





# Rethinking Nordic Cooperation in Higher Education

Intrnationalization of Higher Education Institutions  
in Northern Europe in Light of Bologna

*Peter Maassen and Therese Marie Uppström*

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**Nordic co-operation**

Nordic co-operation, one of the oldest and most wide-ranging regional partnerships in the world, involves Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland. Co-operation reinforces the sense of Nordic community while respecting national differences and similarities, makes it possible to uphold Nordic interests in the world at large and promotes positive relations between neighbouring peoples.

Co-operation was formalised in 1952 when *the Nordic Council* was set up as a forum for parliamentarians and governments. The Helsinki Treaty of 1962 has formed the framework for Nordic partnership ever since. The *Nordic Council of Ministers* was set up in 1971 as the formal forum for co-operation between the governments of the Nordic countries and the political leadership of the autonomous areas, i.e. the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland.

# Contents

<b>Preface .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Executive Summary.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>13</b>
1.1 Mandate for the Study .....	14
1.2 Changes in Internationalization.....	16
<b>2. Main Arguments for Nordic Cooperation .....</b>	<b>21</b>
2.1 Respondents' View on Nordic Cooperation in Higher Education .....	22
2.2 Formal Rationale for Nordic Cooperation in Higher Education .....	23
2.3 Practical and Formal Arguments Compared .....	24
<b>3. National Policies.....</b>	<b>27</b>
3.1 Economic Versus Other Dimensions of Internationalization .....	27
3.1.1 "Aid" Dimension in Internationalization.....	29
3.2 National Policy Aspects of Internationalization of Higher Education .....	30
3.3 Internal Versus External Nordic Orientation in Internationalization .....	31
3.4 Nordic Cooperation and the European Dimension.....	34
3.4.1 Nordic Cooperation and the European Union.....	34
3.4.2 The Open Method of Coordination (OMC).....	35
3.4.3 The Nordic Cooperation and the Bologna Process .....	37
3.5 The Role of Language in Nordic Cooperation .....	40
3.5.1 Teaching of Nordic Languages .....	42

<b>4. Institutional Level .....</b>	<b>43</b>
4.1 Organization of Institutional Administrative Structures .....	43
4.1.1 Relationship Between Administration and Academia in Internationalization .....	44
4.2 Other Issues .....	45
4.2.1 Circumstances Influencing Nordic Student Mobility .....	45
4.2.2 Danish and Norwegian Attempts to Influence Institutional Behaviour .....	46
4.2.3 International Mobility of Students and Staff .....	46
4.2.4 Location of Institutions .....	47
4.2.5 Universities Versus Colleges .....	48
4.2.6 Foreign Staff at Nordic Institutions .....	48
 <b>5. Nordplus .....</b>	 <b>51</b>
 <b>6. Conclusions and Recommendations .....</b>	 <b>55</b>
6.1 Main General Conclusions .....	55
6.2 Current Status for The Nordic Cooperation in Higher Education .....	56
6.3 Current Challenges for Nordic Cooperation in Higher Education .....	56
6.4 The Way Forward – Suggestions for Policy Action .....	57
6.4.1 More diversity and flexibility .....	57
6.4.2 Clearer Strategies .....	58
6.4.3 Better Linkage .....	59
 <b>Sammendrag .....</b>	 <b>63</b>
 <b>References .....</b>	 <b>67</b>
 <b>Appendix 1 .....</b>	 <b>69</b>
Data on Student Mobility .....	69
 <b>Appendix 2 .....</b>	 <b>73</b>
Nordic Cooperation in Higher Education .....	73
Description by the Nordic University Leaders included in the Tromsø Statement of August 2002 .....	73
Nordic Co-operation in Higher Education .....	73

# Preface

In this report the general findings of a study into recent trends with respect to the internationalization of higher education in the Nordic countries are presented (this report is based on national and institutional case studies presented in a separate report – see TemaNord 2005:523) The national and institutional level case studies, on which these general findings are based, will be presented in a separate report. The study was assigned to NIFU STEP by the Nordic Council of Ministers through the *Styringsgruppe for nordisk samarbeid innen høgre utdanning* (HØGUT).

We want to thank all the interviewees and other informants in the five Nordic countries, both at the national and the institutional level, for their willingness to make time and energy available, and share valuable insights and information with us. A special word of thank we want to reserve for the contact persons at the nine case institutions. Without their help we would not have been able to organize the visits to their institutions in an effective way.

The project was fortunate in having a Nordic sounding board group, consisting of experts in the area in question, i.e. Seppo Hölttä, Henrik Toft Jensen, Jón Torfi Jónasson, Torsten Kälvemark, and Terhi Nokkala. Not only did they assist us in preparing the protocol for the case studies, and selecting the case institutions, they also provided us with valuable comments to previous versions of this report. In addition, our Finnish colleagues, Seppo Hölttä and Terhi Nokkala, were responsible for undertaking the Finnish case studies.

At NIFU STEP, Peter Maassen was the project leader, while most of the actual fieldwork was done by Therese Marie Uppstrøm. We want to

thank the colleagues at NIFU STEP, especially Åse Gornitzka, Liv Langfeldt and Nicoline Frølich, who contributed to the set up of the project and helped us secure the quality of this report, amongst other things, through an internal NIFU STEP discussion seminar.

Oslo, October 2004

*Peter Maassen and Therese Marie Uppstrøm*

# Executive Summary

1. There is an important positive attitude in Nordic higher education institutions towards Nordic cooperation. 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.

2. The arguments used for justifying the Nordic cooperation in higher education are non-economic, while the new internationalization trends are at least to some extent driven by economic arguments.

3. Unlike institutions in other countries (inside and outside Europe) Nordic higher education institutions, with the exception of Danish universities, cannot profit economically from attracting foreign students other than through the national public funding model. Therefore the “export” dimension is lacking from the Nordic cooperation in higher education; an “export” dimension that is explicitly part of the internationalization policies with respect to higher education in countries such as the UK, the USA, Australia, and the Netherlands.

4. The issue of “brain drain” deserves more attention in the Nordic cooperation in higher education. This applies to the relevant intra-country and inter-country movement of degree holders, as well as to the movement of degree holders between the Nordic area as a whole and the rest of the world.

5. Nordic cooperation in higher education is a successful, internally oriented “regionalization” form 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, and the apparent shift in student interest, at least in some countries, from exchange to studying abroad fully, might make it necessary to

reconsider the way in which Nordic cooperation is currently organised and implemented.

6. With respect to the Nordic cooperation in higher education the considerations, opportunities and challenges related to the implementation of the Lisbon Agenda and the use of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC), lead to a number of issues for the Nordic authorities at the national and the Nordic level. First: Has the Nordic cooperation in higher education resulted in a common Nordic experience or model that the Nordic countries would like to present to the rest of Europe as a “best practice”? In other words what can other regions in Europe learn from the Nordic cooperation in higher education? Second: Are there institutional experiences in Nordic cooperation, or in internationalization in general, that can be regarded as best practice? Third: Are there aspects of the Open Method of Coordination that are especially compatible with these Nordic “best practices”? In our study at least one of the included institutions (the University of Aalborg) might be considered as a “best practice” in the Nordic area, while other case institutions have taken interesting initiatives that might be of relevance for other European institutions. Fourth: What should be the consequences of the Lisbon Agenda, the enlargement of the EU, and other developments with respect to European higher education, for the Nordic structures that were set up to support the Nordic cooperation in higher education? How can the Nordic Council of Ministers through HØGUT, for example, be made more active, more strategic, more innovative and more stimulating in order to make sure that the Nordic countries can operate effectively as a unity in international arenas? What kind of support structures are needed for linking the Nordic cooperation patterns and structures to cooperation structures in other European countries in such a way that the Nordic dimension is at least maintained, instead of diminished?

7. In the Nordic higher education institutions as in the rest of Europe the use of English as the “lingua franca” is increasing. This increase can be expected to continue, for example, because of the growing pressure on Nordic academics to publish in international (=English) journals; the growing involvement in research funded by the EU; the transition from a focus on small, independent national research projects to involvement in larger international projects; and new teaching patterns in the form of master programmes, with more textbooks and courses in English. It seems unrealistic that the clock can be turned back. This implies that the use of other

languages in addition to English has to be stimulated, instead of assuming that another language or set of languages can become an alternative lingua franca. This calls for multi-lingual teaching and cooperation environments with effective support measures, such as translation facilities during meetings, language and culture courses, and the financial and technical support for the translation of specific English articles and books into the Nordic languages.



# 1. Introduction

Fall 2001 the Nordic Council of Ministers through the *Styringsgruppe for nordisk samarbeid innen høgre utdanning* (HØGUT) asked NIFU STEP to produce an overview of recent developments with respect to the internationalisation of higher education. NIFU STEP handed in its report on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2001 (Trondal *et al.* 2001). Based on the findings and recommendations from the 2001 report HØGUT has invited NIFU STEP to conduct a follow up study aimed at a further analysis and refinement of the main issues at stake.

In this report the main general outcomes of the follow up study on internationalization are presented. Of special interest to the Nordic Council of Ministers was the relationship between Nordic cooperation in higher education and general internationalization trends in higher education. Therefore this report reflects in the first place briefly on the state of the art of the Nordic cooperation. In the second place the report discusses the challenges for this Nordic cooperation of the main current trends in the internationalization of higher education, with an emphasis on the trends in European higher education.

The remainder of this first section will be used for presenting the mandate of the study and reflecting upon some background issues with respect to internationalization that are of relevance for this study. After that we will begin with presenting the main arguments for Nordic cooperation in higher education, both the main formal from the Nordic Council of Ministers behind its cooperation programmes and other activities in the area of higher education, as well as the main arguments as perceived by the actors interviewed in the study. This discussion of the arguments for Nordic cooperation is of relevance in relationship to the Bologna Process that has had major effects on the national as well as the institutional level in the countries involved, including the Nordic countries. It is, amongst other

things, of importance to see whether the interest in Nordic cooperation in higher education has been affected by the Bologna Process.

The differences and similarities between the practical and formal arguments for the Nordic cooperation in higher education form one of the starting-points for the discussions in the rest of the report. Another starting-point is offered by the distinction between the “old” and the “new” internationalization (Trondal *et al.* 2001). After this we will present the main general outcomes of the national and the institutional case studies. In addition we will reflect upon some of the main trends in the internationalization of higher education and the possible consequences of these trends for the Nordic cooperation. Further we will discuss several practical aspects of the current functioning of the Nordplus programme. Finally some general conclusions will be presented, as well as a number of recommendations. The latter are intended to be of relevance for the policy debates at various levels with respect to the Nordic cooperation in higher education.

