

Norwegian government turns down request for humanist school

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Norway's Ministry of Education has announced that a request to establish and open a private school with humanist ideology has been unsuccessful.

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The proposed private school was to give children an education offering secular, humanistic philosophies of life. However, the Ministry of Education declined the application, which would include receiving state funding, as it breached governmental private school legislation on "religious grounds".

These grounds were agreed in 2007 under a tri-partite coalition-Christian Democrat (KrF) compromise, allowing new non-state schools to apply for government grants on a special basis, including religion, or recognised different pedagogic systems like the Steiner School.

Deputy education minister Elizabeth Dahle explained the government's decision to deny permission in this case was that children need teachers who believe in God in order to make their own perception of religion.

"It is difficult to see how secular, humanistic religious schools should be covered by legal provisions based on a general understanding of the concept of religion," she told Christian newspaper Vårt Land.

"We see the value of as many children attending [regular] public school, and believe creating the most inclusive society is important," she added.

Ole Martin Moen, the proposed school's general manager, said, "We can understand a Red-Green government would like to be restrictive, but they cannot discriminate by saying yes to Christian schools, and no to humanist ones."

He will be appealing the officials' decision to the Ministry of Children, Equality, and Social Inclusion on the grounds of "unfair discrimination".

"It is very peculiar that you can discriminate on the basis of whether one believes there is a God or not. It's very particular to have to believe in something you cannot prove in order to start a school for us humanists," concluded Mr Moen.

(Source: *The Foreigner*)

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