

Ida Kjeøy, Silje Andresen and
Andreas Falkenberg

Children who do not attend school: Rules, measures and practices from Norway



Ida Kjeøy, Silje Andresen and Andreas Falkenberg

Children who do not attend school: Rules, measures and practices from Norway

The project 'The Initiative 'NOROC in Education' - A Norwegian - Romanian Initiative for Quality in Education' benefits from a 998.000€ grant from Norway through the Local Development Program. The aim of the project is to improve the quality of educational services, especially in rural areas in 5 counties of Romania.

This document has been created with the financial support of Norwegian Grants 2014 – 2021.

The content of this material does not reflect the official view of the Programme Operator, of the National Focal Point or of the Office of the Financial Mechanism. The information and opinions expressed herein represent the sole responsibility of the author(s).

Fafopaper 2023:04



ASCHF-R FILIALA VALCEA

Fafopaper 2023:04

© Fafo 2023

ISSN 0804-5135

Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Preface | 4 |
| 1 Introduction..... | 5 |
| 1.1 Research questions, data, and methods..... | 5 |
| 1.2 The structure of the report | 6 |
| 2 The Norwegian school system | 8 |
| 2.1 Inclusive, unitary school system..... | 8 |
| 2.2 Four phases of the school system | 8 |
| 2.3 Decentralized school structure with regional differences..... | 9 |
| 2.4 High enrolment, high expenditure | 9 |
| 3 Pupils who do not attend school: Rules and regulations..... | 11 |
| 3.1 Primary and lower secondary education | 11 |
| 3.2 Upper secondary education | 14 |
| 4 Practices from Norway: A literature review | 15 |
| 4.1 Methods..... | 15 |
| 4.2 Findings from the Norwegian literature..... | 16 |
| 4.3 Discussion in light of international research..... | 21 |
| 5 Example of practice: Minority advisors..... | 23 |
| 5.1 Methods..... | 23 |
| 5.2 Minority advisors in lower secondary schools | 23 |
| 5.3 What do the minority advisors do?..... | 25 |
| 5.4 Summary | 30 |
| 6 Example of practice: School Guidance for Roma Pupils..... | 31 |
| 6.1 The history of Norwegian Roma | 31 |
| 6.2 The educational system's failed attempt to include | 32 |
| 6.3 Methods..... | 33 |
| 6.4 The School Guidance for Roma pupils: Role and mandate..... | 33 |
| 6.5 Stories from the School Guidance for Roma Pupils..... | 33 |
| 6.6 Summary | 36 |
| 7 Special education needs in Norway | 38 |
| 7.1 SEN pupils in Norway..... | 39 |
| 7.2 Special education proceedings in Norway..... | 39 |
| 7.3 Challenges linked to the special education proceedings | 41 |
| 7.4 Summary | 42 |
| 8 Summary | 43 |
| 8.1 Rules regulating absences | 43 |
| 8.2 Measures that work..... | 43 |
| 8.3 Suggestions for further research | 44 |
| Sources | 45 |

Preface

This report serves as background information for the joint Norwegian-Romanian project “Inclusive Education for Children and Young People at Risk” (NOROC). The main purpose of the NOROC project is to ensure access to equitable quality education for Romanian children and youth at risk of dropping out of primary and lower secondary schools, through the implementation of relevant measures. NOROC defines Romanian children and youth at risk of dropping out to be being children living in poverty, children with low educational capital, children of Roma ethnicity, children with exposure to ethnic discrimination, children coming from single-parent households and children at risk of early marriages.

Fafo has been assigned the task of describing ‘best practices from Norway’, that can be relevant for the project. In Norway, school dropout is a topic described in the research literature as occurring in upper secondary schools. Primary and lower secondary school is obligatory and therefore, it can seem, dropout is not relevant. Digging deeper into the literature has, however, shown that there are children in Norway who do not attend school at all, despite there being rules and measures available to ensure that they do.

In this report, we describe Norwegian rules and measures, and show some aspects of the work that is being done in Norway to increase pupils’ attendance. Hopefully, the report can also give inspiration and food for thought to our Romanian colleagues in the NOROC project, who are to develop measures to increase attendance among Romanian pupils. We have chosen our research design and case studies based on NOROC’s understanding of youth at risk. However, we leave it up to our Romanian colleagues to define which of the practices described seem ‘best’ for their particular context.

Ida Kjeøy, Silje Andresen, and Andreas Falkenberg are the authors of this report. Kjeøy has conducted the document study, the literature review, and the case study on minority advisors. She has written Chapters 1-5 and 8. Andresen has conducted the case study on the School Guidance for Roma Pupils and has written Chapter 6. Falkenberg has written Chapter 7.

Elin Maria Fiane, librarian at the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, has assisted us in the literature review. Mina Kristoffersen, Rebekka Ringholm, and Laila Nordfjeld have transcribed the interviews. Anne Hatløy has read and commented on a draft version of the report. Nerina Weiss has read and assured the quality of our work. Viv O’Neill has proof read the text. Jon Lahlum has revised the text for final publication. NOROC is funded through the EEA and Norway Grants.

An extended thank you to all the persons who have agreed to be interviewed for this project.

Oslo, 1. March 2023
Ida Kjeøy

1 Introduction

There are some children who never attend school, or who attend for a while and then disappear. When children don't go to school, or have high levels of absences, this has far-reaching consequences for their lives. Children who do not go to school miss out on the possibility to learn, but also lack important arenas for development and socialization, forming friendships, security, and a sense of belonging. In extreme cases, high levels of school absenteeism and dropout can be a first step in a long-term alienation from working life and society at large.

