

Distr.
GENERAL

E/1994/104/Add.3
15 September 1994

Original: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
Substantive session of 1995

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC,
CULTURAL AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

Third periodic reports submitted by States parties under
articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant in accordance with the
programme established by Economic and Social Council
resolution 1988/4

Addendum
NORWAY*

[15 September 1994]

Paragraph 2 of the guidelines (right to enjoy benefits of scientific
progress) (a) and (b) (application and dissemination of scientific
progress)

487. The Norwegian Government regards scientific progress as being
crucial for the achievement of the paramount political objectives of
employment for all, a better environment, a higher quality of life, the
creation of wealth, and increased cultural understanding. In other
words, research cannot be seen in isolation; it is an integral part of
the changes in society and is essential to the implementation of a
universal welfare policy. The dissemination of scientific results is
therefore given high priority in the Government's policy on research.

488. A rational organization of the scientific research is essential for
high standards and the efficient exploitation of research results. For
this purpose, the organization of publicly funded research in Norway has
recently been simplified by the establishment in 1993 of the Research
Council of Norway. This involved merging the five former research
councils (on the humanities, science and technology, fisheries,
agriculture and social sciences, respectively) into a single
organization, the intention being to establish a national consultative
and executive body for research strategy, and to achieve a more
efficient and coordinated use of resources. The establishment of a
single Council should also ensure better integration between basic and
applied research. One of the Council's main tasks is to ensure better
dissemination of information on research and scientific progress.

489. In a recent government report on research policy, Report No. 36
(1992-93) to the Storting, "Research for the community" (English
summary, appendix 15), which was adopted by the Storting in 1993,
emphasis is placed on the use of research to achieve the above-mentioned
objectives, and on the dissemination and application of knowledge and
technology. The importance of encouraging public insight into and
discussion of research and technology is particularly stressed, and the
main elements of the Government's strategy in this respect can be
summarized as follows:

(a) Disseminating information to children and adolescents;

(b) Systematic integration of public education into research programmes and projects;

(c) Making the Research Council of Norway responsible for preparing a national strategy for public education on scientific progress.

490. The authorities have also found it necessary to assume special responsibility for informing users who are often not in a position to acquire and make use of new knowledge, such as farmers, fishermen and small- and medium-sized enterprises in the manufacturing and service sectors. The Research Council of Norway has therefore been given the responsibility of developing information strategies for different groups of users. Moreover, scientific and technological education should be a major area of cooperation between the Research Council of Norway and the Norwegian Industrial and Regional Development Fund.

491. The government report (appendix 15) also emphasizes the importance of developing networks and interaction in the research community, and efforts are being made to create stronger links and closer collaboration between research institutions. Exchanges of personnel and information between such institutions are encouraged, as is interaction between the research institutions and society.

492. New knowledge and information have never been stopped by national boundaries, and the Government is eager to encourage international research cooperation and the development of international networks. It is also seeking to provide more opportunities for researchers to spend longer periods of time abroad and is taking measures to promote and speed up international cooperation in this field.

493. Protection of the environment raises issues of great scientific, political and social concern, and environmental research is one of the major priority areas in current Norwegian research policy. The Research Council has a separate research board for environment and development.

(c) and (d) (restrictions to prevent abuse)

494. In view of the ethical issues raised by scientific progress, three national committees concerned with the ethical aspects of research were established in 1990. These are:

The national committee for medical research ethics, which is concerned with medicine in its broadest sense, i.e. health and life sciences;

The national committee for research ethics in science and technology, concerned with natural science and technology;

The national committee for research ethics in social sciences and the humanities, including law and theology.

495. These committees keep the research community, the public Administration and the general public informed about current and potential issues relating to research ethics in their respective fields of responsibility. They coordinate and advise ethics committees at regional and professional levels, submit reports on matters of principle and comment on specific issues submitted to them. They also propose ethical guidelines for research in the relevant fields.

496. Since 1987, ethical review committees have been established in connection with each of the five major regional hospitals in Norway. The committees review all projects in biomedical research involving humans

and recommend that they be approved or rejected. The committees are organized under the national committee for medical research ethics.

497. An Act relating to gene technology was passed by the Storting in 1993. The Act strictly regulates the production and use of genetically modified organisms, i.e. micro-organisms, plants and animals whose genetic make-up has been changed by means of gene or cell technology.

498. Following a government report to the Storting on man and biotechnology, a bill concerning the medical application of biotechnology has been submitted. The Act is intended to regulate the application of reproduction technology, research on fertilized eggs and confidentiality with regard to the application of DNA technology, and so on. The underlying aim is to ensure that biotechnology is applied in a beneficial way.

