

NORWAY

Key Contextual Data

Compiled by

**Inge Schreyer, Pamela Oberhuemer,
and Lars Gulbrandsen**

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Early childhood education and care (ECEC)

Please note

In alignment with country-specific usage, the term used in this report for the main form of ECEC provision is **kindergarten** (*barnehager*, 0–5)¹. Any additional forms are described where appropriate.

Historical milestones in ECEC in Norway

First half of 19th century	Charities establish the first institutions for poor children (<i>barneasyll</i>).
1840 ff.	Crèches are established for children under 3 whose parents cannot care for them and for poor children of single mothers.
1850 onwards	Froebel-inspired kindergartens are established.
1920-1970	Kindergartens (<i>barnehage</i>) continue to develop against the backdrop of the welfare state era. In 1970, however, the coverage rate was still as low as 3%.
1970s onwards	Employment rate of mothers with under 2 year-olds more than doubles from 1972 to 1991.
1975	The number of kindergartens for children up to age 6 increases and the first <i>Kindergarten Act</i> (<i>Barnehageloven</i>) comes into force. In the years that follow, public interest in kindergartens also increases.
1995 onwards	The Kindergarten Act is amended. The <i>Framework Plan for Kindergartens</i> is issued, regulating the content and tasks of kindergartens. In 1997, compulsory schooling begins in the year children turn 6.
2005/2006	The Kindergarten Act is amended in 2005 and comes into force in 2006, together with a revised version of the Framework Plan.
2006	Responsibility for kindergartens is transferred from the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs to the Ministry of Education and Research. Creating a better transition between kindergartens and primary education and acknowledging the kindergarten's role as the first step in a lifelong learning process are the main reasons.
2009	An individual statutory right is introduced: each child from the age of 1 is entitled to a place in kindergarten.
2011	Amendments to the Kindergarten Act are included in the Framework Plan for Kindergartens.
2016	Introduction of free 20-hour kindergarten attendance for children over 3 years of age from low-income families
2017/18	Further amendments to the Kindergarten Act and the Framework Plan
2019	Low-income families are entitled to 20 hours of free kindergarten attendance for children aged 2 and over.
2021	The Kindergarten Act (§ 42) is amended regarding the avoidance of discrimination.

Sources: Rønsen 1995; Haug and Storø 2013; Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research 2006; Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research 2015; Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research 2016; Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training 2017; Sadownik and Ødegaard 2018; Eurydice 2023

¹ **Editors' note:** International data sources use varying ways of presenting the age range of children enrolled in ECEC settings. We have chosen the following age-inclusive format for the SEEPRO-3 reports: **0–2** years for children **up to** 3 years of age and **3–5** years for 3, 4 and 5 year-olds. In the case of Norway, the relevant format is **0–5** years, as children start primary school at age 6.

ECEC system type and auspices²

Norway has a unitary system of early childhood education and care. At the national level, the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research is responsible for ECEC centres (*barnehager* - "kindergartens") for children from the age of one until they start school at age 6 since 2006.

The Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training is responsible for monitoring and supervision. At the decentralised level, regional government agencies (county governors) ensure that national policies are implemented (Engel et al. 2015, 29) and, since 2006, that municipalities fulfil their duties as kindergarten authorities. Municipalities are responsible for directly supervising kindergartens. They also own and run about half of the kindergartens.

General objectives and legislative framework

There are three overarching goals for the education sector in general, including early childhood education and care: All learners participate in an inclusive learning environment; children and young people in need of special support are given appropriate assistance early in order to being able to develop their potential; staff in the education system are highly qualified and competent. The first Kindergarten Act (*Barnehageloven*) in Norway came into force in 1975. According to the current Kindergarten Act, which came into effect in 2006 and was last amended in 2021, children in kindergartens have the right to express their views on the day-to-day activities of the kindergarten and are to be given the opportunity to take an active part in planning and assessing kindergarten activities on a regular basis. "The Kindergarten must be based on fundamental values, 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." (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research 2006, Section 1).

