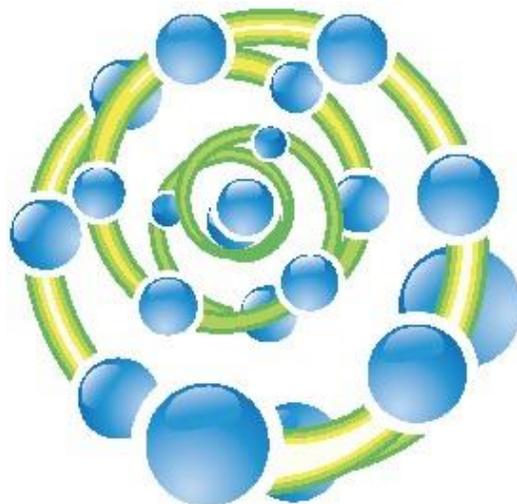


# Apprenticeship-type schemes and structured work-based learning programmes

## Norway



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## A. Apprenticeship-type schemes and work-based learning in Norway

In Norway, all young people leaving compulsory school have a statutory right to attend three years of upper secondary education. They may choose from three general studies programmes and nine VET programmes. The majority of the pupils who embark on upper secondary education choose a vocational programme. Norway has a well-developed upper secondary VET <sup>(1)</sup> apprenticeship system, which enjoys a high degree of confidence among stakeholders. The upper secondary VET usually leads to a trade or journeyman's certificate (*fag- og svennebrev*). The majority of upper secondary VET pupils are in the age group 16-21 years.

Upper secondary VET normally includes two years at school, followed by two years of formalised apprenticeship training and productive work in an enterprise or public institution. This is known as the 2+2 model. The first year (upper secondary level 1) consists of general education and introductory knowledge of the vocational area. During the second year (upper secondary level 2), VET students choose specialisations and the courses are more trade-specific. In addition, the In-depth Study project offers hands-on training in workshops at schools and in enterprises during the first two years. The aim of the subject is to provide a large portion of the training in a company. In current government policy, providing opportunities for training in a company during the tuition hours of the In-depth Study project has been emphasized even more. The subject accounts for 20 per cent of the teaching hours during the first year, and 35 per cent of the teaching hours of the second year.

During the two last years of apprenticeship training, the apprentice has one year of training and one year of productive work. The training is provided according to the National Curriculum for Knowledge Promotion. Should the pupil be unable to sign an apprentice contract with a company, the county authorities is obliged to organise a year of hands-on training in an upper secondary school. In the school year of 2013/2014 there are 37469 apprentices in Norway.

Not all VET programmes follow the 2+2 model. A small group of programmes are organised differently with either one year in school followed by three years of apprenticeship training, or the other way around. In general, the programmes that follow a 1+3 model are often small crafts where the schools have difficulties providing relevant training. The programmes that follow a 3+1 model are often programmes that include more theory of the trade.

Another deviation from the 2+2 model is the Programme of Electrical Trades, which follows a 2+2 ½-model, with two years in school and two and a half year in a private or public company or

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<sup>(1)</sup> This article describes the Norwegian VET system at the upper secondary level.

enterprise <sup>(2)</sup>. In addition, a few programmes are entirely school-based and do not lead to a trade or journeyman's certificate, but so-called 'other vocational qualifications'.

In addition, there are several ongoing initiatives on how to organise apprenticeship training. In the dual model (*veksling*) the pupils alternate between school-based learning and work-based learning as an apprentice in a company. The dual model started out as a pilot project in the Programme for Health Care in 2013, with six participating counties. The project is now expanding, and from the school year 2014-2015 other programmes and counties are invited to participate. The project ends in 2017, and the initiative will then be evaluated.

Another example of an initiative with apprenticeship training is the Certificate of Practice (*Praksisbrev*). This is a project with focuses on practical training and early alternation between school-based and apprenticeship training. However, in this project, the pupils can end the training after two years with a documented competency – the Certificate of Practice. They can also choose to continue two more years to get a trade or journeyman's certificate. The target group is pupils with poor motivation and low grades from lower secondary level, and therefore is in risk of dropping-out from upper secondary school. The Certificate of Practice initially started as a pilot project in three counties in 2008, after which the project was evaluated with good results. The government has recently decided to expand the initiative, and wants all counties to participate. They have decided to make it a permanent scheme, but this has not yet been formalised.

