

EDUCATION IN NORWAY

education



UTDANNINGS- OG
FORSKNINGSDEPARTEMENTET

Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research

EDUCATION IN NORWAY

Education for all is the basic principle of Norwegian educational policy. All children, regardless of social and cultural background, gender, geographical provenance and special needs, have an equal right to education. Public education in Norway is free up to and including the upper secondary level. The standard of instruction at schools and workplaces is of paramount importance for the quality of our society. It is therefore a major goal of Norway's educational policy that the educational system shall be among the best in the world both in terms of academic level and breadth of recruiting.

In order to respond constructively to social change, education must be organised within a framework of lifelong learning.

More information and useful links: ufd.dep.no

FACTS AND FIGURES

- Of a population of 4.5 million, more than 900 000 persons are currently undergoing education. In addition, every year approximately 1 million people take part in adult education courses.
- The educational level of the population has risen considerably in recent years. 56 per cent of those aged 16 and older have upper secondary education; 22 per cent have higher education (2001).
- Approximately 600 000 pupils are attending primary and lower secondary schools, while about 170 000 pupils (2002) are attending upper secondary schools.
- In January 2002 there were about 200 000 students in public universities as well as private institutions receiving public funding.
- The number of students has increased by approximately 70 per cent during the last decade.
- There are approximately 15 000 Norwegians studying abroad receiving financial support from the State Educational Loan Fund. In addition, about 5500 students receive financial support in order to participate in exchange programs or to study for parts of their degrees abroad.
- The Norwegian education budget is equal to 6.6 per cent of the gross domestic product, the average for OECD countries is 4.9 per cent (OECD).

Who is Responsible for Education in Norway?

The Norwegian Parliament (Stortinget) and the Government define the goals and decide the budgetary frameworks for education. The Ministry of Education and Research is Norway's highest public administrative agency for educational matters, and is responsible for implementing national educational policy. A common standard is ensured by way of legislation and through national curricula.

In each county, there is an Education Office representing central government. As of the 1st January 2003 the National Education Office was integrated into the Office of the County Governors. The Education Office links the Ministry of Education and Research with the education sector in municipalities and counties. The main responsibilities of the Education Offices will be reporting, inspection and supervision of existing legislation; administration; quality development; information and guidance.

An evaluation of the national educational administration is under way, in which the extent and the contents of the regional education administration are being reviewed.

This work will be concluded by the end of year 2003.

In cooperation with county and municipal authorities, the Education Office ensures that appropriate schooling is provided for children and young people, as well as providing adequate adult education facilities. The Education Office has a responsibility to ensure that compulsory education complies with the law, curricula, national and international agreements and particular focus areas.

In recent years, considerable responsibility and decision-making authority has been delegated from the central government to county authorities and municipalities. Individual municipalities are responsible for running primary and lower secondary schools, while county authorities manage upper secondary schools. Within the framework of statutes and national curricula, municipalities, schools and teachers have considerable freedom in their choice of teaching materials and methods. Each school is run by a head teacher and has various boards and committees, but also provides considerable financial support for the running of primary and secondary schools.

The State is responsible for universities and university colleges.

PRIMARY AND LOWER SECONDARY EDUCATION

The period of compulsory schooling in Norway is ten years and children start school at the age of six.

Primary and lower secondary education in Norway is founded on the principle of a unified school system, providing equal and adapted education for all on the basis of a single national curriculum. All young people are to share in a common framework of knowledge, culture and values.

Education for children in Norway was introduced in 1739. From 1889, seven years of compulsory education was provided; in 1969 this was increased to nine years and in 1997 to ten years.

Three main stages:

- Lower primary (grades 1–4)
- Upper primary (grades 5–7)
- Lower secondary (grades 8–10)

As a result of Norway's highly dispersed population, 37 % of primary and lower secondary schools are so small that children of different ages are taught in the same classroom. Primary and lower secondary levels are often combined in the same school.

Learning Objectives and Curricula

The collective objectives and principles for teaching in primary and lower secondary schools are laid down in the national curriculum. The curriculum for primary and lower secondary education includes the Core curriculum for primary and lower secondary, upper secondary and adult education, Principles and guidelines for primary and lower secondary education and Curricula are laid down for individual subjects.

