

Background Information: Higher Education System in Norway



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Higher Education System in Norway

1. General Characteristics

Population	
Total population (1.1.2013) (million) ¹	5.05
Population density (2013) (persons per square kilometre) ²	16.7
Population Structure (2013) (share of total population %)³	
0-14 years	18.4
15-24 years	13.2
25-49 years	34.6
50-64 years	18.2
65 years and older	15.7
GDP	
GDP per capita in PPS (2013), EU 28 = 100 ⁴	186
GDP year-on-year growth rate (2013) ⁵	0.7
Education (2009/2010) (All levels)⁶	
Enrolment	
Total (ISCED 0-6)	1,272,458
Tertiary Level of Education (ISCED 5-6) (%)	17.7
Tertiary Education⁶	
Population with tertiary education (2011) (%)	
25 – 54 years	40.2
55 – 74 years	26.4
Population aged 30 – 34 years with tertiary education (2011) (%)	48.8
Public expenditure on tertiary education (percentage of GDP) (2009)	2.2

2. Types of Higher Education Institutions

In Norway, higher education is provided mainly by four types of institutions. These include eight universities, eight specialised university institutions, three of which are private, 20 state-owned university colleges, 29 private higher education institutions, and eight higher education

¹ European Commission. (2013). *Eurostat Compact Guides: Basic Figures on the EU, Winter 2013/2014 Edition*. Luxembourg: Publications office of the European Union.

² Eurostat. (2013). *Population density*. Retrieved from <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tps00003&plugin=0>

³ Eurostat (2013). *People by age group* Retrieved from <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/refreshTableAction.do?tab=table&plugin=1&pcode=tps00010&language=en>

⁴ Eurostat. (2013). *GDP per capita in PPS*. Retrieved from <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&plugin=1&language=en&pcode=tec00114>

⁵ Eurostat. (2013). *Real GDP growth rate*. Retrieved from <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&plugin=1&language=en&pcode=tec00115>

⁶ European Union. (2013). *European Social Statistics*. Luxembourg: Publications office of the European Union

institutes (HEI) under the auspices of other Ministries, i.e. the Ministry of Defence (six HEIs) and the Ministry of Justice and the Police (two HEIs)⁷.

The difference between the categories of HEIs is closely linked to the autonomy in establishing new programmes without applying for external accreditation. Institutional accreditation empowers institutions to provide programmes at certain levels depending on the institutional category without applying for external accreditation from the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT). University colleges may establish new programmes at the Bachelor level without applying for accreditation. The accredited institutions who have the right to award the Doctoral degree (Ph.D.) may establish Master programmes within the subject area of their Doctoral programme. Universities may establish new programmes at all levels, including the Doctoral level, without applying for accreditation. Private higher education institutions accredited in one of the three categories have the same freedom of establishment of programmes as the state-owned institutions belonging to the same category, while the private higher education institutions without institutional accreditation still have to apply to NOKUT for all new programmes.

The universities have traditionally focused mainly on scientific and academic research offering courses in areas like humanities, social sciences, law, engineering, education, and health sciences like medicine and odontology, but some of the more recent universities also offer professional programmes in areas like teacher education, early childhood teacher education, engineering, nursing etc.

The specialised university institutions offer professional programmes at all levels in fields such as economics, music, theology, or management.

University colleges predominantly offer professionally oriented undergraduate/Bachelor programmes such as teacher education engineering, nursing, social work, business administration etc. Depending on the institution, university colleges offer programmes at both Bachelor, Master and in some cases Doctoral- level.

Private higher education institutions cover a wide range of study programmes such as ballet, music, religious studies, and nursing offering programmes at both the Bachelor, Master and in some cases at the Doctoral level. Three private HEIs have been accredited as specialised university institutions while eight have been accredited as university colleges.

3. Study Structure

As a result of the Bologna Process, Norway has completed the introduction of a three-cycle structure by 2003. Higher education attainment and student's performance are measured in credit points compatible with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). The two-cycle degree system has been introduced throughout. However, some fields have integrated programmes leading directly to a second cycle degree (either a Master degree

⁷ Eurypedia. (2013). *Norway – Types of Higher Education Institutions*. Retrieved from https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Norway:Types_of_Higher_Education_Institutions

or second cycle degree where the title of the former degree system has been kept). This includes the following fields: Odontology, medicine, veterinary science, psychology, pharmacy, certain teacher education programmes, fish sciences, architecture, and theology (Theology is offered at three HEIs in Norway and given as a two-cycle programme with the possibility of obtaining a Bachelor degree at one of the three institutions.) The length of the integrated degree programmes varies (five to six years) according to the field of study.

