

# COUNTRY OVERVIEW

## NORWAY 2014



<http://keyconet.eun.org>



## SHORT SUMMARY

Providing a national description contextualizing key competence development in your country [rationale, objectives etc.]:

Over the last decade, key competences have increasingly become part of the Norwegian agenda in terms of policy, practice and research. Education is defined as a key element in social and cultural development, and the educational discourse in Norway targets well-known competences, such as mathematics and science and technology, as well as the more 21st century competences, such as learning to learn and entrepreneurship. Although all key competences are included, some are more clearly defined than others. Some competences are also more defined by a subject within the national curriculum, e.g. foreign languages, mathematics or science and technology, while others are cross-curricular. The objective for introducing the key competences is to become better positioned as a knowledge society and to emphasise the importance of life-long learning

## KCD INITIATIVES:

What relevant key competence related initiatives (e.g. curricular reform/national strategy/pilot project/public consultation etc. in relation to students' curricula and assessment, teacher training, school organisation, and learning resources) have taken place in your country over the past five years, and which are planned in the future? You may also refer here to the 2012 case notes produced for your country, and any other initiatives which will be the focus of the 2013 case notes.

Lifelong learning (LLL) has been on the political agenda for more than a decade, and has developed gradually with the successive introduction of several elements to form a LLL policy package:

- General availability of high quality Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) institutions (barnehager [kindergartens]), rights-based from the age of one.
- Rights-based basic education (13 years) for every individual, including adults.
- 'Bridges' between different types of education and training.
- No dead-ends in mainstream education and training.
- Arrangements for validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes.
- General availability of a variety of further/top-up education courses and training opportunities.
- Appropriate and adequate funding arrangements for education providers and beneficiaries, including companies and individual learners.

All adults are legally entitled to free basic education, as are all young people. While the 430 municipalities provide ten years of primary and lower secondary education, the 19 counties



are responsible for the provision of three years of upper secondary general education or vocational education and training (VET). The latter is provided in close collaboration with the world of work and includes two years of apprenticeship.

Every individual is also legally entitled to have her/his qualifications assessed and documented, even if these are the result of non-formal or informal learning. Validation is made according to the required learning outcomes (standards) for the relevant type of education. This right also applies to immigrants who are not able to present recognised documents to prove their qualifications.

The ‘Knowledge Promotion Reform’, a comprehensive school reform, was introduced in 2006. The reform covers primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education, including vocational education and training (VET). The focus of this reform is the strengthening of basic skills and a shift to outcome-based learning and the Knowledge Promotion curriculum clearly states the objectives for learning outcomes. The Key Competences defined by the Lisbon Strategy were taken into consideration and included, where relevant, in each part of the new curriculum’s three sections: The Core Curriculum, the Quality Framework and the Subject Curricula. The work undertaken by the Cluster on Key Competences has been followed closely, particularly the recommendations for curriculum reform.

- The **Core Curriculum** constitutes the binding foundation and values for primary, secondary, upper secondary and training.
- The **Quality Framework** and the Learning Poster state the responsibility for school and training establishments to organise and adapt teaching and learning processes for the purpose of developing broad competences for pupils and apprentices. Key Competences, such as learning strategies (learning to learn), social competences, cultural competences, motivation to learn, and pupil participation, are integrated into the Quality Framework. It is the responsibility of the school or workplace to provide pupils and apprentices with these competences. Schools and education and training institutions shall have a system that shows how the teaching and training is planned, organised and assessed to ensure that pupils can develop these skills and competences. These skills are not assessed by tests and grades, but through two individual dialogues each year between the teacher/instructor and the pupil/ apprentice.
- The **Subject Curricula** include clear objectives for the competences (learning outcomes) to be acquired by pupils and apprentices by the end of 2nd, 4th and 10th grade, as well as after every stage in Upper Secondary Education and Training. Continuity and coherence are emphasised in the learning outcome objectives. Decisions on how to organise and adapt teaching and learning methods are, however, made locally.

