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# **Nordic 0 – 24 collaboration on improved services to vulnerable children and young people**

First interim report



**Fafo-report**  
2018:22



Inger Lise Skog Hansen, Ragnhild Steen Jensen,  
Anne Hege Strand, Elisabeth Brodtkorb and Sidsel Sverdrup

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# Preface

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This is the first interim report from a process evaluation of the Nordic 0–24 project. The Nordic 0–24 project was initiated by the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2017. The project is in line with the programme for the Norwegian Presidency of The Nordic Council 2018, which states that the presidency aims to reinforce joint Nordic measures to promote the education and inclusion of children and young people, and the follow-up of the 0–24 project is one way of doing so. The Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training is responsible for the management of the Nordic 0–24 project and the project will continue until 2020.

Fafo Institute of Labour and Social Research, in collaboration with VID Specialised University, is performing a process evaluation of the Nordic 0–24 project. The process evaluation is conducted on commission from The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training and will continue until 2020.

We would like to express our gratitude to the national contact persons for the joint Nordic project and the project managers of the included national cases from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland for their contributions to this first interim report, and for interesting and inspiring discussions and dialogs at the joint meetings. We look forward to continuing our collaboration with you. On behalf of the research team, I would also like to extend our thanks to Anne Berit Kavli and Camilla Vibe Lindgaard, our contact persons at the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, for collaboration on the work.

At Fafo, Ragnhild Steen Jensen, Anne Hege Strand and Inger Lise Skog Hansen comprise the research team. At VID Specialised University, Sidsel Sverdrup has participated in the research team and, in addition, Elisabeth Brodtkorb has been actively involved in work for the report. There has been one meeting in an intern reference group for the project, in which Tone Fløtten, Jon Rogstad and Kaja Reegård from Fafo and Tor Slettebø from VID participated, along with the research team. This meeting was of great value to the work and we want to give our thanks to our colleagues at Fafo and VID for their comments and constructive suggestions at an early stage of this report.

This first interim report is mainly based on data provided by the national contact persons in a mapping form and through dialog with the involved partners at two joint project meetings. Anne Hege Stand did a thorough job of systemising information provided by the partners in the mapping forms.

The research team is equally responsible for this first interim report, but Inger Lise Skog Hansen and Ragnhild Steen Jensen at Fafo have had the main responsibility of writing the report. Inger Lise Skog Hansen, as project manager of the research team, has commented on and contributed to all of the chapters, and had the main responsibility for writing chapters 1,2,5,6 and 7. Ragnhild Steen Jensen had the main responsibility for the presentations in chapter 3, together with Anne Hege Strand, and she has commented on the remaining chapters. Elisabeth Brodtkorb and Sidsel Sverdrup at VID had the main responsibility for the presentations in chapter four.

We would also like to take this opportunity to pay our sincerest gratitude to Tone Fløtten, managing director of Fafo, who has read our draft report thoroughly and made constructive suggestions and comments of great value to the project and the presentations in this first interim report.

The issue of vulnerable children and young people, early intervention, and early school leaving is high on the agenda in all of the involved Nordic countries; our hope is that this report will contribute to further discussions within the Nordic 0–24 project and to reaching the aim of identifying factors contributing to more comprehensive and effective services for the target groups.

Oslo June 2018,  
Inger Lise Skog Hansen (project manager)



# Summary

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The Nordic countries are known for their extensive welfare states producing high levels of welfare for their residents across the life course. Still, there are rising concerns related to the situation of vulnerable children and their families, not least of which are the early school leavers and young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). In 2017, as a response to these challenges, the Nordic Council of Ministers initiated the Nordic 0–24 project. The overall agenda of the project is to prevent the social exclusion of vulnerable children and young people, and to prevent school dropout and future marginalisation in the labour market. The project’s aim is to improve services in the Nordic countries that are directed at vulnerable children and young people between the ages of 0 and 24 years by means of improving cross-sectoral collaboration. The project’s starting point is that improved cross-sectoral collaboration at the state, regional and municipal levels is necessary to provide more coherent, higher quality services.

The project comprises cases from all the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden) and the autonomous islands (Greenland and Aaland)—the Faroe Islands participate in the Nordic 0–24 project, but without a specific national case. The cases serve as national examples of cross-sectoral collaboration in the delivery of services to the 0–24 age group. The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training is in charge of the project management, and the project period will continue through 2020.

Fafo Institute of Labour and Social Research has, in collaboration with VID Specialized University, been assigned the task of carrying out a process evaluation of the Nordic 0–24 project. In this first interim report from the process evaluation, we provide an overview of the evaluation’s design. Furthermore, we present a model developed to examine how the national cases may serve as sources for identifying factors that contribute to improved collaboration and more coherent service delivery for vulnerable children and young people. As a background for future analyses, the national policy context of the involved cases and relevant national welfare systems and services are also described.

## **The Nordic 0–24 process evaluation**

In the process evaluation, we will monitor the joint activities in the Nordic project, using the seven national projects as cases. The objective is to study examples of cross-sectoral collaboration aimed at providing better services to vulnerable children, young people and their families, and to discuss lessons learned from these Nordic experiences, regarding both how to promote better cross-sectoral collaboration and how to generate a more coherent follow-up of the target group. The evaluation's key question is:

How does the Nordic 0–24 collaboration, together with cross-sectoral efforts directed at vulnerable children and youth ages 24 and younger, improve the coordination of services aimed at this target group?

The research team will utilise the joint Nordic project meetings as an arena for both collecting information from the involved national cases and for presenting findings and analyses from the project thus far. Because of limited resources in the project, the design relies heavily on collaboration with national partners, the project leaders of the national cases and the joint meetings. Through this collaboration, the evaluation team will acquire data necessary for the analyses.

The process evaluation will make use of the following data sources:

- Mapping forms distributed to the national contact persons and case managers
- Document analysis
- Participation at Nordic joint meetings:
  - Individual interviews
  - Focus groups
  - Presentation of findings
  - Dialogs with participants

The data source for this first interim report is comprised of information from the mapping forms filled out by the national contact persons; individual dialogs with contact persons to clarify specific elements in the information they provided and to request further information on certain topics; and information from two joint Nordic project meetings—one in Norway in November 2017 and one in Denmark in April 2018.

In chapter 2, we present relevant background information on the Nordic countries, including their administrative structures and statistical facts regarding the situations of vulnerable children and young people, early school leavers, and youth not in employment, education or training (NEET) in each

country. We also provide an overview of some of the national initiatives on early intervention and cross-sectoral collaboration, drawing on reports from the involved partners.

Although the Nordic countries share many similarities, there are some differences in models of education and service provision. In chapters 3, 4 and 5, we present an overview of services and systems relevant for the 0–24 age group. This is not meant to be a comprehensive overview but rather a brief introduction of the systems and services, primarily generated by information provided by the national contact persons. The following services are presented: early childhood education and care (ECEC); primary, lower-secondary and upper-secondary education; the most relevant health and social services available for children, youth and their families; and public labour market services for young people. A general conclusion from this presentation is that the Nordic welfare states are advanced and that they provide extensive services for children and young people from early childhood and all throughout their life-course. The national variations described make it meaningful to draw comparisons and discuss what the countries can learn from each other.

In chapter 6, the national cases involved in the 0–24 project are presented. Each of the countries and autonomous islands participating in the Nordic 0–24 project have chosen a case to include, and the presentation in chapter 6 shows that the seven cases that comprise the Nordic 0–24 project are highly heterogeneous. While the cases each address services to and support for vulnerable children and/or youth, and each seeks to enhance cross-sectoral collaboration to improve services for the target group, they differ along central dimensions: how they are organised, at which administrative level they are anchored, and which sectors and services they include. In all of the involved countries and islands, the Nordic 0–24 project is anchored in the education sector—as in the Ministry of Education or Directorate for Education—but the actual cases do not necessarily have schools or educational institutions as a primary or main actor. Furthermore, the cases are not chosen from a stringent set of variables defined by the Nordic project to ensure they are comparable or provide data on the same issues; as such, it is not feasible to perform a comparative analysis of the cases and their goal attainment in this process evaluation—nor is this the aim of the Nordic 0–24 project. The joint meetings of the Nordic 0–24 project have the seven included cases as a starting point for sharing experiences, further learning about and reflection on factors contributing to better collaboration and more coherent services for the target

groups. Based on information from the mapping forms and the joint meetings, we sum up a number of factors that the Nordic partners consider relevant for improved cross-sectional collaboration, at this stage in the project. These factors are: 1) Geographical proximity / location; 2) Professions with different knowledge / culture; 3) Leadership; 4) Incentive systems and economy; 5) Resources and time; 6) Systems and regulations.

In chapter 7, we discuss the findings and present a few reflections on the implications these findings might have for the coming stages of the process evaluation. Our experiences thus far are that it is challenging to get access to the necessary data. The design of the evaluation project relies on the ability of the national contact persons and project leaders to provide data on both the national context and the cases. Several of the national cases are still being adjusted to fit in as parts of the Nordic 0–24 project, and there is a need for a more explicit definition of how the cases are meant to contribute to the joint project.

As the project is in an early stage, this first interim report will serve as a baseline for future work in the process evaluation. In the upcoming joint meetings and workshops, the evaluation team will work more explicitly on facilitating dialog and the sharing of experiences from the cases; this will ensure that we can identify which factors the partners see as contributing to improved collaboration and more coherent services to vulnerable children, young people and their families, and which ones do the opposite. Information about the systems and services presented in this report will form the basis for these discussions.

# 1. Introduction

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The Nordic countries are known for their extensive welfare states producing high levels of welfare for their residents across the life course, but the countries are nevertheless facing social challenges. There is growing awareness around issues like the situation of vulnerable children and their families, child poverty, early school leavers, and young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) (Fløtten and Grødem 2014; 2016; Hyggen 2015; Nordens Välfärdscenter 2016 a and b; Markussen et al. 2010; Tägtström and Olsen 2016). A common issue faced by policy makers when trying to develop measures that are more effective in meeting the needs of vulnerable children and young people is the complexity of problems: The multidimensionality and the complex needs of vulnerable children, young people and their families challenge the organisation of service delivery in all advanced welfare states. Addressing multidimensional needs is a complicated task when services are frequently organised in single sectors and at different governmental levels, and when collaboration between the sectors is often weak or absent.

As a response to this challenge, in 2017, the Nordic Council of Ministers initiated the Nordic 0–24 project, which will continue through 2020. The project's aim is to improve services in the Nordic countries directed at vulnerable children and young people between the ages of 0 and 24 years by improving cross-sectoral collaboration. The project's starting point is that improved cross-sectoral collaboration at state, regional and municipal levels is necessary to provide higher-quality, more coherent services. The project comprises cases from each of the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden) and the autonomous islands (Greenland and Aaland)—the Faroe Islands participate in the Nordic 0–24 project, as well, but without a specific national case. The cases serve as national examples of cross-sectoral collaboration around service delivery for the 0–24 age group. The aim of the Nordic 0–24 project is to share experiences and learning from these national cases regarding collaboration between different sectors and levels of government, and on how to successfully promote a more coordinated, coherent and relevant follow-up of vulnerable children, young people, and their

families. The overall agenda of the Nordic 0–24 project is to prevent the social exclusion of vulnerable children and young people, and to prevent school dropout and future marginalisation in the labour market.

This report is the first interim report from a process evaluation of the Nordic 0–24 project. The aim of the report is to provide a structural description of the seven national cases, along with a description of each case’s national policy context.

## **Process evaluation of Nordic 0–24**

Fafo has, in collaboration with VID Specialized University, been assigned the task of carrying out a process evaluation of the Nordic 0–24 project. In the process evaluation, we will follow the joint activities in the Nordic project, using the seven national projects as cases. The objective is to study examples of cross-sectoral collaboration aimed at providing better services to vulnerable children, young people and their families, and to discuss lessons learned from these Nordic experiences—regarding how to promote better cross-sectoral collaboration and how to generate a more coherent follow up of the target group. The main scope of the evaluation is cross-sectoral collaboration but within the specific context of promoting a more coherent and effective follow-up of vulnerable children and young people to prevent school dropout and future marginalisation of young people in the labour market. The key question of the evaluation is:

How does the Nordic 0–24 collaboration, together with cross-sectoral efforts directed at vulnerable children and young people below the age of 24, improve the coordination of services aimed at this target group?

There are seven more-specific research questions guiding the focus of this process evaluation:

- How is cross-sectoral collaboration of services organised and regulated in the Nordic countries?
- How is the balance between state regulation and local autonomy in cross-sectoral collaborations—and how does it vary?
- How is cross-sectoral collaboration organised and regulated in the national cases? What are the strengths and weaknesses of different ways of organising services?
- How is a user perspective incorporated in the different national cases?

- Is it possible to identify some kind of ‘best practices’? What can be learned from the national cases about cross-sectoral collaboration of services for the target group?
- Can complex needs related to vulnerable children and young people be met in a more effective way through better collaboration and coordination of services?
- How can ‘best practices’ be shared in order to improve the coordination of service delivery directed at vulnerable children, young people and their families in the Nordic countries?

In this first interim report from the process evaluation of the Nordic 0–24 project, we provide an overview of the design of the process evaluation. Furthermore, we present a model developed to examine how the national cases may serve as sources for identifying factors that contribute to better collaboration and more coherent service provision to vulnerable children and young people. As a background for future analyses, the national policy context of the involved cases and relevant national welfare systems and services are described.

## **Complex needs, better coordination and collaboration**

Social investment with an emphasis on education and family policy has traditionally been highly valued in the Nordic countries (Dølvik et al. 2015; Esping-Andersen et al. 2002; Moriel, Palier and Palme 2012). The Nordic 0–24 project could be analysed from a social investment perspective—i.e., it could be seen as an investment in a more coherent policy for vulnerable children and youth, to enhance their future life chances and productivity that, in turn, would result in a more sustainable development of the welfare states. The social investment perspective rests on an understanding of social policy as a productive factor, essential to economic development and employment growth (Morel et al. 2012: 2–3).

At the same time, it is clear that many of the problems related to vulnerable children and youth cannot be solved by mere investment in childcare and education services: More comprehensive policy solutions are required. Many vulnerable children and young people have *complex needs* where several problems are interwoven: e.g., low income, health problems, language problems, qualification problems in school, drug problems, crime, poor housing, unstable family situations, and unemployed or benefit-dependant parents.

The concept *complex needs* is used by different disciplines to refer both to a *breadth* of needs (having more than one need or needs that are interconnected) and a *depth* of needs (needs that are profound, serious or intense) (Rosengard et al. 2007). Complex needs challenge the traditional service provision of modern specialised welfare states by requiring a multi-dimensional effort. Such challenges are often characterised as *wicked problems* (Fløtten and Grødem 2014, Hansen et al. 2013, Ulfrstad 2011): A *wicked problem* has complex causes and diverse consequences and is seemingly unmanageable due to its complexity. The problem cannot be solved by addressing only one of its dimensions, but rather requires intervention from several angles simultaneously, often involving services from different sectors and governmental levels (Difi 2014).

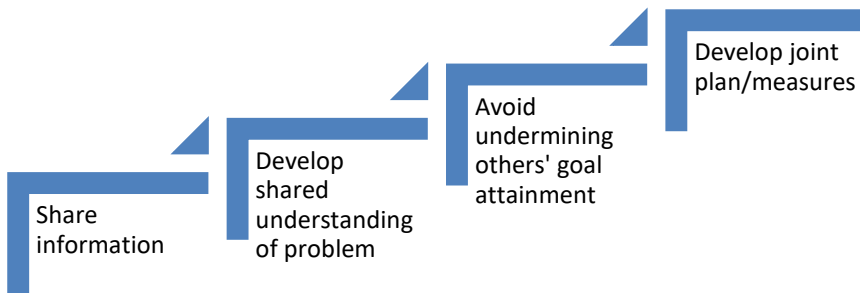
Coordination and collaboration is thus at the top of the agenda in central government management, as there is a growing awareness that a) wicked problems exist, and b) they do not follow sector and governmental boundaries. *Coordination* can be defined in a number of ways. The Norwegian Agency for Public Management and Government (Difi) defines coordination as a process wherein the main objective is that different aims, values, activities, resources or other premises must be seen in relation to one another and prioritised, balanced and adjusted to one another (Difi 2014: 14). This definition is relevant for the Nordic 0–24 project, as it addresses cross-sectoral coordination and collaboration between different sectors, services and professions as a means for more coherent service delivery to vulnerable children and young people. The Nordic 0–24 project is also comprised of cases that enhance improved collaboration between administrative levels (state, region and municipality). Coordination may be divided into vertical and horizontal coordination. Horizontal coordination interconnects administrative units at the same level—for example, directorates from different sectors. Vertical coordination interconnects administrative units at different levels, such as between government departments and directorates, or between states and municipalities (Fimreite 2007). Furthermore, a division can be made between policy development, on the one hand, and the coordination of activity on the other (ibid.). In the policy development process, the involved actors must work on agreeing on aims, principles, activity plans, and frameworks; coordination of activity is about coordinating activities and measures so that they pull in the same direction (ibid.). Difi (2014: 15) makes a distinction between the coordination of resources and the coordination of policies.

This process evaluation applies a coordination staircase developed by Difi (2014) (see figure 1.1) to analyse the approach to and purpose of coordination



in the cases comprising the Nordic 0–24 project, which will further our understanding about better collaboration and cross-sectoral coordination within the involved national cases.

Figure 1.1. Coordination staircase



Source: Difi 2014: 16.

The first step of the coordination staircase is the sharing of information, experience and knowledge. The second step is the development a shared understanding of the problem between different sectors. The third step is when the actors involved change practices within their own sector, either because they realise that their own measures may negatively affect goal attainment in other sectors or because changing practices may lead to positive synergy effects as better goal achievement for all parties. The fourth step involves collaborating on joint measures across sectors and administrative levels.

One main objective of the process evaluation is to identify factors contributing to better cross-sectoral collaboration as a means to enhance more coherent services for vulnerable children and young people. There are several factors that may obstruct collaboration and coordination. These can be at both a system/structural level and at a cultural level. At a system level, salient factors to be aware of include: systems of financing and reporting within sectors; goals and reporting management; different actors' mandates for involvement in collaboration; and regulations in the law for different services restricting the sharing of information about users. Other challenges are related to more cultural aspects: for example, bureaucrats in sectors such as childcare, health care and education have different educational and professional backgrounds with their own professional values, norms and understandings, which may represent a challenge for collaboration (Andersson,

Røhme and Hatling 2006). The analysis of factors contributing to better collaboration and those that might obstruct better coordination and collaboration will be the focus of the next interim report (and the final report). However, in this first interim report, we present a brief overview in chapter 6 of the relevant experiences and factors we have identified from the involved cases and national contact persons thus far.

## **National cases as a starting point**

Each of the countries and autonomous islands that are participating in the Nordic 0–24 project have chosen a case that will serve as a starting point for sharing experiences and contributing to joint Nordic learning about cross-sectoral collaboration. (As mentioned, the Faroe Islands have not included a specific case in the project.) The seven included cases all address services and support to vulnerable children and/or youth in some way, each with an element of enhancing cross-sectoral collaboration as a means to improving services for the target group. That being said, looking into the cases more closely (with a more-detailed presentation in chapter 6), it becomes clear that they also differ in important ways, regarding how they are organised, at which administrative level they are anchored, and which sectors and services they include. In all of the involved countries and islands, the Nordic 0–24 project is anchored in the education sector, such as in the Ministry of Education or Directorate for Education, but the actual cases do not necessarily have schools or educational institutions as a primary or main actor. To obtain a better understanding of the Nordic 0–24 project, we provide a short presentation of the national cases involved and how they are meant to contribute to the joint Nordic project.

### **The national cases**

Denmark has included as their case a network of five different municipal projects administered by the Ministry of Education's team of learning consultants. The team of learning consultants provide different kinds of support and guidance to develop educational practices in the municipalities. One of the issues they focus on is inclusion. The selected five municipalities all have ongoing projects to meet challenges related to vulnerable children and young people and inclusion in school. The educational sector and municipal support system of schools are the primary focus of each of the five local projects. The Danish case explicitly includes cooperation between the state and municipal administrative level. A team of learning consultants from the Ministry

of Education are providing follow-up and guidance for the five municipalities and are facilitating a network for learning between them. In addition, the municipal projects that comprise the Danish case represent efforts targeting improved collaboration between different actors within the education sector and, to some degree, between different services and sectors within the municipalities.

The Finnish case takes place at the municipal and regional (county) level and is aimed at developing models for better collaboration between health, social and educational services to support vulnerable children and young people. The case addresses an ongoing social and health care regional reform<sup>1</sup> in Finland that necessitates closer collaboration between these two administrative levels.<sup>2</sup> The starting point of the project is municipalities that have been working within the framework of a defined life circle model to structure welfare services more explicitly from the needs of different population groups and thus establish more user-oriented services. As part of the Nordic 0–24 project, the case specifically addresses school health services and student health services. The case involves collaboration between different sectors (health, social, education) and different administrative levels. The Finnish case is carried out by the Ministry of Education and Culture, in cooperation with the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities.

The Icelandic case is anchored in a municipal service centre in a district of Reykjavik called Breiðholt. This city district is facing several socioeconomic challenges. The service centre provide a broad range of services to vulnerable children, young people and their families. The ‘Breiðholt model’ was established in 2005, including educational (school) support services at the centre. An interdisciplinary support team provides follow-up of the schools in the district. The aim is to further develop the model as a support for vulnerable children and youth, and to implement it in all Reykjavik schools. The project includes collaboration between different sectors at the municipal level (welfare, social and education), with schools playing a central role. At a national level, the Directorate of Education is administratively responsible for the Nordic 0–24 project in Iceland.

The Norwegian case consists of a network of seven municipalities administered by the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS). In this network, the municipalities work with cross-sectoral learning processes, the aim of which are to develop a set of indicators for good practice

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<sup>1</sup> <https://thl.fi/en/web/social-welfare-and-health-care-reform>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/observatories/eurwork/articles/finland-major-reform-to-healthcare-and-social-services-underway>

in services for vulnerable children and young people. The participants in the network are primarily leaders or managers from different sectors and units in the seven municipalities. Units include schools; kindergartens; educational-psychological services; child welfare services; public health centres; school health services; family houses (some municipalities have established a separate unit with guidance and counselling for vulnerable children, youth and their families); and the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV) offices. At the municipal level, the case explicitly addresses cross-sectoral collaboration and involves different sectors. At the national level, KS is in dialog with the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training regarding their contribution to the Nordic 0–24 project.

The Swedish case is administered by the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SKL) and brings together four municipalities and one region as part of a project called 'Plug In 2.0'. Plug In, which started in 2012, is a large collaborative project targeting the prevention of early school leaving. Plug In 2.0 is a direct continuation of the first Plug In project, with the goal of improving the quality of upper-secondary education, thereby increasing the number of young people who successfully complete it. The target group is 15- to 24-year-olds (males and females) who are at risk of disrupting their studies or who have already dropped out of school, and newly arrived students. For the Nordic 0–24 project, the four municipalities and the region continue to develop and improve collaborative models that facilitate systematic efforts towards young people who have interrupted, or are at risk of interrupting, their studies. The key focus is to enable, further develop and intensify cross-sectoral activities and measures at the municipal and regional level. The project will include different municipal sectors and services: education (both elementary and secondary schools), social services, labour market services and integration units.

The aim of the case from Greenland is to develop a coherent and cross-sectoral effort towards vulnerable children, young people and their families in the small and remote town of Tasiilaq, in eastern Greenland. The town is faced with severe deprivation and extensive social problems; the target group is comprised of children, youth and parents in families with a wide range of social challenges. The project involves all relevant municipal services, including health, social, welfare and education services. One of the project's goals is to introduce specific measures that can help children be better prepared for (and thus be able to participate in) school, which in turn will increase their likelihood of completing elementary school and further education. The case is part of an ongoing project in the area that involves both the

municipality in question and several ministries at the national level. An interdisciplinary co-ordination group of the project has been established. The project involves collaboration between different sectors at the municipal level, and also collaboration between the administrative levels represented by different ministries at the national level and the municipality and services in Tasiilaq.

The case from the Åland regional government is aimed at developing a digitalised model for cross-sectoral collaboration in support of children and young people where there is a need of simultaneous intervention from different organisations and services. The case should be seen with the context of its long-term goal of preventing dropout and social exclusion. The digitalised model is meant to be a tool for collaboration between services: e.g., child protection, elementary and upper-secondary schools, and health care services. The model is to be developed, implemented and disseminated in Åland, and is anchored in the government of Åland's Department of Education and Culture (*Landskapsregjeringen*).