A prescribed regulatory framework – *The Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens* (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training 2017) – sets out the principles, goals and objectives for pedagogical work in ECEC centres (see section on *Curricular framework*).

Both public and private settings are obliged to comply with the Kindergarten Act and the Framework Plan.

ECEC entitlement and compulsory attendance

Since 2009, children from the age of 1 year are entitled to a kindergarten place, which the municipalities are obliged to provide. Attendance is not compulsory. Since paid parental leave lasts until a child's first birthday, few children below that age are enrolled in a kindergarten.

In 1997, the compulsory school starting age was lowered from 7 years and now starts in the year a child turns 6 (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research 2023a).

Main types of provision

Children up to school age can attend either a kindergarten or a family kindergarten (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2019, 205).

² The Eurydice country report on ECEC in Norway provided orientation for legal and regulatory aspects. All other sources are clearly indicated within the text and in the references section.

Kindergartens (*barnehager*) are unitary ECEC settings for children until they start school. The respective provider decides on the opening hours. To cover parents' working hours as far as possible, most kindergartens are open at least 41 hours a week (usually from 7:00 or 8:00 to 17:00 or 18:00). Children can attend them either full time or part time.

Family kindergartens (*familiebarnehager*) are located in private homes, where an assistant works with a maximum of five children, usually under 3 years of age. A qualified kindergarten pedagogue provides supervision and support on a weekly basis (Engel et al. 2015).

Both are obliged to comply with the Kindergarten Act.

Open-door kindergartens (*åpne barnehager*) are drop-in parent-child groups run by a qualified kindergarten pedagogue on a sessional basis. They are only open for part of the day.

Table 1

Norway: Number of kindergartens and children enrolled, 2005 – 2015 – 2022

Year	Kindergartens	Children (0 to under 6 years)
2005	6,278	223,501
2015	6,087	283,608
2022	5,420	268,730

Sources: Statistics Norway 2023a, 2023b

Provider structures

The shares of children's groups under and over 3 years of age are distributed almost equally between private and public ECEC settings (Statistics Norway 2023a). In 2022, there were 5,420 kindergartens for children up to school age - just under half (48.3%. 2,606) were public settings, nearly all of them owned by municipalities. In recent years, both the number of facilities and the number of children have decreased (Statistics Norway 2023a, b). This is primarily due to a lower birth rate. The coverage rate has not decreased.

Within the private sector, there are both commercial and non-profit owners. However, it is difficult to draw a clear-cut line between them. An increasing number of the private kindergartens has been integrated into large companies, but the majority is still independent, with the provider owning just one kindergarten.

Private kindergartens are approved and supervised by the local authority. All approved institutions receive the same municipal grants to cover the main part of the running costs.

The responsibility of the provider is to guarantee operation in accordance with the relevant laws and regulations and to ensure quality (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training 2017).

Table 2

Norway: Settings by provider type and children by age, 2022

Provider type	Kindergartens	0 to under 3 year-olds	3 to under 6 year-olds	1 to under 6 year-olds
Municipal	2,606	49,929	86,152	136,081
County authority/ Government	12	310	396	706
Private	2,802	50,552	81,046	131,598
Total	5,420	100,791	167,594	268,385

Sources: Statistics Norway 2023a, 2023b



Participation rates in regulated provision

In 1963, national statistics on ECEC were published for the first time in Norway. At that time, the attendance rate for children under primary school age was just 2%. The first significant expansion of services took place in the 1970s: attendance increased from 3% in 1970 to 20% in 1980, reaching 62% by 2000 - 37% of children aged 1 or 2 and 78% of the 3 to 5 age group. In the following decade, the attendance rate increased from 37% to 81% for the youngest children and to 97.5% for 3, 4, and 5 year-old children. According to the most recent statistics from 2022, they were 87.7% for 1 and 2 year-olds and 97.2% for 3 to 5 year-olds (see *Table 3*).

