



NORWEGIAN MINISTRY  
OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

Report

# OECD – Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care Policy in Norway

Background Report





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## Glossary

Translation and brief information about some Norwegian terms:

*Barnehage:*

A direct translation of the German word *Kindergarten* (Barn = Kinder, hage = garten). A common term for different types of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) under the provisions of the Norwegian Kindergarten Act, covering the age group 0–5 years.

*Familiebarnehage:*

Family kindergarten/family day care, where assistants work in private homes with up to five children below school age, supervised and mentored by a qualified *kindergarten teacher*.

*Åpen barnehage:*

Open kindergarten a part-time drop-in centre for parents/care givers and children, led by a qualified *kindergarten teacher*. Parents/caregivers stay with their child and participate in the programme together with the child.

*Barnehagelærer:*

Kindergarten teacher, formerly called pre-school teacher (*førskolelærer*). Teachers working at pre-primary level with a tertiary bachelor's degree from university/university college..

*Pedagogisk leder:*

Pedagogical leader, a qualified *kindergarten teacher* with responsibility for a group of children in a *barnehage*. The pedagogical leader works in a team with a group of children together with auxiliary staff (assistants/teacher aids) and in some cases additional pedagogical leaders.

*Styrer:*

Head teacher/Manager. A qualified *kindergarten teacher* who is responsible for the day-to-day management of a *barnehage*.

*Pedagog:*

Pedagogue – can be a qualified *kindergarten teacher* or another qualified pedagogue with a tertiary level education.

*Dagmamma:*

Childminder. The regulations on kindergartens do not cover childminders not being part of an authorised *familiebarnehage*.

The *Storting*:

Norway's National Assembly/Parliament

The *Samediggi/Sameting*:

The Sámi Parliament in Norway



# Foreword

This is the second background report on early childhood education and care (ECEC) in Norway produced for the OECD as part of a thematic review of ECEC.

The first report was submitted on 29 December 1998 as part of the OECD's first thematic review of ECEC, where Norway was one of twelve participating countries. The OECD review team submitted its country note on 8 June 1999, and in February 2001, the Norwegian Ministry of Children and Family Affairs published the two documents in a combined report.<sup>1</sup> This report is published electronically on the following website: [http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/kd/dok/rapporter\\_planer/rapporter/2001/oecd-thematic-review-of-early-childhood.html?id=748945](http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/kd/dok/rapporter_planer/rapporter/2001/oecd-thematic-review-of-early-childhood.html?id=748945).

In 2013, the OECD and the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research agreed to carry out a new thematic review of ECEC in Norway. The review shall provide a framework in which Norway can assess the strengths of its system and the challenges it faces, as a basis for policy development and in addition enable Norway to compare its own approach and development with other countries, as a means of mutual learning. The Ministry hereby presents its background report for Norway.

The background report is designed to:

- Provide a succinct description of the whole Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) system in Norway as a basis for policy analysis, focusing in particular on any changes in the key policy areas of access, equity and quality of ECEC since the 1999 OECD review
- Provide background information and a self-assessment that can be drawn on for the OECD country review
- Contain descriptions of, and changes to, the ECEC system, relevant statistics and research information, and a brief self-assessment of strengths and challenges.

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<sup>1</sup> Barne- og Familiedepartementet 2001





## CHAPTER 1:

# Summary

### 1.1 The most important milestones in the Norwegian ECEC sector in the last 15 years

The ECEC sector has undergone considerable development since the last OECD review in 1999. The most important milestones are:

- Broad political agreement on changes in the financial and legal framework for the ECEC sector (The Kindergarten Agreement/*Barnehageforliket*) in 2003.
- An intense period of ensuring universal provision of *barnehage* places in the years 2003–2009.
- The introduction of a regulated maximum fee for parents in 2004.
- Political agreement and regulation since 2004 on more equal treatment of private and public *barnehager* as regards public financing. From 2014, private *barnehager* will receive 98 per cent of the public funding received by public *barnehager*.
- A new Kindergarten Act (*Barnehageloven*) entered into force in January 2006. Among other things, it legislated children's right to participate, clearer regulation of the content of *barnehager* and a clearer description of roles and responsibilities in the sector.
- A revised *Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens* (*Rammeplan for barnehagens innhold og oppgaver*) in August 2006.
- The transfer of responsibility for *barnehager* from the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs to the Ministry of Education and Research in 2006 in order to create better coherence between *barnehager* and primary education, and acknowledging the *barnehage's* role as the first step in a lifelong learning process.
- The introduction of an individual statutory right from 2009 to a place in *barnehage* for all children aged 1-5.
- The establishment of the advisory body FUB (*Foreldreutvalget for barnehager*), a national parent's committee for Early Childhood Education and Care in 2010.
- State grants were replaced by block grants to municipalities in 2011, thus strengthening local self-government and giving the municipalities the required financial means in addition to responsibility for fulfilling the right to high-quality *barnehager* for all children.
- Better coherence with the rest of the education sector and improved governance as a result of transferring tasks from the Ministry of Education and Research to the Directorate of Education and Training in 2012.
- An evaluation in 2010 and a new framework for the kindergarten teacher education from August 2013.

## 1.2 Areas that the 1999 review team believed required further consideration

In the 1999 policy country note, the OECD review team mentioned several areas that required further consideration. This 2014 background report gives an up-to-date description of how Norway has endeavoured to address issues in these areas, which were described as follows in the 1999 review:

### *Issues relating to equity in access and funding*

‘There are issues of equity and cost that need to be addressed. Despite the rapid extension of provision and the high level of subsidy, there remain major inequalities in the system, both with respect to access (with levels of provision varying between areas) and funding (with many private *barnehager* at a financial disadvantage compared to public ones, and parental fees varying). Overall, parental fees are high and a funding formula, which was proposed and adopted without any explicit rationale, has not been implemented. These issues can, individually and cumulatively, affect attendance for young children in *barnehager*, to the detriment of children from less advantaged backgrounds. There appears to be a risk that, without great care being applied, the cash-for-care benefit scheme may further exacerbate these inequalities. There is a strong case for addressing these issues in relation to the commitment to provide a place in kindergarten for all children whose parents want them to attend, and in the context of the White Paper currently being prepared.’

### *Issues relating to inequality for children from ethnic minorities*

‘These issues of inequality may affect the increasing minority ethnic population in Norway, though there is growing recognition that Norway is an ethnically diverse society, with a range of policy initiatives responding to this recognition. Each country has found or will find its own way of being ethnically diverse, some more successful than others. Norway may be at a stage where it could benefit from taking stock not only of its own experience, but that of some other European countries, and formulating a longer-term view about policy and practice in early childhood services with respect to minority and majority groups.’

### *Issues relating to structure and governance*

‘There are issues of structure to be considered. At a local level, most authorities have moved to integrate responsibility for children’s services, bringing at the least early childhood, schooling and SFOs<sup>2</sup> within the same administrative framework, and going even further in some cases. Nationally, responsibility continues to be split between the BFD<sup>3</sup> and the Ministry of Education. There are good arguments for this split responsibility nationally, but there are also counter-arguments which suggest the need to review these arrangements, to see whether national policy and administrative and legal frameworks need to follow the local facts on the ground – and if not, how local levels of governments can be best managed.’

### *Issues relating to competent staffing and recruitment*

‘Most staff working in early childhood services or SFOs have no training or a relatively low-level training. Trained early childhood teachers form a minority of the workforce. The rationale for this situation would repay review, possibly in the light of a wider review of staffing, considering issues of recruitment, retention and gender. Does the reduction in applications for training reflect a temporary problem or does it portend a more serious and structural shortfall, especially as young women face wider employment opportunities? Do more steps need to be taken to recruit male students and workers, not only to meet the target for male staff but to address a possible decline in women wanting to work in early childhood?’

- 
- 2 SFO = *Skolefritidsordningen* – Out-of-school facilities for school children  
3 BFD = The Ministry of Children and Family Affairs

### 1.3 Main challenges facing Norway's current ECEC system

The 1998 Norwegian background report listed 15 future challenges. Some of them have been addressed since then and some of them still need to be considered, although, in some case, in a slightly different

form. In addition, new challenges have emerged and need to be addressed.

By grouping these challenges, three major overall policy questions can be presented, cf. Chapter 13 for a complete review:

#### A. How to ensure high quality in all *barnehager*?

1. *The shortage of qualified kindergarten teachers*
2. *The percentage of unqualified staff*
3. *Variation in the staff to children ratio between barnehager*
4. *How to ensure that the intentions of the Framework Plan are implemented in barnehager?*
5. *Is the new kindergarten teacher education better designed to meet the demands of the current sector?*
6. *How to provide satisfactory services for children with special needs?*
7. *How to provide satisfactory services for children from language minorities?*

#### B. How to give even more children access to a place in a *barnehage*?

1. *How to promote participation in barnehager for children at risk?*
2. *How to achieve a more flexible system for admission to barnehager?*
3. *How to ensure equal services nationwide?*
4. *How to ensure that subsidy schemes are available to low-income families?*

#### C. How to ensure good governance appropriate for today's and future *barnehager*?

1. *Knowledgebased policy development on national and local level*
2. *Regulating quality standards*
3. *Inspections and monitoring to ensure high quality in all barnehager*
4. *Ensuring sufficient and stable funding of private barnehager*
5. *Ensuring a relevant and updated Framework Plan*



## CHAPTER 2:

# General information about Norway and the ECEC sector

### 2.1 General information about Norway

Norway is situated in the north-western part of Europe, has an area of 385 000 square km and, as of January 2014, has approximately 5.1 million inhabitants. Norway is a constitutional, democratic monarchy with King Harald V as head of state. The *Storting* is Norway's national assembly. It consists of 169 representatives from 19 counties. Since October 2013, Norway has had a minority government consisting of a coalition of the Conservative Party (*Høyre*) and the Progress Party (*Fremskrittspartiet*), with parliamentary support from the Christian Democratic Party (*Kristelig Folkeparti*) and the Liberal Party (*Venstre*). The present Government is led by Prime Minister Erna Solberg and has 17 other ministers.

The Sámi is an indigenous people in Norway. The majority of the Sámi live in the northern part of the country and in the capital (Oslo). The Sámi Assembly was established in 1989. The assembly is independent, elected by the Sámi people and consists of 39 representatives. As an indigenous people, the Sámi are entitled to be consulted on matters that affect them. The Sámi Assembly is consultative for the authorities in all questions concerning the Sámi population.

The 19 counties (*fylker*) have from around 75 000 to 634 000 inhabitants (lowest: Finnmark county, highest: Oslo county). The 19 county municipalities (*fylkeskommuner*) are responsible, among other things, for infrastructure and upper secondary education. Norway is further divided into 428 municipalities (*kommuner*), which differ greatly in terms of population, from 213 (Utsira) to 634 246 inhabitants (Oslo, which is both a

municipality, a county and the capital city). 228 municipalities have less than 5000 inhabitants and only 14 have over 50 000. The municipalities are led by local governments. Local self-government has been the main principle in Norway since 1837, but, especially since 1945, there has been a continual process of reform of the relationship between the national and the local authorities. The goal of the reforms has been to achieve an acceptable balance of power and division of functions between the two levels of government.

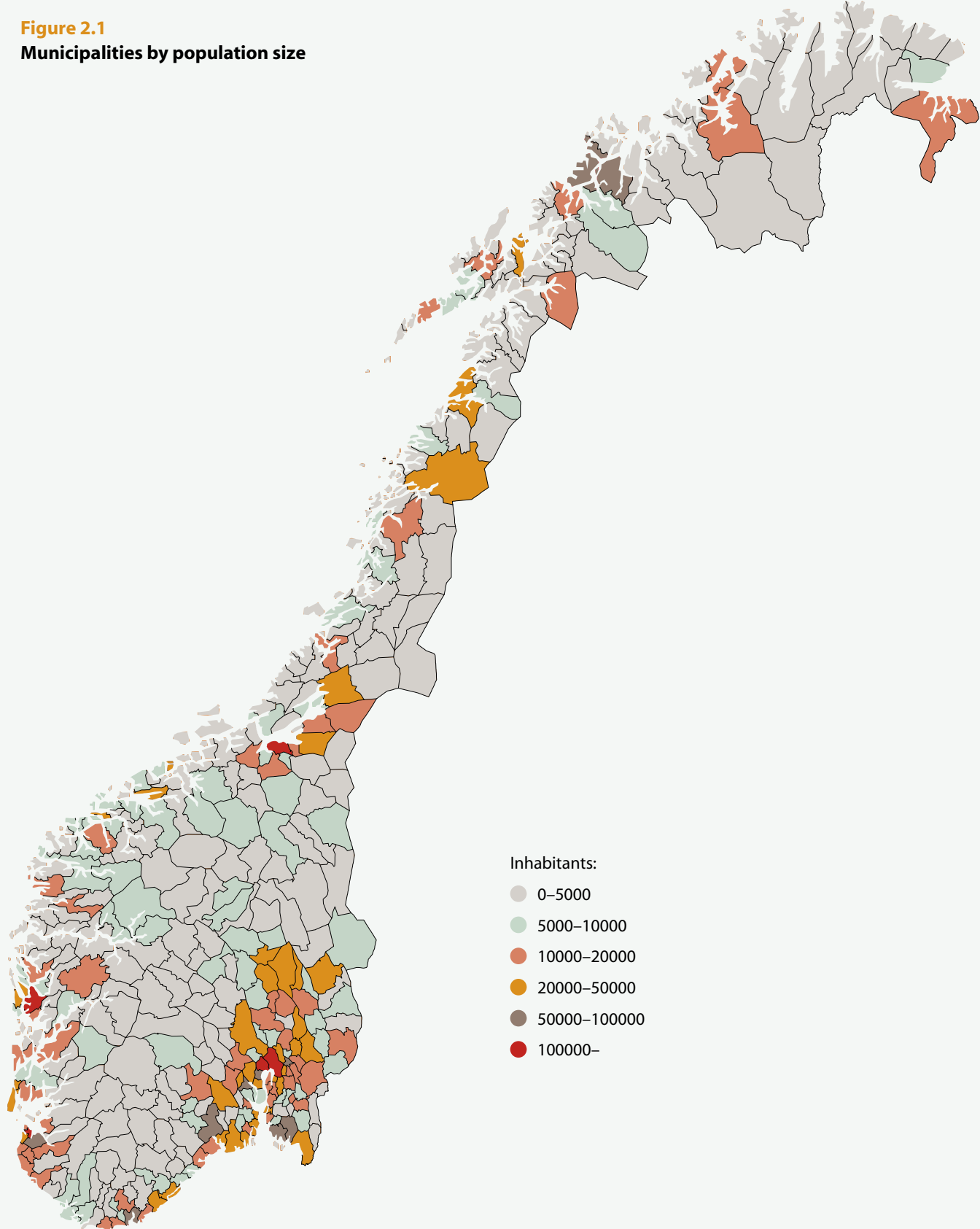
The state is represented in each county by a County Governor (*Fylkesmannen*), whose tasks include responsibility for disseminating national policies at the regional level, providing guidance to municipalities, *barnehage* owners and the general public, and monitoring the *barnehage* sector and education sector.

Norway is a country with a high degree of economic equality and stability. Norway has avoided the financial turmoil that has affected most of the world in recent years. Norway's GDP (gross domestic product) per capita has risen from USD 35 609 in 1999 to USD 100 056 in 2012 (fourth place in the world, after Liechtenstein, Monaco and Luxembourg).<sup>4</sup> The unemployment rate is low, approximately 3.5 per cent in 2013. Social expenditure: 22.9 per cent of GDP (the OECD average is 21.9 per cent). Child poverty rate: 3.4 per cent after taxes and transfers (the OECD average is 11.2 per cent). Total educational expenditure: 7.4 per cent of GDP (the OECD average is 6.1 per cent).<sup>5</sup>

4 Source: globalis.no, United Nations Association of Norway

5 Education at a Glance 2014 and OECD.stat.

**Figure 2.1**  
**Municipalities by population size**



State-guaranteed welfare has long been the guiding principle for policy in the Nordic region, and Norway is no exception, emphasising broad and universal measures. Policies for gender equality have influenced many areas of Norwegian society, not least as regards the expansion of high-quality services for the youngest age groups, and the possibility of balancing work and family life. Female workforce participation is generally high in Norway, and is the second highest of the OECD countries after Iceland.<sup>6</sup>

The fertility rate in Norway is 1.78 children per woman in 2013. Children under the age of six make up 7.4 per cent of the population as of 1 January 2014 (375 744 persons). A sample survey from 2011 shows that more than 80 per cent of parents with children under school age have either part-time or full-time employment.<sup>7</sup> A White Paper from 2013 showed that the average working hours for women aged 30–44 (i.e. the main age group with children aged 0–16) increased from 31.5 hours per week in 2000 to 32.5 hours per week in 2010.<sup>8</sup>

A generous parental leave system makes it possible for a large percentage of parents to stay at home with their children during their first year of life. The compulsory school starting age is six years (primary school starts in August each year).

## 2.2 General information about the ECEC sector in Norway

### 2.2.1 Access and provision

The ECEC system in Norway is for children under school age (6 years since 1996). Participation is voluntary. In 2013, the participation percentage for five-year-olds was 97.5 per cent. Because paid parental leave extends to around one year, few children start in *barnehage* before the age of one. Care for children under the age of one predominantly consists of home care by parents, although a child can be given a place in a *barnehage* because of rights relating to special needs or child welfare considerations. Private providers and municipalities with available capacity can also offer places for children under one year of age. Only 3.2 per cent of children under one year of age were in *barnehage* in 2013.

The ECEC sector is regulated by the Kindergarten Act of 2005 (*Barnehageloven*) and pertaining regulations. An individual, statutory right to a place in *barnehage* entered into force in 2009 for children from the age of one. The *barnehager*, both public and private, are publicly funded and subject to regulations stipulating maximum parental fees. Underpinning the system is a clearly articulated vision of the value of a good childhood and of the value of children, both individually and as a social group, and of their place in society. Norway has experienced great changes in the early childhood sector in recent decades. In 1975, when the first Act on Kindergartens was introduced, only 7 per cent of children below school age (7 years) attended *barnehage*. In 2000, the attendance percentage for children aged 1–5 was 62, while in 2013 the percentage was 90 per cent. The increase in numbers from 2000 to 2013 is 97 340 children, or 51.3 per cent, from 189 837 to 287 177.

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6 Meld. St. 44 (2012–2013) *Likestilling kommer ikke av seg selv*

7 Moafi & Bjørkli (2011)

8 Meld. St. 44 (2012–2013) *Likestilling kommer ikke av seg selv*



In Norway, municipalities play a major role in the ECEC sector. Regardless of size, the municipalities as the local *barnehage* authorities are responsible for providing enough places, for funding and for approving *barnehager* and for monitoring the quality of provision. They are responsible for ensuring that national regulations and standards are complied with in both public and private *barnehager*. In 2011, all public funding was transferred to the municipalities by way of block grants. The municipalities were thereby given the means as well as the responsibility for fulfilling the statutory right to high-quality *barnehage* services for all children.

In Norway, women's participation in the workforce has been high for many years. Before universal provision of *barnehage* places, families who did not get a place in a *barnehage* had to rely on family members or informal childcare/child minders outside the home. The individual right to a place in a *barnehage* that was introduced in 2009 guarantees a full-time place, i.e. a minimum of 41 hours per week, and has created a completely new situation for families with young children, especially for the 1–2 year olds.

There are three types of *barnehager* in Norway:

- *Barnehager* (ordinary kindergartens) offer half-day, part-time or full-day, all-year services for children aged 0-5 years.
- *Familiebarnehager* (family kindergartens/family day care), where an assistant works in a private home with maximum five children below school age, supervised and mentored by a qualified kindergarten teacher. *Familiebarnehager* should consist of at least two homes or an ordinary kindergarten and a home.
- *Åpne barnehager* (open kindergartens) are part-time, drop-in centres for parents/caregivers and children, led by a qualified kindergarten teacher. Parents/caregivers may not leave the child, but have to participate in the programme together with the child.

Norway has 6 174 *barnehager* (ordinary kindergartens and family kindergartens) that provide for 287 000 children (98 per cent in ordinary *barnehager* and 2 per cent in *familiebarnehager*). 53 per cent of the *barnehager* are private and 47 per cent are public (mainly owned by the municipalities, but in a few cases the state). The average agreed hours are 43.9 hours in 2013.<sup>9</sup> A study from 2011 showed that children spend 35 hours per week in *barnehage* on average.<sup>10</sup>

There is great variety in the ownership of *barnehager*. Private providers may open and run *barnehager* as long as the *barnehage* meets statutory requirements and has been approved by the local *barnehage* authority. To ensure an equal level of quality across public and private institutions, private providers must meet the same quality standards as publicly run institutions. The requirements are set out in the legislation and financing mechanisms.

Regulations stipulating maximum fees for parents entered into force in 2004. In 2014, the maximum fee is NOK 2 405 per month, a relative decrease of 35 per cent in the fee from 2005. Municipalities are legally obliged to provide discounts for siblings and subsidy schemes for low-income families.

## 2.2.2 Means of ensuring quality

Regulations such as the Kindergarten Act and the *Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens* apply to all *barnehager* regardless of ownership. In Norway, 48 per cent of all *barnehage* places are provided by private *barnehager*. Following the Kindergarten Agreement of 2003, special regulations have been put in place to ensure equality in terms of public funding for both private and public *barnehager*, and to ensure that public funding is used for the benefit of the child in *barnehager*.<sup>11</sup> Cooperation with private *barnehage* owners has been important in reaching the policy goals. As important stakeholders, municipalities and *barnehage* owners must be involved in the development and implementation of national strategies.

<sup>9</sup> Statistics Norway 2012

<sup>10</sup> Moafi & Bjørkli (2011)

<sup>11</sup> Added through the Act of 22 June 2012 no. 54 (into force 2013)

*The Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens* is a regulation pursuant to the Kindergarten Act. The plan sets out guidelines on the values, content and tasks of *barnehager* and describes their role in society. *Barnehage* programmes must be based on a holistic educational philosophy, with care, play and learning being at the core of activities. Social and linguistic skills, as well as seven learning areas, are also important to the educational environment provided by *barnehager*. The head teacher and the pedagogical leaders are responsible for giving all staff working with the children an understanding of the Framework Plan and how it is to be followed and implemented in the *barnehage's* daily life.

*Barnehager* are staffed by a head teacher (*styrer*), who is responsible for the whole *barnehage*, and pedagogical leaders (*pedagogiske ledere*), who are responsible for a department or a group of children in the *barnehage*. Both are required by the Kindergarten Act to have a three-year tertiary degree as kindergarten teachers, or other relevant teacher or pedagogical education on tertiary level with additional education in *barnehage* pedagogies. In 2013 42 per cent of staff were qualified pedagogues on tertiary level. In addition, staff includes assistants working full time with the children together with teachers/pedagogues. Assistants should preferably have a four-year vocational training on upper secondary level as *child care and youth workers* (two year education and two year apprenticeship). However, assistants are not required to have a diploma, and in 2013 only 25 per cent of the assistants were trained child care and youth workers. 43,5 per cent of staff working full time with the children had no formal early childhood education and care qualifications.

In *familiebarnehager*, assistants are not required to be qualified kindergarten teachers, but the home has to be supervised by a qualified kindergarten teacher on a weekly basis.

The staff to children ratio in Norway is not regulated in detail, but is decided at the local level. The Kindergarten Act states that 'Staffing at the kindergarten must be sufficient for the staff to be able to carry on satisfactory pedagogical activity'. In 2013 the mean number of children per staff working with the children was 6.03.<sup>12</sup> The regulated minimum level of pedagogical staff is as follows: for children aged 0–3 years, the ratio is 7–9 children per qualified kindergarten teacher when children attend for more than six hours per day. For children aged 3–6 years, the ratio is 14–18 children per qualified kindergarten teacher.

After a period that saw a strong increase in the number of *barnehage* places, the introduction of maximum parental fees and a legal entitlement to a place in *barnehage*, the present Government (Solberg) is now concentrating on developing the quality and content of *barnehager*. The Government has formulated the following three overriding goals for ECEC in Norway:

- High quality *barnehager* that promote well-being, playing and learning
- Accessibility to *barnehager* for all children
- Conditions that ensure predictability, diversity and equality in *barnehager*

The Directorate of Education and Training has been delegated the responsibility for ECEC, primary and secondary education and vocational education and training. Through the directorate, the County Governor is responsible for monitoring the *barnehage* sector and education sector, thus ensuring that the Kindergarten Act with regulations is followed.

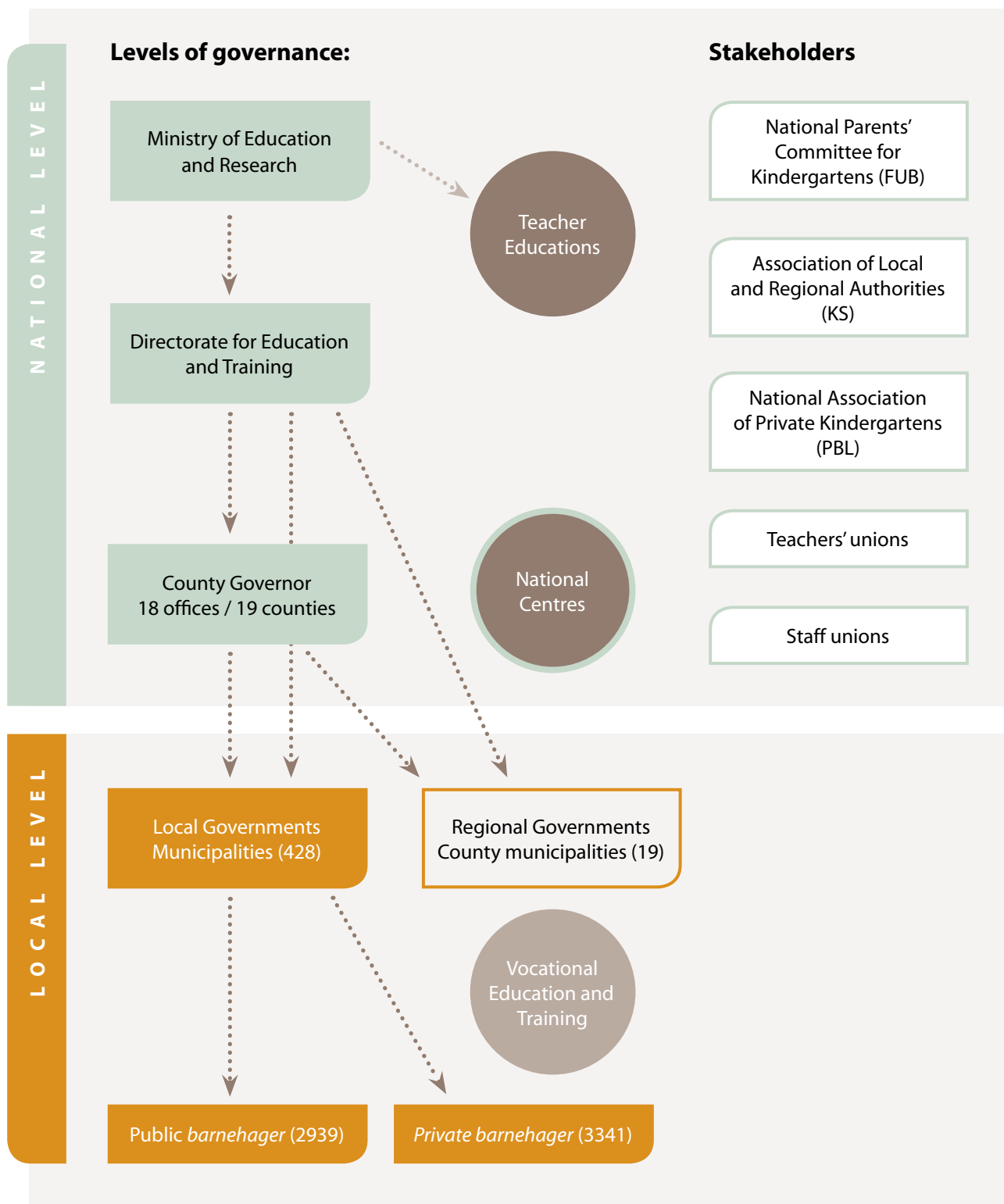
### 2.2.3 Levels of governance and different stakeholders

Figure 2.3 shows the different levels of governance and the different stakeholders in the ECEC sector in Norway. For more information, cf. Chapter 5 Governance of ECEC.

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12 Utdanningsdirektoratet (2014)

Figure 2.3 Different levels of governance and different stakeholders in the ECEC sector



Source: Adapted version of Theisen, A. in Hopfenbeck T. et al.. (2013) 'Balancing Trust and Accountability? The Assessment for Learning Programme in Norway'

# **Section I.**

## **GENERAL ISSUES:**

*governance, policies,  
provision and  
financing*



## CHAPTER 3:

# Statistics on demography, family types and employment

### 3.1 General demographic development since 2000

In 2014, the total population of Norway was 5 109 056. The population has increased every year, and in total by 14 percent, since 2000. As was the case in 2000, in 2014, there are still more women than men in every age group older than 66 years, reflecting the fact that

women live longer than men on average. Life expectancy in Norway is 81.4 years, which is 13<sup>th</sup> place in the world and 10<sup>th</sup> place in the OECD group. Life expectancy for men is 79.4 years and 83.4 years for women.

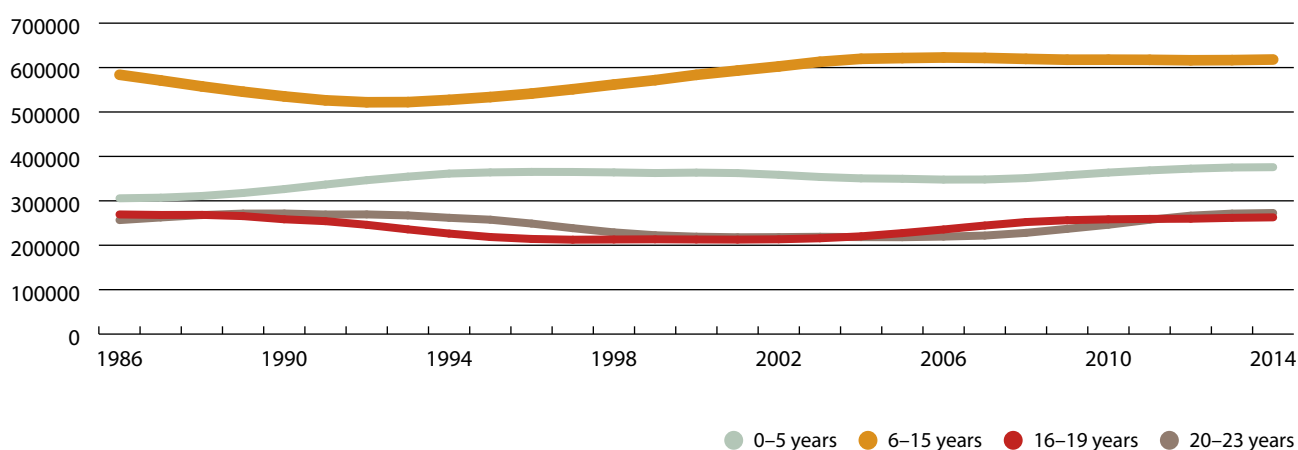
The share of the population in the ECEC age range (0–5 years old) has declined from 8.1 per cent to 7.4 per cent during the period 2000–2014.

Table 3.1

Population 2000–2014			
	Total population	Population 1–5 years	1–5 years (per cent)
2000	4,478,497	304,167	6.79%
2004	4,577,457	293,957	6.42%
2008	4,737,171	292,539	6.18%
2012	4,985,870	311,972	6.26%
2013	5,051,275	314,484	6.23%
2014	5,109,056	316,409	6.19%

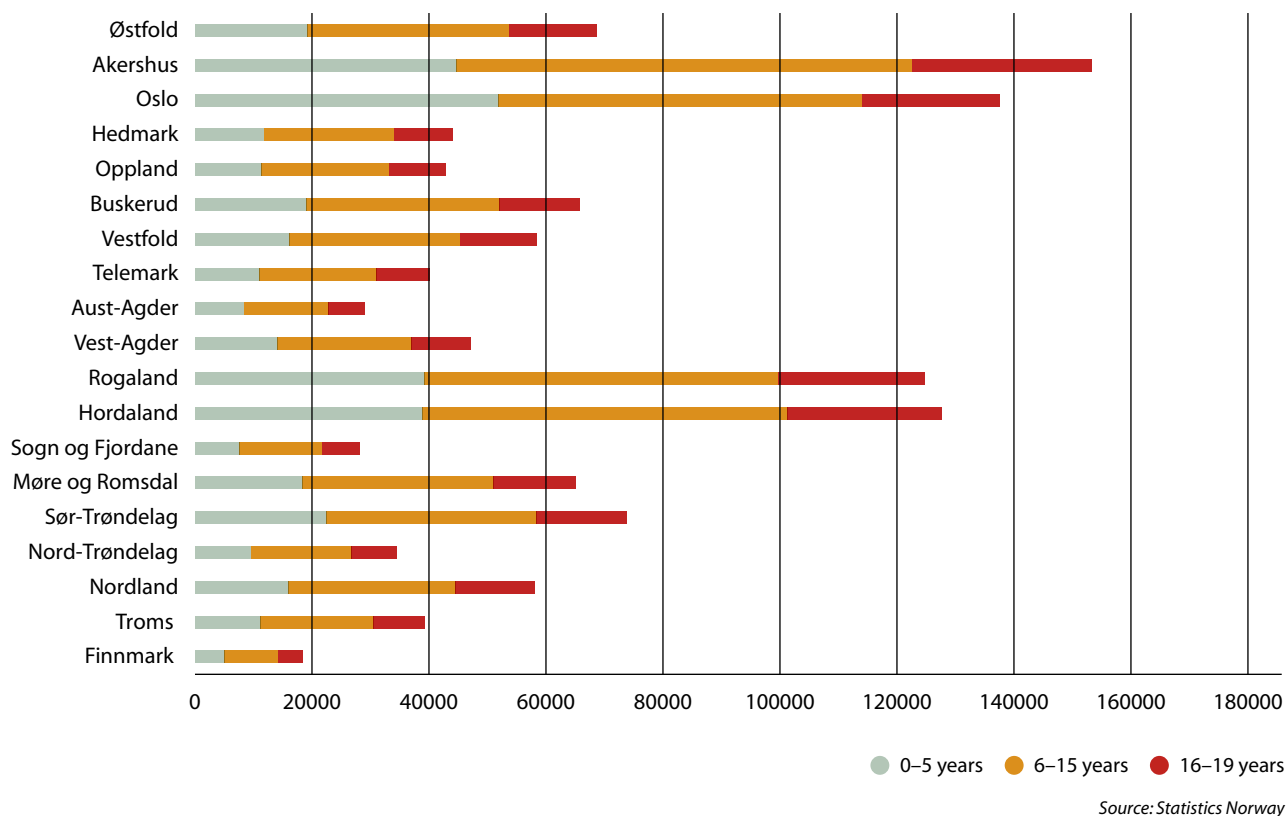
Source: Statistics Norway

Figure 3.1 Number of children and young people in Norway



Source: Statistics Norway

**Figure 3.2** Number of children and young people in the counties in Norway



Most of the children and young people live in Akerhus, closely followed by Oslo, Hordaland and Rogaland. Oslo has the highest proportion of children aged 0-5 years of age.

### 3.2 The Sámi population in Norway

The Sámi are an indigenous people living in Northern Europe. They are recognised and protected under the international conventions relating to indigenous peoples.<sup>13</sup> Norway does not register population based on Sámi identity, and it only uses estimates in population statistics based on the most concentrated Sámi settlement areas north of the Saltfjellet geographical area. Based on these figures, the Sámi population is

estimated to be about 50 – 65 000, or approx 1.3 per cent of the total population.<sup>14</sup> The majority of the Sámi people live in the northern part of Norway and in the capital Oslo. The Sámi language administrative districts include ten municipalities in the northern part of Norway.<sup>15</sup> In these municipalities, the Sámi people have specific rights under the Sámi Act, and Sámi is the official language in addition to Norwegian.

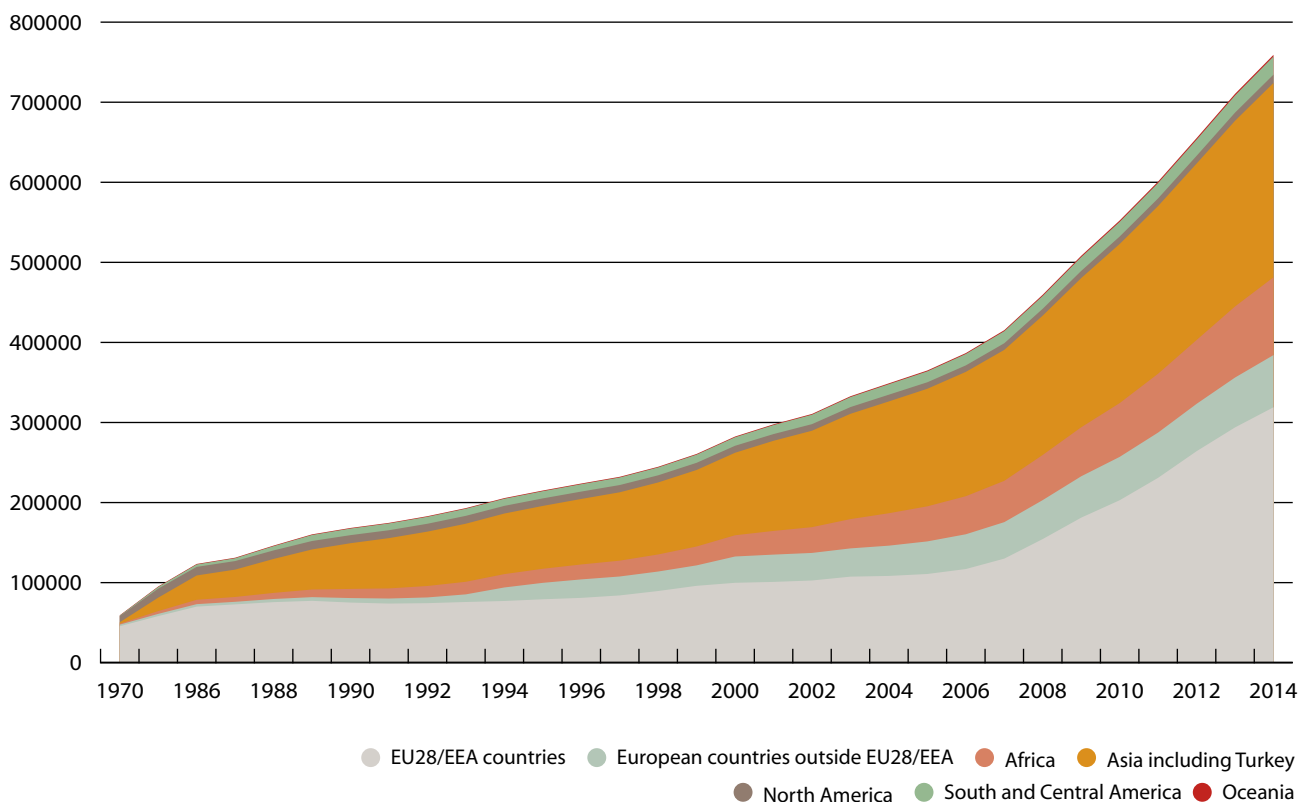
For more information about Sámi *barnehager*, see Chapter 7.1 (financing), Chapter 8.8 (access) and Chapter 9.2.2 (curriculum).

<sup>13</sup> ILO's convention no169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples

<sup>14</sup> St.meld. nr. 28 (2007-2008) Samepolitikken pkt 2.1

<sup>15</sup> Kautokeino, Karasjok, Porsanger, Tana, Nesseby, Kåfjord, Lavangen, Tysfjord, Snåsa og Røyrvik.

**Figure 3.3** Immigrants and Norwegian-born to immigrant parents, by country background



Source: Statistics Norway

### 3.3 Immigration trends

By 1 January 2014, there were 633 110 immigrants and 126 075 Norwegian-born with immigrant parents in Norway. The immigrants come from 221 different countries and independent regions. Immigrants accounted for 12.4 per cent of Norway's total population while Norwegian-born with immigrant parents accounted for 2.5 per cent.

The number of immigrants and Norwegian-born with immigrant parents increased by a total of 155 per cent from 2001 to 2014.

Fifty per cent of immigrants and Norwegian-born with immigrant parents are from Europe except Turkey. This is an increase from 45 per cent in 2001, and this group is by far the largest group of immigrants and Norwegian-born with immigrant parents in Norway. The largest groups by country are: Polish citizens (84 000), Swedish citizens (36 400) and Lithuanian citizens (33 000).



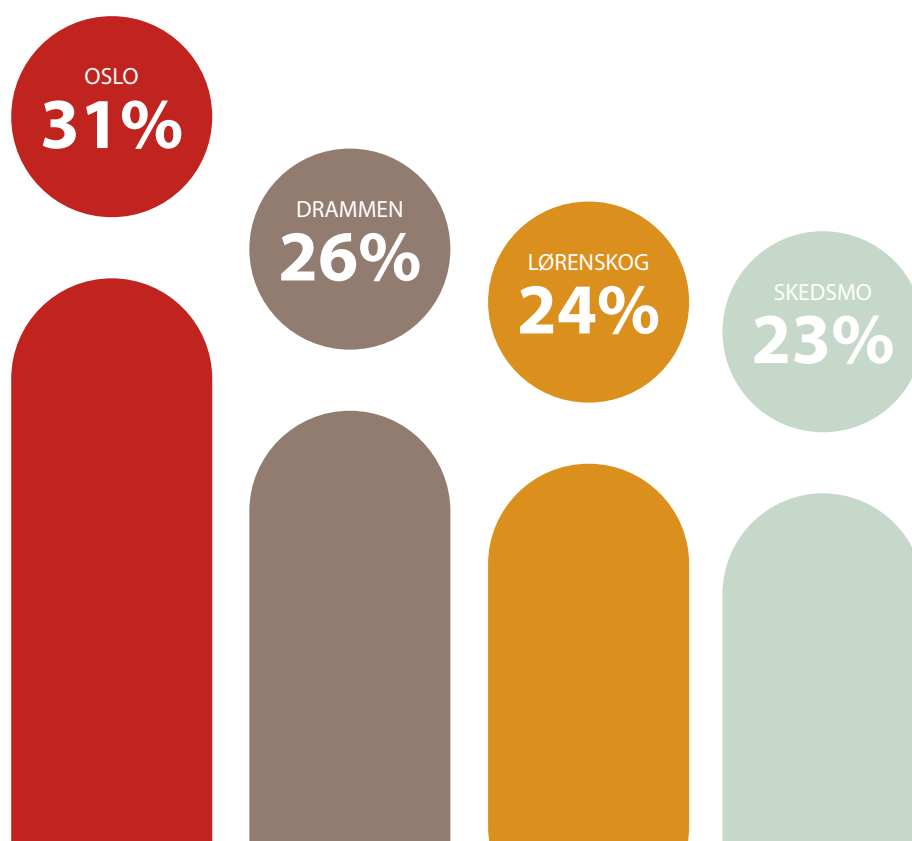
**Table 3.2**

Immigrants and Norwegian-born children with immigrant parents by region			
	2001	2014	Percentage change
Europe except Turkey	135,008	384,190	185
Africa	29,568	97,152	229
Asia including Turkey	112,590	242,699	116
North America	8,373	10,438	25
South and Central America	11,293	22,656	101
Oceania	899	2,050	128
Total	297,731	759,185	155

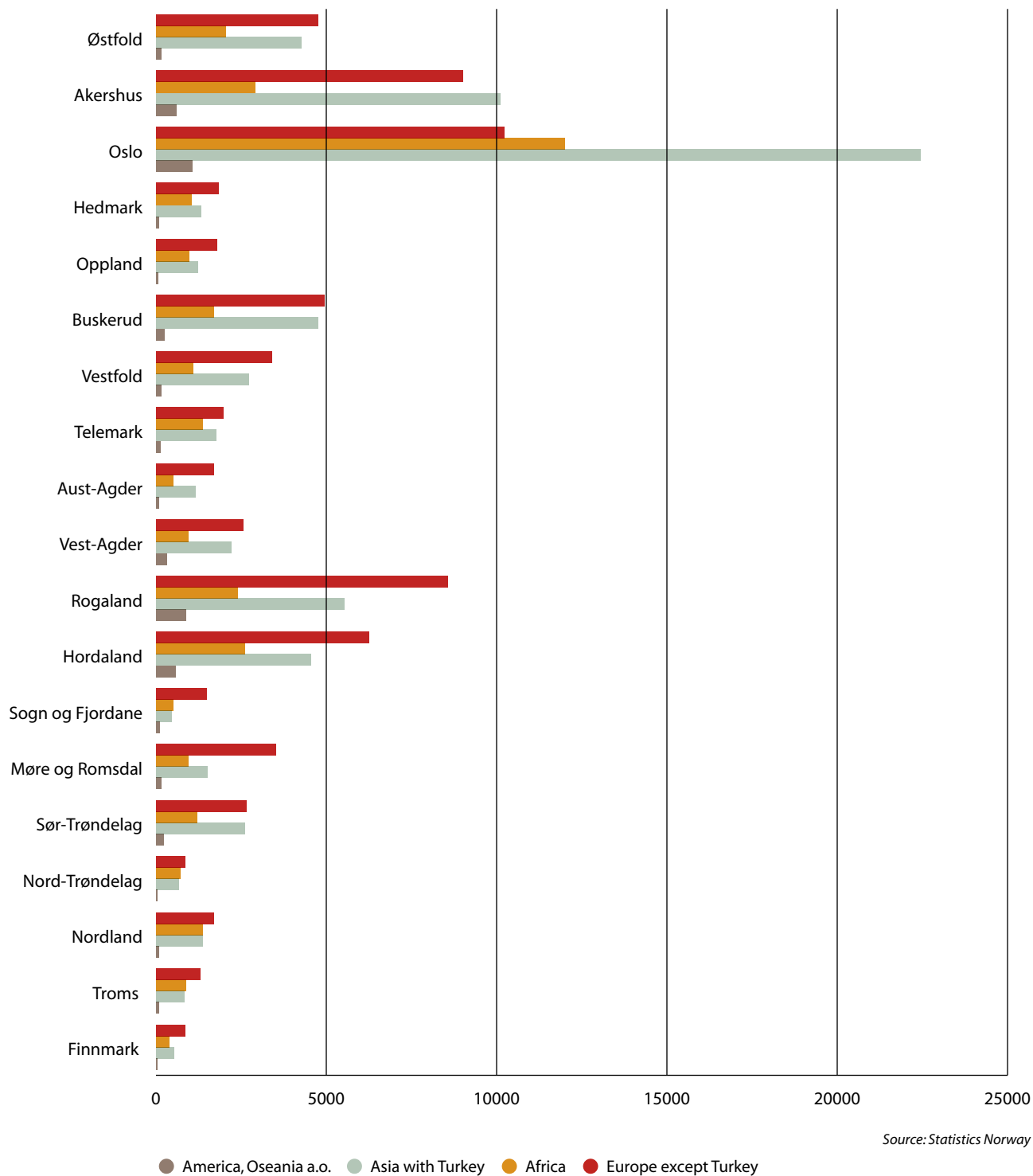
Source: Statistics Norway

In the age group 0–5 years, immigrant children and Norwegian-born children with immigrant parents increased in total by 144 per cent from 2001 to 2014. Children with a background from Europe except Turkey increased in numbers by 21 190 from 2001 to 2014, and are now the largest group of immigrants and Norwegian-born with immigrant parents in the ECEC age range.