### **Cases are heterogeneous in nature**

As the above summaries illustrate, the cases that comprise the Nordic 0–24 project are quite heterogeneous in nature. Even though the aim of the Nordic 0–24 project is to develop more coherent and effective services for vulnerable children and youth, thus reducing social exclusion and dropout, the cases have chosen different approaches. Each case involves different sectors and services, and they provide experiences on collaboration at different levels: between administrative levels, between sectors and between professions or services. The cases were not chosen from a stringent, pre-defined set of variables to ensure that they would be comparable, or that they would provide data on the same issues. As such, undertaking a comparative analysis of the cases and their end goals is not possible in this process evaluation—neither is it the aim of the Nordic 0–24 project.

The joint meetings of the Nordic 0–24 project have the seven included cases as a starting point for sharing experiences, further learning and reflections around factors contributing to improved collaboration and more coherent services for the target groups. The national initiatives and practices in the cases will also generate knowledge and experiences about cross-sectoral collaboration and more coherent services, helping to identify which factors promote better collaboration and which factors appear to hamper it.

All the involved cases will be subject to national evaluations. These evaluations will add to both the Nordic project and this process evaluation. The

research team has developed a list with different issues and problems that the national evaluations should include with the aim of ensuring that they gain relevant information from the national projects that can add to the process evaluation analyses (appendix 1).

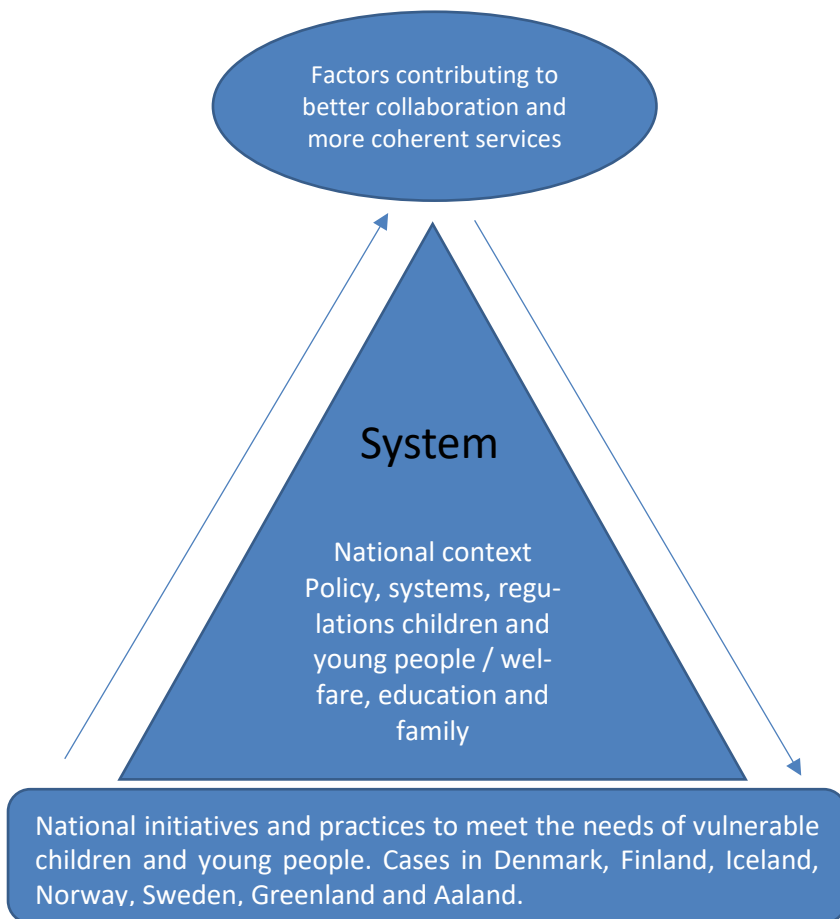
### **Model for process evaluation of the Nordic 0–24 project**

The research team has developed a model for the process evaluation of the Nordic 0–24 project (figure 1.2). As described above, the national cases are the starting point of the Nordic 0–24 project. Analyses of the experiences from the national cases must be seen in relation to the national context. Because of the diversity of the included projects, it is important to look at different sectors and services in each country to approach the context of the involved cases. To provide a platform or a background for further discussions in the Nordic 0–24 project, an overview of the most relevant education and welfare systems in all the participating countries and islands will be presented below.

Though not every country explicitly addresses or includes schools or has goal-oriented measures to combat school dropout, the education sector is a key part of the joint dialogs and discussions in the 0–24 project. As a context for the further discussions, therefore, we will briefly introduce the system of early childhood education and care (ECEC), as well as primary, lower-secondary and upper-secondary education in all countries. In addition, we present the most relevant health and social services currently available for children, youth and their families in the involved countries, and the public labour market services available for young people. In addition, an important part of the context of the Nordic 0–24 project is the national attention towards, and discourse around, vulnerable children and young people, as well as the ongoing initiatives related to cross-sectoral collaboration.

Below, we present the model for the process evaluation. The goal of the process evaluation is to identify factors identified in the Nordic 0–24 project's ongoing cases that appear to contribute to better collaboration and more coherent services for vulnerable children and young people.

Figure 1.2. Model analysis, Nordic 0–24



## Design and method

A process evaluation implies that the researchers follow the Nordic 0–24 project as it develops. During the project’s duration, the information gathered and analyses conducted at each stage are presented and discussed with the involved actors. It could be argued that, in this way, the role of the evaluation is to be another actor in the developing process of the project, more than an objective evaluator. In this design, research conducted at one stage informs

later stages of both the Nordic project and the research process, and will potentially influence the further development of both the involved cases and the problems discussed in the joint Nordic project.

In the Nordic 0–24 project, representatives from the national cases meet two times a year to share experiences. As part of the process evaluation, we are using these joint meetings as an arena for collecting information from the involved national cases and presenting our findings to-date. In this way, the researchers carrying out the process evaluation communicate and discuss findings with the involved actors throughout the project period. This design opens the possibility to analyse the experiences of each case over time, to identify factors across the different contexts that may contribute to better cross-sectoral collaboration, which in turn will facilitate better services for vulnerable children and young people.

The process evaluation will use different data sources:

- Mapping forms
- Document analysis
- Participation at joint Nordic meetings
  - Individual interviews
  - Focus groups
  - Presentation of findings and dialogs with participants.

Throughout the process evaluation, we will present three reports: two interim reports (May 2018 and May 2019) and one final report (June 2020). In this first interim report, we provide a description of the national context of each case, as well as a structural description that includes the aim of the case, the key target group, and which services and sectors are involved. Information for this first report was collected from:

- *Participation in the first joint meeting of the Nordic 0–24 project*, which took place outside Oslo, in Gardermoen, Norway from November 9<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup>, 2017. At this meeting, members of the evaluation team presented the evaluation project, observed the discussions at the meeting, and conducted individual interviews with national contact persons. The meeting programme included presentations on Sweden’s ‘Plug In 2.0’ project. A representative from the Skåne Association of Local Authorities presented their work on education, labour and integration, youth representatives shared their experiences from dropping out of school and, in one session, youth representatives presented their work on user involvement as part of the Plug In project. There were also presentations of the Icelandic case in Reykjavik,



Greenland's case in Tasiilaq, and Denmark's case, which included a presentation of the 'Children's Voice' project in Copenhagen.

- *Mapping forms distributed to the eight national contact persons* to collect data on the organisation of services in each country. The contact persons were asked to focus on the early education and care sector, and on education, health, social and employment services directed at children and young people. The mapping form also contained questions about national attention towards vulnerable children and young people ages 0–24, policy-related early interventions, current cross-sectoral collaboration, and other national initiatives directed at the target group. The mapping took place in December 2017 and January 2018.
- *Mapping of national projects*: The descriptions of national cases in this report are based on information about the projects provided by the Nordic 0–24 project and their website. Additional information was provided by the national project leaders and case managers upon request. The requested information covered three topics: project aim(s), target group(s), and collaborative actors and their intended contribution to the joint Nordic project. In addition, participation in project meetings has provided specific information about the cases and their current status.
- *Participation at the second joint meeting in the Nordic 0–24 project* in Copenhagen April 19<sup>th</sup>– 20<sup>th</sup>. Field trips to two of the projects in the Danish case were carried out (Østre Farimagsgade School in Copenhagen and their project 'Children's Voice', and Tårnby municipality and their project on the development of a support system targeting inclusion in schools). The evaluators took part in a session at the joint meeting, presenting and conversing with the participants. The evaluators also presented the mapping of each national context (a written report presenting the findings was sent to the participants before the meeting) and received feedback on the presented information and preliminary analysis. There was a session with group discussions and a plenum discussion about the aim of the national cases and their contributions to the joint Nordic project on cross-sectoral collaboration.

## **Challenges of the chosen design**

Researchers' experiences thus far suggest that the design of the process evaluation presents clear challenges for gaining access to relevant data. The design relies on national contact persons and project leaders to provide data. They are asked to provide information about national context (education and welfare services, and national policy discussions regarding early intervention and the prevention of children and youths' social exclusion), in addition to information and data from the cases. While working on this first interim report, all of the contact persons found it challenging to complete the mapping forms and to provide information on the range of questions related to the national context of each. For some of the countries, it was also difficult to obtain structural information about their cases. Time constraints certainly played a role, but there were likely other reasons: For one, as the national contact persons work in the education sector, it is challenging for them to access relevant information on services and systems from other sectors. For another, while English is the joint language in the project, none of the participating actors are native English speakers. And finally, some of the countries were still in the process of developing or defining the cases—some of the case descriptions therefore remained incomplete.

## **First interim report: National policy contexts and cases**

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the context of each national case as a background for further analysis as part of the Nordic 0–24 project.

In chapter 2, we take a step back and present some relevant background information on the Nordic countries, on available statistics for certain topics related to vulnerable children and young people, and on national attention targeting the 0–24 project areas, including early intervention and cross-sectoral collaboration. In chapters 3, 4 and 5, we present a mapping of the systems of early childhood education and care, education from primary to upper-secondary school, health and social services, and public labour market services for young people. This is not a comprehensive mapping, but rather a mapping of systems and services of relevance for the target group. A systematic presentation of the involved cases is presented in chapter 6, before we provide a closing summary and discussion in chapter 7.

## 2. Background

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### **A Nordic model, with national variations**

The fact that the Nordic Council of Ministers initiated the Nordic 0–24 project illustrates just how high the situation of vulnerable children and youth, early intervention and cross-sectoral collaboration has been placed on the Nordic political agenda. The Nordic countries all have advanced welfare states. We frequently talk about the Nordic model and it is common to group the Nordic countries into the same type of universal welfare state (Dølvik et al. 2015; Esping-Andersen 1990; Kildal and Kuhnle 2005). Although the Nordic welfare states share several features, they also differ in many ways—for example, different models of service provision have been developed, and there are differences in the school systems and in administrative levels and regulations of services. The overall similarities within the Nordic model and the national variations, however, make it meaningful to compare the Nordic countries and to discuss what the countries can learn from each other. Sharing of knowledge and experiences is highly relevant.

In this chapter, we will present background information on the Nordic countries and some statistical facts on the situation of vulnerable children and young people and on social exclusion. In the last part of the chapter we present some findings about national attention towards—and initiatives related to—vulnerable children and youth, early intervention and cross-sectoral collaboration.

### **Population and demographics**

The Nordic countries vary in size and population (table 2.1). As the *State of the Nordic Region 2018* report points out, the Nordic population is growing, mainly due to immigration. Another demographic trend is urbanisation (Grunfelder, Rispling and Norlen 2018: 23).

Table 2.1. Population in Nordic countries, 2017.

	Total population 2017
Sweden	9 995 153
Denmark	5 748 749
Finland	5 474 083
Norway	5 258 317
Iceland	338 349
Greenland	55 860
Faroe Islands	49 864
Åland	29 214

Source: State of the Nordic Region 2018, National Statistical Institutes.

## Administrative levels in the Nordic countries

The composition of administrative levels varies in the Nordic countries. Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden all have a national (central government), regional (county council or administrative regions) and local (municipality) level of administration. Iceland, Greenland, the Faroe Islands and Åland have a central level of governmental, but no regional administrative level. There have been municipal and regional reforms in recent years—in all of the countries, the number of municipalities has been reduced over the past several decades, and in many areas the responsibility for service provision has been decentralised to the local level. Below, we provide some general facts on the governmental and administrative levels of the involved countries and islands<sup>3</sup>:

**Denmark** implemented an extensive municipal and regional reform in 2007, including a large reduction in the number of municipalities. Today there are 98 municipalities, and Denmark’s 14 counties were replaced by five administrative regions.

The autonomous area of **Greenland** has a national level of government and five municipalities.

<sup>3</sup> Source for this section: <http://www.nordregio.se/Metameny/About-Nordregio/Nordic-working-groups/nwgcityregions/Administrative-municipal-and-regional-reforms/>

The autonomous area of the **Faroe Islands** has a national level of government and 30 municipalities.

**Finland** has 311 municipalities and 19 regions (counties), of which one is the autonomous island province of Åland. Finland is experiencing an ongoing major regional reform, such as the introduction of larger regions and a county government, and changes in administrative structures, where responsibilities for public health and social services are being moved from the municipalities to the new counties.

The autonomous region **Åland Island** has a central government (*landskapsregjeringen*) and 16 municipalities.

**Iceland** has 74 municipalities. Unlike the other Nordic countries, Iceland does not have a regional governmental level: regional development activities are organised by a national state agency—the Icelandic Institute of Regional Development.

**Norway** has 422 municipalities and 18 regions (counties). There has been ongoing municipal and regional reform in Norway since 2014. The parliament has decided to reduce the number of municipalities to 356 and the number of counties to 11, by 2020.

**Sweden** has 290 municipalities and 21 counties. Sweden has not had any changes in the number of municipalities in recent years, but a major regional reform has been running since 2015.

Different acts and statutes regulate welfare services and education in each of the above. These acts and statutes may regulate the structure of services and which administrative level is responsible for providing the services. Some of these regulations restrict the possibility of engaging in cross-sectoral collaborations and of sharing information about the users. Regulations will vary between countries, and relevant regulatory differences will be highlighted in the course of the process evaluation.

## **Vulnerable children and young people in the 0–24 age group**

Statistics on children growing up in low-income families, school dropouts and the share of young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs) are measures that provide insight into the scope and scale of the problems facing vulnerable children and youth in the Nordic countries. Given the data available, the statistics shown below indicate that there are some

differences between the Nordic countries on these key variables related to the scope of the Nordic 0–24 project.

In cross-national comparisons of statistics, one must be aware that data and definitions may vary between countries. All statistics must therefore be interpreted with some caution. In many areas, it is impossible to make comparisons due to differences in national measures—as is the case with, for instance, statistics on dropouts. Below, we present statistics on early school leaving, as this is the only available comparable data related to school dropout.

## Low income

Growing up in a low-income family increases a child’s risk of experiencing social exclusion. The poverty rate is defined as the share of people living in a household with a disposable income below 60% of the median equivalised national income, after social transfers. This is not a measure of absolute poverty, but of relative poverty—the poverty line highlights the share of children living in families whose income is so low that children are at risk of not having access to ordinary or necessary goods.

Table 2.2. At-risk-of-poverty rates for households with dependent children and for children under the age of 18 (EU-SILC 2016). At-risk-of-poverty rate cut-off point: 60 % of median equivalised disposal income after social transfers.

	Households with dependent children	Children under the age of 18
Sweden	16.1	18.7
Norway	10.1	12.8
Finland	8.0	9.3
Denmark	7.9	9.4
Iceland*	9.4	-

\*Statistics for Iceland, 2015

The risk of poverty is highest in Sweden and lowest in Finland (table 2.1). It should be noted that the numbers for Denmark do not include Greenland and the Faroe Islands, and we do not have comparable statistics from any of the autonomous islands. From Norway, we know that parents’ age, civil status, education, and employment status, as well as the number of children in the

family influence the risk of experiencing poverty. These risk factors are correlated with having an immigrant background—immigrants are therefore overrepresented among the poor (Fløtten and Hansen 2018). The same risk factors are also evident in the other Nordic countries (Berglund and Esser 2014; Ekspertudvalg om fattigdom 2013; Ólafsdóttir and Ólafsson 2014; Kangas and Salionemi 2013).

In the next chapter, we will show that in all Nordic countries, a large share of children participate in early childhood education. Many of the countries have implemented regulations regarding parental payment or arrangements to ensure that children from low-income families can participate in early childhood education. In Norway, for example, there have been special arrangements to ensure that children with immigrant backgrounds participate in early childhood education arrangements as a measure to improve language development. A recent published review of universal preschool programmes and long-term child outcomes from Danish research institute VIVE show a positive effect of participating in kindergarten or universal day care provisions, including later progress in school, years of education, and future employment. The effects tended to be higher for children with low socioeconomic status (Dietrichson et al. 2018).<sup>4</sup> One finding is that the day care arrangements must have a certain quality before they have any effect on children's later development. From this perspective, high-quality early childhood arrangements could thus be seen as an early intervention to prevent early school leaving.

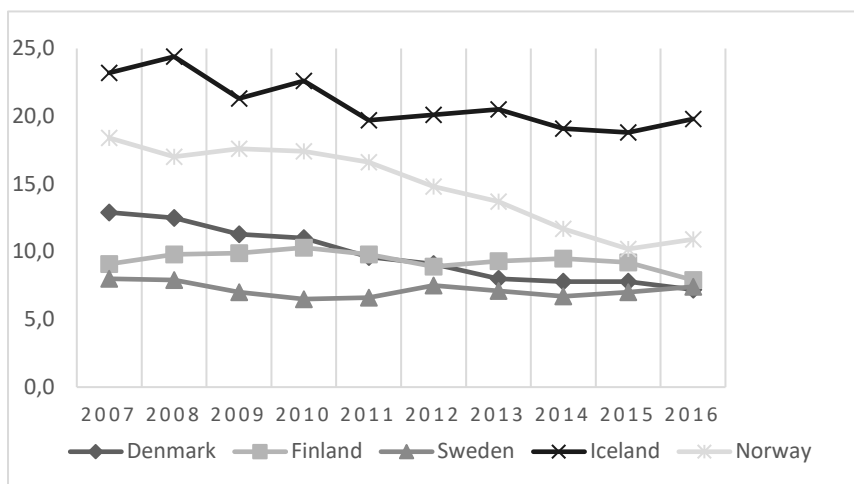
### **Early school leaving**

A primary goal of the Nordic 0–24 project is to prevent school dropout. As we do not have comparable data on dropout from all the Nordic countries, data from Eurostat on early leavers from education and training in the Nordic countries is referred to (figure 2.1).

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<sup>4</sup> [https://pure.sfi.dk/ws/files/1608357/10621\\_Universal\\_Preschool.pdf](https://pure.sfi.dk/ws/files/1608357/10621_Universal_Preschool.pdf)

Figure 2.1. Early leavers<sup>5</sup> from education and training in Nordic countries (percent of population aged 18–24). Eurostat 2016 (edat\_lfse\_14).



Since 2007, the Nordic countries have documented a drop in the number of young people who do not complete secondary education, but the levels of early school leavers varies. Iceland has the highest share of young people without completed secondary education in 2016 (19.8%), while Denmark has the lowest (7.2%) (figure 2.1.).

Education and training strengthens young people’s possibilities in the labour market, while early school leaving represents a risk of future marginalisation. Youth unemployment has been high on the political agenda across Europe since the financial crisis. Although youth unemployment has not hit the Nordic countries as hard as it has in other parts of Europe, it is still a challenge. Finland and Sweden have the highest rates of youth unemployment among 15- to 24-year-olds. The rates in both countries were above the EU average of 18.7% in 2016: 20.7% in Finland and 18.9% in Sweden (Grunfelder et al. 2018:80-81).

In recent years, there has been much attention on young people’s mental health problems as a risk factor for dropping out of education and training.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> ‘Early leavers from education and training’ refers to individuals aged 18 to 24 who have completed, at most, lower-secondary education and are not involved in further education or training; the indicator ‘early leavers from education and training’ is expressed as the percentage of individuals aged 18 to 24 meeting this criteria, out of the total population of 18- to 24-year-olds.

<sup>6</sup> <http://norden.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1071160/FULLTEXT01.pdf>



On assignment from the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Nordic Welfare Centre organised a project on youth in the Nordic countries, focusing on youth with mental health problems and their situation in school and later transition to working life. As a result of the project, they published a report containing several examples of initiatives from the Nordic countries; they also made four key recommendations for how countries can prevent young people with mental health problems from dropping out of education and training<sup>7</sup>: 1) Create better conditions for cross-sectoral collaboration, 2) Make better conditions for enterprises to provide low-threshold offers to vulnerable youth, 3) Strengthen and develop access to assistance in front-line services, schools, and social and health services, and 4) Invest in health promoting measures in schools (primary, lower- and upper-secondary schools).

## **NEETs**

Youth unemployed is problematic, but young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) is of special concern across all the Nordic countries. Although shorter spells of NEET status is common in the transition from school to employment, prolonged periods out of education, employment and training are problematic. Such periods ‘can prevent young people from building up skills, work experience and professional networks and cause lasting “scarring” effects on future employment opportunities and earnings’ (OECD 2018: 13). The share of NEETs among 15-to 29-year-olds varies, from between 11.7% in Finland and 4.6% in Iceland, according to Eurostat (table 2.3). Table 2.3 presents NEET rates from both Eurostat and OECD, and the general impression is that, regardless of source, NEET rates are highest in Finland, followed by Norway, Denmark, Sweden and Åland. NEET rates are lowest in Iceland. Greenland is not included in the Eurostat and OECD statistics, but has made their own national estimation of NEET rates, at 57%—this indicates a much more severe situation for young people in Greenland than in the other Nordic countries. Several of the Nordic countries also produce national statistics with their own NEET rates, which may deviate from the Eurostat and OECD statistics. The comparisons of NEET rates between countries must therefore be interpreted with some caution.

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<sup>7</sup> Nordens Välfärdscenter (2016a). Unga in i Norden – Psykisk hälsa, arbete, utbildning. Policy recommendation. <https://nordicwelfare.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/policyrekommendationer-unga-sv.pdf>

Table 2.3. NEET rates in the Nordic countries.

	<b>NEET rates % 15–29 years (Eurostat 2016)</b>	<b>NEET rates % 15–29 years (OECD 2016)</b>	<b>NEET 2015 % (national estimates)</b>
Finland	11.7	13.2	
Norway	7.1	9.4	
Denmark	7.4	8.2	
Sweden	7.1	8.2	
Iceland	4.6	5.3	
Åland			8.3
Greenland			57

Note: There are no official NEET rates for the Faroe Islands.

Low education is the most important risk factor for becoming a NEET (OECD 2018). Still, there are possibilities for young people with low qualifications to get a job in the Icelandic labour market, for example, while these possibilities seem to be much lower in the Finnish labour market. Each country’s NEET rates can thus also be viewed as indicators of the structure of the national labour market.

While the Nordic 0–24 project as a whole encompasses the 0–24 age group, two subgroups to look at more closely are the 15–19 age group, when young Nordic citizens are expected to be in upper-secondary education, and the 20–24 age group, when many enter further education or begin working. There are a low percentage of NEETS in the 15–19 age group in all of the countries, as most young people attend school, but the trend for both groups is in line with the earlier presented numbers. Finland has a NEET rate among 20–24 years old on 17.4 percent, while the rates in Iceland is 6 percent (table 2.4).

In April 2018, OECD launched a report on youth policies in Norway entitled, ‘Investing in Youth: Norway’ (OECD 2018). The report shows that young people born outside of Norway are twice as likely to be NEETs as native-born Norwegians. Sweden and Denmark have similar challenges as Norway, and the problem seems to be even more pronounced in Finland.

Table 2.4. NEET indicators, 2016. Percent.

	15–19 years	20–24 years
Denmark	2.5	9.5
Finland	4.2	17.4
Iceland	3.1	6.0
Norway	3.4	10.9
Sweden	3.6	10.9

Source: OECD 2018.

In this report, we have not included specific background data related to immigration in the Nordic countries, but as the Nordic 0–24 project progresses, this must be one of the factors discussed, among other socioeconomic factors of relevance for the social inclusion of vulnerable children and youth. As pointed out above, immigration has been high in recent years across the Nordic countries, but there are national differences. The highest percentage of foreign-born residents is found in Sweden, at more than 15%. In Norway and Iceland, the percentage exceeds the European average of 10.3%. The number is slightly lower in Denmark and is lowest in Finland (Grunfelder et al. 2018: 50).

