



Jan-Paul Brekke
International students and
immigration to Norway

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immigration to Norway

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Institute for Social Research
Munthes gate 31
Box 3233 Elisenberg
0208 Oslo
www.socialresearch.no

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Migration management

Norwegian Authorities have shifted their attitude towards international students. A strong emphasis on return has been replaced by a growing acknowledgement of the potentially positive effects of student immigration. Until recently, international students have been expected to leave the country after their final exams.

One reason for this has been consideration of the students' home countries. The idea was that the competence acquired in Norway should benefit the sending states to avoid exacerbating the brain drain. Another was that the Norwegian government did not want students to use a temporary residence permits as a way of obtaining permanent residence in the country. It was not meant to be a gateway for immigration.

Now both of these arguments have been weakened. The idealism that marked the earlier ambition to return competence to developing countries seems to have faded, although it still plays a role. A more pragmatic stance has come in its place. By the end of the 1990s, rumors were spread in the corridors of the Norwegian ministries that graduated students moved to other countries instead of going home. So why should international students who graduated in Norway not be allowed to stay here if they wanted to? Surely their Norway-specific competence was needed in a labor market that already was looking outside the country's borders for labor?

These rhetorical questions point to an increasing emphasis on national self-interest in questions of migration. One context of this study is what has become the number one buzz-word in the world of migration, namely *migration management*. It marks a growing consciousness internationally that migration issues could be better handled by the national governments. A more positive and proactive approach to migration could benefit the nation-states as well as the migrants, as has been stated in a recent UN publication (Global Committee 2005).

Policy towards international students is located at the intersection of a handful of conflicting policy areas. Among these are immigration control policies, labor market policies, education policies and development aid

policies. All of these policy areas have seen changes over the past fifteen years. In the area of educational policy, the drive for increased international exchange and contact has been on top of the agenda. The field of immigration control policy has had to tackle politicians that have wanted to slowly open up the national labor market. One could say that the control policy considerations – avoid misuse – have been weakened compared to the potentially positive consequences for the labor market. At the same time, the wish to avoid draining developing countries of brain power was weakened. Interestingly, during the same period, Norway tightened its asylum policy (Brekke 2004).

This study comments the ambivalent situation of the western welfare states when it comes to immigration, where a more lenient stance toward labor and student immigration has been combined with restrictive asylum policies. Again this points to phenomenon of migration management.

In 2001 a concrete policy change was made in order to make it easier for international students to remain in Norway. I will use this event as a point of reference.

We do not know much about international students coming to Norway. Although there has been some public debate on this issue in recent years, only a very small number of scientific studies have been done. Most of these are written from a non-migration angle. The conflicting considerations of labor market, education policies, immigration policies and development ambitions have not been discussed thoroughly in the literature. On the one hand, the competence of international students in Norway is needed. On the other, the government has to consider the interests of developing sending countries and an overall restrictive immigration policy. To operate in this uncharted terrain, knowledge is needed. This report seeks to fill in some of the blank spots. In other countries, the topic of students and migration has received more attention.

The report focuses on three sets of questions. The first set seeks to establish data on international students in Norway. Who are they and what do they do later? What do we know about those that leave Norway after their studies? Are there for example differences between students from EEA countries and those from outside the area? What trends can be revealed regarding the arrival and exit of international students?

The second set of questions relates to the students' motivation for coming, staying and leaving. Why do students choose to study in Norway? How do they view the rules and regulations for immigration? Do their plans for their post-student life include Norway?

Finally the study explores the shift in policy and how this area is handled in Norway. How do the fields of education policies, immigration control, labor market policies and development policies meet on the issue of international students? The report also includes a brief description of this field in a selection of relevant countries.

As an appetizer to later analyses, I will reveal a few key numbers. Between 1991 and 2005 almost 45 000 international students came to Norway. 37 000 of these had finished their studies by 2005. 31 500 were aged 19 or older. From this total, 4500 stayed on after their studies. This constitutes 14 percent of the student mass. The staying rate showed substantial variations depending on country of origin and length of study. Self financed students were in clear majority.

The study is based on four different types of data. Statistics and registry information on international students were obtained from the Directorate of Immigration, Norwegian Social Science Data Services and the Norwegian State Educational Loan Fund. In addition to this, qualitative interviews were conducted with approximately 15 civil servants and members of organizations in daily contact with international students. A third source of data is a web-based survey among international students at three universities and colleges. A final source of inspiration and data is earlier national and international studies on this topic. I return to the methodological basis for the study in chapter 2.

The cancellation of the quarantine provision in 2001

In 2001 the Labor Government decided to amend the quarantine provision (*Karantenebestemmelsen*). The rule, which had existed for ten years, removed opportunities for students to stay in the country on work permits after graduation. It also set a time limit. Former students could not apply for a work permit in Norway unless they first stayed outside the country for five years. The rationale for the provision had two sides. Firstly it was argued that this arrangement would secure development of the students' home countries. Secondly, one would thereby avoid misuse in the form of people using student permits as a way of immigration. There were some exceptions, but these were the main premisses.

It took a long and arduous process to scrap the provision. It is not within the mandate of this study to detail the process in this report. It will suffice to mention a couple of arguments that carried weight in the political discussion among decision makers.

Firstly it was stated that the quota program was not a useful instrument to secure development of the sending countries (KRD 2001:2). It is not at all certain that the graduated students would in fact return to their home countries and contribute to development. They could just as well have chosen to settle in a third country. If that is the case, neither Norway, nor the home country would benefit from the investment in the person's education.

Secondly, the immigration considerations seemed less important in 2001. There was a broad debate in the Norwegian Parliament and media about the need for importing labor. Against this background, it did not make sense to the ruling labor government to stop former international students from staying in Norway. With their high competence and knowledge of Norwegian society and language, international students appeared to be an attractive supplement in the Norwegian labor market. A group of State Secretaries concluded that if Norway were to recruit labor outside the EEA (European Economic Area; EU and the EFTA member states) region, then the quarantine provision would have to go (UDI-JURA 20.06.01). The government could not simultaneously return qualified students from Norway and attempt to recruit equally qualified people from the same regions, it was stated (KRD 2001).

The provision was removed in October 2001. The change meant that the quarantine of five years was cancelled. Students were allowed to apply for a work permit while residing in Norway. At the same time, it was stressed that the quota program should be continued, and that development ambitions here should be upheld. The State Education and Loan Fund (NSELF) (*Statens Lånekasse for utdanning*) administered the financial side of the program and would convert loans into funds when the students could document that they had returned for one year.

Despite the removal of the quarantine provision, the principle of return for students was left untouched by the reform. So while those that applied for work permits were met with more favourable conditions after 2001, those applying for students' permits were not. The condition of return was still a part of the text that regulated the processing of the students applications in the UDI. Among a list of elements that must be present in an application, we find the following sentence:

Unless otherwise is expressly stated in the permit, it is a condition that the applicant will return to her/his home country when the education is completed, and that the conditions allows for a return at the time of the application (Immigration regulations, Utlendingsforskriften §4, første ledd).

When applying for a students' permit, the message seemed to be that they would have to leave the country when they finished. If there was reason to believe that this would not happen, the decision should be negative.

The totality of the applicants' individual situation is to be taken into consideration. If there is probable cause to suspect (begrunnet og påregnelig mulighet) that the applicant will not return to her/his home country after her/his studies, this favours a negative decision (Immigration regulations, Utlendingsforskriften §4 første ledd. UDI OPA 2005-018)

If they later applied for a work permit, and had a job offer that matched their qualifications, they would however stand a good chance of getting a positive answer.

This seemingly contradictory stance towards international students from the Norwegian government will be commented throughout this report.

Application processing

A student permit requires an application from the student to the university or college. The institutions check the documents and decide whether the student is qualified. According to my informants, the institutions also take into consideration the probability that the applicant will later be approved by the Directorate of Immigration (Utlendingsdirektoratet UDI). An informal system has developed here with the universities and colleges prejudging the Directorate's decision in the individual case. The result is that most cases accepted by the institutions of education also receive a residence permit.

If the student is accepted, a letter of acceptance is issued. This document includes information as to the type of study, duration and financing. The financial arrangement and documentation will be different for the various categories of international students – quota (several types) or self-financed. This last group has to deposit sufficient money for a full year's study as evidence of financial capacity.

In the third stage in the process residence permit applications are sent to the embassy in the applicant's home country. They in turn forward it to the Directorate of Immigration in Norway. Here the information is checked. A decision is then made by the Directorate and the case is returned to the embassy. The student then has to contact the embassy to obtain a visum. In some cases students are interviewed by the employees at the embassies to check information and to confirm language skills.

In some cases, the Norwegian police are authorized to process cases. These are normally cases with a high chance of approval, for example applications from students from the EEA region.

If complaints are lodged over negative decisions, these are ultimately handled by the Immigration Appeals Board (*Utlendingsemnda*, UNE).

The rate of approval is high (UDI, OPA 2004). In 2004, 85 percent of international students were approved. There were some national variations in the rate of approvals, with China having the highest number of negative decisions.

If a student later wishes to apply for a work permit, this is likely to be successful given that a list of criteria is fulfilled. Among these are that the student has stayed in Norway for nine months or more and that the person has

been offered a relevant and full time position with at least twelve months duration. These applications are processed by the Directorate of Immigration. The type of work permit that students can apply for is identical to that meant for other non-EEA foreigners. Until recently it was labeled a *specialist* permit. Now the term *skilled (faglært)* is used.

It is important to note that the process of applying for a work permit is vastly different depending on whether the applicant is a citizen of one of the EEA countries or not. People from this area have easier access to the Norwegian labor market. They can for example stay for months looking for a job in Norway without a working permit.

Delimitations of the study

There are numerous attributes of international students that could have been part of this study. With a limited time frame, several topics will be kept outside the analysis. I will mention a few of these and then discuss some concepts that will be used in the report. This is followed by a readers guide to the rest of the report.

The public debate on international students in Norway has to a large extent centered on misuse of student permits (Johnsen 2004, Nordlie 2004, NRK 2004). This will not be discussed in this report. It suffices to mention one particularly tragic incident. In 2003, two Chinese students were murdered in a students' home in Norway. In connection with the investigation, a network of illegitimate agents was discovered resulting in vigilance among institutional actors to the recruitment of students from China in particular.

The role of lower education institutions – “Folk high schools” (county colleges) – was also highlight as recruitment arenas for international students. They were accused of failing to inform potential students that an education at that level does not qualify them for university or college studies. These schools have since changed their recruitment policies (UDI letter 31.01.05).

Since these events, the police have had a special obligation to monitor developments in the international student community.

Nor shall I comment the debate on the internationalization of education in general. This is part of a Ministry of Education strategy that has consequences for international students intending to study in Norway. The ambition here has been to secure a balance between Norwegians studying abroad and international students coming to Norway. So far, the outflow of students from Norway has by far outnumbered those going in the other direction. Fifteen thousand Norwegians were studying abroad in 2001 (SSB 2002). In the same year only four thousand permits were issued to international students in Norway. One issue that has been much discussed over the past fifteen years is

whether to offer teaching courses in English or Norwegian. In 1994, when the quota program was established, only institutions offering full programs in English were nominally eligible for grants. This was reversed the year after. It turned out to be too ambitious.

A third area I avoid is the distinction between quota and other students. I refer instead to studies done on aspects of the quota arrangement and the behavior of this group of students. The presentation and analysis of data will therefore not be affected by this distinction.

A fourth theme that could have been developed in this report is the history of Norway's approach to international students. Small glimpses are given of events in the 1980s and early 1990s when predominantly secondary/high school and bachelor level students came to Norway from developing countries. By the mid-nineties, the quota program was established and the number of self-financed students increased. The revamped policy emerging around the turn of the millennium mentioned above, paved the way for a careful relaxation of restrictions on student immigration.

In this study, the term "immigration" is used in a weak sense. It means that the report looks at students who come to the country and then either leave or stay. It does not ask how long they stay for, or what they actually do while they are here. Immigration in this sense means that some students go on to apply for other residence permits when they finish their studies. The distinction is drawn between family-based permits and work permits. In other words, in order to qualify as an immigrant in this study, it suffices to obtain a residence permit of some sort after "graduation".

This leads us to the next concept that is widely used in the report. The data used in this study do not include information on students' academic achievements. The word "graduation" is therefore used for all students who have studied one or more terms in Norway before continuing their stay in Norway on non-student permits or leaving the country. In normal use the concept denotes the completion of a degree. Here it will however be used in the meaning of concluding one's studies in Norway.

The concept of return is discussed in some detail in chapter 7. Leaving Norway does not, as already noted, mean that students necessarily return to their home country.

A reader's guide

The three core chapters of this report are five, six and seven. Here the register and survey data are presented. In chapter five the trends in international students coming to Norway are analyzed. In the next chapter, questions of continued residence and return are discussed. In chapter seven there is a

presentation of the students' survey. How do they feel about coming, staying or going? In the final two chapters of the report I discuss (8) and present (9) findings set out in the preceding chapters.

Before we get to the main empirical chapters, however, a few preparatory exercises are needed. In the chapter following this one, the methodological basis for the study is discussed. This is followed by an introduction to studies on the topic of international students and immigration. The final preparatory chapter offers a brief presentation of the field of international students in four countries.

Methodology and data

As mentioned earlier, the study is based on four types of data: statistics, qualitative interviews, a web-based survey and analysis of documents. Here I give a brief account of the different sources.

Only a very limited amount of statistical data has been available to the public in Norway on international students and immigration. The Directorate of Immigration (UDI) has had international students as a part of their annual report on immigration. This however has been limited to numbers and nationality of registered students. By examining the DUF register, from which UDI statistics derive, this study is publicizing a broader range of data on a series of dimensions. The data are analyzed in chapters 5 and 6 including year-on-year comparison of permits awarded international students over a period of fifteen or so years. These data also provide information on students who obtain other residency permits after finishing their studies. Other variables in the DUF register data include age, gender, permit and study duration.

Unfortunately, the DUF register says little about what the students do after their studies. The ones that go on to apply for new permits in Norway are registered. The others, though, are not present in the material. Whether they returned to their home country, to a third country, or remained in Norway without a permit, we do not know. And although we know from the work permit records of students who continue to live and work in Norway, we know little about their careers, which would have indicated how successful students that stay actually are. This will have to wait until a later and broader study.

One additional source of statistical information is the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSSDS). This institution receives data from all educational institutions in Norway. Among other interesting variables, NSSDS data are particularly good for establishing which courses international students follow at the different institutions. There are two weaknesses with

this data. One is that it is based on data reported by the institutions. The result is a lot of missing values. With a broad range of reporters, data continuity and validity can be questioned. A second problem is a blurring of international and foreign students. They are not separated in this registry. As noted earlier, the situation for students who do not belong to the ethnic majority in Norway, but have a permanent residence permit is different from that of international students. For our purpose in this study, the distinction is vital. We therefore use the NSSDS statistics sparingly.

The third source of statistical data is the Norwegian State Educational Loan Fund. This funding institution records information of particular interest to this study. Although only quota program students come into contact with NSELF, the institution keeps data on the return rate of this group. Since return data are otherwise scarce, these are the best available, and can be used to discuss extrapolation of return rates of other groups. This is discussed in chapter 6. The international student return rate data were updated by NSELF especially for this study up to and including 2005. These data do not include the free movers, however – students that come to Norway without being sponsored. These may not behave in the same manner for example when it comes to post study adaptation. Quota students must provide evidence of their return to and at least one year's residence in their home country. Doing so means their state loans are converted to grants. NSELF does not monitor whether students later return to Norway. As a consequence, their data may over-report the number of students that have returned permanently to their home countries.

Qualitative interviews were conducted with approximately 15 civil servants and members of organizations in daily contact with international students. These interviews offered quick answers to central questions and challenges concerning recruitment and handling of this student group.

In these types of interviews, there is always the possibility that the information given is biased. When government employees, for example, are asked to comment on government policy in a particular area, there is chance the informant will be loyal to his or her organization and hold back on critical issues. The same could be said of interviews with NGOs. Here the agenda of the organization may influence the answers given.

These dangers, however, did not seem to present a problem to this particular study, not least because respondents were critical of themselves. The people interviewed reflected on their institution's performance and gave an impression of the complexity inherent in balancing home country development and letting graduates stay in Norway.

The interview guide was expanded as the study went on. In the case of the three institutions, the interviews were partly aimed at understanding and interpreting the student survey. In addition to that the interviews sought

information on the policy and ideology that shaped the institution's handling of international students.

A third source of data was a web-based survey of international students at three university colleges (*høyskoler*). This aspect was designed to elicit information from the students themselves about their reasons for coming to Norway, their opinion of their stay here and future plans. The three cases were chosen after a thorough examination of the NSSDS data showing which university colleges international students were attending, where they were from and what they were studying. In addition to these quantitative data on higher education, information was also obtained from religious schools and folk high schools.

I decided not to include these lower level institutions in the study. The case could have been made for the important role they play recruiting international students who later go on to university studies. In the first interviews, stories were told of how applicants from China and other countries had been made to believe that folk high schools would automatically qualify them for higher education in Norway. This is not the case and the Council for Folk High Schools had to warn members not to give misleading information. The number of international students studying at this level was so low (237 registered for the fall 2005), and so widely dispersed among the different schools, that a web-based survey was unpractical. The same was the case for the bible schools. They were also excluded from the survey. We did, however, approach and interview administrative staff at the most important recruiting schools in this category.

Of the six Norwegian universities and numerous colleges, two universities and one college were chosen. The University of Oslo was chosen partly because of the size of the international student population and nationalities represented. Here a web-based survey sent questionnaires to respondents selected from reliable e-mailing lists. In addition to the sheer number of students, the administrative department in charge of international students had long experience with recruitment and residence permit issues.

The other university, Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), was similar to the University of Oslo in most respects, but had one feature that made it interesting. During the early interviews, we were told that employees from the institution had contacted the Directorate of Immigration on a matter of concern. One way of recruiting international students is through long-term bilateral exchange programs with institutions abroad. NTNU in Trondheim has done just that. Their generally positive experience with this strategy had been challenged during the last couple of years however inasmuch as several students chose to stay on after their studies. It was considered as a potential challenge to their bilateral agreements by NTNU. It had also become a topic in the bilateral contacts with their partners in China

and elsewhere. I wanted to learn more about this and since NTNU qualified on the other criteria, they were included.

The University College of Narvik (*Høgskolen i Narvik*), was chosen for a different reason. The interviews with civil servants in Oslo highlighted this college's special strategy and ideology towards international students. The school made deliberate efforts to recruit students from Russia and China. In 2005 more than a hundred Chinese students were registered in the relatively small town of Narvik in northern Norway. Besides providing an inspiring international community for all students at the college, the management held that some of the students would settle in the area, and thus help the region progress in the longer term. With a useful Norwegian education, and knowledgeable of the local business conditions, such students would be a valuable supplement to the local work force.

With a time frame of six months, three institutions turned out to be maximum number that could be contacted. Taken together they gave access to a sufficient number of international students. In order to gain access to the mailing lists, the three institutions had to reach a decision on whether they should participate. In all three places, the welfare of the students was the main priority. They were often contacted by various commercial and non-commercial actors wanted the e-mail addresses of the students. The need to consider the request to participate in the study seriously caused a delay. A positive side to this level of care was that departments in charge of international students became familiar with the study.

