

# 2007 National Report on the Implementation of the Education and Training 2010 Work Programme

## Norway

<b>1. Presentation of the national lifelong learning strategy .....</b>	<b>2</b>
1.1. Current state of play .....	2
1.2. Comprehensiveness, coherence and relevance.....	3
1.3. Main policy measures.....	4
1.4. Development, implementation and dissemination of strategy .....	5
<b>2. Implementation of transversal policy objectives .....</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1. Qualification frameworks.....	6
2.2. Identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning.....	6
2.3. Lifelong guidance policies and systems.....	7
2.4. Measures to reinforce transnational mobility.....	7
<b>3. Implementation of policy objectives .....</b>	<b>7</b>
3.1. All levels .....	7
3.2. Schools .....	12
3.3. Higher education .....	15
3.4. Vocational education and training and adult learning.....	16

# **1. Presentation of the national lifelong learning strategy**

## **1.1. Current state of play**

The Norwegian strategy for lifelong learning is formulated in the enclosed document, entitled “Strategy for lifelong learning in Norway”. This strategy builds on and incorporates policy making processes which date back to the late nineties, when the Competence Reform put adult education and lifelong learning firmly on the political agenda. The objective of the Competence Reform was to satisfy the demand for competence in working life, by society and by the individual. Among the most important features of the reform were: an individual right to educational leave, a system for documentation and validation of non-formal and informal learning, and the right to upper secondary education and training for adults who have not had such an opportunity earlier. Some years later, adults without primary and/or lower secondary education were given a right to such education, on certain conditions.

One result of the work on the Competence Reform was that the concept of lifelong learning at the beginning of the new millennium was often closely associated with continuing education and training and with competence development in working life. However since then, lifelong learning has been further developed as a “perspective from cradle to grave” which also formed the basis of the subsequent educational reforms after the year 2000.

Many of the objectives of the Quality Reform in higher education (2003) were determined from the perspective of lifelong learning. Through the reform, a new degree system (bachelor, master and PhD following the 3+2+3 system) as well as a unified grading scale (A-F, based on that of the ECTS system, as opposed to several parallel systems before) were introduced, making it easier, both nationally and internationally, to validate qualifications. The reform has also led to more emphasis on relevance to working life and more coherent study programmes.

Currently a reform of primary and secondary education called the Knowledge Promotion Reform is being implemented. It focuses very strongly on one main element of lifelong learning: the importance of having substantial basic skills. These skills are defined as the ability to express oneself orally; the ability to read; the ability to do mathematics; the ability to express oneself in writing, and the ability to use digital tools. The skills are included in each subject’s core curriculum, thus making all teachers responsible for pupils and apprentices developing their basic skills through work in the various subjects. The new curricula also have clear objectives for what the pupils are to master at various stages. In addition, the study structure in upper secondary education is being simplified, with fewer and broader education programmes and greater flexibility as regards adapting the education for the individual pupil, school, apprentice and training establishment.

The goal of the recently introduced Kindergarten Act (2005) is to ensure full kindergarten coverage, high quality and low fees. A new framework plan for the contents and tasks of kindergartens has focused on improving the quality of kindergartens. From October 2005 the governmental responsibility for the early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector in Norway was transferred from the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs to the Ministry of Education and Research. One of the rationales for this transfer was to see ECEC as society’s first institution to support children’s lifelong learning.

In the Government's Report to the Parliament of December 2006, also referred to as White Paper no. 16 (2006-2007) *Early Intervention for Lifelong Learning*, the dominant perspective is—as the title indicates—lifelong learning, in the sense of learning “from cradle to grave”. In this White Paper, the Government places special emphasis on the importance of including all children in good learning communities in kindergartens and primary and lower secondary schools, as a foundation for developing basic skills and learning one's whole life through. The White Paper presents the Government's proposals for future work concerning basic skills, career guidance and adult learning, etc.

The Norwegian strategy for lifelong learning consists of all the processes mentioned above, all of which are fairly recent, the latest being White Paper no. 16 (2006-2007) which was presented on 15 December 2006. In its new Strategy for Lifelong Learning, the Ministry has sought to bring together all these reforms and changes in one document. For the sake of comprehensiveness and overview, we have in preparation for this reporting exercise produced the synthesis report “Strategy for Lifelong Learning in Norway”.

The sector reforms of recent years (the Quality Reform and the Knowledge Promotion Reform) are subject to ongoing evaluation, and adjustments will be made when the results of these evaluations are ready. The strategy for lifelong learning will be an important frame of reference when the necessary adjustments are to be made, and the strategy itself will be subject to adjustment as part of this process, probably within a few years' time.

The most prevalent obstacle related to lifelong learning has been the all-encompassing nature of the concept “lifelong learning” itself. As defined by the EU, it seems to insist on priority over each and all of the sectors within education and working life. However, these sectors have a degree of autonomy by way of legislation and bureaucratic procedures which make the implied degree of coherence and coordination difficult to achieve.

The collaboration between the government and the social partners has yielded very strong results, in particular during the Competence Reform. But some issues were not solved, such as financing pay during continuing education and training for employees.

## **1.2. Comprehensiveness, coherence and relevance**

The “Strategy for lifelong learning in Norway” covers all levels of education. The development from the Competence Reform for adults (1997/98), via the Quality Reform (2003), the Kindergarten Act (2005), the Knowledge Promotion (2006) to the White Paper on Early Intervention (2006), indicates how areas of priority in the promotion of lifelong learning have changed over time, how the different levels of the education system must increasingly be seen in conjunction with each other, and how awareness of the importance of early efforts in the lifelong learning process has gradually increased.

The overarching challenges addressed by the strategy are:

- 1) The need for focus on basic competences in all levels of education
- 2) Recognition of non-formal and informal learning
- 3) Demand for more flexible learning methods and arenas
- 4) Improved quality of and access to career guidance
- 5) More emphasis on working life as a learning arena

The priorities for action and policy development in the light of these challenges are addressed and elaborated on in chapter 1.3.

