



Structures of Education,  
Vocational Training  
and Adult Education  
Systems in Europe

# NORWAY

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If you wish to have more detailed information on education systems in Europe, we warmly recommend that you consult the EURYBASE database (<http://www.eurydice.org>) and the CEDEFOP monographs (<http://www.cedefop.eu.int>)

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# INTRODUCTION

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Europe is characterised by a very wide variety of education and training systems. In order that this diversity should be fully appreciated, EURYDICE, the information network on education in Europe, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) and the European Training Foundation (ETF) regularly update a set of national monographs entitled *Structures of Education, Vocational Training and Adult Education Systems in Europe*.

Descriptions relating to individual countries in turn include basic information on the administration and structure of their systems of education and initial vocational training at all levels (from pre-primary to tertiary). Also included are descriptions of initial vocational education and training in alternance and adult education and training within provision for lifelong learning. The initial and in-service training of teachers and their status are also considered.

The information is set out in accordance with a common structure to facilitate inter-country comparisons while ensuring that special features peculiar to each system are duly emphasised.

The description for each country is preceded by a diagram of its education system. Here again, the way the diagrams are presented has, as far as possible, been standardised so that common – and differing – features of the various systems can be more easily identified and compared.

The first chapter within each country section is devoted to a short presentation of the country concerned, together with the basic principles governing its education and training, the division of responsibilities and then more specific information (relating to administration, inspection, financing, private schooling and advisory bodies). The major reforms of education systems are also considered.

The other chapters deal in turn with pre-primary education, compulsory and post-compulsory education (general, technical and vocational provision entirely within schools). The way these chapters are structured depends on each national context. Where pre-primary education is not in reality separate from primary education, or where compulsory education spans different levels, no artificial division has been created. In the case of all countries, a brief description of the aims and structure of the level of education concerned is followed by further headings devoted to the curriculum, assessment, teachers and statistics.

Initial vocational education and training in alternance is the subject of a chapter in its own right. It includes all education and training for young people that is not essentially school-based, and thus covers for example apprenticeships based on the 'dual system' pattern, sandwich course training and any other initiatives and experiments with major elements of 'on-the-job' experience.

This is followed by a chapter on tertiary education, in which a summary description is supplemented by sections on admission, tuition fees, the academic year, courses, qualifications and assessment. The chapter includes any initiatives implemented as part of the Bologna process.

The last chapter deals with continuing education and training for adults (whether in or outside the labour market, employed or unemployed). It provides information on the political, legislative and financial framework of this kind of education, on the authorities concerned and their responsibilities, as well as on the general organisation of training for adults (types of institution, access requirements, programme objectives, the curriculum and quality assurance). There is also a brief description of guidance/counselling services, as well as of questions relating to assessment and accreditation including the recognition of non-formal kinds of learning.

The situation regarding teachers is dealt with in a specific section for each level of education discussed. Also provided are national statistics on the number of pupils, students, teachers and educational institutions and, where figures are available, on pupil or student/teacher ratios, attendance and attainment rates or, yet again, on the choice of branches of study or areas of specialisation.

The National Units in the EURYDICE Network have drafted the descriptions for their countries, each using the same proposed outline of content as a common framework. The information on initial vocational education and training in alternance, and on adult education has been prepared in close collaboration with members of the CEDEFOP REFER Network (in the case of the European Union and EFTA/EEA countries) and the National Observatories of the European Training Foundation (ETF) in the case of the 12 candidate countries. We are extremely grateful to them and to all those who were involved in this project in the EURYDICE European Unit in Brussels, CEDEFOP in Thessaloniki, and the ETF in Turin for their invaluable contribution to this fundamental source of information which is vital to a better understanding of education and training systems in Europe.

Given the number of countries now covered <sup>(1)</sup> and the amount of data available, the description of each system of education and training may be consulted solely electronically on the website of the EURYDICE Network (<http://www.eurydice.org>), which brings it to the attention of the largest possible number of people and enables it to be updated on a more regular basis.

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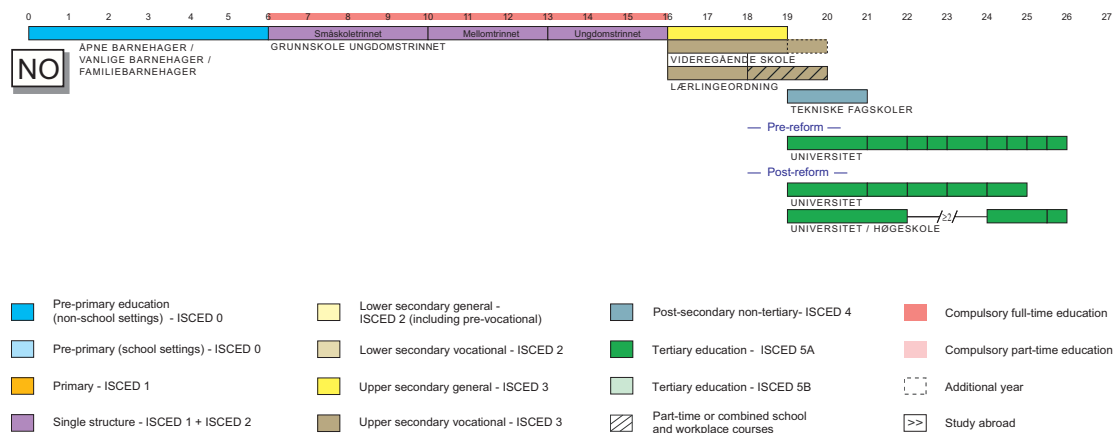
Peter de Roij  
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<sup>(1)</sup> The 30 European countries taking part in the EU Education Programme, Socrates.

### Organisation of the education system in Norway, 2003/04



Source: Eurydice.

# 1. RESPONSIBILITIES AND ADMINISTRATION

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## 1.1 Background

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Norway has 4.5 million inhabitants and a mainland area of 324 thousand square kilometres. The country is divided into 19 counties and 434 municipalities. Oslo, the capital, has half a million inhabitants.

Culturally, the population has been fairly homogeneous. The Norwegian language has, however, two forms (*nynorsk* and *bokmål*) which have co-existed as the country's two official languages for about a hundred years. The proper balance to be accorded to the two versions requires special efforts with regard to educational and cultural policies.

There is a *Sami* minority population with its own language and distinctive culture. This population is centred mainly in the northernmost county of Finnmark. There are an estimated 20,000 *Sami* speakers. As a general rule, *Sami* pupils in compulsory schools are entitled to education in their own language.

Immigrants (defined as both parents born outside Norway) constitute 6,7% of the total population and 20,1% of the population in Oslo (2002). 45% of the immigrants are Norwegian citizens.

Approximately 85% of the population are members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Norway.

At national level, political power is invested in the *Storting* (the Parliament). The 165 members of the *Storting* are elected for four-year terms. The Labour Party has supplied the Prime Minister and formed the government for most of the time since World War II. The current government is formed by a coalition of the Christian Democratic Party, the Norwegian Conservative Party and the Norwegian Liberal Party. Since 1981, women have held almost half the ministerial posts.

Norway is a high-income country. The economy is characterised by large revenues from oil and gas extraction and a large and growing services sector. The education level of the population is high compared to most countries. Labour force participation rates are high – especially for women. Unemployment has been low at around 3%, but is increasing in 2002/03. (Source: Statistics Norway).

## 1.2 Basis of the education system: principles and legislation

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The overall objective of Norwegian education policy is to provide equal opportunities for all, irrespective of sex, geographic location, and economic, social or cultural background. The aim is to offer all children an education adapted to their individual abilities.

In order to provide possibilities for life-long learning it is considered important that a broad spectrum of further training and other study possibilities should be accessible to adults. Strengthening the sector of higher education and improving the quality and quantity of research are other priorities.

Main legislative framework for the education system is set out in the Act concerning Day Care Institutions of 1995 (pre-primary education), the Education Act of 1998 (primary and secondary education), and the Act concerning Universities and Colleges of 1995 (higher education). Legislation is passed by the *Storting*, and directives are issued by the Government (the Ministry).

## 1.3 Distribution of responsibilities for the organisation and administration of the education and training system

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The *Storting* defines the overall aims of compulsory, secondary and higher education; it lays down the structure and organisation. The government has the responsibility for running educational institutions within the frames put up by the *Storting*.

