

The skills reform - lifelong learning

POLICY DEVELOPMENT**PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE** NORWAY

Timeline

2020 Implementation**2021 Implementation****2022 Implementation****2023 Implementation****2024 Legislative process****ID number 38979**

Background

The skills reform is based on the government's skills policy from 2013 until 2020 and the National skills policy strategy 2017-21. The full scope of the reform is to be reached in the years to come. The reform, described in a 2019 white paper, sets the status of what the government has achieved so far, and the measures initiated. It also shows a clear direction for how to further develop the skills policy in the future.

Objectives

The skills reform aims to ensure that no one is excluded from working because of lack of competence. Everyone should have the opportunity to renew and supplement their competence and to work longer.

The second goal is to close the skills gap between what working life needs in terms of skills and the skills of the employees.

Description

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:

- (a) making it attractive to invest time and money in education and training;
- (b) flexible loans and scholarships;
- (c) flexible education and training schemes (providing a framework for other policy developments, such as grants for flexible continuing education in digital competence, modular industry programmes for continuing training in post-secondary VET and a scholarship pilot for skilled workers).

Opening up the education system for lifelong learning through:

- (a) the possibility of combining work with study;
- (b) increased capacity for further education;

- (c) removing the limitation on the minimum length of higher vocational education;
- (d) more flexible and work-related training for adults with a weak link to the labour market.

Providing a better link between supply and demand for competence development through:

- (a) better information on what is possible and what is needed;
- (b) developing a digital competence platform;
- (c) career guidance.

2020 Implementation

The majority of the developments are in the implementation phase. Some measures in relation to ensuring more flexible and work-related training for adults with weak links to the labour market are still under development.

2021 Implementation

Several measures are being implemented, such as flexible loans and scholarships, flexible education and training schemes.

2022 Implementation

Everyone should have the opportunity to renew and strengthen their skills. To support this effort, the Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills (HK-dir), the Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research (Sikt) and the Norwegian State Loan Fund (Lånekassen) have researched a conceptual idea for a digital competence platform for lifelong learning. They also published a report of their findings recommending a project to develop and establish such a platform.

The platform should facilitate the sharing of data on the education offers from education providers and the qualifications achieved for individuals, both in upper secondary education, higher vocational education and tertiary education. By providing infrastructure, data and a framework that makes it attractive and interesting for different providers to participate, the platform should help link existing services in the knowledge sector more closely, while at the same time laying a foundation for the development of new ones. The aim is to contribute to more comprehensive and coherent user journeys that help lower the threshold for individuals to develop relevant skills and make it easier to navigate the information jungle.

Based on the concept proposed for the first establishment phase, several of the measures in this phase plan to deal with further developing existing solutions at Sikt and HK-dir. At the same time, plans were made for future government and private actors to offer digital solutions and services as part of the platform.

2023 Implementation

The Norwegian State Loan Fund developed a new loan solution for adults who combine work and part-time study. It would allow applicants to apply for a study loan for shorter programmes (less than one semester) and choose an individual payment frequency. The suggestions were sent on public consultation on 19.10.2023, with a deadline of 15.12.2023. The public consultation started to be processed.

2024 Legislative process

The Ministry of Education and Research published new draft proposals for amendments to the Education Support Act in March. The new and more flexible loan for short-study programmes is expected to be introduced in autumn 2025. For the first time, study loans will be available for adults studying part-time and on shorter courses.

Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Education and Research (KD)

Target group

Learners

Adult learners

Persons in employment, including those at risk of unemployment

Thematic categories

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Diversifying modes of learning: face-to-face, digital and/or blended learning; adaptable/flexible training formats

Acquiring key competences

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Promotion strategies and campaigns for VET and lifelong learning

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

Providing for individuals' re- and upskilling needs

Lifelong guidance

European priorities in VET

Osnabrück Declaration

Establishing a new lifelong learning culture - relevance of continuing VET and digitalisation

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[Link to the white paper \(Meld. St. 14 \(2019-2020\)\)](#)

[News item about adjustments in study loan for adults](#)

[Link to public consultation study loan](#)

[Link to news item about study loan for short and flexible study programmes](#)

Related policy developments

2023 **Completed**

Strategy for decentralised and flexible education at vocational

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schools, university colleges and universities

The strategy is intended to increase access to flexible and decentralised services throughout the country for vocational schools, colleges and universities.

This is intended to be done through:



Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

CVET

2024 Legislative process

Strategy for higher vocational education

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.



Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

CVET

2024 Completed

Scholarship pilot for skilled workers

Skilled workers were selected as the target group because they leave working life relatively early and traditionally seldom participate in continuing education.



Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

CVET

2021 Completed

Grants for flexible continuing education in digital competence

Skills Norway announced grants totalling near EUR 3 million (NOK 35 million) for the development of flexible continuing education programmes in digital competence. These programmes are aimed at companies and employees who need more expertise as a result of digitalisation.

**Type of development**

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

CVET

2019 Completed**Evaluation of continuing education and training**

In March 2018, the government established an expert committee on continuing education and training (Ekspertutvalg om etter- og videreutdanning).

**Type of development**

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

CVET

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.

**Type of development**

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

CVET

2022 Completed**Vocational education and training for adults (Kompetansepluss)**

In March 2017, Skills Norway designed a key competences mapping tool for young people

not in education, employment or training (NEETs), and for the public in general. The goal is to ensure relevant training for each target group.



Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

CVET

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<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/38979>