This story captured my interest and the college earned a place among the three chosen institutions. In Narvik, they also had the volume of international students to qualify.

In order to make sure that the interests and rights of the students were secured, I contacted NSSDS, a member of the Data Protection Council (*Datatilsynet*). One reason was to ensure students knew that participation was completely voluntary. They were informed about this in the email to which was attached the electronic questionnaire.

The questionnaire was sent to around 700 students studying at the University of Oslo. Students at all levels, Bachelor, Master and PhD, were invited to participate by email. The list of addresses included self-financed students and students on grants and quota programs. The invitation directed them to the hyperlinked questionnaire. Of the 700 students contacted in Oslo, 350 completed the survey. This return percentage of 50 has to be considered a good result. All students received the invitation twice. About 30 email addresses out of a total of 700 Oslo addresses were wrong. Apart from this no particular pattern emerged distinguishing students who agreed to take part from the total number that received the invitation. In other words, no systematic anomalies could be detected. This increases the reliability of the results.

In Trondheim, the list of addresses contained only international master students. The invitation was sent to around 200 students. Of these, 150 answered. Again there did not seem to be a pattern as to who chose to participate and who did not. In Narvik, all international students were invited to answer the questions. 75 out of close to 200 chose to do so. Here the number of students that answered was relative to the size of the biggest groups of students; Chinese and Russians. Whether the characteristics of the students that answered were representative of the total group is difficult to say.

In total 1,100 students were invited to participate. Of these, 590 responded. This gives a response rate of 51 percent.

Some of the invited students were members of the International Students Union (ISU). In order to help spread the survey, the leader of this organization decided to distribute the link to members at other institutions. When I was made aware of this, I sent a message to all ISU local representatives because several of the questions were tailored to the students at the three chosen institutions. A day later I made a second questionnaire that fitted all international students in Norway. This questionnaire was then distributed at NHH (Norwegian School of Business and Administration), the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (at Ås), and the University of Stavanger. Here the exact response rate is harder to estimate. From the information from the ISU representatives, however, the rate should be around 40 percent. In the following chapters, the results from the three original institutions will constitute the base. When results from the additional institutions are used, this will be specified.

One great advantage of a web-based survey is that it is a quick and efficient way of reaching a high number of respondents. A potential disadvantage is a low response rate. This is however a risk faced all types of surveys. Another problematic side to the full anonymity version of the technique – like the one used in this study – is that it limits the possibility for direct follow up questions and reminders.

The final source of inspiration and data in this study are national and international studies on students and immigration, and official documents – memos, white papers and green papers – on the topic. In Norway, relevant studies are few and far between. The international literature is broader, and sheds light on several of the related questions.

Research on students and immigration

The initiative for this study was taken by the Directorate of Immigration. The background was a lack of knowledge about the field of international students. Who comes to Norway, what do they do while they are here, who leaves and who stays on? These were some of the questions the authorities wanted answered. This does not mean, however, that no research or systematic data collection has been done either in Norway or abroad.

In this chapter I present a selection of the Norwegian and international literature on the topic of international students and immigration. The review is sketchy and is meant only as an introduction.

As I mentioned in the introduction, international students find themselves at the crossroads of several policy fields in Norway. In addition to immigration policy, they are the subject of labor market, education and development policy considerations. Several concerns related to international students have been explored.

The leading topic here is education. Over the last 30 years several public and non-governmental organizations have worked to stimulate the internationalization of Norwegian higher education. The Ministry of Education, Norwegian Council of Universities and later the Norwegian Centre for Cooperation in Higher Education (SIU) have been central actors here, along with individual universities and colleges.

In addition to the educational perspective, the development aid side to international students has been a central theme in the development of government policies. In the late 1980s and all of the 1990s, the positive effects for less developed countries were a major motivation for the reception of international students.

The immigration control perspective has not been developed to the same degree. In 1975, Norway introduced a general immigration stop. Since then, immigration policies have had a restrictive function. Foreign nationals from outside the EEA (European Economic Agreement) area have entered the

country primarily through family unification schemes and the asylum system. Strong limitations were applied to labor immigration. Only in the last couple of years has the Norwegian government begun to revise this strict line on labor immigrants. This can be seen as a part of a shift from a reactive to a more proactive stance on immigration.

In line with this, the fourth perspective on student immigration is labor market considerations. Over the last ten years, a growing demand in the inland labor market combined with the expansion of the EU has triggered a more positive attitude towards labor immigration.

Knowledge of student immigration in Norway

The lack of documentation in the field of student immigration to Norway has already been noted. An indication of this is that the most thorough description and discussion of this topic was published in 1989. Under the title "Learning without borders" (*Grenseløs læring*), this government green paper stated that the field of international students in Norway to a large extent had been uncoordinated and without strong government control (NOU 1989:7). A series of suggestions were put forward to increase the number of international students coming to Norway. Some of these were of a technical nature, for example making the Norwegian grade and degree system compatible with international standards, encouraging study programs given in English, and establishing the SIU (Norwegian Centre for Cooperation in Higher Education). Others had an immediate impact on international students coming to Norway and their prospects of staying on after their studies.

The government recommended ending the admission of students on the basis of the "exemption paragraph for students from development countries" (*U-landsparagrafen*). These students were supposed to study at the secondary or at a higher level and then go back to their country of origin (Ihle 1990). From the statistics the authors, a working group, had at their disposal it seemed that only less than ten per cent went back. The stated purpose of the permits and paragraph was to help developing countries improve competence through education. When the students stayed on in Norway, that purpose was lost. The statistics used in 1989 were later criticized by several analysts (Birkeland 1995:6).

The working group suggested a quota system instead. Here the focus should be shifted towards higher education with greater emphasis on financial benefits of returning home. Support for studies at the secondary level was not to be included (NOU 1989:10).

In line with other efforts to secure a developmental effect, it was suggested that persons that had studied in Norway should stay in their home country for

a certain period. The time frame suggested was equal to the length of the study in Norway. So if a student spent four years in Norway, that student was not be granted a staying permit in Norway before four years had passed after her return to the home country (NOU 1989:11).

In the year that followed the government report, the suggestions were implemented. The first signs of this came a year later in the government white paper based on the green paper (Stortingsmelding 40 1990-91). It took until 1994, however, for the new quota arrangement to be fully established.

Summing up the 1989 report and the related white paper, one could say that the government wanted to increase the number of international students while making sure they actually returned to their home countries. Regarding the students from developing countries, the avoidance of a brain drain was a major priority for the government (Birkeland 1995).

Another important document describing the field of student immigration in Norway is a report by the Norwegian Council of Universities named "The quota arrangement – development aid without direction?" (*Kvoteordningen – hodeløs bistand?*) The author was Ingebjørg Birkeland (1995).

Here, Birkeland describes the development of the field leading up to, and the first two years of the quota arrangement. She noted that the ambition of the government to have a special program with English as the working language was still undecided. This had been the goal of the government, but had posed a serious challenge to the universities and colleges. The availability of such courses had been seen as a precondition for the allocation of places in the quota program, but exemptions had been granted from the very start. In 1995 the government formally approved the programs with Norwegian as the working language (Birkeland 1990:11).

Again the lack of statistics on students and immigration was noted. The report did however have sufficient data to single out the major sending countries under the duration of the development paragraph. In 1994 they were Ghana (356 persons granted residence permits), followed by China (157), Sri Lanka (58), India (55), Bangladesh (50), Pakistan (46) and Gambia (40).

In her concluding remarks, Birkeland states that policy towards international students needs revision to have an effect on the development of the sending countries. She suggests a better coordination with other actors dealing with Norwegian development aid and foreign policy (1995:17). In addition to that she suggested a more active recruitment policy through developing a Norwegian fellowship program.

In addition to these central documents, there have been several studies on the topic of international students in Norway (Tryti 1992). The majority of these have had internationalization of education as their focal point. One of them sought to elaborate theories and ways of understanding recruitment of international students in a world wide educational market (Foss 2000). An interesting point made in that study was that in order to have a good position

in this market, Norwegian institutions have to consider a long list of measures, and not only concentrate on marketing. In addition they should develop programs that are coherent and compatible with education in other regions of the world. These types of reflections are relevant in a discussion about how Norway – as a combination of immigration policies, education policies and initiatives by the institutions – can better manage the recruitment of international students.

The return rate of international students has also been discussed in Norwegian research, though not as a main focus. Bernt Bratsberg et. al (2005), found a high return rate among students from outside the EEA area. But despite tight regulation of this group, as he puts it, 25 percent of this group remained in Norway ten years after they had arrived. The period he and his co-authors studied 1988–94. In our present study, a longer time span is analyzed (1991–2005), and EEA students are included and specified (see chapter 5).

In 2001, an evaluation of quota programs established in 1994 was ordered by the Ministry of Church, Education and Research (KUF). The working group concluded that the program had an important effect on internationalization of higher education in Norway and suggested an expansion. Rules and routines for the handling of applications from international students should be simplified. In the report from the working group, a change of tone can be sensed in the text regarding both immigration and development effects of this group of students. The atmosphere in the Government at the time is reflected in a more open stance on the issue of labor considerations and a more nuanced discussion on the issue of developmental effects (KUF 2001). I will return to this report in the discussion of return-rates in chapter 6.

Examples from the international literature on students and immigration

If we turn to the international scene, the literature on the topic of international students and immigration is much broader. The scientific publications can roughly be divided into three related themes. The first category deals with the recruitment and management of international students. The second has themes related to the experience of studying abroad. The third category sheds light on the phenomenon of international students and immigration more specifically. Here I will only mention a few examples from this bulk of literature.

Recruiting and managing international students

The literature on this topic covers recruitment and management of international students at both the national (Dreher and Poutvaara 2005) and institutional level.

Some articles ask whether efforts put into recruitment of international students are worthwhile (Dahlsgaard 2005, Desruissaux 1998, Cohen 1999, Heaton and Throsby 1998)

Others put the focus on challenges in managing international students. At the institutional level, *Managing International Students* by Christine Humprey (1999) is a point of reference. Here she describes and analyses developments in the field of international students over the past twenty years. She then sees what this means for the development of strategies for recruiting and managing international students for the individual university or college.

New strategies for marketing national educations abroad are described and analyzed in Mazzarol's article on the future of international education (2003). According to him the phase of bilateral agreements has already passed and full branches, e-learning and "degrees-at-distance" are now well established in the market.

In order to improve interaction with international students, the Canadian government ordered a case study of eight institutions in 1998 (MacBride 1998). Through interviews with staff and students, room for improvement was found in all parts of the application and welcoming process.

Six years ago, the Swedish Department of Education published a green paper that aimed directly at increasing the number of international students in Sweden (SOU 2000). That report suggested increasing the number of international students to 1,000 per year.

The reasons for this were the positive sides of the international students. The first three aspects that are mentioned in that report have been much discussed in the Norwegian debate.

Bringing international students from developing countries to Norway can be considered *development aid*. It can help transfer knowledge that later can be put to use in the students' home countries. This can also be done bilaterally by developing educational capacity in the developing countries. The development argument has been central in the Norwegian discussion on international students and is the immediate background for the quota grant program.

One important aspect mentioned by the green paper refers to the value of international students as researchers and teachers in Sweden. This *labor market* aspect of international students has had a broader formulation in Norway, rather than being restricted to the academic sphere (KUF 2001).

In a globalized world, one needs an increased understanding about the situation in other parts of the world. *Bilateral and multilateral education* and research programs are one way to promote this.

The report also points to the positive effect of international students on their surroundings during their studies at universities and colleges in Sweden. They will spread *knowledge of their home countries* and inspire Swedish students to understand more of the world around them, it is stated.

Having young persons staying in Sweden for several years gives a basis for later contact. Most of them will go back to their home country with a positive view of Sweden. Later these persons will fill their roles as decision makers, businessmen and cultural experts, while *spreading the positive view* of the country where they once studied. This is rendered highly valuable in the report. This instrumental aspect has perhaps not been central in the Norwegian debate on international students. The same is the case for the last positive aspect that is mentioned in the Swedish green paper.

Finally, the *commercial side* of international students is highlighted as a reason to increase recruitment to Sweden. Tuition and commercial side effects of the temporary stay of students had not been emphasized in the Swedish policy when the green paper was written. Nor have Norwegian institutions aimed at exploiting the commercial possibilities in this field. In the UK, USA and Australia, this aspect has been an important argument for strategic recruitment of foreign students (SOU 2000:66).

An instrumental contribution from Denmark aimed at improving the situation for international students in Copenhagen (Jensen et al 2003). In this report, the attitudes and behavior of the students were seen in light of the reception and service offered foreigners.

Studying abroad

One study that considers a broad range of characteristics of life as an international student is Zadeh's "To study in a foreign country" (1994). Based on material from five universities and colleges in Sweden the author looks at everything from the choice of educational careers to the struggles of everyday life.

International students and immigration

Interesting research has been done on the phenomenon of the "brain drain" in recent years (Khadria 2001, Tremblay 2002). The question asked is whether the one way transition of competence from poor to rich countries is really in

what happens on the global market of education. As time progresses, maybe the links established between the students staying abroad and the home country may result as much in benefits for the home country as if the students return after graduation (Pedersen 1992).

A Norwegian economist contributed to the field by publishing on the situation of international students both in Norway and in the USA (Bratsberg 1995, 2005). The American article focuses on the staying rate of international students in the USA.

Understanding the behavior of international students is important if one is to attract them to a specific country or institution. In Mazzarol et al. (2002) and Menon et al. (1990), the basic motivational model of “push” and “pull” is discussed with reference to international students. The first article identifies factors both in the home and destination country that influence student choices. The second contribution states that one must move beyond the simplified binary model in order to understand the actions of international students.

International students in other countries

At the end of 2004, the European Council approved a directive (2004/114/EU) on the conditions for international students in the EU. The directive was forwarded by the Commission in order to make the EU “the world leading centre for studies and vocational training”. A key element in this strategy was to promote and facilitate the entrance and cross border movement of third country nationals (DS 2005:36). The directive is to be implemented into national law in the member states by the end of 2007. For this study, the point is to illustrate the eagerness and depth of the attention that the field of international students currently receives outside Norway.

The efforts made to recruit international students to Norway have been limited (KUF 2001). Universities and colleges have made bilateral and institution-to-institution efforts to attract students, but there has been no comprehensive policy to promote Norwegian education abroad. Several initiatives have been taken in order to increase the internationalization of education in Norway – quota and grants programs, the creation of a Centre for Internationalization of Education are examples here – but there has been no national strategy for marketing Norwegian education abroad. The establishing of the web site “StudyinNorway.no” in 2005 is an attempt at creating a national website promoting Norway as a destination country for international students. It is being maintained by SIU.

In other countries there is a completely different attitude both among the educational institutions and at a national policy level. Marketing and recruitment are done in what is recognized as an international market of education, where education is considered a legitimate commodity. This is done while not forgetting the other potential positive sides of international students. Among the most well-established countries in the market of higher education are USA, Australia and United Kingdom.

In this chapter I will give a brief description of the situation in four relevant but highly different countries when it comes to policies towards international students: Sweden, Denmark, Great Britain and the USA.

Sweden

In 2000, the Swedish Ministry of Education published a green paper with the title “Advantage Sweden”. Here the aim was to look at measures to increase the recruitment of international students to Sweden. The green paper marked an initiative by the Government to become more active in this area. An indicator that this effort has continued is that the Swedish education is promoted openly on the home page of the Ministry in 2006.

Several suggestions were made in the report to make Swedish education more attractive to foreign students. These included developing a national strategy, improved housing, more education programs in English, introducing international degree and grade systems, increasing recruitment of foreign guest researchers and teachers; increasing the number of grants and a more intense effort to promote Swedish education abroad.

Two particular measures are of particular interest in the Norwegian context. In the green paper, it was suggested that students from outside the EEA area should be allowed to work during their studies. Earlier the right to work had been restricted to holidays. Other rules regulated the work of EEA students. The second measure of importance to us was that all international students should be allowed to stay in Sweden after they had finished their studies. In addition to that, it was suggested that the application procedures should be improved and simplified for graduated international students (SOU 2000).

The organization in charge of managing Sweden’s international students is the Swedish Institute. Their home page is named “Study-in-Sweden” and carries updated information on rules and regulations, institutions and grant programs. The Swedish Institute is present at big international education fairs in Europe and the USA, promoting Swedish education to potential students.

In 1999 4,700 first-time residence permits were granted to international students. Of these 2,800 were given to non-EEA area students. In 2005, this number had increased, according to the Swedish Directorate of Immigration. That year, 6,800 international students received a residence permit for the first time. Almost all of these were non-EEA citizens. Work permit criteria changed in the period, freeing most EEA citizens of the obligation to apply for a permit.

As we will see in chapter 5, the increase in Sweden resembles that in Norway. First time residence permits increased from 2,400 in 1999 to 4,100 in 2005.

In 2004, the Swedish Migration Board did a study of misuse among international students in Sweden (Swedish Migration Board 2004). The result showed that around 27 percent of those that entered Sweden on students permits, never registered at the education facility. As mentioned earlier, the topic of misuse will not be discussed at any length in this current study.

Denmark

In Denmark there has been a heated debate about international students the past few years (Thorup 2005, Nilsen 1994, Seeberg 2005). The background was a proposition from the centre-right Government. The Minister of Education wanted to charge students that came from countries outside the EEA. A fairly high sum was indicated (approx. 100 000 Danish Kroner. [Winthe 2005]). Instead of financial support to the educational institutions for taking international students, the Government suggested extending the number of grants issued each year. The goal was to attract only the top students from outside the EEA area, and discourage others. Researchers and journalists reacted to the proposition and stated that it would mean a dramatic decrease in the number of international students (Exner, Sander and Flyvebjerg 2005). The proposition was also linked to the far right party in Denmark, the Danish People's Party. The debate brought into play the three of the main policy areas connected to international students; immigration control, education and labor market considerations.

During the same period, a debate proceeded in the Danish media about the recruitment and return of Chinese students. Several Danish university colleges went to China to fill up vacant places at their schools (Vester Jacobsen 2002).

In 2000 a Center for Information and Counseling on International Education and Cooperation (*CIRIUS*) was set up. The center was to be a pivot in efforts to increase the international orientation of education in Denmark. It also had as its task to approve and validate international qualifications. Under the Ministry of Education, CIRIUS offers services to individual students as well as institutions. One of the interfaces with the students was the promotional site with the address "studyindenmark.dk". The current heading at this homepage is "Why study in Denmark? Five good reasons".

In Denmark the statistics on international students are not gathered in one central database. This makes it difficult to state inflow and outflow of persons in and out of Danish educational institutions with any precision. According to the statistics on the CIRIUS homepage, the number of international students in Denmark in 2003/2004 was 9,600. The majority of these were European exchange students registered under one of the programs of the European Union. The exact number of exchange students was 5,400, while 4,200 were full-time students. How many of the students in the last category that from outside the EU is unclear. Annotations to the Danish student statistics confirm a strong increase in international students over the last few years. As an example the number of exchange students more than doubled from 1995/1996 to 2004.

