

Norwegian folkehøgskole

School of future with a long tradition

Elaboration on the folk school model of education, based on the study visit realized within the project Climate Experimentarium, Norway, August 2021



Senfineco



Folkehøgskole – Folk school – what does it mean?

Due to lack of a better word in Polish, folkehøgskole is called a school. However, when we look at the profile of an educational institution that we know from traditional education in Poland and apply it to a folk school - we will not find many similarities. The first folkehøgskole was established in 1844 in what is now southern Denmark. Nikolaj Frederik Severin Grundtvig, a Danish theologian, writer, philosopher, and educator, initiated the creation of folk high schools. Involved in the implementation of social and educational reforms, he proposed the folk school formula, where the relationship between the learner and himself plays a central role. This relationship is developed thanks to the methods of non-formal education and the special position of the "teacher" in the teaching process. Folk schools are difficult to find outside of Norway, Denmark, Finland, Sweden and Iceland, although places inspired by the philosophy of folk schools are also created in Germany and the USA. By focusing on the development of interests, social skills and work on their character, students of folk schools become self-confident young people who know themselves, their predispositions, talents, and expectations towards future professional challenges. During the several-month stay, the 18-year-old probably acquires the most important competences in his life, although he will not be awarded a Norwegian diploma with honors.

Folk school philosophy



In the folk school model, each element of the school as we know it is modified for the benefit of the effective process of students' development. The education path is chosen by the young person himself, who at the stage of choosing one of 80 schools focuses on the profile of the place, which will become his second home for the next 8 months. The first criterion is the choice of a Christian or secular/liberal school. In the case of Christian schools the model of transferring knowledge and skills is based on Christian values, but young people are not obliged to participate in church services or daily prayers. However, each student agrees that the basic filter imposed on the nature of their stay will be values and principles close to Christians. There are no references to spiritual life or religious practices in the secular model. The second criterion when choosing a folk school for yourself is the thematic profile. Each school offers a choice of pathway for students to spend the most time on - usually a lead subject or sport. Examples of paths include: psychology, rowing, computer game development, acting, wrestling. In addition to the main subjects, students choose additional subjects to fill their daily schedule. Depending on the school, 6-8 hours per day are spent in class. In the folk school model, students do not receive grades for their achievements. Supported by teachers or mentors and they pass a given subject on the basis of attendance. The role of the teacher is more than imparting knowledge. A teacher is an expert, a professional in a given field, not necessarily required to have a pedagogical education. Students are to find support, mentor, and development assistant in a given field with him. Often, teachers live on or near the school to keep in close contact with their students. Relationships play a huge role in the folk school model.