The government exercises its authority in matters of education through the Ministry of Education and Research. The Ministry covers all levels of education from primary and secondary to higher education, including adult education. Pre-primary education is the responsibility of the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs.

The administration of public primary and secondary education in Norway is decentralised

with the counties and municipalities having considerable authority and financial freedom of action. As well as providing child care services, the municipalities are responsible for the administration of public primary and lower secondary education (compulsory education), for the building and maintenance of school buildings and for the appointment of teachers. The counties are responsible for public upper secondary education, for the administration of the schools, the intake of pupils and the appointment of teachers. The Ministry of Education and Research administers private institutions as well as the institutions of higher education and research directly.

### Central level

The Ministry of Education and Research is responsible for policy issues and all matters of relevance to the educational system as a whole. Employing some 280 people (in 2003), the ministry's budget amounts to some NOK 44 billion (in 2002).

The National Board of Education, established with effect from September 2000, is a state institution, with its own board of directors. The Board is a national centre for the education sector, replacing the former National Centre for Educational Resources and the National Examination Board. The new Board has been assigned to such tasks as the operative responsibility for curriculum development, educational research and development work, certain topics related to information and communication technology in education, examinations in lower and upper secondary schools, and certain tasks related to information.

A Core Curriculum (*Læreplan for grunnskole, videregående opplæring og voksenopplæring, Generell del*) includes general principles for compulsory education, upper secondary education and for adult education in school and industry. This document provides a basis for curriculum development within all these educational sectors.

According to the law, the Ministry of Education draws up curriculum guidelines for compulsory school. The Core Curriculum for primary, secondary and adult education came into force in 1993 and replaced the first part of the Curriculum Guidelines for primary and lower secondary education.

In August 1997, a new national curriculum for the 10-year compulsory school came into force. It is issued as a directive, and is a legal obligation for local authorities, schools and teachers all over the country. However, it is based on the principle of community and adaptation, which emphasises the sense of

community through a common heritage as well as adaptation due to local and individual varieties and differences.

Compared to earlier versions, the curriculum of 1997 puts greater emphasis on a common, central curriculum. This is intended to ensure a nation-wide education system with a common content of knowledge, traditions and values regardless of where the pupils live, their social background, gender, religion or their mental or physical ability. There is still scope at the local and individual level to adapt the policies, adjust the specifications and supplement the activities.

The Ministry is also responsible for establishing the main curriculum and organisation of school time for upper secondary school and organising the school leaving examinations. The curricula at this level are to a large extent developed on the basis of local initiatives or the initiatives of various bodies of experts.

In higher education, institutions are funded directly by the Ministry of Education and Research, generally in the form of framework allocations. The Ministry also approves study programmes following application from the institutions concerned, and in accordance with the provisions of the 1995 Universities and Colleges Act.

Some of the Ministry's work is done on regional level, by regional representatives or by other institutions competent in specific areas.

### County level

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

This work will be concluded by the end of year 2003. For apprenticeship training there is a special Vocational Training Committee (*Yrkesopplæringsnemnd*) in each county, which is responsible for the administration of the apprenticeship contracts, approves the enterprises and organisations which will provide the training, organises the examinations and issues the certificates.

### Municipal level

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

### Institutional level

The head teacher of each school is responsible for the provision of education, the management of the teaching staff and the administration of the school. Local work on subject syllabuses is mainly done at the individual school or by co-operating schools. It should establish the foundation for teachers' planning of their teaching at classroom and pupil level.

All the state higher education institutions are administered by the Ministry of Education and Research in accordance with the provisions laid down in the Act of 12 May 1995 No 22 on Universities and Colleges. The act explicitly provides for discretionary decisions in strategic policy, general management, daily administration and the management of teaching and research - provided that the relevant laws, regulations and national policies are adhered to.

## 1.4 Inspection/supervision/guidance

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In co-operation with county and municipal authorities, the Education Office ensures that appropriate schooling is provided for children and young people, as well as providing adequate adult education facilities. The Education Office has a responsibility to ensure that compulsory education complies with the law, curricula, national and international agreements and particular focus areas. There is an educational-psychological service (*Pedagogisk-psykologisk tjeneste*) in every municipality as a part of the municipal school administration responsible for providing pedagogical, psychological and subject-related advice for pupils and their parents, teachers and educational institutions.

The educational-psychological service also caters for pre-primary children and day-care institutions (*barnehager*) at that level.

A county-based counselling service exists in every county. The service is responsible for providing pedagogical, psychological and subject-related advice for teachers and institutions. The service also assists in diagnosing individual pupils' learning difficulties, takes part in the planning process and provides the tools necessary for continued instruction in the ordinary class context.

In higher education, the NOKUT is responsible for evaluation and quality assessment.

## 1.5 Financing

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All public and most private education institutions and training activities are subsidised by the central government.

Since 1986, at primary and secondary level, municipal/county authorities receive a lump sum covering all central government expenditure such as school education, health services (except hospitals) and culture. Municipalities and counties thus have considerable autonomy in their expenditure decisions.

In a few fields, there are still earmarked grants, for instance for the teaching of mother tongue and Norwegian as a second language to immigrant children, and for the teaching of Norwegian as a second language to adult immigrants.

Extra state subsidies and provisions are also made to avoid regional disparities, e.g. for state-owned schools or courses in some trades which cannot be organised in each region and for some schools for pupils with special needs. There are about 20 national resource centres for special education; all are financed by the state. There are also special measures for the three northernmost counties.

Higher education in Norway is mostly financed by the state. The total amount of funding to be granted directly by the Ministry is determined by the Storting as part of the annual budget. It is meant to cover most of the costs necessary for the running of the institutions. The funding of state institutions can be divided into three main categories: allocations for salaries and other ordinary costs, for investment and new equipment, and for other measures (e.g. activities common to several institutions). Buildings and equipment are funded after a special evaluation has been made.



In addition, all the state higher education institutions can earn complementary funds from research and development activities carried out in co-operation with (or for) national or local research institutes, from private or public funding of special projects or activities, or from the sale of publications, etc. - provided the relevant national regulations for the sector are adhered to.

The education budget for primary and secondary education for adults is the responsibility of the municipal and county educational authorities, which are given a grant of money for these purposes. The remaining adult education programmes are financed by earmarked grants or subsidised by the government. Grants are given to county authorities, municipalities, organisations and institutions, companies and national associations of companies in accordance with the requirements of the Adult Education Act. The study associations and the distance education institutions may also receive contributions from public funds according to rules set out in the same act. These contributions are given on the basis of implemented hours of adult education activity and also according to special applications for pedagogical development work etc. The main source of financing for the study associations is, however, the participant fees.

Education in public institutions at all levels is provided free of charge. In compulsory primary and lower secondary education, textbooks are also free of charge. Private institutions have to cover 15% of their costs by student fees. The remaining amount is paid by the state.

The State Educational Loan Fund (*Statens lånekasse for utdanning*), established in 1947, is a government-run organisation that allocates financial aid to students attending courses in upper secondary and higher education. Each year, the Ministry of Education and Research provides the fund with regulations as to how student financial aid is to be administered and allocated. The scheme consists of loans and grants.

Students at public institutions of higher education are not required to pay tuition fees. However, a small fee has to be paid each term to the Student Welfare Organisation (*Studentsamskipnaden*) by all students.

## 1.6 Advisory and consultative bodies

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A characteristic feature of the Norwegian education system has been the large number of advisory bodies concerned with specific types of

education.

The Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education, NOKUT, was established by the Storting in 2002 and commenced its activities on 1 January 2003. NOKUT is an independent government body. Through evaluation, accreditation and recognition of quality systems, institutions and course provisions, the purpose of NOKUT is to supervise and help to develop the quality of higher education in Norway. In addition, individual applications are considered for general recognition of foreign qualifications. NOKUT is also responsible for keeping foreign institutions and partners informed about the Norwegian education system.

The Education office, from 2003 an integrated part of the Office of the County Governors carry out tasks delegated by the central government. The head of each office is a Director of Education (*Utdanningsdirektør*).

