fees is strong, however, the debate has not been laid dead. The proposal of the working group suggests a possible move towards 'new internationalization' in Finland, with an increased economic rationale behind internationalization. Though the working group suggests Finnish involvement in transnational education, Finland is reluctant towards the inclusion of education in the WTO/ GATS agreement (Maassen et al. 2005).

#### **6.2.4 Finland and the Bologna process**

Finland has been part of the Bologna process since 1999. Despite initial hesitation, most of the goals of the Bologna Process are now shared by the higher education community (Maassen and Uppstrøm 2005). The implementation of Bologna is monitored by a government committee consisting of representatives from the higher education institutions, the students, the social partners as well as several ministries.

#### **6.2.5 Finnish views on Nordic cooperation in higher education**

Nordic cooperation has on a symbolic level been very important for Finland as Finland has wanted to associate with the values of the Nordic societies. During the

---

past decades, it has been considered especially important to keep a window open to the West. The Scandinavian connection is also considered an asset in attracting foreign students to Finland. However, despite engagement in Nordplus and the research cooperation program NorFA, the Nordic dimension is not particularly explicit in the Finnish higher education policies. Even though Sweden has continued to attract students and is among the three biggest receivers of Finnish students and among the most important partners in researcher mobility, the other Nordic countries seem to be less attractive and the flow from other Nordic countries to Finland is very small (Appendix 3). For the Finnish, the idea of the Nordic countries being united by their language is not a reality, and the Nordic languages seem to be less of a unifying and rather a separating factor. The engagement in international cooperation seems to be directed towards other European countries, towards certain countries in the East, as well as overseas towards the USA (Maassen and Uppstrøm 2005).

### 6.3 Norway

A comprehensive reform of the Norwegian higher education sector was initiated in 2000 when the government assigned Mjøs Commission published its report on the future of Norwegian higher education (Mjøs Commission 2000, p.14). This report was followed by a white paper “Do your duty, demand your right” (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research 2000), that lay the foundation for what was to become the Quality Reform. The overall aim of the reform is to make Norway a nation of world renowned research and higher education. It was implemented in 2003 and included several Bologna related measures, like a new degree structure and a new grading scale. The reform placed a new and emphasized focus on the internationalization of higher education. International processes that were seen as important to respond to were the Bologna process, the development of EU's Framework Programs, the so called globalization and Europeanization of higher education, the expansion of the EU, the WTO/ GATS negotiations and the further development of ICT (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research 2000). The

reform has just been evaluated, at the same time as a new commission, the Stjernø Commission, is preparing to publish its report on the future of Norwegian higher education.

### **6.3.1 The Norwegian higher education sector and support structure for internationalisation**

The Norwegian higher education system consists of 7 universities, 5 specialized universities and 24 university colleges, catering to approximately 170 000 students. In 2004/2005 13 157 Norwegian students studied abroad. In comparison about 9683 international students attended higher education in Norway. One of the main focus areas of the Quality Reform has been student mobility. The aim is to decrease the number of Norwegian degree students abroad, increase the number of exchange students, both incoming and outgoing, as well as increase the number of international degree students to Norway.

Higher education is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Research. It is governed according to the Higher Education Act of 2005. The new act of 2005 gave the institutions increased autonomy and strengthened the position of the Rector. The Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education (SIU) is the main governmental support structure for the internationalization of higher education in Norway. SIU was established in 2004. The role of SIU is to coordinate national measures within the field of internationalization, according to official Norwegian policy. The centre is Norway's official agency for international mobility programs, the EU programs as well as programs initiated by Norway, such as the Quota program and the NOMA program that both aim at cooperation with developing countries. In addition to program administration, SIU is responsible for promoting Norway as an education and research destination, and for providing information and advisory services within the field of internationalization in education ([www.siu.no](http://www.siu.no)).

The Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT) is the public agency responsible for carrying out external quality assurance of higher education, as

well as tertiary vocational education, in Norway. It is an independent public agency, established in 2002. NOKUT is a member of ENQA, and considers applications for general recognition of foreign qualifications. The agency is also responsible for providing foreign institutions and partners with information about the Norwegian educational system and the procedures for recognition of foreign higher education qualifications (nokut.no).

### **6.3.2 Background**

Traditionally a number of Norwegian students has always taken their education abroad. Previously this was an intentional aim of the government, to compensate for lack of capacity in the national system. Thus all the way through to the 1960s higher education abroad was seen as a supplement to the Norwegian system, and the policy aim was to increase the capacity of the national system until this would no longer be needed. During the 1980s the rationale behind sending students abroad changed and became one of internationalization, recognizing that the Norwegian labor market would benefit from graduates with an international experience and that for Norwegian students to attend high quality institutions abroad had a value in itself rather than just ease the pressure on the national system (Maassen et al. 2005).

### **6.3.3 The Quality Reform and internationalisation**

The Quality Reform has recently been evaluated. With respect to internationalization, the conclusions of the evaluation were that the reform has changed the general attitude to internationalization, and that the focus on internationalization has increased significantly. However, though the rhetoric of the reform introduces new ways of thinking of internationalization, such as internationalization as a tool for quality enhancement or for a more diversified higher education sector through targeted focus on institutional areas of international strength, student mobility is still the dominating element in the activities and focus of the institutions (Halvorsen and Faye 2006). That is, internationalization as an aim in itself, rather than a tool for

quality enhancement or a symbol of strength in competition for students and funds. The institutional focus on mobility might be a result of the policy instruments introduced for internationalization, which mainly focus on mobility.

The national goals in relation to student mobility are to increase the overall mobility, increase incoming mobility and increase participation in international mobility programs and bilateral agreements. Norwegian students may take their student loans with them if they go abroad, and for approved programs the potential tuition fee might be covered. All students are, according to political decision, to have the opportunity to take parts of a degree abroad. This has naturally placed pressure on the institutions. The Ministry also aims at increasing the number of international students, researchers and teachers in Norway. The cooperation with non-Anglo Saxon countries should increase, and the number of international programs offered at Norwegian institutions should increase (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research 2000).

The link between internationalization and quality does, according to the recent evaluation, not seem to play a central role at the higher education institutions. Internationalization plays a limited role in the institutional strategies. Though internationalization is defined as the responsibility of the institutional leadership, much of the actual responsibility is delegated to the international offices.

The Ministry's strategy for internationalization emphasizes internationalization at home as one important aim of international activity, and one key link between internationalization and quality enhancement.

*The main aim of internationalization is the added value for the study and research environment that comes as a consequence of a well defined institutional strategy. The institutional networks and the international experience of the students and teachers is a prerequisite, but the impulses gained as a consequence of this, has to be transformed into increase study quality, and into research and development work. (Norwegian Ministry of Education and research 2002)*



However, the concept of internationalization at home does not seem to have institutionalized in the institutions, except perhaps as a continued focus on the integration of international students.

### **6.3.4 Economic incentives for internationalisation**

Tuition fees are a contested topic in Norway, and in general not legal in public institutions. Institutions may obtain external funding for their study programs, but only at the expense of their basic funding and thus this is seldom done. However, as a policy instrument for internationalization, the Ministry has introduced an economic incentive; the institutions are granted 5600 NOK (as of 2007) per incoming or outgoing student within an exchange program. Norwegian higher education institutions were granted increased autonomy as a result of the Quality Reform, and the main responsibility for internationalization lies with the institutions. With the students being granted the right to periods of mobility, and the economic incentive for high institutional participation in exchange programs, this has become the main focus in the area of internationalization for the institutions.

### **6.3.5 Norway and the Bologna process and Lisbon agenda**

Norway has since the start of the Bologna process prided itself with being at the very front of implementing Bologna related reforms. Norway was one of the three first 'Bologna countries' to introduce all three of the following measures:

- 3+2- Bachelor's/Master's structure
- An ECTS compatible grading system
- The international diploma supplement

Norway also hosted one of the Bologna ministerial meetings, in Bergen in 2005. The Bologna process is followed by a national Bologna group consisting of representatives from the Ministry of Education and Research as well as major

stakeholders like the Norwegian Association of Higher Education institutions (UHR), The Norwegian association of Researchers, The National Union of Students in Norway (NSU), NOKUT and SIU (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research 2006).

As a member of EFTA, Norway is participating in the Lisbon agenda. A challenge for Norway has been the relatively poor results in international evaluations like PISA and TIMMS, in spite of a comparably high investment in education. Norway also has one of the lowest rates of graduates in mathematics, science and technology (20%), together with a rather slow overall graduation rate. Also, the 2006 OECD thematic review pointed out that higher education institutions in Norway do not place a high enough priority on contributing to the national economy or on cooperation with business. These are some of the challenges related to the Lisbon strategy that Norway is currently focusing on. With respect to the graduation rate, Norway has changed the funding mechanism both for the institutions as well as the student loan system, to encourage an improved rate of graduation (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research 2005a and 2005b).

Contrary to the other Nordic countries, Norway is positive to the inclusion of higher education in the WTO/ GATS agreement. As the majority of Norwegian higher education is publicly funded the belief that inclusion might affect the system drastically is limited. A concern is however, how this might affect the situation for developing countries. Norway has a long tradition of cooperation with higher education in developing countries. The Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) plays a significant role in this work, and the institutions are in general positive and heavily engaged in cooperation with institutions in developing countries. The new Norad program for master programs (NOMA) was launched 2006, with a start up in 2007. This program aims to focus more of the cooperation at the institutions in the developing countries, contrary to previous programs where cooperation has been focused on student mobility to Norway. The program can be criticized for giving few incentives for participation of the Norwegian institutions,

which according to the evaluation of the Quality Reform seems to be the case for cooperation with developing countries in general. This might become a challenge for Norway's continued investment in higher education in developing countries in the future.

Cooperation is still the dominating attitude with respect to internationalization. Though the concept of competition plays a role in the policy rhetoric, the institutions have not caught on to this agenda. In the policy documents the economic role of internationalization plays a limited role, branching etc. does not seem to be an issue for public institutions. Quality is the main normative basis, and internationalization is said to be important for the sake of comparison and learning (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research 2005a and 2005b).

### **6.3.6 Views on Nordic cooperation in higher education**

Being the only Scandinavian country that is not a member of the EU, Norway is in a slightly different position than its neighbors. This might be one reason why Norway seems to be the most positive towards Nordic cooperation. As an outsider in certain fora Nordic cooperation is seen as important opportunity for Norway to voice its opinion and influence development. Nordic cooperation is also seen as important for strengthening Nordic values and issues internationally. Respondents in the NIFU case study considered Nordic cooperation within higher education as an important part of Nordic cooperation in general. One reason for this is the closely linked labor markets. The policy cooperation with respect to the other Nordic countries were by the respondents considered very successful when it comes to recognition of degrees and an advantage with respect to the ongoing work with the Bologna process. The Bologna process was, however, considered to limit certain forms of Nordic cooperation, by amongst other things increasing the focus on European cooperation in general.

In addition to the direct cooperation that exists between the Nordic countries, Norway's neighboring countries have also played an important role as a frame of

reference with respect to policy development in Norway. Earlier Norway has looked mainly at Sweden in its higher education reforms, but currently Denmark seems to be an equally important frame of reference. This is evident amongst other things with respect to the new funding model.

Though there is a desire by the Ministry to increase Nordic higher education cooperation and student and teacher exchange, there are few instruments geared towards this aim. The focus on Nordic cooperation in the policy documents is limited. However, the institutions are asked to specifically report also on Nordic cooperation in their reports to the Ministry (Maassen et al. 2005).

### **6.3.7 The Future of Norwegian higher education, and its international engagement**

A Ministry commissioned working group is currently preparing its report on the future of higher education in Norway. The working group goes under the name the Stjernø Commission and has been given the mandate to consider the future development of Norwegian higher education over the next ten to twenty years. Included in the mandate is the internationalization of higher education, but this does not seem to figure as the most central topic.

At the same time as the ministry is awaiting the report of the Stjernø Commission on the future of Norwegian higher education, they have announced a new working group on the internationalization of higher education. The working group is going to consider the current emphasis on internationalization in Norwegian higher education, the connection between national aims and policy instruments, and the efficiency of the work done. Their report is due Fall 2008.

## **6.4 Sweden**

At the time of the NIFU case study, Sweden seemed to be the reluctant reformer with respect to European initiatives and influence. However, July 1<sup>st</sup> 2007 a new reform of

---

Swedish higher education came into effect, strongly influenced by the Bologna process (Swedish Ministry of Education and Research 2006). This reform seems to bring Sweden more in line with the other Nordic countries.

#### **6.4.1 The Swedish higher education sector and support structure for internationalisation**

The Swedish higher educational system consists of 14 state universities, 22 state university colleges and three independent institutions with a right to award third cycle degrees. Universities and higher education institutions are government agencies under the jurisdiction of the government and the parliament (Riksdagen). The sector is regulated through the Higher Education Act. In the early 1990s the Swedish higher education system underwent a reform. Central themes of the reform were decentralization, quality control and accountability. The process of decentralization led amongst other things to a shift in the responsibility of internationalization; from the allocation of earmarked funds for internationalization, to internationalization being an integrated part of the mandate of the higher education institutions. It is stated in the Higher Education Act that an understanding of other countries and of international relations should be a part of the curriculum at universities and university colleges. The government has however continued to be central in initiating exchange programs, like the Linnaeus-Palme program that was established in May 2000. The aim of this program is to increase cooperation between Sweden and developing countries through student and teacher exchange. This program is not extensive in numbers of participants, but it is considered as extensive in importance (HSV 2005).