### **1.3. Main policy measures**

Policy measures have been developed for all five of the overarching challenges listed under pp 1.2., and the following is an outline of these measures. Included in these measures are efforts to change attitudes to learning and strengthen evidence based policy making, as well as any target needs of special groups. In Norway, the allocation of resources to the strategy for lifelong learning follows the ordinary process of the state budget. No extra funding has so far been specifically allocated to the strategy. Norway has not yet adopted the EU benchmarks. All five of the EU benchmarks are relevant in the Norwegian policy context, but Norway has not made specific goals for measuring these goals by 2010.

#### **Basic competences<sup>1</sup>**

The challenges related to basic competencies are illustrated in that there are too many pupils in Norwegian schools who have poor basic skills – and this follows them throughout life. In addition, there is a lack of knowledge about the learning needs of adults and available education and courses for adults with poor basic skills are not sufficiently motivating. We also have insufficient knowledge about the quality and competence in kindergartens.

Major policy measures:

- Early interventions, such as language stimulation in kindergartens
- The Knowledge Promotion Reform in primary and secondary education
- “The Knowledge Promotion for Adults”- a set of actions concerning adults in White Paper no. 16, including a financing programme for providers of courses in basic competences for adults, and an information campaign designed to change attitudes to learning
- Compulsory Norwegian and civics courses for recent immigrants

#### **Recognition of non-formal and informal learning**

Recognition of all types of learning is essential for a fully developed lifelong learning strategy, and Norway has been in the forefront in developing a system for recognition and valuation of non-formal and informal learning. However, there are challenges: The system for documentation is insufficiently developed, there is a lack of uniform practice across regions, and the reporting routines are not adequate, particularly at the upper secondary level. The services that exist are not sufficiently marketed towards target groups, and there is a need for further cooperation between sectors. (Access to higher education is described in 3.1.3.)

Major policy measures:

- Strengthening of the information and guidance services
- New methods of cooperation between education, working life and the NGO sector.
- New measures for uniform practice
- New reporting and data collection routines

#### **More flexible learning methods and arenas**

The Norwegian educational system has many flexible features, such as open learning pathways and few dead ends, extended use of ICT for the purpose of decentralized education,

---

<sup>1</sup> For definitions of the use of the terms “basic competence” and “basic skills” in this report, please refer to the enclosed document “Strategy for Lifelong Learning in Norway”.

and an integrated use of working life as a learning arena in regular vocational education and training. It is a challenge that available primary and secondary education is insufficiently adapted for adults, and also that Norwegian classes for pupils from minority language backgrounds do not quite function according to the intention. On the institutional side, there is limited focus on continuing education for the private sector in public Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), and there are relatively few incentives for HEIs to prioritize this. In addition, there is no legislation or national policies regarding the adult learner's income during continuing education and training.

Major policy measures:

- A shift in focus from pedagogic methods to competence objectives in primary and secondary education
- New curricula for Norwegian courses for pupils from minority language backgrounds
- A new survey on teaching pupils from minority language backgrounds
- A strengthening of primary and secondary education for adults
- A review of the role of public HEIs in providing continuing education
- New legislation on non-discrimination and accessibility
- Strengthening school and public libraries as learning arenas

### **Career Guidance**

Challenges include that the services in the various sectors are not coordinated well enough, and a high number of counsellors have insufficient competence. There is a lack of services aimed at adults, as well as a lack of reporting and data collection routines.

Major policy measures:

- An evaluation of the pilot programmes of regional partnerships for career guidance with a view to nationwide implementation
- The establishment of a national authority for career guidance is to be considered
- A strengthening of the school counselling service, including competence development for career counsellors.
- Further development of Internet services for career guidance
- Systematic follow-up of work done by HEIs with respect to career guidance

### **Working life as a learning arena**

There is a general need for improved collaboration between education and working life. We know that people with little education take little part in learning activities, as do senior workers. There is not enough positive focus on the uses of learning, and some sectors are not sufficiently learning intensive.

Major policy measures:

- New programmes for basic competence courses in working life.
- Collaboration with the social partners on increased learning work in the enterprises
- Strengthened research on learning in working life

## **1.4. Development, implementation and dissemination of strategy**

The ministry have employed a wide range of consultation approaches for all the processes listed in Chapter 1.1. The Competence Reform, the Quality Reform, the Kindergarten Act, the Knowledge Promotion Reform and White Paper no. 16 were all sent to the various

communities of relevant stakeholders for a thorough consultation before implementation. Moreover, the implementation of the various aspects of the Quality Reform was developed in 19 working groups that all had sector representation.

Regarding the “Strategy for lifelong learning in Norway”, the various stakeholders have been involved in the making of the strategy by way of an open seminar and an informal hearing. The social partners and other stakeholders are also consulted and informed in preparing for meetings in the ETCG group. The strategy has been printed and distributed to relevant parties, and will be formally launched at a seminar in Oslo in spring 2007.

## **2. Implementation of transversal policy objectives**

### **2.1. Qualification frameworks**

Norway has decided to implement the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (the Bologna Process) in accordance with the declaration of the 2005 Bergen Ministerial Conference. As a follow-up to this decision, a working group with all relevant stakeholders has developed a proposal for a national qualifications framework for higher education which will be sent for formal consultation in spring 2007.

Norway took part in the consultation process on the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) in 2005 and welcomed the proposal. In the response to the Commission, Norway underlined that the EQF had to be compatible with the Bologna Qualifications Framework for higher education and that projects to develop and test the EQF were necessary.

Concerning an overarching national qualifications framework for lifelong learning, this matter has to be further discussed in Norway. It has been decided to start working on a proposal for a national qualifications framework for vocational education and training, and to start a pilot project for testing the EQF in certain sectors. This work will be undertaken in close collaboration with the social partners.