The responsibilities of the offices cover all levels of education within the county - the exception being higher education where their responsibility is limited to co-ordinating activities of relevance for the school sector, notably further education and training for teachers. The offices are consultative bodies. They have a quality control function, but the emphasis is on consultation with each school and municipality. Communication between the national authorities, teachers' unions, parents' associations, and pupils' and students' associations is also the responsibility of the National Education Offices. There are also a number of advisory bodies acting at the national level. The existence and activities of these national centres/councils are based on Acts of Parliament or Orders in Council.

The bodies covering several levels in the education system are the following:

The National Centre for Educational Resources whose main function is to assist in the development of textbooks and other learning materials.

Committees, representing employers and employees, serve as advisory bodies to the government on issues not covered by general agreements, laws or regulations.

In addition, there are several bodies providing advice on areas such as Sami affairs, vocational training, university co-operation, adult education, distance education etc.

## 1.7 Private schools

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

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

Private higher education is regulated by the Act of 11 June 1986 No 53 on the recognition of study programmes at, and the state funding of, private higher education institutions, a law entirely administered by the Ministry of Education and Research. The aim of the law was to give more security to the private higher education institutions, particularly academically, by introducing a system for the recognition of study programmes at such institutions. Private higher education institutions may only receive state funding for recognised study programmes but they are not automatically entitled to such support. In practice, the private higher education institutions receive varying shares of their funding from the state, from zero to nearly full financing.

Non-governmental organisations and institutions carrying out open and distance learning are private education bodies run according to the Adult Education Act.

## 2. PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

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Pre-primary education (early childhood education and care) covers the age group from 0 to 5. Participation in a pre-primary programme is voluntary. Pre-primary institutions are the responsibility of the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs. They are generally referred to as day-care institutions (*barnehager*) and are regulated by the Day-care Institution Act of 5 May 1995. The *barnehage* Act regulates the authorisation, operation and supervision of *barnehager*. The *barnehager* must be approved by local authorities. They are defined as educationally oriented enterprises for children under school age, e.g. for children less than six years. All approved *barnehager* receive state grants to cover part of the running costs.

The *barnehager* serve a dual function: they contribute to the education of children of pre-primary age, and they provide care during parents' working hours. A national framework plan stating the general aims of the pre-primary education was implemented in 1996.

In general, there are three types of child care institutions in Norway: ordinary child care institutions (*vanlige barnehager*), family childcare institutions (*familiebarnehager*) and open child care institutions (*åpne barnehager*). They are all coeducational, but there are differences in other respects.

Attendance at day-care institutions is not compulsory and there are no formal entrance requirements. Existing limitations are more a consequence of capacity and cost. The establishment of new day-care institutions varies from one municipality to another, and shortage of places mainly affects children under 3 years.

Parental leave of absence has recently undergone reforms which make it possible to benefit from the right to parental leave in a more flexible manner. A cash benefit scheme entered into force for 1-year-olds in August 1998 and was introduced for 2-year-olds in January 1999.

There are no formal links between day-care institutions and primary schools or institutions providing teacher training. In 1997, the school entry age was lowered from seven to six years. The curriculum and working methods for the first four grades is to a large extent a combination of primary and pre-primary pedagogical principles, and pre-primary teachers are qualified to teach the first year. With an extra

year of education the pre-primary teachers might teach in the first four grades.

### 2.1 Organisation

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The provision of day-care services is the responsibility of the municipalities. A considerable part of the total service is provided by private organisations, under municipal supervision. The government covers part of the annual cost, at present about 34% on average, of all approved institutions, private or public. The rest of the cost is shared between the municipality and the parents. The municipality decides whether it wishes to subsidise the different privately owned institutions. For children with special needs, such as disabled children and immigrants, the government gives special economic support to local authorities. This support makes it possible to establish programmes for integrating children with special needs in day-care institutions. The Norwegian Parliament has decided principles for a reform in the financing of the sector. The Government will present the reform in the fiscal budget for 2003.

In Norway, children attend day-care institutions from 6 to about 50 hours a week. Children may attend day-care institutions full-time or part-time. Ordinary day-care institutions are usually open at least 41 hours per week. The total number of 5,776 day-care institutions were registered in 1999. The size of the institutions varies from small ones with 10-18 children to larger ones with 50-100 children, according to local needs.

Ordinary childcare institutions, which are the most common institutions, may be divided into departments consisting of children either in the age group 0 to 3 or 3 to 6. The youngest children are organised in groups of 8 or 9, while the older ones are in groups of 16 to 20 children. There are also age-integrated groups for 1 to 5 year-olds. Head teachers and teaching staff should be qualified pre-primary teachers. The rest of the staff are mainly assistants, there are generally 1 or 2 assistants for each group.

Family childcare institutions are mainly aimed at

younger children. This type of childcare is organised in private homes, and involves small groups of children; 3 to 5 children in each group. The staff is under the supervision of a pre-primary teacher who normally supervises several homes.

The third type of childcare is in open childcare institutions. Parents stay with their children in an open institution whenever they want within the working hours of the institution. These institutions can be regarded as places where pre-primary teachers, parents and children can meet for social interaction and information about child rearing.

Parents normally have to contribute financially to have their child in a childcare institution. Some parents find it too expensive to do so. Parents of low income or whose children are handicapped may apply for a free place; the municipality then pays their expenses. The amount parents contribute varies between childcare institution and from one municipality to another.

## 2.2 Curriculum/assessment

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The framework plan recommends five basic themes:

- Society, religion and ethics
- Aesthetic subjects
- Language, text and communication
- Nature, environment and technology
- Physical activities and health

Another important part of the program is daily-life activities aimed at developing the child's social skills.

Most institutions have a daily routine. This often consists of free time to play, outdoor activities playing in groups, supervised activities, meals and reading/show-and-tell time. The hours spent on the different activities and the order of the activities vary, according to local needs and the children's attendance time.

There is no formal evaluation at pre-primary level. The monitoring of progress has tended to be concentrated around the child's ability to function socially as part of a group. The teachers give informal information to parents about their children's progress once or twice a year. This information is normally given in person during meetings between the teacher and the parents of one child at a time. If the teacher finds that any child has a special

problem, he or she is responsible for discussing her/his observation of this problem with the parents, and for giving them advice on how to get in touch with a specialist in the field. According to the framework plan the staff should observe and evaluate their daily work. A concrete evaluation programme must be part of the annual plan. Both the parents and the children themselves should take part in this evaluation.

According to different ways of organising the children in groups, they may attend the same group for several years. The children have a legal right to enter compulsory school the year they turn six years.

There are no regulations on the size of groups, but there are on the number of children per teacher (maximum 18 children over the age of three or 9 children under the age of three per one teacher).

## 2.3 Teachers

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Head teachers and the rest of the teaching staff should be qualified pre-primary teachers. In addition, there are assistants without the same level of qualifications. Depending on the organisation of groups, the teacher will stay with a group for several years or the group may have a new teacher. The state has no guidelines concerning this point.

Pre-primary teachers follow 3 years of higher education at a state or private University College. Students receive training in educational theory and practice, aesthetics, social science and the Norwegian language. There is no formal training for teaching assistants. Some of them have only completed compulsory school, but others have attended courses in upper secondary education relevant for work in a childcare institution.

Staff in childcare institutions may work full-time or part-time. Both categories are well represented amongst pre-primary teachers and assistants. There is no regulations concerning the teachers' in-service training.

## 2.4 Statistics

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In 2001, some 192,600 children, 53,8% of all children between the age of 0 and 5, attended day-care institutions. The coverage, low for the

youngest children, increases with the age and reached about 80% for the 5-year-olds. Approximately 64% or 123,800 of those children were in day-care institutions for more than 32 hours per week.

There were 5776 day-care institutions in Norway in 2001; 2,978 of these were public.

53,816 people were employed in day-care institutions in 2001, they totally worked 40,901 man-year. About 93% of the staff were women. 14,663 were qualified pre-primary teachers. (Source: Statistics Norway)

### 3. COMPULSORY EDUCATION AND TRAINING (*grunnskole*)

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In Norway, there is a long tradition of combining primary and lower secondary education in a comprehensive and compulsory school system (*grunnskole*) with a common legislative framework and a national curriculum.

