

## UNIVERSITY RECRUITMENT AND CAREERS IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES

Over the last four decades, the Nordic university systems have grown enormously in volume. New universities have been created, and the number of students obtaining BSc and MSc degrees as well as the fraction of those who continue with PhD degrees has increased almost exponentially. This has been achieved through systems of basic stipend support from the state for students up to the MSc level, creating a larger pool of students, and by targeted support at the PhD level, chiefly from University budgets and Research councils, but increasingly also from industry and private sources. In particular, the number and fraction of women completing PhD degrees have grown enormously. This will be illustrated with recent statistics.

As a result, a university education is no longer considered as a privilege for the elite, as many more students from other social classes have entered the universities. Another notable development is the increasing number of students of foreign nationalities.

Why are the Nordic countries investing in higher education and research? Their governments have realized that the role of natural resources (Norwegian oil, in particular) will decrease and highly educated individuals become increasingly important, and training a new, highly skilled generation of citizens that can drive innovation and development takes decades as well.

Where do the new graduates find jobs? Recent statistics shows that the unemployment rate is very low for highly educated people in the Nordic countries, in particular in science and technology, but also the humanities. Many jobs are still in the public sector, but a wide range of private industries and service companies increasingly employ university graduates.

How do we attract the best students to jobs in academia? And where does funding for research come from? National and European programs to support young promising scientists remain crucial, but an increasing number of PhD fellowships are supported

through public-private partnerships, fuelling industrial as well as public research and jobs (Norway and Denmark).

Universities now work actively to attract the best scientists from a much larger pool than before. Highly qualified foreign scientists get tax reductions in Denmark, and postdocs working abroad can obtain special grants to bring them back to the home country. Measures to attract, retain, and facilitate advancement for women in academic careers have increased the pool of future researchers very considerably where successful, as will also be illustrated.