By law, apprentices are employees of the enterprise and have the rights and duties as such. They are entitled to a salary agreed upon through a centralised system of collective bargaining. As productive work increases throughout the two-year apprenticeship period, the salary increases accordingly. The salary increases from 30 per cent to 80 per cent of a skilled worker's salary during the two years of apprenticeship.

Related to Cedefop's definition of apprenticeship, the Norwegian apprenticeship scheme leads to a formally recognised qualification which is included in the national qualifications framework. Further, it provides a full set of knowledge, skills and competences which gives access to a specific occupation recognised by employers. During the first two years in the 2+2 model, the pupils will usually attend both school-based and work-based learning in a company. In this sense, the pupils alternate between training at a company and the school. However, the pupils do not sign an apprenticeship contract before completing the two first years. The amount of

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<sup>(2)</sup> Companies that take on apprentices in Norway are ordinary public or private companies. We call them here for training companies.

work-based learning may vary, and the pupils may attend different companies. However, many pupils receive valuable experiences and some even signs apprenticeship contracts later on with the same company. Furthermore, all aspects of apprenticeship are explicitly defined in the apprenticeship contract, a legally binding document, and the design of curricula and modes of delivery are decided upon in cooperation with social partners.

## B. Specific features of the above schemes/programmes

### B.1. Support for companies, in particular SMEs, offering company placements

There are several measures to support training companies in Norway. Most companies in Norway are SMEs, but there are no differences in support for SMEs and larger companies. All training companies receive a grant. In 2014 the grant equals approximately € 14,994 for each apprentice, and covers the whole training period. New companies to taking on apprentices receive an additional grant of € 6,250. In some cases, extra grants are given to companies either offering apprenticeships in small trades/crafts worthy of preservation (*små og verneverdige fag*) or for taking on apprentices with special needs.

In the 2+2 model, the schools are responsible for the education the two first years, while the training companies are responsible for the two last years. However, the county authorities have an overarching responsibility for all aspects of public upper secondary education and training, including apprenticeship training.

In order to reduce the administrative burden of the individual enterprise and ensure that apprentices are given the correct training, groups of SMEs often establish umbrella organisations – training offices (*opplæringskontor*) – which assume responsibility for the training of apprentices and formally enter the contractual agreement with the training office at the county authority. The county authority must still approve each individual training enterprise that is to take on apprentices. The use of training offices have increased a lot during the last 20 years, and now account for 70-80 per cent of all training companies. The training offices have legally the status as a training company, but operate in between the county authorities and the training company. Their role and status is therefore legally unclear. The training offices often take responsibility for recruiting new training companies and coach staff involved in the tutoring of apprentices. A recent research report (Høst et. al. 2014) on the role of the training offices, conclude that the training offices also carry out the county authorities tasks and work actively in assuring the quality of the apprenticeship training.

As a part of the Social Contract on VET, (read more in VET in Europe report), the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training are administering several initiatives. One of these initiatives is a web page designed to inform potential training companies of the Norwegian apprenticeship system, the positive features of having an apprentice, and last but not least what a company/business has to do to become an approved training company.

The national authorities also offer support to training companies and training offices by developing guidelines on the training companies' obligations according to the law and practical examples on how the training can be done. These guidelines includes topics such as the role of the training company, how to work with the national curricula at a local level, how to document and assess the training continuously and how the trade and journeyman's test can be carried out.

In order to strengthen the competences of VET teachers' and trainers, the Norwegian Directorate for Education and training is administering a project where teachers receive work-based training in companies and trainers/instructors visit and work in schools for a period of time. The project is currently carried out in all 19 counties, and has 850 participants. The majority of the participants are VET teachers, but around 100-140 are VET trainers. The project aims to improve the cooperation between the schools and companies. The measure started as a pilot project in the building and construction sector in 2009, and was continued with 9 counties in 2010. The new project period is until 2016.

## **B.2. Enhance programme attractiveness and career guidance**

There are several measures aiming at enhancing the attractiveness and career guidance in VET in Norway.

Norway has a twofold counselling service, which includes both career guidance as well as guidance in social or personal matters. The Education Act (*Opplæringsloven*) states that all pupils have an individual right to both types of guidance, according to their needs. Guidance counsellors in primary and secondary education provide guidance to pupils in school, whereas counsellors in the County Follow-up Service (*Oppfølgingstjenesten*) provide guidance to youth from 16-21 who are out of school and/or do not have an occupation.

