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An active Norwegian policy towards the EU

A case study of the Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education (SIU)

Master's thesis in European Studies

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Abbreviations

ACA	Academic Cooperation Association
DG EAC	Directorate-General for Education and Culture
EACEA	Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency
EC	European Communities
EEA	European Economic Area
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
EP	European Parliament
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
EU	European Union
E&T 2010	Education and Training 2010
E&T 2020	Education and Training 2020
IMPI	Indicators for Mapping and Profiling Internationalisation
LLP	Lifelong Learning Programme
MER	Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research
NPM	New Public Management
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OMC	Open Method of Coordination
ONR	Official Norwegian Report
SIU	Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education
UHR	Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions

1.0 Introduction

Internationalisation has been highlighted as a means to enhance the quality and relevance of Norwegian higher education, and it has been closely linked to the Norwegian competitiveness in a global environment (St.meld. nr. 14 (2008-2009)). On a national conference addressing the subject, former Minister of Education and Research, Tora Aasland, accentuated in her speech that the future is international, and that “[i]t is in higher education and research we will find new keys and better solutions to preserve and develop the society further” (Aasland, 2012).¹ To enhance internationalisation, the Ministry of Education and Research (MER) has emphasised the European Union (EU) as Norway’s most important partner in the area (MER, 2011a).

In 2004, the Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education (SIU) was assigned to administer the EU education programmes on a national level, and thus enhance the internationalisation of Norwegian higher education. As a consequence of this, SIU was linked to administrative networks in the Commission framework.² By linking various stakeholders together in networks, the Commission has aimed for a coordinated European approach to higher education through cooperation and sharing of national experiences and practises. Guided by the principle of a Norwegian active policy towards Europe³, the MER has emphasised the importance of participation and contribution in EU policy processes to help increase the quality of Norwegian education (MER, 2011a). Due to Norway’s associated status in the EU, this policy guideline has been particularly dependant on actors’ capabilities and determination to contribute (ONR 2012:2). Based on this observation, this study focuses on SIU and explores its participation and contribution within the EU policy processes in the area of higher education.

An evaluation of SIU conducted in 2010, emphasised the importance of interacting with similar organisations, and encouraged SIU to participate in EU networks to share experiences and cooperate towards common goals (Vabø et al., 2010:33). These networks could also be channels for marketing Norwegian educational practises. The report also called for better coordination and communication between SIU and MER in order to better take

¹ The quotation is an extract from Aasland’s opening speech on the Internationalisation Conference 2012 (My translation).

² The executive body of the EU, the European Commission, will in this study be referred to as the Commission.

³ Cf. the Norwegian concept ”aktiv europapolitikk”.

advantage of SIU's competences and services. Based on this observation, it appears that SIU's participation in European networks may need to be better utilised and further developed.

1.1 Previous research

European cooperation in the area of higher education has been subject to various studies (Luijten-Lub et al., 2005, Walkenhorst, 2008, Gornitzka, 2009). In relation to Norway, the most frequently assessed subject has been the effect of EU cooperation on Norwegian educational policies and institutions. National educational reforms have also established a closer link between education and the market, and the policies have increasingly targeted the educational output. Karlsen (1994, 2006) links this development to an internationally oriented Norwegian education policy, and a more comprehensive cooperation with the EU. He critically assesses the ways in which the cooperation has evolved without any public debate, despite the EU's influence on all levels of education. The same way as the policies towards Europe has been established as a priority area within Norwegian foreign policy, the MER has announced the EU as Norway's most important partner in the field of knowledge (MER, 2011a). The European cooperation has affected national political reforms, and increased the bureaucratic and technical adjustment to the EU (Karlsen, 2011).

Education policies have traditionally been considered a national sensitive area, and supranational cooperation has thus been unlikely to develop. National education policies have traditionally been closely connected to national identity, and also international competitiveness. The European states have typically viewed higher education as an "instrument for transferring the cultural-national heritage", and national governments have had the responsibility to ensure that education has been provided on all levels (Gornitzka, 2009:7). However, despite the 'national sensitivity' of higher education, a close cooperation in the area has gradually emerged within the EU framework, and it has eventually been institutionalised as a European policy area. Gornitzka (2009:30) links this development to the establishment of Commission administrative capacities and the subsequent establishment of incentive programmes. As a result, a network administration has emerged, wherein the Commission has connected to various levels of governance within higher education as a policy sector. As regard to the Norwegian commitments to the area, Chou and Gornitzka (2011:5) finds that "the EEA-agreement connected Norway to an accelerating cooperation in

research and education under the auspices of the EU”.⁴ Their study points to the number of student exchanges as the most obvious effect of a closer EU integration. However, because of the sensitivity of this policy area, the objective to increase internationalisation of Norwegian education has been combined with the need to preserve the national identity.

A fundamental precondition for EU educational cooperation has been that implementation and participation in the education programmes have taken place by translation of the EU expectancies and commitments into national strategies, laws and reforms (Chou and Gornitzka, 2011:48). The sensitivity of education has thus been constituent of the EU cooperation, and the EU has not imposed directives and regulations on its member and associated states. Despite a weak legal basis, however, the Open Method of Cooperation has enabled a closer cooperation based on incentive programmes, benchmarking and sharing of best practise.⁵ Progress has been monitored through increased transparency and regular reports.

Whereas the EU has mainly employed ‘soft mechanisms’ for promoting policy coherence, several studies have argued that the Commission’s network administration has challenged the national political administration in the area (Egeberg and Trondal, 2009, Gornitzka and Langfeldt, 2008, Bugajski, 2008). For instance, the processes of policy-transfer have been subject to various studies. By focusing on how the EU affects the primary and secondary levels of education in Norway, Bugajski (2008) emphasises the agenda-setting powers of the Commission and the notion of ‘bound voluntariness’ as driving forces behind policy-transfers in the area. However, by referring to various official documents on the subject, a common finding has been that policy-transfers has taken place due to the perception of shared interest in the area (Karlsen, 1994). In Norway, participation in EU cooperation has been argued on a ‘logic of consequentiality’, based on the presumption that the challenges that face higher education are global and necessitates a joint response (Gornitzka and Langfeldt, 2008).

Due to the procedures of the OMC, the Commission has “connected to national sectoral administrations, the agency level, to trans-national associations and the level of the universities and colleges across Europe” (Gornitzka, 2009:30). Through such network configurations, it has aimed to meet local needs, and make administration and implementation

⁴ My translation.

⁵ Cf. the discussion about the OMC in chapter 2.

of policies more efficient and effective. Thus, in the area of higher education, national governments “no longer provide sole interface between supranational and subnational arenas” (Hooghe and Marks, 2001:4). From a governance perspective, cooperation within the EU system has divided power between different levels of governance in vertical and horizontal interaction; between governments, and between governments and non-governmental actors operating on different territorial levels (Bache and Flinders, 2004:3). Because of vertical differentiation and the institutional autonomy of higher education institutions, interaction across levels of governance may even bypass national level (Peters and Pierre, 2001:132).

Chou and Gornitzka (2011) characterise the EU cooperation within research and education as multi-level governance in which various actors on different levels are linked together by networks. Moreover, Peterson (2004:107) notes that “EU policies are significantly shaped and closely scrutinised by different kinds of officials and experts in the EU’s committee system”. The European integration in the area of higher education has been a complex development, one in which SIU was established. SIU has the national responsibility for coordinating Norwegian participation and contribution within the education programmes. Norway has had a long tradition of delegating authority and administrative capacities to national agencies to regulate in the economic, social and public sector (Lægreid et al., 2005). Most notably, line with New Public Management reforms (NPM), the Government has gradually shifted from direct to more indirect means of governance (Bouckaert and Peters, 2004).⁶ Within this environment, national agencies have functioned as vehicles for performing services as a part the public management. Consequently, SIU’s activities have been closely linked to the national objectives of increased internationalisation and mobility in higher education. However, as programme manager, SIU has served several masters. In relation to the EU, its activities have been scrutinised by the Commission, which has aimed for a more streamlined administration of the education programmes across borders. Moreover, the agency has been connected to sister-agencies and other organisations in networks where the Commission has functioned as a hub.

The discussion of national agencies interwoven in the European integration processes has been subject to various studies (Martens, 2008, Pollitt et al., 2001, Martens, 2005). A main interest in these studies has been the effects of a Commission network administration on the Norwegian political-administrative system (Christensen et al., 2008, Christensen and

⁶ Cf. discussion in chapter 3.

Lægheid, 2007). The starting point for these studies has been Norway's relationship to the EU, which has mainly been regulated by the Agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA).⁷ The Agreement allows Norwegian actors to access the EU's Internal Market; however, it does not allow access to the decision-making in the Council. As a consequence, contact with the Commission has been more frequent. This arrangement has strengthened the sectoral divisions between ministries and agencies, and "caused interdepartmental fragmentation rather than coordination and a consolidated strategy" (Trondal, 2005:21).⁸ Furthermore, the sectoral organisation in the Commission has mainly activated the lower level officials of the sectoral ministries; the directorates and supervisory agencies.

The sectoral and technocratic division of authority at national level has corresponded to a similar organisation on EU level. In particular, EU level agencies have been established to perform regulatory tasks within the Commission framework. As a result, these agencies have connected with national agencies in administrative networks. This has further enabled interactions across the levels of governance, which may even surpass the national level. This observation has indicated the emergence of a common European administration (Egeberg, 2006b, 2010, Egeberg et al., 2009). As a consequence, national agencies have been increasingly exposed to external pressure from the EU level administration, which may provoke a development of multiple identities and 'double-hatted' behaviours (Pollitt and Talbot, 2004). From an institutional approach, this 'double-hattedness' has been a result of the institutionalisation of the networks in which the agencies interact. This 'Europeanisation' may affect the organisational structures of the agencies, and thus the agency officials' attitudes and role perceptions on national level (Trondal, 2005:7).

In relation to SIU's responsibility for the EU education programmes, the agency has also been 'double-hatted' and served both the MER and the Commission. Indeed, SIU has frequently interacted with other European actors within the Commission framework; in formal and informal programme meetings, and in working groups and committees. However, despite the potential for SIU to develop a 'double-hatted' behaviour, "[t]he "sensitive climate" of this sector has not been conducive to any agencification at the EU level" (Gornitzka, 2009:30).

⁷ According to the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs' register of treaties and agreements, there are currently 74 different agreements regulating the relationship between Norway and the EU (NOU 2012:2:35). This includes agreements of various sizes. The most comprehensive of these, is the EEA-agreement. Cf. discussion in chapter 3.

⁸ My translation.

Moreover, several studies still emphasised the ministries as most influential for the officials' activities (Egeberg and Trondal, 2009, Christensen and Lægreid, 2007). Trondal (2005) also notes that this especially applies for the national officials representing a specified portfolio, as opposed to the independent technical experts. Based on these observations, SIU does "not represent any overt challenge on the nation-state's legal or funding prerogative" (Gornitzka, 2009:31). The agency represents a national portfolio and mainly has administrative tasks on national level. Moreover, within Commission network administrations, SIU and the other organisations have had informational, rather than regulative, tasks.

1.2 Focus and research questions

As demonstrated above, both the subject of educational cooperation between Norway and the EU, and national agencies interwoven in the European integration processes, have been separately addressed in various studies.⁹ By linking these two approaches, this study adds to previous research by addressing the subject of national agencies in the area of higher education. Whereas most studies have focused on regulatory agencies, and the ways in which EU integration has affected the national political administration, this study focuses on the agency configuration in the sensitive area of education as a possible channel for national participation and contribution in EU policy processes. SIU mainly has administrative and informational authorities in the public administration, and is nationally regulated by its mandate and the MER's right to appoint 5 of 7 members and deputy members of its board (MER, 2011c). Therefore, the main focus in this study is SIU's activities in the Commission's network administration, and how the agency's interaction with similar organisation on European level affects the Norwegian participation and contribution in the EU cooperation in the area of higher education.

Guided by the active policy towards Europe, the Norwegian Government has requested an active, precise and open route for Norway's cooperation with the European Union (EU) (St.meld. nr. 23 (2005-2006)). The concept originated in 1972, in the wake of the first public referendum which resulted in a rejection of Norwegian membership in the European Community (EC).¹⁰ After a second rejection of EU-membership in the 1994

⁹ In studies of Nordic agencies, the focus has mainly been on the competition area, the telecom sector, the food safety area, the environmental field, and the statistical area (Egeberg, 2006a, Martens 2005, 2008).

¹⁰ The European Community (EC) refers to the collective nature of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom).

referendum, the relationship between Norway and the EU has mainly been regulated by the Agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA). Within this framework, the active policy towards Europe has continued to guide Norway in its relation to the EU, with the objective of securing influence and participation in EU policy processes (ONR 2012:2:164-170). This study focuses on the practise of the active policy towards Europe in the field of higher education, and it specifically focuses SIU's role within this relationship.

SIU has been “a key actor in the Europeanisation of Norwegian higher education” (Gornitzka and Langfeldt, 2008:155). The agency has a national responsibility for the administration of Norwegian programme participation, for branding Norway as a destination for studies abroad, and to enhance internationalisation. In the Commission administrative networks, the agency's activities have been linked to a number of social goals for the development of the society within the EU.¹¹ The emphasis on education on EU level has led Telhaug et al. (2006:279) to suggest that the Nordic educational philosophy “might once again become an ideal or a source of inspiration”. Hence, this may also be a ‘window of opportunity’ for Norwegian influence in EU level processes. Against this background, the main research questions are: *How is SIU interwoven in European integration processes? And does SIU's interaction with actors on EU level facilitate increased Norwegian participation and contribution in the EU policy processes in the area of higher education?*

In order to answer these research questions, a set of sub-questions arise: How has the cooperation in the area of higher education developed in the EU? How has Norway approached this cooperation? And, in particular, how has SIU been interwoven in the policy processes surrounding the cooperation between Norway and the EU?

1.3 Approach

To address how SIU is interwoven in the European integration processes, and how its activities are linked to Norwegian contributions in the area of higher education, two concepts are vital to this study. First, the assessment of the Norwegian utilisation of the available channels for interaction and contribution is related to the active policy towards Europe. The policy guideline is largely composed of two main goals: to promote Norwegian interests, and

These communities shared the same governing institutions (that of the EEC), which eventually became the governing institutions of the European Union in 1992.

¹¹ Cf. the discussion about the Lisbon Strategy in chapter 2.

to access and process information from the policy processes in Brussels. Norwegian actions have been limited by Norway's associated status in the EU, and the result of this policy guideline has thus been dependent on actors' capabilities and determination (ONR 2012:2:165). Second, the network concept is applied to analyse the process of interaction between SIU and other actors on EU level. The network concept can denote various configurations of interaction between actors on different levels, thus, for the purpose of this study, the network concept needs some further exploration.

Gornitzka (2009) has emphasised that horizontal, and vertical, interconnections in networks between European actors, has been a paramount characteristic of the Commission. These structures have also characterised the area of higher education, where national officials and agencies have interacted in networks with the sector-specific Directorates General for Education and Culture (DG EAC) and the Educational, Audiovisual & Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). When the Commission introduced the umbrella education programme for Lifelong Learning (LLP), it simultaneously emphasised the need for an improved implementation.¹² As a consequent, it requested streamlined national agencies to be responsible for the programme management. These agencies were further linked together in networks to enable a more stable and effective maintenance and development of the programmes.

Cooperation in networks can be linked to the 2001 Commission White Paper on European Governance. In this document, the Commission promoted a modern form of governance based on networks as a way of ensuring adequate policy coordination (European Commission, 2001). The White Paper was the Commission's response to a weakened central administration and the experience of less willingness to implement policies in a top-down fashion. Since its establishment as national agency for the EU education programmes, therefore, SIU has been involved in several European networks where it has exchanged ideas and experiences with Commission officials, sister-agencies, higher education institutions and other actors.

The network concept is thus a fitting framework from which to address the study's research question. It is, however, necessary to further elaborate it in order to examine the content of the specific networks in which SIU participates. The concept has been applied in

¹² Cf. chapter 2, the Lifelong Learning Programme is the EU flagship funding programme in the field of education and training, and integrates the various education and training initiatives in the EU.

various versions within studies of public administration and European integration. In particular, it has frequently appeared in normative research, where it has denoted preferred steering arrangements (Gornitzka, 2009:6). Crucially, the Sage handbook of governance makes the distinction between theories of governance and practises of governance, wherein networks have been subject to both approaches (Bevir, 2011). My use of the concept, however, is similar to the latter.