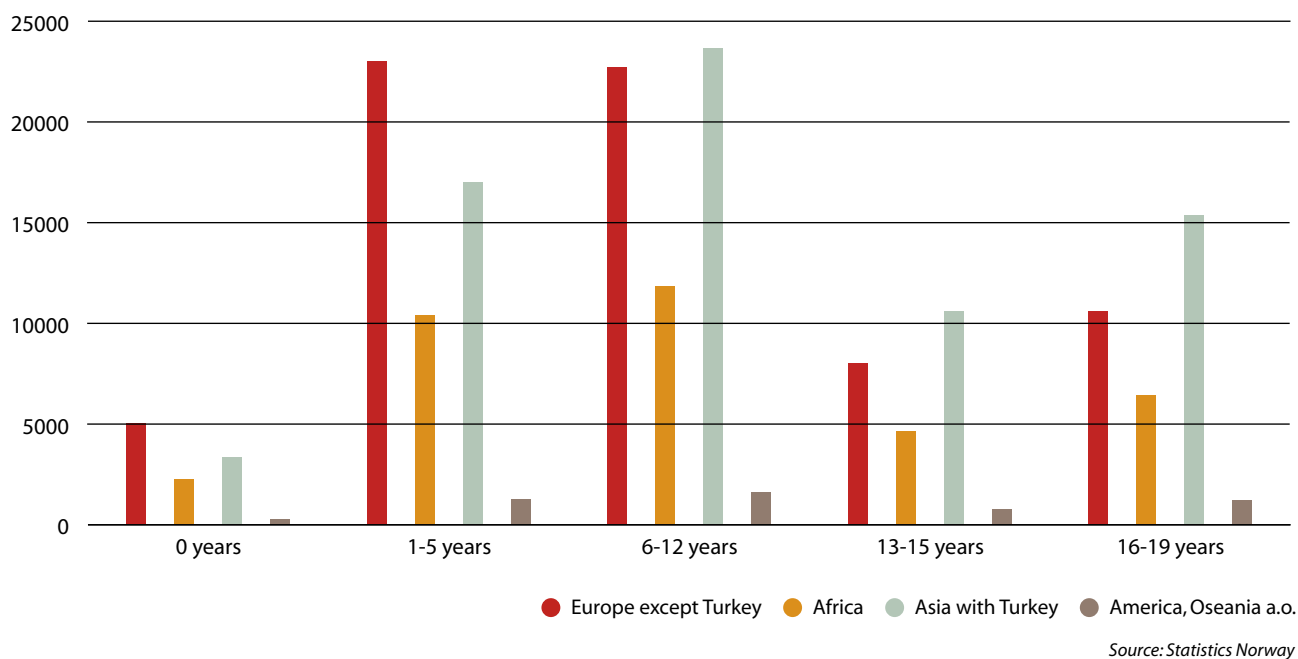
In 2013, 66 934 immigrations and 25 036 emigrations were registered, which gives a net immigration of 41 898 persons. The number of Norwegian-born citizens with immigrant parents increased with 9 000 persons in 2013, from 117 100 to 126 100, or 18 per cent of all children born in Norway in 2013. Of these, the largest groups by parents' land background are Pakistani (15 600), Somali (9 800) and Iraqi (8 200). Per 1st of January 2014 the majority of immigrants lived in Oslo, and most of them had background from Asia and Turkey. Some city districts in Oslo (Stovner, Søndre Nordstrand and Alna) have a population with immigrant background of just above 50 per cent. In 2014, the four municipalities with the largest population with immigrant backgrounds were:



**Figure 3.4** Immigrants and Norwegian-born children with immigrant parents by country background 0-19 year old in the different counties in Norway in 2014.

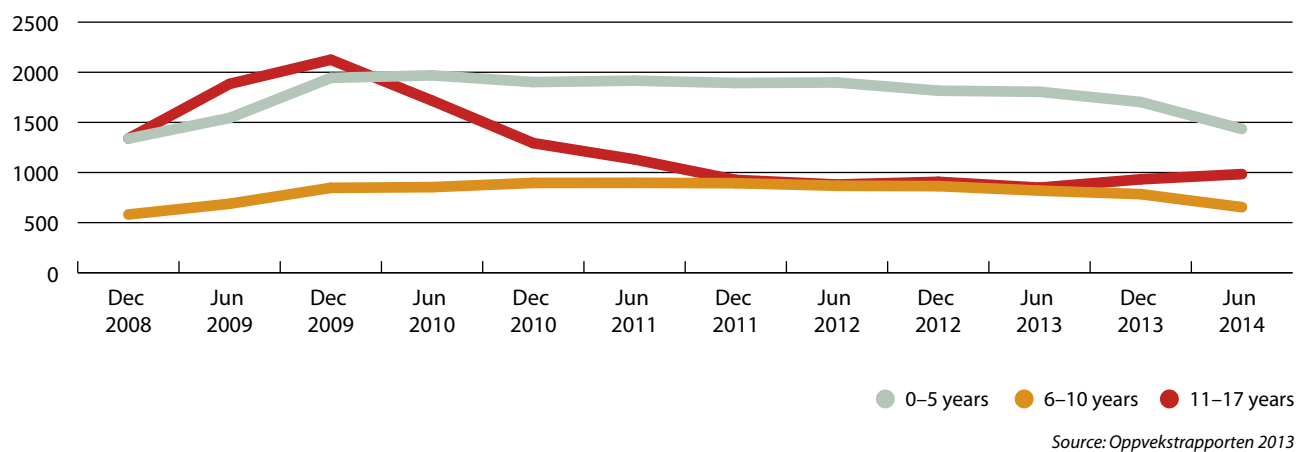


**Figure 3.5** Immigrant and Norwegian born children with immigrant parents from different regions and in different age groups in 2014.



Children in asylum centres do not have a statutory right to a place in *barnehage*. For information about *barnehage* access for children from immigrant backgrounds, cf. Chapter 8.10.

**Figure 3.6** Number of children aged 0–17 in asylum centres



### 3.4 Family types

The average household size dropped slightly from 2.22 to 2.21 persons per household from 2012 to 2013. Most people, one in four, live in a household with 2 persons. Almost as many, 23 per cent, live in a household with 4 persons.<sup>16</sup> In 2011, 39.7 per cent of private households consisted of only one person, up from 37.7 per cent in 2001. In the same period, the proportion of households consisting of more than three persons declined, while households consisting of two persons increased. The average size of households has thereby declined by 3 per cent, from 2.28 in 2001 to 2.21 in 2013.

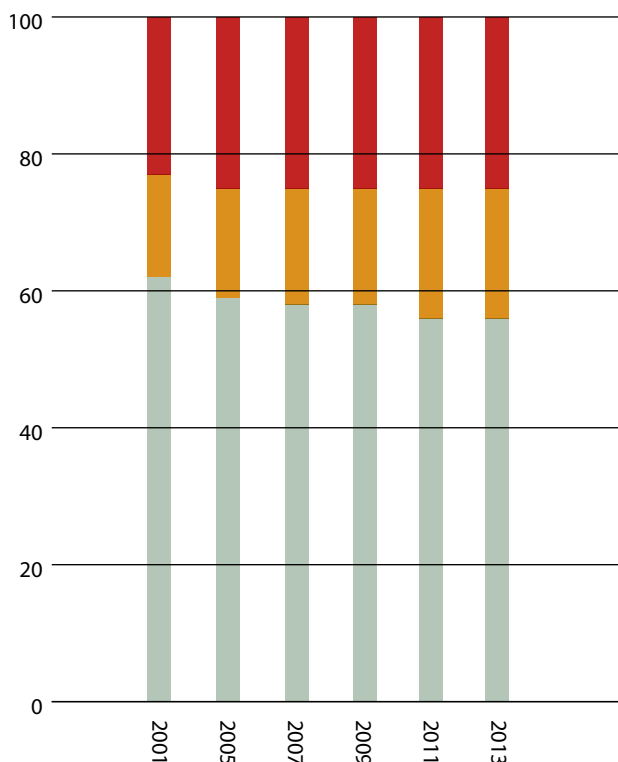
The proportion of couples with small children and the proportion of couples with older children were lower in 2011 than in 2001. During the same period, the proportion of single parents with small children declined, while the proportion of single parents with older children increased. The largest change is in how many persons live alone, accounting for 39.6 per cent of the households in 2011. Two or more-family households, both with and without children, increased from 2001 to 2011.

**Table 3.3** Family types

Households by type of household				
	2001		2011	
	Households	Per cent	Households	Per cent
Living alone	739,834	37.6	879,829	39.6
Couples without resident children	412,844	21.0	476,467	21.4
Couples with small children	224,616	11.4	230,005	10.3
Couples with older children	229,123	11.6	247,845	11.1
Mother/father with small children	34,875	1.8	34,329	1.5
Mother/father with older children	73,539	3.7	91,032	4.1
One-family households with adult children	191,264	9.7	187,475	8.4
Two or more-family households with children	18,957	1.0	28,452	1.3
Two or more-family households without children	36,178	1.8	47,966	2.2
Not in private household	7,121	0.4	-	-
	1,968,351	100	2,223,400	100

Source: Statistics Norway

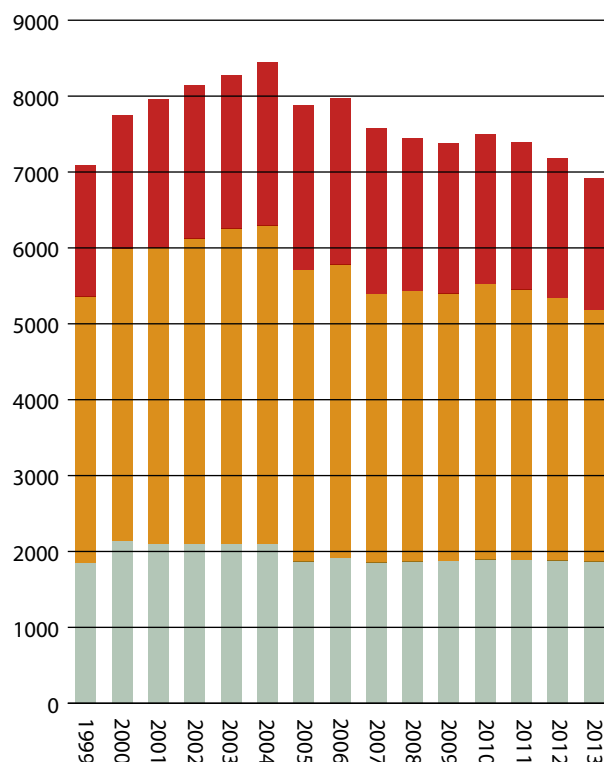
**Figure 3.7** Children 0–17 living with married parents, parents that live together or with only one of the parents



Source: Statistics Norway

- Married parents
- Parents living together
- One of the parents

**Figure 3.8** Number of divorces for couples with children under 18 year



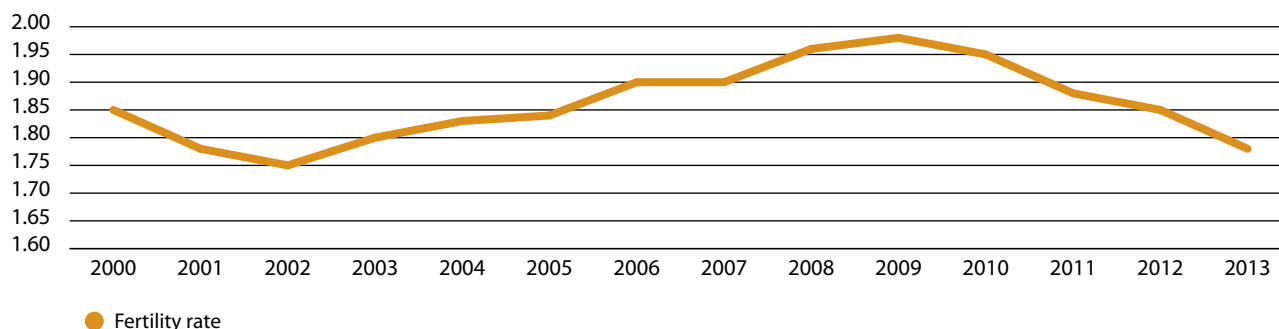
Source: Statistics Norway

- 1 child
- 2 children
- 3 or more children

The figure shows that the percentage of children aged 0–17 living with married parents has decreased in the period 2001–2013, but is still well over 50 per cent. The percentage of children with parents living together without being married as well as children living with only one of the parents has increased. About three of four children aged 0–17 are living with both of their parents (married or not).

The number of divorces for couples with children under 18 year reached a peak in 2004. In 2012 the number was almost the same as in 1999, about 7 000. Statistics Norway has no statistics on break ups of parents living together without being married, but we know from surveys that parents who are not married have a more than three times as high probability to split up as do married couples.<sup>17</sup>

**Figure 3.9** Total fertility rate women by time



**Fertility rate**

The fertility rate, which was 1.85 children per woman in 2000, peaked for this period in 2009 at 1.98. Since 2009, it has declined and, in 2013, it was lower than in 2000 at 1.78. The fertility rate for women from immigrant backgrounds has also been declining, from more than 2.5 children per woman in the years before 2000 to 2.1 children per woman in 2012. The decline has been especially strong for women with backgrounds from Asia, Africa and Latin America.<sup>18</sup>

The mean age when a woman had her first child was 27.4 in 2000. Since then, the age has been slowly increasing and, in 2013, the mean age for a woman giving birth to her first child was 28.6.

**3.5 Employment**

The employment rate among persons aged 15–74 has been stable since 2000, with only a small downward trend. In total, it has declined from 70.9 per cent in 2000 to 68.7 per cent in 2013. This decline is almost entirely caused by a reduction in the employment rate for men, while the employment rate among women has decreased less. Since the employment rate was, and still is, higher among men, this means that the gap in employment between men and women has decreased.

**Table 3.4**

Employment rate and figures (population aged 15–74)				
	2000		2013	
	Rate %	Number	Rate %	Number
Total	70.9	2,269,000	68.7	2,610,000
Males	75.1	1,212,000	71.2	1,378,000
Females	66.6	1,057,000	66.1	1,231,000
Unemployment rate and figures (population aged 15–74)				
	2000		2013	
	Rate %	Number	Rate %	Number
Total	3.4	81,000	3.5	95,000
Males	3.6	46,000	3.7	53,000
Females	3.2	35,000	3.3	42,000

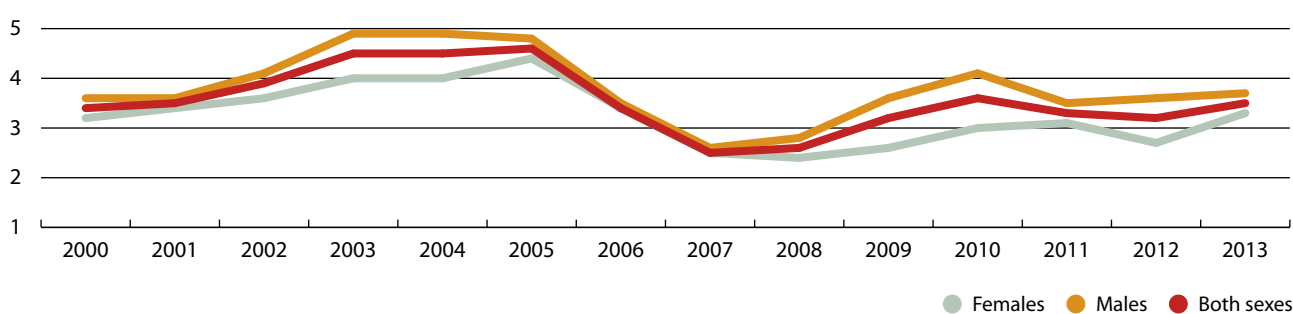
Source: Statistics Norway

### Unemployment

Since 2000, the unemployment rate has varied little. The total unemployment rate was 3.4 per cent in 2000, and 3.5 per cent in 2013, with a peak of 4.6 per cent in 2005. Unemployment was at its lowest with 2.4 per cent in 2007.

The unemployment rate has been lower for women than for men during the whole period.

Figure 3.10 Unemployment rate



Source: Statistics Norway

### Average working hours

The total average working hours per week has shown a weak, but stable downward trend since 2000. It declined from 35.1 hours per week in 2000 to 34.1 hours per week in 2013. This is in its entirety caused by a decline in the average working hours for men. In 2000, men worked 8.2 hours more per week than

women, while in 2013 the difference was reduced to 6.3 hours per week. Norwegian women have among the highest part time work-rates in Europe, 41.8 per cent versus 32.7 per cent in average in the European Union in 2012. The number for Norwegian men was 15.5 per cent and for men in EU 9.8 per cent.<sup>19</sup>

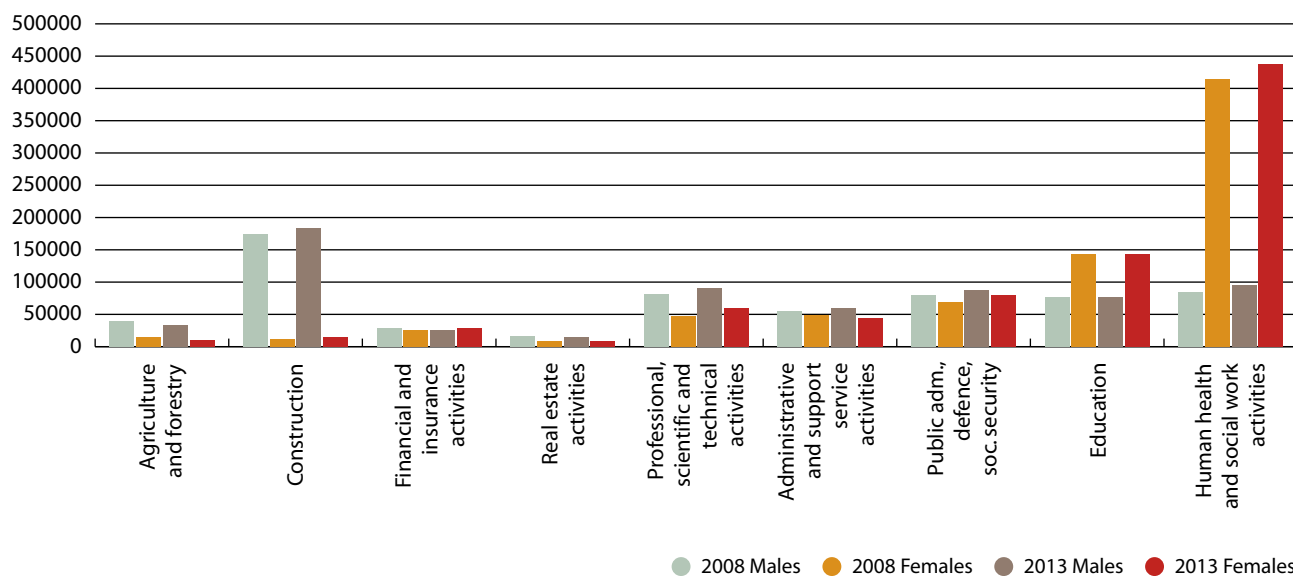
Table 3.5 Actual working hours per week

Actual working hours per week			
	Total	Males	Females
2000	35.1	38.8	30.6
2013	34.1	37.0	30.7

Source: Statistics Norway

**Figure 3.11** Main types of employment in 2013

Employed persons (LFS) (1 000 persons), by industry (SIC2007), contents, sex and time



Source: Statistics Norway

The three sectors that employed most people in 2013 were *human health and social work activities*, *education* and *construction*. These sectors also employed many people in 2000. Among the industrialized countries, Norway has one of the most gender segregated working sectors. This may seem as a paradox compared to the high degree of gender equality. Even though women have higher education on the same level as men, they are overrepresented in the health sector in particular, but also in the education sector. On average a woman's salary is 15 per cent lower than a man's.<sup>20</sup>

#### **Workforce participation by family composition**

In the period 2009–2010, mothers went back to work sooner after childbirth than in the mid-1990s. This is probably related to the increase in fathers' share of parental leave, better access to *barnehager* and lower parental fees. Seventy-five per cent of mothers in 1998–1999 were back at work about 18 months after giving birth. In 2009–2010, this was reduced to approximately 16 months.<sup>21</sup>

It takes almost twice as long before mothers return to a full-time job as to a part-time job. In 2009–2010, half of the mothers were back in a part-time job after about 15 months, while it took about 26 months before half of the mothers were back in a full-time job.<sup>22</sup>

The female labour participation rate has increased by 5 per cent since the introduction of the maximum parental fee in *barnehager* in 2004.<sup>23</sup> The effect is strongest for women with low education and low income. There was also a strong effect for women with several children who were entitled to reduced *barnehage* fees. The effect on labour participation among mothers who were already part of the labour market was small. The introduction of the maximum parental fee does not seem to have influenced the number of hours worked by mothers if they already participated in the labour market. The researchers find no effect for fathers.

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.akademikerforbundet.no/tema/politikk-s/det-kjonns/>

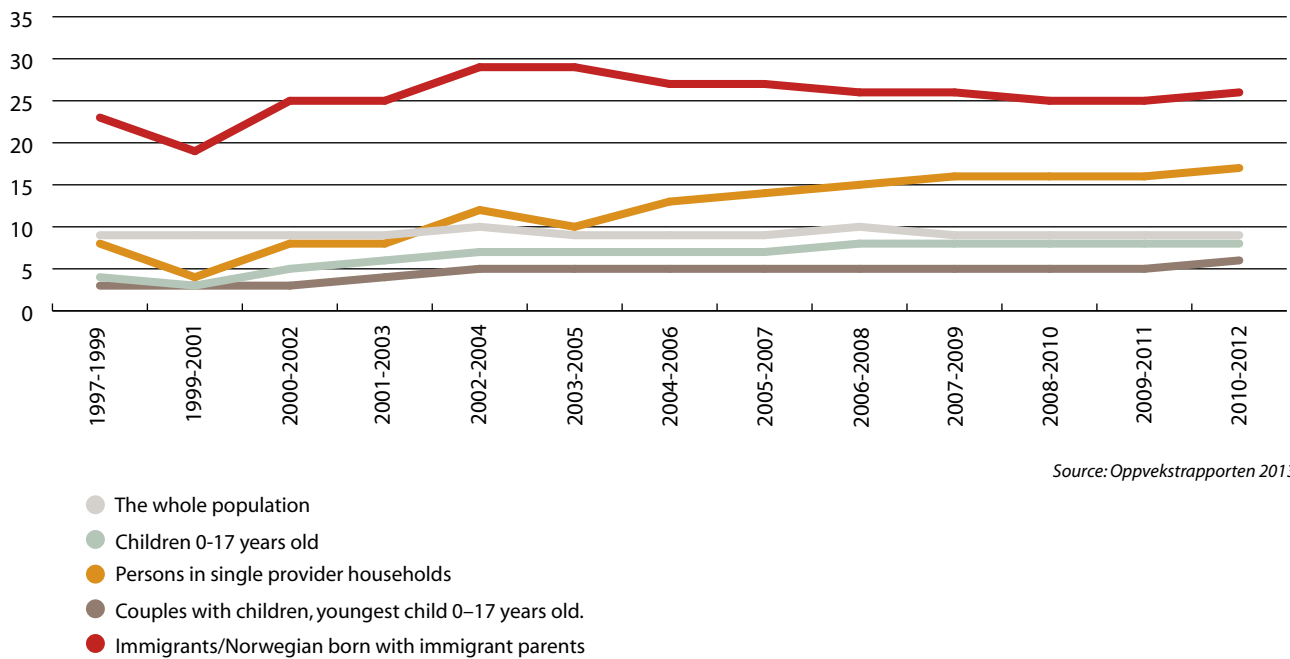
<sup>21</sup> Meld. St. 44 (2012–2013) *Likestilling kommer ikke av seg selv*

<sup>22</sup> Statistics Norway

<sup>23</sup> Hardoy & Schone 2010



**Figure 3.12** Percentage of persons with persistent low income (periods of 3 years)



### Economics

The figure shows that the percentage of children below the age of 18 in households with persistent low income has been stable the last years, about 7–8 per cent. However, the percentage of children with immigrant background in this group is steadily increasing. 25 per cent of all immigrants and Norwegian-born with immigrant parents had persistent low income in the period 2009–2011.

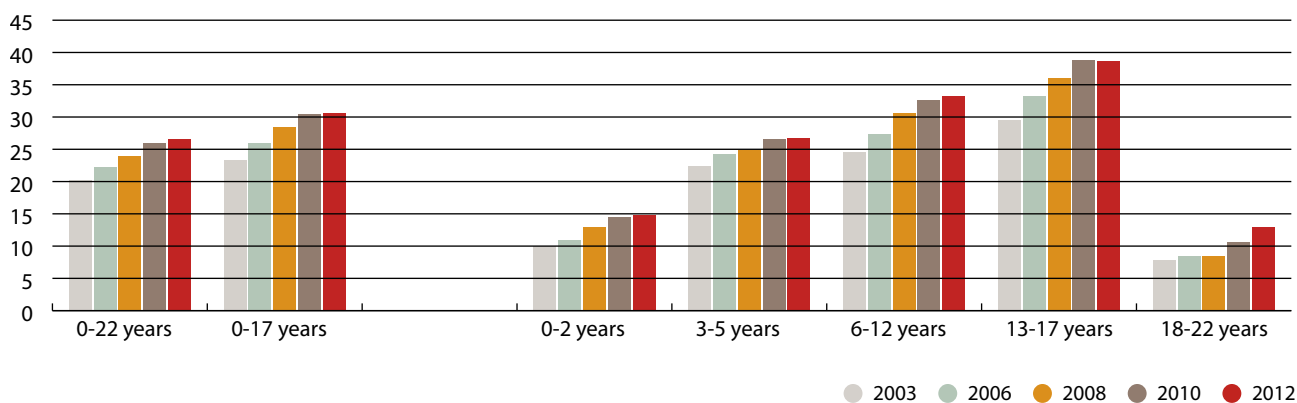
Of 74 000 children in households with persistent low income in the period 2009–2011, 34 000 had immigrant background. This is 47 per cent of all children in the low income-group, an increase from 39 per cent in the period 2004–2006.<sup>24</sup>

### The Child Welfare Service

The number of children receiving measures from the Child Welfare Services has increased for all age groups from 2003 to 2012. By the end of 2012 almost 12 per 1 000 children (0–17) had care measures. As in previous years, there were more boys than girls receiving assistance from the Child Welfare Service in 2012; in total 29 100 boys and 24 000 girls, giving a share of respectively 55 and 45 per cent. The total expenditure for the Child Welfare Services grew with NOK 1 billion from 2011 and totaled at almost NOK 9,9 billion in 2012, representing almost a 13 per cent rise. The expenditure in 2012 covers, among others, 4 375 man-years in the Child Welfare Services. In 2012 a total of 120 200 measures were registered. This was approximately a 2 per cent rise compared to 2011. The most used measure in 2012 was advice and guidance; registered 21 200 times, covering almost 40 per cent of all children with measures.

24 Oppvekstrapporten 2013

**Figure 3.13** Number of children and youth aged 0-22 (per 1000 children) receiving measures from the Child Welfare Services 2003–2012



Source: Statistics Norway

In 2012 there was a decrease in many of the more traditional measures such as: *barnehage*, leisure activity, after school support, visit home/relief home, economic assistance and person selected to support child.<sup>25</sup>

Children and young people who have immigrated to Norway, and Norwegian-born children and young people with immigrant parents, are over-represented among recipients of child welfare services. In 2013, among children and young people (aged 0–22) who have immigrated to Norway, 67 per 1,000 children received help from the child welfare service in 2009. The corresponding figure for children and young people in the rest of the population was 29 per 1,000, while it was 51 per 1,000 for Norwegian-born children with immigrant parents. In all groups, there are more boys than girls who receive help from the child welfare service.<sup>26</sup>

**Table 3.6**

Type of assistance measures administered to children/youth (0–22) in need of support through Child Welfare Service Act.	
<i>Barnehage</i>	9.5
Person selected to support child	6.8
Visit home/relief home	20.8
Home adviser/relief at home	3.3
After school support	8.9
Leisure activity	7.9
Supervision at home	2.3
Economic assistance	14.9
MST – Multisystemic treatment	0.8
PMTO – Parent Management Training	1.6
Other home-based treatment	6.2
Participation in support group	14.3
Advice and guidance	33.8
Other assistance	30
Medical examination and treatment	1.4
Treatment of children with special training needs	0.1

Source: Oppvekstrappporten 2013

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.ssb.no/en/sosiale-forhold-og-kriminalitet/statistikker/barneverng>

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.imdi.no/Documents/BrosjyrerHefterHaandbok/iFACTS2013.pdf>



## CHAPTER 4:

# Focus and goals of ECEC policies since 2000

Norway's ECEC policies interact with other educational policies, family policies, social policies and labour market policies. The main policy goals have been to provide children with good educational opportunities, to give parents the possibility of having secure care for their children while they work or study, to promote equality between the genders and to support children who are vulnerable or at risk.

### 4.1 Equal opportunities and the question of fairness – the Kindergarten Agreement of 2003

Women's increasing workforce participation from the 1970s onwards created a high demand for *barnehage* places in Norway, and demand exceeded the supply of available places. Even by year 2000 getting a place was considered equivalent to winning the lottery, and families had to find private solutions, for example relying on family members or private childminders ('day mum', *dagmamma*). Families that did get a place in a *barnehage* found that parental fees varied considerably from *barnehage* to *barnehage* and from municipality to municipality. Research indicated a situation of systematic inequality and lower participation in *barnehage* among children from low-income families and immigrant families. Private *barnehage* providers played an important role in meeting local needs, but public funding was inequitably distributed, and this led to higher parental fees in private *barnehager* than in public *barnehager*. The unfairness of the system was evident. The question of universal provision became more and more pressing. The inequalities that existed in terms of accessibility, funding and costs were such that broad political agreement was seen as appropriate. Members of the *Storting* demanded new solutions, and the outcome

of the parliamentary debate was a broad political agreement across all parties on financial and legal changes in the sector: the Kindergarten Agreement of 2003.

#### The Kindergarten Agreement

The details of the process leading to the Kindergarten Agreement are as follows: In 2002, four of the political parties sitting in opposition in the *Storting* took the initiative to reform the financing of the ECEC sector.<sup>27</sup> Public funding from the State and municipalities was to be increased to cover 80 per cent of the costs. Parental fees were to be reduced correspondingly and a maximum parental fee was to be introduced. The Government was asked to propose how this reform could be carried out. In 2003, the Government (Bondevik II, consisting of the Conservative Party, the Christian Democratic Party and the Liberal Party) presented St.meld. nr. 24 (2002–2003) *Barnehagetilbud til alle – økonomi, mangfold og valgfrihet* (White Paper no 24 (2002–2003) *Kindergartens for all – economy, diversity and freedom of choice*). In addition, the Government submitted a bill amending the Kindergarten Act.

27 The political parties were: Arbeiderpartiet (the Labour Party), Sosialistisk Venstreparti (the Socialist Left Party), Senterpartiet (the Centre Party) and Fremskrittspartiet (the Progress Party).

The outcome of the parliamentary debate was a broad political agreement on changes to the financial and legal framework for the sector, referred to as the Kindergarten Agreement (*Barnehageforliket*) of 2003. The main objectives were universal provision of *barnehage* places and reduced parental fees. The means consisted of strengthening municipal responsibility for the ECEC sector and increased state financing. The agreement laid the foundation for an intense period of ensuring universal provision through establishment of new kindergartens and kindergarten places. It entailed the introduction of an individual statutory right to a place in *barnehage* for all children aged 1–5, regulated maximum parental fees and an obligation for the municipalities to provide funding for private *barnehager*. The aim was that lack of places and families' economical situation would no longer decide whether a child could benefit from the educational provision in *barnehager*.

To reach the goal of full access, the Government increased the state grants that cover both operating costs and investment costs. State funding was tripled between 2003 and 2011, cf. Chapter 7.1. Regulations on maximum parental fees entered into force in 2004. An individual, statutory right to a place in a *barnehage* (ordinary *barnehage* or *familiebarnehage*) was introduced and entered into force in 2009. Reports from the County Governors, (most recently in September 2014), show that all children with an individual right have their rights fulfilled.

Before 2003, all *barnehager* received earmarked state grants for running costs, but municipalities were not obliged to fund private providers, thus fees were higher for parents using private *barnehager* because they had to cover a higher percentage of the costs than parents in public *barnehager*.<sup>28</sup> At the same time, private *barnehager* had lower running costs because staff pay and pension costs were lower and because private *barnehager* had fewer children with special needs.<sup>29</sup>

In 2003, a law was passed requiring equal treatment of public and private providers with regard to public funding. Ideally, equal treatment will mean that private *barnehager* receive 100 per cent of the average public grant for public *barnehager*. From 2005 to 2013, this percentage increased from 85 to 96 per cent, and from August 2014, the percentage has increased to 98 per cent of the public funding received by public *barnehager*. All political parties agree on the goal of increasing the funding to 100 per cent in future.

The Kindergarten Agreement of 2003 has had a major impact on children's participation in ECEC:

- 97 000 more children have a place in a *barnehage* in 2013 than in 2000.
- Coverage has increased from 62 per cent in 2000 to 90 per cent in 2013 for children aged between 1 and 5 years.
- For children aged 1–2, participation has more than doubled, from 37 per cent in 2000 to 80 per cent in 2013.
- 30 000 more staff work in *barnehager* in 2013 than in 2003.<sup>30</sup>
- Parental fees have decreased by 33 per cent from 2005 to 2014.
- Disparities in participation between low-income and high-income families have been substantially reduced.<sup>31</sup>

28 ECON-rapport 04/03

29 Fürst & Høverstad 2003

30 Staff working with the children, not janitors, cleaners, administrative staff etc.

31 Sæther 2010

## 4.2 Educational policies – *barnehager* as part of the educational system

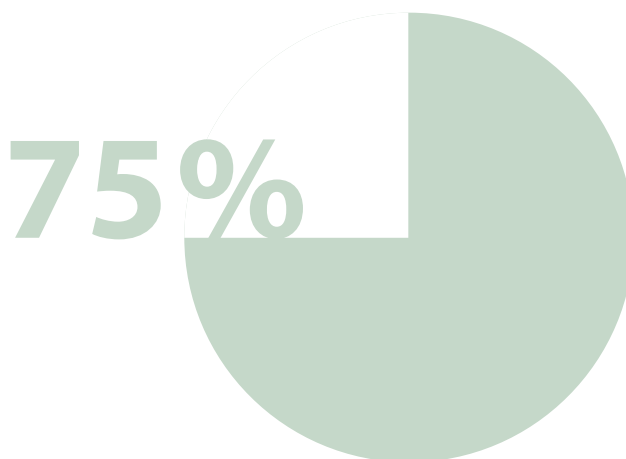
Educational policies have played a major role in developing the Norwegian economy, and they will be even more important in the years to come. It is estimated that human capital constitutes around 75 per cent of Norway's national wealth.<sup>32</sup>

In Norway, responsibility for the *barnehage* sector (legislation, funding and policy) was transferred from the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs to the Ministry of Education and Research in 2006. Through this transfer, the Government acknowledged the role of *barnehager* as the first step in a lifelong learning process and as part of an active policy to reduce inequality in society. At the same time, the uniqueness of the *barnehager*, encompassing as they do both education and care, has been affirmed. The Ministry of Education and Research now has responsibility for *barnehage* as well as for schools and teacher education. Since 2012, the Directorate for Education and Training has also had responsibility for *barnehager* in addition to primary, secondary and vocational education and training at the national level. At the regional level, the County Governors have responsibility for both schools and *barnehager*.

The Kindergarten Act of 2005 and a revised *Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens* entered into force in 2006, cf. Chapters 5.1.1 and 9.2.1. A new purpose clause for *barnehager* entered into force on 1 August 2010 (Section 1 of the Kindergarten Act), cf. Chapter 6.1.

The purpose clause has the same structure and expresses the same fundamental values as the purpose clause for schools and vocational training. This shall contribute to greater coherence between *barnehager*, schools and training establishments. The purpose clause still reflects the uniqueness of *barnehager*. Democratic values, respect, inclusion and gender equality, are shared values. Education in both *barnehager* and schools shall promote the children's creativity, sense of wonder and search for knowledge. Norway has also established a clear link between the Framework Plan and the Curriculum for Primary Schools. The Framework Plan emphasises care and play, learning and formation ('bildung'), and describes seven learning areas that children should become acquainted with in *barnehager*. The seven learning areas are largely the same as those that children will encounter as subjects/curriculum areas at school, cf. Chapter 9.2.1.

The *Storting* has on several occasions unanimously underlined the importance of high-quality *barnehager* for all children, cf. Chapter 4.7. All children should have access to high-quality *barnehager* that ensure that they are cared for and have an opportunity to play and learn in different ways in a safe and stimulating environment. Today, Norway has almost universal participation in ECEC for children aged 1–5. Legislation, governance and staff competence in *barnehager* should ensure a good childhood for all.



32 Statistics Norway (2014)

## 4.3 Family policies – freedom of choice for parents

### 4.3.1 Parental leave and parental benefit

Flexible and coherent solutions are beneficial to parents, work life and society, but also to the child. From 1993, Norway has offered a universal 42 weeks of parental leave at 100 per cent of the mother's earnings, or 52 weeks at 80 per cent. From 1 July 2005, the period was increased by one week to 43/53 weeks. When the mother does qualify for parental benefits, i.e. has been in paid employment or equivalent activity in six of the ten last months before giving birth and her income exceeds half of the National Insurance Scheme's basic amount, both parents will have the right to a paid parental leave. A one month's 'use-it-or-lose-it paternity leave' was included in the parental leave quota in 1993. Since 2006 the number of weeks reserved for fathers has increased successively in 2006, 2009, 2011 and 2013. In 2013 mothers and fathers could receive 100 per cent of parental benefits for a period of 49 weeks or 80 per cent for a period of 59 weeks. The mother had to take her leave at least 3 weeks immediately before giving birth and at least 14 weeks directly after giving birth. In addition to this, the father had to take at least 14 weeks (the so-called paternal quota). The remainder of the benefits could be shared between the mother and the father. The current Government (Solberg) wishes to increase the freedom of choice for parents, so that the number of weeks that can be shared between the parents based upon their own choice was increased by 8 weeks and the paternal and maternal quota reduced to 10 weeks for each, and the mother has to take at least six weeks directly after giving birth. The total number of weeks was not reduced, and the mother still has to take 3 weeks leave before giving birth.

The parental benefit is calculated on the income of the parent who takes the leave. Parents do not receive benefit for the part of their income that exceeds six times the National Insurance basic amount. Mothers who do not qualify for parental benefit based on income receive a lump sum grant. This grant has increased from NOK 32 138 in 2000 to NOK 37 750 from 2014.

### 4.3.2 The cash-for-care benefit scheme

The Act relating to cash-for-care benefit for parents with small children (*kontantstøtteleven*) came into force on 1 August 1998 for families with one-year-olds, and it was expanded to include two-year-olds in 1999. This act conferred a right to receive a cash grant per month for a parent who either

- cares for a child at home (the intention of the policy), or
- has a child with a part-time place in *barnehage*, or
- places a child with a childminder that does not receive state grants (e.g. with a relative or in informal childcare).

The former Government (Stoltenberg II) wanted to reduce the use of cash-for-care benefit as a means of encouraging more women to take employment outside the home and more children to attend *barnehager*.<sup>33</sup> Changes were made so that, from 1 August 2012, the cash-for-care benefit could only be paid to parents with children aged one year, compared to the previous rule that stipulated that parents of one-year-olds and two-year-olds could receive the benefit. The maximum benefit period for each child was reduced from 23 to 11 months. The reduced cash-for-care benefit rate was also changed at the same time. Only full or half cash-for-care benefit would be paid. In order to give families freedom of choice and flexibility the present Government (Solberg) decided to increase the cash-for-care benefit for one-year-olds.<sup>34</sup> From 1 August 2014, the full rate is increased to NOK 6 000 per month. The half cash-for-care benefit will be NOK 3 000 per month. For more information, cf. Chapter 7.2.3.

33 Prop. 1 S (2011–2012) Barne-, likestillings- og inkluderingsdepartementet

34 Agreement between the Liberal Party, the Christian Democratic Party, the Progress Party and the Conservative Party 2013

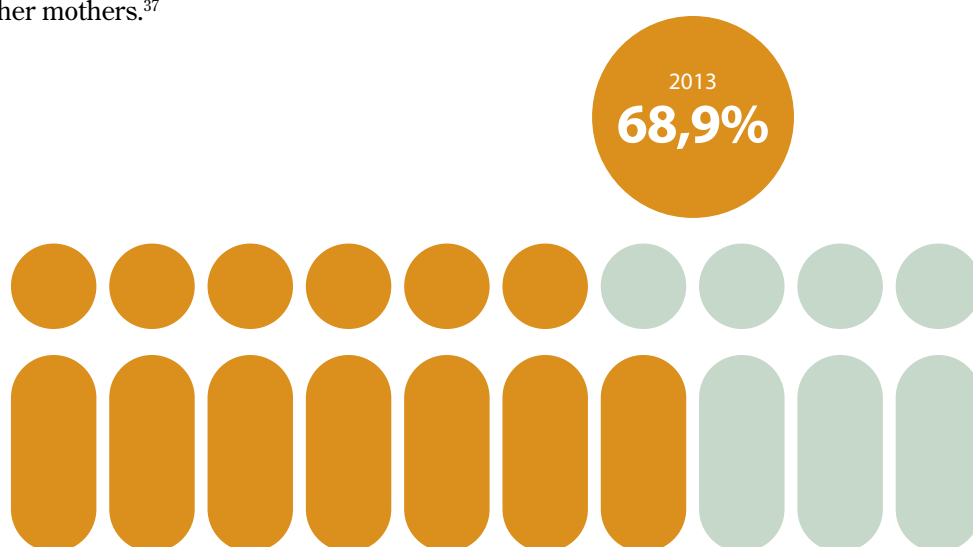
#### 4.4 Labour market and social policies

Female workforce participation, the integration of ethnic minorities, combatting child poverty and unequal opportunities for children from low-income families are all important considerations underlying ECEC policies, and they are issues that politicians continually discuss. The political disagreement on the cash-for-care benefit scheme is a good illustration. On the one hand, it can be argued that families should have freedom of choice as to whether parents should be able to stay at home with small children, while, on the other hand, it can be argued that putting resources into the cash-for-care benefit scheme can hinder the participation of women in worklife and children in *barnehage*. Concern has been linked to excluding children who would benefit the most by participating in *barnehager* and excluding women from work life. A study from 2005 showed that the cash-for-care benefit scheme seems to have decreased the work participation rate for parents, especially mothers, from 1998 to 2002.<sup>35</sup> A study from 2008 found a negative effect on work participation, especially among women with non-western background.<sup>36</sup> A study from 2012 showed that 50 per cent of mothers who reduced their working time as a result of the cash-for-care benefit scheme had not returned to 100 per cent working time when the child was four years old. Mothers with the highest education and the highest salaries started to work 100 per cent earlier than the other mothers.<sup>37</sup>

Statistics indicate that *barnehage* participation among one year olds has decreased slightly the last two years, from a coverage of 70.9 per cent in 2011 to 69.6 per cent in 2012 and 68.9 per cent in 2013.

