

# NORWAY

Early Childhood Education and Care  
**ECEC Workforce Profile**

*Country report author*

**Lars Gulbrandsen**

Norwegian Social Research (NOVA),  
Oslo Metropolitan University

**Citation suggestion:**

Gulbrandsen, L. 2024. "Norway – ECEC Workforce Profile." In *Early childhood workforce profiles across Europe. 33 country reports with key contextual data*, edited by P. Oberhuemer and I. Schreyer. Munich: State Institute for Early Childhood Research and Media Literacy. [www.seeepro.eu/English/Country-Reports.htm](http://www.seeepro.eu/English/Country-Reports.htm)

Funded by:



Federal Ministry for  
Family Affairs, Senior Citizens,  
Women and Youth



State Institute for Early Childhood  
Research and Media Literacy



# Contents

- 1. ECEC governance in Norway ..... 4
- 2. Who belongs to the early years workforce? ..... 4
  - 2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision ..... 4
  - 2.2 Centre Leader ..... 6
  - 2.3 Centre-based posts of responsibility ..... 6
  - 2.4 Co-ordinating and supervisory staff ..... 7
  - 2.5 Specialist support staff ..... 7
- 3. Structural composition of ECEC workforce: qualifications, gender, ethnicity ..... 7
- 4. Initial professional education (IPE) ..... 8
  - 4.1 Initial qualifying routes (higher education and vocational) ..... 8
  - 4.2 Competences, curricula and pedagogic-didactic approaches in IPE programmes ..... 10
  - 4.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability ..... 10
- 5. Guided workplace experience (practicum) in the initial professional education of core professionals ..... 11
- 6. Continuing professional development (CPD) of ECEC staff ..... 11
- 7. Working conditions and current workforce issues ..... 13
  - 7.1 Remuneration ..... 13
  - 7.2 Full-time and part-time employment in ECEC provision ..... 14
  - 7.3 Support measures in the workplace for newly qualified and newly appointed staff ..... 14
  - 7.4 Non-contact time ..... 14
  - 7.5 Current staffing issues ..... 14
- 8. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to staffing and professionalisation issues ..... 15
- 9. Recent country-specific research focusing on ECEC staff ..... 16
- 10. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment ..... 17
- References ..... 18



## Glossary

### **EQF** – *European Qualifications Framework*

Outcomes based (knowledge, skills, competences), eight-level reference tool to enable qualification comparisons between countries.

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/european-qualifications-framework-eqf>

### **ECTS** – *European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System*

A system for enhancing student mobility through the Europe-wide recognition of credit transfers and credit accumulation in higher education

[https://ec.europa.eu/education/resources-and-tools/european-credit-transfer-and-accumulation-system-ects\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/education/resources-and-tools/european-credit-transfer-and-accumulation-system-ects_en)

### **ISCED** – *International Standard Classification of Education*

An instrument for comparing levels and fields of education across countries, developed by UNESCO in the 1970s and revised in 1997 and 2011.

<http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/international-standard-classification-of-education-isced-2011-en.pdf>

## About the author

**Lars Petter Gulbrandsen**, PhD in political science, was employed at Oslo University from 1972 to 1977 and from 1977 to 1996 at the Institute of Applied Social Science. Since 1996 he has been a senior researcher at NOVA – Norwegian Social Research, part of Oslo Metropolitan University since 2013. Main research themes are kindergartens and housing.



## 1. ECEC governance in Norway

Since 2010, all children in Norway have a right to a place in an ECEC centre from the age of one. All ECEC provision is regulated by the same law, the Kindergarten Act (last amended 2021). All ECEC centres have to follow the national early childhood curriculum (*Framework Plan for Kindergartens*). In 2006, political responsibility at the national level was transferred from the Ministry of Family Affairs to the Ministry of Education. Responsibility for the administration of the sector has been gradually but increasingly transferred from the Ministry to an affiliated agency, The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training. At the local level, municipalities serve as the government authority responsible for steering and controlling the ECEC centres.

Even if about half of ECEC settings have a private owner and the other half are run by municipalities, the ECEC system as a whole should undoubtedly be characterised as **unitary**.

The qualification requirements for staff across the entire ECEC sector are the same, regardless of the age of the children. All centres, whether publicly or privately run, have to follow the same rules and regulations. The regulation of public financial support is also the same and according to the Day Care Institution Act, private and municipal centres are to receive equal treatment. The bulk of public subsidies are transferred from the state to the municipalities, which then distribute the funds to each centre. If a municipality wishes to give more money to the ECEC centres under their ownership, they are bound through the regulations to increase the funding support for private settings in the same way.

## 2. Who belongs to the early years workforce?

### 2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC provision

According to the Kindergarten Act, each ECEC centre should have at least one employee per three children under 3 years and one employee per six children over 3 years. The law defines children as 'older than three years' from the August in the year they turn three. The employees mentioned here are the staff working directly with the children and classified as the core personnel (*grunnbemanning*). The Centre Leaders (*barnehagestyrer*) are not included unless some of their working hours are allocated to work directly with the children. This is often the case in small centres. If a centre employs, for instance, a kitchen assistant or a caretaker, they are not considered to be part of the core personnel.

The undisputed largest group among the main staff are the Pedagogical Leaders. The title Kindergarten Teacher seems now mainly to be used in the official statistics, but in the ECEC centres as well as in the relevant legislation, Pedagogical Leader (*pedagogisk leder*) is still the most common term used. We also find the concept Pedagogical Leader in the rules governing the qualifications. According to these rules, there should be one Pedagogical Leader per seven children under the age of three, and one to every 14 children older than three years. The Pedagogical Leader supervises the other staff in the section and ensures that the centre follows the Kindergarten Act and the Framework Plan in its pedagogical work.

