

Norway

Country Overview

Generated: 2024-12-01 10:46:22



Country name

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Introduction

In Norway, the municipalities are responsible for overseeing social and emotional learning (SEL) in early childhood education and care (ECEC) kindergartens. There are several initiatives that can be categorised as assessments and interventions regarding SEL in ECEC, stemming from different types of organisations. Below, some examples of SEL in ECEC are presented, however, should not be considered exhaustive in describing the subject.

Development

Norway has a multitude of initiatives regarding SEL in kindergartens. Municipalities are responsible for ECEC, however, there are private alternatives as well. In 2017, 97% of children from 3 to 5 years of age attended kindergartens in Norway (SSB, 2018). All ECEC's follow the Kindergarten Act (no. 64), a regulatory framework for the content and tasks of kindergartens (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017). While this provides extensive guidelines that include SEL-related terms, such as stressing social competence including skills, knowledge and attitudes, there are possibilities for different ECEC providers (municipalities as well as private providers) to develop local practices. In fact, the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, the executive agency for the Ministry of Education and Research, has encouraged the study of variations in ECEC practices in Norway. Under the programme "Norwegian Research Towards 2020" (Utdanningdirektorater, 2013), the directorate has funded large projects studying the variations of quality in ECEC in Norway and the effects of these differences on children's well-being and social, emotional and cognitive development.

Assessment

The Ministry of Education and Research has the overall responsibility for quality in ECEC in Norway. The goals, purposes, and responsibilities are regulated by the Kindergarten Act and the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training is liable for the implementation of the national kindergarten policy as well as for the development of knowledge based guidelines to support the quality work in kindergartens.

The county governor has a key role in attaining the political goals concerning quality in kindergartens through advising and inspecting the municipalities and the administration of state grants aimed at promoting the kindergarten staff's professional competencies as part of national strategic plans in the sector. The municipalities are responsible for kindergartens, both public and private. The local authority is liable for the approval, supervision, and guidance of kindergartens and for ensuring that public and private kindergarten owners meet the standards stated in the regulations. Kindergarten owners (both public and private) are responsible for observing laws and regulations, the content of the Framework Plan, including content related to SEL, and for quality development in their kindergartens (European Commission, 2022).

Intervention

There are several SEL-related interventions available, or undergoing development in Norway, though many of them are designed for school-aged children rather than ECEC. One example is SELMA, which is a project including development and testing of effects of SEL interventions with elements from positive psychology aimed at both ECEC teachers and children (Evertsen et al., 2022). A Norwegian version of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) called PALS has been extensively studied in Norwegian elementary schools (e.g. Sørli, 2021), but not in ECEC settings. Another example is the teacher classroom management programme from the Incredible Years series that has been evaluated in kindergartens with some promising results (Fossum, Handegård & Drugli, 2017).

There are also examples of interventions more strictly focused on children at risk. TIBIR ("Early Initiatives for Children at Risk") is a programme for the prevention and treatment of behavioural problems in children between 3 and 12 years of age and their families (Kjøbli & Ogden, 2014). The service is provided through municipal services such as public health clinics, the educational and psychological counselling service, child welfare services, kindergartens and schools. TIBIR services are currently offered in 104 of Norway's 356 municipalities.

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Citation

This document was generated from the database used to create the Country Overviews Compendium:

Koltcheva, N., V. Coelho, (2022). Social and Emotional Development for Children aged 0 to 7 years old: European Countries Overviews Compendium. EU-SELF Project. ISBN 978-619-233-213-6 (can be downloaded from <https://eusef.nbu.bg>)