

English summary
of Fafo-rapport 2023:26

**Co-owner or
consultative body?**
The Vocational Training
Board's influence
on vocational training

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This report focuses on the regional cooperation between the relevant parties in vocational education and training. We examine the role of the County Vocational Training Board (CVTB) in the governance and development of vocational training in the counties. We ask: Are the important issues being raised within the CVTB, and how are they being addressed? To what extent do the social partners feel they can influence the governance and development of vocational training at county level? The report is based on interviews with vocational training heads in county authorities, managers in all CVTBs, a survey aimed at members of these boards and a survey aimed at the training offices.

Vocational education and training in Norway partly takes place in schools and partly in the workplace. It is intended to meet labour market demand for key skills, hence the involvement of the social partners. The aim of the cooperation is to give the social partners the opportunity to participate in the governance and development of vocational training, and enable the county authorities to benefit from the social partners' labour market expertise. Without the involvement of the social partners, there can be a mismatch between supply and demand in terms of vocational skills. Furthermore, the social partners must have an active interest in the different skills areas to ensure that training in the workplace maintains a high quality.

The CVTB is an advisory body, but according to the Education Act, its advice should be afforded significant weight. Previous studies have shown that the CVTB nevertheless appears to have little influence on vocational training in the counties. In this report, we find that the cooperation between the county authority and the CVTB is considered to be good in most counties. The cooperation fosters understanding of the issues that the CVTB is concerned with, allowing it to exert influence by helping to shape the administration's proposals. In many counties, the CVTB also maintains various channels of communication with the political sphere. If it disagrees with the administration's proposal, it sometimes manages to win political support instead. In contrast, there are also counties where the cooperation is ineffective, and where the CVTB has relatively little influence, both through the administration and through the political sphere. Some conflicts of interest exist within the board, but, on the whole, it seems to work towards achieving a consensus on its advice and decisions.

Following an amendment to the Education Act in 2007, it became a goal for the CVTB to play an active, strategic role in the quality of vocational training. However, our findings show that it does not fulfil this role to any great extent, even though there are examples of the board helping to set the agenda in more long-term governance. Nevertheless, we find no evidence of clear structures that would prevent the CVTB from taking a more proactive, strategic role, except in the few counties where the cooperation is not effective. In counties where the CVTB does play a strategic and proactive role, this is seen as positive for the work on quality in vocational training in the county.

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