

NEWS FROM NORWAY

Since October 2013, Norway has a new, Conservative government which has proposed a change to the Private School Act (privatskoleloven). At present, if one wants to start a Free School with state support, it has to be either religious or based on an alternative educational philosophy like Montessori or Rudolf Steiner. The government wants to open it up so that anybody can start a Free School as long as the quality is good and it doesn't have a negative effect on the schools run by the local authorities. It may even be exactly like them: but it will still be illegal to make a profit from them; so the government will have to put in place very strict controls to ensure that this does not happen.

Those of us who are in Christian schools will also be under more direct control and are likely to have increased paperwork. We are worried that the potential growth in Free Schools may contribute to giving us all a bad reputation; particularly since people in general think that many of the new ones, not founded on a particular religion or philosophy, will try to make a profit despite this being illegal. We also think that this new law could lead to a lack of awareness that human rights provide a stronger basis for religious schools than for other free choice schools.

In the meantime, we wait to find out if this change in the law will actually take place as, being a minority government, they will have to seek the support of other parties, some of whom have a similar view on this matter.

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