Regarding the practises of networks, Blanco et al. (2011) categorises the concept in two main areas of distinction, namely policy networks (PN) and governance networks (GN). In both perspectives, policy-making is an interactive process including various actors. Moreover, based on mutual dependence, trust and reciprocity, the actors are bound together in networks. However, the two perspectives differ in terms of their contextual framework and composition. The PN approach has aimed to understand the consequences of networks within traditional governance. PN has been elitist and focused on traditional policy fields in line with the departmental boundaries. The networks have enabled frequent interaction between a limited number of participants. Notably, it has also stressed the pressure from the EU in forming policy networks. The GN approach, on the other hand, has been more interested in past-present comparisons of modes of governance.¹³ It seeks to account for the growing difficulties of traditional governance and the emergence of networks as an alternative governance paradigm. It has primarily focused on network arrangements with a spatial and territorial base, and has emphasised the pluralist interaction between various actors and interest groups (Blanco et al., 2011:301).

The use of the network concept in this study, largely complies with the policy network approach. Sørensen and Torfing (2005) describes policy networks as relatively rigid configurations which connects private, quasi-public, and public actors. In particular, these networks have administrative and regulative functions within the public society. They interact across institutional lines, and participate in the production of public governance and administration. The networks are not necessarily connected to the formulation and implantation of laws and regulations, however, they take part in the public production of

¹³ Cf. the distinction between government and governance. Whereas government is understood as “one way in which order is delivered [...] the literature on governance suggests that traditional methods of public regulation, intervention, and legislation are being displaced and that authority is becoming dispersed amongst a variety of actors” (Rosamond, 2007:128). The state remains the key player; however, its role has become reformulated.

common understandings of challenges and solutions, values and visions (*Ibid.*:17). Hence, network administrations exist side by side with the traditional forms of governance (*Ibid.*:13).

In an analysis of the many versions of the network concept in relation to European governance, Kaiser (2009:15) emphasises that the actors' relationships is based on mutual functions as opposed to individual. In contrast to the concept of PN and GN, however, Kaiser applies a different terminology in his approach and suggests a normative-empirical divide. From a normative approach, the concept network governance mainly says something about cooperation between private and public interests. An empirical approach, on the other hand, has emphasised "the role of networks in the generation of policy ideas, their further development and legislative or administrative implementation" (Kaiser, 2009:15). Based on both approaches, Kaiser points to the heuristic advantages of the network concept within different theoretical disciplines. Analysis of networks has not been based on a rigid theory. The concept has been intimately linked to the governance agenda for understanding the EU as a polity or form of government, and to explain the formation of European organisations in the first place. Thus, despite a variety of meanings, the network concept has contributed to understanding policy processes in an existing polity (*Ibid.*:17).

Similar to the latter observation, this study has applied the network concept to understand the interaction between national and EU level in the processes of policy-making and policy shaping. More precisely, the study has aimed to analyse the possibilities for an associated EU state, in this case Norway, to participate and contribute within the policy processes in the sensitive area of higher education. Based on the governance principles of OMC, this study has employed the network concept to discuss the interaction between actors who share experiences, ideas, and information. In line with a PN approach, SIU's network activities with other European agencies, stakeholders and Commission representatives have been arranged along sectoral lines, and thus dealt with specific policy issues. Based on the agencies' responsibility for distribution of funds within the programmes, and the common objective of increasing mobility and internationalisation for increased educational quality, there has been a mutual dependency between the actors. Moreover, due to the Commission's request for a streamlined programme management and an effective implementation on national level, the network configuration has been a source for policy stability.

Networks may consist of both private and public interests. However, the PN approach stresses "the privileged access of certain elite actors" into networks, resulting in a limited

number of members who interacts on both formal and informal basis (Blanco et al., 2011:305). Although this study does not focus on exclusive elite interaction, it is based on the presumption that SIU represents Norwegian interests and practises within the networks. Notably, although the members of the Commission do not represent the interests of their home state, but rather the interests of the EU as a whole, SIU is a *national* agency. In Commission networks it largely shares experiences from Norwegian practises. This assumption can be supported by the compliance between the main EU priorities and the Norwegian policy for higher education, and to the common European objectives of increased mobility and internationalisation (MER, 2011a). Therefore, the extent to which SIU has been a channel for Norwegian participation and contribution is based on an assumption that Norwegian experiences and ideas may benefit the common European good (*Ibid.*). Finally, policy networks are constituent of actors who are mutually dependent on each others' resources (Sørensen and Torfing, 2005:15). Hence, in this study, the network concept entails a situation where actors collaborate towards common goals in a distinctive policy area.

Jachtenfuchs (2001) finds the network concept particularly well suited to describe EU multilevel governance. The flexibility and inclusiveness of the network interaction has been an important driving force behind cooperation in the EU. However, he criticises the governance approaches for ignoring the political power of network configurations, and for not being able to present an overarching theory (*Ibid.*:258). Moreover, Peters and Pierre (2004, 2009) emphasise that the EU's administrative processes introduces more bureaucracy and less efficient governance. Hence, cooperation in networks has been characterised by conflict and 'horse trade'. This has been a challenge to the ideal of representative democracy (Sørensen and Torfing, 2003). Schout and Jordan (2005) agree to the critique, and emphasise that effectiveness of the network administration in the Commission depends on structure, regularity and control.

However, in line with Gornitzka (2009), this study does not focus on network theory or the normative qualities of network governance. Rather, it applies the concept of network as an analytical tool to characterise and discuss "the organisational arrangements that connect the supranational executive to other administrative levels in higher education" (*Ibid.*:5). More specifically, the network concept is applied to analyse the purpose and content of SIU's interactions within the Commission framework.

1.4 Sources

For the purpose of this study, I have chosen a qualitative research design. The main approach is document analysis of various public and official documents, combined with semi-structured interviews with SIU employees and national experts working in Brussels. Based on a broad variety of sources, I have conducted an in-depth analysis of SIU's activities in relation to the EU cooperation in the area of higher education (Ringdal, 2007:94-96).

The study is based on various official documents and academic studies. A number of policy documents regarding the active policy towards Europe have been vital for exploring the official Norwegian policy towards the EU. These include official Governmental Reports to the Norwegian Parliament (St.mld.), Official Norwegian Reports (ONR), and national EU-strategies. Most importantly, the ONR 2012:2 on Norway's agreements with the EU has been vital in order to discuss the relationship between Norway and the EU. In this document, the active policy towards Europe received special attention, and the ONR emphasised the Norwegian capability and determination to influence and contribute within the EU integration. The same is reflected in the reports to the Norwegian Parliament, both the one that concerns European policies as such (St.meld. nr. 23 (2005-2006)), and those focusing on the area of education specifically (St.meld. nr. 14 (2008-2009), St.mld.nr. 27 (2000-2001)). Moreover, the active policy towards Europe is reflected in the MER's EU strategy for the period between 2011 and 2013.

To gain a comprehension of SIU's activities, it has been necessary to include a broader range of sources, such as electronic sources¹⁴, annual reports, and national and EU strategies. Most importantly, a 2010 report conducted by NIFU Step has provided detailed insight into SIU's organisation, mandate and work. The report evaluated SIU's activities during the six year period between 01.01.2004-31.12.2009, and propounded possible adjustments for the future. Its evaluation has been vital in relation to the interviews, and for the discussion in this study. To add to the overall picture of SIU's role within the Norwegian and the European public service, various web pages of both the Norwegian Government and the EU has been used. The SIU web page has been particularly important, as it has provided additional information about SIU's mandate and activities. This web page contains comprehensive descriptions about the programmes SIU manages, including links to the respective EU sites.

¹⁴ For example SIU's web page; www.siu.no.

Through document analysis, I have been able to “summarize fairly rigorously” about evidence of behaviour and relationships between political actors (Manheim et al., 2008:180). However, there may be several pitfalls when one conducts document analyses (*Ibid.*:180-194). Since the criteria for analysing the documents is related to the study’s research question, the effect may be a biased approach that affects the conclusions. Moreover, as words have various meanings depending on the context in which they occur, it is important to bear in mind that a document analysis is based on the subjective interpretation of the researcher. It is further important to note that documents are normally designed for a purpose (Manheim et al., 2008:189). For example, national official documents are a communication of specific political objectives and purposes. However, they do not necessarily provide a coherent description of the society. Therefore, to provide more substance to the study, the document analysis has been supplemented by an analysis of the contextual environment in which the documents have been issued.

To further strengthen the analysis, four semi-structured interviews have been conducted. Through interviews with core officials, the aim has been to analyse policy in practise. As opposed to quantitative and fully structured interviews, the character of semi-structured interviews allows the conversation to stray from a very rigid conversation, and the interviewees can initiate subjects for the conversation which they find necessary and relevant (Robson, 2011:278-301). The interviews included two SIU officials, one from the department for higher education and the other from the department for communication. In addition, two national experts from DG EAC were interviewed to broaden the insight to SIU’s activities in Brussels.

Although the interviews added substantially to my knowledge and analysis, there are several possible pitfalls when using semi-structured interviews as well as when conducting document analysis. Most notably is the issue of reliability. In an interview-situation, the researcher is present both during the collection and the reproduction of the data. This could affect the reliability and the possibility for a neutral account of the reality in which the interviewees operate (Harrits et al., 2010:146). Moreover, the differences in the ways the interviews were conducted could affect the reliability. The manner in which the interviews were conducted differed, because the SIU officials wished to carry out their interview together. Additionally, one of the national experts replied to the interview by mail.

However, the purpose of this explorative approach has been to include unique information that has not been provided for by the official documents. The interviews have provided comprehensive insight to SIU's activities within the EU framework, and insight to the officials perception of the social contexts within the networks (Harrits et al., 2010). The flexibility of a semi-structured interview strategy enabled me to adjust to the requests of the interviewees. By doing so, I may have prevented the loss of relevant empirical data. Furthermore, to strengthen the reliability and verification of the data, the interviews were recorded and the interviewees were ensured anonymity. Because of their anonymity, the interviews are referred to by numbers according to the order in which they were conducted. The interviews with the two national experts are categorised as Interview 1 and Interview 2, whereas the interview with the SIU officials is categorised as Interview 3. However, when direct quotations are used, it is emphasised that it was one of the officials that made the statement.

1.5 Structure and main arguments

To analyse SIU's activities and possibilities for influence and contribution within the Commission framework, the first two chapters examines the context in which SIU operates. Chapter two addresses the concept of network administration in the area of higher education by exploring the development of a common education policy in the EU and how cooperation in the area is conducted. In particular, the chapter discusses the traditional national sensitivity of higher education, and addresses the OMC as a driving force for cooperation. The chapter further argues that administrative networks have been a key feature of the development towards closer cooperation across borders.

By emphasising the important role of administrative networks in the area of higher education, chapter three focuses on the cooperation between Norway and the EU. The EEA-agreement has established the Commission as the main reference point for Norwegian actors in relation to the EU, and the chapter analyses how Norway has responded to the development of administrative networks in the Commission. In particular, it focuses on the establishment of SIU within the national programme administration. The delegation of administrative responsibilities to national agencies has been connected to ongoing reform processes, most importantly to New Public Management (NPM) reforms, and has a long tradition in Norway. However, based on the objectives of the active policy towards Europe, the chapter argues that

the establishment of SIU has also been closely related to the emerging administrative networks in the EU.

Chapter four addresses the development of SIU's activities within the EU framework. By drawing links to the concept of an active policy towards Europe and the calls for Norwegian capabilities and determination to contribute and participate within the cooperation, the chapter addresses the effect a closer European cooperation with regards to higher education on the Norwegian administration. It argues that SIU is a useful, though underdeveloped, instrument for the MER in practising and strengthening Norwegian higher education policy within EU cooperation.

Chapter 6 recalls the study's research question, and demonstrates that SIU's activities in EU level networks have largely been linked to the two main goals of the active policy towards Europe. First, in various contexts, SIU has been in a position to brand and promote Norway and Norwegian interests. Second, the agency has established close ties to its sister-agencies and other actors within the networks. These have been important arenas to access and process information. However, there are situations in which SIU's has not been as actively engaged within the networks. Hence, the chapter concludes by indicating that SIU has the potential to strengthen its capabilities, and improve the utilisation of the available possibilities for interaction and contribution.

2.0 A European network administration in the area of higher education

This chapter focuses on the development of a common higher education policy in the EU. The developments on European level have been crucial for the Norwegian determination to opt for a closer affiliation with EU policy processes and the education programmes. By addressing the EU's administrative capacity in the area, this chapter analyses the nature of this cooperation. Based on the 'national sensitivity' of education, the chapter links the mechanisms of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) to the developing network administration in the Commission. A European administrative capacity has gradually developed with respect to higher education, and cooperation has mainly come in the shape of incentive programmes. To enable a closer cooperation in the EU, the Commission has pressed for improved coordination in areas of the states' administrative systems. Within this context, national agencies have increasingly participated in sector specific cooperation with similar organisations and sister-agencies from other states. This interaction has taken place within the European network administration. Based on this observation, the chapter argues that the OMC and the network administration have been core elements in the development towards more cohesion across the borders.

2.1 Towards a common higher education policy in the EU

Traditionally, education has been an area with legitimate claims of national diversity in the European context (Gornitzka, 2009). In particular, the structural diversity of higher education systems in Europe has been linked to the institutions' role as instruments for transferring national culture, history and heritage. Hence, "these institutions form nationally embedded *socialising institutions*" (*Ibid.*:7). Due to the close link to national identities, education policy has been considered a national sensitive area, not suitable for supranational cooperation.

The 'national sensitivity' of education was evident in the European cooperation in the area. Initially, cooperation was mainly related to vocational training, which was seen as an instrument to support the economic objectives of the common market. The EU has had scarce resources in the area of education, and mainly played a subsidiary role in carrying out the national strategies of the member and associated states. However, the need for closer coordination has gradually become closely related to the Union's overall objectives of enabling "smart, sustainable and inclusive growth" (European Commission, 2010). Cooperation in the area has become more pronounced, and education policies have been

linked to the achievements of the economic and social spheres. Eventually, through closer cooperation, the EU has aimed to develop a “Europe of knowledge” (European Commission, 1997).

2.2 The Treaty of Maastricht: Expanding the legal framework

After a period of stagnation during the 1970s, the European integration gathered pace throughout the late 1980s. In 1987, the Single European Act (SEA) enforced new initiatives towards the realisation of the Internal Market in the EU. This was finally accomplished by the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992, which established the European Union and legally introduced the ‘four freedoms’. Within the Internal Market, this referred to the guarantee for free movement of goods, capital, services and people, which thus arranged for increased cross-border activities among the EU members and associated states. The free movement across the borders also pressed forward a closer cooperation in the area of education. Initially, cooperation in this area was conducted through common action programmes which had no legal obligations. The first programme targeting higher education was established in 1976, followed in 1987 by the Erasmus Programme for student mobility in higher education (Eurydice, 2000). Although they facilitated more interaction, these programmes were scantily committing, and the internal coherence among the Member States was still only marginal. This was related to the sensitivity of the area of education policies. The linguistic differences and variation in national diplomas of education also posed barriers to labour and student mobility.

Despite the slow development in the initial phase, increased globalisation and global competition pressed for more cohesion and closer cooperation in Europe. As a response, the Commission issued a ‘Memorandum on Higher Education in the European Community’ in 1991. In particular, five areas of concern was identified: “participation in and access to higher education, partnership with economic life, continuing education, open and distance learning, and the European dimension in higher education” (Eurydice, 2000:13). The 1992 Treaty of Maastricht followed up the Commission’s Memorandum and expanded the Community competences to the areas of education and vocational training, youth, and culture (Treaty of Maastricht, 1992). The Treaty entitled the Commission the right to propose measures in the area of education. Further, the Council could adopt incentive measures on the basis of qualified majority voting, after consulting the Economic and Social Committee and the

Committee of the Regions. However, any attempt on harmonisation of the laws and regulations of the Member States was excluded (*Ibid.*). Education policies remained the national responsibility, and the EU could not interfere in the content of teaching, the organisation of the national educational systems, or in the states' cultural and linguistic diversity.