Despite this, the trend in Denmark is not easy to confirm. In the Swedish green paper mentioned earlier (SOU 2000:27), the numbers for Denmark indicate a leveling of arrivals, not an increase. In the paper the total number of

international students in Denmark for 1995/96 is stated to be 9,000. If this is correct, the increase over a ten year period would have been a mere 600. It is however unclear which categories are included in the 9,000 students registered by the Swedish working group. It may be that the number includes all students with a foreign citizenship, i.e. also immigrants that reside permanently in Denmark.

Most of the students that came to Denmark from outside the EEA area came from the USA and Canada.

USA

USA ranks at the very top of the countries that receive international students. In 2004/2005 more than half a million students from abroad were enrolled at US institutions of higher education (Opendoorsusa.iienetwork.org). This was a slight decrease from the year before. The trend over the past thirty years has however been a strong rise in the recruitment of students. Still, some voices criticize the US government for not doing enough to attract "human capital". This could cost the nation's economy dearly, it is stated (Florida 2005, Møller 2003).

The coordination of efforts and recruitment of international students has a long history in the USA. The Institute for International Education (IIE) was established in 1919. While government actors and individual institutions market US education, the IIE has monitored developments.

The top four sending countries to the US in 2004/2005 were all Asian. India was on top with 80,000 students, followed by China, Korea and Japan. Most of the students were self-financed, but a total of 140,000 grants were still provided to international students in that same year.

Recent years' decrease in the arrival of international students may be related to increased competition from other English-speaking countries that are active in the global education market. Especially Great Britain and Australia present themselves as competitive providers of education.

The recent trend of establishing branch offices of national universities abroad is also pursued by US universities (SOU 2000, Mazzarol, Soutar and Seng 2003). This practice ranges from the bilateral cooperation of education institutions in two countries to the creation of branch campuses and the development of "on-line" courses to students remaining in their home countries (Mazzarol, Soutar and Seng 2003).

Despite the vast activity of the US government and individual institutions, there are calls for a comprehensive policy in the field of international students. In 2000 President Clinton pointed to the importance of the cultural

and economic relations that arise from the international presence in the US educational system (SOU 2000:41).

United Kingdom

Great Britain is the largest recipient of international students relative to native population. In 2005, the grand total of both part time and full time non-UK students was 318,000. The main sending countries were China (53000), India, USA, Malaysia and Hong Kong. The top EU countries were Greece, Ireland, Germany, France and Spain (UKCOSA, The Council of International Education).

It is the British Council (BC) that handles the promotion of British education abroad. With offices in more than 100 countries the British Council works through the sub-organization Education UK Marketing. Here an aggressive marketing of British education abroad merges with efforts to make British institutions even more attractive on the international education market. International students have been an area of importance for the current Government in Britain.

As early as June 1999, Prime Minister Tony Blair announced an initiative to attract more international students to the UK. He said it would promote long-term, sustainable relations between the UK and other countries through education and training. The goal was to increase the number of international students in the UK by 75,000 over a five-year period. In 2004, this target was met.

A number of less tangible steps were taken to attract international students to the UK, including increasing the number of Chevening scholarships, easing barriers to entry (visa issues), allowing students to work while studying and increasing awareness of the UK, and its education and training products

The initiative reached the end of its lifespan in March 2005 after successfully reaching its targets. In early 2004, Education UK Marketing initiated a process in extension of the 1999 initiative. This new plan is currently under development.

Active policies on international students

If we look at how international students feature in these four countries, it is clear they represent an area with huge national differences. The volume, traditions and potentials are hard to compare between for example the US and Sweden or Norway.

Yet there are some common elements. Firstly, all countries emphasize the positive effects of international students. In the next chapter I set out a preliminary list of such effects. Judging by the discussion so far, it is clear that the Scandinavian countries have not emphasized commercial and immigration benefits. The positive sides to student immigration are however being considered in Norway, as we have seen. These were is also stressed in Sweden.

Secondly, all countries accept as a fact a fully operating international market for education, and a truly global one at that.

Thirdly, all countries see the benefits of comprehensive and coordinated efforts to streamline and promote education abroad. While this has not been achieved in the Scandinavian countries, they are professionalized and institutionalized in the US and the United Kingdom.

International students, where from and how many?

Since only a limited number of studies have been done on international students in Norway, there are several aspects that it could be tempting to explore. In this chapter, I look at student permits awarded each year.

It is important here to remind ourselves of the distinction between permits given each year, and new students. The number of permits may be higher than the number of students that are here at a given time. One person may receive more than one permit a year. At the same time, the number of permits each year will include some students that are in their second or third year. For example, the total number of student permits given in 2005 was 6500 but only 4,100 of these were given to new students. The rest were renewals.

When not made explicit, figures in this chapter refer to permits and not persons. In the next chapter, this will be reversed. The distinction will however be clear from the text that accompanies the statistics.

It is also important to note that there are two groups that are not registered in the data from the Directorate of Immigration. One of these is students from the Nordic countries. These students do not need a permit to spend time at a Norwegian educational institution. The other group is students that spend less than three months in Norway. They would therefore be covered by for example a tourist visa. My informants stressed that many one term students are believed to make use of this possibility of avoiding the application process needed to obtain a student's permit. Students coming from the EEA area may not register at all if they mean to stay less than three months.

The natural starting point when we want to learn about figures and trends is to look at how many students come to Norway and where they come from. From there we can move on to uncovering patterns in who stays on after the studies and who returns. This will be done in the next chapter.

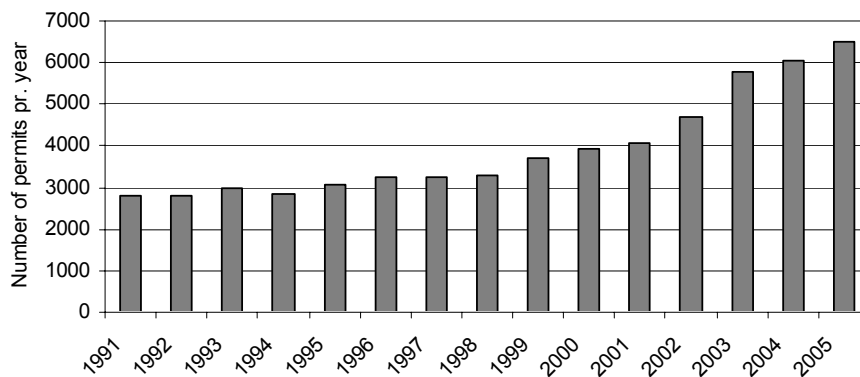
International students coming to Norway

Over the last fifteen years, the number of international students has increased considerably. Several changes in the national policies and international relations have had an impact on student numbers. The deliberate effort to internationalize the Norwegian higher education system by the government is one factor. The challenges facing this effort have been commented on by several sources (Birkeland 1995, KUF 2001). Another important factor is the international student exchange programs. For example, the ERASMUS program has boosted the number of students that spend one or two terms in Norway. The data do not allow us to establish why numbers have risen. For us, the changes in policy at the end of 2001 represent the crucial event. Let us first look at the general trend. How many residency permits did the Directorate of Immigration grant in the last fifteen years?

The Directorate of Immigration started to collect data on international students in 1991. Before this comprehensive national statistics were lacking. Instead statistics were registered by the educational institutions themselves (NOU 1989).

In figure 1 we see the steady increase in the number of permits granted each year. From a starting point below 3,000 in the early 1990s the number climbed to 6,000 and above in 2004 and 2005. The figure also tells us that the number of permits granted was stable from 1991 to 1998, showing only a slight increase. In 1999 the numbers started to go up, and doubled after seven years. From 3,200 in 1998, more than 6,500 permits were approved in 2005.

Figure 1. Student permits 1991-2005, in total



The numbers in figure 1 include permits for students from all countries in contact with the Directorate. This means that people coming from Western and Eastern Europe, developing countries and the rest of the world are all included (au pairs and governesses/trainees are excluded).

Even students at the Folk High Schools (*Folkehøyskole*) and religious schools are represented. From these two categories the applications peaked in 2003 with almost 500 new permits being granted. In 2005, less than 300 permits were approved. It is outside the mandate for this report to discuss this development.

In addition to these groups, also exchange students at the secondary/high school level are included. AFS-Intercultural Program is an example of one of the organizations that coordinate the international exchange of pupils aged between 15 and 18. Each year, between 400 and 500 permits have been issued to pupils/students in this age group in Norway.

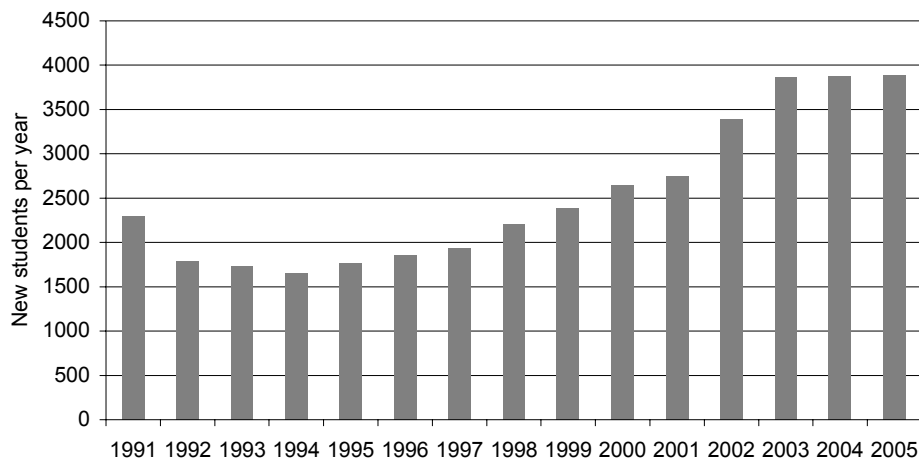
The biggest groups of teen exchange students over the past 15 years were USA (950), Russia (550), Germany (450) and Australia (430) and Brasil (300).

The students that come when they are at this age, and stay for a year, are perhaps not likely to stay on. In fact a quick check revealed that less than 100 later got a work permit out of the 7000 that arrived in this age group between 1991 and 2005. However, the contacts made during the teenagers' stay may contribute to a return to Norway for studies later or perhaps permanent residency.

The topic of this report indicates that these students should be left out of the analysis. In some of the analyses they are included. Their presence or absence in the datamaterial is specified.

To detail developments in the international student community in Norway, we have to see how permits were given to new students. Figure 2 shows students residence permits issued for the first time. The students aged 18 or younger are not included in these numbers. They constituted approximately 500 arrivals pro year.

Figure 2. First time student permits 1991-2005. Age 19 or older



The pattern in figure 2 is similar to that in figure 1. Some details set the two apart. In contrast to the total number of permits, the number of new students increased between 1996 and 1998. There was steep rise between 2001 and 2002. From that year to the next, the number of new students increased by 650, or more than 20 percent.

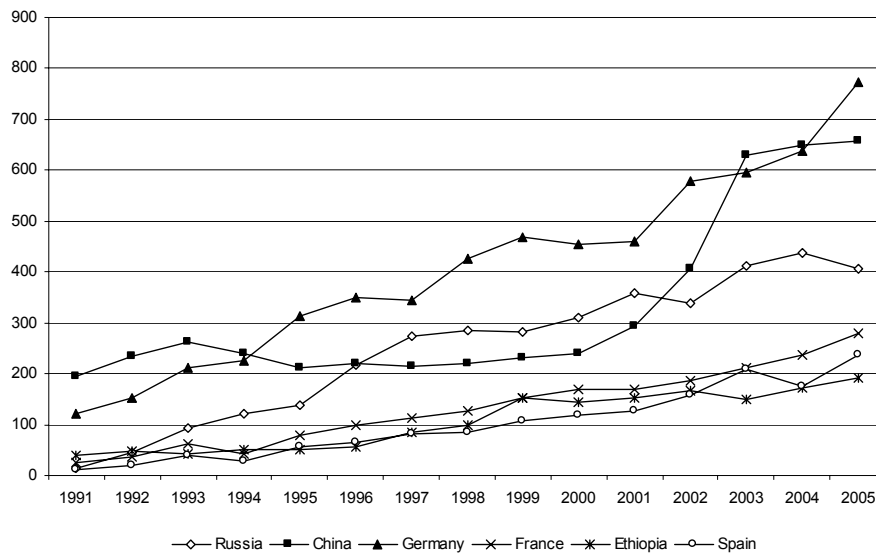
The major sending countries

One way of understanding the increase over the past 15 years is by asking where students came from. Some countries may have contributed more than others. And as I mentioned earlier, not all sending countries are equally interesting from an immigration viewpoint. Students from EEA countries, for example, enjoy more direct access to Norwegian education and labor market than people from other areas of the world.

And if we look at the nationalities of the international students that came to Norway in the period, differences between the sending countries become visible.

Within the group of the top fifteen sending countries, there is a mixture of Western European, Eastern European and more distant countries. For now, I will include them all in the description of the data. Later the focus will be turned towards the countries outside the EEA.

Figure 3. Selection of nationalities with a positive trend. New and old permits. Teen exchange students included.



The top sending country in 2005 was Germany. If we exclude the teen exchange students, and view the last fifteen years, more than 5500 permits (first time and renewals) were granted to students from Germany. 4700 were given to students from China, the number two on the list. A thousand less were received by Russians, which placed that country just above the USA. The USA was sending country number five. The list continues with Ghana (2800), France (2000), Italy (1800), Ethiopia (1600), Sri Lanka (1600), Spain (1500) and India (1400). If we include all countries with one thousand or more permits, the list finishes off with Holland (1200), Tanzania (1400) and Lithuania (1000).

Which of these countries contributed most to the rise in student numbers? And which countries did not?

Figure 3 shows the five most important sending countries with the strongest growth.

In figure 3, the top countries on the list mentioned earlier are again represented. Germany, China and Russia all showed growth during the period as a whole. The pattern for these three countries is however not identical. Germany and China both showed a sharp year-on-year increase 2001–02, while Russian student numbers retreated in the same period. The teen exchange students are included here. They have no influence on the trends.

If we look at the countries selected in figure 3, there is another interesting point to be made. Three of the six countries belong to the group of core EU

countries. In other words, countries from our own part of the world had a substantial share in the total increase in students coming to Norway.

The strong increase in German, French and Spanish students can at least partly be explained by ERASMUS and other EU-related education exchange programs (Foss 2001).

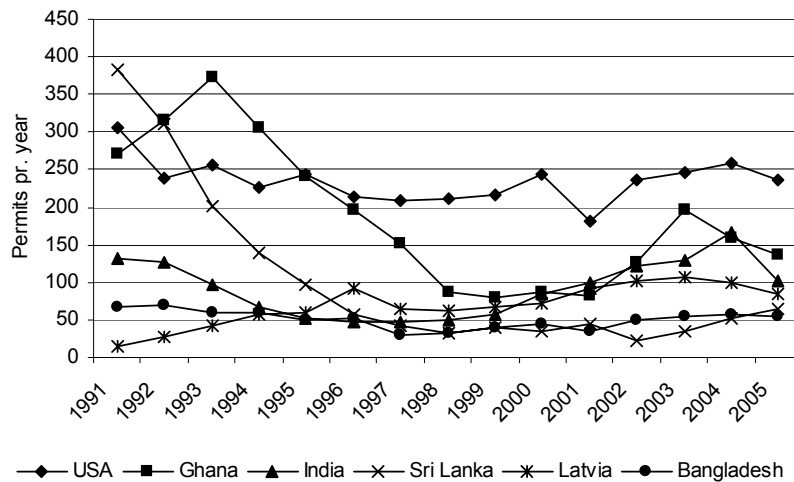
In figure 4, we recognize two of the top five nationalities in the list of the highest total number of permits, USA and Ghana.

From the USA, students came at a stable rate throughout the last fifteen years. Varying between two and three hundred permits a year, the number of students coming from this continent has been amazingly consistent. So did the teen exchange students that constituted between 50 and 100 students per year. Since the young people coming from the US are not included in the public grant programs, the stability is even more interesting.

Ghana ranked fifth in the overall list of sending countries. In figure 4 we see that the early 1990s was the period when students from Ghana were among the dominant groups coming to Norway. In fact, from 1992 to 1994, no other country had as many permits issued as the international students from Ghana. Since this period, however, fewer students have come from this West-African country.

If we look to the left of figure 4, we see that Sri Lanka was on top of the list of permits in 1991. Then number gradually dropped. Since the mid-1990s, only around 50 student permits were issued to people from Sri Lanka each year.

Figure 4. Selection of nationalities with a stable or negative trend.



It would be interesting to search for explanations for these varying national trends in arrivals. In my interviews, it was for example indicated that coming to Norway as a student in the early 1990s was considered an emigration route by many of those from Sri Lanka. This was picked up by the Directorate for Immigration, who subsequently tightened the practice towards this group. As a result, the numbers fell.

Neither the stability of the numbers of students coming from the USA will be explained here. Some of my informants may have been right though, when they indicated that many of these students had a special interest in Norway and the Norwegian language, for example through ancestry.

The numbers from Ghana could probably best be understood in relation to the development of the Norwegian grant programs. A closer look at this country will not be taken here.

For the immigration authorities, it is important to separate students from EEA and non-EEA countries. This division can be used to further understand the increase in the total number of permits over the past fifteen years. Would one expect the increase to be due to a higher number of EEA students coming, or has the increase in arrivals from non-EEA countries contributed more?

In figure 5, I have put the 10 biggest sending countries within the EU after the expansion in 2004 (25 countries) and seen how they contributed to the increase in the number of total permits. To get a grasp of the development, the increase is measured by comparing the numbers from 1998 with those from 2005. During this period the total number of student-permits nearly doubled (from 3,315 to 6,512).

Figure 5. Permits to top ten EEA nationalities 1998 and 2005. All permits.

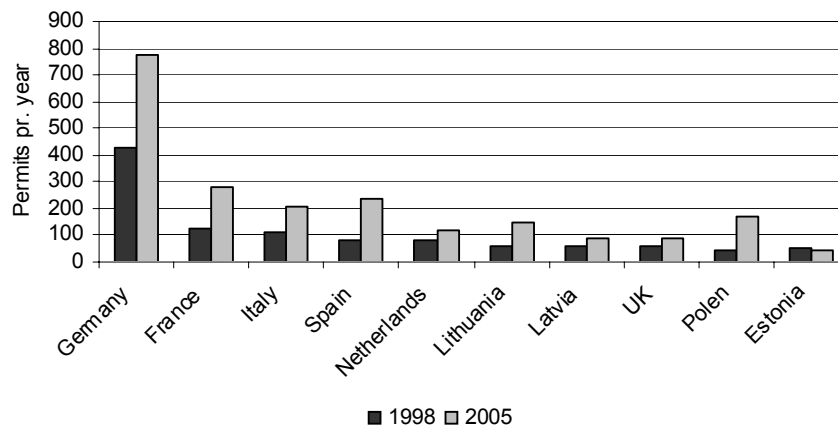
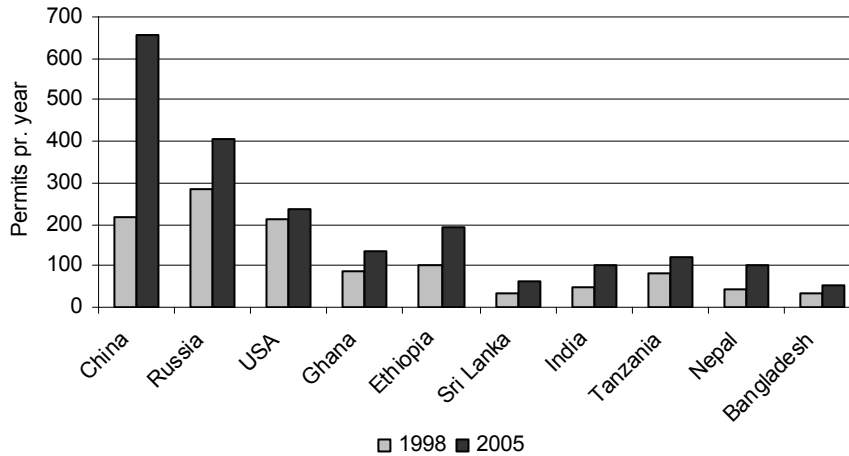


Figure 6. Permits top ten Non-EEA nationalities 1998 and 2005. All permits.



