



Norway

Bård Vegar Solhjell
Minister of Education



Minister of Education, Bård Vegar Solhjell, is responsible for early childhood education and care, and for basic education, which comprises compulsory education grades 1 to 10 and three years of upper secondary education and training. Minister of Education Bård Vegar Solhjell has a Master Degree in political science with sociology, comparative politics and history of ideas from University of Oslo and University of Bergen. From 2005 to 2007, Mr Solhjell was a State Secretary at the Prime Minister's office. Mr Solhjell has held a number of key functions in his capacity as a member of the Socialist Left Party, at present he is the vice-chairman. In his professional capacity the Minister has experienced the teaching profession and has been employed as political advisor to the parliamentary committee of the Socialist Left Party as well as to the party itself.

Inclusive Education: a challenging and rewarding path to successful development

A well educated population is the greatest asset of every nation. The education system organises the transfer of values and norms, knowledge and skills to new groups, it lays the foundation for social integration and economic growth and is vital to the development of a democratic and unified society.

Education is also the individual right of every human being and shall ensure personal growth and intellectual development

How can the education system ensure optimal realisation of both individual and social potentials in a context of constant change and high level of migration? Obviously, education and training needs are changing and become increasingly diversified.

Norway is addressing this challenge by means of inclusive education. Our ambition is that the education system gives access to and accommodates optimal learning for all individuals in a friendly context that welcomes diversity.

International studies show that we have gone part of the way: policies, regulatory instruments and funding are in place, and our pupils score high on indicators of well-being and satisfaction with the social environment in school. On the other hand, the performance of our pupils in basic skills such as reading and math, is below the OECD average, and too many students report that the teaching is not adapted to their learning needs and capabilities.

The causal relation between ones educational attainments and socio-economic situation is thoroughly established. My Government is committed to improving the living conditions for the socially and economically vulnerable. We must improve education in order to reduce inequalities.



Basic skills, such as reading, writing and math, constitute the fundament for all further learning, and hence for the school results and job career of the individual. The EFA Global Monitoring Report 2007 shows that early intervention is the most effective way to improve learning achievements.

On this background my ministry has taken several new policy initiatives to increase the emphasis on basic skills in kindergarten and primary school, and to ensure early support intervention if so needed.

All young people deserve quality education according to their needs and capabilities. It is hence my hope that the ICE 48 will be a success. Sharing ideas, experiences and good practices of inclusive education may give a new boost to the global EFA efforts as well as to the individual countries. I will do my best to contribute to this end also during the next High Level Meeting on Education for All, which will be co-hosted by Norway in Oslo in December.