Within a limited area of impact, however, the EU has aimed to contribute to the development of quality education in the member and associated states. It has encouraged closer cooperation, and supported and supplemented the Member States' national action (Treaty of Maastricht, 1992, Part 3, Title VIII, article 126). The objectives have been to establish 'European dimensions' within the Member States' education policies, to encourage student and teacher mobility, and to enable exchange of information and experiences across borders. As a result, the Socrates Programme was established in 1995. This programme gathered the EU initiatives and action programmes beneath one 'umbrella', with the objective of achieving a more efficient cooperation through a common administration.

The Treaty of Maastricht obviously expanded the EU competences and ability to contribute to the area of education. However, several Member States still found the Commission's Memorandum too economically oriented and that it was "trespassing on national domain" (Gornitzka, 2010:539). This impeded the development of a closer cooperation in the EU. Thus, it is arguable if the Treaty of Maastricht added any substantial change to the policy area (Karlsen, 1994:30). Notably, education policies continued to be dealt with as segments of research and development (R&D), labour market policies and vocational training during the early 1990s.

2.3 The Bologna Process: New initiatives outside the EU-framework

Whereas progress was slow in the EU, new initiatives in the area of higher education rather emerged outside the EU framework. Cooperation gathered momentum when ministers of higher education in France, Britain, Germany and Italy signed the Sorbonne Declaration in 1998. Targeting higher education specifically, the ministers proposed an intergovernmental cooperation in higher education and called for other states to join their initiative. The Declaration was soon joined by 29 European states, which together with the four initiators

signed the Bologna Declaration the following year (The Bologna Declaration, 1999).¹⁵ The main objectives of the Bologna Declaration were to create a comparable degree system of bachelor, masters and doctorates degrees; to establish a common credit system to promote quality assurance within the Member States' educational institutions; and to encourage mobility across borders by recognising foreign degrees. The states aimed to achieve these objectives by 2010, when the cooperation culminated into a common European Higher Education Area (EHEA).¹⁶

Although the four initiating states were EU Member States, the Bologna Process took place outside the EU framework. Consequently, the actors were allowed to make the most of their previous experiences from cooperation in the EU, without being constrained by the EU framework (Gornitzka, 2010:539). Despite the sensitivity of the area of higher education, the Bologna Process was based on belief in common European objectives and values. This was evident in the Declaration's emphasis on the existence of a common European social and cultural space (The Bologna Declaration, 1999). Moreover, the objective was an inclusive approach to the cooperation. In particular, the independent universities had a crucial role in the Bologna Process, based on their cultural position within the nation states. The Commission was also intrigued by the wide scope of the cooperation, and it actively engaged in the Process by contributing both economically and technically. Eventually, the EU incorporated the objective of achieving the EHEA into the Union framework. As a consequence, this connected actors on various levels to the Commission framework, and a network administration across borders and across levels of governance expanded.

2.4 The Lisbon Strategy: Towards a knowledge-based economy

Since the turn of the millennium, the EU has advocated for stronger commitments to the institutionalisation of education as a European policy area. In 2000, the Lisbon European Council established ambitious targets for the future development, including the aim for the EU to become "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world" (Council of the European Union, 2000). With the subsequent Lisbon Strategy, the EU focused more intensively on growth and jobs, and educational quality was closely linked to economic

¹⁵ The Bologna Declaration is currently signed by 47 states, including all EU Member States (The Bologna Process, 2010).

¹⁶ The EHEA was launched by the Budapest-Vienna Declaration in 2010 and was "meant to ensure more comparable, compatible and coherent systems of higher education in Europe" (*Ibid.*).

development and the global competitiveness of the Union.¹⁷ In line with the Bologna objectives, the Lisbon Strategy targeted the European higher education policy specifically (Gornitzka, 2007:155). The initiative was followed up by a working program for education and training towards 2010 (E&T 2010). The objectives in the E&T 2010 was to improve the quality of European higher education, and to encourage modernisation and reform of the national education systems (European Commission, 2009b).

In the Lisbon Strategy, the objective of lifelong learning received special attention. The EU aimed to enable individuals at all stages of their life to engage in education and training. A key priority was to achieve lifelong learning in order to meet the common challenges of “ageing societies, skills deficits among the workforce, and global competition” (European Commission, 2012b). The EU has encouraged a joint response through common objectives: to make lifelong learning and mobility a reality; to improve the quality and efficiency of education and training; to promote equity, social cohesion and active citizenship; to enhance creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training (European Commission, 2012b).

In 2007, the EU introduced the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP), which institutionalised the EHEA as an EU objective (European Commission, 2009a). The LLP was the successor to the Socrates Programme and targeted individuals’ learning arenas at all stages of their lives. It was managed by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), under supervision of the parent DG Education and Culture (DG EAC). It merged and administered the four sectoral sub-programmes: the Comenius Programme for schools, the Erasmus Programme for higher education, the Leonardo da Vinci Programme for vocational education and training, and the Grundtvig Programme for adult education. In addition, the LLP supervised the so called 'transversal' programmes. These programmes complemented the sectoral sub programmes and focused on policy cooperation and innovation, languages, information and communication technologies, and dissemination and exploitation of results (European Commission, 2009a). The LLP has demonstrated the evolving strategic framework for education and training in the EU (European Commission, 2009b, a). Eventually, the EU has aimed beyond cooperation through programme participation towards increased policy coherence.

¹⁷ The Lisbon Strategy is also known as the Lisbon Process and the Lisbon Agenda.

2.5 The Treaty of Lisbon: Towards 2020

In 2009, the Treaty of Lisbon renewed and reinforced the strategic framework for cooperation in the area of education (Treaty of Lisbon, 2007). In order to cope with the tumultuous economic situation in Europe, the Treaty introduced a new strategy for ‘smart, sustainable and inclusive growth’ (European Commission, 2010). Higher education and training were integral elements of this strategy. The EU replaced the former work programme, and introduced new objectives that would last from 2010-2020 (E&T 2020). The E&T 2020 was linked to the EU’s strategy for increased economic growth and decreased unemployment. It aimed to enhance the quality of European education, through the flagship European funding program, the LLP, and the new Tempus and Erasmus Mundus Programmes which coordinated the EU’s relations with countries outside of Europe (European Commission, 2009b). It also introduced the European Qualification Frameworks (EQF) to establish indicators for educational quality and to enable comparisons among the members.¹⁸

Within the E&T 2020, the EU has established common benchmarks to be met by 2020: at least 95% of children between the age of four and the age for starting compulsory primary education should participate in early childhood education; the share of 15-years olds with insufficient abilities in reading, mathematics and science should be less than 15%; the share of early leavers from education and training should be less than 10%; the share of 30-34 year olds with tertiary educational attainment should be at least 40%; and an average of at least 15% of adults (age group 25-64) should participate in lifelong learning (European Commission, 2012b). To achieve these objectives, new modes for cooperation has been introduced.

2.6 The Open Method of Cooperation (OMC)

In relation to the ambitious objectives of achieving the EHEA, increasing mobility, and enhancing the quality of higher education, the EU has introduced ‘soft’ mechanisms to enhance the cooperation. Because of the sensitivity of the area of education, it has emphasised the need of interaction between actors from the private and public sphere, and across the

¹⁸ The EQF is a European reference framework which links countries’ qualifications systems together, acting as a translation device to make qualifications more readable and understandable across different countries and systems in Europe. It has two principal objectives: to promote citizens’ mobility between countries and to facilitate their lifelong learning (European Commission, 2008).

levels and sectors of governance (Gornitzka and Olsen, 2006:12). This new mode of governance has been introduced as an alternative to hierarchical or marked steering. By doing that, the EU has pushed for progress and more cohesion among the member and associated states policies' for higher education. In particular, the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) has encouraged increased cooperation through the formation of administrative networks on EU level (Sørensen and Torfing, 2005:12). As we will see in chapter 3, SIU has eventually become interwoven in these network configurations on EU level.

European cooperation in the area of education has affected actors and organisations on EU, transnational, national and local level. A possible consequence of this complex system, has been less efficient EU governance. The rationale behind the OMC has thus been to enhance the policy coherence through 'soft mechanisms'. This has included the establishment of common European benchmarks and the sharing of best practises. However, the member and associated states have been free to decide their own national strategies for reaching the established objectives, and the EU has not enforced any harmonisation on their policy solutions (Gornitzka and Olsen, 2006:16). Cooperation has rather been based on fixed guidelines and timetables for achieving common goals (Warleigh-Lack and Drachenberg, 2010). In the national sensitive area of higher education, thus, the OMC has enabled the cooperating parties to implement the educational programmes through 'national filters'. This entails a process where the states translate EU policies to fit into their individual systems of education. Furthermore, through monitoring reports, the Member States can learn from each others' best practices and experiences. It has been an incentive-based cooperation, where those who fail to accomplish the common objectives meet the "pillory" (Sørensen and Torfing, 2005:12).

The OMC has illustrated the multi-level cooperation that takes place in the EU. It has enabled cooperation to "[...] involve all the relevant stakeholders: the Union, the Member States, the local and regional collectivities, as well as the social partners and civil society" (De la Porte et al., 2001:5). Moreover, it has arranged for interaction and cooperation in network configurations, where actors have been connected through intermediary levels, but also between them (Peters and Pierre, 2001). The aim has been to increase efficiency customer-attuned public services (*Ibid.*). These networks have altered the exclusiveness of state steering within European higher education. This observation has been demonstrated by the last decades' development of organised multi-level interaction, strengthened public-private cooperation, and cooperation across policy sectors (Gornitzka and Olsen, 2006).

In the area of higher education, interaction between various actors has “developed as part of European expert groups, in agency networks and in the implementation of European programmes” (Gornitzka, 2009:30). In relation to the education programmes, the Commission has requested the member and associated states to streamline the national agencies with the authority to administer and coordinate the education programmes. The aim has been to enhance the efficiency of programme management on national level. Moreover, on EU level, the Commission has delegated some administrative and regulative responsibility for the educational programmes to the EACEA. As a consequence, the national agencies, the EACEA, the European education institutions and other organisations have been “linked to the Commission and to each other outside the immediate reach of national ministries of education” (*Ibid.*). This development has resulted in the emergence of an EU level network administration of the education programmes, where the national agencies have been influenced by, and connected to, the EU policy processes in the area (*Ibid.*:8).

The Commission has promoted the network configuration in the area of higher education in order to improve EU governance, and to make it more efficient. In a 2001 White Paper on European Governance, the Commission presented the idea of restructuring the modes of governance in the EU (European Commission, 2001). As opposed to a traditional ‘top-down’ steering approach, or a market-based steering, the Commission promoted governance through a “virtuous circle, based on feedback, networks and involvement from policy creation to implementation at all levels” (*Ibid.*:11). This aim was to ensure that necessary information was adaptable to local needs and concerns. By establishing networking administrations in connection to the policy shaping, and the implementation processes, thus, the Commission anticipated the development of more efficient governance. Crucially, the objective was to establish a new foundation for integration in the EU.

These network administrative structures have established a platform to spread awareness of the policy processes in the Union. The Commission has accordingly argued that the national agencies “can play a role in benchmarking by providing better and independent information” (Schout and Jordan, 2005:205). In networks, the agencies have shared information and national experiences of ‘good practises’. This has been vital for developing new EU initiatives in the area of education. This assumption has been related to the networks’ “power of definition” (Gornitzka and Olsen, 2006:13). Through regular analyses, reports and argumentations produced by the networks in the area of higher education, the actors have agreed on common definitions of what higher education is, and what purpose it has within the

society. Eventually, these definitions may become acknowledged as common European cultural ideas by inclusion in new policy initiatives, projects and strategies in the EU. Hence, the networks may be influential on EU level due to their ‘power of definition’ and its effect on the developments on EU level. As will be demonstrated in chapter 3, the European idea of lifelong learning, the emphasis on educational quality, and importance of higher education in relation to the development of international competitiveness, have also been constituent of Norwegian educational reforms and reorganisations of the policy sector.

However, despite the Commission’s ambitions of more efficient and effective governance through networks, these structures have been criticised for creating too much bureaucracy and inefficiency in the policy processes (Peters and Pierre, 2009, Schout and Jordan, 2005). Due to increased public participation, and greater flexibility for implementation of policies on national level, the efficiency of the network administration has been dependent on regularity and control. Based on this observation, the EU has been criticised for relying too much on networks as self-organising (Schout and Jordan, 2005). The assumption in the EU has been that resource dependence and shared values within the networks facilitate policy coherence and coordination. However, in sensitive policy areas, networks may acquire more regulation (*Ibid.*:210).

2.7 A network administration of EU higher education

Whereas the EU cooperation in the area of education has become more complex and comprehensive, the OMC and governance through networks have had important impact on the policy development in the EU. In particular, based on the innovative initiatives of the Lisbon Strategy, it has been safe to say that a common EU education policy has emerged (Karlsen, 2006:219). Moreover, the last decades’ development has established an economically and functionally oriented higher education policy in the EU (Gornitzka, 2007, Walkenhorst, 2008). Both in national and EU policies, a large amount of resources have been spent on higher education. The public interest in the area has increased, and higher education has been closely linked to socio-economic and technical developments of the society (Gornitzka et al., 2003). The Commission has aimed to improve EU governance by promoting administration in networks. The main goal has been to achieve increased public participation, to upgrade EU policy-making, and to allow greater flexibility for implementation at national level (Schout and Jordan, 2005). Although this arrangement has been subject to concerns about the

efficiency, quality and effectiveness, administrative networks has been a vital element in the development of a closer EU cooperation in the area of education. Moreover, it is in the environment of a developing network administration on EU level, that the Norwegian affiliation to the European cooperation has increased.

3.0 Administrative coordination between Norway and the EU

In response to closer European cooperation in the area of higher education, Norway has aimed to take part in this development by strengthening its cooperation with the EU (MER, 2011a:2). The Norwegian active policy towards Europe has led Norwegian governments to opt for as much affiliation with European integration processes as possible (Eriksen, 2008). The MER has also emphasised EU cooperation as the most important framework to enhance the quality, and secure renewal and relevance, of Norwegian higher education (MER, 2011a). The relationship between Norway and the EU is mainly regulated within the framework of the Agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA), in which Norway has no formal access to the policy-making in the Council or the European Parliament (EP). In contrast, the Agreement has established the Commission as the main reference point for Norwegian actors. Based on this observation, this chapter explores how SIU has been interwoven in processes of European integration, and in the emerging administrative networks in the Commission. Delegation of administrative and regulative authority to national agencies in Norway has coincided with the development of network administrations on EU level. As a consequence of the Commission's request for a more efficient administration of the EU education programmes, thus, SIU and its sister-agencies have been connected to each other and to the Commission in various network configurations within the EU framework.

3.1 Internationalisation of Norwegian education

The period after the Second World War up to the 1970s has been named the “golden age” of the Nordic education model (Telhaug et al., 2006:246-256). Based on common social democratic values, the Nordic Council promoted closer cooperation between the Nordic states in the area of education. This cooperation has been important for the development of Norwegian education policy. The Norwegian Government has had a crucial role within the Nordic education model. It has been responsible for the professional input, and its objective has been that the institutions should transfer national culture and values through education to the students (Volckmar, 2011). However, the Nordic model for education has gradually been affected by Norway's participation in cooperation outside the Nordic region. In relation to the area of higher education, it has committed itself to cooperation in international organisations like the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United

Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the EU, and the Council of Europe.

An increased international orientation has affected the Norwegian administration of the area of higher education. In Norway, the higher education institutions have traditionally been part of the public service. However, a 1997 review of the educational reforms in Norway since 1945 demonstrated an ideological shift in Norwegian higher education. The Government's responsibility for professional input had been altered, and it had become more concerned with establishing educational targets and measuring output (Telhaug, 1997). Moreover, through decentralisation, merging and large-scale management of institutions, the Government aimed to enable a more efficient delivery of higher education. In addition, by assigning more responsibility for the content of teaching to the institutions themselves, the goal was to increase the educational quality. This development led to increased institutional autonomy.