Both Centre Leaders and Pedagogical Leaders must have completed at least a three-year pedagogical education (study programme for Kindergarten Teachers) at Bachelor level at a university or university college (*høgskole*). The EQF level for this education is 6. Some other pedagogical study programmes, such as that of Primary School Teacher, might also be approved if they are supplemented with a one-year additional course in kindergarten pedagogy (60 ECTS credits). The bulk of Centre Leaders have the regular qualification but a wider range of pedagogical professions may be approved for Centre Leaders.

The largest group among the 56,251 other employees are skilled workers with a qualification as Child and Youth Worker. Their total number is approximately 20,750 persons. They follow a specific upper secondary route which is classified at EQF level 5.

Otherwise, Assistants are an important part of the main body of staff. For many years, however, their relative position in the overall staffing of ECEC centres has been decreasing. There are no educational requirements for the position as Assistant. However, many of them have considerable experience of working in ECEC centres.

Table 1  
Norway: ECEC staff in centre-based settings

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age range	Main roles and positions	Main age-range focus of initial professional education	Minimum qualification requirement ECTS credits EQF level ISCED level
<b>Kindergarten Teacher / Pedagogical Leader</b> <i>Barnehagelærer / Pedagogisk leder</i>  <i>Profile:</i> Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional	ECEC centre, Kindergarten <i>Barnehage</i> 0–5 years <sup>1</sup>	Core practitioner with group responsibility  Centre Leader	0–5 years	3 years at a university or university college ( <i>høgskole</i> ) <i>Award:</i> Bachelor  ECTS credits: 180 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2011: level 6  <b>or</b> Qualification as Primary School Teacher (since 2018 = Master) <i>plus</i> 1 year course in kindergarten pedagogy (60 ECTS credits) for teachers with a 3-year Bachelor’s degree awarded before 2018)
<b>Child and Youth Worker</b> <i>Fagarbeider/Barne- og ungdomsarbeider</i>	ECEC centre, Kindergarten <i>Barnehage</i> 0–5 years	Qualified co-worker	0–18 years	Upper secondary qualification <i>Award:</i> Certificate as skilled worker

<sup>1</sup> **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 for countries with a school starting age at 6 (as in Norway): **0–2** years for children **up to** 3 years of age and **3–5** years for 3, 4 and 5 year-olds.

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age range	Main roles and positions	Main age-range focus of initial professional education	Minimum qualification requirement ECTS credits EQF level ISCED level
				ECTS credits: n/a <sup>2</sup> EQF level: 5 ISCED 2011: 5
<b>Kindergarten Assistant</b> <i>Assistent</i>	ECEC centre, Kindergarten <i>Barnehage</i> 0–5 years	Non-qualified co-worker	n/a	n/a

#### Box 1

**SEEPRO profile categories for ECEC core professionals** (adapted from Oberhuemer, Schreyer, and Neuman 2010)

- **Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional** (specialist focus, 0–6/7 years)
- **Pre-primary Education Professional** (exclusive pre-primary focus 3/4–6 years)
- **Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional** (focus on pre-primary *and* primary education 3/4–10/11 years)
- **Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional** (mainly broad focus, including ECEC, usually 0–12 years, but sometimes including adults)
- **Social Care/Health Care Professional** (sometimes early childhood focus, sometimes broad focus, including adults)

## 2.2 Centre Leader

According to the Kindergarten Act, each ECEC centre should have a recognised pedagogical and administrative leadership. As a rule, each centre has a Centre Leader. According to the *Framework Plan for Kindergartens* (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training 2017), the Centre Leader has the daily responsibility for running the centre by leading the work in planning, documentation and evaluation as well as developing the content and working approach of the centre and ensuring that all staff participate.

Large centres sometimes have a Deputy Centre Leader. In small centres, however, leadership might be a part-time post, combined with a part-time position as Pedagogical Leader. The owners of many centres, often municipalities, sometimes organise leadership teams covering a number of centres. The most important trade union, *Utdanningsforbundet*, has been against such solutions and prefers to have a leader present in all centres. It might even be the result of such organisation that in December 2021, 5,020 regular centres were registered, but only 4,420 Centre Leaders. The majority of Centre Leaders are educated as Early Childhood Pedagogy Professionals. Additional qualifications are optional.

## 2.3 Centre-based posts of responsibility

In Norway, there are as a rule no designated posts of responsibility for tasks beyond those of the Centre Leader and Pedagogical Leader. Other needs will usually be met by external specialists who are employed by the municipality or by private firms and who visit the centres.

<sup>2</sup> n/a = not applicable

## 2.4 Co-ordinating and supervisory staff

As a rule, there are no specialist advisory and supervisory staff in the ECEC sector in Norway who have a co-ordinating or supervisory role across a number of centres. However, such functions may be assumed by the service providers, i.e. municipalities or private providers who own many centres.

## 2.5 Specialist support staff

Both the Kindergarten Act and the Framework Plan state that children in need of extra support are to receive the social, pedagogical and physical adaptation they need. Each centre is required to have an inclusive approach which guarantees equality of opportunity. If such needs surpass the regular provision of the centre, the centre will usually have a right to apply for extra staff resources. Staff engaged in this way will often be part of the core personnel, but might also have special duties for one or more specific children with special educational needs.

# 3. Structural composition of ECEC workforce: qualifications, gender, ethnicity

At the end of 2021, 96,324 persons were employed in Norwegian ECEC centres. The official statistics describe 4,420 as Centre Leaders, 32,827 were pedagogues with the professional title of Pedagogical Leader or Kindergarten Teacher (*pedagogisk leder* or *barnehagelærer*) and 56,251 were other employees belonging to the main staff (see *Chapter 2.1*). 2,826 persons were described as other employees outside the main staff (not working directly with the children) (Statistics Norway 2022a).

