



Norwegian Directorate  
for Education and Training

# Norway Country Background Report

On transitions from ECEC to Primary Education

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# 1. The transition system and its organisation

## 1.1. Policy context

98 per cent of all five year olds in Norway attend kindergarten.<sup>1</sup> *The Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens* (referred to as the Framework Plan from here onwards) clearly states that kindergartens shall, in collaboration with schools, facilitate the children's transition to school in cooperation with the parents. Plans for the children's transition to school must be specified in the kindergarten's annual plan.

National responsibility for kindergartens was transferred from the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion<sup>2</sup> to the Ministry of Education and Research in 2006. In 2012 the Ministry delegated some of the responsibility to the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training. The reason for this was the government's efforts to strengthen the work on quality in the sector and to strengthen and focus on coherence between kindergarten and primary school.

Transition from kindergarten to primary school has received considerable attention in the past decade in Norway and is dealt with in different reports and white papers to parliament. Research on transition also contributes to the increased attention and shows that some children are vulnerable and will experience problems in the transition from kindergarten to primary school.<sup>3</sup>

The white paper *Quality in kindergartens (2008-2009)*<sup>4</sup> has a chapter on transition and coherence between kindergarten and school. The discussion in the white paper on the values and importance related to transition is relevant for the current view on this in Norway. There is broad agreement that a good transition between kindergarten and school presupposes that both institutions facilitate a holistic education that ensures the individual child's need for safety and continuity. The preparations for school must have a broad perspective and be seen in connection with the child's surroundings, family, peers, kindergarten and school.

Kindergartens and schools have a common set of core values (see also 3.1 below). The Framework Plan and the *Knowledge Promotion* curriculum for schools<sup>5</sup> have become increasingly continuous and coherent since kindergartens became a non-compulsory part of the education system in 2005. Awareness of the importance of kindergarten as a voluntary first step in the education system has been strengthened and emphasised in different policy documents.

The Nordic countries have adopted the approach that school should be ready for the child, not the other way around.<sup>6</sup> In other words, not only should the child prepare to start school, but the kindergarten and the school must also prepare to meet the needs of the individual child.<sup>7</sup> There is considerable local freedom when it comes to the actual preparations for coherence and transition between kindergarten and school.

The official Norwegian report from the Brenna committee in 2010<sup>8</sup> recommended that the school preparatory activities should be varied and broad and focus on developing the children's social

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<sup>1</sup> *Kindergarten* covers the age group 0–5 years. A common term for different types of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) under the provisions of the Norwegian Kindergarten Act

<sup>2</sup> The Ministry of Children and Family Affairs until 2006

<sup>3</sup> Broström 2001, 2002, 2003, 2005, Neuman 2002, Shore 1998, Wagner 2003 as listed in Kunnskapsdepartementet (2015c)

<sup>4</sup> Meld. St. 41 (2008-2009): *Kvalitet i barnehagen*

<sup>5</sup> Utdanningsdirektoratet (2006)

<sup>6</sup> OECD (2006)

<sup>7</sup> Meld. St. 41 (2008-2009): *Kvalitet i barnehagen*

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

competence, language and other types of communication through play and meaningful interaction with other children. At the same time, the preparatory activities should be oriented towards learning to learn. The activities should appeal to children's creativity and imagination, and the experiences should be meaningful to the child, encouraging concentration and exploration. The committee suggested that the Framework Plan should make the content of these activities explicit.

The white paper *Kindergartens for the future (2013-2013)*<sup>9</sup> stated that the Framework Plan could be more specific on the content of school preparatory activities, by including social competence and communication, children's active participation and cooperation to a larger extent.

The government presented a white paper on the content of kindergarten in the spring of 2016. One of the main challenges addressed in the white paper *Time for play and learning (2015-2016)*<sup>10</sup> was the need for a good transition and coherence between kindergarten and school. This has fed into Norway's revised Framework plan, to be implemented in August 2017.<sup>11</sup>

The overriding values on what is important for a good transition from kindergarten to school have been unchanged the last decade, and are in coherence with the existing research<sup>12</sup>, but as shown above the attention given to transition has increased. This is also evident in the ongoing discussion about how children benefit from kindergarten, how kindergarten contributes to social equity, to learning and to preparing children for school. There have been debates on making kindergarten compulsory in the final year before school, on the content of the final year of kindergarten, on the room for play in kindergarten, on documentation and mapping of children's learning and development in kindergarten, and on documentation and what kind of documentation about the child should be transferred from kindergarten to school.<sup>13</sup>

These debates have thus far not led to any changes when it comes to coherence and transition in national regulations, laws or the Framework Plan.