## National initiatives on early intervention and cross sectoral collaboration

The national political agenda, political attention and initiatives directed towards vulnerable children and youth, as well as actual cross-sectoral collaboration, constitute an important context for the national cases in this process evaluation, and an important background for further cross-national analysis. In the mapping forms sent to the national contact persons, we asked them to describe the political attention over the past few years directed towards improving services for the 0–24 age group, and to account for any ongoing initiatives on cross-sectoral collaborations aimed at improving services for the target group. Answering these questions turned out to be a complicated task for the contact persons.

In all the participating countries, early intervention, issues facing vulnerable children and young people are high on the national agenda; for many years, the need for better cross-sectoral collaboration has been addressed in

public debate on several welfare issues. Several initiatives addressing ongoing cross-sectoral initiatives related to the 0–24 project were reported (though not all countries reported concrete examples). We present some of the reported projects and initiatives below.

The Danish partners report that the political attention to the 0–24 age group has been growing, especially within the field of education and training. This has resulted in politically-agreed-upon reforms to improve the public-school system in 2013, the vocational training system in 2014, the general upper-secondary education system in 2016 and, most recently, the introduction of a new ‘Preparatory Basic Education and Training programme’ targeted towards NEETs (see further presentation in chapter 5). The Danes report that cross-sectoral cooperation often takes the form of special initiatives involving ministries from different sectors—e.g., several ‘youth packages’ from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Employment—with the purpose of improving employment and educational offers for young people. This calls for a constant political focus on the coordination of such initiatives between sector ministries and other relevant actors at the local level, such as the municipalities and their organisation Local Government Denmark (KL).

The Swedish partners reported several collaborative projects aimed at improving services for the 0–24 age group and projects related specifically to the NEET group. One of these is the ‘National Coordinator for NEETs’ (Ministry of Education). The aim of this governmental mandate is to promote cooperation on measures and actions for NEETs between different actors and authorities at the national, regional and local level, as well as to systemise information and knowledge on any interventions that are implemented. The final official report from this project, ‘Our joint responsibility for youth not in employment or education’ (SOU 2018: 11), was published in February 2018.<sup>8</sup> A second project they reported is the Ministry of Education’s ‘Strategy for NEETs’. This strategy presents actions that the government has taken or intends to take from 2015 to 2018 for young people who neither work nor study. The purpose of the measures is to improve the opportunities for these young people to establish themselves in the labour market and in community life. With this strategy, the government is taking a holistic approach to the NEETs and, on the basis of their specific needs, to carrying out early and powerful efforts. The strategy includes a government mandate to allocate state

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<sup>8</sup> [http://uvas.se/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/SOU-2018\\_11\\_webb\\_NY.pdf](http://uvas.se/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/SOU-2018_11_webb_NY.pdf)

grants for local cooperation efforts, and another mandate—directed at the Swedish National Agency for Education—to prevent early school leaving.<sup>9</sup>

There has also been extensive political attention directed at the 0–24 age group in Norway for many years, the main focus of which has been on early intervention and preventing school dropout. It should also be mentioned that child poverty has been high on the political agenda in Norway since the turn of the century. The national project—the *Ny Giv* ('New Possibilities') partnership—was initiated by the Ministry of Education and Research in 2010<sup>10</sup>. The overall objective of this large project was to increase successful completion of upper-secondary education and training. One explicit aim was to improve cooperation across different levels of government and between different measures. The ministry invited all county council administrations (which are responsible for upper-secondary schools), all municipalities and The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV) to participate. Among the prioritised initiatives were improved, enforced cooperation between the county council follow-up services,<sup>11</sup> the upper-secondary schools, the municipal services and NAV. Another area of focus was on improved, enforced collaboration between secondary schools and upper-secondary schools on close, professional follow-up of students with poor results in school. *New Possibilities* was one of the examples presented in the report 'Against All Odds: Paths to Collaboration in Norwegian Public Administration'<sup>12</sup> from the Norwegian Agency for Public Management and eGovernment (Difi: 2014).

Attention still remains directed towards early intervention and preventing school dropout. In 2014, the Ministry of Education and Research asked the Directorate of Health, the Directorate of Labour and Welfare, the Directorate of Integration and Diversity and the Directorate for Education and Training to initiate a collaboration regarding vulnerable children and youth. This collaboration is known today as the '0–24 Partnership'; the partnership's aim is to ensure that more children succeed in school and complete upper-secondary education, through improved cross-sectoral collaboration at the state level and in the municipalities. The county governors are strongly involved in this partnership and support the municipalities' work to achieve a more

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.regeringen.se/rapporter/2015/11/vagar-framat---strategi-for-unga-som-varken-arbetar-eller-studerar/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/upload/kd/kampanjer/nygiv/nygiv5.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Specific services responsible for following up with all young people between 16 and 21 who are not in education or work.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.difi.no/sites/difino/files/mot-alle-odds.-veier-til-samordning-i-norsk-forvaltning-difi-rapport-2014-7.pdf>

multidisciplinary follow-up of vulnerable children and young people. For example, the project 'A Team Around the Teacher' was initiated in 2013/2014 to develop interdisciplinary collaboration practices between schools and other vocational and professional groups. There was also an expectation that improved utilisation and coordination of existing resources—including providing schools with more and varied expertise—and through close interdisciplinary cooperation, can help strengthen follow-up efforts towards vulnerable children and youths in school.<sup>15</sup>

The Faroe Islands reported that political attention directed at the 0–24 age group has increased over the last 5 years. They state that the project *Tann Góða Tilgongdin* ('The Good Process') has contributed to this, but there is still a need to work on further improving services for vulnerable children and young people aged 0–24. 'The Good Process' is a cross-sectoral project targeted at children with autism and their families. One of the aims is to motivate the various professions and professional groups to work together on a joint programme for each family.

Other cross-sectoral collaboration projects were reported from Denmark—for example, the Danish government's action plan, 'All Actions Must Have Consequences', launched and formally presented on 27 October 2017 by the Minister of Justice and the Minister for Children and Social Affairs. In a related publication, 15 initiatives aimed at reducing crime among young people were presented. Among the initiatives are special 'youth crime committees', greater responsibility for the municipalities to respond quickly to marginalised and vulnerable young people, and increased contact with families.

This initiative can be seen in relation to the Norwegian SLT model, which 200 Norwegian municipalities have implemented as part of their preventive work. SLT stands for 'coordination of local drugs and crime preventive actions', with the aim of achieving better coordination between different services and occupational groups so that children and youth get access to appropriate help at the right time. The municipalities have an 'SLT' coordinator, and the model helps facilitate the coordination of knowledge and efforts between the police and relevant municipal services. Within the network arranged as part of the SLT model, a range of actors can participate, including the police, different municipal services (e.g., child protection, youth workers, social services, health services, and schools), volunteers, organisations and private enterprises.

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.hioa.no/Om-HiOA/Senter-for-velferds-og-arbeidslivsforskning/AFI/Publikasjoner-AFI/Et-lag-rundt-laereren>; please note that this project is not being evaluated here.

An example provided by the Finnish partners is their national programme to reform child and family services: LAPE.<sup>14</sup> The Finnish case included in the Nordic 0–24 project should be seen in relation to this national programme. LAPE is one of the 26 key projects of Prime Minister Juha Sipilä’s government, and is centred around the promotion of child and family-oriented services: By creating an operating culture that strengthens children’s rights and develops a more knowledge-based approach, the project’s goal is to strengthen the wellbeing of and resources for children, young people and families. An important premise for the reform is to increase participation among children, young people and families in the planning of their own services. Support for parenting and low-threshold services will also be strengthened. Planned reform activities are to shift:

- from services based on administrative branches to child- and family-oriented services
- from dispersed to coordinated services
- from bureaucratic services to needs-based and tailored services
- from ‘putting out fires’ to timely services
- from remedial to preventive services

In their descriptions of the reform, the partners highlight the government’s argument that, without the reform, services cannot respond to major health and wellbeing challenges, such as inequality among children and young people, more severe mental health problems, the rising need for child protection, and increasing disputes over custody. The reform is being carried out in cooperation between the central government, municipalities, organisations, parishes and other actors, and the operating environment of future municipalities and counties is being taken into account in the reform work. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the Ministry of Education and Culture are responsible for the reform programme, which is being implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice and other ministries—the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, the Finnish National Board of Education, the National Institute for Health and Welfare, and the Church Council—along with many other organisations in the sector.

The partners from Greenland report that the political attention directed towards the 0–24 age group is very high within the health, education and

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<sup>14</sup> [http://stm.fi/documents/1271139/3208911/LAPE-esite-verkko\\_ENG\\_web.pdf/b13d5d01-6ee6-464b-9dbe-399cb018e9da/LAPE-esite-verkko\\_ENG\\_web.pdf](http://stm.fi/documents/1271139/3208911/LAPE-esite-verkko_ENG_web.pdf/b13d5d01-6ee6-464b-9dbe-399cb018e9da/LAPE-esite-verkko_ENG_web.pdf)

social welfare sectors in Greenland. According to them, it is generally accepted that better coordination of services is necessary to improve the quality of services, and to keep young people from being tossed back and forth between services. The Greenlanders, however, did not provide any concrete examples of cross-sectoral initiatives.

In the mapping from Åland, the partners reported that, in recent years, one topic of political attention directed towards the 0–24 age group targeted young women’s mental health. As an example of cross-sectoral collaboration for the 0–24 group, they reference the collaboration of services at the *Barnahus* (‘Children’s House’). *Barnahus* is a service for children believed to be the victims of some form of crime, and is a collaboration between social services, child protection services, police, health care and the prosecuting authority. There was no formal signed agreement related to this initiative.

In both Finland, Sweden and Norway, the national association of local and regional authorities (the Finnish Association of Local and Regional Authorities, Swedish SKL and Norwegian KS, respectively) are active partners in the Nordic 0–24 project. In Norway, social exclusion was the main theme for the annual meetings of KS in 2016. In the meeting, the municipalities participated in a discussion on how to prevent social exclusion: it was decided that, for the upcoming four-year term, social inclusion would be a topic of focus for KS. A look at the websites of local governments in each participating country show that social inclusion is high on the agenda for all. They have each implemented projects centred on social exclusion, vulnerable children and youth, and each highlights the need for better coordination. The need for better collaboration was also emphasised by the association Local Government Denmark (KL), which participated in the joint meeting of the Nordic 0–24 project in Copenhagen.



## 3. Education

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In this chapter, we will briefly describe how educational services, including early childhood education, are organised in the Nordic countries. The presentation is based on information provided by the national contact persons on mapping forms, which were distributed to all participating countries. In addition, the research team has added information from relevant literature and national and international statistics. The following services are included: kindergartens (early childhood education and care), preschool systems, basic education (primary and lower-secondary education) and upper-secondary education.

### **Early childhood education and care (ECEC) and pre-primary school**

All of the Nordic countries have a national early education and care system: ECEC—kindergartens<sup>15</sup> for below-school-age children. ECEC is recognised as having positive effects on children’s welfare, learning and development.<sup>16</sup> There has been a recent development towards viewing kindergartens as a part of the education system, and thus as the first step in a lifelong learning process. As a result, preschool teacher education in the Nordic countries has been strengthened and reformed, and has shifted to providing higher-quality education (Einarsdottir 2013). Offering high-quality kindergartens to all children has become a prioritised goal for all the Nordic countries and is consequently a service of particular importance for the 0–24 age group.

Kindergartens also may play a vital role in identifying children at risk: As such, in keeping with the Nordic 0–24 project’s aim of early intervention, there is a great potential for reducing social inequality and helping children at risk by initiating measures in early childhood—particularly for children who need extra help or stimulation. In the following section, we present information on the following dimensions about ECEC provisions in the Nordic

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<sup>15</sup> Kindergartens here used as a joint term for nursery, day care and kindergartens

<sup>16</sup> <https://norden.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1093973/FULLTEXT01.pdf>

countries: regulations and organisation; starting age and participation; pre-primary school arrangements; funding and payment; private/public arrangements; and arrangements for tests and special support in ECEC.

## **Regulation and organisation**

In the past, kindergartens were typically part of the social sector, but they have gradually been shifted to being the purview of the Ministries of Education. All the Nordic countries now have national curriculum guidelines that kindergartens must follow (Einarsdottir 2013), and early childhood education and care (ECEC) is a municipal responsibility in each country.

**Denmark:** The Ministry of Education has the overall responsibility for ECEC in Denmark. The Danish ECEC sector falls under the Act on Day Care (*dagtilbudsloven*), introduced in 2007. Denmark's local self-government means that the 98 municipalities handle many tasks locally. For example, the local council of each individual municipality is responsible for setting the local service level, setting local goals, and supervising ECEC.<sup>17</sup> Municipalities are obliged to offer children from 26 weeks of age a place in kindergarten until they reach school-age, and are economically sanctioned if they are unable to provide a place.

**Finland:** The Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for the overall planning, steering and supervision of ECEC, as well as for drafting the necessary legislation. The Early Childhood Education and Care Act took effect on 1 August 2015, replacing the previous Children's Day Care Act, with the new act emphasising the educational aspect of ECEC services in Finland. A government proposition for a new ECEC act is currently going through a parliament reading. The plan is that the new act will take effect on 1 August 2018. Regulations related to the qualifications of staff and data collection in ECEC comprise a central theme in the draft.

The Finnish National Agency for Education decides the core curriculum for early childhood education and care. The municipalities (local authorities) are responsible for providing ECEC services, which may be delivered by local authorities or private service providers. In Finland, all children below school age (i.e., seven years) have the right to ECEC for at least 20 hours per week.

**Iceland:** The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture is responsible for the Pre-primary School Act of 2008. According to the Act, municipalities are

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<sup>17</sup> <http://socialministeriet.dk/arbejdsomraader/dagtilbudsftalen/en-styrket-paedagogisk-laereplan/>

responsible for providing kindergartens and making sure they are run in accordance with the law. The first article in the Act points out that pre-primary schools are the first level of the educational system. Iceland's National Curriculum Guide for pre-primary school outlines the aims of education for young children.

**Norway:** The Ministry of Education and Research is responsible for all education in Norway, including kindergarten. Kindertartens are regulated through The Day Care Institutions Act and a national framework plan for the content and tasks of kindertartens. Municipalities are responsible for providing kindertartens service to children residing in their local area.

In 2009, Norway introduced a system which gave all children the right to a place in kindertartens, wherein children who turned one by the end of October in a given year were guaranteed a place in a kindertartens that same calendar year. In 2017, this right was extended to children who turned one by the end of November.

**Sweden:** Kindertartens are regulated through the Educational Act and the curriculum. The municipalities are responsible for providing ECEC services to children between one and six years of age. Kindertartens can be run either by the municipality or by independent partners (e.g., parent or staff co-operatives, a foundation or a company). The same regulations apply to both independent and municipality-owned kindertartens, and municipalities are responsible for ensuring that regulations related to quality and safety measures are followed. In Sweden, all children between the age of one and five have the right to ECEC.

**Faroe Island:** In the Faroe Islands, although the kindertartens are run by the municipalities, there is a governmental law under the Ministry of Education that regulates the responsibilities, content and tasks of all kindertartens. There is also a national kindertartens curriculum.

**Greenland:** The Department of Education, Culture, Church and Research is responsible for kindertartens legislation, and the municipalities are responsible for providing kindertartens services.

**Åland:** Åland's Department of Social Affairs, Health and Environment is responsible for kindertartens legislation, and the municipalities act as the administrative unit for providing kindertartens services.

## **Starting age and participation rates**

The age at which children may enter kindertartens varies: In Denmark, Greenland and the Faroe Islands, children may be admitted to kindertartens from

the age of 6 months, and in Åland from the age of 9 months. In Sweden, Norway and Finland, children are usually around 12-months-old when they first attend kindergarten. In all countries, the majority of children participate in kindergarten: over 95% of all 3- to- 5-year-olds in Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. The participation rate is lower, however, for the youngest children: In Denmark, 90% of children between the ages of 1 and 2 attend kindergarten, while in Norway the percentage stands at 81%, and at 76% in Sweden.

In Finland, the participation rate is even lower. For the youngest children, 29% of 1-year-olds and 52% of 2-year-olds attend kindergarten. For 3-year-olds, the participation rate is 59%, and for 5-year-olds, it stands at 80%. In Åland, participation rates are comparable to Finland, for all ages. The explanation for the relatively low attendance rates is probably the ‘cash for care’ benefit, an allowance that is granted to families when a child under 3 years of age is looked after at home—this allowance is also granted for other below-school-age siblings of children under 3, if they, too, are looked after at home.

We do not have information on possible differences in kindergarten attendance between different social groups. But we do know that in Norway, there are slightly lower attendance rates in kindergartens for children from immigrant families (especially for the youngest age groups). The numbers available are for children that are minority-language speaking, and show 76% attendance rates for two-year-olds and 94% for 5-year-olds, respectively.<sup>18</sup> In Greenland, 30% of children below school age do not attend kindergarten, for a variety of reasons, and the share of these is highest among the youngest children (under two years) and in rural areas.

### **Pre-primary school**

Denmark, Finland and Sweden have a pre-primary school year (*førskoleår*) for children the year before they enter primary school, to prepare them for the start of school. In Denmark and Finland, this year has been mandatory since 2015. In Sweden, the one-year pre-primary school is not mandatory, but approximately 95% of all children attend it anyway.

In Norway and Iceland, there is no pre-primary school year but, since 1997, basic education has started at the age of six. In Finland, pre-primary education is provided free of charge and children with special educational needs

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<sup>18</sup> <https://www.imdi.no/om-integrering-i-norge/innvandrere-og-integrering/barnehage-og-utdanning/>

have the right to enter pre-primary education the year they turn five—this is regulated under the basic Education Act.

### **Funding and payment**

Childcare services are financed through a combination of parental payment and public funding in all the Nordic countries. A proportion of the childcare market is run by private actors in each country who usually receive public support for providing childcare services. There are differences between countries regarding the degree of regulation of parental payment for these services: In Norway and Sweden, for example, the maximum parental pay for childcare services is centrally regulated, whereas in Denmark, private providers of childcare services may charge higher fees if they wish. In Norway and Sweden, there are implemented systems with a number of free core hours in kindergarten/pre-primary school. In Norway, children from low-income families between the ages of three and five have the right to 20 hours of free kindergarten per week. In Sweden, all children from the age of three years are offered 15 hours of free ECEC per week.

**Denmark:** All ECEC facilities are based on parental payments. The size of parental payment depends on the operating costs in each municipality. According to the Act on Day Care, there is municipal funding covering 75% of operating costs, which means that parental costs may not exceed 25% of total costs. Low-income parents may be entitled to reduced payment (which can gradually reduce parental payment to zero, depending on income level). Parents may also receive a subsidy for caring for their own children or for arranging private childcare as an alternative to kindergarten.

**Finland:** A client fee charged for ECEC is organised by local authorities. The size of the fee depends on family income and the number of hours that the child participates in the services. The price for private ECEC services is determined by the service provider, but a family can receive a private kindergarten allowance to help cover the costs. Pre-primary school is provided free of charge.

**Iceland:** Parents pay part of the cost for kindergarten, but the fees vary between municipalities and are, in some instances, based on parents' income.

**Norway:** Kindergarten is financed by municipalities (via state funds) and parental pay. Both public and private kindergarten providers receive the same amount of municipal finances. Parents pay a maximum fee per month, per child: in 2018, this was 2 910 NOK (300 EUR). There are rebates for low-income parents and for siblings, one of which is called 'free core hours',

where low-income families with children between the ages of 3 and 5 receive 20 hours of free kindergarten per week if the household has an income lower than the politically-decided-upon limit: In 2016/2017, this limit was 417 000 NOK (43 200 EUR).

**Sweden:** The Education Act regulates ECEC fees and states that the fee should be reasonable. From the age of 3, kindergarten is free for 15 hours a week. Since 2005, all municipalities have had a system of maximum fees, with a cap on how high fees can be for each family. The maximum fee system is voluntary for municipalities, and municipalities who apply are entitled to a government grant to compensate them for loss of income.

**Faroe Islands:** Parents pay a maximum of 30% of ECEC costs, and the remaining costs are covered by the municipalities. While some municipalities offer free kindergarten, parental payment typically varies between 1 500 DKR to 2 400 DKR per month, per child.

**Greenland:** Parental payment is income-regulated but it varies by municipalities.

**Åland:** The national preschool system organised and financed by the municipalities, and parental payment is income-regulated.

### **Private/public kindergarten**

The kindergarten system in most of the Nordic countries is either public or run as a combination of public and private institutions. Different private providers operate in the Nordic kindergarten market, such as commercial and non-commercial private businesses. The share of private kindergartens varies between the countries: For example, in Norway, just under half of all kindergartens are privately owned, whereas in Finland the same applies for only 7% of ECEC institutions. In Iceland, few kindergartens are private, and in the Faroe Islands, there are no private kindergartens.

### **Tests and special support**

**Denmark:** At the age of three, the linguistic capacity of all children is evaluated, even those not participating in any ECEC arrangements. Institutions and/or the municipality administrations carry out this evaluation, and some municipalities even begin the evaluation at the age of two. In cases where a child's language capacity is assessed as inadequate, municipalities are obliged to provide necessary language-stimulating activities—one such measure for children who are not attending kindergarten could be to enter

kindergarten, so they may participate in activities that promote language development. Parents who refuse to accept additional linguistic training for their child may risk losing their child benefit.<sup>19</sup>

**Finland:** A personal early education plan is drawn up for each child in the local kindergarten. The plan (and its implementation) must take into consideration each child's individual opinions and wishes; involve parents in their child's early education; and cater to any child who needs extra support.

**Iceland:** Municipalities are responsible for organising any specialist (e.g., counselling or support) services directed at pre-primary schoolchildren, their families, and their schools. It is also the responsibility of municipalities to monitor the quality of pre-primary school operation and to encourage cooperation between the different pre-primary schools and between the pre-primary schools and the primary schools.

**Norway:** In Norway, efforts have been made to develop measures to stimulate kindergarten attendance for children in immigrant families, with the aim of improving their Norwegian language skills before they start school.

“The National Framework Plan for the content and tasks of kindergartens” states that kindergartens must prepare children for a smooth transition from kindergarten to school, e.g., through monitoring children to identify and support those who demonstrate communication problems, who are not linguistically active, or who show signs of delayed language development.

The framework plan also tasks kindergartens with making the necessary social, pedagogical and/or physical adjustments to ensure that children who require additional support receive additional services. Kindergartens can, for example, cooperate with educational and psychological counselling services (PPT), which are regulated under the Education Act, to ensure children with special needs are receiving adequate services.

**Sweden:** The Education Act states that education, including kindergarten, should take into consideration the different needs of children and students. Gender-aware education, for instance, is becoming increasingly common, with the goal of providing children with the same opportunities in life, regardless of gender. Each kindergarten is also responsible for supporting immigrant children in developing both their Swedish language abilities and their mother tongue.

**Faroe Islands:** Support for kindergarten children in need of extra support is provided by the Central Institute for Language and Psychological Counselling, and from the local pedagogical advice system run by the municipalities.

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<sup>19</sup> <http://www.oecd.org/education/school/SS5-country-background-report-denmark.pdf>

In those cases where special needs are permanent, support is financed by the government.

**Greenland:** While attending kindergarten, children are assessed using various tools (e.g., RABUS or TRAS) to detect any behavioural or language difficulties. In addition, children are assessed for school readiness at the age of six, just before starting school (*Skoleparathedes Undersøgelse*).

**Åland:** For children in kindergarten who are in need of extra support because of social, behavioural or language difficulties, there are special kindergartens and services integrated into the regular kindergartens. This special support is organised by the municipality and is provided by teachers who are educated in providing services for children with special needs.

Table 3.1. Characteristics of early childhood education and care in the Nordic countries

	Earliest starting age in kindergarten	Participation rates in kindergarten: young children	Participation rates in kindergarten: older children	Participation rates in pre-primary education
Norway <sup>1</sup>	12 months	81% (1–2 yrs)	97% (3–5 yrs)	n/a
Sweden <sup>2</sup>	12 months	76% (1–3 yrs)	94% (4–5 yrs)	97%
Finland <sup>3</sup>	11 months (approx.)	29% (1 yrs) 52% (2 yrs)	59% (3 yrs) 79.7% (5 yrs)	Compulsory
Denmark <sup>4</sup>	6 months	18% (< 0 yrs) 90% (1–2 yrs)	98% (3–5 yrs)	Compulsory
Iceland <sup>5</sup>	12 months		96.1% (3–5 yrs)	
Faroe Islands	6 months			
Åland	9 months			
Greenland	6 months			

<sup>1</sup> Norway: Numbers from 2015. <sup>2</sup> Sweden: Numbers from 2015. <sup>3</sup> Finland: numbers from 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Denmark: numbers from 2014. <sup>5</sup> Iceland: numbers from 2014. <sup>6</sup> Numbers from 2014, OECD Family Database.