To achieve national objectives in the area of higher education, however, the Norwegian Government has established a common law for the institutions, in which it has emphasised the need for higher education and research to be competitive on a high international level (Universitets- og høyskoleloven, 2005).¹⁹ As a consequence of an emerging European and international cooperation in the field of education, increased internationalisation of Norwegian higher education has been established as a main policy objective (St.meld. nr. 14 (2008-2009)). The MER has also emphasised the importance of internationalisation as a means towards enhancing quality and relevance in Norwegian higher education (MER, 2011a).

The EU education programmes have been vital instruments to enhance internationalisation. These have been designed to promote mobility, international understanding and cooperation in education. Hence, to reach national political objectives, cooperation with the EU has been essential for Norway. As a result, a European dimension has emerged in Norwegian education, which has been influential in national policy-making and legislative amendments (MER, 2011b). Although Norway is not an EU-member, the Ministry has characterised the EU as Norway's most important partner within the area of education and research. The European cooperation in the area of higher education has gradually expanded, and the EEA-agreement has "connected Norway to an accelerating

¹⁹ This statute was lastly amended in 2010.

cooperation in research and education under the auspices of the EU” (Chou and Gornitzka, 2011:5).²⁰

3.2 The EEA-agreement: A stronger commitment to Europe

The EEA-agreement entered into force on 1 January 1994, and it has established a structured partnership between the EU and the European Free Trade Area (EFTA), including Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein.²¹ After the second rejection of EU-membership by the public referendum in 1994, the EEA-agreement has been the most comprehensive framework that has regulated the relationship between Norway and the EU (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2011). It has incorporated the EFTA-states into the Internal Market, and made them subject to the same rules and regulations as the EU Member States (Norwegian Government, 2011). Already in 1989, former Commission President Jacques Delors emphasised the need to establish common decision-making and administrative institutions between the EU and EFTA. Based on this, the aim of the Agreement was to “make activities more effective and to highlight the political dimension of cooperation in economic, social, financial and cultural spheres” (Delors, 1989).

In the EEA-agreement, education policies were mostly treated as segments of the EU’s social policy, labour market policy, policies reforming the public sector, and regional policies (Karlsen, 1994:15, Chou and Gornitzka, 2011:47). However, Protocol 31 of the Agreement has encouraged increased cooperation in the area by the means of the Union’s education programmes. Norway has eagerly complied with Protocol 31’s request, and joined the Socrates Programme in 1995. This was based on the argument that closer cooperation with the EU was essential to enhance internationalisation in Norwegian higher education (Chou and Gornitzka, 2011). Norway was already familiar with the EU education programmes. Through bilateral agreements, Norway had participated in the COMETT Programme for technological education since 1990. During the negotiations of the EEA-agreement, Norway had also joined the Erasmus Programme for cooperation in higher education (Karlsen, 1994). Thus, based on previous experiences, Norway was interested in further commitments.

²⁰ My translation.

²¹ At the time the EEA-agreement was negotiated, the EFTA consisted of Austria, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Finland, Iceland and Liechtenstein. However, in 1995 Sweden, Finland and Austria joined the EU and ceased to be EFTA-members. The EEA-agreement was rejected in the Swiss referendum, and Switzerland’s relationship to the EU is rather regulated by bilateral agreements (EFTA, 2012a).

In a Royal Proposition to the Norwegian Parliament before the entering into force of the Agreement, the Government argued for a closer cooperation in the area of higher education. It was underlined that a closer European cooperation in the area of higher education would increase the number of student-exchanges, improve the quality of Norwegian education, and arrange for promotion of Norwegian education abroad (St.prp. nr.100 (1991-1992)). Although intensified programme participation would cause increased national expenses, the Government emphasised the long-term benefits for Norwegian trade and industries (*Ibid.*). Moreover, as Article 79 of the Agreement established that there was a need for dialogue and exchange of information across borders to make cooperation more efficient, new channels for interaction and contribution within the EU framework were established for the states that participated in EU education programmes. Similar to the objectives of an active Norwegian policy towards the EU, the Government has illustrated this as an opportunity to promote Norwegian policies and practises in Europe (St.prp.nr.100 (1991-1992)). In the Proposition, the Government also ensured the Norwegian Parliament that the Union's governing mechanisms within the area of education were weak, and that the EU could not interfere in the national traditional policies (Karlsen, 1994:148).

As chapter 2 demonstrated, however, EU cooperation in the area of higher education has expanded. This development has affected the Norwegian higher education system, which has experienced a comprehensive modernisation process. The 2003 Quality Reform (Kvalitetsreformen) has established internationalisation as a prerequisite for quality enhancement, renewal and innovation in Norwegian higher education (St.meld. nr. 27 (2000-2001)). In this regard, the Bologna objectives have been particularly influential, and Norway quickly responded to the request for a comparable degree system of a bachelor, master and doctorate degrees. Moreover, in line with the objectives of the Lisbon Strategy, the Government has aimed to improve the quality of Norwegian education and sciences, increase the intensity of the courses, and increase the internationalisation of the national education (MER, 2012). Norway has followed the developments in the EU closely, and lifelong learning and internationalisation has been promoted on all levels of education (Norwegian Government, 2005-2009).

Cooperation with the EU has also affected the Norwegian organisation of the area of higher education. It has established multilevel connections between the EU and actors on national and sub-national level. Through participation in the education programmes, the individual universities and university colleges have been directly linked to the European

administrative infrastructure in this sector. As a result of this fragmented approach, the Commission has requested the establishment of national agency with the responsibility to coordinate the nations' programme participation. Hence, the appointment of SIU as a national agency in 2004 has been connected to "an increasing adjustment and standardisation of the educational system towards international trends" (Karlsen, 2006:27).²² This development has also corresponded to national political objectives. First of all, the aim has been to increase the Norwegian participation in EU education programmes, and to enable a coordinated national approach for increasing internationalisation and quality. Second, the delegation of national authority to SIU has correlated with a more comprehensive process of 'agencification' on national level with the objective of regulating an increasingly market-oriented public sector.

3.3 Agencies in the Norwegian public administration

In Norway, the tradition of delegating authority to agencies outside the respective ministries can be traced back to the 1850s (Lægreid et al., 2005). However, the agencies' form and function within the public service have differed, and their organisation has been subject to various reforms. As a global phenomenon, the idea of New Public Management (NPM) has been particularly influential since the 1980s. NPM-reforms have initiated decentralisation of national authority by establishing a more market-oriented public sector (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004:16). The core idea behind NPM reforms has been the separation of administrative and policy-making responsibilities within the public administration. As a consequence, the national Governments have delegated policy-making and administrative powers to individual technocratic bodies, which has led to more indirect governance. Through privatisation, liberalisation and deregulation, the number of autonomous organisations in the market, the civil society and the public sector has increased. This has produced a need for re-regulation and external control.

Christensen and Lægreid (2005:4) have argued that "agencification and regulation goes in tandem". There has been a close link between devolution and re-regulation, and "the political executives and ministries both let go and tighten the reins at the same time" (*Ibid.*). In order to manage the increasing number of autonomous organisation in the civil service, the Norwegian Government has established agencies to regulate and coordinate these

²² My translation.

organisations' activities. Hence, as a result of NPM-reforms, the 'Regulatory State' has emerged (Christensen et al., 2008). This type of public management has differed from internal political forms of steering, and has been based on formal and objective forms of external control. Within the regulatory state, public management has traditionally been complex, and central agencies have been established as vehicles for performing various regulative functions in the state system. Notably, Pollitt et al. (2001) has used the phrase 'global agency fever' to indicate the popularity and global superiority of this public management form.

The processes surrounding this 'agency fever', however, have differed fundamentally both within and among states. For the purpose of characterising national agencies within the public service, scholars have seemed to agree on some common constituent features (Pollitt and Talbot, 2004, Pollitt et al., 2001, Lægreid et al., 2005, Christensen and Lægreid, 2005). National agencies have mainly been staffed by public servants, and have been assigned public tasks within the state bureaucracy. They have operated on an arm's length from the respective ministries, and have thus had some autonomy within their spheres of responsibility. However, their activities have still been subject to the respective ministries. They have been regulated by national mandates, and their finances have been handled by the state budget. Finally, the agencies have normally been subject to national administrative law procedures.

The agency's public tasks have largely linked to seven main types of functions within the public sector (Bouckaert and Peters, 2004:38-43). Most importantly, the major activities of national agencies have been to implement public policies, either as a direct service delivery or through the transfer of funds. Second, agencies have usually had regulative tasks within the economy and society, but also within the public sector through monitoring and control of services such as education (*Ibid.*:40). A third purpose of national agencies has been to provide advice to the Governments, which consequently has made them assistants in the national policy-making. Forth, agencies have been involved in the collection and dissemination of information, and, fifth, had the responsibility to provide scientific research. There have also been agencies with quasi-judicial functions. And finally, some national agencies have been established to provide representational opportunities for segments of the civil society.

3.4 The Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education (SIU)²³

SIU's role and functions within the Norwegian public service have largely complied with the types of functions mentioned above. It has been established on an arm's length from the Ministry, both in terms of authority and geographical location.²⁴ However, the MER has retained power by determining SIU's sphere of responsibility in its mandate, and the agency's activities have been closely linked to national political objectives (MER, 2011c). In addition, the MER proclaimed the right to elect 5 of 7 members and deputy members of SIU's board. It has the right to nominate the chairman, and important board decisions have been dependent on the MER's approval (MER, 2011c).

The agency was originally affiliated to the Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions (UHR), and operated on institutional level.²⁵ However, its reorganisation as national administrative authority was linked to the need for a centralised coordination of the institutions' activities within the various education programmes Norway participated in. The aim was to enhance the efficiency of the individual institutions programme management, and to establish a fair and equitable participation based on common standards (Vabø et al., 2010). To perform these tasks, "SIU provided the necessary expertise and know-how" from institutional level (Ibid.:19-20).

The mandate granted to SIU was ambitious. The agency was assigned to promote internationalisation, intercultural dialogue, developing cooperation and mobility (MER, 2011c). More precisely, its activities have been related to the provision of development aid, cultural promotion, increased quality in higher education, and increased inward and outward mobility. In addition, SIU has functioned as a competence centre and strategic actor on local, national and supranational level, adding another layer to the agency's tasks. The mandate has reflected an ambitious and vital role for the agency within the Norwegian policies for higher education, and it has been linked to the Norwegian Government's need to safeguard that the institutions "give students research-based teaching of the highest quality relevant and adapted to a modern society of knowledge" (Norwegian Government, 2009-2013:53-54). Increased internationalisation has been established as a means to enhance educational quality. SIU has

²³ SIU's original name was the Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education. However, as the agency's portfolio expanded and eventually included the responsibility for programmes in all levels of education, a statute of 2011 altered the agency's name. Notably, despite new responsibilities, higher education remained the agency's main priority area (MER, 2011b).

²⁴ Whereas the MER is located in the capitol of Norway (Oslo), SIU is located in Bergen.

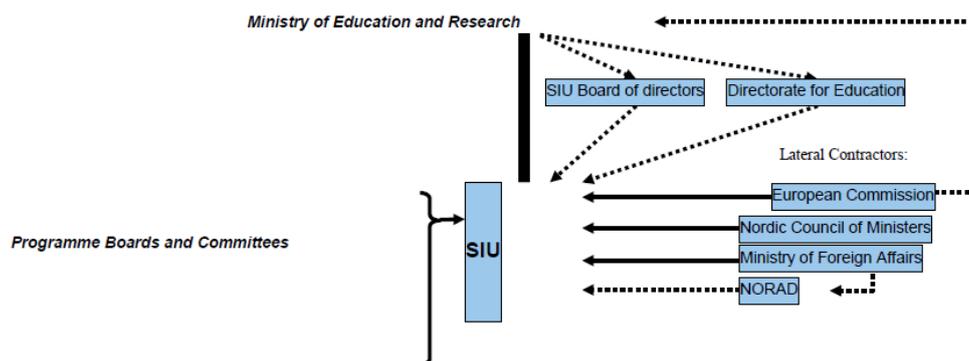
²⁵ Universitets- og Høgskolerådet (UHR).

also been a key player in the internationalisation of Norwegian higher education and in the establishment of international offices within the individual institutions (Michelsen and Aamodt, 2007:55).

The education programmes that SIU manages have been of various sizes and geographical focus. However, the most frequent type has been the programmes for higher education (Vabø et al., 2010). In relation to the programmes, SIU has dealt with transfers of funds and coordination of the institutions strategies for internationalisation. It has also had the responsibility for marketing Norway as a destination for studies abroad. In order to attract foreign students, SIU has created and administered the web portal “Study in Norway”.²⁶ Additionally, the agency has collected and distributed information, provided advisory services, produced reports, and other services to the MER and the institutions.

Due to its role as national authority for the education programmes, SIU has been subject to several ‘masters’. It has administered projects commissioned by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (UD), the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad), the Nordic Council of Ministers, the EU Commission, and the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (SIU, 2011).

Figure 1: *SIU: An agency with many masters (Vabø et al., 2010:23).*



Amongst these relationships, however, the EU cooperation has been most comprehensive, and it has affected all levels of Norwegian education (MER, 2011a).²⁷ SIU has annually received around 100 million kroner to be distributed to the institutions that participate in the EU

²⁶ www.studyinnorway.no

²⁷ Cf. the discussion in chapter 2 on the objectives of the LLP.

education programmes (Interview 3). This responsibility has incorporated the agency in the network administration on EU level. Within these structures, SIU has been connected to the Commission, DG EAC, and to the sub-committees for each sector programme. SIU has also been connected to the EACEA, but mostly in relation to the globally oriented Erasmus Mundus Programme (Interview 3). Within the Commission, however, SIU has participated in various meetings, including committee meetings for the sector programmes, thematic conferences, and meeting between the Directors of the other national agencies (Interview 3). Additionally, SIU has been linked to the Commission due to its administrative responsibility for the national experts employed in the DG EAC (Difi, 2012:19). Following from the EU established administrative system, SIU has the official responsibility for the national experts' remunerations on national level.

In the Academic Cooperation Association (ACA), SIU has had regular contact with national agencies from other European states. ACA is a federation of national organisations from Europe and other areas of the world that has encouraged internationalisation of higher education on European level. It is a platform for cooperation, and an expert centre that has produced various studies and evaluations (ACA, 2011). SIU has been active in this network, and during the period 2004-2009, the former SIU director was actually vice-president of the ACA's board (Interview 3). In the European project, Indicators for Mapping and Profiling Internationalisation (IMPI), SIU has participated in an EU-financed project with the aim to increase transparency between higher education institutions. In that regard, the actors in the IMPI-network have established indicators to measure the institutions' performance in terms of internationalisation (IMPI, 2011). This project has offered the opportunity to compare practises and experiences. SIU has also been in charge of the European students and job-seekers' 'Europass'. This arrangement has made the agency subject to the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), the Europass central administration on EU level (SIU, 2012a).²⁸

The many links connecting national agencies to EU administrative networks have introduced a situation where the agencies have served two masters simultaneously. This has

²⁸ Europass is an EU-initiated tool for students and job-seekers when they travel around Europe. It consists of five documents recognizing individuals' educational and vocational background, and other skills and qualifications from previous experiences. The five documents constitute the Europass Curriculum Vitae, the Europass language Passport, the Europass Mobility Document, the Europass Certificate Supplement and the Europass Diploma Supplement, all to be recognised and acknowledged in the Member States (Europass, 2012).

indicated a possible ‘double-hatted’ behaviour, where the agencies have had to balance their responsiveness to the national ministry against their professional network connections within the EU framework. Due to the agencies individual autonomy from the respective ministries, they may be particularly exposed to external pressure and influence from the EU (Trondal, 2005, Egeberg et al., 2009). Development of close ties between SIU and the actors in EU level networks may thus have an effect on the agency’s activities and its adherence to national political objectives. Within the EU framework, the agency has contributed to the EU strategy of developing a “smart, sustainable and inclusive growth” (European Commission, 2010). This has established a close relationship between SIU and the EU, where the Commission has regulated the agency’s room of manoeuvre in the programmes. However, the agency has not had a regulatory role, either on national, or within the European networks. SIU’s activities in European networks have largely centred on handling information, and as such it does “not represent any overt challenge to the nation-state’s legal or funding prerogative in higher education in Europe” (Gornitzka, 2009:31).

