



Norwegian Ministry
of Health and Care Services

The making of a Norwegian Strategy to increase Health Literacy in the Population

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Subthemes

- What is health literacy?
- Why a Norwegian Strategy?
- The process of making the strategy and especially the process and importance of finding a Norwegian name for health literacy
- The finding of a lot of ongoing activities with clear relevance to health literacy without the concept being used
- The main strategic activities in the time to come



What is Health Literacy

- The degree to which individuals can find, understand, and process health information to make health decisions that respond to their needs
- Very important both in health promotion, disease prevention and the ability of patients and next of kin to cope with diseases
- In other words it is about empowerment of people and patients
- Organizational health literacy: the health care systems responsiveness to health literacy, in other words – the health care services capabilities to incorporate health literacy thinking in organisation, management and service – for instance how they communicate with patients



The patient`s health care service

- Our Health Minister`s main goal is to create "the patient`s health care service"
- That requires a rather radical change in the attitude of health personnel. They have to start asking: "What is important to you?" – instead of "I think the best for you is"
- This implies a shift in the power balance in favour of the patients. Not everyone in the health care services likes or are ready for this
- Health literacy is an important fundament in people-centred healthcare
- The patient`s health care is also impossible to achieve unless the patients have or are given a sufficient level of health literacy. A strategy for increased health literacy is for that reason also politically highly welcome



Why a Norwegian Strategy?

- The answer is quite simple and straightforward:
A strategy were needed because of
 - the great practical importance of health literacy and
 - the need to strengthen systematic work to increase health literacy in Norway



Finding a Norwegian name

- To strengthen our work with health literacy we need a Norwegian name for the concept so that we can communicate about it. "Health literacy" will not do
- Without such a name systematic work and increased emphasis on health literacy will be very difficult to achieve
- The most important element of the strategy therefore is to establish an official Norwegian name for health literacy that will be generally accepted. In the process of finding such a name we consulted institutions working on health literacy and the Language Council of Norway



Health competence

- The Language Council of Norway uses three main principles when choosing names or concepts:
 - Which concepts are already in use
 - The concept should be self-explaining and convey something of the content in a simple way
 - The concept should not be too long
- Using these principles we ended up with "health competence"
- And we have not registered any significant protest to that – which is quite remarkable



A lot of ongoing activities

- In the process of making the strategy we discovered that
 - A lot of activities is taking place that obviously is related to increasing health literacy – without that name or concept being used
 - Highly relevant research on different aspects of health literacy are being performed by different researchers and organisations with limited knowledge about each other
- As a result of the process a network of these researchers is being established



The main strategic activities to increase health literacy

- Performing a survey to measure the level of health literacy in the population and some subpopulations (2020)
- Ongoing activities with relevance to health literacy should be followed up, evaluated and further developed
- Knowledge of and skills in health literacy must be incorporated in the education of health personnel
- The health care services must adjust their communication with patients to the patients level of health literacy
- The perspective of health literacy must be an integrated part of all health care services
- Digital tools must be used to make relevant information related to health literacy available
- A forthcoming white paper on specialised health care will discuss work on health literacy in these services