## 1.1 Mandate for the Study

In the mandate for the study it was indicated that HØGUT is interested in a closer analysis of the main underlying research problems and issues with respect to internationalization of higher education in the Nordic context. It is expected that this will help HØGUT in refining its future activities in the area in question. The analysis to be undertaken by NIFU STEP has to take the following points of view into account.

### *a) At the system / national level:*

- National authorities need more systematic information and data on various aspects of the new internationalization, amongst other things, from the perspective of the new European steering approach, i.e. the Open Method of Coordination (OMC).
- National authorities can be expected to prepare the legal and economic frameworks for both public and private institutions that offer higher education programs. This is more important than to make a distinction between national and foreign institutions, since partnerships, consortia, and various other forms of cooperation over the national borders

contribute to making the distinction between national and foreign institutions less important.

- National authorities should develop a framework for higher education that makes it possible for national and established educational institutions to compete on the same basis as the new actors in the field.

*b) At the institutional level:*

- Higher education institutions should develop a strategy and a plan with respect to how they want to handle the challenges of internationalization. A central element in this work will be to map how academic goals are affected by the growing importance of economic goals and the need to earn income through internationalization.

Taking these points of view as a starting-point NIFU STEP is expected to focus on what stimulates and what hampers Nordic cooperation.

Consequently the two main research questions of the project are:

1. How are academic goals of higher education institutions in general and of their internationalisation 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?

This study is focused on education. Research matters will only be discussed insofar as they are of relevance in the framework of the study, i.e. if including them adds to our understanding of the factors that hamper or encourage Nordic cooperation in higher education. The same goes for consultancy and service activities.

The study consisted of analyses of national internationalization policies and the developments with respect to internationalization at the level of the higher education institutions in the Nordic countries. For this purpose five national studies (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden) were conducted and nine institutional case studies (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 högskola in Sweden; and the University of Iceland in Iceland), which included interviews (with in total over 100 informants) and document analyses. These case studies form an important basis for this report, while also the literature and reports included in the list of references have been used extensively.

## 1.2 Changes in Internationalization

Overall the internationalization of higher education has gone through a period of rapid and far-reaching developments since the mid 1990s (Trondal *et al.* 2001; van Vught *et al.* 2002; van der Wende 2002; Gornitzka *et al.* 2003; Huisman and van der Wende 2004). National and regional/local interests have to be balanced more and more with the politically and economically driven internationalization trends with respect to public and private activities, including education and research. Therefore it is of relevance and importance for the Nordic authorities and the Nordic higher education institutions to discuss what these internationalization trends mean for the Nordic cooperation in higher education, and how Nordic cooperation compares to other forms of internationalization. This report will address the questions included in the project mandate presented above, through presenting a variety of views and perspectives that are held by some of the main actors in the practice of the Nordic cooperation in higher education, as well as through referring to the main literature and some policy papers addressing the changing nature of the internationalization of higher education.

The interpretation of what is coming towards individual Nordic and other European higher education institutions in the framework of the rapidly intensifying internationalization of higher education has changed rather dramatically over the last ten to fifteen years. Looking back ten years, the internationalization activities of European universities and colleges around the mid 1990s were in general still characterized by the efforts and enthusiasm of individual academics, who were at best supported by a moderate institutional infrastructure, in the form of, for example, a small central international office. In the meantime internationalization has become one of the driving forces behind the higher education policies of many countries, while also a growing number of higher education institu-

tions are emphasizing the importance of internationalization in their institutional policies and strategies. This distinction between the more “traditional” forms of internationalization and the new forms can be summarized as follows (Trondal *et al.* 2001; Huisman and van der Wende 2004):

1. The traditional core of internationalization consists of mobility of students and academic staff, in the first place at their own initiative. While the new forms of internationalization (see below) 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 programmes, national or institutional strategies, in other words without being steered by international, national or institutional actors or bodies.
2. The new internationalization consists of:
  - a) New student and staff mobility patterns funded and regulated through specific international or national programmes.
  - b) New geographical destinations for students and staff.
  - c) New forms of cooperation as part of formal institutional agreements.
  - d) New providers coming on 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.

A number of reasons can be mentioned for this growing importance of internationalization of higher education:

### *1. Changing Position of National Governments*

Governmental higher education reforms have become more focused on the expected effects of internationalization and globalization, where earlier the need for higher education institutions to modernize and be innovative, efficient and responsive in the national context was emphasized. 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 to the internationally dominant forms. In these forms stronger inter-institutional competition, more emphasis on institutional and individual performance, and the need to professionalize institutional leadership and management are the main elements.

### *2. Internationalization of Research*

The international state-of-the-art of knowledge in any area has become easier accessible thanks to new technologies and the media. The consequence of this has first been that international agreements concerning cooperation, specialization and division of labour in scientific research can be realized for more easily nowadays than in the recent past. But second, and more importantly, internationalization has either directly or indirectly become a condition for the public funding of research in most fields. Parallel to this in more and more fields “high-quality research” is identified with international research cooperation. There are many examples, e.g. the EU’s 6<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme, of the growing importance of structural international research cooperation for the prestige and funding of research.

Important characteristics of the internationalization of research in the Nordic countries are the growing number of cross-border agreements and cooperation projects, and the increasing number of foreign tenured and visiting staff employed by Nordic institutions. It has to be mentioned though that most of these academic staff are appointed in the area of technology. Especially social sciences and humanities are lagging behind in this.

### *3. Internationalization of Teaching Programmes*

- a) The internationalization/globalization of industrial production, labour markets, capital flows, media, the entertainment industry, etc., make it necessary for many higher education teaching programmes, also in the Nordic countries, to prepare their students for professional activities in an international/global, instead of a strictly national setting.
- b) Students have become more mobile, in the sense that more students are interested in getting a full degree abroad (see appendix 1), or take part of their credits abroad. In Europe the latter is stimulated by international mobility programmes, such as Erasmus and Nordplus, as well as by national governments' policies.
- c) The number of providers of higher education programmes that is 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.
- d) Also teachers have become more mobile, even though not to the extent as the students. Nonetheless, in many European countries the number of foreign staff appointments, both teaching and research staff, has grown, while also the number of short and long time visits of foreign staff has increased over the last ten years.
- e) With respect to internationalization of teaching it are the Anglo-Saxon countries (USA, UK, Australia and to a lesser extent Canada and New Zealand) that profit most from the growing international mobility of full-degree students. On the other side, 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 (e.g. through the Erasmus Mundus programme).



## 2. Main Arguments for Nordic Cooperation

All universities and colleges included in the study are involved in cooperation activities with other Nordic institutions. This Nordic cooperation is integrated into the general internationalization activities and structures of the involved institutions, but in most cases with a clearly identifiable separate position. The latter does, for example, mean in practice that one administrator is responsible for all “Nordic issues” in the internationalization office of an institution.

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 exceptions, since overall there was broad support for and appreciation of the 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 towards Nordic cooperation 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.

## 2.1 Respondents' View on Nordic Cooperation in Higher Education

Taking this general appreciation as a starting-point, the question can be raised what the main practical and formal arguments are for Nordic cooperation in higher education. For those involved in Nordic cooperation the answer to this question might be obvious, and from a political and bureaucratic perspective the arguments for Nordic cooperation might be taken-for-granted. However, given the rapidly changing nature of the international dimension in Nordic higher education as well as in the rest of Europe, we want to start this report by presenting some of the main practical and formal arguments for the Nordic cooperation in higher education.

The interviewees were asked to reflect upon what they felt were the main arguments for the special focus on *Nordic* cooperation in higher education. The main arguments given were:

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 “neighbours” 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 programmes from Non-Nordic programmes, and make cooperation obvious.
4. Especially in Denmark, Iceland and Norway, the size of the Nordic countries is mentioned as an issue. It is argued to make it difficult for the individual countries to be good in all academic fields.
5. Many students mentioned the relative safeness of the Nordic countries. Especially students with families who wanted to spend some time abroad saw this as a major pull factor for going to one of the other Nordic countries.

In addition, it has to be mentioned that for some “the common Nordic languages” form an argument in favour 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) is hampering Nordic cooperation. They prefer English as the language of

communication in Nordic cooperation. We will come back to the language issue later in the report.

## 2.2 Formal Rationale for Nordic Cooperation in Higher Education

How do these arguments given by actors in the practice of higher education compare to the “formal rationale” of the Nordic cooperation agreement as emphasized by the Nordic Council of Ministers? Without going in too much detail here the elements that are argued to shape the Nordic identity and as such form the rationale for Nordic cooperation in general are:

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

With respect to the Nordic dimension in higher education the Nordplus programme is aimed at creating a foundation for a Nordic interdependence in higher education. It has 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.

Main instruments for achieving these goals are student and staff stipends, and grants for short study visits as well as for the planning and implementation of cooperation networks. Priority is given, amongst other things, to small fields that would not survive without a joint foundation, to applications with a clear and balanced division of labour between the various par-

ticipants, and to applications that show a good balance between student– and staff exchange.

Looking at these formal arguments, goals, instruments and criteria it is clear that Nordic cooperation is in the first place aimed at strengthening the Nordic identity. Main arguments for a specific Nordic cooperation agreement for achieving this aim are geographical (“closeness”), cultural (“commonness”), political (“democratic tradition”), and social (“equality and welfare”). Higher education is seen as one of the instruments for helping to achieve the aim of a strengthened Nordic identity. The main goals of Nordplus are, for example, linked to the Nordic identity (*nordisk samhørighet*). In addition, Nordplus is driven to some extent by academic objectives.