As mentioned in Chapter 4.3.2 the present Government (Solberg) has recently strengthened the cash-for-care benefit scheme in order to support parental choice.

Working parents with children of the age of 0–12 are entitled to leave of absence on full pay when a child or the childminder is ill. Each parent has a right to stay at home for a maximum of 10 days (if you have one or two children) or 15 days (if you have three or more children) per year. Single parents can be absent for a maximum of 20 days (one or two children) or 30 days (three or more children) per year. If the child has a chronic illness, the absence can be extended.



35 Rønsen 2005

36 Hardoy & Schøne 2008

37 Drange 2012



## 4.5 The role of social partners in ECEC policy development

Private organisations, parent groups, parishes and other non-profit organisations have a long tradition of running *barnehager* in Norway. In addition, corporations and private *barnehage* chains provide *barnehage* places. There are different kinds of cooperation between the municipalities and the private *barnehage* owners.

At the national level, the main stakeholders are:

- the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (*KS*), representing the municipalities
- the National Association of Private Kindergartens (*Private Barnehagers Landsforbund*)
- the Norwegian Union of Teachers (*Utdanningsforbundet*)
- the National Parents' Committee (*FUB*)
- the Sámi Parliament (*Samediggi/Sametinget*)

These stakeholders have regular bilateral meetings at the political and administrative level with the Ministry of Education and Research. In addition the Minister and Ministry when needed can invite a broader set of stakeholders to join in discussions on policy development in the *barnehage* sector. Other stakeholders are the Union for *barnehage* assistants (*Fagforbundet*), other employer and staff organisations, the National Council for Teacher Education (NRLU), The National Research Council (NFR), the National Union of Students in Norway and more.

All the above-mentioned non-governmental organisations are consultation partners for the Ministry in important matters concerning ECEC, for example proposed legislative amendments or design and implementation of national strategies for raising competence in the sector.

## 4.6 White papers and official Norwegian reports concerning ECEC since 2000

Since 2000, a number of policy documents presented to the *Storting*, as well as reports from public commissions, have advised the Government on the future development of *barnehager*. The most important are:

### White Paper no 27 (1999–2000) *Kindergartens for the benefit of children and parents*<sup>38</sup>

This white paper was presented by the Bondevik I Government. It addressed the need for more places in *barnehager* (the coverage was 61 per cent) and the need for further discussion on the topic of quality in *barnehager*.

### White Paper no 24 (2002–2003) *Kindergarten provision for all – economy, diversity and freedom of choice*<sup>39</sup>

This white paper was presented by the Bondevik II Government as a result of the Kindergarten Agreement reached by the *Storting* in 2003. It addressed questions relating to municipalities' obligation to ensure universal service provision, maximum parental fees and equal treatment of private and public *barnehager* as regards public financing.

### White Paper no 16 (2006–2007) *Early interventions for lifelong learning*.<sup>40</sup>

This white paper was presented by the Stoltenberg I Government. It described education as a means to reduce differences in society, giving all the same possibility to develop themselves and their abilities. Early intervention through accessible early childhood education and care for all and language stimulation for all children in need of directed support were discussed in the paper.

38 St.meld. nr. 27 (1999–2000) *Barnehage til beste for barn og foreldre*.

39 St.meld. nr. 24 (2002–2003) *Barnehagetilbud til alle – økonomi, mangfold og valgfrihet*.

40 St.meld. nr. 16 (2006–2007) ... og ingen sto igjen. Tidlig innsats og livslang læring. [http://www.regjeringen.no/Rpub/STM/20062007/016EN/PDFS/STM200620070016000EN\\_PDFS.pdf](http://www.regjeringen.no/Rpub/STM/20062007/016EN/PDFS/STM200620070016000EN_PDFS.pdf)

### **Official Norwegian Report NOU 2007:6**

#### **Objectives for the future<sup>41</sup>**

A public commission (Bostad-utvalget) was appointed in 2006 to propose a new purpose clause for *barnehager* and primary and secondary schools, cf. Chapters 5.1.1, 5.1.3 and Chapter 6.1. The report NOU 2007:6 *Formål for framtida. Formål for barnehagen og opplæringen* ('Purpose for the future. Purpose for the kindergarden and the education') was submitted to the Government in June 2007.

### **White Paper no 23 (2007–2008)**

#### **Language provides a bridge<sup>42</sup>**

This white paper on language learning in education included a chapter on early childhood. The paper pointed to the need for a holistic approach in municipalities to support children's language development and learning both in *barnehager* and other services. The report included discussions on the quality of mapping tools in use and suggested a follow-up study.

### **White Paper no 41 (2008–2009)**

#### **Quality in Kindergartens<sup>43</sup>**

This white paper was presented by the Stoltenberg II Government. It focused exclusively on the quality of *barnehager* in Norway. Three main aims were presented:

- ensuring equity and high quality in all *barnehager*
- strengthening *barnehager* as an arena for learning and development
- making sure that all children have an opportunity to participate actively in a safe and inclusive *barnehage* environment

The white paper described the status and challenges in this field and proposed actions to promote the development of high and equitable quality in all *barnehager*. Pending the white paper, several public commissions were appointed:

### **Official Norwegian report NOU 2009:18**

#### **Rett til læring**

A public commission (Midtlyng-utvalget) was appointed in 2007 to propose measures to ensure better education and learning for children, young people and adults in need of special educational assistance and support. The report NOU 2009:18 *Rett til læring* ('Right to learning') was submitted to the Government in July 2009.

### **Official Norwegian report NOU 2010:7**

#### **Mangfold og mestring**

A public commission (Østberg-utvalget) was appointed in 2008 to propose measures to ensure equal education (including ECEC) for minority language children, youth and adults. The report NOU 2010:7 *Mangfold og mestring* ('Multitude and mastering') was submitted to the Government in June 2010, cf. Chapter 9.2.5.

### **Official Norwegian report NOU 2010:8**

#### **Med forskertrang og lekelyst**

A public commission (Brenna-utvalget) was appointed in 2009 to propose measures to ensure high-quality structured ECEC for all children. The report NOU 2010:8 *Med forskertrang og lekelyst* ('Keen to explore, eager to play') was submitted to the Government in October 2010.

41 NOU 2007:6 Formål for framtida <http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/KD/Vedlegg/NOU/NOU%202007%20English%20Final.pdf>

42 St.meld. nr. 23 (2007–2008) *Språk bygger broer. Språkstimulering og språkopplæring for barn, unge og voksne.*

43 St.meld. nr. 41 (2008–2009) *Kvalitet i barnehagen.* <http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/KD/Vedlegg/Barnehager/Kvalitesmeldingen/FactsheetSTMeld41.pdf>

### White Paper no 18 (2010–2011)

#### *Learning together*<sup>44</sup>

The white paper was presented by the Stoltenberg II Government. It focuses on inclusion and on early intervention for better development and learning throughout the educational system (including *barnehager*). The objectives are aimed to create motivation and prevent problems through good learning environments for all, to meet the diversity of children's and pupil's circumstances and abilities through adapted education and to develop realistic goals, specific measures and good assessment routines in the special needs education.

### Official Norwegian report NOU 2012:1

#### *Til barnas beste*

A public commission (*Barnehagelovutvalget* – the Kindergarten Act Commission) was appointed in 2010 to give advice on the management of the sector and on amending the Kindergarten Act. The report NOU 2012:1 *Til barnas beste* ('For the benefit of the children') was submitted to the Government in January 2012.

### White Paper no 24 (2012–2013)

#### *Kindergartens for the Future*<sup>45</sup>

This white paper was presented by the Stoltenberg II Government. It laid a further foundation for policy in the ECEC field by upholding the three overall goals in White Paper no 41. Forty initiatives were proposed to contribute to even and equal quality in *barnehager*.

Some of the proposals in White Paper no 24 (2012–2013):

- that 'the best interests of the child' shall be included as a primary concern in all *barnehage* legislation,
- that children be given a right to a well-suited physical and psychosocial environment,
- that the Kindergarten Act and pertaining regulations should be reviewed,
- that the *Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens* should be revised,
- that new regulations for the staff to children ratio be introduced, setting the standard at one staff member for every three children under three years of age and one staff member for every six children over three years of age.

44 St.meld. nr. 18 (2010–2011) *Læring og fellesskap. Tidlig innsats og gode læringsmiljøer for barn, unge og voksne med særlige behov.*  
[http://www.regjeringen.no/pages/36358638/PDFS/STM201020110018000EN\\_PDFS.pdf](http://www.regjeringen.no/pages/36358638/PDFS/STM201020110018000EN_PDFS.pdf)

45 Meld. St. 24 (2012–2013) *Framtidens barnehage.*  
[http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/KD/Vedlegg/Barnehager/Rapporter%20og%20planer/Faktablad\\_Framtidens\\_barnehage.pdf](http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/KD/Vedlegg/Barnehager/Rapporter%20og%20planer/Faktablad_Framtidens_barnehage.pdf)

## 4.7 Broad political agreement on the importance of high-quality *barnehager*

The *Storting* had the following unanimous comments in 2010 on White Paper no 41 (2008–2009) *Quality in Barnehager*:

‘All children deserve good *barnehage* provision. (...) The standing committee is of the opinion that all children must be ensured a safe and sound childhood environment with good opportunities for development, and that giving priority to children, education and research is one of the most important things we can do as a society. This is important to each citizen’s opportunity to make the most of his or her abilities, to create a future for him/herself and to ensure that we as a society have the competence we will need in future.’<sup>46</sup>

The *Storting* had the following unanimous comments in 2013 on White Paper no 24 (2012–2013) *Kindergartens for the Future*:

‘The standing committee is of the opinion that a good *barnehage* shall fill many roles. It shall be a flexible welfare service and a good childhood arena for children. The committee is therefore of the opinion that improving the quality of *barnehager* is an important task in the time ahead. (...) The committee would like to emphasise the value of the Norwegian *barnehage* tradition, where the intrinsic value of childhood and children’s opportunity to play freely are ensured.

Children should be met with trust and respect so that they can develop in a safe and secure environment. Day-to-day life in *barnehager* should be characterised by safety, care, playing and learning. A *barnehage* must be a safe and good place for young children, a place where children develop through play, interaction with others and expressing themselves creatively.

The committee would like to point out that it is important to ensure good quality *barnehager* for all children throughout the country. The committee assumes that equal treatment of children and *barnehager* will require common standards to ensure good and equal *barnehage* provision.’<sup>47</sup>

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46 Innst. 162 S (2009–2010)

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47 Innst. 380 S (2012–2013)



Du er en luv  
Albert Abe



## CHAPTER 5:

# Governance of ECEC

### 5.1 Changes in governance at the national level

#### 5.1.1 A new Kindergarten Act from 2006

After the Kindergarten Agreement in 2003 substantial adjustments were made to legislation and funding processes as Norway moved towards universal access to ECEC services for all children aged one to six. In parallel with the development of universal service provision, measures were taken to assess and evaluate the Kindergarten Act of 1995 in order to make the law a tool for creating and ensuring good quality ECEC services. In mid-2004, an expert group appointed by the former Ministry of Children and Family Affairs, consisting of researchers, various partners in the field and ECEC field participants reported on necessary amendments to the Kindergarten Act and the *Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens*. The group also addressed responsibilities and duties at different levels and assessed the need for documentation and information sharing across different levels. Another expert group was appointed to propose a revised Framework Plan.

From 1 January 2006, the new Kindergarten Act of 2005 replaced the 1995 Kindergarten Act.<sup>48</sup> The main changes were the introduction of children's right to participation in accordance with the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child (incorporated in Norwegian law from 2003), and a new and expanded Section 2 concerning the content of *barnehager*.

The former Kindergarten Act of 1995 had been subject to a number of amendments – not least after the Kindergarten Agreement in 2003 on funding of the sector and parental fees. The new Kindergarten Act of 2005 adjusted the division of responsibility between the different administrative levels and clarified the municipalities' role as *barnehage* authority. The most substantial change was that the County Governors were assigned responsibility for ensuring that the municipalities carry out their responsibilities as the authority for *barnehager*, leaving responsibility for inspecting and supervising the ECEC institutions to the municipality as local authority. Regulations to the Kindergarten Act on *familiebarnehager*, on the staffing of *barnehager*, on police certificates etc. were retained, cf. Chapter 6.1. From 1 January 2009, by an amendment to the Act, a statutory right to a place in ECEC for all children over the age of one came into force. The municipalities are obliged to provide a *barnehage* place from August for children who reach the age of one no later than by the end of August in the year a *barnehage* place has been applied for.

From 1 August 2010, the new purpose clause for *barnehager* entered into force, cf. Chapters 4.6, 5.1.3 and 6.1. The purpose clause has the same structure and expresses the same fundamental values as the purpose clause for schools and vocational training. This is in order to contribute to greater coherence between *barnehager* and primary education. The purpose clause still reflects the uniqueness of *barnehager*.

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48 Lov 17. juni 2005 nr. 64 om *barnehager* (*barnehageloven*)

### 5.1.2 A revised *Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens* in 2006

The *Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens* is a regulation issued pursuant to the Kindergarten Act. It sets out guidelines for *barnehager* concerning their values and purpose, curricular goals and educational approaches, cf. Chapter 9.2.1. The Framework Plan was revised in 2005–2006 on the basis of suggestions from an expert group, and after a public consultation among stakeholders in the ECEC field, such as owners, parents, educators, researchers, other ministries, organisations and administrative bodies at various levels. The revised Framework Plan was laid down by the Ministry of Education and Research on 1 March 2006 and entered into force from August 2006. The holistic educational philosophy, with care, play and learning at the core of the activities was reaffirmed, cf. Chapter 9.2.1.

Following the new purpose clause in the Kindergarten Act, a minor revision was made on 10 January 2011.

### 5.1.3 Transfer of responsibility for the *barnehage* sector in 2006

In 2006, responsibility for the *barnehage* sector was transferred from the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs to the Ministry of Education and Research. Through this transfer, the Government wished to acknowledge *barnehager* as the first step in a lifelong learning process and as part of an active policy to reduce differences in society. Transferring responsibility for ECEC to the Ministry of Education and Research is intended to contribute to greater coherence between educational institutions for children.

Also to this end, a public commission (Bostad-utvalget) appointed in 2006 submitted a unanimous report proposing new purposes for *barnehager* and primary and secondary schools (NOU 2007:6 *Formål for framtid*, 'Purpose for the future'). The legislation on new purposes was adopted by the *Storting* in 2008, cf. Chapter 6.1. While the purposes have the same structure and express the same fundamental values and include many of the same elements, they are adapted to the distinctive nature of *barnehager* and school, respectively.

The Ministry is the national authority for all *barnehager*. The municipalities are the local authority in relation to both public and private *barnehager*. The Kindergarten Act of 2005, which entered into force in 2006, amended the legislation by better defining the responsibilities of owners (Section 7), the municipality (Section 8) and the County Governors (Section 9). Approval, supervision and guidance of *barnehager* are the responsibility of the municipality, while the County Governors are tasked with ensuring that the municipalities carry out their responsibilities as the local *barnehage* authority, cf. Chapter 10.

### 5.1.4 Delegated responsibility for the ECEC sector in 2012

The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (Utdanningsdirektoratet) was established 15 June 2004 as an executive agency for the Ministry of Education and Research. The Directorate has approximately 300 employees today. Since its establishment the Directorate has been responsible for tasks relating to primary and secondary education. In 2012, the Directorate was delegated responsibility for many important tasks in the *barnehage* sector. The objective of this delegation of responsibility is as follows:

- to strengthen the efforts to further improve quality in the *barnehage* sector
- to improve the connections between *barnehage* and primary education

The objective of the Directorate is to ensure that all children, pupils and apprentices receive the high quality education they are entitled to.

The Directorate has the overall responsibility for supervising the ECEC sector, the primary and secondary education sector and the County Governors' governance of these sectors, as well as the implementation of Acts of Parliament and regulations. The Directorate is responsible for managing the Norwegian Support System for Special Education (Statped), state-owned schools and the educational direction of the National Education Centres.

## THE NATIONAL EDUCATION CENTRES

The National Education Centres support the Ministry of Education and Research and the Directorate for Education and Training in the implementation of the national education policy. The centres are organized under a university or a university college, but the Directorate is responsible for the professional governing and follow-up of the centres. The universities and

university colleges are as host organisations responsible for the administrative governing of the centres. The centres provides the *barnehager* and schools with guidance, good examples and technical resources on their web sites. In addition some of the centres arrange conferences for *barnehage* staff and school teachers which contributes to higher competence.

### The ten National Education Centres are:

- The National Centre for Multicultural Education at Oslo and Akershus University College<sup>1</sup>
- The National Centre for Art and Culture at Nordland University College<sup>2</sup>
- The National Centre for foreign languages at Østfold University College<sup>3</sup>
- The Norwegian Centre for Mathematics Education at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology<sup>4</sup>
- The Norwegian Centre for Science Education at Oslo University<sup>5</sup>
- The National Centre for Reading at Stavanger University<sup>6</sup>
- The National Centre for Writing at Sør-Trøndelag University College<sup>7</sup>
- The National Centre for *Nynorsk* at Volda University College<sup>8</sup>
- The National Centre for Learning Environment at Stavanger University<sup>9</sup>
- The National Centre for Nutrition, Health and Physical activity at Bergen University College<sup>10</sup>

The Norwegian Centre for ICT<sup>11</sup> in Education<sup>12</sup> is an independent national centre governed directly from the Ministry of Education and Research, and not by the Directorate.

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- 1 Nasjonalt senter for flerkulturell opplæring (NAFO) ved Høgskolen i Oslo og Akershus
  - 2 Kunst- og kultursenteret ved Høgskolen i Nordland
  - 3 Fremmedspråksenteret ved Høgskolen i Østfold,
  - 4 Matematikksenteret ved Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet
  - 5 Naturfagsenteret ved Universitetet i Oslo
  - 6 Lesesenteret ved Universitetet i Stavanger
  - 7 Skrivsesenteret ved Høgskolen i Sør-Trøndelag
  - 8 Nynorsksenteret ved Høgskolen i Volda
  - 9 Læringsmiljøsentret ved Universitetet i Stavanger
  - 10 Senter for mat, helse og fysisk aktivitet ved Høgskolen i Bergen
  - 11 Information and Communication Technology
  - 12 Senter for IKT i utdanningen

Through professional efforts, national development initiatives, legislative and financial measures, guidance, information and dialogue, the Directorate shall contribute to ensuring that national educational policies are being implemented and further developed. Assessing and developing the quality of *barnehager* are other important tasks. The Directorate is respon-

sible for governing of the National Centres in Education, and for collaboration with the Norwegian Centre for ICT<sup>49</sup> in Education.<sup>50</sup>

- 
- 49 Information and Communication Technology
  - 50 Senter for IKT i utdanningen



The Directorate is responsible for all national statistics concerning *barnehage*, primary and secondary education. This includes presenting and analysing statistics to the sectors. Since 2012 the publication *Utdanningsspeilet* (‘the Education Mirror’) includes relevant and updated statistics as well as current research findings on *barnehager* in Norway.<sup>51</sup> The Directorate initiates, develops and monitors research and development. As part of dissemination of research to the *barnehage* sector the Directorate has started issuing a publication called VETUVA. (“Do you know”)

The Directorate is responsible for the following tasks in relation to the ECEC sector:

- Administration of the 18 County Governors in the ECEC context
- Supervision (through the County Governors) of the municipalities as *barnehage* authority
- Interpretation of and guidance on questions concerning the Kindergarten Act and regulations
- Administration of earmarked state grants
- Administration of the Norwegian Support System for Special Education at the national level

## 5.2 Changes in governance at the decentralised level

### 5.2.1 The municipality’s role as *barnehage* authority

The municipality has a dual role in the ECEC sector. Firstly, a municipality can be the owner of one or several public *barnehager*. Secondly, all municipalities are the official *barnehage* authority at the decentralised level. Pursuant to the Kindergarten Act, municipalities as *barnehage* authority are responsible for the following tasks:

- Approval of *barnehager*
- Facilitation of a coordinated admission process
- Ensuring a place in a *barnehage* for children with an individual statutory right
- Ensuring a place in *barnehage* for children who have priority rights in connection with admissions
- Paying municipal grants to approved non-municipal *barnehager*
- Ensuring that provisions are in place for parental fees, including discounts for siblings, income-based differentiation of payment and maximum payments
- Supervision and inspections of both public and private *barnehager*

As mentioned, after 2000, substantial adjustments were made to legislation and funding processes as Norway moved towards universal access to ECEC services for all children under the age of six. In 2003, an amendment to the Kindergarten Act of 1995 made *barnehage* services a statutory obligation for the municipalities to provide, like health and social services. The amendment meant that all municipalities must ensure that they had enough *barnehage* places in order to offer a place in *barnehage* to all parents in the municipality who wished to enroll their child. At this point there was no corresponding individual right to a place.

51 Education Mirror 2012, 2013 and 2014, <http://www.udir.no/Stotte-menyt/English/>

Until 2004, municipalities were not obliged to fund private providers, so fees were higher for parents using private *barnehager* because they had to cover a higher percentage of the costs than parents in public *barnehager*. In 2003, a law was passed requiring equal treatment of public and private providers with regard to public funding. Ideally, equal treatment will mean that private *barnehager* receive 100 per cent of the average public grant for public *barnehager*. From 2005 to 2014, this percentage increased from 85 to 98 per cent. All political parties agree on the goal of increasing the grant to 100 per cent in future.

A maximum fee for a full-time place in all *barnehager*, whatever the age of the child, was stipulated by the *Storting* in May 2004. In the same legislation, siblings in a family are entitled to reduced fees (a 30 per cent reduction for the second child, 50 per cent for third and subsequent children). Municipalities are also obliged to have subsidy schemes for low-income families.

Until 2011, the *barnehage* owners and the municipalities received state grants from the Ministry of Education and Research earmarked specifically for *barnehager*. These grants were distributed through the County Governor of the respective county. The above-mentioned Kindergarten Agreement of 2003 laid the foundation for achieving full *barnehage* coverage. This commitment was financed by several earmarked grants in the years 2003–2010. The *Storting* decided to replace earmarked public grants with general block grants to the municipalities from 1 January 2011. An important principle in the Norwegian system is that municipalities mainly should be financed by general block grants. The local welfare services then become subjects for local political priorities, which make the local politicians responsible for local welfare decisions, and at the same time the administrative costs both at the central and local level are at their lowest. By 2011, the goal of full *barnehage* coverage had been reached and the municipalities had been given the responsibility for securing each child's individual right to a place in a *barnehage*. Since the reform of the *barnehage* sector was completed, the *Storting* decided to include the *barnehage* grants in the general grant in 2011.

## 5.2.2 The role of the County Governors

The County Governors are the chief representatives of the Government at the decentralised level. They are tasked with ensuring that the decisions of the *Storting* and the Government are implemented correctly throughout the county. There is an Office of the County Governor in all the 19 counties of Norway (the counties of Oslo and Akershus have a joint County Governor situated in Oslo. Thus, the total number is 18).

The County Governor is the first appellate body in legal matters at governmental level. When a municipality, as a result of its supervision of a *barnehage*, has ordered rectification of inadequate or unlawful conditions, the decision can be appealed to the County Governor. The same applies to an order for the temporary or permanent closure of a *barnehage*.

Until 2012, when the Directorate of Education and Training was given responsibility for implementing national policies in the *barnehage* sector, the Offices of the County Governors were alone in being tasked with implementing national policies at the local level. They were instrumental in carrying out development work in the sector in cooperation with local authorities, such as quality measures and policies for increasing access. They were also responsible for the distribution of earmarked grants for the establishment and running of *barnehager*.

The County Governor's supervisory role in relation to the municipalities as *barnehage* authorities is regulated in the Kindergarten Act. Since 2006, the Ministry decided to place greater emphasis on the supervisory role. The County Governors are also responsible for providing guidance to owners, municipalities and the general public. The County Governors are still responsible for tasks related to implementing national policies on local level, such as measures for raising the competence in the sector or for the recruitment of new kindergarten teachers.

Since 2012, the Directorate for Education and Training has been responsible for overseeing the work of the 18 County Governors in relation to ECEC and, through them, being responsible for the supervision of municipalities as *barnehage* authorities, cf. Chapter 10.



## CHAPTER 6:

# ECEC programmes and provision

### 6.1 Ideas, thoughts and values that underpin the ECEC programme

The Nordic *barnehage* model is characterised by its holistic approach to children and childhood, play and learning. The 2005 Kindergarten Act stipulates that *barnehager* should be ‘pedagogical undertakings’ offering children ‘opportunities for play, self-expression, ‘imparting values and cultures’ and helping to ensure that ‘all children experience joy and the ability to cope in a social and cultural community’, whilst also supporting families in the care and the upbringing of their children. The holistic approach is reflected in the Kindergarten Act’s purpose clause, which entered into force on 1 August 2010:

#### Section 1. Purpose

*The Kindergarten shall, in collaboration and close understanding with the home, safeguard the children’s need for care and play, and promote learning and formation as a basis for an all-round development. The Kindergarten shall be based on fundamental values in the Christian and humanist heritage and tradition, such as respect for human dignity and nature, on intellectual freedom, charity, forgiveness, equality and solidarity, values that also appear in different religions and beliefs and are rooted in human rights.*

*The children shall be able to develop their creative zest, sense of wonder and need to investigate. They shall learn to take care of themselves, each other and nature. The children shall develop basic knowledge and skills. They shall have the right to participate in accordance with their age and abilities.*

*The Kindergartens shall meet the children with trust and respect, and acknowledge the intrinsic value of childhood. They shall contribute to well-being and joy in*

*play and learning, and shall be a challenging and safe place for community life and friendship. The Kindergarten shall promote democracy and equality and counteract all forms of discrimination.*

As mentioned in Chapter 4.2, the purpose clause has the same structure and expresses the same fundamental values as the purpose clause for schools and vocational training. This is in order to contribute to greater coherence between *barnehager* and school. The purpose clause still reflects the uniqueness of *barnehager*.

The educational work in Norwegian *barnehager* is based on a tradition of dialogue, curiosity and exploration. The kindergarten teachers are trained to see children’s interests and use them in pedagogical situations in everyday life. Development of children’s basic competence involves strengthening their social competence and communication skills in a broad sense. Children’s learning takes place while they play, but also in more organized and structured situations. As mentioned in Chapter 5.1.1, the Kindergarten Act of 2005 gave children the right to participation, and thus strengthened the obligation for *barnehager* and staff to take children’s perspective into account:

#### Section 3 Children’s right to participate:

*Children in kindergartens shall have the right to express their views on the day-to-day activities of the kindergarten.*

*Children shall regularly be given the opportunity to take active part in planning and assessing the activities of the kindergarten.*

*The children’s views shall be given due weight according to their age and maturity.*

Pursuant to the *Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens*, *barnehager* 'shall prepare the children for life-long learning and active participation in a democratic society in mutual understanding and cooperation with the children's homes'. (...) 'Children are entitled to express their views on, and to influence, all aspects of their lives at *barnehager*. The degree of participation and how the right to participation is put into practice will depend on the age and level of function of the child. Children must both experience a sense of belonging and community, and feel that they can exert self-determination and express their own intentions.' (...) 'Kindergartens must operate on the basis of children's own ways of expressing themselves. Staff must listen to and attempt to interpret their body language, and must be observant in relation to their actions, aesthetic expressions and eventually their verbal communications. Kindergartens must allow for the different perspectives of different children, and must respect their intentions and realms of experience. Children's right to freedom of expression shall be ensured, and their participation must be integrated in work on the content of kindergartens. Taking children's participation seriously requires good communication between children and staff, and between staff and parents. Children's right to participation requires time and space for listening and talking. Pedagogical activities must be organised and planned in such a way that there is time and space for children's participation. This can encourage children to influence their own lives at their kindergarten. Children must experience responsive adults who take the whole group into consideration.'

Some studies have addressed the question on children's participation. A sample survey indicated that before and after new regulation in 2005 there was an increase from 46 per cent (2004) to 59 per cent (2008) of *barnehager* that involved children in assessment to some or a large degree.<sup>52</sup> A smaller study from 2012 indicated that children's well-being were stronger in *barnehager* where children could influence activities and make choices.<sup>53</sup> The Directorate started in 2012 a special effort for increasing the staff's competence in implementing the purpose clause and children's

participation – *Vennskap og deltakelse* ('Friendship and participation'). Feedback from the sector shows a positive attitude among the staff working in *barnehager* regarding this work.<sup>54</sup> How children's right to participate is being ensured can be part of the supervision by local authorities. The network for the largest cities in Norway (Storbynettverket) has included questions on children's participation in its tool for monitoring quality.<sup>55</sup> There is no system for reporting results from these monitoring activities to the national level.

## 6.2 Different undertakings providing ECEC

Universal service provision has contributed to a decline in informal child minding for one-year-olds, from 22 per cent in 2002 to only 2 per cent in 2010.<sup>56</sup> The three main types of ECEC provision in Norway are ordinary *barnehager*, *familiebarnehager* (family kindergartens) and *åpne barnehager* (open kindergartens, drop-in centres). *Barnehager* are either public, i.e. owned by municipalities (or in a few cases owned by the state), or private, i.e. owned by parents, churches, foundations, pedagogical/ideological organisations, small private enterprises, limited companies and corporations. Most private owners have only one *barnehage* (3 300 of 3 450). Approximately 75 owners have 3 *barnehager* or more, and of these 30 have more than 5 *barnehager*. Only a handful of owners have more than 25 *barnehager*. These mostly have *barnehager* across the whole country in many counties and country parts.<sup>57</sup> Since 2005 there has been a reduction in *barnehager* owned by parents as well as by small private enterprises. There has been an increase in *barnehager* owned by corporations.

52 Gulbrandsen & Eliassen 2013

53 Bratterud et al. 2012

54 Meld. St. 24 (2012–2013)

55 Rambøll 2013

56 Meld. St. 24 (2012–2013)

57 Utdanningsspeilet 2014

**Table 6.2.a** Number of *barnehager* (ordinary *barnehager*, *familiebarnehager* and open *barnehager*):

	2000	2004	2008	2012	2013
Public <i>barnehager</i>	2 984	2 853	3 082	2 986	2 955
Private <i>barnehager</i>	2 849	3 182	3 623	3 411	3 341
Sum	5 833	6 035	6 705	6 397	6 296

The reason for the reduction in the number of *barnehager* from 2008 to 2013 is the establishment of larger units, especially in the cities. New places have been evenly distributed throughout the country, but the cities have had the biggest challenge because of lack of available building plots in areas of high population density. In Oslo, a former hospital and a former factory were converted into *barnehager*, and although parents were initially sceptical about such big units, the large *barnehager* seem to function well thanks to good internal organisation and architectural solutions. Smaller municipalities have not had problems

finding building plots, but they can experience demographic and topographical challenges, such as a scattered population and long distances for some families. If the only ordinary *barnehage* is situated near the centre of the municipality, families living on the outskirts of the municipality may have to drive several kilometres every day to get there. *Familiebarnehager* in private homes have to some degree been a solution to this problem, because they can be situated closer to children's homes. In 2013 only two per cent of children in ECEC attended a *familiebarnehage*.

**Table 6.2.b** Percentage of public vs. private *barnehager* (ordinary and *familiebarnehager*):

	2000	2004	2008	2012	2013
Public	51	47	46	47	47
Private	49	53	54	53	53

**Table 6.2.c** Number of children (ordinary and *familiebarnehager*):

	2000	2004	2008	2012	2013
Public ordinary	110 885	118 604	140 672	150 402	149 570
Private ordinary	68 480	83 528	112 058	129 372	131 949
Public <i>familiebarnehager</i>	2 114	1 797	830	375	300
Private <i>familiebarnehager</i>	8 358	9 168	8 326	6 004	5 358
Total	189 837	213 097	261 886	286 153	287 177

98 per cent of children in ECEC attend an ordinary *barnehage*, and of these 47 per cent attend a public and 53 per cent a private *barnehage* (2013).

As both private and public *barnehager* are subject to the same regulation, the difference between private and public *barnehager* is not necessarily very big. There are however some interesting findings. Statistics show that public *barnehager* have a higher percentage of children with special needs, of children with immigrant background and of children from families where the parents have low education and low income. Some private *barnehager* have their own rules for access which give precedence to for example children of parents belonging to a certain organisation or to families living in a certain area. A proportion of private *barnehager* also offer alternative pedagogical profiles, for example Montessori-pedagogy or Rudolf Steiner-pedagogy. As regards parental preferences for public versus private *barnehager*, there is a slight tendency for families with lower socio-economic status to choose public *barnehager*.<sup>58</sup>

**Table 6.2.d** Percentage of children in public vs. private *barnehager* (ordinary and *familiebarnehager*):

	2000	2004	2008	2012	2013
Public	60	57	54	53	52
Private	40	43	46	47	48

As we can see, the percentage of children attending public *barnehager* declined from 2000 to 2013, while there was a corresponding increase in children attending private *barnehager*. This illustrates the importance of private suppliers in relation to reaching the goal of universal service provision during the period 2003–2009. The ECEC sector in Norway differs from the school sector by having a high percentage of private owners. The percentage of private schools in Norway is low in an international perspective, in the school year 2013/2014 only 6.4 per cent of all primary and lower secondary schools had private owners, and only 3.1 per cent of pupils in compulsory education attended a private school.<sup>59</sup>

## 6.2.1 Ordinary *barnehager*

Ordinary *barnehager* cover the age group 0–5 years and are the most common form of ECEC in Norway. 98 per cent of the children in ECEC attend an ordinary *barnehage*.

Within the statutory framework, ordinary *barnehager* vary widely as regards size, internal organisation and educational content.

### Size

The size of *barnehager* measured by the number of children has increased over the years. The median number of children in an ordinary *barnehage* has increased from 35 in 2002 to 47 in 2012.<sup>60</sup> The trend is towards larger units. Statistics for 2013 and 2007 show that:

- 30 per cent of *barnehager* had fewer than 25 children in 2013, compared to 40 per cent in 2007
- 54 per cent of *barnehager* had 26–75 children in 2013, compared to 50 per cent in 2007
- 16 per cent of *barnehager* had 76 or more children in 2013, compared to 10 per cent in 2007<sup>61</sup>

### Internal organisation

Ordinary *barnehager* are traditionally organised as integrated institutions with groups/departments for either children aged 1–3 or children aged 3–5. In recent years, more *barnehager* have been organised differently, grouping either by age or, alternatively, in larger and smaller groups during the day. Staff normally works in teams with one pedagogical leader (i.e. kindergarten teacher) and two assistants for each group of children, but there are other ways of putting together teams and groups.

<sup>58</sup> Moafi & Bjørkli 2011

<sup>59</sup> Statistics Norway, Prop. 1 S (2014–2014) Kunnskapsdepartementet

<sup>60</sup> Gulbrandsen & Eliassen 2013

<sup>61</sup> Statistics Norway

A study commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Research from 2011 showed that :

- 56 per cent of *barnehager* are organised in groups for toddlers aged 1–3 and for older children aged 3–5.
- 25 per cent of *barnehager* are organised with a combination of group-based and flexible grouping of children.
- 13 per cent of *barnehager* are so small that all the children are in one group.
- 6 per cent of *barnehager* have no departments, but what are called *bases* (*basebarnehager*).<sup>62</sup>

The study found that on several dimensions the large *barnehager* stood out as more ‘professional’, having the highest degree of qualified staff and updated educational knowledge. *Barnehager* oriented towards the flexible grouping fulfilled more often the ‘pedagogical norm’. On other dimensions like group sizes or head teacher spending time with children, the smaller *barnehager* did better. The complexity of the bigger organisation seemed to some degree to decrease the time the kindergarten teachers spent working with children. The researchers pointed to an increase in group sizes, and that larger *barnehager* (more than 80 children) seemed to have larger toddler groups (13 or 14 children on average) as opposed to smaller traditional group-based *barnehager* (9 to 11 children). For older children 3–5 years the flexible grouping seemed to be common, across organizational form. Findings in the report have been discussed by, among others, the public commission presenting suggestions on new regulations for the sector, cf. Chapter 9.1.4

#### *Educational content*

All *barnehager* must base their educational content on the Framework Plan, which must be interpreted and put into practice on the local level. This gives the kindergarten teachers a high degree of freedom in developing and carrying out the pedagogical work, cf. Chapter 9.

Some *barnehager* emphasise specific educational approaches within the bounds of the Framework Plan, e.g.:

- Outdoor *barnehager* use nature and physical activity outdoors as the main basis for their educational work. Children and staff stay outdoors for hours, sometimes for the whole day. Many Norwegian parents appreciate sports and outdoor pursuits, and outdoor *barnehager* are welcomed by this segment.
- Waldorf *barnehager*, which base their educational approach on the work of the Austrian anthropologist and educationalist Rudolf Steiner, are characterised by artistic and aesthetical activities.
- Montessori *barnehager*, which base their educational approach on the work of the Italian doctor Maria Montessori, are characterised by specially developed toys and learning materials.
- Other profiles might be linked to Sports and health (*Idrettsbarnehager*) or Culture and creativity (*Kulturbarnehager*).

### 6.2.2 *Familiebarnehager*

*Familiebarnehager* (family kindergartens, family day care) are a type of ECEC where an assistant works in a private home with maximum five children, supervised and mentored by a qualified kindergarten teacher. The homely quality of *familiebarnehager* is to be ensured by the regulations, while at the same time having an organisation that supports *familiebarnehager* as pedagogical undertaking. This is why the regulation states that *familiebarnehage* should consist of more than one home, that uninhabited premises should not be approved and that there shall be supervision and mentoring on a weekly basis. *Familiebarnehager* usually provide for children younger than three years of age, and 97 per cent of the 735 *familiebarnehager* (in 1 182 homes) in 2013 were privately owned. In 2013 only 2 % of all children with a place in *barnehage* attended a *familiebarnehage* in 2013. In 2000 the number was 5,5 per cent.

62 Vassenden et al. 2011



Both White Paper no 41 (2008–2009) *Quality in Kindertartens* and White Paper no 24 (2012–2013) *Kindertartens for the Future* discussed whether *familiebarnehager* are compatible with the goal of high-quality content in *barnehager*. A study from 2012 and the Official Norwegian Report NOU 2012:1 both underlined some shortcomings of *familiebarnehager*.<sup>63</sup> The study showed that 33 per cent of the units were established in uninhabited premises, which is a breach with the intention that the children should be in a homely environment. 44 per cent of the units were established in single homes without cooperation with other units, which is a breach with the intention that units should cooperate. 55 per cent of the units had double groups of children, which could mean up to 10 children together. Half of the assistants had no finished secondary education. On the other hand the survey indicated that many *familiebarnehager* are organised and run in a good way. There were variations in the pedagogical guidance, but 67 percent of the units had pedagogical guidance each week and 18 percent daily. A proportion of the *familiebarnehager* are run by kindergarten teachers. White Paper No 24 (2012–2013) proposed changes to the regulation removing the possibility to exemptions to run *familiebarnehager* in uninhabited premises, with double groups or to run *familiebarnehager* in single homes. The white paper also suggested to make it easier for the municipalities to ensure pedagogical guidance for those *familiebarnehager* which are unable to find a qualified pedagogue and to remove the municipality's opportunity to grant dispensation from the qualification requirement for the supervising and mentoring kindergarten teacher for each *familiebarnehage*.

**Table 6.2.2.a**

**Number of children attending a *familiebarnehage*:**

2000	2004	2008	2012	2013
10 472	10 965	9 156	6 379	5 658

As the table shows, the number of children attending *familiebarnehager* has decreased in the last few years, from more than 10 000 in 2000 and 2004 to 5 658 in 2013. Parents seem to prefer ordinary *barnehager* if they have the option. On the other hand, *familiebarnehager* may be a more practical solution in parts of Norway with a scattered population and few children aged 1–5, because the *familiebarnehage* will probably be situated closer to the child's home than an ordinary *barnehage*. Some parents prefer the homely atmosphere and the small groups of children that *familiebarnehager* are supposed to offer.

### 6.2.3 Open *barnehager*

Open *barnehager* (*Åpen barnehage*) have existed in Norway since 1988. This kind of *barnehage* is a low-threshold, part-time, drop-in centre for parents/care givers and children, led by a qualified kindergarten teacher. Parents/care givers cannot leave their child there, but participate in the programme together with the child. The offer is usually free of charge, but the parents sometimes pay a small amount per visit. The municipalities are not obliged by law to have open *barnehager*, but when they are offered, their activities are regulated by the Kindergarten Act. Their ownership is about fifty-fifty public and private. Open *barnehager* are sometimes organised in combination with a *familiebarnehage* or a municipal family centre.<sup>64</sup> The table below shows the number of open *barnehager* and capacity since 2000. As we can see, there was a peak around the year 2004, while the numbers for 2013 were lower than the 2000 level. The individual right to a *barnehage* place that entered into force in 2009 is probably the main reason for the decline in recent years.

<sup>64</sup> Family centres are centres for a municipality's overall services relating to children, including pregnancy health services, health clinics for mothers and children, children's welfare services and the educational and psychological counselling service.

<sup>63</sup> Rambøll 2012

**Table 6.2.3.a** Number of open *barnehager* and capacity:

	2000	2004	2008	2012	2013
Open <i>barnehager</i>	217	271	271	199	184
Capacity	5 307	7 414	7 223	5 316	4 893

A study from 2008 showed that open *barnehager* are a way of showing parents from immigrant backgrounds how Norwegian *barnehager* function, thereby contributing to recruitment to ordinary *barnehager*.<sup>65</sup> The Ministry commissioned a study of open *barnehager* which was published in August 2014.<sup>66</sup> The study showed the following:

- There are approximately 200 open *barnehager* in Norway, and they are on average approved for 30 children, have 0.9 full year man-hours, 1–2 employees and are open about 12 hours a week.
- About 50 per cent are owned by the municipalities, 30 percent are owned by churches or denominations and the remaining 20 per cent are owned by other private owners.
- The open *barnehager* are open for children aged 0–6 year, although the most common clients are children between 0 and 3 years. Their daily agenda is similar to ECEC institutions.
- The proportion of minority language users varies. Data show that staff and management are concerned with preventive health care and family counseling, children’s learning, and cultural and social integration of clients with Norwegian as a second language.
- The group that could potentially be recruited to ordinary *barnehager* is relatively small, but the pedagogues show a great awareness of recruitment and transition to ordinary *barnehager* by emphasizing educational curricula, disseminating information and assisting with practical help in the application process for a place in ordinary *barnehage*.

The researchers emphasize that open *barnehager* have characteristics that make them particularly suitable for working with preventive health care, integration, and equalization of social differences (the Kindergarten Act, Section 2), which is also the open *barnehager*’s most unique contribution in the ECEC field. The researchers recommend the following:

- Make sure that the open *barnehager* and what they offer is attractive for a wide range of Norwegian families with small children during maternal/paternal leave, as well as for families with multiple and complex challenges.
- Recognize the uniqueness of the open *barnehager*, and that the requirements for documentation, planning and formal bodies must be adapted to the operating form of the open *barnehager*.
- Complying with the staff’s desire for developing competence in parental guidance, as well as competence in cultural diversity.
- Raise awareness about the resources that are needed in open *barnehager* and the particular needs of the adults (parents) that are relying on these, so that parents and staff can work together to improve the learning outcomes for children and to shape the offerings of individual open *barnehager*.

65 Hatlem 2008

66 Trøndelag Forskning og Utvikling 2014



## CHAPTER 7.

# Funding

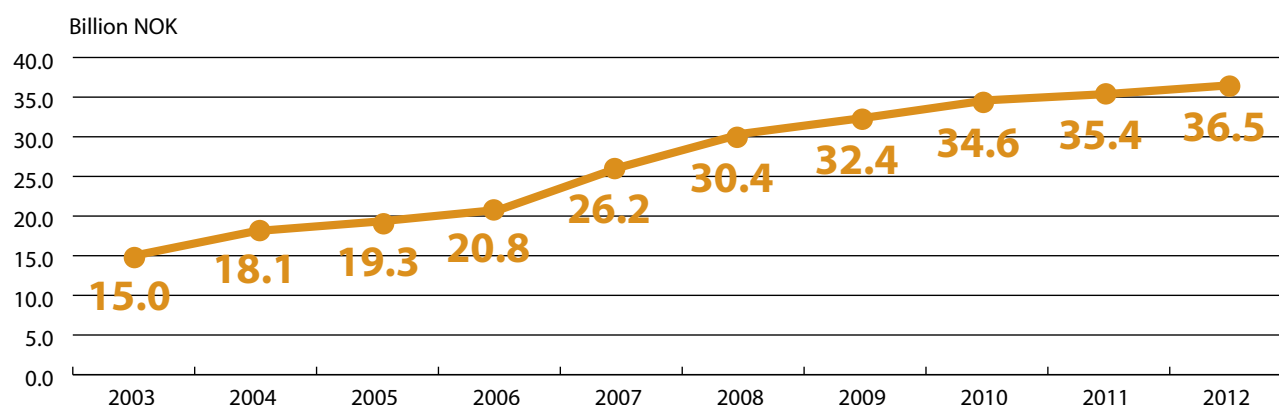
### 7.1 Main sources of ECEC funding

In 2001, public grants (earmarked state grants and municipal funding) covered 66 per cent of the operating costs of municipal *barnehager*. Parental fees covered 33 per cent of the costs. Parental fees varied across the country and across ownership, and in the private sector parents covered 46 per cent of the costs. State and municipal grants covered 46 percent of the costs of private *barnehager*. Other sources of income covered 5 percent of the costs of private *barnehager* where as losses amounted to 3 percent of the costs.<sup>67</sup> The political aim was that the state would cover 50 per cent, the municipalities 30 per cent and the parents 20 per cent.<sup>68</sup> In 2012, public grants covered 85 per cent of the costs. Parental fees cover the remaining 15 percent. The municipalities administer financing for both private and public *barnehager*.

