



Organisasjon for
Norske Fagskolestudenter

National Student Association for HVET in Norway

ONF - Organisasjon for Norske Fagskolestudenter

President Silje Kjørholt

About the national student association – ONF

- ONF is the national student association for Higher VET i Norway referenced to EQF level 5.
- Established in 2012 on initiative by the Norwegian Council for Vocational Colleges with funding from the Ministry of Education and Research.
 - Aim to give the students a voice in public debate and increase student engagement.
- In 2017 ONF has 8500 members on 25 vocational colleges – over half of the student mass.
- Members are both private and public institutions within all major fields of study: Technical, maritime, healthcare and social studies, mercantile, media and arts.



Aim of ONF

- Main objective to advocate for the improvement of Norwegian HVET students' interests, rights and conditions.
- National student voice advocating for student involvement at vocational colleges and an independent student democracy.
- Political advocacy on issues where HVET students are a stakeholder.
- Information work to increase knowledge about HVET in society and empower local student associations.



Political advocacy

- Equal student rights as HE (university/university college) students.
- Recognition of HVET qualifications and same credit system for all students.
 - Transitions between vocational colleges and university/university colleges
- High quality HVET education that matches employers need for competence/labour-market demand.
- Increased recruitment of students and funding for vocational colleges.
- Student representation in decision-making bodies concerning HVET.



Achievements 1

- Becoming a visible key stakeholder for a previously neglected student group.
- Major amendment to the Vocational College Act in July 2016 that increased student rights and legal protection for students in HVET.
 - White Paper suggests further rights to student welfare organizations, student representative on vocational colleges' board, degree for completed education.
 - Upcoming amendments to improve supervision of private institutions and limit misuse of student financed school fees.



Achievements 2

- More student representation in decision-making bodies and national committees for fields of study in HVET.
- Breakthrough with White Paper in 2016 *Skilled Workers for the Future*, yet to be ratified on 2nd May 2017 by the parliament.
- Right to financial support for studies abroad.
- Inclusion in Studiebarometeret, a student survey about the quality of education conducted by NOKUT.
- Organizing admission to HVET on the same portal as HE.



Why a national student association 1

- Government objective that *“the students must engage in their field and succeed in their education”*
 - Need to involve the stakeholders to achieve goal.
- HVET student are 4% of the student mass/15 000 students in Norway – a minority student group
 - The National Union of Students i Norway, NSO represents 250 000 students in HE referenced to EQF level 6 to 8.
 - Student democracy in HVET differs from HE.



Why a national student association 2

- NSO and ONF represents different student groups/stakeholders with sometimes competing interests.
 - Before 2014 ONF had no representation on the board of NOKUT – Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education, in 2016 there is equal representation of HE and HVET students.
- HVET students in Norway compared to HE students
 - Prior education: 70% has a VET certificate from EQF level 4, 20% from general studies and 10% with other prior work-based learning.
 - Age: 50% between 21 and 30 years old, 22% between 36 and 50, while HE has 50% from 20 to 24.
 - Gender: Students make gender traditional vocational choices. The majority of students are men, 60%, and women 40%.
 - Opposite situation in HE with 40% men in bachelors and master programmes.



Why a European student association network for HVET/SCHE 1

- Diverse field but shared characteristics of HVET/ SCHE students group in Europe – shared issues.
 - Minority student group compared to HE student - generally older, less likely to choose HE, prior work experience, VET qualified or seeks re-qualification.
 - Recognition of qualifications and position in education system, labor-market relevance of programmes.
 - Student democracy challenged by high turn-over.
- Interests and voice of HVET/SCHE students lack representatives in European decision-making bodies.
 - ESU – European Student Union primarily advocates for students in higher education, not HVET/SCHE students.



Why a European student association network for HVET/SCHE 2

- Key stakeholder in future developments of HVET/SCHE in Europe – but lack coordinated approach to communicate mutual issues.
- Network provide added value from exchange of knowledge on student involvement and student issues on HVET/SCHE.
- Competing interests and challenges with student involvement in HVET/SCHE programmes calls for independent initiative.



Thank you for your attention.

Contact information

Silje Kjørholt

President ONF

leder@fagskolestudent.no

T: 0047 458 42 743

post@fagskolestudent.no