In Norway, parental leave lasts until the child's first birthday and therefore relatively few children under the age of 1 attend a kindergarten (2022: 4.6%), but 94.7% of the 2 to 3 year-olds. In 2022, significantly more children under 2 years of age (4,874) were on the waiting list for a kindergarten place than children between 3–5 years (Statistics Norway 2023f).

Table 3

Norway: Number of children in kindergartens and enrolment rates by age, 2022

Age	Number of children	Enrolment rate, in %		
Under 1 years old	2,392	4.6		
1 year-olds	46,506	81.0	87.7 (1–2)	93.4 (1–5)
2 year-olds	51,893	94.7		
3 year-olds	54,666	96.8	97.2 (3–5)	
4 year-olds	55,561	97.2		
5 year-olds	57,367	97.4		
0 to under 6 years	268,385	79.7		

Source: Statistics Norway 2023b, 2023e

Children generally attend kindergarten full time: over 97% of children under and over 3 years of age attended for more than 41 hours per week in 2022.

Table 4

Norway: Number of children in kindergartens by age and weekly hours of attendance, 2022

	Weekly hours of attendance						Proportion attending over 41 hours, in %
	0-8	9-16	17-24	25-32	33-40	over 40	
0 to under 3 years	2	24	210	1,043	1,558	97,954	97.2
3 to under 6 years	4	41	158	957	2,339	164,095	97.9

Source: Statistics Norway 2023b, own calculations

Financing and costs for parents

Alongside Iceland and Sweden, Norway is one of the OECD countries that spends the most public money on the early childhood sector. In 2019, total public expenditure on early childhood education and care amounted to 1.38% of GDP, a significant increase from 0.69% in 2000. Around 0.7% was each allocated to provision for under 3 year-olds and to settings for 3 to 5 year-olds (OECD 2023).

Kindergartens are financed by municipalities (about 85%), with the expenditure in this area covered largely by state transfers as well as fees from parents. In 2004, a regulated maximum fee for parents was introduced (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research 2015).

In 2011, earmarked transfers for kindergartens were replaced by block grants to municipalities, thus strengthening local self-government. However, it is doubtful whether this reform provided the municipalities with more financial means for fulfilling the right to high-quality *barnehager* for all children (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research 2015, 9).

Since 2015, all public and private kindergartens receive similar subsidies from the government. National regulations for a free kindergarten place on a universal basis do not exist, but municipalities can issue their own regulations.

In January 2023, parents paid an average monthly fee (including meals) of 2,894 NOK (approx. €255³) (Statistics Norway 2023g). The maximum fee in January 2023 was NOK 3,000 (approx. €265) per month (Eurydice 2023, 4.1).

Since 2015, the fee has been capped at 6% of household income (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2019, 57). Low-income families pay a reduced fee; all families pay a lower amount for siblings. These regulations apply to both private and public kindergartens. Low-income families receive legally regulated, free 20-hour kindergarten attendance for children aged 2 years and older.

In 2022, a couple with two children spent about 5% of net household income on childcare costs⁴ (OECD.Stat 2023).

Staff to child ratios and group size

Kindergartens are usually organised in mixed-age groups, on the one hand for under 3 year-olds and on the other for 3 to under 6 year-olds. The exact arrangement is decided by the provider.

Since 2018, a statutory staffing ratio came into force of one employee for up to three children under 3 years of age and up to six children over 3 years of age. In each group, there must be at least one fully qualified pedagogue member of staff for every seven children under the age of 3 and for every 14 children over the age of 3 (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research 2023b). There are no regulations on group size.

Rooms must offer at least 5.3 square metres of space per child under 3 years of age, and at least 4 square metres per child over 3 years of age.

Curricular framework

The Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training 2017) emphasises humanistic and democratic values and traditions, which are to be implemented in a holistic manner. The Framework Plan states that all kindergartens must work towards the goal of promoting children's development and learning, and stimulate children's linguistic and social competence. Childhood is a phase of life with intrinsic value; kindergartens must be inclusive communities with space for every child. The rights and needs of the individual child should always be taken into account. The pedagogical approach includes outdoor play and physical activities, free play and guided activities. Building good relationships and the age-appropriate participation of children are foregrounded, as is the promotion of language, including sign language and Sami language.