3.5 An active Norwegian policy towards Europe

The appointment of SIU as national agency for the education programmes can be connected to the Norwegian active policy towards Europe. Within the so called Soria Moria II-declaration, which is the Government’s political platform for the 2009-2013 period, the policies towards the EU were established as a main priority in Norwegian policies (Norwegian Government, 2009-2013).²⁹ The Government has drawn up an active and offensive policy towards the EU. It has aimed to pursue a coherent Norwegian contribution to the cooperation, and to promote and protect Norwegian interests in areas of importance. In the area of higher education, the Soria Moria II-declaration emphasises that “research and education are pre-conditions for value-creation and economic growth in a knowledge-based economy where knowledge and technology are our greatest competitive advantages” (Norwegian Government, 2009-2013). In relation to the EU, SIU has been a key player in enabling increased internationalisation for increased education quality.

The aspiration of an active policy towards Europe first emerged in relation to the Norwegian rejection of EU membership in the 1972 referendum (Frydenlund, 1982:77-80). It

²⁹ The Government’s inaugural address was based on a political platform for the period 2005 - 2009 that was negotiated at the Soria Moria Hotel in Oslo. This platform was further altered when the Government renewed its term of office and launched the second Soria Moria-declaration (Norwegian Government, 2009-2013).

indicated a decline of Norwegian cooperation with the European states, and the Government aimed to prevent the referendum from obstructing Norway's relationship with the rest of Europe. The fear was that the European states would interpret the referendum as a general Norwegian rejection of cooperation in Europe. Therefore, the Government reassured the Norwegian commitments to Europe by proclaiming that Norway would pursue an active policy towards Europe (Frydenlund, 1982). This policy guideline has been a core force behind Norwegian cooperation with the EU until the present (ONR 2012:2).

The concept of an active policy towards Europe has been applied both as a political objective and as an analytical category to describe the full implication of Norwegian cooperation with European organisations, states and actors. However, the concept has been most associated with the relationship between Norway and the EU. It has been related to the ways in which Norway has established policy objectives, allocated resources, and developed systems to enable Norwegian actors to better utilise the range of possibilities that have been available for participation and contribution (ONR 2012:2:165). Overall, the active policy towards Europe has been dependent on the available formal and informal channels for interaction between Norway and the EU. These channels have mainly been regulated within the framework of the EEA- and the Schengen agreements.³⁰ Since Norway is not an EU-member, it has not had the right to be represented or to vote in the policy-making in the Council and the European Parliament. Consequently, Norwegian actors in Brussels have not aimed to affect these processes by launching new ideas or initiatives (*Ibid.*:164). The active policy towards Europe has rather been a reactive line of policy which has encouraged Norwegian actors to influence in policies of particular importance, and to prevent conflict between Norway and the EU.

Due to these restraints on Norway's room for manoeuvre in relation to the EU, the accomplishments of the active policy towards Europe have been connected to the Norwegian utilisation of available possibilities for action. This has further been determined by Norwegian actors' capabilities and determination to pursue its interest of contributing and influencing within the EU policy processes (*Ibid.*:164-166). The EU has actually encouraged Norway to engage actively in the European policy processes, despite its associated status in the EU. In a 2010 Council resolution, Norway was encouraged to use existing structures to strengthen its

³⁰ Founded on the the Schengen Agreement from 1985, the Schengen Area represents a territory without internal border , where the free movement of persons are guarantees, and where common rules and procedures regulates the visas, asylum request and border controls (The Official Website of the European Union, 2009).

dialogue with the EU (Council of the European Union, 2010). Norway's association to the EU was further described as a "privileged partnership" (*Ibid.*:5). This description has been based on how the cooperation between the EU and Norway has proceeded; mostly without any significant obstacles. In addition, Norwegian competences and resources have also been of value to the EU (ONR 2012:2).

There have been various channels available for Norwegian participation and contribution in the EU integration processes, both formal and informal, within the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament. In relation to these, the Norwegian active policy towards Europe has largely been conducted on the basis of two main objectives (ONR 2012:2:165). First, the objective of promoting Norwegian interests has been a driving force behind Norwegian activities in Brussels. Norway's close relationship with the Nordic Member States has been important in that regard (ONR 2012:2:168, Interview 2). Due to their membership in the Union, it has been in the Norwegian interest to cooperate on common objectives with the Nordic Member States in order to strengthen Norway's possibilities to influence. The second main objective has been to access and process the available information concerning the policy processes in the EU. To be informed about developments in Brussels on an early stage has been essential for Norway in order to prevent conflict with the EU, to prevent exhaustive transaction costs when implementing new policies, and to take advantage of the information in national policy development.

However, Norwegian influence and contribution has mainly been effective in the 'decision-shaping' processes, meaning the early phases in which a new policy is initiated and prepared. In addition, Norwegian influence has been significant in the implementation phases, when EU policies are translated and adjusted to the Norwegian political system (*Ibid.*). Despite Norway's "privileged relationship" with the EU, its access to the policy processes has been restrained by its status as an associated state. There are currently 27 Member States in the EU. This has affected the growing number of issues on the EU agenda, and it has been challenging for associated states to gain attention within the myriad of connections between actors on various levels of governance. Therefore, the Norwegian active policy towards the EU has been most effective in areas where Norwegian and EU interests have complied, and when Norway can provide experience, competence or resources to the cooperation (NOU 2012:2:165).

Based on this observation, cooperation in the area of higher education has better enabled Norwegian actors to exert an active policy towards Europe. As will be demonstrated in chapter 4, Norwegian interests have largely coincided with the EU's main objectives for the European cooperation in the field of higher education. The MER has also emphasised that Norway can contribute to the cooperation by promoting Norwegian strategies and presenting good examples from Norwegian practises (MER, 2011a). The Ministry has aimed for Norway to increasingly adjust to EU policy processes, and it has encourage participation in networks and processes related to the programmes in order to “contribute to the targets set out in the Lisbon-strategy” (MER, 2011b).

3.6 Closer administrative ties between Norway and the EU

Due to coinciding objectives in the area of higher education, it has been important for Norway to actively engage in cooperation with the EU. In accordance to the active policy towards Europe, the MER has emphasised that Norway should “take advantage of the available opportunities to secure influence in areas of importance” (MER, 2011a).³¹ Related to this objective, the Ministry has delegated administrative authority to SIU in order to strengthen the national administration of the cooperation with the EU. It has aimed to coordinate the universities and university colleges' participation in EU education programmes, and to increased internationalisation of Norwegian education. SIU's responsibilities on national level have connected the agency to the Commission network administration. Through interaction with the Commission, sister-agencies and other actors on EU level, SIU has been closely interwoven in EU policy processes. It has cooperated in networks, which have been established to strengthen the foundation for European integration. Due to modes of governance such as the OMC, actors have been motivated to share experiences and information within these networks as a part of the policy development in the EU. SIU's activities in the networks connected to the education programmes will be further elaborated on in the following chapter.

³¹ My translation.

4.0 Interaction in European networks

This chapter focuses on SIU's role in European networks. In connection to the administrative coordination between Norway and the EU in the area of higher education, the chapter explores SIU's exertion of the possibilities that are available for participation and contribution in EU policy processes. The MER has called for an active Norwegian policy towards Europe in the area of higher education, and it has encouraged Norwegian actors to secure national interests and to exert influence in areas of importance in cooperation with the EU. The MER has emphasised that the main political objectives of Norway has largely coincided with the priority areas in the EU. Compared to the European states, Norway has been in a leading position in some areas when it comes to reaching these objectives. Meanwhile, in other areas, Norway could benefit from better knowledge about the developments and ideas emanating from the European cooperation. The chapter examines how SIU has been a vehicle for marketing Norwegian practises, and for gathering information about the policy processes in the EU. The chapter argues that SIU has been a useful, though underdeveloped, instrument for reaching Norwegian policy objectives in the area of higher education.

4.1 An active higher education policy towards the EU

As chapter 2 demonstrated, education policy has become an integral part of the EU 2020 strategy for growth and jobs (European Commission, 2010). The main goal has been to increase the levels of employment, productivity, and social cohesion in Europe. These goals have been mutually reinforcing, and higher education has had a vital function within this strategy. The EU has set ambitious objectives in the E&T 2020 strategy, and each Member State has adapted their own national targets in accordance to these.³² Whereas the Member States have committed themselves to closer cooperation in the area, the EFTA/EEA-state Norway has followed the development closely. The EEA-agreement has encouraged Norway to participate in the accelerating cooperation in the EU, and the Commission has been the most important link for the Norwegian actors in the administrative networks in the EU (Chou and Gornitzka, 2011).

In a speech at the 2012 Internationalisation Conference for stakeholders in the sector, former cabinet Minister for higher education and research, Tora Aasland, has noted that the

³² Cf. discussion in chapter 2.

processes of modernisation of the Norwegian universities and university colleges had to be increasingly heedful of the international environment (Aasland, 2012). It was underlined that the institutions had to develop in order to meet the highest international standards. Due to the higher education institutions' vital role in the society, it has been important to modernise and develop the academic and disciplinary knowledge in order to strengthen the international competitiveness of Norwegian education (Universitets- og høyskoleloven, 2005). Similar to the objectives of the EU, it has been a national objective in Norway that the institutions offer quality education in order to meet national and global challenges of unemployment, economic decline, and poverty. In her speech, Aasland (2012) particularly mentioned internationalisation and mobility as important means to achieve this goal.

Since 1992, Norwegian institutions for higher education have participated in European mobility projects facilitated by the Erasmus Programme. In 2004, another layer was added to the collaboration, as the EU introduced the globally oriented Erasmus Mundus Programme. The Erasmus and Erasmus Mundus Programmes have offered scholarships for various international projects and exchanges. These have been the most extensive programmes in which Norwegian universities and university colleges have participated in. As was discussed in chapter 3, SIU has distributed Erasmus scholarships to the Norwegian institutions that are responsible for students and employees exchanges (SIU, 2011). The Erasmus Mundus Programme, however, has been administered centrally by the EU, and national applications have been submitted directly to the EACEA. SIU has nonetheless been the national coordinator for the programme, and has assisted the institutions by providing information, advice, and by helping them to prepare their applications.

By increasing mobility across the borders, the Erasmus Programme seeks to enhance quality and reinforce the European dimension in higher education. It aims to improve transparency and enable networking across national and institutional lines. The initiatives that have become most well known in Norway have been those that increase mobility among students, apprentices, teachers and other employees. Compared to other programmes, statistics have revealed that the Erasmus Programme is the most frequently used exchange programme by Norwegian institutions and students (SIU, 2012b). In the academic year of 2010/2011, 1530 Norwegian students studied abroad with an Erasmus scholarship. This represented a 13 per cent increase compared to the former academic year, and was a national peak for the participation in the Erasmus Programme. During the same academic year, 3877

incoming foreign students studied in Norway. That accounted for twice as many as the outgoing students (*Ibid.*:13).

The Erasmus Mundus Programme facilitates multinational and global cooperation. By enabling global cooperation on joint masters- and doctorate degrees, the programme aims to attract students coming from countries outside of Europe. It is a prestigious programme, and competition for the scholarships is strong. As a consequence, it has been easier to participate in Erasmus Mundus projects for the larger institutions with more resources (SIU, 2012b:8-9). Norway, being a small country in a European context, has nonetheless managed to be more active within the Erasmus Mundus Programme than its size would presume. Consequently, in the network administration connected to the Erasmus and Erasmus Mundus Programmes, Norwegian practises has on several occasions been highlighted as a good example of how also smaller countries can manage to engage actively in prestigious European projects (MER, 2011a:5).

Due to Norway's participation in these programmes, the MER, the agencies, various associations, and the universities and university colleges have all been linked to the Commission network administrations. Norwegian actors have been active participants in the EU cooperation in the area of higher education. In a comparison with the other Norwegian Ministries, a recent Official Norwegian Report (ONR) has found that it was the MER that attended most informal meetings in the Council in the period between 2007 and 2011 (ONR 2012:2:180). The MER has also participated in European networks, attended committee meetings and interacted with other Norwegian and European actors in Brussels. A coordinated European administration on EU level has also attracted a number of Norwegian civil servants that have been directly engaged in the policy processes in Brussels. In addition, recent figures from EFTA has demonstrated that most of the Norwegian national experts in Brussels, are currently employed in the DG EAC (EFTA, 2012c).³³

The active exertion of the Norwegian scope of action in relation to the EU, can be related to the Government's aim to "invest in Norway as a society of knowledge" (Norwegian Government, 2009-2013). As chapter 3 demonstrated, the importance of international cooperation to enhance the quality of Norwegian education has been evident in various situations. By the means of the Quality Reform, Norway has quickly adjusted to the

³³ In 2011 there were 9 Norwegian national experts in the Directorate for Education and Culture (DG EAC) (EFTA, 2012c).

objectives set out by the Bologna Declaration. In relation to the E&T 2020, Norway has even exceeded some of the common European objectives set out by the strategy. It has already accomplished and surpassed the EU objective that 40% of the 30-34 years olds should have completed a higher education (MER, 2011a). On the other side, Norway has also adopted the EU objective of reducing the number of early school leavers to 10%. The work towards reaching this objective is still progressing in Norway. Based on these acknowledgements, the MER has aimed to accentuate that the EU and Norway are important to one another, and that there have been benefits of a closer cooperation for both. This indication of a mutual dependence has been connected to the need for joint responses to global challenges, and it has been a driving force behind an 'active higher education policy' towards the EU.

The coordination of a common European administration on EU level has enabled SIU to participate in the Commission network administration. An evaluation report carried out by the Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research and Education (NIFU) has emphasised the benefits of SIU's participation in the Commission networks (Vabø et al., 2010). In particular, it has pointed to the importance of interaction with sister-agencies, due to the opportunities they provide for sharing national experiences and practises across borders. The knowledge SIU has appropriated from its participation in the various network configurations in the EU, has been a type of input that could potentially improve the national administration of the education programmes (*Ibid.*).

One objective for establishing a network administration on EU level has been to achieve increased public participation in the policy processes (Schout and Jordan, 2005). This has been linked to the assumption that increased public involvement could enable greater flexibility for policy development and implementation of policies at national level (*Ibid.*). By this arrangement, the EU has aimed to assure that necessary information has met local concerns. As a result, the aim has been to establish a stronger foundation for further integration in Europe (European Commission, 2001). As was elaborated on in the introduction, a policy network approach (PN) sees the administrative networks at EU level as arranged along sectoral lines. In the sectoral networks connected to the education programmes, SIU has acted individually from the MER. The agency has become interwoven in the multi-level EU integration processes, where it has dealt with specific tasks that have been related to its responsibilities on national level. Similar to the assumptions made by the PN approach, cooperation in the networks in which SIU participates in, has been founded on the actors' mutual dependence on one another for achieving common goals in the sector.

Based on this function, the PN approach has emphasised the network configuration as a source of policy stability (Blanco et al., 2011).

Based on the assumption that Norway exerts an active higher education policy towards the EU, the next two sections address the content and purpose of the various networks in which SIU participates. Arranged according to the two main goals of the active policy towards Europe, SIU's activities will first be analysed in regards to the degree they have affected the promotion of Norwegian interests. The second section will address the question of whether SIU's activities facilitate access, and process on adequate levels, of information from the EU policy processes.

4.2 Promotion and branding of Norwegian interests

To strengthen the European cooperation in the area of higher education, the EU has based the cooperation on the principles of the OMC (Gornitzka and Olsen, 2006:12-17). This has entailed a cooperation mainly based on “soft mechanism” for achieving policy coherence, such as benchmarking and monitoring reports.³⁴ In networks across sectors and levels of governance, the actors have been able to utter ideas and demonstrate practises through analyses and reports. In these documents, the actors have come to agreement on a common line of argumentations which has affected the ways in which the reports have been interpreted on EU and the national level. While the states have retained the organisational and financial powers with regards to the national systems of higher education, the influence from the networks has been described as “powers of definition” (*Ibid.*:13).

Through exertion of the “powers of definition”, the networks have had the opportunity to establish and promote a common perception of what higher education *is*, and what *purposes* it has within the society. Considering the ‘powers of definition’ in the EU, it has been observed that Norwegian influence has been “most successful when Norway and the EU have common interests, or [when Norway] can offer experiences, knowledge or resources” (*Ibid.*:165).³⁵ Cooperation between Norway and the EU in the area of higher education has largely been based on common interests. This may indicate that the area of higher education

³⁴ The concept of “soft mechanisms” or “soft laws” has implied a mechanism for coordinating national policies without establishing binding agreements. It has been a common mechanism in the EU, in areas where cooperation has been based on the OMC. The “soft mechanisms” has focused on benchmarking rather than policy enforcement (Junge, 2007:393).