There are a number of agencies with different responsibilities related to internationalization in Sweden. The National Agency for Higher Education (HSV) is responsible for the supervision of Swedish higher education, including the international activity. HSV is also responsible for the evaluation and recognition of foreign qualifications. The Swedish Institute (SI) is responsible for information about education in Sweden to foreign students, the Swedish Foundation for International Cooperation in Research and Higher Education (STINT) is, amongst

other things, responsible for certain scholarship programs, the International Program Office (IPK) administers the EU exchange programs, and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) is responsible for various scholarships, amongst them the Linnaeus-Palme program. The Swedish Agency for Networks and Cooperation in Higher Education is newly established, and is responsible amongst other things for assisting the implementation of the new degree structure and widen recruitment to higher education. In Sweden's 2005 progress report for Education and Training 2010, it is suggested that the large number of bodies involved in different aspects of internationalization might lead to a somewhat uncoordinated approach (Swedish Ministry of Education and Research 2005).

### **6.4.2 Background**

Internationalization of higher education is considered to have been high on the political agenda in Sweden since the 1970s. Initially it was placed high on the agenda because of the expansion of Swedish companies abroad and the need for graduates who could fill important international positions. There was also a growing debate concerning the developing world, and active solidarity with non-industrialized countries and cultures was promoted. When Sweden started the process of joining the EU in the early 1990s, the issue of European integration also affected higher education policy (Maassen et al. 2005).

### **6.4.3 Mobility**

The number of Swedish students going abroad has remained stable since the end of the 90s, at approximately 26 000 students. The number of international students coming to Sweden has however increased steadily and was in 2005/ 2006 approximately 26 000 as well, thus leveling out the number of incoming and outgoing students. There is however a difference with respect to how many of these were mobile as degree students or exchange students. In 2005/ 2006 about 20 000 Swedish students went abroad as degree students, whilst about 15 500 international degree

---

students came to Sweden. Anglo Saxon countries receive the most Swedish students, together with Denmark, who was the fifth most popular study destination for Swedish students in 2005/2006. Finland, India, China and Pakistan account for the largest number of incoming students. 60% of the international students in Sweden are from Europe. When considering tuition fees for non-European students, this would therefore affect 40% of the international students in Sweden (HSV 2007).

#### **6.4.4 Rationale for internationalisation**

The main rationales behind the Swedish internationalization policies have since the 1970s been largely academic and cultural as well as political with respect to European integration and development aid. The increased quality of an international campus has been an important argument and ‘internationalization at home’ has perhaps been emphasized more explicitly in Sweden than the other Nordic countries. With respect to bilateral agreements with developing countries, democratic and moral values have characterized the process, rather than an economic rationale. An economic argument behind the recruitment of more international students, or the introduction of tuition fees, have been virtually absent from the policy agenda in Sweden until very recently.

In searching for an economic rationale for the internationalization of higher education, one aspect that has been on the agenda is the competitiveness of Swedish industry internationally. It is believed that Swedish graduates with an international student experience will play an important role for Sweden upon graduation, that some of the foreign exchange students to Sweden might choose to stay and join the Swedish labor force, and that contacts and experience gained by international students while studying in Sweden might lead to future economic cooperation after they return to their home country (Maassen et al. 2005). Currently Swedish higher education is tuition free by law, also for international students. It is stressed that the presence of international students fosters development and quality enhancement of the higher education environment. However the government has appointed a

commission that is to evaluate the possibility of introducing tuition fees for non EU/EEA students (HSV 2007).

The Swedish government is of the opinion that higher education is a national matter and should not be included in the WTO/ GATS agreement. Sweden is not interested in selling its higher education and would rather cooperate than compete. Support through GATS is not believed to add anything to the higher education environment (Maassen et al. 2005).

#### **6.4.5 A new world – a new university**

July 1<sup>st</sup> 2007 an important reform of Swedish higher education came into effect. The main topics of the reform are internationalization and increased participation in higher education. The Bologna process forms an important motivation behind the reform. The reform introduced a new three cycle degree structure, including a new two year master, new degree descriptions based on the European Qualifications Framework, a new credit system in line with ECTS, and Diploma Supplement also for the third cycle. The rationale behind the reform seems to continue the focus on educational, cultural and political values, rather than economic, though increased global competition also is an issue. The government bill “A New World – A New University (2004/2005) states that

*“One important reason for the internationalisation of higher education is that it contributes to educational quality. [] Another important reason is that the internationalisation of higher education helps promote understanding and respect for other points of view, cultures and traditions, as well as fostering international solidarity.” (p.9)*

The aim of increased participation in higher education seems to have been motivated more from a national aim of social cohesion, rather than the Lisbon agenda’s rationale of a strengthened economy.

The reform is seen as important for the recognition of Swedish graduates abroad. Other important instruments for internationalization are the Swedish student loan system and participation in regional exchange programs. This loan system allows the



students to take their student loans and spend them on approved studies abroad. The requirement is that the study program must be a full time program of at least 13 weeks offered by an approved higher education institution or provider (HSV, 2005). The development of this policy may have been affected by a fear of academic isolation in the 1980s, when the international study opportunities for Swedish students were limited unless they could obtain financial support privately. After the introduction of this system, the number of students taking periods of their studies abroad increased dramatically (Maassen et al. 2005).

The Erasmus program has been important for the internationalization of Swedish higher education institutions. Participation in the program has led to the establishment of central international offices at many institutions and is believed to have added a professional approach to international cooperation (Maassen et al. 2005).

#### **6.4.6 Views on Nordic cooperation in higher education**

Nordic cooperation within higher education is valued and seen as important. Respondents in the NIFU case study believed that Nordic cooperation strengthens the individual institutions and ensures quality and the survival of minor fields. They also considered it as important because of the mobility within the Nordic labor market. Cooperation at a political level was appreciated by respondents on a national level, and informal, biannual meetings between representatives from the ministries of all Nordic countries was considered as being of great value. The Ministry has no special instruments designed to promote Nordic cooperation, but sees Nordplus as a valuable activity and a program that could be better utilized (Maassen et al. 2005).

Though Sweden has been hesitant of reforming its higher education system according to European developments, one of the more innovating examples of Nordic cooperation has taken place here, as well as in Denmark. The Øresund University is a consortium of twelve universities and university colleges in the region of Øresund, which spans across Skåne in Sweden and Sjælland in Denmark. The aim of the

cooperation is to make Øresund “a significant science region” by opening up all courses, libraries and other facilities to all students, teachers and researchers at the twelve institutions. The education and research of both countries is thus believed to complement each other and thus increase the quality and efficiency among the participating institutions. The consortium includes amongst other institutions the University of Copenhagen and Lund University ([www.uni.oresund.org](http://www.uni.oresund.org)). In spite of initiatives like this taking place in Sweden, Sweden has been hesitant about the introduction of joint degrees, and there is currently no policy framework this kind of cooperation.

## 7. The dynamics of Nordic cooperation in higher education interpreted

The value of Nordic cooperation in general has been up for discussion recently (Jørgensen 2007). One argument against a continued focus on Nordic cooperation is that several of the functions previously assigned to Nordic cooperation have been or are being replaced by European cooperation. With respect to education, this is visible, amongst other things, through an increasing ease of European mobility and transfer of credits. One argument for continued Nordic cooperation is that Norway and Iceland are not EU members, and through formal political cooperation on a Nordic level, the Nordic region at least potentially can strengthen its position in the EU. With respect to education, Norway and Iceland are participating fully in most of the EU educational programs and in the Bologna process. However, as non-EU members they have no say whatsoever in the formal EU decision making processes. Nordic cooperation in higher education might be a way for these two countries to gain some influence in EU's educational policy processes. Nonetheless, the question can be raised what the advantage of Nordic cooperation is for the three Nordic EU member states.

Formal, political cooperation on a Nordic level played an important role during the post WWII period, but perhaps Nordic cooperation is becoming just a symbol of which the original importance has lost its rationale and value? Cecilia Malmström, the current Swedish EU minister, said in a recent speech:

*"If we didn't already have a Nordic cooperation, we would need to create one, but it would probably have a different shape and angle than the cooperation we have today."*

She continued by saying that she believes Nordic cooperation is important as a complementary level to the regional, national and European. But to continue to play this complementary role, Nordic cooperation has to become more visible and better defined (Malmström 2007).

The following sections compare the policy content of European, Nordic and national education policy developments, searching for converging as well as diverging tendencies.

## 7.1 Policy problems

The policy problems addressed in the Bologna process' and Lisbon strategy's documents seem to be characterized by a greater sense of urgency, than that of Nordic cooperation in higher education. The Lisbon strategy is perhaps most 'impatient' in its call for reform. The Lisbon policy documents depict a world where Europe is lagging seriously behind its competitors in the global economy, and if Europe does not reform, this will seriously affect Europe's economy, and the quality of life of its citizens. The policy documents of the Bologna process describe a fragmented European higher education and the weaknesses caused by this. The policy problem of NCM documents seem to be converging with the Lisbon agenda in that they refer to the increasing need for a highly skilled work force, and the challenges and opportunities of an internationally competitive higher education market, combined with an increasingly mobile student body. However, the impression is rather that the objective of increasing Nordic competitiveness in higher education is based on a wish to further develop a product that is already considered an asset, rather than to solve a 'problem'.

This might be a consequence of the fact that the Nordic region is a homogeneous region compared to Europe as a whole. Cooperation comes more easily, and less urgency is needed to promote this. A synchronization of degrees and grading systems, as promoted through the Bologna process and the Lisbon agenda, is a controversial issue, and has not been on the agenda with respect to Nordic cooperation. Reforms that affect issues like degree structure and funding, as in the European reform agenda, require more pressure than academic mobility based on trust, which has been a dominant focus in Nordic cooperation. The lack of an urgent

agenda might, however, cause Nordic cooperation to become less visible, perhaps lose priority, when other issues are urged to the forefront of the policy agenda.

The Nordic languages as minority languages in an international setting are also a policy problem for the NCM, and the focus on strengthening the teaching of Nordic languages internationally is a central policy issue. In this there is a potential divergence with European tendencies. European policy documents stress European language and culture as a European asset, but this does not come across as one of the central issues in the integration efforts.

The policy problems in the national policies of the Nordic countries relate to the challenges and opportunities created by the increased international mobility in higher education, and the need for the Nordic countries to face the new situation proactively. Increased international mobility can create both a potential, and desired brain gain, and an increased brain drain for the Nordic countries. The issue of brain drain seems to be a growing concern, though not characterized by a great sense of urgency yet. With respect to these issues, there is a convergence with NCM policies. The challenges posed by the Nordic languages being minority languages, are an issue on the agenda in the Nordic countries. Most often the conclusion seems to be to increase the number of English language courses and programs, rather than strengthen the teaching of the Nordic languages. In this there is a divergence with the policy of the NCM, though with the inclusion of the Baltic countries, and the introduction of the NMPs, the use of English in NCM initiatives is also increasing.

## 7.2 Policy objectives

A central policy objective for the NCM is that the Nordic region should be a pioneering region in the development of human resources. To be a pioneer means to “lead way for”, or “being the earliest, original, first of a particular kind” (Webster 1998). Is the NCM aiming at “leading the way” in regional cooperation in higher education? It seems reasonable to claim that this has been the case, historically, with

the Sigtuna agreement laying the foundation for a Nordic area of higher education as early as 1975. With respect to issues like simplified admission procedures, the Nordic region has been ahead of European integration efforts. But is this still the case? Are the policy instruments suggested for the future characterized by innovativeness and originality? And if they are, is this in itself a motivation for the higher education institutions to engage in Nordic cooperation, or are there other objectives that are more important at an institutional level?

The NCM also aims at increased quality and efficiency in higher education, strengthened Nordic identity and the promotion of Nordic languages and culture. Compared to this, the E&T 2010 program aims for a higher education system characterized by quality and excellence, efficient management and governance, and sufficient funding. The objective of the Bologna documents is a European Higher Education Area characterized by transparency of systems, ease of mobility, equity in participation, employability of graduates and attractiveness to the rest of the world. The key objective for focusing on internationalization in the Nordic countries also seems to be enhanced quality, combined with increased competitiveness. Thus at all three levels, European, Nordic and national, international cooperation and integration are seen as tools for quality enhancement.

### **7.2.1 Internationalisation as a quality enhancer**

For the NCM, the link between Nordic cooperation and enhanced quality has traditionally been the assumption that student and staff mobility leads to added learning for those involved, and that through Nordic networks it is possible to pull resources in small fields and strengthen fields of particular Nordic interest. As the international focus on quality assurance in higher education is increasing, researchers and stakeholders have started to question these assumptions and point to the fact that little research actually exists on the link between internationalization and enhanced quality (Westerheijden et al. 2007).