## 1.2. Goals and purposes

*The Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens* is a regulation to the Kindergarten Act. The Framework Plan describes the transition from kindergarten to school and stipulates that kindergarten should accommodate the transition. See also chapter 1.4 below.

Transitions are only mentioned generally in the regulation to the Education Act, i.e. in the Quality Framework for schools. "Good and systematic cooperation between day-care institutions and primary education, primary education and lower secondary education, lower secondary education and upper secondary education shall ease the transition from one education stage to the next in the course of one's education."<sup>14</sup>

Both kindergartens and schools are institutions that provide care, opportunities for play, learning and formation. Children will encounter similarities and differences between these two institutions. Kindergartens and schools should provide mutual information about their activities to each other. Kindergartens and schools have a joint responsibility to ensure that children approach the differences between the institutions with curiosity and confidence in their own abilities. Children must be able to leave kindergarten properly. They should look forward to starting school, knowing that there is a connection between their kindergarten and their school.

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<sup>9</sup> Meld. St. 24 (2012-2013): *Framtidens barnehage*

<sup>10</sup> Meld. St. 19 (2015-2016): *Tid for lek og læring*

<sup>11</sup> Kunnskapsdepartementet (2017)

<sup>12</sup> Lillejord et al. (2015)

<sup>13</sup> Kunnskapsdepartementet (2015c), Haug (2013), Engel et al. (2015)

<sup>14</sup> The Quality Framework, p. 7

If the kindergarten is to provide the school with information about an individual child, parents must consent. Parents must be given access to, and be able to influence, the exchange of information. Such collaboration must focus both on what children can do and are capable of and on whether they need special assistance. Close cooperation between kindergarten and school is particularly important for children who need special care or special learning environments. If extensive special arrangements are required, the collaboration must be initiated in sufficient time before the transition to school.<sup>15</sup>

See also chapter 3.3.

## 1.3. Organisation of ECEC and primary education

In Norway, kindergarten is a first, non-mandatory, step on the education ladder. The Brenna committee recommended that kindergarten continue to be voluntary. One of the reasons was the lack of sufficient pedagogical staff in 2010.<sup>16</sup> There have been no changes in the organisation of the ECEC system and primary education the last five years.

## 1.4. Distribution of responsibilities

According to the Framework Plan, kindergartens shall, in collaboration with schools, facilitate the transition of children from kindergarten to year one and to after-school groups. This shall be done in close collaboration with the children's families. See also chapter 1.2 above. Plans for the children's transition from kindergarten to school must be specified in the kindergarten's annual plan.

It is up to the local authority (municipality) and the kindergarten owners (public and private) to decide on the organisation of the transition from kindergarten to school and to allocate funding. How kindergartens and schools cooperate is not regulated at a national level. Hence, there will be local differences in how this is solved. This is in line with the principle of local and municipal autonomy in Norway, as it can allow for local solutions to different local challenges and enable local resources to be used in an appropriate manner. At the same time, it can also entail unwanted local variations in quality and systems for transitions.

The national regulations<sup>17</sup> are described in the national guide *From being eldest to being youngest*<sup>18</sup>. The guide places responsibility for the practical implementation with the individual kindergarten and school. Kindergarten and school staff must work together to use all available resources to prepare the child for school. This includes preparing the school for receiving the child and its parents.

The municipality's and the county governor's responsibilities are also described in the guide. The municipality is the local authority for kindergartens. The municipality shall provide guidance and ensure that kindergartens are operated in accordance with current rules. This includes responsibility for securing the transition from kindergarten to school. The municipality is on the one hand the local authority for all kindergartens, public and private, and on the other hand the owner of both schools and kindergartens. Nationally, private kindergartens constitute half of all kindergartens, whereas three per cent of pupils attend private schools.<sup>19</sup> The role of the municipality can therefore be described as complex when it comes to facilitating good transitions between kindergarten and school.