*Table 2.1* lists the various qualification levels among ECEC centre staff in December 2021. The obligatory requirements for both Kindergarten Teachers (Pedagogical Leaders) and Centre Leaders are found in the first three rows in the table. Those with an “other higher education” refers to persons with a non-pedagogical IPE who may be employed as Centre Leaders.

Table 2

### Norway: Structural composition of ECEC workforce: qualifications, gender, ethnicity

#### 2.1 Norway: Educational background of ECEC centre staff, December 2021

Staff categories	% of all staff	EQF Level
Staff with specialist higher education degree (Kindergarten Teachers)	42.0	6
– Professional education equivalent to Kindergarten Teacher	1.4	6
– Other pedagogical education	1.7	6
– Other higher education	1.8	6
Staff with upper secondary vocational qualification (Child and Youth Workers)	22.2	5
Other skilled worker with upper secondary qualification	5.2	5
Staff with other professional background or no formal qualification	25.8	5 or (generally) lower

Source: Statistics Norway 2022a

Table 2.2 shows the proportion of men in the workforce according to official statistics. 10.7% of the workforce are men. Only a very small group, mainly in jobs outside the pedagogical staff, consist almost only of men, such as caretakers.

## 2.2 Norway: Distribution of male workers in different positions within centre-based ECEC, December 2021

Position	Total number	Proportion of men, in %
Kindergarten Teachers (Pedagogical Leaders)	32,827	9.1
Centre Leaders	4,420	8.8
Others employees in direct contact with children	56,251	11.0
Other jobs (e.g. technical, administrative)	2,826	96.1
<b>All jobs in early childhood centres</b>	<b>96,324</b>	<b>10.7</b>

Source: Statistics Norway 2022a

In 2021, 9% of Kindergarten Teachers had a minority ethnic background and 1.2% were “Norwegian born to immigrant parents”. Among other staff belonging to the core personnel, 20.5% had a minority ethnic background and 1.2% were “Norwegian born to immigrant parents” (Statistics Norway 2022c).

## 4. Initial professional education (IPE)

### 4.1 Initial qualifying routes (higher education and vocational)

The professional education of Kindergarten Teachers in Norway started in 1935. At first, it was a rather short qualifying course which included much practice. The only entrance requirement was what we could call – for lack of a better translation – the „housewife school”. In the 1960s, the official title was Kindergarten Mistress, but this was changed into the gender neutral term Kindergarten Teacher (probably due to the fact that the first two male “mistresses” started their education in 1969). At this point of time, only 24% of Kindergarten Teachers had completed an upper secondary education. The incidence of such an education was higher among the assistants than among the teachers. From now on, professional education took place as a two-year course at university colleges. In 1971, the job title was changed to Preschool Teacher, a title that existed until 2013 when Kindergarten Teacher once again become the official title for people who had completed this education. Around 1980, three-year study programmes were introduced. This is still the case, whereas since 2018, the initial education of Primary School Teachers has been extended to five years, with a minimum qualification requirement at Master level.

Today, twelve Norwegian universities and university colleges provide professional studies for Kindergarten Teachers. In terms of geographical location, the number is even larger, since for some years now, educational institutions have been merged and the study programmes for Kindergarten Teachers have sometimes continued to be provided at the locations of the former independent institutions.

The regular entry requirement is a completed upper secondary education. However, for about 15 years it has been possible to combine work in an ECEC centre with part-time attendance at a university or university college, usually for four years. Kindergarten Teachers educated in this way have turned out to be a very stable part of the workforce (Gulbrandsen 2015).



Until 2003, Kindergarten Teachers had the opportunity to teach in the first four grades of primary school.

Table 3

**Norway: Kindergarten Teacher / Pedagogical Leader**

<b>Job title in Norwegian: <i>Barnehagelærer/Pedagogisk leder</i></b> Profile: Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional
<b>Entry requirements:</b> University entrance certificate <b>Professional studies:</b> 3 years at a university or university college ( <i>høgskole</i> ) or 1 year studying kindergarten pedagogy (60 ECTS) in the case of Primary School Teachers with a pre-2018 Bachelor's degree <b>Award:</b> Bachelor's degree, which can be followed by a Master's degree (+120 ECTS, EQF-level: 7, ISCED level: 7) <b>ECTS credits:</b> 180 <b>EQF level:</b> 6 <b>ISCED 2011:</b> level 6 <b>Main ECEC workplace:</b> ECEC centres/kindergartens ( <i>barnehage</i> ), 0–5 years

Table 4

**Norway: Child and Youth Worker**

<b>Job title in Norwegian:</b> <i>Barne- og ungdomsarbeider/fagarbeider</i>
<b>Entry requirements:</b> 10 years of compulsory schooling <b>Professional studies:</b> Upper secondary qualification (specialised stream) <b>Award:</b> Certificate as skilled worker <b>ECTS credits:</b> n/a <b>EQF level:</b> 5 <b>ISCED 2011:</b> level 5 <b>Main ECEC workplace:</b> ECEC centres/kindergartens ( <i>barnehage</i> ), 0–5 years

Table 5 shows all persons living in Norway of working age (67 years or younger) with a professional education as Kindergarten Teacher according to type of occupation in 2000 and 2012 (Gulbrandsen 2015). As the table indicates, between 2000 and 2012 the proportion of those educated as Kindergarten Teachers and working in a kindergarten increased considerably. Since 2012, however, this type of statistics is no longer compiled.