³⁵ My translation.

has been a good environment for an active and affective Norwegian influence on the definitional powers of the network administration.

In relation to SIU's programme management, several channels for communication have emerged between SIU and the Commissions, and between SIU and other national agencies. Through frequent reports and regularly meetings, SIU has interacted with the Commission and DG EAC. In relation to the Erasmus and Erasmus Mundus Programmes, it has handed in annual work programmes where it has presented outlines of the Norwegian strategies and main priorities within the programmes. This has enabled SIU some room of manoeuvre to secure Norwegian interests in the programme management, and the agency has been able to demonstrate the national priorities within the programmes. Before handed to the Commission, the work programmes have been formally approved by the MER in order to secure their compliance with national priorities. Thereafter, the Commission has ensured the compliance with EU objectives, before the work programmes have been approved. At the end of each programme term, SIU has also reported back to the Commission about the progress and performance of national strategies within the programmes. During the interview, the SIU officials mentioned that the annual work programs and the progress reports were vital channels for exhibiting areas where Norwegian institutions or actors have demonstrated 'good practises' within the programmes (Interview 3).

In relation to the regular progress and performance reports which the Commission has requested, SIU take advantage of the opportunity to hand in comprehensive overviews and analyses of the broad variety of Norwegian activities and results. Within these reports, the SIU officials noted the agency has consistently focused on pointing out areas of Norwegian 'good practise' (Interview 3). This could be situations where new initiatives had resulted in an increase in the number of students' exchanges, or situations where Norwegian institutions had committed themselves to new partnerships. In the interviews it was still indicated that the Commission tended to overlook the examples of successful projects that SIU had presented in the reports (Interview 3). It was noted that the Commission's main focus was on the aspects of the programme management which had not functioned according to established goals. The agency officials also argued that unbalanced treatment of the agencies' reports had left little room for discussions on policy-level with the Commission (*Ibid.*). This last observation may imply that in written interaction with the Commission, SIU's scope for influence through the promotion and marketing of Norwegian interests can be limited.

Despite the less accommodating attitude from the Commission in written interaction with the agency, it was emphasised during the interview that the direct meetings between SIU and Commission officials have been more rewarding (Interview 3). The interview findings revealed that SIU has frequently met with Commission-officials on follow-up visits and inspections in Norway and in Brussels. In particular, it has been of importance that the Commission, every second year, has paid a ‘quality and impact monitoring visit’ to Norway for each sector programme. One of the SIU officials described these as the most “pleasant meetings” (*Ibid.*).³⁶ They allowed the agency to give the Commission representatives a comprehensive guided tour through the various Norwegian activities within the education programmes. And since the Commission representatives have usually stayed for a couple of days, SIU has had a good opportunity to demonstrate Norwegian practises and results from across the whole country. The interviewees explained that these meetings enabled “a rewarding dialogue” between SIU and the Commission about the effects of the cooperation (*Ibid.*).³⁷ The Commission was perceived as much more accommodating to SIU during these visits. The SIU officials exemplified this perception by pointed to one specific ‘quality and impact monitoring visit’, in which SIU had been able to demonstrate its practise of involving national stake holders in the programme administration. This was later recognised and awarded by the Commission as an example of ‘good practise’ (Interview 3). Based on their previous experiences, thus, the SIU officials mentioned this as a prime example of how SIU may be influential in the cooperation with the Commission.

Another example of Norwegian influence in the EU cooperation was when the agency set up the web portal, “Study in Norway”. This was a part of SIU’s project for branding and marketing Norway as destination for studies abroad. In this web portal, foreign students can browse through comprehensive information about how it is to study and live in Norway. It provides an easy guide to ‘life in Norway’, and includes links to the various higher education institutions across the whole country. As the interviews revealed, this initiative received special attention in the Commission (Interview 3). SIU was particularly credited for the web page’s layout, and the Commission even adopted its features when it established its own web page called “Study in Europe”.³⁸ This example comply with what both the national experts

³⁶ My translation.

³⁷ My translation.

³⁸ The SIU officials had also participated in the ”Study in Europe” project, but they found it challenging due to internal disagreements and scarce financial resources. As far as the SIU officials knew, this project had currently stagnated (Interview 3).

and the recent Official Norwegian Report on Norway's relationship to the EU emphasised: Informed and developed proposals, and good examples of national practise, have been appreciated in the EU system (ONR 2012:2:164-165).

In formal meetings with the Commission in Brussels, however, the agencies have not been equally able to contribute. The interviews with the SIU representatives revealed that this has most notably been the case for the agencies from associated states (Interview 3). For example, the Commission has often requested contribution from the national agencies during formal meetings, to add to its presentations. However, these requests have consistently been directed to the agencies from one of the Member States. While these agencies have been thus able to present their national practises for both Commission and national representatives on a regular basis, the agencies from associated states have mainly acted as observers in the informal meetings (*Ibid.*). The SIU officials had experienced that the agencies from the EEA/EFTA states had been treated as 'third countries' in the Commission meetings as opposed to the Member States (Interview 3).³⁹ In the interview, this impression was emphasised by an example: In formal Commission meetings, SIU representatives were normally placed at the end of the table together with the representatives from EFTA, Turkey and Croatia. The recent Official Norwegian Report (ONR 2012:2) confirmed this impression of Norway being an 'outsider' on some occasions. It was accentuated that without membership in the Union, the complex relationship between Norway and the EU made it more challenging for Norwegian actors to exert influence in the policy processes.

The interviews revealed that the Commission's 'Guide for National Agencies' was another possible challenge to SIU's opportunities to develop and promote national strategies within the programme management (Interview 3). This was a handbook constituent of a thoroughly regulation of the agencies' activities. By providing a common handbook for the national agencies, the Commission has requested a more streamlined programme management. The SIU officials noted that this handbook had established a relatively strict framework for regulating SIU's activities, thus also restraining its room for manoeuvre in the national programme administration. As was described by one of the interviewees, the only flexibility for SIU within this guide has been to move 10 per cent of one programme's budget to the other (Interview 3). Although the SIU officials found this flexibility as marginal, it had

³⁹ The EEA/EFTA nations are the three members of the European Free Trade Area (EFTA) which are also members of the EEA, namely, Island, Lichtenstein and Norway. One EFTA member, Switzerland, has not joined the EEA (EFTA, 2012b).

still enabled the agency to affect the distribution of resources within the programmes to projects and activities that were in accordance to national priorities (*Ibid.*).

As was shown in the introduction, several studies of national agencies had observed that within the network administration in the Commission, the agencies established particularly close ties with EU level agencies (Trondal, 2011, Egeberg, 2010). These agencies had been connected in networks outside the immediate reach of the Commission and the respective ministries on national level. Due to the frequent interaction across the levels of governance, thus, the national agencies had in some situations developed a ‘double-hatted’ behaviour. This entails a situation where the agencies’ activities had diverged from the national objectives and become more ‘European’, and this has raised some concerns about the developing network administration within the Commission framework. The various network configurations between national and EU level agencies could affect the implementation of EU policies on national level, due to a more ‘Europeanised’ attitude of the national agencies. However, the interview with the SIU officials revealed that the agency actually had less contact with the EACEA than directly with the Commission and DG EAC (Interview 3). SIU had mainly cooperated with the EACEA in relation to the EU’s global education programme, the Erasmus Mundus. In this cooperation, the agency has mainly been an assistant in the administration of this specific programme due to its responsibility for assisting the Universities that intended to apply for participation in an Erasmus Mundus project.

As opposed to the observations in previous research, thus, the interview data did not confirm the presumption that the agency had developed a ‘double-hatted’ behaviour as a result of close ties with EACEA within Commission network administration (*Ibid.*). This observation may be interpreted as a result of the ‘national sensitivity’ of higher education. Due to the sensitivity of the sector on the national level, the agencies have not been involved in any regulation of the implementation of EU policies (Gornitzka, 2009:31). Their activities in the European networks had mainly been centred on handling information, and “[t]he ‘sensitive climate’ of this sector had not been conducive to any agencification at the EU level” (*Ibid.*:30).

Although the interviews indicated that SIU’s interaction with the Commission and EACEA had been restrictive to influence from the agency, it was still found that these channels for interaction had enabled SIU to demonstrate Norwegian ‘good practises’ (Interview 3). As a result of the “soft mechanisms” for cooperation enabled by the OMC, SIU

has had the opportunity to present the Norwegian priorities and strategies through various channels for revision and feedback in relation to the programme administration on the national level. The most obvious channel for contribution has been the regular performance reports. Despite the SIU officials' disappointment about the Commission's treatment of content of these reports, they still emphasised that they had consistently aimed to utilise this channel to present Norwegian experiences (Interview 3). This behaviour was explained by the anticipation that good examples are appreciated by the Commission, and that SIU still saw the channel for contribution as an opportunity to share experiences and to be noticed in the EU system.

As opposed to the formal meetings, SIU has been able to participate more actively in the informal Commission meetings. In advance of the formal meetings, the Commission has usually initiated informal sessions in which it has encouraged the national agencies to display and share their best practises. The two interviewees from SIU agreed that these sessions were ideal settings for SIU to participate in, due to the fact that agencies from member and associated states were allowed to contribute on equal terms (Interview 3). However, the SIU officials confirmed that the agency had the potential to strengthen its scope of action in these sessions by a more active participation (*Ibid.*). This observation may imply that SIU needs to improve its determination to take on a more active role in the networks. During the interview, the same observation was found within the ACA- and IMPI-networks. Although the SIU officials highlighted the sessions in these networks as a 'window of opportunity' for SIU to contribute with professional advice and ideas, the agency had not taken full advantage of this opportunity (Interview 3). Hence, whereas the opportunities have been available, the observed inactiveness of SIU may indicate that the agency's room for influence and contribution have been too poorly utilised by the agency.

In networks of sister-agencies, on the contrary, SIU has been a more active contributor. In these networks there has been less hierarchy than in the formal Commission sessions. The agencies from associated states have had the same treatment as those from the Member States. Based on this, the SIU officials accentuated that the agency had established a more influential position and a stronger voice within these networks (Interview 3). In line with the findings of the Official Norwegian Report (2012:2), it was also highlighted during the interviews that there existed a close relationship between the Nordic colleagues. Cooperating with Nordic agencies, SIU has had better chances for influence and for sharing and profiling the Norwegian practises (*Ibid.*). The traditional 'Nordic model' for education

based on social democratic values, has been admired within Europe, and has thus had the potential to be a source of inspiration to other states (Telhaug et al., 2006:278-279). Notably, one of the national experts confirmed during the interview that the ‘Nordic Model’ still had a special position in the EU (Interview 2). Without overestimating the importance of the Nordic ties, however, the SIU officials also acknowledged the benefits from cooperating closely with the Nordic neighbours that were members of the EU (Interview 3).⁴⁰ This was evident when the Commission appointed Denmark, a Member State, to host the next agency meeting in 2012. In preparation for this session, the Danish agency exclusively asked for the contribution and assistance from the Nordic agencies, including SIU. Hence, the sister-agency network has turned out to be an ideal arena for SIU to share and promote national practises (Interview 3).

4.3 Accessing and processing information

Despite a large number of active Norwegian officials in Brussels, the diplomats and civil servants have spent most of their time in Brussels on gathering information about the ongoing processes in the EU (ONR 2012:2:166). Norwegian influence has mainly been conducted by passing the EU policies through national filters, and thus adjusting them to national policies and priorities. Being informed about the policy processes in Brussels has therefore been important. As was shown in chapter 3, gaining insight into the dynamics of EU cooperation could reduce the costs of adjusting to new situations as a result of the policy developments. It could also enable the involved parties to better utilise the opportunities within new EU resolutions.

Based on the mechanism of the OMC, cooperation in the area of higher education has intensified. It has broadened the impact areas of the programmes, and established an incentive driven cooperation based on benchmarking and peer reviews. In this context, SIU has been interwoven in the processes of sharing experiences in networks. This has created an incentive-based cooperation, where the member and associated states have motivated to aim for policy coherence through processes of “naming and shaming” (Schout and Jordan, 2005:205). The objectives behind this practise have been to establish greater transparency and an increased public participation. This practise of involving the national agencies in the

⁴⁰ Of the Nordic states, Denmark, Sweden and Finland are EU members, whereas Norway is an associated state and Island has applied for membership.

network administration has been enforced by the Commission due to the agencies' ability to provide better and independent information about the developments in the area of education (*Ibid.*).

In various network configurations, SIU has had access to information about EU policy processes and about experiences from other states. In formal Commission meetings, the Commission has distributed information about the programme developments and propounded new initiatives or priority areas within the programmes. In informal meetings, the SIU officials noted, there has been distributed more information about the different national practises and experiences. There has also been a large number of expert and working groups connected to the education programmes, in which SIU has participated. Actually, DG EAC has been ranked as number three in the EU in regards to the number of underlying groups which it administers (Gornitzka and Olsen, 2006:7). Due to the large number of actors involved in networks connected to the programme administration, "the education programmes have also been a platform for further development of policies" in the EU (*Ibid.*).⁴¹

As was mentioned introductory, within the ACA- and IMPI-networks, SIU has been encouraged to exchange ideas and experiences in order to create more transparency and compatibility between the states' systems for higher education. The ACA-network is mainly a federation of European organisations which fund and encourage internationalisation of higher education (ACA, 2011). It aims to act as an advocate for internationalisation world-wide, and its activities have included mostly analyses and publications, research and evaluations, as well as consultancy. The IMPI-network was initiated by the ACA, and has been co-funded by the Commission. It has initiated the establishment of European-wide indicators for measuring the internationalisation processes in the European universities. SIU and the other five core partners in the IMPI-network, have constructed indicators for good performances in order to assist the institutions to conduct self-assessments and to improve their strategies for internationalisation. The aim has been to establish charts of options for comparison, and to assist the Universities in developing a profile for internationalisation (IMPI, 2011). This aim has been connected to the overarching objective of enhancing the global competitiveness of European higher education (*Ibid.*). In the ACA- and IMPI-network, SIU has accessed detailed information about the different national and institutional strategies for internationalisation. It has even taken part in the development of common European indicators and standards. Due to

⁴¹ My translation.

SIU's key role in the processes of internationalisation on the national level, this implies that the information that has been distributed in these networks have been directly transferable to SIU's administrative tasks in Norway.

Furthermore, the networks that have emerged in relation to the European administration of the Erasmus and Erasmus Mundus Programmes have been important arenas for SIU to link up with the sector. Within these networks, the agency has interacted with coordinators from the international offices at the higher education institutions in Norway and in Europe (Vabø et al., 2010:24). This contact has been essential for SIU, as it has aimed to retain a close relationship to the institutions. As was revealed in chapter 2, it has been vital for the agency to be informed about the interests and needs of the actors working or studying within this sector. During the interview, the SIU officials also expressed their objective to meet the needs from the institutions (Interview 3). They noted that SIU had benefited from close interaction with European universities and university colleges, as this had added to the agency's knowledge about practises and priorities in other European states. Due to its membership in the Erasmus Mundus network, SIU had also participated on education conventions in countries like Brazil and Russia (*Ibid.*). These conventions had been arenas where actors from around the whole have met to market and profile their national education systems and practises. This may enable SIU to acquire a more global perspective on the processes of mobility and student exchange.

Due to its role as national agency, SIU has also been established as a service centre for the Norwegian universities and university colleges. The agency has regularly arranged seminars for the sector to inform about possibilities and developments in the Erasmus and Erasmus Mundus Programmes. The interview revealed that SIU has tried to take advantage of these seminars to highlight the purpose of the education programmes in a European context (Interview 3). The agency has made efforts to inform the participating actors about the programmes' functions within the larger EU objectives in the economic and social spheres. The Erasmus Programme has been an instrument for the Member States to meet their obligations within the EU 2020-objectives delivering a smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth (European Commission, 2010). When presenting information about the programmes' connection to developments in the EU, it has been essential for SIU to relate this information to Norwegian priorities and needs. Due to Norway's associated status in the EU, and its limited scope of action in the policy-making processes in Brussels, the aim has been to focus the attention on how the main EU objectives have coincided with national priorities in the

sector (Interview 3). By presenting the information in such a manner, the agency has aimed to promote the benefits for engaging in international cooperation and to enhance internationalisation.