Permits issued to non-Nordic students from the top ten EEA countries increased by 94 percent in the period. The presence of teen exchange students did not influence this number. In figure 6, the top ten overall sending countries from outside the EEA are listed. Again the development for each country is displayed.

In Figure 6, the strong growth in permits issued to students from China is displayed. It was during this time interval that the near explosion in arrivals came from this Far-East country. All the countries in figure 6 showed an increase in this period. From earlier, however, we know that over a longer stretch of time several of these non-EEA countries showed a stable or negative overall trend. This was the case for USA, Ghana, Sri Lanka, India and Bangladesh.

Now we can identify which countries contributed most to the increase in student permits from 1998 to 2005. The increase in arrivals from the ten biggest EEA countries during the period was 94 percent. The equivalent number for the ten major countries outside the EEA was 80 percent. In other words, it was the EEA countries, like Germany, France, Italy and Spain that contributed the most to the increase. The group of teen exchange students is included in both figures 5 and 6, but did not influence the trends.

If we look at the composition of the group of permits, the trend is confirmed by the data in figure 7. From 1994, permits issued to EEA residents were given a special classification in the DUF register.

Figure 7. Student permits, share EEA and Non-EEA countries, 1994-2005. All permits.

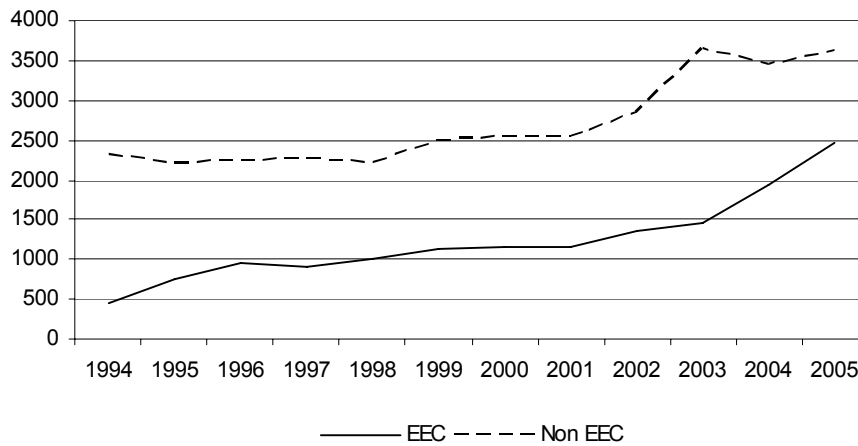
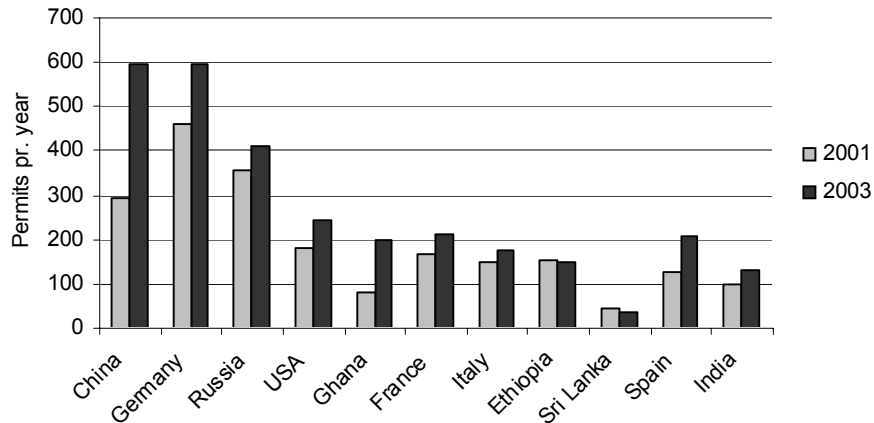


Figure 7 shows the relative composition of permits issued to students coming to and staying in Norway. Post-doc (self financed, around 50 each year), religious school and folk high school permits are not included. From a level below 20 percent, EEA permits increased at a higher rate than the rest. In 2005, more than 40 percent of all international students in Norway originated from EEA countries. There are several explanations for this, one of which is the expansion of the EEA area after the millennium.

This study focuses particularly on changes that occurred around the cancellation of the quarantine paragraph in 2001. If we compare the number of students registered in 2001 with 2003, the same pattern is visible that appeared in figure 5 and 6. In figure 8, the performance of the top ten sending countries overall are displayed.

Figure 8. Change in permits 2001-2003, top ten sending countries



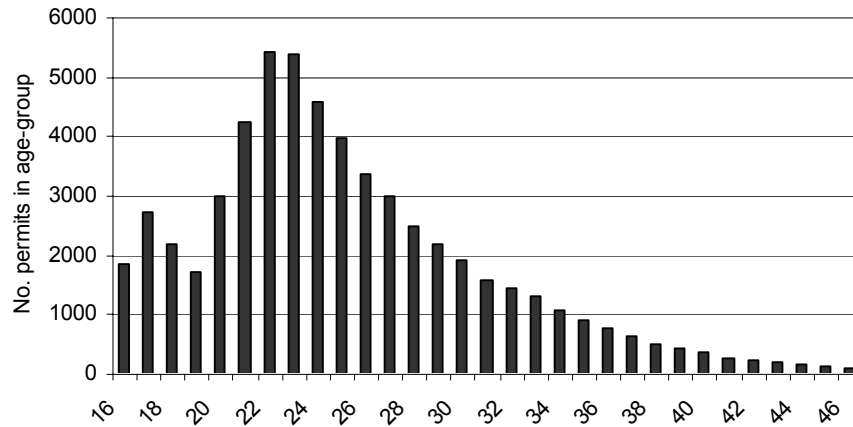
From figure 8 we see that growth in most of the top ten sending countries started before the paragraph was rescinded, and continued thereafter. Only Sri Lanka and Ethiopia had fewer students in Norway after the cancellation than before. In the Ethiopian case, the reasons are probably to be found at the national level and perhaps related to the grant programs. In figure 7 and 8 the teen exchange students are again included without influencing the trend.

So can the increases in figure 8 be attributed to a revamped policy? This is a big question and can not be answered on the basis of these data alone. It is however important to note that the removal of the quarantine provision in 2001 did not affect students from EEA countries. The increase in arrivals from for example Germany, France, Spain and Italy was unrelated to this liberal measure. More information is needed before the discussion of effect can be moved a step further.

Age

How old were the international students in Norway? In the data from the Directorate for Immigration, all students with permits are included. This is visible in the figure 9 below. Here the young students going to religious schools and participating in exchange programs at the secondary level are represented alongside the average student in her early twenties and the somewhat older NORAD and Quota grant students.

Figure 9. Age of students with student permits. All permits. 1991 – 2005.



The relatively high number of young students aged 16 to 18 could be explained by the approximately 500 pupils/students coming on the exchange programs at the secondary/high school level.

The data from the Directorate of Immigration provides information on the gender of the students that have graduated or terminated studies in Norway. Of the almost 40,000 who studied here during the past 15 years, half were male. There are however wide differences between nationalities. The general picture is that third world countries, like Bangladesh, Tanzania and Ethiopia, have a huge majority of male students. This is also the case for India and Pakistan. Other countries counter this by having contributed a majority of women. The most extreme cases in this regard were Russia (70 to 30), Japan, USA and Australia.

Where in Norway did they study?

The data from the Directorate of Immigration do not say where the students study. From another source, the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSSDS), it is possible to get an impression of this. These data are, as I mentioned in chapter 2, of a different origin. They are based on information that the institutions themselves supply. This means that it is the number of students with a foreign citizenship that is registered, and not *international students* according to the definition given. Even Nordic students are included in the statistics. As a result NSSDS figures are higher than Directorate of

Immigration. Nevertheless, they tell us something about the number of students at different universities and colleges.

In 2005, NSSDS statistics showed a 60/40 distribution of *foreign students* between universities and colleges. Most of these students were at the University of Oslo. Of 11,000 registered foreign students at Norwegian universities, 6,000 were attending the one in the capital. The University of Science and Technology at Trondheim (NTNU) comes next with 2,400 registered foreign students, followed by the universities of Bergen (1,200), Tromsø (1,000) and Stavanger (800).

Of the university colleges, the top positions were held by Oslo (1,300), Agder (700) and Narvik (400).

Do they stay or do they go?

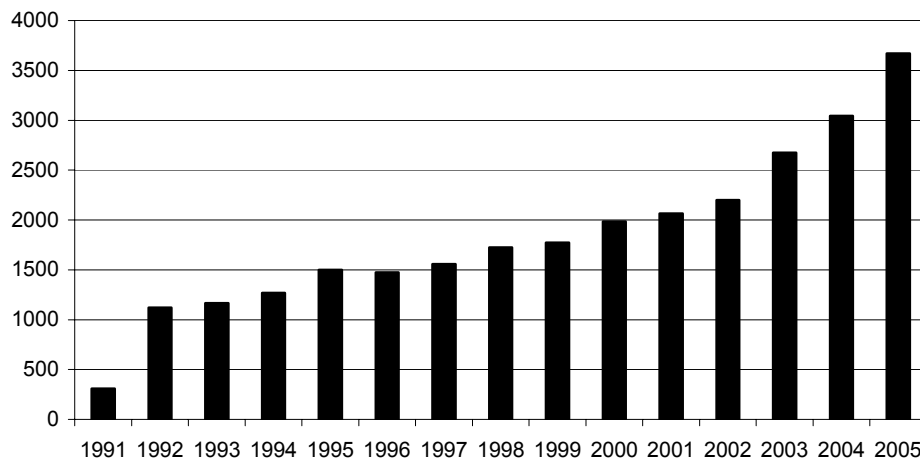
We have now come to the question of what the international students do when they finish their studies. From an immigration perspective, this is of course an essential question. Yet, without the background information that was presented in the last chapter, this discussion would be hard to get a grip on. What we have learned so far is that the overall trend has been an increase in the number of international students over the past fifteen years. Some nationalities have grown consistently; others have contributed less to the general upward trend and showed a stable pattern. Other countries sent fewer students at the end of the period than the start.

We have also learned that the increase in permits issued was particularly intense from 2001 to 2003. Whether this was related to amendments in Norwegian labor market legislation is an open question.

In this chapter we move one step further in the process of gathering information about the effects of the change in 2001. The main purpose of this chapter, however, is to establish the immigration effect and potential of international students coming to Norway. So far we have looked at the students as they “checked in” to the Norwegian educational system. Now we turn our attention to the “checking out”.

From 1991 to 2005, more than 30,000 international students graduated or finished studies at Norwegian universities and colleges. In line with the increase in the students arriving to Norway, the number of graduates also showed a rising tendency during the period. If we look at figure 10, we see that while 2,000 students finished their studies in 1997, the number had doubled in 2005. Compared to the number of arrivals (see figure 1), the increase came a year or to later in the numbers for the graduates in figure 10.

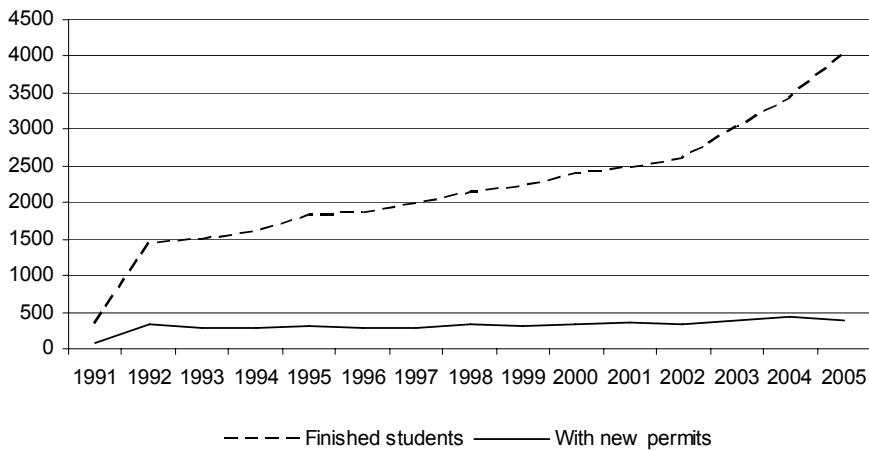
Figure 10. Graduated or finished students, per year. 1991-2005. Aged 19 or older.



Now we are closing in on one of the central questions in this study, i.e., how these graduates behave after they finish studying. Did they stay on?

We ask first at how many graduates renewed their residence permits. In figure 11, we recognize the development in the total number of graduates and see that it is compared to the number of ex-students that went on to have new permits.

Figure 11. Total graduates and new permits, pr. year



In figure 11, we see the increase in the number of international students that graduated each year from 1991-2005. The lower curve indicates the trend in the persons that stayed in Norway after they had finished their studies. Roughly three to four hundred got new residency permits each year.

What is striking with figure 11 is that the increase in graduated students was not followed by an increase in the number of persons that stayed on. Instead, the gap between graduates and immigrants became wider from one year to the next. This means that an increasing number of international students left the country after they had finished. And relatively speaking, fewer stayed on in Norway. In figure 11 the sub-nineteen group is included but does not affect the pattern. The arrival of this group was stable at 500 per year.

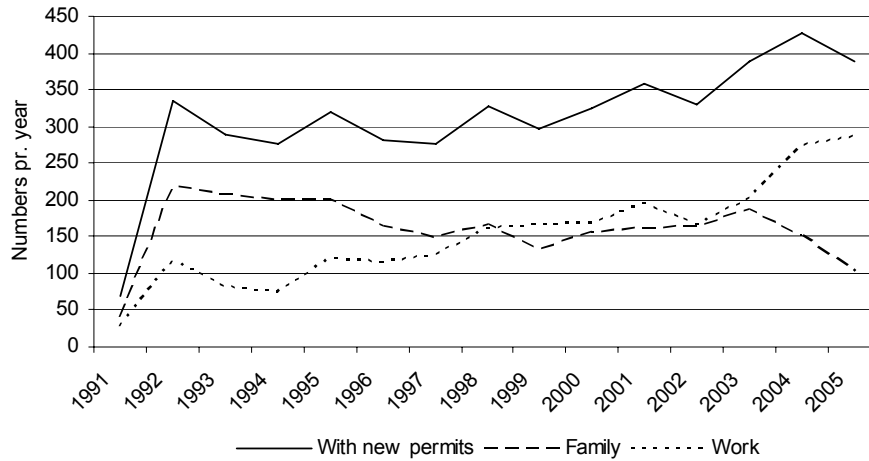
This falling tendency was mirrored in the share of students that got new permits. In the mid 1990s, around 20 percent of those aged 19 or older, stayed on. In 2004, this number was reduced to 14 percent and then fell another four points to 10 percent in 2005.

In order to understand this perhaps surprising trend, we have to look for explanations in more than one place. Let us start by taking a closer look at those that chose to stay. First we have to establish their origin. How does the group from EEA countries compare to those from outside the region? Which of the groups are more likely to stay on after their studies?

For a student who wants to stay on after s/he has finished her studies, there are two main possibilities. Either s/he can apply for family reunification with a Norwegian citizen or others with a permanent residence permit, or s/he can apply for a work permit (a third possibility is to apply for asylum. These cases were however not registered in the data material). There are several sub-groups of both of these two standard types of permits, but in the analysis of these data, we will stick to the main categories.

If we look at figure 12, the above trend is replicated, with a stable number of new permits being granted to graduated students. Between three and four hundred persons received either a permit related either to family reunion or work.

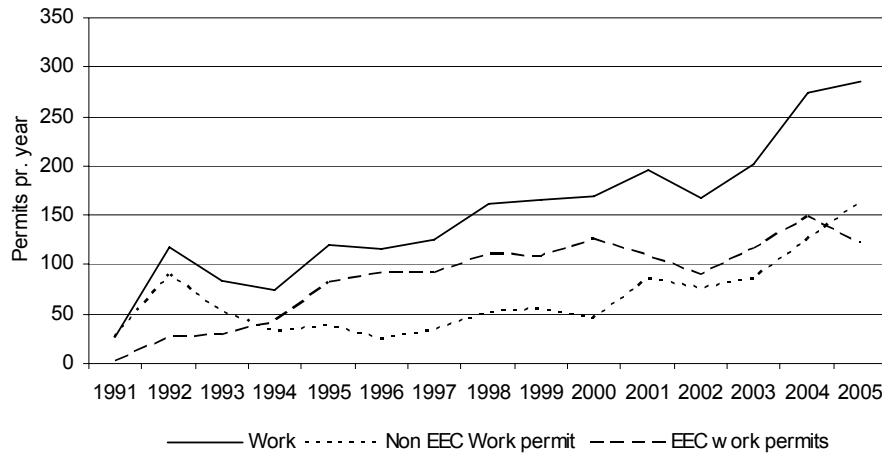
Figure 12. Graduated students with new permits. All ages.



Both of these types of permit are displayed in figure 12. Through the mid-1990s, the majority of post-study permits were granted in family-related cases. The next phase was from then until 2003. During this period the two types of permit had an equal share of the total issued to former students. From 2003 and onwards, most of the permits were given to people applying for work permits. There is one last thing to be noted concerning this figure, and that is the growth in family reunification permits. Until the mid-1990s, the share of this type of permit was dominant, as I just noted. In fact more than twice as many family reunion permits were granted compared to work permits. In 1992/95, more than 200 family-related permits were given to former students each year. In 2005, the two types of permit had changed positions. This particular year, 286 former students received a permission to live and work in Norway, while only 102 were given permission to stay for family reasons.

One of the motivations of this study was to establish the volume of labor related immigration from international students. Let us therefore have a closer look at how the work permits were distributed between students with a background inside and outside the EEA.

Figure 13. Work permits given to graduated students. All ages.