The Norwegian government is currently implementing several measures in order to increase the flexibility and relevance of the VET provision and enhance the attractiveness of VET. The measures were first introduced in a white paper in Spring 2013. In October 2013, Norway had a change of government, and it is emphasizing increased impetus on VET. This includes counteracting the unacceptable high level of drop-outs, to increase the number of apprenticeship placements, to make the VET provision more flexible and increasing the state grant given to companies that provide apprenticeship training. In addition, the government wants to strengthen the counselling service to support the pupils in important educational choices and social issues, and make sure that teachers and trainers participate in regular follow-up education. Another of the aims of the government is to strengthen the VET pathway to higher education. Further, they

want to develop courses for pupils who want to combine VET with a general study programme (TAF – *tekniske allmennfag*). The scheme is successfully being piloted in the programme for Electrical Trades and Building and Construction in some counties.

Due to the statutory right to upper secondary education (*ungdomsretten*), the vast majority of the pupils who graduate from lower secondary school start directly at the upper secondary level. The percentage has remained between 96 and 97 per cent of a youth cohort since 2006. In addition, the pupils are entitled to embark on one of three preferred programmes in upper secondary education and the country authorities must provide programmes that correspond to the pupils' preferences. The aim is to make upper secondary education more attractive by increasing the pupils' motivation to continue their training.

The first year in upper secondary VET consists of general education and introductory knowledge of the vocational area. This broad entrance to VET is partly a strategy to ensure that the pupils can make a career choice based on knowledge of a wide range of specific crafts. The broad entrance is also a strategy to ensure a general knowledge in the vocational area and the need for insight in similar crafts for vocational practitioners. At the same time, the In-depth Study Project gives the pupils the opportunity to specialise in a subject area of special interest to them. This is supposed to give the pupils experience and knowledge to choose their future career.

Compulsory education in Norway includes the lower secondary level, stage 8-11 (ISCED II). Three subjects at this level support educational choice and career guidance:

- The Elective Programme Subject (*Utdanningsvalg*) is aimed at giving the pupils insight and experience with VET programmes at upper secondary level, thus providing a better foundation for choice of vocation;
- the Working Life Subject (*Arbeidslivsfaget*) The rationale is to allow pupils in lower secondary education to learn in more practical ways. The content of the working life subject is based on the nine vocational programmes at upper secondary level, but the competence aims in the curriculum are adapted to lower secondary level;
- 14 Optional Subjects focus on practical skills and some of the subjects are related to VET.

Finally, WorldSkills Norway is an NGO, which manages the national skills' competition and organise the participation of Norwegian youths in EuroSkills and WorldSkills. The organisation's main objective is to promote VET through skills' competitions. The aim is to increase the use of skills' competitions as a learning method at upper secondary schools. Experience indicates that

skills' competitions at schools can increase pupils' and apprentices' motivation and interest for VET.

### **B.3. National governance, regulatory framework and social partners' involvement**

Whereas legislative power lies with the Norwegian Parliament (*Stortinget*), the Ministry of Education and Research has overall responsibility for national policy development, the regulatory framework and administration of education and vocational training at all levels.

The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (*Utdanningsdirektoratet*) is responsible for the development of the curricula, the VET provision and development, supervision and quality control of primary, lower secondary and upper secondary general, including VET.

VET at upper secondary level, including apprenticeship, is an integral part of the education system and is regulated by the same acts as general education. VET is directly and indirectly affected by a variety of legal regulations. Some are general and regulate all types of public institutions and activities. The legal framework, the Education Act, directly targeting VET comprises laws and administrative regulations affecting both public and private providers of VET. The Education Act regulates objectives, scope, organisation and division of responsibilities, financing and content of education and training. This includes the curricula, the VET provision, examination, teachers' and trainers' competences, statutory right to education and pupil's choice of programmes, and learning environment.

Norway enjoys a high degree of decentralisation, and the central government has delegated responsibility to the local level in the field of education. The 19 county authorities are responsible for all aspects of public upper secondary general education and VET, including apprenticeship training. The counties receive financial support from the central government.

The apprenticeship training takes place with an employer or employers and follows the national curricula. The apprentice is offered an apprenticeship contract, which is standardised and signed by the apprentice, the manager of the enterprise, the appointed training manager and a representative of the county authority. The counties are responsible for approving training companies, and have a right to evoke the company's status as a training company if the training is not provided in accordance with the training agreement and the national curricula.