The subject curricula lay down a common learning content for all pupils, which increases in scope through the school and is greatest at the lower secondary stage. This common learning content can be adapted to local conditions and to the needs of individual pupils.

The Sami Curriculum

The culture and traditions of the Sami community are part of the common Norwegian and Nordic culture that both the national curriculum and the special Sami curriculum require all pupils to be acquainted with. In areas defined as Sami, and according to specific criteria elsewhere in Norway, this teaching is given in accordance with the distinctive Sami curriculum. For Sami pupils, this teaching is intended to build a sense of security with regard to the pupils' own culture and to develop Sami language and identity, as well as equipping Sami pupils to take an active part in the community and enabling them to acquire education at all levels. State support is provided for the development of textbooks written in the Sami language.

FACTS

Approx.

3 300 schools

600 000 pupils

67 000 teachers

Building Teaching Competence

To ensure that pupils receive an education compatible with the curriculum for primary and lower secondary education, the Ministry has implemented a plan for competence building, development and experimentation.

School Subjects at Primary and Lower Secondary Levels

- Christian knowledge and religious and ethical education • Norwegian
- Mathematics • Social Studies • Arts and Crafts • Science and the Environment
- English* • Music • Home Economics • Physical Education • Compulsory additional subjects

* English is compulsory from the 1st year

In addition to the compulsory subjects, pupils are required to choose one of the following options:

- **Second foreign language.** Pupils can choose a foreign language in addition to English, e.g. German or French or another language on the basis of local or regional needs.
- **Supplementary language study.** Pupils can choose additional in-depth study of a language they already have a basic knowledge of.
- **Practical project work.** This is an activity that is planned in co-operation with the pupils.

In addition, time is set aside at all levels for school's and pupils' options. A separate quota of hours is allocated to class and pupils' council work at the lower secondary level.

For deaf pupils, curricula have been set up for Norwegian sign language as a first language; supplementary study of Norwegian Sign Language; and special syllabuses in Norwegian, English, Drama and Rhythmics.

Day-Care Facilities for School Children

From 1 January 1999, all municipalities in Norway have been legally obliged to provide day-care facilities before and after school hours for children attending the first four grades. Day-care facilities must provide amenities for play and participation in cultural and recreational activities appropriate for the age, level of physical ability and interests of the children. Such day-care facilities must also provide satisfactory development conditions for children with physical disabilities.

UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION

Upper secondary education embraces all courses leading to educational qualifications above the lower secondary level and below the level of higher education.

Since autumn 1994, everyone between the ages of 16 and 19 has had a statutory right to three years' upper secondary education leading either to higher education, vocational qualifications, or lower level qualifications. Applicants are entitled to a place on one of the three foundation courses applied for, and two years further education building on the foundation course. Those who opt for vocational training can acquire the necessary qualifications for entrance to higher education by attending an additional course in general theoretical knowledge (approx. 6 months).

County authorities are obliged by law to follow up young people between 16 and 19 who are currently neither attending a course of education or in employment.

Pupils entitled to special needs education are entitled to up to two years upper secondary education in addition to the statutory three years when needed in order to obtain the educational objectives set for each individual. This right also includes pupils entitled to tuition in sign language or 'punktskrift'.

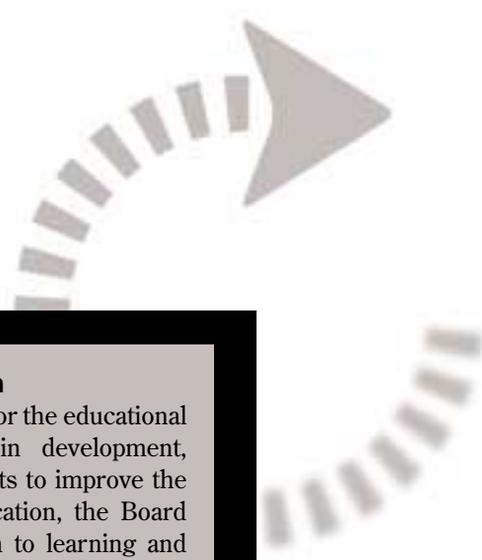
From the autumn of 2000 all adults born before the 1 January 1978 have a statutory right to upper secondary education.