The sister-networks have been another channel for interaction across borders where SIU has had access to inside information about different national practises. As was mentioned above, the SIU officials emphasised that interaction with the sister-agencies was particularly rewarding (Interview 3). The evaluation of SIU established that these network has been essential to its work, since exchange of ideas and information between similar organisations in European networks can possibly strengthen the agency's legitimacy on the national level (Vabø et al., 2010:82). This assumption has been linked to the possibilities for SIU to learn from others' practices and experiences in networks of sister-agencies. Potentially, this may strengthen SIU's knowledge and capability to meet challenges and critical tasks on the national level. By sharing ideas and strategies with sister-agencies, SIU could develop and improve the Norwegian administration of the programmes. Based on these assumptions, the evaluation of SIU emphasised that "[s]uch connections could very well be further developed" (*Ibid.*). As was also evident in the interview, these networks were invaluable to SIU.

SIU's interaction with the national experts employed in DG EAC has possible been another channel for insight and participation in to the EU policy processes. In interaction with the national experts, SIU has been able to acquire detailed information about the policy processes and developments in the EU. A closer relationship to the national experts, may thus enable SIU a better access to 'the inside'. Although the relationship between SIU and the national experts has mostly regarded technical formalities, there have also been instances where they have exchanged professional information and advice. The interviewees pointed out that some of the national experts had been on leave from SIU during their period of work in the DG EAC. During their period of work in Brussels, these had usually sustained contact with their former colleagues in SIU on an informal basis (Interview 1). The interviews revealed that the national experts had contacted SIU when they had information about developments in Brussels that they found relevant for the agency's work. However, both the national experts and the SIU officials felt that there could be more frequent contact between them (Interview 1, Interview 2, Interview 3). They agreed that this would provide a good opportunity for SIU to acquire information about planned developments in the programmes, which was not necessarily shared in the agency's meeting with the Commission.

During the interviews, there were found several reasons why it would be advantageous for SIU to establish a closer link to the national experts in DG EAC. In the EU, the national experts are employed as independent actors that are not answerable to the national Governments. They are employed by the Commission to provide professional expertise and advice, and their activities in Brussels are not subject to any national guidelines or restraints. This allows the national experts to develop professional relationships with other actors in Brussels, and enables them to be directly involved in the developments of new Commission proposals. Despite their independence from national control, the national experts revealed that they have been allowed to report about developments in the EU to the MER on an informal basis (Interview 2, Interview 1). As one of the national experts emphasised, this possibility for informal communication across the levels of governance could be further utilised by SIU as well (Interview 2).

It was argued in the interviews that SIU should strengthen its ties to the national experts, as the agency would benefit from updates about the developments within the education programmes. By this arrangement, SIU would be better informed about the planned developments and initiatives within education programmes that was not available to in other networks. Since Norwegian actors have no formal access to the decision-making in the Council, the ONR 2012:2 established that it has been essential for Norwegian actors to be informed about developments in Brussels on an early stage. As was elaborated on in chapter 3, this would enable SIU an improved exertion of the room for manoeuvre available to it in relation to the EU (ONR 2012:2:164-165). Notably, this recommendation coincided with the findings in the evaluation report. The report emphasised that “having international contacts may also be a matter of legitimacy for SIU itself” (Vabø et al., 2010:82). In particular, the report argued that SIU could benefit from having contact with similar organisations where “[c]hallenges, critical tasks or issues, and ideas and experiences of ways of organising programmes may be shared” (*Ibid.*). Whereas it recommended SIU to develop this type of contact further, it focused particularly on the sister-agencies in that regard. However, it failed to mention the possible benefits from developing a closer professional relationship between SIU and the national experts. Yet, based on the observations above, the interviews indicated that improved communication between the MER, the national experts, and SIU could strengthen the Norwegian utilisation of the possibilities inherent in the area of higher education.

Whereas the relationship between SIU and the national experts was not thoroughly investigated in the evaluation report, the interviews indicated that the national experts possess strategic information that could be relevant for SIU in the administration of the education programmes (Interview 1, Interview 2). In particular, one national expert emphasised the link between policies and programme management, and recommended SIU to pay close attention to the policy developments in the EU in order to improve the programme administration on national level (Interview 2). This national expert was surprised that SIU had not requested any information about the processes connected to the development of the newest education programme in the EU, Erasmus for All (Interview 2).⁴² It was underlined the developments that was currently taking place in the EU education programmes would affect the agency's work and portfolio. Since one of the national experts had actually been closely involved in developing this new programme, it wished to encourage SIU be more pro-active and enquire more information. The Erasmus for All is a new EU programme for education, training, youth and sport, which was proposed by the European Commission on 23 November 2011 (European Commission, 2012a). In 2014, this programme will reorganise the programme administration on EU level, and replace the seven existing EU programmes with one. It will also increase the funds allocated to the development of knowledge and skills, and offer new loan guarantee-schemes for full-time Master's students in Europe. Since a reorganisation of the coordination and management of the education programmes on EU level necessarily would affect SIU's portfolio and strategic capacity, this national expert noted that it should be crucial for SIU to acquire information about these developments on an early stage. To be informed about the policy processes on an early stage could make it easier for SIU and Norwegian actors to benefit from the possibilities for project funding and scholarships within the new programme management.

In relation to the argumentation, the SIU officials admitted that agency had not thoroughly seen up to this channel for insight into the EU policy processes (Interview 3). Recalling the ONR's remark about the actors' need to strengthen their capabilities and determination for participation in EU policy processes, this indicates that SIU could need to improve its determination to take active part in the developments in Brussels. Notably, during the interview, the SIU officials even assumed a broader perspective on the importance of their relationship with the national experts. They did so by emphasising that it should be an

⁴² Erasmus for All is the new EU programme for education, training, youth and sport proposed by the European Commission on 23 November 2011 (European Commission, 2012a).

objective to give the national experts ‘meaningful’ jobs when they returned to Norway. For example, to improve the utilisation of the competences and experiences the national experts had assumed during their periods of work in DG EAC, the SIU officials suggested that they could be employed in related positions in SIU or the MER (*Ibid.*) . Hence, the interviewees seemed to agree that both SIU, the MER and the national experts could benefit from interchanging ideas and experiences with each other.

4.4 Effects of a network administration in the area of higher education

Clearly, since SIU was appointed as national authority for the EU education programmes, the agency has been interwoven in the European integration processes through various networks and channels for interaction within the Commission framework. In these networks, SIU has both been able to promote Norwegian practises and experiences, and to access and process information which has been useful for the internationalisation of Norwegian higher education. As has been found in this study, it has been essential to be able to locate and take advantage of the possibilities available for contribution and participation. Further, in accordance to the active policy towards Europe, the achievements of this political guideline has been dependant on the Norwegian actors’ capabilities and determination to engage in the EU integration processes (ONR 2012:2:164). Notably, SIU has had the capability to participate and contribute within the different networks that it has been connected to. However, the findings in the interviews have indicated that SIU’s determination to participate has not been equally apparent in every network in which it has engaged.

The question of SIU’s determination can be related to the ways in which the agency balances its responsibilities to the MER and to the Commission. SIU is a “two-headed” national agency in the sense that it simultaneously “has to respond to the policy ambitions of the European Commission and the central national authorities” (Vabø et al., 2010:22). It has operated under the auspices of the MER, at the same time been a professional partner to the Commission. It has participated in network-administrative Commission structures, where it has interacted with actors from different levels with various professional and technical backgrounds. This has resulted in a situation where SIU’s work plan has had its origin in national political objectives, while it at the same time has been established to support and develop EU priorities and initiatives within the education area (Gornitzka and Olsen, 2006).

This ‘double-hattedness’ may have an effect on SIU’s determination to exert an active Norwegian policy towards the EU. Egeberg (2006a:8-10) traced a rather consistent observation: When it comes to assisting the ministries in the Council and in comitology meetings, and in cases of transposing EU regulation into national legislation, national agencies have generally acted in line with the ministries’ instructions. When it comes to putting transposed legislation in to practise, however, the national agencies have worked more closely with the Commission, EU level agencies and sister-agencies within sectoral networks. As was elaborated on in the introduction and in chapter 3, the important point has been that the Norwegian actors that interact with other actors in Brussels have been more likely to adapt a ‘European attitude’ compared with other national officials within the same sector.

However, since the agencies in the area of higher education have mainly been concerned with handling information, they have not represented any overt challenge to the national prerogative in the sector (Gornitzka 2009). Without a regulative role, SIU has not been involved in any direct regulation of the national economy and society. On the other side, SIU has monitored and controlled the educational services provided for by the higher education institutions. Bouckaert and Peters (2004:40) describes this responsibility in terms of regulation. From their point of view, agencies such as SIU have regulative powers within the public services. In terms of regulation, thus, SIU has worked towards “intensified internationalisation for increased quality” in Norwegian education (Vabø et al., 2010:82). According to this perspective, the agency has regulated the educational institutions’ processes for internationalisation.⁴³ SIU’s regulative responsibilities have not, however, complied with Christensen and Læg Reid’s (2005:3-5) more narrow use of the term regulation. They describe regulation in terms of functions like rule-making, monitoring, scrutiny and the application of rewards and sanctions. Although SIU has operated on an arms’ length from the MER, it has not had the authority to exercise any of these types of regulation within the public service. The agency’s activities have rather complied with the MER’s strategies and priorities.

As was evident in the interviews, SIU has rather aspired to promote and achieve national political objectives. The SIU officials noted that agency needs the MER’s approval of its annual work programme within the Erasmus Programme before it can be handed to the Commission. The MER has also retained control by proclaiming its right to elect 5 of 7 members of SIU’s board (MER, 2011c). Most of all, SIU’s compliance with national political

⁴³ NOKUT may be an example of another regulatory agency within the area of education. Its functions are more directed at the regulation of the educational quality.

objectives was evident in the ways in which the agency developed its strategies and activities. These had largely been based on the objectives set out in the Government's report on internationalisation that was handed to the Norwegian Parliament for approval in 2008.⁴⁴ In the interview, the SIU officials mentioned that this document had been treated like 'the Bible', and it has consistently guided SIU's activities and priorities (Interview 3). These observations make it possible to conclude that SIU has been a player in the Norwegian active policy towards Europe. It has been evident that SIU has promoted Norwegian policies and priorities, and its network activities have added to the Norwegian utilisation of available channels for participation and contribution in EU policy processes.

A more constructive discussion about the effects of a network administration in the area of higher education might therefore be related to the ideational effects of SIU's activities within the EU framework. As has been evident both in official documents and in the interviews, cooperation in the area of higher education has been based on a belief in the need for joint European responses to meet common global challenges (Interview 2, Interview 3, MER, 2011a). The SIU officials also perceived the European networks as arenas to display and develop the Norwegian higher education system (Interview 3). These officials' experiences complied with the assumptions that were discussed introductory about cooperation in network. Within network configurations, the mutual dependence between the actors has established a good environment to share ideas and experiences across levels of governance (Kaiser, 2009). Based on the OMC, thoroughly processed ideas and good proposals have been in demand. This has introduced a situation where the actors that have provided the best proposals, have been most influential within the cooperation (Sabel and Zeitlin, 2010). This cognition indicates that if SIU markets and promotes the Norwegian framework as a good example, the Norwegian practises may set an example to be followed in the developments of new initiatives within the programmes.

Similar to this observation, the SIU officials pointed to several examples of situation where the agency had facilitated an active policy towards Europe. During the interviews, it was noted that SIU's interaction in networks with actors from the whole world, had added to the agency's experiences and knowledge about other states and institutions' practises and self-assessments (Interview 3). Due to SIU's responsiveness to the EU and the MER, the SIU officials had the right to participate in the administrative developments on both European and

⁴⁴ St.mld.nr. 14 (2008-2009).

national levels. By being interwoven in European integration processes, the agency has acquired knowledge that has been invaluable in regards to its responsibility for the programme administration,. It has also been important in relation to its overall achievements within both Norwegian and European policies for higher education.⁴⁵

However, as has been pointed to above, there have been several available channels for interaction and contribution that SIU has not made full use of. The question of SIU's determination can be raised in relation to the ACA- and IMPI-networks. Although the SIU officials noted that these network provided a 'window of opportunity' for the agency to contribute directly with professional advice, they also admitted that SIU had not thoroughly utilised this opportunity. The same inactiveness was found in the informal Commission meetings. Although the Commission had encouraged the national agencies to contribute in these meeting by opening for discussions about the various national practises and experiences, SIU had neither taken full advantage of this opportunity. This observation has complied with the findings in the report that evaluated SIU's activities since its appointment as a national agency. This report emphasised the need for SIU to make better use of its competences (Vabø et al., 2010).

Whereas SIU has had the potential to improve its use of some of the available channels for interaction with actors in Brussels, the agency has still been more active within other channels. In this regard, it was implied during the interviews that the ways in which the agency had actually facilitated Norwegian participation in the policy processes in the EU, had been poorly taken advantage of by the MER (Interview 3). Although SIU has produced several analyses and reports on behalf of the MER, the Ministry had mainly requested information and facts about the Norwegian programme participation. In relation to the EU, however, one of the SIU officials underlined that the MER could benefit from a more thorough and "hands-on" information from SIU (*Ibid.*). The SIU officials emphasised that SIU had attempted to take on a more active role as a competence centre in relation to the EU education programmes. For instance, SIU had asked the MER for the possibility to contribute with lectures during the regular conventions held by the Ministry for the various actors in the education sector. In these conventions, the topic was European education policies.⁴⁶ However, the fact that the MER had not yet answered to SIU's requests for the ability to contribute, may

⁴⁵ Note the objectives of increased mobility and internationalisation for increased quality in education.

⁴⁶ These meeting are initiated by the MER and are called "Forum for europeisk utdanningspolitikk".

suggest that SIU have the potential to exert an even more influential role on national level if it was enabled to do so.

The evaluation report also pointed to the somewhat diffuse mandate that regulated SIU's room for manoeuvre, which possibly hindered SIU to exert its full potential. It found SIU's mandate, strategies and goals "very ambitious and possibly conflicting in their objectives and interests" (Vabø et al., 2010:20). Similar to that finding, the interviewees felt that the agency's mandate restrained its scope for assuming an analytical perspective in its reports. Despite the actual number of academics within SIU's staff, the agency felt enquired to mainly focus on providing numbers and overviews about the developments in the programmes. However, in order to take better advantage of SIU's competences and services, the report called for a better coordination and communication between SIU and the institutions. The belief in SIU's competences as a useful contribution to the national strategies in the area of higher education was based on SIU's success in being a national node for the internationalisation processes of Norwegian universities and university colleges. The report stated that SIU...

...is embedded in both national and international networks and administers a large portfolio of international programmes. The majority of international coordinators at the universities and university colleges in Norway are complimentary about the way that SIU administers the programmes on which they jointly work (Ibid.).

The report recommended that the MER should signal more clearly that SIU is the national authority for education programmes for increased internationalisation and mobility (*Ibid.*). This was due to the fragmented separation of authority within the area of higher education. According to the Norwegian organisation of the sector, the individual institutions have their separate strategies of internationalisation, in addition to the national strategy. This organisation has the potential to result in a fragmented Norwegian participation, and diverging initiatives within the sector programmes. Thus, the report accentuated the importance of an independent authority such as SIU to coordinate the institutions programme participation. The assumption was that this would improve the balance of trust and authority between the MER and SIU, and between SIU and the institutions.

At the same time as the evaluation report recommended to strengthen SIU's role as the national authority for the education programmes, it raised some concerns about SIU's competence building and its ability to communicate its 'know-how' (Vabø et al., 2010). It emphasised that SIU, at the time that the report was released, did not possess the necessary

analytical skills and political sensitivity to perform satisfactory as a competence centre. The report further established that the agency “lack[ed] the political competence needed to advise the Ministry and other client organisations effectively” (*Ibid.*:86). It recommended a reorganisation of the agency in order to improve the agency’s capacities, and to better SIU’s exertion of its responsibilities within the national administration. This recommendation further emphasised the interdependence between SIU and the Ministry on the administrative as well as the political level. It encouraged SIU to strengthen its analytical competences in order to provide the information which both the MER and SIU felt was lacking. This implies that there is a need to strengthen SIU’s role within the national strategies for internationalisation in order to make better use of the agency’s competences and know-how. As one of the national experts established during the interview: Policy developments and programme administration are closely interlinked (Interview 2).