In the development of the reform, special attention has been given to the definition of basic skills, which are an essential part of the learning outcome in the curricula, and integrated at all levels in all subjects, including VET. Basic skills are integrated into all subjects from grade one, and taught across subject-specific curricula. These skills include: the ability to express

oneself orally; the ability to read; numeracy; the ability to express oneself in writing, and the ability to use digital tools (digital competence). Basic skills are cross-curricular and independent of any specific subject/curriculum. However, when integrated in all subject curricula they consequently become subject/curriculum dependent, reflecting the characteristics of each subject. All pupils shall acquire these basic skills in order to develop their competences and to take an active part in the knowledge society, including private life, work life, participation in a democratic society and further education and training. In 2010, a Framework for basic skills was developed. This Framework is a document defining the five basic skills mentioned, describing their functions at different levels covering compulsory and secondary education. It is a generic Framework developed to serve as a reference document for developing and revising the National Subject-Specific Curricula.

National tests in basic skills were introduced in autumn 2007. The tests currently cover numeracy and reading ability in Norwegian and English. These tests are **not in specific subjects** but in basic skills. The aim of the national tests is to determine whether schools are succeeding in developing pupils' basic skills. The tests that are carried out must maintain a high professional standard, and the results should serve as a platform for qualitative development at a local level. The test results will determine whether pupils' skills are consistent with the learning outcomes for basic skills in curricula after the fourth and seventh grades in primary school. Results are available to those who are involved with qualitative development in the schools, but there is to be no ranking of schools.

The Knowledge Promotion Reform is valid for all learners, including adults outside the formal education system and for people following in-service training. The lifelong learning aspect is also covered by measures related to other policy initiatives.

To enhance the scope and quality of the provision of basic skills for adults, the national *Program for basiskompetanse i arbeidslivet* (Basic Competence in Working Life Programme - BKA) has been set up. The Introductory Act of 2005 (for refugees and immigrants) introduced the right and obligation of certain groups to participate in Norwegian language training and social studies. The provision has been developed continuously since then. In a regulation based on the Introductory Act, the Norwegian Agency for Lifelong Learning (Vox) is responsible for the development and implementation of the curriculum.

In addition, national centres targeting key areas that cover several of the key competences have been established, initiating both research and development work within these key competence areas. These centres have been growing in number over the last ten years. At present there are centres covering each of the following areas: multicultural education, foreign languages, art and culture in education, reading, mathematics, science, new Norwegian (second mother tongue), writing, information and communication technologies, center for food, health and physical activity, learning environment.

In Norway, recognition of the importance of lifelong learning has grown over the last ten years, resulting in the Competence Reform (1997-1998), which aims to meet the need for new



or different competences in society, in the workplace and by the individual. It is a reform both of education and of the workplace and is targeted at all adults, both employed and unemployed. It has been designed and implemented based on interaction between social partners, the Ministry of Education and Research, organisations and educational institutions. The enthusiasm in Norway for lifelong learning has not only a cultural and social basis, but also an economic one. There is a belief, widely shared by the government as well as by social partners, that the high level of education of the Norwegian population is still not enough to satisfy the shifts in labour demand over the coming years. It is argued that lifelong learning is a crucial strategy for upgrading the skills and qualifications of poorly qualified adults and updating those of more highly qualified individuals to both accommodate and minimise the adverse social consequences of structural economic change. In many small communities, initiatives on lifelong learning and the provision of online learning opportunities for all student groups make important contributions to this growing focus on key competences.

In addition, the ‘Action Plan Entrepreneurship in Education and Training – from compulsory school to higher education 2009-2014’ was launched in September 2009. The main objective of the action plan is to strengthen the quality and scope of entrepreneurship education and training at all levels and in all areas of the education system. More generally, the education system is seen as vital for the development of a culture of entrepreneurship and a creative society. Entrepreneurship education can help students become acquainted with local working and business life, and developing collaboration between the education system and working life, local workplaces can be used as contexts for learning.



## OVERALL KCD APPROACH:

How would you characterise the overall approach to key competence development in your country? Is it a holistic approach characterised by an overarching strategy, or rather a targeted approach focusing on one or more specific dimension of the education system (student curriculum, assessment, teacher training, school organisation, learning resources etc.)? Does it cover formal and non-formal learning, both primary and secondary school levels?

