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WORK PROGRAMME

2005 Progress Report



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Modernisation of the Education and Training systems towards the 2010 goals

**Contribution to the 2006 Joint European Council and
Commission Report**

National Report

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1. INTRODUCTION: NORWEGIAN NATIONAL POLICIES AND THE LISBON AGENDA

Within the Lisbon Strategy the European Union Member States agreed on three strategic goals for European education and training systems: 1) Improving quality and efficiency of education and training systems; 2) Facilitating access to education and training systems for all; and 3) Opening up education and training systems to the wider world. Each strategic goal has a number of sub-objectives.

The Norwegian Government has a corresponding view on these strategic goals and indirectly they form part of Norway's educational and research policy. An integral part of the European Economic Area, Norway has actively taken part in the efforts to reach the ambitious goals of the Education and Training 2010 work programme. Norway is therefore pleased to contribute to the reporting which will form the basis of the Joint Council and Commission progress report next spring. This regular follow-up of progress made towards the common objectives will improve and visualise the impact and efficiency of the open method of coordination in the field of education and training.

The Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research has recently published an account of how Norway performs with regard to the European education and training indicators and benchmarks¹. Studying Norwegian performance objective by objective, it also gives examples of relevant policies and reforms in the different areas. This publication, dated January 2005, forms the basis of the present report. Other important sources have been the Norwegian country reports to the Lisbon-to-Copenhagen-to-Maastricht Consortium² and to the 2005 Bologna Bergen Summit³.

In the writing of this report, the Ministry of Education and Research has made use of the guidelines and the structure proposed by the European Commission for this reporting exercise. Chapter 2 gives an account of main challenges and major current reforms, while chapter 3 outlines the main aspects of the Norwegian Life-Long Learning Strategy. Chapters 4 and 5 deal respectively with higher education and vocational training. A last chapter includes an overview of efforts to consolidate the European and international dimension of Norway's education and training policy. As the issues dealt with are interlinked and relevant for several sections in the report, there may be overlaps and cross-references.

¹ "The Common European Objectives in Education and Training: Indicators and Benchmarks in the Lisbon Strategy. A Norwegian perspective 2005", January 2005, Norwegian Ministry of Education and Training, Oslo. The report is available at http://www.odin.dep.no/filarkiv/236367/Future_Objectives_020205.pdf

² "Achieving the Lisbon goal: The contribution of VET", www.refernet.org.uk/index_copenhagen.asp

³ <http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/No/index.htm>

2. INVESTING MORE AND MORE EFFICIENTLY: KEY AREAS OF REFORM

Areas most in need of action

Education and training is a priority in Norway: Investments in education are well above OECD average on education⁴. However, it has lately been documented that there is not always a direct correlation between economic *input* and learning *output*. Recent international surveys (e.g. PISA and TIMSS) rank Norwegian students at best about average among the participating countries according to a number of indicators measuring basic skills. The results from these international comparisons are disappointing considering the considerable investments made in education at all levels. According to the survey results, the following findings constitute important challenges for Norway:

- Too many Norwegian pupils lack skills in reading, arithmetic and general science. We are among those countries that have the greatest differences between less able and able pupils. A total of 20 % of Norwegian ten-year-olds lack elementary reading skills;
- One in five students at 15 years of age cannot or only with great difficulties read a simple text (number of low achievers below OECD average);
- Performance by Norwegian 15 year olds in science is substantially below the OECD average, and there is a large gap between the best and poorest students;
- Less than 20 % of all higher education graduates were in the field of mathematics, science and technology (among the lowest rates in Europe).
- It has been shown that in higher education Norwegian students take a relatively long time to complete their studies and that many of them discontinue this education;
- One of the factors foreign expert groups have pointed out in their evaluation of Norwegian research environments is that efforts have been fragmented. There are too many small research groups, and there is a need for stronger scientific leadership along with improved collaboration and distribution of work.

Current top priority reforms

These challenges are met with a handful of comprehensive reforms covering all levels:

Knowledge Promotion in primary and secondary education

Changes in the structure and content of primary and secondary education and training are being implemented by means of a new, comprehensive reform of basic education entitled *Knowledge Promotion* (“Kunnskapsløftet”) ⁵. The aim of the reform is to sustain and develop the best in basic education (understood as all schooling from the start of primary to the end of upper secondary education), with a view to ensuring that pupils are better able to meet the challenges of the knowledge society. The learning goals will be stated more clearly. The **new subject curricula** will therefore be less detailed, and the **basic**

⁴ 6,6 % of GDP, the average is 4,9 %

⁵ Following the Government’s White Paper Culture for learning which was debated in Parliament on 17 June 2004, White Paper No. 30 (2003-2004), cf. Recommendation to Parliament No. 268 (2003-2004)

skills⁶ will be given priority and greater attention. The curricula will include clear objectives specifying the level of competence expected from pupils/apprentices at each level. The objectives will be designed in such a way as to provide a suitable basis for discussion among all those involved in the learning process. Decisions on organizational matters, methods and forms of work will be delegated to the teaching institutions. The number of teaching lessons in primary education will be increased from 2005-2006.

School owners will be allowed **flexibility in organising** their education as up to 25% of the number of lessons can be used freely for adjustment to the individual pupil and local conditions. The purpose of this arrangement is to improve the scope of adapted education and training, and it applies to all pupils in all subjects at all levels of basic education.

At the same time, the schools' central role as mediator of values, general educational standards and culture will be safeguarded. To this end a **new general Quality Framework**⁷, mandatory in all schools and apprenticeship work-places, is being introduced.

As a prerequisite for the increased decentralisation and as a support for the school owners' responsibility for quality assessment and development, the Parliament approved in 2003 the establishment of a **national quality assessment system**, cf. the section on "Monitoring and evaluation of educational policies" below. The intention is to create a better culture for learning at the local level by giving the school owners, the teachers, the parents and the pupils increased knowledge about input, processes and output at their school.

At the lower secondary level a second **foreign language** will be introduced as a compulsory, practical subject. Schools shall provide classes in German, French, Spanish or Russian, and if possible other languages including non-European languages. The curricula will emphasize practical skills in the language, rather than theoretical knowledge of it. A second foreign language can be taught at primary level if conditions otherwise permit it. It will be possible for lower secondary pupils to study parts of subjects taken from ordinary upper secondary curriculum.

Technology and design will be introduced as an inter-disciplinary topic at primary and lower secondary level, and trials with philosophy as a subject may be conducted. Schools

⁶ More emphasis will be placed on developing the following basic skills among pupils' and apprentices': the ability to express oneself orally; the ability to read; the ability to express oneself in writing; the ability to do arithmetic; the ability to use information and communication technology.

⁷ The Quality Framework states that schools and apprenticeship work-places shall: 1. Give all pupils and apprentices/trainees an equal opportunity to develop their abilities individually and in cooperation with others. 2. Stimulate pupils' and apprentices'/trainees' motivation, perseverance and curiosity. 3. Stimulate the development of the pupils' and apprentices'/trainees' the development of their own learning strategies and of their capacity for critical thought. 4. Stimulate pupils' and apprentices'/trainees' personal development and identity, and assist them in the development of ethical, social and cultural competence, and democratic understanding and participation. 5. Encourage pupil participation, and enable pupils and apprentices/trainees to make conscious value judgements and decisions on their educational needs and future work. 6. Promote adapted teaching and varied working methods. 7. Stimulate, exploit and develop the individual teacher's competence. 8. Contribute to teachers and instructors being evident leaders and role models for children and young people. 9. Ensure that the physical and psycho-social working and learning environment promotes health, joy and learning. 10. Prepare for cooperation with the home and ensure parents'/guardians co-responsibility in the school. 11. Prepare for the local community to be involved in education and training in a meaningful way.

are also encouraged to make room for increased physical activity for all pupils, and to raise awareness of nutrition and diet.