Norway is participating in two of the Leonardo da Vinci projects on EQF. The School Students Organisation in Norway is participating in the project where stakeholders are discussing experiences and examining challenges in establishing a national qualifications framework, and the Ministry of Education and Research is participating in the Nordic project where different themes related to implementation of EQF will be discussed during 2007-2008. The overall aim of this project is to make sure that decisions regarding the EQF in the Nordic countries are well founded.

Decisions on how to implement the EQF will be taken on the basis of analyses of the different project results.

### **2.2. Identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning**

According to the Regulations to the Education Act it is possible for persons who have not attended Upper Secondary Education and Training to have their competence assessed in relation to the Knowledge Promotion Reform’s competence aims. The County Municipalities are responsible for this assessment, where a person’s competence is to be considered in comparison to the ordinary teaching and training in Upper Secondary Education and Training.

In higher education, the system of validation of informal and non-formal learning functions adequately as far as access is concerned (as reported previously), but the system does not seem to be well enough known in relation to recognition of parts of courses or programmes, as there are very few applications to this end. For more on this subject, see 1.3.

### **2.3. Lifelong guidance policies and systems**

Today, guidance services in Norway are for the most part organized within each sector. The counselling services in lower and upper secondary schools provide counselling for pupils, to which they have statutory rights. Academic counselling services and career services in HEIs cater for applicants, students and graduates. The public employment offices are responsible for providing guidance to job seekers. In White Paper no. 16 (2006-2007), the government proposes a series of actions to strengthen each of these services, and to tie them closer together by way of national and regional coordination measures. For more information on these actions, see chapter 1.

### **2.4. Measures to reinforce transnational mobility**

For more than a decade, Norwegian students in higher education have benefited from worldwide portability of loans and grants through the State Educational Loan Fund. (In the preceding decades, the portability was restricted in terms of geography (Europe and North America) and eligibility of study programmes.) In addition, since 2002, also as previously reported, student mobility is encouraged through a result-based compensation in the framework allocation to the higher education institutions (in 2007, NOK 5800, approximately €710, for each in- and outgoing student).

Norway is fully integrated in education and research cooperation with the EU through the EEA-Agreement, various bilateral agreements and national action plans. Norway participates in the new Lifelong Learning Programme through the EEA-Agreement, and fully partakes in the four sectoral sub-programmes – Comenius, Leonardo da Vinci, Erasmus and Grundtvig. The Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education (SIU) is the Norwegian National Agency (NA) for the programme.

## **3. Implementation of policy objectives**

### **3.1. All levels**

#### **3.1.1. Governance and leadership**

According to the Kindergarten Act<sup>2</sup> of 2005 all kindergartens (ECEC institutions) should have adequate pedagogical and administrative leadership. Kindergartens shall have a head teacher who is a trained pre-school teacher (Bachelor's degree) or has other college education that gives qualifications for working with children and pedagogical expertise.

There has since the early 1990s been a gradual development from an input to an outcome based system in **Primary and Secondary Education** in Norway. A new curriculum comprising learning outcome based objectives was introduced in the Upper Secondary

---

<sup>2</sup> Act no 64 of June 2005 relating to Kindergartens

Education Reform of 1994, and in primary and lower secondary education within the Reform of 1997. Little information on the effect of learning outcome based curricula existed in Norway in the 1990s, and participation in PISA 2000 thus represented the first step in the development of a systematic monitoring of learning outcomes in Norwegian schools. The new comprehensive reform in primary and secondary education, the Knowledge Promotion Reform, has taken effect from the autumn of 2006. The aim of the Knowledge Promotion Reform is to sustain and develop the best basic education system possible with a view to ensuring pupils' ability to meet the challenges of the knowledge society. In the new curricula (LK06) the learning objectives are defined as Competence Aims at stated levels. The objectives are designed to provide a suitable basis for discussion among all those involved in the learning process.

The Act on Vocational Colleges of 2003<sup>3</sup> regulates short (six months to two years) **vocational education** that builds upon upper secondary education or equivalent competence. The Act formally established vocational college education as a shorter and more professionally-oriented alternative to higher education, the aim being to contribute to the growth of shorter forms of training that are more flexible and relevant to the labour market. Vocational colleges (post-secondary non-tertiary education, ISCED 4) are administered in close connection to upper secondary education (technical and maritime programmes), or else through private provisions. On 30 March 2007, a Bill was presented to the Storting (Parliament), proposing amendments in the Act on Vocational Colleges relating to governance, to recognition and to funding.

In **Higher Education**, as a result of a new act on higher education in 2005, public (i.e. state) and private higher education institutions are integrated into a common regulatory framework. Previously, there were separate laws for public and private higher education. According to the 2005 Act, higher education institutions are free to choose between two forms of governance: either keep the old system with a board headed by the Rector of the institution, or else have a board chaired by a person recruited externally, in which case the Rector is not a member of the board. Through the Quality Reform (see previous report), the accredited higher education institutions<sup>4</sup> were given significantly more autonomy, e.g. in terms of introduction and repeal of courses.

### 3.1.2. Stimulating private investments

The main measures to stimulate private investment in higher education were made in the period covered by the previous report. These were on the one hand a change to net budgeting of the higher education institutions, and on the other legal changes relating to innovation and knowledge transfer. In 2002, the legislation on higher education was amended, and in 2003, the employees' invention law was amended. The former involves a set of changes that effectively expands the societal responsibilities of higher education institutions as regards the promotion of practical applications of research methods and results, especially in industry. The latter was an amendment of the employment law<sup>5</sup> governing control of employee inventions, from which academic researchers had so far explicitly been exempted. The measure removes the 'professor's privilege' from the legal corpus, thus placing responsibility

---

<sup>3</sup> Act No 56 of 20 June 2003 relating to Vocational Education and Training

<sup>4</sup> All the public higher education institutions and, as of March 2007, three private ones.

<sup>5</sup> Proposition No. 67 to the Odelsting (2001–2002). Amendment to increase the commercial exploitation of inventions. This amendment changes the 'professor's privilege' (lærerunntaket) of Act No. 21 of 17 April 1970 relating to the right to inventions made by employees.

for commercialisation of academic research on the universities. The implementation of the regulation substantially changes the basis for commercializing academic research in Norway, enabling HEIs to keep revenue from commercial activities. State higher education institutions cannot charge tuition fees for ordinary studies covered by the funding through the framework allocations.