Enhanced quality is an important element in the E&T 2010 documents where high quality higher education is considered an important instrument to achieve economic growth and global competitiveness. The link between European cooperation and quality is mainly placed in the establishment of a European level quality assurance system. Also a cross-border division of work to promote greater institutional diversity, and international recruitment to enhance human capital in the institutions, is believed to enhance higher education quality.

An important element of the OMC, and emphasized in the new Nordplus program, is the exchange of good practice and cooperation as a quality enhancing element. An important aspect of this work in the OMC has been benchmarking. This has until now not been a central element in Nordic cooperation. If it will become an important element, remains to be seen. However, the aspect of facilitating the exchange of good practice and policy learning is another area where there is convergence between European and Nordic developments.

The focus on quality is one of the perhaps most interesting aspects of the Bologna process. With the recent decision to set up a European register for quality assurance agencies, the signatory countries are beginning to place their systems of higher education under the auspices of European quality assurance. This is an interesting move away from the previous protectionist attitude of national education. An analysis of the process leading up to this decision is outside the scope of this thesis, but with the increased focus on international comparisons, such as the ones undertaken by the OECD, and the increase in number of international rankings and the attention attributed to these rankings, perhaps ministers are becoming accustomed to international evaluations of educational quality. Therefore the step towards a register of quality assurance agencies does not seem so threatening as it might have done two decades ago<sup>2</sup>.

---

<sup>2</sup> The majority of higher education rankings are conducted outside of Europe. The French minister of education has therefore suggested that Europe set up its own ranking list, with indicators that better fit the European systems, and thus might place European universities higher on the list

Another Nordic initiative with respect to quality assurance is the Nordic Quality Assurance Network in Higher Education (NOQA). NOQA is a network that includes all the Nordic quality assurance agencies and was formally established in 2003. The network is intended to be a forum for information dissemination and the exchange of experiences between the Nordic agencies, as well as a forum for pursuing projects of mutual interest. The main objective is to create a joint understanding of different Nordic viewpoints on issues related to higher education quality assurance (www.noqa.net). NOQA has published a report in which it looks at the European standards and guidelines for quality assurance in higher education, and the plans for the European register of quality assurance agencies in a Nordic perspective (Vinther-Jørgensen and Hansen, 2006). The report points to a number of “dilemmas and uncertainties” with respect to the new European framework for quality assurance. This relates to issues like the lack of clear definitions of important terms and concepts, as well as to the importance of taking the national context of the quality assurance agencies into consideration when evaluating them and their performance. Most interestingly, however, the report points to the potential tension between the new register and national authorities. The group assigned by the Bergen ministerial meeting to develop the plans for the register, the so-called E4 group<sup>3</sup>, also points to this potential tension:

*“The role of national authorities in the work of the Register is an important and sensitive issue. [] some BFUG representatives have expressed the view that, [] national authorities should have full membership and voting rights on the Register Committee. On the other hand, the view has also been expressed in the BFUG and is held by the E4 Group that the integrity and independence of the Register would be fatally compromised if representatives of national authorities could vote or exercise a veto in respect of their own national agencies.” (ENQA 2007, p9)*

This quote relates to what the conditions for inclusion on the list should be, and how the process of selections should be organized. Thus the E4 group is promoting a supra-national body responsible for the quality assurance of quality assurance agencies. The issue of criteria and procedures for inclusion/exclusion of membership

---

<sup>3</sup> The E4 group consists of representatives from ENQA, EUA, EURASHE and ESU



---

in the register is also the concern of the NOQA report, which states that the conditions for compliance are too vaguely described. This might lead to different interpretations of the criteria, and confusion concerning whether an agency is or is not fulfilling them. Nor is the relationship between the register, and national legislation clear. The NOQA report asks what will happen to an agency that does not comply with certain standards and guidelines because national legislation prevents it. Will this require reform of national legislation to allow inclusion of some agencies, or will national contexts be considered a cause of exemption from certain standards?

*“Thus, the standards and guidelines for quality assurance agencies do not only imply a challenge to agencies, but might also challenge institutions, governments and other stakeholders as well.” (Vinther-Jørgensen and Hansen 2006, p.15)*

The ENQA report (2007) explicitly states that agencies should comply with all standards if they are to be included in the register. The NOQA report concludes that even though the Nordic agencies in general have a very high level of compliance with “the intentions behind the standards, specific operations and circumstances of minor importance can make compliance with certain standards questionable.” The report states that this is due, in certain instances, to national legislation, e.g. legislation concerning the role of an agency in the follow-up on external quality assurance processes (Vinther-Jørgensen and Hansen 2006, p.17). What will be the potential consequence of this for the Nordic countries?

All the Nordic countries focus on enhanced quality as a main reason for their policy on the internationalization of higher education. However, it does not always seem clear how internationalization is intended to increase quality. The link between internationalization and increased quality in higher education has, as mentioned above, so far not been subject to much research. Few, if any of the Nordic policy documents refer to how this increased quality is to be evaluated, and how it is manifested. The two most common connections in Nordic policy are that increased competition will lead to increased quality, and that international experiences will lead to increased learning for the student, either by the student being mobile or by the student being exposed to international students and/or teachers with international

experience. In the initiatives of the Danish globalization council, there is a clear link between the policy instrument of increased international and national competition and the objective of enhanced quality. This is also the case for Finland, where there is a certain concern for brain drain and the need for institutions to attract high quality students and staff to maintain a high level of education. Sweden focuses in its higher education policies more on 'internationalization at home' and the enhanced quality an international campus can add to the teaching and learning. In Norway there has also been a political emphasis on 'internationalization at home' and on a diversification of the sector through the institutions being encouraged to focus on their areas of international strength. The evaluation of the recent reform does however show that in the sector, on the institutional level, the focus is on mobility as a quality enhancer. As such, there seems to be convergence between the national focus on enhanced quality through international cooperation, and NCM initiatives. However, NCM initiatives do not seem like more obvious tools for the Nordic countries than other European initiatives.

### **7.2.2 Language and culture as a policy objective**

Whilst the promotion and sustainability of Nordic languages and culture have been and will continue to be an important policy objective for the NCM, it plays a less prominent role in the Bologna process and the E&T 2010. It is hardly mentioned in the E&T 2010 except through the opportunity to take language courses in the Lifelong Learning program. The Bologna documents refer to European culture and diversity in languages as a European asset, but they are not targeted in any particular way. Reichert and Tauch (2005) claim that the Bologna process has focused on, and made significant progress in issues like structural convergence, greater transparency, and portability of national grants as a means to promote mobility, seemingly neglecting that language barriers still have a negative effect on a student's choice of being mobile.

However, the issue of the Nordic language community and unity is not an uncontested issue. The ‘linguistic core’ of the Nordic countries is formed by Denmark, Norway and Sweden. The close relationship between the languages of these three Scandinavian countries is regarded as a natural bridge for cooperation in higher education. A challenge to this seemingly harmonic unity is the fact that the Finnish language is excluded, as well as Icelandic. It is a policy objective for the NCM to find solutions to this challenge.

The issue of the Nordic language community was included in the NIFU case study. The study indicated that the Scandinavian speaking interviewees appreciated the ease of communication and access to information and documents in their neighboring countries and did not seem overly concerned about the challenge their Finnish and Icelandic colleagues might face in this respect. The Finnish and Icelandic interviewees, however, indicated that this lack of understanding of the problems the use of the three ‘core languages’ give in Nordic communication and cooperation, might be regarded in certain respects as a potential barrier for Nordic cooperation in higher education.

The mobility pattern of Nordic students might be used as a proof of the point made by Reichert and Tauch, as well as the concern of the Finnish and Icelandic interviewees. The tables in Appendix 3 show that Sweden is the second most popular study destination for Finnish students, with 1009 Finnish students being enrolled in Sweden in 2005/06. However, only 232 Swedish students went to Finland the same academic year, and that was a significantly higher number than for Danish and Norwegian students going to Finland (14 and 21 respectively). With respect to mobility in the Nordplus program in 2004/ 05, Finland sent most students and received the least. 218 Nordplus students came to Finland, and 696 Finnish students travelled as Nordplus students. Compared to this, Denmark, Norway and Sweden received 503, 396 and 778 respectively (Appendix 3). The Nordic mobility to Finland is thus considerably lower than other Nordic mobility. This mobility pattern can obviously be explained by a number of factors; e.g. a relative tendency for students to

travel south and the historical relationship between Finland and Sweden. But, it can also be argued that the numbers show that a language barrier affects the mobility patterns for the Nordic students within the Nordic region, causing less Nordic students to go to Finland, where they in general do not speak and understand the language.

With the move towards the inclusion of the Baltic countries in the Nordplus program, the challenge Finnish and Icelandic academics and students face in Nordic cooperation might be partially overcome, as more of the cooperation will be conducted in English. However, it poses a new challenge to Nordic languages as an important policy objective, and the new Nordplus language program, will have to face this in an innovative manner. In what way the move towards English as the main language of communication will affect Scandinavian cooperation remains to be seen.

### **7.2.3 Aid as a policy objective and “the external dimension” of Nordic cooperation**

An element in the national internationalization policies in the Nordic countries is the ‘aid’ element, i.e. ‘North-South’ cooperation in higher education as part of developing aid programs and policies. The Nordic countries were among the first countries worldwide that included the international aid dimension in a prominent way in their national higher education policies (Maassen and Uppstrøm 2005). This dimension still plays an important role in international cooperation policies of the individual countries, in particular Sweden and Norway, where this is visible, amongst other things, through the high mobility to these two countries from Africa (Appendix 3), with a growing interest on a policy level from Finland. This issue has not been on the NCM policy agenda as a possible joint Nordic initiative. It is however mentioned here as it relates to the so-called ‘external dimension’ of regional cooperation.

One prominent feature in the new plans for the NCM, the new Nordic master programs, includes a focus on attracting students from outside the Nordic region. Thus the NCM is moving away from a focus mainly on internal Nordic mobility, to

include an ‘external dimension’. The NCM focus is, however, on a possible brain gain, and the potential ethical dilemmas of causing brain drain in developing countries does not seem to be an issue (yet).

The issue of aid is not particularly prominent in European developments, but the danger of contributing to brain drain is addressed. Partially the aim of the Bologna process and Lisbon agenda is to achieve a brain gain for Europe, but not at the actual expense of developing countries. The Bologna strategy: Strategy for the European Higher Education Area in a Global Setting, previously referred to as a strategy for the ‘external dimension’, addresses this issue and the need to balance competition with cooperation and partnership. The strategy emphasizes that cooperation with institutions in the developing world, with the aim of building capacity, should be a priority for the EHEA countries. The strategy also draws a link to the UN’s Millennium Development Goals. The reason why this challenge is not explicit in NCM’s policies might be that it has been addressed on a European level. However, with the Nordic countries’ history of experience in higher education cooperation as ‘aid’, and the increasing ‘external’ interest of the NCM, this might be an area where the Nordic region could show its potential for being pioneering.

### 7.3 Policy instruments

With respect to policy instruments, it is possible to identify two levels of policy instruments both in European and Nordic initiatives. On the one hand, we have the policy instruments that are designed to influence national authorities, institutions and other stakeholders to work for the stated policy objectives. On the other hand, we have the concrete policy instruments designed to reach these objectives when implemented. The first level of policy instruments will include the OMC with respect to the Lisbon agenda and the biennial ministerial meetings and national reports with respect to Bologna. For the NCM, this will include meetings of ministers as well as other forums of policy dialogue.

The second level of policy instruments refers in the case of the NCM mainly to the Nordplus program and the new Nordic master programs. Compared to European policy instruments, the E&T 2010 focuses mainly on economic incentives in the shape of mobility programs like the Lifelong Learning program, as well as the suggested reforms at a national level. With respect to the Bologna process, there are a number of instruments designed to obtain transparency of national systems, the ECTS system, diploma supplement, the Qualification framework for the EHEA, etc., there are also the Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the EHEA and the European register for quality assurance agencies.

Mobility programs and economic incentives for mobility seem to be the most prominent policy instruments at the national level in the Nordic countries. Denmark is also introducing a number of new initiatives, as a consequence of the work of the Globalization council, that focus on institutional strategies as important instruments of internationalization, and of the establishment of offices that will promote Danish higher education internationally. It is too early to say anything about the effects of these latter efforts.

### **7.3.1 Mobility**

Mobility has figured high as a policy instrument on the internationalization agenda in Europe. The European mobility program in higher education, Erasmus, seems to have paved the way for several of the political changes we can now observe (van der Wende and Huisman, 2004). With respect to inter-regional mobility, the Nordic region has, as already mentioned, been a pioneering region. With the Reykjavik declaration replacing the Sigtuna agreement in 2004, there are in general no serious political or economic circumstances that affect the Nordic mobility of students negatively. The Nordic higher education area seems to already be a reality. The traditional differences between the Nordic countries in the degree program structures have previously lead to some practical inconveniences in areas such as the recognition of (especially professional) degrees, recognition of credits, etc. However,

these traditional differences should mostly disappear as Sweden follows the other Nordic countries in implementing a three cycle degree structure with a two year master.