FACTS

Approximately
500 upper secondary schools
170 000 pupils
32 000 apprentices
27 000 teachers

The 15 Foundation Courses are:

- General, Business and Administrative Studies
- Music, Dance and Drama
- Sport and Physical Education
- Health and Social Care
- Arts, Crafts and Design
- Agriculture, Fishing and Forestry
- Hotel and Food-Processing Trades
- Building and Construction Trades
- Technical Building Trades
- Electrical Trades
- Engineering and Mechanical Trades
- Chemical and Processing Trades
- Woodworking Trades
- Sales and Service Trades
- Media and Communications



The Norwegian Board of Education

The Board is a national resource centre for the educational sector, and has responsibilities within development, assessment and information. In its efforts to improve the quality of primary and secondary education, the Board aims to provide an integrated approach to learning and assessment and to educational research and development.
www.ls.no

General Theoretical Education and Vocational Training

Upper secondary education has been developed throughout the country in order to secure equal access to education for all. In the past, a number of different types of upper secondary school existed, providing courses of varying duration. Since 1976 Norway has had a uniform upper secondary school, combining general theoretical education and vocational training. General theoretical education and vocational training are provided side by side, often in the same school building.

During the first year, students take one of 15 foundation courses. Specialised courses are offered in the second and third year (advanced courses I and II), and in some cases apprenticeships.

Pupils receiving vocational training can normally take a trade or journeyman's examination. The training will be provided both at school and at the workplace, and involves two years tuition at school and one year's apprenticeship training, normally followed by one year's productive work.

If insufficient apprenticeships are available, the county authority must offer training at school in the form of a third year course (advanced course II). The final examination (trade or journeyman's examination) will be the same, regardless of whether training has taken place at school or at the workplace.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education consists of courses at universities and university colleges. Entry is normally gained on the basis of completed upper secondary education.

With the exception of some private university colleges, all are state-run, but have considerable academic and administrative autonomy.

The Quality Reform

The Ministry is now following up on the Norwegian Parliament's decision to implement a reform in higher education, based on the White Paper (St.meld. nr. 27, 2000-2001) entitled 'Do your duty- demand your rights'.

By way of measures relating to the content, organisation and financial administration of institutions, the reform aims to improve the quality of higher education. Universities and colleges are responsible for the quality of teaching, research and information, and will, through the reform, be given extended authority to sustain this responsibility. The Ministry will provide the framework designed to improve quality.

Universities

- University of Oslo – the oldest and largest
- University of Bergen
- Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim
- University of Tromsø

Specialised University Institutions

- Agricultural University of Norway, Ås
- Norwegian School of Economics and Business Administration, Bergen
- Norwegian Academy of Music, Oslo
- Norwegian School of Sport Sciences, Oslo
- Norwegian School of Veterinary Science, Oslo
- Oslo School of Architecture

National Institutes of the Arts:

- Bergen National Institute of the Arts
- Oslo National Institute of the Arts

Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT)

The independent national agency for quality in education is a central agency in the effort to secure quality in higher education. NOKUT shall ensure that work on quality in the institutions is carried out in accordance with the Quality Reform Programme. NOKUT has the authority to:

- Confer accreditation on new studies which the institutions themselves do not have the authority to establish
- Accreditation of national and private higher educational institutions
- Approve individual studies at private colleges which are not accredited
- Grant general approval of foreign education, and Norwegian education which is not granted by institutions under the Act on Higher Education, or the Act on Private Colleges

www.nokut.no

FACTS

- 4 universities • 6 specialised university institutions • 26 university colleges
- 2 national institutes of the arts • Approximately 20 private institutions with recognised higher education study programmes receiving state funding
- Approximately 200 000 registered students (including more than 19 500 at private higher education institutions).

Apart from teaching, universities and specialised institutions have a particular responsibility in terms of research and training of researchers through doctoral programmes. Teaching has been offered with degrees of varying length. As a result of the higher education reform, bachelor degree courses lasting three years and master degree courses lasting two years will be offered for most studies from the autumn of 2003.

