


# Strategy for higher vocational education

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

STRATEGY/ACTION PLAN

 NORWAY

## Timeline

2021 Implementation 2022 Implementation 2023 Implementation

2024 Legislative process 2025 Legislative process

ID number 41541

## Background

The government wants to improve and strengthen higher vocational education in Norway, and the strategy lays out both how to accomplish this, as well as the goals for the strategy.

5 years ago, there were just over 15 000 vocational school learners, but last year there were well over 23 000. It has been a deliberate government policy to increase this number. The government has also spent EUR 39.51 million (NOK 400 million) on quality improvement. This strategy is supposed to ensure that these positive developments continue.

## Objectives

Some of the objectives of the strategy are:

- (a) to support the continued growth of the higher vocational education sector;
- (b) to establish a system for the allocation of new student places which takes into account the skills needs of the labour market, and the planning capacity of vocational education schools, which is based on an analysis of the available knowledge base and skills needs;
- (c) to create new paths from upper secondary education to higher vocational education;
- (d) to examine the criteria and framework for institutional accreditation with a view to enabling vocational schools to choose, create and change education offers themselves, after receiving general approval from the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT);
- (e) to stimulate quality development of online and flexible study offers through skills development in online pedagogy for higher vocational education teachers;
- (f) to establish a pilot centre of vocational excellence, where vocational schools, in collaboration with the labour market and professional environments, can develop projects to promote professional development and new solutions to competence needs in working life.

## Description

The strategy was proposed by the Ministry of Education and Research for further improving

The strategy was proposed by the Ministry of Education and Research for further improving and strengthening higher vocational education. It is aimed at higher vocational education and all actors in the field. The beneficiaries are both individual students and society, mainly by improving quality and increasing autonomy.

The priorities focus on the following four areas:

#### Growth in the tertiary vocational college sector

The government is to take steps to ensure continued growth in higher vocational education according to labour market demand for more skilled workers and workers with high-level and up-to-date vocational skills. The distribution of new study places will be based on skills needs mapping and prioritisation in the labour market.

#### Developing the quality of higher vocational education

Tertiary vocational colleges can already accredit individual study programmes and professional subjects, and establish for themselves study programmes that fall within the scope of accreditation. Tertiary vocational colleges are to be given greater self-determination to develop and amend study programmes, enabling them to respond better and faster to the labour market skills demand. The government has to submit a proposal to enable vocational schools to apply for an institutional accreditation for all subject areas, as most universities and colleges have today. The Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT) is to grant this authorisation based on application.

The government would like to raise the quality of web-based and session-based teaching by focusing on competence-raising.

Wider international collaboration can provide tertiary vocational colleges with tools for competence development, raising quality, renewal and innovation. The goal is for vocational colleges to participate in different international education programmes and to promote international cooperation and mobility

#### Encourage excellent quality

The government is to establish a pilot scheme for centres of excellence in higher vocational education. Centre status will be awarded to vocational colleges having a partnership with the labour market and expert environments. Several such centres at universities and university colleges have already gained valuable experience that will be used in this work.

#### Higher-level study programmes for higher skills requirements

Based on a comprehensive review, the government is to assess whether certain higher vocational education programmes can be placed at a higher level in the current qualifications framework for lifelong learning (NQF). In the NQF, certificates from tertiary vocational colleges are placed at levels 5.1 and 5.2.

#### **2021 Implementation**

Measures from the strategy are to be implemented in the years to come.

#### **2022 Implementation**

The following measures have been implemented:

500 new study placements were created in higher vocational education and two pilot vocational centres excellence were appointed

#### **2023 Implementation**

The education ministry proposed changes to adult student loans which were in consultation until December. The proposed changes would make them more flexible and support the continued growth of the higher vocational education sector. The sector will not grow without a growing number of students to study.

### 2024 Legislative process

On 22 March 2024, the Ministry of Education and Research proposed amendments to Act No. 28 on higher vocational education to the Storting.