The county governor shall provide guidance to municipalities and owners on national policy and administrative decisions. The county governor shall ensure that the municipality carries out its

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<sup>15</sup> The Framework Plan

<sup>16</sup> NOU 2010:8 *Med forskertrang og lekelyst*

<sup>17</sup> The Framework Plan, the Kindergarten Act

<sup>18</sup> Kunnskapsdepartementet (2008)

<sup>19</sup> Utdanningsdirektoratet (2016)

responsibilities as the authority for kindergartens. Local procedures for the transition between kindergarten and school must comply with the Kindergarten Act, the Education Act and regulations.

A survey from 2010<sup>20</sup> illustrates the substantial local freedom of action for many kindergartens to decide the content of the school preparatory activities and to adapt the Framework Plan to local conditions and needs. Guidelines from the local authority are to some extent reported to be a basis for school preparatory activities, since 34 per cent of the persons responsible for these activities state that they are prepared by the local authority. The number who state this is 20 per cent higher in public (municipal) kindergartens than in private (non-municipal) kindergartens.

Teacher education programmes, for both kindergarten and primary school teachers (years 1 to 7), cover the transition between kindergarten and schools. Both kindergarten and primary student teachers have a regulated number of days for institutional practice. For kindergarten student teachers a part of this practice period is dedicated to the issue of transitions, and students are encouraged to spend some days during the practice period in a school. Primary school student teachers are not required to or given the option to spend some of their practice period in a kindergarten, however.

The Ministry of Education and Research and the Directorate for Education and Training regularly consult with key actors on current issues. This includes transition from kindergarten to school when this is necessary. Among the key actors are the National Parent's Committee for Kindergartens, labour unions, the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities and the National Association of Private Kindergartens.

See also chapters 2.2, 3.1 and 3.3.

## 1.5. Monitoring transitions

Transition is organised locally, hence we have limited national knowledge about it. With the exception of national surveys<sup>21</sup> where kindergarten head teachers<sup>22</sup> are asked whether they have certain formal routines for transitions, transitions are not monitored nationally.

In some instances, the kindergarten will pass on information about the children's development, social and linguistic competences to the school, with the parents' permission. We have no systematic knowledge of current instruments that may be used to monitor the transition locally.

See also chapters 4.2, 4.2 and 4.3.

# 2. Professional continuity

## 2.1. Leadership

According to the Framework Plan, the head teacher and pedagogical leader of the kindergarten have a particular responsibility for the planning, implementation, assessment and development of the kindergarten's tasks and content. They are also responsible for advising the rest of the staff so that they have a common understanding of the kindergarten's responsibilities and tasks. This is a general responsibility, but it can also be said to include the kindergarten's and the staff's work on transitions. The Framework Plan does not specify how to exercise this responsibility.

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<sup>20</sup> Rambøll (2010)

<sup>21</sup> Gulbrandsen and Eliassen (2013), Sivertsen et al (2015)

<sup>22</sup> Equivalent to *centre head*

The national guide on transitions underlines that the head teachers in both kindergarten and school are responsible for putting the cooperation between kindergarten and school on the agenda and for following up the cooperation between the institutions. The guide also underlines the importance of a solid foundation in order to manage this process: “Initiatives and support from kindergarten and school management are important factors in creating development and change. Management must describe the challenges and play a part in developing the measures. Only then will the changes gain power and be lasting. Clear and powerful leadership is a prerequisite for learning organisations, and this is also emphasised in the white paper *Culture for learning* (2003-2004).”<sup>23</sup>

A survey from 2010, on the other hand, shows that the pedagogical leader has the main responsibility for planning and deciding the content and for implementing school preparatory activities<sup>24</sup>.

## 2.2. Staff support for transitions

The above-mentioned national guide *From being eldest to being youngest* was published by the Ministry of Education and Research in 2008 and is aimed at municipalities, kindergartens and schools.