Table 5

**Norway: Type of work among people educated as Kindergarten Teachers, 2000 and 2012**

	2000	2012
In an ECEC centre (kindergarten)	44.1%	54.0%
In primary school (possible until 2003)	25.6%	16.3%
In other occupations	22.6%	20.9%
Not in employment	7.7%	8.8%
Total in absolute numbers	(27,353)	(46,385)

Source: Gulbrandsen 2015



## 4.2 Competences, curricula and pedagogic-didactic approaches in IPE programmes

There is a national framework plan (curriculum) for Kindergarten Teacher Education. This is compulsory for all institutions that offer such a course of study. The current framework was introduced in 2013 (Ministry of Education and Research 2012). An important change was that all academic disciplines except pedagogy were removed from the text and replaced by knowledge areas. Pedagogy is to be integrated into all knowledge areas.

The national framework plan for Kindergarten Teacher Education specifies learning outcomes for the student concerning knowledge, skills and general competence. The education focuses on the following six knowledge areas: (1) Children’s development, play and learning; (2) Society; religion, philosophy of life and ethics; (3) Language, texts and mathematics; (4) Nature, health and movements. These four areas are covered during the first two years of IPE (80 ECTS credits). The fifth area – Management, cooperation and development work (15 ECTS credits) – is assigned to the final year. In addition, two areas from the first two years are studied in more depth (40 ECTS). Also in the final year, 30 credits are allocated to a specialisation intended to build on the knowledge areas and contribute to professional progression and increased competence relevant for work in kindergartens. A Bachelor thesis is also completed during the final year (15 ECTS credits).

Table 6

**Norway: Competence areas in the qualification route of Kindergarten Teachers**

Knowledge area	ECTS credits	Year of study
1. Children’s development, play and learning	20	Years 1 and 2
2. Society, religion, philosophy of life and ethics	20	Years 1 and 2
3. Language, texts and mathematics	20	Years 1 and 2
4. Nature, health and movements	20	Years 1 and 2
<i>Specialisation in two of the areas above</i>	40	Years 1 and 2
5. Management, cooperation and development work	15	Year 3
6. Specialisation	30	Year 3
Bachelor thesis	15	Year 3
<b>Total</b>	<b>180</b>	

Source: Ministry of Education and Research 2012

An ideology which is often called the ‘Nordic Model’ or ‘educare’ pervades the course of study. The model is based on a balance between self-generated play activities and the structured and prepared educational activities of the Kindergarten Teachers. Applying a holistic perspective, teaching, play and care are interlinked in developing children’s cognitive, social and emotional learning (Sheridan, Sandberg, and Williams 2015).

## 4.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability

There is no alternative entry into IPE apart from the one-year kindergarten pedagogy qualification for other persons with a minimum three-year pedagogical education (as was formerly the case for Primary School Teachers).

Certification as a skilled worker (Child and Youth Worker) is normally given on the basis of a successfully completed exam from specific streams at upper secondary school. An unknown

number of people with such a certificate have never been in upper secondary school, and have qualified as Child and Youth Workers by studying alongside their jobs as Assistants.

## 5. Guided workplace experience (practicum) in the IPE of core professionals

The practicum is an important part of the education of Kindergarten Teachers. A minimum of 100 days, integrated in all six knowledge areas, are distributed, with 75 days during the two first years and 25 days in the final year. This element of IPE is regulated by national guidelines. The students complete their practicum in ECEC centres after the university/university college has entered an agreement with the kindergarten.

Practice supervisors are Kindergarten Teachers who are assigned this function as a supplement to their regular job in the centre. The educational institution is their employer for this function and pays them extra. In 2005, the most important union, *Utdanningsforbundet*, and the Ministry of Education entered an agreement, but this agreement has never been renewed and has in practice been replaced by local agreements between the IPE institutions and the kindergartens in a specific area. This can be illustrated by the agreement between Oslo Metropolitan University, the institution that educates the greatest number of Kindergarten Teachers, and the local kindergartens. A practicum supervisor-teacher is paid a weekly bonus of 1075 NOK (€107.50) for mentoring two students. The Centre Leaders receive 400 NOK (€40,00) per week regardless of the number of students.

The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training has established a formal course at the national level for student supervisors or for those who have supervisory functions towards newly employed staff. This specialist qualification is awarded 30 ECTS credits. The Directorate gives funding support so that the employee can combine such a qualifying course with their regular job (see, e.g., Jensen, Bråten, and Svalund 2020).

## 6. Continuing professional development (CPD) of ECEC staff

Formal courses of continuing professional development at the national level are administered by The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training. The centres apply for places through their owners, who control and send on the applications to The Directorate for final approval. In 2022, the providers of ECEC settings forwarded 1,593 applications and 1,050 Kindergarten Teachers were offered a place from the autumn of 2022. The most important reason for refusal was the popularity of some courses. Here the number of applicants went beyond the number of places.

The CPD catalogue of the Directorate is structured into eight thematic areas. These are offered at 12 universities or universities colleges, with a total of 37 courses in 2022. All of them are certified for the education of Kindergarten Teachers. The most frequently offered topic was that as supervisor for practical training (9 courses). The second most widespread was supervisor education (7 courses) and the third was children's language development and language learning (6 courses). Other topics were: pedagogical leadership and learning environment (5), additional



education in kindergarten pedagogy and physical development and motor activity (both with 3 courses), and special pedagogic and natural science in kindergarten (both with two courses). In terms of the number of applications, the most popular courses were on pedagogical leadership and the learning environment.

