Challenges for Equity in Education in Norway

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The Norwegian education system - facts

- Early childhood
  - Both private and public day-care institutions
  - Maximum prices – to be reduced.
- Primary and lower secondary
  - Compulsory school, 10 years, free of charge.
  - Responsibility: municipalities
- Upper secondary education and training
  - 3 academic programmes, 9 vocational programmes.
  - Responsibility: county municipalities.
- Higher education
- Adults
  - The right to complete their primary and secondary education
Special education in Norway

- Common education acts for all children from 1975
- 3 Governmental National Plans of Action 1990 - 2002
- Approximately 99% of Norwegian children are in regular school
- Approximately 6% receive special education within regular school
- Boys receive special education more often than girls

For all – systems to support

- A good learning environment stated in the Education Act
  - Manifesto against bullying
- Educational and psychological counselling service at both municipality and county municipality level
- A Support system for Special Education - Resource centres at a state level
Increased cultural diversity

- Linguistic and cultural diversity is increasing in Norway
- Language minority children provide vital resources to the society through among others cultural knowledge and linguistic competences
- Kindergartens, schools and other educational institutions are vital in the work of securing inclusion and participation by language minorities in the Norwegian society
- New curricula and assessment tools

Basic principles

- Equal formal access to everyone
- Opportunities to lifelong learning
- No substantial financial barriers
Challenges

• The main challenge is to make sure that everyone acquire sufficient knowledge and skills in school
  – One out of four 15 year olds leaves comprehensive school without sufficient skills
  – Every fourth student drops out of upper secondary education or training
  – More than 400 000 adults in Norway have weak literacy and numeracy skills
  – 83 percent of the inmates in Norwegian prisons who are under 25 years old have not completed upper secondary

And...

• Weaknesses in the education system systematically affect some groups with a certain family background more than others
• Family background is correlated to
  – day-care attendance
  – learning outcomes in comprehensive school
  – completion of upper secondary school
  – attendance in education and training at the workplace
Percentage of 20-24 year-olds excluded from work and education, by completion status in upper secondary school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commenced but Did not complete Upper secondary education</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed upper secondary education</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>7.1</td>
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</tbody>
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Early intervention for lifelong learning

- Early language stimulation can prevent social differences
- Follow up when students are falling behind
- It is never too late
Measures

- Full day-care provision by the end of 2007
- Ensure that all children who need it are offered language stimulation before starting school
- Pilot project to test free core-time in the day-care centres

Measures – primary and secondary school

- Evaluate the current legal basis for the duty to provide individually adapted education
- Implement a gradual extension of the primary school day to 28 teaching periods per week
- Fruits and vegetables to all children in primary and lower secondary school, in lower secondary from this autumn
- Develop and initiate help-with-homework schemes
- Strengthen the school counselling service
- Work to establish more apprenticeships and traineeships
Measures - higher education and adults

- Higher Education Act - individual education plan
- At every higher education institution:
  - Plans of action for students with disabilities
  - Contact person or advisory service
- The Norwegian University of Science and Technology - in charge of inspiring all the other higher education institutions

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"Wisdom is not a product of schooling but of the lifelong attempt to acquire it."

"The progress towards inclusive education is like a river. It cannot be reversed and the flow gets wider and wider."

Thank you for your attention.