



NORWEGIAN MINISTRY
OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

Meld. St. 18 (2010-2011) Report to the Storting (white paper) Summary

Learning together

Preface



Need for special educational assistance and support

The target group for this Report to the Storting is *children, young people and adults in need of special educational assistance and support*. There are children and young people in kindergartens and schools who struggle with reading, writing or mathematical difficulties, and psychological, relational or behavioural problems. In adult education centres we find adults who have encountered problems in their working life or everyday life due to low basic skills, as well as people with a need to renew their basic education as a result of illnesses, injuries or accidents sustained. At all levels of the education system there are children, young people and adults who suffer from mobility impairments, visual impairments, hearing impairments and physical disabilities, significant language, speaking and communication difficulties, as well as brain injuries.

Adapted education, special educational assistance and special needs education

Mostly, the needs for assistance and support in education can be met inside the framework of regular kindergartens and by means of adapted education in schools. Nevertheless, children below compulsory school age who need special educational assistance are also entitled to such help. In primary and secondary education, pupils who do not have, or are unable to obtain a satisfactory learning outcome from the tuition, are entit-

led to special needs education. This right is invoked when the educational and psychological counselling service in the local or regional authority carries out an *expert assessment*, which in turn is used to make an *individual decision* on special educational assistance or special needs education. Pupils in primary and secondary education and training are entitled to an individual education plan (*individual subject curriculum*), which must include goals and contents of the special needs education. The special educational assistance or special needs education shall be evaluated every six months.

Extent and organisation

Special educational assistance comprises one to two percent of children below school age. In the primary and lower secondary education and training, the proportion of pupils requiring special needs education has grown in recent years, up to around 8.4 percent of all pupils in the school year 2010-11. The extent is at its highest in the 10th grade with 11.7 percent, and lowest in the first grade with 4.3 percent. Of the pupils requiring special needs education, 64.2 percent receive between three and seven hours a week, mainly in groups of two to five pupils within the school. Of the total number of teaching hours, 17 percent is spent on special education. The gender distribution in special needs education has remained stable for a long time, with boys accounting for around 70 percent.

Introduction



In Norway, the educational system is shared by all and something which binds us together. It is founded on our traditions and shared values and serves to prepare us for the future. Knowledge is the most important resource of our society. This is why our commitment to kindergartens, education and research is vital for society at large and a high priority area for the Government. By ensuring that all citizens have access to education and knowledge, we as a nation and as individuals can realise our potential.

Each year in mid-August, some 60,000 children start school, bursting with expectation. Of these, 97 percent have already attended kindergarten¹ before school age. Some of these children will require more help and support than others. Some children will have reduced physical abilities or developmental disabilities, and others will have learning impediments. Their needs may be due to their individual nature and abilities or factors in their home environment.

All children in Norway have a right to attend kindergartens and educational institutions, to attend their neighbourhood school and to receive special educational assistance and special needs education where this is required. These rights shall be granted unconditionally. It is the responsibility of the authorities to ensure these rights are met for each child – regardless of their abilities and capacity. The authorities also have a definite obligation to prevent discrimination.

¹ Pre-primary pedagogical institutions providing early childhood education and care for children aged 0–5

The Norwegian educational system has grown ever more open and accessible. As late as in 2009, all children became entitled to attend kindergarten, according to specific rules. Practically all young people apply for upper secondary education and training. Norwegian working life demands high levels of skills and knowledge, and the Ministry of Education and Research is strongly committed to seeing as many young people as possible complete their upper secondary education and training and attaining the qualifications required for further studies or working life.

The Norwegian population is generally well educated and social differences are relatively small. Few countries spend as much on education as Norway. There is broad political consensus on the purpose of the schools, i.e. to give children and young people an opportunity to attain a well-rounded education, personal development, knowledge and skills. Studies and surveys show that both students and teachers report that they are content at school. This provides a sound basis for continuing the development and improvement of our educational system.