### 2.3 Practical and Formal Arguments Compared

At the moment there is a large overlap between the arguments for Nordic cooperation mentioned in the practice of higher education, and the formal arguments. Specific Nordic geographical, cultural, political and social characteristics or certain academic aspects are underlying all practical and formal arguments for a Nordic cooperation programme in higher education. Obviously in the practice of higher education the academic arguments are emphasized more, while the notion of a Nordic identity is getting more attention in the formal rationale for Nordic cooperation. However, what is lacking in the set of arguments justifying Nordic cooperation in higher education are arguments related to the “new internationalization.” For example, economic arguments are not mentioned directly and explicitly, despite the formal importance of the link between higher education and the Nordic labour market. Only indirectly when referring to the Nordic characteristics of certain fields, such as nursing and pedagogics, some interviewees mentioned the labour market link. The competitive, and in some respects commercial orientation of the “new” internationalization is not an element in the Nordic cooperation at all, and there are no signs that it will become an explicit part in the near future. This is not to say that the governments of the Nordic countries are not recognizing the importance and relevance of the growing “economization” of the internationalization of higher education. However, there are no indications that any of the Nordic

governments is seeing the Nordic cooperation in higher education as an area where this commercial/economic dimension can or should be introduced. In this sense a policy distinction is growing between internationalization in higher education in the Nordic context, which continues to be driven by geographical, cultural, political, social, and academic motives, and internationalization of higher education in general, where more and more economic considerations have been introduced lately.



## 3. National Policies

### 3.1 Economic Versus Other Dimensions of Internationalization

While Nordic cooperation in higher education traditionally has been driven by a range of non-economic arguments, overall the economic dimension of internationalization is becoming more important in the national internationalization policies of at least three of the five Nordic governments. This is not (yet) visible at the institutional level, with one exception, one of the Danish case-institutions.

Of the five Nordic countries the Danish authorities have gone farthest in including economic aims in their internationalization policies with respect to higher education, followed by Norway. The position of Denmark in this can, amongst other things, be illustrated by pointing to the Danish ambitions of making their universities attractive for foreign, i.e. non-EU students and expecting of the universities that they charge tuition fees to non-EU students. Norway has made it clear in the WTO/GATS negotiations that it is in favour 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. The other three countries have not gone this far. 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”. It 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. For other reasons, also in Iceland the economic dimension of internationalization has not been put explicitly on the political agenda (yet).

It has to be stressed that while the economic aims of internationalization have become more explicit and more important in the Nordic countries, even in Denmark and Norway 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. But also in other European countries, such as the Netherlands and Belgium, the universities and colleges have been stimulated to “export” their teaching programmes. In discussing the economic dimension of the internationalization of higher education a distinction has to 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, including the ones mentioned above, 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 nowadays also graduation rates, play a role in the level of public funding individual public higher education institutions receive from the state. 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. This goes for national, EU, as well as non-EU students. In the funding models all students are treated equally, with one exception introduced recently. In Denmark the universities no longer receive funding through the “taxi-meter” model for non-EU students coming from countries with which the Danish government does not have a special agreement. As mentioned above the Danish universities are now expected to charge a tuition fee to these students.

With respect to the Nordic countries a specific indirect economic element in internationalisation 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 programmes. 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 programmes of Nordic students is regarded to be too low. This awareness can be observed in all the Nordic countries.

A related issue is that there are indications that some Nordic countries experience a mild form of “brain drain”, in the sense that each year they lose more university and college “degree holders” than they gain. However, there are no valid data with respect to this Nordic “brain drain”. It can be argued that it might be of relevance to examine this issue. First the extent to which there is an intra-Nordic area movement of degree-holders, and if so, to what extent this leads to a loss in some Nordic countries and a gain in others. Second, whether the Nordic area as a whole gains or loses degree holders. If the latter is the case it might be of relevance to investigate possible effects (socially as well as economically). If the former is the case, however, it might be of relevance to examine whether these incoming degree holders mainly come from the rest of Europe or other developed countries, or mainly from developing countries.

Finally also the regional dimension is of relevance. Throughout the Nordic area there is a movement of people, including higher education degree holders, from the rural to the urban areas (in general a move from North to South). Despite the policies and programmes of the national governments, the Nordic Council of Ministers and the EU, the population level in the North of the three largest (in a geographical sense) Nordic countries is still going down. There are of course a number of specific, successful efforts to stimulate the cooperation between the higher education institutions in the northern regions of the three involved countries. However, more drastic measures seem to be necessary if higher education is to contribute more directly to the creation of jobs and the efforts to make the social and cultural climate in the northern region more attractive.

### *3.1.1 “Aid” Dimension in Internationalization*

Another important element in the national internationalization policies is the “aid” element, i.e. “North–South” cooperation in higher education as part of developing aid programmes and policies. In table 1 it can, for example, be seen that in Denmark, Finland, and Norway the number of students formally enrolled in the institutions in these three countries coming from Africa is larger than the number of students coming from North America.

Given the national basis of the “aid” dimension, the fact that this dimension is not in the first place a responsibility of national Ministries of Education, and the fact that it is not included in the project mandate we will not discuss this dimension any further in this report. However, it can be emphasized here that 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, and that this dimension still plays an important role in international cooperation policies of the individual countries.

### 3.2 National Policy Aspects of Internationalization of Higher Education

Leaving the “aid” dimensions aside, and given the above considerations, what is the core of the national internationalization policies with respect to higher education of the Nordic countries? For answering this question it is of importance to make a distinction between the overall national policies with respect to internationalization in higher education, and the agreement concerning the Nordic cooperation in higher education.

The Nordic cooperation in higher education can be interpreted as a specific form of internationalization that can be called the “regionalization” of higher education. With the term “regionalization” we refer to the main aim of this specific form of internationalization, i.e. to strengthen the regional – in this case Nordic – dimension in higher education. In the case of the Nordic countries this regionalization of higher education is not an isolated policy approach, but it is an integral part of a general Nordic cooperation agreement, of which (higher) education and scientific research are important areas. In line with their commitment to the general Nordic cooperation agreement, the Nordic governments are promoting the Nordic cooperation in all relevant areas, including higher education, through their national policies. However, 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, using the above distinction between economic and non-economic arguments for

internationalization, the more internationalization of higher education at the national level is driven by economic arguments, 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 is not necessarily part of the national internationalization policy with respect to higher education.

### 3.3 Internal Versus External Nordic Orientation in Internationalization

This distinction between Nordic and national policy theories can to some extent be observed with respect to the national policies on the internationalization of higher education. Especially in Denmark, Finland and Norway, where internationalization of higher education has become an important policy issue, the Nordic cooperation in higher education is somewhat of a special case in the national internationalization policies with respect to higher education. One could argue that many involved see the Nordic cooperation in higher education not in the first place as an inter-national activity, but instead as an intra-regional activity. Also the existence of a supra-national institution, the Nordic Council of Ministers, which also has the responsibility for the overall coordination of the cooperation programme in higher education, adds to the perception that Nordic cooperation is a policy area on its own. Even though it has been linked to and seen as a part of national internationalization policies, still, from a national policy perspective Nordic cooperation represents “a world of its own” that has to be understood and analyzed accordingly.

However, the relatively internal orientation of the Nordic institutions does not imply that there are no joint externally oriented activities of the Nordic countries. The Norden Group, for example, was set up to inform foreign students about study opportunities in the five Nordic countries. The group has established a portal for this purpose, [www.nordenedu.et](http://www.nordenedu.et), aimed at providing better access for the general public to information on higher education in the Nordic countries. Funding for the implementation of the portal was provided by the Nordic Council of Ministers. However, this external orientation is a relatively new phenomenon that is not part of the activities of the Nordic Council of Ministers. It can be regarded as a derived activity from the main aim: strengthening the Nordic identity. The

Nordic Council of Ministers provided funding, but it is not part of the Norden Group, nor is any of the governments of the five Nordic countries directly involved.

In the practice of higher education the Nordic cooperation and the general internationalization of higher education are not always seen as separate worlds, with different rationales. For example, many students, staff members and institutions use Nordplus rather pragmatically without being concerned too much with the specific programme objectives. In general, many Nordic students want to spend some time abroad during their studies, and the choices made concerning the how and what of this stay abroad are made on the basis of personal and social deliberations. Only very few make a deliberate choice for a stay in another Nordic country on the basis of academic and cultural arguments in line with the formal rationale of the Nordic agreement. If you want to spend some time abroad as a student you need money, and if you cannot provide it yourself you have to use one of the available support programmes.

However, what has to be mentioned here is that while in the early 1990s in practice only Nordplus and Erasmus funds were available for Nordic students who wanted to study some time abroad, there are now many more programmes and funds available for internationally oriented students. From our institutional case-studies we have gotten the signal that the interest of Nordic students in studying some time at an institution outside Europe is growing the same time the interest for studying in Europe is decreasing (See also Universitas 2004<sup>1</sup>). At the same time the interest of students throughout the world to enrol as a degree student in a foreign institution is growing (see tables 1, 2, and 3 in appendix 1). For the Nordic countries this has as a consequence first that the number of incoming degree students is growing (see tables 1 and 3 in appendix 1), while also the number of Nordic students studying fully abroad is increasing (see table 2

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<sup>1</sup> In the newspaper of the University of Oslo it was reported recently that UiO has experienced a dramatic reduction in the number of its own students using formal exchange places (from 498 in 2001 to 270 in 2003). The reduction was especially strong in Erasmus places, where of the available 500 places only 168 had been used in 2003. The same development was reported from the University of Bergen that has experienced a reduction of interest in intra-European mobility since 1996. This is all the more dramatic in the light of the current Quality Reform in Norwegian higher education that intends to stimulate the number of exchange students at Norwegian universities and colleges. However, NTNU in Trondheim seems to have been able to change this trend through an active 'marketing campaign' for especially Erasmus places (Universitas 24 March 2004).

in appendix 1). In this Sweden and Denmark are “exporters” of higher education, implying that there are more foreign students studying in these two countries than the number of Swedish and Danish students studying abroad. The other three countries are importers of higher education, with Iceland as the obvious country that is “importing” most of its citizens’ demand for higher education. It has to be pointed to though that the relative number of Icelandic students studying abroad has steadily decreased throughout the years as a consequence of the quantitative and qualitative growth of the capacity of the Icelandic higher education system. Finland is relatively speaking the least active country in the higher education “import–export arena”, having the relatively lowest number of incoming full students and after Denmark the lowest percentage of its students studying abroad.

The cultural–political starting-points for stimulating cooperation in Nordic higher education, and the pragmatism in the practice of higher education are not necessarily counteracting each other. As will be discussed below Nordplus as the core of the formal Nordic cooperation activities is a successful programme that is much appreciated by students, staff and institutional administrators. It serves a purpose on two sides, in the sense that it stimulates cooperation in Nordic higher education through effective academic networks and student mobility as intended by the Nordic Council of Ministers. It also provides many students and to some extent staff members with the means to stay abroad in an academic environment for a while. Even though many students are not in the first place interested in the specific Nordic dimensions in this process, it can be assumed that (academic) time spent in another Nordic country contributes in one way or another to strengthening the Nordic dimension. In this respect the experiences with the Nordplus programme can be compared to the experiences with the EU student mobility programmes. Socrates/Erasmus evaluations have, for example, shown that most students are moderately satisfied with the academic dimension in the 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).