## Basic education (primary and lower-secondary school)

Equal access to education for all has long been an important aim of the Nordic welfare state. Education as a key factor in social integration and social mobility has been highly emphasised and all countries have aims related to inclusive education. In the following section, we present the following dimensions of the basic education systems in the Nordic countries: organisation and regulation of the school system, systems of support for students with special needs, and school health services and after-school programmes.

### Organisation and regulation of the school system

The regulation of basic education is similar across the Nordic countries: In each country, it is the national Ministry for Education that is responsible for drafting legislation for primary and secondary schools. An Education Directorate is the executive agency for the Ministries in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and the Faroe Islands. In Åland, the Department of Education and Culture is the central authority responsible for the legislation of primary and lower-secondary schools. In Greenland, the Ministry for Culture, Education, Research and Church is the central administrator of primary and lower-secondary schools. The municipalities under *Naalakkersuisut*—Greenland's self-government—are responsible for providing the school service.

Compulsory basic education is governed by state legislation, but the practical responsibilities for implementing school services are, in general, decentralised to the municipal level in all the Nordic countries. There are some variations in the share of private schools between countries and rules for allowing private schools. Sweden and Denmark have the highest share of private schools, while Finland, Norway and Iceland have very few private primary and lower-secondary schools. In 2013, the share of students in private compulsory (primary and lower-secondary) school was 16% in Denmark, 13% in Sweden, 4% in Finland, 3% in Norway and 2% in Iceland (Lundahl 2016).<sup>20</sup>

Basic education in practise comprises 10 years in all countries, but it varies if there is a pre-primary school year included or not. School starting age varies between six and seven. In Denmark and Finland, a pre-primary school year is mandatory, followed by 9 years of basic education. Most children in Sweden also attend pre-primary school at the age of six, and then enter first

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<sup>20</sup> <http://umu.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A905133&dswid=7808>

grade at the age of seven. In Iceland and Norway, children start first grade at the age of six. In all the Nordic countries, students graduate from basic education at the age of 15: In Iceland and Norway, this is 10<sup>th</sup> grade while for the rest of the countries it is 9<sup>th</sup> grade. In Denmark and Finland, there is a possibility for an additional voluntary year (10<sup>th</sup> grade).

**Denmark:** Basic education (primary and lower-secondary school) in Denmark starts at the age of 6 and continues for 10 years. The first year is a pre-primary school year (*børnehaveklasse*), emphasising play and school-preparation activities. There is a voluntarily 10<sup>th</sup> grade as the last qualification level of basic education. The 10<sup>th</sup> grade programme is aimed at young people not yet ready for further education or training.

Approximately 13% of all children at the primary and upper-secondary school level attend private schools. Private schools in Denmark are self-governing institutions that are required to provide education to the standards of the municipal schools. There are many different types of private schools and some are based on a specific philosophy, pedagogical approach or religious belief. Continuation schools (*Efterskoler*) are private residential schools for students in 8<sup>th</sup> through a voluntarily 10<sup>th</sup> grade.

**Finland:** Basic education (primary and lower-secondary school) in Finland is comprised of 9 years of comprehensive school. Basic education may include an extra (voluntary) year of additional studies (in year 10).

The state contributes towards costs related to basic education by means of central government transfers to education providers, as stated in the Act on Central Government Transfers to Local Government for Basic Public Services. Most children attend a local public school: The percentage of private schools in the compulsory education system is around 1–2%. In the public schools, students receive a hot meal free of charge every school day.

**Iceland:** Basic education (primary and lower-secondary school) lasts from ages 6–16. Education in Iceland has traditionally been provided by the public sector, but there are a few private institutions, primarily at the pre-primary, upper-secondary and higher education levels.

A Compulsory School Act was passed in June 2008. The Act introduced a set of changes that are mostly a continuation of previous legislative developments. At the same time, the Pre-Primary School Act and the Upper-Secondary School Act were passed, one of the aims of which was to increase cohesion and cooperation between all school levels. In these acts, the administration of the schools, which are run by the municipalities, was clarified and decentralised, and the roles, rights and duties of parents and children were outlined.

**Norway:** In Norway, basic education (primary school and lower-secondary school) starts at the age of 6 and lasts for 10 years. The municipalities are responsible for operating and administering primary and lower-secondary schools, and national standards are ensured through legislation, regulations, curricula and framework plans.

Most of the schools are public schools run by the municipalities—only about 8% of schools in Norway are private. Private schools must be approved in accordance with the Private Education Act. These schools receive state financial support—85% of the operating costs of privately-owned schools are subsidised by the state. Schools that want to achieve approval and state support must either be primarily of a denominational nature (i.e., alternative religious arrangements) or offer an approved pedagogical alternative (i.e., mostly Montessori or Steiner schools). Certified international schools can also be approved.<sup>21</sup> When applications are assessed, the public school structure and educational considerations are taken into account.

**Sweden:** Basic education (primary school and lower-secondary school) starts at the age of seven and lasts for nine years. The Education Act states that each municipality is responsible for providing primary and lower-secondary school for children residing in the municipality.

The governing body of primary or lower-secondary schools may be municipalities or independent bodies. Starting an independent school (i.e., a charter school—an independent school with public funding) requires authorisation from the Swedish Schools Inspectorate (*Skolinspektionen*). In 2014, about 17% of primary and lower-secondary schools were private/charter schools.

Schools are mainly financed by the municipalities: Almost 70% of municipal school revenue comes from municipal tax revenues, and approximately 14% consists of central government grants. In addition, targeted state grants finance 5% of school costs.

Municipalities allocates resources to the schools according to the ‘equal treatment principle’, which stipulates that municipal and independent schools have equal financial conditions. The schools receive per-student compensation from the municipality. There are no official statistics on the total amount each municipality allocates to schools, and figures may vary between municipalities.

**Faroe Islands:** Basic education (primary school and lower-secondary school) starts at the age of seven and lasts for nine years. The primary and

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<sup>21</sup> [https://www.udir.no/Upload/Brosjyrer/5/Education\\_in\\_Norway.pdf?epslanguage=no](https://www.udir.no/Upload/Brosjyrer/5/Education_in_Norway.pdf?epslanguage=no)

lower-secondary schools are organised into 43 schools. While the responsibility for school content as curricula lies with the Ministry of Education, the municipalities are responsible for the school buildings, etc.

**Greenland:** Basic education (primary and lower-secondary school) consists of 10 years. The Ministry for Culture, Education, Research and Church is the central administration for primary and lower-secondary schools in Greenland. The municipalities under *Naalakkersuisut*—Greenland’s self-government—are responsible for providing school services: The municipal council has overall responsibility for the schools in the municipality and ensures that all school-dependent children in the municipality are enrolled in primary and lower-secondary schools or receive education that meets primary and lower-secondary school requirements.

**Åland:** The government of Åland’s Department of Education and Culture is the central authority responsible for the legislation of primary and lower-secondary schools in Åland, while the municipalities are the local authorities responsible for providing school services. There are no private schools in Åland.

### **Arrangements for students with special needs**

In all of the Nordic countries, the main approach of education policies are to facilitate inclusive education for all students in the ordinary school. Great emphasis is placed on the general welfare of all students and the inclusion of all children in the school, irrespective of origin or disabilities. The goal is to ensure that students are included socially, and that students with special needs are integrated into ordinary schools. The different systems and arrangements for following-up with students with special needs and vulnerable children are all highly relevant for the Nordic 0–24 project. Often, this requires other professions or certain competencies in the school system, and calls for collaboration between different actors.

All the Nordic countries have a system for support provision in schools, as well as a system to provide special education, adjusted education and assistance. However, the ways in which the support system for students with special needs is organised—and how extensive the system is—varies. Finland stands out as the country with the most extensive system of special education and support in schools and the most explicit system for early identification of children with learning difficulties, extra support needs, or special education. In Norway and Denmark, the number of students receiving special or supported education increases with age. Only a small share receive special or

supported education in the lower grades. In Finland, however, the system appears to encourage a high degree of extra support (both general and intensified) in the early school years.

**Denmark:** Special education may be provided to students within ordinary classes, in the form of adjusted education, special classes or special schools. In 2014, 4.4% of Danish students received some form of special education, most of which took place in special classes or special schools. Only 0.26% of students in ordinary schools received special education. The use of special education is lowest in the lowest grade (*børnehaveklassen*), at 2.1%, and increases linearly to 5.7% in 9<sup>th</sup> grade. It is a goal of the education policy to decrease the number of students in special classes and special schools, and to integrate more students into ordinary schools

In 2012, changes in the definition of special education were introduced. The term ‘special education’ was limited to the additional educational support provided to students in need of nine hours or more per school week. Referral to special education is based on an assessment of the individual student’s needs and only takes place after a pedagogical-psychological assessment of the child has been conducted. Support provided to students needing some additional assistance—but less than nine hours per school week of it—was classified as ‘supplementary support’ or ‘additional support’. Students in these categories are exempt from special needs education legislation and may receive adjustments to their educational situation without a prior pedagogical-psychological assessment. The school leader is responsible for assessing whether students’ needs can be met within the framework of the usual teaching programme, and/or if pedagogical-psychological assessments are needed. Supplementary support may also be provided to entire classes in need of extra support, and, as with support for individuals, school leaders are responsible for making sure that appropriate additional support measures are implemented. These include: teaching in smaller groups, differentiated teaching, complementary teaching, and the use of two teachers or teaching assistants. The school is not required to carry out a pedagogical-psychological assessment of the child before introducing supported education, but school leaders and parents can request such services as needed. There are no national statistics for the number of students who receive adjusted education for less than nine hours per week.

**Finland:** Students with special needs or who need adjusted education may receive special support in a ordinary school, either in the form of adjusted

teaching in a general class or being taught in a special group, for part or all of the school day. Some students receive teaching in special schools<sup>22</sup>.

If a child is unable to complete the objectives for basic education within the allocated nine years due to a disability or illness, the child may receive extended compulsory education. Extended compulsory education begins the calendar year the child turns 6 and lasts for 11 years.

Students' extra support needs should be identified as early as possible and long-term plans developed for how the child's needs will be met. Support may be identified and provided at three different levels (one level at a time): general, intensified or special support. It may include extra teaching, special teaching on a part-time basis, and the use of assistants or special tools or aids.

'General support' is the basic form of adjusted teaching, and usually involves some form of pedagogical adjustments. The aim of general support is to identify a student's need as early as possible and adjust his/her teaching situation accordingly. General support is provided as needed, and no assessment is required to put a general support measure in place.

'Intensified support' is more continuous and is adjusted to meet the specific needs of an individual student. This form of support is directed at students who may be in need of several types of support or lengthier support in their learning situation. In cases of intensified support, a plan is developed for the student and collaboration and planning around the student's needs takes place.

'Special support' is provided in those cases where intensified support is not sufficient, and requires an administrative decision based on a pedagogical inquiry into the students' learning difficulties. An individual plan is developed for the student, and involves special education and other services.

There is no statutory maximum limit regarding the number of students in each group in basic education. However, the maximum number of students permitted in special needs teaching groups is set through legislation.

**Iceland:** Guidelines for services for special needs students in pre-primary and compulsory school are provided in special ordinances (Ordinance on Special Education no. 585/2010 and Ordinance on Municipalities Specialist Services in Schools no. 584/2010).

There are currently three special schools that provide services for the whole country at the compulsory level: one for students with severe disabilities and two for students with psychiatric and social difficulties. The Upper-

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<sup>22</sup> There have not been provided data on share of children attending special schools for this report.

Secondary Education Act stipulates that students who require special needs education (SNE) should be provided with *specialised assistance and appropriate facilities*, as deemed necessary by the Ministry of Education. Normally, however, this is done within the realm of mainstream education (i.e., with SNE students spending 80% or more of their time with their mainstream peers). Only around 3% of students in compulsory education are not enrolled in mainstream education facilities, and far more students (up to 25%) receive some form of short- or long-term teaching and learning support based on need.

**Norway:** There are approximately 629 000 students in basic education in Norway. In the 2016/2017 school year, 7.8%, or just under 50 000 students, received some kind of special education. It is more common for the oldest school-age children to receive special education—for example, 4% of children in 1<sup>st</sup> grade and 11% of children in 10<sup>th</sup> grade received special or adjusted education. Students may receive special education, assistance or adjusted education in their ordinary school class (35%), in groups (53%) or alone (13%), for some or all of the school hours.<sup>23</sup>

All children, including children with disabilities and defined special needs, have a right to an education at their local school. There are two national schools for students with disabilities (one for students with hearing impairments and one for deaf-blind students), and there are seven private schools for children with special needs. The municipalities differ in how they organise specialised teaching for students with disabilities or severe learning difficulties. The norm is to make accommodations for adjusted education within ordinary school classes. In some municipalities, however, certain schools (called ‘reinforced schools’, or *forsterkede skoler*) have special classes or groups for students with disabilities or severe learning difficulties. In the 2015/2016 school year, approximately 4 000 students received special education in separate groups or in classes designated for students with special needs. There are also special schools in some of the larger municipalities, and though there are no available national statistics for the number of special needs municipal schools in Norway or for the number of children attending them, we know that very few students attend these schools.

Regulated by the Educational Act, all municipalities are required to organise a pedagogical-psychological support service (PPT). PPTs work at a systems level to support schools (and kindergartens, at which point it is regulated by the Kindergarten Act), to facilitate education, individual support and

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<sup>23</sup> <https://www.udir.no/tall-og-forskning/finn-forskning/tema/elever-og-ressurser-i-grunnskolen-2016-17/>

follow-up for special needs students and their families. This service is available for schools and students throughout their educational path.

**Sweden:** According to the Education Act, a student should be given support in the form of adjustments to the ordinary course of teaching if it appears that he or she cannot reach the minimum knowledge requirements. If these adjustments are insufficient, this is reported to the school leader, who is responsible for making sure that the student's special needs are investigated properly. The same applies if there are particular reasons for believing that such adjustments would not be sufficient. The need for special support is also investigated if the student has other difficulties in his or her school situation. When necessary, consultation with the school's health services may take place.

If a child has an intellectual disability, he or she may instead attend a special needs comprehensive school, which is adapted to each student's circumstances. There are also special schools for children with certain functional disabilities, such as deafness, or for children with a combination of several functional disabilities.

**Faroe Islands:** Almost all children in the Faroe Islands attend ordinary school. There is one special school in the country, and in the 2018/2019 school year, there were approximately eight special classes offered throughout the country. Around 2% of Faroe Island students attend either the special school or a special class.

**Greenland:** For students whose functional difficulties are of such a nature or extent that their special support needs cannot be covered within general education, special education and other special educational assistance is provided. Special education and other special educational assistance is implemented in accordance with rules laid down by the national government.

Supplementary teaching is given to students who are temporarily struggling in one or more subjects because they have been out of school for a long duration of time or have received insufficient education due to illness; transferred from a school where teaching in terms of content, methods or extent significantly differed from the new school; or recently moved to the country, with no knowledge of Greenlandic.

According to the publication '*Folkeskolen i Grønland: 2016–2017*', 447 students were registered as having special needs.

**Åland:** Children with special needs can attend special classes or training schools. There are special schools for intellectually disabled students and special classes for those with cognitive and learning disabilities. Specially ed-



ucated teachers educate and provide services to students with learning difficulties, while psychological counsellors and school psychologists are provided to students with social problems or those at risk of potential dropout. These services are provided and financed by the municipality. Approximately 12% of students receive professional support in educational matters.

### **School health services and pedagogical-psychological services**

All the Nordic countries have a system for school health services and support in the schools, and all have a school nurse present at school. Variations occur with regard to what other professions are present at school, and whether school health services are at the school or the municipal level. Each of the Nordic countries also provide some kind of pedagogical education services. In this overview, we have not provided a comprehensive presentation of all kinds of social, education and health services available in school or follow-up services for students in school. Several of the national cases in the 0–24 project—such as the Icelandic case, the Finnish case and several of the projects that comprise the Danish case—include ways of organising interdisciplinary support for schools, students and parents. There are differences between countries but also between municipalities in terms of how this is organised. In the chapter on health and social services (see chapter 4), we provide more detailed information on relevant services for children.

**Denmark:** Health nurses and pedagogical-psychological counselling (*Pædagogisk Psykologisk Rådgivning—PPR*) are both provided at the school and municipality level. Some municipalities also have school social workers. The services are organised, regulated and financed by the municipalities, and their organisation differs from municipality to municipality.

**Finland:** Students in pre-primary care, comprehensive school (primary and lower-secondary school) and upper-secondary school (*gymnasiet*) have the right to individually-tailored school health services (*elevhälsa*), which consist of psychologists, counsellors, and other staff. The school health service is a collaboration between different professions, including education, social, and health service professions, as well as between the students and other actors. The municipality in which the school is situated is responsible for providing school health services.

**Iceland:** Health care in compulsory school is a continuation of youth and child welfare, and its aim is to promote student health care and wellbeing. There are school nurses in every compulsory school in Iceland, and they work in close collaboration with parents/guardians, school administrators and teachers.

School health care services also monitor whether children have received vaccinations as recommended by the Directorate of Health. If children have not received adequate vaccinations, parents will be contacted. Parents can also seek advice from the school health care centre regarding the child's wellbeing, and their mental, physical and social health.

**Norway:** Municipalities have a duty to provide school health services (regulated by “the Act Related to Municipal Health and Care Services”). Most commonly, trained school nurses are present at school. 73% of the health services staff in primary schools are school nurses; in secondary school, the number rises to 78%. Other occupations, such as psychologists or psychiatric nurses, are available in some schools but are less common. School health services are obligated to have systems in place for bringing in additional health services when needed, including doctors, physiotherapists, and psychologists. School health services are free and are often provided on the school premises; their goal is to promote good student health, and to provide early intervention.

Students in Norwegian primary education are entitled to social-pedagogical counselling, and ‘social teachers’ (*sosiallærer*) are available at all primary schools (grades 1–7). Social-pedagogical counseling is linked to both pedagogical-psychological services and school health services. In lower-secondary schools, students are also entitled to educational and vocational counselling, and councilors (*rådgiver*) are available at all schools (grades 8–10). The right to counselling implies that the student will have access to guidance and follow-up, as well as help adapting to the school environment and making decisions about future vocational and educational choices. The counselling is intended to help decrease social inequality, prevent dropout and integrate ethnic minorities.<sup>24</sup>

**Sweden:** All students in primary and secondary schools have access to school health services (*elevhälsa*), which are administrated by the municipalities. School health services are comprised of medical, psychological, psychosocial and special educational support and activities. At school, students have access to a school physician, school nurse, psychologist and counsellor; students in need of special education have access to staff specialising in special education, such as a special pedagogue. Different professions in school, such as the health service team, as well as teachers, special pedagogues and principals, are involved in the assessment of a special education need.

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<sup>24</sup> [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/guidance-and-counselling-early-childhood-and-school-education-48\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/guidance-and-counselling-early-childhood-and-school-education-48_en)

Sweden has a decentralised school system and there is no central record of how school health services are organised locally. There are no national statistics regarding the share of students who receive support from school health services.

**Faroe Islands:** School health services are available at each school. The Ministry of Health finances and is responsible for the services. If a student needs extra support or counselling, an additional support is offered—approximately 7.7% of primary and lower-secondary students receive such support.

**Greenland:** There is no specific school health service, but all health services are free and psychological and pedagogical counselling services for students are available: They are organised by the Home Rule Order No. 22 of 23 July 1998 concerning primary and lower-secondary education and other special educational assistance.

**Åland:** The government of Åland's Department of Education and Culture regulates the educational and psychological counselling services. The service is provided and organised by the municipalities in the school system. The school health system is regulated and financed by the government of Åland's Department of Social Affairs, Health and Environment and is provided and organised by *Ålands hälso- och sjukvård*.

### After-school programmes

Each of the Nordic countries have after-school programmes; they are most common for the youngest children (ages 6–9) but are also directed towards older children who are vulnerable and/or who have special needs. The service is most often organised by the municipalities and is part of the ordinary school system. In all the Nordic countries, there is a parental fee for attending after-school programmes. For vulnerable children, attending after-school programmes may be important in terms of social inclusion and may represent an important arena for integration and strengthening school achievements. In Norway, there have been several local after-school programmes that incorporate a certain number of free core time hours as a measure for promoting social inclusion—these are most common in areas with a high share of immigrant families (Bråten and Bogen 2015).<sup>25</sup>

**Denmark:** The before- and after-school care programme (*skolefritidsordningen—SFO*) is for children in 0 (pre-school) to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade (ages 6 to 9) and is part of the ordinary school system (and therefore the ordinary school legislation). Leisure time centres (*fritidshjem*) are aimed at children in this same

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<sup>25</sup> <http://www.fafu.no/images/pub/2015/20444.pdf>

age group and are legislated under the daytime services act. In addition, there are youth clubs aimed at children in 4<sup>th</sup> through 9<sup>th</sup> grade. The municipalities are responsible for organising and running the different leisure time activities for children and are obliged to include services directed at vulnerable children. The municipalities decide the size of parental payment—for low-income families (e.g., those earning under 580 000 DKR in 2018) it is possible to apply for a place without cost.

It has become more common to have an SFO service integrated with primary schools, instead of organising separate leisure-time activities for children.<sup>26</sup> Almost all of the youngest school children participate in SFO/youth clubs.

**Finland:** In Finland, there is a before- and after-school care programme directed at students in their 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, as well as students in special education. The programme is normally open between 7am and 5pm. The municipalities decide whether or not to arrange this type of service, and participation in the programme is voluntary. The municipality also decides on the amount that parents must pay, which is capped at 120 EUR for 570 hours and 160 EUR for 760 hours. The students who attend receive one meal a day.

The state supports the municipalities by subsidising some of the costs, and the municipalities may organise the service themselves or collaborate with other municipalities and organisations. Approximately 34% of all first and second graders and students in special education participate in this programme.

**Iceland:** Most of the municipalities offer after-school care facilities for children in the lower grades, in cooperation with the schools. Parents pay a fee for participation in after-school care programmes.

**Norway:** It is the responsibility of the municipalities to provide an after-school programme for children in 1<sup>st</sup> through 4<sup>th</sup> grade, and for children with special needs in 1<sup>st</sup> through 7<sup>th</sup> grade. There is no government-decreed cap on how much parents must pay for after-school care, but municipalities must run the service without profit.

Although the after-school programme (*skolefritidsordning*—SFO) was founded under the Education Act, it does not have to meet the same pedagogical quality dictated by law for the schools. It is not mandatory for children to attend the after-school programme: Statistics from the 2015/2016 school year show that around 80% of 1<sup>st</sup> graders and 30% of 4<sup>th</sup> graders attended the after-school programme. In recent years, several local SFOs have

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<sup>26</sup> EVA notat 2017. Børns og unges brug af fritids- og klubtilbud. Kendetegn ved kvaliteten i tilbuddene—en vidensopsamling.

offered free core hours to promote the attendance of minority children. Some of these have been evaluated and demonstrated positive results in terms of attendance rates.<sup>27</sup>

**Sweden:** All schools, both municipal and independent, offer students access to after-school programmes. The Education Act states that each municipality must offer recreation centres or an after-school care programme (*fritidshem*) for students in primary and lower-secondary schools. Students may participate in the after-school programme from preschool (at 6 years of age) until they turn 13.

Table 3.2. Some characteristics of basic (primary and lower-secondary school) education in the Nordic countries

	<b>Mandatory school starting age</b>	<b>Years of basic education (mandatory)</b>	<b>Integration of students with special needs with students in ordinary school classes</b>	<b>Share of students receiving special support (adjusted education) in ordinary school classes, in special groups, or in special schools</b>	<b>Age group for after-school programmes</b>
Norway	Age 6	10 years	High	7.9%	Age 6–9
Sweden	Age 7	9 years	High		Age 6–13
Finland	Age 7	9 years	High	16.4%	Age 7–8
Denmark	Age 6	10 years	Medium. Numbers reduced since 2012 reform	4.4%	Age 6–9
Iceland	Age 6	10 years	Very high. No special needs school system	3% <sup>28</sup>	For children in lower grades
Faroe Islands	Age 7	9 years	Very high		Age 7–9
Åland	Age 7	9 years	High		Age 7–8
Greenland	Age 7	10 years	High		Age 7–9

<sup>27</sup> [https://www.udir.no/globalassets/filer/tall-og-forskning/forskningsrapporter/for-sok\\_med\\_gratis\\_aks\\_delrapport\\_1.pdf](https://www.udir.no/globalassets/filer/tall-og-forskning/forskningsrapporter/for-sok_med_gratis_aks_delrapport_1.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> Three percent are not enrolled in mainstream schools; the share that receive short- to long-term teaching and learning support based on need is higher: up to 25%.