Inclusion

Inclusion forms a basic tenet of the Government's educational policies. Inclusion as a goal in educational policy means that children and young people from different social backgrounds and multiple ethnic, religious and linguistic origins come together in kindergartens and common schools of high quality and with high expectations that eve-

ryone will learn. This calls for positive discrimination. For the individual kindergarten and school, inclusion will mean actively taking into consideration and accommodating for the variation in the abilities and capacities of children and young people, with respect to both organisation and teaching. Thus, the Education Act stipulates that the educational system must be of equal quality and adapted to the circumstances and abilities of each child. This requires good learning environments, where the pupils experience an academic and social community which is pleasant and good for their development. At times, extensive adaptation to individual needs will also be necessary. Similarly, the care and training provided in the kindergartens must promote a sense of well-being in play and learning and provide a stimulating and safe place for friendship and fellowship.

The inclusive kindergarten and school is based on values and a view of humanity with a fundamental respect for human rights and equality. These values are deeply embedded in our society and laid down in the purpose clause for our school and kindergarten legislation.. This provides the statutory basis for ensuring that schools and kindergartens are inclusive. Indeed, research shows that under certain given conditions, an inclusive environment promotes the best learning outcomes for all. In groups with cultural diversity, the different strengths and interests of the various pupils will provide the others with different inputs and help reinforce learning motivation. Permanent organisation into ability groups often leads to poorer results, although some studies indicate there are exceptions to this rule. In this Report to the Storting, the Ministry of Education and Research will review research dealing with the learning outcomes of those children who receive special needs education through a variety of organisational frameworks. It is important that the local and regional authorities have a thorough knowledge and awareness of the results and effects of the various organisational methods used in special needs education. Even though we have largely closed down the system of special schools in Norway, the Ministry will not recommend shutting down the rest of these.

Formal rights are not by themselves sufficient to produce inclusive kindergartens and schools. It is the ambition of the Ministry of Education and Research to continue to develop the educational system to compensate for social differences and attain an even greater degree of improved learning outcomes for all pupils. The social backgrounds of the pupils are reflected in their learning

outcomes, their completion of upper secondary education and training and their recruitment into higher education. The kindergartens should have a preventive effect, and must work to ensure that all children, regardless of their functional level, age, gender and family background, learn that each and every one of them, and indeed, each individual in their group, is important for the community. In Norway, social differences in the educational system are smaller than in most comparable countries, but even so, our ambition is to reduce the reproduction of social differences. Our educational system must be better at compensating for social differences and ensure a more equal distribution of the chances to succeed. Important prerequisites for social equalisation are early intervention and a good start, together with highly skilled teachers and school administrations, sound evaluation systems and feedback along with variation in teaching and classroom work. The Ministry of Education and Research has presented several Reports to further this goal. The recurrent theme is early intervention and development of skills and qualifications in kindergartens and schools:

- *Early Intervention for Life-long learning* – Report No. 16 (2006–2007) to the Storting

Research reveals that Norwegian education has tended towards a “wait-and-see” mindset. The notion that problems will disappear along the way often proves to be wrong. The Ministry therefore introduced a strategy of early intervention. The necessary measures are to be introduced at an early stage in education and as and when challenges are discovered.

- *The Teacher. Role and Education.* – Report No. 11 (2008–2009) to the Storting.

Higher levels of specialisation, a new and wider education subject plus better guidance and follow-up of new teachers will make new teachers better equipped for their job in the classrooms. The general teacher education has been reformed into two differentiated Primary and Lower Secondary Teacher Education Programmes for years 1–7 and years 5–10.

- *Quality in schools* – Report No. 31 (2007–2008) to the Storting

The report presents the quality goals for the primary and secondary education and training and measures to increase the benefit the pupils derive from the tuition. Mandatory surveys of reading skills are introduced in the 1st to 3rd grades and increased resources put into teaching of reading and arithmetic in grades

one to four. All newly appointed head teachers as well as heads with no previous education in management and administration will be given the opportunity of taking further education in school administration, whilst a new system for continuing and further education for teachers will be introduced on a permanent basis.

- Quality in Early Childhood Education – Report No. 41 (2008–2009) to the Storting kindergartens

The introduction in 2009 of a statutory right to attend kindergarten represented a milestone in Norwegian education history. Before and after the enactment, great efforts were made to ensure enough places for all, to guarantee that these rights can be met. Whilst more kindergartens have been built, the proportion of the cost paid by the parents has been reduced. The Ministry will carry on the efforts towards improving the qualifications and quality of kindergartens.