The interest of students throughout the world to enroll as a degree student in a foreign institution is growing. One consequence of this is that the number of international students seeking higher education in the Nordic countries also is growing. The Nordic countries all have a policy of increasing mobility, though in general the aim is to decrease the number of outgoing degree students and replace this with participation in mobility programs, and increase the number of incoming degree students. Numbers for 2004/05 indicate that Norway currently is the only Nordic country that imports education, meaning that outgoing mobility exceeds incoming mobility. Though the numbers of international and mobile students for Finland are lower than that of Norway, both in actual numbers and in percentage of total student population, Finland had more incoming than outgoing students in 2004/ 05. Norway has the largest percentage of outgoing students (5,9 %, 13157), whilst Denmark has the largest percentage of incoming students (8,3%, 17160). Sweden had the largest student mobility as counted in actual numbers; 36458 (8,0%) incoming and 25478 (5,6%) outgoing (Appendix 3).

Nordplus as the core of the formal Nordic cooperation activities is a successful program. The NIFU study showed that the program is much appreciated by students, staff and institutional administrators. It serves a double purpose in the sense that it stimulates cooperation in Nordic higher education through academic networks and student mobility, and it provides students and staff with the means to spend time in an academic environment abroad (for more information on institutional experiences with Nordplus, see Appendix 4). The NIFU study indicated that participating students not necessarily participate in Nordplus due to an interest in the specific Nordic dimensions of higher education, but it seems fair to assume that (academic) time spent in another Nordic country contributes to Nordic awareness even so. In this respect Nordplus is comparable to the Erasmus program. Evaluations of the Erasmus

program have shown that most students are moderately satisfied with the academic dimension in their stay abroad, and feel that spending some time in an academic environment in another EU country has contributed to their understanding and appreciation of the European dimension in higher education and in the society they are coming from (Teichler et al. 2001).

When considering mobility numbers, the Nordic countries seem to come second to Anglo Saxon countries with respect to Nordic students' choice of destination. Great Britain is the most popular study destiny for students in all the four Nordic countries in this study. USA and Canada is the third most popular study destiny for Danish students, and comes second with respect to Swedish students. Australia and New Zealand figure high for Norwegian students, only beaten by a category called "other Europe", that can be explained by the large number of Norwegian students studying medicine in Eastern Europe (SIU 2007). This might be another indication that language plays a role when students choose study destinies, as English is the first foreign language for most Nordic students.

### **7.3.2 New internationaliation and economic incentives as a policy instrument**

The description of 'new internationalization' includes a move towards an economic rationale, a new normative basis, for investing in internationalization. An economic rationale is obvious in the Lisbon strategy, and to some extent in the Bologna process, with the focus on international competitiveness being economically based. The NCM has with its new initiatives also introduced a focus on the competitiveness of the Nordic region as a region of higher education. At a national level the Nordic countries show an increasing, though perhaps reluctant interest in internationalization as a means for economic gain. This is visible through the Danish ambitions of making their universities attractive for foreign, i.e. non-EU/ EEA students and expecting of the universities that they charge tuition fees to non-EU/ EEA students. Norway has made it clear in the WTO/GATS negotiations that it is in favor of minimal national barriers to trade in higher education, amongst other things, as a way to stimulate more



---

internal competition between institutions in the Norwegian system. Norway is alone amongst the Nordic countries in taking this position. Finland has also carefully started addressing the importance of the economic dimensions of internationalization of higher education, while Sweden can be argued to be more 'neutral'. Sweden is aware of the importance of the economic dimension of internationalization, but the Swedish authorities will not try to influence the institutions directly in this (Maassen et al. 2005).

While the economic aims of internationalization have become more explicit and more important in the Nordic countries, even in Denmark the economic dimension in the internationalization policies with respect to higher education is rather marginal when compared to the situation in countries such as Australia, the USA, and the United Kingdom. In these countries higher education is seen as an important part of the economy with a clear export function. Also in other European countries, such as the Netherlands and Belgium, the universities and colleges have been stimulated to "export" their teaching programs (Maassen and Uppstrøm 2005).

With a change in the normative basis follows a change in policy instruments. In the Nordic countries we can see an introduction of economic incentives to stimulate the engagement in internationalization.

In discussing the economic dimension of the internationalization of higher education, a distinction can be made between direct and indirect economic benefits of 'exporting' higher education. The direct economic benefits for the higher education institutions are related to income they get through their students. In many countries, e.g. Australia and the US, the students provide the institutions with an income through tuition fees and other means introduced to let the students themselves cover a part of the costs of their higher education. Indirectly in practically all countries student numbers and increasingly graduation rates, play a role in the level of public funding individual public higher education institutions receive from the state (Maassen and Uppstrøm 2005). In the EU, students from other EU countries have to be treated the same way in funding models as national students. In the Nordic

countries the regular higher education students are not expected to contribute to the costs of their education in the form of tuition fees or other measures.

The potential growth of an economization of internationalization was included in the NIFU case study. The majority of the interviewees at an institutional level emphasized the academic dimension of internationalization, and to a lesser extent the cultural and social dimension. With the exception of one Danish institution, the case-institutions were very reluctant to 'economize' their internationalization activities, in the sense of seeing internationalization as a source of income. An economic rationale was however not completely absent. With the current funding models in the Nordic countries, most institutions are dependent on an equal number of incoming and outgoing students, or a surplus of incoming students, to not lose funding that is tied to degrees and study points. Thus respondents expressed that they experienced an economic pressure to increase incoming mobility. The case study also showed that the mobility programs, with an economic incentive to engage in mobility, have played a vital role in increasing and institutionalizing mobility in the institutions. Most, if not all international offices were established as a consequence of participation in the Erasmus and Nordplus programs.

A specific indirect economic element in internationalization policies is the growing awareness that higher education can be used to attract young people from outside the Nordic countries, especially to engineering and science programs. The expectation is that some of them will stay after finishing their studies, and as such contribute to the welfare in the Nordic countries where the enrolment in these programs of Nordic students is regarded to be too low.

Some of the Nordic countries have used the student financial system as a policy instrument for internationalization. As referred to above, the outgoing mobility for Swedish and Norwegian students is far higher than that of Finland and Denmark. This could be linked to the fact that Swedish and Norwegian students have been able to take their student loans with them as degree students abroad. Denmark and Finland

have recently changed their policy on this, allowing their students to take their loans with them abroad as well.

Denmark and Norway have introduced an economic incentive in the funding model for the institutions to engage in mobility. Because the premium is only given to organized, formal forms of student exchange, and not for ‘free-movers’, this is a direct stimulus for the institutions to maximize the number of students that is using formal exchange programs and student mobility programs such as the Lifelong Learning program/ Erasmus and Nordplus. It is too early to say anything definite about the effects of this stimulus. Given that these premiums are rather small it can be doubted whether there will be any far-reaching changes in the internationalization practices as a consequence of this.

The most contested topic in the Nordic countries is tuition fees. This has been on the political agenda in all four countries as a consequence of international developments. So far the conclusions have not been uniform. Denmark has made a move and introduced tuition fees for non EU/ EEA students. Finland has researched the topic and though there might be political will, the student movement is strong and fiercely against. Sweden has also researched the topic, but is so far not considering an introduction of fees, whilst Norway had a discussion up for debate, but it was soon put down and not researched further.

## 7.4 Policy linkage

This thesis has not explored the policy linkage of the different policy initiatives historically<sup>4</sup>. However, there is an obvious policy linkage between the different processes, between the Bologna process, the Lisbon agenda and NCM initiatives. Advancement in one process seems to benefit, and is taken into account as indicators

---

<sup>4</sup> For an historical overview of the policy debates in the EU leading up to the Bologna process and the EandT 2010, see amongst others Corbett 2005.

of success, in the other processes. Secondly, the international activity in higher education also seems to play a role with respect to other areas of foreign policy. Internationalization as aid has already been mentioned. There is also an increasing focus in the Bologna process and E&T 2010 on the effects visa procedures and work permit regulations have on both student and staff mobility. Policies on the internationalization of higher education also seem to play a role in the general geographic positioning of a country, as elaborated below.

#### **7.4.1 Geographical orientation and policy linkage with foreign affairs**

None of the Nordic countries have an explicit focus on Nordic cooperation in their national policy. Some do mention a focus on the neighboring areas, the Baltic countries and Russia, particularly Finland, Sweden and Norway that border with this area. The only explicit references to Nordic cooperation are found in the reports to the Lisbon strategy and the Bologna process, where participation in NCM related activities is mentioned. This seems to be mentioned more as a proof of a high international activity, rather than as part of a strategic policy.

The impression from the NIFU study was that Norway is the country that appears to value Nordic cooperation the most. One of the main reasons for this is that Nordic cooperation in higher education is seen as an instrument for strengthening the Nordic position in the EU. As Norway is not a member of the EU, Nordic cooperation is considered one way of being able to influence EU developments, or being heard in EU arenas.

The former Finnish prime minister Paavo Lipponen has, in an interview (Aftenposten 2004) indicated that the relative influence of the Nordic countries in the newly enlarged EU will diminish if the institutions of the Nordic countries, e.g. the NCM are not adapted. In the interview he indicates that he wants to strengthen the cooperation between the Nordic countries and the other countries in the Baltic Sea region, in the first place the Baltic countries, but also Russia, Poland and Germany.

With the new Nordplus program, Nordic-Baltic cooperation is indeed strengthened with the inclusion of the Baltic countries as equal partners with the Nordic countries. And there does indeed seem to be a foreign policy agenda behind the inclusion of the Baltic countries in Nordplus, in addition to objectives related directly to higher education.

The inclusion of the Baltic countries has not been an uncontested topic within the NCM. The Nordic Council committee for culture and education has voiced its concern. Though the committee agrees in principle that cooperation with the Baltic states should move from aid to equal partnerships, and though the members welcome the increased interest for Nordic language and culture in the Baltic countries, resulting from increased mobility, the committee is concerned that this inclusion will weaken the program as a tool for a strictly Nordic political agenda. The committee also regrets that more of the cooperation in the future will be conducted in English (Nordic Council 2006).

The inclusion of the Baltic countries affects the rationale for Nordic cooperation. Of the six practical arguments for Nordic cooperation as identified in the NIFU study, only one, the relative small size of the countries, seems to motivate an inclusion of the Baltic countries. It will be interesting to follow the development of the Nordplus networks as the new Nordplus program is implemented.

#### **7.4.2 Nordic cooperation and the Bologna process**

The Bologna Process offers opportunities and threats to the Nordic cooperation in higher education. While the Bologna Process removes barriers in its intention to create a European Higher Education Area, some of the basic foundations for Nordic cooperation, the ease of mobility, are now extended to the whole European region. This can make Nordic cooperation less relevant on one side, but also opens up for strengthening Nordic cooperation. As mentioned above, it seems that a common Nordic Higher Education Area already exists. As such the aims of the Bologna Process, creating an open European higher education area, have been realized on a

Nordic level. However, while the Bologna process is aimed at taking away structural barriers for European cooperation in higher education, Nordic cooperation has been far less based on a structural homogenization process, e.g. a harmonization of the grade structures. “In that respect Nordic cooperation in higher education is streamlined even more by the Bologna Process” (Maassen et al. 2007, p.158).

Could the Bologna process also pose a threat? When hindrances for student and staff mobility, and structural institutional cooperation, are taken away all across Europe, why would Nordic students, staff and institutions, focus their internationalization activities in the first place on the Nordic countries? It is too early to draw any empirical conclusions in this respect, but if the Bologna process does pose a threat of potential redundancy for Nordic cooperation, the aim of the NCM to be a pioneer will become even more important, to maintain a role on behalf of higher education cooperation in the region, and to provide an added value for the Nordic higher education institutions.

### **7.4.3 Nordic cooperation, the Lisbon strategy, and the OMC**

An evaluation of the progress made by the participating countries in the E&T 2010 program shows that the Nordic region is doing very well. The 2006 joint report from the Education Council emphasizes the Nordic countries several times as examples of good practice. Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden are, for example, emphasized as countries with a good progress towards a national strategy on lifelong learning and a high public expenditure on education as percentage of GDP (Education Council 2006).

A central element of the OMC template is the analysis of best practices and peer policy learning. In the area of higher education, there is a set of common Nordic experiences and perspectives that could offer important information to share with a wider European audience. The Nordic countries have policies with comparable core values and approaches to higher education, and experiences within the area of increasing mobility through removing administrative and legal obstacles. Thus here is

an opportunity for the Nordic region to play an important role in the Lisbon agenda, by identifying how Nordic cooperation in higher education has contributed to competitiveness and social cohesion, and disseminate this in a way that is relevant at the European level.

