


Centres of vocational excellence

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE

 NORWAY

Timeline

2022 Pilot

2023 Implementation

2024 Implementation

2025 Implementation

ID number 43656

Background

Vocational college education is becoming increasingly specialised and the requirements for what a skilled worker should be able to do increase in line with technological development. There is a need for spearheads in the sector that will contribute to developing the vocational colleges and provide the labour market with the competences they need.

Centres of vocational excellence are seen as spearheads in the higher vocational education sector to develop innovative ways of working with and promoting quality in education. Through their work, the centres are expected to contribute to increasing the reputation of and enrolment in vocational education. The model is based on the EU initiative – Centres of vocational excellence (CoVEs).

Objectives

The scheme aims to:

- (a) raise the status of higher vocational education and stimulate the development of excellence in this area;
- (b) provide outstanding vocational colleges with the resources to work long-term on quality development and innovation in higher vocational education;
- (c) stimulate increased cooperation among vocational colleges and different education levels, and strengthen their cooperation with the labour market.

This means that the centres will amongst others work on shorter qualifications, the link between IVET and CVET, and lifelong learning.

Description

Centres of vocational excellence are intended to contribute to increasing professional competence and the quality of training at vocational colleges. Similar to centres for excellent education in the university and college sector, this is a prestigious scheme which should, among other things, stimulate increased quality in the vocational colleges that serve upper secondary learners, including apprentices, young people (15-29 years) and adult learners.

Centres of vocational excellence have among their tasks:

- (a) developing and testing pedagogical and didactic methods adapted to higher vocational education;
- (b) developing and testing new forms of cooperation with the labour market;
- (c) stimulating student ownership of learning and new forms of student engagement;
- (d) sharing experiences and results with relevant parts of the higher vocational education sector, to contribute to raising quality beyond the centres themselves.

2022 Pilot

The pilot scheme was launched in 2022 and the beneficiary colleges were announced in November 2022. The vocational college in Rogaland and the vocational college in Viken were the first to achieve the status of centres of vocational excellence. They are to receive a total of NOK 24 million (EUR 2 116 million at the exchange rate of 18/07/2023) over four years to develop the higher vocational college sector (over EUR 1 million each). This is a pilot scheme to be evaluated after three years. The funds for the centres are paid annually. The centres are expected to start on 1 January 2023 until 1 January 2027.

During the pilot period, the Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills (HK-dir) must ensure that an evaluation is carried out to provide a basis for assessing whether the arrangement with the centres of vocational excellence should be continued.

2023 Implementation

For both centres, 2023 was characterised by planning and establishing, and starting up some of the planned activities. Both centres experienced an upswing in interest and found that it improved their status and helped with dissemination and effect.

Viken vocational centre of excellence, called Centre for Experiential Learning, planned to be a recognised capacity for higher vocational education and an innovative player in the pioneering and sustainable development in an education sector that the labour market has high demand for. Various activities started in 2023, amongst others:

- (a) academic pedagogical practice; hybrid learning, and a practical pedagogical introduction course - a one-week introductory course for newly employed teachers;
- (b) modular degree granting vocational education path; a project for a modular education path which could grant a degree. A study plan of 60 credits was developed;
- (c) transitional arrangement to the higher education sector from vocational education. (Ease transition from vocational education to higher education).

Rogaland vocational centre of excellence, referred to as SNU in Norwegian (Centre for innovative educational paths), planned to be a spearhead for innovative education, through engaging learning and collaboration. Various activities started in 2023, amongst others:

- (a) map, describe practice and develop competence in learning methods and teaching practise within simulation and collaborative learning; an interview guide was drawn up and an initial qualitative survey carried out amongst the teachers;
- (b) collaborate with partner schools on mapping methodology;
- (c) establish working groups for interaction with working life, etc.

2024 Implementation

Both centres continued their planned work in 2024. Among other measures, Rogaland initiated an AI workshop and ensured flexible access to their own apps for their students and teachers.

2025 Implementation

The overarching goal of the centres of vocational excellence is to increase the sector's status and stimulate the development of outstanding quality in higher VET. In 2024 /2025, the centres focused on the following key areas:

The Centre for Innovative Education (SNU) hosted an internationalisation seminar in collaboration with its strategic partner, Katapult. The seminar brought together stakeholders from the higher vocational college sector to share experiences from international projects. The aim was to enhance the quality of education and foster cross-border collaboration.

The Centre for Experiential Learning (SEL) prioritised improving educational quality by strengthening the pedagogical competence of teaching staff. The centre organised a Practical pedagogical introduction course specifically designed for newly appointed teachers in the vocational college sector. Additionally, SEL focused on integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) in teaching practices. In 2024, 52 educators participated in a pilot initiative to test AI tools in their own classrooms.

The grant scheme was being evaluated by an external analysis agency.

Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Education and Research (KD)
- Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills

Target group

Learners

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices
Young people (15-29 years old)
Adult learners

Education professionals

Teachers
Trainers

Entities providing VET

VET providers (all kinds)

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET
Further developing national quality assurance systems

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Developing and updating learning resources and materials
Supporting Centres of vocational excellence (CoVEs)

Transparency and portability of VET skills and qualifications

Developing and applying qualifications smaller/shorter than full

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Promotion strategies and campaigns for VET and lifelong learning

Permeability between IVET and CVET and general and vocational pathways, academic and professional higher education

European priorities in VET

Osnabrück Declaration

Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[News item](#)

[Link to more information about the centres](#)

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