³ Conversion rate December 2023

⁴ The calculation is based on: full-time working parents (average wage); two children aged 2 and 3 years in full-time childcare; childcare benefits included.



All kindergartens, whether public or private, are obliged to adhere to the principles of the Framework Plan. The provider may adapt the plan according to the local circumstances, but this needs to be described in the ECEC centre's programme. Kindergartens prepare an annual plan that documents the respective decisions and activities and describes how the contents and goals of the Framework Plan are implemented.

In August 2017, a revised version of the Framework Plan came into force. It is organised into nine sections: foundations and values, responsibilities and roles, aims and content, children's participation, cooperation between families and kindergartens, transitions, kindergarten as a pedagogical institution, ways of working in the kindergarten, and seven learning areas (Sadownik and Ødegaard 2018).

The seven learning areas are:

- *Communication, language and text*
Children should explore and develop their understanding of language and learn about different ways of communicating. They should be encouraged to play with spoken and written language and symbols.
- *Body, movement, food and health*
Children should learn about their bodies and needs through various physical activities, gain a positive view of themselves and respect the limits that others may have.
- *Art, culture and creativity*
Children's curiosity, imagination and creative thinking should be stimulated; they should be encouraged to express themselves in different ways and to respect other cultures.
- *Nature, environment and technology*
Children should be able to play outside all the year round in order to experience nature and their environment in a holistic way. They should also have the opportunity to work with different tools and materials.
- *Numbers, spaces and shapes*
Children should learn to understand mathematical concepts, play with numbers and get to know different shapes in their environment.
- *Ethics, religion and philosophy*
Children should learn about basic Christian and humanistic values and explore religions. They should be encouraged to ask questions and develop respect for other points of view.
- *Local community and society*
Children should learn about and respect local traditions, including those of minorities, and develop a sense of belonging to their community. Cultural diversity, different family forms and different ways of living should be equally emphasised.

Special emphasis is placed on learning and play. The concept of *Bildung* (based on the German term) is explicitly considered to be the basis for the core kindergarten values. Children are encouraged to develop into critical citizens with responsibilities towards nature and society (Sadownik and Ødegaard 2018).

The children's transition to primary school is also regulated in the Framework Plan. It states that kindergarten and school "should share knowledge and information to enable them to co-operate on provision for the oldest kindergarten children, their transition to and enrolment in school. The kindergarten must obtain the parents' consent before sharing information about individual children with the school" (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training 2017, 33).



Digital education

In the *Framework Plan for Kindergartens* (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training 2017), different working methods are presented to reflect the diversity of content. Among other things, digital practices are mentioned as helping to support learning processes, creativity and play. When using digital tools, which should not take too prominent a place, pedagogues should actively accompany the children and also be aware of copyright issues, data protection and the children's privacy. The children should be supported in reflecting critically on digital media.

Monitoring – evaluation

In Norway, the municipalities are responsible for the supervision and external inspection of the kindergartens. The county governors ensure that the municipalities within their county perform this responsibility correctly. According to the Framework Plan, kindergartens are to carry out their own internal quality assessments.,

Child-related assessment

There is no formal assessment of children at the pre-primary level. However, staff in kindergartens regularly share with parents their observations regarding the child's health, well-being, development and learning.

Centre-level assessment

Pedagogical practice is evaluated regularly, mainly in the form of self-evaluation on the basis of staff reflections (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training 2017). The frequency is not prescribed, but the results must be recorded in the kindergarten's annual report (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2019, 128f).

When evaluating kindergartens, the children's perspective is also important and, in addition to observations by staff, even the youngest children and their parents have the opportunity to contribute. In addition, staff ensure that they communicate regularly with parents about the children's health, skills and development. This is usually done through informal conversations when the children are brought and picked up (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2019, 20, 130). *RefLex* is a self-assessment tool offered by the Directorate for Education and Training that helps ensure compliance with the Kindergarten Act.