One attempt to contribute to this is made in the NCM report “The Nordic region as a global winner region” (*Norden som global vinderregion*, NCM 2005b). Though not claiming to be scientific in its approach, the NCM makes an attempt in this report to identify aspects of the Nordic region that would explain why the Nordic countries do so well in various economic rankings (e.g. World Competitiveness Index 2004, Networked Readiness Index, 2005), in spite of characteristics that might appear to be unfavorable in this aspect, like a comparably high level of taxation, large public sectors and a comprehensive welfare systems (Maassen et al 2007). Their explanation is related to the Nordic culture, shared Nordic values, and social conditions. The shared Nordic values are listed as equality, trust, proximity to power, inclusion, flexibility, respect for nature, the protestant work ethic and aesthetics. The Nordic conditions are listed as the Nordic social system, the shared Nordic language community, a shared level of self-realization with respect to life style, and the fact that the Nordic countries use each other as a frame of reference. The suggested links between economic strengths and Nordic values are (NCM 2005b, p. 92):

- Welfare products (linked to equality)
- Innovation (linked to trust)
- Management based on procedural strengths (linked to proximity to power)
- Broad, strong skills base (linked to inclusion)
- Adaptability (linked to flexibility)
- Sustainability and a holistic approach (linked to respect for nature)

- Industry, personal responsibility and efficiency (linked to the protestant work ethic)
- Design and functionality (linked to aesthetics)

With respect to education, Nordic strengths are emphasized as an interdisciplinary approach, cooperation, innovation, entrepreneurship and value creation. As a future strategy, however, the NCM seem to be less original when the aim is set to exploit the best talents and increase investment in high-level research. In the report however, the NCM also underlines the need for more research on the factors that make the Nordic regions successful, and with respect to education more research on the nature of competence and how to disseminate it.

## 7.5 Normative basis

When studying processes of regional cooperation in Europe and the Nordic region, we find support for the theories and observations behind the idea of new and old internationalization. The European processes show a shift towards more institutionalized forms of cooperation and a more instrumental approach to cooperation, where cooperation is not the main objective in itself, the objectives are the social and economic advantages that come as a consequence. European policy documents still stress the value of European cultural and linguistic diversity, and the importance of conducting cooperation and reform in higher education according to academic values. The main focus and underlying motivation is however on strengthened economic competitiveness and improved European social cohesion.

Nordic cooperation in higher education has traditionally been driven by a range of non-economic arguments. However, as discussed above, the NCM seems to be changing its agenda and rationale for cooperation. The traditional academic and cultural motives seem to be supplemented by a focus on competition and cooperation in higher education as an instrument in foreign policy.



## 8. Conclusions

Nordic cooperation in higher education is a specific form of internationalization that can be defined as regionalization. It can be considered successful and is appreciated by most actors involved (Maassen and Uppstrøm 2005). The supra-national stimulation and coordination of Nordic cooperation in higher education through the NCM has most likely led to a higher level of Nordic cooperation than would otherwise have been the case. Even so, direct reference to Nordic cooperation is virtually absent in national higher education policy documents. The world of higher education is changing, and to understand the dynamics of Nordic cooperation, it is important to consider both the wider context it operates within, and the local circumstances that translate the Nordic agenda into domestic needs.

There is an obvious institutionalization of European developments at a national level in the Nordic countries. In line with neo-institutional theory, it is possible to observe new rules of action, principles and objectives being promoted at a European level and becoming obvious, natural and legitimized in national policy in the Nordic countries. National reform initiatives and policy dialogue reflect the establishment of a common vocabulary in line with the Bologna process and E&T 2010 discourse, a common perception of reality seems to have been established between European and national level policy problems, and there seems to be little disagreement that the objectives set for the Bologna process and the E&T 2010 are largely considered 'criteria for success' also at a national level.

When studying the transmission of European reform initiatives to the national level however, one can make a distinction between 'diffusion' and 'translation' of objectives and instruments (Gornitzka 2006). The term diffusion refers to when the essential characteristics of a policy remain unchanged when implemented at the national level. The term translation refers to when the policy is influenced by the transfer from one context to the other, e.g. policy instruments initially designed to reach one objective at the European level, might be implemented to reach another

objective at the national level. The Nordic countries show differences in their implementation of European reforms initiatives. Differences are amongst other things visible in the pace of reform, with Sweden lagging behind the others, as well as in the normative basis for reform initiatives, with Denmark most explicitly introducing an economic rationale. It seems reasonable to assume that though diffusion might take place with respect to some reform initiatives, there is also a translation taking place, with European developments being utilized to solve national policy problems. It is also reasonable to assume that this is the case with respect to national investment in Nordic cooperation.

There might be several potential reasons why Nordic cooperation does not play a more important role higher in national policy documents. It can be argued that the more a national internationalization policy with respect to higher education differs in its underlying policy theory from the focus of the Nordic cooperation agreement, the more the Nordic cooperation dimension in higher education will be seen as a separate phenomenon in the country in question. In other words, the more the objectives, instruments and normative basis of Nordic cooperation differ from those of internationalization in general, the more the Nordic cooperation in higher education will be regarded in the country in question as a separate policy issue, i.e. an issue that is not necessarily part of the national internationalization policy with respect to higher education. Perhaps Nordic cooperation indeed is considered a separate policy issue for the Nordic countries. The interviews conducted for the NIFU study at a national level indicated that Nordic cooperation is considered important, though several respondents, especially in Denmark, stated that even though Nordic cooperation is important, it should not be conducted at the expense of European cooperation in general.

Another reason might be that Nordic cooperation is considered a well established form of cooperation without an urgent policy problem attached to it, and thus it is in less need of attention. A third reason could be that issues considered of importance for the Nordic countries in a Nordic context are also addressed at a European level,

and does not need to be repeated on the policy agenda with respect to Nordic cooperation in particular.

There might be indications of a de-institutionalization process with respect to Nordic cooperation. The purpose of Nordic cooperation has to some extent been questioned, and there has been a divergence in the normative basis of Nordic cooperation and the development of internationalization, in general and on a European level. A de-institutionalization has not been the dominant development, however. Resources reserved for Nordic cooperation in higher education has not been challenged, and, just as with regards to European processes, Nordic cooperation in higher education is currently a process “in the making and under construction”. The chapters above show that the NCM is changing its agenda and rationale for cooperation, and it seems that the changes are converging on several issues with European integration efforts. As it also seems to be a process of convergence between European developments and national policy, the normative match between national internationalization processes and Nordic cooperation might increase with the launch of the new strategy for higher education cooperation next year, and the implementation of the new Nordplus program. This might influence the status of Nordic cooperation on the national policy agendas.

One obvious change in the new NCM program aimed at higher education is a move from a dominantly internal Nordic focus, to an increasing external focus. The Nordic Master programs aim amongst other things at attracting students from outside the region to the Nordic countries, and at being a show case for high quality Nordic education. This development is in line with the development of the Bologna process, where the ‘external dimension’ has received increasing attention since the Bergen ministerial meeting in 2005. This development is also in line with general developments in the internationalization of higher education. At the launch of the new Nordplus program, the Nordplus program was described as a proactive way of facing the increasingly global flow of highly skilled people and the general challenges and opportunities of globalization ([norden.org](http://norden.org)). The policy instruments

that the NCM choose to utilize are clearly influenced by the policy instruments of the EU. The Nordic master programs are inspired by the Erasmus Mundus program. The idea of a Nordic university, though still only at a think tank stage, is inspired by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology. A Nordic variant of European policy instruments in higher education is not new. The Nordplus program was launched in 1988, just after the Erasmus program which was launched in 1987. Both with respect to the mobility programs and the joint degree programs, the Nordic version differs slightly in shape and size to the European, but the overall objectives are similar.

The International University Association (IUA) has recently conducted a study on the future, geographical priorities and areas of growth for internationalization in higher education (Knight 2007). One of the findings of this study was that the number one geographical priority in choice of partner for cooperation, for countries and higher education institutions, in four of the six world regions (Africa, Asia Pacific, Europe and Latin America) was neighboring countries and their institutions. This favors continued Nordic cooperation, almost in spite of NCM efforts, and emphasizes the importance and strengths of common culture, shared history, and geographic proximity. Commenting on this study, Knight (2007) concludes that

*“the growth in the importance of regionalization is one of the unexpected outcomes of globalization, and intraregional collaboration is a factor to be seriously considered when preparing long-term national and institutional plans”.*

Looking at it historically, cooperation in higher education at a Nordic level has been pioneering in some of its developments. Currently there does not seem to be a pioneering tendency in the new NCM initiatives. There are however potential areas where Nordic cooperation could break new ground. These may be found amongst other things in the need for more research in two areas: the role of international cooperation in quality enhancement of higher education, and the role of regional cooperation in strengthening the economy and social cohesion. Another area where there is need for pioneers, and where Nordic cooperation might play a role is with

---

respect to regional cooperation and the role of higher education in development/  
developing countries.

## References

- Asgrimsson, H. (2007), *Input to the Nordic Globalisation Process – Region of opportunity, a Nordic response to the challenges of globalisation*, Nordic Council of Ministers, Copenhagen
- BFUG (Bologna Follow Up Group) (2007), *European Higher Education in a Global Setting – A Strategy for the External Dimension of the Bologna Process*, [http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/documents/WGR2007/Strategy\\_for\\_EHEA%20in\\_global\\_setting.pdf](http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/documents/WGR2007/Strategy_for_EHEA%20in_global_setting.pdf)
- Barroso, J. M. (2005), *Communication to the spring European Council, Working together for growth and jobs. A new start for the Lisbon Strategy*, European Commission, Brussel, [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/lisbon\\_final\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/lisbon_final_en.pdf)
- Bleiklie, I., Marton, S., Hanney, S. (1995), *Policy arenas, network and higher education reforms. The cases of England, Sweden and Norway*, Notat 95/40 LOS-Senter, Bergen
- Cerych, L. and Sabatier, P. (Eds.) (1986), *Great expectations and mixed performance*, Trentham books, Stoke
- Corbett, A. (2005), *Universities and the Europe of knowledge. Ideas, institutions and policy entrepreneurship in European Union higher education policy, 1955-2005*, Palgrave Macmillian, New York
- Council of Europe/ UNESCO (1997), *The Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region*, [http://www.bologna-berlin2003.de/pdf/Lisbon\\_convention.pdf](http://www.bologna-berlin2003.de/pdf/Lisbon_convention.pdf)
- Danish Government (2006), *Progress, Innovation and Cohesion – Strategy for Denmark in the Global Economy*, [http://www.globalisering.dk/multimedia/Pixi\\_UK\\_web\\_endelig1.pdf](http://www.globalisering.dk/multimedia/Pixi_UK_web_endelig1.pdf)
- Danish Parliament (2003), *Act on Universities (the University Act)*, Act no. 403 of 28 May 2003
- Danish Rectors' Conference (2005), *Kort og Kontant - Håndtering af udenlandske betalingsstuderende og markedsføring af danske uddannelser i udlandet*, Rektorkollegiet, Danish Rectors' Conference
- Denmark's Ministry of Education (2005), *Danish contribution to the 2006 joint council/ commission report on the implementation of the work programme "Education and Training 2010"*
- Denmark's Ministry of Education (2007), *Bologna process, national report 2005-2007*

- 
- ENQA (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education) (2005), Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area, ENQA, Helsinki, [http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/00-Main\\_doc/050221\\_ENQA\\_report.pdf](http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/00-Main_doc/050221_ENQA_report.pdf)
- ENQA (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education) (2007), *Report to the London conference of ministers on a European Register of Quality Assurance Agencies*, ENQA Occasional Paper 13, [http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/documents/WGR2007/Report\\_on\\_European\\_Register\\_for\\_QAA.pdf](http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/documents/WGR2007/Report_on_European_Register_for_QAA.pdf)
- Edelman, L. B. (1992), Legal ambiguity and symbolic structure: Organizational mediation of civil rights law, *American Journal of Sociology* 97
- European Commission (2004), *Education and Training 2010 – The Success of the Lisbon Strategy Hinges on Urgent Reforms. Joint interim report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the detailed work programme on the follow-up of the objectives of education and training systems in Europe*, [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/jir\\_council\\_final.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/jir_council_final.pdf)
- European Commission (2005), *Mobilising the brainpower of Europe: enabling universities to make their full contribution to the Lisbon Strategy*, European Commission, Brussels, [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/comuniv2005\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/comuniv2005_en.pdf)
- European Commission (2006), *Delivering on the modernization agenda for universities: Education, research and innovation*, European Commission, Brussels, [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/comuniv2006\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/comuniv2006_en.pdf)
- European Commission (2007), *The Lisbon Strategy*, [http://europa.eu/scadplus/glossary/lisbon\\_strategy\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/scadplus/glossary/lisbon_strategy_en.htm)
- Education Council (2001), *Report from Education Council to the European Council on the concrete future objectives of education and training systems*, [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/rep\\_fut\\_obj\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/rep_fut_obj_en.pdf)
- Education Council (2003), *Council conclusions of 5 May 2003 on reference levels of European average performance in education and training (Benchmarks)*, [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2003/c\\_134/c\\_13420030607en00030004.pdf](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2003/c_134/c_13420030607en00030004.pdf)
- Education Council (2006), *Modernizing education and training: A vital contribution to prosperity and social cohesion in Europe. 2006 Joint interim report of the council and of the commission on progress under the “Education and Training 2010” work programme*. [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2006/c\\_079/c\\_07920060401en00010019.pdf](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2006/c_079/c_07920060401en00010019.pdf)
- European Ministers of Education (1999), *Bologna Declaration*
- European Ministers of Education (2001), *Prague Communiqué*
- European Ministers of Education (2003), *Berlin Communiqué*