The distinction between national internationalization policies with respect to higher education and the Nordic cooperation agreement also came to the surface during the interviews. At the national level Nordic coopera-

tion in higher education is seen as an integral part of internationalization of higher education, but it is emphasized that Nordic cooperation fulfils different goals and has a distinct rationale when compared to what has been called the new internationalization of higher education. This “together, but separate” characterization was even stronger at the institutional level.

### 3.4 Nordic Cooperation and the European Dimension

#### *3.4.1 Nordic Cooperation and the European Union*

Norway is the country that appears to value the Nordic cooperation most. One of the main reasons is that the Nordic cooperation in higher education is seen as an instrument for strengthening the Nordic position in the EU. The assumption underlying this starting-point has traditionally been that the more the Nordic countries cooperate in higher education the more they are seen by the other EU member states and the European Commission and its staff as “one bloc”. The more the Nordic countries act and are regarded as “one bloc” the more influence they, at least potentially have. However, this traditional position needs to be reconsidered as a consequence of the enlargement of the EU with 10 new members (Nordic Council of Ministers 2003). The former Finnish prime minister Paavo Lipponen has, for example, in a recent interview (Aftenposten 2004) indicated that the relative influence of the Nordic countries in the enlarged EU will diminish if the institutions of the Nordic countries are not adapted. These institutions, including the Nordic Council of Ministers, have been established in another era to cover other needs, than the current needs in international cooperation the Nordic countries are facing, according to Lipponen. 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. As an example of the changing cooperation structures that are the result of the EU enlargement he suggests to include the three Baltic countries in the informal meetings the heads of government of Denmark, Finland and Sweden have before EU top meetings.

When looking at higher education this development Lipponen is referring to is in line with the fact that the EU membership of Denmark,

Finland, and Sweden has made it “natural” for the higher education institutions in these countries to regard cooperation possibilities with institutions in other EU member states as at least as important as cooperation possibilities with the institutions in the other Nordic countries. Especially the Finnish and Swedish higher education institutions included in our study seem to be even more interested in European cooperation than in specific Nordic cooperation.

### 3.4.2 *The Open Method of Coordination (OMC)*

The open method of coordination (OMC) has emerged in the EU context in recent years as a new policy instrument. Initially confined to employment as a policy area and developed as part of the preparation for the EMU, the OMC has been introduced in an increasing number of policy areas. The Lisbon European Council meeting represents a decisive moment in this. Not only was the OMC codified, but it also included several new areas, including education and research, where the OMC was to be applied. As such the European Commission has indicated that a “radically new process of co-operation has been launched in Europe in education and training areas” (Commission 2004: 5).

The Open Method of Coordination is pointed to as core instrument for achieving the ambitions of the EU in the area of education/ training. This method involves according to the Conclusions of the Lisbon European Council (meeting 23/24 March 2000 – paragraph 37):

- Fixing guidelines for the European Union combined with specific timetables for achieving the goals which they set in the short, medium and long terms.
- Establishing, where appropriate, quantitative and qualitative indicators and benchmarks against the best in the world and tailored to the needs of different Member States and sectors as a means of comparing best practice.
- Translating these European guidelines into national and regional policies by setting specific targets and adopting measures, taking into account national and regional differences.
- Periodic monitoring, evaluation and peer review organised as mutual learning processes.

Following the general Lisbon strategy, the Council of Education Ministers agreed in 2001 upon three broad strategic goals for European education and training systems: 1) improving the quality and effectiveness of education and training systems in the EU; 2) facilitating the access of all to education and training systems; and 3) opening-up education and training systems to the wider world. These were refined in 13 associated objectives (Council of European Union 2002) that cover the whole education system, with some of these objectives primarily concerning higher education.

The recent assessment of the progress of the EU towards attaining the objectives of “Education and Training 2010” concludes that unless urgent reforms are undertaken in the EU member states, the Union will not be able to attain the objectives set (Commission 2004, Council of the European Union 2004). Such urgent measures are also identified with respect to higher education, especially the need for a European qualifications framework and increasing mobility (Council 2004: 28–29). According to the logic of the OMC it is a national responsibility to take the measures necessary to reach the commonly agreed objectives. However, it is in the area of higher education that a set of common Nordic experiences and perspectives could offer important information to share with a wider European audience in processes activated in the framework of the OMC. This concerns the Nordic experiences within the area of increasing mobility through removing administrative and legal obstacles, and the Nordic cooperation that includes the Baltic States. The Nordic countries also have policies with comparable core values and approaches to higher education. This is very much in line with the aims the OMC processes in the EU in principle are expected to achieve.

Furthermore, in the area of education and training the EU level processes have not yet implemented the analysis of best practices that is a central element of the OMC template. The focus is still on the formulation and development of indicators and not on what member states can learn from it (Kaiser 2004). Consequently there is at present a momentum for bringing to the European level the best practices that may be contained in the long experiences of having a single higher education area in the Nordic countries (see also appendix 2). That would require an active and conscious strategy of Nordic policy makers to 1) formulate what they see as “good

Nordic experiences” and 2) disseminate them in a way that is relevant at the European level.

This opportunity is also more generally expressed by Maria João Rodrigues who claims in a recent interview (European Voice 2004) that “The Scandinavian countries” success in achieving competitiveness and social inclusion proves that the embattled “Lisbon Agenda” goals are realizable”. Rodrigues, who played a crucial role in drafting the EUs Lisbon strategy, and is an advisor to the European Commission, suggests that “the key question to Europe’s success is whether the “Nordic model” is exportable”. For Nordic higher education as a whole it implies that it should “proof” that it successfully has achieved competitiveness and social inclusion, and that the Nordic cooperation has contributed to this achievement. Here lies a nice task for the Nordic Council of Ministers to support the Nordic higher education systems in providing the necessary evidence.

Finally, with respect to the Lisbon process its decentralized nature is emphasised; a key feature of the OMC is the collective work that brings together “the Union, the Member States, the regional and local level as well as social partners and civil society” (Lisbon European Council, §37). The OMC is in principle not limited to promoting policy learning at the European and national levels, but is a method for generating a pool of knowledge and information from several levels and from various actors (Radaelli 2003). In the context of Nordic cooperation “local” knowledge has been gathered and recorded over the years. The OMC processes currently going on in the area of education and training represent at least in principle an opportunity for disseminating such information and thus possibly promoting “bottom up learning”.

### *3.4.3 The Nordic Cooperation and the Bologna Process*

With respect to the internationalisation of higher education in Europe few actions have been more influential than the signing of the Bologna Declaration in June 1999 by 31 national and regional Ministers of Education, other politicians and civil servants representing 29 European countries. Since than eight more countries have signed the declaration. The Bologna Process, which follows the signing of the Bologna Declaration, seeks to create a “European Higher Education Area” (EHEA) without barriers. The EHEA is expected to contribute to a higher goal, i.e. to strengthen Europe

as a unity, necessary for improving its competitive power compared to other parts of the world. This is supposed to contribute to economic progress, a better functioning labour market and a larger internal social cohesion. There is a commitment to implement a clear set of objectives and an accompanying action plan, which is embodied in the Process. The whole reform is supposed to be implemented in 2010 (cf. the section on the OMC).

The Bologna Declaration states that for establishing the European area of higher education and promoting the European system of higher education in the world, amongst other things, the following objectives will have to be attained:

- Adoption of a system of *easily readable and comparable degrees* in order to promote European citizens' employability and the international competitiveness of the European system of higher education.
- Adoption of a degree system based on *two cycles*.
- Establishment of a *system of credit transfer* – preferably based on the ECTS system.
- Promotion of *mobility* overcoming obstacles to the effective exercise of free movement for students and teachers, researchers and administrative staff.
- Promotion of *European co-operation in quality assurance* with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies.
- Promotion of the necessary *European dimensions* in higher education, particularly with regards to curricular development, inter-institutional cooperation, mobility schemes, and integrated programmes of study, training and research.

It can be stated that a common Nordic Higher Education Area already exists (see e.g. appendix 2). As such the aims of the Bologna Process, creating an open European higher education area, have been realized in the Nordic region. However, while the Bologna process is aimed at taking away structural barriers for European cooperation in higher education, the Nordic cooperation was 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.

Since the signing of the Bologna Declaration many meetings have taken place at which the Bologna Process has been discussed. The European Ministers of Education met in Prague (2001) and Berlin (2003), and will meet in Bergen in 2005 for discussing the “Bologna developments” and the measures that need to be taken to make sure that the main Bologna objectives are realized in 2010. One of the agreements reached in Prague was a call for more Joint Degrees, which is also one of the aims of the Erasmus Mundus programme. However, while in a number of countries joint degrees already play an important role in realizing certain goals, in the Nordic countries the support for joint degrees at the institutional level is extremely low (Reichert and Tauch 2003, p. 79). If the Nordic countries do not want to be “left behind” in the development of joint degrees and joint curricula the Nordic authorities should put this topic high on the joint Nordic policy agenda.

Also European university and college leaders and student bodies have met at various occasions, for example, in Graz (Reichert and Taub 2003), for reflecting upon the Bologna Process. The Nordic university leaders met in Tromsø in August 2002 “to discuss the challenges of the Bologna process to the higher education systems of the Nordic countries and ways for Nordic higher education to contribute to the Pan-European process with and Bologna process based on: mutual understanding between governments and universities” (Nordic University Leaders 2002).

The core issue according to the so-called Tromsø Statement is that the Bologna process must be focused on recognition, not on harmonization. In addition it should be a process of convergence, not of uniformity. The main challenge for the involved authorities is to prevent harmonization and uniformity/homogeneity, and to maintain and protect diversity.

The other issues included in the Tromsø Statement represent the general European university leadership interpretation of the Bologna process, as well as more specific Nordic dimensions. Among the first are that the university leaders expect the authorities to respect institutional autonomy (in line with the Magna Charta Universitatum of 1988). Further that the university leaders with regards to the Gats negotiations support the statement in the Prague Communiqué that higher education is a public good.