The pupil may find an apprenticeship placement individually or, as in most cases, the county authorities' helps with the provision. There is no statutory right to an apprenticeship placement. However, should the pupil not succeed in finding an apprenticeship place, the school is obliged to provide and organise a year of hands-on training leading up to the same final trade or

journeyman's examination. This is a costly alternative for the county authorities, and statistics show that pupils who complete upper secondary level 3 in school achieve poorer results on their trade or journeyman's examination than apprentices.

Norway has a long-standing tradition of close cooperation between education and training authorities and the social partners at the secondary level. The overarching aim of the tripartite cooperation is to train Norwegian VET students to fulfil the needs of the working life. Through the tripartite cooperation structure, changes in technologies and labour market and their implications for training needs are communicated from the market actors to the decision-making bodies.

The social partners give advice concerning a wide range of topics for upper secondary VET. According to the legal framework, the social partners have representatives, most often the majority, in all important advisory bodies at national and county level for upper secondary VET:

- The National Council for Vocational Education and Training (*Samarbeidsrådet for yrkesopplæring – SRY*); give advice on an overarching level on quality issues;
- nine Vocational Training Councils (*Faglige råd*) give advice in specific groups of trades on the training programme structure, curriculum development and quality issues;
- the County Vocational Training Board (*Yrkesopplæringsnemnda*) for each county gives advice on quality, career guidance, regional development and the provision in the county to meet the local labour market needs;
- the trade-specific Examination Boards (*Prøvenemnder*) are situated in each county and are responsible for the trade and journeyman's examination;
- national and regional VET Appeals Boards (*Klagenemnder*) cater for candidates who fail the trade and journeyman's final examination.

#### **B.4. Quality assurance in work-based learning and/or apprenticeship**

In Norway, the strong tripartite cooperation represents a crucial quality assurance mechanism, see more above. In addition to the institutionalised involvement of social partners in VET, quality assurance is embedded in the legal documents that apply to VET.

Quality standards for VET providers are set in the Education Act and regulations, included the curricula. A formal inspection system also exists. The national authorities are responsible for

inspections regarding all activities of the Education Act and have the authority to give legally binding order to correct the contrary conditions.

In Norway, local autonomy is considered an important aspect of the education system, including VET and work-based learning. The regional county authorities are responsible for the training provision. Therefore, the VET providers have a major responsibility to develop the quality of VET. The county authorities are required by law to define and implement a quality system for the training provision which is adapted to the local needs. The national authorities do not specify its content.

The training companies have the operational responsibility for the apprenticeship training during the last two years in the 2+2 model. To ensure that the apprentices receive a training which meets the requirements in the curricula, the training companies are obliged by law to develop a plan for the training.

The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training is currently implementing a quality system for upper secondary VET (*Kvalitet i fagopplæringen*). The system is not obligatory, but is meant to guide all levels in quality issues. These are the national authorities, the regional county authorities (the VET providers), the schools and the training companies.

The aim of the system is contributing to a relevant training provision for the pupils and apprentices in a good learning environment, and that as many as possible complete the training. The system is meant to enhance the quality of VET by improving the knowledge base, making the information accessible to all actors, presenting good examples and clarify each level's responsibilities for the training in accordance with the law. By providing a solid knowledge-base on how well VET is functioning according to specified criteria, the quality of VET can be improved at each level. Also, developing a culture for quality is considered to be an important aspect.

## **C. Main strengths and weaknesses of the apprenticeship scheme**

Research shows both strengths and weaknesses of the Norwegian apprenticeship model. In this section, we will analyse the link between the apprenticeship scheme and the labour market in Norway. A strong link can be characterised as a strength of the system. Further, we will analyse challenges relating to high levels of drop-out from Norwegian VET and the Norwegian companies opinion on the apprenticeship scheme.

### **C.1. Link to the labour market**

The apprenticeship scheme have a great potential for integrating young people to the labour market if the VET provision meets the needs of the labour market. In an ongoing research project on the quality of VET, Høst et. al (2014) analyse the link between the VET provision and the labour market. A strong link is measured by the employment situation of VET candidates and the average number of working hours per week. On the one hand, their first conclusions state high employment figures for candidates with a VET qualification, which indicates that VET competence is generally appreciated in the Norwegian labour market. On the other hand, they find differences between the VET programmes. The nine VET programmes mostly covers different sectors.