- *Education Strategy*– Report No. 44 (2008–2009) to the Storting

There are fewer and fewer jobs left in Norway where upper secondary or higher education is not a requirement. The Ministry has therefore presented a report on how primary and secondary education and training will help ensure the country's need for a qualified work force. The report includes new measures in primary and lower secondary schools, vocational/technical colleges, higher education as well as in the formal and informal sections of adult education.

In 2011, the Ministry of Education and Research launched a project, aimed at improving completion rates by introducing new measures to both the lower and upper secondary education and training. For the first time, the Ministry has set national targets for reduction of drop-out rates and improvement of completion rates: 75 percent in 2015, compared with 69 percent today.

The Government has initiated several processes to promote improved harmonization of welfare services. This report must be seen in conjunction with Report No. 47 to the Storting (2008–2009) *The Coordination Reform*, to be followed by a new report to the Storting on the National Health and Care Plan (2011–2015), a new act on health and care services and a new act on public health. The emphasis on public health work, prevention and early intervention is central to the Coordination Reform, and the proposal for a new act on public health highlights the importance of working

together across sectors. The act will promote a societal development which will strengthen public health and even out social differences in health and living conditions. Public health work requires systematic and long-term commitment inside and outside the health service, and across sectors and administrative levels. Much of the groundwork for achieving good health when growing up and later in life is laid during childhood and adolescence. Consequently, we see kindergartens and schools as key arenas for public health work and preventive work. This will for example entail that kindergartens and schools must be developed, adapted and provided with qualifications that will contribute to increased everyday physical activity and provide good settings for nutrition and meals. Mealtimes will in turn function as important social activities that may contribute to better social skills, inclusion and a feeling of mastery, which are important elements in a positive learning environment and the learning processes.

Adapted education and special needs education

The measures outlined in the previous Reports from the Ministry of Education and Research will make kindergartens and schools better equipped to embrace the range of abilities and backgrounds represented by the diversity of children and young people. To do this, we must understand how to adapt kindergarten and special needs education in the primary and secondary education and training. Section 1–3 of the Education Act states that the tuition and training must be adapted to the individual pupil's abilities and capacities and that the school must put measures in place as soon as possible. Adapted education is important because there is a direct correlation between the schools' ability to introduce adapted education and the pupils' learning outcomes.

Adapted education means the types of measures introduced by the school to ensure their pupils profit as much as possible from the tuition and training offered. These may relate to the organisation of the teaching, educational methods and progression. Adapted education in a class or group which is composed of children with diverse abilities will often be demanding on the teachers. Because the schools first and foremost function as an arena for learning together, we cannot define adapted education as personalised teaching adapted to a single child. Adapted education is about striking a happy balance between each pupil's abilities and capacities and the entire classroom/school community. Such a balance can be

achieved by introducing a variety of work tasks, learning content, working methods, teaching materials/aids and organisation. To achieve the necessary variety, the schools must use their expertise to manage learning processes based on the abilities and capacities of their pupils. It will also require the schools to constantly carry out evaluations, variations and changes of their own practices.

Those pupils who, despite such measures, are incapable of obtaining a satisfactory outcome from the tuition, are entitled to receive special needs education (Section 5-1 of the Education Act). The Ministry will continue the right to special educational assistance and special needs education. This means that the school's ability to supply adapted education plays a part in determining the requirements for special needs education. The Ministry is of the opinion that in many schools, greater efforts should be made within the framework of adapted education before pupils are tested for special needs education by the educational and psychological counselling service. In the Education Act, the Ministry will emphasise that, prior to making any decisions on the need for special needs education, schools must survey, assess and possibly test out new measures within the framework of adapted education. Special needs education should act as a safety net which may be initiated based on an assessment of the pupil and what he/she will need to obtain a satisfactory outcome of their tuition and training. In order to assist kindergartens and schools in their work related to adapted education and a satisfactory learning environment, the Ministry will set up a new resource centre for learning environment and behavioural research and introduce measures aiming to improve the qualification of the educational and psychological counselling service.

