

## Norway Report to Operations Manager

Oslo's airport is about 30 miles from the city centre and it is in the middle of green piney fjord land. Little farmhouses are dotted around everywhere and if it wasn't for the pine trees and fjord puddles you'd think you were in the American Mid West. If you've done your homework though, you'd remember that the Scandinavian style of building was exported to the U.S. by settlers, from Scandinavia and Germany. A high speed train takes you into Oslo Central Station in about 30 minutes, so I was soon checking in.

The hotel is like a cross between being in halls and a hostel. The room is a bit shabby for 50 bucks a night, but I do have an en-suite wet room with under floor heating. Oslo is expensive, I did some research on the internet and a pint in the Hard Rock Café is £6 (wont be going there then). I paid £8 for a Burger King just because it was 2 doors down from the hotel. The cost of living is approximately double that of the UK, but so is the standard of living, it's all relative-minimum wage is about £12 an hour. Norway made it's money in the middle of the last century with the black gold-oil. It is now trying to maintain it's economy and standard of living in much the same way as we are-the knowledge economy

I've already met one of the other delegates in the lift! I recognized her from the presentations that have already been mailed out but she didn't recognize me. It's no wonder really as we all know that any picture of me over a few weeks old is out of date due to something I've done to my hair usually. Communication was difficult as her English was pre-intermediate and my Italian is pre-nonexistent.

Tomorrow is Bank Holiday in the UK, but I'll be going to the Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training. We will receive presentations on Equal Education in Practice and Strategies for Equal Opportunities before working in groups. Tuesday looks at multi-cultural education, "drop outs" (their words not mine) and young linguistic minorities. Wednesday looks at Careers Guidance in Norway and then we get a jolly to the Munch Museum. I'm really looking forward to that as there's also an Egon Schiele exhibition on in the same museum and he's one of my favourite artists. On Thursday we are visiting a secondary school and looking at "Untraditional Choices"- this is where the gender stereotyping stuff kicks in. Our hosts take us out to dinner that evening (argh-£6 drinks!) Friday is a visit to The Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise ( a bit of young enterprise thrown in here), then a presentation on "Female Future". After evaluation we're off to the Vigeland Sculpture Park.

Monday

We've inevitably had some schedule changes and Monday was presentations in the morning and a visit to a homework centre in the afternoon, not as scheduled in the itinerary. As we went around the room introducing ourselves I was the only one who did my introduction bilingually-shameful! We have four delegates from Ireland (three from the Republic and one who lives in the Republic but works in Northern Ireland for the Careers Service there). Between them they brought everyone out of their shells pretty quickly and everyone was soon laughing. A general presentation about the week by the Assistant Director of the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, Jorunn Holen followed. Here we learnt a lot about Norway in an overview...

We then had a presentation about the Norwegian school system by Lone Lonne (pronounced "Loner-Luner") Christiansen (see also Powerpoint Slideshow copies marked "Lifelong Perspective of Careers Guidance 9/5/07"). This was later than scheduled as Lone had been requested to write a speech for the Education Minister at the last minute. Although it seems that Lone is far too modest to admit, she has been instrumental in careers and equal opps since the 1980's and is a founder member of the "Women into Trades" movement in Norway. Every child has the right to go to kindergarten from the age of 12 months in Norway but there are not enough places, neither are there enough children from immigrant families in kindergarten. This situation is improving, but financial subsidies are in place to support parents to stay at home with their children in Norway (there is a strong tradition of "childhood" in Norway, where children have spent some considerable time at home in the family circle before starting school. Free kindergarten places have been offered in some cities to resolve this issue. Children start school at 6 (it used to be 7) and then follow 10 years of compulsory education. Careers Education is introduced in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade (14/15 years old) but it is not a substantial curriculum by any means. This has been brought forward by two years, it used to be introduced in year 10. The provision is now more spread out and is more centred on self awareness and evaluation rather than careers information. All young people are then entitled to 3 years of vocational and/or academic education in "upper Secondary School " (or further education). Programmes are broad to start with offering tasters and variety before specialisms are chosen. This system was introduced in 1994 but has been criticized because of the amount of early leavers not completing. This may be because young people are being asked to stay in school, rather than go into work, or work based training (although it's hard to find vacancies for apprenticeships). Reviews of vocational qualifications are now taking place (will become similar to the NVQ system in the UK), meaning that young people can qualify to work to certain level very quickly if they want to. Partnerships exist between schools and employers for work experience and more formal structures exist managed by the NHO Naeringslivets Hovedorganisasjon (Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise) and much more detailed information about this is provided

later in the itinerary. There are careers advisers in lower and upper secondary schools in Norway. They are qualified teachers, some have guidance qualifications, some don't. Since the school reform of 1994 there has been a move to professionalise the system, which has not happened yet (13 years later). The Norwegian system would like to emulate the system we have here in Wales- lifelong, strong service in schools and improved guidance qualifications and established standards.