The organisation of upper secondary education will be somewhat changed, but the main structure remains, i.e. the vocational programmes normally involve two years in school and two years at a workplace. The changes affect both the names and the combinations of subjects. Upper secondary education will have three academic and nine vocational education programmes (the former areas of study)⁸. General **matriculation requirements** will be tightened.

Pupils' competence in **science subjects** will be strengthened by making mathematics compulsory in the second year of the three academic programmes. Pupils will have a choice between a theoretical and a practical approach to the subject. The written leaving examination at the end of compulsory schooling will continue in its current form, with one important exception: pupils drawn to take the written examination in Norwegian will now face one examination covering both forms of the language. The oral part of the leaving examination will be continued. Trials on the assessment of portfolio as alternative to centrally-arranged examinations will be initiated.

Pace of introduction: The reform of primary and secondary education and training will be introduced in years 1-9 of compulsory education as of autumn 2006. The first pupils will have completed upper secondary education according to the new structure in the spring of 2009, and the first cohort of students complying with the new matriculation requirements will enter universities and other tertiary institutions in the autumn of 2009. The first apprentices will receive their trade and journeyman's certificates according to the new structure in the spring of 2010.

A number of strategic plans support the Knowledge Promotion Reform. These include:

Development of competence for teachers and trainers

The Ministry, in cooperation with a number of other bodies, has constructed a strategic plan for the development of competence for teachers and trainers in the period 2005-2008. The Parliament has approved of a more than NOK 2 billions grant for this purpose, a historical increase in the funding of competence development. The plan reviews the responsibilities and tasks of the national authority, the school owner (public authority or private), and the higher education sector in connection with the implementation of the reform. The purpose of the plan is to lay a foundation for the measures that will provide school administrators, teachers, skilled supervisors and trainers with the boost in competence needed to equip and stimulate them for their encounter with the challenges that the reform presents. The priority areas of the strategic plan are:

- Increased competence in the management of the individual school and apprenticeship work-place.

⁸ The twelve education programmes in upper secondary education will be: Technical skills and industrial production, Electrical and electronic subjects, Building and construction technology, Restaurant trades and nutritional subjects, Health and social subjects, Design and craft subjects, Media and communication, Service and travel, Academic specialization, Sports subjects, Music, *dance and drama*

- Reform-related development of competence among the teaching staff in schools and development of a learning culture in the individual school and apprenticeship work-place.
- Further education of the teaching staff in schools.

Strategy to boost children's reading proficiency

A 5-year action plan entitled "Make Room for Reading!" aims at stimulating both the love of reading and the reading abilities among children and youngsters. Its purpose is also to improve the teachers' competence in reading instruction and increase the use of school libraries. Another goals are to raise consciousness that reading is the foundation of learning other skills, cultural competence, quality of life, participation in work and a democratic society, to improve the teachers' knowledge about new and present-day literature for children and youngsters; and finally to stimulate the spread of literature.

The plan is a joint effort of all parts of society, parents, education from preschool to university, economic life and trade and commerce. In co-operation with the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, efforts have been made to secure the co-operation and participation of the public library system. The public library system provides schools with information on literature suited for different age groups and purposes, and organise different programs designed to enhance reading.

Strategy for entrepreneurship in education

The strategy plan "See opportunities and make them work!" (2004-2008) is a follow up of the Government's plan for a comprehensive innovation policy launched in 2003. The Government's aim is that a greater number of pupils, apprentices and students shall be given practical and theoretical insight into entrepreneurship. The education system shall contribute to value creation, founding of new businesses and innovation in Norway by stimulating attitudes, knowledge and skills in students and teachers on all levels and by developing an entrepreneurship culture. This implies i.a. greater cooperation between educational institutions and business and industry; focus on entrepreneurship in regional development policy; greater participation in international networks and contact with education systems in other countries; and increasing teacher competence in entrepreneurship training.

Strategy for raising the MST competence level

The Norwegian Government is indeed aware of the critical situation in the MST area, and is continuously working on improving the situation. The most important effort occurred in November 2002, when a strategic plan on MST ("*Math, Science and Technology – naturally... Strategy for raising the competence lever in math, science and technology 2002-2007*") was presented.

This strategic plan is updated annually. Changing the attitudes towards and interest in MST among pupils, students and society in general – and thereby increasing recruitment – will be a long process. The overall objectives of the Norwegian strategic plan are:

- to increase MST competence of pupils and teachers, of leaders and employees in the working community, and of the general public
- to improve the motivation of pupils and teachers with regard to MST in education and training, and to increase recruitment to MST education

- to highlight the utilitarian value of MST in order to promote the further development of the welfare state, and to create more positive attitudes to these subjects among the general public.

The Knowledge Promotion initiative has introduced more compulsory mathematics in upper secondary education in the study programmes leading to entrance qualifications for higher education (see above).

Higher Education Quality reform

The purpose of the ongoing *Quality Reform* (“Kvalitetsreformen”) in higher education is on the one hand to implement the Bologna Process and Norway's obligation in that respect and on the other to achieve improved quality in higher education and research. Among the 'Bologna' measures of the reform, the most important are:

- a new, greatly simplified degree structure (and revised or new study programmes), with 3 + 2 + 3 (bachelor, master, ph.d.) as the main model
- the establishment of the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education as of 1 January 2003, and
- increased focus on internationalisation.

The more 'national' parts of the reform relate to funding – with new financing systems both for students and for higher education institutions, to better guidance and counselling of students, and to new forms of students assessment and evaluation, as well as to changes in governance at the institutional level and to increased institutional autonomy.

Study programmes according to the new degree system is implemented for all new students beginning their studies as from the academic year 2003–04.

An important aim of the reform is to get more students to complete their studies and on time while at the same time raising the academic level. Norway has moved relatively quickly from a situation characterized by higher education for the few to one offering higher education for most. Norwegian universities and colleges of today are therefore faced with totally different challenges and expectations than they were some decades ago. The Quality Reform is explained in further detail in chapter 4 on Higher Education.

A new law on higher education – private and public was decided by the Storting in March 2005 and will enter into force on 1 August 2005.