“Increased attention to learning for the youngest children has led to a higher awareness of the importance of continuity in early childhood education and care. The goal is not to avoid transitions, because transitions are a part of life. The goal is to prevent the challenges associated with transitions from becoming too great and to enable the child to handle them and come through them strengthened.”<sup>25</sup>

The purpose of the guide is to strengthen the coherence between kindergarten and school and create a smooth transition for children when they start school. It is not mandatory to use the guide, and a survey from 2010 showed that only one third of kindergartens used it as a basis for their work on preparing children for school.<sup>26</sup> The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training published a guide to transitions for children and young people who receive special educational support or special needs education in 2014.<sup>27</sup>

Material resources and advice on transitions can also be available locally. As an example, the municipality of Oslo has established standard procedures<sup>28</sup> for how kindergartens and schools cooperate on transition.<sup>29</sup> For each procedure it is listed who is responsible, who takes part, what is to be achieved and when it is to be carried out. Another example is the plan for the cooperation between kindergartens and schools in the municipality of Bergen.<sup>30</sup> This plan contains both a description of the foundation for cooperation and coherence when it comes to transition as well as information about how the cooperation can and should happen.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Kunnskapsdepartementet (2008), p. 27 (our translation)

<sup>24</sup> Rambøll (2010)

<sup>25</sup> Kunnskapsdepartementet (2008), p. 9 (our translation)

<sup>26</sup> Kunnskapsdepartementet (2015c)

<sup>27</sup> Utdanningsdirektoratet (2014)

<sup>28</sup> Oslo kommune (2013)

<sup>29</sup> The procedures concern: Registration of children who will start school the following year, transfer of information about the children from kindergarten to school (with parental consent), children with (extensive) special needs, children who need special support in the last year of kindergarten and when starting school, meeting between kindergarten teachers and school teachers to develop professional cooperation between the institutions, meeting for parents with kindergarten and school, parent-teacher conference (in both school and kindergarten), yearly evaluation of the cooperation between the urban districts and the schools, contact with parents of children who do not attend kindergarten and school visits

<sup>30</sup> Bergen kommune

[https://www.bergen.kommune.no/bk/multimedia/archive/00187/Plan\\_for\\_samarbeid\\_187739a.pdf](https://www.bergen.kommune.no/bk/multimedia/archive/00187/Plan_for_samarbeid_187739a.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> Relevant themes here are enhancement of competence for ECEC staff as well as school staff, arenas for discussion and reflection, school visits and transfer of information from kindergarten to school

The National Parents' Committee for Kindergartens in cooperation with the National Parents' Committee for Primary and Secondary Education and the Union of Education Norway have developed a checklist for a good transition between kindergarten and school and made this available on their website.<sup>32</sup>

Generally speaking, there are no additional resources allocated to staff or support staff in relation to transition, but this practice may vary locally.

## 2.3. Collaboration between authorities and ECEC/primary schools on professional continuity

There are national strategies in place to secure qualified staff in both kindergarten and school<sup>33</sup>. For example, there is a big emphasis on further education for kindergarten teachers and teachers, and various measures to increase skills levels for all kindergarten staff are in place.

A national reference group has been established to safeguard the interests of different stakeholders in the kindergarten sector in connection with this. There is an equivalent system established for the education sector. The kindergarten teachers', teachers' and students' unions are participating in the reference group and are thus collaborating on staff education and training. This includes transition from kindergarten to school when this is necessary. See also chapter 1.4.

# 3. Pedagogical continuity

## 3.1. Curriculum framework and developmental goals

### Similarities and differences between the Framework Plan and the curriculum

*The Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens* and the *Knowledge Promotion* curriculum (LK06), i.e. the *Core Curriculum*, the *Quality Framework* and subject curricula, are built upon the same perspective on values and humanity. When the Framework Plan was revised in 2006, emphasis was placed on seeing the coherence between the Framework Plan and the primary school curriculum. Kindergartens and schools have different mandates, but the learning areas in kindergarten and subjects in schools are to a large degree concurrent. Both the Framework Plan and the curriculum emphasise the importance of linguistic, social and cultural competence. The learning areas in the Framework Plan reflect the subjects that the children will encounter in school.

Together, the Framework Plan and LK06 cover kindergarten, primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education and training. Both the Framework Plan and LK06 give owners, kindergartens and schools a large scope of action locally, but at the same time they require systematic and continuous work.

The Framework Plan contains process aims for children's experiences and learning. The Framework Plan states that progression must be clarified in detail in the kindergarten's annual plan. LK06 contains competence aims that state what the pupils are supposed to have achieved after years 2, 4, 7 and 10, and after each year of upper secondary education and training. The work on progression, organisation, choice of content, work and assessment methods is developed at a local level.