First cycle qualification (Bachelor)

- The first cycle qualification comprises a Bachelor degree, which requires three years of studies in most programmes. In the areas of performing arts and teacher education, Bachelor programmes/undergraduate programmes require four years of studies.
- A three-year Bachelor degree requires completing 180 credits, while the Bachelor degree in performing arts and the undergraduate degree in education require 240 credits.

Second cycle qualification (Master)

- The study duration of a second cycle Master degree is generally two years.
- Typically, 120 ECTS credits are required for completing a Master degree. However, in certain second cycle courses and experienced-based Master programmes (e.g. MBA), 60 – 90 credits are required for completing a Master degree. These second cycle degrees also require relevant work experience

Third cycle qualification (Doctoral)

- The structured Doctoral programmes in Norway are three-year programmes. In addition, one of the degrees from the former degree structure has been kept, the so-called, Dr. Philos, with no courses, no supervision, and no funding. The Norwegian Artistic Research Programme (candidates receive a diploma stating the completion of the programme) has also been established at the Doctoral-level intending to secure high level artistic research.

4. Admission Requirements

In Norway, the admission to study at a higher education institution is determined by a general matriculation standard, which sets the minimum requirements. This includes the following components:

1. An upper secondary school leaving certificate based on successful completion of one of the academic programmes in upper secondary education, or of a programme with both vocational and general subjects which includes specified levels of attainment in six key academic subjects (Norwegian, English, Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, and History).

2. An upper secondary vocational qualification (a crafts' or a journeyman's certificate) plus successful completion of a one-year “packaged” course in the six key subjects mentioned above.
3. The “23/5” route: Applicants aged 23 or above with at least five years of work experience or a mixture of education and work experience and who have successfully passed the course in the six key subjects mentioned above.
4. Recognition of prior learning (RPL): Access based on individual assessment of formal, informal, and non-formal qualifications is open to applicants aged 25 or more. Applications for admission on the basis of RPL are handled locally at each institution.
5. VET pathway to higher education (*Y-veien*): For certain specially designed courses, particularly in engineering, specific relevant vocational qualifications from the upper secondary level satisfy the admission criteria.

Moreover, the admission capacity is delegated to the institutions within guidelines set by the government. Admission to a Master programme requires a Bachelor degree or equivalent.

5. Enrolment Levels

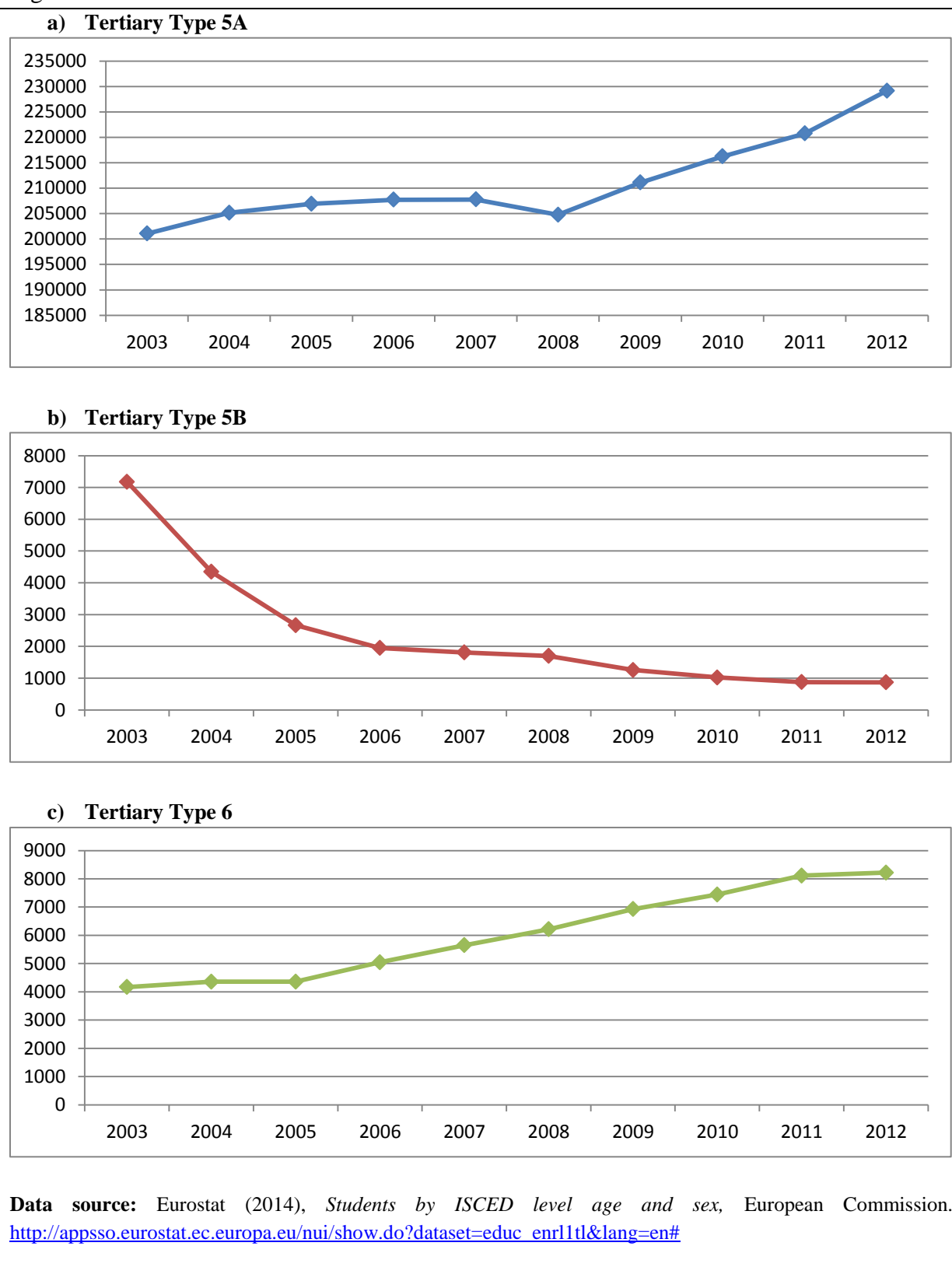
Figure 1 shows trends in enrolment levels (ISCED 5A, 5B and 6, ISCED 97) in Norway between 2003 and 2012. Tertiary Type 5A and 6 enrolment levels have increased whereas Tertiary Type 5B has decreased steadily.

