

Developments: Ambitious reforms on access and inclusion

The situation of adult education in Norway has slightly deteriorated in the last year, but many new policies came into action. In 2019, the Norwegian government published a white paper on lifelong learning and issued a competence reform, seeking to leave no one behind because of their lack of competences. This reform included a scheme that provides a loan for adults, with which they can access short courses in higher vocational education. The courses available equip learners with skills sets needed for 21st century business needs.

Another reform supports the unemployed to continue to receive financial assistance while pursuing an education. The 2019 reform was an ambitious step to enhance social mobility and support the most disadvantaged parts of the population, who were further alienated by the pandemic.

There has been a downward trend in funding for adult learning and education. The Norwegian government provided less funding in 2019, which also negatively affected EAEAs member, the Norwegian Association for Adult Learning (NAAL).

Norway implements European policy recommendations

Upskilling Pathways has been implemented in Norway and there are a range of reforms, publishing for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Civil society

has an active role in Norway and was involved in the consultation process for the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR). EPSR has stimulated universities to invest in continuing education and strengthened links between labor market measures and education policy. However, EPSR does not play an important role as Norwegian social policies, including policies in lifelong learning, are stronger than those proposed in the EPSR, including free access to education from primary school to higher education.

Challenges: Response to the crisis

The adult education sector in Norway has been significantly affected by the pandemic, but NAAL was only slightly affected. The crisis resulted in less people attending the courses and a massive change to provide learning online. Although the ICT literacy in Norway is high, some providers still struggle with the provision of online methods. Sudden fall in income has not been fully compensated by arranging digital courses.

Responding to the crisis, the Norwegian government initiated a compensation program, but compensation programs have not been directed at the non-formal adult education sector. However there has been frequent dialogue with the government in order to set up alternative training courses in adult education, especially related to vocational training, targeted to people that lost their job. Alongside the many challenges that surfaced during covid, it also showed cooperation across the providers and revealed coalition building and dialogue, helping those in need.

Goals for 2021

One of the challenges for the next year will be to stimulate universities to offer continuing and further education for people who are already in work. NAAL also works to improve the relevance of higher education and to stimulate young people into vocational training, and to combine different forms of education. NAAL will also try to enhance financing of the non-formal adult learning sector.

NAAL would recommend the government to focus more on the voluntary and non-profit learning sector. EAEAs member believes that education and training in the voluntary sector is central to human mastery, to the preservation of cultural and natural heritage, and well as an entrance to the labor market.
