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RESOURCE DOCUMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL (NON-EUROPEAN) ART STUDENTS AND ART PROFESSIONALS

BASED IN NORWAY: ABOUT THE HIGHLY BUREAUCRATIC MIGRANT CURVE OF AN INTERNATIONAL ARTIST IN NORWAY

*This document is modelled after a student trajectory attending education in Norway

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UPON NORWAY ARRIVAL

UDI Requirements for "Study visa permit"

(Main source: <https://www.udi.no/en/want-to-apply/studies/studietillatelse/?c=per#link-58>)

Requirements:

- Requirement #1: "You must pay an application fee"

Study permit fee: NOK 4 900

- Requirement #4: "You, as an international art student, must have enough money to live on, at least NOK 121 220 per year"

*Before arrival in Norway, some students have to transfer to their art school the amount specified above (NOK 121 220). While for some others it is sufficient to show bank statements from their accounts in their respective countries (worthwhile to see if UDI is still lenient on this point). The educational institution (sometimes Lånekassen does) will 'host' the money until the student gets a Norwegian bank account and a Norwegian identification number (ID number).

Comments:

1. Some artists pursuing bachelor and master's degrees in Norway's art academies come from developing countries where the average monthly life expenses fluctuate between NOK 7 000 to 10 000 NOK. The high living cost of the country (a monthly average of NOK 27 800) pushes international art students to live on a considerably lower basis than their Norwegian and European peers.
2. In January 2018, handling charges for visa applications for international students to Norway was raised from NOK 3 200 to NOK 4 900, a jump of almost 60%. This is far higher than similar charges in neighbouring countries Sweden (NOK 1 460), Denmark (NOK 4 050) and Finland (NOK 4 296).
3. These increases in visa fees will continue to marginalise international students, in particular art students, adding further concerns and uncertainty about their future in the country, while at the same time impeding prospective students from applying in future years. In practice this has a deeply negative impact, by weakening student mobility, reducing the internationalization of study programmes and the exchange of ideas that comes from cultural diversity in higher education and cultural diversity in the country.
4. In some cases, students are not made aware that they cannot withdraw the money that they've transferred to Norway, held by their school (or Lånekassen) until they open a Norwegian bank

account and get an ID number. Current processing time to open a bank account in Norway is between 3 to 5 months. This, of course, makes even more difficult the social and economic adaptation for students, keeping their money for living expenses in limbo and inaccessible. Though temporary, this is a precarious situation for anyone trying to establish a life in a new country.

Previously, and only in extraordinary situations, some art schools allowed their international students to retreat a small percentage of their money. Usually giving them vouchers, these vouchers were cash-out by Posten. About a bit more than a year ago, Posten stopped cashing-out these vouchers for the students and left many of them with no access, whatsoever, to their own money. Many students still have really difficult times because of this policy.

5. The vast majority of international art students are not eligible to get support from Lånekassen.
6. It is recommendable that every artist found his/her own personal company (sole proprietorship) as soon as possible. To be able to issue 'fakturas' for self-employed and freelance work as an artist. However, this is impossible for artists in Norway on a student visa; operating a sole-proprietorship is a direct violation with the terms of their permits, and could jeopardize renewal.

Rights:

"If you are granted a study permit, you are automatically also granted permission to work part-time for up to 20 hours per week in addition to your studies and full-time during holidays."

Comments:

1. Unfortunately, for most international art students, this right to work is not enough in order to cover their basic living expenses. We agreed that a 50% part-time right to work is a very good incentive and support for students. However, most students (if hired) could only get hospitality related jobs, where the average hourly rate is NOK 169. That means a monthly income for the student of approximately NOK 13 520. It is challenging, although possible, to live with this amount of a month, however, this amount is pre-tax. Moreover, when Skatteetaten applies a 9% - 12% tax deduction from the total income, we can see that a student on average (being optimistic) could potentially make NOK 100 000 a year. Based on the previous information, when UDI requires the student to present bank statements that show a minimum of NOK 121 220 in their savings account, it does neglect how difficult it is for an art student to make a profit like that in one year.