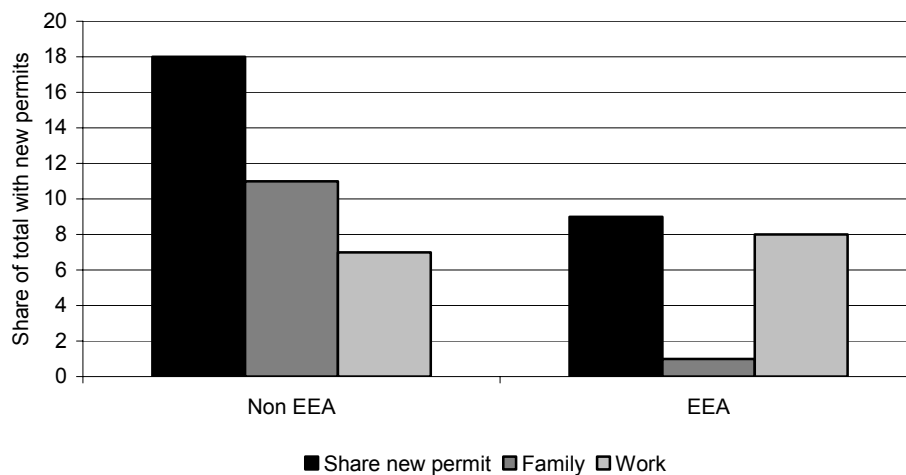
The distribution of work permits for EEA and non-EEA students shows no definite pattern, as we can see in figure 13. What can be noted is that over the ten-year period from 1994 to 2004, more permits granted to former EEA students. This seemed to change recently. The graduated non-EEA students were in majority.

Over the last four years, the two groups have shared permits equally. Since 2000, non-EEA students with a work permit increased from 50 to 150 per year. During the same period, the number of EEA students fluctuated between 100 and 150.

A question that is not answered in figure 13 is what type of permit was dominant among the students from the two different backgrounds.

In figure 14, the composition of family and work permits is displayed for EEA and non-EEA students. In order to compare the groups, absolute numbers of students are transformed to share of total.

Figure 14. Share of students with new permits, EEA and non EEA graduated 1991-2005. Aged 19 or older.



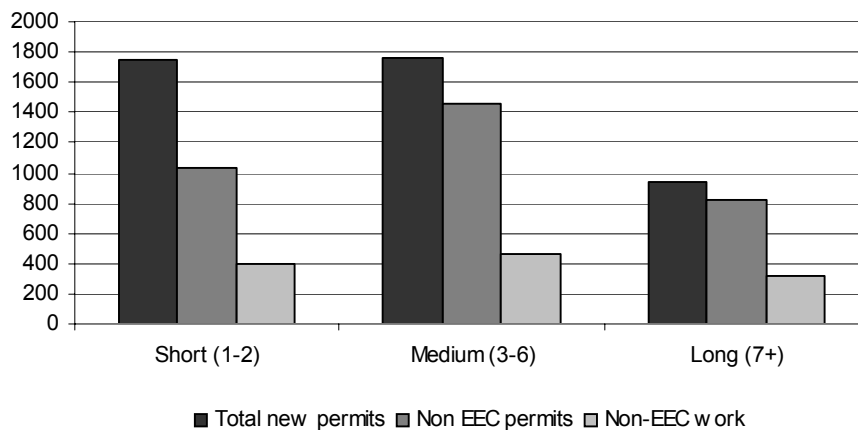
The difference between the EEA and non-EEA groups is clearly displayed in figure 14. Firstly, relatively more non-EEA students choose to stay after their studies. Eighteen percent of the first group stayed on, and only nine percent of the latter. Secondly, there was a notable difference in the distribution of family and work permits. From the non-EEA group, eleven percent got a family-related permit while seven percent got a work-related permit. In this figure, only students aged 19 or older are included.

For the EEA students, the relationship was the opposite. Only one percent ended with a family permit, whereas eight percent got permission to work. One explanation could be the duration of studies for the two groups. I will not develop this argument any further. The effect of duration on immigration will however be explored a bit further, but then related only to different countries within the Non-EEA group.

The effect of duration of study

Now we have gone through the steps that lead us closer to what has an impact on the immigration of international students. Two variables that may have an effect are duration of education in Norway – in other words of their stay – and nationality.

Figure 15. Effect of duration, semesters. 1991-2005. All ages. Total of new permits and number of non EEA citizens



The length of education prior to a renewed permit or not can be divided into three groups: short studies (one or two terms); medium studies (three to six terms) and long studies (seven terms or more). These would typically correspond to a short-term exchange student, a Master's student or a student who took several courses, and students obtaining a full degree in Norway.

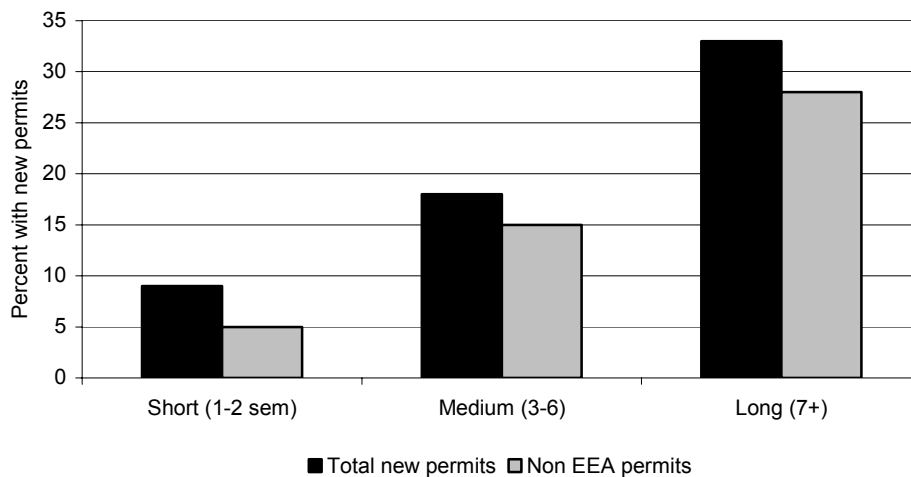
Let us see how these three groups spread out when it comes to later immigration. In figure 15, we can see the difference between the short, medium and long-term student.

In figure 15, we see that the total number of new permits issued to short, medium and long term students. When interpreting the findings in this figure, we have to take into consideration that the basis for each category was different. The students that stayed for one to two terms, here called "short" had a basis of 23,500 students (including the sub-19 exchange students). Of these, we see that a bit fewer than 1,800 got new permits. One thousand of these were given to students from countries outside the EEA area. Of these thousand permits, around four hundred were work related.

Compared to these students, there were fewer in the two other categories. Altogether, 11,000 students had studied for three to six terms and less than three thousand for more than seven terms.

The variations in the basis for the numbers in figure 15 mean that the relative tendency to stay on in Norway on new permits was also very different for the three groups. In the next set of numbers, seen in figure 16, this is clearly displayed. The share of short-term students that stayed on was a mere 7 percent. A bit more than half of these were non-EEA nationals. For the medium-term category, the chances of staying were considerably higher.

Figure 16. New permits. Percent that stayed on with short, medium or long duration of study. 1991-2005. Aged 19 or older.



The students that spent seven or more terms in Norway were most likely by a long chalk to stay. Of three thousand long-term students, around one third got new permits, half of them work related.

A closer look at the countries with the highest number of long-term students shows that several of the now familiar sending countries are present. China, Russia, Ghana, Germany, and Ethiopia all had a hundred or more students in the plus-seven semester category. Which of these had the highest staying rate of the long duration students? The number one country on that list was Germany. Sixty percent of these students (76 out of 128) got a new permit after they had finished their studies. And in contrast to the other countries on the list, the permits issued to the Germans were almost exclusively work permits. The next country with a high staying rate among the plus-seven students was Russia. Forty-six percent out of the total of 367 long duration students remained in Norway. The Russian permits were evenly divided into the work and family category.

From this list of long stayers it is worth mentioning that both Ghana and Ethiopia had few students remaining on new permits. Ghana was lowest on the list of mentioned countries with a rate of 25 percent, only beaten by Ethiopia with a mere 16 percent staying rate among the group with plus-seven semesters.

There is not space to dig deeper into the differences between the long, medium and short-term students. An interesting subject for further inquiries would be distribution by nationality. As an example, there were only 28

students from the USA that were in the longest category. This is a very low number considering the country is among the top five contributors of international students to Norway. It is clear there are national differences in staying rates.

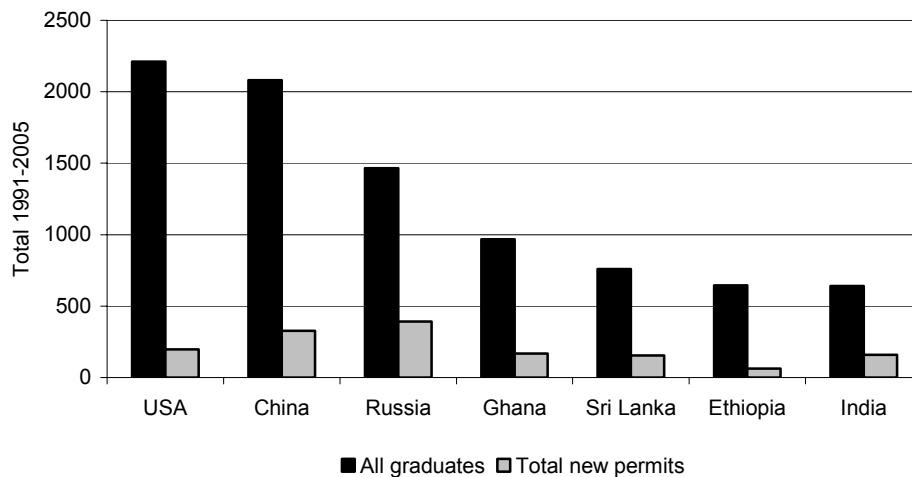
The effect of nationality

The next question is whether nationality of the students affected probability of staying in Norway. Are there national differences? If there are, which students are most prone to stay? For the rest of this chapter, the focus will be on students from outside the EEA area.

In figure 17, the top seven non-EEA countries with graduated students are displayed. It includes both the total of students that have finished studying here, and the number that got a new family- or work related permit afterwards.

The first thing that is striking in figure 17 is the lack of concurrence between the number of students and renewed permits. While the USA is ranked number one in number of graduated students, only seven percent of them stayed in the country after they finished.

Figure 17. Number graduates from top seven non EEA countries. With total of new permits. Period 1991-2005. Aged 19 or older.

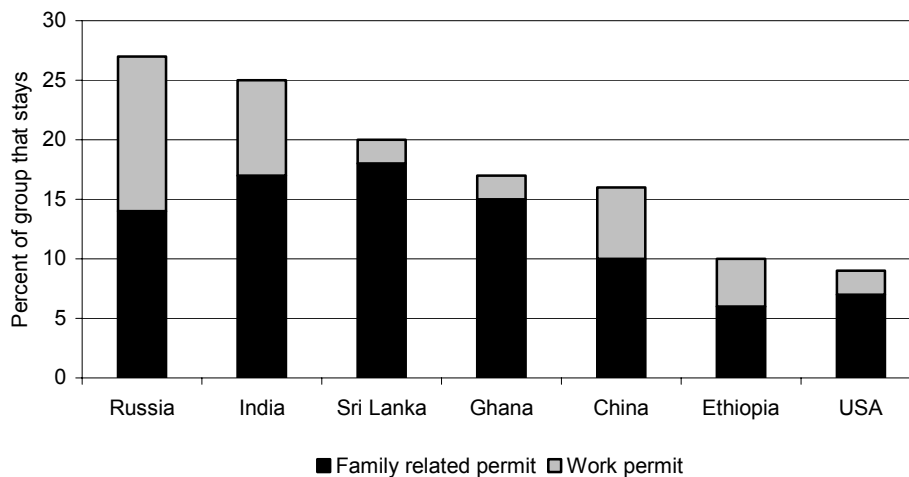


The staying rate is shown in figure 18. Here the ranking from figure 17 is changed. With a nine percent staying rate, the students from USA are placed below the rest of the top seven sending countries. This is interesting because the approximately one thousand exchange students at the secondary/high school level are not included. Part of the explanation for this is that even the students that were 19 years or older spent only a short time in Norway. In contrast to other nationalities, 75 percent of the students from USA studied for 12 months or less. The difference is striking when compared to the 35 percent of the Russian students that spent only one or two semesters in the country, or the mere 25 percent of the Chinese.

If we return to figure 18 we see that out of the students from Russia, India and Sri Lanka, more than one in five stayed on in Norway. As noted earlier, though, students from Sri Lanka were more visible in the statistics at the first half of the 1990s.

From figure 18, we can also see the national differences in the type of permits the students got after their studies. The overall picture is that most of those that stayed did so for family related reasons. The most extreme case here was the students from Sri Lanka. Of the 20 percent of those that stayed on, only 2 percent got work permits. But also students from Ghana and USA stayed for predominately family reasons.

Figure 18. National staying rates. Type of new permit. Top seven non-EEA countries. 1991-2005. Aged 19 or older.



At the other end of the scale were Russia and China. Although more than half of the students that stayed on from these countries did so on family permits, the rate of work permits was considerably higher than the other countries. More than 40 percent of the permits that the Russian and Chinese students got were work related. Only India came close in this ranking. Out of every ten Indian students that stayed, three had work related permits.

The big picture

I will wait until chapter 8 to sum up and discuss the findings so far. One way of encapsulating this chapter, however, is to use the numbers that have been presented to see how big the immigration effect of the international students really was between 1991 and 2005. If we again say that the main concern in this study is to establish the dimension of the labor immigration by students from outside the EEA, then the following balance can be presented.

International students registered in Norway 1991-2005.	
All international students 1991-2005	44 475
Of these total of finished students	37 337
Of these 19 or older	31 629
Of these left the country	27 178

Remained in Norway with new permits	4 451

Of these family related permits	2 290
And work related	2 161

Work permits EEA students	1 258
Work permits Non-EEA students	903

This balance shows the total labor immigration effect stemming from international students coming to Norway. If we again look especially at the students from outside the EEA area, less than a thousand students went on to get work-related permits in Norway. This calculation covers the whole period between 1991 and 2005. This means that an average of a mere 61 work permits were granted to former students of non-EEA nationality each year.

If we look at the total of work permits given to ex students, both from within and outside the EEA, the yearly average is higher. Divided by the 15 years the period covers, an average of 144 former students received a working permit each year.

If we do the same calculation for the whole group of permits, both work and family related, we end up with a yearly average of 297. This is the

number of international students that each year receives other types of residence permits after they have finished their studies.

The question of return

What then about those international students that do not stay on in Norway? Do they return to their home country? Or do they move on to another part of the world and make use of their education there? These questions are difficult to answer. In the statistics supplied by the Directorate of Immigration, there is no information about the whereabouts of those that leave the country. To get a solid impression about what happens to these former students would require a broad and complicated study on its own.

There is however one source of data that may give at least an indication of “what happens next”. As I mentioned earlier in chapter 2, The Norwegian State Educational Loan Fund (NSELF) funds students coming to Norway on the different quota programs. They therefore have data for this group. The question is how accurate the registration of the return rate actually is.

On the one hand there is reason to believe that the NSELF return data is solid; the quota students must document their return to their home country in order to get their educational loan converted to a grant. This has to be done one year after they return home. Since NSELF requires a reliable documentation of the former student’s life in the home country, these data must be considered reliable.

On the other hand, there are several problems with the NSELF data. First of all is that it only covers those students that were in one of the quota programs. This means that more than 80 percent of the international students that spend time in Norway are not registered by the NSELF. As I mentioned earlier, these so called free movers may act in a different manner for example when it comes to post study adaptation. And even for the limited group of quota students the data are probably dubious. For example NSELF data do not register persons that re-enter Norway after having converted their loans into grants. This may result in an overestimation of the actual rate of return. A further problem is that students that move to third countries have little reason to report this back to the NSELF. If they do so they have to make downpayments on their loans.

Despite these and other weaknesses with the NSELF data, they constitute the only data available on return of international students. Although unreliable, a presentation of the numbers therefore is in place.

Before I come to the actual numbers that the NSELF has registered, a few comments have to be made about the earlier discussion on return in the Norwegian literature.

The 1989 green paper (NOU 1989:13) mentioned earlier, gave a broad evaluation of the system for international students up to that point in time. The Flatin committee tried to estimate the effect of the paragraph that opened Norwegian education system to pupils and students from developing countries. On the basis of incomplete data, the committee concluded that almost “none of the students returned to their home country” (Birkeland 1995:6).

In the 1995 report from the Norwegian Council of Universities (NCU), an attempt is made to supplement the data from 1989. Here figures from the University of Bergen are used to correct the impression that most international students stayed in Norway. According to their statistics from the early 1980s and later, the trend was that the share of returnees was increasing. In 1995, more than half of the international students were assumed to have left Norway (Birkeland 1995:6). The 1991 Immigration Law is suggested as a possible factor that contributed to a higher return rate.

In 2001, the government quota program was evaluated (KUF 2001). One of the aspects of the grant system the committee considered was the return rate of quota students. They based their estimates on NSELF statistics, and information provided by the major educational institutions. The information submitted by the universities and colleges was however of little use. The reason for this was that the answers varied from “almost all of them return to the home country”, over “some return and others don’t”, to the other extreme “most of them stay in Norway”. They were again made to rely on the numbers from NSELF to estimate the return rate.

The statistics on which the 2001 report was based showed that at the time, approximately one thousand quota students were in the process of getting their loans converted into grants. They had finished their studies, but had not yet gotten their loans annulled. Out of these, five hundred had gone back to their home country. The rest were still in Norway. In addition came some three hundred students from the same generation that had gotten the conversion already. That meant that in total some six out of ten had returned from that group of quota students. The evaluation committee used this information to conclude that a bit more than half of the students on the quota program return to their home country (KUF 2001: 11).

The largest groups that were still in Norway were former students from Russia, China, Ethiopia, Ghana, Estonia and Latvia. The incomplete statistics also supported an estimation of national differences in return rate. The committee found that the students from Russia, Ethiopia, China and Romania all had a return rate below 50 percent. More students from these countries seemed to stay on than those that left. The quality of these numbers are however uncertain. This also goes for the time for registration. It is unclear how long after graduation these numbers were gathered.

As we have seen elsewhere in this chapter, the data from the Directorate of Immigration gives a different picture regarding return. Even though the studies conducted in 1995 (NCU) and 2001 (KUF: Ministry of Church, Education and Research) seemed to indicate that 50 percent or fewer of the students returned, the data from the Directorate of Immigration points to a different conclusion: That the return rate is considerably higher. The UDI data are more encompassing. These data include all students, not only the relatively small number on the quota programs or students from one institution.

One final point from the 2001 evaluation will be presented here. In the report, the authors mention leakage to third countries. Students that do not stay in Norway, go on to settle in other attractive countries, it was argued. The committee found no support for this claim in NSELF's 2001 statistics. Of the 1000 students graduated under the quota program that constituted their data, less than 40 had an address in a third country. Some of these students may even have moved to neighboring countries in their home region. With a third country rate of less than 5 percent this phenomenon, or perhaps rather the reporting of it, must be considered to be insignificant. The countries that figured most often in the third country list of addresses were the USA and Canada.

If we look at the latest statistics on return provided by the Education Fund, it is not possible to come to any well based conclusion regarding return. The numbers from 2001 showed that around half of the quota students returned home, and only a few went to third countries. In 2005, the numbers were inconclusive.

On the one hand, NSELF statistics indicated a higher number of students staying on in Norway, and a lower number returning home. These statistics covered all former quota students still in contact with the institution. They are displayed in table 1 in the left column.