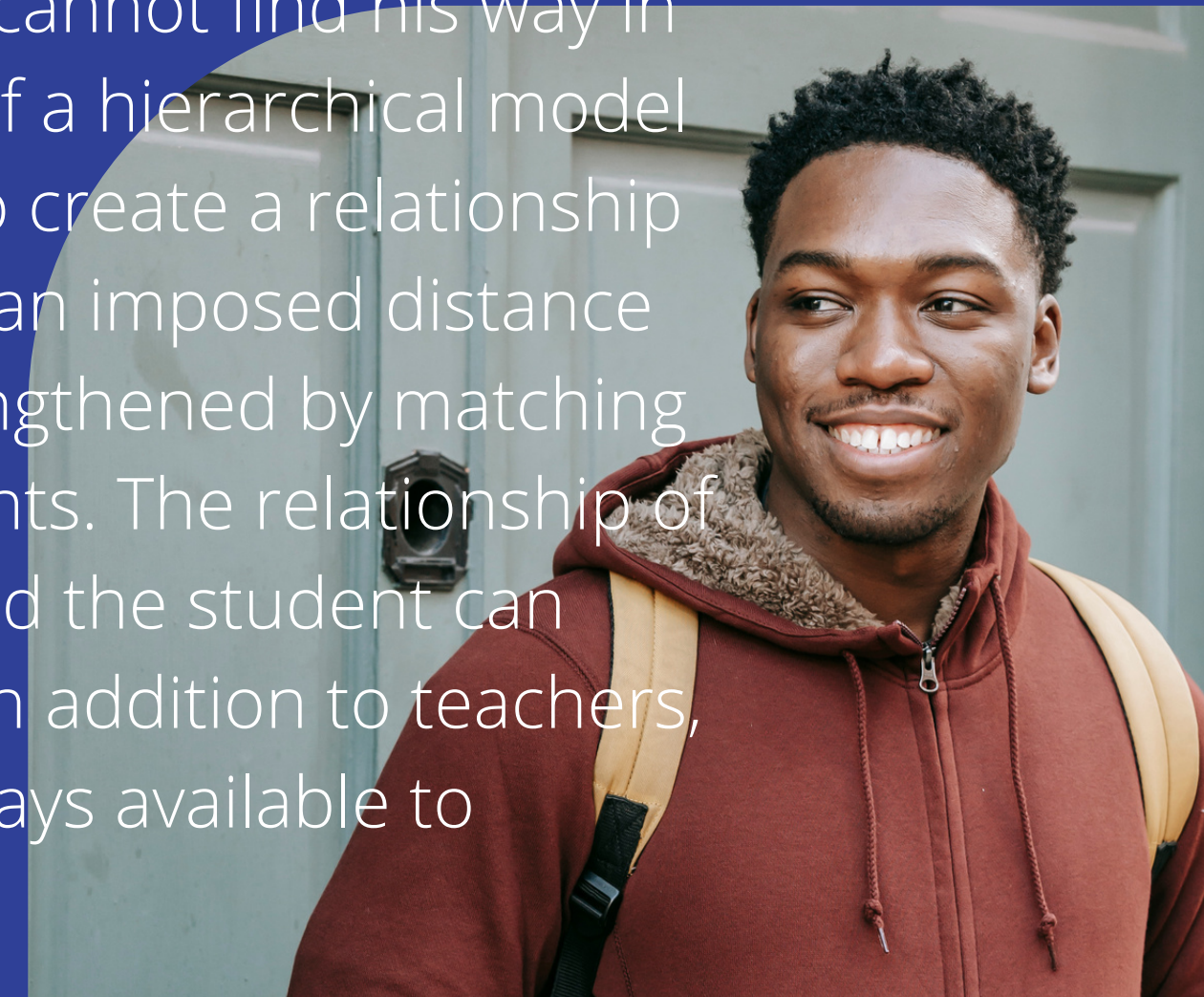
The teacher, student, cleaning lady, cook, headmaster and security guard sit at the same table and are an equally important part of the community. Such an egalitarian model allows each student to feel part of a group, make intergenerational friendships and find themselves among people with different views, lifestyles and approaches to the world. This added value offered by the folk school is to emphasize equality, tolerance and acceptance of differences among the large group of people with whom students live on a daily basis. It is also a preparation for the experiences that young people will gain in any field on their career path through group collaboration, negotiation and communication. Throughout their stay at school, students live in multi-person rooms and particular daily schedules. The rules of each school are democratically determined and each decision is discussed with the student community. Each of them must have a sense of agency and decision-making about their group, which also builds a sense of responsibility and the need for cooperation. Apart from grades, there are also no exams in the folk school. Schools unanimously do not apply the student assessment system, but attach great importance to the practical side of learning.





