

other things, the Competence Building Programme, the non-formal learning programme and the project for the development of flexible teaching models in upper secondary education.

• **Action plan and information measures**

- An action plan for the Competence Reform has been drawn up for 2000-2003
- An information and communication plan has been drawn up for the Competence Reform
- Brochures have been printed about the right to upper secondary education and the right to study leave
- Information about the Competence Reform is accessible on the web pages for the Ministry of Education on ODIN (electronic information service for the ministries and the government)
- The Norwegian University Network for Lifelong Learning (Norgesuniversitetet) provides information about continuing education and training for adults at university and college level.

Internet addresses:

The Ministry of Education:

www.kuf.dep.no

VOX:

www.vox.no

The Norwegian University
Network for Lifelong Learning:

www.norgesuniversitetet.no

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The Competence Reform

The Competence Reform in Norway was launched to give adults more opportunity to acquire education and training and to improve their qualifications. The main objective of the reform is to help meet the needs of society and the workplace for skills and knowledge. It is both an educational reform and a workplace reform.



WHY DO WE NEED THE COMPETENCE REFORM?

Changes in society set new standards for knowledge and skills. Globalisation and technological advances are changing the world. New knowledge is needed to strengthen competitive ability and to make it easier for the workplace to adapt to the new requirements. With a higher level of competence, we all have more options and more opportunities to fulfil our own wishes and needs. A well-educated population is the most important resource a society can have. It can help to create new jobs, ensure quality of life and prevent new class distinctions. It is particularly important to motivate people who have little education and who do not ask for education and training.

WHO IS THE COMPETENCE REFORM FOR?

The Competence Reform is targeted at all adults, both those who are employed and those who are unemployed. The Norwegian Government is working hand-in-hand with the social partners, educational institutions and organizations on the reform.

WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED?

- **Adults have the right to a basic education**

Adults who need primary and lower secondary education have a statutory right to such education from August 2002. This education must be adapted to the individual's needs and life situation – as regards both when and where the education is to be provided and the rate of progression.

The municipal authorities are responsible for providing this education. They can cooperate with other bodies, such as adult education associations or institutions which provide distance education.

Thirty-seven municipal authorities are taking part in a project to identify needs and develop new teaching models for basic education for adults.

- **Adults have the right to upper secondary education**

Adults have had a statutory right to upper secondary education since August 2000. This right applies to adults who were born prior to 1978 and who have not completed an upper secondary education. Teaching will be based on formal and non-formal learning and be adapted to the individual's needs and life situation – as regards both when and where the education is to be provided and the rate of progression.

The county authorities are responsible for providing this education. They can cooperate with other bodies such as adult education associations or institutions which provide distance education.

Projects have been initiated to develop new, flexible teaching models.

- **Non-formal learning must be documented and assessed**

Non-formal learning may be acquired through training, paid and voluntary work, and active participation in organizations and community life.

Work is being done to set up a national system to survey and assess the type of non-formal learning adults have. 4,500 persons have participated in the testing of documentation systems at the workplace. 7,500 persons have had their non-formal learning assessed with a view to taking upper secondary education.

The Norwegian Act relating to Universities and University Colleges has been amended to allow adults over 25 years of age without formal entrance qualifications to be admitted on the basis of non-formal learning. The individual educational institutions determine whether the non-formal qualifications are acceptable. In the autumn of 2001, approximately 2,700 adults were offered study places on the basis of non-formal learning.

- **Employees have the right to study leave**

The right to study leave was introduced on 1 January 2001 and is laid down in the Working Environment Act. Employees may be allowed to take study leave on a full-time

or part-time basis in order to take part in organized education and training. To qualify for study leave, employees must have been in employment for at least three years and employed by the same employer for the past two years.

- **Study financing has improved**

The State Educational Loan Fund provides financial assistance (loans and grants) for most types of education and training. The rules have been changed to make them more applicable to adult needs. Students may have an income of up to NOK 5,200 per month before grants from the State Educational Loan Fund are reduced. It has been proposed that this income be increased to NOK 100,000 per year from the autumn 2002. Financial assistance will then be NOK 80,000 per year. The new rules will also apply to adults who are entitled to primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education.

- **Education is tax-free**

Following amendments to the Tax Act in 1999, education financed by an employer is generally exempt from tax.

- **The Competence Building Programme**

Under this programme, enterprises, trade organisations, parties to wage agreements and others may apply for project funds to develop the market for continuing education and training for adults. The Government granted NOK 50 million to this programme in 2000 and NOK 100 million in 2001. More than four hundred projects have received financial support. It has been proposed that funds should also be granted in 2002.

- **Changes in the public education system**

The public education system will be altered to make it possible to cater to the needs for skills and knowledge at the workplace. Among other things, a quality reform in higher education is being implemented.

- **VOX - the Norwegian Institute for Adult Education**

VOX was established on 1 January 2001. The institute will expedite and carry on research and development, spread knowledge, build networks and be a knowledge resource to the adult education community. VOX administers, among