Commitment to Research

Funding for fundamental research in universities and colleges will be strengthened both directly to institutions and through the Research Council of Norway as a result of the Government's recent White Paper “Commitment to Research”⁹. The Government will reinforce academic quality in general, and the conditions for fundamental research in mathematics, science and technology. In this context, the following measures are particularly relevant:

⁹ Report to the Storting No 20 (2004-2005), 18 March 2005

- A joint financing model for universities and colleges will substitute the existing separate models. The model includes two result-based components: education and research. A third component, dissemination of knowledge, is under consideration. Specific formulation of the model is addressed in the National Budget for 2006.
- The result-based research component will include indicators for scientific publications, graduates with doctorates, and funds from the Research Council and the EU framework programmes.
- The inclusion of the result-based component for dissemination and promoting the application of research results that is under consideration, can be especially suited for the applied research profile of state university colleges.
- Research programmes and projects geared towards state university colleges will be continued and strengthened. The programme Strategic college projects will enhance the quality and scope of research activities at state university colleges, while business-oriented college programmes will enhance collaboration and mutual competence development between state university colleges and small and medium-sized companies.
- As a general rule, the Research Council will concentrate its grants on large-scale projects, while the institutions will be responsible for financing smaller projects carried out by their own employees. To encourage institutions to assign priority to operational funds for research, the Government will introduce a scheme whereby researchers and researcher groups can apply for support for smaller funding needs related to ongoing research projects. The scheme is limited to the period 2006–2010.
- The Government will initiate a national strategy to strengthen fundamental research in mathematics, science and technology.
- The Government will set up a scheme where donations to research of at least NOK 5 million will be matched with a state contribution corresponding to 25 per cent of the amount of the donation. The donation must come from private persons, companies or non-profit organizations and must be given to one of the universities, university colleges with doctorate programs, the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters, or the Research Council of Norway.
- Greater investment in research equipment will constitute an important part of the strengthening of basic research in science and technology. The current arrangement comprising funds for equipment both via the Research Council and directly to the institutions as strategic research funding will be retained. The Research Council will survey and assess national needs and, in cooperation with the institutions, will develop realistic strategies for assigning investment priorities.

More efficient investment

As mentioned above, the fact that the learning benefits are not in proportion to the use of resource is an important challenge for Norway. The current *Knowledge Promotion Reform* of basic education and training includes a number of measures for improving the outcomes of the public investment in education (see above). Some of the main measures are: Stronger emphasis on basic skills; strengthening the teachers' competence; more local freedom and flexibility for the schools to organise and adapt their education; and a national quality assessment system for primary and secondary education and training that will give all levels more knowledge about the learning conditions and outcomes at each school, thus enabling the teachers, the schools and the authorities to take different actions to face the challenges revealed (see below).

An important part of the Quality Reform in higher education is the introduction of a new **funding formula for higher education institutions** which is more result-oriented than previous systems. Under the new system, grants to higher education institutions consist of three main components: a basic component, an education component, and a research component.

Changes have also been made in the system of **financial support to students** in Norwegian higher education, whereby the cost-of-living allowance (basic support) increased from NOK 7 000 to NOK 8 000 (approx. EUR 1 100) per month from the academic year 2002-2003 (10 months per academic year). The allowance consists of a combination of loans and grants. From 2004-2005, however, the total amount is initially given as a loan. The relevant share of the loan will be converted to grants upon completion of examinations or study programmes. Students not living with their parents are eligible for a grant equivalent to 40 per cent of the maximum cost-of-living allowance upon completion of studies.

The aim of this parallel change in financing systems both for higher education institutions and for students is to encourage timely completion of studies for a higher number of students. As the Quality Reform was only implemented for students beginning their studies in the academic year 2003–04, it is as yet too early to reach any conclusions as to the success of these measures.

EU funds

EU funding has not been used in any form to support these reforms, strategies and action plans.

Correlation between national priorities and the common European objectives

As stated in the introduction of this report, Norwegian national priorities correspond to a large extent with the priority areas for reform and investment agreed at European level. The following trends characterise the reforms of the Norwegian education system:

- Sharper awareness of quality at all levels, and a greater willingness to take part in discussions on quality
- Strong pressure to set up quality assurance systems
- More determined efforts towards the development of competence in institutions, and the establishment of an organizational culture for learning
- A more professional and research-based approach to many of the problems in the education sector
- More emphasis on creating the preconditions for flexibility and opportunities for the individual
- Greater emphasis on decentralization.

Reforms in the structure of education/training institutions

In 2003 the Education Act was amended with a view to delegate more responsibility from the central to the local level and give school owners and schools more freedom in organizing their activities. The main changes were the replacement of the former stipulated maximum number of pupils per class with a more general requirement that the pupils should be organized in groups that are pedagogically justifiable. The responsibility of the Ministry and the schools owners for developing and evaluating the quality of

education was made clearer. This change is an element in the systematization of the quality assurance work, and it also provides a better base for management by objectives. The qualifications required by a school principal was also changed, removing the requirements related to education and teaching experience. Instead the Act now has a general requirement that a schools must have a professional, administrative leader. An Internet-based guide to support the local organization of education as well as supervision has been established.

In 2003 a new Independent School Act was approved. The new Act requires that the content must be equivalent to and correspond to the curricula in the public system in order for an independent school to be recognized. This means that an independent school no longer has to be based on a special life stance or represent a pedagogical alternative to the public system.

In June 2004 the former Norwegian Board of Education was replaced by the Directorate for Primary and Secondary Education. As an independent administrative organ under the Ministry, its main tasks are analysis and assessment; development, guidance and support; supervision and administration.

Incentives to invest and to enhance efficiency and attractiveness

The establishment of a national quality assessment system in 2004 has increased the public insight into the schools regarding their organisation, resources, outcome and learning environment. This is an incentive to enhance local responsibility for the quality development of education.

With effect from the 2004 salary negotiations, the central authority is no longer the teachers' counterpart. Now the employers or their organization, the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities, negotiate directly with the employees. This transfer is also a stage in the policy of transferring more responsibility and authority to the local level.

The current *Knowledge Promotion Reform* of the basic education provides programmes for competence development for teachers and school management (see above).

Private investment

With the above-mentioned new Act on Independent Schools there has been a substantial increase in the number of applications for establishing state dependent private schools in Norway. These institutions receive 85% of the funding of the public schools. It is important to underline that the private schools only enrol about two per cent of the pupils in primary and lower secondary schools and some seven per cent of students in upper secondary education.

Monitoring and evaluation of educational policies

It is **standard practice** to evaluate policy reforms launched (ex-ante, ongoing and ex-post), both internal and external evaluations may be undertaken. Both the Quality¹⁰ and

¹⁰ The main responsibility for the evaluation of the Quality Reform in higher education has been given to the Research Council of Norway in cooperation with the Rokkan Centre of the University of Bergen and NIFU STEP, an independent research foundation. The first preliminary findings will be published in autumn 2005, the final report in 2007.

Competence Reforms have been evaluated. The Knowledge Promotion Reform will also be evaluated.

A new **national quality assessment** system for primary and secondary education and training has been introduced as part of the Knowledge Promotion initiative (see above). This includes monitoring through national tests, which are a nationwide survey of pupils' skills in reading, writing, mathematics and English. The national tests achieve two main goals: they are a pedagogical tool and a support in learning and teaching, and they give information to pupils, teachers, administrators, owners, national authorities and the public as a basis for discussion and quality development. The new system will also provide information on pupils' school and learning environment, the rate of progress in upper secondary education and training, and the resources available to schools. The intention is that the web site www.skoleporten.no will provide a basis for informed decisions at all levels of primary and secondary education and training.

Monitoring and quality assurance in Higher Education have been strengthened through the above-mentioned Quality Reform, through the establishment of the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT). See Chapter 4 for more details.