External evaluation

There are no specific procedures for the external evaluation of kindergartens in terms of methods or compulsory use of instruments. However, there are instruments provided by the Directorate of Education and Training for voluntary use, such as parent questionnaires or pedagogical documentation materials.

In most cases, the municipalities and county governors share the duties of external evaluation (Engel et al. 2015, 83). The municipalities are responsible for monitoring and developing the quality of kindergartens, especially with regard to process quality. They can draw on national guidelines issued by the Directorate for Education and Training (Engel et al. 2015, 58, 86). There are no formal regulations for external evaluations, which are the provider's responsibility (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2019, 123f).

The criteria for external evaluations include (1) the quality of the setting (e.g. safety, minimum number of fully qualified staff, working conditions), (2) the quality of the staff (e.g. qualifications,

cooperation with parents, interactions with children) and (3) the development of the children and their achievements through observations and assessments (Engel et al. 2015, 83ff).

Inclusion agenda

Kindergartens must observe the children's right to participate by enabling and encouraging them to express their views on day-to-day life in kindergarten (Sections 1 and 3 of the Kindergarten Act, Article 104 of the Norwegian Constitution, and Article 12, No. 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child). The children must be able to actively participate in planning and assessing the kindergarten's activities on a regular basis. All children have a say concerning what goes on in kindergarten (see section on *Curricular Framework*) (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education 2020).

Children with special educational needs and disabilities

The Kindergarten Act ensures the right to special needs support below compulsory school age. The Act also states that children with disabilities shall be entitled to priority admission to a kindergarten.

Mostly, children with special needs or disabilities attend a regular facility. Only very few attend separate facilities (2010: approx. 2%).

In 2022, 2.1% of children in municipal kindergartens received special educational assistance; in private kindergartens this applied to 1.5% of the children (Statistics Norway 2023h, own calculations).

Inclusive practice in early childhood education ensures that all children have equal opportunities in terms of development and learning. In Norway, children who cannot benefit sufficiently from mainstream provision are entitled to receive special support. For example, there is support in sign language, but also in individual languages for children from ethnic minorities. Nevertheless, the aim is for all children to attend regular institutions and to be supported there according to their needs. Furthermore, kindergartens are expected to cooperate with health services or educational-psychological services in order to provide the best possible support for each child. For example, White Paper 19 (2015-2016) *Time for play and learning - better content in kindergarten* sets the minimum staffing ratio, calls for a minimum qualification for professionals and presents concrete measures to improve the quality of inclusive practice (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research 2021). Studies by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations 2021) were also incorporated into the White Paper.

Inclusion in the kindergarten also means that the learning environment is geared towards children with special needs and that the staff look for flexible solutions that benefit everyone. This may include using digital media to support children with hearing or visual impairments.

Children with a migration background

In the *Framework Plan for Kindergartens* (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training 2017), particular reference is made to children with a Sámi background. These children have the right to speak their language in kindergarten and to learn about their culture so that they can develop their own identity. The Sámi language and Norwegian have the same status as official languages of Norway. It is estimated, that around 50,000 to 65,000 Sámi live in Norway, between 1.1% and 1.4% of the total Norwegian population (IWGIA 2023).

In 2021, there were 20 Sámi-kindergartens and 9 kindergartens with Sámi sections in Norway, attended by 800 children (Utdanningsdirektoratet 2022).

Since 2019, children in asylum centres aged 1 year and older also have the right to attend a kindergarten for 20 hours per week free of charge (European Commission 2020, 50).

In 2022, 10.8% of the total population and 12.5% of children under 5 years had a non-Norwegian citizenship. 61.6% and 57.6% respectively of them came from EU27 countries (Eurostat 2023b, own calculations).

According to national statistics, in 2022, 23.2% of children attending kindergarten had a migration background, and 20% were from linguistic and cultural minorities. These two groups overlap considerably: 86.2% of those with a migration background also belonged to linguistic or cultural minorities (Statistics Norway 2023c).