Special efforts are currently being made to encourage students to register for courses in mathematics, science and technology subjects.

State University Colleges

The aim of the state university colleges is to make higher education more widely available while increasing the amount of academic expertise available to the different regions of Norway. The 26 colleges primarily offer shorter courses of a more vocational orientation than those offered by the universities. Courses normally have a duration of two to four years. In addition to teacher training and courses in engineering, health and social work and other vocational courses, the colleges offer undergraduate courses interchangeable with those offered by the universities. These make an important contribution to the decentralisation of higher education. Many students combine courses at colleges with courses at universities. Some colleges now offer graduate degree courses. Three colleges have been given the right to grant doctorates. The university colleges are also engaged in research and development work. As for the universities and specialised institutions, the higher education reform will also lead to changes in the degree structure from the autumn of 2003, with the introduction of a first degree lasting three years (bachelor) and a graduate degree lasting two years (master).



ADULT EDUCATION

Lifelong learning and educational opportunities for adults are important principles of Norwegian educational policy. The aim is to provide suitable conditions in order to strengthen the competence of the adult population.

Updated and new competence is necessary to improve competitiveness and increase flexibility in a changing working life. New competence can give individuals greater freedom of choice and possibilities to realise wishes and needs.

A major challenge in the years to come will be the work involved in implementing the Competence Reform. The reform shall aim to meet the need for new or changed competence in society, in the workplace and for the individual. One important objective is to make the workplace an active arena for learning. The Competence Reform embraces all adults and is based on interaction between several actors.

The Norwegian Parliament (Storting) has decided that all adults shall have a statutory right to primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education, and that the teaching shall be adapted to the needs of each adult. The right to upper secondary education was put into force from autumn 2000, while the right to primary and lower secondary education, put into force from autumn 2002. Non-formal learning may lead to the shortening of a course or exemption from examinations or tests.

As of August 2001, adults aged 25 and over also have the right to entry at higher education institutions on the basis of non-formal learning.

Considerable efforts have been made in recent years to improve educational opportunities for disadvantaged groups through adult education. Above all, this applies to adults with particularly weak schooling, various groups of physically disabled persons, adults with reading and writing difficulties and adult immigrants.

There are approximately 1 million participants in adult education each year. Training takes place in the public educational system, adult education associations, local folk high schools, distance education institutions and other private institutions as well as the workplace.

The municipalities are responsible for primary and lower secondary education for adults, and for training in Norwegian language and civic life for adult immigrants. County authorities are responsible for upper secondary education for adults. Over 50 000 people participate annually in adult education provided by municipal and county authorities. Adult education associations and distance education institutions also offer courses at these levels.

Adult Education Associations

An adult education association is a voluntary organisation consisting of two or more member organisations, and whose primary objective is to provide adult education courses. There are 22 adult education associations with more than 400 member organisations.

Adult education courses are offered in a wide variety of subjects, ranging from recreational courses to vocational courses and courses at university and college level. Twenty-two adult education associations receive state support to hold such courses. Annually, almost 700 000 adults participate in courses held by adult education associations, 240 000 adults participate in courses at the upper secondary level, whereas about 55 000 adults attend courses at university and college level.

Folk High Schools

Folk high schools have approximately 7 000 places distributed between about 80 schools located throughout Norway. Most of them are boarding schools that are owned and run by several different types of groups and bodies, ranging from Christian organisations to local councils and independent foundations. Folk high schools provide general courses for young people and adults, but there are no formal examinations.

Distance Education

The use of distance education is widespread in Norway. Traditionally this has consisted of correspondence courses, but a number of multimedia programmes are now offered. Each year, almost 40 000 students complete courses held by 14 authorised distance education institutions. In the coming years, distance education will play an important part in providing alternative and more flexible facilities to meet the needs for continuing education and training.

Training for the Labour Market

The labour market authorities provide training for the labour market in co-operation with the education authorities. Courses give vocational qualifications and are provided by a number of different agencies including upper secondary schools; autonomous resource centres attached to the schools; study associations; and private companies. In 2001, around 32 000 people took part in such training. The courses are fully financed by the State.