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<sup>32</sup> Foreldreutvalget for barnehagen (2011) <http://www.fubhg.no/brosjyre-om-overgang-barnehage-skole.187505.no.html>

<sup>33</sup> Kunnskapsdepartementet (2011 and 2013)

In order to make it easier for kindergartens to plan a varied and comprehensive pedagogical programme, the content of kindergartens is divided into seven learning areas that are of central importance to experience, exploration and learning. These areas are largely the same as the ones that children subsequently encounter in school.<sup>34</sup>

The Framework Plan has aims for the work within each learning area in order to promote the children's development and learning and to clarify the responsibilities of staff. The aims that focus on children's experiences and learning are expressed as process aims. The children shall become familiar with the learning areas and working methods. Work on the learning areas must be appropriate to the age and interests of the children and to the composition of the group of children and other circumstances. Teaching materials, working methods, equipment and approaches must be designed with the different needs of children in mind. All children shall be given equal opportunities to face challenges that correspond to their level of development.

#### The purpose clause

There are similarities and differences between the purpose clauses for kindergartens and schools. Both describe values such as respect, equality, democracy, formation and learning. Cooperation with the home is mentioned in both. However, kindergartens shall attend to children's need for care and play, and this is not included in the purpose clause for schools. The revised purpose clause for Kindergartens entered into force on 1 August 2010.

#### **Purpose clause for kindergarten**

The Kindergarten shall, in collaboration and close understanding with the home, safeguard the children's need for care and play and promote learning and formation as a basis for an all-round development. The Kindergarten shall be based on fundamental values in the Christian and humanist heritage and tradition, such as respect for human dignity and nature, on intellectual freedom, charity, forgiveness, equality and solidarity, values that also appear in different religions and beliefs and are rooted in human rights. The children shall be able to develop their creative zest, sense of wonder and need to investigate. They shall learn to take care of themselves, each other and nature. The children shall develop basic knowledge and skills. They shall have the right to participate in accordance with their age and abilities. The Kindergartens shall meet the children with trust and respect, and acknowledge the intrinsic value of childhood. They shall contribute to well-being and joy in play and learning, and shall be a challenging and safe place for community life and friendship. The Kindergarten shall promote democracy and equality and counteract all forms of discrimination.<sup>35</sup>

#### **Purpose clause for school**

Education and training in schools and training establishments shall, in collaboration and agreement with the home, open doors to the world and give the pupils and apprentices historical and cultural insight and anchorage. Education and training shall be based on fundamental values in Christian and humanist heritage and traditions, 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. Education and training shall help increase the knowledge and understanding of the national cultural heritage and our common international cultural traditions. Education and training shall provide insight into cultural diversity and show respect for the individual's convictions. They are to promote democracy, equality and scientific thinking. The pupils and apprentices shall develop knowledge, skills and attitudes so that they can master their lives and can take part in working life and society. They shall have the opportunity to be creative, committed and inquisitive. The pupils and apprentices shall learn to think critically and act ethically and with environmental awareness. They shall have joint responsibility and the right to participate. Schools and training establishments shall meet the pupils and apprentices with trust, respect and demands, and give

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<sup>34</sup>The Framework Plan

<sup>35</sup> The Kindergarten Act (Ch. 1)

them challenges that promote formation and the desire to learn. All forms of discrimination shall be combated.<sup>36</sup>

A revised *Framework Plan for the Content and tasks for Kindergartens* will be implemented in August 2017. Among the changes in the revised plan is more attention to the toddlers as well as to cooperation, cooperation with parents and coherence in transitions from ECEC to primary school.