- 
- European Ministers of Education (2005), *Bergen Communiqué*
- European Ministers of Education (2007), *London Communiqué*
- European Voice (2005), *Nordic success proves Lisbon can work, claims Agenda guru*, Vol. 10 No. 11: 17 March 2005
- Finland's Ministry of Education (2004), *Education and Research 2003-2008. Development plan*, Ministry of Education
- Finland's Ministry of Education (2005a), *Promemoria från arbetsgruppen som har utrett möjligheterna att ta ut avgifter av utländska examensstuderande för studier vid högskolor*, Undervisningsministeriets arbetsgruppspromemorior och utredningar 2005:48,  
<http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Julkaisut/2005/liitteet/tr48.pdf?lang=sv>
- Finland's Ministry of Education, (2005b), *Education and Training 2010 – Finland's interim report*
- Finland's Ministry of Education, (2006), *Bologna process, national report 2005-2007*
- Garam, Irma (2006), *International mobility in Finnish higher education 2005*, Center for international mobility,  
<https://www.cimo.fi/dman/Document.phx/~public/Julkaisut+ja+tilastot/Raportit+ja+selvitykset/mobility2005.pdf>
- Gornitzka, Å. (1999), Governmental policies and organisational change in higher education, in *Higher Education* 38 1999
- Gornitzka, Å. (2006), What is the Use of Bologna in National Reform? The Case of Norwegian Quality Reform in Higher Education, in Tomusk (ed.), *Creating the European Area of Higher Education*, Springer, Dordrecht  
<http://www.springerlink.com/content/w3m8h7/?p=cd30ff31c863483cb32680b5050bfc31&pi=0>
- Gornitzka, Å (2007a), The internationalization of research and higher education. Changing borders of knowledge, in Gornitzka, Å. and Langfeldt, L. (eds.), *Borderless Knowledge. Understanding the "new" internationalization of research and higher education in Norway*, Kluwer academic publishers, New York
- Gornitzka, Å. (2007b), The Lisbon Process: A supranational policy perspective. Institutionalizing the Open Method of Coordination, in Maassen, P. and Olsen, J. P. (eds.), *University dynamics and European integration*, Springer, Dordrecht
- HSV (Högskoleverket) (2005), *The Internationalisation of Higher Education in Sweden*, Högskoleverket  
<http://www.hsv.se/download/18.539a949110f3d5914ec800083834/0527R.pdf>
- HSV (Högskoleverket) (2007), *Universitet och Högskolor – Högskoleverkets Årsrapport*,  
<http://www.hsv.se/download/18.5b73fe55111705b51fd80004587/0733R.pdf>



- 
- Halvorsen, T. and Faye, R. (2006), *Evaluering av Kvalitetsreformen. Delrapport 8 Internasjonalisering*. NIFU STEP, Oslo
- Huisman, J. and van der Wende, M. (2004), The EU and Bologna: Are supra- and international initiatives threatening domestic agendas?, *European Journal of Education*, Vol. 39, no. 3, 2004, Blackwell publishing
- Jørgensen, S. I. (2007), Norden på Tomgang, *Morgenbladet no. 44*
- Kemp, N. and Rogers T, (2006), *Towards a Danish International Education Strategy*, CIRIUS, Copenhagen,  
<http://cirusonline.dk/Default.aspx?ID=5788andM=NewsandPID=9447andNewsID=2325>
- Knight, J. (2003), Updating the Definition of Internationalization, *International Higher Education*, no. 33, Fall 2003
- Knight, J.(2007), The Lure of Europe for International Higher Education Cooperation, *International Higher Education*, no. 48, Fall 2007
- Maassen, P. and Uppstrøm, T. M. (2005), *Rethinking Nordic Co-operation in Higher education. Internationalization of Higher Education Institutions in Northern Europe in Light of Bologna*, TemaNord 2005:520, Nordic Council of Ministers, Copenhagen,  
[http://www.norden.org/pub/uddannelse/forskning\\_hojereudd/sk/TN2005520.pdf](http://www.norden.org/pub/uddannelse/forskning_hojereudd/sk/TN2005520.pdf)
- Maassen, P., Nokkala, T. and Uppstrøm, T. M. (2005), *Rethinking Nordic Co-operation in Higher education. National and Institutional Case Studies*, TemaNord 2005:523, Nordic Council of Ministers, Copenhagen,  
[http://www.norden.org/pub/uddannelse/forskning\\_hojereudd/sk/TN2005523.pdf](http://www.norden.org/pub/uddannelse/forskning_hojereudd/sk/TN2005523.pdf)
- Maassen, P., Vabø, A. and Stensaker, B. (2007), Translation of globalization and regionalization in Nordic cooperation in higher education, in Gornitzka, Åse and Langfeldt, Liv (2007), *Borderless Knowledge. Understanding the “new” internationalization of research and higher education in Norway*, Kluwer academic publishers, New York
- Malmström, C. (2007), *Sverige – Norden - EU – et Framtidsperspektiv*, Foreningen Norden, Göteborg, <http://www.sweden.gov.se/sb/d/3214/a/82096;jsessionid=aQ1ZF-h-K0Id>
- March, J. G. and Olsen, J. P. (2005), *Elaborating the “New institutionalism”*, Working paper no. 11, March 2005, ARENA, Centre for European Studies, University of Oslo
- Meek, Lynn (2003), Governance and management of Australian higher education: enemies within and without, in Amaral, A., Meek, L. V., Larsen, I. M. (eds) *The higher education managerial revolution?* Kluwer academic publishers, New York
- Ministers of Education in France, Germany, Italy and the UK (1998), *Sorbonne Declaration*

- 
- Mjøøs Commission (2000), *Frihet med ansvar. Om høgre utdanning og forskning i Norge*, NOU 2000: 14
- Muller, J. Cloete, N. and Badat, S. (2001), *Challenges of globalization, South African debates with Manuel Castells*, Maskew Miller Longman
- NCM (Nordic Council of Ministers) (2002), *Cooperation Nordic strength*, NCM, Copenhagen, <http://www.norden.org/faktab/uk/nordiskstyrka.pdf>
- NCM (Nordic Ministers of Education), (2004), *The Reykjavik Declaration*, <http://norden.org/hogreutbildning/aftaler/sk/nordisk-deklarasjon-no.pdf>
- NCM (Nordic Council of Ministers) (2005a), *Ministerrådsforslag om strategi for nordisk utdannings- og forskningssamarbeid 2005–2007 – Norden som foregangsregion for utvikling av menneskelige ressurser*, NCM, Copenhagen
- NCM (2005b), *Norden som global vinderregion På sporet af den nordiske konkurrencemodell*, Nordisk Råd and Nordisk Ministerråd, anp 2005: 777
- NCM (2006), *Draft “Council of Ministers’ proposal for the further development of the Nordplus programmes 2008-2011”*, NCM, Copenhagen
- Nordic Council, (2003), *Felles kulturarv styrker nordisk identitet*, Nordic Council, <http://www.norden.org/pub/kultur/kultur/sk/US2003441.pdf>
- Nordic Council (2006), *Kultur- og utdanningsutvalgets betenkning om Ministerrådsforslag om videreutvikling av Nordplus- programmene 2008-2011*, [http://www.norden.org/sagsarkiv/docs/Bet\\_B246nordplus.pdf](http://www.norden.org/sagsarkiv/docs/Bet_B246nordplus.pdf)
- Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research (2000), *Gjør din plikt - Krev din rett. Kvalitetsreform av høyere utdanning*, St.meld. nr. 27 (2000-2001)
- Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research (2002), *Internasjonaliseringsstrategi for høyere utdanning – rapport fra prosjektgruppen*. Ministerial project group, Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, Oslo
- Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research (2005a), *The Common European Objectives in Education and Training: Indicators and Benchmarks in the Lisbon Strategy A Norwegian perspective 2005*, Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, [http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/kilde/ufd/rap/2005/0001/ddd/pdfv/236366-future\\_objectives\\_020205.pdf](http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/kilde/ufd/rap/2005/0001/ddd/pdfv/236366-future_objectives_020205.pdf)
- Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research (2005b), *Contribution to the 2006 joint European council and commission report, national report, Norway*
- Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research (2006), *Bologna report, national report 2005-2007*
- Olsen, Johan P., (2007), *Mellom økonomi og kultur: Det europeiske universitetet i endring. Working paper no. 08, May 2007*, ARENA, Centre for European Studies, University of Oslo

- 
- Olsen, Johan P. and Maassen, Peter (2007), *European debates on the knowledge institution: The modernization of the university at the European level*, in Maassen, P. and Olsen, J. P. (eds.), *University dynamics and European integration*, Springer, Dordrecht
- Pressman, J.L. and Wildavsky, A.B. (1971), *Implementation*, California Press, Berkely
- Reichert, S. and C. Tauch (2005), *Trends IV: European Universities Implementing Bologna*, EUA, Brussels
- SIU (Senter for internasjonalisering av høyere utdanning)(2007), *Mobilitetsrapport 2007*, Publikasjon 01/07,  
[http://www2.siu.no/pub.nsf/0/7FB21AC9E44CB885C12572880042C8DF/\\$FILE/SIU\\_mobilrapport07.pdf](http://www2.siu.no/pub.nsf/0/7FB21AC9E44CB885C12572880042C8DF/$FILE/SIU_mobilrapport07.pdf)
- Scott, Peter (1998), Ch. 9: Massification, internationalization and Globalization, in Scott, Peter (Ed.) (1998), *The globalization of higher education*, Open University Press
- Swedish Ministry of Education, Research and Culture (2005), *Swedish report: Educational cooperation under the Lisbon strategy – Towards the 2010 common goals*
- Swedish Ministry of Education, Research and Culture (2006), *Bologna process, national report 2005-2007*
- Swedish Parliament (2004), *New world – new university: a summary of government bill 2004/05:162*, Swedish Parliament
- Teichler, U., Gordon, J., Maiworm, F., Bradatsch, C. (2001). *Das SOKRATES-Programm: Erfahrungen der Ersten Fünf Jahre*, Wissenschaftliches Zentrum für Berufs- und Hochschulforschung, Kassel
- Trondal, J., Stensaker, B., Gornitzka, Å. and Maassen, P. (2001), *Internasjonalisering av høyere utdanning. Trender og utfordringer*, NIFU Skriftserie, 28
- Trubeck and Mosher (2001), *New Governance, EU Employment Policy, and the European Social Mode,l*  
<http://www.jeanmonnetprogram.org/papers/01/011501.html#TopOfPage>
- Vinther-Jørgensen, T. and Hansen, S. P. (eds.) (2006), *European Standards and Guidelines in a Nordic Perspective. Joint Nordic Project 2005-06*, NOQA
- Webster (1998), *Webster Dictionary*
- Westerheijden, D. F., Stensaker, B and Rosa, M. J. (2007), *Quality assurance in higher education. Trends in regulation, translation and transformation*, Springer, Dordrecht
- Yin, R. K. (1994), *Case study research. Design and Methods*, Applied social research methods series, volume 5, Sage publications, London



## **Appendix 1: Rethinking Nordic cooperation in higher education. Internationalization of higher education institutions in Northern Europe in light of Bologna - Protocol for institutional case studies**

### 1 Selection of institutions

The institutional level study will include nine case studies. The University of Reykjavik in Iceland and one university and one college in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden. As this is a pilot study and the over all cases are few compared to the population the criteria for selection are not so strict, but we recommend a college situated in the region of the capitl, and a university situated elsewhere. The institutions to be selected for the case study should be chosen following these criteria:

- 1) sector: university versus colleges: two of each
- 2) complexity: specialised versus comprehensive
- 3) size

The most preferable selection of cases would then be to have one big comprehensive university and one smaller, specialised university; one specialised (either technical or economic) college and one “non-technical/economic” college.

These criteria are chosen because theoretically these characteristics can be assumed to be important factors influencing institutional change processes. Following these criteria in selecting cases would ensure a meaningful variation in the types of institutions that are covered by our study.

### 2 Background information on the selected institutions

#### 2.1 Organisational structure:

- number and nature (i.e. which disciplines) of faculties/schools/departments;
- number of students and employees (academic as well as non-academic; preferably in fte's);
- type of formal governance structure: short description and information on what governing bodies and actors formally have to be involved in institutional decisions, as well as the formal distribution of decision making authority over these bodies and actors.
- Does the institution have an international office?
- Does the institution have an international committee?
- How many administrative positions at the central level are reserved for international activity?
- How many administrative positions at the decentralized level are reserved for international activity?
- How many of these (both central and decentralized) are connected to formal educational programmes?

## 2.2 Budgets and allocation mechanisms:

- What types of state funding do the institutions receive (GUFs versus earmarked funding)?
- If relevant: what is the structure of general government funds for the institution?
- How are funds allocated within the institution?
- What sources of funding and financial contributors are linked to the institution?(relationship between basic governmental funding, NSF kind of funding and contract income)

- 
- Who are the main contractors?
  - What percentage of institutional income is covered by student fees/tuition?
  - Does the institution have a special budget for international activities?

### 2.3 Student/graduate markets:

- Student “market” - what have been the characteristics of the enrolment market? Amongst other things, we would like to receive information on the relationship between students travelling abroad as a part of their degree, and international students taking parts, or a whole degree at the institution. How many of these students travel as part of organized programmes?
- (Graduate “market” - what part of the labour market(s) do the graduates of the institutions go to - private (multinationals, SME’s)/public, local/regional/national/international?)