After-school care centres are normally situated in or near the schools, and often administered by the schools. A fee must be paid in order to participate in the after-school programme, which provides students with educational group activities intended to support and stimulate their development.

**Faroe Islands:** The Faroe Islands have a national after-school programme for children from first through third grade. The after-school programme is run by the municipalities.

**Greenland:** Greenland has an after-school programme for first through third grade. The fee is income-based.

**Åland:** 7- to 8-year olds in Åland are provided with after-school activities. The service is organised by the municipalities, and the parental cost is 165 EUR per month.

## **Upper-secondary school: General Studies and Vocational Education and Training (VET)**

Nearly all young people in the Nordic countries enter upper-secondary education. However, there is a shared concern that too many drop out before completion. Young people who have not completed their upper-secondary education have difficulty finding work and are at risk of social exclusion.<sup>29</sup> While the compulsory school structure is fairly similar across the Nordic countries, differences are more pronounced when it comes to upper-secondary school education. While it is difficult to draw firm conclusions about the impact cross-national differences in organising upper-secondary school may have on, for example, dropout levels, the OECD (among others) has stated that there may be such a connection. Using Norway as an example, the OECD has pointed out that Norway has a low non-completion rate among VET students. One possible explanation is the relatively academic nature of VET studies in Norway, which consist of two years of school-based training before students are expected to find an apprenticeship. Many students struggle to make this transition and end up without an apprenticeship contract. In addition, students enter into VET programmes based on their own interests, and these choices may not correspond with the future needs in the labour market. The OECD has suggested that Norway change their organisation of VET studies to become more work-based and better aligned with labour market demands (OECD 2018). This may serve as an example of the potentially large impact the organisation of upper-secondary school services can have on the ability of young people to successfully transition into employment, instead

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<sup>29</sup> <http://norden.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1071115/FULLTEXT01.pdf>

of ending up as NEETs. Of the Nordic countries, Denmark has the VET system that is most closely attached to the labour market, while Sweden's VET system is largely school-based. In Finland, VET is organised mainly within institutions (i.e., on-the-job learning) or as apprenticeship training. The Norwegian systems have a separate track for apprenticeships.<sup>30</sup>

It is difficult to find comparable Nordic data on dropout rates among upper-secondary students. Eurostat uses a statistical measure for early school leavers, defined as the share of young people between 18 and 24 years of age who lack an upper-secondary education (see chapter two). This share is between 5% and 10% in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden. In Iceland, this figure is higher, at just under 20%. The measure of early school leavers does not correspond with national figures on dropout rates within upper-secondary education (see the section below on attendance and dropout). The Nordic countries are among the only OECD countries that do not have higher education tuition fees (OECD, 2014<sup>31</sup>). This could explain, in part, their high rates of upper-secondary school attendance.

In Iceland and Norway, young people that have completed basic education have a statutory right to enter upper-secondary education, even if they do not have passing grades in all lower-secondary school subjects or exams. In Sweden, all municipalities are obliged to offer secondary education to young people who have completed compulsory school. Those who do not have passing grades from compulsory school can attend introductory programmes to qualify for further participation upper-secondary programmes. In Denmark, all students who have passed the prescribed examinations from their lower-secondary education can enter an upper-secondary programme. Denmark also offers 'a voluntary 10<sup>th</sup> grade or continuation schools' (*Efterskole*) to students aged 14–18 years, beginning in the 8th grade. As described in the section on basic education, these are independent residential schools with different course offerings where students can complete their basic education. In Finland, as well, there is a possibility for an additional extra year of basic education, and all who have completed basic education are eligible for general upper-secondary education. We will not go into detail regarding the different admissions systems for upper-secondary schools, though this is of relevance for those students in the target age group attending upper-secondary school. Admissions systems based only on grades will lead to some schools or programmes having students who are more motivated towards schooling

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<sup>30</sup> <https://www.nordforsk.org/en/news/nordic-vocational-education-and-training-2013-2018dead-end2019-or-pathway-to-higher-education>

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.oecd.org/education/Education-at-a-Glance-2014.pdf>

than others. Different systems for transitioning students from basic education to upper-secondary education could potentially influence the share of young people who attend and the need of additional services in school.

In this chapter, we will present information about the following dimensions of upper-secondary education: organisation, support services, attendance and drop out.

## **Organisation of upper-secondary education**

In each of the Nordic countries, upper-secondary education consists of general studies programmes and vocational education and training (VET) programmes. ‘General studies’ is an academic specialisation that provides qualification for higher education, while VET is more practically-oriented. Both programmes usually have a duration of three or four years.

There are differences between the Nordic countries with regard to the organisation, regulation and funding of upper-secondary schools. In Sweden, each municipality is responsible for providing upper-secondary education—in Norway, upper-secondary school is the responsibility of the county council (at the regional level). In Denmark, upper-secondary schools are self-governing institutions under the Ministry of Education, with separate boards and a taximeter funding system; in Finland, upper-secondary education can be offered by any education provider that has received a license from the Ministry of Education and Culture: These providers can be private or public, local or state-run.

In Sweden, VET has been integrated into the general upper-secondary school system. This full-time, school-based system does not have a direct connection to the labour market. In Finland, VET is organised mainly within institutions (i.e., on-the-job learning) or as apprenticeship training; the Danish and Norwegian systems have a separate apprenticeship track.<sup>32</sup>

**Denmark:** The upper-secondary education system in Denmark caters to students in 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade, when students choose an academic branch (general, preparatory, commercial, and technical) or a vocational branch. Upper-secondary programmes are offered by self-governing institutions under the Ministry of Education. There are a total of 257 upper-secondary schools in Denmark, 30 of which are private. The Ministry of Education defines the content and curriculum for compulsory subjects and develops syllabi for specific subjects and multi-subject courses.

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<sup>32</sup> <https://www.nordforsk.org/en/news/nordic-vocational-education-and-training-2013-2018dead-end2019-or-pathway-to-higher-education>



A central element of the Danish self-governance model are the upper-secondary school boards. These boards have the primary leadership responsibility for running and managing the activities of the self-governing institutions. This includes the administration and financial management of the institutions, as well as the educational and teaching activities undertaken by the institutions. The responsibilities and tasks of the boards thus include:

- Making decisions about educational programmes, activities and admissions/capacity, according to recommendations from the heads of the institutions
- Determining the guidelines for the activities of the institutions
- Ensuring responsible administration of the institutions' funds
- Carrying out budget approval and financial accounting for the institutions

For general (academic branch, general studies programme) upper-secondary schools, the majority of the board members must come from outside the institution, and primarily from within the institution's local area. One board member is jointly appointed by the municipal council in the region, two are elected by and from among the staff (one of whom has voting rights), and two are elected by and from among the students (one of whom has voting rights if he or she is over 18). The head of the institution acts as the secretary for the board and participates in the board meetings but does not have voting rights.

There are two different types of programmes:

*General studies programmes:* The common objective of general studies programmes is to prepare young people for higher education. Most of the programmes are three years in duration and are for young people who have completed nine years of basic education. However, there is one two-year programme (HF) that admits students who have completed ten years of basic education.

*VET programmes:* The vocational education and training programmes (VET) are alternating— or 'sandwich-type'—programmes, where practical training in a company alternates with classes at a vocational college. The programmes consist of a basic programme and a main programme. The student must enter into a training agreement with a company that has been approved by the social partners (a confederation of representatives of employers and employees) in order to complete the main programme. The social partners have considerable influence on—and thus great responsibility for—the VET programmes.

Trade committees that have been set up by employers and employees lay down the detailed content of a specific trade's education and training programmes within the school's general framework. This applies to the duration and structure of the programmes and their objectives and assessments, as well as the distribution of practical training and school-based teaching. The committees are obliged to follow labour market developments, to take the initiative to introduce new education and training programmes and to make adjustments to/discontinue existing programmes, depending on changing demands of the labour market.

In the colleges, the trade committees appoint local education committees for each of the programmes at the college. At the local level, these committees are required to advise the colleges on programme planning, work toward the development of cooperation with local trade and industry and strive to secure more internships for their students.

**Finland:** In Finland, the upper-secondary school system is divided between general (academic branch) upper-secondary education (*gymnasieutbildning*) and vocational education and training (VET) programmes. The education providers in secondary education are mostly municipalities, although there are some privately-operated VET institutions (around 27%) and general upper-secondary schools (around 2%).

*General upper-secondary education* provides students with extensive general knowledge and the readiness to begin studies at a university, university of applied sciences or to enter vocational training, based on the general upper-secondary education syllabus.

*Vocational education and training (VET)* is designed both for young people without upper-secondary qualifications and adults who are already working. Vocational qualifications can be completed in school-based VET or as competence-based qualifications. VET is organised mainly within institutions (i.e., on-the-job learning) or as apprenticeship training. A vocational qualification provides general eligibility for university of applied science and university studies. The Ministry of Education and Culture prepares VET legislation and steers and supervises the sector. The Ministry also grants the education providers' permits to provide VET. VET is developed, delivered and assessed in close cooperation with the labour market.

The Finnish government has initiated a reform of Finland's upper-secondary education system with the aim of improving upper-secondary schools as a general education that provides access to continued higher education studies, to improve the quality of learning effects of the education, and to im-

prove the transition from upper-secondary school to higher education studies<sup>33</sup>. The primary objective of this new reform are to offer more individualised and flexible studies, provide students with appropriate support and guidance and improve the collaboration between upper secondary schools and higher education institutions<sup>34</sup>.

VET as well is being restructured in Finland. VET for young people and adults will be consolidated into a single entity with its own steering and regulation system and financing model. The current supply-oriented approach will be refocused into a demand-driven approach. Education will be competence-based and customer-oriented: Each student will be offered the possibility of designing an individually-appropriate path to finishing a qualification or a supplementary skill set.

**Iceland:** There are three types of schools offering upper-secondary education in Iceland: *Grammar schools*, which offer four-year general academic branches of study, concluding with a matriculation examination; *Comprehensive schools*, which offer an academic course comparable to that of Iceland's grammar schools, concluding with a matriculation examination—a few comprehensive schools also offer post-secondary non-tertiary programmes, such as those to educate master craftsmen; and *Industrial vocational schools*, which offer theoretical and practical branches of study in certified (and some non-certified) trades—these schools also offer post-secondary non-tertiary programmes to educate master craftsmen. There are three private upper-secondary schools in Iceland: two for general studies and one for VET.

Agreements between the Minister of Education, Science and Culture and individual upper-secondary schools specify the principal emphases in school activities, school curricula, studies on offer, structure of instruction, quality control and evaluations. Although the duration of these agreements last between three to five years, their implementation is reviewed annually and they can be revised if the parties to the agreements consider it necessary.

There are 34 schools offering education at this level: 21 are located outside the capital area, and some of these are relatively small; most of the upper-secondary schools outside the capital area have boarding facilities and school

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<sup>33</sup> <http://minedu.fi/en/reform-of-general-upper-secondary-education>

<sup>34</sup> [http://minedu.fi/en/artikkeli/-/asset\\_publisher/esitys-uudeksi-lukiolaiksi-julkivahvaa-yleissivistysta-tiivistyvaa-korkeakouluhyteistyota-ja-panostuksia-lukiolais-ten-hyvinvointiin](http://minedu.fi/en/artikkeli/-/asset_publisher/esitys-uudeksi-lukiolaiksi-julkivahvaa-yleissivistysta-tiivistyvaa-korkeakouluhyteistyota-ja-panostuksia-lukiolais-ten-hyvinvointiin)

transport. It is not uncommon for students who live in the countryside to attend schools in the capital area. There are three private upper-secondary schools in Iceland: two for general studies and one for VET.

A large majority of the students (88%) enter general studies programmes, while only 12% enter VET programmes.

**Norway:** The governing body for upper-secondary education is the county council (*fylkestinget*). Legislation and regulations (i.e. the Education Act), including the National Curriculum, form a binding framework. Eight percent of all upper-secondary schools are private.<sup>35</sup> Private schools must be approved in accordance with the Private Education Act to receive state funding. In line with the rules for approving private primary or upper-secondary schools regarding the assessment of applications, public school structures and educational considerations are to be taken into account.

The upper-secondary education system is divided into general studies programmes (*studieforberedende*) and VET (*yrkesfaglig*). Programmes for general studies consist of study at a university or higher education preparatory school for three years. Approximately 61% of the students in upper-secondary education attend a general studies programme.

VET in Norway consists of eight programmes that lead to more than 180 different trade or journeyman's certificates. Most of the VET programmes consist of two years of school-based education and training, followed by two years of apprenticeship in a training enterprise.

**Sweden:** The education system in Sweden is highly decentralised: As such, the governing bodies of upper-secondary schools can be municipalities, county councils (*landsting*) or independent (private) (*enskilda*).<sup>36</sup>

The Education Act (SFS 2010: 800) stipulates that each municipality is responsible for providing upper-secondary school education. The municipality can offer education that they organise themselves; alternatively, upper-secondary education may be organised by another municipality or county council in accordance with cooperation agreements.

Decisions about which programmes are offered, and the maximum capacity for each programme, are adjusted as far as is possible with regard to the preferences of the applicants. The range of programmes offered by the municipality must include a comprehensive selection of national programmes.

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<sup>35</sup> [https://www.ssb.no/en/utdanning/artikler-og-publikasjoner/\\_attachment/287176?\\_ts=158d834b638](https://www.ssb.no/en/utdanning/artikler-og-publikasjoner/_attachment/287176?_ts=158d834b638)

<sup>36</sup> In special cases, the state can be the governing body; for example, the National Board of Institutional Care (*Statens institusjonsstyreelse—SiS*) provides education for children and young people of school age who are receiving treatment in special residential homes.

The Secondary Education Regulation (Gymnasieförordningen 2010: 2039) stipulates that a selection of students must be made if there are more applicants than there is capacity. In general, the admission of students is based on grades from compulsory school.

There are 18 national upper-secondary school programmes in Sweden: 12 vocational programmes and 6 higher education preparatory programmes. The 12 vocational programmes provide a foundation for working life and further vocational education. The 6 higher education preparatory programmes provide a foundation for further education in the higher education sector. For students who are not eligible for a national programme, there are five introductory programmes.

According to statistics from the Swedish National Agency for Education (*Skolverket*), approximately 340 000 students are enrolled in upper-secondary school.<sup>37</sup> Of the students admitted to national programmes, one-third enter vocational programmes and two-thirds enter higher education preparatory programmes.

**Faroe Islands:** The Ministry of Education, Research and Culture is responsible for upper-secondary education in the Faroe Islands. Upper-secondary education is provided by five schools across the islands.

Upper-secondary schools are organised into an academic group and a vocational group. Within the academic group, students can choose one of the following programmes: general sciences; general humanities; general business; general technology; or general fisheries. All courses of study take three years to complete. Students may also choose to enter higher-preparatory education, which is a two-year general studies programme. Within the VET programmes, student can take a basic introductory course of vocational training within a variety of fields—such as electricity, carpentry, engineering, hair and style, office work, and cooking—and combine these with apprenticeship and training in these trades.

**Greenland:** The government of Greenland's Department for Education, Culture, Research and Church is responsible for upper-secondary education. Greenland has a system for general studies (*gymnasiale uddannelser*) and for vocational education and training. General studies are organised into a 6-month basic education programme, after which students can choose from eight different programmes that take 2.5 years to complete. There are four schools providing general studies programmes.

VET-schools are self-governing institutions that provide initial vocational education and training, continuing vocational training and, in some cases,

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<sup>37</sup> Skolverket (2017)

higher education programmes with a vocational or professional orientation (e.g., management programmes and BA-level programmes in engineering). VET programmes are governed by a board of directors representing major stakeholders (e.g., employers, trade unions, national and regional authorities) and representatives of the student council, management and employees. There are six main VET schools in Greenland, each of which targets a specific sector (*brancheskoler*), and some of which have subsidiaries (*regionsskoler*) in other towns.

VET in Greenland consists of initial vocational education and training (IVET) and continuing vocational training (CVT). IVET programmes last between five months (basic seaman's training) and five years (electricians) and are mostly structured as a dual (apprenticeship) system, where students sign an apprenticeship contract with a public or private enterprise for the duration of their training and where periods of practical training in the host company alternate with periods at the VET-school. The proportion of time spent in the company typically accounts for between one-half and three-quarters of the total length of the programme, but the number and length of the school periods may differ significantly from programme to programme

**Åland:** The government of Åland's Department of Education and Culture regulates and is responsible for upper-secondary schools at the national level. The local authority *Ålands gymnasium* is responsible for organising upper-secondary schools at the local level.

After nine years in primary and lower-secondary school, students at the age of 16 can choose to continue their upper-secondary education in either an academic track—with a programme of general studies—or a vocational track, both of which usually take three years and provide a qualification to continue on to a university or university of applied sciences.

### **Support services and students with special needs**

In all the Nordic countries, the upper-secondary schools have support systems and other services that have been put into place to serve students with special needs or prevent students from dropping out of upper-secondary schools. Examples of these kinds of services include access to free health care, special education services for those in need of such support and career counselling.

**Denmark:** Due to Denmark's principle of self-governance, support services are developed by each individual school and may be structured in a variety of ways:

- All schools have student counsellors or mentors who help students adjust to school and cope with personal and social problems.
- Study hall activities in the afternoon are set up for students in general programmes to provide extra help with homework and assignments.
- Most schools have special-needs teachers and resources for dyslexic (and to some extent dyscalculic) students, including net-based resources.
- All VET schools offer support and guidance for students with reading difficulties.
- In case of long-term illness, students are offered one-on-one out-of-school teaching and supervision.
- Schools have the possibility of contacting help centres in towns or municipalities, such as psychological support or abuse centres.
- Most general upper-secondary schools also cater to students with special talents or interests: e.g., extra lectures, extracurricular activities in sports, music etc.

**Finland:** Students within upper-secondary education have the right to school health services (*elevhälsa*) in Finland. *Vocational special needs education* is designed for students who need special support with regards to learning and studying due to learning difficulties, disabilities, illness or other reason. Special needs education refers to systematic pedagogic support that is based on the students' personal objectives and skills, as well as special arrangements for teaching and studying. The purpose of special needs education is to enable students to meet the vocational skills requirements and learning objectives so students can earn their qualifications. However, in special needs education, exceptions can be made to the qualification requirements by adjusting the vocational skills requirements, learning objectives and skills assessments, as deemed necessary with regards to the students' personal objectives and skills.

Students counselling is offered in all levels of education and consists of support in both the student's current studies and future studies/career choice.

**Iceland:** At the upper-secondary level, students with disabilities and students with emotional or social difficulties are provided with instructional and special study support. Specialised assistance and appropriate facilities are provided at the schools, if necessary.

For the last three years (2015–2017), the screening test, 'Upper-Secondary Education Students' Programme' has been administered to all upper-secondary schools in the country. The screening test was designed for educational

and career counselors to help them identify newcomers at risk of negative school experiences and of dropout, and to assess what kinds of support are beneficial to different students. The test systematically evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of students at the upper-secondary level and their learning environment.

**Norway:** In Norway, there is a school health service available in upper-secondary school, which usually consists of a school nurse and an associated doctor; there are counselling services present at all schools, and several schools also have a psychologist. The responsibility for and organisation of the school health service lies with the municipality, as stipulated in the Health and Care Services Act. There are national regulations, however, and the Directorate of Health has developed professional guidelines for the school health service. There are pedagogical-psychological services available for upper-secondary schools at the county council level, which are available for all upper-secondary schools, students and apprentices in the county.

As part of a pilot project initiated in 2015 there have been supervisors from Labour and Welfare Services (NAV) placed at several upper-secondary schools as part of the student school services team. The main purpose of placing NAV supervisors in upper-secondary schools is to help prevent drop-outs. In recent years, there has also been a stronger emphasis on career guidance to hinder dropout from upper-secondary education, including the project 'Partnerships for Career Guidance', which was started in 2005.<sup>38</sup>

**Sweden:** In Sweden, a student who is at risk of not reaching the minimum knowledge requirements for education is entitled to receive support. The Education Act contains regulations on how this support can be designed as either *additional adjustments* or *particular support*. The provisions apply to both primary and upper-secondary school.

*Additional adjustments* are minor interventions. No formal decisions are needed, and the support can be carried out by teachers and other school staff. Such measures may include help with planning and structure, an individually designed schedule, clearer instructions, study guidance in the students' mother tongue, digital learning resources or other forms of individual support.

*Particular support* consists of long-term interventions of a more intensive nature. These interventions are preceded by an investigation or action programme, and are followed-up with and evaluated over time. The support is

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<sup>38</sup> [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/guidance-and-counselling-early-childhood-and-school-education-48\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/guidance-and-counselling-early-childhood-and-school-education-48_en)



generally provided within the group/regular class in which the student usually belongs to. Special education groups as provided in primary school are not provided in upper-secondary education.

Shortened programmes, extended education, and the right to retake a course or deviate from national programmes are among the support measures designated in the Secondary Education Regulation. Special classes are established for students with hearing or visual impairments, disabilities or other pronounced difficulties with regards to regular classes and course-work.

**Faroe Islands:** For students with special needs in upper-secondary education, there are counsellors employed in all schools. Students are offered guidance in all areas—e.g., dyslexia, psychological challenges, etc. School psychologists are available in all upper-secondary schools.

**Greenland:** Student counselling is available for students who need guiding or treatment. The counselling is aimed at helping students complete their education. The counselling teams consist of psychologists and social workers, and are physically located in five houses in Qaqortoq, Nuuk, Sisimiut, Aasiaat and Ilulissiat, but are available for all students via telephone- and Internet-based services. The counselling is free of charge.

**Åland:** The Åland Core Curriculum for Upper-Secondary Schools (2016) emphasises the fact that the purpose of ‘special support’ is to help and support students in an effort to guarantee them equal opportunities to complete their upper-secondary school studies. Once a student’s learning difficulties have been identified, the planning and implementation of support measures is started immediately, and takes into consideration relevant information regarding the student’s educational performance and their support needs during basic education. The local upper-secondary school curriculum determines how instruction and support measures for special needs students are to be organised.

All students in vocational education and training (VET) have the right to receive sufficient personal and other educational guidance as needed. Vocational institutions are required to pay attention to the counselling and guidance of students with learning difficulties, as well as those who have absences from school or problems with everyday life. Students in need of special educational or student welfare services are provided with an individualised plan; this plan must set out details of the qualification to be completed, the requirements and scope of the qualification, the individual curriculum drawn up for the student, and the student welfare services and support required for studying.

Vocational special needs education and training is primarily provided in regular vocational institutions, with all other students. There is one separate vocational special programme (*Yrkesträkningsprogrammet*), which provides special facilities and services to promote vocational education and training primarily for students with the most severe disabilities or chronic illnesses.

### **Attendance and dropout**

As mentioned above, most young people in the Nordic countries enter upper-secondary education. In 2016, 96% of all students in Iceland who graduated from compulsory school began upper-secondary education. Similarly, in Norway and Sweden, virtually all students who complete compulsory schooling enrol in upper-secondary school. Enrolment is also high in Denmark and Finland, but at a slightly lower level (Bäckman et al 2017).<sup>39</sup>

As each Nordic country defines dropout differently, and Iceland does not have any statistics on dropout, it is not possible to establish a comprehensive overview or comparison of dropout numbers between the Nordic countries. Two comparative reports on this subject from 2010<sup>40</sup> and 2011<sup>41</sup> state that, in Finland and Sweden, approximately 8 out of 10 students left upper-secondary school with examination certificates over the course of around five years (which is two years over the normal time-to-completion). In Denmark and Norway, this number was 7 out of 10, and in Iceland, 6 students out of 10 completed their upper-secondary education. Common across all the Nordic countries is the finding that dropouts are higher for vocational subjects than general subjects and are higher among men than women.

In chapter two, we discuss early school leaving in relation to dropout. However, in the mapping forms that provided data for this report, each country was asked to present dropout figures and, as it turned out, not all had available statistics on dropout; for those who did, it was not always clear from the figures how dropout was being measured, nor how it was defined. This means we have been unable to make a statistical comparison for dropout rates between the participating countries. The statistics below are from the national reports, each based on their own country's definitions of dropout. Numbers should not be compared between the countries.

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<sup>39</sup> <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0958928715588702>

<sup>40</sup> Markussen, TemaNord: 517.

<sup>41</sup> OECD Education at a Glance (2011).

