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Internationalization of higher education – cross-border and at home – promoting the culture of dialogue and appreciation for diversity

Ladies and gentlemen!

(PP1) Thank you to the International Association of Universities (IAU) and the Notre Dame University for inviting me to this most interesting and important international conference here in Louaizé. And personally, I must say that it is most exciting to visit Lebanon for the very first time.

My mission today, is to give a presentation of how Norway deals with internationalisation of education – emphasizing intercultural dialogue and diversity. This is because my government submitted a Report on the matter to the Norwegian Parliament earlier this year.

(PP2) As an alternative headline for my presentation, I would have chosen our favourite proposal for a title on the Report the Ministry had been working on since 2008. “*Should I Stay or Should I Go*” – a title from 1981 by the British punk-rock-group The Clash. Together with the penguins who wonder if they should dare to cross over to the next ice raft – I think this illustrates almost everything about internationalisation. We have to decide whether to stay at home, close the door and try to make the best of it – or dare to jump and join the others. But instead of being funny, we ended up – as usual – by using a more bureaucratic, explaining and not very exciting title: Internationalisation of Education.

(PP 3) Norway – almost equally divided north and south of the Arctic Circle and on the outskirts of Northern Europe - it goes without saying: *We couldn't stay – we had to go!* Therefore, historically, we have always been well connected to the outside world – when it comes to trade and political alliances. But the Norwegian society itself has been relatively homogeneous until 30-40 years ago. In the early 1970's, the first larger group of non-European immigrants came to Norway – applying for labour. Since then, the number of immigrants has grown rapidly – and is still increasing. In parallel with the globalisation of the economy, trade and labour markets, of education and research - our society has changed significantly.

To Norway, international success in education and research collaboration and competition – depends on how successful we are in intercultural dialogue and understanding. The Norwegian policy is to teach and prepare everyone to be intercultural citizens in this society from early childhood. The reason for this is of course a significant change in the demographic profile – with an increasing number of immigrants to Norway – and the growing globalisation and internationalisation in the area of economy, trade and labour markets – and of course also within education and research.

Ten percent of the inhabitants in Norway are immigrants – in our capital Oslo, the number is 25 – coming from different parts of the world. In primary schools in Oslo, more than 120 languages are spoken and some schools alone have up to 80 languages represented. 1/3 of the pupils have minority background and the number of immigrants is increasing – especially from non Western-European countries. This rapidly growing mix of cultures is a challenge to our society – our minds and way of living. That is why it is important to integrate the international and intercultural perspective in our education system. On the other hand, our enterprises are more international than ever, and we need a workforce who knows how to work internationally in Norway – and abroad. So far, we have done a lot, but we still have work to do.

Norway is today a welfare state, and we are doing well in many areas. However, our future prosperity will be based less on oil, fish and other commodities, and more on skills and know-how. To survive,

we have to compete and co-operate with relevant actors abroad. As a small country, we just have to admit that the most of the world's knowledge production takes place outside Norway, and it is vital for the development of the Norwegian society that we can benefit from knowledge that is generated elsewhere. Therefore, we must be an interesting partner for other countries, and our education institutions must be of interest for institutions abroad. In some areas, we believe that we really are a good and an equal partner also with those bigger sized than ourselves. In other areas we are even excellent, with expertise that makes our institutions highly attractive partners for high prestige institutions abroad.

Norway has historically collaborated mostly with our Nordic neighbours, a few other European countries and North America. But as the world is changing – when it comes to trade patterns, education and research – we must constantly ask ourselves – *Should we stay - or should we go?* New and strong economies are emerging, and a key to the good life lies in excellent education and superior research. May be we have good connections already, but like most other countries, we have to rethink opportunities and measures, strategies and partnerships.

Norway has participated in the Bologna Process from the very beginning, we follow up on the Lisbon Convention actively, and our institutions participate in a lot of European programmes and projects. But the involvement in activities in other countries and areas of the world, are rapidly increasing. The Ministry of Education and Research has contributed to this development through the signing of Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) for collaboration on education and research with a growing number of new strategic partner countries around the world. Within the last couple of years, we have signed MoUs with China, India, Brazil, Argentina, Chile – and hopefully one with Lebanon in the near future as well. The change of perspectives and measures in our international relations are quite extensive. In parallel with the pan-European processes, we have changed much of the organising and content of the Norwegian education and research during the last 10-15 years. It was about time to sum up and evaluate the situation.

(PP 4) As I said, The Norwegian Government submitted a Report to the Norwegian Parliament (the “Storting”) on internationalisation of education in February 2009. One of the main goals with the Report was to present and discuss the full picture of internationalisation in education, and to make some strategic choices as to where to go next. In accordance with the Norwegian tradition of broad involvement in important processes, the document is based on research and research literature, a large number of meetings and written contributions from education institutions on all levels, student organisations, social partners and other stakeholders in Norway, seminars and also visits to a selection of European organisations and countries.