### 2.4 Organization of international activities

- Which, if any, formal educational programmes is the institution a member of?
- Is the institution a member of any consortia/ partnerships at a central level?
- Is the institution a member of any consortia/ partnerships at a decentralised level?
- Does the institution have branches in other countries?
- Is the institution involved in distance education?
- Does the institution have a special international policy on a central level?
- Does the institution have a special policy with regards to internationalization on a decentralized level?

- Does the institution have a special policy with respect to increasing competition?
- English speaking masters degrees

## 2.5 Other pieces of information:

In addition, the background information should preferably include an assessment of the position of the institution, i.e. its ranking / status. In cases where a national evaluation/ranking system exists this system should be used to support the assessment.

A short outline of the institution's history should also be included in the background information, as well as any other piece of information that might be of relevance for understanding the nature of the institution in question.

## 3 Study of change processes

In order to give a systematic overview of factors that motivates or hampers the internationalization of higher education institutes, with an emphasis on the Nordic dimension the study is divided in two thematic areas: traditional internationalization, with a focus on student and teacher mobility, and new internationalization with a focus on competition and institutionalization.

### 3.1 Selection of institutional policies and programmes with respect to the economic role of universities and colleges in the area of teaching and education

The institutional case studies should address change processes in the following three areas:

First, we are interested in how institutions have changed the traditional internal teaching activities focused on traditional students in order to strengthen the relationship between higher education institutions and the economy. Second, have the institutions developed new relationships between traditional internal teaching activities and the external needs for training and education leading to new educational



---

and training structures for “non-traditional/life-long learning students”? Third, have there been changes in the involvement of external stakeholders to internal structural change processes?

#### 1) Traditional internationalization (student and teacher mobility)

The internationalisation of higher education has traditionally been understood as international contact between individual researchers, students, universities and states (Trondal et. al.). It has often been placed equal to student and teacher mobility and has for the major part been uninstitutionalized. Since the nationalization of higher education it has been a search for what is different, a cultural exchange. With the globalization debate internationalization as a theme has entered educational policies on a national and supra national level to an increasing extent and attempts to institutionalize and formalize student and teacher mobility have become well established within Europe through programmes like SOCRATES, ERASMUS, TEMPUS and the like (Nordplus?). Within this cluster of policies we are interested in the move towards an institutionalization of international contact, any change in discourse from academic to economic

#### 2) New internationalization (market economic rationale and homogenisation)

Within the same debates concerning globalization processes there has also been a change in discourse from the more academically motivated to an increasingly economic reasoning of higher education. Homogenisation and standardisation. institutionalised national higher education increasingly adapts to international and supra national agreements. New offers on the market. Deregulation, increased institutional autonomy, new financial models causes institutions to expand their activities across borders. WTO GATS.

Within this cluster of policies we are interested in

Commercialization of higher education

3.2 Central institutional level processes:

We want to start with an analysis of the policies and programmes at central institutional level in these three clusters. We want you to begin with providing us with an overview of all institutional policies and programmes that existed in the time frame you selected for the institution in question.

As indicated before we want to know what the institutional discussions, decision- and policy-making processes focused on in the three clusters in the selected time frame. Therefore we want to emphasise again that you should not only cover the policies and programmes that relate to the selected national level policies and programmes, but all policies and programmes, in other words: How did the institutional policy agenda look like concerning the two types of internationalization in the period covered?

It should in general be possible to base this first step on document analysis. In addition you might want to use one or more knowledgeable resource persons per institution.

We realise that there might be institutions that are relatively decentralised, i.e. they hardly seem to have institutional policies and programmes. In these cases you may have to rely almost completely on the knowledgeable institutional resource persons for producing this first overview. However, we think that also in the cases where institutional policies and programmes seem to be almost completely absent, it should be possible to draft an institutional policy agenda as mentioned above.

Concerning this “agenda” and the analysis of it the following two sets of questions are your starting-point:

1) For getting an overview of the main institutional programmes and policies:

- What institutional programmes and policies exist with respect to the two types of internationalization mentioned above?
- When were they introduced and why were they introduced? What were their origins - were they new or were they an adaptation/replacement of an already existing policy or programme?

---

2) For the analysis and description of internal dynamics programmes and policies at central institutional level:

- Who were involved in these processes? What constituency within the organisation did they come from? What determined their participation? What were the roles of the participants?
- Where were these processes mainly taking place? Collegiate bodies, special committees or administrative units within the central administration, informal fora, specially designed processes (such as the University of X's committee for life long learning).
- What were the underlying attitudes and interests in these change processes? What were the motivations for engaging in these change processes/ development of programmes and policies in these areas?
- What and whose ideas were central in the processes?
- What attention was given to these issues by the active participants, by institutional leaders and by the institution in general? Was it central to institutional policies/missions or peripheral?
- What was (was there) interaction between different levels of the institution in these processes? E.g. was the development a response to/ a confirmation of processes that were going on at other levels of the institution?
- Can the actors be described in terms of their power? What constituted the basis of their influence on these processes - formal position in the organisation, their academic reputation or that of their organisational unit, their special interest and commitment to the programmes and policy in question?
- Were there clashes between different interests or views on the three issues? Were these processes characterised by internal consensus or by dissensus? Were there any specific alliances established?

3) For the description and analysis of the external conditions and interactions in these processes:

- What were the perceptions of the external conditions the institution was facing with respect to these two types of internationalization? Were there environmental events, changes or expectations surrounding these processes that were deemed as relevant? And if so, what part of the environment was seen as pertinent? International/European level, national government, business, student market, other higher education institutions, buffer organisations, professional organisations, or other?
- Were there external participants directly involved in these processes?
- If any environmental expectations were deemed as relevant, what was the institution's conception of why such expectations were put forward? E.g. what was seen by the institution as the external actors' objectives for exerting pressure?
- Were these expectations/pressures seen as consistent with the institution's own interests and ideas, or the interests and ideas of different constituents within the institution?
- Were the external expectations/pressures of some external actors seen as conflicting or contrary to expectations of other external actors?
- If relevant: in what way was the institution or were different actors within the institution perceived as being "pressured"? I.e. how or by what means was pressure exerted?
- What can characterise the "response" of the institutions to these perceived external demands? What did they do faced with them? The range can vary from "nothing", accepting, complying, bargaining with the external constituents, avoiding, defying, to actions of manipulating the external expectations (cf. theoretical framework).

---

## 4 Examining sub-unit level action

For understanding institutional change processes it is essential to examine the relationship between central institutional processes leading to specific institutional policies and programmes and the “real” action decentrally in the institution. What we mean by “real” action is that we assume that in most if not all selected institutions the actual change processes take place somewhere decentrally in the institution. In the first place this refers to changes in the traditional basic academic units, be it the faculty, department, or sub-department level, i.e. the level deemed as the most appropriate level “above” the level of the individual staff member. In the second place this implies changes outside the traditional academic basic units. With respect to the latter we’re interested both in the processes that have been leading to new units/structures as in the changes taking place in these units/structures. Many of the same questions outlined under 3.2 can be used to structure the description and the analysis of the actual change processes.

The point of focusing our analysis on the sub-unit level is to encompass action at the core of the institution’s life. In addition to the reasons explained above we want to point to two “extreme” examples as regards the relationship between central and decentral level that have been mentioned during the Rome meeting. First, one possibility is that “central” level in some of the institutional change processes is practically empty. As a result of local or national circumstances, in practice in some institutions it might be the decentral level that is expected to design policies and programmes in the two cluster areas instead of the central institutional administration. This would imply that the decentral level might have “full” sets of processes meaning that we would have to draw conclusions about institutional actions/responses on the basis of an analysis of this level. Second, it could also be a fair assumption that academic organisations absorb variations in their environmental conditions without modifying their teaching (and research) activities, implying that because of local or national circumstances in practice in some institutions there might be many central institutional policies and programmes, but hardly any “real” action at the sub-unit

level. Either way it implies that we have extend the analysis beyond the central institutional level.

Even though at this stage we don't want to go into too much detail already concerning the design of the decentral part of the study we do want to point to two important concerns:

1. How to find out what constitutes the appropriate sub-unit level in each of the selected institutions?
2. How to select a number of units at what is decided to be the appropriate level?

Our preliminary perspective on these concerns is as follows. It is important to limit the study so that we embark on a study that is doable (connected to what is thought of as the basic unit - and how big this and thus how extensive the processes we're going to study are) - once again there is the issue of criteria for selecting these units. The disciplinary criteria is too complicated to follow through, and not the most relevant factor to focus our analysis on in the framework of our study (it would have been another situation if a major research question we were investigating was the assumption that some disciplines are by nature of their subject matter inherently more internationally oriented than others, but that is not the case). Academic status and/or resource situation could be a possibility to use as a selection criteria. Also the focus of specific institutional policies or programmes could be used to select sub-units. In other words, if specific institutional policies or programmes would be focused on all sub-units a number of criteria can be used (e.g. status/resource situation/size) to select a few of them; if however an institutional policy or programme would be focused on only one or a few sub-units it would make sense to select next to this (or one of the few) sub-unit at least one sub-unit outside the focus of this specific policy/programme. In any case the selection we assume would be the result of an interactive process adjusted to "local" conditions and the requirements of the comparative dimension.

1) development of new teaching programmes and curricula change. A possible methodology would here be to go through study guides of the selected sub-units and look for changes in the courses (programmes) offered - describe the changes and the direction that they are taking, then use follow-up interviews to find out why these changes occurred.

2) development of life-long learning activities: what possible new structures (if any) have been established? Use here also descriptions of study offerings and/or interviews with key unit people. Why were they established? And if not - try to probe in interviews whether the introduction of activities combining working and learning has been an issue at all at the decentral, that is selected sub-unit level. The issues of involvement of external stake-holders, would then not be an separate issue but should appear as part of the study of change in the other two areas.

In the introduction to the protocol we suggested that the design of the decentral/sub-unit level part of the institutional case studies, including the selection of the appropriate units to examine, will to a large extent be determined on the outcomes of the central institutional part of the studies. If you have any questions on either the central or the decentral part of the institutional level study, please don't hesitate to get in touch with us.

Oslo

October 2002

Therese Marie Uppstrøm

Peter Maassen

## Appendix 2: List of respondents for the case studies

### Denmark

#### National level interviews

Mogens Berg, Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation

Jette Kirstein, CIRIUS

#### Institutional level interviews

Copenhagen University College of Engineering

Anne Kappel, International Office

Teachers involved in the European Project Semester

Additional information material: The international strategy, the university web site:

<http://www.ihk.dk>

#### Aalborg University

Hanne Engelund, special advisor of internationalisation

Kirsten Jakobsen, head of the International Office

Staffan Zetterholm, chair of the International Council

Finn Kjærdsdam, dean at the Faculty of Science and Engineering

Olav Juul Sørensen, Professor, Department of Business Studies

Additional information material: Udviklingskontrakt for Aalborg Universitet 2000-2003 (University Performance Contract 2000-2003), various brochures developed by

Aalborg University for international students, Internationalisation at Aalborg

University – A Self-Assessment Report, the university web site: [www.auc.dk](http://www.auc.dk)

### Finland

#### National level interview

Anita Lehtikoinen, Counsellor for education, Ministry of Education, November 26<sup>th</sup>, 2002.



## Norway

### National level interview

Lene Oftebro, Advisor, Ministry of Education and Research, January 2003

### Institutional level interviews

#### Oslo University College

Interviews conducted January and February of 2003 with:

Dagrunn Kvamme, Head of the International Office

Anne Beate Aubert, Nordplus coordinator

Berit Tveit, Senior advisor, study administration

Administrative and academic employees at the Faculty of Engineering.