The target groups for the courses are Centre Leaders and Kindergarten Teachers. The owners of the centres receive a fixed sum of money per candidate; 70,000 NOK or about €7,000. According to the most recent evaluation rapport, 86% of the participants attended the course on full pay (Jensen, Bråten, and Svalund 2020). Close to 90% of the participants are satisfied with the support they have received. The centre might use some of the money to hire a substitute, but they are not obliged to do so. Such formal CDP-activities normally cover one study year (two semesters).

Even if the political authorities strongly wish and support such CPD activities, attendance is always optional. All courses are attended alongside regular employment. Staff are permitted to leave their jobs to follow courses and lectures and they also use their free time in the evenings or at weekends to study. Most completed courses are credited with 30 ETCS.

Since 2017, the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training has commissioned yearly evaluations of the national CPD activities. The first report was conducted by the Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research and Education (NIFU) (Siddiq and Gjerustad 2017), the latter by the applied research institute Fafo (Jensen, Bråten, Svalund, and Talberg 2018 and 2019; and Jensen, Bråten, and Svalund 2020). All reports are in Norwegian, but have summaries in English. Surveys were the main data source for the reports. The vast majority of the survey respondents, both Kindergarten Teachers and Centre Leaders, assessed the CPD programme as good, relevant and interesting; they felt that there was an appropriate mix of theory, reflection and methodology. Learning outcomes were considered to be high, the syllabus 'suitably' demanding and the lectures and teaching sessions were appraised as good (Jensen, Bråten, and Svalund 2020).

The most recent survey showed that most Kindergarten Teachers claimed to share the knowledge they had gained with their co-workers in the kindergarten, but that a hectic work schedule in the kindergartens made it hard to find both the time and arenas for knowledge sharing. As in previous surveys, the educational grant was emphasised as important, both for the individual participants who had their expenses covered and for the kindergartens that could call in staff replacements to cover absence. It appeared that the reimbursement of expenses had been sufficient for most participants.

The number of people following such further education is modest compared to the total number of Kindergarten Teachers. Only about 2% of them attend such a formal course of CPD each year. However, the number of teachers attending these courses every year accounts for more than 50% of the number of newly qualified Kindergarten Teachers.

Most of the IPE institutions which offer study programmes for Kindergarten Teachers also offer a follow-on Master's degree. So far, few graduates with a Master's degree have taken up a post in an ECEC centre. However, the number is increasing and the political authorities welcome this development. In 2022, there was at least one employee with a Master's degree in 20% of the centres. Among the Centre Leaders, 10% had a relevant degree at Master level (Kasin and Gulbrandsen 2022).

In 2017, the Ministry of Education introduced a new Competence Development Model at the regional (county) level (Recomp – Regional Competence Development) for primary schools and kindergartens. This is an arrangement where ECEC centres within a regional unit of Norway can participate in a CPD activity for all staff members of a kindergarten, aiming to achieve systematic setting improvement. The system is organised as a cooperation between the participating centres, the IPE institutions in the region, service providers, and the county governor. Since the



measure is fairly recent, no evaluations for the kindergarten sector are available (for primary schools see OECD 2020).

## 7. Working conditions and current workforce issues

### 7.1 Remuneration

In 2010, Statistics Norway published calculations on the expected lifetime income for different educational groups. Among those with the same initial professional education, Kindergarten Teachers came out with the lowest (Kirkebøen 2010). The calculations were based on income statistics from the period 1999-2008. During the following ten years, the income for this group of employees has increased more than those with a comparable qualification and Kindergarten Teachers are no longer a low-paid group within the public sector (Gulbrandsen 2018).

The wages are the results of negotiations at the national level between the provider organisations and the trade unions. The employers' organisation for centres owned by the municipalities is the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS, *Kommunesektoren*), while a great part of privately owned centres are organised within the National Federation of Private Kindergartens (PBL, *Private Barnehagers Landsforbund*). The most important unions are *Utdanningsforbundet* who organise and negotiate on behalf of Centre Leaders and Kindergarten Teachers and *Fagforbundet*, which represents the skilled workers and assistants.

A newly graduated Kindergarten Teacher in a municipally owned centre will for instance receive a yearly wage before tax of 423,500 NOK (about €42,350), while the same person would receive at least 446,100 NOK (about €44,610) in a privately owned centre with a collective wage agreement. Work experience is very important for the level of wages. After ten years of work as a Kindergarten Teacher, the wage will be 515,200 NOK (about €51,520) in a municipally owned centre and 549,000 NOK (about €54,900) in a private one. Regardless of experience, the wage for Centre Leaders is about 70,000 NOK (about €7,000) higher than for Kindergartens Teachers. All these figures are based on the agreement from June 2021 (Salary explorer 2022).

The wages of Assistants and Child and Youth workers are lower. A Kindergarten Assistant with ten years of experience is guaranteed 379,600 NOK (€37,960), while a skilled worker with a certificate as a Child and Youth Worker is guaranteed 434,100 NOK (€43,410).

In the most recent TALIS Starting Strong Survey, only 30% of the Norwegian staff said they were satisfied with their salary. However, in contrast to the other participating eight countries, a higher salary did not have the same priority among the Norwegian staff as it did in the other participating countries, particularly if their centre had received a moderate increase of the budget (Gjerustad, Hjetland, and Opheim 2019).

Due to the continuing high prices of housing in Norway, particularly in the capital, it has been estimated that a newly qualified member of the nursing profession, for example, can only afford to buy the lowest-price housing at around 2 to 3% of the total housing announced for sale in the capital. In the case of Kindergarten Teachers, the special collective wage agreement for Oslo helps meet their living costs. However, they may also be reliant on financial help from parents (Sandlie and Gulbrandsen 2018) or a well-earning partner.