Compulsory education, comprising mixed ability and co-educational classes, has the aim of offering all pupils an education suited to their individual abilities. This principle applies just as much to the education of pupils with learning and other difficulties as to pupils with special abilities, be these theoretical, practical, physical or aesthetic. In such cases, extra resources can be allocated to the pupils who have special needs or to the class as a whole.

According to the Education Act of 1998, the purpose of primary and lower secondary education should be "in agreement and co-operation with the home, to help to give pupils a Christian and moral upbringing, to develop their mental and physical abilities, and to give them good general knowledge so that they may become useful and independent human beings at home and in society". The school "shall further the equal status and equal rights of all human beings, intellectual freedom and tolerance, ecological understanding and international co-responsibility. Teaching shall provide a foundation for further education and for lifelong learning and provide support for a common foundation of knowledge, culture and basic values, and a high general level of education in the population. Teaching shall be adapted to the abilities and aptitudes of individual pupils. Emphasis shall be placed on creating satisfactory forms of co-operation between teachers and pupils and between the school and the home. All persons associated with the school shall make efforts to ensure that pupils are not injured or exposed to offensive words or deeds."

Starting in 1997, as part of Reform '97, Norwegian children start school during the calendar year they reach the age of 6 (previously, the age was 7). Compulsory education has been extended to 10 years (instead of 9) and consists of three stages:

- Primary stage: grades 1-4 (age 6-10);
- Intermediate stage: grades 5-7 (age 10-13); and
- Lower secondary stage: grades 8-10 (age

13-16).

No formal division is made between the stages of education. Some schools have pupils at all stages while others are purely primary schools (*barneskoler*, grades 1-7) or lower secondary schools (*ungdomsskoler*, grades 8-10). Dividing compulsory education between two schools is often done for practical reasons, such as the number of pupils, the size of the buildings and the historical traditions in the local area.

Education in the publicly maintained primary and lower secondary schools shall be free of charge. The municipality shall provide pupils attending the primary and lower secondary school with textbooks and readers, equipment for writing and drawing and other learning materials.

Fees are charged in private schools, which usually receive public funding (85% of total expenses). A system of organised day-care facilities (*skolefritidsordning*) for children at the primary stage has been established and expanded as part of the reform of primary and lower secondary education. From 1 January 1999, all municipalities are legally obliged to provide such activities before and after school hours to those pupils in grades 1 to 4 who need it. Day-care facilities must provide amenities for play and participation in cultural and recreational activities appropriate for the age, level of physical ability and interests of the children. Such day-care facilities must also provide satisfactory development conditions for children with physical disabilities.

#### 3.1 Organisation of the school

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Since 1994, the school year has been 38 weeks for pupils and 39 weeks for teachers.

Subjects are allocated a number of 45-minute periods within each main stage. This leaves schools greater flexibility to plan the school year.

The total annual number of periods is 6118 for all primary school pupils (grades 1-7) and 3420 for all lower secondary school pupils (grades 8-10).

The law sets a limit of a maximum of 28 pupils

per class in primary school (grades 1-7) and 30 pupils per class in lower secondary school (grades 8-10). Each class functions as a teaching and as an administrative unit. Normally, each class stays together as a heterogeneous unit from grade 1 to grade 7, and from grade 8 to grade 10, sometimes even from grade 1 to grade 10.

Normally, classes are organised according to age, consisting of pupils born in the same calendar year. Schools organised in this way are called fully graded schools (*fulldelte skoler*). However, Norway has a relatively large number of small schools situated in remote and sparsely populated areas. In these schools, different year groups are taught in the same classroom. Approximately one third of schools in Norway are such multigraded schools (*fådelte skoler*).

All pupils in Norway are taught in mixed-ability classes and permanent grouping within a class is not allowed. However, schools are free to develop their own systems of flexible groupings within the system of class units in order to maximise the possibilities presented by the new curriculum in individual and pedagogical terms.

At primary and intermediate level, each class has a class teacher who is largely responsible for the teaching of most subjects. First grade classes with more than 18 pupils must have two teachers.

At lower secondary level, a class teacher, who also teaches the class in at least one subject, or perhaps a team of teachers, usually handles the administration of the class. Teachers at lower secondary school level may have different academic backgrounds, some having studied general teacher education at state colleges and some having a university background plus teacher training. Teachers are almost always required to teach a range of subjects.

### 3.2 Curriculum

The 1997 curricula, referred to as L97, contain new syllabuses for the subjects. The earlier optional subjects have been replaced by compulsory additional subjects and the school's and pupils' options. The choices made by the school or the pupils shall have a local profile and the syllabus shall be designed by the school in accordance with the objectives of the national curriculum. The education can take place in the form of projects carried out in the school and in the local community.

Compulsory additional subjects are chosen from one of three alternatives:

1. A second foreign language: the pupils may choose to learn another foreign language in addition to English, i.e. German or French, or possibly another language for local or regional reasons.
2. Supplementary language study (i.e. English, Norwegian, *Sami* or Sign language).
3. Practical project work: The pupils can choose a practical activity, where they take part in the planning of a project.

Allocation of periods in compulsory education:

Subjects and lessons per year	Grades 1-4	Grades 5-7	Grades 8-10	Sum
Christian Knowledge and Religious and Ethical education	266	266	247	779
Norwegian	912	589	532	2,033
Mathematics	532	437	418	1,387
Social Studies	190	285	380	855
Art and Crafts	228	380	228	836
Science and the Environment	152	247	342	741
English	95	266	342	703
Music	152	228	114	494
Home Economics	38	114	114	266
Physical Education	228	266	304	798
Compulsory additional subjects			304	304
Class and pupil activities			95	95
Free activities	247			247
Periods per year	3,040	3,078	3,420	9,538
School's and pupils' options	152	114	152	418
Finnish/ <i>Sami</i> as second language				1,111

There is a separate *Sami* curriculum, usually referred to as L97S, which has been introduced to cover the overall education of pupils living in certain *Sami* administrative regions of Norway where there are long traditions of *Sami* language and culture. L97S has the same status as L97.

Pupil participation is a basic principle of the curriculum. The pupils will gradually be given more responsibility for planning their own learning and, at the lower secondary stage, they shall share the responsibility for planning and evaluating the tasks they carry out themselves or together with others.

Education shall include practical tasks that give rise to questions requiring well-founded

solutions. The pupils shall learn to plan, organise and carry out practical tasks in different areas. The pupils shall be able to obtain information from different sources, and subject this information to critical judgement.

A certain minimum percentage of the available time must be devoted to theme and project work (60% at primary stage, 30% at intermediate stage and 20% at lower secondary stage). In the initial grades especially, learning takes place through a combination of play, work on themes and other learning activities.

Pupils have some homework at all levels. There are no regulations as to how much homework pupils should have.

Vocational guidance and information about the world of work are integrated as important parts of education.

The initial stage (grades 1-4): The teaching is based on the traditions of both the day-care institutions and the school, and shall ensure an easy transition from day-care institution to school. Emphasis shall be placed on exploring and learning through play. Large shares of the teaching shall be organised into themes containing elements from different subjects. The teaching shall gradually become more subject-specific as the pupils move up through the grades.

The intermediate stage (grades 5-7): At this stage, the different subjects become more distinct. The practical and theoretical elements of the subjects shall be distinguished more clearly. The organisation of the subject matter into themes and project work shall show how the subjects are interconnected. The education shall help the pupils to develop skills and relationships.

The lower secondary stage (grades 8-10): The education shall be based on and further develop what the pupils have learned already, and shall ensure a good transition to upper secondary education. More detailed learning and greater coherence of the subject matter, together with practical work, shall give the pupils practice in analytical and critical methods of approach. The education shall emphasise working across subjects and give the pupils experience of project work.

### 3.3 Assessment/certification/guidance

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There has been a development in the view of assessment in Norwegian schools in recent years in favour of putting greater emphasis on continuous and formative assessment. This

development is reflected in L97. Assessment should reflect the general aims and the objectives of the subject and the main subject elements. It should be an integral and continuous part of the learning process in which the pupils must take an active part, and it shall be supplemented by regular meetings between teachers, parents and pupils.

Progression from year to year throughout compulsory education is automatic. Pupils in difficulty may receive additional educational support.