## 3.2. Pedagogy

Kindergartens in Norway are founded on a common European tradition, and the development of the modern kindergarten stems from two roots: one social and one pedagogical. The asylum movement laid the foundation for the social tradition. The German philosopher Friedrich Fröbel is the originator of the pedagogical tradition of kindergartens. He was concerned with children's free play and positive learning experiences. Fröbel's ideas on the upbringing of small children gained ground in Norway around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>37</sup> The Norwegian kindergarten places itself within a Nordic social-pedagogical tradition which sees the child as an active participant in the learning processes.<sup>38</sup>

The Norwegian background report to the OECD *Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care Policy in Norway* characterises the Nordic kindergarten model by its holistic approach to children and childhood, play and learning.<sup>39</sup> The Kindergarten Act stipulates that kindergartens should be pedagogical undertakings offering children opportunities for play, self-expression, imparting values and cultures and helping to ensure that "all children experience joy and the ability to cope in a social and cultural community, whilst also supporting families in the care and the upbringing of their children."<sup>40</sup>

The holistic approach is reflected in the Kindergarten Act's purpose clause. As shown in 3.1 above, the purpose clause has the same structure and expresses the same fundamental values as the purpose clause for education and training. The purpose clause of the Education Act reflects the view that developing the pupils' knowledge, skills and attitudes is of great importance to their ability to master their own lives and participate successfully in working and social life. The Quality Framework for primary/secondary schools also emphasises the role of the pupil as an active participant in the learning process. Stimulating the pupils' curiosity and desire to learn is important from early school years. Developing learning strategies and critical thinking becomes increasingly important as pupils move through the school years.

Common values as expressed in regulations and supporting documents contribute to greater coherence between kindergarten and school. The purpose clause of the Kindergarten Act still reflects the uniqueness of kindergarten. The educational work in Norwegian kindergartens is based on a tradition of dialogue, curiosity and exploration. Kindergarten teachers are trained to identify the children's interests and use them in pedagogical situations in everyday life. Development of children's basic competencies involves strengthening their social competence and communication skills in a broad sense. Children's learning takes place while they play but also in more organised and structured situations. The Kindergarten Act gave children the right to participation and thus strengthened the obligation for kindergartens and their staff to take the children's perspectives into account.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> The Education Act (Ch. 1)

<sup>37</sup> Meld. St. 41 (2008-2009): *Kvalitet i barnehagen*

<sup>38</sup> OECD (2006 and 2012)

<sup>39</sup> Kunnskapsdepartementet (2015c)

<sup>40</sup> The Kindergarten Act (Section 2. Content of kindergartens)

<sup>41</sup> Kunnskapsdepartementet (2015c)

### 3.3. Child development

In 1997 education became compulsory from the year the child turns six. Adapted education is a common principle in primary and secondary education and is incorporated in the Education Act.<sup>42</sup> If there is uncertainty whether a child is ready for school, individual mapping tools and tests are used in agreement with the parents. The local educational psychological service (PPT) or other expert bodies carry out the mapping. The mapping tools have not been created specifically to monitor transition, and we do not know how they are used in relation to transition. See also chapters 1.1, 4.3 and 4.4.

The parents have to apply for a postponement in the relevant cases. The head teacher then decides whether to postpone school enrolment on the basis of an expert evaluation from PPT or others. In 2014, school entry was postponed for 0.6 per cent of the children.

The Framework Plan and the national guide on transitions address coherence for children with special needs: “The same aims and measures for coherence and a successful transition are in principle valid for all children. The aim is to ensure continuity in the individually adapted learning. For children with special needs, the changes associated with starting school may represent a particular challenge. The school shall offer special measures so the child can benefit from a stimulating and adapted education. Parents and children shall not be met with excluding and stigmatising attitudes.”<sup>43</sup> See also chapter 4.1.

### 3.4. Collaboration between authorities and ECEC/primary schools on pedagogical continuity

Both transition and pedagogical continuity are dealt with locally. See also 1.4 and 3.1 above. There is no national information on how authorities generally collaborate with kindergartens and schools on pedagogical continuity. However, there are examples of this type of cooperation. The municipalities of Ål, Gol, Hol, Hemsedal, Nes and Flå run a project together with Statped, the national service for special needs education “*Felles løft for tidlig innsats i Hallingdal*”. The topic of transition between kindergarten and school is part of this collaborative project. The goal is for staff in kindergarten, school, the public health centre and PPT to work together to contribute to coherence and a safe and predictable start at school for all children and their parents.

A report from the project concludes that early intervention has increased in these municipalities.<sup>44</sup> Among other things, this conclusion is based on staff having increased their knowledge about the importance of play for learning and development, an increased understanding of coherence between kindergarten and school and the development of transition plans in all the municipalities.