As long as a private *barnehage* is approved by the municipality, it may receive grants to cover part of its operating costs. The public funding of Norwegian ECEC has increased from NOK 12 billion in 2000 to NOK 38 billion in 2013 (both amounts in 2013-NOK). From 2000 to 2013, public expenditure on the ECEC sector increased from 0.5 percent of GDP to 1.3 percent, an increase of 0.8 percentage points. As the numbers indicate, there has been political will across parties to prioritise the ECEC sector in the past decade.

Until 2011, the *barnehage* owners and the municipalities received state grants that were earmarked specifically for *barnehager*. All approved *barnehager* (public and private) received operating subsidies from the Ministry on the basis of the number of children, their ages and the time of provision. These grants were

Figure 7.1. Public financing of Norwegian ECEC 2003–2012. Billion constant 2012 prices (NOK).

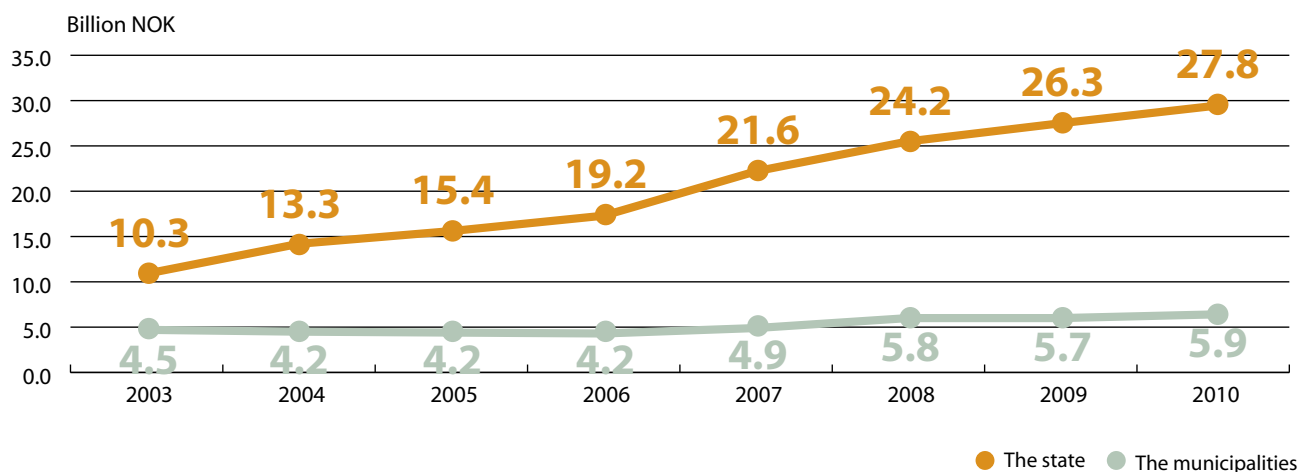


Source: Statistics Norway and the Ministry of Education and Research.

67 Først & Høverstad i St.meld. nr 24 (2002–2003) Barnehagetilbud til alle – økonomi, mangfold og valgfrihet

68 St.meld. nr. 27 (1999–2000) Barnehage til beste for barn og foreldre.

Figure 7.2 Public fundings 2003–2010



Source: Statistics Norway

distributed through the County Governor in the respective county. In addition there were earmarked grants supporting *barnehager* in providing for children with special needs.<sup>69</sup> The previously mentioned Kindergarten Agreement (*Barnehageforliket*) in 2003 laid the foundation for achieving full *barnehage* coverage.<sup>70</sup> This commitment was financed by several earmarked grants in the years 2003–2010, cf. Figure 7.2. These grants included earmarked state grants for the establishment (investment grants) of new *barnehage* places (public and private).

The *Storting* decided to replace earmarked state grants with general block grants to the municipalities from 1 January 2011.<sup>71</sup> The principle of local self-government is a strong principle in Norway. Consequently the Norwegian system is that municipalities mainly shall be financed by general block grants. The local welfare services then become subjects for local political priorities, which make the local politicians responsible for local welfare decisions, and at the same time the administrative costs both at the central and local level are at their lowest. Earmarked funding was a tool to secure the development of the sector and reaching the national goal of universal provision

of places.<sup>72</sup> By 2011, the goal of full *barnehage* coverage had been reached and the municipalities had been given the responsibility for securing each child's individual right to a place in a *barnehage*. Since the reform of the *barnehage* sector was completed, the *Storting* decided to include the *barnehage* grants in the general grant in 2011.

*Barnehager*, schools and the health and social sector account for nearly 80 per cent of the municipalities' gross operating expenditure. One municipality may give *barnehager* and schools high priority, while another prioritises care for the elderly. In 2013 the proportion of municipalities' expenditure on *barnehage* varied from under 5 per cent to 20 per cent. The proportion of children under 3 years of age in *barnehage*, full time or part time partition, density of population, as well as the number of children under school age and the size of *barnehager* are influencing the expenditure per child in the municipalities.<sup>73</sup> In order to produce services of good quality within the limits of the funding framework, local politicians must consider the needs of the population and ensure effective use of resources.

69 Eg. disabled children, refugees.

70 *St.meld. nr 24 (2002–2003) Barnehagetilbud til alle – økonomi, mangfold og valgfrihet*

71 Innst. 345 S (2009–2010) and Prop. 124 S (2009–2010)

72 *St.meld. nr. 27 (1999–2000) Barnehage til beste for barn og foreldre.*

73 Utdanningsdirektoratet (2014) Statistikknotat 02 2014

Until 2003, municipalities were not obliged to fund private providers, so fees were higher for parents using private *barnehager*, because they had to cover a higher percentage of the costs than parents in public *barnehager*. A report analysing funding in the *barnehage* sector in 2001 showed that municipal funding varied from 34 per cent in public(municipal) *barnehager* to 9 per cent for ordinary private *barnehager*.<sup>74</sup> In 2003, a law was passed requiring equal treatment of public and private providers with regard to public funding.<sup>75</sup> Ideally, equal treatment will mean that private *barnehager* receive 100 per cent of the average public grant for public *barnehager*. From 2005 to 2014, this percentage increased from 85 to 98 per cent. All political parties agree on the goal of increasing the grant to 100 per cent in future.

The specific regulation on the funding of private *barnehager* has had some unforeseen consequences for the municipalities, and the regulations have been subject to discussions and revisions. A specific problem pointed to by municipalities, have been the situation where parents can apply for a private *barnehage* place in a neighbouring municipality without notifying their residential municipality, and the neighbour municipality will then send the bill at the end of the year to the residential municipality. This may represent an unexpected expense and make it difficult to balance the *barnehage* budget.<sup>76</sup>

The Sámi Parliament (*Samediggi/Sametinget*) receives a state grant to finance Sámi *barnehager*, including the development of teaching materials, language training and development of information and advisory work for Sámi *barnehager* and other *barnehager* with Sámi children. This grant supplements the municipal grants given to Sámi *barnehager*. In 2014 the state grant is approximately NOK 15.2 million, up from NOK 11.5 million in 2000 (both amounts in 2014-NOK).

In the national budget, Chapter 231 item 63, the Ministry administers an earmarked public grant to the municipalities aimed at enhancing language development for minority language children in and/or outside *barnehage*. Minority language in this case is defined as any language except Sámi, Swedish, Danish and English (Sámi is covered by other funding, and staff are expected to be able to communicate in Swedish, Danish and English). Allocation of the grant to municipalities is based on the number of minority language children in ECEC institutions. The number of minority language children in *barnehage* has more than doubled since 2005, from 13 950 to 37 900 children in 2013. As a result, the grant per child decreased from NOK 7 660 in 2005 to NOK 3 550 in 2013 (nominal amounts), cf. also Chapter 9.2.5 and Chapter 13.

## 7.2 Regulations concerning the use of public grants and parental fees

Before 2012 there was no explicit regulation on the use of public grants in *barnehager*.

In 2012, the *Storting* passed an amendment to the Kindergarten Act relating to the use of public grants and parental fees in non-municipal *barnehager* (e.g. private *barnehager*) aiming to ensure that public grants and fees were used to deliver quality in accordance with the regulation.<sup>77</sup> The amendment states that public grants and parental fees must benefit the children in *barnehager*. The *barnehage* owner is still allowed to make a reasonable net profit. The net profit is deemed to be reasonable if the following conditions are met:

- *All expenses reported in the profit and loss account must be related to the running of the barnehage.*
- *Payments for transactions with the owner, close associates of the owner or companies in the same group cannot be higher than what would be charged by independent parties.*

74 Først & Høverstad i St.meld. nr 24 (2002–2003) Barnehagetilbud til alle – økonomi, mangfold og valgfrihet

75 Innst. O nr. 128 (2002–2003) and Ot.prp. nr. 76 (2002–2003)

76 Presentation from Hole municipality June 2014.

77 Innst. 352 L (2011–2012) and Prop. 98 L (2011–2012)

### 7.3 Parental fees

The Nordic countries are known for their relatively high universal service provision, where the standard and quality of *barnehager* are identical for children of low-income as well as high-income parents. The marginal welfare improvement is shown to be higher for low-income parents.

The Kindergarten Act Section 15 refers to the regulation on parental fees in *barnehager*. As a main rule all Norwegian parents have to pay a monthly fee for their child's *barnehage* place. National regulation of parental fees is an important strategy for ensuring affordable access to quality ECEC services for all children. As part of the Kindergarten Agreement of 2003, a maximum parental fee was introduced from 2004 for all *barnehager*. The maximum fee is decided annually by the *Storting* in the national budget.

The introduction of a regulated maximum fee for parents in 2004 has resulted in a significant decrease in the proportion of ECEC costs covered by parents. The proportion of operating costs covered by parents has been reduced from 37 per cent in 2002 to 15 per cent in 2012 and henceforth. From 2005 until 2014, the real cost of a *barnehage* place to parents has been reduced by 35 per cent. The reduction has been greater for high-income and middle-income families than for low-income families because the former groups paid higher fees.

In the national budget for 2015 the Government proposes to allocate NOK 112 mill. to a new subsidy scheme for low-income families, cf. Chapter 7.4. At the same time, the Government has proposed to increase the maximum fee by NOK 100 per month, to NOK 2 580 per month in real terms, and NOK 28 380 per year.<sup>78</sup>

A separate charge may be levied for meals, and most *barnehager* charge extra for meals. In 2013 *barnehager*'s average charge for meals was NOK 248 per month.<sup>79</sup> The Ministry does not have information on whether disadvantaged children get a discount or free meals, and there are no national regulations of this.

### 7.4 Subsidy schemes for parents

All municipalities are obliged to give parents a so called *sibling discount*, which means that parents with more than one child enrolled in *barnehage* are entitled to a fee reduction of 30 per cent for the second child and 50 per cent for the third and any subsequent children.

All municipalities have an obligation to have subsidy schemes for families with low income, but neither the subsidy schemes nor families with low income are defined in detail. The variation between municipalities is therefore quite large. Since the regulations in this field do not specify sums or percentages for the reduction in price, the municipalities have freedom to find solutions, and they can actually meet their obligation by only giving a very small reduction in price. This can result in large variation between municipalities in addition to making it difficult for low-income families to understand the regulations.

Statistics for 2013 show that 15 per cent of the municipalities do not offer any other subsidy scheme than the obligatory sibling discount. 24 per cent of the municipalities have some sort of income-differentiated parental fees and these municipalities are among the ones with the highest populations. About 50 per cent of all ECEC-children live in these 24 per cent municipalities. About half of these 24 per cent municipalities offer an income-differentiated fee only to families with a gross yearly income of NOK 350 000. In average, families with a gross yearly income of NOK 400 000 had to pay NOK 2 100 per month for one child in ECEC (amounts per January 2014). The fee was a little lower (NOK 2 085) in public ECEC than in private ECEC (NOK 2 126). In comparison, the average fee for all families regardless of income was NOK 2 220 per month for one child in ECEC. The Ministry does not have information about the other municipalities on actual reductions in fees.

<sup>78</sup> Prop. 1 S (2014–2015) Kunnskapsdepartementet

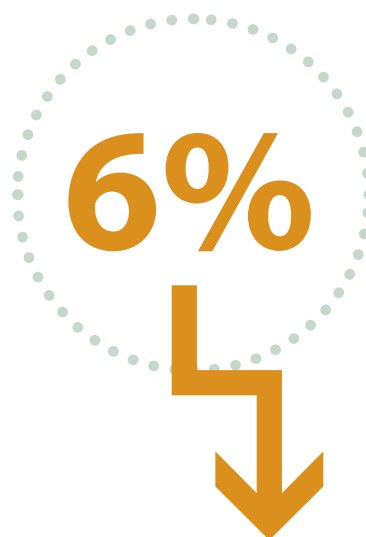
<sup>79</sup> Statistics Norway

In addition, single parents with an income below 6 G (G= The National Insurance Scheme's basic amount) which at present is NOK 530 000, may apply for support for child-minding. The support can cover up till 64 percent of documented expences for child-minding, but limited upwards by the maximum parental fee (which is decided yearly by the *Storting* in the annual national budget).

A study of subsidy schemes from 2011 shows that 21 per cent of the municipalities had a general offer of income-differentiated places. 53 per cent of children in ECEC lived in these 21 per cent municipalities. The income limit varied, but 78 per cent of these municipalities had a limit between NOK 200 000 to 400 000. Of the remaining 79 per cent municipalities, a majority offered subsidy schemes or free places according to other types of legislation, such as the social service or the child welfare service. 23 per cent of all municipalities did not offer any kind of subsidy scheme at all. The study also showed the use of free places in ECEC. 5.6 per cent of the municipalities with general subsidy schemes offered free places to 538 children in ECEC (children with free core places 4 hours per day are not included). 34.5 per cent of all municipalities offered free places to 803 children in ECEC according to the Child Welfare Act. 8.5 per cent of all municipalities offered free places to 99 children in ECEC according to the Social Service Act. 13.6 per cent of the municipalities offered free places to 80 children according to the section on special pedagogical help in the Education Act.<sup>80</sup> This means that a total of 1 520 children, or 0.5 per cent of all children in ECEC, had a free place in 2011.

Statistics for 2013 show that nine per cent of the municipalities offer free places through the ordinary system and that 58 per cent offer free places as a more special measure. In addition 71 per cent offer free places after a special assessment, for example as a measure through the child welfare service. 15 per cent of the municipalities do not offer any other subsidy scheme than the obligatory sibling discount.<sup>81</sup>

In 2013 *barnehage* coverage among 1–5 year olds was 90.0 per cent, but earlier studies have shown that children from low-income families are underrepresented.<sup>82</sup> The present Government wishes to use greater differentiation of parental fees as a means of increasing *barnehage* participation among children from low-income families and as a means of reducing child poverty in Norway.<sup>83</sup> The majority in the *Storting* supported this in the national budget process. Therefore the national budget for 2015 introduced a better social profile on the parental fees in *barnehager* by allocating NOK 235 mill. with the purpose of establishing a national minimum requirement for subsidy schemes for low-income families. The proposal will give more families opportunities to use *barnehage* for their children by setting a maximum limit for the parental fee for a full time place to 6 per cent of the family's income. The sibling discount will be the same as today. The proposal requires a revision of the present regulation on parental fees, and the Government aims for the new regulation to come into force from 1 May 2015. The Government points out that the municipalities have freedom to set an even lower percentage than 6 per cent or to offer free places..



80 TNS Gallup 2011

81 Scheistrøen 2014

82 Moafi & Bjørkli 2011

83 Political platform 2013



## 7.5 Other benefits for families with children

### 7.5.1 Child benefit

Child benefit (*barnetrygd*) is a universal benefit for children under 18 years of age. The right to child benefit applies from the month after birth until the month before the child turns 18. Child benefit is paid per child. The child benefit rates are stipulated annually by the *Storting*, and are in 2014:

- Ordinary child benefit: NOK 970 per month. NOK 11 640 per year.
- Additional bonus for families living in the county of Finnmark or on the Svalbard islands: NOK 320 per month. NOK 3 840 per year.

### 7.5.2 Tax allowance for child-minding expenses

Parents of children under the age of 12 are entitled to a parents' allowance. This is a deduction from ordinary taxable income for documented expenses for child minding. The maximum allowance for one child is NOK 25 000, with an additional NOK 15 000 for each additional child.

### 7.5.3 The cash-for-care benefit scheme

The cash-for-care benefit scheme (*kontantstøtte*) is an alternative to using a place in a *barnehage* for children aged between one and two years. The right to cash-for-care benefit is therefore related to whether the child has a place in a *barnehage* (excluding open *barnehager*, where parents have to stay with the child the whole time). It is also possible to combine part-time attendance at a *barnehage* with reduced-rate cash-for-care benefit. For more information, see Chapter 4.3.2.

The OECD has in its report *Labour Market Integration of Immigrants and their Children in Norway* criticised the cash-for-care benefit scheme for preventing the integration of families from immigrant backgrounds.<sup>84</sup>

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84 OECD 2009

## **Section II.**

# **KEY AREAS OF REVIEW**



## CHAPTER 8.

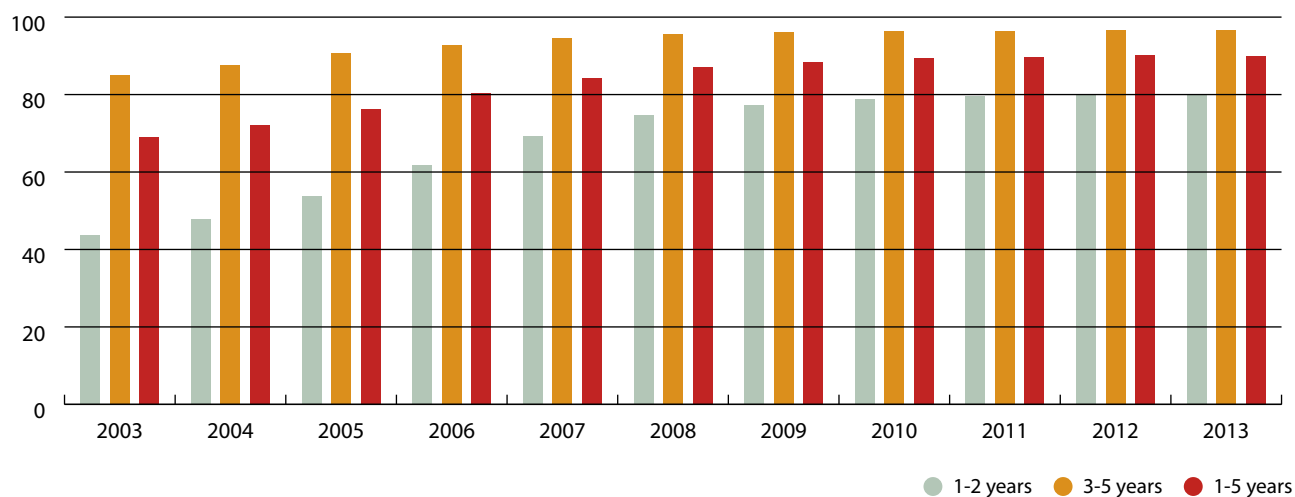
# Access

### 8.1 Provision and distribution of ECEC places

The main objectives of the Kindergarten Agreement of 2003 were accessibility for all and reduced parental fees. See Chapter 7.3 for text on parental fees and measures aimed at helping parents to cover the costs of *barnehager*.

The trends in supply and demand in relation to *barnehager* since 2000 reflect the 'revolution' that has taken place in the ECEC sector in Norway as a result of the Kindergarten Agreement. *Barnehage* attendance has increased dramatically since 2000, especially among younger children. In 2000, the total number of children in *barnehager* (ordinary *barnehager* and *familiebarnehager*) was 189 837. In 2013, the number was 287 177, an increase of 97 340 children or 51.3 per cent.

Figure 8.1. Barnehage participation 2003–2013



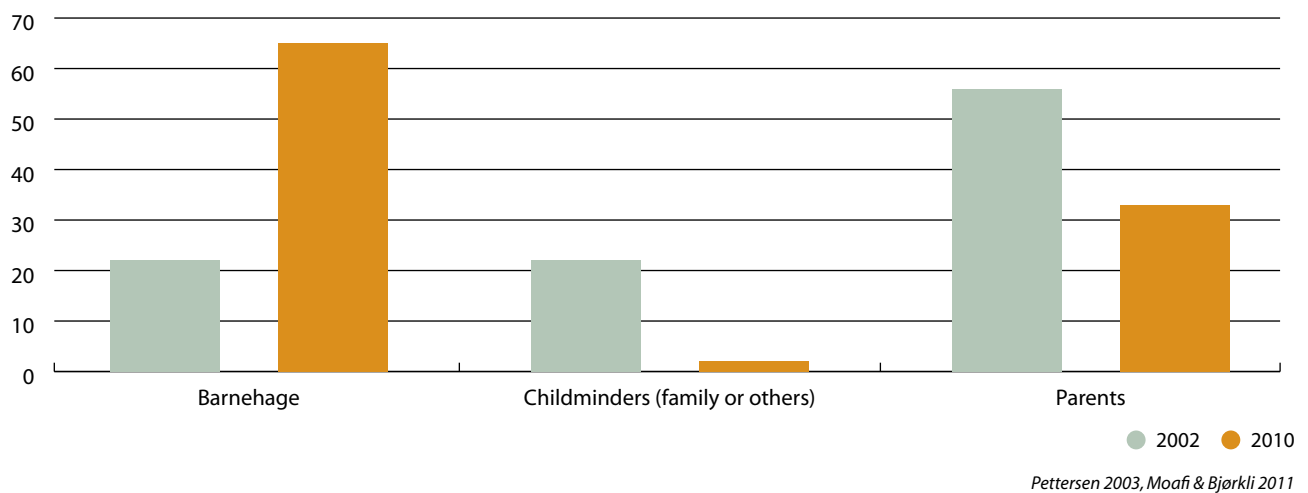
Source: Statistics Norway

### From child minding to barnehage for 1 year olds

Increased availability of places in *barnehager* due to the expansion in the sector has entailed changes in

the composition of child care. This can be illustrated by the composition of child-care for 1 year olds from 2002–2010.

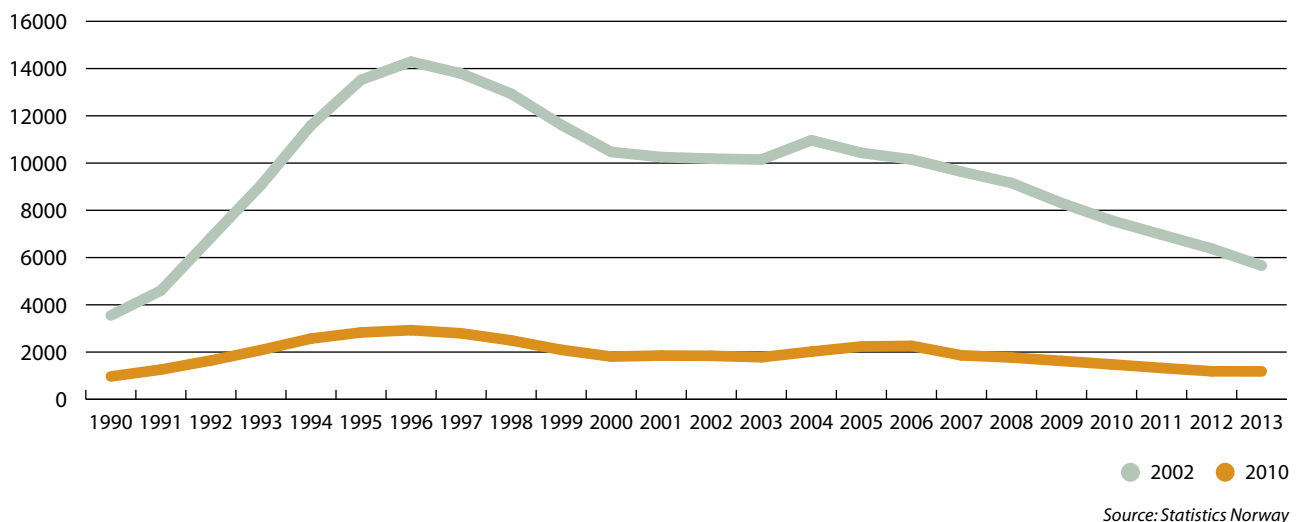
**Figure 8.2** Changes in child care for 1 year olds



Informal care through childminders (excluding regulated *familiebarnehager*), family or others has been replaced by *barnehager*. In 2013 69 per cent of all 1 year olds attended in *barnehage*. In the same

period *familiebarnehager* seems to have been replaced by places in ordinary *barnehager*, cf. Chapter 6.2.2. In 2013 only 2 per cent of all children in *barnehage* had a place in a *familiebarnehage*.

**Figure 8.3** Development in the number of *familiebarnehager* (measured by the number of homes and number of children) from 1990–2013.



**Table 8.1** Provision since 2000 – number of children in *barnehager* (ordinary and *familiebarnehager* – same table as 6.2.c):

	2000	2004	2008	2012	2013
Public ordinary	110 885	118 604	140 672	150 402	149 570
Private ordinary	68 480	83 528	112 058	129 372	131 949
Public <i>familiebarnehager</i>	2 114	1 797	830	375	300
Private <i>familiebarnehager</i>	8 358	9 168	8 326	6 004	5 358
Sum	189 837	213 097	261 886	286 153	287 177

There has been a reduction in the number of children attending *familiebarnehager* by 48 per cent since 2004.

**Table 8.2** Percentage *barnehage* participation per age cohort:

Age of children	2000	2004	2008	2012	2013
1 year	26,8	37	65,8	69,6	68,9
2 years	47,5	58,8	83,6	90,5	90,6
3 years	71,6	82,8	93,6	95,3	95,3
4 years	80,1	88,9	96,4	97,1	96,9
5 years	82,5	91,1	96,8	97,6	97,5
1–2 years	37,1	47,8	74,7	80,2	79,8
3–5 years	78,1	87,7	95,6	96,7	96,6
1–5 years	62,0	72,2	87,2	90,1	90,0

The general participation for children aged 1–5 years has increased from 62 per cent in 2000 to 90 per cent in 2013. The participation for children aged 1–2 years has more than doubled, from 37 per cent in 2000 to around 80 per cent in 2013.

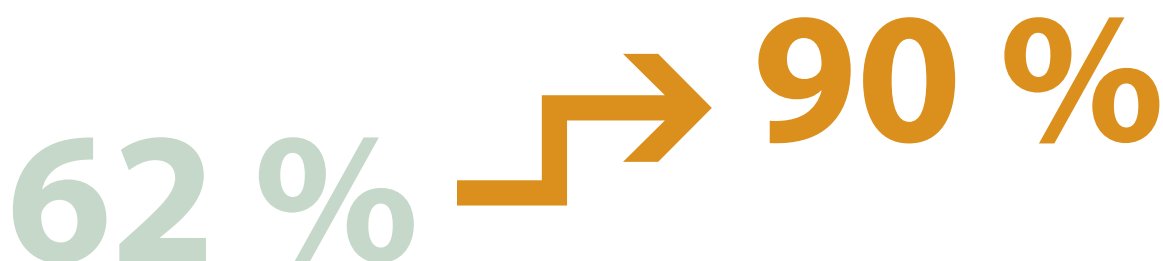
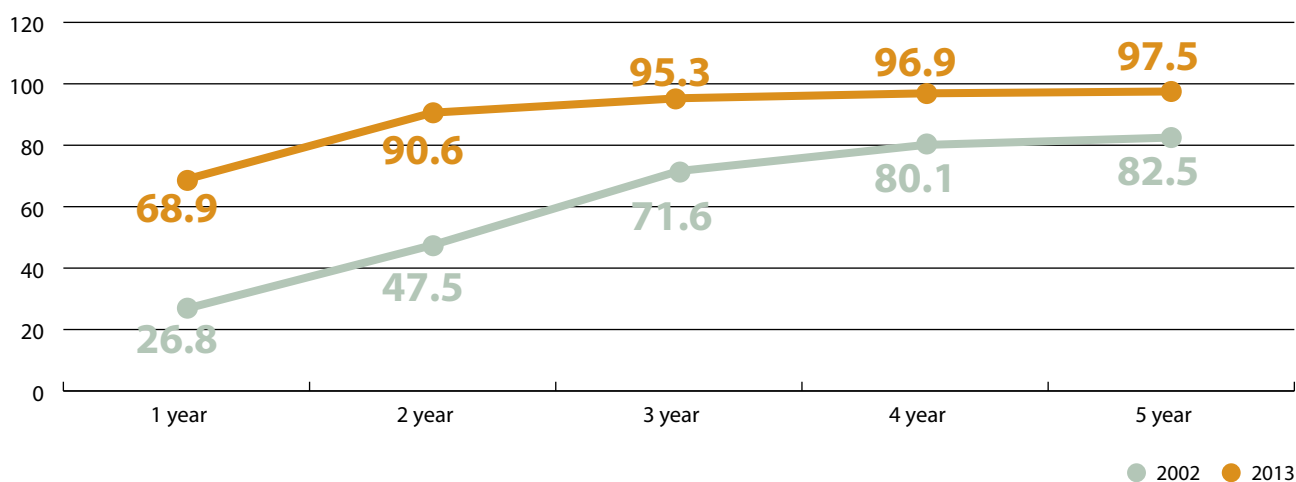


Figure 8.4 Participation by age groups 2000 and 2013



Participation by age groups 2002–2011, Statistics Norway

The Kindergarten Agreement’s goal of universal provision of *barnehage* places could not have been reached without the joint efforts of public and private providers. The table below shows the percentage of private versus public provision since 2000. As we can see, the distribution has been about the same throughout the past decade.

Table 8.3 Percentage of public vs. private *barnehager* (ordinary and *familiebarnehager* – same table as 6.2.b):

	2000	2004	2008	2012	2013
Public	51	47	46	47	47
Private	49	53	54	53	53

Traditionally, groups of parents have been among the private *barnehage* owners in Norway, often taking the initiative to establish a *barnehage* for their own children in their neighbourhood. The number of *barnehager* run by parents was 887 in 2005 (14 per cent of all *barnehager*), but decreased to 688 *barnehager* in 2013 (11 per cent of all *barnehager*). In the past decade, private *barnehager* owned by a single private owner have predominated, cf. Chapter 6.2.

## 8.2 Opening hours and time of provision

*Barnehager* may offer part-time or full-time places. With increased accessibility and maximum parental fees, there has been a shift towards full-time places, and 92 per cent of places offered in 2013 are full-time. A study from 2010 showed that 85 per cent of the children had a full-time place, i.e. 41 hours or more per week, but that only 19 per cent of the children actually were present for the full opening hours. On average, children attended *barnehage* for 35 hours per week, regardless of age.<sup>85</sup>

### 8.3 Legal entitlement to a place

The intense period of ensuring universal provision of *barnehage* places in the years 2003–2009 made it possible for the *Storting* to pass the long-awaited legislation on a universal right to a *barnehage* place for all children. The Kindergarten Act Section 12a *Right to a kindergarten place* entered into force on 1 January 2009. It states that:

*Children who reach the age of one no later than by the end of August in the year a kindergarten place has been sought, are, upon application, entitled to a place in a kindergarten from August in accordance with this act with regulations. The child is entitled to a place in a kindergarten in the municipality in which it is domiciled. The municipality must have at least one admission process per year. The application deadline for the admission process will be set by the municipality.*

The right to a place does not apply to children who reach the age of one on 1 September or later (children without a statutory right). The municipality or private *barnehage* owners can offer a place to children without a statutory right if there are places available. The current number of children without a statutory right who have been admitted to *barnehager* is 11 280, but this includes children who have been given a place in *barnehage* due to rights based on special needs or child welfare considerations, and it is not possible to extract the actual number of children who have been given a place with no legal rights at all.

### 8.4 Admission of children without a statutory right

Private *barnehager* have always been entitled to define their own admission criteria and are still doing so. This means that private *barnehager* may admit children without a statutory right, and the municipality is obliged to finance these places. This issue was addressed in White Paper No 24 (2012–2013) *Kindergarten for the future*, where the conclusion was that, as long as private *barnehager* have places available, they may continue to admit children without a statutory right. Three reasons were given:

- When earmarked state grants were replaced by general block grants to the municipalities from 1 January 2011, the grants included the financing of all existing places by the end of 2010, some of which already were for children without a statutory right. Funding for *barnehage* places for a certain number of children without a statutory right is therefore included in the block grants.
- Allowing for the admission of children without a statutory right will give parents greater freedom of choice between *barnehager*.
- The fact that some private *barnehager* have already admitted children without a statutory right will make it easier for the municipalities to provide enough places when the right to a place is extended in future.

Naturally, parents of children without a statutory right are not satisfied with having to wait for one more year for a place, and the pressure on the political parties to find a solution has been growing since 2009. In its political platform document of 7 October 2013, the present Government has formulated the following goal: *The Government wishes to work towards greater flexibility in admissions to Kindergarten.*<sup>86</sup> In the national budget for 2015, the *Storting* has granted NOK 333 mill. to the municipalities for more places and greater flexibility in admissions to *barnehager*.

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86 Political platform 2013



## 8.5 Children who do not attend *barnehage*

Parental fees decreased by 35 per cent from 2005 to 2013, and disparities in participation between low-income and high-income families have been substantially reduced. The high percentage coverage today (90 percent of 1–5 year olds) shows that almost all children attend *barnehage* before starting school at the age of six. The obstacles to children obtaining a *barnehage* place are virtually non-existent, so why do not all families choose *barnehage*, especially for younger children? We have some information about which groups of families prefer to keep their children at home, and the main categories appear to be:

- Families from immigrant backgrounds where the mother does not participate in the workforce
- Families from ethnic Norwegian backgrounds with strong religious beliefs where the mother does not participate in the workforce
- Families with low income combined with low education and a high level of unemployment and/or welfare benefits
- Families who are sceptical about the institutionalisation of childhood and who have financial freedom to take care of their children at home<sup>87</sup>

A study from 2010 showed that 9 per cent of all families said that they did not apply for a *barnehage* place because it was too expensive. Among families with low income, 19 per cent said that it was too expensive. The study also showed that the lower the income level and education level of the parents, the lower degree of *barnehage* attendance among children.<sup>88</sup>

A study from May 2014 shows that in 2012 approximately 2 300 children with minority background aged 3–5 year did not attend *barnehage*. The parents' reasons were varied. Some had both language problems and technical problems in understanding how to apply for an ordinary *barnehage* place within the application deadline, some found that the price was too high and since the mother stayed at home anyway, they preferred to have the child at home, some were sceptical to the Norwegian cultural influence and some wanted to wait until the last year before school, believing that children learn a new language quickly.<sup>89</sup>

## 8.6 *Barnehage* places with no parental fees

In recent years, there has been some debate about offering *barnehage* places with no parental fees, cf. the proposals in the reports from two national public commissions mentioned in Chapter 4.6, but the costs of partial or universal access without payment are substantial, so no proposals have been submitted to the *Storting* in this context. For example, the Brenna commission estimated that 20 free hours per week for all children aged 3–5 would cost NOK 2.9 billion in 2010.<sup>90</sup>

However, some groups are already offered free places:

- Children who receive help from the Child Welfare Service. Children in this group can be given a *barnehage* place free of charge as a part of the efforts made to help the child and the family. This can include children who are younger than one year by the end of August, thus allowing these children admission earlier than others.
- Children from low-income families. Municipalities can offer low-income families a place in *barnehage* without having to pay a parental fee.

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<sup>87</sup> Seeberg 2010

<sup>88</sup> Moafi & Bjørkli 2011

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<sup>89</sup> Bråten & Sandbæk 2014

<sup>90</sup> NOU 2010:8

A study from 2013 shows that there is quite a large variation between municipalities regarding fee reductions and the offer of places free of charge. 15 per cent of the municipalities do not offer any other fee reduction than fee reductions for siblings. Two municipalities offer places free of charge for all children.<sup>91</sup> For more information, see Chapter 7.4 Subsidy schemes for parents.

The Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion has initiated and funded an ongoing programme that offers four free core hours per day in *barnehage* for all four and five-year-olds (and some three-year-olds) in some areas in the cities of Oslo, Bergen and Drammen with a high proportion of minority language children. The aim is to improve the language and social skills of children prior to starting school by increasing their participation in *barnehage*. The programme includes raising parents' awareness of the importance of learning Norwegian and participating in social activities. The programme also aims to ensure that *barnehage* staff have adequate expertise in multicultural education and language stimulation. A three-year evaluation of the programme was presented in November 2014. It shows that not only the offer of free core hours, but also active recruitment, dialogue and involvement of parents are important in relation to increasing participation. It also shows that free core hours lead to higher participation in *barnehage* for minority language children and that minority language children in districts with free core time score higher on tests in reading (Norwegian) and mathematics in 1. grade in primary school compared to minority language children in districts without free core time. There are no differences in the scoring results between ethnic Norwegian children in districts with or without free core time.<sup>92</sup>

The Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion has from August 2014 given the municipalities Oslo, Bergen and Drammen the opportunity to adjust the programme of free core hours in order to reach out to more families with a low socio-economical status in other city districts. At the same time, the

programme should be adjusted to be able to meet the demand in the Government's political platform on linking free core hours to requirements for participation on the parents' behalf, cf.

*'the Government will strengthen language training for all those with a minority background and will link free core-time care in kindergartens to requirements for participation in activities or Norwegian language classes.'*<sup>93</sup>

The agreement on the national budget for 2015 between the Government and its supporting parties in the *Storting* led to a supplementary grant of NOK 51 million to a nationwide offer of free core hours for all 4 and 5 year olds from low-income families.

## 8.7 The question of making *barnehage* compulsory

In Norway, the compulsory school entry age is six years (primary school starts in August each year) and compulsory school as well as higher secondary school is free for all. Attending *barnehager* is voluntary, but the participation rate for five-year-olds in 2013 was 97.5 per cent. The remaining 2.5 per cent five-year-olds consist of 1 566 children (of a total of 63 832 five-year-olds in the population). This shows that practically all children have attended *barnehage* before starting school.

Several bodies have discussed compulsory *barnehage* in recent years, for example:

*Fordelingsutvalget (The commission for economic equality)*

This commission was appointed by the Ministry of Finance in 2008 and submitted its report in 2009, proposing measures to reduce economic inequality in the population. The commission proposed free part-time *barnehage* (four hours daily/20 hours per week) for all children and compulsory participation for five-year-olds.<sup>94</sup>

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91 Scheistrøen 2013

92 Bråten et al. 2014

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93 Political platform 2013

94 NOU 2009:10 *Fordelingsutvalget*

*Brenna-utvalget (The commission for educational provision for all preschool children)*

This commission was appointed by the Ministry of Education and Research in 2009 and submitted its report in 2010. The commission proposed 20 free hours of *barnehage* per week for all children aged 3–5, but that *barnehage* attendance should still be voluntary.<sup>95</sup>

*The Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise (Næringslivets hovedorganisasjon – NHO)*

This organisation is the leading voice of business and industry in Norway. At its annual national conference in January 2014, it proposed making *barnehage* attendance compulsory for five-year-olds. The proposal is based on research results and statistics showing that the value and effects of investing in ECEC have a huge impact later on, both for individuals and for society as a whole.<sup>96</sup>

In the aftermath of the conference, the Minister of Education, Mr Torbjørn Røe Isaksen, made it clear that the question of compulsory *barnehage* is not on the political agenda at present. One of his Conservative Party (Høyre) colleagues, the spokesperson for education in the *Storting*, Ms Kristin Vinje, launched the idea that the compulsory school age should be lowered from six years to five years. Prime Minister Erna Solberg made it clear in an answer to the *Storting* on 29 January 2014 that the question of compulsory school start for five-year-olds is not on the political agenda during the present four-year parliamentary period (2014–2017).

## 8.8 Access for Sámi children

The basis for the Norwegian Sámi policy is that, as a state, Norway was established on the territories of two peoples, Norwegians and Sámi, and that both these peoples have the same right to develop their cultures and languages. Consideration of Sámi interests shall be included when developing policies in relevant areas. The state shall take steps to ensure that the Sámi people can further develop and strengthen their own culture, their own language and their own business and industry and community life.

The Kindergarten Act, Section 2 *Content of kindergarten*, states that

*(..) Kindergartens shall take account of children's age, level of functioning, gender, and social, ethnic and cultural background, including the language and culture of Sámi children.*

The Kindergarten Act, Section 8 *Responsibilities of the municipality* states that

*(..) The municipality is responsible for ensuring that kindergartens for Sámi children in Sámi districts are based on the Sámi language and culture. In other municipalities steps shall be taken to enable Sámi children to secure and develop their language and their culture.*

This legislation relates to ILO Convention 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples.

In 2013, 822 Sámi children attended *barnehager* offering Sámi content. Of these children, 577 attended Sámi *barnehager*, 92 attended *barnehager* with a Sámi section/group and 153 children attended *barnehager* offering Sámi language stimulation. There are three official Sámi languages in Norway. Of the 822 children, 780 had a North Sámi background, 18 had a Lule-Sámi background and 24 had a South Sámi background. In 2013, 23 *barnehager* were Sámi *barnehager*, seven *barnehager* had a Sámi section/group and 22 *barnehager* offered Sámi language stimulation.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> NOU 2010:8 *Med forskertrang og lekelyst*

<sup>96</sup> Among others; results from the Perry Preschool Study, cf. Schweinhart et al. 2005

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<sup>97</sup> Source: Sametinget

## 8.9 Access for children with special needs

The acts of 1975, 1995 and 2005 all gave children with special needs special priority rights as regards admission to *barnehage*. The definition of what ‘special needs’ cover has not always been clear, and it may still not be clear today. The Kindergarten Act of 2005 states in Section 13 that ‘*Children with disabilities shall be entitled to priority for admission to a kindergarten. An expert assessment shall be carried out to determine whether the child has a disability.*’ Since the legal individual right to a place in *barnehage* entered into force in 2009 and Norway achieved universal service provision, giving priority to children with special needs has lost some of its relevance.

The Education Act, Section 5–7, contains provisions relating to preschool children with a specific need for special educational assistance: ‘*Children under compulsory school age with a specific need for special educational assistance, have the right to such assistance. The assistance shall include an offer of the provision of advice for parents. The assistance may be attached to kindergartens, schools, social and medical institutions, etc., or be organised as separate measures. The assistance may also be provided by the educational and psychological counselling service or by another expert body. (..)*’

Until 2011, an earmarked state grant covered *barnehager’s* expenses relating to children with special needs. Since 2011, the municipalities receive a block grant, and the Ministry is no longer able to control the actual amount used for this purpose. The *Storting* has pointed out this dilemma in its response to White Paper no 24 (2012–2013) *Kindergartens for the Future*.<sup>98</sup> The Ministry will consider solutions for improving the data on municipal resources allocated to children with special needs, and has in 2014 given a mission to the Directorate in order to improve the statistics on children with special needs and to undertake a study on the quality of the provision for children with special needs.<sup>99</sup>

### *Children under care of the Child Welfare Service*

A place in *barnehage* is often used as a voluntary measure by the Child Welfare Service. Many of the children under such care have special needs because of their family situation. *Barnehager* are considered to have an important role in relation to preventive child welfare. In the case of children living in at-risk circumstances, places are fully funded by municipalities. For more text, see Chapter 9.4.2.

## 8.10 Access for minority language children

As described in Chapter 3.3, the population from immigrant backgrounds has increased strongly in Norway in recent decades. Children with a different mother tongue than Norwegian face greater challenges when they start school, and participation in *barnehage* is therefore an important issue in relation to helping minority language children to become functionally bilingual or multilingual.

Statistics from Oslo, the municipality with the largest population with immigrant backgrounds, show that by the start of 1. grade in 2011 in Oslo 70 per cent of minority language six-year olds lacked sufficient knowledge in Norwegian to be able to follow the ordinary education, even though 75 per cent of these children were born and raised in Norway and 70 per cent of them had attended *barnehage*.<sup>100</sup> In the school year 2013/2014 as much as 40 per cent of the pupils in primary school in Oslo had another mother tongue than Norwegian or Sámi. 61 per cent of this group (or 25 per cent of all pupils) were considered to lack sufficient competence in Norwegian to be able to profit from the ordinary teaching in the school, and were therefor receiving extra educational measures in Norwegian.<sup>101/102</sup>

98 Innst. 380 S (2012–2013)

99 Prop. 1 S (2014–2015) Kunnskapsdepartementet

100 Oslo kommune 2012

101 Oslo kommune 2013

102 Oslo kommune 2014

The definition of minority language children in the table below excludes children whose mother tongue is Sámi, Swedish, Danish or English. Sámi is an official language in Norway and not an immigrant language, and Sámi children can attend Sámi *barnehager*, cf. Chapter 8.8. Swedish and Danish are so similar to Norwegian that it is considered unproblematic for these children to communicate with Norwegian-speaking children and staff. English is excepted because knowledge of English is so good in the adult Norwegian population that communication with English-speaking children and their parents is considered unproblematic. In addition, English-speaking inhabitants of Norway can make use of some of the international *barnehager* in Norway where the language is English.