**Denmark:** It is estimated that within 5 years of completing lower-secondary education, approximately 33% of a youth cohort will enter a VET programme and 75% will enter a programme for general studies (some students will enrol in more than one programme within a given 5-year period) (2016).

The estimated dropout rate is 30% for upper-secondary school overall (VET and programmes for general studies). The estimated dropout rate is 52% for VET programmes and 15% for general studies programmes (2016).<sup>42</sup>

**Finland:** According to Statistics Finland's education statistics, in 2016, a total of 103 600 students attended upper-secondary general school leading to a qualification. A total of 30 500 matriculation examinations were completed.

In all, 5.1% of students attending upper-secondary education programmes leading to a qualification or degree discontinued their studies and did not resume them in the 2014/2015 academic year.

**Iceland:** In 2016, 94.6% of 16-year-olds, 89.8% of 17-year-olds and 81.4 % of 18-year-olds were in upper-secondary education. Statistics on dropouts are not available.

**Norway:** In 2017, upper-secondary schools had 198 944 students and 44 546 apprentices.<sup>43</sup> Over a period of five years, between 2010 and 2015, a total of 73% of students completed their upper-secondary education, 6 out of 10 of them within the prescribed 3-year timeframe. More men (79%) than women (68%) completed upper-secondary education within five years. The completion rates are higher for general studies (86%) than for VET (58%).<sup>44</sup> About one in four students in VET studies dropped out of the study programme they enrolled in. However, many dropout students later completed a different study programme or managed to complete their VET training over a longer period than five years.

**Sweden:** Statistics from the National Agency for Education show that the dropout rate for upper-secondary education is estimated at 22.4%, measured four years after students first enrolled in their programme of study. Included in these numbers are those who attend the introductory programmes and students who only have a study certificate. The dropout rate is higher for men (23.7%) than women (19.9). The figures are slightly better when students in the introductory programmes and students with a study certificate are ex-

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<sup>42</sup> <https://uvm.dk/statistik/tvaergaaende-statistik/andel-af-en-ungdomsaargang-der-forventes-at-faa-en-uddannelse/profilfigurer>

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.ssb.no/utdanning/statistikker/vgu>

<sup>44</sup> <https://www.ssb.no/utdanning/statistikker/vgogjen/aar/2016-06-02>

cluded: 81% of students attending a higher education preparatory programme graduated after four years (84.5% for women and 77.1% for men). According to the statistics for vocational education programmes, the rate is 75.1% for women and 73.9% for men.

**Faroe Islands:** Approximately 27% of upper-secondary students start vocational education with apprenticeships and training,<sup>45</sup> and approximately 73% start with general studies (*gymnasium*). The dropout rates for vocational studies stand at 10%. There are no official statistics for dropout rates for general studies.

**Greenland:** In 2016, 1 125 students attended a general studies programme, while 1 186 students attended a VET programme. Sixty-one percent of young people ages 15 to 18 attended upper-secondary education in 2017. In 2014, the dropout rates in VET were 44.1% for women and 58.9% for men.

**Åland:** In 2016, 440 students enrolled in general studies at *Ålands Lyceum* and 519 students entered vocational education training at *Ålands Yrkesgymnasium*. In the same year, statistics show that 6 students (of the 440) dropped out of the general studies programme, and 50 students (of the 519) dropped out their vocational educational training.

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<sup>45</sup> The number refers to the number of students with an apprenticeship agreement; the actual share of students starting vocational education may be higher.

## 4. Health and social services

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In the Nordic welfare states, an extensive range of health and social services are available for adults as well as for children and young people. In this chapter, we present some of the welfare services that are especially relevant for the 0–24 project’s target groups. Specifically, we will describe the services that are available and look at how they are organised.

In all the Nordic countries, universal welfare programmes secure the health and welfare of the whole population. However, there are some key differences with regards to how the services are organised. The responsibility for providing health and social services to the 0–24 age group is divided between different administrative levels, within and between the countries. Health and social services are usually delivered through public organisations, but private actors sometimes also take part in the delivery of services. The municipalities have extensive autonomy and self-determination concerning the delivery of the public health and social services for which they are responsible, so there is a wide range in how the service delivery is organised. Larger municipalities often have more width and variation and a more specialised range of services than smaller municipalities.

However, the presentation of the services in this chapter is based on the mapping forms that were distributed to all the involved countries and are thus on a national level, so possible inter-municipal differences are not described. The following kinds of services are presented: services to monitor and identify vulnerable preschool-age children, health and social services for school-age children, mental health care services and child welfare services. As coordination of services is a central topic for the 0–24 project, this chapter also presents some of the ways health and social services for children and young people are coordinated in the Nordic countries.

## Services to monitor development and identify vulnerable children below school age

To provide intervention as early as possible, it is important to have systems in place for identifying and monitoring the development of vulnerable children and families at an early stage in their lives. In all the Nordic countries, specific health care services (e.g., health centres or dedicated health visitors) are available for small children, as are programmes that ensure contact with and monitoring of the development of new-born babies through to school-age children. The municipal administrative level has the responsibility for primary health care delivery to children and young people in *Denmark, Finland, Norway* and the *Faroe Islands*. In *Sweden*, primary health care is the responsibility of the county council, although the school health service (*Elevhälsa*) is organised through schools and is a municipal responsibility. In *Iceland, Greenland* and *Åland*, primary health care is a state responsibility.

Apart from Denmark, all the Nordic countries offer health-centre-based care for babies and small children combined with an outreach practice involving home visits both before and a short time after birth. Parents with small children are scheduled to visit the health centre on a regular basis. In this way, health services can monitor the child (and the interaction between the child and his/her parents) in order to ensure its development and wellbeing. In *Denmark*, the follow-up on maternity and children's health and wellbeing is based around home visits. The health visitors visit pregnant women with special needs, but home visits may also be offered as a service to expecting parents in general. Besides this, health service for pregnant women is provided through general practitioners.<sup>46</sup> Families with babies up to twelve months of age are offered a minimum of five home visits from health visitors in order to ensure the children's wellbeing, after this children receive health services through general practitioners. Families with special needs may be offered home visits for the first five years of their child's life.

## Health and social services for school age children

In all of the Nordic countries, school health services provided by health nurses are available through elementary school and, in most of the Nordic countries, school health services are provided through upper-secondary school. The school health services continue the preschool health services'

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<sup>46</sup> <http://www.norden.org/no/hallo-norden/danmark/barn-og-familie-i-danmark/graviditet-og-foedsel-danmark>

monitoring of children with regards to their health and social situation throughout their schooling. In *Finland*, school health care is offered to students through to the end of their university education (Health Care Act, section 17). In *Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden*, school health services are the responsibility of municipalities, while in *Iceland, Greenland, the Faroe Islands and Åland*, they are a state responsibility.

The school health services cover children and youth in school; however, the target groups of some of the national 0–24 projects may have a marginal position in the school system (for example, NEETs), and therefore do not necessarily have access to school-based health services. Young people outside the school system who are in need of health services are referred to the primary health care services offered to the public. In *Norway*, however, all municipalities are required to provide youth health centre services for all young people up to 20, regardless of their daily activities, whether or not they are in school.<sup>47</sup> In some municipalities, youth health centres are available for young people up to 24 years of age. These health centres provide a wide-ranging health services, a general practitioner (GP), advice and counselling.

Pedagogical-psychological counselling is a type of service that includes broad educational, psychological and clinical expertise. This type of service can target mental health issues among children and young people, but learning-related problems, distress or family problems are also considered relevant issues. The pedagogical-psychological services are organised somewhat differently between the Nordic countries. In *Denmark*, PPR is the individual municipalities' counselling and advisory service for children and young people (up to the age of 18), families, schools and day care institutions. A patient can be referred to PPR through school or other institutions, or parents and other adults can refer patients directly. PPR can provide short courses of treatment concerning, for example, anxiety problems in children and young people.<sup>48</sup> In *Finland and Sweden*, counselling is integrated with the school health service, which includes access to psychological and pedagogical-psychological expertise. In *Norway*, the educational-psychological counselling service (PPT) provides both psychological and special education help to children and young people from kindergarten through upper-secondary school. PPT is a municipal service through lower-secondary school; the county takes

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<sup>47</sup> <https://helsedirektoratet.no/retningslinjer/helsestasjons-og-skolehelsetjenesten/seksjon?Tittel=helsestasjon-for-ungdom-11113#helsestasjon-for-ungdom:-alle-kommuner-skal-ha-et-gratis-helsestasjonstilbud-til-ungdom-opp-til-20-årkrav-i-lov-eller-forskrift>).

<sup>48</sup> [https://nordicwelfare.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/danmark\\_webb-1.pdf](https://nordicwelfare.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/danmark_webb-1.pdf)

responsibility for the service in upper-secondary school, as upper-secondary education is a county responsibility. In *Greenland*, psychological and pedagogical counselling services are organised by the Home Rule Order No. 22 of 23 July 1998 concerning primary and lower-secondary education and other special educational assistance. In the *Faroe Islands*, the services of Sernám are available for parents and youths, and for professionals in day care services and the education system as well: Sernám works to ensure that children and youths between 0 and 18 are able to develop and improve their skills. Special competences that fall under Sernám's four departments are related to speech and hearing impairments; physio- and occupational therapy; pedagogics; and psychology.<sup>49</sup> In *Åland*, educational and psychological counselling services are provided and organised by the municipalities as part of the school system.

## Mental health care

The mental health situation is an important factor for the risk of school dropout. Children and young people in the target groups may be vulnerable or exposed to situations related to psychological or behavioural problems or substance abuse. Mental health services are therefore relevant resources and important collaborators in some of the national 0–24 projects. In the Nordic countries, the delivery of mental health services for children and young people is organised in parallel with other health services. Primary care is offered locally, most often at the municipal level, and includes health clinics, school health services and GPs. More specialised services are usually a state-, county- or regional-level responsibility, or are offered as a collaboration between each of these. Outpatient clinics, also called polyclinical treatment and specialised non-institutional care, is the most common way of organising specialised counselling and treatment in all the Nordic countries. Depression, anxiety, ADHD and eating disorders are examples of problems addressed through these services, which are offered in varying degrees of intensity according to the needs of the patient.

In *Denmark*, primary mental health services are a municipal responsibility. The regions are now responsible for hospital care, including mental health care delivered by general practitioners, psychiatric specialists and psychologists. The regions must provide sufficient capacity and ensure that there is a range of necessary and relevant treatment services for people with mental

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<sup>49</sup> <https://d1d6zxt0xmx99c.cloudfront.net/media/1961/7-children-school-and-education.pdf>



health problems. Social psychiatry offers various forms of social services and is provided by both regions and municipalities.<sup>50</sup>

In *Finland*, primary mental health care is provided by the municipal health and social services. Specialist mental health care is provided at psychiatric clinics and in psychiatric hospitals, and the municipalities are required to collaborate around offering mental health hospital specialist services within a specific hospital district.<sup>51</sup> For the Finnish 0–24 project, rehabilitative psychotherapy is a relevant service. The aim of rehabilitative psychotherapy is to support or improve the performance of people ages 16–67 who have a mental condition that jeopardises their capability for work or study. The number and proportion of young people undergoing rehabilitation psychotherapy has steadily increased over recent years. In order to receive this service the client must have a psychiatric diagnosis and have completed at least three months of appropriate treatment with a health care provider and a qualified psychotherapist; and a psychiatrist must also issue a statement. The therapy can be provided via the public health care system or a private institution, and may involve individual, couples, family or group therapy. For young people, music therapy is also offered. Rehabilitative psychotherapy is granted for one year at a time.<sup>52</sup>

In *Iceland*, the primary health care centre of the capital region (*Gedheilsa-Eftirfylgd*) offers services for individuals with mental health disorders and their families. A team of professionals offers assistance through interviews, family therapy, group therapy, home visits and other types of support. The primary health care centres in the capital region also work in cooperation with an association of professionals and individuals dealing with mental health problems. These services are based on the ideology of empowerment and personal assistance in community existence (PACE). In Landspítali, there is the Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Department (BUGL), a division within Women’s and Children’s Services for children up to 18 years of age. BUGL works closely with the parties conducting the primary diagnoses, such as hospitals outside the capital, health care centres and social services.<sup>53</sup>

In *Norway*, the psychiatric outpatient clinic for children and youth (*Barne- og ungdomspsykiatrisk poliklinikk—BUP*) is a specialist health service under

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<sup>50</sup> [https://nordicwelfare.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/danmark\\_webb-1.pdf](https://nordicwelfare.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/danmark_webb-1.pdf)

<sup>51</sup> <https://www.med.uio.no/helsam/forskning/nettverk/hero/publikasjoner/skriftserie/2012/2012-1.pdf>

<sup>52</sup> [https://nordicwelfare.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/finland\\_webb-1.pdf](https://nordicwelfare.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/finland_webb-1.pdf)

<sup>53</sup> [https://nordicwelfare.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/island\\_webb.pdf](https://nordicwelfare.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/island_webb.pdf)

state responsibility (Regional Health Enterprises) offered both in decentralised and centralised venues. Admittance to BUP requires a referral. Specialised psychiatric investigation and treatment for young people above the age of 18 is mainly provided by district psychiatric centres (DPS). DPS is a decentralised specialised service and involves community mental health centres.

The *Swedish* system for mental health services for children and young people is also divided between primary care and specialised care. However, in Sweden, the child or young person can refer him- or herself to BUP or be referred by a parent. Referral from a GP is not required.<sup>54</sup>

*Greenland* has a somewhat different system for mental health services delivery. Here, the municipalities govern the larger initiatives centralised in institutions such as schools or hospitals, while the central authorities govern the more general informational initiatives. Many initiatives and organisations have been set up to deliver social and mental health services to children below the age of 18, but there are no Greenlandic public agencies specialising in issues relating to vulnerable young people over the age of 18.<sup>55</sup> The Ministry of Family, Gender Equality and Social Affairs supports the SAAFIK national counselling and knowledge centre for sexually abused children. The purpose of SAAFIK is to evaluate, assess, process and follow-up with cases of sexual abuse among children and adolescents throughout Greenland. NGOs also play an important part in the delivery of mental health-related services to vulnerable children. Examples are TIMI ASIMI, a 12-week action- and outdoor-based intervention for at-risk adolescents aged 13 to 21, and Sapiik, a youth-to-youth mentoring project that seeks to inspire and motivate students who are considering dropping out of school.<sup>56</sup>

In the *Faroe Islands*, mental health services are available at private practices.<sup>57</sup> Specialist psychiatric services are also offered through regional psychiatric teams, which provide an ambulant service and also travel out to different Faroe Island regions.

In *Åland*, specialist mental health services are offered through the Åland Psychiatric Clinic, and a GP referral is requested in order to be admitted. The special services are divided into two groups according to the clients' age:

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<sup>54</sup> [https://nordicwelfare.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/sverige\\_webb-1.pdf](https://nordicwelfare.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/sverige_webb-1.pdf)

<sup>55</sup> [https://nordicwelfare.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/gronland\\_webb.pdf](https://nordicwelfare.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/gronland_webb.pdf)

<sup>56</sup> [https://nordicwelfare.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/gronland\\_webb.pdf](https://nordicwelfare.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/gronland_webb.pdf)

<sup>57</sup> <https://d1d6zxt0xmx99c.cloudfront.net/media/1861/national-handbook-online-version.pdf>

young clients (< 18 years) are treated by BUP (the Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Clinic), while adults (18+) are treated by PPU (the Adult Psychiatry Clinic).<sup>58</sup>

In addition to the public services offered to children and young people with mental health problems, all the Nordic countries also have third-sector organisations and religious organisations offering activities and telephone-support services for young people.

## Child welfare services

Child welfare services, including child protection, are among the services explicitly aimed at vulnerable children and youth, and are a core service for supporting children, young people and families experiencing different forms of hardship. The main goal of the child welfare services in all the Nordic countries is to ensure that children and young people living in conditions that represent a risk to their health and wellbeing receive the help and protection they require. A common objective for the child welfare services in the Nordic countries is that the difficulties of the child or young person shall, as far as possible, be resolved in consultation and cooperation with the child and his or her family. If this is not possible, the services may implement support measures without the consent of the custodial parent if the measure is deemed to be of vital importance to the child's special need for support, and if the purpose of the measure is deemed feasible despite the lack of consent. However, the vast majority of child welfare measures are characterised by support services based on consent from the child and the child's family.

The measures offered through the child welfare and protection services are manifold. They range from voluntary preventive support to the placement of a child against the will of parents and child. Preventive support measures are by far the most used services, and child welfare services offer a number of these kinds of services—for example, setting up support contacts, financial assistance, environmental therapy measures, and other sorts of social or practical support for children and their families. Supported housing solutions are also among the measures. For example, in *Sweden*, social services offer homes for care or housing (HVB) to children or young people in need of care or treatment within the scope of the social services—e.g., substance abuse, behavioural issues or young unaccompanied immigrants. Placement of a child in alternative care, such as foster care or an institution, is the most far-reaching type of support. The formal decision to take care of

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<sup>58</sup> [https://nordicwelfare.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/aland\\_webb.pdf](https://nordicwelfare.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/aland_webb.pdf).

a child in the form of placement is made by a board on a county, regional or state level.

In *Denmark, Sweden, Greenland, and Åland*, child welfare is an integrated part of the social services. In *Finland, Norway and Iceland*, child welfare services are organised as separate services, with a separate legal framework in the form of child welfare and protection acts. In *Iceland*, however, although the child welfare service is a separate service, the social service centres are the responsibility of the municipality and provide a broad range of services of great relevance for children and young people. The social services cooperate with the schools around preventive measures regarding child raising, offering classes and information for parents as well as for employees in the schools and preschools. The Child Protection Service in the *Faroe Islands, Barnaverndartænastan*, is divided into 8 areas, each with an office and a Child Welfare Service Board.

The Nordic countries' child welfare responsibilities are divided between different administrative levels. In *Norway*, for example, the municipalities have a far-reaching responsibility for child welfare (including child protection), involving guidance, advice and follow-up of children, youth and families, assessment of needs of involvement from child protection services, voluntary interventions/measures and cooperation with children and families. The Child Welfare Services may get involved if a child or young person ends up in trouble, for example with regards to behavioural issues connected to drugs or alcohol, crime etc. If placement of a child in alternative care is a possibility, the municipal child protection services put forward a consideration of placement to a regionally state responsibility board (*Fylkesnemnda*). Decisions regarding the placement of a child in alternative care must be made by this board. The state, represented by regional Offices for Children, Youth and Family Affairs, are responsible for recruiting foster care homes. The municipalities are responsible for the approval of foster care homes, undertake the majority of follow-ups, contacts and the provision of necessary measures for both children and foster parents while the child is in foster care<sup>59</sup>. The municipality of Oslo represents one exception, however: Here, the municipality is responsible for the whole chain of services (municipal welfare services, institutions and foster care homes). In *Denmark*, special support measures in response to social problems, including child protection, are provided by the social services. The difficulties of the child or young person should, as far as possible, be resolved in consultation and cooperation with the child's family. If this is not possible, the municipality may implement

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<sup>59</sup> [https://www.bufdir.no/global/Fosterhjem\\_og\\_rekruttering\\_sluttrapport.pdf](https://www.bufdir.no/global/Fosterhjem_og_rekruttering_sluttrapport.pdf)

support measures without the consent of the custodial parent, if the measure is deemed to be of vital importance to the child's special need for support, and the purpose of the measure is deemed feasible despite the lack of consent. A Child and Youth Committee (made up of members of the local council, a judge and two educational-psychological experts) are involved if custodial parents do not give their consent or a child aged 12 years or older resists the municipality's decision. In this situation, the parents or the child can then bring the decision of the municipality's Child and Youth Committee before the National Social Appeals Board, and can further appeal the decision of the National Social Appeals Board to the district court. Parents and children have a right to free legal aid throughout this whole process.

*Iceland* has a different way of organising the child welfare services. Here, the Ministry of Welfare is the authority in matters of child protection. On behalf of the Ministry, the Government Agency for Child Protection is in charge of the day-to-day administration of child protection services. The basic unit for child protection in Iceland is the child protection committee (CPA), which is responsible for child protection services at the local level. However, the Child Protection Act encourages cooperation between local authorities and jointly-elected CPA, especially in smaller communities (municipal responsibility)<sup>60</sup>. The CPA's primary function is to support the family in accordance with the main objectives of the Child Protection Act.

In *Sweden*, the child's protection and rights are governed by the Social Services Act (SoL) and services are provided by the municipality. Measures offered through this act are directed towards children ages 0 to 18, are voluntary and can only be carried out with the consent of the parents. The law of special provisions for the care of young people—the Act on Special Care for Young (LVU)—is a protection measure for children and adolescents under 21 years of age, which complements the Social Services Act (SoL). If voluntary measures cannot be arranged with the consent of the child and parents, the authorities can use the LVU to carry out necessary actions and support

In *Greenland*, Inatsisartutlov nr. 20 of 26 June 2017 (*om støtte til børn*) (The Child Support Act) stipulates that child welfare and protection is a municipal responsibility. The Greenlandic government's Ministry of Social Affairs provides advice, guidance and supervision to municipal bodies and case officers concerning child welfare and child protection. However, the responsibility for social services targeting children and young people is divided between:

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<sup>60</sup> <http://www.bvs.is/media/forsida/Child-Protection-in-Iceland-and-the-role-of-the-Government-Agency-for-Child-Protection.pdf>

- The state (about 1/5 of the services, including a range of national organisations with full or partial financial support from the Greenlandic government that have been set up to ensure specialised and centralised expertise);
- The municipalities (1/2 of the services);
- NGOs, which have an important role with regards to offering programmes and services in support of children and young people, and which account for the remaining services.

Young people who have received child welfare and protection measures and turn 18 are entitled to ‘aftercare’. At 18, young people in general are in need of parental support around numerous life issues, yet young people ‘aging out’ of the child welfare system do not always have access to support from informal networks.<sup>61</sup> If informal support is limited during this phase, formal support from public services becomes more urgent.<sup>62</sup> The Nordic countries have some variation when it comes to eligibility for aftercare. In *Finland*, aftercare is offered for youths that have been placed outside their family, and the municipal responsibility for aftercare terminates when the young person turns 21. *Swedish* legislation states that support should be given when young people leave care, but the wording in the legislation is vague. If the placement is done through a care order (LVU), the placement can last until 21. Voluntary placements are supposed to end at 18, but often continue until the young person has finished upper-secondary school at 19. In *Greenland, Denmark, and Norway*, aftercare can be given to young people up to the age of 23 if they received any form of service from the child welfare and protection services when they were 18. *Åland* and the *Faroe Islands* have equivalent eligibility rules, but the right to aftercare ends at 21.

After child welfare services in the form of aftercare ends, young people must turn to social services for social support measures, if needed.

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<sup>61</sup> Paulsen, Veronika, and Berit Berg. 2016. "Social support and interdependency in transition to adulthood from child welfare services." *Children and Youth Services Review* 68:125–31.

<sup>62</sup> Stein, Mike. 2012. *Young people leaving care: Supporting pathways to adulthood*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

## Coordination of health and welfare services

Young people in the target group of the 0–24 projects are likely to be users of both health and social services and of more than one type of services within each. The countries regulate the coordination of services when service users receive services from more than one party in the municipalities and regions. This holds also for the 0–24 target group. In this section of the chapter, some examples of service coordination are presented.

Coordination of health and welfare services can be regulated through legal provisions at the individual and systems level or a combination of the two. At an individual level, *Sweden* and *Norway* (for example) have legal provisions that state the right of a coordinated individual plan for residents who require coordinated services from different providers. The right to an individual plan also covers children and young people and is being used by child welfare services as a tool for coordination. The plan puts forward the services being utilised and the responsibilities each service has according to service delivery for the individual person.

At a systems level, coordination of services towards children and young people can be secured by legal provisions which state that municipalities are required to organise a structure for collaboration. For example, in order to make sure that municipal services are offered to children and young people with special needs, the *Danish* municipalities have multidisciplinary teams responsible for the wellbeing, health and development of all children and young people, and to ensure sufficient contact with relevant services.<sup>63</sup> In *Finland*, the Act for Young Persons (2016) regulates cross-sectoral initiatives. According to this Act, all municipalities must establish a cross-sectoral network for the supervision of and services for young people.<sup>64</sup> Agreements regarding cross-sectoral cooperation is another way of securing joint efforts towards the target groups. The Danish ‘Health Agreements’ are an important tool in ensuring holistic help and support from both the health and social services. These are agreements between municipalities and regions, aimed at securing obligatory coordination and collaboration across sectors.<sup>65</sup> In the *Faroe Islands*, collaboration agreements have been formed between the Social Insurance Agency (under the Ministry of Social Affairs) and the National Hospital (under the Ministry of Health), and between the Institution of Educational and Pedagogical Counselling (under the Ministry of Education, Research and Culture) and the National Hospital (under the Ministry of Health).