3. A COMPREHENSIVE LIFELONG LEARNING STRATEGY

A national reform for Life-Long Learning

Norway started to develop a comprehensive national LLL-reform at a relatively early stage. It was entitled the *Competence Reform* ("Kompetansereformen"). This comprehensive initiative aims to increase competence development and lifelong learning in the adult population as a whole. The overall goal is to provide Norway with a highly skilled and flexible workforce capable of meeting future societal needs. The Competence Reform is based on a broad understanding of knowledge, where theoretical and practical skills, the promotion of creativity and initiative, and the development of self-esteem and social skills are all part of a whole. The reform work has been ongoing since the late nineties, with implementation from 2000 onwards. The Ministry of Education and Research has the overall responsibility for implementation. The most important measures of the reform are:

- Statutory rights to education for adults at primary and secondary school level;
- A national system for validation of informal and non-formal learning;
- Right to leave of absence for educational purposes;
- Funding subsistence and providing tax incentives for individuals investing in learning;
- A Competence Building Programme to develop the market for further and continuing education;
- Reorganisation of the public education system to meet the learning requirements in working life;
- Motivation and information.

The basis for the reform was the need for competence in the workplace, in society and by the individual. The Competence Reform embraces all adults in and outside the labour market and has a broad, long-term perspective.

Improved basis for policy-making

Another initiative is the Norwegian Competence Report (NCR) (2003-05), aiming at providing a more comprehensive account of competence as a driver of innovation, value creation, quality of life, wealth and welfare in Norway. The intention is that NCR shall present an improved basis for policy-making in areas where competence and learning are key factors. It will contribute to strengthening public debate and to identify areas in which there is need for new initiatives. Moreover, the Ministry wishes to establish a work method and an approach that will allow the monitoring of developments in Norway over time.

Important Dimensions of Norwegian LLL-policy

Partnerships

At the present time the Ministry of Education has several ongoing projects involving the links between education and training, industry and society. The above-mentioned Competence Reform is perhaps the most important in a lifelong learning context. The Reform results from a tripartite effort where the social partners and a large variety of providers of education have taken important initiatives in developing a national policy in this field.

Non-formal and in-formal learning

Documentation and validation of skills and knowledge are central elements of the Competence Reform. A national system for documentation and validation of *realkompetanse*¹¹ has been established. Its main elements are as follows:

- Methods for documenting and evaluating skills gained in working life and in the informal sector;
- An opening up of the educational system for *individual assessment* of applicants with insufficient formal qualifications at all levels;
- The right to have *realkompetanse* recognized when applying for upper secondary education, so courses may be shortened where appropriate;
- The right to have *realkompetanse* recognized in relation to the national curricula, for persons wanting to apply for jobs.

Please see chapter 4 on the recognition of formal, informal and non-formal learning for admission to higher education.

Earliest possible stage

In a life long learning perspective it is important to stimulate learning at an early age which is the basis for learning later in life. Research indicates that kindergartens can help reduce differences in learning achievements resulting in better school results, especially in the case of children from minority language backgrounds, disabled children and children in danger of developing reading and writing difficulties. The Ministry of Education and Research proposes to strengthen its cooperation with the Ministry of

¹¹ The term “*realkompetanse*” covers all skills, knowledge, abilities, attitudes and insights people have – formal, informal and non-formal.

Children and Family Affairs to ensure improved continuity in lifelong learning in connection with the revision of the Kindergarten Act and its framework

Teachers and trainers

Teacher education is an integrated part of higher education in Norway. It includes programmes for the training of pre-school teachers, of general teachers in compulsory education, and of teachers in vocational studies, as well as special subject/discipline teachers of various kinds. Most teacher education programmes are of 3 years' duration and lead to a bachelor's degree. The programme for general teacher training is of 4 years' duration, however. As part of the Quality Reform in higher education, all teacher education programmes were revised.

Over the years, the number of teachers with specialised knowledge in traditional school disciplines has decreased, as younger teachers tend to have a general teaching background, or a specialisation in education, or the like. This is a matter of concern for the overall quality of teaching in a number of subjects. The situation is not satisfactory, especially when it comes to the recruitment of teachers in science, technology, and foreign languages. Special measures have therefore been taken and a recruitment campaign has been launched in order to try to reverse this somewhat negative trend. Initiatives have also been taken to update teachers in new skills, especially in the pedagogical use of ICT. More information is given in Chapter 5. From the academic year 2005–06, the academic requirements for admission to general teacher education have been strengthened.

Enhancing learning opportunities for adults and older workers

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 their wishes and needs. The Norwegian Parliament (Stortinget) has decided that adults shall have a statutory right to primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education. The right to upper secondary education has been put in force from autumn 2000, while the right to primary and lower secondary education was implemented in August 2002. There are more than 1 million participants in adult education each year. Training takes place in the public educational system, adult education associations, folk high schools, distance education institutions and other private institutions and on the workplace.

Integrated use of ICT in education and training systems

The Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research has launched a multi-annual Programme for Digital Literacy (2004 – 2008). The programme intends to address two major challenges:

- Integration of information and communication technologies (ICT) in learning processes. This requires a better balance between access to technology and the actual exploitation of new technologies. It is a major challenge for the education systems of tomorrow to implement digital literacy as a natural part of daily learning at all levels of education. ICT must no longer be considered a tool for particularly interested students.
- Demonstration of success factors, obstacles and examples of good practice for the education sector.

The programme is trans-sectoral and addresses the entire education sector – primary – and secondary education, higher education and adult learning. It focuses on the impact of ICT

on the quality of education, the motivation for learning, learning methods and learning effect. It concentrates on the development of tools that over time will measure and analyse quantitative and qualitative features of the development of ICT and learning.

Disadvantaged groups

Considerable efforts have been made in recent years to improve educational opportunities for disadvantaged groups through **adult education**. This particularly applies to adults with especially weak schooling, various groups of physically disabled persons, adults with reading and writing difficulties and adult immigrants. In accordance with the Norwegian Education Act, teaching shall be adapted to the abilities and aptitudes of individual pupils and apprentices. **Pupils with special needs** who are unable to benefit satisfactorily from ordinary tuition in primary and secondary education have the right to special education. As far as possible, the special education that is provided shall be planned in cooperation with the pupil and the parents of the pupil, and considerable emphasis shall be placed on their views.

As part of the follow-up of government policies for the disabled, all higher education are required to develop action plans to facilitate access and studies for students with special need, and activities are reported annually and monitored carefully by the Ministry of Education and Research.

Strengthening the education and training possibilities for **prisoners** is the aim of the Government's recent Communication the Parliament entitled "Yet another Spring" (Stortingsmelding nr. 22, 2004 -2005). Its ambitions are to develop education and training within rehabilitation of criminals in order to better reflect levels of the society as a whole. This means tackling different challenges, such as the fact that all teaching will have to be within prison walls and that the inmates have varying qualifications. An important instrument will be to offer assessments in order to map what kind of qualifications – "realkompetanse" – the individual might have. This will better enable the rehabilitation services to offer the right kind and level of education and training, as well as constitute a useful documentation for the person in question at the end of its sentence. This pilot project will particularly aim at offering better and more possibilities for vocational training which provides the best opportunities for finding a job once back in the society. Another key instrument is to better enable teachers and trainers working in prisons to tackle learning difficulties and to give special education.

