

ADULT EDUCATION AND OER 2015 COUNTRY UPDATE: NORWAY

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Norway is a Scandinavian country outside the European Union but adjacent to Sweden. It has a population of just over 5 million. Being in the Schengen Zone it shares free movement with the other Nordic countries (and most members of the EU) but has its own customs rules.

There is a considerable degree of intelligibility between Norwegian (both versions), Swedish and Danish. Indeed,¹

Generally, speakers of the three largest Scandinavian languages (Danish, Norwegian and Swedish) can read each other's languages without great difficulty. This holds especially true of Danish and Norwegian. The primary obstacles to mutual comprehension are differences in pronunciation. Danish speakers generally do not understand Norwegian as well as the extremely similar written norms would lead one to expect. Many Norwegians – especially in northern and western Norway – also have problems understanding Danish, but according to a recent scientific investigation Norwegians are better at understanding both Danish and Swedish than Danes and Swedes are at understanding Norwegian.

Although there appears to be little interworking at the ministry level between Nordic countries on OER and MOOCs the free movement and language compatibility have brought about a considerable amount of informal collaboration, such as NordicOER.²

1 Adult Education in Norway

There is a strong tradition of adult education in Norway, originating in correspondence schools.

NKI Fjernundervisning is a Norwegian correspondence school, established in 1959 near Oslo. It offers postal and Internet studies in courses ranging from upper secondary school to university college studies, and post-graduate studies. It claims to be Scandinavia's largest provider of online education, offering flexible online education within a wide range of disciplines in partnership with recognised colleges and universities, to around 10,000 students.³ Teaching is mostly in Norwegian. Since 2007 NKI has been part of the company Anthon B Nilsen.⁴

NKS Nettstudier was founded even earlier, in 1914.⁵ It offers college studies and vocational education on the internet. It is now part of the Foundation School Campus Kristiania. This has 4,500 full-time students, plus the students in online learning. The school, with campuses in Oslo, Bergen and Trondheim, offers 15 college studies units, 18 Bachelors degree programmes and 2 Masters programmes.⁶

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison_of_Norwegian_Bokm%C3%A5l_and_Standard_Danish and <http://www.listlanguage.com/swedish-written-language.html>

² <http://nordicoer.org>

³ <http://www.nki.no/nettstudier/nki-nettstudier-scandinavia-s-largest-provider-of-online-education>

⁴ <http://www.abn.no/index.php/en/utdanning>

⁵ <https://www.nks.no>

⁶ http://no.wikipedia.org/wiki/Campus_Kristiania

Continuing the cycle of innovation, *Campus Nooa* was started in 2012 by Professor Morten Flate Paulsen who was earlier central to the development of NKI Nettstudier. It offers secondary school courses and a variety of management and other courses, some in English.⁷ Narrative information in English about this is scanty but there is a useful presentation in English.⁸

Other large providers of distance education include BI (Norwegian Business School)⁹ and Sør-Trøndelag University College

In contrast, some aspects of Norwegian adult education are very 'presential'. Norway is an active member of the *Folk High Schools* movement,¹⁰ which in conjunction with *Folk Universities*, are found in Nordic countries, Germany and Austria. These have a strong focus on residential teaching.

Vox is the *Norwegian Agency for Lifelong Learning* and is part of the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research. It promotes access and participation in formal, non-formal and informal adult through research, basic skills, integration, career guidance and programmes and subsidies.

2 Copyright in Norway

Norway has a Creative Commons affiliate, set up in 2004.¹¹

3 OER in Adult Education in Norway

Norway has a number of OER initiatives of which the best known is perhaps the Norwegian National Digital Learning Arena. Indeed,¹²

It is a joint initiative between county councils in Norway that allocates a portion of state funds to ensure free access to textbooks for Norwegian students and to develop digital resources (or purchase from publishers or other producers. The project has produced a large amount of OER and there are many thousand resources available from the portal.

However, despite the high level of activity in online learning, on the whole OER is not very prevalent in distance education in Norway. This is the case for MOOCs also.

In contrast, in the policy area there is a useful government report on MOOCs,¹³ and several Nordic experts on online education prepared the *Kragerø Open Online Education Declaration* in June 2014.¹⁴

4 Quality for OER in Norway

The Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT) is an independent government agency that contributes towards quality assurance and enhancement in both higher education and tertiary vocational education.¹⁵ It is a full member of ENQA. In its recent (2013) self-reflection on its activities there was no mention of OER or MOOCs and

⁷ <http://campus.nooa.info/?lang=en>

⁸ <http://www.slideshare.net/CampusNooA/campus-nooa>

⁹ <http://www.bi.edu>

¹⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Folk_high_school

¹¹ <https://wiki.creativecommons.org/Norway>

¹² <http://poerup.referata.com/wiki/Norway>

¹³ https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/upload/kd/time_for_moocs.pdf

¹⁴ <http://www.nooa.no/kragero-open-online-education-declaration/>

¹⁵ <http://www.nokut.no>

very little on e-learning,¹⁶ but the report did note that certain aspects of flexible learning had been under study, for example flexible professional education¹⁷ and other clues on the NOKUT site suggest that NOKUT is keeping such aspects under review.

¹⁶

http://www.nokut.no/Documents/NOKUT/Artikkelbibliotek/Generell/Strategi/2013/ENQA%20Review%20of%20NOKUT%20selfevaluation%20Report_February%202013.pdf

¹⁷ <http://www.nokut.no/en/Facts-and-statistics/Publications/Research-and-analyses/Education-in-Norway/Quality-challenges-in-flexible-professional-education/>