### 3.1.3. Widening access and improving equity

The cultural and linguistic diversity in Norway is increasing. From 1980 to 2006 there has been a tripling of the immigrant population in Norway. The possibilities of success in society, however, are not the same for minority language pupils as for majority language pupils. The first group (both first and second generations) consistently show poorer results than majority language pupils and students. This is the main reason why the *Strategic Plan for Equal Education in Practice* was implemented in 2003, running from 2004-2009 with a revised edition published in February 2007. The plan includes a range of measures to be implemented in order to improve the situation for these pupils with the aim of reducing the gap in educational achievements between the minority and majority pupils and students.

The Norwegian Government's goal for the ECEC sector is full access for all children whose parents want so by end of 2007. The coverage was 76,2 per cent for children 1-5 years by the end of 2005. Preliminary data from Statistics Norway 15 March 2007 show a coverage of 80,4 per cent by end of 2006 (62 per cent for children under the age of three and 93 per cent for children over the age of three). The Government is considering a legal right for all children to attend kindergarten. The government is also considering the possibility of giving local authorities a legal obligation to give children who need it special language stimulation. This would be an obligation whether the child attends kindergarten or not.

According to the **Kindergarten Act**, children with disabilities and children who are object of an administrative decision pursuant to the Child Welfare service Act shall be entitled to priority for admission to kindergarten. The rationale for this legislation is that the children mentioned might have special educational needs, and that kindergarten will give them the possibility for play and interaction with other children and with a skilled staff in order to promote their development in the best way possible. Even if children from ethnic and cultural minorities are not specially mentioned for these admission criteria, the Act states that kindergartens shall take account of children's functioning, gender, and social, ethnic and cultural background. For immigrant children, the kindergarten has a dual function in terms of language development. Kindergartens can stimulate both mother tongue and the Norwegian language. Minority language children are about 9 per cent of all children in Norway 1-5 years. According to the Education Act<sup>6</sup> Section 5-7 children with specific needs have a legal right to special education/special educational help before school age.

For **Primary and Secondary Education**, research states that to teach and train minority language pupils in Norwegian is a crucial task. Since minority language pupils have lower learning outcomes in the performance of written and oral Norwegian, this training will need to be improved. One measure to ensure this is to implement a new level based curriculum in basic Norwegian for this group of pupils. In the autumn of 2007, we will implement a new curriculum for minority native languages, and the use of diagnostic and screening tests for the schools will take place. The teachers will be given support for further education courses in order to be prepared for these initiatives.

---

<sup>6</sup> Act no. 17 July 1998 No 61 relating to Primary and Secondary Education

Thus, the most important objectives for the *Strategic Plan for Equal Education in Practice* are to improve the language skills and learning outcomes among minority language pupils, and to increase the number of minority language pupils and apprentices initiating and completing upper secondary education and training. It is also important that more students from minority language backgrounds partake in and complete higher education. An essential part of this is to improve the skills in Norwegian in order to increase the possibilities for education and active participation in the working and community life.

Since 2001, applicants can be admitted to **Higher Education**, without sufficient formal entrance qualifications on the basis of age (25 years or more), and a combination of formal, informal and non-formal learning. (See previous reporting). It should also be noted that since 1992, adults aged 23+ can be admitted to higher education on the basis of five years of education and/or work experience and prescribed minimum levels in six core subjects from upper secondary school. For other aspects relating to widening access to higher education, see section 3.4.6 Enhancing access for disadvantaged groups.

#### 3.1.4. Gender aspects

Equal opportunities and gender parity is a key principle in the Norwegian educational policy and included in the *Education Act*. The aspect of gender is integrated in the education in general as part of the emotional and intellectual growth of the pupils, and in the teaching of all the subject matters. Teachers work to implement awareness of gender disparities in the school tasks, and encourage pupils to oppose discrimination of either sex.

In general, access to **Kindergartens** promotes gender equality since it allows both parents to fully partake in education and working life. The Ministry also has an *Action Plan* for equality between the genders in kindergartens (2004-2007). It is a goal that 20 per cent of the kindergarten staff should be male. The children should be raised to practice equality between the genders. Boys and girls shall have the same opportunities to be seen and heard, and shall be encouraged to participate jointly in all activities at kindergartens.

In order to ensure gender parity in **Primary and Secondary Education**, continuous work is being performed aiming at boys and girls to achieve equal opportunities in education and in working life. This includes that they shall know their lawful rights, privileges and obligations, and the encouragement of mutual respect between the sexes. The aim is also to encourage boys and girls to make conscious educational choices. A *Strategic Plan for Equity in Primary and Secondary Education* is planned for 2007-1011, and measures include the importance of emphasising non-traditional choices of education and career for pupils in and after upper secondary education and training. Various measures have already been implemented to help the young make reflected choices about secondary education, professional and higher education – beyond the traditional gender barriers and according to their own interests and talents.

Although about 60 per cent of the student body in **Higher Education** are female, both the Norwegian education system and the labour market are characterised by strong gender differences. Women dominate in social, health and medical studies, in teaching, in the humanities and in social sciences, while men still dominate in natural sciences, mathematics and information technology. Among academic staff at the higher education institutions, although the share of female graduates at the doctoral level increased from 31 per cent in

1995 to 40 percent in 2005, and the total share of women among higher education staff was 41 per cent in 2005, and only 17 percent of the full professors were women.

In 2004, a committee for Women in Science was nominated for a 3-year period to coordinate measures relating to gender issues among higher education academic staff. The committee presented its final report in February 2007, which includes proposals for a number of measures to promote gender equality at higher education institutions – in terms of budgetary measures, more targeted research, as well as integration of gender equality measures both in higher education governance and in quality assurance and accreditation criteria. To follow up on the work and ensure continued focus on gender equality in academia, the Ministry will shortly nominate a new "Women in Science" committee for the period up to 2010.