In principle, all special educational assistance and special needs education should be provided in a form that does not entail segregation of children and young people. Nevertheless, there are some cases where the consideration of what will be best for the individual child or young person dictates the need for separation. In this report, the Ministry underlines that the special needs education must draw up realistic goals for each pupil, along with specific measures, evaluation of outcomes and also that it should not go on for longer than necessary. The Ministry will improve the system for evaluation and follow-up of pupils who receive special needs education and simplify the case handling rules for special needs education. The Ministry will also introduce measures for

reducing case handling time for individual decisions pursuant to Chapter 5 of the Education Act.

The Ministry will initiate the programme "Vidprenger grenser" (*Breaking new ground*), a drive to improve the education provided to pupils with general learning difficulties and developmental disabilities. The current situation for many of these children is that too little is expected of them when it comes to learning, and consequently they are not given sufficient opportunities for development. The services of Statped, the Norwegian Support System for Special Needs Education, will be made more accessible to local and regional authorities looking for support in a variety of special educational areas of expertise. Our goal is to build up a team around the individual teacher. The teacher will look to the school administration for support and to his/her colleagues for cooperation. The school will have access to other services that are important to children and young people who require special assistance and support. The local and regional authorities will receive support from Statped, which will become more accessible and possess a broader range of qualifications and expertise.

The parental perspective

Having a child with significant functional challenges or learning disabilities pose extra challenges to parents in their encounter with kindergartens, schools and support services. For the parents to feel that the needs of their children are being met in the education system, it is important that a satisfactory system is in place for early assessment, follow-up, effective coordination between the kindergartens and schools and to achieve a smooth transition between the various school levels along with proper coordination and interaction between the various support functions. Good cooperation between the home and school is important to the pupil, parents and the teacher. When the school facilitates cooperation between home and school, it will be easier to achieve the desired motivation, good working routines and a feeling of confidence in the school environment. In cases where a child needs special support, such cooperation will be particularly important. Likewise, good cooperation between the home and kindergarten is an important prerequisite for meeting the needs of each child in the best possible manner.

Many parents of children who need special assistance and support in education feel that their children are not given the help and support they

need. Many of the parents inform us that the transition stages are difficult and that the coordination between the various institutions fails, leaving the parents to take on the role of coordinators themselves. It is important that parents are informed of the rights of their children both in kindergarten and school, and their rights of lodging a complaint entail if they have doubts or disagree with the authorities on whether these rights are being met in an adequate manner. It is also important to be well informed on the support services, and which networks it might be useful to take part in. The National Parents' Committee for Kindergartens (FUB) and the National Parents' Committee for the Primary and Lower Secondary Education (FUG) provide important input to the parent-school cooperation efforts.

The Ministry wants to clarify exactly what parents of children in need of special assistance and support are entitled to, and what they may expect from our education system. To that end, the Ministry will prepare a guide for parents of children who need special assistance and support. This guide will also contain a *Poster for Parents* giving an overview of the most important rights of the child. The Ministry will also improve the facilitation for parents of pupils with special needs by means of improved training for the parents and the immediate response team in Statped (the Norwegian Support System for Special Needs Education), and improved coordination of the services.

The Midtlyng Committee

An important basis for the Report is the recommendations from the Midtlyng Committee, Official Norwegian Report 2009:18 *The right to learn*, and the more than 300 consultative comments received by the Ministry. The Committee was appointed on the Ministry's initiative in 2007. Its mandate was to investigate how we can improve the way we provide education for children, young people and adults who need special assistance and support. Key issues in the mandate were:

- *The ordinary tuition*: How does the ordinary education facilitate early intervention, learning and development for the individual special needs pupil?
- *Special needs education*: What is the situation with regard to organisation, use of resources and results? How are these services organised in comparable countries?
- *The support systems*: How are responsibilities and tasks distributed between the units in the the Norwegian Support System for Special

Needs Education (Statped) and the educational and psychological counselling services?

- *Cooperation and coordination*: What factors prevent and/or promote cooperation between the various disciplines, agencies and institutions, locally and across the various levels?

The Committee assumed that special needs have a great many expressions and will comprise a far bigger group than those receiving special educational assistance in kindergarten and special needs education in primary and secondary education and training at present. The main conclusion in the report was as follows:

«[...] that an improvement of the general schemes will be the most important measure for children, young people and adults with special needs. Developing ever more specialised schemes for an ever more diversified population will serve to dilute the sense of fellowship and community on which our society is founded».

