

Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg's obituary which was printed in:
Dagsavisen Thursday, October 4
Aftenposten and Adresseavisen Friday, October 5
Bergens Tidende and Fædrelandsvennen Saturday, October 6

Knut Sydsæter

It was with sorrow that I received the message that professor emeritus Knut Sydsæter had lost his life in an accident in Spain, barely 75 years old.

Knut Sydsæter was a wonderful person and an excellent mathematician. As early as 1965 he started teaching economics students at the University of Oslo. With a small sheet of paper as his manuscript he introduced me and generations of other economics students to mathematics as a tool in the subject of economics. With professional weight, commitment, and humour, he was both a demanding and an inspiring lecturer. He opened the door into the world of mathematics. He showed that mathematics is a language that makes it possible to explain complicated relationships in a simple manner.

Sydsæter had a certain knack with using the blackboard as an aid in his teaching. At the same time he made it possible for many more than those who could find a seat at his lectures, to enjoy and benefit from his unique ability to communicate the subject. He published several textbooks in mathematics at the university level. These now exist in ten different languages and are used in a number of countries. His mathematical formula collection has been an invaluable work of reference for several generations of economists.

Knut Sydsæter was concerned that the position of mathematics in school must be strengthened, and he did not hesitate to give me advice and ideas about how this could happen. When I, as prime minister, was involved in establishing the Abel Prize in mathematics in 2001, Knut Sydsæter was one of those who had been eager to get this prize set up, thereby giving increased recognition to the place of mathematics in society.

Although Sydsæter was also an able researcher, the Norwegian state administration has primarily benefitted from his efforts to increase the understanding of mathematics among students of economics. He taught us that even relatively simple mathematical methods can be powerful means towards understanding the complex world we live in and to sort out the challenges we may face in an economy like Norway's.

Sydsæter's contributions to research and teaching will live on for a long time. My thoughts today go to his family.

Jens Stoltenberg