

Athens, May 14th 2018

Open letter Concerning the Norwegian Institute at Athens

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Today's Greece is a vibrant combination of a young nation with a long and important history. The rich cultural heritage of Greece is reflected by eighteen UNESCO World Heritage Sites; at the same time, Greece is where current global events let future history unfold before the eyes of the world: economic crisis, political tensions, mass migration. Greece is not only a rich field laboratory for archaeology, but in recent years the current situation in Greece has become a case study for the crises in modern western societies. Scholars from around the world now gather in Athens to work and exchange ideas on topics ranging from the most distant past to our own present. The result is a stimulating multidisciplinary international academic arena of acute importance.

Eighteen foreign schools and institutes are recognized by the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports as official representatives of their respective nations. These research and educational institutions have been granted the unique privilege of applying for and receiving permits to do archaeological fieldwork in Greece on behalf of their nationals. All schools are required to report on their activities annually, and our privileged position in Greece is thereby a gateway not merely to bilateral, but in fact to global collaboration, always securing a world-wide audience for our efforts. Importantly, these efforts are no longer limited to archaeology. Today many of the schools have national mandates extending far beyond archaeology and the classical world. The inherent multidisciplinary character of archaeology linking humanities with social sciences as well as with life sciences and cutting edge-digital techniques has facilitated the expansion of the schools' academic competences. Balkan studies and Eastern Mediterranean perspectives are of acute importance today turning Athens into an important research hub also for anthropologists, political scientists, economists, sociologists, cultural historians, as well as more interdisciplinary studies on extremism, migration, and much more. An example, the scholarly network "Mobilities in/of Crises" co-sponsored by the British and French Schools at Athens, the British Institute at Ankara and Balkan Futures, has also had Norwegian participation. Moreover, the schools now place cultural events high on the agenda. The established network of the schools and our Greek colleagues thus support a creative climate of cultural exchange within the fields of art, architecture, cinema, literature, music, and photography, and so give ample opportunity for artistic professionals to reach a new international community. In 2018, the collaboration is in particular focused on Athens as the UNESCO Book Capital, and on 2018 as the European Year of Cultural Heritage.

We write to you as representatives of these schools, who against the background of the creative international milieu presented above are astonished to hear that the existence of the Norwegian Institute at Athens is threatened. Our colleagues at the Norwegian Institute at Athens are responsible for a highly visible Norwegian presence within both academic and cultural fields; they offer a very impressive range of activities for such a small institution. The work of the Norwegian Institute at Athens must count as an invaluable resource for both young and established scholars and artists of Norway providing first-rate library and

This open letter has been sent to:

Patron of the Norwegian Institute, Her Majesty Queen Sonja

Ministry of Culture, The Honourable Trine Skei Grande, Minister
Ministry of Education and Research, The Honourable Iselin Nybø and Jan Tore Sanner,
Ministers

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Honourable Ine Eriksen Søreide and Nikolai Astrup,
Ministers

Board of Universities Norway: Mari Sundli Tveit, Chair

The Rectors of Norwegian Universities:

Dag Rune Olsen, University of Bergen
Svein Stølen, University of Oslo
Gunnar Bovim, Norwegian University of Science and Technology
Anne Husebekk, Arctic University of Norway
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Petter Aasen, University of South-Eastern Norway
Bjørn Olsen, Nord University
Curt Rice, Oslo Metropolitan University
Mari Sundli Tveit, Norwegian University of Life Sciences
Ingunn Moser, VID Specialized University

Rectors of Norwegian University Colleges whose staff or students have used the Institute's services the past year:

Ole Gustavsen, The Oslo School of Architecture and Design
Vidar L. Haanes, Norwegian School of Theology
Kathrine Skretting, Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences
Hans Andreas Blom, Østfold University College
Jørn Mortensen, Oslo National Academy of The Arts,
Peter Tornquist, Norwegian Academy of Music

For information, in digital copy to:

Wegger Chr. Strømmen, General Secretary, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Gudmund Hernes, Research Professor, FAFO Research Foundation
Hilde Sandvik, Editor, Broen.xyz
Asle Toje, Research Director, Norwegian Nobel Institute
Knut Olav Åmås, Director, Fritt Ord Foundation

Kristoffer Solberg, Universitas
Dag Hellesund, På Høyden
Nina Kristiansen, forskning.no
Heidi Marie Lindekleiv, Vårt Land