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The basic principle of the education policy in Norway is that every individual is entitled to the opportunity and the necessary support to be able to identify and develop her/his talents to the full. It is furthermore the responsibility of the education system to provide the various sectors of society with qualified, critical and constructive individuals that will actively support and contribute to the democratic welfare society. As such, the overall approach towards key competence development is very much a holistic one. This is partly due to historical traditions in curriculum development and political initiatives emphasising a national agenda.

The Knowledge Promotion Reform reflects a holistic view of the learner. Consequently, the eight key competences defined by the Lisbon Strategy are included in all parts of the reform. Norway has selected and implemented key competences as follows:

- The Quality Framework is valid for both general education and vocational education and training. Some of the key competences defined by the Lisbon Strategy are included in this part of the new curriculum.
- Basic skills are considered subject-independent and are identical for general education and vocational education and training.
- Some of the key competences are considered as subjects and not skills as such.

According to section 4A-1 of the Education Act, education at primary/lower secondary level is granted to all adults who have such a need, irrespective of any prior training at this level. Training includes all subjects (Norwegian language, mathematics, English language, social studies and natural sciences) that the adult needs in order to receive a certificate of completion of primary/lower secondary education. The municipality where the person lives is responsible for offering this training free of charge, and the courses should be adapted to the needs and situation of the individual adult concerned.

## KEY COMPETENCES ADDRESSED:

Is there a focus on any particular EU key competence/s or a combination of them, or perhaps there is more of a focus on alternative/complementary competences defined at national level?

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All key competences are addressed, but some competences are given a clearer and more ambitious focus than others. There has been a specific focus on mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology. Digital competence has also become central since it was defined as a key competence area in the national curriculum. Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship and cultural awareness and expression are also highlighted through projects on a national level. Reading and writing are two nationally priority areas in a School Based competence-building strategy.

## STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED:

Who are the main stakeholders involved in key competence development in your country?

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The collaboration between the Norwegian government and social partners has a long and strong tradition in adult education. The development and follow-up of the Competence Reform was a result of this close collaboration.

The main stakeholders involved in key competence development for compulsory education are the Ministry of Education and Research, the Directorate of Education, the National Centres, and national agencies following up on policy initiatives.

In the area of adult education, the Ministry of Education and Research is working together with several other bodies. Education and employability, as well as the education and inclusion of immigrants/refugees, concern both the Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion. Depending on the task, there is also overlap between adult education and local/regional authorities, industry, social and health affairs etc. There is also a long tradition of collaboration between the Ministry of Education and Research and non-governmental organisations (NGO) in the area of adult education. These NGOs receive financial support in order to offer courses for the adult population in the form of both formal and non-formal learning.

## KCD IMPLEMENTATION PROCESSES:

How does the implementation of key competence development/reform in school education function in your country? (e.g. process followed, political commitment, consultation with stakeholders and their respective roles, incentives for stakeholders, dedicated funding, teaching material, definition of goals and standards, assessment and evaluation mechanisms, impact on teacher training/professional development and school practices/leadership, scaling-up approach, based on research/evidence? etc.)

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This is done mainly through national curricula and national agencies targeting specific competence areas.

The Norwegian Education Act states that all pupils have the right to individually adapted education and therefore pupils with special needs have the right to individually adapted subject curricula. Teachers have the responsibility to adapt their teaching to the capacities and needs of their pupils.

The national curriculum of 2006 (Knowledge Reform) gave teachers more freedom in their choice of teaching methods. This reform facilitated the individual adaptation of teaching and also entailed greater responsibility for the teacher and stronger requirements of their pedagogical competence, thus creating a need for more support. Teachers also need new competences for the approach based on learning outcomes and Norway implemented a competence development strategy for teachers (2005-2008). This strategy will continue until 2017. National guidelines for the curriculum have been developed, including the key issue of assessment.

Characteristics of achievement are descriptions of the quality of skills for the different curricula areas. The characteristics are based on competence objectives as outlined in the curriculum. The characteristics are designed across the main areas of the subjects to express competence in the subject as a whole. The characteristics must be used along with the curriculum. The implementation of the reform demanded focused action at every level of the education system over a period of several years. Other tools to support teaching and learning are the introduction of national tests and diagnostic surveys.