More specific Nordic aspects are the emphasis on the involvement and participation of students in the governance of higher education institutions and the emphasis on the importance of lifelong learning. In addition, the Nordic university leaders want to make the Nordic Space for Higher Education an area of easy transition. A first level degree from any Nordic country should be accepted as a sufficient condition for a second level degree in any other Nordic country, not only formally but also in practice. Further it was indicated that there is a shared understanding of academic quality and quality assurance in the Nordic countries. The Nordic university leaders would like to develop a Nordic platform for quality assurance in higher education. It is important that this work is done in collaboration between the national agencies in this field, the higher education institutions and the students. The university leaders proposed a plan according to which these three partners – on a Nordic basis – report on their efforts every second year to assess their successive achievements. Finally, from the perspective of the Open Method of Coordination it is of potential relevance that the Nordic university leaders have stated that they want to contribute to mutual recognition and convergence in the Nordic Area and are willing to share their experiences with regional networks in other parts of Europe as well as with other regions of the world. A first example is the co-operation with the Baltic Rectors' Conferences in a Nordic–Baltic Space of Higher Education. As such this part of the Nordic cooperation in higher education can be promoted as a “best practice” in the rest of Europe.

In appendix 2 the reader can find the text describing the Nordic cooperation in higher education as included in the Tromsø Statement.

### 3.5 The Role of Language in Nordic Cooperation

The “cultural core” of the Nordic countries is formed by Denmark, Norway and Sweden. What is meant here is that for these countries their languages are regarded as a kind of natural bridge for cooperation in higher education. In these countries most interviewees did not seem to be overly concerned with the difficulties Finnish and Icelandic citizens have with the three “core languages”. A number of interviewees in Iceland and Finland indicated that this lack of understanding of the problems the use of the three “core languages” gives in Nordic communication and cooperation

might be regarded in certain respects as a potential barrier with respect to Nordic cooperation. Certainly when Nordic cooperation is going to be more integrated with other forms of internationalization, and when it is going to be driven more by national than supra-national arguments, it might be worth to consider using a “neutral” language as the official language of communication for Nordic cooperation. However, it is not unlikely, as indicated by some of the interviewees, that such a measure in the end will negatively affect the level of cooperation in higher education between Denmark, Norway, and Sweden.

As is indicated in the report by Reichert and Taub (2003 p. 150) linguistic matters are neglected in the Bologna Process. While a lot of progress has been made in terms of structural convergence, greater transparency of national higher education offerings and degree structures, portability of national grants, language barriers still have a negative effect on student mobility. Given the absolute and relative low number of students from other Nordic countries studying in Finland (table 1 in appendix 1) it can be argued that the language barrier also affects the mobility patterns of the Nordic students (see Nordic Council of Ministers 2002). This can also be illustrated by the figures presented in table 2 (appendix 1) that indicate that the two most popular countries for Danish students were in 2001 Great Britain and the USA, for Norwegian students Great Britain and Australia, and for Swedish students Great Britain and the USA. The language issue undoubtedly also plays a role in the mobility patterns of countries from Finland and Iceland. The most popular destination for Finnish students is Sweden, followed by Great Britain, and for Icelandic students it is Denmark, followed by the USA. Here there is a clear challenge for the Nordic authorities to take measures to safeguard the linguistic and cultural diversity of the Nordic area and let not English become (if one has not already to use the word remain instead!), the dominant language in international teaching activities. This challenge implies at the national level, amongst other things, that incoming students should be integrated more with the national students, that (obligatory?) language and cultural courses should be developed for the incoming foreign students, and that the development of multi-linguistic learning environments within the Nordic institutions should be stimulated.

The complexity of the issue can be further illustrated by referring to the controversies arising in 2003 around the intention of the Danish govern-

ment to demand that Swedish and Norwegian students speak Danish before allowing them to study medicine in Denmark. This intention in itself shows that the “Nordic ideal of promoting inter-linguistic understanding” can be made subservient to specific political–economic needs of one of the Nordic countries involved. In this case the wish of the Danish government to limit the number of applicants for and drop outs in the medical study programmes.

It is of relevance to take the language diversity of the Nordic countries and the realities of the cooperation intentions with the Baltic states and Russia/St. Petersburg (as in Nordplus Neighbour) as a starting-point. This should allow for a more flexible approach towards language, implying, for example, that the “appropriate” language for communication in cooperation projects would be dependent on the nature of the project. This would imply, for example, the use of one “neutral” language (most likely English), in some cases combined with one or more “common” languages, as in the case of Finnish – Estonian cooperation.

### *3.5.1 Teaching of Nordic Languages*

The agreement between the Nordic countries to more or less “guarantee” that the languages of all Nordic countries will be taught at the university level in all Nordic countries were regarded by some of the interviewees as rather rigid and inefficient, given that some of these programs enrol very few students. An alternative could be to support students interested in studying another Nordic country’s language to actually do this language study in the country in question.

## 4. Institutional Level

### 4.1 Organization of Institutional Administrative Structures

In all the case-institutions in the study, the growing importance of internationalization is, amongst other things, visible in the institutionalization at the central institutional level of internationalization structures, functions and responsibilities. For some institutions this has happened recently, for others some time ago. For some institutions this implies a large central structure with various sub-units and many administrative staff members, while for one institution it means having one person in the central administration responsible for international affairs. In this institution the knowledge on and use of Nordplus was limited, to say the least.

In practice having a central internationalization office can be expected to mean that the central administration is in one way or another trying to support, if not influence the internationalization activities of the academic staff in certain ways. However, despite having a central office or other central institutional structure for internationalization, not all institutions have clear and consistent strategies on the basis of which this supporting and influencing takes place. As a consequence, some of the institutional internationalization activities seem to be inconsistent and “ad-hoc”, while in many institutions the internationalization aims are more rhetorical than real.

There is an interesting variety between the institutional case-studies with respect to their level of formal involvement in international activities, and the nature of these activities. “Internationalization” does not carry the same, uniform meaning across our case-institutions. It can be argued that the lack of institutional strategies concerning internationalization is related to the relative weak role institutional leadership, administration and management traditionally played in Nordic institutions. An important consequence of this variety is that homogeneous, uniform policies and policy

instruments for steering and stimulating the internationalization of higher education in the Nordic countries will not have the expected effects. What is needed is diversified, flexible policies and policy instruments that relates to the institutional diversity.

#### *4.1.1 Relationship Between Administration and Academia in Internationalization*

In general there is a certain amount of tension in every included institution between the central level and decentral academic units. While internationalization was traditionally an academic responsibility, it is now felt by many academics that the central administration is unnecessarily “interfering” in their affairs. However, this tension should not be overemphasized, since most academics also more or less expect a stimulating and supporting role of the central administration when it comes to internationalization. Many academic staff members realize that the international arena, including all policies and programmes aimed at supporting international cooperation, has become so complex that a certain level of competency is needed in any higher education institution in order to profit optimally from the opportunities offered in this arena. This competency has preferably to be developed by administrative staff members, either somewhere centrally in the institution, or centrally in the large units such as faculties.

Many international activities in higher education still are the result of personal initiatives and contacts of individual academic staff members. However, for a structured and effective use of the national and international infrastructure set up for supporting international activities in higher education, including programmes such as Nordplus, academic staff members have to cooperate closely with institutional administrators. Nonetheless, despite the recognition that cooperation between academics and administrators in this area is indispensable, as indicated the cooperation in practice is not without tensions. Again in many institutions one of the main reasons for this is the lack of a clear and transparent institutional strategy on internationalization. Consequently the institutional administrative support structure for internationalization is not offering the concentrated competency needed, but consists of a number of individual administrators each with his/her own responsibilities and his/her area(s) of interest, and. While overall these administrators are competent, motivated and well-informed,

the lack of a clear institutional strategy leads in many institutions to situations in which the institutional goals of internationalization are not clear to all involved, the competencies of the administrators not necessarily in line with the needs inside the institution, and the needs inside the institution not always well communicated with the institutional leadership and administration. Therefore it can be recommended that all institutions develop a clear and transparent institutional strategy with respect to internationalization, a strategy that is well-known inside the institution and “owned” by the institutional staff members. Such a strategy will provide a frame within which the necessary institutional competency in internationalization aspects can be developed in an efficient and effective way. This would allow the administrators and academics to operate more as teams in internationalization activities.

## 4.2 Other Issues

### *4.2.1 Circumstances Influencing Nordic Student Mobility*

In general there are no serious political or economic circumstances that affect the Nordic mobility of students negatively. As indicated above and illustrated by the Tromsø statement (appendix 2) the Nordic higher education area is a reality. The traditional differences between the Nordic countries in the degree program structures lead to some practical inconveniences in areas such as the recognition of (especially professional) degrees, recognition of credits, etc. However, these traditional differences in the structures of the degree programs can be expected to mostly disappear as a consequence of the introduction of the Bachelor / Master degree structure as part of the implementation of the Bologna Declaration.

However, the paradox resulting from the Bologna Process is that the creation of a European Higher Education Area also eliminates barriers for a closer cooperation between the Nordic countries and the other countries involved. 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 in their internationalization activities in the first place on the Nordic countries? (see data in appendix 1).

#### *4.2.2 Danish and Norwegian Attempts to Influence Institutional Behaviour*

All institutions involved emphasize the academic, and to a lesser extent cultural and social dimension of internationalization. With the exception of one Danish institution the case-institutions are very reluctant to “economize” their internationalization activities, in the sense of seeing internationalization as a source of income. Nonetheless, the national governments in Denmark and Norway are trying to move the institutions in this direction. The Danish government, for example, by expecting the Danish universities to charge tuition fees to non-EU students. The Norwegian government by including in the proposed new higher education budget model institutional premiums for incoming and outgoing students with in both cases a minimum duration of three months. This latter means a direct stimulus for the Norwegian institutions to maximize the number of students that is using formal exchange programmes and student mobility programmes such as Socrates/Erasmus and Nordplus, because the premium is only given to organized, formal forms of student exchange, and not for “free-movers.” It is too early to say anything definite yet about the effects of this stimulus, but given that these premiums are rather small it can be doubted whether there will be any far-reaching changes in the internationalization practices in Norwegian universities and colleges. In addition, as indicated above, the Norwegian students seem to prefer more and more to spend some time at a non-European higher education institution instead of European one.

#### *4.2.3 International Mobility of Students and Staff*

In most institutions at any given time the number of students who are internationally mobile as part of their studies is limited, i.e. hardly more than 10%. However, if one looks at the number of graduates that has spent part of their studies abroad, the percentage varies between 20 and 40% at most of the larger institutions. At the smaller institutions this percentage is in general much lower.