### 3.1.5. Learning outcome based approaches

*The Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens*, which is a regulation to the Kindergarten Act, provides guidelines on the values, content and tasks of kindergartens. The Framework Plan describes the societal role of kindergartens. Kindergartens' programmes shall be built on a holistic pedagogical philosophy, with care, play and learning being at the core of activities. Social and linguistic skills, as well as seven learning areas, are also important to the pedagogical environment provided by kindergartens. The plan emphasises the importance of adults' attitudes, knowledge and ability to relate to and understand children, so that they can bring up children to participate actively in a democratic society. The plan focuses both on the present and on the future. Each of the seven learning areas covers a wide range of learning. There are goals for the work within each learning area, in order to promote the development and learning of children, and to clarify the responsibilities of the staff. The aims that focus on children's experiences and learning, are expressed as process aims, not outcome aims.

The education and training reform, **the Knowledge Promotion Reform for Primary, Lower and Upper Secondary Education and Training** was introduced in August 2006. The reform consists of new curricula and structures and objectives for the three levels of education and training. Both increased flexibility and focus on basic skills have been cornerstones of the reform. Specific objectives have become more significant, and there is a focus on improved awareness of achievement of the objectives. The new curriculum consists of three parts: **The Core Curriculum, the Quality Framework** and **the Subject Curricula**. The new curriculum is elaborated on in chapter 3.2.2.

In **Higher Education**, the systematic use of learning outcome based approaches will be introduced through the establishment of a national qualifications system framework based on that of the European Higher Education Area, see section 2.1.

### 3.1.6. Quality assurance systems

The municipalities are responsible for the supervision of **kindergartens**, and there are no national quality assurance systems in the ECEC sector. The County Governors are responsible for the supervision of the municipalities regarding their obligations. The Framework Plan states that all kindergartens should assess their work regularly, and the Kindergarten act states that staffing must be sufficient for the staff to carry out satisfactory pedagogical activity.

In **Primary and Secondary Education**, national tests in basic skills, reading in Norwegian and English, and mathematics will be introduced in 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade in 2007. In general there is consensus that it is a matter of common interest and responsibility to continuously improve

the quality of education and training. New mapping tests in reading and arithmetic will be implemented in 2008 at 2nd grade in primary school. In addition to the national tests, systems of quality assurance have also been established through a focus on learning environment, student involvement, guiding and counselling, and the social environment of the institutions.

One of the intentions with the *Knowledge Promotion Reform* is to increase the learning outcomes for the pupils. Continuous formative subject related assessment is the best basis for motivation and personal development to attain a best possible learning outcome for the individual pupil and apprentice. It is of crucial importance that teachers have competence in assessing the pupils the right way. Measures to increase the teachers' assessment competence will therefore be introduced in order to improve the system for documentation. The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training has been given the responsibility to develop a new system for individual assessment. The social partners are involved in the work to develop appropriate measures. Some measures will be implemented in the autumn of 2007.

Since 1 January 2004, the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT, see below) is responsible for the recognition of **vocational college education** programmes (ISCED 4).

The Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (*Nasjonalt organ for kvalitet i utdanningen*, abbreviated NOKUT) is also responsible for quality assurance and accreditation of Higher Education. NOKUT is an independent government body which began its work in January 2003 (see previous report). Its role is to supervise and develop the quality of higher education at national level through evaluation, accreditation and recognition of institutions and course provision. NOKUT is governed by a board, which has the overall responsibility for the Agency's activities and decisions. All material connected with evaluations and accreditations, such as the appointment of experts, institutional applications, the experts' report and NOKUT's decisions, is made public. From 1 August 2005, all higher education institutions offering accredited education are obliged to have an internal quality assurance system. In 2007, NOKUT itself will be subjected to an external evaluation. This will be done in accordance with the European Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance adopted by the Bergen Ministerial Conference. The evaluator will be chosen through a call for tender (deadline for proposals 23 April 2007).

#### 3.1.7. Learning partnerships with stakeholders

Transparency and involvement in decision-making processes are important parts of the quality assurance system. This includes keeping a close relationship to all relevant stakeholders, such as: Social Partners including the Teachers' Associations, the Pupils' Association, the School Owners, the Parents and the Pupils, Research Institutions, the NGO sector, and the Adult Education Associations.

## 3.2. Schools

### 3.2.1. Increasing investment in and strengthening pre-primary education

Since this Government took office, the state budget to support the establishment and running of kindergartens is increased from one year to the next. In 2007 the government spends approximately 18 billion NOK for kindergartens. The Kindergarten Act states that kindergartens must lay a sound foundation for children's lifelong learning. *The Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens* was new in 2006. Even if the children's

learning outcomes are not tested, all children should have the possibility to develop their potentials.

### 3.2.2. Modernising curricula and assessments

The new curriculum for **Primary and Secondary Education** was developed as part of the *Knowledge Promotion Reform*, and consists of three parts: The *Core Curriculum*, the *Quality Framework* and the *Subject Curricula*.

- **The Core Curriculum** constitutes the binding foundation and values for primary, secondary, upper secondary and training.
- **The Quality Framework** states the responsibility for school and training establishments to organize and adapt the teaching and learning processes for the purpose of developing broad competences for pupils and apprentices. Key Competences are integrated into the Quality Framework, such as learning strategies (learning to learn), social competences, cultural competences, motivation to learn, and pupil participation.
- **Basic Skills** are integrated in all subjects from grade one and taught across subject-specific curricula. The skills comprise: The ability to express oneself orally; the ability to read; the ability to do mathematics; the ability to express oneself in writing, and the ability to use digital tools.
- **Subject Curricula** includes clear objectives for pupils' and apprentices' competence (learning outcome) after 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade, as well as after every stage in Upper Secondary Education and Training. Continuity and coherence are emphasised in the learning outcome objectives, however, decisions on how to organize and adapt the teaching and learning methods, are made locally.