A strategic plan, "Equal education in practice! (2004-2009)", has been launched in order to improve learning and increase participation of **language minorities** in day-care-centres and schools. It has five main goals¹²:

- To ensure that minority language children of pre-school age have a better understanding of the Norwegian language
- To improve the educational achievements of minority language pupils
- To increase the percentage of minority language pupils and apprentices who begin and complete their upper secondary education
- To increase the percentage of minority language students in higher education
- To improve the Norwegian language skills of minority language adults

¹² Strategic measures include: Testing various models for special language tuition; Strengthening the multicultural perspective in curricula and teaching aids; Human resources development: the establishment of a national centre for multicultural education; Grant scheme for minority language teachers who lack formal qualifications; Awareness-raising programme for school administrators; Strengthening home/school collaboration; Dissemination of lessons learned through a variety of channels: "good-practice" schools.

Improving the learning environment

The Ministry of Education and Research supports a number of measures to improve the learning environment in Norway. A recent survey on the satisfaction with the basic education among parents and the general public shows an increase in the satisfaction with the way schools handle the bullying problems. Schools are offered **anti-bullying** programmes such as Olweus' "*Programme of efforts against bullying and anti-social behaviour*" and the anti-bullying programme called "*Zero*" from the Centre for Behavioural Research. These programmes have been prepared with state funds while schools cover the costs of implementation themselves. Almost 800 schools have made use of one of these programmes. Evaluation has shown that the programmes are effective and reduce the incidence of bullying in the schools where they are used systematically.

An Internet-based tool for local evaluation and quality development work enabling the pupils themselves to **assess their school environment** has been established (The Pupil Inspectors - <http://elevinspektorene.no>). The results of this evaluation is incorporated in the website for quality assessment and development (<http://skoleporten.no>).

Improvement of the learning environment is also an important aspect of the Quality Reform in higher education, and all higher education institutions are required by law to have Learning Environment Committees with staff and student representation. In most cases, these committees are closely linked to, or cooperation with, the committees or projects in charge of quality assurance at the institution.

Flexibility and progression within and between all sectors

As a follow-up to the Berlin Communiqué on the establishment of national qualifications frameworks in all the Bologna member states, and as a result of Norway's participation in the follow-up process on the Copenhagen Declaration on raising the status of vocational education and training (VET), Norway is at the moment in the process of developing a **qualifications framework**. In general, Norway supports the idea of establishing a framework system oriented towards learning outcomes, supported by arrangements for quality and transparency at different levels in a lifelong learning perspective. A working group has been established in the Ministry in order to take into further consideration challenges on the national level related to establishing such a system.

4. REFORMING HIGHER EDUCATION

Main measures: The Norwegian Quality Reform

The Quality Reform of higher education (see also Chapter 2), which at present (2005) is in its final stages of implementation, covers both state and private higher education. It consists in short of the following main elements: Changes in governance at the institutional level; Increased institutional autonomy; New funding formula for the institutions; Establishment of a Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT); New degree structure; New forms of student evaluation and assessment; Better student guidance; New system of financial support to students; and Internationalisation. The changes in the funding formula for HE institutions and in the system of financial support for students are presented in Chapter 2 More efficient investment.

European Compatibility: New Degree Structure, ECTS...

A new degree structure has been introduced, replacing the previous 90 different degrees and qualifications. The new degree structure consists of the degrees bachelor, master and ph.d., following the 3+2+3 model. In a few subject areas, students enrol for a five-year integrated master's degree course, while a very limited number of fields are exempted from the new degree structure, i.e. Medicine, Veterinary Science, Psychology and Theology.

The students' academic performance will no longer be assessed only through final examinations, but also through various term assignments. A new, standardised grading system is introduced, with a descending scale from A to E for passes and F for fail. The present credit system of 20 credits per year is replaced by a system in which a full academic year is equivalent to 60 course credits. Both the new grading scale and the course credit system are equivalent to those of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). In addition, students are to a greater extent enrolled in set programmes than what was the case prior to the reform. There will be regular guidance and monitoring of each student. An Individual Education Plan containing both the student's and the institution's mutual commitments, will be signed by both parties. This is to secure that the student receives adequate guidance, as well as to provide the institution with an overview to ensure proper use of resources.

Internationalisation

The overall aim regarding internationalisation is to ensure a qualitative competitive higher education sector through increased cross-boarder institutional co-operation as well as student and staff mobility. Each student is entitled to a study period abroad as an integrated part of her/his Norwegian degree programme, and it is a declared aim to increase participation in international education and research programmes such as the EU Framework Programmes, Socrates/Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci, Nordplus, as well as in bilateral institutional agreements between Norwegian and foreign institutions. Special initiatives include the Co-operation Programme with South East Europe - Research and Higher Education, and the Norwegian Co-operation Programme with Russia.

An increased number of academic courses offered in English, and a more international student environment at Norwegian institutions should attract more foreign students to

Norway. Moreover, the Diploma Supplement, already implemented on a compulsory basis for all higher education institutions as of 2002, helps facilitate transborder credit transfers between institutions. The new funding formula for higher education institutions also incorporates measures designed to promote internationalisation in Norwegian higher education.

Promoting structural change

In June 2004, the Ministry of Education and Research presented a proposal for a new act relating to higher education. The Bill outlines a common framework for both state and private higher education institutions regarding:

- their authority to establish and close down study programmes,
 - quality assurance of institutions,
 - the rights and obligations of the students,
 - the continuance of today's organisation of the state institutions with scientific, organisational and academic autonomy,
 - a new model for the internal administration structure, including the strengthening of the position of the Rector as head, academic as well as administrative, of the institution.
- The Ministry also proposes that the new act will have provisions to introduce joint degrees and to regulate the authority to develop a national qualifications framework. The parliamentary decisions on the necessary legislative changes were taken in spring 2005.

Quality assurance

The primary responsibility for quality assurance rests with the higher education institutions themselves. As part of the Quality Reform, a new quality assurance agency, the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT), was established on 1 January 2003. It is an independent government body, and has the following responsibilities:

- To assess the quality assurance systems of the higher education institutions, through quality audits carried out in regular cycles.
- To accredit private and state HE institutions applying for a change of status.
- To accredit new study programmes at institutions that are not entitled to establish new study programmes. These decisions cannot be modified by any other authority.
- To review accreditations already given. Any institution can have accreditations revoked or suspended, for the entire institution as such, or for individual programmes, following a negative assessment in this type of evaluation. The evaluations are conducted by experts appointed by NOKUT.
- To carry out other types of evaluations with the purpose of investigating, assessing and developing the quality of higher education in Norway. The Ministry may instruct NOKUT to undertake such evaluations.
- To recognise foreign education/diplomas (NOKUT also includes the Norwegian ENIC/NARIC unit, the Lisbon Recognition Convention information unit.)

Links between HE and research

Higher education institutions have a triple mandate:

- to provide higher education on the basis of the foremost scientific research, artistic development and empirical knowledge,

- to engage in research and academic or artistic development work, and
- thirdly, to disseminate knowledge and research results to society at large.