Other sources:

Steep rise in visa charge for international students

<https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20180202085029630>

Cost of living in Norway

<https://www.expakistan.com/cost-of-living/country/norway>

Report “International Students in Norway. Contributors to Quality in Higher Education

<https://diku.no/en/reports/international-students-in-norway-contributors-to-quality-in-higher-education>

Immigration in Norway 2008-2018

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/586665/immigration-in-norway>

Lånekassen

<https://www.lanekassen.no/nb-NO/Languages/Financial-support-for-foreign-students/Who-is-eligible/>

Sole proprietorship

<https://www.altinn.no/en/start-and-run-business/planning-starting/Choosing-Legal-Structure/sole-proprietorships>

FIRST YEAR IN NORWAY

UDI Requirements for “Study visa permit (renewal)”

(Main source: <https://www.udi.no/en/want-to-renew/study-permit>)

Requirements:

- Requirement #1: “*You must pay an application fee*”

Study permit renewal fee: NOK 4 900

- Requirement #4: “*You, as an international art student, must have enough money to live on, at least NOK 121 220 per year*”

-Requirement: to submit bank statements showing that the NOK 121 220 is something you’ve earned, work income, and not simply borrowed for the purpose of the application.

Comments:

1. During the first year of studies art students must face not only the regular struggles everyone else would face when moving to a new country. Furthermore, they also have to go through incredibly tedious bureaucratic processes (open a bank account, a tax account, get an ID, try to get student housing, apply for jobs, etc). Most art students can spend between 2 to 4 months to find a part-time job after their arrival to Norway.

Before students would get on their feet (9 months after their arrival) and to slowly find their way through the system, they are once more asked to apply for a visa (a renewal of their study permit). The student must prove that he/she has another NOK 121 220 in a savings account.

2. Most art students are recommended by UDI authorities to not leave the country while the assessment of their visa renewal is ongoing. However, in certain cases UDI might give a written permission to leave the country on a very specific basis. Most art students and professional artists have international appointments abroad (art residencies, exhibitions, projects, etc.). To not

be able to attend severely damages the artists' scope of action, restricts their professional mobility and weakens their economic realities.

3. A tool that has been vastly ignored is the access to affordable or free Norwegian language lessons for international art students moving to Norway. Most will struggle with adaptation because of this, being proficient in the language becomes a social requirement that they cannot meet with their own resources. One that could help them foster their artistic practice, but also to adapt better to society and the local culture.

SECOND YEAR IN NORWAY

UDI Requirements for "Job seeker visa permit"

A job seeker who has recently graduated in Norway or is a researcher

* It can be granted for a maximum of one year

(Main source: <https://www.udi.no/en/want-to-apply/work-immigration/job-seekers/?c=per#link-841>)

Requirements:

- Requirement #1: *"You must pay an application fee"*

Job seeker visa fee: NOK 6 300

- Requirement #4: *"You, a job seeker who has recently graduated in Norway, must have enough money to live on, at least NOK 246 246 per year"*

Comments:

1. By implementing requirement #4, UDI doubles the previous live-on money (study permit renewal: NOK 121 220), making it even harder for recently graduated artists (or about to graduate) to be granted a job seeker visa. Even though they are entitled by law to be granted the mentioned visa scheme upon graduation from a Norwegian educational institution. As explained before, most students will struggle to even make more than NOK 100 000 a year, but then, how are they supposed to make a year's profit of NOK 246 245? This is absolutely distanced from the reality of most if not all Non-European art students in the country.
2. Although UDI tends to be flexible when assessing this type of visa, most students will fall short of UDI economic income bar. Many will have their visa application rejected.
3. Even if the student visa is granted, the now graduated artist will face another challenge: If the artist is hired for an institutional job within the field of art or culture, he/she will have to immediately apply for a working visa. He/she will have to spend another NOK 6 300 and many hours to put together a new visa application. Waiting time oscillates between 1 to 3 months.