Assessment at the primary and intermediate stages does not involve the awarding of marks. Only at lower secondary level is a system of marks introduced, and this is in addition to the ongoing informal assessment system. A numerical marking system has now been introduced on a 6-to-1 scale, 6 being the top mark and 1 the lowest.

All pupils in grade 10 are required to take a centrally set written examination in one of three subjects: Norwegian, Mathematics or English. Every year it is decided centrally which schools will take the Norwegian examination, which the Mathematics and which the English. Pupils are only told a few days before the examination which subject has been assigned to their school. Approximately one third of the pupils in grade 10 throughout the country will take the examination in each of the three subjects. Most pupils will also have to sit an oral examination, which is organised locally. The oral examination may be in any of the school subjects, except for Home Economics, Physical Education and Art and Crafts. In those subjects where the pupils have not taken an examination, the final mark is given on the basis of the teachers' assessment of the pupil throughout the year.

All pupils completing lower secondary school are entitled to three years of further education at upper secondary level.

### 3.4 Teachers

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Concerning compulsory education at primary level (grades 1 to 4), the current idea is to model it on a combination of pre-primary and school pedagogical principles, and pre-primary teachers will be qualified to teach these grades after completing a one-year specialisation course for this purpose.

Generally, teachers in compulsory school are allocated by class. Each class has a class teacher who is responsible for the class and who generally teaches more than one subject in the



class. The same teacher often teaches and administers the same group of children for several years. This is the traditional way of organising class teaching and administration at primary level. It is considered appropriate to the age of the pupils and to the need to integrate different aspects of education, such as cross-curricular goals and themes relevant to more than one subject. However, there is a clear trend towards organising teacher's planning and teaching in teams, rather than leave it to the individual teacher. The curriculum now states that teachers must be able to work together across sections, classes, levels and departments. They must co-operate in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the school's activities.

At lower secondary level, there are some subject specialists (such as for the second foreign language, home economics and physical education).

Teacher training in Norway takes place either at state colleges or at universities. In schools there will often be a combination of the two. Until 1994, teachers in primary and (some in) lower secondary schools had to follow three years of general teacher education. From 1994 onwards, general teacher education, which takes place at state colleges, has been extended to four years. Alternatively, teachers in lower secondary schools may have completed four to six years of university study and then undergone teacher training at a university or a state college, including teaching practice. Prior to 1994, this training consisted of a half-year course but now the course has been extended to one year.

Teachers with general teacher education may teach all subjects at all levels at compulsory school. Teachers with university qualifications may only teach subjects in which they have passed a university examination.

Teachers in compulsory schools are employed by the municipal authorities. Most of them work full-time, but a large number of teachers work part-time, especially in primary schools. The school year allows for five planning days each year, which are often used for in-service training. The law states that teachers have a duty to attend in-service training to ensure that their education is in accordance with the national guidelines.

The Education Act does not specify the number of days per year that the teachers must attend in-service training.

### 3.5 Statistics

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Number of primary and lower secondary schools in the 2000/01 school year (excluding Norwegian schools abroad): 3,248

of which:

Fully graded schools: 2,001 (61%)

Multigraded schools: 1,276 (39%)

(Source: GSI - *Grunnskolen informasjonssystem*)

Close to 100% of all pupils complete compulsory schooling. Approximately 94 to 95% enter general or vocational upper secondary education, and 4% to 5% enter employment or unemployment. Most pupils continue in upper secondary schools in the same area.

Source: Statistics Norway

## 4. POST-COMPULSORY SECONDARY EDUCATION

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Upper secondary education normally covers the 16 to 19 age group, or the period from the eleventh to the thirteenth year of education and training. It includes general and vocational education at upper secondary schools, vocational training at technical schools and apprenticeship training.

There is one major type of school at this level of education: the upper secondary school (*videregående skole*), administered by the county. Upper secondary schools are generally of modest size and are invariably coeducational; their pupils are recruited from the lower secondary schools in their areas.

The large majority of upper secondary schools are combined schools, i.e. schools offering both general studies and vocational training.

Technical colleges, whose history is different from that of upper secondary schools, are now administered as a part of upper secondary education. They have traditionally offered further vocational qualifications within a broad range of trades, and have acted as a stepping stone to higher education. They now offer 2-year courses to pupils who already have trade skills, practical experience in employment, and/or upper secondary education. In consequence, pupils tend to be somewhat older than the average upper secondary pupil.

Since the introduction of Reform'94, the Act Concerning Upper Secondary Education and the Act Concerning Vocational Training have had the same principal aims. They stipulate that pupils should be prepared for an occupation and for participation in civic affairs, be given the basis for further education and encouraged in their personal development. The pupils' knowledge and understanding of basic Christian and humanist values, of Norwegian traditions as a part of their cultural heritage, of democratic ideals and of scientific method should be developed. In addition, vocational education has the general aim of ensuring co-ordinated theoretical and practical education, providing skilled workers in the various crafts and industries, and reducing unemployment among youth.

One of the main goals of upper secondary education is to make it possible for all pupils to attain a recognised qualification.

The three former acts relating to primary and lower secondary education, upper secondary education and vocational training are the basis of a common Education Act of 17 July 1998.

The Education Act governs primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education. It incorporates the changes in upper secondary education introduced during the 1990s and contains a chapter on vocational training and apprenticeship.

### 4.1 Organisation of the school

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School buildings are used by one set of pupils per day, but are generally available for adult education courses in the evenings.

While the institutions to some extent specialise in different fields and offer a full education in different areas, the goal is that every county should offer most courses.

Classes are organised by courses. A pupil starting upper secondary education has the right to a place on one of his/her three preferred foundation courses. Admission to specific courses can be affected by factors such as the applicant's grades and the counties course provision. However, more than 90% are admitted to their first choice. A pupil with a handicap that makes it necessary to provide special education has the right to be accepted on a specific foundation course at the request of the pupil, parents and teacher.

Streaming is very unusual in Norwegian schools; pupils in upper secondary schools work in mixed-ability classes.

All pupils have between 30 and 35 lessons per week over the approximately 38-week school year; small variations are found between courses.

Textbooks and supplementary materials can be used freely without any need for official approval.

The authorities do not prescribe textbooks and there are often several competing books on the market. It is the school and its teachers who decide which textbooks the pupils should buy

and use in class. Pupils buy their own textbooks and all other necessary materials.

## 4.2 Curriculum

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In the autumn of 1994, a major reform was implemented. From then all pupils leaving lower secondary education are entitled to three years of upper secondary education that provide the pupil with either an academic or a vocational education. In addition, the authorities are legally obliged to make adequate provision for older pupils who wish to start, continue or complete their education at this level. The education comprises a one-year foundation course and two years of advanced courses (the advanced courses only apply to vocational education). There are 15 foundation courses (3 general, 12 vocational education) and a much larger number of advanced courses. Pupils are normally accepted on courses building on the foundation course they have followed. In the case of apprenticeship training, the third year of schooling is replaced by one year of full-time instruction in a recognised training establishment followed by one year of productive work in the same establishment.

The subject syllabuses are broad, applicable regardless of where the education/training takes place and of what groups receive it. The modular structure of the courses is designed to accommodate the varying needs of pupils (including adults); it also makes it easier for schools to relate their courses to the needs of industry. A broad concept of knowledge is applied, including not only the development of knowledge and skills, but also ethical values and attitudes and such personal qualities as social competence, entrepreneurial skills, communicative skills etc. Internationalisation, environmental concerns and computer technology are integrated into the syllabuses.

A working knowledge of Norwegian is expected of all pupils, including immigrants, entering upper secondary education. Language courses are available, and an examination in Norwegian as a second language can be taken in place of the normal Norwegian examination.

To a limited extent it is possible to combine a foundation course from one branch of study with advanced courses at level I and II from other branches of study (3 general, 12 vocational education).

If there are not enough apprenticeship places, the county provides a school-based specialisation option that leads to a craft or journeyman's certificate in the form of an

advanced course II at school. The structure requires a close relationship between schools and industry.

## 4.3 Assessment/certification/guidance

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Pupils normally have to attain a minimum standard at one course level (e.g. the foundation course) before being admitted to the next level (e.g. advanced course I). In certain cases, pupils without this minimum standard may be admitted to the next level if the school accepts that their skills and knowledge meet the requirements.