The Report describes the current situation and proposes new measures to ensure that the Norwegian education system provides pupils and students with the necessary skills to act and interact in an increasingly globalised world.

(PP 5) The Report covers the whole education system, from primary and secondary education and training, to non-university tertiary education and higher education, including research education. It is the first time a Norwegian government develops a Report with this holistic approach to the topic.

(PP 6) International perspectives, languages and cultural awareness are increasingly important competences for people applying for employment. Internationalisation of education must therefore not only focus on students and staff spending semesters or years abroad, but also entail that the education provided in Norway is international in character, and that it is internationally competitive with respect to quality standards. In order to do so, we must evaluate study programmes in Norway – make them international attractive both for international and Norwegian students. More than 80 percent of all Norwegian students do not study abroad at all, and they must be provided high quality education at home. But we must make it recommendable and possible to emphasise quality besides the overall value of visiting foreign countries and institutions. And last, but not least – our new strategic partner countries make it even more important to focus on language and cultural awareness.

(PP 7) The main measures in the Report will, as we see it, give the following results - once implemented:

- Increased quality in the Norwegian education system: Quality is a guiding principle for internationalisation of education in Norway: Both with respect to studies abroad and in the development of the provisions in Norwegian education institutions, quality will be the guiding principle.
- Attracting international students: Norwegian education institutions will be more attractive to foreign students and academics. Today, we have more than 3,500 foreign-language study programmes are offered, 200 of which comprise English-language masters programmes, and the number is increasing every year. These Master programmes are of importance both to attract international students and academics - and to offer international study programmes to Norwegian students.
- Including the entire institution: Internationalisation will concern all pupils, students and academic staff in Norwegian education institutions, and not exclusively those who have the opportunity to go abroad. The administrative and technical staff must also be prepared and trained to deal with the internationalisation of their own institutions.
- The students staying in Norway will meet an international campus, with foreign students, teachers and researches and with international perspectives on the curriculum. Students on master's and Ph.D. level will participate in international research co-operation.
- Increased cooperation between institutions: Cooperation between Norwegian education institutions and education institutions abroad will be even more heavily emphasised, including co-operation with institutions in developing countries.

There are many measures proposed in the Report, concerning primary education and secondary education and training. But since this session is about tertiary and higher education, I will concentrate on the measures proposed on this level.

(PP 8) There are considerable variations in non-university tertiary education. Education programmes in these institutions are supposed to be a real alternative to higher education, and provides courses or programmes which is from six month to two years of duration. We need to collect more statistical information about their study programmes, degrees of course completion, drop-out rates and mobility, and will do so in the near future. The reason for this lack of information is that the law and regulations for this type of education is rather new in Norway. Therefore, we need some more systematic knowledge about these schools before we can give advises and stimulate internationalisation.

The following measures are proposed:

- Improve the statistical basis in the area of non-university tertiary education. The Ministry of Education and Research will be in charge of this project.
- Set up a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) for non-university tertiary education adapted to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). This is to make it easier to communicate with international partners and to stimulate our institutions in collaboration with institutions abroad.

(PP 9) In Norwegian higher education, a Quality Reform was launched in 2003. The first evaluation of this reform shows that Norwegian higher education institutions have made significant progress in internationalisation at home, including establishing a more international campus - and with respect to student and staff mobility. The Quality Reform – inspired by and including the Bologna action lines – gave all Norwegian students the right to a study visit abroad as part of a degree at their home institutions. We are proud to say that more than 30 percent of the Norwegian students finishing a degree in Norway, have a study visit abroad included. To further stimulation of student mobility, the Norwegian institutions are entitled to a minor sum of money from the Ministry for each incoming and outgoing student.

However, from now on, it will be important to focus even more on structure, involvement and collaboration with institutions abroad and to associate internationalisation with strategic development of the institutions. Among the main measures are:

- Establishing projects/programmes for development of joint degrees and study programmes on Master and Ph.D. levels. Some academics are quite experienced in this kind of projects – other academics are not. We want to initiate more joint projects. We have seen successful examples on joint degree projects within the Erasmus Mundus Programme and under the auspices of the Nordic Council of Ministers.
- Establishing projects for transfer of training and common improvements across national borders (“Tuning-like projects”). In addition to projects on joint degrees and study programmes, this is most demanding projects to all partners involved. To be successful, you have to collaborate and evaluate each other qualifications, expectations, study content and results as well as learning outcome and structure. This is one very important kind of co-operation when it comes to uncover your own thinking and choice of values. And – it is of great help for improvement to all participants in the project.
- Establishing pilot projects for internationalisation in short professional degree studies, first and foremost within study programmes for engineers, nurses and teachers. This is where we have found most difficulties in terms of introducing mobility exchange possibilities. We will initiate projects to show how this can be done in addition to making the study programme more international.
- Gathering knowledge and experience of how both education and research can benefit from closer co-operation. We want to give a group of experts the mandate to explore opportunities and models on this. One important issue is how students can be involved in research projects before they finish their Master degree. This is important in order to recruit more researchers, and at the same time - to show the students that a research career is an option. This could be a win-win situation.
- Conducting research on effects, best practice and other issues in internationalisation of higher education. We do simply need to know more - and to collect what we already know - for everyone to use. We have to encourage our institutions to closer collaboration, to share international experiences and to share best practice on internationalisation at home. Some of our universities and university colleges are strong enough to attract quality partners abroad without any help from other national institutions. Other institutions – do not have the same neither ability, nor resources – and would make a profit on closer cooperation with fellow national partners - also moneywise. Smaller institutions - with a sensible division of labour and responsibility, might all together also be attractive as a network to quality institutions abroad.

(PP 10)

- Mobility for students, academics, administrative and technical staff.
- Development of indicators
- Promoting Norway abroad
- Improvements on practical arrangements for international students in Norway
- Closer cooperation and labour division between Norwegian institutions in order to be attractive to foreign institutions

These are all measures specifically proposed in the Report. But our institutions do already have a responsibility to internationalise. The measures proposed are reflecting areas of importance to stress right now – and are all measures proposed by the institutions themselves during the report process.

As I said earlier, Norway has quite a few students who participate in mobility programmes as part of their Norwegian academic degree. Both to the Norwegian mobility students and the Norwegian degree students abroad (Bachelor, Master and Ph.D.), we can offer one of the best state funding possibilities in the world. They are entitled to loans and grants for general life support - the same amount of money whether they are studying in Norway or abroad. They are free to choose whatever university or study programme they like – as long as the education is equivalent to the Bachelor or Master levels in Norway. In addition to that – the state will give loans and grants to cover a fair part of any possible tuition fees. Even extra support might be granted to cover expenses in connection to study visits at high quality institutions. The students are also entitled to reimbursement of travel costs.

Mobility of students is important and must be based on quality when it comes to choice of institution and study programmes. The number of Norwegian participants in quality student exchange programmes and degree seeking students at foreign universities must increase, which will require a high standard of information and guidance about high quality study abroad opportunities.

(PP 11) Studies abroad will continue to have high priority, especially student exchange and degree studies at master's level (graduate students). The Government will adjust its financial support for tuition fees so that students are motivated to choose studies of high quality:

- Financial support for subsistence and travel grants will be maintained at the current level.
- Financial support to studies at institutions without tuition fees throughout the world will be continued on the same level as today.

(PP 12) It must be made economically more attractive to study at foreign institutions of high quality. The following actions are steps in that direction:

- An advisory group will be assigned the task of proposing quality criteria, and lists of high quality institutions and programmes will be developed. These will be considerably more extensive than the current supplementary grant lists. The current supplementary grant lists will be discontinued.
- Support will be given for the first year (Freshman year) of Bachelor degree courses offered by institutions and within programmes included in the new quality lists.
- Larger grants will be given to cover tuition fees at institutions of high quality.
- It shall be assessed whether the level of grants to cover tuition fees for exchange students shall be associated with institutional agreements.
- The new scheme shall be phased in gradually, from the academic year of 2011/2012 at the earliest.

The 40 measures listed in the Report are reflecting what we could analyse to be most important after the extensive hearing among stakeholders and actors within the education area in Norway. And it is most interesting to see that many other countries have a similar situation when it comes to internationalisation of education. However, the point is not to make all education systems equal but transparent, and not all study programmes like copies – but of high quality. That includes most definitely an international perspective and an intercultural understanding. So if we work hard and smart, the question will not any longer be: “Should I stay or should I go? – but rather “When do I go – and where?”

(PP 13) The Norwegian Report on internationalisation of education has an overall focus on:

- **Quality** – in international collaboration and at the entire education institution at home
- **Co-operation** – between institutions to secure the best possible relations and results in education and research

- **Attractiveness** – to international partners and students
- **Relevance** – to every student and employee – and to the labour market as well as trade and industry.

Every country and every education institution must find their own way of how to deal with internationalization of education and research. We must strive for diversity and quality. But we need transparency and more harmonized structures to be able to offer our students and staff more mobility possibilities and make it easier to gain knowledge and skills across borders.

(PP 14) I have told you in brief about the policy on internationalisation of education in Norway. I brought with me some copies of the English summary of the Report – and it is also possible to send some to you after this conference. Just let me know afterwards.

Thank you for your attention.