The higher education sector thus plays a central role in the Norwegian research system. Nine out of ten researchers obtaining a doctorate are trained in this sector. The sector remains the knowledge base for research in Norway and collaborates extensively with researchers from other sectors (e.g. research institutes, industry). Research in the higher education sector is mainly directed towards basic research, although higher education institutions also have a clear mandate to do applied research in cooperation with industry, the university colleges with a special focus on regional development. Most of R&D in the humanities and social sciences is carried out in this sector. The majority of academic staff in higher education institutions are obliged to do both research and teaching, but the balance between these tasks varies between institutions and also between individual staff members at the same institution.

In 2001, fifty-six percent of public investment in R&D were allocated to the higher education sector. Thirty-five percent were allocated to public or private research institutes, which do mostly applied research. Nine percent were allocated to industry. The two main sources for R&D funding in the higher education sector are the general framework allocations to the higher education institutions and funding from external sources. The general funds account for about 80 percent of R&D funding in the sector, whereas the Research Council of Norway is the most important external source for R&D funding.

Promoting advanced learning and innovation

The Norwegian Government plans to raise total investment in research to three per cent of GDP by 2010, one per cent of which will come from public funding. It is proposed that the Norwegian Fund for Research and Innovation be increased to NOK 50 billion. The recent Norwegian White Paper on Research “Commitment to Research”¹³ highlights three general areas of priority: internationalisation, basic research and innovation. *Basic research* is to be strengthened through the use of increased resources, strengthened professional management and funding mechanisms that foster quality. Schemes such as Centres of Excellence and Outstanding Young Investigators will be extended in 2006 and 2007. Centres for research-based innovation will be established. An overall strategy will be compiled in order to improve the utilisation of our national resources such as energy, environment and social sciences with a view to attracting more researchers and students to Norway. Research in mathematics, natural sciences and technology will also be given special priority. Measures designed to make research positions at universities and university colleges more attractive include:

- The creation of new temporary posts, with a duration of 4–6 years, in which candidates will be considered for fixed tenure as professors at the end of their period of research.
- A scheme for national graduate schools is to be established.
- Additional Ph.D. scholarships and post-doctorate positions are to be created.
- Opportunities for carrying out research abroad will be improved through, among other things, top-up funding of EU scholarship schemes.

¹³ Report to the Storting No. 20 (2004–2005), 18 March 2005

- A new scheme designed to cover minor operational expenditure in ongoing research projects.

The priorities of the White Paper are described in further detail in chapter 1.

Making HE more responsive to LLL and non-traditional students

The normal requirement for access to higher education is the completion of a 3-year study programme in academic subjects at the upper secondary level, or in some of the technical and vocational subjects. From 2001 onwards, the universities and the university colleges have the right to admit students without sufficient formal entrance qualifications on the basis of age (25 years or more), and a combination of formal, informal and non-formal learning. The institution decides if the applicant is qualified for the study programme concerned. Admission to higher education is based on a point system of assessments from upper secondary school, examinations in other disciplines at universities and university colleges, and additional points for age and completed military service. For certain groups, assessment for admission is now possible by other means than the points system. Disabled applicants may be assessed for admission outside the point system, but the same qualifications, as mentioned above, are required.

The Act on Universities and University Colleges mentions in particular disabled students' prospect of completing their studies.

To promote equality of access to higher education, the student welfare organisations offer housing, canteens, day care centres, medical care etc. These services are to a large extent financed with state support. The State Educational Loan Fund was established in 1947 in order to improve the social recruitment to higher education. All students enrolled in a study programme at a higher education institution are entitled to financial support. Changes to the system of student financial support has recently been introduced, c.f. chapters 2 and 6. State higher education institutions do not charge tuition fees, but loans are available to cover all, or part, of the tuition fee at private higher education institutions.

Norway Opening Universities (NOU) is a national political initiative in the field of lifelong and flexible ICT-supported learning in higher education. NOUs main tasks are to stimulate the development of lifelong and flexible learning in Norwegian higher education; to generate and share knowledge; to be a policy advisor for the Ministry in this field. NOU supports Norwegian institutions of higher education by funding projects for developing ICT supported flexible learning and distance education courses through a annual application process.

Recognition of prior learning/flexible learning paths

Rights assuring educational opportunities:

- Adults with a right to complete education at secondary level can have their non formal and informal learning assessed. This assessment can give access to secondary schools or can, in some cases, allow the applicant to shorten the study period.
- Applicants aged 23 or older, who have at least five years of relevant work experience and who possess competences in six key subjects, can get general access to studies at tertiary level (“general study competences”)
- Adults aged 25 or older can have their non-formal and informal learning assessed in order to allow them to study a specific subject (opposed to “general study competences”). In some cases, the applicants should be allowed to condense their study period. This assessment is done by the institution in which the applicant wants to enrol.

In 2001 and 2002 between seven and eight per cent of all applicants to higher education were enrolled through the procedure for recognition of non-formal and informal learning. Evaluation indicates that these students manage just as well as students admitted in the regular way, and that, due to work experience, they also contribute positively to the learning environments at the institutions.

Obstacles and areas for further progress

The main challenge ahead for Norway relates to the institutions' and the students' use of the opportunities the structural changes create with regard to mobility. Higher education institutions are strongly encouraged to intensify efforts to co-operate with other European higher education institutions, to participate in networks and to encourage mobility both amongst students and staff.

The development of a national framework for qualifications and the description of study programmes by means of learning outcomes is also one of the main challenges ahead for Norway. Even though the structural implementation of the elements of the Bologna Process to a large extent has been done, the actual implementation of the elements at the institutional level remains a challenge. The changes that need to take place at the institutional level in order to make the Bologna reforms a factual reality at the Norwegian institutions cannot be made by structural and legal changes alone. We have to allow for a certain amount of time for the institutions in order not only to complete the factual implementation of all the elements, but also in order for the institutions and the academic staff to familiarise themselves with the new elements and their consequences.

5. INCREASING THE QUALITY AND ATTRACTIVENESS OF VET

National implementation of the Copenhagen tools

The Norwegian Directorate for Primary and Secondary Education has been designated as National Europass Centre (NEC). The Directorate will be responsible for the coordination at national level for all the Europass activities and be part of the European network of NECs.

Image and attractiveness of the vocational route

In Norway, all young people between the ages of 16 and 19 are entitled to three years' upper secondary education, qualifying them for an occupation and/or higher education (Reform 94). With the school reform of 1994 a single system of upper secondary education was introduced which provides both academic education and vocational training, often in the same building. Equal weight and status are given to theoretical education and practical training. Apprenticeships have been incorporated in the upper secondary school education system. Instruction takes place through a combination of school attendance and work. The normal model is two years in school followed by two years of workplace apprenticeship. The reform has made it easier for pupils who first choose vocational training, to achieve college and university eligibility by adding one year of theoretical subjects. The new Knowledge Promotion Reform makes it possible for pupils in the last year of lower secondary education to try out different study programmes of the upper secondary education and for students in upper secondary

education to start with practical work-related training already in the first year. Approx. 50 per cent of the youth cohort choose vocational education.

There is also the opportunity to choose "vocational tertiary education" (ISCED level 4) ("fagskoleutdanning" in Norwegian), a continuous vocational education of max. 2 years, building on an upper secondary degree. This provision is intended to contribute to making VET more attractive.

Quality in VET has increased relevance, and in the development of a quality assurance framework all relevant partners are involved both at regional and local level. The Ministry has given the above-mentioned directorate the assignment to develop and action plan for quality assurance in VET.