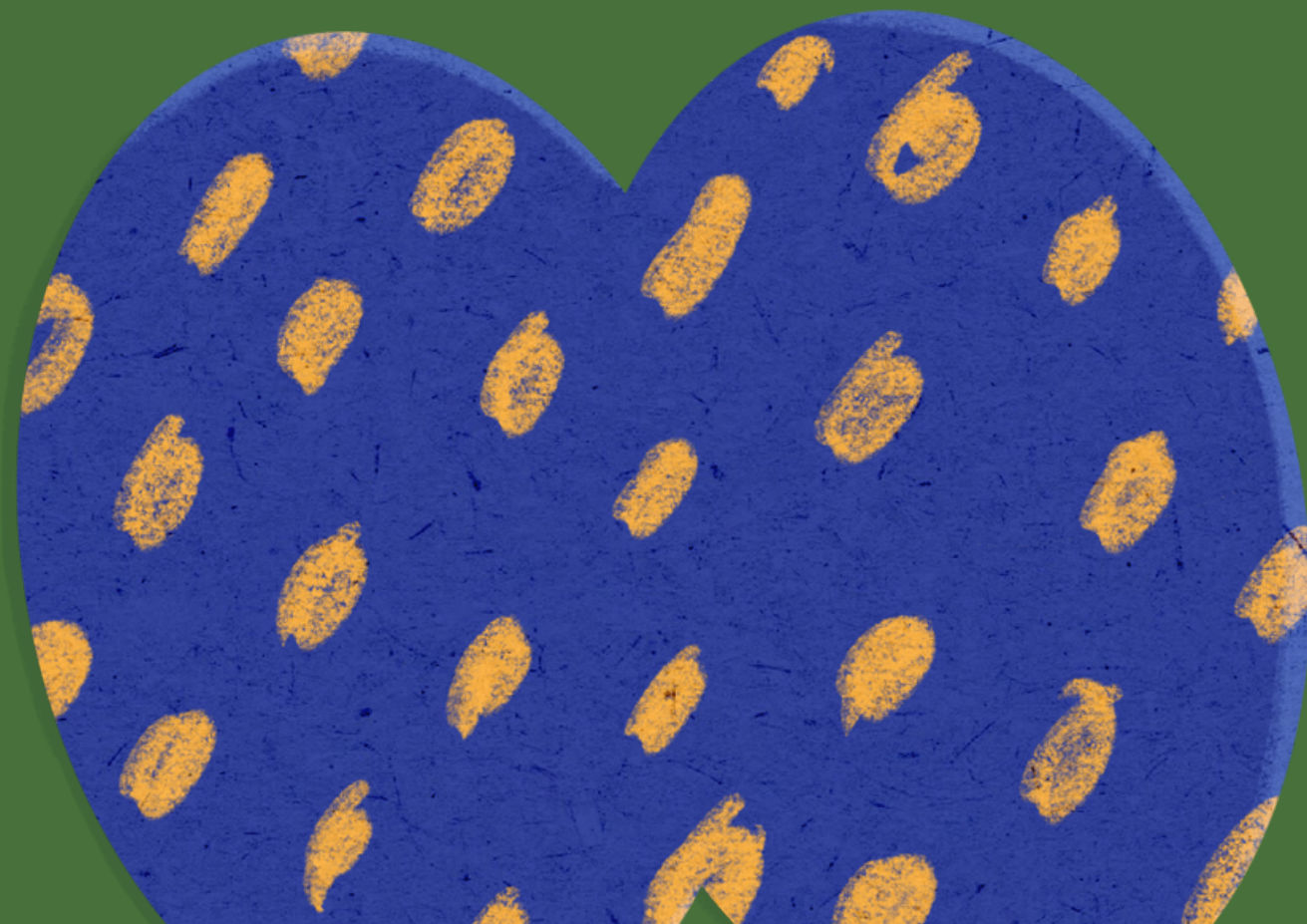
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Most of the classes are workshops, accompanied by manual work, exercises, designing, creating. Students see the progress of their work, the development of initial ideas and are motivated to achieve better and better results. Social development - trips, integration trips are another element of creating a community and discovering yourself among others. By creating an environment conducive to the development of students, maximum attention is paid to the development of the individual characteristics of each young person and their talents. Each of the students is watched by teachers who react when something bad happens or when they see that the student strays from the group, cannot find his way in everyday life or is unsatisfied with his achievements. The absence of a hierarchical model (no Mr/Mrs terms) challenges both sides - teachers and students to create a relationship truly based on respect, courtesy and mutual appreciation rather than imposed distance and fear. Instead of hierarchy, leadership skills are developed, strengthened by matching responsibilities and tasks to the individual predispositions of students. The relationship of both sides is based on trust and the belief that both the teacher and the student can learn a lot from each other and are co-creators of the curriculum. In addition to teachers, each school has qualified educators and psychologists who are always available to students.