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<sup>63</sup> Sundhedsloven §3.

<sup>64</sup> <https://www.retsinformation.dk/forms/r0710.aspx?id=133870#K3>

<sup>65</sup> [https://nordicwelfare.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/danmark\\_webb-1.pdf](https://nordicwelfare.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/danmark_webb-1.pdf)

The aim of the agreements is to improve collaboration between sectors, thereby guaranteeing that children and young people in psychiatric care receive the necessary guidance and overall support from the health care system, the social care system, and the educational counselling system.<sup>66</sup>

Coordination of services can also be promoted by organisational structural efforts, such as in *Norway*, where some municipalities have chosen to co-locate and also co-organise several services targeting children and families—for example, in so called ‘family houses’ or ‘family services’. In *Iceland*, the state-provided health centres have core teams that include GPs, nurses and school nurses, specialised children’s nurses who are concerned with preventive activities, physiotherapists and occupational therapists to ensure a coherent service at the health-centre level.

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<sup>66</sup> [https://nordicwelfare.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/faroarna\\_webb.pdf](https://nordicwelfare.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/faroarna_webb.pdf)



## 5. Labour market services

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The youth unemployment rate varies between the Nordic countries, but each country shares concerns about young people dropping out of education and employment. The overview of NEET (young people not in employment, education or training) rates presented in chapter two shows slight intra-Nordic variations. As noted above, for example, the NEET rate is highest in Finland and lowest in Iceland.

In this chapter, we present relevant services and initiatives available for young NEETs in the Nordic countries. The presentation will cover three dimensions: public employment services and their offers for young people; special arrangements and initiatives for young people not in employment; and special arrangements for guidance and follow-up.

### Public employment services

The public employment offices are a municipal responsibility in Denmark and Greenland, but a local state service in the other Nordic countries. In Norway, the NAV (labour and welfare) offices consist of a state-run labour market service and a municipal social service. All of the public employment services, across the Nordic countries, pay special attention to young people and to following up with young NEETs. Indeed, in each of these countries, the main approach towards young people seeking labour market services is to encourage them to complete their education and training to strengthen their future position in the labour market.

**Denmark:** Job centres ('public employment services') in Denmark are run by the municipalities and also provide services to young people. Their main objective, when it comes to young people, is to facilitate the completion of their education. The job centres will assess whether the young person can participate in and complete education following the conventional route or if they are in need of special follow-up support to help them continue and complete their education.

Everyone below 30 years of age who has not completed their education and who applies for social assistance will receive a special education benefit (similar to the state's student grant). The local job centres are responsible for measures targeting these young people. If, for example, a young, unskilled individual is unable to attend regular education programmes, he or she must take part in activation measures aimed at preparing for ordinary education within one month of receiving education benefits. These activation measures can include: 1) upgrading skills and qualifications, 2) 'Building Bridge to Education' activities, 3) mentoring, and 4) practical on-the-job training in enterprises. Young people who face multiple challenges will also be assigned a coordinating caseworker.

The job centres are obligated to provide support to young people seeking assistance until they not only enter but complete their education. If needed, the job centres will offer mentor support for young people who have (re)started ordinary education.

**Finland:** The Employment and Economic Development Offices (state-run public employment services, TE office) provide services for the unemployed, including young people. If a young person does not qualify for income-based unemployment benefits, the Social Insurance Institution, *Kela*, can pay them a basic unemployment allowance. For young people aged 17–25, there are certain conditions. If, for example, they do not have an education or a vocational skill, they must participate in activation measures in order to receive the basic allowance.

Since 2013, there has been a 'Youth Guarantee', under which every pupil who has completed basic education is guaranteed a place in an educational institution, apprenticeship training, youth workshop, rehabilitation programme or similar. The emphasis of the Youth Guarantee is to raise the educational level and occupational skills of young people, thereby strengthening their chances in the labour market.

**Iceland:** The Directorate of Labour provides service to unemployed people, and runs nine service offices around the country as well as three smaller branches. These offices and branches provide all general services for job-seekers, such as registration, assessment of skills, counselling, resources and employment services, as well as cooperation with other resources and labour service providers.

**Norway:** The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV) consists of public employment services (PES), social insurance services and municipal social assistance services. NAV offices are a joint office, where the state is responsible for employment services and social insurances while the

municipalities are responsible for social services and social assistance benefits. There is a NAV office in all Norwegian municipalities.

NAV prioritises young NEETs. Most NAV offices have specific teams or youth contact persons working to follow up with youths. Their overall aim is to encourage young people to complete their education.

**Sweden:** The Swedish Public Employment Service (the state-run *Arbetsförmedlingen*) is responsible for activation programmes for young people, starting at age 16. The overall aim of this service is to encourage young people to complete upper-secondary school (normally by age 19). The Swedish Public Employment Service has local employment offices all over Sweden. There is a ‘Youth Guarantee’ to ensure that people under 25 years of age are offered help with obtaining a job or entering education, and that they are offered this assistance within a shorter time than is the case for unemployed individuals above the age of 25.

If a young person does not attend upper-secondary school, he or she will not receive any economic assistance until the age of 18 (one exception, however, is the ‘Youth Job Programme’ for disabled people under the age of 18).

**The Faroe Islands:** The Ministry of Social Affairs and the unemployment services are jointly responsible for public employment services directed at the under-25 age group. There is one central job centre for the Faroe Islands and one central social service centre.

**Greenland:** The Public Employment Services (PES) of Greenland is the responsibility of the ‘*Majoriaq* centres’, which are centres for jobs, guidance and the upgrading of qualifications and are located in every town-sized settlement—there are 17 in total across the country. The local municipalities are responsible for the running of these centres, governed by performance contracts between each individual municipality and Greenland’s national government (*Naalakkersuisut*). Biannual reporting is required as part of these contracts. The Ministry of Industry, Labour, Trade and Energy is responsible for the drafting, negotiating and administration of the contracts, and for monitoring implementation.

A *Majoriaq* centre consists of three pillars of services: 1) job placement; 2) career and education guidance; and 3) upgrading skills for education and work. In practice, any unemployed person who enters his or her local *Majoriaq* centre will be assessed and assigned to one of the three categories by a guidance counsellor. This counsellor describes the degree to which he or she can easily be employed or the degree to which special measures are needed in order to enhance his or her employability. Based on this assessment, the best course of action is described in an individual action plan.

**Åland:** The national government of Åland's Department of Trade and Industry is responsible for the local Public Employment Service authority: *Ålands Arbetsmarknads- och studienservicemyndighet*.

## Special arrangements for young people

Some of the countries offer specific arrangements or programmes exclusively to young people, such as the 'Building Bridge to Education' programme in Denmark and the youth-focused teams in Norway's NAV offices. Many Finnish municipalities have arranged local youth workshops to augment the traditional public employment services. In Sweden, there are several municipal arrangements for the target group, and there is an appointed national coordinator for NEET-directed support. Other countries also have municipal arrangements anchored in the social services directed at young NEETs, many of whom are dependent on social assistance. We do not have a full overview of these arrangements, but in some of the national cases, these arrangements might be an important collaborative actor.

**Denmark:** One of the programmes offered by job centres in Denmark is the 'Building Bridge to Education' (*Brobygning til Uddannelse*) programme. This programme provides young unemployed people without an education with a 'bridging course' to make it easier for them to enrol in education. The Building Bridge to Education programme takes place at vocational schools and consists of a fixed schedule with various short internships at vocational schools and enterprises. In addition, each young person is assigned a mentor.

The Building Bridge to Education programme was implemented in 2013–2014 and, due to its positive results, two further initiatives were created in 2016: 1) the financing of a measure to be implemented from October 2016 until the end of 2017, in support of local PES to develop and use Building Bridge to Education programmes; and 2) the 'Job Bridge to Education' (*Jobbro til Uddannelse*), a randomised controlled study drawing on experience from Building Bridge to Education and general knowledge of the effects of active labour market policies. It includes mentor support and practical work training. Contrary to previous trials with bridge-building programmes 'Job Bridge to Education' targets young people receiving cash benefits who have been identified through objective standards in the Danish cash benefits system as having particular difficulties in attaining an education.

*Reform for a simplified system of preparatory basic education:* On 13 October 2017, the Danish government and several political parties agreed on a reform for preparatory education, targeted at strengthening efforts aimed at young people under 25 who are not ready to enter an upper-secondary education

after they finish primary school. The agreement entails a simplified system wherein several of the existing preparatory education schemes are merged into one new basic preparatory education programme (*Forberedende Grunduddannelse—FGU*). In the FGU programme, young people will be personally, professionally and socially prepared to complete a vocational education, enter other upper-secondary education pathways or obtain a job. Furthermore, the agreement entails that local governments will provide one coherent programme for all young people under 25 across multiple sectors (education, employment and social), and each young person will be assigned one permanent contact person. The agreement is based on recommendations from an expert committee that presented their final report in February 2017. The changes will take effect starting in 2019.

**Finland:** The *Ohjaamo* is a local advisory service point for young people under the age of 30: essentially, a one-stop service centre, as it provides multiple services to young people under one roof.<sup>67</sup> In many municipalities, the centres have outreach activities and outreach teams to follow up with young NEETs. The purpose of this kind of youth outreach is to help young people who need support access the services they need. The municipalities decide whether or not to organise youth outreach; currently, however, these activities cover nearly the entire country. The Ministry of Education and Culture supports the recruitment of social workers for youth outreach with grants handled by the Regional State Administrative Agencies.

*Youth workshops:* An additional service available for young people is the ‘youth workshop’. Youth workshops help young people under 29 tackle issues related to education and training, working life and life management. Young people can contact a workshop directly or, for example, through the TE office, social welfare office or the *Ohjaamo* in their municipality. Youth workshop activities are based on learning by doing, through coaching and practical work. The workshops are work-oriented, communal learning environments.

Youth workshop activities are organised by municipalities, associations and foundations, and are available in more than 90% of all municipalities in continental Finland. The Ministry of Education and Culture assists the development of youth workshops with grants handled by the Regional State Administrative Agencies.

**Iceland:** Iceland was hit hard by the economic crisis in 2008, and several initiatives tackling unemployment among young people were established.

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<sup>67</sup> <http://ohjaamot.fi/en/taustaa-ja-historiaa>

Several of the measures were concentrated on education and guidance.<sup>68</sup> One of these programmes was called ‘Education Is a Working Option (*I. Nám er vinnandi vegur*)’, and its aim was to get registered unemployed people into education—this programme is now closed, as are several of the other education- and guidance-specific programmes (Arnardóttir 2016 31–35).<sup>69</sup> One programme still running is the ‘Youth Community Workshop’ (*I. Fjölsmiðjur—D. Produktionsskoler*) project. The programme was initiated in 2001 by the Red Cross. Today, the programme is organised in several locations around Iceland by the municipalities, the Directorate of Labour, and the Ministry of Welfare. The project’s aim is to offer work experience to young NEETs aged 16–24 (*ibid.*).

**Norway:** A reform was introduced in 2017 to strengthen youth-directed employment services in the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV). All NAV offices are now obliged to offer unemployed young people under the age of 30 an individually-adjusted employment-related measure within eight weeks after first contact. The aims of the reform are manifold: to strengthen the competence of the youth teams and youth contact persons in NAV offices; to find better ways of co-ordinating services directed at unemployed youth; to develop better cooperation between local NAV offices and local employers in order to find work for young people; to prioritise young people in the allocation of employment activation measures (such as job placements and other employment measures); and to offer young unemployed people educational and training measures to enhance their skills and competences.

As mentioned in chapter 3 on upper-secondary education, some upper-secondary schools have a supervisor from NAV present on their premises. These NAV supervisors concentrate on several issues, but one important aim is to prevent dropout. Students often face complex challenges related to, for example, mental health problems, housing problems, economic problems and other social problems that might influence their school situation. The NAV supervisors can offer assistance with several of these issues.

Starting in 2017, municipalities (in NAV offices) have been instructed to require young people below 30 years of age to participate in some kind of activity to receive economic social assistance benefits. Several municipal offers and projects have been developed to promote activation for young people receiving social assistance benefits.

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<sup>68</sup> <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1071169/FULLTEXT01.pdf>

<sup>69</sup> <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1071169/FULLTEXT01.pdf>

**Sweden:** When youth in Sweden turn 18, the public employment services (PES) may offer them internships (to gain work experience) and different types of subsidised employment. It is possible for those between the ages of 20 and 24 to complete upper-secondary school while also receiving economic assistance from PES, if certain conditions are met.

Many municipalities also have other types of initiatives and support for young people. For example, municipalities are responsible for economic and social assistance if a young person has no resources to provide for him- or herself. As such, the municipality is incentivised to help young people take steps to become self-sufficient. There are municipal job centres, like Stockholm's *jobbtorg*,<sup>70</sup> with its special initiatives for young unemployed people who receive social assistance benefits, or the *ComUng* in Lund,<sup>71</sup> which is part of the Swedish case in the Nordic 0–24 project.

*National coordinator for NEETs:* Following up with NEETs is also high on the agenda in Sweden. In 2015, the Swedish government appointed a national coordinator for NEETs (Regeringen, 2015). One of the coordinator's tasks is to promote collaboration between government agencies, municipalities, county councils and organisations, at the national, regional and local levels, on measures directed towards NEETs (see chapter 2 for further details).

**Faroe Islands:** There are no specific programmes for young people in the Faroe Islands. The Faroe Islands do not present exact NEET rates, but in the mapping, they reported their estimation of close to zero.

**Greenland:** At a *Majoriaq* (public employment service) centre, young people up to the age of 30 have the opportunity to upgrade their skills, take development courses (including non-academic courses), and participate in courses to strengthen their personal and social skills, with the purpose of preparing for education or employment. Measures include: 1) workshop courses, where unskilled young people can learn certain skills—for example, Greenlandic handicrafts or boat repair—and upgrade their basic mathematic skills, language skills, etc.; and 2) job training, where the young person works at a regular job and *Majoriaq* covers a portion of their salary for a period. (Participation in one measure does not exclude participation in the other.)

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<sup>70</sup> <http://www.stockholm.se/Arbete/Fran-bidrag-till-jobb/Jobbtorg-Stockholm/Fragor--svar/>

<sup>71</sup> <https://www.lund.se/arbete--lediga-jobb/arbete-for-ungdomar/comung/>

**Åland:** The youth project *Ung Resurs sysselsättningsprojekt* is a non-governmental activation programme for young people without vocational educational training, partly financed by the government of Åland. The association *Ung Resurs rf* is responsible for the youth programme.

## Counselling and career guidance

In addition, there are several specific counselling and career guidance services available for young NEETs in the Nordic countries.

**Denmark:** In Denmark, 'Educational Guidance for Young People' (*Ungdommens Uddannelsesvejledning*)<sup>72</sup> is offered at the municipal level. The municipalities provide guidance on further education for students in secondary education, and young NEETs ages 15–17 years are followed up with. In addition, the Education Guidance programme can also advise young people up to 25 years of age, and an initiative from the local job centre providing guidance for young people below 30 who have received an education benefit.

**Finland:** Both the *Ohjaamo* and youth work centres provide different kinds of counselling and guidance support for young people.

**Iceland:** Iceland has not reported any specific counselling services.

**Norway:** At the county council level, there are specific services responsible for following up with all NEETs between the ages of 16 and 21 (see chapter 3 for further details), who are covered by the legal right to upper-secondary education.

The county councils also operate centres that offer career guidance and job-seeking support to all citizens ages 19 and older. This is not a service specifically aimed at young people, however, as NEETs are often covered by the follow-up services, and young people in education have specific counselors in schools.

**Sweden:** In Sweden, public employment services provide career and counselling guidance. These kinds of services may also be included in some of the municipal arrangements referred to above.

**Greenland, the Faroe Island, and Åland:** Greenland, the Faroe Islands and Åland have not reported any specific guidance or follow-up services for NEETS, but we can assume that these kind of services are integrated with other available programmes and arrangements for the target group.

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<sup>72</sup> <https://www.ug.dk/6til10klasse/ungdommens-uddannelsesvejledning>



## 6. The national cases of cross-sectoral collaboration

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In this chapter, we present the national cases involved in the Nordic 0–24 project. The cases vary both in the way they are organised, at which administrative level they are anchored, and which sectors and services they include. At the project meeting in Copenhagen, a template for the presentation of the national projects was discussed. In this first interim report, information on three main issues is prioritised: 1) the aim and goals of the national cases, 2) a description of the target groups, and 3) a description of the actors and services included in the case. Furthermore, the researchers highlight the importance of paying attention to: 4) how cross-sectoral collaboration is facilitated in the national projects, 5) how the user-perspective is approached, and 6) what the contribution of each national project to the overall Nordic project will be.

At this point, the cases are at very different stages, from how they are structured and organised to how they are assumed to contribute to the Nordic project. In this chapter, we present information on the cases as they appear at this stage in the evaluation. In the next interim report, the cases and experiences from the cases will be more thoroughly discussed.

### **National anchorage of the 0–24 projects**

All of the national 0–24 cases are in one way or another anchored in the national ministry responsible for education. There are, however, variations in how the cases are organised. Finland, Norway and Sweden have a similar way of anchoring the cases, in both the national association of local and regional authorities (in Finland: *Kuntaliitto*; in Norway: *KS*; in Sweden: *Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting—SKL*) and in the national ministry or directorate responsible for education. In Norway, *KS* is in charge of the case, but there is a collaboration between *KS* and the Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training, and the case reports to the Ministry of Education and Research. In Sweden, *SKL* is in charge of the case but reports to the Ministry of Education

and Research. In Finland, the Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible but is collaborating with *Kuntaliitto*.

In Denmark, the case is anchored in the Ministry of Education and the National Agency for Education and Quality. There is a national team of learning consultants at the agency in charge, and five involved municipalities comprise the case. A similar way of organising the case is found in Iceland, where the Directorate of Education is responsible on behalf of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, but the actual case takes place at the Service Centre of Breiðholt in Reykjavik and there are several municipal collaborative actors involved. In Greenland, the project is anchored in the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Church, which collaborates with two other ministries and the municipal administration of *Sermersooq* (*Kommuneqarfik Sermersooq*) on the specific case, which takes place in the town of Tasiilaq.

In Åland, the project is anchored in the regional government of Åland's Department of Education and Culture (*Landskapsregjeringen*).

The table below outlines the detailed names of the main actors in each project. The actors listed in bold are where the national case is formally anchored.

In each national case, there is a collaboration between different actors. These actors work together on a defined project to enhance services directed at one or more specific target groups within the 0–24 age group and their families. As described earlier, this means that the national cases are very different in both scope and content and in terms of which groups they approach. In the following, we give a brief and schematic presentation of the seven national cases. As mentioned, the Faroe Islands have decided not to include a specific case as part of the project. We describe the purpose of the projects, the target groups and, as far as it has been decided, the actors involved in the cases.

Table 6.1. Anchorage of the national cases of cross-sectoral collaboration. Bold text is where the main responsibility for carrying out the case has been placed.

Country	National Gov Dept	National Agency	Local Authorities and Regional Associations	Municipalities/ Others
Denmark	<b>Ministry of Education</b>	<b>National Agency for Education and Quality / The Inclusive Education Team</b>		Five municipalities
Finland	<b>Ministry of Education and Culture</b>		The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities ( <i>Kuntaliitto</i> )	Several municipalities
Iceland	Ministry of Education, Science and Culture	<b>The Directorate of Education</b>		Municipality of Reykjavik, Department of Welfare, Department of Education and Youth; Service Centre of Breiðholt (district in Reykjavik)
Norway	Ministry of Education and Research	The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training	<b>The Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS)</b>	Seven municipalities
Sweden	Ministry of Education and Research		<b>The Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SKL)</b>	Four municipalities and one region
Greenland	<b>Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Church;</b> Ministry of Social Welfare, Family, Gender Equality and Justice; Ministry of Health			Municipalities of Kommuneqarfik and Sermersooq and the city of Tasiilaq.
Åland	<b>Department of Education and Culture</b>			

## Denmark

### Project title

‘Inclusion of vulnerable children and young people through early, preventative efforts and cross-sectoral cooperation’

The case consists of a network of five municipal projects administered by the Ministry of Education’s learning consultants.<sup>73</sup> All five municipalities have specific ongoing projects to meet challenges related to school inclusion.

### Aims and goals

The aim of the case is to identify factors in the education system that have a decisive influence on the absence and exclusion of vulnerable children and young people. The project will reveal and systematise existing experiences of cooperation between state and municipalities and across municipal administrations in order to develop new forms of cooperation—both between the state and municipality levels and between municipal administrations. The project also aims at increasing the inclusion of vulnerable children and young people in the 0–24 age group, in order to prevent exclusion and dropout from the education system.

### Target group

The target groups in the project are the following:

*At the state level:* consultants in the Ministry of Education, Local Government Denmark (KL), The Danish Association of Social Workers, and the Association of Child and Cultural Managers (*Barne- og Kultursjef-foreningen*).

*At the municipal level:* managers and consultants across different administrations dealing with vulnerable children and young people.

*At school and institutional level:* management teams in day care institutions, schools and leisure facilities, as well as resource personnel working with vulnerable children and young people.

### Collaborating actors

There are several collaborating actors: The Ministry of Education, The Centre of Outreach Quality Work at the Agency of Education and Quality (*Styrelsen*

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<sup>73</sup> Learning consultants in the inclusion team at the Centre of Outreach Quality work at the Agency of Quality and Control.

for *Undervisning og kvalitet*), Local Government Denmark (KL), and municipalities of Copenhagen, Fredrikshavn, Guldborgssund, Tønder and Tårnby. The municipalities have ongoing projects related to vulnerable children and young people and education, and the projects involve different actors and services at the municipal level, as well as collaboration with learning consultants at the national level.

## Finland

### Project title

‘New forms of support for growth, welfare and learning in municipalities applying the life cycle model after the social welfare and health care reform (regional reform)’

The case is administered by the Ministry of Education and Culture in cooperation with the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities. Municipalities that have applied the life cycle model participate in the project.

### Aims and goals

The aim of the project is to collect and spread examples of good practices and good models from organisations in municipalities that have applied the life cycle model. The life cycle model seeks to structure the services more explicitly from the needs of different population groups and develop more user-oriented services and, as part of that, to coordinate the necessary services (e.g. health, social and education services). The aim is to develop models that specifically apply to school and student health services, and to cover new collaboration needs between administrative levels. After the social and health reform (regional reform),<sup>74</sup> the responsibility for these services is located at both the municipal and regional levels. The aim is to develop models and tools for counties and municipalities that want to continue to work with, or start applying, the life cycle model.

The case is related to the programme to reform child and family services (LAPE), presented in chapter one.

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<sup>74</sup> <https://thl.fi/en/web/social-welfare-and-health-care-reform>

## **Target group**

The target groups are municipalities that have used life cycle models as an approach in their services and new municipalities that want to apply this model. Indirect target groups are experts working with school health services and student health services.

## **Collaborating actors**

The Ministry of Education and Culture, the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities (*Kuntaliitto*) and municipalities are collaborating actors (at present, we do not have an overview of participating municipalities).

## **Iceland**

### **Project title**

‘The *Breiðholt* model

The case is anchored at the service centre of Breiðholt in Reykjavik and involves a collaboration between the Department of Welfare and the Department of Education and Youth in the city of Reykjavik and, at the national level, the Directorate of Education.

### **Aims and goals**

The aim of the case is to develop the Breiðholt interdisciplinary model further in support of schools, children, youth and parents. The goal is to reduce dropout and early school leaving. In 2005, the social support and school services in Breiðholt were merged into the Service Centre of Breiðholt. Since then, the interdisciplinary collaboration of these units has been under construction. The social service unit provides counselling and support services to the residents. The school service unit provides counselling, screening, diagnoses and guidance to children, parents and staff in pre-primary and elementary school. In addition, there is a collaboration with Breiðholt’s upper-secondary school. In the project included as a case in the Nordic 0–24 project, early intervention is promoted, and the aim is to increase resources and collaboration between institutions to improve efforts towards children at risk. The goal is to implement the support model in all schools in Reykjavík.

## **Target group**

The target group is children in primary and lower-secondary school who do not attend school, usually because of specific learning difficulties, emotional problems, parental problems or social difficulties in the family. Parents and primary and lower-secondary schools are also part of the target group.

## **Collaborating actors**

The participants of the project are the Service Centre of Breiðholt, with an interdisciplinary support team, the Department of Welfare and the Department of Education and Youth in the city of Reykjavik, and a collaboration with Breiðholt's upper-secondary school, primary and lower-secondary schools in the district.