## 7.2 Full-time and part-time employment in ECEC provision

According to the Working Environment Act, the maximum number of working hours in a week is 40. However, most collective wage agreements operate with 37.5 hours. All those in paid employment in 2021 had a right to five weeks of paid holidays and for workers older than 60, six weeks. The regular retirement age is 67; the right to receive public benefits other than a pension cease at this age.

In 2021, 67.2% of the main staff in ECEC provision had a full-time employment contract. 22.1% of the staff had a contract between 40 and 99% of a regular week and 10.7% had agreed upon less than 40% (Statistics Norway 2022b).

## 7.3 Support measures in the workplace for newly qualified and newly appointed staff

Since 2009, various agreements have been made to ensure appropriate mentoring support for newly qualified teachers in kindergartens, primary schools and secondary schools. In 2018, a new agreement between the Ministry, the provider associations, the trade unions and the association of education students was signed. The target group is newly qualified entrants into the profession and they receive supervisory support during the two first years of their employment. The advisory support should be given by a qualified mentor who is a teacher with a formal qualification as mentor or with the necessary professional competence and with at least three years of experience as a teacher. The measure is financed by the state and the service providers/owners are responsible for ensuring it takes place. Although the proportion of the target group who received mentoring increased from 55% to 63% between 2016 and 2019, there is still a large number of newly qualified staff who do not receive the agreed advisory support and mentoring. Another problem is that only half of the advisers have the formal competence as mentor as described above (Rambøll 2022).

## 7.4 Non-contact time

For more than 40 years now, Pedagogical Leaders in municipally owned centres have had a negotiated right to a minimum of four hours weekly for planning, preparations and follow-up work. The privately owned centres do not have this basic right. A survey in 2018 among the members of *Utdanningsforbundet* showed that 25% used less time than allocated and 29% more (Respon Analyse 2018). 93% of the centres had allocated four hours per week as non-contact time.

## 7.5 Current staffing issues

From the 1960s up to the recent past, the lack of qualified Kindergarten Teachers was constantly very high. The problem during these early years was that a large number of newly educated teachers left the kindergartens and few returned to work. This problem was exacerbated in the first decade of the 2000s through the strong increase in provision for under 3 year-olds, which requires double the number of pedagogues than groups with older children. During this time, the political authorities initiated many attempts to reduce the gap by trying to increase recruitment, encourage employees who had quitted to return and generally to encourage employees to stay (Gulbrandsen 2015).

During the following decade, this shortage of staff gradually disappeared. Today the number of teachers wishing to work in an ECEC centre is sufficient enough even to improve the teacher to child ratios (Gulbrandsen 2015). This change did not come about because former teachers returned to work in kindergartens but rather through an ever-increasing number of qualified staff who stayed in the profession. Whether this was due to the effects of the political measures is



unclear; it probably coincided with other social changes. Compared to the 1970s and 1980s, the recruitment of Kindergarten Teachers changed in terms of social class. An ever-increasing proportion of students came from homes without an academic tradition. For a student with well-educated parents, a job in a kindergarten was probably not in line with the level of parental ambitions and in the best case only a temporary position of waiting and preparing for something else. In contrast, for students with a working class background and without family academic traditions and ambitions, it could mean a rise in social status to become a pedagogue, highly sought after both among centre owners and political parties and authorities (Gulbrandsen 2018).

This increased stability changed the age composition of the staff. Since so few left the profession, the mean age of the staff increased steadily. Since so many of the older teachers had left the centres many years ago, the centres no longer had a retirement problem (see also *Table 7*). Kindergarten Teachers who would by now be approaching retirement age, were no longer working in ECEC (Gulbrandsen 2018).

*Table 7*

**Norway: Age structure among Kindergarten Teachers, 2021**

Age	Distribution, in %
Under 29 years	18.8
30–39 years	35.2
40–49 years	26.8
50–59 years	15.0
Over 60 years	4.2

Source: Statistics Norway 2022c

## 8. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to staffing and professionalisation issues

The content of initial professional education is important for the competence and quality of the Kindergarten Teachers. *Chapter 4.2* describes the current content of IPE. Although there has been a certain amount of pressure for change for more than 10 years, no decision has as yet been made. In 2010, the entire professional education was evaluated by the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT, *Nasjonalt organ for kvalitet i utdanningen*). In 2012, a new Framework Plan was issued, without giving too much attention to the foregoing evaluation. The implementation of the new study programme was followed by an expert group. This group delivered a rather critical report in 2017. As a representative of many critical research contributions, Havnes (2021), for example, wrote that the reduction of 10 disciplinary subjects into 6 integrated “knowledge areas” was not without its problems. In the Autumn of 2020, the Ministry appointed a new expert group that should propose amendments in the Framework Plan for Kindergarten Teacher Education. The proposals from this group are awaiting a response from the political authorities.

Another important question is the length of the course of study. The NOKUT evaluation from 2010 had already discussed an extension from three to five years. The majority of experts was against this, not least because of the great shortage at that time (the shortage gradually disappeared after 2010). Since the IPE of Primary School Teachers has been raised to Master’s level

and five years' duration, a discussion of an extension for Kindergarten Teachers is bound to follow. Closely associated with this question is the number of students who follow a relevant Master level course, building on their Bachelor's degree. Establishing requirements for those with a Master's degree in terms of specific centre-based posts of responsibility, such as Centre Leader, could contribute to such a discussion.

## 9. Recent country-specific research focusing on ECEC staff

### TALIS – Starting Strong

**Source:** Gjerustad, Hjetland, and Opheim 2019; Gjerustad, Opheim, Hjetland, Rogde, Bergene, and Gulbrandsen 2020 (see *References* for full details)

The Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research and Education (NIFU) is conducting the Norwegian part of the project. A new round of data collection took place in 2023.