## 4. Developmental continuity

### 4.1. Collaboration with the child

Children and parents have a right to participation. This applies to all years of kindergarten, not only the final year. The Kindergarten Act states that “Children in kindergartens shall have the right to express their views on the day-to-day activities of the kindergarten. Children shall regularly be given the

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<sup>42</sup> The Education Act § 1-3

<sup>43</sup> Kunnskapsdepartementet (2008), p. 21 (our translation)

<sup>44</sup> Brendmoe and Olsen (2015)

opportunity to take active part in planning and assessing the activities of the kindergarten. The children's views shall be given due weight according to their age and maturity."<sup>45</sup>

The national guide on transitions<sup>46</sup> lists several possible transition activities: "get-to-know-each other" at school or school visits, a buddy system and for staff across the institutions to get to know each other. The guide emphasises that the child is the most important actor and that the starting point for development and activities must be the child's experiences and perspective. Children often have a clear opinion on what is important to know when you are about to start school, and they should be heard. Children's right to participation is a starting point for kindergartens and is explicitly mentioned in the purpose clauses in the Education Act and the Framework Plan (see 3.3 above).

In a survey from 2010, all those responsible for school preparatory activities in kindergarten reported that children participate in planning, carrying out and evaluating school preparatory activities. It further appears that children are most involved in carrying out the activities and to a lesser degree involved in evaluating and planning.<sup>47</sup>

Nearly every kindergarten has school preparatory activities in place<sup>48</sup>, but we do not have a detailed and updated national overview of the content or organisation of these activities. According to the 2010 survey, the target group for the activities are the five-year-olds, and all kindergartens have preschool groups for children who are starting school.<sup>49</sup> Typically, these groups meet for one to five hours a week. Almost all kindergartens in the survey said that the preschool groups stimulate school-related skills such as taking a message, raising your hand and waiting for your turn, going on trips and practise basic skills such as reading, writing and numeracy. The survey also showed that social and linguistic competence is emphasised in the school preparatory activities. A survey from 2016 shows that school heads agree that these are the most important areas to emphasise.<sup>50</sup> In addition, many of the school heads also underline the importance of enhancing the children's motor skills and ability to concentrate. A study published by the Norwegian Institute for Public Health<sup>51</sup> showed that nearly half of the kindergartens often facilitate structured play to learn both numbers and letters. Nearly a third said that they facilitate play and learning.

## 4.2. Collaboration with the home environment

According to a national survey from 2015<sup>52</sup>, 91 per cent of head teachers have procedures in place to involve parents in connection with the transition from kindergarten to school. The Framework Plan does not specify how the parents should be involved, but the national guide<sup>53</sup> emphasises that parents must be well informed about legal, practical, structural and content matters relating to school. This especially applies if it is their first child starting school. Good information to parents of minority children who need specially adapted language education is mentioned particularly in the guide. The guide suggests that the use of interpreters and translating relevant material be considered in areas where there is a large number of children with a minority language background. See also chapters 1.1, 1.2, 3.3 and 4.1.

98 per cent of kindergartens ask the parents' consent to transfer information about the child to the school.<sup>54</sup> The parents are involved in setting the terms for the information transfer. That means gaining access to and deciding what information is transferred. 95 per cent of municipalities have a system for

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<sup>45</sup> The Kindergarten Act, chapter 2

<sup>46</sup> Kunnskapsdepartementet (2008)

<sup>47</sup> Rambøll (2010)

<sup>48</sup> Sivertsen et al. (2015)

<sup>49</sup> Rambøll (2010)

<sup>50</sup> Gjerustad et al (2016)

<sup>51</sup> Lekhal et al. (2013)

<sup>52</sup> Sivertsen et al. (2015)

<sup>53</sup> Kunnskapsdepartementet (2008)

<sup>54</sup> Sivertsen et al. (2015)

transferring information about children from kindergarten to school. In most cases this includes all the kindergartens and schools in the municipality.<sup>55</sup>

### 4.3. Collaboration at setting level

The national guide on transitions<sup>56</sup> states that the single most defining factor for successful cooperation is that teachers in kindergarten and school prioritise cooperation and meet to plan the transition. The goal is to achieve a common understanding of the work, clarify aims, and as early as possible clarify which teachers the children will meet at school.