During 2022, 4,919 asylum applications were filed, 206 of them for children under 5 years of age (Statista 2023). Approximately one third (32.2%) were filed by persons from Syria, followed by persons from Ukraine (16.9%) and Afghanistan (10.3%) (UDI 2023).

Parental leave arrangements⁵

Maternity leave (*mødrekvoten*) is part of Parental leave (also termed “mother’s quota”) and covers three weeks before the birth and up to 15 or 19 weeks afterwards depending on payment level. Six weeks following the birth are compulsory, after which the time can also be divided into smaller blocks. Either the full salary continues to be paid for 18 weeks or 80% of it for 22 weeks (up to a maximum of NOK 9,290 (€798.32)). The condition for this is having been employed during six of the last ten months before the birth and a salary that corresponds to at least half the basic national insurance benefit payment over the previous year. Unemployed women receive a one-off payment per child.

Paternity leave (*pappapermisjon*) lasts two weeks which can be taken flexibly. Payment is only made if this is negotiated with the employer. It can be taken at different times and also by other persons who support the mother.

Parental leave (*foreldrepengeperioden*), which also applies to same-sex parents, lasts 46 or 56 weeks (together with the three weeks before the birth 49 or 59), depending on which payment option is chosen. After the birth, 15 to 19 (non-transferable) weeks are provided for each parent. The remaining 16 or 18 weeks are considered family time (*fellesperioden*) and can be taken by either parent (even at the same time). As with Maternity leave, either full pay can be paid for 49 weeks or 80% for 59 weeks. Non-employed women receive a flat-rate payment of NOK 90,300 (€ 7,759.73) per child. After the first six weeks, Parental leave can be postponed until a maximum of three years after the birth or taken part time, also by both partners at the same time. However, the latter option reduces the payments.

Parents with a child between 1 and 2 years of age who do not use a publicly funded childcare place receive a monthly lump sum of NOK 7,500 (€644.50) - this amount is reduced for part-time care.

Regarding Paternity leave, it is assumed that about 89% of fathers make use of it. In 2021, 48% of mothers and 11% of fathers took unpaid leave. Family time is mostly taken by mothers. Trend-wise, it tends to be well-educated mothers and mothers with well-paid jobs who share this time with their partner. However, there is no detailed data on this.

⁵ The brief summary in this section is based on the country note for Norway by Brita Bungum and Elin Kvande in the *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2023* (see References).

Current challenges for the system of Early Childhood Education and Care in Norway

Country expert assessment by *Lars Gulbrandsen*

Stability of the pedagogical staff

As stated in the ECEC Workforce Profile (Gulbrandsen 2024), a major challenge for the ECEC system in Norway is the retention of well-qualified pedagogues. After many years of significant staff shortages, the number of pedagogues willing to work in a kindergarten is now sufficient to meet the pedagogue norm, even enough to meet the strengthened staff to child ratio proposed by the government in October 2022. Ways need to be found to maintain the current workforce and to ensure that a high proportion of the newly qualified pedagogues really choose to work in a kindergarten. Moreover, the volume of newly educated candidates needs to remain stable. In this respect, both the organisation and content of the work as well as wages and other forms of recognition of the employees' work, are of great importance. In 2022, there were two strike actions, the first concerning wages, the second concerning pensions. In all negotiations and reforms, the stability of the pedagogical staff should be a central concern.

Governance of the sector and the private-public mix

The kindergartens in Norway are owned either by the municipalities or by private owners (50 – 50). Since this has been the case ever since kindergartens were established in Norway, there has never been any process of privatisation in the sector. However, in recent years the question of ownership has increasingly become a topic of controversial debate, with political parties to the right supporting private owners and the parties to the left generally preferring to re-establish the private centres as centres owned by the municipalities. In 2022, the new government (The Labour party and the Agrarian party) set up an ad hoc committee (“the de-commercialisation committee”) to clarify the issue of commercial owners. The committee was hoping to secure parliamentary support on a broader base and was planning to deliver a White Paper in mid-2024. However, since the competent and experienced civil servant who had been chairing the committee decided to resign in February 2023, it is now unclear whether the committee will continue or not. Whatever the outcome, parents in general express very high satisfaction with their kindergarten, regardless of the owner. At the same time, surveys consistently show that users of private kindergartens tend to be more satisfied than users of municipal kindergartens.