## **Norway**

### **Project title**

'Strengthened quality of systematic and interacting work with vulnerable children and young people'

The Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS) is the national case owner. The case includes a network consisting of seven municipalities.

### **Aims and goals**

The Norwegian case is part of a development project on municipal services initiated by KS in 2017. A network of seven municipalities will work on cross-sectoral learning processes and develop indicators for good practice towards vulnerable children and young people. A stated reason for the project is that the municipalities experience challenges providing the right services at the right time for children and families in need of assistance from several services simultaneously. Collaboration across professions, sectors and administrative bodies are recognised as necessary. The project will contribute to sharing experiences and learning on how different levels of administration and sectors can best implement their efforts to develop coordinated, comprehensive and relevant services for the target groups. The overall objective of the project is to strengthen the municipalities' capacity to collaborate at such a high quality that children, young people and their families become better equipped to manage their own lives.

The following areas will be developed further into indicators in the project: a robust collaboration culture, common goals and direction, knowledge-based services, improved levels of expertise, early efforts, and qualitative evaluations.

The network will clarify the values, characteristics and practices that enhance the quality of work with vulnerable children and young people. The indicators will be operationalised to be relevant to the work of each municipality.

### **Target group**

The different professionals that are collaborating to raise the quality of services provided to strengthen vulnerable children, young people/youth, and their families are the targets of the project.

### **Collaborating actors**

Seven municipalities participate in a network. Each municipality has put together a participant-group including school managers, day care centres, educational psychological services (*PPT-tjeneste*), child welfare and health care/school health services, and 'family house' and NAV (Norwegian Labour and Welfare Service) representatives. The following municipalities are involved in the network: Halden, Gjøvik, Lunner, Råde, Sørum, Averøy, Skaun and Steinkjer.

The Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS) is the national case owner. The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training is a collaborative actor for their contribution to the Nordic 0–24 project.



# Sweden

## Project title

‘Plug In 2.0’

The Plug In 2.0 case is run by The Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SKL). Plug In is a large collaborative project on preventing early school leaving, which first started in 2012. A specific Plug In case has been established for the Nordic 0–24 project.

## Aims and goals

The overall objective of the Plug In project is to prevent students from dropping out of upper-secondary school. The aim is to both prevent students at risk of interrupting their studies from dropping out, and encourage young people who have already left their studies to return to education or establish themselves in the labour market. For the Nordic 0–24 project, the aim of the project is to further develop and intensify cross-sectoral activities and measures at the municipal and regional levels. These municipal and regional activities and measures build on the experiences and learnings developed in the larger Plug In project (2015–2018), regarding how different levels of administration, actors and sectors can collaborate and coordinate their work in order to provide comprehensive, effective, relevant and equivalent service for every child or young person.

## Target group

The primary target group of the project is young women and men in the age group 15–24 years. The target group includes young people at risk of interrupting their studies and those who have not completed their upper-secondary education. However, all children are part of the target group of the participating region/county council in the project: the region of Kronoberg. Their regional initiative *Barnens bästa i Kronoberg* (‘The Best of Children in Kronoberg’) is aimed at strengthening the cooperation and coordination between different professions and sectors who work with children and young people of all ages.

## Collaborating actors

Four municipalities and one region participate in Plug In for the Nordic 0–24 project. SKL runs the project. Actors involved at the municipal and regional

levels are several municipal services, such as education, labour market and integration units, as well as primary, lower-secondary and upper-secondary schools. These actors may also cooperate with other relevant actors, such as the Swedish Public Employment Services. The region of Kronoberg, and the municipalities of Berg, Sandviken, Göteborg and Lund run the local projects. The municipalities have different kind of projects focusing on either guidance or follow-up of NEETS or coaching and guidance for students when transferring from lower-secondary to upper-secondary school. The region of Kronoberg has a broader project for children and young people (as presented above).

## **Greenland**

### **Project title**

‘Tasiilaq’

The case is anchored in the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Church, but the project for better living conditions for children and families in the city Tasiilaq is based on a collaboration between several Ministries of Greenland’s self-government, the municipality of Sermersooq and the city of Tasiilaq. An interdisciplinary steering committee with representatives from both administrative levels has been established.

### **Aims and goals**

The project is a continuation of an existing project in Tasiilaq. Tasiilaq is an area in Greenland with high levels of deprivation and extensive social problems. The aim of the project is to carry out an extraordinary cross-sectoral effort to gather together various services to support families in Tasiilaq. The project will introduce specific measures that can help to ensure that children are physically, mentally and socially able to complete primary and lower-secondary school and higher education.

### **Target group**

The target groups of the project are children, young people and their parents in Tasiilaq. Families with specific challenges—like single mothers, unemployed or low-income families, and families with a history of abuse—are particular target groups. A large number of families in Tasiilaq fall within this target group.

## **Collaborating actors**

The Ministries of the self-government (such as the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Church; the Ministry of Social Welfare, Family, Gender Equality and Justice; and the Ministry of Health), the Municipality of Sermersooq and the Municipality's Administration for Children, Family and School are all collaborative actors in the case.

## **Åland**

### **Project title**

'Further development of the collaboration model for child protection work in Åland'<sup>75</sup>

The case for the Nordic 0–24 project is anchored in the Åland government's Department of Education and Culture.

### **Aims and goals**

The aim of the case is to improve the cross-sectoral cooperation between professionals in schools who work with vulnerable children and young people ages 0–24 in Åland. The project will provide municipalities with a new template for the collaboration model<sup>76</sup> that describes how the model for child protection work can be used by professionals in schools. The collaborative model will be distributed to the 16 municipalities in Åland by the 0–24 project and the Åland government's Department of Education and Culture. The collaboration model for child protection work will be shared with the rest of the Nordic region in both a printed version and on the internet.

The new developed guide will describe how different professionals in school can work together and have more efficient meetings to develop improved cooperation and relevant services for vulnerable children and young people.

### **Target group**

The target groups are the municipalities and professionals working with vulnerable children and young people 0–24 years. The extended target group is children and young people ages 0–24 years who need special support because

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<sup>75</sup> *Samverkansmodell för barnskyddsarbete.*

<sup>76</sup> handledningsmaterial för samverkansmodell.

of specific learning difficulties, emotional problems, parental emotional problems or social difficulties in the family. The project will contribute to a long-term goal of preventing dropout, social exclusion and poverty.

### **Collaborating actors**

The development of the guide for a collaborative model for child protection work is developed/written in cooperation with the Lighthouse Sandra Rasmussen Company. The recipients of the guide are the professionals/actors in schools, health care and social care and others working together with vulnerable children and young people 0–24 years of age.

## **The national cases as examples of cross-sectoral coordination**

The cases described here are to serve as the basis for the process evaluation and the joint learnings in the Nordic 0–24 project. The cases are expected to display factors contributing to effective cross-sectoral collaboration in the 0–24 area. Cross-sectoral coordination is not a goal in itself, but a means to develop better and more coherent follow-up of vulnerable children and young people and their families.

The countries have each chosen cases that, to a varying degree, approach cross-sectoral coordination explicitly as a means to achieve better services for the target group. As a consequence of not having a clear definition of which type of cases or projects to include in the joint Nordic project at the outset, there is a broad range of issues on the table and no clear link as to how they will bring added value to discussions on cross-sectoral collaboration. At the same time, this diversity can contribute fruitful insight into what is happening within and across the Nordic countries with regards to the 0–24 age group, and there is the potential to gain inspiration from the different initiatives. That being said, the researchers experiences from the project thus far is that there is a clear need for meticulous preparation before and around the joint meetings to make sure that the discussions and workshops add to the joint project and the process evaluation. Cross-sectoral collaboration—and factors contributing to better cross-sectoral collaboration and more coherent service provision is at the heart of the process evaluation and the joint Nordic project. However, at this stage, the joint project has not yet reached a stage where all participating countries can clearly define how their national project will approach this and how they will contribute to the joint project.

In upcoming joint meetings and workshops, dialogs and sharing of experiences from the cases must be facilitated to explicitly target which factors are seen as contributing to better collaboration and more coherent services to vulnerable children, young people and their families, and which factors might hamper improved collaboration. We might also consider whether it is possible to identify more specific challenges as a starting point, or to split the participants into groups based on their main approach or involved actors.

The research team acknowledges that it might be necessary to define specific research question ahead of the meetings. Then, all cases could be asked to provide information from their case, which would provide a basis or background for the discussions and mutual learning processes at the meetings. The researchers will also work on identifying relevant issues around which participants could be divided into constructive groups, to use more joint issues as starting points for discussions about experiences related to cross-sectoral collaboration.

In Copenhagen, the central issues of the field trips targeted how best to facilitate providing support for inclusive learning environments in primary schools. The fieldtrip to the two local cases provided information on collaboration between professions, actors and services within the education sector and, to a certain degree, between different sectors within the municipality. In one of the cases, the support teams were located at the municipal education administration and provided ambulant guidance and support for schools. In the other case, a broad resource centre providing follow-up on inclusive learning environments within the school was developed, in collaboration with PPR services in the municipality. In both these cases, the schools and support of inclusive education in primary or lower-secondary school was the starting point. This was interesting for all of the 0–24 project participants who were at the field trip, as all the governmental participants at the state level are anchored in the education sector, and almost all the cases have schools as one of the partners at some level. But as we can see from the cases presented above, basic education and schools are not the starting point for all cases:

- The cases comprising the Danish case mainly target support for inclusion in school.
- The case from Iceland is centred around support of schools, children and families.
- While the case from Åland is aimed at facilitating better collaboration between professionals in schools, it is more specifically focused on developing tools for enhancing cross-sectoral collaboration.

- In the Swedish case, most of the local projects involved are more explicitly related to follow-up of youths, dropouts and NEETS.
- The Finnish and Norwegian cases have a broader perspective, concentrating on quality efforts to develop better services for children and young people more generally. This is also the focus in the Greenlandic case, but in Greenland it is restricted to one specific town.

## **Challenges to cross sectoral collaboration**

Both in the mapping forms and at the joint meeting in Copenhagen, we addressed factors assessed as representing challenges to cross-sectoral collaboration, and factors assumed to contribute to cross-sectoral collaboration. When summing up the joint meeting in Copenhagen, we presented six different factors that we found striking in the mapping forms, the field trips undertaken in connection with the meeting, and the discussions:

1. Geographical proximity/location
2. Professions/knowledge/culture
3. Leadership
4. Incentive systems and economy
5. Resources and time
6. Systems and regulations

As mentioned above, at the joint meeting in Copenhagen, a field trip to the Østre Farimaksgade primary school—one of the local projects included in the Danish case—was arranged. The school has developed their support services with a heightened emphasis on user-involvement and ‘children’s voices’. But more interesting in this case, for our purposes, is their emphasis on developing a strong resource centre and an inclusive learning environment at the school, where different professions and different competences are represented. One interesting issue to further explore in the process evaluation is the importance of establishing a joint location for collaborating actors or meeting places for more successful collaborative efforts. This issue of geographical proximity/location was also addressed in the mapping forms filled out by the Danish partner.

One other issue raised in the discussions after the field trip was the importance of leadership with a clear mandate regarding cooperative participation around a specific task. At the Farimaksgade school, the leadership stood out as being very dedicated and involved in the project on inclusion and thus in providing joint engagement for the model.

In the mapping forms, the partners shared their experiences or identified challenges related to cross-sectoral collaboration. Participants from the Faroe Islands, for example, reported that one of the challenges with regards to enhancing services for the 0–24 age group is getting different professionals and different sectors to collaborate. In the discussions at the joint meetings, establishing a joint understanding between different professions or competence groups around an issue was raised as being important for collaborative action; as illustrated by the experiences of the Faroe Islands participant, however, different professions with different systems of knowledge, approaches, and cultures might represent a major challenge for establishing a joint effort.

Several of the challenges raised in the mapping forms were related to enhancing cross-sectoral collaboration in a single-sector administrative system. Additional challenges centred around the (lack of) institutional incentives related to cross-sectoral collaboration: Collaboration is time-consuming and to spend time and resources in the joint effort, the participants must experience an added value.

In the mapping form, the Danish partners addressed the challenges of effectively coordinating cross-sectoral actions. While we do not have further elaboration on this, one element they mentioned is the need for prioritising sufficient resources.

When it comes to challenges related to cross-sectoral collaboration, the Swedish partners emphasised that Sweden's overall challenge is to develop services that are able to carry out the early interactions that must take place between involved authorities and responsible actors. By identifying the challenges of young people early on, efforts can be made to address the problems before they become larger and more complex. In their report, they write that stronger incentives for collaborative engagement between authorities and actors, civil society and parents must therefore be established. Their assessment is that the incentives are not strong enough for institutions and services to improve their collaboration. Consequently, cooperation must be considered both as contributing to better services and as being economically beneficial.

Partners from Greenland report several challenges related to the development of good cross-sectoral collaboration between services for children and young people. The size of the country (i.e., geographical distance), the lack of infrastructures and problems with recruiting and retaining qualified staff are all major challenges. The low educational level in Greenland means that qualified staff must primarily be recruited from Denmark. The Danish staff,

however, primarily want to live and work in the capital, Nuuk, and it is challenging to motivate qualified staff to work in smaller towns or settlements in Greenland.

In the report from Åland, four different challenges of developing cross-sectoral collaboration between services are mentioned: the obligation of professional secrecy, a lack of financial incentives, different work cultures, and the perception that collaboration is time-consuming. Each of these are in line with above-mentioned factors that will be further discussed in the process evaluation.

## **Further discussions on learning from the cases**

These preliminary discussions about factors influencing cross-sectoral collaboration will be continued throughout the project. In line with the model introduced in chapter one (figure 1.2), the experiences from the national cases will add to these discussions.

In future phases of this evaluation, during the discussions with participants, the research team will consider to lean more heavily on the list of issues and questions recommend to the evaluation of the national cases. As this list is sent to the national contact persons ahead of time, it could also serve as a framework for discussions in the joint Nordic meetings regarding what, in the participants' experiences, seems to contribute to or hamper cross-sectoral collaboration (see appendix 1). This includes related questions, such as: Where does the coordination and collaboration take place? Are there facilitated for meeting places and arenas for collaboration? Are specific methods or tools used to facilitate better collaboration? What is the mandate of the project and the involved actors regarding cross-sectoral collaboration? What is the level of engagement from each involved actor on these joint issues?

Experiences from the previous joint project meetings indicate that, in order to engage in these kind of discussions, the participants must have the chance to prepare beforehand. This calls for a clear delineation regarding what issues to discuss at each meeting and that this be communicated to participants well ahead of the meetings.



# Closing remarks

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An overall analysis of the described services and systems presented in this report reflects what we understand to be the Nordic welfare state: an advanced and extensive welfare state that provides services for children and young persons from early childhood through their life course.

In all Nordic countries, there are services available that should make it possible to identify vulnerable children (and families) from an early age. Each of the countries have systems for home visits to families with new-borns and continuous follow-up to monitor children's development. A large share of Nordic children attend kindergarten or other early child care arrangements. In several of the countries, there are arrangements to stimulate kindergarten attendance among children from low-income families or other vulnerable groups. There seems to be a growing emphasis in all countries on the value of such early education and care in preparing children for later school readiness. There is a free and inclusive school system in all the Nordic countries. Sweden and Denmark both have a larger number of private or independent schools than the other countries, but most Nordic children attend a public primary and lower-secondary school in their neighbourhood. All countries have systems providing school health services and support systems for inclusive, adjusted, supportive and special education. Most young people also attend upper-secondary school, but there are greater differences in the systems for upper-secondary education than for basic education. There are significant concerns across the Nordic countries about school dropout. The dropout numbers are generally higher within vocational education than in general study programmes, and are higher among boys than girls.

There are extensive services available but at the same time, this report also illustrates the need for mutual learning with regards to better cross-sectoral collaboration at the state, regional and municipal levels to provide higher-quality, more coherent services to vulnerable children and young people. The systems and services are there, but there is a need for improved collaboration, and perhaps new models of service provision and support. The aim of this process evaluation is to study examples of cross-sectoral collaboration aimed at providing better services to vulnerable children, young people and

their families; another objective is to discuss lessons learned from the experiences of project participants in order to target how to promote better cross-sectoral collaboration and how to generate a more coherent follow-up of the target group.

The presentation of the national systems and services is not a comprehensive mapping, but rather a description of systems and services of relevance for the Nordic 0–24 projects' target groups and cases. The overview illustrates both the similarities and national variations between relevant services for the Nordic 0–24 project. When we started out with this mapping of systems and services, we were occupied with national variations. The mapping and the project thus far has revealed that there are also many local variations between municipalities within the countries that are of great relevance for the project. Due to the decentralisation of the responsibility for welfare service provision, there are many local variations around and models for providing services. That means that, within the national structures and systems, we will find local variations and different models of relevance for the Nordic 0–24 project. For example, several of the national cases in the 0–24 project comprise several municipal projects that are trying out models that may contribute to improved understanding about better services for and follow-up of the target group. In this report, for example, we have seen that there are different models within the Nordic countries on how to provide support for vulnerable students in schools.

As pointed out above, the report does not provide a comprehensive overview of all relevant systems and services in the Nordic countries related to the 0–24 group, nor all relevant policy debates or background data on all relevant factors. In the overview of school systems, we have, for example, not gone thoroughly into admissions systems for upper-secondary schools, which might be of relevance for future discussions about cross-sectoral collaboration to prevent dropout. In Norway, there is an ongoing debate about the consequences of a combined system of admissions regulated by grades and unit price to finance upper-secondary schools in Oslo. One critique of this system is that it contributes to significant socioeconomic differences between schools, and thus differences in student support needs between the schools. There might be a parallel local context of relevance in the other Nordic countries that will be worth addressing in the project evaluation.

One other factor is that we have not included specific background data related to immigration in the Nordic countries, but for the next phase(s) of the Nordic 0–24 project, this must be one of the factors discussed—among other

socioeconomic factors of relevance for the social inclusion of vulnerable children and youth. Neither have we included specific services related to the promotion of social inclusion of children and young people with immigrant backgrounds. This too will be relevant to address in the next phase(s) of the project, and as part of the contexts of some of the cases.

The national cases that comprise the Nordic 0–24 project are to be our main source of data in the proceeding process evaluation and a starting point for further discussions within the joint project. As described in this report, these projects are quite different:

- The cases comprising the Danish case mainly target support for inclusion in school.
- The case from Iceland is centred around support of schools, children and families.
- While the case from Åland is aimed at facilitating better collaboration between professionals in schools, it is more specifically focused on developing tools for enhancing cross-sectoral collaboration.
- In the Swedish case, most of the local projects involved are more explicitly related to follow-up of youths, dropouts and NEETS.
- The Finnish and Norwegian cases have a broader perspective, concentrating on quality efforts to develop better services for children and young people more generally. This is also the focus in the Greenlandic case, but in Greenland it is restricted to one specific town.

One clear challenge to the process evaluation is that the cases are not chosen from a stringent set of variables defined by the Nordic project to ensure that they are comparable or that they provide data on the same issues. Additionally, several of the national cases are still being adjusted to fit in as parts of the joint Nordic 0–24 project. In other words, this is still a joint project in the making.

As the project is in an early stage, this first interim report will serve as a joint baseline for future work in the process evaluation. In the upcoming joint meetings and workshops, the evaluation team will work more explicitly to facilitate dialog and the sharing of experiences from each case. This is to make sure that we are able to identify which factors the partners see as contributing to better collaboration and more coherent services to vulnerable children, young persons and their families, and which factors appear to hamper this process. Information about the systems and services presented in this report will form the basis for future discussions.

A consequence of not having a clear definition of which type of cases or projects to include in the joint Nordic project at the outset is that there is a broad range of issues on the table and no clear link regarding how they will bring added value to discussions on cross-sectoral collaboration. The research team has developed questions to be implemented in the national evaluations of participating cases, and these evaluations will hopefully contribute to generating relevant data from the cases (see appendix 1). In the upcoming joint meetings, we might also consider whether it is possible to identify more specific challenges as a starting point, or to split the participants into groups based on their main approach or involved actors. In addition, the research team will define specific research questions for the participants before the meeting, so they are able to share and receive relevant information with and from their local partners, and be prepared to engage in the discussions at the joint meetings.

The promotion of school completion and the prevention of dropout is a primary aim of the joint Nordic project. While not every national case is directly linked to the school sector, the school sector or actors in the school system are collaborative actors in each case, in some way. Thus far in the project, there have been several discussions between the partners about the organisation of support services in schools and how other professions might help provide a more coherent follow-up of vulnerable students; as such, we can see that discussions about inclusive education are relevant for all the participants. Identifying these kinds of good thematic approaches to use as the bases for future dialog and workshops at the upcoming joint meetings will help generate relevant data.

The next interim report will look more explicitly at the involved cases and the experiences of participants. The present report will form a backdrop for these further discussions. In this report, we have initiated a discussion around six factors experienced by the partners as being of relevance for cross-sectoral collaboration. Further analyses will depend on future data collection, the national evaluations of each case and engagement from the participants in discussions at the joint meetings.

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# Appendix 1 Input to the evaluation of national cases

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## Input to the evaluation

This is our input to what the national projects should include in their evaluations when their cases are going to be evaluated. Our input concerns what we believe is of importance in order to highlight our issues in the overall evaluation of Nordic 0-24.

The following overall topics/questions should be included in the national evaluations:

### Aims and goals

- What are the **aims and goals** for each of the cases?
- What are the **planned activities** within each case?
- What is the identified **key target group** for each of the cases?

### Collaboration and management

- Which **collaborating actors** are involved, and at what levels (local/national) are they situated? From what sectors and professional groups are the collaborating actors in each of the different cases?
- How does **coordination and collaboration take place**? Are there facilitated / implemented **specific meeting places, arenas for collaboration and cross sectoral coordination**?
- Are there **specific methods or tools** used to facilitate better collaboration and cross sectoral coordination?
- What factors are assessed as having contributed to **promote collaboration**?
- What factors are assessed as having contributed to **restrain collaboration**?



## Organization, regulation and structure

- How the project **organized**, meaning is it part of a more overall national project or initiative, or a local independent project? Who has the **main responsibility** of the project (meaning responsible of management, progress and results) and what kind of **resources** are allocated to enhance collaboration?
- What is the **mandate of the project** and the involved actors? (Meaning the scope of action, specific mandate, regulations or other agreement that regulate what the involved actors are to do, or allowed to implement as part of the project).
- What **challenges and strengths do the actors experience with the chosen organization of the project**?
- How is **the mutual trust and engagement** on the joint issue between collaborating organizations and professionals?
- To what extent are **the organization and management assessed as adequate to improve cross-sectoral collaboration**?

## User perspective

- How is **the user perspective** incorporated in each of the national cases, and who does each case identify as users?
- What kind of strategies on **safeguarding service users interests**, perspectives on user involvement do they have in the project?
- How are the **methods to promote user involvement assessed**?
- Is it possible to identify any examples of **best practice on user involvement** from the project?

## Sharing of knowledge and experiences

- How is knowledge and experiences shared within the project? What kinds of tools, methods and arenas to share knowledge do they practice?
- Have there been any specific meeting points or arenas in the project that have been successful to promote better and more coordinated services?
- Are there any methods or tools used in the project that are assessed as successful to promote collaboration and more coordinated services?  
What are the most essential elements of these methods / tools?

## **Achievement /effect**

- What have they achieved in relations to the aims and goals of the project (as stated in the first part)?
- What kinds of merit and worth in relation to collaboration have been achieved, and how can this be described?
- What kinds of significance in relation to collaboration have been achieved, and how can this be described?
- What kinds of efficiency in relation to collaboration have been achieved, - and how can this be described?
- **Overall: to what extent has collaboration contributed to offer better services to vulnerable children, young persons and their families?**
- **What factors are assessed as of main importance to reach the overall goals related to offer better services?**
- **Is it possible to describe a best practice of cross-sectoral collaboration within the national case?**



## **Nordic 0 – 24 collaboration on improved services to vulnerable children and young people**

This is the first interim report from a process evaluation of the Nordic 0–24 project. The Nordic 0–24 project was initiated by the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2017. The aim is to improve services in the Nordic countries that are directed at vulnerable children and young people between the ages of 0 and 24 years by means of improving cross-sectoral collaboration. The overall agenda is to prevent the social exclusion of the target group, prevent school dropout and future marginalisation in the labour market. The project comprises cases from all the Nordic countries and these cases serve as national examples of cross-sectoral collaboration around service delivery for the target group. This first interim report provide an overview of the design of the process evaluation, a structural description of the national cases, and as a background for future analyses, the national policy context of the involved cases and relevant national welfare systems and services.



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