According to a 2015 survey, 76 per cent of kindergartens have established common meeting points for teachers in kindergarten and school. 94 per cent have procedures in place for cooperating on children with special needs.<sup>57</sup> In a survey from 2016 school heads responded that the most typical activity in the above-mentioned meetings is to discuss plans for individual children and/or the information about the children that is transferred from kindergarten to school.<sup>58</sup> Other very typical meeting activities are to plan the school visit day and agree on common goals, guidelines and rules for good transitions for the children who are about to start school.

Significant barriers to cooperation are school resources and priorities to participate. Furthermore, the kindergartens seem to have a better understanding of the school day and learning situations at school than vice versa.<sup>59</sup> The study also shows that in the cases where the schools did participate, they found it useful. Lack of time in both kindergarten and school and a lack of will and interest in school are barriers against cooperation.

A case study from a Norwegian municipality found that kindergartens, schools and after-school programmes see and value the transition differently. Kindergarten teachers attach greater importance to transition and coherence than do school staff.<sup>60</sup>

### 4.4. Collaboration with early childhood services and other settings, agencies and organisations

When it comes to children with special needs, many key actors may be involved in the transition in addition to the parents, the kindergarten and the school.<sup>61</sup> Examples are PPT, the public health centre and the child welfare service.

See also chapter 3.3 above.

## 5. Challenges and strategies

As described in chapter 1.1, more attention has been given to transition, and there has been an effort to strengthen coherence between kindergarten and school. We see this coherence in different national strategies and measures aimed at kindergarten and school collectively. The national strategies on

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<sup>55</sup> Vibe (2012)

<sup>56</sup> Kunnskapsdepartementet (2008)

<sup>57</sup> Sivertsen et al. (2015)

<sup>58</sup> Gjerustad et al. (2016)

<sup>59</sup> Rambøll (2010)

<sup>60</sup> Hogsnes and Moser (2014)

<sup>61</sup> Kunnskapsdepartementet (2008) and Utdanningsdirektoratet (2014)

language, reading and writing<sup>62</sup> and on science subjects<sup>63</sup> are recent examples of this. Both also include suggested measures aimed at improving coherence and transition.

Based on the description above, one challenge for coherence and transition seems to arise from kindergarten and school teachers lacking knowledge of each other's pedagogical practice. Hence, a question up for discussion is whether there is a need to establish a system to ensure that teachers in both kindergarten and school have knowledge and understanding of each other's education and work.

As described in chapter 1.2 above, the Framework Plan describes the transition from kindergarten to school, but transition is only mentioned generally in the regulation to the Education Act. The question then becomes whether it is necessary to render the responsibility and need for coherence and transition more visible in school regulations.

A practical challenge, particularly for the larger cities, is that a kindergarten may deliver children to different schools. This can make kindergarten-school cooperation more challenging and makes the need for a local overarching plan more evident.

There seems to be very little disagreement between central stakeholders about the goals and principles in national regulations and documents dealing with coherence and transition between kindergarten and school. In addition, there is general agreement on the need for good procedures for coherence and transition. There is discussion on some issues, illustrated by the suggested revisions to the Kindergarten Act that were submitted for comment in 2014. Among other things, the comments show that there is some disagreement on documentation and on what type of documentation should follow the child from kindergarten to school.<sup>64</sup>

Transition and coherence between kindergarten and school was one of the main challenges addressed in the white paper *Time for play and learning (2015-2016)*<sup>65</sup>. This has fed into Norway's revised curriculum framework, to be implemented in August 2017. The new framework states that "the kindergarten shall support children in acquiring experiences, knowledge and skills that provide them with a solid foundation and motivation for starting school. Kindergartens are required to support children in bringing their time in ECEC to a conclusion in a good way and being able to start school with curiosity and confidence in themselves and their abilities".<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Kunnskapsdepartementet (2015b)

<sup>63</sup> Kunnskapsdepartementet (2015a)

<sup>64</sup> Kunnskapsdepartementet (2014) Høring om endringer i barnehageloven og tilhørende forskrifter

<sup>65</sup> Meld. St. 19 (2015-2016): Tid for lek og læring

<sup>66</sup> Kunnskapsdepartementet (2017) (our translation)

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