Additional information material: The College strategy for 2001-2003, The strategy for internationalisation for 2002-2004

#### University of Bergen

Interviews conducted October 2002 and January/ February, 2003 with:

Kirsti Koch Christensen, Rector

Rune Nilsen, Pro-rector

Jan Petter Myklebust, Head of the International office

Bjørn Einar Aas, Adviser, International Office

Bente Bjørknes, Faculty of mathematics and natural sciences

George Fransis, Institute of Chemistry

Kristin Migrov Nodland, Geography

Stian Thowse, International office

Helge Bjørlo, Faculty of Social sciences

Arnfinn Kvam, Geography

Additional information material: The Strategic plan for 2000-2005 for The University of Bergen

## Sweden

### National level information

Torsten Källemark, Swedish national agency for higher education

### Institutional level information

Södertörn University College

Interviews conducted January 2003 with:

Elsy Liman Grave, International Coordinator

Karin Holmgren, International Student Advisor

Jan Böhme, Chair of the Council for Internationalisation, Professor of Molecular Biology

Yonhyok Choe, Researcher, Political Science

Karl-Magnus Johansson, Researcher, Political Science

Lisbeth Jonsson, Professor in Botany

Gøran Grape, Economy

Additional information material: Various brochures produced by Södertörn University College, university web page: <http://webappl.web.sh.se/>

### Linköping University

Interviews conducted November 2002:

Kristin Wiberg, Nordlys

Monica Ungerholm, Faculty of Philosophy

Ann Kristin Comstock, International Office

Ingrid Axberg Ahlsson, International secretary at the Institute of Technology

Additional information material: Various brochures produced by Linköping University, university web page: [www.liu.se](http://www.liu.se)

### Appendix 3: Student mobility to and from the Nordic countries

Table 1

Incoming and outgoing students compared to total number of students enrolled at home or abroad, academic year 2004/ 2005

	Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden
Tot. no of students	207.148	310.369	222.709	454.922
Tot. no. of international students enrolled	17.160	7.915	9.683	36.458
Percentage of int students	8,3	2,6	4,3	8,0
Tot. no. of degree students abroad	3.358	4.373	13.157	25.478
Percentage of degree students abroad	1,6	1,4	5,9	5,6

Source: *Mobilitetsrapport 2007, Publikasjon 01/07*, Senter for internasjonalisering av høyere utdanning,

[http://www2.siu.no/pub.nsf/0/7FB21AC9E44CB885C12572880042C8DF/\\$FILE/SIU\\_mobilrapport07.pdf](http://www2.siu.no/pub.nsf/0/7FB21AC9E44CB885C12572880042C8DF/$FILE/SIU_mobilrapport07.pdf)

Table 2

5 most popular study destinations for Nordic students, 2005 / 2006

Denmark		Finland		Norway		Sweden	
Destination	No. of stud.	Destination	No. of stud.	Destination	No. of stud.	Destination	No. of stud.
Great Britain	1210	Great Britain	1524	Great Britain	2583	Great Britain	4271
Sweden	365	Sweden	1009	Other EU	2331	USA and Canada	3391
USA and Canada	322	Other EU	662	Australia and New Zealand	2210	Italy and Spain	2935
Norway	248	USA and Canada	298	Denmark	1940	Australia and New Zealand	1948
Germany	207	Germany	252	USA and Canada	995	Denmark	1821
Number of students going to the Nordic countries that are not listed among the 5 most popular study destinations							
Finland	14	Denmark	100	Finland	21	Finland	232
		Norway	60	Sweden	727	Norway	618

Source: Nordic Statistical Yearbook 2007,

<http://www.norden.org/pub/ovrigt/statistik/sk/N2007001.pdf>

Table 3

## Incoming mobility to the Nordic countries

	Denmark (05/06)	Finland (2005)	Norway (2006)	Sweden (04/05)
Europe	8.160	6.782	5.045	11.874
North America	612	341 (all of America)	370	1.114
South and Central America	151	(included above)	193	500
Africa	332	56	1.055	840
Asia	2.177	458	1.813	3.579
Oceania	154	27	59	327
Unspecified	106	33	2.587	4.979

Sources:

Limitation: Data for each country is gathered from different sources and can not be considered strictly comparative. It is presented here to give an indication of incoming mobility to the Nordic countries.

Denmark: *Tabelsamlinger til mobilitetsstatistik for videregående uddannelse 2005/06*, CIRIUS, <http://www.ciriusonline.dk/Default.aspx?ID=9402>

Finland: Garam, Irma (2006), *International mobility in Finnish higher education 2005*, Center for international mobility, <https://www.cimo.fi/dman/Document.phx/~public/Julkaisut+ja+tilastot/Raportit+ja+solvitykset/mobility2005.pdf>

Norway: *Mobilitetsrapport 2007, Publikasjon 01/07*, Senter for internasjonalisering av høyere utdanning,

[http://www2.siu.no/pub.nsf/0/7FB21AC9E44CB885C12572880042C8DF/\\$FILE/SIU\\_mobilrapport07.pdf](http://www2.siu.no/pub.nsf/0/7FB21AC9E44CB885C12572880042C8DF/$FILE/SIU_mobilrapport07.pdf)

Sweden: *Universitet and högskolor. Högskoleverkets årsrapport 2007*, Swedish national agency for higher education,

<http://www.hsv.se/download/18.5b73fe55111705b51fd80004587/0733R.pdf>

Studentmobilitet – högskolestuderandes internationella rörlighet, Swedish national agency for higher education,

<http://www.hsv.se/download/18.44aba2dc11030072f75800084730/0709R.pdf>

Table 4

Mobility in the Erasmus and Nordplus program compared, 2004/ 2005

	Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden
Incoming Erasmus	3985	5116	1841	6626
Outgoing Erasmus	1793	3951	1279	2699
Incoming Nordplus	502	218	396	778
Outgoing Nordplus	423	696	458	398

## **Appendix 4: Institutional experiences with the Nordplus programme**

The experiences in the included institutions with Nordplus were in general positive. One main reason for this positive attitude was related to the stimulus it gives individual academics to use their own networks for Nordic cooperation activities. At the central level Nordplus tended to lead a more anonymous life and several of the interviewees stated that our case study contributed to drawing more attention to Nordic cooperation and that they were intending to review the portfolio of the institution. Thus the way the Nordplus program is organized administratively, the position of the formal responsibility, had a direct influence on focus and attitude towards Nordic cooperation at an institutional level.

The Nordplus program is currently organized in a decentralized manner, where the initiative of the involved academics is central. In general central institutional administrators would prefer to centralize the administration for Nordplus, while the academic staff preferred the current possibility of applying for funding on an individual basis. The disadvantages of not having a central administrative responsibility seems to be that Nordplus seldom is included in a detailed way in the institutional strategies with respect to internationalization. It is more difficult for the institutions to maintain a good overview of the ongoing activity, and to create a coherent Nordic strategy for the institution as a whole. This would potentially increase the efficiency of the use of Nordplus.

However, the main advantage of a decentral, individualized approach is the flexibility it gives to the academic staff and students involved. The direct access of academics to Nordplus improves the attractiveness of the program for academic staff members.

There are a certain amount of complementary aspects, as well as a certain degree of competition between Nordplus and the Erasmus/Socrates program of the EU. The individual student who is interested in staying abroad as part of his/her academic studies tends to use the program that is either best fitting or most profitable. In all

countries the Nordplus grants were at the time of the case studies higher per student than the EU grants, but at the same time there were more EU grants awarded.

Some interviewees suggested that Nordplus perhaps could become complementary to other mobility programs also in the other conditions provided. There is for example a need for support for mobility shorter than three months. The Nordplus program is currently aimed at stimulating longer periods of stay abroad of students (between 3 months and 1 year). The main argument for making Nordplus more flexible is that not all academic programs are offered in all Nordic countries at the highest possible level. In addition, not all specializations in all academic fields are offered in all Nordic countries. Therefore Nordic students are argued to need a funding possibility for shorter stays in another Nordic country (1 to 12 weeks). This would, for example, allow them to take specialized modules of one or several weeks at another Nordic university or college. Therefore it can be argued that the short stay possibility should be added to the longer stay possibility.

Nordplus is aimed at generally stimulating cooperation in higher education and student mobility as part of that for cultural/political and academic reasons. Given the diversity of Nordic interests of the various fields and disciplines to be found in Nordic universities and colleges there is always the risk that Nordplus is sometimes funding activities for which there is no clear academic rationale. A small number of fields has a direct Nordic interest from an academic content point of view, such as Nordic language programs, Nordic history programs, specializations in various fields, such as in law, (Nordic) political science, (Nordic) business and geology. It can be argued that for these programs the requirement should be that all students are obliged to spend part of their studies at another Nordic institution. In addition there are fields with a specific academic approach that is uniquely Nordic, e.g. nursing and pedagogics. These fields also have a clear labor market dimension, in the sense that there is a great mobility of graduates from these programs on the Nordic labor market. Therefore for these fields it can be argued that Nordic cooperation should be stimulated as much as possible, with preferably for all students a possibility for



spending part of their studies at another Nordic institution. Further there are fields and disciplines with no specific Nordic dimension, but where specific faculties, departments, and individual staff members have specialized in such a way that they have become of interest to other Nordic academic units and scholars. Finally, there are fields and disciplines with no specific Nordic dimension. Funding cooperation in the latter group does not further a specific academic purpose, but must be seen from the perspective of the cultural aims underlying the Nordic cooperation.

## **Appendix 5: Conclusions and recommendations of the NIFU study**

Part of the assigned task for the NIFU study, was to propose recommendations for the further initiatives of HØGUT and the NCM. Based on the findings both at the national and the institutional level, the suggested future developments were grouped under the headings: more diversity and flexibility, clearer strategies and better linkage.

With respect to diversity and flexibility, the study pointed out that with the growing interest in the international dimension of higher education, both by policy makers as well as by staff and students, the aims and intentions with respect to internationalization of all stakeholders involved have become more diversified. This diversification should preferably be translated into policies and programs aimed at stimulating internationalization of higher education, including the Nordic cooperation in higher education.

- It was recommended to make Nordplus more flexible, amongst other things, by allowing shorter periods of stay of students with a clear academic aim to be funded through the program. In this way Nordplus would be supporting mobility of a different shape than the EU programs, and meet a need that is currently not met.
- The study also recommended looking into the different needs and challenges of different institutions; e.g. rural college vs. urban university. Currently most policy initiatives assume uniform needs across the higher education sector. The NIFU case study showed that this was not the case.
- To create an arena for international cooperation for smaller, rural institutions, one option could be to establish a Nordic virtual university. A Nordic virtual university could also be promoting Nordic cooperation internationally, and

---

could stimulate the establishment of joint degree programs in Nordic higher education.

- The case study also showed that teacher mobility is a neglected area, and therefore an area with much potential for improvement. HØGUT was therefore encouraged to stronger support teacher mobility and international teacher recruitment. It was pointed out that the advantage of this is that internationalization is “brought to” the institutions, and that non-mobile students can also benefit from Nordic/international cooperation.

With respect to the need for clearer strategies, the NIFU study pointed out that internationalization is becoming one of the major policy issues with respect to higher education in the Nordic and wider European context. Both nationally and supra-nationally, it can be expected that the international dimension will become a more important parameter in national funding arrangements. Only those institutions that have a clear, coherent and transparent strategy for internationalization will profit optimally from this. A challenge in this at the institutional level is to find an appropriate balance between academic interests, initiatives and autonomy on the one side, and the administrative needs for information, coherence, transparency and control on the other. However, clearer strategies do not imply that institutions should all go in the same direction. Internationalization, as was shown in the case-studies, can have many purposes. It can be related to a need to increase quality, to recruitment, to benchmarking, institutional profiling and marketing, etc. Given the diversified interests related to Nordic cooperation, there is a need to identify the various strategies and to highlight and systematize “best practice” in different areas.

- HØGUT was recommended to look into the possibility of creating a coordinating mechanism that can link and integrate institutions with different strategic interests, and give support to the development of institutional networks in the Nordic countries related to various cooperation/internationalization issues.

- HØGUT was also recommended to look into the possibility of promoting and supporting the development of “joint Nordic study programs”. It was suggested that joint study programs could on the one side further stimulate Nordic integration, and also be an instrument for profiling the Nordic region in Europe, and the rest of the world.
- Finally with respect to clearer strategies, it was pointed out that research has shown the many difficulties foreign students meet when arriving in a new country. It was suggested that HØGUT could initiate or support the development of a knowledge structure on the Nordic level that collects, analyze and advise institutions on the practicalities of Nordic cooperation/internationalization. This knowledge structure could not only highlight “best practice”, but also be of great assistance to institutions that currently are lagging behind.

And thirdly, with respect to *better linkage*, it was pointed out that Nordic cooperation in higher education is a special form of internationalization in higher education. However it does not stand on its own. Internationalization can have various purposes, such as improving the quality of teaching and research, strengthening a regional identity, making the use of a higher education infrastructure more efficient, strengthening the economic situation of a country or region, adding to the income of an institution, or even a country, and contributing to more effective developing aid cooperation. Given this diversity, internationalization of higher education can best be promoted by a better linkage between various policy initiatives and the needs of the higher education institutions.

NCM initiatives can be designed to fulfill various objectives, either for supporting Nordic cooperation on its own, or to adjust the Nordic dimension to the on-going Bologna-process, or promote (elements of) the Nordic cooperation in higher education as a best practice in the implementation of the Lisbon Agenda. These purposes might be integrated, but the NIFU study suggested that a more flexible support structure for Nordic cooperation is needed. In support of this argument, it was

referred to the general arguments put forward by Lipponen (Aftenposten 2004). Are the advisory committees (such as HØGUT) and other support structures in the area of higher education, in their current form, the appropriate bodies for handling the new internationalization challenges that are facing the Nordic higher education institutions, and can they play the innovative bridging role in the direction of an enlarged EU? As indicated by Lipponen, and supported by the conclusions of the NIFU study, it is not the Nordic cooperation as such that needs to be rethought, it is also by others (e.g. Rodrigues in European Voice 2005) considered to be effective, if not a 'best practice' in Europe. But it might be that the institutional support structures (including HØGUT) are somewhat outdated and not well equipped enough for the task of dealing not only with the intra-Nordic expectations, but also with the external challenges of an enlarged EU.

- The NIFU study thus recommended to reconsider the current functioning of HØGUT (and other support structures) and reflect upon the question whether it/they should be replaced by a different, more flexible and externally oriented body, or whether it can be adapted, implying amongst other things, that it should be less program-based, and more innovative and needs oriented.