Rights:

“You can not be self-employed or run your own business in Norway”

Comments:

1. Most art professionals rely on their own professional and specialized work to make a living out of their artistic practice. This is a work that is usually conducted as self-employed or freelance. This restriction takes away, from the artist, the possibility to have another source of income in parallel to a part-time or full-time job in other industries (bars, cafes, shops, etc). It also prevents the artists from focusing on fostering their artistic practice, therefore, crippling their creative agency, their right to labour, and ultimately delaying their professional development. This is outrageously unfair, tipping the balance in favour of, even so more, already privileged groups within the field. Visual arts is a profession characterized by very low income and those the vast majority of artists in the visual field (83%) organize their businesses as individual companies, thus creating and operating their own jobs. In 2015, the report documented “Kunstens autonomi og kunstens økonomi ”(published by the Ministry of Culture) that the average annual income for visual artists was NOK 89 000 from artistic activities. The reality is that most visual artists in Norway today have to balance multiple smaller jobs and freelance assignments next to his or her main work. This is especially true for young artists in the establishment phase.
2. Student visa and job seeker visa permits do not form the basis for a permanent residence permit. This means that the first three years of the artist's residence in the country does not make him/her eligible for a permanent residence permit. An artist should be based in Norway under legal residence permits for about six to seven years before being able to get a permanent residence permit.

THIRD YEAR IN NORWAY

UDI Requirements for “Work visa permit”

Skilled worker with an employer in Norway

(Main source: <https://www.udi.no/en/want-to-apply/work-immigration/skilled-workers/?c=per#link-816>)

Requirements:

- Requirement #1: *“You must pay an application fee”*

Work visa fee: NOK 6 300

- Requirement #5: You must have received a concrete job offer from one specific employer in Norway.

- Requirement #6: The job must normally be full-time. If you have been offered at least an 80 percent position, we will accept this.

-Requirement: should your employer suddenly not be able to employ you, breaking your contract, so too is the basis for your residency permit. You would then have to report your loss of work to the police and be expected to find a similar job within a period of time (3 months). Failure to find a comparable job in time would result in the termination of the residency permit.

Comments:

1. As visible in the migrant curve, most art students and art professionals are pushed into other types of work than their own artistic practice. Thus, they will most likely try to find an institutional job that can give them some economic and emotional stability. Others, the minority, will try to become self-employed and take the economic risk that comes with it. We can see here that the dynamics and barriers set by the UDI system, actively push the artists to have their artistic practice on the side instead of having it as their main economic and cultural activity. This situation, as mentioned before, results in the involuntary abandonment of the artist's own artistic practice in order to try to secure some economic profits and more importantly, a new visa permit in Norway.

2. If the artist managed to do this, to find a job, but for different circumstances he/she loses it in the future. Then, the artists are not allowed to apply for unemployment benefits from NAV. UDI will set a restrictive framework that will lock down all social benefits (labour wise) for artists. Here a list of possible social benefits to apply to, offer by NAV:
 - a. Register as job seeker on nav.no
 - b. Apply to unemployment benefits (usually rejected based on UDI visa restrictions)
 - c. Apply to "Tilleggsstønader" scheme from NAV (usually rejected based on UDI visa restrictions)
 - d. Apply to "Tiltakspenger" scheme from NAV, it can be granted if the artist is conducting an activity suggested by NAV (e.g. Norskkurs). The financial support varies but, in most cases, it won't cover the artists' basic life expenses (e.g. NOK 800 a week).
 - e. Apply to "Økonomisk sosialhjelp" scheme from NAV, it can be granted if the artist finds himself in an absolute precarious situation. That means, no money at all, no capital, no savings, etc. Most won't get it because of UDI restrictions when issuing working or self-employed visas for artists. However, whoever is seeking to apply to this scheme must have in mind that if granted, it will negatively affect his visa renewal the following year. UDI will most certainly reject his application if the artist was a recipient of social benefits the year prior.
 - f. Apply to Housing Allowance from Husbanken. Husbanken gives support to people with low income to be able to cover their house rent.

3. Each application to a social support scheme will take approximately 5 hours of a person's time. That's an average total of 30 hours, unpaid work. Processing times vary, artists can expect an answer within 3 to 4 weeks.
4. The uncertainty produced by strict UDI regulations on work permits for international visual artists, have discouraged many established artists in Norway from applying to Kulturrådet support schemes as "Kunstnerassistent", together with a foreign artist.