Table 1. Return rate of Government quota/grant students. Pr. December 2005

	All quota students in contact with Education Fund	Quota students graduated in 2004
Still in Norway	677	171
Returned to home country	583	238
In third countries	72	15
Total	1332	424

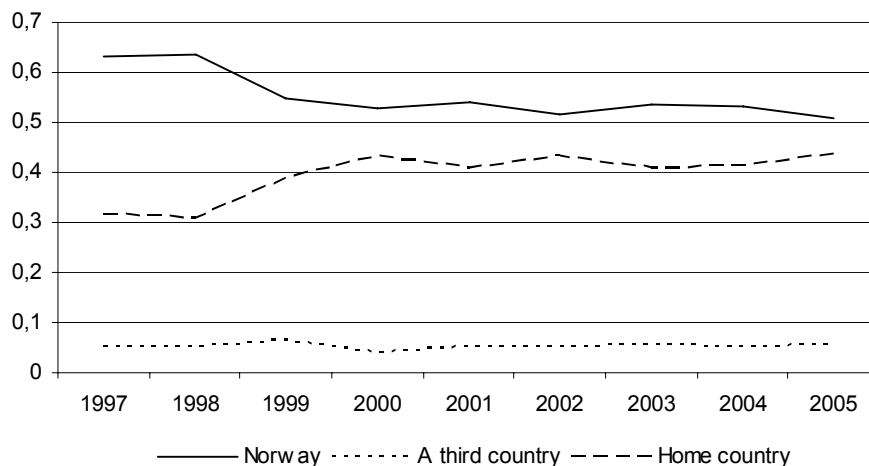
From the numbers in the left column of table 1, it would seem that fewer quota students returned now than in 2001.

On the other hand, the numbers for the graduates of 2004 indicated a different pattern. From the right column of table 1, one would conclude that 56 percent of the students went back even during the first year after graduation.

There are several reasons for the discrepancy between the two sets of data. In the left column, displaying the total number of quota students still in contact with NSELF, the figures for the students still in Norway probably is too high. The reason for this is that all students that do not explicitly notify the Education Fund about a change of address, remains listed as residing in Norway. These people remain on the list for three years, even if NSELF do not manage to get in touch with them. These former students may have gone back to their home country or they may have traveled to a third country. But even the figures for the returnees may be incorrect. Although they are based on new addresses for the students in the home countries, they may be made to look permanent, when in fact some of the former students may have returned once more to Norway. Employees in the Educational Fund do not routinely check this possible misuse of the conversion policy. A spot test done in 2006 would indicate that there is over-reporting of permanent returns to the home countries (Interview employee NSELF).

With all this in mind, we can look at the period from 1997 to 2005.

Figure 19. Quota students repaying their loans. Where are they now?



In figure 19 the stable tendency is displayed. The share of quota students returning to their home country, as reported to the NSELF, was the same in 2000 as in 2005. This was also the case for the students moving on to a third country. Around 5 percent of the students that were still in touch with NSELF reported having moved to a country other than Norway or their home country. Even if the percentage that returned was stable, the number of students increased during the period. In 1997 and 1998, around 300 quota students were registered as repaying their loans or waiting for the one year period to pass, so that they could convert their loans to grants. Two years later, the number had increased to 800, before leveling out at around 1,300 a year. The rate of people returning, however, was stable as we have seen.

One last point could be made regarding return. During the last few years, some educational institutions have communicated with the Directorate of Immigration about students that do not return to their home countries. One should think that this was of no concern to the universities and colleges. Whether individuals stay on and work or become part of families in Norway should lie outside the institutions responsibility and fields of interest. Yet some institutions had reported their concern. The reason is perhaps understandable. The students that caused them to contact the Directorate had been part of bilateral and bi-institutional arrangements. When students from these programs end up staying in Norway, this may be a challenge to further cooperation. Part of the deal is the institutions shall have exchange competence. When finished, the students are supposed to go back to their home institutions and thereby improve the educational milieu. The exchange was meant to be balanced.

Some of my informants disputed that this reaction was typical. They stated that the institutions would normally not concern themselves with international students that chose to stay on in Norway after having been part of bi-lateral exchange programs.

In the next chapter, we will see how the international students themselves related to the question of staying or returning.

Why do they come, and why do they stay?

Until now this report has had an outside look at the issue of students and immigration. Now we turn to the students themselves. In the web-based survey I described in chapter 2 the students were posed questions about their current situation and their plans for the future. The rest of this chapter sets out the answers they gave. One section of the survey was left open for qualitative comments from the students. In the following presentation I will mix these citations with the quantitative material. First we will need a few remarks about those that participated in the survey.

Who were the respondents?

As I mentioned in chapter 2, the survey was distributed to three universities and colleges, and later to other institutions. It is the first round that is referred to here, but several comments are included from the second set of recipients.

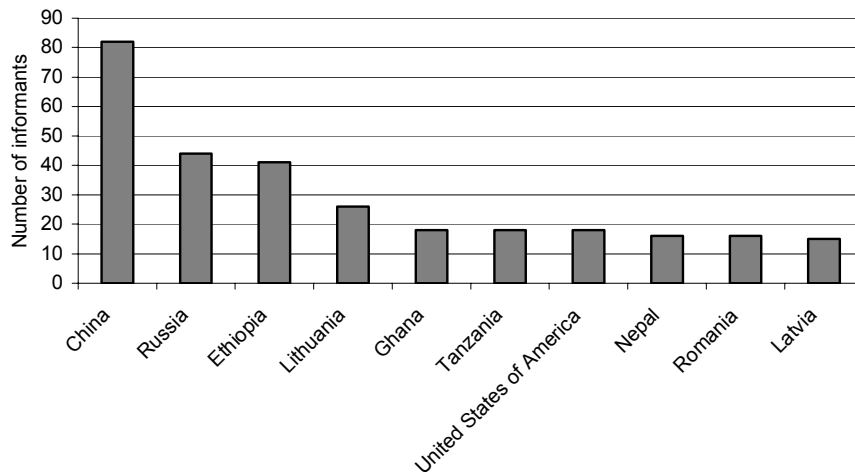
The three main institutions were the University of Oslo, NTNU at Trondheim and Narvik University College. A total of 1,100 email invitations were sent out. A response came from 550 students after one reminder. This gives a response rate of 50, which is quite high, given the fluctuating situation these students are in.

Two thirds of the informants were on a Master's program. Twenty five percent were at a lower level, while 7 percent were currently working on their PhD. Asked about what level they were aiming at while in Norway, however, 20 percent answered that they wanted to end up with a PhD.

Age-wise, there were no anomalies for in the stage of their educational trajectory. The main groups were between 24 and 27. There was however also a group of 15 percent over 34.

Most of the students wanted to finish their studies in Norway, and not supplement them later in their home country. Of the 550 respondents, a more were funded mainly by NSELF. One in four financed their own studies, while the rest had "work" or other solutions as their primary source of income.

Figure 20. Informants in the web-survey. The countries that had 15 or more

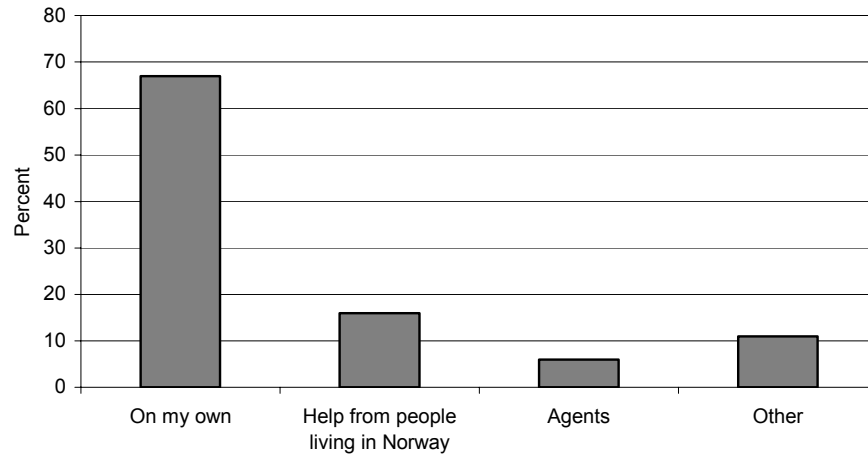


Students from all the major sending countries participated in the survey. As we can see in figure 20, China and Russia were the two top countries in the survey. We can also see that the other important sending countries like Ghana, Ethiopia and the USA were represented. This makes the survey and its results more valid. There is no room here for a discussion about how representative the results are for all international students in Norway. It would however be uncomplicated to make the case that this part of the study could be transferred to other institutions that resemble the three that were selected. The differences between the students in Oslo, Trondheim and Narvik, will not be discussed in this report.

However, one comment on the differences has to be made. And that is to explain the high number of Chinese students that participated in the survey. The reason is that there is a large contingent of students from this country in Narvik. By including that college, I also opened up for a high number of Chinese respondents.

In the survey I asked the students about their educational background. A great majority had a Bachelor's degree or some additional courses when they came to Norway.

Another question was how they got information about the studies in Norway. Did they get it through friends, agents, family? In figure 21, the distribution of the answers is displayed.

Figure 21. How did you get information about studies in Norway?

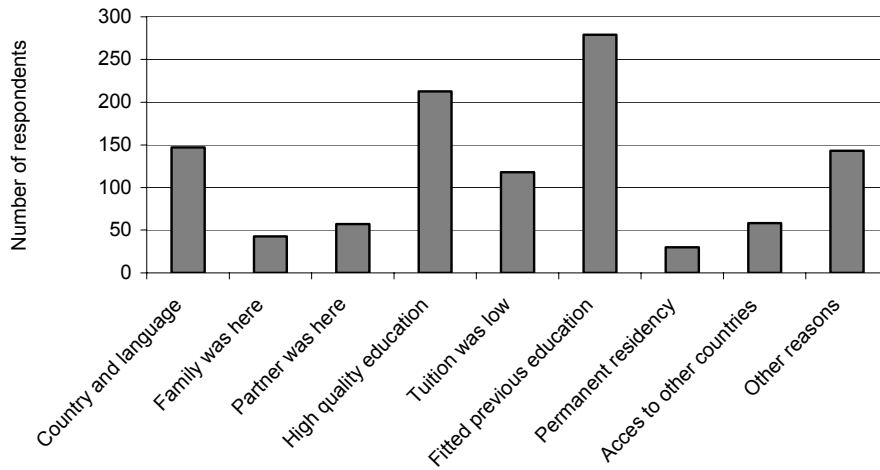
The major source of information was friends, followed by internet. One in five had gotten information from former students that had studied in Norway. Six percent reported that they had heard about the possibility to study in Norway through agents.

The survey also included a question on whether they had gotten help in the application process. Two thirds of the students said that they had arranged everything by themselves. The second largest group had gotten help from persons already living in Norway. Again, six percent answered that agents had been involved in the process.

A final piece of background information on the international students that participated in the survey has to do with the duration of their residence permits. The 10–12 month permit was by far the most common (66 percent). Apart from this group, there were more students that had permits lasting longer than 12 months than those that had a shorter duration than 10 months.

Why Norway?

A central question for researchers and professionals interested in migration is why immigrants choose to come to a specific country. In the survey of the international students, I asked them why Norway. Was it characteristics of this specific country, the quality of the education, migratory considerations or other factors that made them choose to come here?

Figure 22. Reasons for choosing Norway

If we look at the figure 22 below, the main reasons for coming to Norway as a student are clearly related to the education itself. The two alternatives chosen by most informants were that the studies here “fitted into their previous education”, and that the education here “held a high quality”. In fourth place came the “low tuition” of Norwegian universities and colleges.

In addition to these characteristics of the education, qualities of the country and language were stated as reasons by 150 students out of the 545. More specifically, the alternative these students agreed with was “Because I am interested in the country and the language”. Here it was obvious that the Norwegian language was perceived as a positive factor. Further down, we will see what the students answered when asked about the language as a barrier against immigration.

Family reasons were mentioned as important by 20 percent of the respondents. These answers included both a link to a spouse/partner or other family ties.

There were also two issues related to immigration among the alternative answers. The first was that studying in Norway could help secure them permanent residency, and the other that Norway could function as a springboard to residency in other attractive countries. These, perhaps seemingly less legitimate, reasons for coming, were mentioned by a bit fewer students than stated family reasons.

Frustrations with rules and regulators

The comment section of the survey gave the students an opportunity to express their opinion on studies, residence and work. Certain frustrations and suggestions were mentioned frequently.

Perhaps because of the theme of the survey, many students commented on how they were treated by the Directorate of Immigration. The general feeling was one of frustration. Another piece of data, a question about the UDI in the additional survey, gave a more balanced opinion about the directorate.

One frustration was related to the handling of the application and handling process of the residence permits. Here the requirement for supplying a financial guarantee was among the top issues. The amounts set (80 000 for a self financed student and 167 000 for family reunion) were experienced as being too high. One student from Canada expressed himself in this way:

The UDI rules, like demanding that 80.000 is in the bank all at once, sends a clear message that foreigners (unless they are refugees or from developing countries) are not welcome in Norway. But they will tolerate us as long as they don't have to lift a finger to assist us (Age 30, USA, current level: Masters, self financed).

The fee for applying for a temporary working permit and renewal of the residence permit also caused frustration. One student put it this way when describing the situation for quota students:

Foreign students are living on a very controlled budget. Now they pay 800 kroner to apply for a new residence permit. In addition they have to pay another sum of 800 to get a work permit. These students pay from the loan they get from Lånekassen. I think this is terrible. These students are compelled to buy used clothes. How can they afford to pay such vast amounts of money? (34, Sri Lanka, PhD, self financed).

Another frustration was that the residence permits has to be renewed at least once a year. From the students' point of view, it seemed more reasonable to get a residence permit that equaled the length of the study. So if a person had been accepted to a two years Master's program, the permit should also be for two years.

The 20 hours per week limit on part-time work also led to some comments from the students in the survey.

It is hard for many students from Eastern Europe, since they can only work for twenty hours a week when they study. It is also difficult that they can only have one job. I understand that it is a way to control the situation for immigrants who want to use education as a way to obtain a residence permit,

but for those that are here to study, it is really frustrating to not be able to earn the money necessary to actually live here. (20, Russia, Bachelor, most important source of income: Work)

One clear finding from the survey was that the students experienced a lack of guidance and clear signals about their post-study possibilities in Norway. This is interesting since it seemed to be a reflection of a widespread confusion among most actors involved with international students. Local employees at the universities and colleges, with a few exceptions, did not give guidance on the possibilities in Norway. Nor did they encourage the students to seek employment or residency on other grounds. The people processing the applications for residency in the Directorate of Immigration noted what could appear to be double signals being sent to them from above and from them to the educational institutions and the students themselves.

It is hard to have to wait for a permit. It seems that the people that work in the Directorate of Immigration do not have complete understanding of the rules. They give you different information when you ask (24, Mexico, Bachelor, work).

The confusion probably stems from a real contradiction. In the next chapter I will argue that it has its roots in the contradictory logics development aid, immigration control and labor market considerations.

I experience that people who are responsible for international students are unwilling to give advice and guidance when it comes to continued education in Norway or on finding work (24, Russia, Masters, work).

If this student is right, one could argue that this unwillingness is a part of what could be called a traditional view of student immigration. And that is that they should go back to their home country. There does not seem to be a difference between the quota students and the self-financed on this issue. Perhaps one could conclude that the norms from the quota programs have come to dominate the whole field of international students. This would mean that also the vast majority – the self financed students – were met with these norms on for example return.

I am happy about my studies, although it was tough in the beginning. When I have inquired about the possibilities to get a permanent residence permit here in Norway, I have received differing information. That I think is frustrating! Besides, I do not get any wiser from reading the web pages from the Directorate of Immigration. Here there is great room for improvement! (24, Latvia, Bachelor, grant State Education and Loan Fund)

Another student meant that the lack of clarity in signals and information could ultimately lead students to choose other countries.

Information regarding immigration policies in Norway is not well disseminated and explained to the students. This makes it difficult to know the rights we have when it comes to employment or settlement. If we ask people about this information, we do not get it. Norway may feel that it is best of the Western countries in giving job opportunities, but it is not. Its immigration laws and work permit rules are the most difficult, and can in the end drive people away to other countries (24, *other country*, Bachelor, grant NSELF)

The employees at the Directorate of Immigration pointed out what could be perceived as double standard in the processing of applications from international students. Since the changes in 2001, different signals have been sent regarding return before arrival and after they have finished their studies.

On the one hand is the traditional focus on the assumption of return. When they finish, the students shall go back to their home country, or at least leave Norway. And every year applications are rejected in accordance with reference to this rule. When applying for a residence permit, the students have to convince the Directorate that it is unlikely that they will seek to stay in Norway after their studies. If they do not succeed in this endeavor, they are turned down. And the premise of return is upheld although the people doing the processing know that the same people that are turned down would most probably have been granted a residency permit a year later if they had been allowed to study here.

Because on the other hand, the change in the quarantine provision in 2001 meant that the road to work permits were made easier for international students. At the same time, the processing of all applications for permits as *skilled* or *specialist* worker was made more lenient. The signals that have been sent to the civil servants in the UDI over the last five years have been to interpret the rules in favour of the applicant when the main criteria are fulfilled (UDI 2006). This was practiced in the same way for former international students and other applicants alike.

This may be experienced as a double communication, according to the employees. In the first instance, first time applicants are rejected because it is suspected that they may stay in the country. In the next instance, former students are allowed to stay and work. The civil servants discussed this situation among themselves. The regulations demanded that they had to reject people for reasons that they knew would be neglected a year later for others that got a permit in the first round.

Already in the documents written before the change of policy, this dual consideration of control and labor market shortages were noted. In 2001, the working group that evaluated the quota program put it this way:

The Ministry is considering removing the quarantine paragraph for international students. The background is the need for labor within several sectors. [...] It seems unreasonable to deny persons that have much need competence, that speak Norwegian and have knowledge of the Norwegian society, to work in Norway. [...] It has also been argued that the paragraph does not necessarily mean that the students actually go back to their home countries. They may choose to move to other countries where their competence is needed. On this background, it appears that the immigration law in Norway is no longer a suited instrument in the effort to secure a development effect of international students coming to Norway (KUF 2001:7.5).

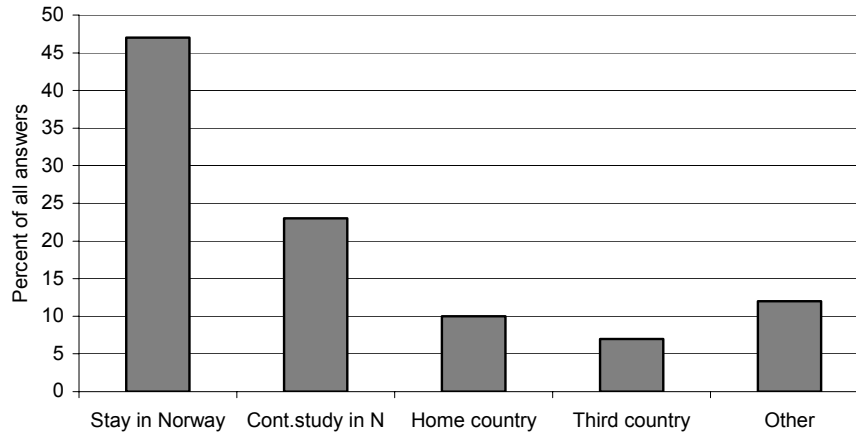
This quote points to the crossing interests in the policy field of international students. How did the question of staying or leaving look from the students' point of view?

