

Norway – Country report

Nordic meeting, 16.-17. March 2015 in Oslo

Short facts from NAAL (VOFO)

NAAL(VOFO) has now 14 study Associations as members, while there are 15 in total in Norway. The last one is discussing the possibility to join us. The study Associations represent over 480 member associations with several thousand members. Our annual general meeting will be held on 28th of May in Oslo.

We have a new web-site at www.vofo.no

New Secretary General at VOFO

After more than 17 years, Sturla Bjerkaker has left the position as Secretary General of VOFO and was from 1 September 2014 replaced by Ms Gro Holstad. Gro came from the position as Deputy Secretary General at the Norwegian Association for Diabetes. After a period of «overlap», Sturla will continue during 2015 as a Special Advisor part time.

National policy on Adult education

The National Budget for 2015 was launched in October 2014 and it contained two severe suggestions for the study associations and VOFO. The fundings for adult learning through the study associations was cut with 40 million NOK and the fundings for VOFO was cut with 50 %. Two major challenges!

The same day as the proposal was out, we invited our member associations and regions to a meeting about the situation. We managed to involve the study associations and their members, volunteers, people who had participated on the courses and politicians. We were united!

Through several meetings with politicians on national and local levels, over 200 media articles, use of facebook, over 10000 signatures who protested on the governmental proposals, we managed to stop the proposals. There were no cuts in the funding! Our prime minister said that the Government was surprised over the engagement in this case.



White Paper in planning – Changes in the rules for funding non-formal adult education

The Ministry initiated in spring 2014 a project to work for possible changes in the law and rules for public funding of the study association. The work should be based on the existing Act for non-formal adult education, and be done in cooperation with VOFO. We have been engaged in this work since June last year. In April, we will launch our report from a working group. The work will be – it is said – seen as a part of the work with a new White Paper on “Lifelong learning” which the Ministry of education will launch late this autumn. The White Paper will focus on adults with low skills, adults falling out of the educational system. Therefore, it is a bit uncertain how the public funding for the study association will fit in this focus.

Basic Skills and the voluntary sector

At the same time, in the state budget for this year, the Ministry has decided to use 10 million kroner for a new program in line with the successful program BKA – Basic Skills for the working life. The BKF-program – Basic Skills for the voluntary sector – will probably give many of the study associations

opportunities to offer basic skills education and learning for adults outside the working life. VOFO is in dialogue with the Ministry and Vox in this project.

Activities and projects

Inkludera Flera

All, and all ages, should be included and have ICT-skills for being able to cope with everyday life in the future. Especially mature and older people has low ICT skills and therefore have problems with their bank and public affairs etc. The Nordplus project “Inkludera Flera” with almost all the “Folkbildning Norden”-members as partners – are working with this challenges. A summing up conference will be held in Copenhagen in May 2015.

EQM

Rapid developments in the labour markets and educational systems in Europe have brought about enormous changes in education and training provision in post compulsory and adult learning. This provision often falls outside any formal educational system and procedures. It can therefore be difficult to assure the quality of the training provided. As people become aware of the importance of updating their skills and employers demand increasing accountability, learning providers may need to be able to prove the quality of their programs.

The EQM process is a transparent assessment process where the learning provider gets the opportunity to review own processes by using a set of indicators that are based on standards commonly agreed by eight organizations from eight European countries.

More information contact William Evans at NAAL we@vofo.no

Educational development

The Norwegian Association for Adult Learning runs an annual training program consisting of several seminars and conferences, to contribute to the development of the quality of the member organisations' educational and other kinds of activities. Among the 8-10 annual seminars, we find topics like Adult learning methods, Learning as a strategy for organizational development, Working with the medias, NGO Leadership, NGO as employers.

The seminar topics are chosen according to the organisations' needs, and the seminars are usually fully booked, we have around 200 participants each year. Evaluations are in general very positive.

Adult Learning pedagogy/andragogy

The government has expressed the need of teachers and trainers' development, and has fully financed a training program also for adult learning teachers. The Norwegian Association for Adult Learning is responsible for the training in our member organisations, and has over the past two years organized courses for around 180 participants. The courses are normally more than overbooked, and will run for another two years at least.



Recent research projects on learning associations in Norway

There have been two major research projects on adult learning associations in Norway the last two years; both commissioned by Vox and conducted by the private research company Oxford Research AS.

The first project was a survey among more than 4.000 participants of various courses in NGOs. The survey showed that the respondents were happy with the course and satisfied by its quality and level. Most of them (9 out of 10) would recommend taking the course to others. The most valued learning outcome was motivation for further learning.

The second study aimed to compliment the former by investigating the significance of governmental grants to courses in NGOs. A survey among 50 local course organizers showed that a substantial number of them reported the grants as being critical or important to their activity, and almost everyone reported that the grants contributed to lower course fees. Nonetheless, because of the unfortunately small sample size, these results are highly uncertain and the report fails to provide a definite understanding of the importance of governmental grants.