

The most important messages in White Paper No 41 (2008–2009) Quality in ECEC



The Norwegian Government has three goals for quality work in ECEC:

- *Ensure equity and high quality in all kindergartens*
- *Strengthen the kindergarten as a learning area*
- *All children should participate in an inclusive community*

A strong start

In a few decades the ECEC sector has developed from being a possibility for the few to a universal right for children. The Norwegian government will take care of and develop the best of the kindergarten tradition in Norway. This tradition is founded on a holistic approach to care and learning and respect for the value of childhood in itself. This approach must be sustained, but at the same time the kindergarten's content and tasks must develop in accordance with new knowledge and research.

All children deserve a good quality place in kindergarten. Investing in the youngest is of great value. Both international and national research shows that early intervention gives high return. Children who have attended kindergarten, have better chances of succeeding in education and working life than children who have not attended kindergarten.

After a period with high increase in kindergarten places, introduction of maximum parental fees and a legal entitlement to a place in kindergarten, the government will now emphasise quality and content in kindergarten.

Ensure equity and high quality in all kindergartens

Staff in kindergarten

Staff's professional and personal competence is the most important resource in the kindergarten and a prerequisite to ensure that the kindergarten is a good arena for care, play, learning and social equation.

To ensure relevant competence in the kindergartens the government will in 2009 strengthen the recruiting of pedagogues. The government has increased the capacity in preschool teacher education with approximately 440 places in the fiscal budget for 2009. The government will increase the recruiting further, and proposes in revised national budget to increase the study places in preschool teacher education, decentralized preschool teacher education and further education. The proposal in the revised national budget will give approximately 500 additional study places.



factsheet

The government will continue its work to recruit preschool teachers and improve the competence in the kindergartens by:

- Increasing staff with preschool teacher education and competence on children
- Increasing the amount of study places in 2009 with approximately 940 in preschool teacher education (including ordinary preschool teacher education, work-placed preschool teacher education, further education in kindergarten pedagogy for staff with other pedagogical education and further education for all staff in kindergartens)
- Offer supervision of all newly educated preschool teachers from 2011 – 2012
- Continue the means of the national strategy for improving staff's competence 2008 – 2010
- Initiate means to include other professions to be included in staff
- Change the title 'preschool teacher' to 'kindergarten teacher'.

Co-operation between home and kindergarten

A kindergarten of high quality and equity presupposes good co-operation based on trust between home and kindergarten. To this end the government intends to set up a national advisory board of parents, similar to the national advisory board of parents in primary school. The advisory board of kindergarten parents will expose the parents' resources, make their voices heard in contemporary kindergarten policy and secure parents' perspectives. The advisory board will be set up within 2010.

In addition the ministry will propose a regulation that mandates all kindergartens to offer two meetings a year with the individual parents to discuss their children's learning and wellbeing.

Knowledge about kindergartens

To reach the goal of equity and high quality in all kindergartens it is necessary to strengthen the knowledge about the field. Solid and reliable statistics and updated research are vital for policy making, for the preschool teacher education and for the professional development of kindergartens. These considerations require better systems for dissemination of information and research than we have today.

The Ministry will:

- Develop a national system to monitor the development of quality in the kindergarten sector
- Compile an annual national report on the conditions in the kindergarten sector
- Establish a national researchers' school for the scholarship holders in the teacher educations
- Initiate or support longitudinal studies on quality and long term effects of kindergarten attendance
- Establish a web portal about and for kindergartens.



Sharing responsibility and monitoring the kindergarten sector

The enormous increase of places and the increased complexity of the kindergarten sector create monitoring and quality assurance challenges. The aim is to improve the sector to meet the increased expectations from the public, the sector itself and the political level. The Kindergarten Act will be reviewed to be more appropriate for today's and tomorrow's kindergarten sector. The ministry will also consider whether the competence in the local kindergarten authority is sufficient. The ministry will further assess the supervisory system organization in the future kindergarten sector, and it will aim to delegate tasks from the ministry to the Directorate for Education. To secure good quality the ministry will also consider changes needed in the regulations for family kindergartens.

The government aims at establishing equal economic terms for public and non-public kindergartens through a step by step plan of maximum five years. The legislation securing equal treatment will contribute to prevent the development of quality differences between public and non-public kindergartens.

Strengthen the kindergarten as a learning arena

The content of kindergartens

To secure all children good possibilities for development the government will strengthen the kindergarten as a learning arena. The content of the kindergarten must be varied and in accordance with the interests and backgrounds of each child and the group of children. Children in kindergartens should get a common platform and a good start for their lifelong learning. All children should develop, learn and be well prepared for school attendance. The content and tasks of kindergartens must be founded on a holistic approach to learning, where care, play and learning are closely connected.

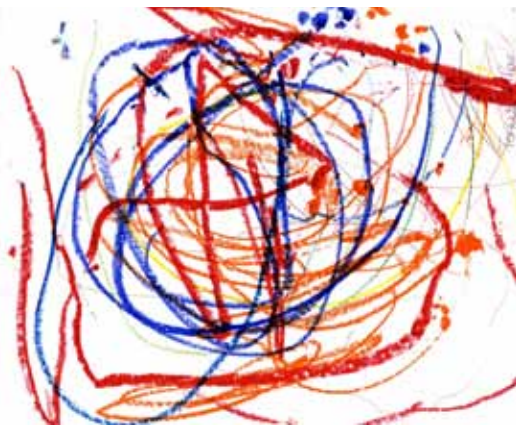
The Ministry will:

- Consider whether more distinct goals for the learning areas in the framework plan for the content and tasks of kindergartens are beneficial
- Consider how the kindergartens' work concerning equality between the genders can be renewed and strengthened
- Accord state grants for the development of linguistic competence and competence on Sami traditional work.

Documentation and evaluation

Most of today's children have attended kindergarten before they start school. To ensure that children's transition is of high quality and equity, the kindergartens must have good preparations for school, and the schools must in the same way prepare to receive the children from kindergarten.

The ministry will prepare a public hearing on introducing a legal entitlement for all kindergartens to transmit written documentation on children's interests, play, learning and development to school.



All children should participate in an inclusive community

The kindergarten – An inclusive community

Kindergartens must offer all children good opportunities for development and activity, irrespective of abilities and family background. Children belonging to indigenous groups and linguistic and cultural minorities must be supported to be part of both majority and minority cultures. Attending high quality kindergarten can support social equity, early intervention and lifelong learning.

A commission set up by the Ministry of Finance has documented research proving that high quality preschool programs are important and cost effective. The commission points out the importance of early intervention for children under school age, because of the strong positive influence on later education and participation in working life.

The Ministry will:

- Set up a public commission concerning pedagogical support of all preschool children
- Establish legislation offering language screening for all children in kindergartens
- Develop supervisory material for the recommended language screening tools after a professional evaluation of the tools.

Co-ordinated work for children in need of special support

The government wants kindergartens to give all children a supportive and arranged environment for care and learning. It is important to provide good and early support to children who need special care and support. Several services and means must be co-ordinated, and different authorities and levels of administration must co-operate to give children with special needs necessary support.

The Ministry will:

- Develop supervisory material on co-operation between kindergartens and the child welfare services (in co-operation with the Ministry of Children and Equality)
- Strengthen the preschool teacher education on the topics violence and failure of care.



Facts about kindergartens

- Children in kindergartens: 261 884
- Kindergartens: 6 706
- Coverage for children 1- 5 years: 87.2 per cent
- Staff in kindergartens: 81 433
- State grants for kindergartens 2009: 24.3 billion NOK

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