**Aims:** The aim of the project was to investigate work conditions, views about competence, wages, content of work and work satisfaction as well as views on play, well-being and learning among the children.

**Methods:** Surveys among leaders and the other members of the core personnel were carried out in the spring of 2018. Participants were 315 centre leaders (response rate 85%) and 1,753 other members of the staff (response rate 88%) from a national representative sample of 305 kindergartens.

**Selected findings:** The surveys showed a very high degree of well-being among the different groups within the staff. Compared with the staff in the other participating countries, staff in Norway were relatively more satisfied with their wages.

**Implications:** The findings throw light on why Kindergarten Teachers for some years now no longer quit their workplace. The high degree of work satisfaction might also be valuable for the quality of the provision the centres offer.

### Kindergarten Teachers with a Master's degree (*Barnehagelærere med masterutdanning*)

**Source:** Kasin and Gulbrandsen 2022 (see *References* for full details)

The project is being conducted at Oslo Metropolitan University.

**Aims:** To describe the incidence of staff members with a Master's degree and the efforts and initiatives taken by the centres to recruit persons with a Master's degree.

**Methods:** Documentary analysis and a representative survey among all regular Norwegian ECEC centres. The Centre Leaders filled in the questionnaires. The survey was conducted in the winter 2022. The response rate for the survey was 31%.

**Selected findings:** 20% of the centres have at least one employee with a Master's degree in early childhood pedagogy. 10% of the centres had a Centre Leader with a qualification at this level. An increasing proportion of Kindergarten Teachers now have such an education.

**Implications:** The authorities have welcomed staff with a Master's degree but have so far done little to realise this. So far, the growth is primarily a result of individual teachers who want to increase their competence. The report will give important input into the work to realise the wish for more formal and certified competence in the centres.





## Small, but good. Need for competence in small ECEC centres in Oslo and Viken (*Liten, men god. Om kompetansebehov i små barnehager i Oslo og Viken*)

**Source:** Gulbrandsen and Os 2022 (see *References* for full details)

The project is conducted at the Oslo Metropolitan University.

**Aims:** As an important stakeholder in the Regional Competence Development Model (Recomp, see *chapter 6*), concerns have been expressed at the county governor level that small centres are not being reached with these new measures for increasing setting-level competence.

**Methods:** A questionnaire was sent to the Centre Leaders in all small centres in the two counties. A small centre was defined as a centre in the group comprising the fifth smallest centres according to the number of children enrolled. This gave a sample of 344 centres. The response rate was 51,3%.

**Selected findings:** The participation of small centres in Recom was quite high and not alarmingly lower than among larger centres. The participants from small centres were also quite satisfied with the competence development activities they had been offered.

**Implications:** There seems to be no immediate need to implement competence measures specially directed towards small centres. The participants were most satisfied with lectures that presented new knowledge about kindergartens and least satisfied with the cooperation with the universities and the university colleges.

## 10. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

Two challenges will be highlighted: keeping the pedagogues in the centres (staff retention) and enhancing the internal organisation of the centres.

The development of qualified staff has been rather good over the past ten years. A very high proportion of newly qualified Kindergarten Teachers have chosen to work in an ECEC centre, and very few have quitted their jobs. It will be a challenge to maintain this positive development in the years to come. A danger signal could be the number of applicants to the Kindergarten Teacher education study programmes, which were 27% lower in 2022 than in the preceding year. All upcoming negotiations about wages and working conditions need to take the effects on recruitment into consideration.

The regulations for pedagogue to child ratios have had important implications for the organisation of the centres. With up to nine children per pedagogue among children under 3 and 18 children per pedagogue among children older than 3, the units very often were organised with these numbers of children, meaning one Kindergarten Teacher and two other members of staff with a lower or with no qualification. With a new pedagogue norm where the figures nine and 18 have changed to seven and 14, all staff members who previously would have worked with a qualification as Kindergarten Teacher can no longer be a leader of the units. This suggests that new posts and work titles and a new division of responsibilities will be necessary to develop and negotiate in near future.

