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# Initial Vocational Training in Norway

## 1. Introduction

### Overview

The public system of initial vocational training (IVT):

- The provision and financing of initial education are a public responsibility and IVT is free of charge (Skule et al. 2002: 273).
- Generally, the role of the social partners in IVT is based on the ILO convention 142, ratified by Norway in 1976, which establishes that the employers' organizations and trade unions shall influence and participate in the framing and development of vocational guidance and training (ReferNet Norway 2005: 15).
- Adults have a statutory right to receive public primary (from 2002) and secondary (from 2000) education, and the responsibility for provision is similar to the one applying to children and youth. Adults may study at tertiary institutions, just like younger students (ReferNet Norway 2005: 16).
- Labor market training for the unemployed, and language and vocational training for immigrants also constitute important parts of the Norwegian education and training system, but fall outside mainstream education (ReferNet Norway 2005: 16).
- Students in higher general and vocational education are entitled to financial support through *Statens Lånekasse for utdanning* (the State Educational Loan Fund). Students

can apply for both grants and loans, depending on their financial situation and civil status (ReferNet Norway 2005: 23).

The role of collective labor agreements (CLAs) in IVT:

- Collective bargaining settles the main principles for both initial and continuing vocational training. These main principles are stated in the agreements reached between the social partners at sectoral level (ReferNet Norway 2005: 4).
- Apprenticeship training is the joint responsibility of the social partners, the vocational training committee and the training offices (ReferNet Norway 2005: 21).
- Policies concerning vocational education (Reform 94) and training for adults (the Competence Reform) have, in most respects, been based on negotiated agreements between the authorities and the social partners (Skule et al. 2002: 273).
- Collective agreements primarily regulate the working conditions and pay at the workplace for vocational training (Nergaard 25.06.2009, interview). Legally, the apprentice is an employee of the training enterprise and has the rights and duties that follow from statutes and wage agreements between the employers' and employees' organizations. The apprentice is entitled to a salary that corresponds to the productive work conducted (ReferNet Norway 2005: 21).
- Nevertheless, there are no funds or schemes in Norway for IVT.

## **Levels of Bargaining**

Negotiations occur at sectoral level.

## **Actors**

Trade unions:

- Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (*Landsorganisasjonen i Norge*, LO)
- United Federation of Trade Unions (*Fellesforbundet*)
- Electricians and IT Workers' Union, (*EL & IT Forbundet*)

Employers' associations:

- Confederation of Norwegian Enterprises (*Næringslivets Hovedorganisasjon*, NHO)
- The Federation of Norwegian Construction Industries (*Byggenæringens Landsforening*, BNL)
- Technical Contractors' Association, Norway (*Tekniske Entreprenørers Landsforening*, TELFO)

## **Critical Junctures**

Definition: Critical junctures are years or time periods when important decisions on the development of the collectively negotiated IVT scheme were made.

- We have not found clear evidence of the existence of a significant critical juncture regarding the evolution of IVT regulation in CLAs.
- Nevertheless, one can mention that in 1994 a major reform of secondary education led to the introduction of a statutory right for all young people leaving compulsory school to receive three years of upper secondary education, and a new 2 + 2 model of vocational education and training based on two years of schooling and two years of enterprise-based apprenticeship training (ReferNet Norway 2005: 17, Skule et al. 2002: 265).

## **2. Important Collective Agreements (Examples)**

The following CLAs are of particular importance regarding regulation of IVT:

- Basic Agreement NHO-LO 2006-2009
  - An agreement between the NHO and the LO.
- Building Industry Agreement 2008-2010
  - An agreement between the NHO and the Federation of Norwegian Building Industries (BNL); and the LO and the United Federation of Trade Unions (*Fellesforbundet*).
- Electrical Work Agreement 2008-2010
  - An agreement between the NHO and TELFO; and the LO and the Electricians and IT Workers' Union and the union's departments.

## **3. Important Sectors**

One can mention the construction sector, as well as the industry and electrical work sectors as particularly important regarding regulation of IVT in CLAs.

## **4. Structure, Organization, and Mode of Administration**

In Norway, there are no funds or schemes for IVT.

## **5. Role of the State: Financial Support, Legislation, and Extension Procedures in General**

We have not found any evidence.

## **6. Financial Structure of the Collectively Negotiated Scheme**

- Initial vocational education and training is financed either by the employers when the training is at a work place or it is publically financed, when one attends a school.
- Adults also have the right to this kind of education and training if they did not receive it when they were younger (Nergaard 25.06.2009, interview).

## **7. Benefits and Measures of the Collectively Negotiated Schemes**

- Basic Agreement NHO-LO 2006-2009
  - It provides the wage levels for apprentices during the training period (ReferNet Norway 2005: 4).
- Building Industry Agreement 2008-2010
  - It provides the wage levels for apprentices during the training period, overtime, in period from end of the apprenticeship until the first trade/craft examination is taken (Building Industry Agreement 2008-2010: 15).
- Electrical Work Agreement 2008-2010
  - It provides guidelines for the number of apprentices, for planning and implementing the training, and for wages for apprentices who combine upper secondary school with an apprenticeship (Electrical Work Agreement 2008-2010: 14).

## **8. Coverage Rates of the Collectively Negotiated Schemes**

We have not found any evidence.

## 9. The Politics around the Collectively Negotiated Schemes

### Linkages to Public Reform Policies

We have not found any evidence.

### Linkages to Wage Agreements and Wage Policy (e.g. Wage Restraint, Tripartite Agreements) and Other Agreements

We have not found any evidence.

## 10. Recent Developments, Other Interesting Information, and Open Questions

We have not found any evidence.

## 11. Contacted Experts

We thank the following expert and colleague for providing information and answering very specific questions:

- Nergaard, Kristine, 25.06.2009, Institute for Labour and Social Research in Oslo, telephone interview

## 12. List of Abbreviations

- BNL: *Byggenæringens Landsforening* (The Federation of Norwegian Construction Industries)
- CLA: collective labor agreement
- EIRO: European Industrial Relations Observatory On-Line
- ILO: International Labour Organization
- IVT: initial vocational training
- LO: *Landsorganisasjonen i Norge* (Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions)
- NHO: *Næringslivets Hovedorganisasjon* (Confederation of Norwegian Enterprises)
- TELFO: *Tekniske Entreprenørers Landsforening* (Technical Contractors' Association, Norway)

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