Overview of issues regarding immigration. Generally there is a shortage of bilingual teachers and resources in Norway to deal with migrating peoples. However it seems that on the other hand they see the key to education and integration into Norwegian society to be through learning the language and all resources are monolingual. The right of asylum seekers to enter maintain education is therefore a big challenge. There is less progression to Upper Secondary School with this cohort and a lower rate of completion of traineeships and it seems harder to place this particular group. There are 5 main goals relating to immigration in Norway:

- Improving language skills early amongst pre-school children of linguistic minorities.
- Improve school performance

In the afternoon we took a trip to a Support Centre for Homework (Senter for Leksehjelp) in Holmlia, a suburb of Oslo. The centre hasn't been open long and takes pupils from a selection of 5 local schools in the area all within a 15 minute walk of the centre. School starts at 8.30am and finishes quite early in Norway (2pm) and young people of secondary school age (10-16) can come and have a snack and gain assistance with their homework. The centre is open from 1-5 pm and employs 7 people, 3 teachers ("advisers") and 2 assistants a Librarian and Manager. The centre is also open to parents to discuss development and co-operates with the local schools. Although it was strongly stipulated that schools were invited to ask pupils if they wanted to register without any pre-selected criteria, all of the young people at the centre were first or second generation immigrants from Pakistan, Somalia and other countries and it is worth noting that schools with 40% or more pupils from minority backgrounds get funding for homework clubs. Understandably some of these young people need extra support to overcome language skills. The centre operates much like an after school club, but a written application must be submitted to gain a place at the centre-children must be motivated to apply. The centre decides who to admit and this ensures a healthy mix of ages, abilities and backgrounds and it is not just a resource for low achievers. Learning agreements are put together to agree learning strategies, absences must be authorized and bad behaviour could lose a place for a young person. The centre has a combination of classrooms and social areas (which can be used after 4pm). The centre works in conjunction with the library next door and the librarian helps out at the centre and runs a monthly book club where titles are discussed.

Tuesday

Ski Upper Secondary School (FE).

- Presentation on the Work of NAFO, situated at the Oslo University College-National Resource Centre for multi-cultural education and Strategy into Action presented by Vibeke Larsen.

(see handout)

- “Drop Outs” or early leavers as we would call them. Similar stats here, more boys dropping out than girls. In the absence of guidance in the educational system in Norway “further education” can be accessed free of charge from 16-24-allowing for false starts, bad choices, health issues etc.

We even saw a touch of entrepreneurship there. We also visited a Lower Secondary School for immigrants and refugees (very small).

Wednesday

This was the first day we worked in groups and found out more about each others roles. We differ greatly. The Czech delegates are psychologists who implement psychometric testing in LDD assessment centres, as well as assessment for learning difficulties and disabilities (Sylva). She lives in South Bohemia-doesn't that sound romantic? Their only “immigrant” problem is the “indigenous” Romany population who don't really wish to engage and are treated by the Czech government in much the same way as traditional travelling people are in the UK, having their traditional land taken away from them as they had no modern legal right to them and being told to stay in one place. However she did observe that it seemed that this group didn't want to work for money to support themselves, but rather receive without any exchange of labour (her personal observation). I guess there are sections of all societies who can be viewed like that rightly or wrongly. In France most immigrants are Arabic and don't wish to integrate into French society. Many live in inner city ghettos and violence is increasing as a result. In Spain, many are Latin American and although they are first language Spanish the dialects can differ greatly and many come from communities where crime is endemic. We all observed that we have seen many more Polish people in our communities since their ascension to the EU (apart from the Czech Republic because everyone is leaving there too). One delegate observed that Poland must be empty by now!

We identified that language is a major barrier in all European countries represented and for those of us providing guidance it is essential that we can get over this. In Careers Wales North Wales as I write this I am aware that we will be utilizing a “Language Line” service..

We also agreed that whatever mindset you are trying to change, catching the cohort early is key (this goes for learning a language too). However we also agree that much work must be done to influence parents too, who can undo any hard work done.

So, I'm trying to get a night in tonight as although we are eating cheaply enough (about £10 for a main course) the drink is very expensive!! Even in your standard eatery you can't get a bottle of wine for under £30 and when your drinking with the Irish, that's gonna cost. I have however been truly adopted. There are 4 of them on the exchange and I have to say that they have been instrumental in bringing everyone out of their shells and we are all a happy social group-apart from me-tonight. My feet are killing me though I have to say and I'm having a treat writing this in my pyjamas!

Thursday

I've learnt so far, that for all our troubles we are a profession in Wales (at least we are such a thing), our service is the most developed and-once we get the All Wales Professional Standards that we are working towards we'll be far ahead of over European countries-like Norway for example. They could learn a lot from the way we work and how we have developed. France has the most similar service to us, but they are under threat-the government is likely to scrap them pretty soon. The service in Northern Ireland is also pretty similar. In Eire, "Guidance Counsellors" work in schools and are employed by them and must have a teaching cert. They also have to register every year and join the Institute of Guidance.

The exchange so far has focused on dealing with immigrants and refugees from non-european member states. We haven't touched really on gender inequality. Maybe this is because it is a bigger issue here. However our hosts did admit today that there is still a very distinct gender split in the labour market that isn't being addressed at all. We are much hotter on this in Wales already. Norwegian guidance doesn't challenge or present options without a gender bias like we do. Norwegian Guidance isn't guidance anyway because the careers advisers aren't qualified and it isn't recognized as a profession her-yet!!!!

Friday

The last day and just a morning of work. First a presentation about "Female Future" about tackling the "glass ceiling" for female professionals. This project is all about getting women into the boardroom-and it seems to be working! Gender stereotyping in Norway echoes our own issues here in Wales-the traditional jobs that women have entered into or picked up to work around childcare are less paid generally than other roles. As the message filters through some movement is seen, with immigrants taking some of these kinds of jobs. We then had a very snazzy presentation about work experience. In Norway work experience projects

start early in the school career. It is handled currently by another organization. Organisations in Norway like to become involved with the local community as it is good P.R. and it can also lead to recruitment in later years. Some of the staff featured in the video first visited their employers as young work experience students, some younger than year ten and became enthused with what they saw. I'm not sure if there is an element ensuring the next generation of the workforce here!

We all spent the afternoon at the Vigeland Sculpture Park and enjoyed a complimentary guided tour. At the end of the day we said our goodbyes to some and the rest of us stayed on until Sunday to catch our flights back home and enjoyed the experience of watching the Eurovision Song Contest on an European Exchange whilst staying in a country that actually isn't a member state!