### 3.2.3. Specific learning/training needs of teachers

In 2006 and 2007 about 50 million NOK in the Norwegian state budget is earmarked for raising the competence of the ECEC staff. In March 2007 the Ministry established the *National strategy for competence development in the ECEC sector 2007 – 2010*. The social partners in the sector participated in the work on the strategy. The Ministry wants to develop the kindergartens as learning organisations with an active approach to competence development. The priority areas of the strategy are pedagogical leadership, children's participation, language environment and language stimulation and cooperation between kindergarten and school. The strategy describes the responsibilities of the different partners within the sector and demands that the different partners should participate and create a common understanding of the goals for the raising of competence.

*The National Strategy for Competence Development Plan for 2005 -2008* – a twelve-point plan agreed upon by all the social partners – includes a range of different initiatives to navigate teachers' changing roles in the knowledge based society. The plan comprises relevant fields of further and continuing education and training related to the implementation of the *Knowledge Promotion Reform*. Examples of fields of further and continuing education are the development of improved cultures for learning; how to navigate the new subject curricula; foreign language training; and improved counselling and career guidance.

The main target groups for this plan are:

- School administrators and pedagogic leaders
- Teachers in primary and secondary education and training
- Professional leaders and instructors for training in training establishments within IVT
- Staff in the Pedagogical – Psychological Services

- Staff in the county municipal Follow Up service

The aim of the plan is that the staff in the primary, lower and upper secondary education and training should attain a competence ensuring that the pupils and the apprentices receive individually adapted training. They should also have the possibilities of developing their abilities and talents in accordance with the *Core Curriculum*, the *Quality Framework* and the *Subject Curricula*. Through a promotion of competence, school leaders, teachers and instructors shall be stimulated to face the future challenges connected to changes in content and structure of the *Knowledge Promotion Reform*. National educational resource centres have been established with a view to promoting and strengthening certain subjects and study areas, e.g. mathematics and science, reading education and research, multicultural education, foreign languages, ICT, New Norwegian (the second official language in Norway), as well as arts and culture.

#### 3.2.4. Measures to reduce early school leaving and increase completion rates

The Competence Reform and the Knowledge Promotion Reform both include measures aimed at reducing school leaving. The underlying focus on basic skills, as well as the forming of national strategies to ensure follow-up of the goals of the reforms, contribute to obtaining the goals of these measures. Some of the new initiatives are described in the following.

The strategy *Make Space for Reading – Strategy for Stimulating a Love of Reading and Reading Skills 2003-2007* has been an important initiative to stimulate a love of reading and reading skills. The main aims of the strategy are to improve reading skills and the motivation to read among children and young people; improve teachers' reading-teaching skills; provision of literature and use of libraries; and to increase society's awareness of reading as a basis for participation in working life and in a democratic society. *The Make Space for Reading Plan* must be seen in connection with the implementation of the *Knowledge Promotion Reform* of 2006. With the reform, all teachers are responsible for reading, since it is a basic skill in all subjects.

The policy plan *Languages Open Doors (2005-2009)* covers all foreign languages, its general objective being "Improved skills in more foreign languages for pupils, apprentices and teachers in primary and secondary education, and an increased interest in and motivation for language teaching".

*The Strategy Plan for Joint Promotion of Mathematics, Science and Technology (MST)* has been implemented because Norway is facing a situation where the needs for expertise in mathematics and a number of natural sciences and technological fields are not being met. This means that the educational system is not providing sufficient MST competence. The present government has included a goal of strengthening the MST competence throughout the whole educational pathway and increasing the efforts to recruit students to these subjects, in its inaugural declaration. The Strategy Plan was launched in 2002 and the present version is running from 2006-2009. The following key target areas are given particular emphasis:

- National Forum for MST in working life and education
- Development of local interaction between education and trade and industry
- Establishment of student projects for inclusion and recruitment to MST
- Increased number of instruction hours in mathematics and natural sciences in primary, lower and upper secondary education
- Development of MST competence for teachers and kindergarten staff

- Evaluation of funding schemes for increasing the number of candidates who want to become teachers specialising in MST
- Development programme for good methods of learning and working in MST
- Use of the International Polar Year 2007-2008 to promote interest in MST in society

### 3.3. Higher education

#### 3.3.1. Measures to reinforce the knowledge triangle (education, research and innovation)

As part of the follow-up of a White Paper on research in 2005, it was decided to launch a call for proposals for **Centres for Research-based Innovation (CRIs)**. In June 2006, the Research Council of Norway (RCN) invited 14 CRI-applicants to establish such centres. The total budget allocation for the 14 centres will amount to 1120 M NOK over the eight-year life span of the CRIs. Each centre receives an allocation from the Research Council of roughly 10 M NOK per year (approximately €1.2 million), and the host institution and partners must contribute with at least the same amount as RCN. The main objective of the centres is to enhance the capability of the business sector to innovate by focusing on long-term research based on forging close alliances between research-intensive enterprises and prominent research groups. The CRI scheme will:

- Encourage enterprises to innovate by placing stronger emphasis on long-term research and by making it attractive for enterprises that work on the international arena to establish R&D activities in Norway.
- Facilitate active alliances between innovative enterprises and prominent research groups.
- Promote the development of industrially oriented research groups that are on the cutting edge of international research and are part of strong international networks.
- Stimulate researcher training in fields of importance to the business community, and encourage the transfer of research-based knowledge and technology.

The host institution for a centre can be a university, a university college or a research institute, or an enterprise with a strong research activity. Five of the 14 centres are hosted by universities.

#### 3.3.2. Participation targets and how to meet them

In higher education, there is no overall participation target for the sector as such, only concrete participation targets in the field of health and medical studies (medicine, psychology, nursing, etc.). These education programmes must fulfil a specific number of 60 ECTS credit units. These required ECTS-credit units are set yearly in the State budget. In addition, the participation targets of the various study programmes concerned are discussed in the yearly annual consultative meetings between the Ministry and the HEIs.