## References

- Gjerustad, C., H. N. Hjetland, and V. Opheim. 2019. *TALIS Starting Strong Survey: Første hovedfunn. Kortrapport med oppsummering fra OECDs første internasjonale undersøkelse av ansatte og styrere i barnehagene* [First main finding. Short report with a summary from the OECD's first international survey of staff and directors in kindergartens]. NIFU rapport 2019:18. Nordisk Institutt for studier av innovasjon, forskning og utdanning (NIFU)
- Gjerustad, C., V. Opheim, H. N. Hjetland, K. Rogde, A. C. Bergene, and L. Gulbrandsen. 2020. *Trivsel, læring og utvikling i barnehagen. Resultater fra TALIS Starting Strong Survey, Foreldreundersøkelsen i barnehage (FUBA) og BASIL* [Well-being, learning and development in kindergarten. Results from the TALIS Starting Strong Survey, the Parent Survey in Kindergarten (FUBA) and BASIL]. NIFU rapport 2020:10. Nordisk Institutt for studier av innovasjon, forskning og utdanning (NIFU)
- Gulbrandsen, L. 2015. *Barnehagelærerne. Yrkesgruppen som sluttet å slutte* [Kindergarten Teachers. The occupational group that stopped quitting]. NOVA, Høgskolen i Oslo og Akershus, Notat nr 1/15.
- Gulbrandsen, L. 2018. Barnehagelærere – Fra mangel til overskudd [Kindergarten Teachers - From shortage to surplus]. In *Søkelys på arbeidslivet* [Spotlight on working life], 35(1-2): 43-55. <https://www.idunn.no/doi/10.18261/issn.1504-7989-2018-01-02-03>
- Gulbrandsen, L. and E. Os. 2022. *Liten, men god. Om kompetansebehov i små barnehager i Oslo og Viken. Fakultet for lærerutdanning og internasjonale studier – Velferdsforskningsinstituttet NOVA* [Small, but good. Need for competence in small ECEC centres in Oslo and Viken. Faculty of Teacher Education and International Studies - Welfare Research Institute NOVA]. Oslo Metropolitan University
- Havnes, A. 2021. Kunnskapsområdene i barnehagelærerutdanningen – en umulig modell? Utfordringer ved faglig integrasjon og profesjonsretting [The areas of knowledge in Kindergarten Teacher education – an impossible model? Challenges in professional integration and professional guidance]. In *Nordic Studies in Education*. Vol 41, No 2, 111-129.
- Jensen, R. S., M. Bråten, J. Svalund, and N. Talberg. 2018. *Videreutdanning for barnehagelærere og lederutdanning for styrere 2018* [Continuing professional development for Kindergarten Teachers and management training for directors 2018]. Fafo-rapport 2018:30. The Fafo Institute for Labour and Social Research.
- Jensen, R. S., M. Bråten, J. Svalund, and N. Talberg. 2019. *Videreutdanning for barnehagelærere og lederutdanning for styrere 2019* [Continuing professional development for Kindergarten Teachers and management training for directors 2019]. Fafo-rapport 2019:30. The Fafo Institute for Labour and Social Research
- Jensen, R.S., M. Bråten, and J. Svalund. 2020. *Videreutdanning for barnehagelærere og lederutdanning for styrere* [Continuing professional development for Kindergarten Teachers and management training for directors]. Fafo-rapport 2020:23. The Fafo Institute for Labour and Social Research
- Kasin O., and L. Gulbrandsen. 2022. *Barnehagelærere med masterutdanning* [Kindergarten Teachers with a Master's degree]. Faculty of Teacher Education and International Studies – Welfare Research Institute NOVA. Oslo Metropolitan University.
- Kirkebøen, L. J. 2010. Høyt utdannede tjener mer over livsløpet [Highly educated people earn more over their lifetime] In *Økonomiske analyser*, 5, 3-10. Statistisk sentralbyrå [Statistics Norway]
- Ministry of Education and Research. 2012. *Forskrift om rammeplan for barnehagelærerutdanning* [Regulations on the framework plan for Kindergarten Teacher training – in Norwegian]. [https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/upload/kd/rundskriv/2012/forskrift\\_rammeplan\\_barnehagelaererutdanning.pdf](https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/upload/kd/rundskriv/2012/forskrift_rammeplan_barnehagelaererutdanning.pdf)
- Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training. 2017. *Framework Plan for Kindergartens*. <https://www.udir.no/globalassets/filer/barnehage/rammeplan/framework-plan-for-kindergartens2-2017.pdf>
- OECD. 2020. *Improving school quality in Norway. Progress with the Competence Development Model*. [https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/improving-school-quality-in-norway-2020\\_98600316-en](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/improving-school-quality-in-norway-2020_98600316-en)

- Rambøll. 2022. *Evaluering av tilskudd til veiledning av nyutdannede nytilsatte lærere* [Evaluation of grant for advice of newly educated and newly employed teachers]. Rambøll Management Consulting. [https://nyutdannede.no/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/evaluering\\_tilskudd\\_veiledning\\_sluttrapport\\_ramboll\\_2022.pdf](https://nyutdannede.no/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/evaluering_tilskudd_veiledning_sluttrapport_ramboll_2022.pdf)
- Respons Analyse. 2018. *Undersøkelse blant pedagogiske ledere og barnehagelærere* [Survey among pedagogical leaders and Kindergarten Teachers]. <https://www.utdanningsforbundet.no/globalassets/lohn-og-arbeidsvilkar/arbeidstid/undersokelse-blant-pedagogiske-ledere-og-barnehagelarere.pdf>
- Salary explorer. 2022. *Kindergarten Teacher Average Salary in Norway 2022*. <http://www.salaryexplorer.com/salary-survey.php?loc=162&loctype=1&job=12475&jobtype=3>
- Sandlie, H. C., and L. Gulbrandsen. 2018. Homeownership and family transfers within a Nordic welfare state. In *Generational Interdependencies. The Social Implication for Welfare*, edited by B. A. Searle, 103-122. Vernon Press.
- Siddiq, F., and C. Gjerustad. 2017. *Deltakerundersøkelsen for barnehageansatte 2017: Resultater fra en spørreundersøkelse blant ansatte i barnehagen som har tatt videreutdanning innenfor strategien «Kompetanse for fremtidens barnehage»* [Participant survey for kindergarten employees 2017: Results from a survey among kindergarten employees who participated in further education within the strategy "Competence for the future kindergarten"]. NIFU. Rapport 2017/23
- Sheridan, S., A. Sandberg, and P. Williams. 2015. *Forskollärarkompetens i forandring* [Changing preschool teacher competence]. Lund: Studentlitteratur.
- Statistics Norway. 2022a. *Employees in kindergartens and schools*. <https://www.ssb.no/en/utdanning/barnehager/statistikk/ansatte-i-barnehage-og-skole>
- Statistics Norway. 2022b. *Employees in kindergartens, by occupation, contractual percentage of full-time equivalent and competence 2015 - 2021*. <https://www.ssb.no/en/statbank/table/12994>
- Statistics Norway. 2022c. *Employees in Kindergarten and schools. Employees in kindergarten, by sex, age and immigration category 2015 – 2021*. <https://www.ssb.no/en/statbank/table/12704>