There are clear policy intentions in some countries to raise this number overall. The Finnish Ministry of Education has, for example, included in its new higher education policy programme the intention that 1 in 3 Finnish

higher education students should take part of their studies abroad<sup>2</sup>. However, even if that goal would be realized it would still mean that 2 in 3 Finnish students would not take part of their studies abroad. Given that internationalization of higher education does not only refer to student mobility, how do Nordic institutions, for example, create an international atmosphere in the institution from which also the non-mobile students will profit? In this respect there are clear differences between the case-institutions. For one institution internationalization is a relatively marginal activity that hardly goes beyond the mobility of some of the students, and the contacts of individual staff. Another unique case is the University of Iceland that is still in the process of moving from being mainly an undergraduate teaching institution towards becoming a research university with graduate programmes in various fields. However, given the characteristics of the Icelandic society it is very unlikely that the university will in the foreseeable future become a comprehensive research university with a full range of undergraduate and graduate programmes in all fields. As a consequence the university has to be internationally oriented in nature, with effective connections with foreign universities in order to be able to offer its students and staff optimal study and research possibilities. The remaining case-institutions aim at developing an international atmosphere in their institution, amongst other things, through attracting international students and staff and integrating them in the institution in an effective way. Below we will discuss the neglect of the internationalization of the academic staff of higher education institutions.

#### *4.2.4 Location of institutions*

With respect to the realization of these internationalization intentions two additional factors were mentioned in the interviews. The first is the location of the institution. Institutions in larger urban areas in general have a broader and more ambitious internationalization strategy than institutions in more remote, rural areas. The Øresund University, for example, has created a viable regional Nordic cooperation between 14 Danish and Swedish universities offering joint degrees and more study possibilities for students in the Øresund Region (Maskell and Törnqvist 1999). As indicated

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<sup>2</sup> This is an ambitious intention given that at the moment less than 5% of the students overall take part of their studies abroad.

this does not necessarily mean that these strategies are more coherent and transparent. However, it does mean that the “urban institutions” tend to see the whole world as their internationalization area, while non-urban institutions in general are more interested in internationalization possibilities in their region (Reichert and Taub 2003). Examples of the latter are the cooperation structures in higher education in the North of the Nordic countries (Finland, Norway, Sweden) and in the mid-Norway/Sweden region.

#### *4.2.5 Universities Versus Colleges*

A second factor mentioned is the difference between (research) universities and colleges. Even though most colleges are involved in research, publicly funded basic research is still concentrated in the universities. Since most bottom-up international cooperation activities are based on research, universities in general have no trouble finding appropriate international cooperation partners. On the other hand colleges, and especially “rural colleges” have a problem attracting high quality students and staff from abroad, outside those areas of specialization where they have an international reputation. National governments in general do not take this diversification (urban – rural, university – college) into account in their internationalization policies with respect to higher education.

#### *4.2.6 Foreign Staff at Nordic Institutions*

A further factor influencing the effectiveness of institutional policies aimed at creating an international atmosphere is the possibility of attracting foreign staff. In general temporary foreign staff members are not able or willing to spend a long time at a Nordic institution. Most temporary foreign staff members spend either less than a week, or between 4 and 12 weeks at a Nordic institution. A recent study among full-time foreign staff members at Norwegian universities (Nerdrum *et al.* 2003, p. 27) shows that the main single factor attracting foreign staff members is a relationship with a Norwegian partner. This goes for more than 30% of this group. Two additional sets of factors of importance are first factors related to professional circumstances, salary and career possibilities, and second, having come to Norway originally to study. As far as we know no comparable, research-

based information is available on the reasons for foreign staff to work full-time for universities (or colleges) in the other Nordic countries.

However, given the relatively low number of foreign staff with a full-time position overall in the Nordic higher education systems, and the crucial role of foreign staff in developing an international atmosphere (as well as in strengthening the quality of Nordic higher education), internationalization policies at all relevant levels in the Nordic countries (institutional, national, supra-national) should be aimed more than is the case now at making a longer stay at a Nordic institution of higher education attractive for foreign academics. This goes for academics from other Nordic countries, but especially for academics from outside the Nordic countries.

This issue represents not uniquely a Nordic problem. Also the other European countries involved in the Bologna Process have largely neglected the issue of facilitating a truly European wide recruitment of academic teachers (Reichert and Taub 2003, p. 149). Reichert and Taub plea for making this issue a central one in the creation of the EHEA, and giving it greater attention in the next phases of the Bologna Process. Questions such as: How can higher education institutions be encouraged to internationalise their academic staff recruitment procedures? What obstacles to long-term staff mobility must be overcome in terms of health insurance, pension rights, etc., should therefore be included in the preparation to Bergen 2005.



## 5. Nordplus

Nordic cooperation is, of course, including many more activities than the organised exchange and cooperation activities funded through Nordplus. Nonetheless, given that all institutions involved in the study are receiving funding through the Nordplus programme we want to discuss in this section various aspects of and experiences with Nordplus.

The experiences in the included institutions with Nordplus are in general very positive. It has to be emphasized that overall this positive attitude towards Nordplus has to do with the stimulus it gives individual academics to use their own networks for Nordic cooperation activities.

There is a certain amount of complementary as well as competition between Nordplus and the Erasmus/Socrates programme of the EU. The individual student who is interested in staying abroad as part of his/her academic studies is in general using the programme that is either best fitting or most profitable. In all countries the Nordplus grants are now higher per student than the EU grants, but at the same time there are more EU grants awarded.

Two issues are of relevance when making an assessment of the way Nordplus works in practice. First the formal responsibility within the institution with respect to the administration of the program. In general central institutional administrators would prefer to centralize the administration for Nordplus, while the academic staff prefers the current possibility of applying for funding on an individual basis.

The advantages of having a central administrative responsibility are the possibility of including Nordplus in a more detailed way in an institutional strategy with respect to internationalization, having a greater uniformity in the Nordplus applications in the institution, and getting a better insight into the size and nature of the Nordic cooperation activities at the central level

in the institution. This would all potentially increase the efficiency of the use of Nordplus.

The main advantage of a decentral, individualized approach is the flexibility it gives to the academic staff and students involved. In addition it can be argued that the direct access of academics to Nordplus improves the attractiveness of the programme for academic staff members, while it also makes the use of Nordplus more effective compared to an administrative responsibility. Therefore, it is important to develop a balance between a central coordination responsibility and a decentralised academic responsibility.

The second issue concerns the conditions of Nordplus. The program is currently aimed at stimulating longer periods of stay abroad of students (between 3 months and 1 year). While this is supported by many of the academic staff interviewed, also the signal was heard that it would be appreciated if Nordplus could be made more flexible by making shorter periods of stay of students in another Nordic country eligible for funding.

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. However, most interviewees indicated that the longer stay possibility should remain the core of the programme.

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 programmes, Nordic history programmes, specialisations in various fields, such as in law, (Nordic) political science, (Nordic) business and geology. It can be argued that for these programmes the requirement should be that all students are obliged to spend part of their studies at another Nordic institu-

tion. 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 labour market dimension, in the sense that there is a great mobility of graduates from these programmes on the Nordic labour 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.

These cultural intentions are also visible in the newly introduced Nordplus Neighbour programme. Nordplus Neighbour is aimed at developing long-term network cooperation between the Nordic countries and countries in the adjacent areas, in education and training, i.e. from primary school to university level. The group of adjacent countries include Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Northwest Russia (St Petersburg). While the national authorities involved are strongly in favour of this cooperation with the neighbours' programme, the Nordic institutions involved in our study were somewhat more sceptical. 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 favour 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. Baltic academics were argued to profit more from an inclusion in larger, more diverse European networks, than from an inclusion in Nordic – Baltic networks prioritising, amongst other things, cultural themes that might be more of relevance to the Nordic dimension than the current needs of the Baltic countries.

An alternative approach would be to make funds available for Baltic researchers who want to join teaching or research projects or networks coordinated by Nordic institutions, or with at least a strong involvement of Nordic academics.



## 6. Conclusions and Recommendations

### 6.1 Main General Conclusions

Nordic cooperation in higher education is a specific form of internationalization in higher education that is successful and appreciated highly by most actors involved. The supra-national stimulation and coordination of Nordic cooperation in higher education, amongst other things, through the Nordplus programme, has led to a high level of cooperation in higher education in the Nordic countries. The institutions covered in the study are in principle positive towards continued and strong Nordic cooperation.

However, the world of higher education is changing rapidly. At various levels the economic role of higher education is stimulated, amongst other things, by giving this economic dimension, including the recruitment of foreign students from a labour market perspective, a more prominent place in the national policies with respect to the internationalization of higher education. The latter is an element in the new internationalization (Trondal *et al.* 2001). The Nordic countries should be aware that both outgoing as well as incoming students are important for the internationalisation of the Nordic universities and colleges. Therefore, both should be promoted.

Also the growing political attention for “trade in higher education”, for example, in the WTO/GATS negotiations, is a sign of this “economization” of the international dimension in higher education. It will be clear that this trend potentially also will affect the Nordic cooperation in higher education which traditionally has been driven by cultural, geographical, political, academic and social considerations, and not so much by explicit economic motives.

Given the structural strength of the Nordic cooperation there is no need for being too worried about the effects of the economic dimension of the new internationalization on the Nordic cooperation. However, there are a num-

ber of considerations that the national and supra-national authorities responsible for policies and programmes aimed at stimulating Nordic cooperation in higher education could take into account when reviewing, refining and rethinking their policies and programmes and considering how to keep them in line with the main developments and trends in the practice of higher education, especially the Bologna-process. Before these are sketched, a short summing up of the study can be done.

## 6.2 Current Status for The Nordic Cooperation in Higher Education

- Nordic higher education institutions are all interested in Nordic cooperation in higher education, but are to varying degree paying attention to this dimension in their daily operations.
- The formal rationale for Nordic cooperation is still built on political and cultural arguments. The extensive use of native languages during cooperative efforts has traditionally strengthened this dimension.
- Much diversity can be found among the institutions with respect to the scope, level, intensity and ability to participate in Nordic cooperation, as well as in international activities in general.
- The Nordplus programme is by the institutions seen as a success, and is much appreciated. No barriers or big problems can be identified related to this programme.
- The Nordic area is not a homogeneous region. This also goes for the Nordic cooperation, and the attractiveness of the higher education institutions in the Nordic countries for Nordic and non-Nordic students. The relative number of foreign students in Sweden is, for example, more than twice as high as in Denmark and Finland.