The Midtlyng Committee underlined that emphasising the general aspects of the right to learn must nevertheless not be viewed as de-emphasising special needs or the need for special adaptation for the benefit of the general: «an education that is organised around the notion of the «average pupil», or as a one-sided reflection of the values and experiences of the majority culture, will not be able to provide an education of equal for all» (p. 18).

The committee was not in agreement on how to strike the best balance between the general and the special. This issue also came up as an important theme in many of the comments regarding the consultation document which the Ministry received from the local and regional authorities, the universities and university colleges, organisations, parent interest groups and private citizens. Academics doing research into the field of education and special education also seemed to take different sides. The large number of responses to the consultation paper, and the variety of perspectives represented in the comments, show that the report from the Midtlyng Committee has sparked debate on all levels of the educational system.

The balance between the general and the specific is also a topic in this Report to the Storting. The Government has taken the position that the inclusive school and the diversity of pupils will provide the best framework for each pupil's opportunity to learn. A series of initiatives in the past few years have aimed to improve quality in our kindergartens, schools and the training in the various professions in the welfare sector. In addi-

tion to the reports referred to above, the Government will be presenting a Report to the Storting on the lower secondary school system, and a Report on the professions of the welfare state in 2011. A comprehensive plan dealing with the qualifications of the personnel in kindergartens is underway, as is an improvement of the education of pre-school teachers. Along with a high level of quality and qualifications, it is necessary to have in place good support systems which the kindergartens and schools can draw on for guidance and support when needed.

Taking differences into account and encountering diversity can both be demanding as well as exhilarating, and requires a positive and open-minded attitude and qualification across all levels of the system. This Report from the Ministry aims to prepare and enable local and regional authorities, kindergartens and schools to understand and appreciate diversity and to handle diversity in the best possible manner. The goal must be that all children are met with realistic expectations from a competent educational staff within the framework of a stimulating and safe learning environment.

Three improvement strategies

When politicians, researchers and organisations take a critical view of the educational system's ability to address the diversity of children, young people and adults, this may signify two things. Firstly, it may be that our present-day educational system is more ambitious on behalf of everyone than was the case in the past. Secondly, it may be that our educational system does not perform as well for everyone as we intend. Although the right and access to education is largely adequately provided, this does not automatically entail that everyone is offered equal opportunities in practice and that everyone is able to develop according to their best potential.

With the exception of the reorganisation of Statped, this Report to the Storting deals with how to make our present-day system work better in practice – rather than building entirely new structures. The Report is built on three strategies to show the challenges and opportunities in the educational system and its capacity to embrace and support the diversity of children, young people and adults who need special assistance and support to learn and develop.

Strategy 1: Identify – follow up

Kindergartens and schools must become better at identifying and following up those in need of help and support. Good learning environments will stimulate the pupils' motivation and make them work harder. Adapted education and early intervention will ensure the best possible learning outcomes. Special needs education will continue to function as a safety net for those who do not profit satisfactorily from the ordinary tuition. Realistic goals must be set for each pupil receiving special needs education, with specific measures and performance assessments. Schools need to focus more on the goals, duration and results of their special needs education. The activities in the kindergartens must be organised in such a way that all the different children can participate in different ways, based on their own interests, skills and development stage.

Strategy 2: Target-oriented qualifications – improved learning outcome

As the educational system has been made more accessible for all, the range and variety of needs and abilities among children and young people have presented kindergartens and the schools with new challenges, which have led to changes in the required skills and expertise of pre-school teachers and school teachers. In order for kindergartens and schools to meet the varied needs and requirements of the children and young people in their care, they will need more specialised and targeted competencies. Building of a support team around teachers includes bringing the educational and psychological counselling services in closer and furthering the proper use of classroom assistants

Strategy 3: Cooperation and coordination – better implementation

The kindergartens and schools all over the country will be assured good access to comprehensive special education support. Cooperation with parents of children in need of special assistance and support will be improved through information and coordination. Parents should not have to coordinate the services for their own children, and the various services must not be perceived as disconnected services.