To strengthen and improve educational and vocational guidance the Ministry will introduce a framework on quality where counselling is embedded. This framework will be followed up through the new national system for quality assessment.

Common principles for validation of non-formal and informal learning have been implemented to strengthen the comparability of approaches at different levels and in different contexts. The principles have been developed in close cooperation with the social partners.

The needs of low-skilled and disadvantaged groups

In the Norwegian Education Act an apprentice is defined as a person who has signed an apprenticeship contract with a clear objective to obtain a trade or journeyman's examination/certificate. A low-skilled person may sign a trainee contract and take a less extensive examination. Although the social partners have agreed to this, experiences shows that companies are reluctant to take on trainees.

Linking VET with the requirements of the labour market

The tripartite cooperation in VET is part of the Norwegian legislation and is organised in three different bodies:

- a. At national level, the National Council for Vocational Education and Training gathers representatives for the employers', the employees' and teachers' organizations, pupils' associations and the Ministry of Education. The Council's function is to advise the Ministry in political matters and take the initiative in promoting vocational training.
- b. Also at national level, the 9 Vocational Training Councils, one for each study program and representing the various sectors of business, industry and vocational training, give advice to the Ministry on the development of competences and curriculum. Every trade or area of work is associated with a Training Council.
- c. At local level, the County Vocational Training Boards, gathering members from employers' and employees' organizations, bears a major responsibility for implementing vocational training on behalf of the county authorities.

A new amendment in the Education Act is under preparation, emphasizing the cooperation on quality in VET. This includes promoting apprenticeship places and local partnerships agreements

The main objective of recent reforms has been to meet the challenges of rapid obsolescence of knowledge combined with rapid development of technology, and how to cope with this in dynamic environments. The former education and training system was viewed as being out of pace with society.

In accordance with the government strategy on adult learning, employees have been given the right to leave of absence to attend adult training courses (Work Environment Act). During this kind of absence the employer does not pay salary, and there is no right to receive public funding. Employees have the right to take this leave of absence for a period of up to three years, and the right is not restricted to full-time employees. The leave may be fulltime or part-time.

There are certain conditions for obtaining a leave of absence. The employee must have been working for at least three years, and working with the present employer for the last two years. The employee must participate in organised courses during the leave of absence at upper-secondary level or higher, and these courses must be job-relevant. The employee may not demand leave of absence if it implies major difficulties for the employer in organising work during the period of absence.

Reduction of barriers between VET and general/higher education

With the Norwegian school reform of 1994, a single system of upper secondary education was introduced which provides both academic education and vocational training, often in the same building. Equal weight and status are given to theoretical education and practical training. The reform has made it easier for pupils who first choose vocational training, to achieve college and university eligibility by adding one year of theoretical subjects.

The government has initiated a three-year project with the aim of establishing a system for recognition and documentation of non formal competence. Please refer to information given in chapters 3 and 4. The recognition of prior learning and the access to competence-based learning are important elements of the Competence Reform which introduced the system of offering competence-based training for adults. An individual may receive credit for non-formal and informal learning and be offered training for what is lacking to reach the level of upper-secondary examination or the journeyman's certificate. The Competence reform comprises several projects focusing on developing new models for adult learning and new initiatives in developing adapted and flexible learning environments.

Role of vocational teachers and trainers

Training of teachers in VET: Vocational education and training is fully integrated in the educational system in Norway. In-service courses are the same for general as well as for vocational teachers. Examples of core themes are tolerance, ethics, methodology, learning environment, and the pedagogical use of ICT. There are also specific courses for updating teachers in vocational subjects. These courses are offered mainly through a Vocational Higher Training, and may be taken as part-time or full-time courses. Vocational teachers normally attend a university college. The pedagogical education for vocational teachers as well as for teachers of general subjects is offered as a pre-service course of one year duration, but it may also be taken as a bachelor or a master degree. In-service courses are provided by different types of training institutions or may be organised collaboratively between schools and companies. When reforms or changes in

curricula are introduced, the regional authorities are responsible for “up-skilling” the teachers in vocational training. There is no fixed model for this type of in-service courses; the social partners have an important role in deciding on content, duration, and organisation.

Practical pedagogical education may be offered as a two-year part-time study program. This facilitates the transition from a professional career to a teacher’s career for vocational teachers. The program is designed for teachers and trainers in upper-secondary education and training for persons who wish to teach in upper-secondary school. It also targets people with apprentice training responsibilities in private and public enterprises. Prerequisites for entering the program are a trade- or journeyman’s certificate and some work experience, or an equivalent degree qualifying for teaching in upper secondary schools.

Training of trainers/teachers at the workplace (apprenticeship training and CVET in enterprises): There are no specific IVET arrangements that target enterprise-employed instructors and tutors with a responsibility for training of apprentices within upper secondary education. However, in the process of recruitment and approval of enterprises for the training of apprentices, the county education administration conducts an evaluation of the individual enterprise. The level of professional competence of the enterprise in general and the professional and personal qualifications of the responsible persons in particular are emphasised. There are no formal requirements regarding pedagogical training. As a result of the reform of 1994, the Ministry of Education presented an action plan for the upskilling and further training of teachers to ensure high quality in vocational training at the upper-secondary level. This CVT measure targets teachers and instructors as well as business leaders and members of the examination boards. The aim is to equip teachers and instructors to meet the challenges and the objectives of the curriculum. By mid-1997 over 60,000 teachers and instructors had participated in this training. The vocational training offered to personnel is based on four modules, comprising one foundation module and three specialised modules. These can be taken independently of each other. The modules include relevant rules and regulations, planning and organisation of training in the enterprise, basic pedagogical and separately adapted training, and evaluation and quality improvement in training. The implementation costs of the action plan are divided between the State, the counties, and the employers. A Training Office, owned and run by the companies, coordinates the activities between members who have agreed to take on a joint responsibility for training apprentices. The Training Offices are established to coordinate the training and to enhance the competence of the company trainers and employees by providing in-service courses for teachers and trainers in the companies. Practical pedagogical training is a one-year course offered to teachers in the University Colleges and to trainers in a workplace.

Training of teachers and trainers in continuing education and training (outside enterprises): The minimum prerequisite to enter vocational teacher studies is qualification as Master craftsmen with two years of relevant work experience. The study duration is 3 years and includes 4-8 weeks of company training and 12 – 14 weeks of teacher training in school.

Early identification of skills needs and planning of VET provision

The aim of recent reforms has been to strengthen the general access, quality, and relevance of the system and to increase the effectiveness and cost-efficiency of education

and training, but at the same time to establish a framework that would allow for flexibility and rapid responses to new challenges and demands arising from future developments in technology, markets, and society as a whole. As of the end of 2003 the system was still in a state of continuous change, but the outline is clear:

- The various parts of the education system have been mutually adapted to create a more streamlined structure;
- It has become easier for the students to move horizontally between academic and vocational training paths;
- A legal framework has been established to ensure national control of all parts of the education system while at the same time allowing flexible delivery according to needs;
- The administrative system and the financial arrangements for students and public and private providers of education and training have been adjusted to fit the strategic intentions of control and flexibility;
- The international orientation of the provision has been strengthened.