Each teacher has full freedom in creating work tools - this requires a lot of flexibility from teachers and the management, which is constantly trying to add new subjects depending on the students' needs. There are times when a subject is changed during the year; if students lose interest in it, one with high attendance is created in its place. Why do youth choose folk school? When completing the stage of formal education, it is not obvious that the 19 year-old will go to study in Norway. Increasingly, young people go to the so-called gap year, go abroad, start work, take a year of military training or studies at a selected folk school for 9 months. The last two options bring an additional benefit when applying for college, namely by choosing a folk school or military training, the candidate receives two additional points in the recruitment process, which may decide on admission to the desired course.

Interviews



During our stay in Norway, we were able to talk to several Norwegians about the image of folk schools from their perspective. The seniors we met spoke very positively about folk school. They mentioned that in the 60s and 70s there were not many such schools to choose from, and attending them was associated with a higher social status due to the price of stay. The value represented by schools, however, was not appreciated as it is today. More people decided to start a vocational school, believing that folk schools would not be useful in adulthood and the skills acquired there would be impractical. Over the years, the image of folk school has changed thanks to the changing approach to personal development and competences that have become important on the labor market. Other interlocutors around the age of 30 drew attention to the fact that a year in a folk school is a considerable expense of several thousand euros. We managed to talk to people who had former folk school students among their friends during their studies. They remembered them as confident, knowing what they want, exceptionally open and with many interests. Our interlocutors, who did not know anyone who attended a folk school, described this form of education more as a vacation or the development of a sports hobby. We also spoke to an 18-year-old girl who admitted that she would like to go to folk school after graduating from high school.

Urban School Project in Stavanger



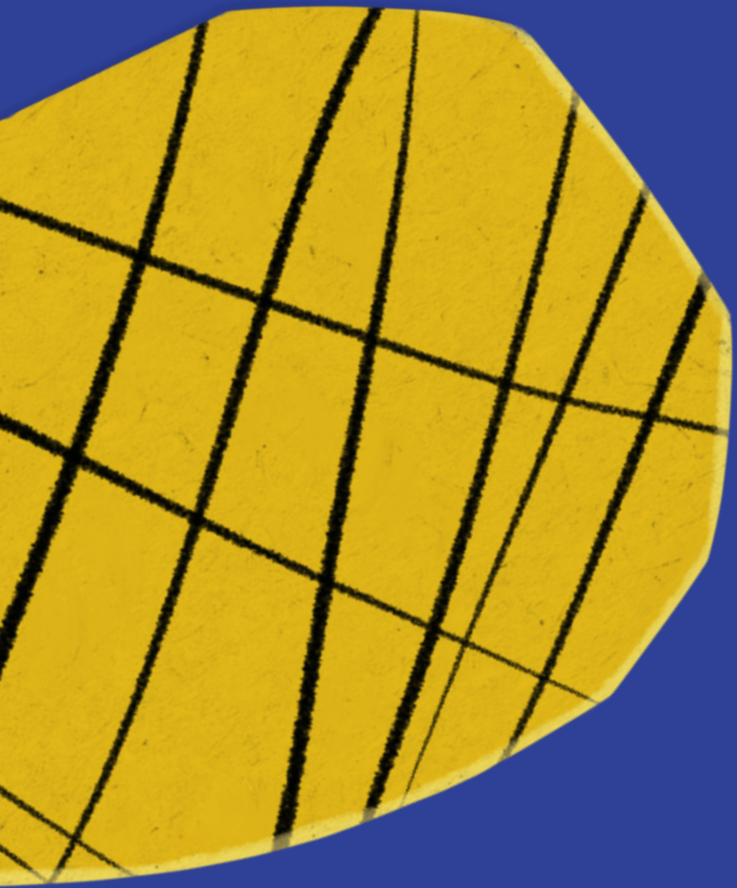


In Stavanger, Geir Bakken shared with us his initiative to create the Urban Folk School. It is an innovative project due to the profile and location of the school. Traditionally, folk schools are located on the outskirts of cities or are deliberately remote from human settlements so that young people can spend more time in nature and in outdoor activities. A group of educators has created a school project that would be established in 2022. The first folk school in urban spaces is to focus on education in the field of sustainable development, creating social businesses and creating green digital solutions. The initiative group plans to transform post-industrial urban spaces into a modern, environmentally friendly school. In August 2021 the group was negotiating the terms of cooperation and funding with the city hall.