The findings in this study may imply that SIU’s competences have been improved since the report was presented in 2010. After the report was published, an internal reorganisation of SIU followed, and the agency was given a new statute in 2011 (MER, 2011c). To strengthen its analytical competences, the agency reorganised a separate department for development and analysis. In the interview with the SIU officials, it was emphasised that the agency had strengthened the analytical competence of its staff (Interview 3). Despite this argument, however, one of the national experts still indicated that the MER was not completely satisfied with the reports that SIU produced. These were perceived as too technically oriented, and without any real analytical substance (Interview 2). This differed from the view of the SIU officials. They had the impression that the MER had only requested facts, and not research (Interview 3). These conflicting views on the MER’s utilisation of SIU’s competences suggest that there are still uncertainties about SIU’s room for manoeuvre within its mandate, even after its reorganisation.

Despite uncertainties, the SIU officials emphasised that the relationship to the MER had improved as a result of the report’s critiques and recommendations (Interview 3). As a consequence, SIU had been given more responsibility to carry out projects related to the objectives set out in the national strategy for internationalisation of Norwegian education (St.meld. nr. 14 (2008-2009)). The SIU officials expressed a wish to further strengthen the analytical substance in their reports, as they felt that they were able to provide information that would improve the MER’s knowledge about the developments within the programmes (Interview 3). On one side, the interviews revealed that SIU, in some instances, felt restrained

by a limited room for manoeuvre on the national level. On the other side, it was also indicated that SIU was in a position where it had the potential to take better advantage of its own competences and knowledge about the policy processes in Europe. A better utilisation of these competences could possibly expand the agency's scope of action within the area.

4.5 Interwoven in European integration processes

Although SIU has not been equally active in all the networks in which it participates, its activities in Brussels have largely concurred with the principles of a Norwegian active policy towards Europe. An enhanced national administration of the EU education programmes, undertaken by SIU, has added to the Norwegian use of the available room for action in the area of higher education. By comparing statistics within the Erasmus and Erasmus Mundus Programmes, the SIU officials noted that the number of outgoing and incoming students has increased during the years since SIU's establishment (Interview 3). Moreover, the agency had aimed to improve Norway's international reputation by establishing the "Study in Norway" web site. Seeing that a good review within the education programmes would put Norway in a more influential position in Brussels, the findings in the interviews may indicate that SIU's activities have strengthened Norway's scope for promoting national experiences and for participating in the further programme development in the EU. It has also been evident that SIU has been able to promote 'good examples' of Norwegian practises in Brussels, due to its access to the Commission network administration. Furthermore, as noted by the ONR 2012:2, Norwegian cooperation with the EU has been most effective when it has been based on concurrent interests. Since cooperation in the higher education has largely been based on common priorities, this underlines the opportunities available for Norwegian actors to participate and contribute to the European cooperation.

5.0 Conclusions

This study set out to analyse the cooperation between Norway and the EU in the area of higher education. By examining the Norwegian Agency for International Cooperation in Education's (SIU) contributions and participation in the European Commission's framework, the analysis has examined the ways in which SIU has been interwoven in European integration processes. It also set out to explore how SIU's interaction with actors on EU level has facilitated an active Norwegian policy towards Europe. This research design has brought three conclusions.

First, the main conclusion is that SIU's competences in relation to Norway's cooperation with the EU have not been taken full advantage of. This study primarily relates this to SIU's efforts to take advantage of the opportunities that have been available to it in the Commission framework. For instance, both in informal Commission meetings and in the ACA-network, the agencies have the opportunity to present national projects or demonstrate different national practises on their own initiative. However, the study indicates that SIU had the potential to improve its scope for contribution with examples of 'good practise' from Norway. In relation to the Commission expert committees, both the SIU officials and the national experts emphasised the advantages of a closer relationship between them. To be informed about the developments in the EU is an important precondition for an active Norwegian participation on an early stage of the policy processes in Brussels (ONR 2012:2). Hence, SIU could benefit from more frequent interaction and exchange of information with the national experts in DG EAC, in order to strengthen its own knowledge about European higher education and the EU education programmes.

In relation to the MER, moreover, the study indicates that the MER should strengthen its use of SIU as a competence centre in relation to the EU. This relates to the EEA-agreement, which is the most comprehensive framework which regulates Norway's relationship to the EU. The Agreement has promoted closer cooperation in the area of higher education, mainly through increased programme participation. However, due to Norway's associated status in the Union, it still has no rights to vote in decision-making processes in the Council or the European Parliament. Thus, the channels available for interaction in the Commission's sectoral structures have been crucial. A recent ONR emphasised that Norwegian actors struggle to contribute and influence in EU policy processes, and that the Norwegian participation in Brussels have been dependant on the actors' capabilities and

determination to make the most of the established channels for interaction (ONR 2012:2:164-166). In line with this observation, the empirical findings in this study indicate that the MER may need to be more attentive towards SIU and its competences in relation to the cooperation with the EU. Through various administrative networks, SIU has access to the policy processes in Brussels. As a consequence, the SIU official noted that the agency had knowledge about the developments in Brussels which would be of interest to the MER, in regards to the national strategy for internationalisation of higher education.

Related to this observation, the second conclusion emanating from this study is that SIU has been closely interwoven in the European integration processes through interaction with various European stakeholders in the area of higher education. In particular, this study has linked this development to the idea of NPM and the modernisation of EU governance. On the national level, NPM ideas have inspired the separation of administrative and political responsibilities, and agencies have been established to perform managerial and regulative tasks within the public service (Christensen and Lægreid, 2005). In line with NPM reforms, the MER delegated managerial authority for the education programmes to SIU in 2004 on national level. This was part of the development of a more coherent national strategy for internationalisation. As national agency for the EU education programmes, moreover, SIU was connected to the developing network administration on EU level. In a 2001 White Paper on European governance, the Commission encouraged increased involvement in the policy processes from actors on various levels (European Commission, 2001). By this arrangement, it aimed to provide a new foundation for integration in the EU. Eventually, the aim was to establish more effective governance. In line with this development, SIU has been involved in several network configurations where it has interacted with similar organisations, transnational associations, national experts, and higher education institutions. These have all become part of the Commission's sectoral management of the European cooperation in the area of higher education.

Third, despite the potential to improve the use of SIU's role and competences, the agency is still a channel between national and EU level which facilitates increased Norwegian participation and contribution in EU policy processes. This study points to the new modes for cooperation on EU level which has enabled increased interaction between actors across the levels of governance, and between policy sectors. In particular, by the means of the OMC, the agency has participated in the developments of standards for internationalisation in the ACA- and IMPI-networks. It has branded Norway as a study destination for foreign students, and it

has persistently communicated Norwegian practises and priorities through regular reports and meeting with Commission officials. On the national level, the agency has been at the core of developing Norwegian priorities and projects within the programmes. Moreover, it has acted as a competence centre for the national institutions, and has encouraged increased participation in the education programmes through provisions of information and advice. This development has been noticed in the EU, and Norway has been credited for its initiatives within the Erasmus Mundus Programme (Interview 3, MER 2011a).

Furthermore, when it comes to accessing and processing information, the network administration in which SIU participates have been an important arena for the exchange of ideas and experiences of ‘good practises’. Through formal and informal meetings with the Commission, DG EAC, or in the sector committees on the levels below, the agency has accessed firsthand information about the policy processes in the EU. SIU has been particularly active in sister-networks, where it has interacted with similar organisations. This has been valuable, since the agencies may share “ideas and experiences of ways of organising the programmes”, and cooperate to meet common “challenges, critical tasks or issues” (Vabø et al., 2010). Through regular evaluations and analysis, the agency has gathered and presented information about the Norwegian participation and projects. Without a regulative role, the agency’s activities have largely been centred on handling information (Gornitzka, 2009:31). However, the networks’ activities have also been used in the preparation and development of EU initiatives and priorities (*Ibid.*:27). In these processes, the agencies have been connected to the developments of common benchmarks, and to the provision of independent information and expertise. Hence, their contribution has been an element in the generation of policy ideas and their further development in the EU.

The Official Norwegian Report 2012:2 remarked that the Norwegian active policy towards Europe was mostly about being attentive to the developments in the EU, to gather information about relevant developments and adjust to these (ONR 2012:2:840). The relationship between Norway and the EU is complex, and it has been subject to a “constant tension in Norwegian policies towards the EU”: Although Norway does not participate in the policy-making processes in the EU, it still wishes to conduct an active policy towards Europe in order to be able to influence policy processes (ONR 2012:2:195).⁴⁷ This case study may indicate that this tension is a general trend in the relationship between Norway and the EU.

⁴⁷ My translation.

An active participation in EU policy processes depends on Norwegian actors' capabilities and determination to influence and contribute. However, the framework regulating the cooperation between Norway and the EU has developed in various ways since the EEA-agreement entered into force in 1994. It has become more complex, and this has affected the Norwegian activities in Brussels. The ONR 2012:2 emphasises five important developments in the relationship between Norway and the EU: The number of EU Member States has increased, Norway has made several additional agreements with the EU, the EU has incorporated new statutes within the framework of the existing agreements, the existing agreements have developed as a result of new interpretations and practises, and Norway has voluntarily adjusted to EU processes in ways that have exceeded the formal agreements. These developments have made Norway's structural connections to the EU more complex and diffuse. In this context, therefore, the active Norwegian policy towards Europe seems as current today as it was in 1972.

6.0 Literature and sources

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Interviews

- Interview 1 06.03.2012. National Expert. *E-mail communication*.
- Interview 2 08.03.2012. National Expert. *Personal communication*.
- Interview 3 12.03.2012. SIU. *Personal communication*.

7.0 Appendix

Interview guides

SIU

Formål med intervjuet

I Kunnskapsdepartementets EU-strategi for 2011-2013 presiseres det at 'Norge kan lære av utviklingsarbeidet i EU' samt 'bidra med gode eksempler og markedsføre våre egne strategier overfor andre land i EU'. En viktig essens i målsetningen for samarbeidet er altså at Norge skal følge utviklingen i EU, påvirke den der det er mulig og dra nytte av de samarbeidsformene som er tilgjengelige. I den forbindelse er virksomheten til SIU interessant ettersom senteret er tilknyttet både EU Kommisjonen, norske eksperter i Brussel, norske utdanningsinstitusjoner og Kunnskapsdepartementet. De følgende spørsmålene vil fokusere på SIUs virksomhet innenfor samarbeidet mellom Norge (Kunnskapsdepartementet) og EU innenfor høyere utdanning, og hvorvidt tilknytning til EU og europeiske nettverk gjør SIU til en viktig ressurs for å nå målsetningene i EU-strategien.

Om din bakgrunn

- Hvor lenge har du vært ansatt i SIU?
- Ved hvilken avdeling er du ansatt?
- Hva går dine arbeidsoppgaver ut på?

Om SIUs rolle i forvaltningen

- Kan du beskrive SIUs mandat og rolle i forvaltningen?
- Kan du beskrive SIUs virksomhet?
- Hvor stor del av SIUs aktiviteter er rettet mot EUs utdanningsprogrammer?
- Hvor stor del av SIUs aktiviteter er rettet mot høyere utdanning?
- Hvordan går SIU inn mellom norske høyere utdanningsinstitusjoner og EU?

Om forholdet mellom EU og SIU

- Hvordan vil du beskrive forholdet mellom EU og SIU?
- I forbindelse med høyere utdanning (Erasmus), hvem har SIU kontakt med, og hvilken rolle har SIU i samhandling med disse?
- Hvordan vil du beskrive SIUs virksomhet på europeisk nivå?

- Hvilken grad av innflytelse har EU på SIUs virksomhet?
- Mottar SIU retningslinjer fra KD vedrørende tilknytningen til aktører i Brussel?
- Hvordan vil du beskrive relasjonen mellom SIU og de nasjonale ekspertene?
- Rapportere de nasjonale ekspertene til SIU om deres aktiviteter i Brussel?
- Er de nasjonale ekspertene en ressurs for SIU?

Om forholdet mellom Kunnskapsdepartementet (KD) og SIU

- Hvordan vil du beskrive forholdet mellom KD og SIU?
- Hvordan foregår kommunikasjonen/samhandlingen mellom KD og SIU?
- Hvilken grad av autoritet og tillit har SIU i iverksettelsen av EUs utdanningsprogrammer?
- Opplever du at SIU blir ansett som en ressurs innenfor samarbeidet med EU?
- Kan SIU påvirke norsk utdanningspolitikk på bakgrunn av sin tilknytning til EU?
- Kan SIUs virksomhet ovenfor EU påvirke norsk utdanningspolitikk?
- Opplever du at SIUs tilknytning til Kommisjonen, EU-byråer og europeiske nettverk øker senterets kompetanse om europeisk prosesser?
- Opplever du i så fall at denne kompetansen blir ivaretatt av KD?

National experts

Formålet med intervjuet

I Kunnskapsdepartementets EU-strategi for 2011-2013 presiseres det at 'Norge kan lære av utviklingsarbeidet i EU' samt 'bidra med gode eksempler og markedsføre våre egne strategier overfor andre land i EU'. En viktig essens i målsetningen for samarbeidet er at Norge skal følge utviklingen i EU, påvirke den der det er mulig og dra nytte av de samarbeidsformene som er tilgjengelige for Norge. I den forbindelse er Senter for Internasjonalisering av Utdanning (SIU) interessant ettersom dette senteret er tilknyttet både EU Kommisjonen, norske eksperter i Brussel, norske utdanningsinstitusjoner og Kunnskapsdepartementet. De følgende spørsmålene vil fokusere på SIUs forhold til aktørene i Brussel (i denne sammenheng nasjonale eksperter) innenfor samarbeidet om høyere utdanning og hvorvidt denne kontakten tilfører senteret innsikt og kompetanse om de politiske prosessene i Brussel.

Om din bakgrunn

- Hva er din yrkesbakgrunn?
- I hvilken Kommisjonskomité var/er du ansatt?
- Hvor lenge har du/har du vært ansatt som nasjonal ekspert?
- Hva var bakgrunnen for at du reiste til Brussel?
- Kan du beskrive dine arbeidsoppgaver i Brussel?

Om dine erfaringer som nasjonal ekspert

- I hvilken grad føler du at du må balansere rollen som nasjonal sendemann med rollen som representant for Kommisjonens interesser?
- Opplever du at du opptrer på lik linje som andre nasjonale eksperter (for eksempel fra medlemsland) i Brussel?
- I så fall, gir rollen som likemann aksept for deltakelse og åpner for nettverksbygging?
- Har tiden i Brussel gitt deg en bedre innsikt i hvordan EU jobber?
- Føler du at du har medvirket i utformingen av EUs politikk, og i så fall på hvilken måte?

Om tilknytningen til SIU

- Som nasjonal ekspert innenfor utdanningspolitikken, hvordan kan forhold til SIU beskrives?
- Foregår det en aktiv dialog mellom de nasjonale ekspertene og SIU?
- Bidrar de nasjonale ekspertene med råd og veiledning til SIU i deres iverksetting av utdanningsprogrammene i Norge?
- Har de nasjonale ekspertene (innenfor det utdanningspolitiske samarbeidet) kompetanse og erfaring som er nyttig for arbeidet til SIU nasjonalt?
- I forbindelse med store arrangement/tiltak som Internasjonaliseringskonferansen 2012, i hvilken grad har SIU konsultert de nasjonale ekspertene i forkant?
- Bli de nasjonale ekspertene kontaktet og konsultert i forbindelse med andre områder av SIU arbeid nasjonalt og internasjonalt?

- Opplever du at SIU burde anvende den kompetansen og det nettverket som de nasjonale ekspertene oppretter i Brussel?
- Etter å ha vært ansatt i Brussel og jobbet tett innpå EU Kommisjonen, kan de nasjonale ekspertene bidra med ny innsikt og en bredere kompetanse når du vender tilbake til Norge, som vil kunne overføres til jobben i SIU?