The efforts to increase participation by minority language children in *barnehager* include several measures, and the percentage of all minority language 1–5 year-olds attending *barnehager* has increased from 44.5 per cent in 2000 to 76.8 per cent in 2013. For information on the measure free core hours in *barnehage*, cf. Chapter 8.6 ‘*Barnehage* places with no parental fees’.

Table 8.4 shows the *barnehage* coverage for the following groups of children aged 1–5:

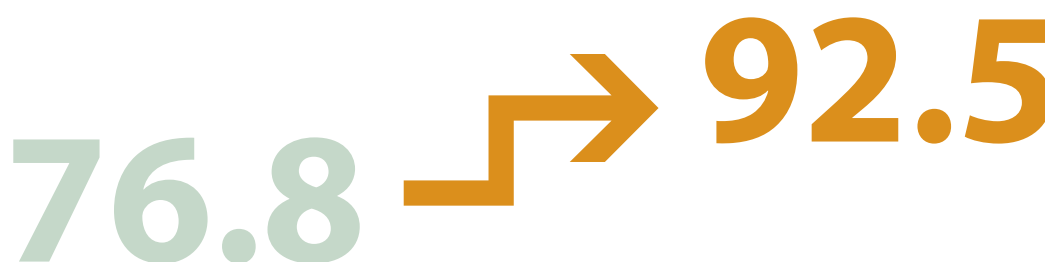
- All children regardless of mother tongue/cultural background
- Minority language children except children with Sámi, Swedish, Danish or English mother tongue/cultural background
- Children who are not defined as minority language children, i.e. children with Norwegian, Sámi, Swedish, Danish or English mother tongue and/or cultural background

As we can see, the coverage for minority language children compared to other children is about the same for 4- and 5-year-olds. The differences are larger for 1–3-year-olds, and most notable for 1-year-olds, where the coverage is 39.5 per cent for minority language children versus 74.7 per cent for others.

**Table 8.4** Coverage for all children, minority language children and children not defined as having a minority language aged 1–5 (in per cent):

Age of children	All children	Minority language	Not minority language
1	68.9	39.5	74.7
2	90.6	72.3	94.1
3	95.3	86.0	97.0
4	96.9	93.5	97.5
5	97.5	95.3	97.9
Total	90.0	76.8	92.5

Source: Statistics Norway



**Table 8.5** The development in coverage for minority language children 2000–2013

Age of children	2000	2005	2008	2012	2013
1		18.9	30.5	36.5	39.5
2		31.0	48.9	68.2	72.3
3		62.3	76.3	85.5	86.0
4		79.4	91.3	92.0	93.5
5		82.8	93.4	96.9	95.3
1–2		25.0	39.7	52.4	52.4
3–5		74.7	87.0	91.3	91.5
1–5	44.5	53.8	67.8	75.0	76.8

Source: Statistics Norway

Detailed statistics on cohorts are not available for the period before 2005. As we can see, the proportion of all cohorts has increased since 2005. By the end of 2013, 76.8 per cent of all 1–5 year-old minority language children attended *barnehage*, compared to 90.0 per cent for all children, cf. Chapter 8.1. In 2008, the numbers were 67.8 per cent vs. 87.2 per cent, and in 2000 44.5 per cent vs. 62.0 per cent. The coverage for minority language one–two-year-olds has more than doubled from 2005 to 2013, from 25.0 per cent to 52.4 per cent. Almost all minority language five-year-olds – 95.3 per cent – attended *barnehage* in 2013. The remaining 4.7 per cent consist of 427 children of a total of 9 129 minority language five-year-olds. Increased participation in *barnehage* is seen as an important opportunity to help children to understand and speak the Norwegian language and thus become functionally bilingual or multilingual before starting school.

Children of persons seeking political asylum in Norway do not have a statutory right to a place in *barnehage* until their application is approved and they have been given a permanent address in a municipality. As long as the family stays in an asylum centre, the Directorate of Immigration states that children from 2 years up to school age shall have the option of attending a ‘child base’ at the centre for minimum three hours daily Monday to Friday. A person with competence in childhood shall be in charge of the service offered at the ‘child base’. The Ministry of Justice administers a state grant that funds places in *barnehage* for four and five-year-old children from asylum seeking families, which includes the parental fee, and these children may therefore get admission to a *barnehage* if there are available places. There is no public financing of places in *barnehage* for children younger than four years of age from asylum seeking families.



## CHAPTER 9.

# Quality

### 9.1 Regulations and minimum standards

#### 9.1.1 Licensing of *barnehager*

As the local *barnehage* authority, the municipality is responsible for the licensing regimes for all kinds of *barnehager*, including the public *barnehager* that it owns. The municipality must ensure that all services are registered, have necessary approvals and are subject to health and safety inspections. Ownership, the purpose of the institution (e.g. its particular educational or religious purpose), criteria for access, fees, opening hours and physical space are considered as parts of the licensing process. The municipality is responsible for supervision and monitoring of *barnehager*, cf. Chapter 10.1

#### 9.1.2 Indoor and outdoor space

The regulations relating to *barnehager*'s indoor and outdoor space have not been changed since the review in 1999. Pursuant to the Kindergarten Act Chapter IV Section 10 *Approval*, the indicative norm for children's play area indoors is four square metres net per child over three years of age and approximately one third in addition per child under three years of age. The outdoor area should be approximately six times as large as the play and living space indoors. Parking spaces, access roads etc. are not included in the outdoor area.

A PhD-thesis from March 2014 shows how the development of outdoor play area and other available space in *barnehager* has been reduced in public *barnehager* premises offering full-day service in Oslo:

*The gross size of kindergartens in Oslo has decreased by 12.6m<sup>2</sup> per child for those built after 2006, compared to those built before 1975. Play space per child constitutes more than half of this decrease, while in the same time period the reduction in space for parking and access on the premises decreased by only 0.2m<sup>2</sup> (1.6%). The inflexibility of the requirements for parking as well as universal design may cause these aspects to not only occupy space, but also affect the functionality of the play area. The specific and detailed requirements for designing roads and ramps are not easy to apply without affecting the functionality of play areas.*<sup>103</sup>

As we can see from the PhD-thesis a regulation of indoor and outdoor space that is open to interpretation and local variation may result in smaller areas for play.

#### 9.1.3 Pedagogue to children ratio

The present regulation concerning teaching staff – the pedagogue norm – is one pedagogue per 7–9 children younger than three years of age and one pedagogue per 14–18 children older than three years of age. In *barnehager* with shorter opening hours than six hours, the number of children per pedagogue may be higher. A pedagogue should preferably be a qualified kindergarten teacher, but other pedagogical educations can also meet the requirements.<sup>104</sup> For text on staff to children ratio, including auxilliary staff<sup>105</sup>, see Chapter 9.1.4.

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<sup>103</sup> Nilsen 2014.

<sup>104</sup> Introduced in the 2005 Kindergarten Act.

<sup>105</sup> Auxilliary staff: Assistants working with the kindergarten teacher with the group of children. Can have secondary, upper secondary or tertiary level education



The strong increase in the number of *barnehager* implemented to achieve universal provision of *barnehage* places in the years 2003–2009 was expected to be a challenge as regards the percentage of pedagogues.<sup>106</sup> Instead, Norway managed to maintain an average of one third of *barnehage* staff with kindergarten teacher education, and the last years there has been a small increase. In 2003, the percentage of staff with kindergarten teacher education was 36.4 per cent. In 2013, the percentage of staff with kindergarten teacher education was 37.5 per cent.

If a *barnehage* owner is unable to recruit a qualified kindergarten teacher, the owner can apply to the municipality as the *barnehage* authority and be granted dispensation from this regulation for a year at a time for a total of three years. After three years, the *barnehage* owner can apply for and be granted permanent dispensation from this regulation. This means that a certain percentage of persons employed as head teachers or pedagogical leaders do not have a certified education as a kindergarten teacher. In 2013, this percentage was 10.9 per cent or approximately 3 600 persons (2.1 per cent of the head teachers and 13.2 per cent of the pedagogical leaders). There are also some *barnehager* with a lack of pedagogical leaders, so the total shortage of kindergarten teachers is approximately 4 400 kindergarten teachers. This represents a serious challenge for the quality of the *barnehager*. The number of graduates from the kindergarten teacher education in 2013 was 2 059, and from experience we know that not all of these start to work in a *barnehage*. This means that full coverage of kindergarten teachers will not be possible for several years, depending on the future recruitment of students and the turnover rate among today's kindergarten teachers working in *barnehager*.

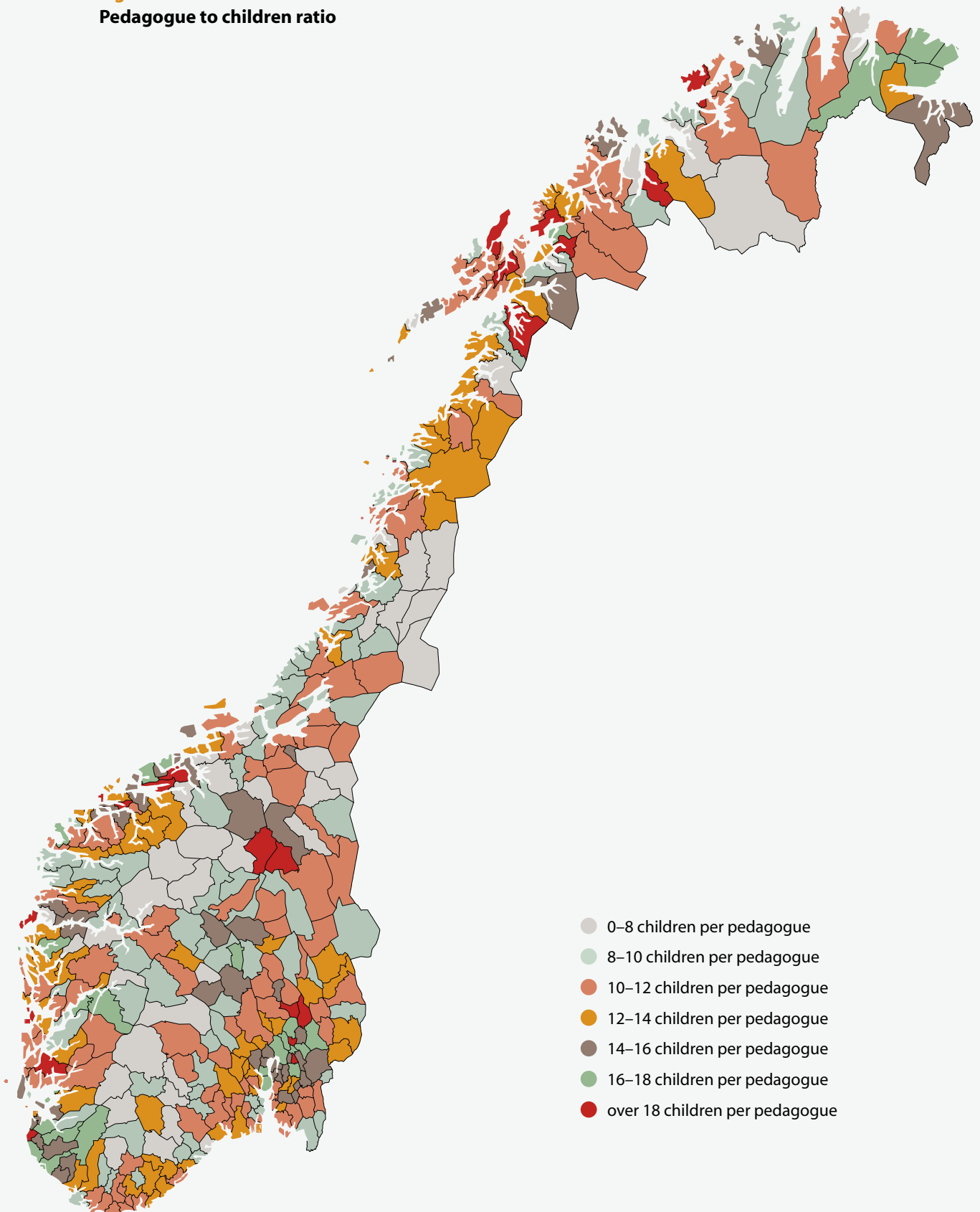
The question of introducing a more ambitious norm for the number of pedagogues in *barnehager* was addressed in White Paper no 30 (2010–2012) *Quality in Kindergartens* as well as by the two commissions *Fordelingsutvalget* ('The commission for economic equality') and the Kindergarten Act commission. The latter was appointed in 2010 to give advice on the management of the sector and on amending the Kindergarten Act. In its Official Norwegian Report NOU 2012:1 *Til barnas beste* ('For the benefit of the children'), the commission proposes a more ambitious norm. The details of the proposition are as follows: 50 per cent of the staff should be pedagogues, and half of the remaining 50 per cent, i.e. assistants, should have a diploma from a two-year apprenticeship served after the age of 16. In this way, only 25 per cent of the staff will be permitted to have no formal qualifications in ECEC at all. There should be one pedagogue for every six children younger than three years of age and one pedagogue for every twelve children older than three years of age.

In White Paper no 24 (2012–2013) *Kindergartens for the Future*, the former Government (Stoltenberg II) did not propose a new pedagogue norm, but pointed to the challenge of meeting the current requirements and to the shortage of pedagogues in today's *barnehager*. The question of introducing a more ambitious pedagogue norm would have to be considered at a later time, once the current requirements have been met.

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<sup>106</sup> Kindergarten teachers or employees with other pedagogical education at tertiary level with a supplement of 60 ECTS in *barnehage* pedagogy

**Figure 9.1**  
**Pedagogue to children ratio**



#### 9.1.4 Staff to children ratio and group size

There is no fixed norm for the number of assistants that can or should be employed. Both the 1995 and 2005 Kindergarten Acts stipulate that the number and level of staff must be sufficient to carry out satisfactory educational activities based on the Framework Plan. Statistics show that Norway actually has a quite high staff to children ratio compared to other countries: one adult to 4.9 children on average. The number in Sweden is 5.3, in Denmark 7.5 and in many countries more than 20. The explanation of the high staff to children ratio lies partly in the percentage of toddlers in Norwegian *barnehager* (children aged 1–3 need more help), partly in the long opening hours and partly in the Norwegian emphasis on outdoor play and organised walks and excursions.

*Familiebarnehager* in private homes are subject to different regulations than ordinary *barnehager*, and the ratio is specified as follows:

- One assistant can be in charge of maximum five children over the age of three years at one time.
- If the family home is suitable and meets the regulatory standard, an additional group of one assistant and maximum five children over the age of three can be present at one time. Thus, two assistants can be in charge of maximum ten children over the age of three.
- If the majority of the children are younger than three years, the total number must be lower.
- As a rule, a minimum of two children must be present, and minimum 50 per cent of the children must not live in the home.
- The kindergarten teacher in charge of the *familiebarnehage* must not be responsible for more than 30 children in total.

In the majority of ordinary *barnehager*, children belong to a group. There will usually be separate groups for the 1–2 and 3–5 age cohorts. Since the costs for children aged 1–2 are twice as high as for children aged 3–5, there is a financial incentive for the *barnehage* owner to place children in the group aged 3–5 as early as possible in the year when the child turns 3 years old. This can be a problem for the children, especially for children with birthdays late in the year. If a child turns two in December, he or she may have to move to a group for 3–5 year olds the following January. Some children are robust and cope perfectly well with being the youngest in a larger group, but vulnerable children may experience problems.

The size of the group a child belongs to will vary according to the age of the children. A common standard in *barnehager* through the years has been nine children in groups for 1–3 year olds and eighteen children in groups for 3–5 year olds, each group with three adults responsible for the group, including a pedagogue. This standard is not legally funded, and studies show that there has been changes. A study from 2011 shows that a third of 3–5-year-olds are in groups with at least 19 children, and more than 75 per cent of 1–2-year-olds are in groups with at least 10 children. 20 per cent of 1-year-olds and 27 per cent of 2-year-olds are in groups with 15 children or more.<sup>107</sup>

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107 Moafi & Bjørkli 2011

## 9.2 Curriculum

### 9.2.1 The Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens

The *Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens* is a regulation issued pursuant to the Kindergarten Act. The first national curriculum plan – called a *framework plan* – came into force in 1996. As the name implies, it sets out a framework for the educational activities of *barnehager*. Each *barnehage* has to adapt its own educational activity to the Framework Plan and describe its activities in an annual plan for the *barnehage*. Thus, Norway does not have a prescribed and specified curriculum, and the *barnehager* have great pedagogical freedom. The Framework Plan emphasises the Nordic tradition of combining education and care. A Sámi supplement is integrated in the plan, cf. Chapter 9.2.2.

The 1996 Framework Plan described among other things how everyday activities and thematic work contributed to children's outcomes, and there was a focus on basic competences acquired by children as a result of informal learning processes. Basic competence was defined as the development of social interaction skills and the development of language and communication skills in a broad sense. Preconditions for the development of such skills were social interaction, play and day-to-day activities in the *barnehage*. The 1996 Framework Plan also formulated objectives for children's development and learning in five subject areas; Society, religion and ethics, Aesthetic subjects, Language, text and communication, Nature, environment and technology and lastly Physical activity and health. Subjects was not areas to be taught or imparted as a specific body of knowledge in "classes", but areas that would be part of both formal (planned) and informal activities during the day.

The Kindergarten Act of 2005 was followed up by a revised *Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens* in August 2006. The main principle of 'formation through care, play and learning' remained the same, but some things were new. Children's right to active participation was specifically regulated in the 2005 Kindergarten Act, and the new Framework Plan emphasised this principle in the introductory chapter. The revision also made clearer the role of the pedagogical leadership. The formulation of goals

was divided into goals for children's experience (process goals) and goals for the staff's work. The description of goals for basic competence was changed so that this was part of a chapter describing the content on care, play, social competence, language competence and *barnehage* as cultural arena. The 2006 Framework Plan was made considerably shorter than the 1995 version in order to make it more accessible to parents, staff and the public. Cultural diversity and the development of both identity, understanding and inclusive fellowship for all children were emphasised.<sup>108</sup>

The current Framework Plan identifies seven learning areas as important parts of a *barnehage's* learning environment. The learning areas are grouped in a way that is intended to facilitate children's transition to primary school, and are as follows:

- Communication, language and text
- Body, movement and health
- Art, culture and creativity
- Nature, environment and technology
- Ethics, religion and philosophy
- Local community and society
- Numbers, spaces and shapes

To support the implementation of the revised Framework Plan in 2006, the Ministry issued guiding booklets on relevant themes, such as pedagogy for the youngest children, multiculturalism, children's agency and participation, language and language stimulation, numeracy, outdoor activities and gender equality. These booklets were written by experts, and the intention behind them is to promote reflection and discussion among staff on the content of the Framework Plan and the attainment of process goals in the local context, cf. Chapter 9.2.4.

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108 OECD 2013

After the introduction of the new purpose clause in 2010, the Framework Plan was revised in accordance with the new purpose. Thus, the most recent version of the Framework Plan entered into force in 2011. At the same time, the Ministry announced that a more complete revision was necessary.

The public commission appointed in 2009 to propose measures to ensure high-quality, structured ECEC for all children (Brenna-utvalget), pointed out that the guidelines in the Framework Plan might be too vague. The commission therefore proposed a new revision of the 2006 plan that would introduce goals for *barnehager's* work on play, care and social competence, and goals for the development of children's individual basic competence.<sup>109</sup> The details in the proposal were not met with enthusiasm in the sector, but the need for a revision was addressed in White Paper no 24 (2012–2013) *Kindergartens for the Future*. One of the proposals in the white paper was that, in order to ensure that the purpose is reflected in the content of *barnehager* and that the Framework Plan is in accordance with the needs of the ECEC sector, it is necessary to revise the *Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens*. The former Government (Stoltenberg II) proposed appointing a group to revise the Framework Plan based on the various white papers and official reports from recent years. The revision of the Framework Plan was intended to make it easier for *barnehage* staff to operationalise the purpose clause, the clause setting out the content of *barnehager* and children's right to participation in *barnehager's* day-to-day activities. The expert group was also asked to provide advice and suggest how to describe progression in learning and development in the Framework Plan and how demands on the pedagogical provision should be described in the annual plan.

Following White Paper no 24 (2012–2013), a publicly appointed group of experts from the field drafted a partially revised *Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens* in 2013–2014, proposing how it can be better aligned with the new purpose clause, how it can be better designed to meet the needs of children under three years of age as well as five year olds who are about to start in primary education and

how the description of pedagogical working methods should be. Awaiting clearer regulation on documentation and assessment, the group was only given the task to suggest changes to the first two parts of the plan. However, the change of Government in October 2013 led to some changes. The present Government (Solberg) wanted to treat the revision as a whole, and decided early in 2014 to postpone the revision till 2015. The revision is to be coordinated with the ongoing review of the Kindergarten Act. A revised Framework Plan is scheduled to come into force in 2016.

### 9.2.2 Sámi *barnehager*

As mentioned in Chapter 8.8 *Access for Sámi children*, there were 23 Sámi *barnehager*, seven *barnehager* with a Sámi section and 22 *barnehager* that offered Sámi language stimulation in 2013. The majority of *barnehager* providing for Sámi children are in the northern part of Norway (70 per cent in the county of Finnmark).

The *Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens* states that *barnehager* for Sámi children in Sámi districts must be an integrated part of Sámi society, and must demonstrate the diversity, vigour and variety of that society. The statutes of Sámi *barnehager* must include the aim of strengthening children's identity as Sámi people through using the Sámi language, and by teaching children about the Sámi culture, way of life and society. In *barnehager* catering for Sámi children outside Sámi districts, staff should be familiar with Sámi culture and able to emphasise Sámi culture as a part of the *barnehage's* programme.

It is a persistent challenge to recruit *barnehage* staff with competence in the Sámi language, and, in collaboration with the Sámi Parliament, the former Ministry of Government Administration and Reform presented a five-year plan in 2009 that aimed, among other things, to secure and develop this competence. The plan (*Handlingsplan for samiske språk* – 'Action Plan for Sámi Languages') has been prolonged for 2014. The main goals in the plan are to strengthen, preserve and develop the three official Sámi languages in Norway (Northern Sámi, Lule-Sámi and Southern Sámi).

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109 NOU 2010:8 *Med forskertrang og lekelyst*

Because of historical discrimination and language policy, a large percentage of today's adult Sámi population are not fluent in a Sámi language because they were prevented from learning or using Sámi in school, and had to speak Norwegian instead. *Barnehager* and schools therefore have the important task of supporting Sámi parents in helping their children to learn Sámi. In this revitalisation of the Sámi languages, the *barnehager* and schools' efforts in the language area are particularly important. In areas where the Sámi language is not the language of interaction, it is particularly important to lay the foundations for the development of Sámi in *barnehager*. Measures such as 'language nest' *barnehager* and language immersion programmes are projects that some municipalities have good experiences from.

The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training is responsible for measures in *barnehager*, including *barnehager* for Sámi children. The Directorate is responsible for the measures in the Action Plan for Sámi Languages, which include measures focusing on language, developing educational materials and strategies for recruitment and competence development in the *barnehage* sector.

The Sámi Parliament presented a white paper on *barnehager* for Sámi children in 2012.<sup>110</sup> The white paper outlines a number of challenges and measures. The most important are:

- Recruiting *barnehage* staff with Sámi competence
- Developing competencies which focus on language
- Developing educational materials

The Sámi Parliament and the Ministry of Education and Research will collaborate on measures relating to the national strategy for competence in *barnehager* 2014–2020. The Sámi Parliament, the Ministry and the Directorate have regular meetings to discuss challenges and measures. In addition, the Sámi Parliament is consulted by the Government on all issues concerning the Sámi population.

### 9.2.3 The annual plan for *barnehager*

Pursuant to the Kindergarten Act, the owner of a *barnehage* may adapt the national Framework Plan for *barnehager* to local conditions. On the basis of the Framework Plan, the *barnehage*'s coordinating committee shall establish an annual plan for the *barnehage*'s educational activities. Staff members are expected to carry out a programme of educational activities. The way in which the learning areas are adapted to the interests of individual children, the group, and the local community is determined by each individual *barnehage*, and set out in the *barnehage*'s annual plan. Progress must also be clarified in detail in the plan. The annual plan must set out objectives for children's attendance, how the objectives are to be attained and how the work is to be followed up and evaluated. Parents can be involved in planning the content and can play an active role in various ways. Questions relating to views on education, content and priorities should also be discussed in each *barnehage*'s parents' council and coordinating committee as part of the work on the annual plan. The children should also be involved in part of the planning process. They will often come up with new, spontaneous suggestions in relation to the plan already established by the adults.

### 9.2.4 Pedagogical freedom

Kindergarten teachers have a high degree of pedagogical freedom within the bounds of the Kindergarten Act and the Framework Plan. Although the revised Framework Plan of 2006 introduced seven learning areas, the plan does not impose instructions or detailed guidelines as regards activities or represent an obstacle to freedom of choice, adaptation and variation at the local level. There is ample room for experimentation and innovation. The revised Framework Plan in 2006 was reduced from 129 to 39 pages. Detailed descriptions of working methods were taken out. Supplementary guiding booklets, to enhance reflexive practice was introduced for a number of relevant topics in the period 2006–2011, but these booklets have no legal status.

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110 Sametinget 2012: Sametingsmelding om samisk barnehagetilbud

As mentioned in Chapter 6.2.1, some *barnehager* emphasise specific educational approaches within the limits of the Framework Plan, e.g.:

- Outdoor *barnehager*
- Waldorf *barnehager*/Rudolf Steiner *barnehager*
- Montessori *barnehager*

In addition, some *barnehager* have adopted special programmes or methods, for example the Italian *Reggio Emilia*, the American *High Scope* and the Dutch *Marte Meo*.

### 9.2.5 Challenges regarding the curriculum

In this chapter we will look closer at some challenges regarding the curriculum in the Framework Plan.

- *How can the Framework Plan support care and education for the very youngest children?*

The last decade has seen an increase in participation levels for all age groups, but the relative change has been the largest in the age group 1–2, from 37.1 per cent participation in 2000 to 79.8 per cent in 2013. The evaluation of the implementation of the 2006 Framework Plan ('Alle teller mer') as well as other reports indicate that kindergarten teachers seem to find it challenging to develop the pedagogical work for the very youngest in line with the Framework Plan.<sup>111</sup> This issue was therefore part of the mandate for the expert group on the revision of the plan in 2013.

- *How can barnehager best prepare children for school?*

A study in 2009 showed that 96 per cent of *barnehager* had school preparation activities for five-year-olds, an increase of 24 percentage points from 2004, when only 72 per cent had activities of this kind. School preparation activities in *barnehager* include certain social skills, such as being able to wait for your turn, raising your hand when you want to say something in a group and being able to understand and respond to a message

given by grown-ups. Academic activities include experience with letters and numbers, but not actual teaching of reading, writing and mathematics. Activities that encourage independence include sleepover nights in *barnehager* and excursions to interesting places.

White Paper no 24 (2012–2013) *Kindergartens for the Future* contains a discussion on whether, and, if so, how the revised Framework Plan should and could contain stronger guidelines for the social and educational content for five-year-olds in *barnehager* and thus better prepare children for school. In its political platform, the present Government says "The Government will reinforce the use of Norwegian and language development in kindergartens in order to prepare the children for school and education."<sup>112</sup>

- *How can 'barnehager' contribute to gender equality?*

The Ministry has issued a guiding booklet on gender equality to promote reflection and discussion among staff about the content of the Framework Plan and the purpose clause. A brochure called *Søt eller tøff – et fritt valg?* ('Cute or cool – a free choice?') has been published as an aid for staff.

The Norwegian Government's gender equality action plan *Equality 2014* incorporates *barnehager* in several of its measures. First it seeks to increase competence in *barnehager* through information material and courses. More than 1000 persons from the sector have participated in a total of 28 courses on practical work with equality. Secondly, gender equality teams have been established in all counties. The teams work to recruit male staff to *barnehager*. Based on experience and local needs these teams also work on raising competence and doing other kinds of relevant projects. One important resource here is the website [www.mennibarnehagen.no](http://www.mennibarnehagen.no) ('men in *barnehager*').

A third important part of *Equality 2014* from a *barnehage* perspective was a status survey of the gender equality work in *barnehager* in Norway. The Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research and Education (NIFU) delivered its report in December 2014.<sup>113</sup> Notwithstanding the fact that more men in

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111 Østrem et al. 2009, Riksrevisjonen 2009

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112 Political platform 2013

113 Opheim et al. 2014

*barnehage* is no guarantee for good work on equality issues, the goal of getting the male proportion of the staff up to 20 percent seems reasonable.

Results of the head teachers survey indicates that gender equality has a place in the *barnehager* daily work. A significant proportion state that staff behaviour towards the children is taken up in formal arenas, though there is variation between different types of formal venues. The results indicate a correlation between the proportion of men and gender equality in the *barnehager*. In *barnehager* with a high share of men the head teachers report greater importance of the action plan/framework plan on the *barnehager* work on gender equality.

In 2015 a white paper on equality between women and men will set the course for future work. The Ministry of Education and Research is a central part in much of what has been done and in much of what is going to be done from now onward. The *barnehage* is seen as an important arena as well as an important

● *Should children in barnehager have learning goals?*

A public commission (Brenna-utvalget) was appointed in 2009 to propose measures to ensure high-quality, structured ECEC for all children. The report NOU 2010:8 *Med forskertrang og lekelyst* ('Keen to explore, keen to play') was submitted to the Government in October 2010. Two of the proposals concern individual learning goals: The commission proposed that the Framework Plan should contain goals for the development of each child's basic competence. The commission also proposed that the Framework Plan should make it a requirement that each child can also set goals for his or her own learning and development. The public hearing did not provide widespread support for these suggestions.<sup>114</sup>

The question of individual learning goals is controversial in Norway. The reason for this is that it conflicts with the traditional holistic educational philosophy in the *barnehager*. The question will be addressed in the revision of the Framework Plan in 2015–2016.

● *How can barnehager identify and help children with special needs?*

Another question that is controversial in Norway, and that has given rise to heated debate, is the issue of language testing of children in *barnehager*. One of the proposals in White Paper no 41 (2008–2009) *Quality in Kindergartens* was to make it a requirement that all *barnehager* offer language mapping of all children around the age of three. The public debate following the presentation of the white paper led to the Government temporarily shelving this proposal. An expert group was appointed in 2010 to consider the quality and relevance of some of the existing language testing tools. The expert group presented its report in 2011.<sup>115</sup> The expert group concluded that none of the existing mapping tools was appropriate for all groups of children and expressed the need to build competence in the sector as well as develop appropriate tools. In White Paper no 24 (2012–2013) *Kindergartens for the Future*, the former Government (Stoltenberg II) proposed introducing a requirement that *barnehager* must offer language testing for children who are considered to have special language needs that will require follow-up. The present Government "will assess children's language skills and provide language training for children who need this before they start school. This service will also encompass children who do not attend Kindergarten."<sup>116</sup>

*How can barnehager help minority language children?*

Early childhood is the key period in relation to the development of language. Many children do not have Norwegian as their mother tongue and learn Norwegian as a second language in *barnehage*. It is important that these children are given help to become familiar with and speak the Norwegian language and thus become functionally bilingual or multilingual. According to the Framework Plan, *barnehager* must support them in using their mother tongue, while working actively to promote their Norwegian language skills.

On behalf of the Ministry of Education and Research, the Directorate for Education and Training administers an earmarked state grant to municipalities aimed at enhancing language development for minority language children in and/or outside *barnehager*. The state grant is

114 Letters on hearing; The national Parental Board, The Teachers' Union, several municipalities and County Governors.

115 Kunnskapsdepartementet 2011

116 Political platform 2013.



designed to strengthen local work on language learning and multiculturalism. The allocation of the grant to the municipalities is based on the number of minority language children in *barnehage*, but this number has more than doubled since 2005, from 13 950 to 37 900 children in 2013 while the level of the grant has not been adjusted to this increase. It is therefore a challenge that the earmarked grant now applies to a higher number of children, entailing a reduction in the nominal amount for each child.

The project *Språkløftet* ('Language Promotion') in the period 2007–2009 aimed to encourage participation in ECEC by children in need of language stimulation through cooperation with health services in 9 municipalities. An evaluation showed that by focusing on the work relating to language promotion, all involved parties became more aware of how they cooperated and of which competencies they lacked.<sup>117</sup>

The Ministry has, through the Directorate for Education and Training, published aids to support *barnehage* staff in their work on language and cultural diversity. In 2006, the Directorate produced the handbook 'Children in Multilingual Families', which provides parents with answers to frequently asked questions about children's bilingual or multilingual development. In addition to offering advice to parents, it also helps staff in *barnehager* to respond to parents' questions and reflections on the bilingual development of their children. It includes examples and articles on how to involve parents actively in language stimulation. In 2012, the Directorate published a strategy for information and guidance material in the minority field. In spring 2013, the Directorate published a booklet with guidelines to *barnehager's* work in the language field called 'Language in Kindergarten – Much more than just talk' (*Språk i barnehagen – Mye mer enn bare prat*).<sup>118</sup>

Three documents have had a great impact on the development of Norway's policy for immigrant education in recent years:

- The most recent document is White Paper no 6 (2012–2013) *A holistic policy of integration. Diversity*

*and social cohesion*, which sets out the principles for a policy for diversity and social cohesion, and presents a holistic picture of integration policy. One important measure introduced following the white paper is the allocation of NOK 30 million a year during the period 2013–2017 to promote competence development in the multicultural area in the whole education sector. This includes employees, managers and owners of *barnehager* (private and public) and schools, and staff of teacher training institutions.

- The second document is the policy review conducted by the OECD of Norwegian immigrant education in 2009.<sup>119</sup> The OECD states that Norway has already developed measures to respond to some of the key challenges in educating immigrants, but that there is a need to build capacity in order to implement these measures successfully from early childhood education and care to education for adult immigrants. One of the OECD's recommendations is that schools need to be more responsive to linguistic and cultural diversity and that improving the capacity of teachers and school leaders should be a top priority. Language support needs to be mainstreamed into the curriculum, teacher education and research, and more support, such as technical language acquisition and career guidance, should be provided. Managing regional variations is another key challenge in immigrant education.
- The third important document is the *Official Norwegian Report (NOU) 2010: 7 Multitude and Mastering. Multilingual children, youth and adults in the education system* presented by the Commission for Equal Education for Minority Language Children, Youth and Adults (Østberg-utvalget).<sup>120</sup> The commission introduced five main perspectives in its report: early effort, long-term second language education, multilingualism as a positive value, the need for competence building in the education sector and implementation challenges. Many of the commission's recommendations were in line with the OECD recommendations.

<sup>117</sup> Rambøll 2009

<sup>118</sup> [http://www.udir.no/Upload/barnehage/Pedagogikk/Veiledere/Udir\\_sprakveileder\\_engelsk.pdf?epslanguage=no](http://www.udir.no/Upload/barnehage/Pedagogikk/Veiledere/Udir_sprakveileder_engelsk.pdf?epslanguage=no)

<sup>119</sup> OECD 2009a

<sup>120</sup> NOU 2010:7 Mangfold og mestring

NAFO, the National Centre for Multicultural Education (*Nasjonalt senter for flerkulturell oppl ring*), has a special responsibility for implementing measures aimed at improving education for language minorities in Norway, including *barnehager*, adult education institutions, universities and university colleges. NAFO runs competence-building programmes for work in, and leadership of, institutions concerned with the education of linguistic minorities and for the development of inclusive multicultural learning communities in Norway. In collaboration with, among others, the Directorate for Education and Training, NAFO has established a mother tongue website ([morsmal.no](http://morsmal.no)) as a network and database of resources for mother tongue teachers, bilingual *barnehage* employees, parents and children.

With support from NAFO, FUB (the National Parents' Committee for Early Childhood Education and Care) has developed a booklet on cooperation between *barnehager* and parents. The booklet targets all parents, but it has a clear multicultural profile. The booklet has been translated into some relevant immigrant languages (English, Arabic and Polish).

### 9.3 Staff qualifications, professional development and working conditions

In a report Statistics Norway published in 2012 the estimated need for kindergarten teachers will be 58 400 man years in 2035. That is an increase of 17 800 man years or 44 per cent in the period 2010–2035.<sup>121</sup>

Based on the estimated stability in how many kindergarten teachers that still work in a *barnehage* after five years and the estimated growth in children in ECEC-age, there has to be employed around 2 000 new kindergarten teachers every year to keep the density of kindergarten teachers at the same level. But since there is a shortage of 4 400 kindergarten teachers today, there is a need to educate more than 2 000 until there is no shortage. In 2013 there were 2 076 kindergarten teachers on the ordinary kindergarten teacher education who completed the bachelor degree, in 2012 there were 1833 who completed the bachelor degree. If the trend from the last years continues Norway risks to have a shortage of kindergarten teachers until 2030.

121 Roksvaag & Texmon 2012

#### 9.3.1 Staff qualifications

The Kindergarten Act states the following in Section 17 *Head teacher* and Section 18 *Other kindergarten staff*:

- *Barnehager* shall have adequate pedagogical and administrative leadership.
- *Barnehager* shall have a head teacher who is an educated kindergarten teacher (i.e. a three-year bachelor degree from university/university college) or who has other college education that gives qualifications for working with children and pedagogical expertise.
- Pedagogical leaders must be educated kindergarten teachers. Other three-year pedagogical programs<sup>122</sup> at college level with further education in teaching in *barnehager*<sup>123</sup> shall be equated with kindergarten teacher education.
- In cases where there is a lack of applicants that meet these educational requirements, the municipality may grant a dispensation.
- Staffing in the *barnehage* must be sufficient for the staff to be able to carry on satisfactory pedagogical activity.

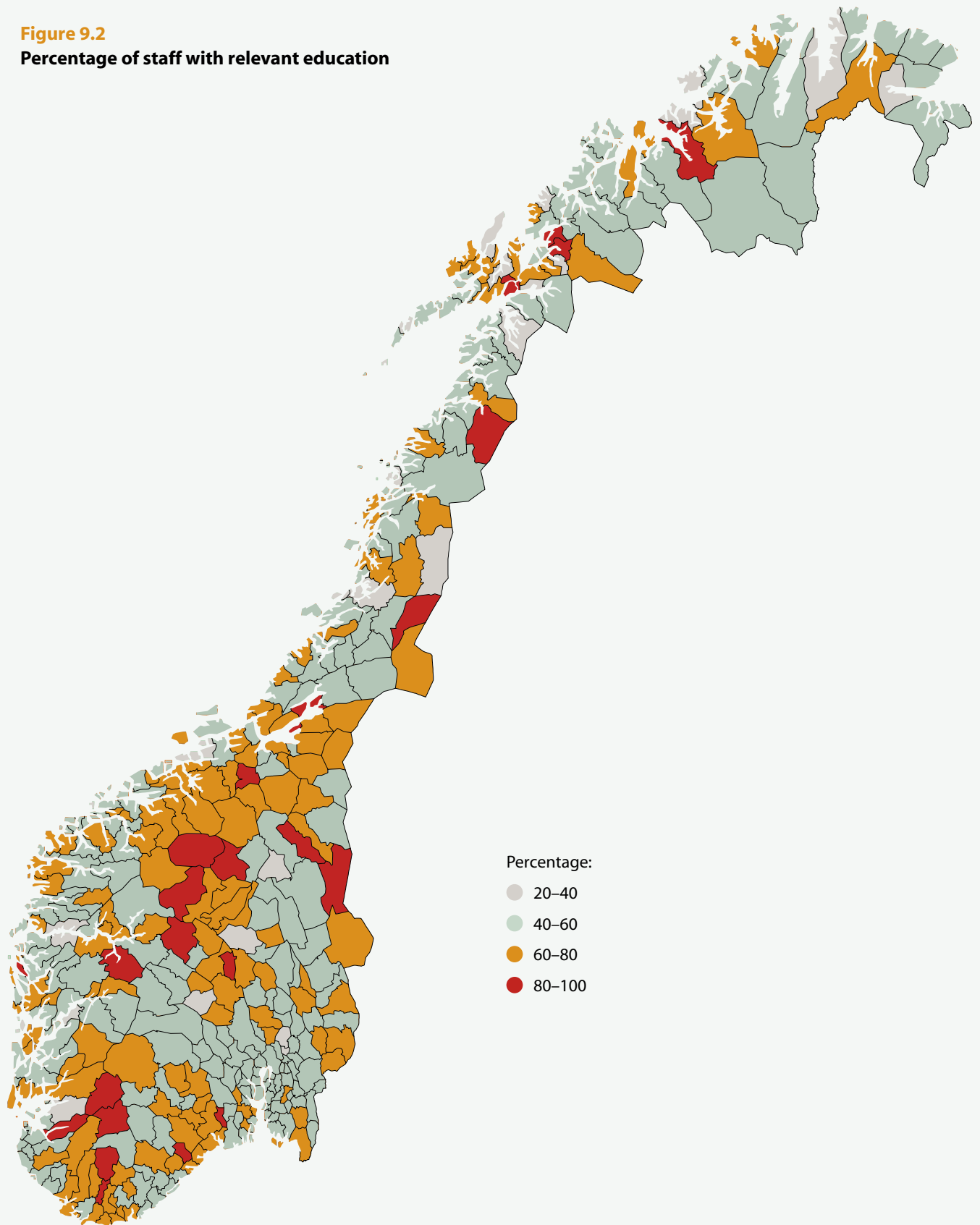
As mentioned in Chapter 9.1.3, the regulations concerning teaching staff – the pedagogue norm – require one kindergarten teacher per 7–9 children under 3 years of age and one kindergarten teacher per 16–18 children over 3 years of age. In addition, there are auxiliary staff – *barnehage* assistants – who work in team with the pedagogical leaders. As mentioned in Chapter 9.1.4, there is no set norm for the number of assistants that may or should be employed, as long as the staffing is sufficient to be able to carry on satisfactory educational activity.

122 Primary school teachers, teachers for children with special needs, teaching specialists in practical-aesthetical topics, child welfare pedagogues

123 60 credits (*studiepoeng*) according to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System

**Figure 9.2**

**Percentage of staff with relevant education**



**Table 9.1** The development in the *barnehage* staff's formal competence 2003–2011

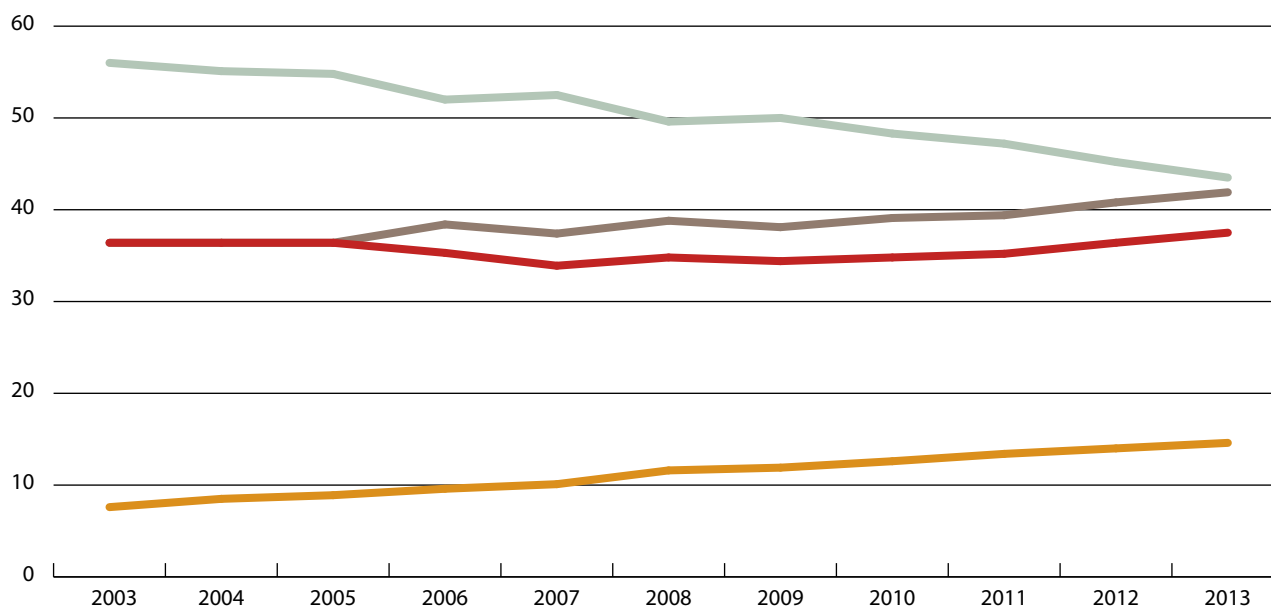
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
The proportion of employees with kindergarten teacher education	36,4	36,4	36,4	35,3	33,9	34,8	34,4	34,8	35,2	36,4	37,5
The proportion of employees with pedagogical education on tertiary level	36,4	36,4	36,4	38,4	37,4	38,8	38,1	39,1	39,4	40,8	41,9
The proportion of employees trained as child care and youth worker	7,6	8,5	8,9	9,6	10,1	11,6	11,9	12,6	13,4	14,0	14,6
The proportion of employees without pedagogical education on tertiary or secondary level	56,0	55,1	54,8	52,0	52,5	49,6	50,0	48,3	47,2	45,2	43,5

Source: Statistics Norway

The great increase in the number of *barnehager* implemented to achieve universal provision of *barnehage* places in the years 2003–2009 should have proven a challenge as regards the percentage of pedagogues. Instead, Norway managed to maintain the

percentage at an average of one third of *barnehage* staff. In both 2005 and 2012, the percentage was 36.4 of staff working with children. Recent statistics for 2013 show that the percentage of pedagogues is currently 37.5.