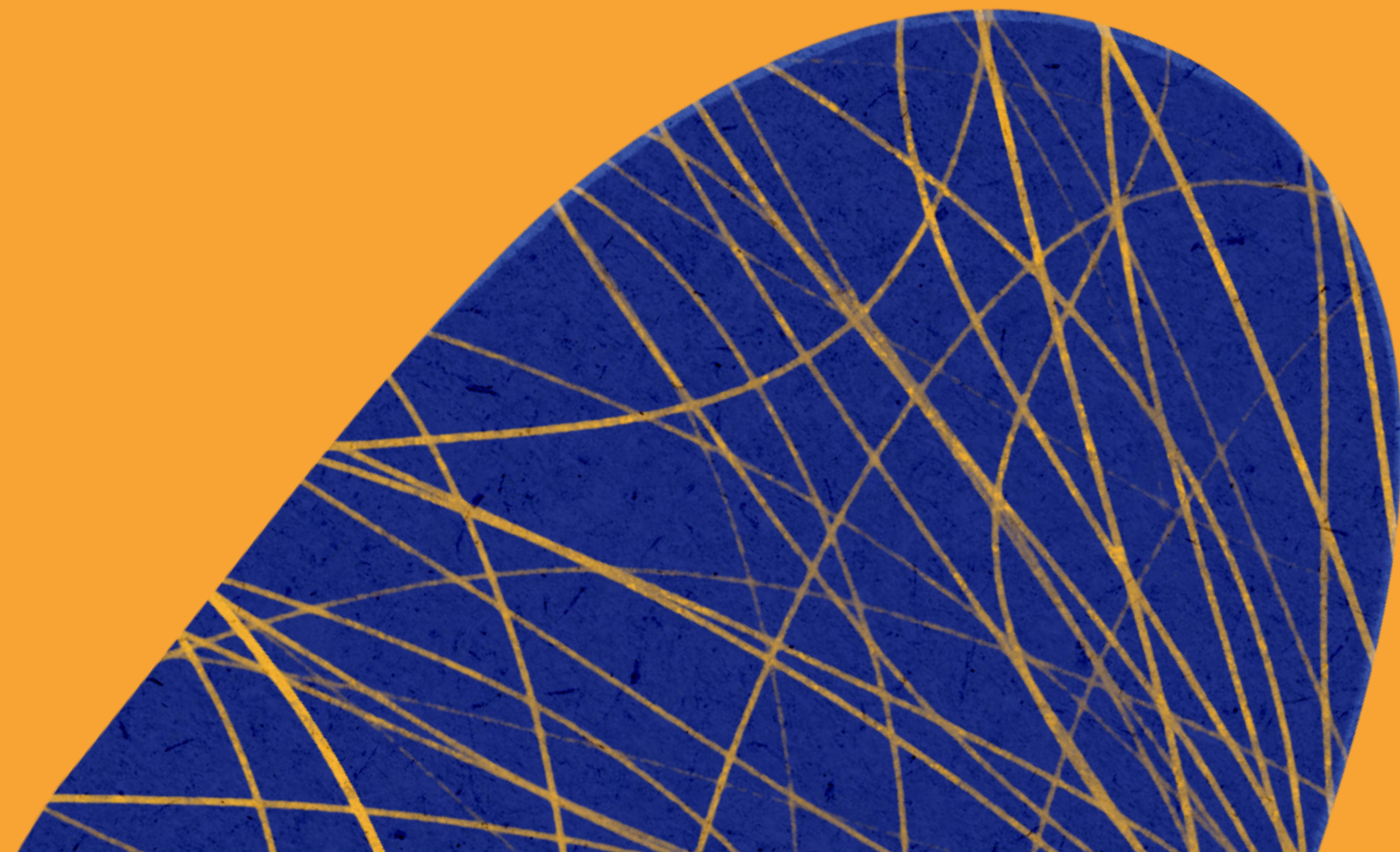
Special guest



Each of the folk schools is equipped to host students with disabilities. However, some schools focus especially on the integrative dimension of their activities, creating special conditions in their spaces for the development of people with reduced mobility. During our visit to Norway we were hosted by Ivar Wollertsen Samnøy. Living in a comfortable housing estate for people with mobility difficulties - he impressed us with his independence, openness and activity. Ivar was a student at the Lundheim school in the 70s. Because he is partially paralyzed and uses a wheelchair, his parents had many concerns about sending him to school. As he says, the time he spent in Lundheim was one of the happiest times of his life. The Christian profile of the school allowed him to develop spiritually and get closer to God, which, as he claims, invariably gives him strength for everyday activity. At school, he learned to be independent, made lifelong friends, and still warmly remembers the teachers who allowed him to believe in his abilities despite his limitations. Ivar, along with a representative from the project's partner organization Climate Experimentarium, is writing a book about his life, which he says is meant to be an inspiration to all people with disabilities.



About the project



The project "Climate Experimentarium" (1.2021 - 4.2022) was inspired by Scandinavian non-formal education and teaching methods taken from the Folkschool system in Norway. The foundation of the initiative is a program of workshops for young people aimed at the implementation of 6 micro-projects in the field of sustainable development. The methods we use, when creating projects, rely on the curriculum of Norwegian folk schools (Folkehøgskole).

The values we want to address:

We gain practical knowledge.

We build awareness of climate change and environmental threats

We include seniors in the intergenerational dialogue

Design elements:

- Study visit of the Senfineco team and LEVEL UP at Rogaland Folk Academy in Norway
- Intergenerational workshops - exchange of methods (life hacks), the so-called resourcefulness - cooking together, drawing on the experience of seniors in the subject of saving, caring for resources and health.
- Design workshops - creating microprojects / campaigns on climate change and sustainable development by young people aged 13 - 18.
- Spreading the results of the project at a nationwide conference with the participation of young people

In charge of the project