Other sources:

Register as a job seeker & Unemployment benefits

<https://www.nav.no/en/home/benefits-and-services/unemployment-benefits>

Tilleggsstønader

<https://www.nav.no/no/person/arbeid/oppfolging-og-tiltak-for-a-komme-i-jobb/relatert-informasjon/tilleggsstønader>

Tiltakspenger

<https://www.nav.no/no/person/arbeid/oppfolging-og-tiltak-for-a-komme-i-jobb/stønader-ved-tiltak>

Økonomisk sosialhjelp

<https://www.nav.no/sosialhjelp>

Husbanken

<https://husbanken.no/bostotte>

Kunstnerassistent

<https://www.kulturradet.no/stotteordning/-/vis/kunstnerassistent>

THIRD TO FOURTH YEAR IN NORWAY

UDI Requirements for "Work visa permit"

Self-employed persons with a company in Norway

(Main source: <https://www.udi.no/en/want-to-apply/work-immigration/skilled-workers/?c=per#link-816>)

Requirements:

- Requirement #1: "You must pay an application fee"

Work visa fee: NOK 6 300

- Requirement #6: The business concerned must normally be your own sole proprietorship. The business cannot be a limited company. You can only work in this business. You cannot take other work.

- Requirement #8: It must be likely that the business will give you a profit (business income) of at least NOK 246 246 per year pre-tax. The UDI will ask the county authority to assess if this is likely.

- Requirement: A detailed description of the business, including an assessment of the market and the sales potential for your product or service and your role in the business

Comments:

1. We strongly suggest professional artists, when applying to UDI, to submit a request to be granted a special permission to work 50% as employees in parallel to their self-employed work. Although, we are aware of the complexity of this request and most applications will have this special permission rejected by UDI. Artists can appeal, but because it takes 3 months to get an answer, most artists will not be able to work during this period. Which could further deteriorate their economic situation, and forced them to drain all their savings.

This permission, if granted, will shield the artists in cases where their self-employed work is reduced or affected because of unforeseen circumstances, life events, and/or labour issues. *In contrast, Norwegian and non-European artists have a full permission to be employees while also working as self-employed.

2. If the artist has not secured an institutional job but is granted a special 50% work permission, the artist can register as a job seeker with NAV. It will receive assistance on how to get a job and NAV could ask him/her to join an activity plan, which could include Norskkurs lessons or other professional activities to help them find a job in their field.

Unfortunately, this special permission only enables artists to work in the field of art and/or culture to a capacity of maximum 50%. It is not unusual for artists to supplement their incomes by taking jobs in hospitality, seeing as it can be competitive to find well-paying jobs within the arts. The visa will remain under self-employed and social benefits (NAV) will be assessed on the basis of the restrictions set by UDI when the visa permit was granted. It is of concern that previously artists who work as employees and/or self-employed will not form the basis for labour-related social benefits (e.g. unemployment benefits).

3. There is no guide or manual to help artists draft their business plan, however, attached to this document there is an example of a business plan that was successfully assessed by UDI.

Other sources:

Social benefits and own business activities

<https://www.nav.no/no/person/arbeid/dagpenger-ved-arbeidsloshet-og-permittering/relatert-informasjon/dagpenger-og-egen-naeringsvirksomhet>

Checklist for self-employed persons (with a company in Norway)

<https://www.udi.no/en/checklists-container/work/checklist-for-self-employed-with-company-in-norway/?c=per>

CORONA VIRUS SITUATION

The economic implications by the Coronavirus outbreak has severely hit the already precarious situation of many artists in the country, in particular non-European artists. Most exhibitions, projects, art residencies, and other artistic and cultural events have been cancelled. Leaving the artists with no source of income. For many, within this minority, it means a great deal of uncertainty when trying to face the challenges and struggles triggered by the Coronavirus. On top of their already well-known UDI immigration entanglements.

What it means, in everyday life, for artists is the impossibility to make any money out of their self-employed labour nor to be able to find an institutional job in the field to support themselves. Topped with zero financial allowance from NAV (as today) or any other social service agencies. If the government does not start implementing real solutions (mainly, financial social support) for these individuals, as soon as possible, it will doom them to a future life with no resources. Making the breach bigger between sectors of society and severely damaging the cultural production of this group of artists. When most won't have any money to pay for rent, food, artistic production costs, studio rent, and other basic needs for artists.