Amendments to the Act No 28 include the possibility for higher vocational colleges to obtain institutional accreditation, the possibility for providers of higher vocational college education to apply for exemptions from the higher vocational college regulations, a dispensation authority for admissions and the strengthening and clarification of certain student rights in line with the Universities and Colleges Act.

On 31 May, institutional accreditation was included in the Act on Higher Vocational Education. With this accreditation, higher vocational colleges can start new study programmes without an external accreditation process. The connected regulation is expected to be updated accordingly in 2025.

The process towards institutional accreditation for vocational colleges began in October with preparatory work and political debate. On 6 December, the Ministry of Education and Research launched a public consultation on proposed amendments to the higher vocational education regulations. The proposal introduces institutional accreditation, allowing accredited vocational colleges to create new programmes and revise existing ones across all fields of study.

### 2025 Legislative process

The regulatory framework of institutional accreditation for higher vocational colleges was under revision by the Government, with a strong emphasis on ensuring that quality requirements and accreditation procedures are effective. The higher vocational education sector has already taken important steps through programme area (example programme area health) accreditation, and the framework for institutional accreditation was under development. The deadline for submitting answers to the consultation with proposals for amendments to the higher vocational education regulations was 6.3.2025. Following this, the submissions were taken into account, and the regulatory framework was yet to be formally adopted.

## Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Education and Research (KD)

## Target group

### Learners

Young people (15-29 years old)  
Adult learners

### Entities providing VET

VET providers (all kinds)

## Thematic categories

### Modernising VET offer and delivery

Expanding VET programmes to EQF levels 5-8

### Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Financial and non-financial incentives to learners, providers and companies

# European priorities in VET

## Osnabrück Declaration

Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET

## Subsystem

CVET

## Further reading

[News about the strategy](#)

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[ReferNet Norway; Cedefop \(2021\). Norway: priorities for further growth and improved quality of higher vocational education. National news on VET](#)

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[Higher Vocational Education Act](#)

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[Public consultation - study loan](#)

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[News item - study loan](#)

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[Act on Higher Vocational Education](#)

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[Suggested changes to the Tertiary Vocational Education Act](#)

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[News item about adopted changes](#)

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[Public consultation on regulation of higher vocational education](#)

## Related policy developments

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**2025 Implementation**

### Norwegian Committee on Skill Needs 2021-27

Since 2017, the KBU has provided thorough professional assessments of Norway's future competence needs. Three comprehensive reports have ensured the authorities and the labour market, both regionally and nationally, a solid basis for both planning and making informed decisions.

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#### Type of development

Practical  
measure/Initiative

#### Subsystem

IVET CVET

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**2025 Completed**

## The skills reform - lifelong learning

Work on the reform started in 2019 and will develop further in the years to come. The government has initiated several measures to reach the objectives of the reform:

Stimulating individuals and companies to invest in education and training through:

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### Type of development

Practical  
measure/Initiative

### Subsystem

IVET CVET

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**2025 Completed**

## VET-related priorities in the political platform of the government

Following the elections of autumn 2017, the government announced its priorities on 14 January 2018. For upper secondary VET, they included:

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### Type of development

Strategy/Action  
plan

### Subsystem


IVET CVET

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**2023 Completed**

## Regulation on NQF

The Ministry of Education and Research adopted, in November 2017, a regulation formalising the overall position and status of the NKR.

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### Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

### Subsystem

IVET CVET


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**2022 Completed**

## Modular industry programmes for continuing training in post-secondary VET

Design work for shorter and flexible industry programmes for continuing training in post-

secondary vocational education was initiated in December 2018. The programmes address the building and construction and the healthcare sectors.

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**Type of development**

Practical  
measure/Initiative

**Subsystem**

CVET

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“ ... ” **Cite as**

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). Strategy for higher vocational education: Norway. In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). *Timeline of VET policies in Europe* (2025 update) [Online tool].

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/41541>