Senfineco Association is a youth non-governmental organization focused on critical thinking, social dialogue and global education learning. Evolving from an informal group since 2018, we have been working for the intercultural development of our region and the empowerment of its young people. We aim to socially support and complement formal education and provide an opportunity for youngsters and young adults, by stimulating their sense of initiative and entrepreneurship. For that, we use non-formal education tools to promote activities on critical thinking, media literacy, volunteer work, structured dialogue and intercultural education.



The LEVEL UP Association was established in 2019.

We influence others with our creativity and enthusiasm to implement new projects in order to create a better reality. We are driven by good energy and it is this energy that we want to pass on. Our mission is to improve competences - ours and others. Among the values that brought us together are: professional and internal development, building professional experience - ours and others, fun, self-realization. We respect time, therefore we operate in the ROWE model - Results-Only Work Environment. This means that we focus on results, not hours. By crossing our barriers and leaving the comfort zone, we focus on continuous development. We are open and ready to take on challenges.



Folkeakademiet is a cultural organization based on voluntary work, bringing together people passionate about acquiring knowledge and personal development. The organization operates in 9 districts, running about 120 folk academies. Each academy creates a community of people studying various fields of science in a non-formal way, promoting adult education. From its humble beginnings in 1885 to the present day, the goal of the organization is the same: to create communities that, through learning and development, prevent polarizing inequalities in society.

Acknowledgements



Special thanks go to our interlocutors who have become our guides in the world of Norwegian folk schools:

Rolf Atle Kristoffersen - representative of the partner organization Folkeakademiet Rogaland

Geir Bakken - leader of the Stavanger Urban Folk School initiative group - StUF

Dag Folkvord - School Principal Jæren Folkehøgskole - <https://www.jarenfhs.no/>

Ole Petter Hansson - Principal of the Lundheim Folkehøgskole School -

<https://www.lundheim.fhs.no/>

Ivar Wollertsen Samnøy - a graduate of the Lundheim Folkehøgskole

Inspirations

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rkB1H1S8_vs&t=1s

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lWrQNdlKjCE>

<https://www.folkehogskole.no/>

<https://www.folkehogskole.no/school/jaren>

<https://www.lundheim.fhs.no/>

<https://folkeakademiet.no/distrikter/rogaland/>



Senfineco



**Aktywni
Obywatele**
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Liechtenstein
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