It should also be noted that the performance-based funding system that was introduced in HE in Norway in 2002 comprises a general encouragement for increased participation, as around 40 percent of the funding are now distributed on the basis of achievement on different indicators and around 25 percent of the grant to the institutions are distributed on the basis of the number of ECTS-credits obtained by the students at each institution.

### 3.3.3. Measures to increase excellence

In 2003, the Research Council of Norway initiated a *Centres of Excellence* (CoE) scheme, with the intention to bring more Norwegian researchers and research groups up to a high international standard. The centres are devoted to long-term, basic research, and only institutions carrying out scientific work at the highest international level are awarded status as CoEs. The scheme initially comprised 13 centres. These CoEs receive funding of NOK 6 to 20 million (approximately €735 000 to €2.45 million) per year and have an annual budget framework of NOK 155 million (€19 million).

With the addition of eight new CoEs in December 2006, over NOK 235 million (approximately €29 million) will be allocated annually to the scheme. Six of the new CoEs are located in Oslo, one is in Bergen, and one in Tromsø. In a midway evaluation conducted by the Research Council, and finalised in 2006, nine of the first 13 Norwegian Centres of Excellence (CoE) are ranked as exceptionally good. Four of the centres scored slightly lower, primarily because they could be better organised.

The evaluation was designed to assess the scientific quality and activities of the individual centres, both in absolute terms and as compared to the centres' original research plans. The evaluation committee consisted of nine scientists from several European countries; none of whom were Norwegian. In its report, the evaluation committee states that all 13 CoEs have had a positive impact on the research communities within which they have been established. They have spawned cooperation and interaction between different research fields and across departments and faculties. The Research Council will use the evaluation as a basis for determining whether all the centres should retain their status as CoEs for the entire ten-year period up to 2013, or whether some of them should be discontinued after five years. All the centres are located at, or connected to, higher education institutions.

### 3.3.4. Measures to increase number of graduates in math, science and technology

In order to increase the number of graduates in science and technology, and in particular the number of women, various recruitment campaigns have been implemented. In addition, there has been quite wide news coverage of the lack of persons with qualifications in science and technology in the Norwegian work force over the past couple of years. As a result, there was a marked increase in the number of applicants to a number of relevant study programmes from 2005 to 2006, in particular with regards to women:

- In technology, engineering, and architecture, the total number of applicants increased by 8.4 per cent, and the number of female applicants by a solid 20.4 per cent.
- In information technology and informatics, the total number of applicants decreased somewhat, by 0.9 per cent, while the share of female applicants increased by 15.6 per cent.

## 3.4. Vocational education and training and adult learning

### 3.4.1. Improve quality and attractiveness of VET

Pupils receiving vocational education and training can normally take a trade or journeyman's examination. The training will be provided both at school and at the workplace (in a training establishment) and involves two years' teaching and training at school and one year's apprenticeship training, normally followed by one year's productive work. If insufficient apprenticeships are available, then the county municipality must offer training at school in the form of a third year course. The final examination (trade or journeyman's examination) will

be the same, regardless of whether the training has taken place at school or at the workplace. There is a long tradition with a tripartite collaboration within VET as regards curriculum planning, structure of education programmes and assessment.

The Quality of VET is addressed through implementation of the *Knowledge Promotion Reform*, and its cornerstones of a *Core Curriculum*, *The Quality Framework* and the *Subject Curricula*, and overseen by the National Council for Vocational Education and Training (SRY). Through the reform, a reformed scheme of nine education programmes for VET have been presented, each supervised by a programme specific Vocational Training Council. The objective for this structure was to make a new structure which would allow for greater flexibility, possibilities for change and a broader focus to ensure a more dynamic vocational education and training

The nine vocational training programmes in upper secondary education are:

- Technical and Industrial Production
- Electricity and Electronics
- Building and Construction
- Restaurant and Food Processing
- Agriculture, Fishing and Forestry
- Health and Social Care
- Design, Arts and Crafts
- Media and Communication
- Service and Transport

Norway shares the challenges related to improving the performance, quality and attractiveness of VET, and seeks to create conditions that engage both young people and those in working life to partake in learning. Some of the challenges are considered a question of lack of knowledge, career guidance and counselling. *White Paper no 16* expresses the need for better competence among counsellors both in lower and upper secondary education and training. Consequently, new guiding criteria for education standards for councillors have been proposed in this White Paper.

#### 3.4.2. Reinforce link between VET and labour market needs

The number of Vocational Training Councils was reduced from 20 to 9 in order to improve the transparency of vocational education and training system and to ensure a more effective development of vocational education and training in line with the competence needs of the labour market, the individual and society. The vocational training councils keep track of new trends and developments, provide advice in the development of the new structure for vocational education programmes and make competence profiles/platforms for the crafts and trades within its domain. The Competence profiles/platforms form the basis of the development of the new curricula. The councils also provide advice on how to improve the quality of the vocational education and training.

A strengthening of the focus on basic skills will enable and prepare our pupils and students for future changes in the labour market. An emphasis on reading, writing, numeracy and digital skills will make the future work force more competent to take part in society irrespective of education programmes in upper secondary education and training. They will be more flexible and adaptive to specific demands. As long as all schools give priority to the implementation of basic skills into all subjects, the future work force will be better prepared for entering the labour market. All teachers and trainers are responsible for enabling pupils and apprentices to develop basic skills through their work in various subjects and learning situations and within all education programmes.

In connection with the implementation of the *Knowledge Promotion Reform*, Optional Programme Subjects and In-depth study projects for pupils attending vocational education programmes are planned in order to make the teaching more adapted to the needs and wants of the individual pupil. For pupils who educate themselves for a specific vocation, these two new initiatives will bring possibilities to get in contact with the vocation at an early stage in their upper secondary training career.

In the Bill proposing amendments in the Act on Vocational Colleges, the Government has proposed an opening for institutional recognition of vocational colleges as such, not only of programmes. Accredited Vocational Colleges will then be able to start programmes without prior recognition from NOKUT. The Government believes this will make the accreditation process more flexible, thus strengthening the link between the Vocational Colleges and the labour market.