VOX - Norwegian Institute for Adult Education

VOX is a centre of development for the wider adult education field, and shall initiate and carry out research and development within the field. VOX shall participate in development and dissemination of knowledge, development programmes and network building between different organisations and institutions. The institution shall serve as a knowledge base for all those participating in education and training for adults.

COMPULSORY EDUCATION

Compulsory education consists of primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education.

Independent Schools

Independent schools are primarily intended as a supplement to state-run schools. The Ministry can give approval to schools of a denominational nature, schools that operate with alternative curricula, or schools providing instruction which normal schools are unable to give. The schools must be run within plans approved by the Ministry, and schools that do not comply with set regulations may have their approval withdrawn. Approved independent schools receive financial support from the state.

In a new proposal by the government (November 2002), the existing requirement as to purpose is suggested extended with requirements as to quality and content. This will imply that those independent schools meeting the requirements in terms of quality and content on the same level as public schools, as a rule will be approved. The right to approval is still conditioned by the fact that approval should not cause significant negative consequences for the municipalities and inhabitants concerned. The aim of the proposal is to increase diversity and freedom of choice within the education system.

There are also a number of private colleges within higher education, in particular within business and administration studies, health studies and teacher training. In connection with the Quality Reform of higher education, existing legislation is currently being reviewed.

Home and School

The National Parents' Committee for Primary and Lower Secondary Education is an advisory body for the Ministry of Education and Research. Its purpose is to promote effective forms of co-operation between home and school. The committee is responsible for promoting the interests of the parents in relation to the school.

Pupils with Special Needs

Teaching shall be adapted to the abilities and aptitudes of individual pupils and apprentices. Those who do not benefit satisfactorily from ordinary tuition have the right to special education. As far as possible, the special education that is provided shall be planned in consultation with the pupil and the parents of the pupil, and considerable emphasis shall be placed on their views.

Before the municipality or the county authority makes a decision concerning special education, an expert assessment shall be made of the pupil's specific needs. This assessment will suggest whether the pupil needs special education, and what kind of tuition should be provided. Each municipality and county authority shall provide an educational and psychological counselling service. The service shall ensure that expert assessments are prepared when this is required by the Education Act. The service shall assist the school in work on organisational development and development of expertise in order to improve the adaptation of tuition for pupils with special needs.

Language Minorities

The increase in immigration has led to a growth in the number of pupils belonging to language minorities. There is a broad political consensus that the school should cater to the needs of language minorities. Language minority pupils should be given the necessary instruction to enable them to complete upper secondary education and pursue higher education and/or a career. Under the auspices of the Nordic Council of Ministers, Nordic collaboration has been established on the education of pupils who belong to language minorities.

Study Financing

The State Educational Loan Fund was founded in 1947. The fund provides financial support to students in the form of loans and grants. Students attending upper secondary education and those attending higher education, including adults, are entitled to financial support. The fund enables people to study regardless of their social and economic background. Such support is also available for studies abroad.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

There is strong emphasis on ICT throughout the whole education sector. The purpose of ICT in education is to contribute to a system of education that develops ICT and uses it as a subject and a tool, in the way it is being organised, applied and used pedagogically. It is a key tool in achieving

- general access to relevant and new knowledge
- equal opportunities in acquiring expertise in and access to ICT, irrespective of gender, address and social situation
- flexible and user-friendly learning opportunities
- new forms of co-operation, work, learning and assessment, nationally and internationally, to provide individuals who have learning difficulties with the opportunity to improve their quality of life, learning and participation in communal and working life.

Gender Equality

Genuine gender equality is seen as an important goal for society as a whole as well as an overall goal within education.

Gender equality features as an integral part of the Education Act, within the general part of the curriculum as well as within the different subject curricula.

The learning process shall prepare girls and boys, men and women for an education and a choice of profession corresponding to their abilities and interests, irrespective of traditional gender expectations.

Training and education shall provide everyone with the same rights, obligations and opportunities for further education, family life, working life and other activities within the community.