Most schools organise orientation sessions at the start of the school year. A Pupils' Guide has also been prepared which shows pupils how they can participate actively in the planning and implementation of their courses. The Guide also gives pupils advice on being responsible for their own learning and participating in the democratic activities of the school.

In general academic subjects, written and oral assignments are given, class discussions, project work and group tasks are used, and the school's resources, including school libraries and ICT, are employed.

Two types of marks are awarded in the upper secondary school and recorded on pupils' certificates. Marks are awarded for overall achievement and are based on the pupils' work during the school year including practical work, work in class, homework, tests, project work and group work. These marks are awarded each term, but only the end-of-year marks are recorded on the certificate. The marks are given on a seven-point scale from 0 (lowest) to 6 (highest); decimal points are not used. In the case of trade certificates, centrally set theoretical and practical examinations are held; the mark is "passed" or "not passed".

Examinations are either written, oral, a combination of the two or practical. In the general area of study, written examinations in Norwegian composition are compulsory. In addition, pupils normally take at least two written examinations in at least two other subjects.

Most examinations in written subjects are organised by public examination boards. Answer papers are evaluated centrally by groups of experienced teachers. As a safeguard against possible error, a separate commission of examiners deals with appeals. Their decision is final.

Concerning the final qualifications awarded at upper secondary level, a distinction is made between occupational qualifications and qualifications for higher education. Of the 15 foundation courses, the first three are the main entry route to higher education.

There are basically two different kinds of certificates:

- a) The craft/journeyman's certificate in crafts and trades governed by the Act Concerning Vocational Training.
- b) The certificate awarded on completion of 3 years of upper secondary education leading to either general entrance qualifications for higher education or vocational qualifications in vocational subjects not governed by the Act Concerning Vocational Education.

Every year, examinations are held for external candidates. This category of examinees includes adults who are in employment and wish to qualify for further studies.

#### 4.4 Teachers

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The principal of the school is the administrative and pedagogical leader. However, each teacher and class is free to adopt the methods that are most appropriate, taking into consideration the overall aims, attainment targets and focal points of the course, and the interests, skills and learning strategies of the pupils.

Teachers in upper secondary schools are subject specialists; this applies to both the academic and vocational areas of study. The subjects that they are qualified to teach therefore determine both their appointment to a specific school and their allocation to classes.

In foundation and advanced courses, pupils have different teachers in all subjects. Pupils choosing the same subject in advanced course I and II can often have the same teacher in the subject during the two years.

Teachers of academic subjects have completed four to six years of university and/or college studies and are normally qualified to teach two or three different subjects; teachers of vocational subjects have full trade qualifications. Both groups of teachers have, in addition, one year of compulsory teacher training.

Teachers in upper secondary education are employed by the county authorities. Their workload allows for five planning days each

school year; these planning days are often used for in-service training.

#### 4.5 Statistics

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Numbers refer to the 2000/01 school year.

Number of pupils in upper secondary education: 161,926

Number of pupils at different levels of upper secondary education:

Foundation courses: 63,220

Advanced course I: 53,683

Advanced course II: 41,324

(Source: *Statistics Norway*)

Number of upper secondary schools: 503

Run by the state: 6

Run by the counties: 428

Run by municipalities: 0

Private: 69

(Source: *Statistics Norway*)

Number of teachers in upper secondary schools: 25,631 (men: 14,257; women: 11,374)

of which

Full-time: 18,360

(men: 11,452; women: 6,908)

Part-time: 7,271

(men: 2,805; women: 4,466).

(Source: *Fylkeskostra*)

## 5. INITIAL/VOCATIONAL TRAINING

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Vocational training and apprenticeships in Norway must be seen in the light of what is said above about the structure of upper secondary education. The trend towards combined schools, i.e. schools offering both general studies and vocational training, and the parallel effort to avoid higher status being awarded to specific areas of study have resulted in a greater integration of practical and theoretical subjects. This in turn makes it difficult to provide statistics based on an assumption of the separation of general studies and vocational training at this level.

### 5.1 Organisation

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Vocational training, including the trade examination, is regulated by the Education Act of July 1998. According to the act, vocational training aims to develop competence and promote an understanding of the role of vocational training in relation to the occupations themselves and society. The central body under the act is the National Council for Vocational Training. Each craft or industry has a training council, which produces training plans, curricula and examination regulations. The training plans and curricula are approved by the Ministry of Education. Each county has a Vocational Training Committee which administers apprenticeship contracts, approves training establishments (which can be private or public enterprises or organisations), organises tests, etc. The main employer and employee associations are given a key role in the administration of the act and in the development of the training programmes covering the various recognised trades.

The development of schools into regional/local resource centres is seen as a step towards closer co-operation between schools and the working community.

### 5.2 Education/training establishments

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The vocational training system at upper secondary level in Norway is based on close co-operation between school and the working community and on a combination of schooling and apprenticeship. Most trades and crafts have an apprenticeship period of 3 or 4 years (full-time). The norm for training is two years of vocational training in an upper secondary school (classroom teaching and practical experience in the school workshop) followed by two years in a training establishment (one year of practical training and one year of work experience - known as the '2+2' model). The training establishment (*lærebedrift*), an enterprise or public organisation has to be recognised as such by the local Vocational Training Committee. Each firm must have a trained specialist, called a training manager, in charge of the training. The training manager, together with the employee representatives, is responsible for seeing that the establishment provides adequate training opportunities and that the training curriculum laid down for the trade or craft is followed.

### 5.3 Financing

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Apprentices have to be paid a regular wage, which is determined by the appropriate wage agreement, and an apprentice can only be laid off if the training establishment is not able to provide work suitable for on-the-job training for a transitional period, or if both parties agree. Training establishments entering into contracts with apprentices receive a state subsidy. Establishments are also recompensed for the supervisory work involved during training and testing. In some trades, the labour market training authorities subsidise equal-status measures, and some counties give additional grants.

## 5.4 Curriculum

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Since 1994, more weight has been placed on general subjects in vocational training. The foundation course in all vocational areas of study includes at least 11 periods of general subjects per week (Norwegian, English, mathematics, science and physical education) while 22 periods per week are available for subjects directly related to the area of training.

## 5.6 Assessment/qualification/guidance

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There is continuous assessment and regular, formal testing during the first two school-based years. During the in-company training period, the company is responsible for determining when and how the assessment should be conducted. There is a centrally monitored final examination for the trade certificate. The examination consists of a practical and a theoretical part. The theoretical part is finalised when the apprentice has passed the final examination for the appropriate course at upper secondary school. The practical part varies a great deal depending on the trade involved. In some trades, the practical work has to be done in the course of a day; in others, the candidate may spend weeks on it. The work has to be assessed by the examination board.

On completion of the apprenticeship, a trade examination (*Fagprøve*) or journeyman's examination (*Svenneprøve*) is taken, leading to the award of a trade or journeyman's certificate. In a few subjects, the trade examination can be taken on completion of advanced course II, but in most cases a period of practical experience is needed in order to satisfy the requirements. In certain circumstances, it is possible to take the trade or journeyman's certificate without having been an apprentice, e.g. adult employees with sufficient work experience.

During the school-based training, guidance is provided by advisers. During the on-the-job training, it is provided by the training manager. Later, the government's employment advisory service is available.

## 5.7 Teachers

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Vocational teachers in schools are required to have a full trade qualification, a minimum period of work experience, one year of additional education in their field and they should have completed a one-year teaching course.

Teachers are appointed full-time or part-time. Like other teachers in upper secondary education, they are employed by the counties and are expected to keep up to date with developments in their subject areas and to follow relevant in-service training courses.

## 5.8 Statistics

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New apprenticeship contracts in the period 1 January to 31 December:

1998	15,914
1999	15079
2000	14532
2001	14461

Apprenticeship contracts in force on 31 December:

1998	31,793
1999	30,658
2000	30,099

Trade or journeyman's examination, numbers taken and pass rate:

1998	37,997	
	Pass rate	91%
1999	28,750	
	Pass rate	75%
2000	23,715	
	Pass rate	93%

Source: Statistics Norway

## 6. HIGHER EDUCATION

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The Ministry of Education and Research is responsible for all public higher education with the exception of training for the police and the military.