The students on immigration and return

The results from the survey show that the students had an ambiguous attitude towards immigration and return. As a broad generalization, one could say that they considered staying, but thought that they were not welcome and would have to leave.

There were two main reasons for this. One was connected to the general challenges of access to the Norwegian labor market for immigrants. The second was an uncertainty whether the Norwegian authorities wanted them to stay. Let me give a few examples of the answers they gave to questions illuminating different aspects of the immigration-return nexus.

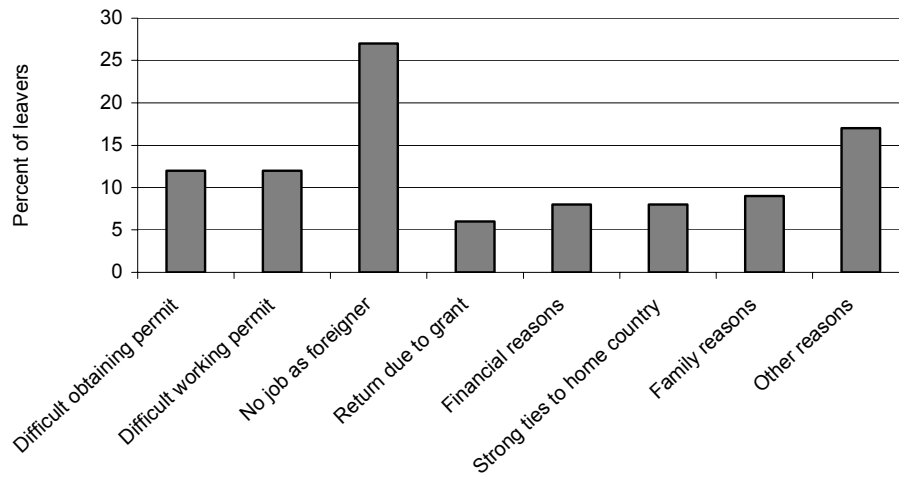
The introductory question to this issue was what their plans were when they finished their studies. As we see in figure 23, a solid majority said that they wanted to stay on in Norway.

Figure 23. Students' plans after current study

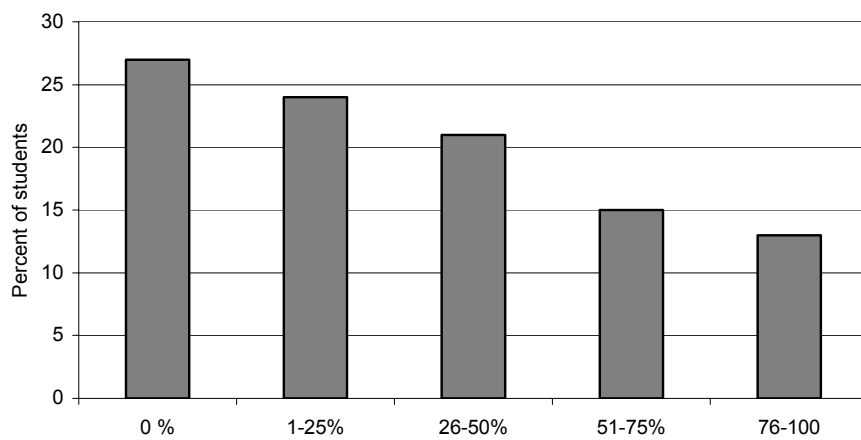
In figure 23 we see that 47 percent of the students said they were planning to stay on in Norway. In addition came the 23 percent that stated that they would continue to study there. In comparison, the score for those that planned to go back home, or to a third country, was low. Together a mere 17 percent said they planned to leave. The conclusion from these answers is clear; the possibility to remain in Norway was present in the minds of the international students.

The first follow-up question would be directed to those that stated that they did not plan to stay in Norway. Why did they want to leave?

In figure 24, the answers are displayed. The total number of students that said they had no plans to stay was 145. In the figure, portions of this are given in percent. Difficulties in finding a job as a foreigner, was the reason for leaving that was stated by highest number of students. Apart from that answer, the respondents were evenly distributed across the other answers.

Figure 24. Reasons for planning to leave

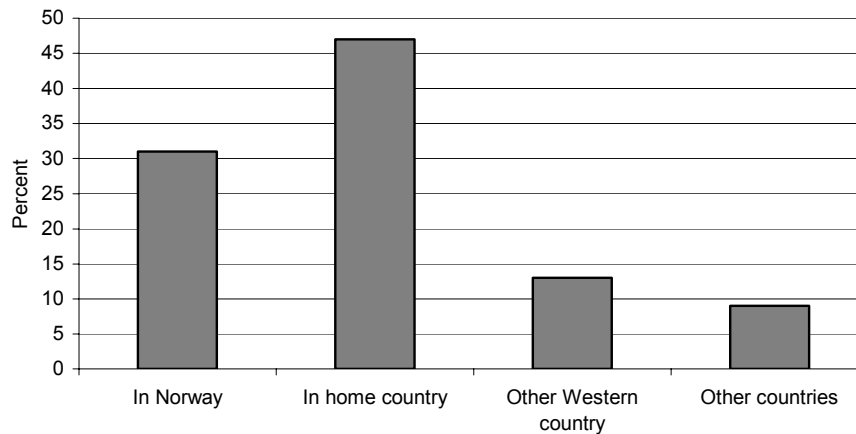
In the survey I wanted to force to students to think hard about where they realistically thought they would end up living, at least in the foreseeable future. One way of doing this was to ask the respondents to estimate the chances that they would still be in Norway one year after they had finished their studies.

Figure 25. self estimation of being in Norway one year after finishing studies

In figure 25, the results are shown. One in four said that there was zero chance they would be in Norway in one year. As we can see, there is a falling tendency. If we add the two first answers, we find that half of the students thought that it was a twenty-five percent chance, or less, that they would still be in Norway one year post graduation. This seems to contradict the distinct ambition to stay that was displayed earlier in figure 23.

What then about the longer time span? Where did they think they would be living *five* years after graduation? The answers to this question confirmed the tendency that more students saw their future lives as being outside of Norway as the time horizon was expanded.

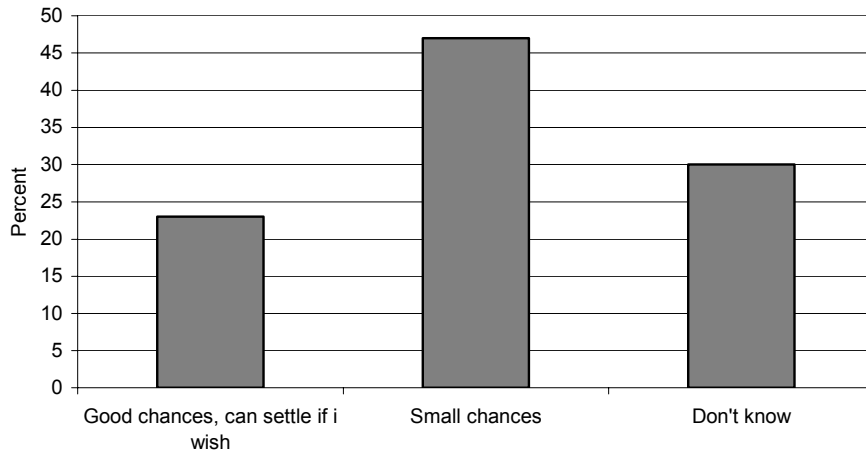
Figure 26. Students' probable residency five years after end of studies



If we reduce the alternatives in figure 26 to two, Norway or other countries, we find that the vast majority see a future outside this country. Seventy percent would be living outside Norway if the students were right in their estimation of where they would be in five years time.

Two follow up questions were meant to capture the reasons for this tendency to not seeing a realistic future in Norway. The first was a direct attempt at forcing them to estimate their chances for settling in Norway. In figure 27, there are two findings that need to be commented.

Figure 27. Perceived possibilities for settling in Norway



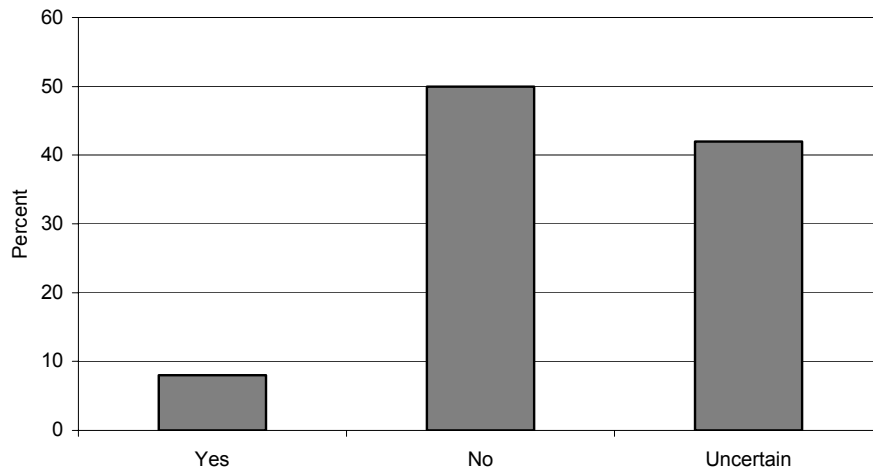
The first is the repeated confirmation of the discrepancy between the immigration-optimistic result in figure 23 and other answers. As we remember, half of the students answered that they would stay in Norway, when asked about their plans after they had finished.

Here, in figure 27, the picture is different. Only 23 percent said that they thought their chances for settling were good. 47 percent answered that they thought their chances to be small. The full text of that alternative was “The possibilities are limited. It is difficult to get a staying permit here in this country”.

The second finding in the figure is that again, the number of students being unclear about their chances is high. Thirty percent of the students chose this alternative. This confirms the finding that there was a great lack of clarity about their actual chances for settling in Norway. This said, this type of question will make people a bit uncertain. It is a hypothetical question, and has therefore certain methodological weak sides. It is difficult to know what will happen in the future. Despite this, the uncertain group is large.

The second follow-up question where I tried to gauge the reasons for not seeing a realistic future in Norway, focused on whether the students felt that the Government wanted them to settle in Norway. Again we meet the uncertainty, but this time even more clearly and with less of a methodological doubt attached to it. In figure 28, the question was posed directly. “Do you feel that the Norwegian Government wants you to settle in Norway?” (*Opplever du at norske myndigheter ønsker at du bosetter deg i Norge?*).

Figure 28. Do you feel that Norwegian Authorities want you to settle in Norway?



The numbers in figure 28 show clearly that the students did not perceive the Norwegian authorities as welcoming with regard to immigration. The uncertainty expressed by more than 40 percent of the students confirms the earlier findings. Either the students think that the Norwegian Government does not want them to stay, or they are uncertain. Only 8 percent feel encouraged to settle by the authorities.

Are the international students welcome in Norway or not? This broader question was discussed by the students in the qualitative part of the survey. In their comments they pointed to the general debate in Norway on integration.

The Norwegian authorities, as well as the Norwegian population, make it clear that they do not wish foreigners to reside here. It is their country and their choice. Norwegians are not known for their tolerance and the reputation is well earned (34, USA, bachelor, work).

Others focused on the difficulty of getting a job. Some had a gloomy view on their chances, while others emphasized the positive potential that foreign labor can have.

It is very hard for a foreigner to get a job in Norway. Most companies don't want to employ foreigners. That is at least mine and others experience. Norway is not a very open society, even though Norwegians think it is (26, Austria, Masters, self financed).

The ones that pointed to the positive contributions they could make to Norwegian society, at the same time saw it as a loss to the country that they were not welcome to settle here.

I must say I do not feel welcome here. However much I love to live and work here, and no matter how much education and experience I have, it is still unlikely that I will find a job in Norway after graduation. I think this should be a concern for Norway, because they essentially paid for me to be educated. I have begun to learn the language and would be an asset to the Norwegian labor force. Yet, I will probably end up living in another country, which will get a competent citizen at no cost to them (30, USA, Masters, self financed).

Another student combined the view that “it is Norway’s loss” with a suggestion about how all could seemingly benefit from the situation.

I am puzzled that the Norwegian Government finances the studies for foreigners and makes people go back to their home countries. Wouldn’t it be more profitable for Norway to make use of these foreign resources when they finish their studies? By for example offering a job for 3 – 5 years, the students could repay their loans, show themselves in the working life etc. Norway is still skeptical to foreign labor (28, Belarus, Masters, grant NSELF).

The suggestion to open up for a period of 3–5 years with work permits was mentioned by several students. It was argued that the students could be of more use to Norway and their home countries if they had some practical work experience before returning. This was the comment of a PhD student, aged 29 from Ghana:

I don't see reason in Norway using huge sums of money to train graduates from developing countries only for them to end up working in other economically active regions of the world, notably USA, Australia, Canada, UK etc. There is a balance that has to attain considering the factors that lead to this status quo. The graduate does not have adequate employable skills, because we have to remember that majority (if i am not mistaken) of the students are new undergraduates coming from their countries with no work experience and/ or attachment to any company back home. We would be better served if after our studies, we are allowed a limited period of stay to work in Norway. This would help Norway benefit from the training and money invested in the students plus giving the graduate experience to be able to better fit into industry upon his return to his home country. For example, fields in petroleum periodically require graduates to fill up positions when the industry undergoes revitalization. Now, with restrictions placed in the way of graduates, they are driven to join firms in other western countries where as Norway could have benefited. Of course, we don't have to loose sight of the fact that the interest of the developing countries are at stake. In resolving this,

developing countries would benefit much more from graduates with experience in academia and industry than newly unprepared graduates, being forcefully pushed back home. Western countries have spread their influence by allowing graduates ample time, not just to train, but to learn their language and culture. They intend become ambassadors of their host countries, its people, its resources and products, when they return. When given the option or choice, most students would prefer home when opportunity exits and have been well trained to go back home. Graduates from similar developing countries are not compelled to go home against their wishes in countries like the USA. A lot of them work to get industrial experience before going home. I must also be quick to add that some of the students readily go home because their fields are in high demand back home.

Several students agreed that the Norwegian governments should be strategic and encourage students to stay that studied in the core sectors of the Norwegian economy, such as fisheries and petroleum. Not keeping these students in the country hurts both parties, according to her. We could remark that this student seems to forget the goal of creating development in at least some of the home countries of the international students. The students were however not oblivious to this possible effect of their stay in Norway.

I believe that for students from developing countries, it is preferable that the Norwegian authorities create opportunities in their home countries and help these students to go back and get a job there, rather than letting the stay in Norway. This could be done for example by helping them find a job in Norwegian projects operating in their home countries, lobbying the local governments to use these students etc... (32, Mali, PhD, grant "NSELF")

Among the other opinions that the students mentioned in the qualitative comments were: that working in Norway would involve taking a job with less prestige, that while the work here could be better, at home they would be close to the family, that the lack of full programs in English hurt their grades,

Statements about Norway

The final section of the web-based questionnaire consisted of a series of statements. These were all related to immigration and the students were asked to mark off whether they agreed or disagreed. The statements included characteristics of Norway and the immigration policy that may influence how the students view coming to, studying, staying or leaving the country.

Table 2. Do you disagree or agree with the following statements?

Statement	Disagree	Agree
a) Norway is an attractive country to live in for foreigners		Agree
b) If I could choose, I would settle in my home country		Agree
c) It is difficult to understand the rules on how to get a residency permit here in Norway		Agree
d) The climate makes Norway an unattractive country to settle in	Disagree	
e) The language makes it difficult to settle in Norway	Disagree	
f) The knowledge I have gotten from my studies in Norway would be more valuable in my home country than in Norway		Agree
g) Many students come to Norway because they want to settle here	Disagree	
h) It would be difficult to get a residence permit for a girlfriend/boyfriend/partner from my home country		Agree
i) If I could find work and it was encouraged by the Norwegian government, I would settle here		Agree
j) It is difficult to see possibilities in the Norwegian labor market		Agree
k) Immigration regulations make it difficult to settle in Norway		Agree
l) The possibility to study in Norway is well known in my home country		Agree

A few of the statements and the answers given by the students need commenting. Firstly, language and climate could be regarded as classic in discussion of why foreigners come or, perhaps more relevant here, do not come to Norway (see e) and f) in table 2). The traditional view is that the language, which is not spoken elsewhere, and the climate, which can be tough, has a deterring effect on foreigners. This does not find support in the student survey. Most denied being put off by the climate or indeed the language.

In the qualitative comments from the students on the topic of language, however, more divergent views were expressed. The lack of English spoken courses gave the students a disadvantage compared to the Norwegians. A lack of Norwegian was seen as a major obstacle when they considered finding a job here. In the survey, however, these views did not make the majority say that the language was an obstacle to settling here.

Secondly, the statement “h” on the need for competence in the students’ home countries has to be commented. The answers to this question were quite evenly distributed, with one exception. The number who “totally agreed” with the statement was high. This extreme of the scale may have been chosen by the quota students. Their answers tipped the weight to “agree”.

Thirdly, the statement “i” is interesting. If the conditions were right – if there were job offers and encouragement from the Norwegian Government – two thirds of the students would consider settling here. The answers to this statement can perhaps be understood as an indication of the motivation for immigration among the international students. They would consider settling here, but see it as unrealistic if we are to judge by other answers in the survey.

A fourth point to be made regards statement “j” about the difficulties to see opportunities in the Norwegian labor market. Here it is important to remark that it is not certain that Norwegian born students would have answered any different. For students in the midst of their studies, the labor market may seem distant.

Finally, the students disagreed with the statement that “many students come to Norway because they want to settle here”. This tendency was clear in both the main and the supplementary selection of respondents. Some informants were slightly offended by this and similar questions in the survey. They felt that the questions had as a premise that all students that come to Norway in fact come here to settle. This is as we have seen not the self-understanding of the students and find no support in the numbers presented in this report.

The motivations of the students vary with regards to ambitions to stay, return or move on. The qualitative answers in the survey indicate that there can be a movement in motivation during the stay in Norway. Similar to that for native Norwegians, the experiences as an international student can shape the future for the individual. Changes in the life situation are common during this period. We have discussed the different and ambivalent attitudes that students had towards returning and staying. The statement “g” confirms the finding that the students do not see themselves as immigrants when they choose to go to Norway.

In this chapter, the results from the broad survey have been presented without being accompanied by a thorough discussion. Due to the timeframe for this study, only a very limited selection of findings can be discussed. In the next chapter, a brief discussion will be combined with the results from analysis of the register data.

The ambivalence of student immigration

I started this report by noting that the Norwegian policy toward international students is formulated at a crossroads of considerations. It is a meeting point of labor market policies, immigration policies, educational policies and development policies. It is a policy field where national self interest meets altruistic ideals.

There are two sides to the attitude of the Norwegian governments towards international students.

On the one side, recent governments have *not* wanted the students to stay in Norway after they finish their studies.

One reason for this has been concern for the development of the students' home countries. They should go back and contribute in that process. This has been ideologically founded. Whether this policy actually has had any developmental effect has not been established (KUF 2001).

Attached to the critical stance towards the developmental argument is that students who leave Norway go to a third country instead of going home. This is however not supported by the available data. The imperfect NSELF registry on quota students shows that only a small portion of them chose to go to a third country. The self reported web-survey in this report indicated the same tendency. Only a few students saw this as a viable option. It is also unclear whether a change in Norwegian policy would have made these students stay in Norway. Maybe they would have gone on to other countries anyway.