To promote better integration and employability of immigrants, the Government has introduced compulsory Norwegian and civics courses for new immigrants. A set of actions to promote better integration of immigrants and linguistic minorities has been implemented through the strategy Equal Education in Practice! (2007-2009). These are measures aimed at ensuring better teaching and greater participation of linguistic minorities in kindergartens, schools and in education in general. Through a five-year commitment, 2013-2017, kindergartens and schools are offered to increase the competence of challenges that immigrant children, youth and adults meet in the training in a project called Competence for Diversity.

The national tests are meant to give information on learning outcomes related to basic skills at all administrative levels (school, municipality, regional and national level). Results from national tests are published on a website, Skoleporten, together with data on output, resources, learning environment and completion. Data from national tests are published at local (municipality), regional and national levels. Data regarding a school's level is made available to the responsible municipality and to the school itself on a password-protected part of the website. The results from national tests are intended to be viewed by schools and municipalities as part of their knowledge base for improving learning outcomes. At a national level the results from the national tests give necessary information about results in schools and municipalities and on variation in learning outcomes, and are used together with results from international assessments (PISA, TIMSS, PIRLS) as a basis for policy development.

## OBSTACLES AND FACILITATORS:

What would you identify as obstacles and/or facilitators to developing and implementing a key competence approach in your country's education system, or to more generally introducing any type of educational reform related to the definition of key competences and revision of the curriculum, and to joint collaboration on such issues relying on the input from those working on different dimensions (e.g. teacher training, learning resources etc.)?

The facilitators are mainly connected to the national curriculum and all of the initiatives that have been implemented as a consequence of this curriculum.

### Some obstacles are:

- The limits of a test-based assessment system: there is danger that the tests define key competences only as that which is possible to test, and also that teachers increasingly teach for the tests.
- Availability of learning: there is a need to increase the number and variety of learning resources for teachers in their teaching and for students in their learning, particularly those that take advantage of digital technologies. At the moment there is a lack of awareness of how the development of learning resources should be connected to all key competences.

- Teachers' competences: teacher training colleges and policy initiatives on teacher education has to emphasise key competences more explicitly. Teacher education has been lagging behind other sectors and areas within the education and training system. This also relates to in-service training. Still, the higher education sector does now in a broader sense participate in contributing to continuing and supplementary teacher training.

Long term commitment: key competences also imply a need for long term commitment and strategy. There is a danger that policy initiatives are defined only within certain phases and the high number of important issues in education on a national level can be a challenge.



## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION/USEFUL URLs:

-  Ministry of Education and Research:  
<http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/kd.html?id=586>
-  Directorate of Education:  
<http://www.udir.no/Stottemeny/English>
-  Norwegian Agency for Lifelong Learning:  
<http://www.vox.no/no/global-meny/English>
-  The Norwegian Centre for ICT in Education:  
<http://iktsenteret.no/english>
-  The Cultural Rucksack:  
<http://kulturradet.no/den-kulturelle-skolesekken>
-  Junior Achievement – Young Enterprise:  
[http://ja-ye.eu/pls/apex31mb/f?p=17000:1002:3142851505951371:::1002:P1002\\_HID\\_ID:7028](http://ja-ye.eu/pls/apex31mb/f?p=17000:1002:3142851505951371:::1002:P1002_HID_ID:7028)
-  Science for the Future:  
<http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/kd/documents/reports-and-actionplans/Actionplans/2010/science-for-the-future.html?id=593791>
-  The School for the Future:  
<http://blogg.regjeringen.no/fremtidensskole/mandate-in-english>

## ABOUT EUROPEAN SCHOOLNET

European Schoolnet is the coordinator of the KeyCoNet project.

European Schoolnet is a network of 31 Ministries of Education from across the European member states, leading educational innovation at European level. As a major international think tank, European Schoolnet operates key European services in education on behalf of the European Commission, member Ministries of Education and industry partners.

European Schoolnet's activities are divided among three areas of work:

- Policy, research and innovation: information sharing and evidence building.
- Schools services: enhancing cooperation between schools across Europe.
- Advocacy: how ICT and digital media contribute to transforming teaching and learning processes.

### Join us on

-  <http://europeanschoolnet.org>
-  Key Competence Network on School Education – KeyCoNet
-  #21skillscourse  #KeyCoNet
-  <http://www.europeanschoolnetacademy.eu/web/keyconet>

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