Other concerns of this group are connected to: What's going to happen to those artists who must apply for a renewal of their visa this or next year? UDI renewal is strongly linked to the fact that a self-employed artist should make a profit of NOK 246 000 in 2020, but Corona has destabilized most artistic and cultural labour and businesses in the country, thus diminishing the potential of artists' personal companies' income for this year. It is impossible not to ask, on what terms UDI will assess the future visa applications (2021) of non-European artists and cultural producers that fall short of the income bar in 2020?

Now, when NAV refuses (or denies) to process the application for social benefits of many international artists in the country based on the administrative restrictions put in place by UDI, it does put the artists in an even more precarious position. Because of the migrant curve and dynamics, explained throughout this resource document, set by the government for non-European artists in the country, many artists remained outside of the social welfare system opportunities to fund and support their everyday life struggles. Now a more pressing struggle than ever.

Most visual artists are not eligible to:

- Unemployment benefits (We don't know yet if it will be possible to get *dagpenger*)
- The relief packages yet to be launched by the government for self-employed and freelancers will take effect only 17 days after the quarantine started. (Information is constantly changing. It seems the new time is 4 days)

- The international artists who are eligible, on the other hand, will not be able to receive a significant amount of support in order to overcome the situation. As we can see in the migrant timeline for artists, since year-one the government has actively pushed and prevented artists to work as self-employed. This results in a very low economic activity registered throughout the years, which now makes it really hard for artists to present enough documentation of self-employment income to NAV.

Comments:

- The government will provide self-employed persons and freelancers sick pay from day 4 of the absence with the same coverage as in current rules. This is a temporary arrangement for the time being. The change takes effect immediately and the payments are made as soon as Nav gets a technical solution in place.
- For emergency cases, we suggest artists that are members of NBK to apply for the "Kriselån" scheme. We are also aware that this fund is not sufficient to relieve the economic burden that the artists are experiencing due to the Coronavirus outbreak.
- Many unionized artists have had to prioritize their basic needs, as food and rent money, and cannot direct money towards the payment of their unions' membership fees. Thus, many are afraid they won't be able to get any legal, financial or other kind of support from their respective artist unions. We would like to encourage member unions to temporarily relieve international artists in hard economic situations from the payment of their membership fees.
- Artists are in need of legal advice, particularly professional social and immigration counselling. Most don't have the means to pay for this, we encourage anyone with knowledge in this field to offer free legal assistance for artists.

Sources:

Spørsmål tilknyttet koronakrisen

<https://creokultur.no/sporsmal-tilknyttet-koronakrisen/?fbclid=IwAR1F9qobJv8Jm0PYCV79fNgwv3LfGzxcDOtjm-gsi58rv5cxUCMyxjJE9s>

Korona-situasjonen: Informasjon til billedkunstnere

https://www.norskebilledkunstnere.no/aktuelt/korona-situasjonen-informasjon-til-billedkunstnere/?fbclid=IwAR3bPwl7uujO0rTmH3_RA5Oa0hz_KRAUzSig8ovT2QG7FfvXYzfyNjAE4

Kriselån

https://www.norskebilledkunstnere.no/bkv/?fbclid=IwAR3A7mKlus76lntWcuqxQnKSETkXQYCKL5t_2uo

[NLaWBY6rNi3CSnlv7QVg](#)

Free Legal Aid Advice in Norway: Organisations To Turn To

<https://oslodesk.com/free-legal-aid-advice-in-norway-organisations-to-turn-to>

Coronavirus - information from NAV

https://www.nav.no/no/person/innhold-til-person-forside/nyttig-a-vite/koronavirus--informasjon-fra-nav?fbclid=IwAR03SOHvw8QKPICSIYF6A6TWY5kuPeFBppVI_kY1sWXr1YNFWDEw7O546w

Coronavirus - information for self-employed and freelancers

https://www.nav.no/no/person/innhold-til-person-forside/nyttig-a-vite/koronavirus--informasjon-fra-nav/koronavirus-informasjon-til-selvstendig-naeringsdrivende-og-frilansere?fbclid=IwAR18QNmg9E3fMSgLCfC8b1gKifzB_4MZcJD4B4v_dDbyPR1FzewCyBApvW0

Fattighuset

<https://www.facebook.com/pg/fattighuset/about>