

1. SHORT FACT OF YOUR ORGANIZATION

NAAL(VOFO) is a democratic association, with 14 study Associations as members. The study Associations represent over 500-member associations with several thousand members. In 2017 there were 520 000 participants on 44500 courses. There were courses in 424 of 428 municipalities in Norway.

Our general Assembly was held 31 of May in Oslo. Inge Carlén is the leader for one more year.

We started an evaluation process of our regional structure in 2016 which concluded late 2016/spring 2017. We had 16 regions, but this is going to be 7-10 before 2020. We started a pilot project last year, where the purpose was to test out the recommendations: 7 regions, all regional employees to report to central management, the tasks are policy/influence work and follow up our local members. The purpose is to become a stronger force for members towards regional politicians. The pilot will be evaluated.

There has been a total change in our office since 2014. After the summer vacation this year, only 2 persons from the “old staff” are left. Many of the old staff has been retired during these years, so VOFO’s administration is quite “young”.

2. THE POLITICAL SITUATION FOR ADULT EDUCATION

In their political platform, the new Government has said:

The government will strengthen the voluntary, open and non-bureaucratic education provision in the voluntary sector, directed by among others the study associations." This is one of nine instruments the new government will utilize to ensure lifelong learning for all. Folk high schools are also prioritized in the platform as an important part of the diversity of education opportunities.

Despite of this, the Government tried to reduce the financial support to the study associations in this year’s budget (as in the previous year). We managed – again – to stop it, with a large mobilization. The national politicians say, even today, that it was two major events during this period, it was mobilization from the Folk High schools and our fight. They got hundreds of emails from our members, local politicians and people who has attended our courses. We were happy to stop the proposed budget cut, but we can’t continue like this.

The Ministry of Education and Research has evaluated the Study Associations and how they use the funds from the government. The evaluation has also presented proposal of changes for our members. We are not fully informed, but we know they want to change the Law for Adult Learning and change the criteria for the funds. They want to strengthen the focus towards workplaces and reduce the support to “folkbildningactivities”.

The Government are in the process of making major changes in the public sector regional structure and are now discussing what kind of national task should go to the new regions. One of the proposals are the funds to the study associations and to decentralize Kompetanse Norge/ Skills Norway which is the directorate of Adult Education. If this goes through, the national study Associations will struggle, unless they continue to receive earmarked national funds. Our concern is also that the funds will be gone in the regions, and there will be more project funds or perhaps nothing to “folkbildning”.

The future of the study associations is really unsure in Norway, and we work very hard to find good solutions. Our dialog with the Ministry and politicians will be very important these days.

Here is a link to the national strategy for skills policy, which came in 2017.

3. NEW KNOWLEDGE IN THE FIELD OF FOLKBILDING

We have just signed a contract with FAFO, which is an independent social science research foundation that develops knowledge on the conditions for participation in working life, organisational life, society and politics, the relationship between politics and living conditions, as well as on democracy, development and value creation. They will look into study associations as a learning catalyst within 5 areas:

-inclusion, learning motivation, restructuring, living communities, qualifying supplement to formal education.

We hope to have a report during autumn 2018.

4. ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS

Project on inclusive training activities.

VOFO has received funding from the Ministry of Education and Research to develop a base of information on how adult learning training providers are working to help inclusion of adults into training activities and hence contribute to preventing exclusion. Having done the research, our objective is to set up a small website where other organizations can find best practice advice, guidance, examples and stories on how various courses are adapted and how organisations are recruiting to include immigrants, refugees and groups that from various reasons are not participating in adult learning. To ensure broad dissemination of the findings, VOFO will run a series of seminars around the country, starting in q4 of 2018.

Project on new communications concept

The non-formal adult learning through the educational associations (studieforbund) is subject to strong pressure from the government as political priorities are set on employability and work life related training. This is challenging the acknowledgment and recognition of added values for individual and society from participating in other organized learning activities. As a consequence, VOFO has embarked on a project to develop a communications concept which will help develop and strengthen messages that shows value from the broader learning arena in the volunteer sector.

Training of adult educators

- Series of courses/seminars for teachers, NGO staff leaders, elected leaders and administrative staff in the 500 member associations.
- 40 courses on andragogy over the last three years with 700+ participants
- National, Nordic and international conferences

5. COMMON THEMES

- How to meet the political focus with good arguments
- What is our sectors values, what's our "message"?