**Figure 9.3** The development in the *barnehage* staff's formal competence 2003–2011



Source: Statistics Norway

- The proportion of employees without pedagogical education on tertiary or secondary level
- The proportion of employees trained as child care and youth workers
- The proportion of employees with pedagogical education on tertiary level
- The proportion of employees with kindergarten teacher education

Even though the percentage of pedagogues is over one third on average, analyses show that there is relatively large variation between *barnehager* in Norway. In 2013 in the 10 per cent of *barnehager* with the highest competence level, 79 per cent of all staff working with the children had a relevant education. The 10 per cent of *barnehager* at the lower end of the scale had a maximum of 33 per cent of staff with a relevant education.<sup>124</sup>

There has been a shortage of kindergarten teachers for many years. In 2013, the shortfall is estimated to be 4 400 teachers. Municipalities can, on application from the owner of a *barnehage*, grant dispensation from the qualification requirement if the position has been publicly advertised and no qualified applicant has come forward. In 1997, 19 per cent of those employed as head teachers or pedagogical leaders worked on a dispensation from the educational requirement. In 2008, 4.6 per cent of head teachers and 15.9 per cent of pedagogical leaders worked on a dispensation. In 2013, this proportion was reduced to 2.1 per cent for head teachers and 13.2 per cent for pedagogical leaders.

**Table 9.2** Dispensations from the qualification requirements 2005–2013

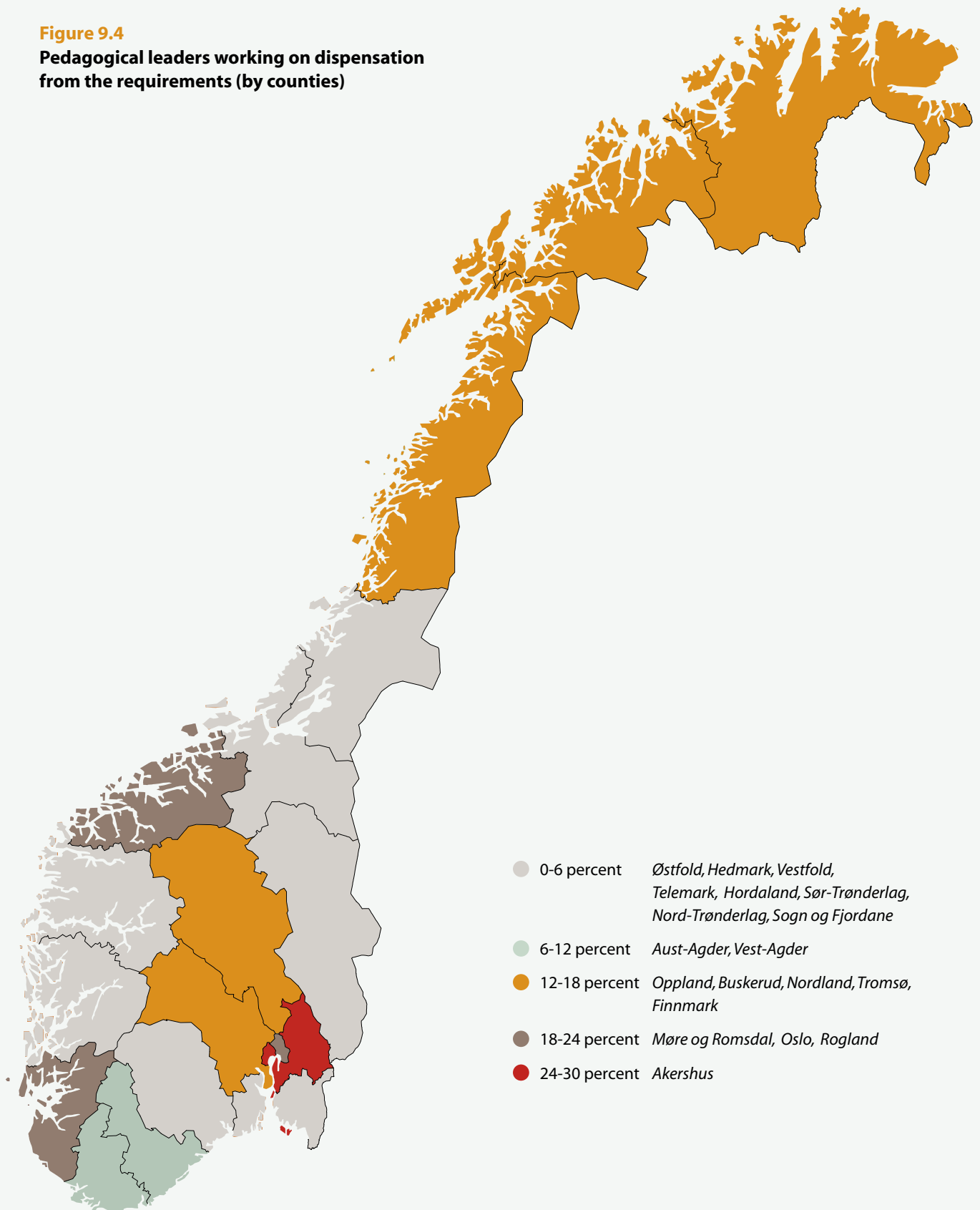
	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
The number and proportion of head-teachers/managers with exemption from the regulated pedagogical tertiary education	269 (4,5)	222 (3,7)	238 (3,7)	324 (4,6)	252 (3,6)	218 (3,2)	190 (2,8)	164 (2,4)	141 (2,1)
The number and proportion of head-teachers/managers without regulated qualification	723 (12,2)	508 (8,2)	573 (8,9)	441 (6,3)	408 (5,9)	271 (4,0)	249 (3,7)	200 (3,0)	194 (2,9)
The number and proportion of pedagogical leaders with exemption from the regulated pedagogical tertiary education	1000 (6,8)	1330 (8,2)	2258 (12,4)	3183 (15,9)	3488 (15,9)	3620 (15,7)	3878 (15,9)	3869 (15,2)	3487 (13,4)
The number and proportion of pedagogical leaders without regulated qualification	1521 (10,3)	2080 (12,9)	3187 (17,5)	3187 (15,9)	3584 (16,3)	3837 (16,6)	3863 (15,9)	3812 (15,0)	3390 (13,0)

Source: Statistics Norway

124 Prop 1 S (2014-2015) Kunnskapsdepartementet

**Figure 9.4**

**Pedagogical leaders working on dispensation from the requirements (by counties)**

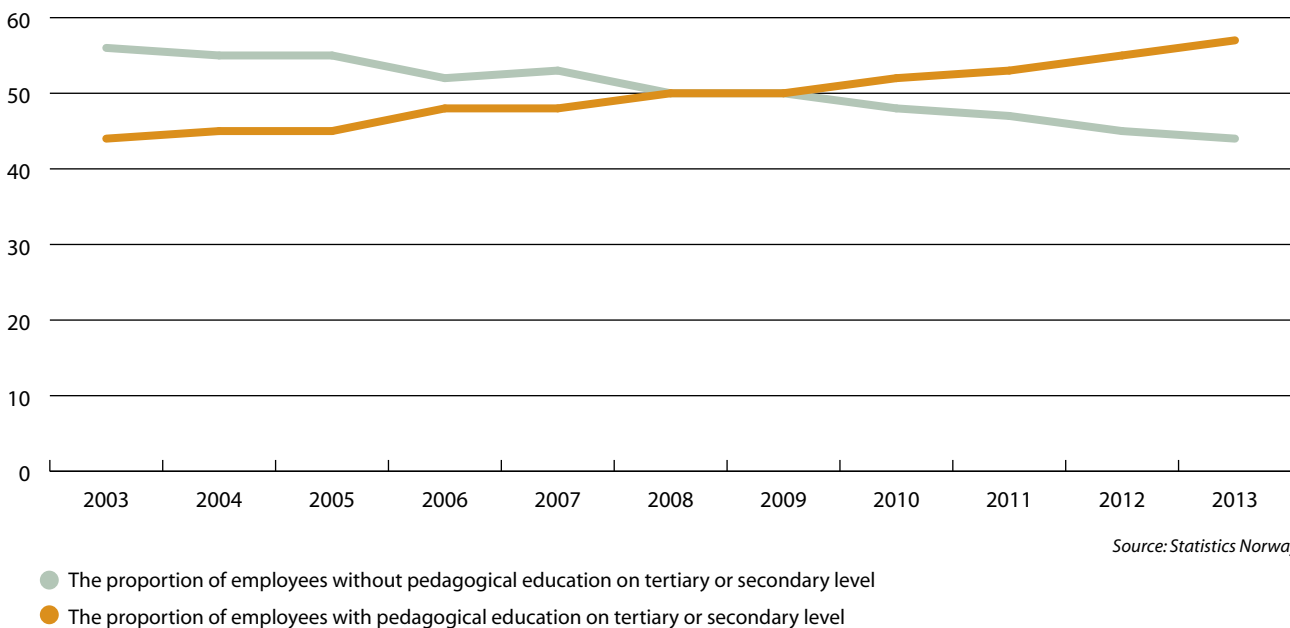


There are no requirements in the Kindergarten Act as regards the education of *barnehage* assistants. Approximately 14 per cent (14.6 per cent in 2013) of the total staff working with children are staff who are trained *child care and youth worker*, a four-year vocational training at upper secondary level. Most of the child care and youth worker work as assistants. The proportion of staff with vocational training as child care and youth worker has doubled since 2003, from 7.6 per cent to 14.6 per cent. The number of candidates passing the exam increased by more than 50 per cent from 2007 to 2012, totalling 1 832 candidates.

A relatively large proportion (43.5 per cent in 2013) of staff working with children has no formal education in early childhood education and care. Analyses of statistical records show that 25 per cent of this group do not have formal qualifications beyond compulsory secondary education.

The figure below shows the development in staff with and without relevant formal *barnehage* education. As we can see, the lines intersected around 2009–2010, and the percentage of staff without a relevant *barnehage* education is now below 50 per cent. There has been a steady increase in the number of staff with relevant formal *barnehage* education. The proportion of auxiliary staff without formal qualifications in pedagogy or childcare has consequently been gradually reduced. In 2013, 24.9 per cent of assistants were trained child and youth workers.

**Figure 9.5** Staff with or without pedagogical education



There are no statutory requirements for the staff to children ratio, and concerns have been voiced lately that the number of children per staff member is increasing, although the number of children per kindergarten teacher decreased from 10.3 in 2005 to 9.1 in 2013.

**Table 9.3 Staff to children ratio 2000–2013**

	2000	2004	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Children in <i>barnehage</i>	189 837	213 097	261 886	270 174	277 139	282 737	286 153	287 177
The number of employees working directly with children		55 732	75 668	78 805	80 390	81 743	83 480	84 044
Children per employee working directly with children		3,8	3,5	3,4	3,4	3,5	3,4	3,4
Children per Full Time Equivalent, corrected for age and time of provision		6,4	6,2	6,2	6,2	6,2	6,2	6,1

In 2013, the number of children per FTE (full-time equivalent) was 6.1 (as a weighted statistical average, where children 2 years and younger count as 2). The number of FTEs has been stable for a long time, even during the period of expansion. The numbers varied between 6.1 and 6.4 during the period 1999 to 2012.

The proportion of staff from minority backgrounds in Norwegian *barnehager* has been steadily increasing, including the number of kindergarten teachers from immigrant backgrounds. Among other things, the Ministry has provided funding for courses and in-service training for minority language assistants working in *barnehager*. This support has been instrumental in recruiting minority students to the kindergarten teacher education.

### 9.3.2 Men in *barnehager*

It has been a persistent challenge to increase the number and proportion of men in pedagogical work with children in Norway's *barnehager*. To this end, regulations have been put in place to promote recruitment, giving priority to men when two applicants have the same level of qualifications as well as a number of other strategies. An ambitious target of 20 per cent was introduced as part of the strategy for gender equality in the sector in 2000. The proportion of men has slowly increased, from 5.7 per cent in 2003 to 8.4 per cent in 2013. The number of *barnehager* that meet the ambitious target of 20 per cent men working with children has increased by 55 per cent, from 636 to 951, since 2003, and 15.6 per cent of all *barnehager* have minimum 20 per cent men in pedagogical work.

The proportion of male students registered in the kindergarten teacher education increased from 8.5 per cent in 2003 to 14.4 per cent in 2013. During the same period the proportion of male students among new students in the kindergarten teacher education increased from 10.6 per cent to 19.2 per cent. The proportion of male students finishing the kindergarten teacher education also increased in this period, from 5.5 per cent in 2003 to 10.8 per cent in 2013. The much lower proportion of male candidates qualified as kindergarten teacher than new students suggest that the drop-out rate on the kindergarten teacher education is higher for men than women.

According to a survey on men in *barnehager*, about half of the participating *barnehager* said that they had implemented measures to increase the number of men. Job advertisements encouraging men to apply are the most widely used measure. The qualitative data show a positive attitude towards men, at the same time as there is a certain scepticism about the use of quotas. The resistance is based on arguments about qualifications. The document analysis shows that it is easier to recruit men to *barnehager* that already have male staff, especially if the men are kindergarten teachers. The qualitative data show correlations between the proportion of men among staff and the head teacher's assessment of gender equality work in the *barnehage*. A higher proportion of men increases the probability of a positive assessment of gender equality efforts. Whether this is a result of gender awareness among staff or whether a higher proportion of men is likely to increase gender awareness is uncertain.<sup>125</sup>

125 Likestillingscenteret 2010



**Table 9.4** Proportion of men in *barnehager*

	2003	2004	2008	2012	2013
Proportion of <i>barnehager</i> with male employees	28,71	30,37	39,90	47,10	49,14
Proportion of <i>barnehager</i> with more than 20 per cent male employees	10,7 %	11,2 %	13,0 %	14,9 %	15,6 %
Proportion of men in public <i>barnehager</i>	4,4 %	4,5 %	5,6 %	6,8 %	6,9 %
Proportion of men in private <i>barnehager</i>	7,2 %	7,7 %	9,3 %	10,4 %	10,6 %

### 9.3.3 Professional development and strategies for competence

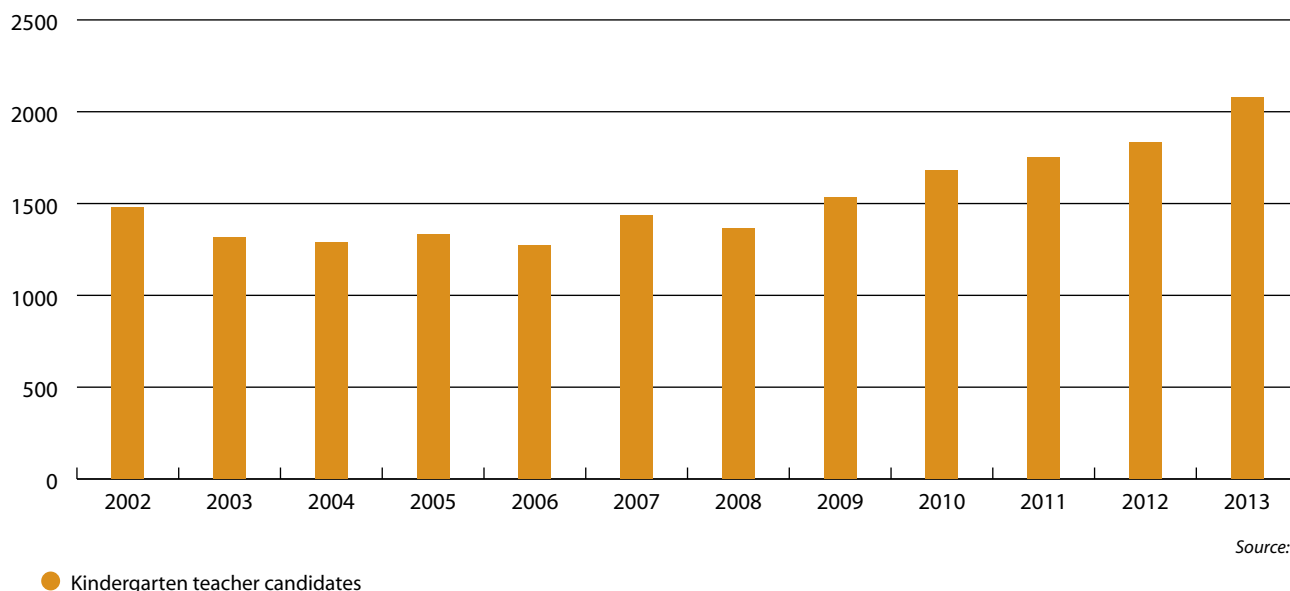
The professional and personal competence of staff is the most important resource in *barnehager* and a prerequisite for ensuring that a *barnehage* is a good arena for care, play, learning and social equity. National strategies for quality in the sector are therefore clearly linked to and concerned with staff compe-

tence, the recruitment of qualified staff and raising competence in the sector. Specific issues such as inclusion and multiculturalism, pedagogical leadership, curriculum implementation and gender issues have been addressed through the strategies.

National strategies on quality, qualifications and competence since 2000

- **2001–2003:** ‘The Good *Barnehage*’ (*Den gode barnehagen*) – a national strategic plan following up White Paper no 27 (1999–2000) *Barnehager for the benefit of children and parents* aimed at addressing issues of availability and good pedagogical provision, including competence-raising measures and recruitment. (Evaluation by NOVA 2002 and DMMH 2003)
- **2005–2010:** Multilingual work in *barnehager* – NAFO’s competence-building project for *barnehage* employees ([http://nafo.hioa.no/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/NAFO\\_Resource-guide-\\_Engelsk\\_web.pdf](http://nafo.hioa.no/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/NAFO_Resource-guide-_Engelsk_web.pdf))
- **2007–2010 (prolonged 2011):** Competence in *Barnehage* – a national strategic plan for raising competence in *barnehager* (Evaluation by Asplan Viak/Fafo 2011)
- **2007–2011:** A strategic plan for the recruitment of preschool teachers to *barnehager* and teacher education. (Evaluated by Rambøll Management 2012)
- **2007–2009:** Equal education in practice. State grants to the National Centre for Multicultural Education to initiate education in the field of multilingualism and multiculturalism on all levels, from *barnehage* to upper secondary schools and vocational training. (Evaluation by Rambøll Management 2010)
- **2008–2010:** Strategy for Equality in *Barnehage*. (Evaluation by the Centre for Equality (Likestillingssettret) in cooperation with the Eastern Norway Research institute (Østlandsforskning) 2010) An abstract in English is included in the report. [http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/KD/Vedlegg/Barnehager/Rapporter-percent20ogpercent20planer/Nye\\_barnehager\\_i\\_gamle\\_spor\\_2010.pdf](http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/KD/Vedlegg/Barnehager/Rapporter-percent20ogpercent20planer/Nye_barnehager_i_gamle_spor_2010.pdf)
- **2014–2020:** Competence for the Future *Barnehage* – national strategy for competence and recruitment.

**Figure 9.6** Number of kindergarten teacher candidates



New models for kindergarten teacher education combining work and studies are being developed, with the active cooperation and involvement of *barnehage* owner/employers, students, staff and the university colleges/universities. Encouraging staff who are already employed in *barnehager* to qualify as kindergarten teachers will contribute to enhancing the level of formal training among staff. This entails recruiting motivated students and will, in the long term, hopefully ensure stable staffing in *barnehager*. The evaluation of the national recruitment strategy 2007–2011 considered this measure to be an effective means of recruiting more teachers.<sup>126</sup>

Several national strategies have aimed to increase the number of educated kindergarten teachers. Between 2009 and 2012, the Ministry of Education and Research established 650 more places in the kindergarten teacher education. The number of graduating candidates has increased steadily, and was 2 076 in 2013.

The problem of dropping-out both from the kindergarten teacher education and between graduation and employment in a *barnehage* has been addressed in the discussions about the recruitment of qualified staff to the sector. Recent reports show that stability is increasing in the sector and that more of the graduates seek employment in *barnehager*. In 2012, this applied to 80 per cent of graduates.<sup>127</sup>

**Strategy for raising the competence in the sector 2013 – 2020**

The strategy for competence 2014–2020 addresses the problem of unqualified *barnehage* staff and proposes measures to ensure that a higher percentage of this group acquire a formal competence as regards children and *barnehager*. The strategy aims to recruit and retain more staff with relevant competence for work in *barnehager*. The strategy proposes a coherent system for raising the competence for all the different groups of staff, directed towards individual employees as well as *barnehager* as learning organisations. The system illustrates possible career paths. The strategy covers a timespan of 7 years,

126 Rambøll 2012 a

127 Gulbrandsen & Eliassen 2013

allowing for long-term planning and strategic thinking for *barnehage* owners and staff. The *barnehage* owner is responsible for ensuring that employees are given the possibility to participate, but in order to succeed more stakeholders need to be engaged and collaborating. Regional networks have been established to develop measures locally. *Barnehage* owners are encouraged to support assistants to take the diploma for vocational training as child care and youth worker, or to take kindergarten teacher education on a part-time basis in order to become a qualified pedagogue. Associations of municipal and private owners as well as staff organisations and local and regional authorities are important stakeholders engaged in the implementation of the national strategy. The strategy also includes cooperation with universities/university colleges as well as other relevant institutions providing relevant education on different levels.

The Directorate for Education and Training is responsible for allocating the means for further education and continuous development of staff. The Directorate receives reports on regional and local measures and reports to the Ministry.

The establishment in 2009 of a guided first year for new kindergarten teachers is seen as important by the sector both to recruit and keep the kindergarten teachers in the profession.<sup>128</sup> This guidance is part of an agreement between the Ministry of Education and Research and the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS). A survey shows that 63 per cent of all newly educated kindergarten teachers are offered this option. The owner of the *barnehage* is responsible for offering the guided first year of work. The Ministry contributes by funding education of mentors, and supports information and initiatives to motivate for participation. 80 per cent of head teachers in *barnehager* with newly educated kindergarten teachers provided such teachers with an option of mentoring in 2014. The Directorate for Education and Training has been tasked with evaluating the guided first year and the education of mentors. The findings of this evaluation will be presented in December 2016. Research indicates that mentoring contributes to smooth transitions from

studies to work, but that there is still a potential in ensuring that it leads to more reflections on and analysis of the teachers practice.<sup>129</sup>

Other competence-raising measures that have been put in place include further education for head teachers (30 credits at master's level) and further education for pedagogical leaders (30 credits). From autumn 2014 450 head teachers will be offered this program every year. The national leadership training program is evaluated by Oxford Research and the Institute for Pedagogy (Institut for Pædagogik) at Aarhus University in Denmark. A report from 2013 shows that the participants are satisfied with the education, but the programs vary among the five institutions that offers the program.<sup>130</sup> A final report will be published in the autumn 2014.

The Directorate for Education and Training allocates financial means for further education and competence measures, and receives reports on participation. The Directorate then reports to the Ministry of Education and Research.

Recognising the importance of leadership in ensuring quality *barnehage*, the present Government increased the amount and the number of study places in the national leadership training by 10 million NOK in its first budget for 2014, to a total amount of 33 million NOK.

Providing further education in Early Childhood Education and Care to staff with other teacher/pedagogue education on tertiary level will contribute to reducing the number of dispensations in the sector.

The model below illustrates how formal training can be offered to all groups of staff. It is also an illustration of possible career paths.

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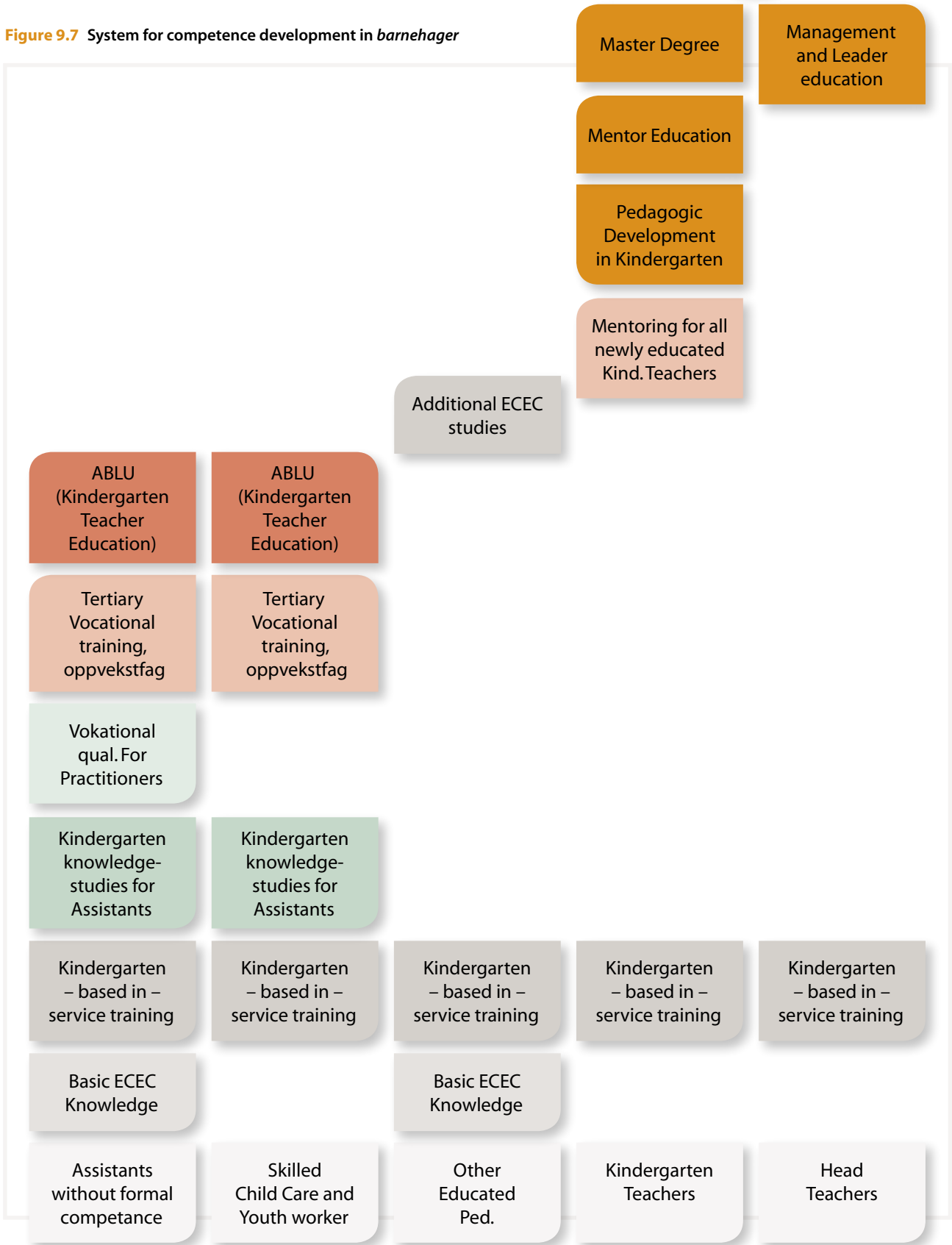
128 TNS Gallup 2012a, Rambøll 2012a, Rambøll 2014

129 Eik (2014)

130 Oxford Research 2013

PHD

Figure 9.7 System for competence development in barnehager



Source: The Ministry of Education and Research

### 9.3.4 A new kindergarten teacher education

The Framework Plan for the former preschool teacher education from 2003 gave all universities/university colleges freedom to organise the contents of the teacher training in their own way. It was also possible to establish different profiles and study specialisations. This resulted in a broad variety of preschool teacher education programmes within the limits of the framework. In 2010, the Norwegian Agency for Quality in Education (NOKUT) evaluated all the preschool teacher education programmes at the 20 university colleges/universities that offered such programmes.<sup>131</sup> The aim of the evaluation was to create a knowledge base to ensure and develop research-based professional training of high quality and relevance for preschool teachers.

The evaluation indicated a number of challenges with regard to the quality of the education and the quality of the candidates' professional competence. The education had low status both among university colleges/universities and in society at large. The education did not recruit the students with the highest academic levels from high school, and the students did not put enough effort and time into their studies. The education was too oriented towards children over three years of age, not meeting the need for knowledge about children younger than three. The education also needed strengthening in relation to competence in multiculturalism. In addition, the evaluation pointed to the fact that preschool teacher training did not offer sufficient opportunities for in-depth study of pedagogy for children with special needs. It was also deemed necessary to strengthen the education in relation to pedagogical and administrative leadership.

NOKUT pointed to the fact that most educators are lecturers with university degrees who lack experience from the ECEC field. Some of the preschool teacher education programmes did not meet the requirement that 20 per cent of staff should have the competence required of associate professors. In addition, a rather large proportion of practice teachers did not have sufficient training in guidance and tutoring. Following the evaluation, NOKUT has advised institu-

tions providing preschool teacher education to prioritise this education and to ensure that more of their teaching staff have competence at associate professor level. They are further encouraged to strengthen the link between theory and practice by increasing the resources devoted to research and development. This will provide lecturers with better knowledge of the ECEC field, at the same time as providing a more research-based and coherent professional education and strengthening the link between theory and practice.

NOKUT recommended a revision of the framework plan for the preschool teacher education. An expert group was tasked with proposing changes to the education, and in 2012 a new framework plan for the kindergarten teacher education was put in place. The first two years of the new education have a common structure and content, while the third year opens up for different specializing programmes. The aim of the revised education is to achieve better quality with a more equal initial training than before. The title of the profession was changed from *førskolelærer* (preschool teacher) to *barnehagelærer* (kindergarten teacher) to emphasise that *barnehage* has a value of its own and not only as a preparatory stage to starting school.

In addition to theoretical knowledge, the curriculum for the kindergarten teacher education provides insight into a holistic conception of learning, where care, play and learning as well as formation are natural components. Children's and parents' participation is regulated in the Kindergarten Act and shall be part of the knowledge and skills developed by students. The new kindergarten teacher education has been more clearly linked to the Framework Plan for *barnehager*. Work methods in *barnehager* are founded on a topic-based multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary conception of knowledge, which allows considerable room for play and spontaneous activity.

In the new framework plan for the kindergarten teacher education, ten subjects have been replaced by six knowledge areas. This is more in line with the integrated way children learn and with how pedagogical work in *barnehager* is organised. Within each knowledge area, academic subjects, didactics, pedagogy and practice are closely linked. The curricular components of the kindergarten teacher education still consist of educational theory, drama, arts and

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131 NOKUT 2010

crafts, physical education, religious and ethical education, mathematics, music, natural science and environmental studies, language and social studies, but, in the new kindergarten teacher education, they are integrated and combined into the following knowledge areas:

- Children's development, play and learning
- Society, religion, view of life and ethics
- Language, text and mathematics
- Arts, culture and creativity
- Nature, health and movement
- Leadership, cooperation and developmental work

A minimum of 100 days of practical training is an integral part of the education, and a bachelor thesis is obligatory upon completion of the three-year course. The international component has been strengthened and students are encouraged to go on educational exchanges during their education.

The new framework plan for the kindergarten teacher education is in accordance with the European Qualification Framework (EQF) and it defines learning outcomes in the form of specific and general knowledge and skills.

In 2013, a group of *barnehage* experts was appointed to monitor the universities/university colleges' implementation of the new kindergarten teacher education. The group will present its evaluation report in 2017; one year after the first cohort of students has graduated.

### 9.3.5 Working conditions and wages

The working conditions of ECEC staff have remained more or less the same the last decade. For a full time position in a *barnehage* the number of hours per week is still 37.5 and the employees get at least 25 days per year with paid holiday. As regards data on the variation in the wages for the staff, the Ministry only has data on the differences between public and private *barnehager*. Variations by county, municipality or degree of urbanization are not available. Neither are data on other social benefits.

Wage negotiations and questions on working conditions are issues between *barnehage* owners, employees' organisations and employees. Statistics Norway has calculated that the private rate of return for a kindergarten teacher degree, based on lifetime earnings, is negative. A study from 2012 shows that former kindergarten teachers point to low salary and a lack of opportunities for promotion as important issues.<sup>132</sup> In addition, they point to lack of financial resources that hinders educational activities for children in *barnehager* and lack of qualified colleagues and a satisfactory working environment as factors that are important for preventing turnover.

Both the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (*KS*) and the National Association of Private Kindergartens (PBL) conduct the central collective negotiations on behalf of their members resulting in a main agreement with the staff unions (the Union of Education Norway – 'Utdanningsforbundet', the Norwegian Union of Municipal and General Employees – 'Fagforbundet' and part of the Confederation of Vocational Unions – 'Delta'), the latest from 2012–2014. PBL has done this since 1996. Since 2014 membership in PBL implies also being part of the collective negotiation system (this was a separate voluntary part of the membership from 1996–2013). The system of wages is a framed system which gives possibilities for variations between municipalities or between *barnehager*. Working conditions and salaries are in addition negotiated locally, which can result in higher wages or other local measures.

132 Education mirror 2013 cit. TNS Gallup 2012

### Wages in public barnehager

The average wage per month in public *barnehager* varies with the employee's position. In 2013 the head teacher/manager earned about 42 300 NOK on average, while the assistants on average earned about 15 000 NOK less per month. This difference has increased since 2002. In 2002 the average wage of the assistant was 73 per cent of the average wage of the head teacher, while in 2013 this had decreased to 65 per cent.

In the following tables and figures the categories for the non-teacher (auxiliary) staff will vary between "Child nurse", "Child Care and Youth Worker" and "Assistant". The two former are approximately the same form for a vocational training at upper secondary level. The "Child nurse" education was replaced by the "Child Care and Youth Worker" education in 1994. The term "Assistant" means staff without any specified formal education for working in *barnehage*.

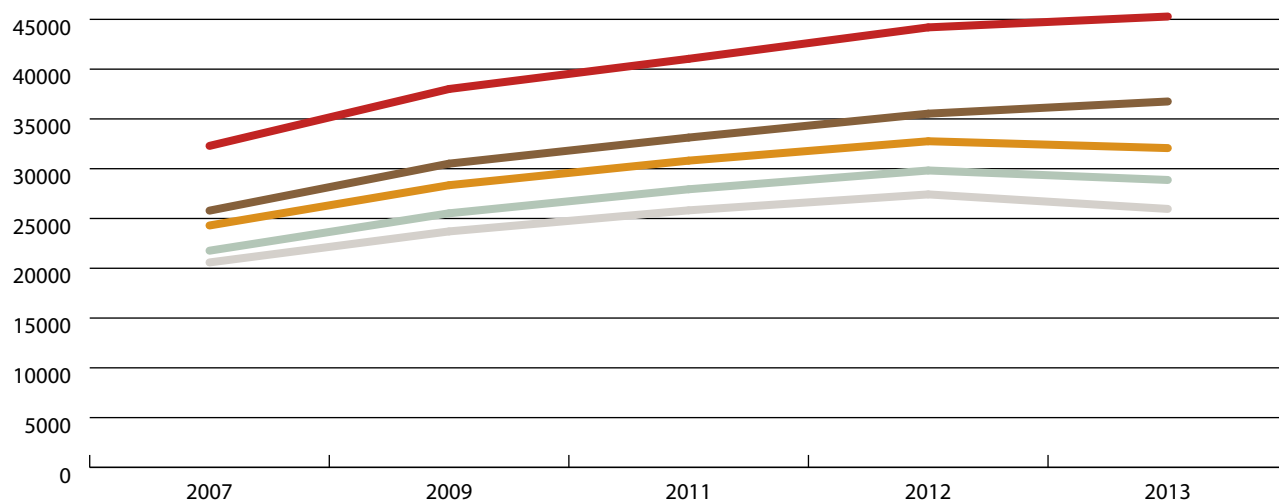
**Table 9.5** Average wage per month in public *barnehager*

	2002	2012	2013
Head teacher/manager	24 652	41 525	42 259
Kindergarten teacher/Pedagogical leader	22 119	34 986	35 421
Kindergarten teacher/pedagogue	21 757	33 380	33 777
Child Nurse	19 644	30 483	30 878
Child Care and Youth worker	19 103	29 206	29 523
Assistant	17 912	26 679	27 420

Source: KS (wage in December)

The development from 2002 to 2013 is illustrated in figure 9.5. The head teachers followed by the pedagogical leaders and other pedagogues have had the largest wage increase.

**Figure 9.8** Development of wages in public *barnehager* 2007–2013



Source: KS (wage in December)

- Head teacher
- Barnehage teacher/Pedagogical leader
- Barnehage teacher/Pedagogue
- Child Nurse
- Assistant

For all employees in Norway the average wage in 2013 was 38 500 NOK per month. This is higher than the average wage for all the positions in the *barnehage* except the head teacher. Most of the employees in the *barnehage* are women, and women in general earn less than men. The average wage for all women in 2013 was 35 700 NOK per month, so the average wage for a pedagogical leader is about the same as the average wage for women in general.

**Table 9.6** Average wage for all employees in Norway

	2002	2012	2013
All	25 113	37 300	38 500
Men	26 816	39 400	40 700
Women	22 790	34 600	35 700

Source: Statistics Norway

The kindergarten teacher has at least 3 years of higher education. In 2013 the average wage per month for all employees with 1–4 years of higher education was 42 400 NOK. This is about the average wage of a head teacher, while the kindergarten teacher earns less. Also for employees with higher education men earns, on average, more than women. But kindergarten teachers also earn less than the average for women with 1–4 years of higher education.

**Table 9.7** Average wage per month for all employees with 1–4 years of higher education

	2002	2012	2013
All	28 473	41 400	42 400
Men	31 735	46 200	47 500
Women	25 619	37 900	38 700

Source: Statistics Norway

The average wage per month has increased with 50–70 per cent from 2002–2013 for all the different positions in the public *barnehage*, with the largest increase for those with the highest wages. The average wage increase for all employees with 1–4 years of higher education has been just below 50 per cent in the same period, while the average wage increase for all employees has been somewhat higher.

**Table 9.8** Increase in average monthly wage in public *barnehager*

	2012–2013	2002–2013
Head teacher/manager	1,8 %	71,4 %
Kindergarten teacher/ Pedagogical leader	1,2 %	60,1 %
Kindergarten teacher/pedagogue	1,2 %	55,2 %
Child Nurse	1,3 %	57,2 %
Child Care and Youth worker	1,1 %	54,5 %
Assistant	2,8 %	53,1 %

Source: KS (wage in December)

**Table 9.9** Increase in average monthly wage for all employees in Norway

	2012–2013	2002–2013
All	3,2 %	53,3 %
Men	3,3 %	51,8 %
Women	3,2 %	56,6 %

Source: Statistics Norway

The increase in the wage for the lowest paid positions in the *barnehage* has been almost the same as the increase in the average wage for all employees with 1–4 years of higher education, around 50 per cent. But the head teacher and kindergarten teacher in public *barnehager* have had an increase between 60–70 per cent in the period 2002–2013, which is higher than the average for all with comparable length on their education.

**Table 9.10** Increase in average monthly wage for employees with 1–4 years of higher education

	2012–2013	2002–2013
All	2,42 %	48,9 %
Men	2,81 %	49,7 %
Women	2,11 %	51,1 %

Source: Statistics Norway



### Wages in private *barnehager*

The average wage in the private *barnehager* is about the same as in the public *barnehager* for the different job positions. In 2013 the average wage for the lowest paid positions in the *barnehager* was lower in the private than the public *barnehager*, while the average wage for the head teachers was higher in the private than the public *barnehager*. The increase in the head teachers' average wage from 2007–2013 in the private

*barnehager* has been 40 per cent versus 34 per cent in the public. The average wage for the assistants has had the same increase of 26 per cent in public and private *barnehager*.

The difference between the lowest paid employee, the assistant, and the highest paid employee, the head teacher, is larger in the private than in the public *barnehager*, and this difference has increased since 2007.

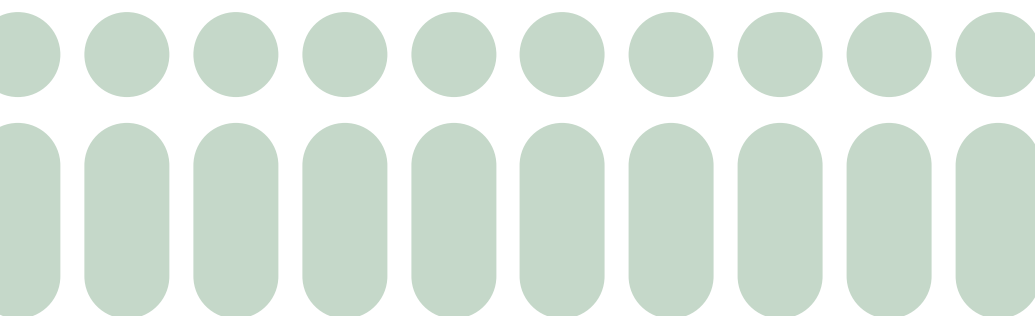
**Table 9.11** Average monthly wage in public and private *barnehager*

	2007		2013	
	Public	Private*	Public	Private
Head teacher/manager	31 615	32 292	42 259	45 284
Kindergarten teacher/Pedagogical leader	27 388	25 789	35 421	36 751
Kindergarten teacher/pedagogue	26 090	24 299	33 777	32 070
Child Nurse	23 945	21 766	30 878	28 868
Child Care and Youth worker	21 681	20 586	27 420	25 960

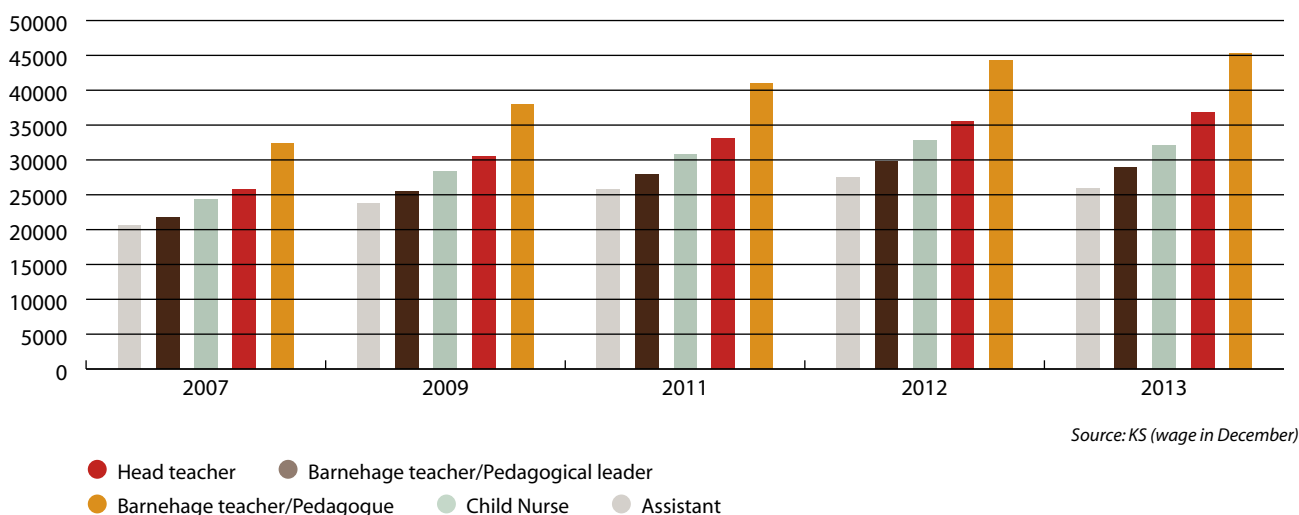
\*Wage in March

Source: KS and PBL (wage in Nov/Dec)

The development is illustrated in figure 9.9. Compared to figure 9.8 we can see that in private *barnehager* head teachers have a higher average wage and assistants a lower average wage than the same groups in public *barnehager*.



**Figure 9.9** Development of wages in private barnehager 2007–2013



**Table 9.12** Increase in average monthly wage in public and private barnehager

	2007–2013	
	Public	Private*
Head teacher/manager	33,7 %	40,2 %
Kindergarten teacher/ Pedagogical leader	29,3 %	42,5 %
Kindergarten teacher/pedagogue	29,5 %	32,0 %
Child Nurse	29,0 %	32,6 %
Child Care and Youth worker	26,5 %	26,1 %

Source: KS and PBL (wage in Nov/Dec)

### Wages in public sector (municipalities)

The total average wage for all employees in the *barnehager* in 2012 was 30 808 NOK per month. This is about 6 000 NOK less than for employees in the primary and lower secondary schools and 9 000 NOK less than employees in upper secondary schools. The wage increase since 2007 has been a little higher in the *barnehager* than primary and lower secondary schools and upper secondary schools, so the difference has decreased.

In the *barnehager* there are more employees with no higher education, so the difference in average wage is also explained by the fact that the average employee in the primary and lower secondary schools and upper secondary schools has more education than the average employee in the *barnehage*.