The premise of the development discussion is that the quota student is set as "default". This means that the quota refugee is handled as the standard international student that is coming to Norway. All other international students that come to Norway – with some exceptions within the EEA area – are faced with rules and expectations regarding return that was created within the quota program. And this is the case although only one in five is currently part of these loan/grants arrangements.

Another reason why the Norwegian governments have *not* wanted the students to stay has been to avoid exploitation of student permits as a gateway for other immigrants. If students were encouraged to remain, this could attract immigrants whose primary goal was not to study.

Both these arguments seem to have weakened over the past six years. The first because of what could be called the “third country phenomenon”. The second because the need for labor has become steadily more accepted within Norwegian politics.

And this is the other side of the coin, and the most important reason for the slight change of attitude toward international students from the Norwegian governments.

The need for labor was the argument that tipped the group of State Secretaries in favor of scrapping the quarantine provision in 2001. And at the time there was increasing interest in recruiting labor from outside the EEA area. To the politicians involved in the discussion it then seemed odd to at the same time having to reject applications from people with the same background that in addition had studied in Norway (KRD 2001).

The ambivalence of the Norwegian governments towards international students takes on several shapes and forms. It dominates the authorities handling of concrete cases, their (lack of) information strategies and overall thinking.

The ambivalence was also felt by the students themselves. The informants of this study made that clear. Both in their written comments and in their answers to the survey, the perceived ambivalence from the government was in the open. It was unclear to them whether they *could* stay on or *had* to leave. In addition there was their own uncertainty of whether they *wanted* to stay on in Norway or leave the country.

It was difficult for the students to get information about their possibilities to stay after graduation. They reported that the employees at the universities and colleges as well as the civil servants in the Directorate of Immigration did not know the rules either. Or at least they were reluctant to tell them in a clear voice, let alone promote the option of staying. This was how the students experienced the situation. In line with this, the students were unsure whether they were actually welcome to stay in Norway. In their answers to the survey they confirmed that they either didn't know or were sure that Norwegian authorities did not want them to settle in the country.

The reason that the information about the possibilities in Norway is not ready at hand, is that the whole system, institutions and the administration in Oslo, does not have a coherent “policy of staying”. Those that stay are still the odd cases. Default is set to “leaving”.

This lack of clarity on the political and policy level is transported down to the institutions and civil servants. It can be recognized in the students' experiences with face-to-face interaction with the front line bureaucrats. They are unclear and do not promote staying as an alternative.

Recruitment and arrival

In chapter 4 we saw that recruitment of international students varies between countries. Compared to the large English speaking countries, the efforts put into recruitment from Norwegian governments and institutions emerged as bleak. The Norwegian effort stood better up against the Scandinavian neighbors.

All Norwegian actors connected with international students acknowledged the positive sides to the presence and later contact with these students. The motivation to increase the recruitment seemed to be there. When compared to the four other countries, the commercial and business sides of the recruitment of international students seemed not to be developed in Norway. There was not any coordinated marketing of Norwegian education in international forums, media or at international education conferences. The institutions relied on bilateral agreements and the special interest of eager students.

Despite this, there was a steady increase in students coming to Norway over the past fifteen years. The arrivals accelerated at the end of the 1990s, a trend that continued after the millennium. In fact, the strongest growth in new arrivals was from 2001 to 2003.

Cancellation of the quarantine provision

This time span coincided with the first liberation in the regulations for international students in Norway, the canceling of the so-called quarantine provision. This change of policy in 2001 made it easier for international students to get a work permit after they had finished their studies.

A question here is whether the strong increase in arrivals in 2002 was caused by the removal of the quarantine provision. Did the change in policy have an immediate effect on the recruitment of students?

This study has not aimed directly at the change in policy in the sense that it has targeted the students that came to Norway in 2001, 2002 and 2003. This would have to be part of a study that wanted to secure the relationship between the cancellation of the restriction and the increase in arrivals. The data that is available to the present study, however, are inconclusive with regard to establishing such a causal relationship. The increase may have been caused by the cancellation of the provision, but there seem to be strong arguments against such an assumption.

The relationship in question would state that the liberalization in the application process for work permits for graduated students in October 2001 caused the increase in arrival of international students in 2002 and 2003. It also has to be noted that several minor liberal measures were introduced from 2000 onwards.

Here are two of the arguments that can be put forward to counter the immediate impression of cause and effect.

The first is that this would presuppose a strong marketing of the change in policy. The message would have to reach the decision makers, the students and their advisors, in the first couple of months of 2002. We know that the decision to end the quarantine regime was taken at the very end of 2001 and that the marketing of the change was not extensive. This makes it improbable that the communication of the change had an effect on the students that applied in the winter/spring of 2002.

If the scrapping of the provision did not have an effect on the year 2002, then a large part of the increase in arrivals would stand unaccounted for by the change of policy. This external cause is unknown. A trace to follow could be to have a closer look at where the new students came from, or the development in the total of student arrivals from within Europe and from countries further away.

The second argument would be that the linkage presupposes that the students would choose Norway based on the access to work after graduation. This may be true. Although one would have to distinguish between nationalities that end up working in Norway and those that do not. The next step would be to see where the new students during the boom of arrivals actually came from. Did they come from countries with a high staying/work rate or not?

The numbers presented in chapter 5 and 6 lead to a discussion on the motivation for the new students coming. Was their arrival related to the cancellation? In figure 9, we established which countries contributed to the boom. China and Germany were two countries with the highest increase in student permits issued from 2001 to 2003. We later saw that China did not have a particularly high staying rate (15 percent), and only six percent of those that came ended up with a work permit after their studies. The German students had less than ten percent staying rate. Neither of these nationalities was especially prone to be motivated by a change in application procedures for later participation in the Norwegian labor market. Besides, German citizens would fall under the EEA regulations and would normally be welcome to find work and residence in Norway.

To strengthen the argument, one could add that there was not a strong increase in arrivals from Russia during the period. Russia was the country with the highest rate of students that remained in Norway after their studies. One should therefore perhaps expect this group to be the most motivated by changes in the rules for access to the Norwegian labor market. The number of permits issued to Russians actually fell from 2001 to 2002 (358 to 338) before increasing in 2003 (413).

These are strong arguments against concluding that the increase in permits and arrivals between 2001 and 2003 was caused by the cancellation of the quarantine provision.

The next step in analyzing the effect of the provision would be to look at a possible effect on the staying rate. Was that influenced by the change in 2001? The numbers presented in chapter 6 showed that while the increase in graduated students grew stronger after 2002 (figure 11), the number that remained in Norway on new permits did not increase. More people finished their studies, but the number of people that actually settled remained the same. This means that the provision did not seem to have any effect on the staying rate.

Stay or leave?

We have already discussed the ambivalence regarding returning or staying after graduation. Both the Norwegian authorities and the students were ambiguous when it came to this question. But there are a few more points to be made on the background of the empirical material that is presented in this report.

The change in the attitude towards international students showed by the Government has made the policy less coherent. At the outset in the 1980s and 1990s, the premise of return and the ambition to avoid brain drain went together well. The cancellation of the quarantine provision in 2001 was an indication of a change that tore the two elements apart. The ambition of a developmental effect has been weakened. At the same time the number of non-quota students has risen. However, the premise of return is still practiced in the Directorate of Immigration's handling of new applications. And it is practiced by the NSELF when they consider the conversion of loan into grants. But the premise of return is not practiced when the same students apply for a work permit a year later or after they graduate. From a formal point of view, it can be argued that the students permit is a temporary permit. Therefore the question of return has to be considered. A later application for a work permit points towards a permanent residency, again from a formal stance. As a result of this, the question of return is not stressed in the processing of these permits.

The result is an inconsistency. The premise of return appears to be practiced and not practiced at the same time.

In the letter of approval to the fresh students, the message is explicit: We want you to leave Norway once you finish your studies. The message inherent in the cancellation of the quarantine provision however sends the opposite message: We welcome you to stay and work in Norway. The result is a

seemingly schizophrenic signal of “Go away ... closer”. And as I mentioned earlier, the civil servants remarked on the challenges in simultaneous processing of applications from fresh students and issuing work permits for last years arrivals.

While the idea of using the education of international students as a strategy in developmental aid seems to be fading, there has also arisen a new debate about the factual basis for the brain drain hypothesis (UDI 2005b).

Judging from the data in this report, it seems that the international students are motivated to stay on after graduation if they were stimulated to do so. In the survey, they answered that they could see themselves as prolonging their stay in Norway, but that they did not feel that it was realistic. They thought it would be difficult to settle here and many felt unwanted. If we take one step back, we can conclude that there is a potential for more international students to stay. The motivation seems to be there.

In five years time, most students saw themselves as living in their home country. The data did not allow us to check whether the students that remained in Norway after their graduation actually ended up living permanently in Norway.

They suggested several measures that could make studying here and staying in Norway more attractive. One important missing element in the transition from student to permanent resident was information. The students suggested an updated internet site tailored for their situation. It would need information about the rules and regulations as well as labor market contact points. A cut in the fees for applying for the various permits was another element that was mentioned. High fees were interpreted as a signal not to apply, by some.

One concrete suggestion that came up was to open for a three to five years work permit after graduation. It was argued that this would not threaten but instead increase the development effect of the education. The students going back to their home countries would in addition to their education bring with them valuable and updated practical experience. On the other hand, it could be argued that there already exists such an opening for the students. They may not be aware of it, but their applications for work permits are under normal circumstances welcomed by the UDI.

The bilateral contacts that are negotiated between Norwegian and foreign educational institutions, need to take into consideration the staying rate of some nationalities.

The general situation for foreigners in the labor market is picked up by the international students. These signals of inferiority were commented on by many of the participants in the survey. In addition to endless stories of applicants with foreign names not getting jobs, comes the general ambivalence of Norwegians towards foreign labor.

An absence of strategy?

Ambivalence has been a central concept in this chapter. It may seem a little too easy to attach the lack of clarity to a seemingly non-intended ambiguous stance by the authorities on issues of return. Let me introduce a thought that is not new in social science – that of ambivalence as policy strategy. Letting policy in certain areas remain unclear can have intended consequences. In this case, the lack of clear signals on return may function as a selection mechanism whereby the most eager students stay, while the less motivated leave the country. Relying on this strategy will of course be a problem if it makes attractive students go back or move on to third countries.

Instead of claiming that the ambiguity of the authorities is a result of a (un)clear strategy, it is more probable that the field has been left partly unattended. Reviewing the policy toward the international students would perhaps clear away the positive sides of untidiness. But it would open up for a wider range of the positive effects from this temporary or permanent migration. The noble ambition of development and the reluctance to opening new pathways of immigration have perhaps hindered a full appreciation of the possibilities in the field of international education. The ongoing change in political attitude towards labor immigration could open for further liberal initiatives.

By clearing away the ambivalent signals that have dominated the field over the past ten years however, the government will have to make some difficult choices. What competence does Norway need, and what is not in demand? How do these needs match the ambitions of potential students? Who does the nation want to stay and who may leave? These choices bring the government right into the core of the complicated business of migration management.

Findings

This study has revealed a lot about international students and immigration to Norway. There are several paths of analysis that have not been tested. These will have to wait. In this report there have nevertheless been a number of points that are worth noting. I have categorized them under five headings; "Arrivals", "After graduation", "Policy", "Motivation" and "International students in other countries".

Arrival

1. There has been a strong increase in arrivals over the last seven years. Permits given to the ten biggest sending countries within the EEA nearly doubled. Germany, France and Spain were among these. From the top ten non-EEA countries, the increase was 80 per cent during the same period. China, Russia and the USA were among the main contributors in this category.
2. The students from the quota program remained the standard student, despite constituting only 20 percent of the total number of international students. This had consequences for the attitude towards the group at universities and colleges as well as among the authorities.
3. Around 4000 new international students come to Norway each year. Most of them stay for one or two semesters. Less than five percent stay for seven semesters or more. 40 percent of the permits are given to students coming from the EEA region. This number is increasing.
4. In 2001 a liberal measure was taken to make it easier for international students to work after graduation. The cancellation of the so-called quarantine provision did not have any effect on the staying rate three years later. Whether it contributed to the increase in arrivals is unclear.

Stay or leave after graduation

5. Few students remain in Norway after they graduate. In total, 12 percent of all students got a work permit or family related permit after they finished their studies. Persons with a background outside the EEA stayed to a slightly higher degree (14) than the Europeans (9).

6. Although the number of graduates doubled from two to four thousands between 1998 and 2005, the number of students staying was almost unchanged (330 to 380 per year). Over the past two years, the ratio of work permits to family permits has changed in the favor of work.

7. The nationalities most prone to stay were Russia (23 per cent), India (23), Sri Lanka (20), Ghana (17) and China (15).

8. Length of study was strongly correlated with probability of staying. Out of the students with seven or more semesters of study, one third got permits to work or live with their families afterwards.

9. Approximately half of those who stayed got a work permit. The rest got family related permits.

10. Since 1991, only 928 work permits have been granted to students from Non-EEA countries after graduation. This amounts to 62 such permits per year.

Policy

11. There has been an increasing willingness in Norwegian politics to emphasize national interest in the regulation of international students.

12. The policy towards students wanting to stay was ambivalent. As a result, the Directorate of Immigration rejected applicants by referring to the premise of return, while following a liberal line towards graduated students that applied for a work permit.

13. In Norwegian policy, the consideration for development in the students' home countries has become less important. So has the fear from the Norwegian government that studies will be used as a backdoor to immigration. The concept *brain drain* has lost its absolute position.

Motivation

14. The students stated that they came to Norway mainly because the study programs fitted into their plans and was perceived as holding a high quality. Also special interest for the country and its language were pull factors.

15. Many students were motivated to stay after graduation, but did not think they were welcome.

16. Information about post-graduation possibilities in Norway was perceived to be lacking. This contributed to the students' impression of not being welcome.

17. Challenges in the labor market for foreigners in general made it less attractive for international students to settle in Norway.

18. Many students are motivated to stay, at least for some years. But they see this as unrealistic. On the medium and long term, they do not see themselves as living here. There is a discrepancy between what they wish and what they see as being realistic.

International students in other countries

19. The four countries discussed in this report all see the benefits of international students. The English speaking countries focus less on the altruistic development sides, and more on the commercial and relation building aspects.

20. The Norwegian education policy lacks a strong national comprehensive recruitment initiative, marketing Norwegian education abroad. Other actors may therefore reap the benefits from what is called a *global market of education*.

21. There is a trend that countries make it easier for international students to immigrate.

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Institutt for samfunnsforskning

Rapport 2006:8

<i>Forfatter/Author</i> Jan-Paul Brekke
<i>Tittel/Title</i> International students and immigration to Norway
<i>Sammendrag</i> Norske myndigheter har endret sin holdning til internasjonale studenter de siste ti årene. Fra å være sterkt opptatt av retur så man ved utgangen av 1990-tallet at studentene kunne være interessant arbeidskraft. I 2001 endret man regelverket slik at det skulle bli lettere for studentene å få innvilget arbeidstillatelse. Siden har feltet blitt overlatt til seg selv av immigrasjonsmyndighetene. I FN snakket man om migrasjonsstyring (migration management) i 2005 og 2006. En økende interesse rundt internasjonale studenter i Europa og verden for øvrig kan sees i sammenheng med denne diskusjonen. I mange land vil internasjonale studenter være ønsket som immigranter. Over tid har andre tilgrensende politikkområder gjennomgått en utvikling. På utdanningsfeltet har ambisjonene om internasjonalisering blitt gjentatt og forsterket. Bilaterale avtaler mellom norske og utenlandske institusjoner har bidratt til øket bevegelse av studenter over grensene. Hensynet til mulige bistandseffekter av studentutvekslingen har blitt svekket sammen med frykten for å bidra til hjerneflukt fra utviklingsland. Et siste hensyn i den tradisjonelle linjen var at studenttillatelsene ikke måtte bli en bakvei inn for ordinær migrasjon. I 2006 praktiserte man derfor fortsatt forutsetningen om retur når studenttillatelser ble behandlet. Resultatet var en tilsynelatende dobbel holdning overfor studentene. Når de kom til landet fikk de eksplisitt beskjed om at de var forventet å dra igjen når de ble ferdige med å studere. Samtidig hadde man altså fjernet hindringer for at de skulle få bli hvis de ønsket det. I denne rapporten beskriver studentene selv usikkerheten som denne dobbeltheten medførte. Det er gjort lite forskning på internasjonale studenter og immigrasjon i Norge. Hovedoppgaven i denne rapporten er derfor å kartlegge feltet. Hvor mange kommer og hvor kommer de fra? Hvilke trender kan avdekkes? Hvem blir igjen etter studiene? I tillegg til disse spørsmålene som blir besvart med data fra Utlendingsdirektoratets register, ble det gjennomført en egen nettbasert spørreundersøkelse. Her fikk studentene selv mulighet til å gi uttrykk for hvorfor de kom til Norge og hvordan de vurderte sjansene for å bli igjen etter studiene. En tredje datakilde var kvalitative intervjuer med sentralt plasserte tjenestemenn. Tallmaterialet fra Utlendingsdirektoratet viste at det er relativt få studenter som blir igjen i Norge etter studiene. Færre enn 15 prosent ble værende av familiegrunner eller for å jobbe. Studien dekker alle internasjonale studenter som var registrert fra 1991 til 2005. En bit av diskusjonen rundt internasjonale studenter i Norge har dreid seg rundt muligheten for å få inn arbeidskraft fra utenfor EØS området. De siste femten årene var imidlertid færre enn 70 som både hadde bakgrunn utenfor EØS området og som senere ble her for å arbeide.
<i>Emneord</i> Studenter, immigrasjon, brain drain, hjerneflukt, bistand, internasjonalisering, retur, migrasjon, ambivalens, politikk, utdanning
<i>Summary</i> Norwegian Authorities have shifted their attitude towards international students. A strong emphasis on return has been replaced by a growing acknowledgement of the potentially positive effects of student immigration. Until recently, international students have been expected to leave the country after their final exams. In 2001 a change in policy was aimed at making it easier for students to stay on. Later governments have not been active in this field of policy. The result has been a seemingly double stance towards student immigration. To the students themselves this lead to an ambiguous communication regarding prolonged stay in Norway. They were uncertain whether they were actually welcome to remain in Norway after they had finished their studies.

Not much research has been done previously in Norway on this topic. Mapping the terrain of international students and immigration is therefore the main ambition of this report. How many are there and where do they come from? Do they stay on after their studies or do they return to their home countries? In addition the report discusses the students' reasons for coming and later for staying or leaving.

The regulation of student immigration takes place at a crossroads of policy areas. Immigration control has been mentioned along with labor market considerations. In addition to these fields, educational policies have a major influence on the flow of students across national borders. A fourth field is development policies. Traditionally there has been a concern in Norway for the home countries of the students coming from the third world. The ambition of developing these regions through exchange of students has been mixed with a fear of contributing to brain drain. This concern weakened over the past ten years.

Based on register data along with a web-based survey and qualitative interviews, this study found that the immigration effect from international students so far has been limited. Less than 15 percent of the graduated students stayed on in Norway. There were however big variations in staying rates across nationalities and length of studies.

Index terms

students, immigration, brain drain, migration, management, ambivalence, return, education, developing countries