Our knowledge platform – the basis for improvements



Chapter 3 *Our knowledge platform* contains an overall presentation of statistics, research and other documentation which form a basis for the subsequent chapters. The chapter underlines the fact that the report's target group, children, young people and adults who need special assistance and support in their education, is not a clearly delineated group. The target group varies from children, young people and adults with reduced functional ability to children, young people and adults who have difficulties associated with reading, writing and arithmetic. The chapter points to the steep increase in the use of special needs education, and the increase in types of education where pupils are taken out of their normal class. There is little

special educational assistance in kindergarten, while there is three times as much special needs education in Grade 10 in the lower secondary school as in Grade 1 in primary school. The chapter documents that there are often unclear objectives, few specific follow-up measures and a lack of evaluations of the results achieved in special needs education. The chapter is based on the three strategies which the Ministry introduced in Chapter 1 *Introduction*. These are *Identify - follow up*; *Targeted qualifications - improved learning outcome*; and *Cooperation and coordination - better implementation*. The knowledge platform documents how and to what extent the three strategies are followed in the present day system.

Kindergarten and primary – early intervention for better development and learning



In Chapter 4, the Ministry presents three education-policy objectives for better learning for children and young people in kindergarten and primary/secondary education and training. The objectives view the learning environment, adapted education and special needs education together:

- create motivation and prevent problems through good learning environments
- meet the diversity of pupils' circumstances and abilities through adapted education
- realistic goals, specific measures and good assessment routines in the special needs education

The Ministry sees it as important that the adapted education must be improved and that the special needs education primarily will be used as an extra safeguard for pupils who do not benefit adequately from the school's ordinary educational provisions. The Ministry points out that before a decision is made on special needs education, the schools must map, assess and, if necessary, try out new measures. The Ministry will improve the system of assessing and following up pupils who receive special needs education. The Ministry wants the case processing rules for special needs education to be simplified, in that the requirement for a written, half-yearly assessment (half-year report) will be dropped. The Ministry will also initiate the programme *Breaking New Ground*, which aims to increase awareness of the educational provisions for pupils with general learning difficulties and developmental disabilities.

The Ministry wants those clauses in the Education Act that concern children below compulsory school age, to be transferred to the Kindergarten Institutions Act. This Act will then regulate all educational provisions for children below compulsory school age. This will not undermine the rights of children who do not attend kindergarten, as they are also entitled to special educational assistance. Adults' rights to and opportunities for education and training are also discussed.

The use of assistants in schools, and particularly in special needs education, is also a topic in this chapter. It is pointed out that assistants can play an important role in school, but that personnel who do not meet the professional and teaching qualification requirements must not be in charge of the teaching or be responsible for special needs education.

The chapter considers the Midtlyng Committee's proposal for introducing "a learning portfolio" in kindergartens and schools, and the Ministry has initiated a survey of similar systems in the different local and regional authorities and in other countries. Further assessment is required as to whether a learning portfolio may be introduced without creating extra work, and in such a way that it ensures better follow-up of the pupils.

The Ministry will

- ensure that all children are offered a language development assessment in the kindergartens

- transfer the clauses in the Education Act that relate to children below compulsory school age to the Kindergarten Institutions Act
- ensure that the local and regional authorities' obligation to assess and, if necessary, test to confirm whether a pupil benefits adequately from the ordinary educational provision, is made explicit in the Education Act
- increase the awareness of the educational provision for pupils with general learning difficulties and developmental disabilities through the programme *Breaking New Ground*
- further develop the *Guide to the Education Act relating to special educational assistance and special needs education* into a user-friendly digital version, based on the present guide, which will be adapted to the internet format in language and content. This guide will contain templates, descriptions of routines and examples from local authorities. The digital guide must also reach the adult target group as well as parents by e.g. including a poster for parents showing an overview of rights and user involvement.
- replace the requirement to prepare half-yearly reports for pupils receiving special needs education with a clause to the effect that an assessment of the pupil's development must be compiled in writing at least once a year in the student's individual education plan
- introduce a clause in the Education Act that specifies the terms and conditions for using assistants in education
- introduce a special clause in the Education Act on the teaching of pupils who have a need for alternative and supplementary communication
- initiate a survey of systems/tools that are used in local and regional authorities and in some other countries to document and follow up how individual pupils are learning
- consider setting up a multi-disciplinary forum or council to contribute to a more coordinated educational follow-up of children with cochlear implants.