**Table 9.13** Wages and developments in public sector (municipalities)

	2007	2012	Change 2007–2012
Total	29 000	36 075	24,4 %
<i>Barnehage</i>	24 658	30 808	24,9 %
Primary and secondary schools	30 567	36 983	21,0 %
Upper secondary	32 350	39 875	23,3 %
Care and welfare	28 425	35 292	24,2 %
Culture	27 925	34 583	23,8 %
Technical	28 342	35 817	26,4 %
Central administration	29 783	38 442	29,1 %

Source: Teknisk beregningsutvalg, rapport november 2008 og 2013

## 9.4 Family and community engagement

### 9.4.1 Family engagement in ECEC

To ensure opportunities for engagement and cooperation between parents and *barnehage* staff, both the former 1975 Child Day Care Act and 1995 Kindergarten Act and the current 2005 Kindergarten Act state that every *barnehage* must have a parents' council ('foreldreråd') consisting of the parents/guardians of all children in the *barnehage* and a parent-staff coordinating committee ('samarbeidsutvalg') consisting of an equal number of representatives of parents/guardians and staff. The owner of the *barnehage* can also be a member of the committee. The parents' council has the right to express an opinion on all matters of importance to parental relations with the *barnehage*. After the introduction of the maximum fee, only the parents' council can consent to a proposal from the owner to charge more than this amount, for example an additional fee for meals ('kostpenger').

Parental engagement is integrated in the Kindergarten Act through the purpose clause and the *Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens*. Each *barnehage's* coordinating committee draws up an annual plan for educational activities in the *barnehage*, and parents are actively involved in this work.

The Framework Plan states that parents shall be actively encouraged to take part in monitoring quality and in reviewing the *barnehage's* activities through meetings, committees and surveys. A study from 2012 shows that 87 per cent of *barnehager* make use of surveys.<sup>133</sup>

A national survey from 2008 shows that parents throughout the country are satisfied with *barnehager* and with the cooperation with *barnehager*.<sup>134</sup> A report on quality in *barnehager* describes procedures for informing and involving parents in the *barnehager's* planning and activities. In 2012 sixty-nine per cent of all parents said that they were actively involved in planning and in activities in *barnehager*.<sup>135</sup>

One of the proposals in White Paper no 41 (2008–2009) *Quality in Kindergartens* was the establishment of a national advisory board of parents for ECEC. In August 2010, the Government appointed the National Parents' Committee for Early Childhood Education and Care (*Foreldreutvalget for barnehager – FUB*). FUB's main task is to ensure that parents' voices are heard in relation to ECEC policy and to ensure that parents' perspectives are taken into account in the development of ECEC. FUB also advises the Ministry about cooperation between *barnehage* and the home, and contributes to informing parents about the same, cf. <http://www.fubhg.no/>.

A number of municipalities have established local parents' advisory boards, and FUB wishes to stimulate this. Greater involvement of parents at the local level will help to ensure that parents' perspective is taken into account in the policymaking context in the municipalities.

It has become more and more common to present *barnehager* on websites. Many municipalities present all *barnehager*, irrespective of ownership, on their websites in order to make it easier for parents to choose when applying for a *barnehage* place. Many *barnehager* also choose to present themselves in this manner.

In addition many *barnehager* use their website to inform parents about services and day-to-day activities. Using password-based solutions, parents can find photos and texts about day-to-day activities which their children have participated in.

During the year, regular meetings are held between staff and parents ('foreldremøter'). These meetings offer opportunities to give information and discuss current matters. One-to-one meetings between a child's parents and the kindergarten teacher are important opportunities to discuss the child's development and well-being.

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<sup>133</sup> Gulbrandsen & Eliassen 2013

<sup>134</sup> TNS Gallup 2008

<sup>135</sup> Gulbrandsen & Eliassen 2013

A report from 2012 shows that 97 per cent of all *barnehager* have written procedures for how to inform new parents. 94 per cent of all *barnehager* hold parent consultations (one-to-one meetings) twice a year, while 85 per cent have meetings with all parents (the parents' council) twice a year.<sup>136</sup> Newsletters can be part of the information given to parents at the local level, but the Ministry has no indication of how widespread this is.

In White Paper no 41 (2008–2009) *Quality in Kindergartens*, it was stated that the Ministry will establish a web portal about and for *barnehager*. In June 2014 the Directorate opened the website *Nasjonalt barnehageregister* (NBR, translates to 'National register of *barnehager*'). NBR contains information on all *barnehager* regarding address, ownership and number and age of children. Each *barnehage* can add a link to its own website. The Directorate is currently developing a system for assessment of quality in *barnehager* where statistics on staff's qualifications and other factors will be a part. The system is due to be published in 2017. The Government's goal is a system where parents and others easily can find information on individual *barnehager* and compare quality measures.

One important task for the *barnehage* is helping minority language children to become functionally bilingual or multilingual. Cooperation with parents is crucial in this respect, but it is challenge for the *barnehage* to communicate with parents who don't speak Norwegian fluently. In recent years, the Ministry, the Directorate and the National Centre on Multicultural Education (NAFO) have published information about the *barnehager's* work in this field as a help to overcome this challenge.

## 9.4.2 Community engagement and inter-agency cooperation in ECEC

### *Inter-agency cooperation between different public services*

The challenge of developing better inter-agency cooperation between the different public services has been on the political agenda for years. In its political platform, the present Government states that it wishes to contribute to closer cooperation between the Child Welfare Service, health clinics, *barnehager*, schools, the police and the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Service (NAV).

The municipality is responsible for several public services and should try to ensure that the cooperation between them is as good as possible in order to provide children and families with the best-coordinated services. Cross-disciplinary and holistic thinking is therefore of central importance. In addition to *barnehager*, the services in question are schools, public health clinics, the educational and psychological counselling service, social services and the Child Welfare Service. Chapter 5 of the *Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens* describes cooperation with other institutions and services in more detail.

### *Cooperation between barnehager and the Child Welfare Service*

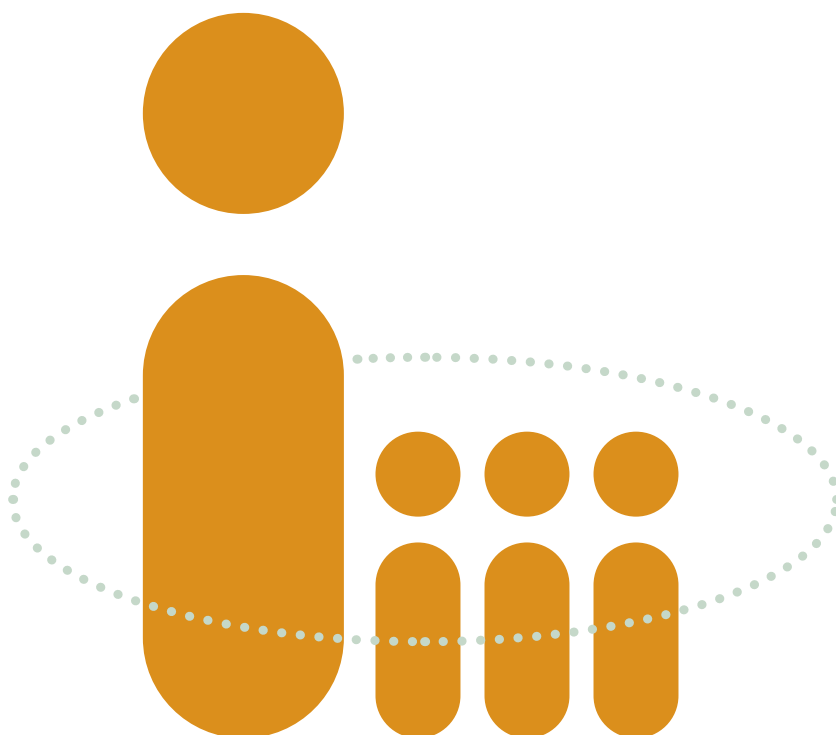
Since participation in *barnehager* has increased so dramatically over the past decade, especially for the youngest children, cooperation between *barnehager* and the Child Welfare Service has become even more important. *Barnehage* staff is in a unique position to observe and detect whether a child is a victim of neglect, maltreatment and physical and sexual abuse. The Kindergarten Act, Section 22 *Duty to provide information to the child welfare service* states the following:

*The kindergarten staff shall in their work be alert to circumstances which may lead to action on the part of the child welfare service. Notwithstanding the duty of confidentiality, the kindergarten staff shall on their own initiative provide information to the child welfare service when there is reason to believe that a child is being mistreated at home or if there are other forms of seriously deficient care (...) or when a child has shown persistent, serious behavioural problems (...). Kindergarten staff are also obliged to provide such information when ordered to do so by the bodies responsible for implementing the Child Welfare Services Act.*

Of 6 100 cases concerning children aged 1–5 investigated by the Child Welfare Service in 2005, *barnehager* had reported 500 of them (8 per cent). In 2012, *barnehager* reported 1 300 of 9 450 cases (14 per cent). In 2009, the Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion published guidelines for cooperation between *barnehager* and the Child Welfare Service (*Til barnets beste – samarbeid mellom barnehagen og barnevernstjenesten* – ‘For the benefit of the child – cooperation between the *barnehage* and the Child Welfare Service’). A study from 2012 showed that 22 per cent of *barnehager* stated that they had used the guidelines.<sup>137</sup>

In the past few years, the Government has implemented several measures to increase the expertise of Child Welfare Service staff in reaching and helping children and families from immigrant backgrounds. One such measure is the establishment of a special further education programme on child welfare from a minority perspective, which is financed by the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion. It is also a priority task for the Norwegian authorities to inform parents from immigrant backgrounds about children’s rights in Norway and the function of the Child Welfare Service. Some families may have a cultural background where corporal punishment and cultural rituals, such as female circumcision, represent a danger to the child’s well-being and health. Dialogue has been initiated between the public authorities at various administrative levels and minority group organisations in order to promote greater trust in and understanding of the mandate and tasks of the Child Welfare Service.

During recent decades, different parental guidance programmes have been offered by the municipalities. The *barnehager* can help and guide parents who face problems in bringing up their children.



137 Gulbrandsen & Eliassen 2013

### *Transition from barnehage to primary school*

The transition from *barnehage* to primary school has received more attention in the past decade. The Framework Plan accentuates the municipality's responsibility to ensure that *barnehage* and primary school facilitate the children's transition in cooperation with the parents. Plans for the children's transition to school must be specified in the *barnehage's* annual plan. Research show that some children are vulnerable and will experience problems in the transition from *barnehage* to primary school.<sup>138</sup> In 2008, the Ministry published the guidelines 'From being eldest to being youngest' for municipalities, *barnehager* and schools. A survey from 2010 showed that only one third of *barnehager* used the guidelines as a base for their work regarding preparing children for school.<sup>139</sup> Ideally, all five-year-olds should be able to visit their primary school in the spring before school starts in August, but this may prove a challenge for large *barnehager* where the children are going to start at a number of different schools, or where the child attends a *barnehage* situated a long way from its home and primary school. A survey in the municipality of Oslo in 2010 showed that only 38 per cent of the *barnehager* cooperated with all the different primary schools that the children would attend.<sup>140</sup>

Sample surveys to head teachers indicate that the cooperation between *barnehager* and schools has improved the last decade, and that *barnehager* have increased their efforts to prepare children for school. The share of *barnehager* which provided school preparing activities in 2012 was 98 per cent compared to 72 per cent in 2004. The share of *barnehager* which has established procedures for provision of information from *barnehage* to school was 90 per cent in 2012 compared to 31 per cent in 2004.<sup>141</sup> This information should be given with the consent of and in cooperation with the parents. The political and legal issue concerning procedures for *barnehager* giving individual information about a child to the school remains unresolved at the moment, and is part of an ongoing review of the Kindergarten Act.

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138 Broström 2001, 2002, 2003, 2005, Neuman 2002, Shore 1998, Wagner 2003

139 Rambøll 2010

140 Oslo kommune 2012

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141 Gulbrandsen & Eliassen 2013



## CHAPTER 10.

# Monitoring and research

### 10.1 Monitoring of regulations and minimum standards

#### 10.1.1 The roles of the municipality and the County Governor

Since the first Child Day Care Act in 1975, the municipalities have been responsible for supervising and inspecting the *barnehager*. The County Governor was given a parallel role.

The Kindergarten Act of 2005 clarified the roles of owners, municipalities and County Governors. Responsibility for supervision/monitoring of *barnehage* is divided between the municipalities as *barnehage* authority and the County Governors, so that the County Governors would supervise the municipalities, not the *barnehager*. The Kindergarten Act states the following in Section 16 and Section 9:

The municipality

- shall supervise undertakings and may order the rectification of inadequate or unlawful conditions
- If the deadline for complying with the order is not observed, or if the condition cannot be rectified, the municipality may order the temporary or permanent closure of the undertaking.
- The municipality's administrative decision regarding closure shall be sent to the County Governor for his/her information. Administrative decisions regarding rectification and closure may be appealed to the County Governor.

The County Governor

- shall provide guidance to municipalities and owners of undertakings
- is the appellate body in respect of administrative decisions made by the municipality
- shall supervise that the municipality carries out the responsibilities imposed on it as the authority for *barnehager*
- has the right of access to documents and to the premises of *barnehager* insofar as this is deemed necessary in order to fulfil the responsibilities of the County Governor

#### 10.1.2 The question of resources in small municipalities

It is demanding for some municipalities – especially small ones with few employees – to follow up their supervisory role. Several surveys indicate differences in capacity and competence among local authorities.

Surveys have shown that the number of inspections from municipalities varies considerably, and in its report from 2009 the Norwegian National Audit Office (*Riksrevisjonen*) pointed to the fact that 23 per cent of all *barnehager* had not been inspected ever.<sup>142</sup> More recent surveys in 2011 and 2012 indicate that the municipalities have increased the number of inspections.<sup>143</sup> The resources allotted to inspections have increased and inspections are also better organ-

142 Riksrevisjonen 2009

143 Rambøll 2012, Gulbrandsen & Eliassen 2013



ised and more professionalised. Large disparities between municipalities remain however. A number of smaller municipalities rarely or never conduct inspections. More than half of the 428 municipalities have less than 5000 inhabitants, and it can therefore be expected that challenges regarding capacity and competence are present in a large part of the country.<sup>144</sup>

A total of 68 per cent of the private *barnehager* had inspections in 2013, whereas the percentage for public *barnehager* was 58 per cent. 69 per cent of *familiebarnehager* had inspections in 2013.

### 10.1.3 The question of principle about the municipality's dual role

Norwegian municipalities own and run about half of the country's *barnehager*. In addition, municipalities are tasked with supervising undertakings pursuant to the Kindergarten Act. A municipality has the same supervisory responsibilities for all *barnehager* within its borders, whether they are privately owned or owned by the municipality. In its supervisory role, the municipality checks whether it fulfils its responsibilities as *barnehage* owner. This dual role as both supervisor and owner raises questions about the municipalities' legitimacy as supervisory authority. Municipalities must therefore ensure that their role as exerciser of authority and supervisor is kept as distinct and separate as possible from their role as *barnehage* owner and service provider.

A study from 2010 shows that 79 per cent of the municipal authorities had their ownership and supervisory roles organised under the same unit.<sup>145</sup> In 2012, this percentage had dropped to 47 per cent.<sup>146</sup> Thus, there is a trend for the municipality's ownership and supervisory roles to be clearly separated.<sup>147</sup> More than half of the Norwegian municipalities have assigned responsibility for their role as owner, roles relating to planning and the exercise of supervision, and roles pertaining to other exercising of authority, to the same manager. The challenge in relation to the real and perceived independence of the supervisor role is most pronounced in cases where each role reports to the same middle manager, such as section heads for *barnehager*. About one third of the municipalities have assigned responsibility for the ownership role and for the exercise of supervision to the same middle manager.<sup>148</sup>

The Kindergarten Act Commission discussed the dilemma of the municipalities' dual role, but ended up recommending that the municipalities should continue to have the responsibility for monitoring and inspections. (Sett inn fotnote med følgende kilde: NOU 2012:1 *Til barnas beste* ('For the benefit of the children')) White Paper no 24 (2012–2013) *Kindergartens for the Future* discussed a proposal to transfer responsibility for supervision from the municipalities to the regional or national level, preferably the County Governors, in order to ensure the legitimacy of the supervisory authority. The present Government says in its political platform that the Government will 'Implement independent supervision of kindergartens'. The question of responsibility for monitoring and inspections has been part of the ongoing review of the Kindergarten Act. A law proposal letting the municipalities keep the responsibility for monitoring and inspections, but at the same time giving the County Governors admission to inspect *barnehager* directly, has been on a public hearing in the period November 17, 2014 – January 19, 2015.

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144 Kommuneutvalget 2014

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145 PwC 2010

146 Rambøll 2012c

147 Education Mirror 2013

148 Rambøll 2012 c

## 10.2 Monitoring of the quality of *barnehager*

### 10.2.1 The *barnehager*'s annual report on quality factors

All Norwegian *barnehager* are obliged to fill in an annual report using a web-based tool.<sup>149</sup> The report is submitted to the Directorate for Education and Training as well as Statistics Norway (*Statistisk sentralbyrå* – SSB), and includes comprehensive information about:

- the number of ECEC places and children (by age), including the number of minority language children and children with disabilities;
- attendance rates;
- the quality of ECEC provision (e.g. the number of staff, staff positions, qualifications and gender);
- organisation of the *barnehage* (e.g. ownership and opening hours);
- parental fees, sibling discounts and reductions for low-income families.

Statistics Norway collects data about employees in different sectors, including the ECEC sector, on working conditions and workforce supply.

In addition privately owned *barnehager* (53 per cent) have to submit a separate profit-and-loss account to the Directorate for Education and Training. The profit-and-loss account is used by the municipalities to monitor the use of public grants and parents' fees in private *barnehager*.

Based on the annual reports and annual accounts, official statistics are compiled about ECEC services. In addition, Statistics Norway collects register data on employees in the sector, on working conditions and workforce supply, as well as public financing of the sector (both public and private institutions). Statistics Norway also conducts an annual survey of municipal regulations and levels of parental fees.

Other surveys conducted regularly up until general state grants replaced the former earmarked block grants in 2011 included:

- Analysis of *barnehage* statistics – status for the development of new *barnehage* places and waiting lists as of 20 September
- Analysis of costs in *barnehager*

In addition, other surveys and analyses are carried out on an irregular basis when the Ministry sees a need for more information about certain topics.

### 10.2.2 Other types of monitoring

Several studies in recent years have given a better and more complete picture of the current status in the ECEC field.

In White Paper no 41 (2008–2009) *Quality in Kindergartens*, it was stated that the Ministry will compile an annual national report on conditions in the *barnehage* sector. The Directorate for Education and Training is responsible for this, and, since 2012, it has included text on *barnehager* in its annual publication 'The Education Mirror' (*Utdanningsspeilet*), which is also published in English, cf. the 2013-version: [http://www.udir.no/Upload/Rapporter/TheEducationMirror\\_2013.pdf?epslanguage=no](http://www.udir.no/Upload/Rapporter/TheEducationMirror_2013.pdf?epslanguage=no) and the 2014-version: <http://utdanningsspeilet.udir.no/en/>.

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149 BASIL – *Barnehage-statistikk-innrapporteringsløsning* (Kindergarten statistics report system)

Parents are entitled to information about their child's *barnehage*, but the Ministry does not have information on the routines each *barnehage* have for giving information. Since parents are represented in the parent-staff coordinating committee ('samarbeidsutvalg'), it is assumed that the need for information will be covered through this committee. The reports from the municipality's supervision will also be publicly accessible, and often the local media will have news items on the results of these supervisions.

The present Government's goal is a system where parents and others easily can find information on individual *barnehager* and compare quality measures. In White Paper no 41 (2008–2009) *Quality in Kindergartens*, it was stated that the Ministry will establish a web portal about and for *barnehager*. In June 2014 the Directorate opened the website *Nasjonalt barnehageregister* (NBR, translates to 'National register of *barnehager*'). NBR contains information on all *barnehager* regarding address, ownership and number and age of children. Each *barnehage* can add a link to its own website. The Directorate is currently developing a system for assessment of quality in *barnehager* where statistics on staff's qualifications and other factors will be a part. The system is due to be published in 2017.

Norway carries out surveys of parents' opinions and consults these stakeholders on a regular basis about any difficulties and wishes they have regarding ECEC services. This procedure plays a critical role in maintaining quality, affordability and transparency in the spending of budgets. National surveys and parent consultations provide information about ease of access, opening hours, the administration and distribution of places, family background, quality standards, parents' perception of the well-being of children, and the provision of meals and healthcare for children.

The following table shows the results from the latest surveys of parental satisfaction regarding ECEC services. As we can see, the results from the years 2010, 2011 and 2012 are very similar. On average, parents have a high degree of satisfaction (highest possible score is 6). The area with the lowest score is the *barnehage*'s physical environment.

**Table 10.1** Parental satisfaction with services (scale 1–6)

	2010	2011	2012
Well-being	5,1	5,1	5,1
Involvement	4,6	4,6	4,7
Respectful treatment	5,3	5,2	5,3
Accessibility	5,3	5,3	5,4
Information	4,7	4,6	4,7
Physical environment	4,5	4,5	4,6
Total average	4,9	4,9	5,0

Source: Oppvekstrapporten 2013

The last six years EPSI <sup>150</sup> Norway has conducted surveys on user satisfaction for the different levels in the education system, and *barnehager* have always had a high score. The average score in 2014 is 76.9, which is higher than upper secondary school (72.2), primary school (72.1) and lower secondary school (63.6). The following table shows the results for *barnehager* for the years 2009–2014:

**Table 10.2** User satisfaction for *barnehager* (percentage of parents who are satisfied with the *barnehage*)

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Public <i>barnehager</i>	73.7	71.8	73.5	71.9	73.7	74.2
Private <i>barnehager</i>	80.6	76.3	78.0	76.8	77.3	79.5
All <i>barnehager</i>	76.9	73.9	75.7	74.3	75.5	76.9

Source: EPSI Norway 2014

EPSI Norway reports that 6 of 10 parents are very satisfied with their child's *barnehage* while 1 of 10 is dissatisfied. As the table shows, parents are a bit more satisfied with private than public *barnehager*. The Ministry has no explanation for this.

<sup>150</sup> EPSI Rating is an independent organisation that provides neutral performance assessments to a multitude of users.

### 10.3 Changes in the research agenda relating to ECEC

The contribution of Norwegian research communities to knowledge about *barnehager* has been increasing strongly since 1999. The transfer of responsibility for the ECEC sector from the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs to the Ministry of Education and Research in 2006 was an acknowledgement of *barnehager's* role as the first step in a lifelong learning process. *Barnehager* are therefore included in research on the education sector. Public financing of research in the ECEC sector has increased dramatically since 1999. In the years 2007 to 2009 alone, public financing increased from NOK 36 million to NOK 107 million. In the national budget for 2014, the Ministry allocated NOK 24 million for research on the ECEC sector. The Government's goal as expressed in the national budget, is to provide a better knowledge basis for practice, public management and ECEC policies.

When responsibility for the ECEC field was transferred to the Ministry of Education and Research, the ECEC field was included in the programme for practice-based research and development (R&D) called *PraksisFoU* (PracticeR&D). This programme aimed to generate new research-based knowledge in areas of key importance to *barnehager* and primary and secondary education by promoting organised cooperation between institutions responsible for teacher education and owners of *barnehager* and schools. Extra funding was provided for the programme, and topics deemed relevant to the ECEC sector were pointed out, such as the content and quality of *barnehager* and effects on children's learning and development, organisational issues, the relationship between the education of kindergarten teachers and practice, and research on inclusive early childhood education and care. *PraksisFoU* lasted from 2005 to 2009 and was replaced by a new programme, *PRAKUT* (an abbreviation of 'practice-oriented educational research'), in 2010 (see below).

In White Paper no 41 (2008–2009) *Quality in Kindergartens*, one of the conclusions was that the knowledge base in the ECEC sector was still lacking in scope and quality. It was therefore necessary to improve the situation by obtaining better research and better statistics, and by developing a national system for monitoring quality in the ECEC sector. The white paper concluded that the Ministry needed more knowledge about quality and the long-term effects of *barnehage* attendance, and that the Ministry would initiate and support longitudinal studies of this kind.

In 2008, the Ministry of Education and Research adopted an overall strategy for educational research, including research on and for *barnehager*. The strategy pointed out that, previously, research on ECEC tended to address questions relating to accessibility, distribution and the cash-for-care benefit rather than questions relating to the quality, content and tasks of *barnehager*. The strategies *Kunnskap for kvalitet (2008–2013)* ('Knowledge for quality') and *Kvalitet og relevans (2014–2019)* ('Quality and relevance') gave direction to the work of strengthening educational research. The goals are:

- To strengthen the expert communities that conduct research on education
- To raise the quality and relevance of the research
- To stimulate innovation and closer cooperation between research communities in Scandinavia, Europe and worldwide
- To facilitate the use of knowledge and research results in governance, administration and practice in the education sector.

Educational research is partly funded through programmes set up by the Research Council of Norway (*Norges forskningsråd*), but also as part of the core funding of universities/university colleges (75 per cent). An analysis shows that the annual increase in the funding of R&D in the educational sector was 14 per cent between 2007 and 2011. Research on ECEC showed the largest increase in the period, but it still only constituted 13 per cent of the total funded educational research.<sup>151</sup>

Funding research programmes through the Research Council of Norway that specifically include *barnehager*, their educational content and tasks and their effect on children and childhood have been part of an overall strategy on the part of the Ministry to strengthen educational research as a whole and research on *barnehager* in particular.

The Research Council of Norway established the long-term programme *Utdanning 2020* ('Education 2020') in 2009.<sup>152</sup> The programme aims to strengthen educational research of high scientific merit and to enhance the knowledge base for policy-making, public administration, professional education and professional practice. A number of ECEC projects have been funded via the programme.

In 2014, based on an evaluation from 2013, the two programmes *Utdanning 2020* and *PRAKUT* were merged into one large programme for educational research called *FINNUT* ('Find out').

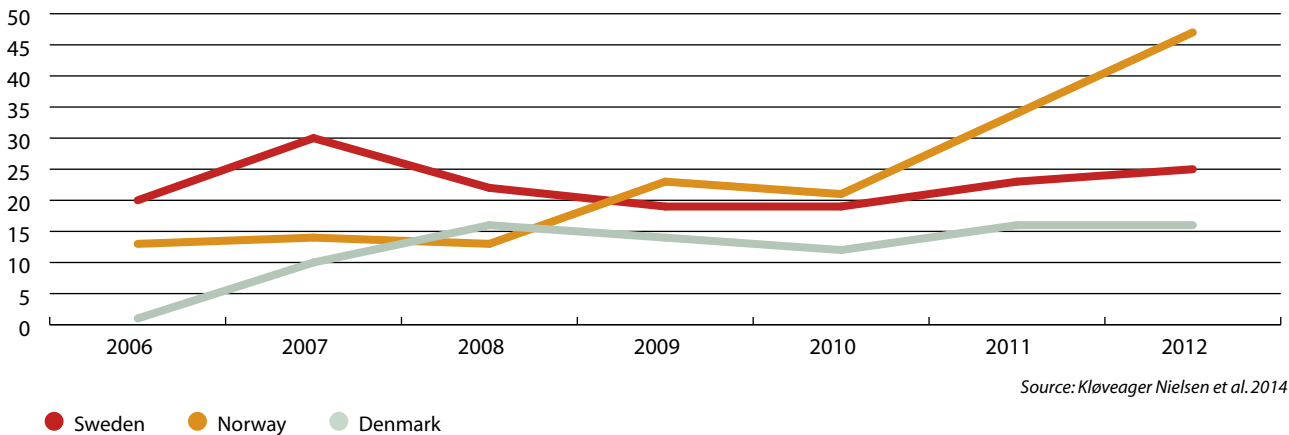
The effects of Norwegian ECEC on children's well-being and development have been put on the agenda, not least because of the increase in the level of participation. A number of Norwegian longitudinal studies are currently ongoing. The largest studies are:

- BePro (2012–2017) – Better Provision for Norway's Children in Early Childhood Education and Care. This is a large longitudinal research project on the effects of quality in Norwegian *barnehager* on children's well-being and development. The study will explore the characteristics and quality of different kinds of early years provision and the impact various types of settings have on children's well-being, attainment, progress and development. Part of the objective also includes developing a research-based tool for the national evaluation of process quality in ECEC.
- The BONDS study (Behaviour outlook Norwegian developmental study) (2006 – ongoing) in which 1 150 children aged from 6 months upwards and their families are taking part. The study also includes reporting from *barnehager* (130). The study is specifically aimed at studying children's social development.
- The SOL study, part of Folkehelseinstituttets (the Norwegian Institute of Public Health) MoBA project (2007 – ongoing). The MoBa project has recruited 100 000 mothers and children to the study since 1999. Over 70 000 fathers have also taken part. Parental surveys have followed the children from before birth through the ages of 6, 18, 24 and 36 months, to 5 year of age and beyond. In the reports on *barnehage* quality and effects, data from surveys among parents and pedagogues are combined. Around 4 000 5-year-old children are included in this specific study. The SOL study will follow children into school, and the next survey will be carried out when they are 8 years old.
- The Stavanger project was initiated by the University of Stavanger in cooperation with Stavanger municipality. In the study, 1 000 children are being followed from 2 years of age in *barnehage* until they are 10 and in school.

151 NIFU 2013

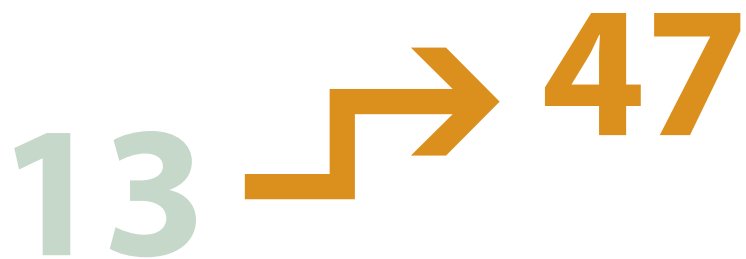
152 [http://www.forskningsradet.no/prognett-utdanning/Home\\_page/1224697819042](http://www.forskningsradet.no/prognett-utdanning/Home_page/1224697819042)

**Figure 10.1** Number of yearly ECEC-studies in Denmark, Sweden and Norway



Since 2007, the Scandinavian countries have cooperated on and co-funded a mapping project and quality assessment of Scandinavian research on *barnehager*, which has resulted in the establishment of a database in which research is made available to the sector: *Nordic Base of Early Childhood Education and Care (NB-ECEC)*.<sup>153</sup> The mapping has been conducted by the Danish Clearing House. Reports clearly show that Norway had the biggest increase in the number of publications between 2006 and 2012. In 2006, only 13 Norwegian studies were included, while in 2012, 47 of the included studies were from Norway, 57 per cent of the studies that year.<sup>154</sup>

The mapping showed that, from 2006 to 2010, the yearly number of studies included was around 50, but, in the last two years of the mapping (2011 and 2012), the number of included studies increased to 73 and 83, respectively. There has also been an increase in the number of studies published in English, increasing from 2 per cent in 2006 to 29 per cent in 2012. The report from the Clearing House states *'that there is no doubt that the national effort to increase research on ECEC in Norway through the Research Council of Norway's programmes is starting to make itself evident by the number of reported (and included) studies in this mapping.'* Figure 10.1 below the number of studies included per country per year for Denmark, Sweden and Norway.



<sup>153</sup> <http://nb-ecec.org/>

<sup>154</sup> Kløveager Nielsen et al. 2014

Dissemination of research to the sector has been one of the main objectives of this Scandinavian cooperation and, inspired by the Danish Evaluation Institute, the Directorate for Education and Training has started issuing a publication to *barnhager* based on Scandinavian research. It is called VETUVA ('Do you know?').

Both NIFU's report on ECEC research from 2009 and the Clearing House report on Scandinavian research from 2012 indicate that internationalisation has increased in Norwegian ECEC research. The large research projects funded through the Research Council of Norway include researchers from other countries in their teams, such as BePro, which is inspired by the UK EPPE study and includes researchers such as Edward Melhuish (UK – EPPE), Jacqueline Barnes and Marianne Riksen-Walraven (Netherlands – NCKO).

Responding to a call for tenders under the 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme, following the EU communiqué on ECEC, 11 universities/university colleges will be conducting a large research project on Curriculum Quality Analysis and Impact Review of European ECEC (CARE). Through Thomas Moser and the University College of Buskerud and Vestfold, Norway is one of the partners. The research project is addressing the need to:

- assess the impact of ECEC
- optimise quality and curricula for ECEC to increase effectiveness
- raise the professional competence of staff
- monitor and quality assure ECEC
- increase the inclusiveness of ECEC, especially for socioeconomically disadvantaged children
- funding of ECEC
- the need for innovative European indicators of children's well-being

The project will seek to address these issues in an integrative way, and the ultimate aim will be to develop an evidence-based and culturally sensitive framework.

## **Section III.**

# **SELF-ASSESSMENT IN SUMMARY**





## CHAPTER 11.

# The most important strengths of the current ECEC system in Norway

The following is an overview of the most important strengths of the current ECEC system in Norway, strengths that serve as examples of particularly good practice or innovative approaches worth sharing with other countries.

### 11.1 Universal service provision and universal access through an individual right to a place in ECEC

- Broad political agreement on changes in the financial and legal framework in the ECEC sector (the Kindergarten Agreement–*Barnhageforliket*) in 2003, cf. Chapter 4.1.
- An intense period of ensuring universal provision of *barnehage* places in the years 2003–2009, cf. Chapter 4.1.
- An individual statutory right to a place in ECEC for all children aged 1–5 from 2009, cf. Chapter 8.3.

### 11.2 Maximum parental fee and subsidy schemes for low-income families

- The introduction of a regulated maximum fee for parents in 2004, cf. Chapter 7.2.
- A legal obligation for municipalities to offer subsidy schemes for low-income families, cf. Chapter 7.2.

### 11.3 Women's possibility to work outside the home

- Parents' opportunities to participate in the workforce, especially women, cf. Chapter 3.5 and Chapter 4.1.

### 11.4 The Nordic ECEC model – a holistic approach

- ECEC programmes based on a holistic educational philosophy, with care, play and learning being at the core of activities, cf. Chapter 6.1 and 9.2.
- The combination of education and care and the value of childhood, cf. Chapter 6.1 and 9.2.

### 11.5 Children's right to participate

- A statutory right for children in *barnehager* to express their views on day-to-day activities, to be given a regular opportunity to take active part in planning and assessing the activities, and for their views to be given due weight based on their age and maturity, cf. Chapter 6.1.



## CHAPTER 12.

# Norway's latest innovative policies and practices to enhance quality in ECEC and their potential for scaling

The following describes Norway's latest new policies and practices to enhance quality in ECEC. The potential for scaling is also described if it is considered relevant.

### 12.1 Regulations

#### **Universal access to ECEC**

The goal of universal access was reached when an individual statutory right to a place in ECEC for all children aged 1–5 entered into force in 2009. The criteria for the individual right is that the child reaches the age of one no later than by the end of August in the year a *barnehage* place has been applied for, and the child is entitled to a place in a *barnehage* from August (i.e. the beginning of the *barnehage*/school year). This means that children who reach their first birthday on 1 September or later do not have a statutory right to a place until August the following year, when they will be nearly two years of age. The potential for scaling relates to the possibility of either extending the right to include children who reach the age of one after August or granting admission to children without a statutory right regardless of when during the year their first birthday falls. This represents a political challenge that needs to be addressed and that is currently on the political agenda, cf. Chapter 13.2.

#### **A new purpose clause for barnehager**

The introduction of a new purpose clause for *barnehager* from 1 August 2010 was an important step on the way to, among other things, better quality in the ECEC sector. The public commission that submitted the proposal for a new purpose clause stated the following:

‘Modernising the purpose clauses of *barnehager* and primary and secondary schools means seriously addressing the challenges and possibilities a modern society faces as regards diversity and pluralism. There must be respect for disagreement and a will to compromise. In a society where people with different religious, secular, cultural and political views are to live together, it is necessary to have the ability, courage and will to engage in dialogue – including dialogue about difficult and sensitive matters concerning values and religion, culture and identity.’<sup>155</sup>

The purpose clause is operationalised through the *Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens*. As proposed in White Paper no 24 (2012–2013) *Kindergartens for the Future*, the Framework Plan will be revised in the period 2015–2016. The revision will hopefully make it easier for *barnehage* staff to operationalise the purpose clause in the *barnehager's* day-to-day activities. Thus, the potential for scaling lies in how the purpose clause is adapted in the revised Framework Plan and how implementation is supported.

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155 NOU 2007:6 Formål for framtida

## 12.2 Staff quality

### **A new education for kindergarten teachers**

The evaluation of the previous education for preschool teachers led to a new framework plan, a new structure and a new name: 'Education for kindergarten teachers'. The new education was implemented in August 2013 in all universities and university colleges. It will be evaluated during the period 2013–2017. The evaluation may lead to changes.

### **The competence strategy for the period 2014–2020**

The last of a series of strategies for improving the competence of *barnehage* staff was presented in 2013. The strategy is ambitious, and, hopefully, it will lead to a higher level of knowledge and competence concerning children and *barnehager* among ECEC staff. The potential for scaling lies in increasing the number and proportion of formally qualified staff, both to meet the regulated requirement and to ensure high quality. The ambition in the strategy is to raise the number of staff with formal competence in all positions (head teachers, kindergarten teachers and assistants).

## 12.3 Curriculum

### **Children's right to agency and participation**

The Kindergarten Act of 2005 introduced children's right to participate, to express their views on the day-to-day activities and to be given the opportunity to take active part in planning and assessing the activities in the *barnehage*. This right is considered one of the most important innovative policies in relation to the curriculum in ECEC in Norway. The revised Framework Plan that entered into force in August 2006 describes how this right can be operationalised in *barnehager*.

The Framework Plan will undergo a new revision in the period 2015–2016. The potential for scaling lies in how the revision deals with this right, safeguarding the children's needs for care and play and promoting learning and formation (bildung/danning) as a basis for a well-rounded development.

In connection with the 200 year anniversary for the Norwegian Constitution of 1814 the *Storting* revised several of the sections on 27 May 2014, including new paragraphs on human rights. For the first time children's rights are made an explicit part of the constitution. This change has taken place in the 25 year anniversary of the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child.



### **Bringing children's rights into the Constitution**

The following section in the revised Norwegian constitution states children's rights to be:

#### **§ 104**

*Barn har krav på respekt for sitt menneskeverd. De har rett til å bli hørt i spørsmål som gjelder dem selv, og deres mening skal tillegges vekt i overensstemmelse med deres alder og utvikling.*

*Ved handlinger og avgjørelser som berører barn, skal barnets beste være et grunnleggende hensyn.*

*Barn har rett til vern om sin personlige integritet. Statens myndigheter skal legge forholdene til rette for barnets utvikling, herunder sikre at barnet får den nødvendige økonomiske, sosiale og helsemessige trygghet, fortrinnsvis i egen familie.*

*Children have the right to have their human value respected. They have the right to be heard in questions regarding themselves, and their opinion shall be regarded in compliance with their age and development.*

*In actions and decisions regarding children, the child's best shall be a basic consideration.*

*Children have the right to have their personal integrity protected. The authorities of the State shall facilitate the conditions for the child's development, which includes ensuring that the child is secured economically, socially and healthwise, preferably in its own family.<sup>156</sup>*

156 NB – this is not an official translation

### **Barnehage as an arena for learning and danning**

A project on *barnehage* as an arena for learning and *danning* (formation/bildung) was initiated by the Ministry following the implementation of the new purpose clause in 2011. The concept of *danning* in *barnehage* was challenging for the field to apprehend and in this explorative project 6 universities/university colleges and 66 *barnehager* in 6 counties carried out developmental work putting the purpose into practice.

Discovering and understanding children's development in their thinking and understanding of themselves and the world and finding ways of supporting these processes have been the main object of the *barnehager's* developmental work. The idea was to couple the 'theoreticians' with the 'practitioners' in answering questions like: How should *danning* be understood in the context of *barnehage*? How do *barnehager* work with children's learning within the *barnehage's* societal mandate? How do *barnehager* work with the learning areas based on a holistic view on learning, encompassing care and play, learning and *danning*?

In addition to developing good practice in the participating *barnehager*, the project has resulted in 6 theory-based and 66 practice-based articles discussing underlying understandings, experiences and practices and illustrating the learning processes of children and staff. Experiences from the projects shows that good learning situations are based on including children's perspectives and that the role of staff are central. Actively involving the children, the staff have encouraged participation in meaningful processes and have supported children's engagement with other children, the physical surroundings and artefacts (eg. books, cameras, drawing- and writing materials, wool or objects like building material etc). This rich documentation will be useful in the further implementation of the purpose clause and can feed into discussions on the development and implementation of a revised framework plan. In addition to the reports presenting the articles, the Directorate for Education and Training has commissioned a synthesis report.<sup>157</sup>

## **12.4 Family and community engagement**

### **A national parents' committee for ECEC**

The establishment of the National Parents' Committee for Early Childhood Education and Care (Foreldreutvalget for *barnehager* – FUB) in August 2010 has led to parents' voice being heard in ECEC policies and resulted in parents' perspectives being taken into account in the development of ECEC. FUB also advises the Ministry on cooperation between *barnehager* and families, and contributes to informing parents about this. The potential for scaling at the national level is irrelevant, but FUB encourages the establishment of local parents' advisory boards in the municipalities. Greater involvement of parents at the local level will contribute to ensuring that parents' perspectives are taken into account in ECEC policy-making in the municipalities.

– FUB consists of a chairman, a vice chairman, four ordinary members plus an additional deputy member in case one of the ordinary members is prevented from attending a meeting. *Barnehager*, municipalities and other stakeholders are asked to propose candidates from all over Norway, and the members are appointed by the Ministry of Education and Research for a period of four years. The Ministry strives to get a composition which secures balance between men and women, geographical representation, at least one member with a child with special needs, one member with a child with minority language background and one member with Sámi background. The committee meets approximately twice in the fall and thrice in the spring. In addition the Ministry finances a secretariat with approximately four employees for administrative support. The committee usually meets with the Minister of Education and Research once a year to present its view on the needs in *barnehage* seen from parents' perspective.

157 (DMMH, 2015)



## CHAPTER 13.

# Major challenges facing Norway's current ECEC system and strategies to address them

This chapter describes the major challenges Norway is currently facing as regards ECEC and the strategies to address them. The structure is as follows: three major challenges are described by grouping several related challenges together. The challenges from Norway's background report in 1998 are included, as well as a number of new challenges. The existing strategies to address the challenges are also described.

The high growth in public expenditure on *barnehager* in the years from 2003 to 2009 was mainly driven by the need to build capacity in the sector to ensure universal provision of *barnehage* places. The question today concerns quality issues. The persistent challenge of ensuring high quality in all *barnehager* could be defined as the overarching challenge to which all policy instruments and dialogue should be turned.

Shaping and implementing policies in the *barnehage* sector have entailed active use of measures linked to three areas: funding, regulation and process/soft law (structures, strategies and policy dialogue). Active use of these tools has levered policy change and development on local level such as universal accessibility, flexibility, diversity and quality.

The replacing of earmarked grants to the *barnehager* and municipalities with block grants to municipalities in 2011 and the strengthening of local responsibility and autonomy indicate a major change in available tools for national policy development. Funding as a specific governing instrument has lost weight, giving more weight to regulation and process/soft law. Policies for high quality *barnehage* for all therefore pose challenges linked to shaping structures within these

two domains: regulation and soft law in order to ensure good governance and further development of the sector, cf. Chapter 7 and 8.

For the sake of readability, the challenges will be grouped within three main topics: high quality, accessibility and governance. The topics and the related components and questions will be discussed as follows:

### A. How to ensure high quality in all *barnehager*?

1. *The shortage of qualified kindergarten teachers*
2. *The percentage of unqualified staff*
3. *Variation in the staff to children ratio between *barnehager**
4. *How to ensure that the intentions of the Framework Plan are implemented in *barnehager*?*
5. *Is the new kindergarten teacher education better designed to meet the demands of the current sector?*
6. *How to provide satisfactory services for children with special needs?*
7. *How to provide satisfactory services for children from language minorities?*

### B. How to give even more children access to a place in a *barnehage*?

1. *How to promote participation in *barnehager* for children at risk?*
2. *How to achieve a more flexible system for admission to *barnehager*?*
3. *How to ensure equal services nationwide?*
4. *How to ensure that subsidy schemes are available to low-income families?*



### C. How to ensure good governance appropriate for today's and future barnehager?

1. *Knowledgebased policy development on national and local level*
2. *Regulating quality standards*
3. *Inspections and monitoring to ensure high quality in all barnehager*
4. *Ensuring sufficient and stable funding of private barnehager*
5. *Ensuring a relevant and updated Framework Plan*

### 13.1 Major challenge no 1: How to ensure high quality in all barnehager?

The term quality is not easily defined. A common definition would be to have a description linked to three elements: structural quality (organisation, ratios, formal competence etc.), process quality (content and relations) and outcomes in terms of children's wellbeing, development and learning.<sup>158</sup>

It should, however, be noted that meeting various criteria related to structural quality measures does not necessarily translate into high-quality education and care, as structural criteria are only proxies for process measures of quality, such as the staff-child relationship and the child's experience in *barnehage*.<sup>159</sup> On the other hand these structural quality measures are not without significance for process quality – smaller groups and higher staff to child ratio provides room for more frequent inter-action and more receptive and responding relationships.<sup>160</sup>

#### 13.1.1 The shortage of qualified kindergarten teachers

The background report from 1998 mentioned the following challenge: *'It is a challenge for the central authorities to educate enough kindergarten teachers. For the employers the challenge is to keep their staff qualified and give them working conditions which will make them stay in their jobs.'*

The Kindergarten Act's present norm for teaching staff (the pedagogue norm) is one pedagogue per 7–9 children younger than three years of age and one pedagogue per 14–18 children older than three years of age. In *barnehager* with shorter opening hours than six hours, the number of children per pedagogue can be higher.

