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Competence compass





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Summary

This report maps skills development in the labour force from the point of view of local trade union representatives. The union representatives represent a broad spectrum of workplaces, in terms of sector, industry and employees' level and type of education. The survey includes 5107 respondents from the central organisations the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (LO), the Confederation of Vocational Unions (YS), the Confederation of Unions for Professionals (Unio) and The Federation of Norwegian Professional Associations (Akademikerne), in addition to the independent unions The Norwegian Society of Engineers and Technologists (NITO) and the Norwegian Association of Pharmacists. An important topic in this report is the employees' terms for participation in skills development.

Need for upskilling

The survey reveals a general need for upskilling of the Norwegian labour force. One in five trade union representatives report a problematic skills deficit among the employees they represent.

Lack of employer support and accommodation

Three in ten union representatives report that little provision has been made to develop the skills of the employees they represent. This view is shared across various sectors, but is more pronounced in certain areas, such as within health trusts. Although more respondents believe that there are provisions in place, this must be considered a high level of dissatisfaction with the employees' learning opportunities.

Lack of motivation among employees or poor opportunities?

Only ten per cent consider the employee perception that skills development is not necessary to be a major barrier. For comparison, over 40 per cent of union representatives report that high work pressure is a major barrier to participation in skills development, and one in three state that a lack of financial support from the employer is a major barrier. External barriers are therefore much more significant than personal barriers, according to the union representatives. Where union representatives report a problematic skills deficit among employees, both high work pressure and lack of financial support are prevalent. This may seem like a paradox: the greater the need for upskilling, the harder it is to achieve.

Great interest in skills development at the workplace

The union representatives report a considerable interest in skills development among the employees they represent. However, interest varies depending on the type of training. Almost 80 per cent report that their employee groups are interested in courses and seminars held in the workplace, and close to 50 per cent report interest in courses held outside the workplace. This may be because participation in training at work is more practically feasible. Another explanation, however, is that these initiatives are perceived as more relevant by the employees themselves.

Trade union representatives have minimum involvement in workplace skills policy

The union representatives feel that they are rarely involved in competency mapping at the workplace. Only two in ten have been extensively involved. They are even less involved in decisions about which employees should participate in skills development. Only one in ten union representatives have been extensively involved in such decision-making.

Potential to improve skills development in the workplace

The workplace is a key learning arena for the labour force, and union representatives can play a central role in strengthening the efforts in skills development within an organisation. As long as there is a desire for greater involvement of union representatives in such efforts, this should be incorporated into union representative training. In this report, we identify a need to map the barriers to participation in skills development, and a need for closer involvement of union representatives in order to facilitate skills development in line with the organisation's needs.

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