The support system in local and regional authorities – strengthened cooperation and coordination of early intervention



This chapter deals with the support network in local and regional authorities, particularly the educational and psychological counselling service. Four expectations to this network are presented in order to clarify its mandate and duties:

- the educational and psychological counselling service is available and contributes to uniform and cohesive practice
- the educational and psychological counselling service does preventative work
- the educational and psychological counselling service contributes to early intervention in kindergarten and schools
- the educational and psychological counselling service is a professionally competent service in all local and regional authorities

Several initiatives are related to these advisory expectations, which combined will entail increased guidance, information and development of expertise. A strategy for post-graduate and further education in the educational and psychological counselling service is one essential initiative. This chapter also discusses what the kindergarten and school sector can do to improve information and cooperation between parents and users of the local and regional services. One of the proposals is a “parents poster” which contains comprehensive information to parents of children who need special assistance and support in their education. A two-year trial scheme is also proposed that

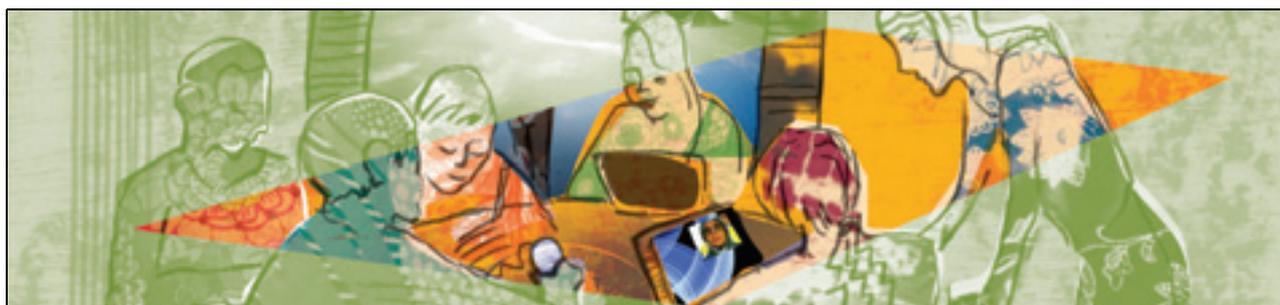
would enable the educational and psychological counselling service to refer pupils to the psychiatric outpatient clinic for children and young people (BUP) and the habilitation service for children and young people (HABU), and the plan is to set up an intermunicipal network to make the required expertise available to the local authorities. The goal is improved cooperation and coordination between the different services provided by local and regional authorities and the state.

The Ministry will

- implement a two-year trial scheme in a region or a few counties which enables the educational and psychological counselling service to refer pupils to psychiatric outpatient clinics for children and young people (BUPs) and the habilitation service for children and young people (HABU)
- have relevant statistics and information about the educational and psychological counselling service form part of the guide template for the annual reporting on conditions in the primary and upper secondary education and training pursuant to Section 13-10 of the Education Act
- continue the work of mapping tests for use with minority-language pupils and training the educational and psychological counselling service in how to use mapping tools

- initiate work, in cooperation with the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities and other key players, to develop a strategy for post-graduate and further education in the educational and psychological counselling service
- raise the need for guideline criteria regarding quality and qualifications with the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities within the current mandate and duties of the educational and psychological counselling service
- facilitate intermunicipal networks of expertise within the four Statped regions in cooperation with local and regional authorities that want to join in
- prepare a *poster for parents* that gives parents an overview of current rights and informs them of the importance of user involvement. This poster must be available in several languages
- introduce clauses in the Kindergarten Act and the Education Act which specify that the kindergarten and the school must participate in the preparation of and follow-up of measures and objectives in the individual plan

The national support system – special education expertise for the whole of Norway



This chapter focuses on changes to and objectives for the Norwegian Support System for Special Education (Statped). Statped will be restructured into four multi-disciplinary regional centres in Northern, Central, Western and South-Eastern Norway. At the same time, Statped will be given a central management that will make sure the objectives for Statped as a whole are being met, that the regional centres develop in the same direction and have a clear, common profile. Three objectives are specified:

- Statped must be a clear and accessible provider of special education support services to local and regional authorities. Statped must deliver services at individual level as well as system level, and all local authorities must have the same access to Statped's services
- Statped must possess top expertise in the fields of special education and must contribute actively to the dissemination of knowledge and competency in these fields
- Statped must have a strategy for how to prioritise areas for research and development (R&D work) and act as a cooperation partner for universities and university colleges

This chapter discusses changes in the field of hearing impairment. The Ministry explains that the full-time teaching at three out of four Statped national primary schools for the hearing impaired will be closed down over time, while part-time teaching will be strengthened to ensure higher quality, greater scope and a wider reach. Statped's

support and guidance to the local and regional authorities will also be strengthened, enabling them to offer good school services to hearing-impaired children and pupils. Additionally, the Ministry proposes changes to Signo and Briskeby as schools and centres of expertise in order to ensure there is a clear statutory mandate for the school activities and adequate legal protection for the pupils of these schools.

The chapter also discusses changes for selected national centres that will be given a somewhat wider mandate, in that the educational and psychological counselling service will be included as a target group. A new centre for learning environment and behavioural research will be established by merging the resources of two existing centres.

The Ministry will:

- restructure Statped into one undertaking with a clear service profile and four multidisciplinary regional centres: Northern, Central, Western and South-Eastern Norway. South-Eastern Norway will have a branch office in Kristiansand
- continue Sami Special Education Support (SEAD) as part of the multidisciplinary Statped. Northern Statped will handle SEAD services across the nation
- give Statped a multidisciplinary profile. Statped's service profile will be changed to achieve a uniform approach to Statped's work with local and regional authorities

- have Statped coordinate and further develop educational programmes for parents of children with hearing or visual impairments or who need alternative and supplementary communication
- gradually reduce the fees for adapted teaching aids provided by Statped
- close down the national primary schools for the hearing impaired at the resource centres Statped Vest (Hunstad school), Skådalen and Nedre Gausen after the 2013–14 academic year. The primary school for the hearing impaired at Møller-Trøndelag Resource Centre and the school for the deaf-blind at Skådalen Resource Centre will continue. National part-time teaching of hearing impaired children will be continued and strengthened
- facilitate continued operation of Signo and Briskeby and a good statutory mandate for the schools
- establish a new centre for learning environment and behavioural research based on Lillegården Resource Centre and the Centre for Behavioural Research and discontinue the association with Statped
- extend the mandates for the National Centre for Mathematics in Education, the National Centre for Reading Education and Research and the National Centre for Multicultural Education so that their target groups also include the educational and psychological counselling service.

Research and higher education – Norway’s special education resources



This chapter discusses research and education. The Ministry will emphasise that there is a need for further information on the contents and dimensioning of the different study programmes in the field of special education and the educational provisions offered to children, young people and adults who need special assistance and support in their education. As one of several initiatives, the Ministry will appoint an expert group to review and propose improvements to the current research into special education and university courses. Increased allocations have been promised for the *Utdanning 2020 (Education 2020)* programme aiming to improve our knowledge of the causes and effects of special educational assistance/special needs education. The chapter explains how the Ministry is working to meet new and changed needs for competencies and qualified personnel in kindergartens and primary and secondary education and training. An overview is provided of the follow-up of NOKUT's (the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education) evaluation of the pre-school teacher education, the new study programmes for primary school teachers and relevant post-graduate and further education provisions.

The Ministry will

- appoint a group of experts to determine our knowledge to date and prepare an analysis of

- the needs for special education programmes and special education research. This includes a call for Nordic cooperation on research into particularly small and vulnerable areas of expertise within the field of special education
- increase the funding of Education 2020 to strengthen research into causes and effects of special educational assistance/special needs education in kindergarten and primary and secondary education and training
- through the expert group, act as a driver for more cooperation, for a greater extend division of labour and concentration of expertise in the special education communities at universities and university colleges
- for initiate initiative systematic cooperation between universities/university colleges and a regionalised Statped, through partnership agreements
- develop an overall and uniform strategy for recruiting, further developing and retaining the necessary professional qualifications in kindergartens
- suggest to the parties in the strategy *Kompetanse for kvalitet (Competence for Quality)* that special education and general education subjects should be made a priority when the strategy is updated from 2012
- consider whether special education and general education subjects may be offered to teachers as courses/modules of further education