## 6.3 Current Challenges for Nordic Cooperation in Higher Education

- The Bologna Process offers opportunities and threats to the Nordic cooperation in higher education. While the Bologna Process removes barriers and intends to create a European Higher Education Area, some

of the basic foundations for Nordic cooperation are now extended to the whole European region. This can make Nordic cooperation less relevant on one side, but opens also up for strengthening Nordic cooperation within Europe.

- Given the currently emphasised method of implementation of the Lisbon Strategy of the EU, i.e. the Open Method of Coordination, an opportunity has emerged for profiling the Nordic cooperation in higher education as an exemplary (=“best practice”) cooperation form in Europe.
- There is a need to assist institutions that are lagging behind in their internationalisation efforts, without assuming the needs of these institutions are the same as the needs of the internationally very active and visible institutions.
- The challenges and diversified status and needs of institutions with respect to internationalisation/Nordic cooperation, calls for innovations at the policy-making and systemic level so that the strong position Nordic cooperation has can be maintained.

## 6.4 The Way Forward – Suggestions for Policy Action

Based on the previous points, Nordic cooperation must at the same time consolidate and innovate using a mixture of measures that builds on the past while adjusting to the future. Some suggestions and illustrations of possible instruments are given below.

### *6.4.1 More diversity and flexibility*

With the growing interest in the international dimension of higher education, on the side of the policy makers as well as on the side of the staff and students of the higher education institutions, also the aims and intentions with respect to internationalization of all stakeholders involved have become more diversified. This diversification should preferably be translated into the policies and programmes aimed at stimulating internationalization of higher education. This also applies to the Nordic cooperation in higher education. An example could be to make Nordplus more flexible in a number of ways, amongst other things, by allowing shorter periods of stay of

students with a clear academic aim to be funded through the programme. Another element in this is the differentiation between institutions, with respect to their nature and mission, as well as with respect to their location. One could, for example, imagine Nordic cooperation at various sub-levels such as regional, efficiency oriented cross-border cooperation, cooperation between urban institutions (e.g. Oslo – Gothenburg, and institutional cooperation in Øresund region), and cooperation along specific Nordic academic dimensions. Other options are:

- Establish a Nordic virtual university that could offer institutions currently lagging behind a place to reach out in the Nordic and international “market”. Such an institution could be set up in different ways, but most easily as a conglomerate of existing Nordic higher education institutions. A Nordic virtual university would also be promoting Nordic cooperation internationally, and could stimulate the establishment of joint degree programs in Nordic higher education.
- The Nordplus programme could also support students intending to take shorter modules as part of new bachelor/master programs emerging as a result of the Bologna-process. Such an initiative would support the Bologna-process, but would benefit the Nordic countries in particular.
- As shown in both current reports about the status of the implementation of Bologna-process, and in the institutional case-studies in this study, teacher mobility is a neglected area, and therefore an area with much potential for improvement. By stronger supporting teacher mobility and international teacher recruitment, the advantage is that internationalization is “brought to” the institutions, and that non-mobile students can also benefit from Nordic/international cooperation.

#### *6.4.2 Clearer Strategies*

Higher education institutions have to be prepared for the challenges of the future. This is a cliché, but it contains an important recommendation also for Nordic institutions. Now 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 shown in the case-studies, can have many purposes and 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.

- There is a need for a coordinating mechanism that can link and integrate institutions with different strategic interests. In addition there is a need to give support to the development of institutional networks in the Nordic countries related to various cooperation/internationalization issues. This coordination should take place at the supra-national (=Nordic) level.
- A result coming out of such networks could be “joint Nordic study programs” in various academic fields or in areas of particular interest to the Nordic cooperation. At the policy/systemic level, incentives for institutions interested in developing such joint programmes could be seen as a first step. Joint study programs could on the one side further stimulate Nordic integration, but could also be a instrument for profiling the Nordic region in Europe, and the rest of the world.
- Research has shown the many difficulties foreign students meet when arriving in a new country. Developing a knowledge structure on the Nordic level that collects, analyse and advise institutions on the practicalities of Nordic cooperation/internationalization could not only highlight “best practice”, but also be of great assistance to institutions that currently are lagging behind.

#### *6.4.3 BetterLinkage*

Nordic cooperation in higher education is a special form of internationalization in higher education, but it does not stand on its own. Internationalization can have various purposes, such as improving the quality of teach-

ing 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. This relates directly to the previous recommendations and implies a careful and mutual adjusting of the options available. The options sketched can be designed to fulfil 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 even be integrated, but therefore a more flexible support structure for Nordic cooperation is needed. The question can be raised, in line with the general arguments put forward by Lipponen (Aftenposten 2004), whether the advisory committees (such as HØGUT) and other support structures in the area of higher education in their current form are the appropriate bodies for handling the new internationalization challenges that are facing the Nordic higher education institutions, and whether they can play the innovative bridging role in the direction of an enlarged EU. As indicated by Lipponen (Aftenposten 2004) it is not the Nordic cooperation as such that needs to be rethought, since it is also by others (e.g. Rodrigues in European Voice 2004) considered to be effective, if not a “best practice” in Europe. It are the institutional support structures (including HØGUT) that seem to be 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. As indicated above, what is needed is a support structure that can assist Nordic higher education in creating new teaching and research activities and structures, e.g. Nordic teaching programmes leading to a joint degree, and specific Nordic programmes in fields with a strong Nordic tradition and dimension. These new activities and structures should make Nordic higher education more attractive for Nordic and non-Nordic students, and should make Nordic higher education institutions attractive cooperation partners inside as well as outside Europe.

Consequently it can be 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 programme-based, and more innovative and needs oriented.

Finally it should be obvious that to decide upon the future profile of Nordic cooperation is not a technical, but a political question. Again, and it cannot be emphasized enough, this profile should do justice both to the diverse, internal needs of the Nordic higher education institutions, and the challenges posed by the rapidly changing environment of the Nordic area, both near in the Baltic Sea area, and farther away in an enlarged EU.



# Sammendrag

Denne rapporten er et sammendrag av en større studie som Nordisk Ministerråd gjennom HØGUT (Styringsgruppen for nordisk samarbeid innen høyere utdanning) har bestilt av NIFU STEP. Hensikten med studien har vært å analysere:

- I hvilken grad og på hvilken måte nordiske utdanningsinstitusjoner er påvirket av markeds- og effektivitetstenkning i deres strategier for internasjonalisering
- Hvilke faktorer som bidrar til eller eventuelt hindrer nordisk samarbeid i forhold til internasjonalisering av høyere utdanning

Studien har et spesielt fokus på høyere utdanning, der forskning kun trekkes inn der dette er relevant for utdanningsaktiviteten. Datamaterialet inkluderer analyser av nasjonal politikk på internasjonaliseringsområdet i Danmark, Finland, Island, Norge og Sverige, men er først og fremst en studie av hvordan et utvalg på 9 nordiske utdanningsinstitusjoner arbeider i forhold til internasjonalisering. Rundt 100 informanter ved disse 9 institusjonene utgjør hovedtyngden av datamaterialet. En egen referansegruppe sammensatt av personer fra de fem nordiske landene har bidratt til kvalitetssikringen av arbeidet.

Hovedkonklusjonen i studien er at nordisk samarbeid har vært og er en velfungerende internasjonaliseringsaktivitet høyt verdsatt av majoriteten av informantene på et generelt grunnlag (for en detaljert gjennomgang av det empiriske grunnlaget for denne studien se rapport .....). De kulturelle, geografiske, politiske, akademiske og sosiale motiv for fortsatt nordisk samarbeid synes fremdeles å stå sterkt. De politiske initiativ som er tatt innenfor eksempelvis Nordplus samarbeidet har også bidratt til et høyt aktivitetsnivå når det gjelder hvordan nordisk samarbeid er operasjonalisert

i de nordiske land. Samtlige institusjoner som er studert er positive til nordisk samarbeid i fremtiden.

Samtidig er høyere utdanning i endring, og det er mulig å se at man – på ulike nivåer – vektlegger økonomiske motiver sterkere når internasjonalisering kommer på dagsorden. Dette kan på sikt kunne ha negative konsekvenser for samarbeidet, selv om de etablerte båndene som er dannet mellom de nordiske land nok i umiddelbar fremtid vil dempe de mest markante utslag en mer økonomisk motivert samarbeidslinje kan tenkes å ha. Generelt synes status for nordisk samarbeid å være at:

- Nordiske utdanningsinstitusjoner er generelt positive til nordisk samarbeid, men der de i svært ulike grad har sin oppmerksomhet knyttet til et slikt samarbeid i sitt daglige arbeid med internasjonalisering
- Motivene knyttet til nordisk samarbeid er fremdeles sterkt orientert i retning av politiske og kulturelle. Muligheten til å bruke de nordiske språk i det nordiske samarbeidet har bidratt til å styrke denne dimensjonen
- Det eksisterer store forskjeller mellom institusjonene med hensyn til deres intensjoner, omfang, intensitet og evner til å delta i nordisk samarbeid, og internasjonaliseringsarbeidet for øvrig
- Nordplus-programmet er av utdanningsinstitusjonene sett på som en stor suksess. Det er ikke mulig å påvise noen store barrierer eller hindringer knyttet til denne aktiviteten i dag
- Norden er ikke en homogen region, noe som avspeiler seg i det nordiske samarbeidet i høyere utdanning, og utdanningsinstitusjonenes attraktivitet som samarbeidspartner. Et eksempel er at Sverige synes å være mer attraktivt som studieland enn de øvrige nordiske land.