#### 3.4.3. Opening pathways to further and higher education

The structure and organization of the Norwegian VET system is also designed as a door opener to higher education. The completion of one additional year at upper secondary level with subjects from the academic education programmes provides admission to universities and university colleges. This pathway to higher education is aimed to give pupils more options.

From 2009, it will also be possible to get access to specifically designed higher education programmes on the basis of a Craft's or Journeyman's Certificate only (i.e. without the additional year mentioned above). This measure, called "Y-veien" is based on successful pilot projects, particularly in the engineering field.

#### 3.4.4. Addressing specific learning/training needs of VET teachers and trainers

The staff in VET shall possess the qualifications needed to ensure that pupils and apprentices receive adapted education and training, including the opportunity to develop skills and talents in accordance with the requirements of the Core Curriculum, the Quality Framework and the subject curricula. Through a boost in competence, school leaders, teachers and instructors in apprenticeship companies will be enabled and stimulated to meet the challenges related to the changes in content and structure which the Knowledge Promotion Reform involves. The competence development is based on the Competence Development strategy running from 2005 to 2008. Competence development measures are primarily addressed to administrative staff in schools, teachers in primary and secondary schools and professional leaders and instructors engaged in training at the workplace.

#### 3.4.5. Measures to reinforce partner involvement

There is a long tradition for high involvement through the tripartite collaboration regarding decision processes, where the different stakeholders (i.e. the social partners, the teachers' and pupils' associations, the school owners and research institutions) take part. At the national level the National Council for Vocational Education and Training (SRY) has a separate secretariat in the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training. The Council handles issues of national interest, development of subject curricula, development of competence, recruiting of pupils and apprentices, dimensioning of apprenticeship contracts, vocational education and training guidance and counselling, and the rules and regulations of the general framework for education and training.

The tripartite collaboration at regional/county municipal level takes place via the *County Vocational Training Boards* in which both regional authorities and social partners in the industry are represented. These boards certify training establishments and are engaged in enhancing the competence for instructors and professional leaders in the training establishments.

#### 3.4.6. Enhancing access for disadvantaged groups

The Follow-Up Service works to create alternative jobs or education and training offers to those who drop out of education and training, including in VET. Preventative measures have been implemented in order to reduce the number of early school leavers regarding improved counselling and guidance in lower and upper secondary education and training.

Pupils finishing 10 years of primary education have the opportunity to enter directly into an apprenticeship through the “Lære kandidatordning” (“learning apprenticeship arrangement”). A formalised model for such practise-based two year training leading to basic competencies is currently being tried out. This is the so called *Praksisbrev* (“*Certificate of Practice*”) - where the certificate is attained after 2 years in VET. (The ordinary VET pathway is 4 years). With this initiative, pupils with weak qualifications and/or poor motivation to complete upper secondary education and training would get the possibility to gain formal competence at a lower level than Craft or Journeyman’s certificate. The *Praksisbrev* should be presented as a possibility to build on further in the system of upper secondary education and training. Presently, pilot projects in three County Municipalities are being conducted.

It is also possible to sit a trade or journeyman’s examination on the basis of sufficiently broad working experience of a trade of duration 25 per cent longer than the stipulated apprenticeship period. The County authority as represented by the county vocational training board decides whether the working experience stated by the applicant can be approved, and may in special cases approve periods of experience shorter than that indicated above.

In higher education, the 2005 Act places the responsibility for the students’ learning environment with the educational institution. This relates to all students, including those with functional disabilities. In the Act, it is stated that, as far as “possible and reasonable”, the physical working environment shall be designed in accordance with the principles of universal design, and that the study situation shall be adapted for students with special needs. This adaptation must not result in any reduction of academic requirements. It could involve such measures as using a PC, giving extra time for examinations, and/or giving oral rather than written examinations.

The higher education institutions should also, “as far as possible and reasonable”, ensure that the premises, access, and sanitary and technical facilities are designed so that persons with functional disabilities can pursue their studies there. Further, the individual education plans introduced through the Quality Reform and agreed between the educational institutions and the individual student (see previous report), are useful tools for adapting studies for persons with reduced functional abilities.

According to the 2005 Act, the educational institutions must also establish learning environment committees with student members, to deal with the learning environments for all the students at the institution. This is an important way of focusing on an accessible and adapted learning environment at the institution.

In addition to what is stipulated by law, all higher education institutions must have a special action plan for the functionally challenged. They must also have a special advisory and counselling service for persons with reduced functional abilities.

#### 3.4.7. Increase rate of adult participation in lifelong learning

It is the position of the Norwegian government that adults with poor basic skills should have the opportunity to get the basic education they need, and thus be able to take an active part in the workplace and society. As part of the Competence Reform, a number of measures have been initiated to build up the skills of the adult population. Amongst other things, the national funding scheme called the Competence Development Programme (KUP) was started to give partial funding to development projects run with the cooperation of education and training providers and enterprises. KUP was also meant to help make education at primary and secondary levels more easily available to adults.

To counteract drop-out from working life because of poor basic skills the Government has initiated the Programme for Basic Competence in Working Life (BKA). The awarded funds are to be spent on giving employees instruction in reading, writing, arithmetic and basic use of ICT. As far as possible this teaching should be given in the workplace and be related to the job. Courses meant for job seekers will also be started through the Labour and Welfare Organisation. The programme is to help both job seekers and employees have the opportunity to acquire the competence they need to master the requirements of working life. The pilot projects have been very successful.

In White Paper no. 16 (2006-2007) on Early Intervention, a number of measures are proposed with a view to improving the basic competence of adults. It has been proposed to strengthen the Programme for Basic Competence in Working Life (BKA) and to consider if this programme is to be made a permanent scheme. More efforts concerning motivation and information for the target groups are suggested. The White Paper also suggests a review of which national framework conditions could provide increased learning incentives for employees with limited education.