6. Registration and/or Tuition Fees

Students at state-owned HEIs in Norway do not pay tuition fees. Each student has to pay a semester fee of 35 to 70 Euro⁸, which grants membership to the local student welfare organisation as well as other services. Students at private HEIs may have to pay tuition fees. A few specialised programmes at the state-owned HEIs may have tuition fees, such as certain programmes of continuing and further education.

⁸ Study in Norway. (2007). *Tuition*. Retrieved from <http://www.studyinnorway.no/Study-in-Norway/Tuition>

Figure 1: Trends in enrolment levels



7. Financial Support for Students

The objectives of the educational support given by the state in Norway are to promote equality and equal opportunities to ensure that students can freely choose their education and to ensure supply of educated labour. The Ministry of Education and Research provides the regulations regarding educational support. The State Educational Loan Fund (*Lånekassen*) administers the grants and loans in accordance with these regulations⁹.

Students in higher education are awarded a fixed amount as a loan (for the academic year 2014-2015 NOK 97 850 (approximately 11000 Euros) can be awarded annually). For students who do not reside with their parents, part of the loan may be converted to a grant upon completion of the education. The grant is means-tested against the student's income or social benefits. Grants may also be awarded for travel and for providing for children, and loans may be granted for tuition fees.

Loans/grants from the State Educational Loan Fund can be awarded only for a limited number of years. For students in higher education, support may be awarded for a total period of up to eight years (the period may be extended for certain groups). Students may be delayed in their education for up to one year without losing the right to educational support. There are also schemes whereby all support may be awarded as grants during certain periods. These include periods after birth/adoption and periods when the student is unable to study due to illness. As a main rule, educational loans are interest-free during the period of education.

For education abroad, a separate set of rules applies regarding support for tuition fees and travels, e.g. support for the tuition fee can be given partly as grant and partly as loan. The loan system is state founded with safeguards for those who are repaying loans in cases of low income, unemployment, illness etc.

8. Note on the Norwegian data provided for EUROSTUDENT V

The Norwegian questionnaire deviated from the common Eurostudent questionnaire on a few items that may affect comparability on certain sub-topics, in particular related to student finances. The EUROSTUDENT results overestimate the share of Norwegian students experiencing financial difficulties. This is due to a softer translation used in the Norwegian questionnaire along the lines of “to what degree do you experience that you do not have sufficient money”.

It is also important to note that the Norwegian data on fees paid by students also include the above-mentioned semester fee. This is not a tuition fee, but grants membership to the local student welfare organisation as well as other services. Furthermore, the Norwegian questionnaire did not distinguish between loans and grants, as students in Norway can get up to 40 percent of their loan converted into a grant if they pass their exams. This means that only the sum of loans and grants is reported.

⁹ For further details see the webpage of the State Educational Loan Fund: <https://lanekassen.no/Languages/>

Other deviations include the question on school leaving qualification, where no distinction was made between upper secondary academic and vocational tracks.

Finally, instead of a 10-point scale for students' self-assessment of social standing, a 5-point scale was applied in the Norwegian questionnaire. The above has to be kept in mind when interpreting the Norwegian data on the following pages.

This report is based on the following sources:

Eurypedia. (2013). *Overview Norway*. Retrieved from

<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Norway:Redirect>

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