Presence of staff during opening times

As a rule, ECEC centres are open for 9 hours per day. However, the centres do not have sufficient financial resources to meet the required staffing regulations all the time. Therefore, there will often be fewer adults present than the regulations specify, usually at the start and the end of the day. This reduces the amount of time that staff can carry out pedagogical work with the children. The real staff to child ratio across the whole day will therefore often be a result of how the parents use the time they are allowed to use. If many use all the time they are permitted to use, this could reduce the quality of the centre by giving each member of the staff responsibility for more children. The municipality receives the bulk of the funding for kindergartens through framework grants from the state, based on objective criteria. A rich municipality might choose to allocate more money to the centres while, for instance, a municipality which is less rich but has many elderly people needing intensive care, might choose to allocate their extra funds to care arrangements for the elderly. The philosophy behind framework grants is to promote autonomous local government, the result might be kindergartens of varied quality. Since 81 per

cent of the kindergarten costs are staffing costs, there are few possibilities to change this given the current amount of transfers from the state, the current financial situation and other needs of the municipalities, the current amount of user fees and the current opening hours.

Demographic data

Please note: For reasons of comparability, data on children are always reported up to 6 years of age, even if compulsory schooling starts earlier or later in some countries.

Total population

In 2022, the total population of Norway was 5,425,270. Over the last 20 years it has slowly but steadily increased (2000: 4,478,497; 2010: 4,858,199; 2020: 5,367,580) (Eurostat 2023a)

Total fertility rate

In 2021, the average of the total fertility rate in the EU27 (from 2020) was 1.53. The highest total fertility rate of the 33 SEEPRO-3 countries was in France (1.84), the lowest in Malta (1.13). With 1.55, Norway is approximately on EU average (Eurostat 2023c)⁶.

Children under 6 years of age

Table 5
Norway: Children under 6 years of age, 2022

Age	Number of children
Up to 1 year	56,458
1 year-olds	53,674
2 year-olds	55,550
3 year-olds	56,293
4 year-olds	58,065
5 year-olds	60,653
0 to under 6 year-olds, total	340,693

Source: Eurostat 2023a

The proportion of children under 3 years of age in the total population was 3.1% in 2022, and that of children under 6 was 6.3%. These proportions were significantly higher than the EU averages (Eurostat 2023a).

⁶ Data for **Ukraine** and the **UK** (2021) are from Statista (<https://www.statista.com/statistics/296567/fertility-rate-in-ukraine/> and <https://www.statista.com/statistics/284042/fertility-rate-in-the-united-kingdom-uk/>). Data for the **Russian Federation** (2021) are from WorldBankData (<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.TFRT.IN?locations=RU>).

Table 6

Norway: Children under 6 years of age – share in total population from 2000 to 2022, in %*

		Under 3 year-olds	3 to under 6 year-olds	0 to under 6 year-olds
2000	Norwegen	4.0	4.1	8.1
	Ø EU15 ⁷	3.2	3.2	6.4
2005	Norwegen	3.7	3.9	7.6
	Ø EU25	3.1	3.1	6.2
2015	Norwegen	3.5	3.7	7.2
	Ø EU25	3.0	3.2	6.2
2022	Norwegen	3.1	3.2	6.3
	Ø EU27(2020)	2.7	2.9	5.7

Source: Eurostat 2023a, * Own calculations, deviations due to rounding

Single households with children under age 6

In 2022, 91% of households with children under 6 were couple households. Households with single parents accounted for only 4.3% - almost exclusively single mothers (4.2%).