Gitt de utviklingstrekk som kan identifiseres knyttet til den økende vektlegging på markedstenkning og økonomi, kan følgende utfordringer og muligheter skisseres når det gjelder det nordiske samarbeidet i høyere utdanning i tiden som kommer:

- Bolognaprosessen innebærer både muligheter og trusler sett med nordiske øyne. Mens Bolognaprosessen i hovedsak tar sikte på å fjerne barrierer for studentutveksling og annet samarbeid, kan dette sies å

utgjøre en «trussel for det etablerte nordiske samarbeidet som for lenge siden har fjernet slike barrierer. Dette kan bidra til å gjøre nordisk samarbeid mindre relevant, men åpner på den andre siden en mulighet til å styrke det nordiske samarbeidet innen en europeisk kontekst

- Den for tiden dominerende metode for implementering av Bologna, den såkalte «Open Method of Coordination» (OMC), kan sies å åpne opp for nye muligheter for det nordiske samarbeidet. Ikke minst kan det eksisterende nordiske samarbeidet sies å være et godt eksempel på OMC i praksis, og gi de nordiske land en mulighet for å profilere seg som en foregangsregion for utdanningssamarbeid i Europa
- Det er samtidig et behov for å yte assistanse til de institusjoner som ikke har kommet særlig langt i sitt internasjoniseringsarbeid – verken innen Norden eller internasjonalt, uten dermed å anta at deres behov nødvendigvis er de samme som hos de fremtredende institusjoner på dette feltet

Gitt nevnte utfordringer og muligheter, synes tiden inne for å videreutvikle eksisterende politikk for nordisk samarbeid innen høyere utdanning. Under skisseres noen mulige felter for videre politikktutvikling:

- A. *Mer vekt på forskjellighet og fleksibilitet.* Gitt de forskjeller som eksisterer mellom land og institusjoner når det gjelder ambisjoner, evner og muligheter for å delta i det nordiske samarbeidet, kan det argumenteres for at en fremtidig politikk bør ta hensyn til dette og fremme tiltak som tar hensyn til mangfoldet. Eksempler er at Nordplus kunne bli mer fleksibelt utvekslingsprogram, der flere hensyn innarbeides, eller at det etableres flere initiativ som tar sikte på å etablere nordisk samarbeid som tar hensyn til forskjellene i utdanningsinstitusjonenes profil og formål. Etablering av et nordisk virtuelt universitet der institusjoner som i liten grad har vært aktive i forhold til nordisk samarbeid ville ha en lav terskel for å delta.
- B. *Tydeligere strategier.* Det kan forventes at internasjonalisering i tiden som kommer vil være en viktigere dimensjon i både nasjonal og internasjonal politikktutforming. Ikke minst kan det tenkes at dette vil gi seg utslag i en sterkere sammenheng mellom internasjonalisering og finansieringen av høyere utdanning. Å kunne balansere slike hensyn med akademiske, kulturelle og sosiale aspekter ved internasjonaliseringen

er en stor utfordring. Alle institusjoner kan neppe utvikle seg i samme retning hvis overlevelse er et viktig formål. Å etablere mekanismer som kan informere utdanningsinstitusjonene om deres valgmuligheter og «god praksis» på internasjoniseringsfeltet synes derfor påkrevet. Slik kunnskap ville være relevant på ulike nivå – fra institusjonell strategiutvikling til de mer praktiske aspekter ved internasjonaliseringen. Ikke minst kunne en slik «kartlegging» også kunne lede frem til etablering av nye nettverk der institusjoner med felles interesser eksempelvis kunne utarbeide felles utdanningsprogrammer, eller finne andre former for samarbeid.

- C. *Sterkere koordinering.* Det eksisterende nordiske samarbeidet i høyere utdanning er en spesiell form for internasjonalisering, men skjer ikke isolert fra andre aktiviteter. Dette kan ikke minst ha betydning for hvordan nordisk samarbeid innen høyere utdanning er organisert. Et spørsmål som kan stilles er om mandatet og arbeidsfeltet til de eksisterende koordineringsorgan for nordisk samarbeid er hensiktsmessige også for fremtiden. Her bør det poengteres at det ikke er det nordiske samarbeidet som skal gjennomtenkes pånytt, men selve organiseringen av og formålet med samarbeidet. En mulig implikasjon er eksempelvis at et koordineringsorgan for fremtiden kanskje skulle være mer innrettet mot innovasjon og utvikling enn «forvaltning» av eksisterende samarbeidsaktiviteter.

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# Appendix 1

## Data on student mobility

### **Table 1: Proportion of foreign students in tertiary education in the Nordic countries of study<sup>1</sup>. (1998 and 2001)**

(Data per continent. Individual countries only included if their students formed at least 0.2% of student body in at least one of the Nordic countries)

### **Table 2: Proportion of Nordic citizens<sup>1</sup> in tertiary education studying abroad. (2001)**

(Individual countries only included if students from at least one Nordic country formed at least 0.2% of their student body).

### **Table 3: Foreign students from throughout the world as a percentage of all students (1998 and 2001)**

**Table 1 Proportion of foreign students in tertiary education in the Nordic countries of study<sup>1</sup>. (1998 and 2001)**

	Countries of destination									
	Norway		Sweden		Finland		Denmark		Iceland	
	1998	2001	1998	2001	1998	2001	1998	2001	1998	2001
<b>Country of citizenship</b>										
Denmark	0.34	0.40	0.23	0.23	0.01	0.02	.	.	0.37	0.48
Finland	0.07	0.12	0.84	1.00	.	.	0.05	0.06	0.20	0.29
France	0.05	0.06	0.08	0.27	0.02	0.04	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.27
Germany	0.16	0.24	0.25	0.57	0.07	0.09	0.32	0.30	0.17	0.35
Iceland	0.11	0.14	0.12	0.09	0.02	0.01	0.34	0.39	-	-
Norway	.	.	0.35	0.34	0.02	0.02	0.63	0.77	0.31	0.35
Poland	0.04	0.04	0.14	0.23	0.02	0.02	0.11	0.11	0.05	0.13
Spain	0.02	0.03	0.04	0.21	0.01	0.03	0.04	0.05	0.06	0.13
Sweden	0.31	0.53	.	.	0.15	0.21	0.24	0.35	0.22	0.31
Great Britain	0.20	0.20	0.15	0.22	0.05	0.05	0.20	0.20	0.05	0.16
United States	0.17	0.16	0.16	0.25	0.06	0.07	0.13	0.12	0.20	0.26
<b>Total per continent</b>										
Africa, total	0.33	0.39	0.15	0.18	0.25	0.26	0.14	0.20	0.01	0.05
Asia, total	0.59	0.54	0.81	0.64	0.40	0.60	0.70	0.53	0.12	0.28
Europe, total	1.91	2.67	3.10	4.51	0.93	1.24	2.55	3.06	1.89	3.42
North America, total	0.21	0.21	0.22	0.39	0.10	0.11	0.17	0.16	0.25	0.34
Oceania, total	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.06	0.01	0.01	0.03	0.03	0.04	0.01
South America, total	0.08	0.08	0.13	0.16	0.02	0.02	0.07	0.06	0.07	0.02
Not specified	-	0.77	0.04	1.41	0.03	0.02	2.36	2.49	0.01	0.01
All countries, total	3.13	4.67	4.47	7.35	1.74	2.26	6.02	6.53	2.39	4.13

Reading the third column: 0.4 per cent of the Norwegian students in 2001 were Danish citizens, 0.12 per cent of the Norwegian students in 2001 were Finnish citizens, etc.  
Source: OECD, Education at a Glance 2003.

**Table 2 Proportion of Nordic citizens<sup>1</sup> in tertiary education studying abroad. (2001)**

	Citizenship				
	Denmark	Finland	Iceland	Norway	Sweden
<b>Countries of destination</b>					
Australia	0.09	0.04	0.05	1.29	0.30
Austria	0.03	0.06	0.24	0.04	0.07
Denmark	.	0.04	7.43	0.77	0.19
Finland	-	.	0.33	0.03	0.16
France	0.14	0.11	0.40	0.18	0.24
Germany	0.35	0.36	1.64	0.49	0.25
Iceland	0.03	0.01	.	0.02	0.01
Netherlands	0.03	0.03	0.21	0.04	0.03
Norway	0.40	0.08	2.63	.	0.28
Sweden	0.43	1.28	3.30	0.63	.
Great Britain	0.91	0.91	2.19	2.04	1.13
United States	0.45	0.28	4.75	0.96	1.11
Proportion of students studying abroad	3.17	3.44	23.72	6.92	4.05

Reading the second column: 0,09 per cent of Danish students study in Australia, 0,03 per cent of Danish students study in Austria etc.

Source: OECD, Education at a Glance 2003.

**Table 3 Foreign students from throughout the world as a percentage of all students in selected OECD countries**

Host country	Year	
	1998	2001
Switzerland	15.9	17.0
Australia	12.6	13.9
Austria	11.5	12.0
United Kingdom	10.8	10.9
Belgium	..	10.6
Germany	8.2	9.6
Sweden	4.5	7.3
France	7.3	7.3
Denmark	6.0	6.5
New Zealand	3.7	6.2
Ireland	4.8	4.9
Norway	3.2	4.7
Iceland	2.4	4.1
United States	3.2	3.5
Hungary	2.6	3.4
Netherlands	..	3.3
Czech Republic	1.9	3.0
Finland	1.7	2.2
Spain	1.7	2.2
Italy	1.2	1.6
Japan	1.4	1.6
Slovakia	..	1.2
Turkey	1.3	1.0
Poland	0.5	0.4
Korea	0.1	0.1
Country mean	4.8	5.3

Source: OECD, *Education at a Glance* 2003.

## Appendix 2

### Nordic Cooperation in Higher Education

*Description by the Nordic University Leaders included in the Tromsø Statement of August 2002*

#### *Nordic Co-operation in Higher Education*

The Nordic co-operation in higher education between Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden has existed in its present form for several decades. In 1975, the Sigtuna Agreement preceded the Lisbon Convention as regards the recognition of qualifications concerning higher education in the Nordic Region. Each country recognises qualifications from any other Nordic country – whether for access to higher education, for periods of study or for higher education degrees – as similar to the corresponding qualifications in its own system. Nordic students may on equal terms seek admission to any Nordic university, bringing their student support with them.

Thus, a Nordic Space for Higher Education already exists. Although the Nordic process started long before the Bologna Declaration was signed in 1999, today the Nordic Space for Higher Education should be seen as a sub-space of the European Area of Higher Education, and the Nordic process should be seen as an element in the Pan-European Bologna Process.

In 1995 the five Nordic Rectors' Conferences set up a Nordic University Association (NUS) in order to learn from each other's experiences in higher education policy, to promote Nordic co-operation and to co-ordinate Nordic efforts internationally. The university administrators have since long gathered in The Nordic Association of University Administrators

(NUAS). NUS and NUAS co-operate closely. The Nordic Presidential Meeting (*Nordiskt Ordförandemöte*, NOM) was established as early as in 1946 and is possibly the oldest still operating international student structure. The most important issues for NOM ever since its birth have been educational and student social issues in the Nordic countries.