* * *

Paragraph 4 of the guidelines (conservation, development and diffusion of science and culture)

500. Reference is made to paragraphs 460-498.

501. It may be added that approximately 1.9 per cent of Norway's GDP is spent on research, 1.0 per cent of which comes from public funds. There has been a considerable increase in public expenditure on research from 1989 to 1993, on average 5 per cent per annum, whereas industrial investment in research has decreased during the same period, and is fairly low compared to many other industrialized countries.

Paragraph 5 of the guidelines (freedom for research and creative activity)

502. Freedom of expression is guaranteed by article 100 of the Constitution. Moreover, as mentioned above, it is an underlying principle of the Norwegian Government's policy that science and culture must be available to all. The freedom to carry out scientific research and creative activity includes the freedom to exchange information and the provision of opportunities for artists and scientists to participate in national and international networks and fora. Norway has a long tradition of non-interference by the authorities in the content of teaching and research at institutions of higher education.

503. The freedom to carry out research is a prerequisite for innovation, creativity and diversity. This principle is an explicit element in Norwegian research policy, and it is acknowledged that scientific achievements are very often the result of basic research. Learned societies, academies of science and professional associations are also to a large extent given public support in order to pursue research activities.

504. The main impediment to full scientific or artistic freedom from a national point of view is financial constraints, which make it necessary to define national priority areas.

Paragraph 6 of the guidelines (international contacts and cooperation)

505. International cultural cooperation is a part of Norwegian cultural policy. The following goals have been set by the authorities: the presentation of Norwegian art and culture abroad, encouraging contact with foreign influences as an inspiration to Norwegian cultural life, the promotion of international understanding, and enhancing Norway's profile.

506. Norway is a party to a number of bilateral and multilateral agreements concerning cultural cooperation, and participates in international organizations and conferences.

507. Norway has bilateral cultural cooperation arrangements with a series of countries in different parts of the world. These involve a considerable number of exchanges relating to artists, scientists and exhibitions. The Research Council of Norway coordinates the exchange programmes.

508. Multilateral cooperation includes participation in the activities of international organizations such as the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Council of Europe and UNESCO.

509. The Nordic Council of Ministers forms the main framework for Norwegian cultural cooperation with the other Nordic countries, according to a cultural agreement signed in 1971. This includes cooperation and coordination in a number of fields, as well as the financing of joint Nordic projects and permanent institutions. Nordic cultural cooperation includes regular contacts between Nordic politicians through the Nordic Council and between civil servants from these countries.

510. Norway is actively involved in European cultural cooperation within the Council of Europe. This involves participation in the work of the steering committees for culture, sport and the media and various sub-committees in these fields.

511. High priority is given to Norwegian participation in the activities of UNESCO. Norway was a member of the Executive Board of UNESCO in 1990-1993, and Norwegian priorities within this organization are basic education for all, environmental issues, cultural heritage and cultural identity, and the cultural aspect of development.

512. Norway also appointed a national committee to promote the objectives of the United Nations Decade for Cultural Development. On the initiative of Norway and the other Nordic countries a World Commission on Culture and Development was established in 1991 under the joint auspices of UNESCO and the United Nations. Norway follows this work closely through the Norwegian Commission member.

513. The development of new knowledge and skills has always taken place across national and cultural boundaries. Research is therefore international by its very nature. Norway participates in research cooperation in a number of areas and a variety of ways through its membership of Nordic, European and global organizations and programmes. One of the tasks of the new Research Council of Norway is to increase Norwegian participation in the organizations of which Norway is a member. The main elements of the Government's policy as regards international contacts are described in the government report of 1992-1993 on research (appendix 15) and can be summarized as follows:

(a) Measures should be adopted to encourage research students and researchers to spend time in institutions in other countries. The individual Norwegian institutions have a special responsibility here. The Research Council of Norway and the Norwegian Council of Universities are responsible for helping research communities in Norway to join international networks. The various research institutions are responsible for the specific implementation of bilateral agreements with their foreign counterparts;

(b) Norway must play an active role in international forums that deal with research policy, particularly the European Environment Agency, the Nordic Council and the OECD. Research cooperation with Central and Eastern Europe is given special attention under a Norwegian assistance

programme for the period 1992-1996. Here priority is given to exchanges of personnel, the development of networks and the strengthening of subjects and disciplines which have been under political control.

514. A new strategy has been developed for bilateral cultural and scientific cooperation with developing countries, and new guidelines for research cooperation are currently being prepared. The Directorate for Development Cooperation (NORAD) is responsible for cultural exchanges with developing countries and considerable resources are allocated to research cooperation with these countries. The general objectives of Norwegian research assistance are transfers of knowledge to and competence-building within the developing countries. The main categories of research cooperation are assistance to institutions in developing countries to take part in research networks, and country support through specific cooperation programmes. Emphasis is also placed on development research in Norway.