There are 38 public (i.e. state) higher education institutions in Norway, including

- 4 universities
- 6 specialised university institutions (national higher education institutions specialising in specific fields of study)
- 26 university colleges, and
- 2 university colleges/academies of arts and crafts.

In addition, there are 30 private higher education institutions with recognised study programmes, of which 19 receive state funding for (part of) their activities. About 10% of the student population are enrolled in private institutions of higher education

The universities are those of Oslo, Bergen and Tromsø, and the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim.

In April 1998, the Norwegian Government appointed a Royal Commission to examine the system of higher education in Norway. This was the beginning of the work on an ongoing reform (spring 2003) called the Quality Reform. A green paper was submitted in May 2000, and the Government presented a white paper to the Storting in March 2001. Following the parliamentary debate and decisions in June 2001, as well as five white papers on specific issues <sup>(2)</sup> and two bills <sup>(3)</sup> in spring 2002.

There are two main reasons for the current reform, namely

- to achieve improved quality in higher education and research
- The Bologna process and Norway's obligations in that respect

The Storting has decided that the Quality Reform should be fully implemented at all

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<sup>(2)</sup> On exemptions to the new degree structure, on recruitment of academic staff, on higher education in the arts, on Sami higher education, and on teacher education.

<sup>(3)</sup> One amending the acts on state higher education and on health personnel, and one amending the act on private higher education.

higher education institutions from the autumn term 2003.

The Quality reform comprises the following main elements:

- Changes in governance at the institutional level
- Increased institutional autonomy
- A new funding formula for the higher education institutions
- The establishment, as of 1 January 2003, of NOKUT, the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education
- A new degree structure according to the 3+2+3 Bologna model
- New forms of student guidance, evaluation and assessment
- Changes in the financial support to students, and
- Increased importance of internationalisation

### 6.1 Admission Requirements

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Admission capacity to higher education is decided centrally by the government. The normal requirement for access to higher education is the completion of a 3-year study programme in general i.e. academic subjects at the upper secondary level or in some of the areas of study in technical and vocational subjects. Pupils at upper secondary level choose one from a selection of fifteen foundation courses for their first year, and specialised advanced courses I and II for the following years. Three of the available foundation courses prepare for higher education, meeting the academic entrance requirements, while ten are vocational. Pupils from vocational areas of study most often meet the higher education entrance requirements after the completion of a supplementary general study course. A general matriculation standard has been introduced, setting minimum requirements, which include the following components:

- Successful completion of three years of

upper secondary education including foundation course, advanced course I and advanced course II (regardless of area of study) or possession of a recognised vocational qualification/trade certificate.

- Included in, or in addition to, the above-mentioned criteria, is the necessity of having successfully completed upper secondary studies corresponding to a specific level of attainment, determined in periods (or lessons) per week, within the following general subject areas: Norwegian (14); English (5); history (4) and social studies (2); mathematics (5); natural science (5).

From 2001 onwards, the universities and university colleges in addition 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 relevant institution decides if the applicant is qualified for the studyprogramme concerned.

## 6.2 Fees/financial support for students

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Studies in public (i.e. state) institutions of higher education are free of tuition fees, but a small fee has to be paid each semester to the student welfare organisation.

The State Educational Loan Fund provides financial support for the students in the form of scholarships and loans. These are mainly to cover expenses for accommodation, subsistence costs and study materials.

## 6.3 Academic year

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The academic year is 10 months and normally divided into two terms:

- Autumn term from August to December
- Spring term from January to June.

Studies generally begin in August. However, certain programmes admit students only in the spring term.

At some institutions a summer term was introduced in 1992. This lasts for about two months with dates varying from one institution to another.

## 6.4 Courses

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A new degree structure is being introduced as a part of the Quality Reform. It will eventually replace the present system. The main model of the new degree structure, adopted from the Bologna Process will be Bachelor's Degree (3 years) + Master's Degree (2 years) + Ph.D. (3 years). In a few subject areas, students will enrol for a five year integrated degree course (Master's). A limited number of study programmes are exempted from these changes and will retain the present degrees (psychology, medicine, veterinary science, theology). The main structure of the present (old) degree structure is as follows:

- Vocationally oriented study programmes of 2 to 4 years' duration at the state colleges can lead to one of the specific college degrees "*høgskolekandidat*" (college graduate), or "*høgskoleingeniør*" (college engineer).
- The first, or lower degree, *candidata/candidatus magisterii* (commonly referred to as *cand.mag.*), is normally obtained after 3½ (natural sciences) or 4 years of full-time study. The *cand.mag.* degree is awarded by practically all the higher education institutions.
- The second, or higher degree, in general consist of 1½ to 2 additional years of study. The most common degrees are called *cand.philol.* (humanities), *cand.scient.* (natural sciences), *cand.polit.* (social sciences) and *cand.san.* (paramedical/health education).
- In addition, some university faculties and the university colleges offer professional degree programmes requiring 4½ to 6 years of study. The programmes cover areas such as agricultural sciences, psychology, medicine, pharmacy, dentistry, law, engineering and theology.
- The doctor's degree programmes consist of 3 years of study after completion of the higher degree or other professional degree programmes.

Doctorates according to the old system are awarded on the basis of high level research conducted over a number of years leading to the successful defence of a substantial thesis.

As a means of facilitating and encouraging student mobility between higher education institutions in the country, degrees can be conferred to on the basis of studies from a combination of higher education institutions. The state higher education institutions are



legally obliged to reciprocally recognise each other's study programmes on a time for time basis, provided there is no overlap in the content of the studies concerned.

## 6.5 Assessment/qualifications

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Student assessment is decided by the institutions. It usually takes the form of both written and oral examinations at the end of courses. Other forms of assessment are becoming increasingly more popular. Within the old system, marks range from 6.0 to 1.0, where 1.0 is the best mark and 4.0 is the pass mark. With the implementation of the Quality Reform in 2002 and 2003, the European Credit Transfer Scheme grading system has been/will be adopted. (A Excellent, B Very Good, C Good, D Satisfactory, E Sufficient, FX Fail –more work required before the credit can be awarded, F Fail –considerable further work is required.) In a transition period, both systems will be in use at the same time.

(The names of the qualifications are given under point 6.4)

From the autumn of 2002 the degree system is changed to Bachelor, Master and PhD degrees. A number of institutions changed their programmes from 2002 with the rest of institutions coming in line by the academic year 2003/04.

## 6.6 Teachers

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In higher education, the institutions appoint their own staff, and, following central (i.e. national level) negotiations between the Ministry of Education and Research and the relevant national trade unions, the Universities and the University Colleges have the right to negotiate salaries in so-called "local negotiations".

Since the 1 February 1995, a unified system or "structure" for positions of academic staff, meaning that the academic (and/or artistic and/or other) requirements for teaching and research staff are the same for all with the same professional title in the whole sector, whether they are at a University or a University College. The proportions and numbers of the various categories of staff still vary between institutions, and are likely to continue to do so, because of differences in institution size, academic profile and study programmes.

## 6.7 Statistics

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Number of students according to sector and institution as of 2001:

Total number of students in higher education: 198 496

University sector in all: 81 359

University colleges in all: 117 137

Female students: 118 019

Male Students: 80 477

(Source: Statistics Norway)

## 7. ADULT EDUCATION

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Educational opportunities for adults and the principle that learning is a lifelong task are the two basic tenets of a Norwegian adult education policy which aims to raise the general level of education of the entire adult population regardless of where in the country they live. A major concern has therefore been to integrate adult education into the current school reforms.

The Core Curriculum applies to adult education as well as primary and secondary education.

### The Competence Reform

The challenges of the future demand the continuous renewal of competence in the population. A broad concept of competence is needed and the basis for the Competence Reform is the need for competence in and outside the labour market, in society and by the individual. The Storting has approved the legal right for adults to primary and lower secondary education and to leave for educational purposes. It has also established a system for the documentation of non-formal learning.

From the perspective of lifelong learning, a good basic education will to a large degree be the basis for further learning. Basic and continuing education complement one another and together they will lay the foundation for a long-term rise in competence.