The strong increase in the number of *barnehager* established to achieve universal provision of *barnehage* places in the years 2003–2009 should have been a challenge as regards the percentage of kindergarten teachers. Instead, Norway managed to maintain the percentage at an average of one third of *barnehage* staff. In 2013, the percentage of kindergarten teacher or other qualified teachers/pedagogues on tertiary level in staff was 37.5 per cent.<sup>161</sup> Even so, there is an estimated shortage of 4 400 pedagogues in 2013. The number is based on the number of persons employed in positions as head teachers and pedagogical leaders without meeting the required education as kindergarten teacher (i.e. employed by dispensation) and the number of lacking kindergarten teachers to meet the requirements in the pedagogue norm.

If all educated kindergarten teachers in Norway had chosen to work in *barnehager*, the numbers would be sufficient to cover the need, but the situation is that only about 50 per cent of all educated kindergarten teachers are working with children in the settings. There are regional differences, so that Oslo and Akershus is by far the region with the toughest challenges.

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158 White Paper no 24 (2012–2013) *Framtidens barnehage*

159 Solheim, et al. 2013

160 NOU 2012:1 Til barnas beste, OECD Starting Strong III

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161 Kindergarten teachers and other qualified teachers/pedagogues on tertiary level with further education in *barnehage* pedagogy

Because of the shortage of qualified kindergarten teachers, *barnehage* owners can apply for and be granted dispensation from the pedagogue norm. *Barnehage* owners may also apply for dispensation from the formal qualifications a pedagogical leader or head teacher is supposed to have. The use of dispensations from the formal qualifications means that a number of persons employed as head teachers and pedagogical leaders do not have the requisite education. In 2013 this percentage was 2.1 per cent (400 persons) for head teachers and 13 per cent (4 000 persons) for pedagogical leaders. Even though the shortage has been decreasing the last years, the lack of qualified kindergarten teachers represents a persistent and serious challenge to equal quality in *barnehager*.

The Ministry has addressed the challenge of recruiting more kindergarten teachers in several ways during the past decade. In 2012–2014, the Ministry launched the recruitment campaign ‘The best job in the world is vacant’ (*Verdens fineste stilling ledig*). Other measures include the financing of part-time kindergarten teacher education which enables assistants to qualify as kindergarten teachers while still working part-time in a *barnehage*, introductory guided year for fresh kindergarten teacher candidates in *barnehager* and available further education in *barnehage* pedagogy for other qualified teachers/pedagogues that want to qualify for work in *barnehager*, cf. Chapter 9. Regional recruitment teams coordinated by the County Governors with participation from relevant stakeholders are designing measures adapted to the local needs, cf. Chapter 9.3.3. The number of graduates from the kindergarten teacher education in 2013 was 2 076. Depending on how many of these pedagogues who actually start working in *barnehager* and the yearly turnover rate, this means that it can still take many years to fully meet the shortage of kindergarten teachers.

The background report from 1998 mentioned the following challenge: *‘It is a challenge to develop strategies to recruit men to all kind of positions in the barnehager. Special efforts have to be made to recruit male students to preschool teacher education, and to keep them working in the barnehager.’*

To support the recruitment of male kindergarten teachers to *barnehager*, male applicants are given priority when two applicants have the same level of qualifications.<sup>162</sup> A public strategy for gender equality in the sector launched in 2000 set an ambitious target of 20 per cent men, but the statistical average has been around 7–8.7 per cent in the past decade. However, the number of *barnehager* that meet the 20 per cent target has increased from 636 in 2003 to 985 in 2013. This means that 15.6 per cent of the *barnehager* met the 20 per cent target in 2013, an increase from 10.7 per cent in 2003.<sup>163</sup>

The challenge of reducing turnover among kindergarten teachers is harder for the Ministry to address, since wage negotiations and questions on working conditions are issues between *barnehage* owners, employees’ organisations and employees. Statistics Norway has calculated that the private rate of return for a kindergarten teacher degree, based on lifetime earnings, is negative. A study from 2012 shows that former kindergarten teachers point to low salary and a lack of opportunities for promotion as important issues.<sup>164</sup> In addition, they point to lack of financial resources that hinders educational activities for children in *barnehager* and lack of qualified teaching colleagues and a satisfactory working environment as factors contributing to turnover.

The Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS) has recently established a *barnehage* and school-ownership strategy from 2013–2016 presenting a policy in order to provide quality services and ensure good outcomes for children. The association wants to be actively participating in the developmental work for a national system for quality, cf. Chapter 10.2.2, and in the national strategy for raising the competence in the sector, cf. Chapter 9.3.3.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Forskrift om særbehandling av menn 1998, med hjemmel i Likestillingsloven (<https://lovdata.no/dokument/SF/forskrift/1998-07-17-622?q=forskrift+om+s%C3%A6rbehandling+av+menn>)

<sup>163</sup> Statistics Norway

<sup>164</sup> Education mirror 2013 cit. TNS Gallup 2012

<sup>165</sup> KS’ eierstrategi for barnehage og skole 2013 – 2016 <http://www.udir.no/PageFiles/78342/KSeierstrategiforbarnehageogskole2013-2016.pdf>

The National Association of Private Kindergartens (PBL) has defined its aims to be consulting on strategic ownership and promoting quality and values in the private sector in the best interest of children, families, staff, owners and society. This also includes working towards increasing the proportion of qualified pedagogues in staff.<sup>166</sup>

Both associations, KS and PBL, conduct the central collective negotiations on behalf of their members resulting in a main agreement with the staff unions (the Union of Education Norway – ‘Utdanningsforbundet’, the Norwegian Union of Municipal and General Employees – ‘Fagforbundet’ and part of the Confederation of Vocational Unions – ‘Delta’), the latest from 2012–2014. PBL has done this since 1996. Since 2014 membership in PBL implies also being part of the collective negotiation system (this was a separate voluntary part of the membership from 1996–2013). The system of wages is a framed system which gives possibilities for variations between municipalities or between *barnehager*, cf. Chapter 9.3.5. Working conditions and salaries are in addition negotiated locally, which can result in higher wages or other local measures.

### 13.1.2. The percentage of non-qualified staff

Statistics from 2013 show that there has been an increase in the percentage of staff with a relevant education, but still 43 cent of staff have no formal training in early childhood education and care. It is a challenge that many of the assistants have very low levels of formal education. 24.9 percent of assistants are trained child care and youth worker (ISCED level 3) in 2013.

The strategy for competence 2014–2020 addresses the problem of unqualified *barnehage* staff and proposes measures to ensure that a higher percentage of this group acquire a formal competence as regards children and *barnehager*. The strategy aims to recruit and retain more staff with relevant competence for work in *barnehage*, cf. Chapter 9.3.3. The strategy proposes a coherent system for raising the compe-

tence for all the different groups of staff, directed towards individual employees as well as *barnehager* as learning organisations. The system illustrates possible career paths. The strategy covers a timespan of 7 years, allowing for long-term planning and strategic thinking for *barnehage* owners and staff. The *barnehage* owner is responsible for ensuring that employees are given the possibility to participate, but in order to succeed more stakeholders need to be engaged and collaborating. Regional partnerships lead by the County Governor Offices have been established to develop measures locally. *Barnehage* owners are encouraged to support assistants to take the diploma for vocational training as child care and youth worker, or to take kindergarten teacher education on a part-time basis in order to become a qualified pedagogue.

KS and PBL, the associations of municipal and private owners, are important stakeholders engaged in the implementation of the national strategy, cf. Chapter 13.1.1. The Teachers’ Union has pointed to a need for a stronger commitment in putting the strategy into practice.<sup>167</sup> Lack of funding can restrain staff from participating in further education and competence measures. Compared to primary and secondary school, *barnehager* are neither subject to financial compensation to cover expenses for substitute staff during absence due to competence measures nor scholarships for employees who engage in competence measures.

The question of introducing a more ambitious norm for the number of pedagogues in *barnehager* was addressed in White Paper no 41 (2008–2009) *Kvalitet i barnehagen* (‘Quality in Kindergartens’), as well as by the two commissions *Fordelingsutvalget* (‘The commission for economic equality’) and *Barnehagelovutvalget* (‘the Kindergarten Act Commission’). The latter was set up in 2010 to give advice on the management of the sector and on amending the Kindergarten Act. In its Official Norwegian Report NOU 2012:1 *Til barnas beste* (‘For the benefit of the children’), the commission proposed a more ambitious norm, the details of which are as follows: 50 per cent of staff should be pedagogues, and half of the remaining 50 per cent, i.e. assistants, should have a diploma from a 2-year, post-16

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<sup>166</sup> PBL Strategiplan 2013 – 2015 <http://www.pbl.no/no/VERKTOY-MENY/Om-PBL/Strategiplan-2013-2015/>

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<sup>167</sup> [www.utdanningsforbundet.no](http://www.utdanningsforbundet.no)

apprenticeship. In this way, only 25 per cent of the staff will be permitted to have no formal childcare qualifications. Auxiliary staff with no formal childcare qualifications can still represent a resource, as young people being introduced to *barnehage* work as formally unqualified assistants, may choose to qualify on either upper secondary or tertiary level at a later time.

In White Paper no 24 (2012–2013) *Framtidens barnehage* ('Kindergartens for the Future'), the former Government (Stoltenberg II) did not propose a new pedagogue norm, but pointed to the challenge of meeting the current requirements and the shortage of pedagogues in *barnehager*. The question of introducing a more ambitious norm would have to be considered at a later time, when the requirements of current regulations have been met.

The present Government (Solberg) is intent on increasing the number of qualified kindergarten teachers in *barnehager* as well as strengthening the number of staff with other qualifications, cf. Chapter 13.1.1. Good leadership is seen as vital for the quality of *barnehager*. The national program for leadership training and development for head-teachers has been strengthened in order to ensure this.

### 13.1.3 Variation in the staff to children ratio between *barnehager*

Variations in the staff to children ratio are too high between *barnehager*. The OECD has pointed out that the staff to children ratio is a factor for quality in ECEC.<sup>168</sup> At present, the Kindergarten Act only states that 'Staffing at the kindergarten must be sufficient for the staff to be able to carry on satisfactory pedagogical activity'. This obviously poses a dilemma for the supervising body: how should 'sufficient' be defined? This problem was also addressed by *Barnehagelovutvalget* ('the Kindergarten Act Commission'), which proposed a general norm for the staff to children ratio of 1:3 for children younger than three years of age and 1:6 for children older than three years of age. This proposal was reiterated in White Paper no 24 (2012–2013) 'Kindergarten for the future' with the time limit for its implementations being set to the year 2020. The pres-

ent Government confirmed this as a goal in its political platform document of 7 October 2013.

A study conducted in 2011 showed that the average staff to children ratio was 3.4 in groups with children aged 0–3 and 5.5 in groups with children aged 4–6.<sup>169</sup> There is significant variation in the staff to children ratio among *barnehager*, however. The ten per cent of *barnehager* with the lowest staff to children ratio have, on average, approximately two more children per staff member than the ten per cent with the highest staff to children ratio, cf. Chapter 9.1.4.

### 13.1.4 How to ensure that the intentions of the Framework Plan are implemented in *barnehager*?

The background report from 1998 mentioned the following challenge: '*It is a challenge to create valid and reliable monitoring, assessment and evaluation to ensure that the intentions of the new national Framework Plan are implemented in each barnehage nationwide.*'

The evaluation report from 2009 indicated challenges in the implementation of the 2006 Framework Plan. The researchers studied the implementation from the perspectives of the head teachers, staff, regional and local authorities, parents and children. The report pointed to challenges in terms of interpretation and understanding, governance and content. The researchers expressed specific concern on the question of capacity and competence among staff and on a tendency to emphasize "language development" and "learning" as opposed to the "value of childhood" and "education to active participation in society".<sup>170</sup>

White Paper no 41 (2008–2009) '*Quality in kindergartens*' pointed to the need to monitor developments on the implementation of the Framework Plan, especially in terms of the learning areas. A recent sample survey indicate however that care and education, social and linguistic competences and play seem to be emphasized in a balanced way in *barnehager*.<sup>171</sup>

168 OECD 2012b

169 Vassenden et al. 2011

170 Østrem et al. 2009

171 Meld. St. 24 (2012–2013), cit. Gulbrandsen & Eliassen 2013

In 2009 Norway received the country policy profile report ‘Quality Matters in Early Childhood Education and Care. Norway’ from the OECD<sup>172</sup>. The report comments positively on the Framework Plan being a progressive document providing a framework for continuous child development, putting the child and play at the centre of curriculum. ‘Age-appropriateness and needs-based pedagogy are highly valued aspects and the aim is to bring different subjects and ways of learning into balance, forming a balanced whole where children develop broad knowledge.’ The report also points to the need for competence among staff in order to translate the framework into quality practice on local level. This is a demanding task, and based on the examples from other countries supportive measures should be taken especially in terms of guiding staff in their practices. This also includes questions on how to identify children’s needs within a broad framework.

The Directorate for Education and Training is tasked with supporting the sector in the implementation of the Framework Plan. Guidance material as well as other measures have been developed and disseminated. In addition the National Centres contribute to the implementation of the Framework Plan within their designated subjects, cf. Chapter 9.3.3.

### 13.1.5 Is the new kindergarten teacher education better designed to meet the demands of the current sector?

The background report from 1998 mentioned the following challenge: *‘It is a challenge for the colleges both to establish their educational plans in harmony with the National Curriculum for the preschool teacher training and to ensure that the changes in the barnehage field are taken into account.’*

The evaluation of the former education for preschool teachers in 2010 led to a new framework plan for this education, a new structure and a new name: ‘Education for kindergarten teachers’. The new kindergarten teacher education shall strengthen the knowledge of pedagogical leadership, multiculturalism, pedagogical provision for the youngest children, special needs

education, cooperation with parents and inter-agency cooperation between different public services. The new education shall strengthen teacher professionalism and interaction between the education and the practice field.

The new kindergarten teacher education was implemented in August 2013 in all universities and university colleges. A group of experts have been appointed to follow the implementation of the new education during the period 2013–2017 and will publish yearly reports. In September 2014 the experts published their first report “*Frå førskulelærar til barnehagelærar. Den nye barnehagelærarutdanninga. Mulegheit og utfordringar.*” (Translates to “From preschool teacher to kindergarten teacher. The new kindergarten teacher education. Possibilities and challenges.”) The first report includes a description of challenges and recommendations to universities/university colleges as well as to the Ministry of Education and research on how the implementation can be supported. The reports from the expert group will show whether the new kindergarten teacher education provides an education that is research-based and supports students in acquiring the knowledge they need to meet the sectors expectations and the professional demands set for today’s kindergarten teachers.

### 13.1.6 How to provide satisfactory services for children with special needs?

The background report from 1998 mentioned the following challenge: *‘It is a challenge for the municipalities and the barnehage’s staff to give all children with special needs good care and understanding in the barnehage, and to establish good contact and cooperation with the parents of these children.’*

Ensuring that all children in need of special support get timely and appropriate help is an important goal for policies, cf. Chapter 8. Surveys show that *barnehager* in Norway are inclusive fellowships providing education and care for all children.<sup>173</sup> Numbers for 2013 show that 2.4 per cent of children in the *barnehager* receive special needs education in accordance

172 OECD 2013

173 Cameron, Covac & Tveit 2011

with Section 5–7 in the Education Act. In addition there are children in need of supportive and inclusive pedagogies. In a sample survey in 2012, 55 per cent of *barnehager* reported having children with special needs.<sup>174</sup> Only 5 per cent of *barnehager* reported not receiving additional support (eg. additional funding for extra staff, physical adjustments etc.), but 44 per cent of the head teachers deemed this support insufficient in terms of meeting the child’s and the *barnehager*’s needs.

Until 2011, an earmarked state grant covered *barnehager*’ expenses relating to children with special needs. Since 2011, the municipalities have received a block grant, and the Ministry can no longer control the actual amount used for this purpose. The *Storting* has pointed out this dilemma, and the Ministry will consider solutions for improving the data on municipal resources allocated to children with special needs. The Directorate for Education and Training has been tasked with improving the statistics on this group of children and also to undertake a more in-depth study in 2015 on children with special needs in *barnehager*.

The challenge of provision for children with special needs is part of the ongoing review of the Kindergarten Act. This includes a proposal to transfer the right to special education for preschool children from Section 5–7 in the Education Act to the Kindergarten Act.

The issue of quality provision for children with special needs is however a broader issue. It relates both to the cooperation involving children, families and *barnehager* on the local level and to routines for inter-agency cooperation between different public services. A recent survey indicates that 87 per cent of *barnehager* have established routines for contact with other welfare services.<sup>175</sup> There are however differences, with lower figures for private *barnehager* as opposed to public *barnehager*.

Competence among staff is deemed crucial in order to discover and provide tailored support for children with special needs. The national competence strategy for the period 2014–2020 has therefore specifically pointed to ‘Children with special needs’ as one of four

targeted topics. The Directorate for Education and Training is implementing the strategy and is following the developments in the sector.

### 13.1.7 How to provide satisfactory services for children from language minorities?

The background report from 1998 mentioned the following challenge: *‘It is a challenge to ensure that children from language minorities have a good understanding of the Norwegian language before they start school.’*

In spite of increased participation in *barnehager* for minority language children, this challenge still remains in 2014. Statistics from Oslo, the municipality with the largest population with immigrant backgrounds, show that in the school year 2013/2014 as much as 40 per cent of the pupils in primary school had another mother tongue than Norwegian or Sámi. 61 per cent of this group (or 25 per cent of all pupils) were considered to lack sufficient competence in Norwegian to be able to profit from the ordinary teaching in the school, and were therefore receiving extra educational measures in Norwegian.<sup>176/177</sup> The present Government sees the challenge of ensuring that all children from language minorities have a good understanding of the Norwegian language when they start school, as one of the most important issues for *barnehager* and other provisions for minority children before school age. In addition, the Government says the following in its political platform: *‘The Government will assess children’s language skills and provide language training for children who need this before they start school. This service will also encompass children who do not attend kindergarten.’*<sup>178</sup>

On behalf of the Ministry of Education and Research, the Directorate for Education and Training administers an earmarked state grant to municipalities aimed at enhancing language development for minority language children, cf. Chapter 7.1. Allocation of the grant to municipalities is based on the number of minority language children in *barnehager*, but the grant can also be used for measures for children who don’t have a place in *barnehage*. The number of

174 Gulbrandsen & Eliassen 2013

175 Gulbrandsen & Eliassen 2013

176 Oslo kommune 2013

177 Oslo kommune 2014

178 Political platform 2013

minority language children in *barnehager* has more than quadrupled since the beginning of this millennium, from 900 children in 2000 to 37 894 children in 2013. It is a challenge that the earmarked allocation now applies to a higher number of children, entailing a reduction in the nominal amount for each child. The funding is designed to strengthen local work on language learning and multiculturalism. The municipality as local authority is given the role to implement measures and allocate means based on local needs and resources.

The Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion funds an ongoing programme offering four free core hours per day in *barnehage* for all four and five-year-olds (and some three-year-olds) in some areas of the cities of Oslo, Bergen and Drammen with a high proportion of minority language children, cf. Chapter 8.6. The aim is to improve the language and social skills of children prior to starting school by increasing their participation in *barnehage*. The programme includes raising parents' awareness of the importance of learning Norwegian as well as participating in social activities. The programme also aims to ensure that *barnehage* staff has adequate expertise in multicultural education and language stimulation. A three-year evaluation of the programme started in 2011 and the final evaluation report was presented in November 2014. The evaluation shows that free core hours lead to higher participation in *barnehage* for minority language children and that minority language children in districts with free core time score higher on tests in reading (Norwegian) and mathematics in 1. and 2. grade in primary school compared to minority language children in districts without free core time. There are no differences in the scoring results between ethnic Norwegian children in districts with or without free core time.<sup>179</sup>

During the past decade, both the former Ministry of Children and Family Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Research have published support material for *barnehage* staff about language and cultural diversity. In 2012, the Directorate for Education and Training published a strategy for information and guidance material in the minority field. In spring 2013, the Directorate published guidance material for *barnehager's* work on language development and learning.

An important measure following White Paper no 6 (2012–2013) *A holistic policy of integration. Diversity and social cohesion* is the allocation of NOK 30 million per year during the period 2013–2017 to enhance competence development in the multicultural area in the whole education sector. The measure is called "Kompetanse for mangfold" (Competence for diversity), and the Directorate is responsible for the implementation. The measure will be including employees, managers and owners of *barnehager* (private and public) and schools, (i.e. municipalities and county authorities), staff in the adult education sector and teacher training institutions.

The OECD conducted a policy review of Norwegian immigrant education in 2009.<sup>180</sup> The OECD states that Norway has already developed measures to respond to some of the key challenges in educating immigrants, but needs to build capacity in order to implement these measures successfully from early childhood education and care (ECEC) to education for adult immigrants.

NAFO, the National Centre for Multicultural Education (Nasjonalt senter for flerkulturell oppl ring), has a special responsibility for implementing measures aimed at improving education for language minorities in Norway, including *barnehager*, cf. Chapter 9.2.5. Their website provides *barnehager* with examples and support material.

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179 Br ten et al. 2014

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180 OECD 2009a

## 13.2 Major challenge no 2: How to give even more children access to a place in a *barnehage*?

Challenges remain in giving access to all children in need of a *barnehage* place. This is especially an issue for children who reach the age of one on 1 of September or later, but also an issue for families who move from one municipality to another during the year, and who might lose a place in *barnehage* if their new municipality does not offer a place until the next admission in August.

### 13.2.1 How to give children without a statutory right to a *barnehage* place better access to *barnehager*?

The background report from 1998 mentioned the following challenge: *‘It is a challenge to reach the political goal of giving access to ECEC, full-time or part-time, to all children whose parents wish so in the year 2000.’*

This challenge has been addressed through a statutory right to a place in *barnehage* being introduced in 2009, but, as the following text will show, the question today is how this right is being fulfilled and whether or not it should be expanded to include children who do not have this right today.

Today the right to a place does not apply to children who reach the age of one on 1 September or later. The municipality or private *barnehage* owners can however give applicants a place if they have available places. The number of children with a place in *barnehage* who reached the age of one on 1 September or later, was 11 280 by the end of 2013. Of these children, 9 386 had reached the age of one in the period 1 September–31 December while 1 894 still had not reached the age of one. These numbers include children who have been given a place in *barnehage* due to rights based on special needs or child welfare considerations. It is therefore not possible to find out the actual number of children who have been given a place without having any kind of individual right through legislation.

Parents of children without a statutory right risk having to wait for almost a full additional year for a place. The pressure on the political parties to find a solution has been growing since 2009. In its political platform document of 7 October 2013, the present Government has set this goal: *‘The Government wishes to work towards increased flexibility in admission to kindergarten.’*<sup>181</sup> From 2015 block funding to municipalities have been increased by 333 million NOK in order to give room for more flexible admission arrangements. It is expected of municipalities that they will prioritize better solutions for families, and the Ministry will monitor the implementation. The issue of flexibility is also related to other measures such as parental leave and the cash-for-benefit scheme. The numbers of one year olds in *barnehage* decreased for the first time in many years in 2012, cf. Chapter 4.3.1, 4.3.2 and 8.1.

In the national budget for 2015 the *Storting* has decided to grant NOK 51 million to an extension of free core hours in *barnehage* for 4- and 5-year-olds from low income families. The Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion is responsible for the implementation of this measure in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Research.

The *Storting* has asked the Government to investigate different models for combinations of the cash-for-care benefit and the use of a place in *barnehage*. The Ministry of Education and Research will be responsible for this.

### 13.2.2 How to ensure equal services nationwide?

The background report from 1998 mentioned two challenges regarding this issue: *‘It is a challenge to ensure that all municipalities should feel responsible for meeting the demand for access in order to give families equal services regardless of which part of the country they live in.’* (...) *‘It is a challenge for the owners of barnehager and staff to make efforts to offer a variety of opening hours and programs in order to meet the needs of both children and parents.’*

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181 Political platform 2013



Following the Kindergarten Agreement a statutory obligation for all municipalities to ensure the provision of a sufficient number of *barnehage* places was introduced in 2003. This legislation was put forward in combination with legislative changes on equal funding between municipal and private provision and maximum fee.<sup>182</sup> The responsibility of the municipalities according to the Kindergarten Act, Section 8, is also that:

'The pattern of development and modes of operation shall be adapted to local conditions and needs.' cf. Chapter 5.2.1.

The *barnehage* provision in Norway shows great variation. A scattered population, long distances and lack of qualified staff are some of the problems the municipalities are faced with in meeting the requirements of the Kindergarten Act. The reform in 2011 on funding that introduced block grants to municipalities in combination with legislation is aimed at strengthening local government and autonomy. It places responsibilities with the municipalities to plan for and provide *barnehage* places to meet the local needs.

### 13.2.3 How to ensure subsidy schemes for low-income families?

The background report from 1998 mentioned the following challenge: *'It is a challenge to meet the families' demands at a price which does not exclude children because of their families' economic situation. There should be better monitoring of the consequences of public expenditure.'*

All municipalities have an obligation to have arrangements for families with low income, but neither the arrangements nor families with low income are defined in detail. The variation between municipalities is therefore quite large, cf. Chapter 7.4 Subsidy schemes for parents.

All municipalities are obliged to give parents a so called sibling discount, which means that parents with more than one child enrolled in *barnehage* are given a 30 per cent reduction in fees for the second child and 50 per cent for the third and any subsequent children.

Statistics for 2013 show that 24 per cent of the municipalities have some sort of income-differentiated parental fees and that these municipalities are among the ones with the highest populations. About 50 per cent of all ECEC-children live in these 24 per cent municipalities. 15 per cent of the municipalities do not offer any other subsidy scheme than the obligatory sibling discount.

A study of subsidy schemes from 2011 shows that a total of 1 520 children, or 0.5 per cent of all children in ECEC, had a free place in 2011.<sup>183</sup>

In 2013 *barnehage* coverage among 1–5 year olds was 90.0 per cent, but earlier studies have shown that children from low-income families are underrepresented.<sup>184</sup> The present Government wishes to use greater differentiation of parental fees as a means of increasing *barnehage* participation among children from low-income families and as a means of reducing child poverty in Norway.<sup>185</sup>

In the national budget for 2015 the *Storting* decided to increase the maximum parental fee by NOK 100 per month in real terms to NOK 2 580 per month from 1 May 2015. This gives a nominal increase of NOK 175 per month. The *Storting* decided to grant NOK 235 million to subsidy schemes for low-income families from 1 May 2015 so that these families will pay a maximum of six per cent of their income for a place in *barnehage* limited upwards by the maximum parental fee. This is estimated to include all families with a yearly income of NOK 473 000 and will give an average reduction of NOK 650 per month. The sibling discount is continued, so the parental fee for the second child will be 70 per cent of the fee for the first child, and the fee for the third and subsequent children will be 50 per cent of the fee for the first child.<sup>186</sup>

182 Ot.prp. nr.76 (2002–2003)

183 TNS Gallup 2011

184 Moafi & Bjørkli 2011

185 Political platform 2013

186 Innst. 14 S (2014–2015)

### 13.3 Major challenge no 3: How to ensure good governance appropriate for todays and future *barnehager*?

The *barnehage* sector involves 428 municipalities, a high proportion of private owners as well as regional and national authorities. To ensure that *barnehager* can fulfill their tasks towards children, families and society, the development of good governance appropriate for today's sector is needed.

Earmarked funding has been a powerful tool to increase the number of *barnehage* places and to ensure quality provision. Changes in the funding system towards block grants have implications for the discussions on how to shape regulation, policy dialogue and other measures in order to have high and equal quality *barnehager* available to all children.

#### 13.3.1 Knowledge based policy development on national and local level

Research in the ECEC field shows that participation in a high-quality pedagogical setting can have positive impact on children's lives, especially for children at risk. The value of early investment has been pointed out in several studies.<sup>187</sup> Both Norwegian and international studies indicate that *barnehage* attendance can have positive effects on children's language development.<sup>188</sup> Findings are more mixed when studying the effects on the development of social skills, but Norwegian studies indicate no adverse affect of early starting age (in opposition to some American studies).<sup>189</sup> The relationship and positive interaction between care-taker and child are pointed to as the most important factors in contributing to childrens well-being, learning and development. We have little conclusive knowledge from Norway on the effects of structural factors such as group-size, level of formal education and physical environment on childrens outcomes, but there are some indications that the young-

est children's social competences is best enhanced in smaller groups.<sup>190</sup>

In a society where education is more and more important to the quality of people's life, it is important to give children the best opportunities to fulfill their potential. The transfer of responsibility for *barnehager* from the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs to the Ministry of Education and Research in 2006 signalled acknowledgement of *barnehager's* role as the first step in a lifelong learning process and as part of an active policy to reduce both social and economic inequality in the society.

The transfer of resources and responsibility for quality ECEC to the municipalities can contribute to better and more coherent policies locally for high quality *barnehager* for all children. This is however dependent on the municipalities and *barnehage* owners' capacities and knowledge, structural and organisational measures as well as clear policy goals aligned with resources.<sup>191</sup>

Strengthening national governance through the transfer of tasks and responsibilities to the Directorate for Education and Training from the Ministry will enhance the possibilities for knowledgebased policy development on both national and local level. In 2013 the Directorate was charged with developing a system for monitoring and enhancing quality in *barnehager* by 2017.<sup>192</sup> Development work involves stakeholders such as the associations for parents (FUB), private *barnehage* owners (PBL), regional and local authorities (KS), staff organisations, municipalities, County Governors and the *Samediggi/Sameting*. Developing and making accessible indicators and statistical information as well as dissemination of research results and local quality tools are among efforts put in place to support dialogues on quality and quality enhancement on all levels in the sector.

187 Heckman 2004, Havnes & Mogstad 2009

188 Lekhal 2012, Lervåg 2012, Aukrust 2005, Aukrust & Rydland 2009

189 Zachrisson 2013, Folkehelseinstituttet 2014

190 Zachrisson et al. 2012

191 OECD 2012b

192 Letter 13–13 to the Directorate for Education and Training

A number of white papers to the *Storting* have pointed to the need for local systems for quality (White Paper no 27 (1999–2000) *Barnehager til beste for barn og foreldre*, White Paper no 41 (2008–2009) *Kvalitet i barnehagen* and White Paper no 24 (2012–2013) *Framtidens barnehage*). In a diverse sector reliant on and supportive of local self-government and autonomy, it is a challenge that not all *barnehager* and not all municipalities have the capacities to use knowledge on research results and best practices to ensure quality for all.

The present Government emphasizes the role parents can play in the dialogue on quality in ECEC. Ensuring accessible and relevant information will support parents in engaging actively with the sector and making choices in the best interest of their children. The Directorate is charged with developing a web portal specially designed to meet parents' needs for information, cf. Chapter 9.4.1.

The background report from 1998 mentioned the following challenge: *'It is a challenge to inspire Norwegian researchers to do longitudinal studies on the barnehage's effect on children's development in order to improve programs and quality.'*

This challenge has been addressed, and the number of longitudinal studies has increased in the past decade, cf. Chapter 10.3. Preliminary results from the ongoing longitudinal studies have been presented, but conclusive reports are yet to come. The present challenge consists of keeping up the level of research activity and of ensuring good information about research results as a basis for good practice and for development of policy, cf. Chapter 13.1.1. The Ministry has recently issued a research strategy for educational research in the period 2014–2020, including research on *barnehager*.

The Directorate for Education and Training have launched a publication called VETUVA ('Do you know') as part of the system for quality in *barnehager*. This publication contains articles based on recent Scandinavian research on *barnehager* in a format designed to initiate and inspire research-based quality dialogues on local level. Inspired by the Danish publication *Bakspejlet* ('The rear mirror'), the publication also provides dialogue-cards on relevant issues. The research survey comes from the Nordic Base of Research on ECEC: NB-ECEC.<sup>193</sup>

The ongoing educational research programs in the National Research Council are expected to yield more relevant knowledge on the quality and effect of *barnehager*, cf. Chapter 10.3, and the new national Centre for Knowledge in Education (Kunnskapsenteret for utdanning) will contribute to the dissemination of evidencebased knowledge to the sector.

### 13.3.2 Regulating quality standards

The background report from 1998 mentioned the following challenge:

*'It is a national responsibility to start the discussion and initiate the development of new quality standards for the Norwegian barnehage and discuss whether they should be regulated nationally or locally based.'*

Norwegian studies on *barnehager* show variety in structural quality as well as process quality.<sup>194/195</sup> The *barnehager* differ in size, organisation and profile, cf. Chapter 8. This diversity is seen as a strength of the sector, presenting parents with a choice and taking into account local needs and resources. At the same time children should have a right to a *barnehage* place that holds good quality regardless of where they live. How can we ensure high quality in all *barnehager*? What regulations need to be in place in order to reach this goal?

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<sup>193</sup> [www.nb-ecec.no](http://www.nb-ecec.no)

<sup>194</sup> Riksrevisjonen 2009, Vassenden 2011, NOVA 2012, Education Mirror 2012 og 2013

<sup>195</sup> Bratterud et al. 2012, Nordahl 2012, Vartun et al. 2012, Lekhal et al. 2013, Folkehelseinstituttet 2014,

The background report from 1998 mentioned the following challenge: *It is a challenge to aim towards equality in quality and price between public and private barnehager.*<sup>196</sup>

Regulating the maximum parental fee in 2004 entailed more equality in prices between public and private *barnehager*. The difference in quality, on the other hand, is still a challenge. There are public and private *barnehager* of excellent quality and public and private *barnehager* of poorer quality. With the new regulation on equal funding differences between private and public *barnehager* have been reduced. Differences that still remain concerning level of qualified staff or number of children to staff might as well vary according to size and geography, as to ownership.<sup>196</sup>

Local or national regulation of quality standards have been an ongoing discussion in the sector since the review in 1999 (e.g. White Paper no 27 (1999–2000) *Barnehage til beste for barn og foreldre* – ‘Kindergartens to the benefit for children and parents’). The Kindergarten Act of 2005 with regulations strengthened the regulation on content in *barnehager* and clarified regulation on approval of *barnehager*. The Act also clarified the roles and responsibilities in the sector. White Paper no 41 (2008–2009) *Kvalitet i barnehagen* (‘Quality in Kindergartens’) discussed issues related to quality standards and regulation. There was concern with the large variations in quality and organisation in *barnehager*. Municipalities differed largely as to how they conducted their role as inspectors of *barnehager*. The public commission *Barnehagelovutvalget* (2010) was given the task to suggest amendments to the regulation in order to ensure high and equal quality, while at the same time taking due considerations of local self-government and sustainable solutions. *Barnehagelovutvalget* argued that national standards would make it easier for owners, users and authorities to understand, comply with and monitor the national regulations. The commission suggested national standards, but emphasized that they should be few and directly linked to quality in the provision. The official report NOU 2012:1 *Til barnas beste* (‘For the benefit of the children’) presented a suggestion for a new Kindergarten Act.

196 Gulbrandsen & Eliassen 2013

White Paper no 24 (2012–2013) *Framtidens barnehage* (‘Kindergartens for the Future’) discussed some of the propositions made in the NOU 2012:1, for example regulation of the staff to child ratio and ensuring more coherent practices across settings and municipalities, cf. Chapter 13.1.3. Setting out detailed national standards such as child to staff ratio, child to pedagogue ratio or square meters per child is contrary to the principle of local self-government and responsibility. In the debate the The Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS) was strongly opposed to introducing new detailed regulation.<sup>197</sup> The National Association of Private Kindergartens (PBL) advocated a national norm under the precondition of sufficient funding of private *barnehager*.<sup>198</sup>

The present Government is concerned with quality in the provisions. Legislative measures are now being considered in the ongoing review of the Kindergarten Act.

### 13.3.3 Inspections and monitoring to ensure equal quality in all *barnehager*

The municipality as *barnehage* authority plays an important role in ensuring equal quality, especially with regard to the supervision of *barnehager*, cf. Chapter 10.1.2. The objective of supervision is to ensure that the *barnehager* are operated in keeping with the Kindergarten Act and that they are adequate. Norwegian municipalities own and operate about half of the country’s *barnehager*. In addition, municipalities are tasked with supervising undertakings pursuant to the Kindergarten Act. A municipality has the same supervisory responsibilities for all *barnehager* within its borders, whether they are privately owned or owned by the municipality. When in its supervisory role, the municipality controls whether the municipality fulfils its responsibilities as *barnehage* owner. The dual role of supervisor and owner could give rise to questions about the municipalities’ legitimacy as supervisory authority.

197 Letter of hearing from the Association of Regional and Local Authorities (KS)

198 PBL 2013

The former Government (Stoltenberg II) proposed in White Paper no 24 (2012–2013) *Framtidens barnehage* ('*Kindergartens for the Future*') to transfer responsibility for supervision from the municipality to the regional or national level, preferably the County Governor, in order to ensure the legitimacy of the supervisory body. The present Government (Solberg) proclaims in its political platform that it will 'implement independent supervision of child day-care centres'.<sup>199</sup>

The present system entails that 428 bodies are conducting inspections on *barnehager*. In addition to issues on competence and capacity, the quantity and diversity of inspectorates lead to challenges in coordination and equal treatment of *barnehager*.

Ensuring legal, economical and pedagogical competence to conduct inspections as well as objectivity and independence is a major concern in organising the inspectorate system. Transferring the responsibility to the County Governors' offices, as suggested in White Paper no 24 (2012–2013) *Kindergartens for the Future*, would ensure more equal treatment of *barnehager* and more effective and targeted inspections based on national evaluations of risk. It would be easier to recruit inspectors with relevant competence, and transferring the task to the County Governor will mean that existing capacity and management of the sector can be effectively used. In 2011 municipalities conducted 4 000 supervisions, whereof 1 300 inspections. The resources for supervision and inspections in the municipalities amount to 184 man year.<sup>200</sup>

A majority of the members in the public commission *Barnehagelovutvalget* suggested keeping the responsibility with the municipalities. It was deemed that relieving the municipalities of their monitoring and inspecting role could cause reduced resources for maintaining other obligations in the sector, that it could entail less contact between municipalities and the private *barnehager* and finally that the problems of the dual role will still be there in terms of approval and funding.

The question of transferring this responsibility is part of the ongoing review of the Kindergarten Act. A proposal was sent on public hearing 17 November 2014 – 19 January 2015. The Ministry proposes that the County Governor is given the same right as the municipalities to supervise the *barnehager*. This will decrease the challenge of the municipality's dual role as owner and *barnehage* authority.

### 13.3.4 Ensuring sufficient and stable funding of private *barnehager*

The background report from 1998 mentioned the two following challenges as regards this topic: '*The state grant system is from 1976. The challenge is to evaluate whether the system is still suitable or if it is time to propose an alternative way of financing.*' '*It is a challenge to create a more impartial funding of barnehager. The parental part of the funding must become more acceptable. The local authorities should be more responsible for equal support of private and public institutions.*'

The parental part of funding has decreased by 35 per cent from 2005 to 2014. The ambition in *Barnehageforliket* ('the Kindergarten Agreement') was that public funding should constitute 80 per cent of the cost when the maximum parental fee was introduced in 2004. *Barnehageforliket* also stated that the maximum parental fee should be reduced further, which would imply that public funding should cover more than 80 per cent of the cost. Parental fees in 2011 covered 14 per cent of costs in the public part of the sector and 17 per cent of costs in the private part of the sector.<sup>201</sup>

In 2003, a law was passed requiring equal treatment of public and private providers with regard to public funding. Ideally, equal treatment will mean that private *barnehager* receive 100 per cent of the average public grant for public *barnehager*. From 2005 to August 2014 this percentage increased from 85 to 98 per cent of the funding received by public *barnehager*. All political parties agree on the goal of increasing the grant to 100 per cent in the future. It remains to be seen when the 100 per cent mark will be reached.

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<sup>199</sup> Political platform 2013

<sup>200</sup> Rambøll 2012c

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<sup>201</sup> Education mirror 2013

On average, private *barnehager* received a substantial increase in public grants in the period 2003–2011. In ordinary private *barnehager*, the grant per full-time place increased from NOK 55,000 in 2003 to NOK 86,500 in 2011. That was an increase of about 55 per cent in total, or 5.75 per cent per year. The percentage of the grant has increased correspondingly from 71 per cent in 2003 to 91 per cent in 2011. After the transition to block financing, the disparities in grants among the private *barnehager* have diminished. The increase in the level of grants has been largest in the *barnehager* that initially had a low level of grants.<sup>202</sup>

The replacement of state grants by block grants to municipalities in 2011 was intended to strengthen local self-government and give the municipalities the means as well as the responsibility for handling the right to high-quality *barnehager* for all children. However, responsibility for funding the private *barnehager* has been challenging for the municipalities. Almost half of the municipalities received complaints from private *barnehager* about the calculation of grants.<sup>203</sup> In about 40 per cent of the municipalities, the persons in charge of *barnehager* said that the co-operation with the private *barnehager* became worse after the transition to block financing.<sup>204</sup> The National Association of Private Kindergartens (PBL) was highly critical of the system for financing private *barnehager* and claims that the funding was both volatile and unpredictable. Since the grant for private *barnehager* was calculated on the basis of the average costs of municipal *barnehager*, the funding varied from municipality to municipality and from year to year. PBL therefore wished to replace the block grants with earmarked state grants to *barnehager* (a return to the former system before the block grants) and communicated this view to the Ministry.

The present Government decided that the grant should be calculated on the basis of the annual accounts of the municipal *barnehager* from two years back in time. This will increase funding predictability for the private *barnehager* and make the administration of the grants less demanding for the municipalities. The new method for calculating grants will be implemented in January 2015.

### 13.3.5 How to ensure a relevant and updated Framework Plan?

The last decade has seen an increase in ECEC-participation levels for all age groups. *Barnehage* coverage among 1–5 year olds was 90 per cent in 2013 as opposed to 62 per cent in 2000. There has been an increase in all age groups, but the relative change has been the largest in the age group 1–2, from 37.1 per cent in 2000 to 79.8 per cent in 2013. Among five-year-olds, the coverage was 97.5 per cent in 2013. This means that almost all children have *barnehage* experience before they start their compulsory education in primary school at the age of six.

As shown in Chapter 4.7, the *Storting* has on several occasions unanimously acknowledged the importance of high-quality *barnehager* for all children. Regulating standards and designing curriculum are important policy levers for quality in ECEC.<sup>205</sup>

The public commission (Brenna-utvalget) appointed in 2009 to propose measures to secure high-quality, structured ECEC for all pre-school children pointed out that the guidelines in the Framework Plan of 2006 might be too vague. The commission therefore proposed a new revision of the Framework Plan to introduce goals for *barnehager*' work regarding play, care and social competence, and goals for the development of basic competences.<sup>206</sup>

After the introduction of the new purpose clause in 2010, the Framework Plan of 2006 was revised in line with the new purpose. Thus, the last version of the Framework Plan entered into force in 2011. At the same time, the Ministry announced that a more complete revision was necessary. In White Paper no 24 (2012–2013) *Framtidens barnehage* ('*Kindergartens for the Future*') it was deemed necessary to revise the *Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens* to ensure that the purpose is reflected in the content of the *barnehager* and that the Framework Plan is in accordance with the needs of the sector.

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202 Borge et al. 2012

203 Rambøll 2012c

204 Borge et al. 2012

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205 OECD 2012b

206 NOU 2010:8 *Med forskertrang og lekelyst*

Chapter 9.2.1 and Chapter 9.2.5 describe the development of the Framework Plan since 1996 and the current challenges that will have to be addressed both in the ongoing revision of the Kindergarten Act and in the revision of the *Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens* in the period 2015–2016. As the public debate in connection with White Paper no 41 (2008–2009) *Kvalitet i barnehagen* ('Quality in Kindergartens') and White Paper no 24 (2012–2013) *Framtidens barnehage* ('Kindergartens for the Future') showed, there are questions that need to be answered as regards the content of the Framework Plan, especially questions on assessment and documentation, language mapping of children and the question of learning and outcomes for children in *barnehager*, cf. Chapter 9.2.5.

Following White Paper no 24 (2012–2013) *Framtidens barnehage* ('Kindergartens for the Future'), the Government appointed an expert group to provide advice on a new revision of the Framework Plan based on the various white papers and public reports from

recent years. The revision of the Framework Plan is intended to make it easier for *barnehage* staff to operationalise the purpose clause, the clause setting out the content of *barnehager* and children's right to participation in *barnehager's* day-to-day activities. The expert group was also asked to provide advice on whether to make the Framework Plan more explicit and appropriate to meet the needs for different age-groups, both the very youngest and for the 5-year olds, including preparation for school. Questions on how to ensure progression in children's experiences and learning were also to be considered, as well as advice on the annual plan. The group was asked to give advice on whether the plan should be more explicit on working methods and pedagogical work. The expert group's suggested text was presented in February 2014. Their advice will be part of the foundation for the revised Framework Plan. Awaiting new regulation on assessment and documentation, the process of revision will be resumed and completed in 2015–2016.

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Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research

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Design: Kristine Steen, 07 Media

Photo: Sveinung Bråthen, Pål Hermansen and Tove Mogstad

Slinde, Colourbox.com: p. 120, 122, 126

Publication number: F-4414 E

Print: Norwegian Government Security and Service

Organisation 06/2015 - Impression 200