The link to the labour market is considered to be strongest in the traditional VET sectors. These are the building and construction sector, the electrical trades and in industry. In the health care, the restaurant and the service sectors, the unemployment figures for VET candidates are a bit higher compared to the other programmes. Also, in these sectors, the number of working hours per week is considerably lower compared to the other programmes. These are sectors which are generally characterised by a larger number of part-time workers. In the sectors where the link is weakest, the VET qualification has been established more recently and is not necessarily the only qualification needed for employment. These sectors typically also recruit adults without a formal qualification, but with long experience in the field.

Furthermore, the employment situation VET graduates are overall better compared to young people in general. In addition, three years after completing a trade or journeyman's certificate, VET graduates have higher employment rates compared to the rest of the population. In their report, Høst et. al (2014) conclude that a VET qualification to a varying degree establishes a strong and lasting link to the labour market. VET graduates generally find a job after completing their apprenticeship period, and their employment situation is apparently stable.

Another way of expressing the link to the labour market is by analysing the share of pupils achieving a VET qualification. For Service and Transport, Design, Arts and Crafts and Agriculture, Fishing and Forestry only 20 per cent of the pupils complete a VET qualification five years after the start at the upper secondary level. For Health and Social Care and Restaurant and Food Processing Trades, the figures are a bit higher, about 26 per cent, respectively. For the Technical and Industrial Production, Building and Construction and Electrical Trades, the share of pupils achieving a VET competence is higher, between 40 and 50 per cent. Media and Communication is in a special position, only 2,6 per cent achieve a VET competence, while 77 per cent achieve a general study qualification (White paper no. 20, 2012/2013). Furthermore, these results indicate the existence of considerable differences between sectors, and that the traditional VET programmes stand strong.

### **C.2. Drop-out from VET programmes**

Statistics show that about 60 per cent of the VET learners complete their upper secondary training successfully within 5 years. The critical point for completion is the transition from the second to the third year. For most VET programmes, this is the transition from school-based training to apprenticeship placements in a company. As of 1st December 2013, there was 24 500 pupils who had applied for an apprenticeship contract. About 16 500 of the applicants received an apprenticeship placement in a company, equaling 68 per cent. For the group of pupils not successfully receiving an offer of an apprenticeship placement, the short supply of available places is an obstacle for completing the training. The discrepancy between available apprenticeship placements and the number of applicants has been described as a structural flaw in the VET system in a recent report (NIFU 2012). It is the companies that decide how many and whom they will give an apprenticeship placement to, and as a consequence, NIFU claims, the 'youth right' is not valid. Most of the pupils who receive an apprenticeship placement successfully complete their VET training with a trade or journeyman's certificate (The Education Mirror, 2013).

In 2011, less than half of the pupils continued on a VET pathway after completing the second year. Twenty two per cent of the VET pupils switched to a third year that would qualify them for higher education (The Education Mirror, 2013). These figures may indicate that the youth do not consider a VET qualification as an attractive career option.

### **C.3. Norwegian companies are overall positive to the apprenticeship scheme**

The research institute NIFU has made a survey to analyse the Norwegian companies' opinion on the apprenticeship scheme (Høst et al., 2012). They conclude that there is a considerable

potential in recruiting new training companies in Norway. A third of the companies who do not have apprentices have already considered becoming a training company, and half of the companies are positive to becoming a training company. One of the main findings in the report is that the training companies do not differ from regular companies. Further, 95 per cent of the training companies agree that the apprenticeship scheme is an important part of recruiting new employees. The majority of the companies employ the apprentice after they complete the training.

## **D. Conclusions**

Most VET programmes in Norway are organised in a 2+2 model, with the first two years in school, followed by two years of apprenticeship in a public or private company i.e. a training company. Often the pupils have practical training the first two years as well, but how much and how may vary. Even though the 2+2 model is organised with 2 years of school followed by two years apprenticeship training, the model is considered to be an apprenticeship model. In general, the link between VET and the labour market in Norway is strong, and most training companies are content with the apprentice system. However, there are considerable differences between the VET programmes. The programmes representing the traditional VET crafts and trades have stronger links than the new. The high drop-out rates indicate that we need to continue to work on improving the quality of VET. In doing this, we need a close cooperation with the social partners, who have in-depth knowledge of what are the needs of the labour market.

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