### 7.1 Specific legislative framework

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Adult education is regulated by the Act concerning Adult Education (1976) and the Education Act (1998). Under the Adult Education Act, the provision of courses is the responsibility of the respective public education authorities at the various levels of education. The Education Act regulates primary and lower secondary, and upper secondary education for adults. The act also regulates special education for adults.

In addition, there is the Act concerning Folk High Schools (1984); the folk high schools are an important part of adult education.

### 7.2 Administration

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Responsibility for adult education is shared between the public authorities and the study associations representing non-governmental organisations with adult education as their main objective, such as the Folk University (*Folkeuniversitetet*) and The Workers' Educational Association (*Arbeidernes opplysningsforbund*). The municipalities are responsible for adult education at primary and lower secondary level, and the counties at upper secondary level. The study associations and distance education institutions also provide courses at these levels, as well as courses in higher education and courses not offered by the public institutions.

At present, no authorities co-ordinate and control the complete field, but the National Education Offices have a certain responsibility for the co-ordination and co-operation between different actors of adult education in their respective regions. The Ministry of Education is responsible for the administration of the statutory educational provisions of the Act as well as developing curriculum guidelines. The municipalities and counties are responsible for the development of adult education in their respective areas.

### 7.3 Funding

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The state subsidises adult education in accordance with the provisions of the Adult Education Act.

The authorities' responsibility for the provision of financial resources depends on the level and type of education provided. The cost of primary and secondary education to adults is covered by the municipal and county education authorities respectively. The participants must meet the cost of textbooks in upper secondary education, and there is a fee for both lower and upper secondary examinations. The educational authorities also meet the cost of adult immigrant education. The boarding costs at folk high

schools are covered by a fee paid by the pupils (approx. 38,000 NOK a year in 2002) and by state grants. Fees are charged for distance education and for courses organised and offered by study associations. These courses also receive state support.

There are seven main types of adult education based partly on the type of education offered and partly on the organisation involved:

1. 22 non-governmental study associations receive public support for running a comprehensive series of courses and study groups for adults.
2. National funding covers about 50% of the costs of folk high schools, 5/6 by the government and 1/6 by the counties.
3. 12 distance education institutions currently receive financial support.
4. Education of adults in Norwegian as a second language is from 1998 extended so that the immigrants are given lessons sufficient to reach a minimum level of competence. The courses are limited to a 3000 hours course for persons with little or no schooling from their home country, and a 850 hours course for persons with better educational background. Education of adults in Norwegian as a second language is covered by national funding. Responsibility lies with the municipalities.
5. Labour market courses provide occupational qualifications. They are part of the government's labour market strategy and are fully financed by the state. The Ministry of Education is responsible for the content and pedagogical aspects of the courses, while the Ministry of Labour and Government Administration is responsible for the finances, the numbers, and the localisation of the courses as well as determining the level of demand and making decisions regarding who should teach.
6. Adult education at primary and lower secondary level is organised by the municipalities. The municipality receives financial support as a part of national funding and decisions about priorities for adult education at this level lie with the municipality.
7. The county education authorities are responsible for adult education at upper secondary level. The county receives financial support as a part of national funding, and the decisions about priorities for adult education lie with the county.

## 7.4 Organisation

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The number of organisations, the different authorities involved and the number of courses offered at different levels make the picture of adult education in Norway very complex.

There are seven main types of adult education based partly on the type of education offered and partly on the organisation involved:

### Study associations

Study associations offer a comprehensive series of courses and study groups for adults. They are responsible for the content of the courses; most of the courses are not bound by national curricula and examination systems. The courses cover a large number of activities, from purely leisure activities to academic subjects and work training. Some associations offer courses qualifying for lower and upper secondary education and higher education. These courses are regulated by the respective national guidelines and laws.

### Folk high schools

They provide general education courses of different lengths for young people and adults, but these do not result in formal qualifications. The 77 (2002) folk high schools are boarding schools owned and run by religious organisations, independent foundations or county authorities, in various parts of the country. They have room for some 7,000 students. There are no examinations and external curricular requirements at the folk high schools, but the national assembly has decided that from the school-year 1997/98, the whole-year-pupils are credited three points in the competition for admission to higher education.

### Distance education

Distance education is also fairly widespread. While distance education earlier consisted mainly of correspondence courses, this educational branch today comprises a number of multimedia programmes. The courses cover fields ranging from leisure activities to university and college level subjects up to degree level. An increasing number of courses are also related to in-service vocational training. Most distance education courses covered by the Adult Education Act are courses leading to work-related qualifications. More than half of the courses cover subjects related to social/health care, management/economics and technical subjects.

### Courses in Norwegian as a second language

Courses for adults in Norwegian as a second language have been extended from 1998 so that immigrants are given lessons sufficient to reach a minimum level of competence. The courses consist of a 3000 hours course for persons with little or no schooling from their home country and an 850 hours course for persons with a better educational background. The courses are offered to all inhabitants with Norwegian as their second language with the exception of those who have Swedish, Danish or Sami as their first language.

### Labour market courses

These courses are a means of preparing unemployed people for work and motivating them for participation in further education. They provide occupational qualifications. The courses quite often cover the subjects and levels offered by upper secondary schools. The courses take place in upper secondary schools, in separate centres attached to the schools or in business and industry. They are run by labour market authorities, adult associations and school authorities in co-operation with each other.

### Primary and lower secondary level

From August 2002 adults have a legal right to primary and lower secondary school. Adult education at primary and lower secondary level (compulsory education) is organised by the municipalities. The National Education Office in every county gives advice and stimulates the work in each municipality as regards determining the needs for adult primary and secondary education and making plans to provide it in the individual municipality. Primary and lower secondary education can be taken at local primary and lower secondary schools as well as at municipal adult education centres. Primary and lower secondary education courses can also be arranged by distance education institutions or study associations co-operating with the municipalities. Courses at lower secondary level leading to examinations in different subjects cover mainly the 9th and 10th grades. Additional subjects are taken, depending on the participants' skills and knowledge. Most adults take these examinations as external candidates.

### Upper secondary level

From August 2002 adults born before 1978 and without completed secondary school have had a legal right to upper secondary school. Adult education at upper secondary level is given at upper secondary schools, county-based adult education centres and the State Adult

Education Centre. In addition, some study associations, distance education institutions and labour market authorities offer courses that qualify as parts of a full secondary education programme. Adults wishing to follow vocational courses have additional requirements regarding age (over 21) and qualifications. Distance study methods are frequently used. Adults with all-round work experience within a specific field may present themselves as external candidates for a craft examination consisting of both a practical and a theoretical part. About 60% of those obtaining the craft certificate avail themselves of this arrangement. Special needs education within primary and lower secondary school for young people between 16 and 20 years of age is a responsibility that is delegated to the county education authorities.

## 7.5 Statistics

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The number of adults participating, and the level of national financial support (2001), in the different programmes as reported by the organisers are given below.

The study associations (22 recognised associations with over 400 member organisations):

- Participants – 614,422
- Percentage of women – 55%
- National financial support – 213 mill. NOK
- Number of courses – 54,500
- Average number of participants per course – 11
- Average length of each course – 30 hours
- Percentage of courses taught by a teacher – 79%

The folk high schools (77 folk high schools):

- Participants at courses from 16,5 weeks to 33 weeks – 11,252
- Participants at courses shorter than 16,5 weeks – 19,083
- National financial support – 399 mill. NOK

Distance study offered by the 14 private institutions receiving state support (2001):

- Approx. 33,000 participants complete courses.
- National financial support – 27,7 mill. NOK

Courses for adults in Norwegian as a second language:

- Participants – 19,450
- Teaching hours – 1,134,254
- National financial support – 601 mill. NOK

## Labour market courses (2000):

Participants – 37,176

Courses – 2,740

National financial support – 978 mill. NOK

## Primary and lower secondary education examinations:

*Hovedmål* (the language standard of first choice) – 319*Sidemål* (the language standard of second choice) – 317

Norwegian as a second language – 587

Mathematics – 855

English – 834

## Upper secondary education:

Participants – 18,800 participants above 20 years of age.

(Sources: *Voksenopplæring i Norge, Nøkkeltall 2001/Utdanning i Norge, Nøkkeltall 2001/St.prp nr.1 (2000–2001)*)