

## Country Report: Norway

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The only option to study philosophy for a high school student at the regular high schools in Norway (i.e. not IB-schools), which lasts for three years from age 16 to 19, is to choose (among a wide variety of subjects from science to particular languages) the optional subject called *History and Philosophy* in their second and third grade. Ethical Education in high school is connected to the compulsory subject *Religion*, 3 lessons per week, in third grade. This subject also includes a relatively small part of philosophy. In Middle School (*ungdomsskole*), age 13-16, ethics is part of the compulsory subject *Christianity, Religion, Philosophy of Life and Ethics*. Here there is a lot of political discussion regarding the amount of time prescribed to the teaching of Christianity compared to the time prescribed for other major religions.

*History and Philosophy* is taught at one third of all high schools, and the amount of pupils is around ten percent, and compared to what is tradition for philosophy-teaching in Norway this is a high number. It is a 5 hours per week course, where it is possible to finish the subject after the second grade part (until ca 1850), without attending the third grade course (a modern perspective). There are locally administered oral exams after the second and third grade course, and nationally administered written exams after the third grade course. Most of the students will have to do one of these exams.

The reason behind putting history and philosophy together in one course is that both subjects, each in their own way, try to say something about and question who we are, how we are brought here, and what our possibilities are. The main topics in philosophy are the classical ones: ontology and metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and existentialism and philosophy of science – all presented both historically and from our own modern (or post-modern) point of view.

*History and Philosophy* is one among other voluntary and compulsory courses at high school who leads to *examen artium*, which means that you are ready for entering the university. Beside this the course doesn't give any special benefits. So the pupils mainly choose the subject because of their interests and the idea of philosophy expands their intellectuality and helps them in other subjects and their academic career.

*History and Philosophy* was introduced through a (yet another) new school reform in 2007. Earlier, philosophy was only taught at a few high schools as a two hours a week course. It was voluntary and there were no national written exam. For the last decade it has been an outspoken policy from the school authorities that philosophy has to be strengthened in the pre-university education. Therefore, this new subject arises at the high schools and philosophy has become a bigger part of other courses as well. This includes both at high school and primary school, in subjects like history, social science and religion. The amount of students choosing History and Philosophy has been a great inspiration to any philosophy teacher in Norway, and has meant that all the history teachers now teaching this subject have been forced to re-educate themselves in the history and didactics of philosophy for the first time

since their *examen philosophicum*. A one term compulsory introductory philosophy course all students at the universities of Norway have to attend. This exam means that everyone with an academic education at least know the basic history of philosophy, logic and philosophy of science.

The status of philosophy in general is relatively good in Norway today. The number of students at the institutes is increasing, and the education authorities are aware of the benefits. Skills in philosophical thinking among the population - in the political, social, economic and cultural spheres of society – are needed for ongoing discourses and debates. Even though the career-possibilities for full-time philosophical activities are not that wide, especially not in the private sector, there are still some signals which say that critical thinking, proficiency in analysing problems and dilemmas, and the power of understanding political and moral situations through universal concepts are needed dexterities also in the working life.