Table 7

Norway: Households with children under age 6, 2022

Household type	Total households	Share of total households, in %*
Households – total	500,000	
Couple households	455,100	91.0
Other types of households	23,300	4.7
Single households, total	21,600	4.3
Single households, women	20,900	4.2
Single households, men	700**	0.1

Source: Eurostat 2023h, * Own calculations, ** Data calculated

Employment rates of parents with children under age 6

In Norway, in 2022, the overall employment rate for men (15-64 years) was 80.1% and for women 75.4% (Eurostat 2023g).

In 2022, 82.9% of women and 94.3% of men (18-64 years) with children under 6 were employed. Among the 27 EU-countries (2020), both the shares of employed fathers and mothers were well above the EU-averages (63.6% and 87.2% respectively) (Eurostat 2023d, own calculations).

⁷ The data for 2000 include the EU15-Länder at that time (AT, BE, DK, DE, IE, EL, ES, F, FI, IT, LU, NL, PT, SE, UK). The 2005 data (EU25) include CY, CZ, EE, HU, LV, LT, MT, PL, SI, SK. Data for 2015 include the additional EU28 countries BG, RO und HR. Data for EU27 (from 2020) comprise the countries of the EU28 without the UK.

Table 8a

Norway: Employment rates of parents with children under 6 compared with other EU countries, 2010 und 2022

	2010	
	Mothers, in %	Fathers, in %
Norway (age of the youngest child: 4–5 years)*	82.0	92.0
Highest rate of employment in 27 EU countries ⁸	Denmark: 82.7	Netherlands: 93.4
Lowest rate of employment in 27 EU countries	Hungary: 31.7	Latvia: 72.7
	2021	
	Mothers, in %	Fathers, in %
Norway	82.9	94.3
Highest rate of employment in 27 (2020) EU countries ⁹	Luxembourg: 81.9	Sweden: 95.1
Lowest rate of employment in 27 (2020) EU countries	Czech Republic: 42.5	Romania: 78.5

Source: Eurostat 2023e, *Statistics Norway 2023d

For other SEEPRO-3 countries that were not part of the EU27(2020) in 2021/2022 – like Norway – data are displayed in Table 8b.

Table 8b

Employment rates in non-EU SEEPRO-3 countries, 2021/2022/2023

Countries	Parents with children under 6 years		Overall employment rate	
	Mothers in %	Fathers in %	Women in %	Men in %
***Russia (2021/2022)	67.1 (2021)	k.A.	55.6 (2022)	70.4 (2022)
*Serbia (2022)	64.4	78.3	57.9	71.0
**Switzerland (2022/2023)	46.9	95.3	60.0 61.1 (2023)	83.5 84.2 (2023)
+Ukraine (2021)	n.d.	n.d.	60.7	69.9
+++United Kingdom (2021/2023)	75.6	92.1	++72.3	++79.2
with dependent children	72.4	93.1	++72.1 (2023)	++79.4 (2023)
with children under 2 years	70.7	95.0		
with children 3–4 years				

*Eurostat 2023d, 2023g

**[BFS] Bundesamt für Statistik. 2023. *Erwerbsquoten in Vollzeitäquivalenten nach Geschlecht, Nationalität, Altersgruppen, Familientyp* [Full-time equivalent employment rates by gender, nationality, age groups, family type]. <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/asset/de/je-d-03.02.00.01.03>

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⁸ AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DK, DE, EE, EL, ES, F, FI, IE, IT, HU, LV, LT, LU, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK, UK

⁹ AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DK, DE, EE, EL, ES, F, FI, IE, IT, HR, HU, LV, LT, LU, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK

Children at risk of poverty or social exclusion¹⁰

In 2022, 14.6% of children under 6 were at risk of poverty or social exclusion. This proportion was below the EU27 average (23.3%) for this age group. The share of all persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the total population was 16.3% (EU: 21.6%). In 2020, 2% of children under 6 and 1% of the total population suffered from severe material deprivation (EU average 6.1% and 4.3% respectively) (Eurostat 2023e, f).

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¹⁰ 'At risk of poverty or social exclusion' refers to the situation of people either at risk of poverty (threshold set at 60 % of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers), or severely materially deprived or living in a household with a very low work intensity. (https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:Material_deprivation)

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