6. CONSOLIDATING THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Increasing mobility

Student mobility

The Norwegian government has determined that each student is entitled to a period of study abroad as an integrated part of his/her Norwegian degree programme. It is the responsibility of the Norwegian higher education institutions to arrange for these sojourns abroad¹⁴. Pupils of upper secondary education are also encouraged to go abroad. The Directorate of Primary and Secondary Education has published an internet-based handbook on how to take part in mobility.

Norwegian higher education institutions are encouraged to increase the number of academic courses offered in English at their institutions in order to attract more foreign students to Norway.

One of the most important steps taken, however, is that student mobility has become one of the criteria for state financing of higher education institutions through the new financial system. The new founding formula for higher education institutions incorporates measures designed to promote internationalization in Norwegian higher education. The institutions receive NOK 5000 (approx. 700 EUROS) per incoming and outgoing exchange student. The aim is increased and more balanced student mobility and exchange.

¹⁴ Norwegian Erasmus Mobility has increased by 14.5% according to the Erasmus student and teacher mobility Report 2003/2004.

Removal of administrative and legal obstacles to mobility

Norwegian students in higher education may spend the financial support of NOK 80 000 a year on studies in a country of their own choice. They may also get extra support to cover travel expenses and tuition fees at foreign universities. Out of a wish to encourage students to freely choose where and what to study, a new financial support system for studies abroad has been implemented from the academic year 2004-05 (see information on the Quality Reform). In the former financial support system for Norwegian students abroad there were limitations regarding the type of educations eligible for tuition funding, and these limitations are now abolished. Students may get tuition support (grants and loans) from the State Educational Loan Fund up to NOK 102 320 per year. A supplementary grant of NOK 55 320 to students studying specific subjects at specific educational institutions is given when the tuition fees exceed NOK 102 320 per academic year.

Over the last years the State Educational Loan Fund has conducted a temporary arrangement of giving loans and grants for pupils and groups of pupils in upper secondary education who wish to spend on year of their education abroad as an integral part of their education, i.e. on the condition that their education schedule at the home school is not delayed. As of the school year 2005-2006, this scheme will be permanent. It will be paid special attention to how to increase the participation of students in VET in this scheme.

Policies aimed at increasing mobility of teachers and trainers

Norway is very committed to mobility both for students and teachers. This is obvious as far as the policy documents are concerned and with regard to the large number of programmes and projects under which school teachers can be mobile. These range from the mobility programmes of the EU, the Nordic programmes and the programmes aiming at collaboration with the neighbouring countries to the more global mobility programmes such as the Fulbright Foundation, the UNESCO school network and the mobility towards Africa. This has resulted in an estimated 3% mobility of school teachers. The respective agencies have also devoted a lot of attention to the study of the impact of mobility.

Norway is also actively participating in teacher mobility under the Council of Europe and within the framework of the Nordic programmes, especially Nordplus with Nordplus Junior (for upper secondary education) and Nordplus Mini (for primary and lower secondary schools), Nordplus Språk (for language learning) and Nordplus Nabo for exchanges with the neighbouring regions (the Baltic countries and northwestern Russia).

Norwegian teachers have participated in mobility under the Socrates and Leonardo programmes. As far as Socrates is concerned future teachers were mobile under Erasmus whereas teachers were mainly mobile under Comenius. Teachers representing the schools participated in Arion study visits.

Data show that the participation of Norwegian universities in the ERASMUS programme has increased over the last years. It is however important to mention that it is difficult to know how many students in initial teacher training participate in Erasmus as there are no detailed figures for teacher training. It was however, mentioned that especially Intensive Programmes are very popular in teacher training institutions.

Lately, there has been considerable growth in participation in mobility in school partnerships in Norway. This is probably due to the fact that the amount granted per

school has increased to a maximum of 9 800 EUROS with an average of 5 600 EUROS per school (2003).

Bilateral agreements

Norway also participates in bilateral agreements with a number of countries. The most important are “GJØR DET - Tun Sie es” (Do it), a bilateral agreement between Germany and Norway, and TROLL involving France and Norway. There is also the Barentsplus Junior bilateral student exchange programme between Norway and Russia for upper secondary school students.

The aims of the Quality Reform of Norwegian higher education and the aims of the Bologna Declaration and the Lisbon Process when it comes to mobility of students and teachers, are identical and therefore reinforce each other. As a result, Norwegian higher education institutions are working on their international strategies as well as reviewing and renewing their co-operation agreements with partner institutions abroad. Norwegian higher education institutions are strongly encouraged to participate in European and other international education and research programmes.

Main obstacles met in the implementation of policies

For Norwegian students and teachers going abroad, language is sometimes considered an obstacle, especially in relation to non-English speaking countries. In order to encourage stays in non-English speaking countries, the National Educational Loan Foundation awards grants for language courses.

As a parallel initiative to the changes in the tuition funding scheme (explained above), it is possible to obtain financial support from the State Educational Loan Fund for students who need and/or want to take a preparatory semester in order to learn a foreign language before starting a full-degree education in a non-English-speaking country.

Consolidating the European and international dimension of education

Active citizenship

Education and training are among the most important tools in order to understand and to participate in modern society. **Equal opportunities** for all students independent of social background and physical and mental capacity are required in order to enable as many as possible to participate in a modern society and to counteract social segmentation. 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** which should provide equal opportunities and individually adapted education for all on the basis of a single national curriculum. All young persons share a common framework of knowledge, culture and values.

An important principle in Norway is that all education – from primary to higher – shall be **free of charge for all**. Regarding higher education (and to some extent upper secondary education), the State Education Loan Fund provides financial support to students in the form of loans and grants. This fund enables people to study regardless of their social and economic background. Such support is also available for studies abroad (see above).

Regarding **active citizenship**, the new Directorate for Primary and Secondary Education is using special “equity” indicators that measure the degree of the pupil’s participation at school and on the degree of pupil/student democracy. The Ministry of Education is currently started work on a new national strategy on active citizenship.

The challenges to individuals and societies imposed by globalization and modernization are widely acknowledged and apparent. The increasingly technological changes in the workplace and in everyday life presents us with continually **new challenges** and demands regarding the kind of competencies that are required. Education and learning are the driving forces of welfare and economic growth in knowledge-based societies. These topics have been put on the policy agenda by both the OECD and the EU. As a response, Norway has initiated systematic efforts to survey knowledge resources as well as the ability to activate them.

Citizens of Europe and the wider world

The current Coalition Government’s European Policy Platform of 2002 describes the challenges, goals and measures for Norway’s European policy. Here the Government states its ambition to **increase knowledge** in schools, training programmes and higher education institutions about European policy, economy and culture, other European countries, European cooperation, and Norway’s position in Europe. As demonstrated in the above-mentioned recent reforms above, the Government is also devoted to strengthening the teaching of a **second foreign language** in Norwegian primary and secondary schools and further education (European languages), as well as to increasing **exchanges and mobility** between Norwegian and European students and apprentices (through bilateral agreements and existing programmes).

establish an interministerial project group to assess, among other things, the following:

As a follow up of the *Government’s European Policy Platform*, the Directorate for Primary and Secondary Education will during 2005 map out to what extent the the basic education in Norway includes an European dimension. The Directorate will also host a conference for teachers on European issues in the autumn 2005.