This report is about school dropout and high absences in Norway, focusing on pupils in primary and lower secondary school. The focus is on the rules and measures that have been put in place to increase attendance and ensure that pupils attend and complete their schooling.

Norway is a country where school enrolment rates in the obligatory phases are high. In all, 96% of all children complete primary and lower secondary school. In Norwegian public discourse, the phenomenon of dropout is only included when speaking of pupils in *upper* secondary school. The 4% who don't complete their obligatory education are seldom mentioned or studied. Neither are those who never meet up for their first day of school; this comprised 218 children in the school year of 2022/2023 (Utdanningsforbundet, 2023).

The goal of the study has been twofold. Our first task was to describe the situation in Norway, and the measures that are in place that ensure that Norwegian children go to school. Second, the study aims to shed light on the children who do not attend and to discuss what can be done to make sure that they do.

1.1 Research questions, data, and methods

This report answers the following research questions:

- What are the *rules* regulating absences and dropout in Norway?
- What are the *measures* implemented in Norwegian schools to reduce absence and dropout, and what works?

To answer the research questions, we have conducted a document study, a literature review, and three case studies.

The document study included reading and analyzing central government documents regulating absences. Documents included are the Norwegian Education Act and supporting documents and guides produced by the Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training. We analyze the documents and describe the mechanisms that are in place from the side of the government. This study shows what the government says that schools and teachers *should* do in cases of high absences and dropout. It does not show what schools *actually* do and whether or not persons assigned different responsibilities carry them out.

The literature review included an extensive search in literature connected to absences and dropouts in Norway. The aim of the review was to find reports and evaluations on measures implemented to reduce dropout rates. Measures regarding

primary, lower, and upper secondary schools were included in the search. This review gives an overview of the measures that have been evaluated through research, but not an overall view of *all* the measures that have been put in place. In the cases where an evaluated measure is found to work, it is found to work in the specific context where it has been created and tested.

We have conducted three case studies. The case studies were chosen based on previous research, which has shown that the 4% who do not complete primary and lower secondary education in Norway are mainly pupils with high levels of absences, minority language pupils who have recently come to Norway, and pupils who receive special education (Vika, 2021). In addition, the little research that is done on Roma families in Norway has shown that Norwegian Roma have low school attendance or do not attend school at all (Engebrigsten, 2015; Engebrigsten & Liden, 2010; Hagatun, 2019; Hagatun & Westrheim, 2014). The goal of the case studies was to get a deeper understanding of how different entities work with dropouts and absenteeism, and to get closer to the phenomenon of dropouts from lower secondary schools.

The first case study is on minority advisors in lower secondary schools. These are advisors who work in schools where many pupils have a minority background. The advisors contribute to guiding and following up children and young people who are at risk of, or are exposed to, negative social control, honor-related violence, forced marriage, and/or female genital mutilation. Previous research has shown that they also work with pupils at risk of dropping out of school, and with pupils with high levels of absences (Bredal, Bråten, Jesnes, & Strand, 2015). We interviewed five minority advisors and two teachers.

The second case study is on school guides for Roma pupils. The school guides are hired by Oslo Municipality to work with Roma pupils, their parents, and schools they attend. The goal of the measure is to improve communication and understanding between schools and Roma families and to increase the chances of Roma pupils completing primary and lower secondary education. We interviewed four school guides.

The third case study is on children with special education needs. The chapter is based on previous research, the primary source being the Nordahl Report (Nordahl et al., 2018), written by an expert group for children and young people in need of extra support in school and kindergarten.

The combination of document study, literature review, and case studies allows us to describe, from different perspectives, the practices regarding children who do not attend school. This is a strength to our design. A clear limitation is that it has been beyond the scope of this report to conduct interviews with pupils, and also that the number of interviewed teachers is low. These perspectives are therefore lacking.

1.2 The structure of the report

Chapter 2 gives a brief overview of the Norwegian school system, presenting the context in which different rules, regulations, and measures function. Chapter 3 presents the rules and regulations that are in place in Norway regarding children who do not attend school. Chapter 4 presents the findings from a literature review of research regarding school attendance and dropout in Norway. The chapter presents evaluated measures that have been implemented in Norway to reduce dropouts. It includes measures that have been shown to work, and measures that have not had the wanted effect. In Chapters 5 and 6, we present practice examples. Here, we have conducted our own interviews to get a deeper understanding of measures that work to reduce dropout in lower secondary education in Norway. Chapter 5 is a case study on

minority advisors in lower secondary schools, and Chapter 6 a case study of the measure School Guidance for Roma Pupils. Chapter 7 gives insight into how the Norwegian school system attends to pupils with special education needs. Chapter 8 concludes.

2 The Norwegian school system

In this chapter, we give a short overview of the Norwegian school system. The chapter gives background and explains the context under which the rules and measures, discussed in further chapters, work.

2.1 Inclusive, unitary school system

Norway has a school system where the overall aim over the last decades has been equal access to education for all (Hansen, Jensen, Strand, Brodtkorb, & Sverdrup, 2018, p. 47). From the beginning of the twentieth century and into the 1990s, educational policy documents used the term ‘unitary school’ (*enhetsskolen*) to describe the school system, or the ideal of it. The main idea of the modern Norwegian school has been a common, free, compulsory school for all children between 6 and 16 years, who belong to the same geographical area. Over the last decades, it has been an explicit goal that the ‘unitary school’ should be inclusive (Nilsen 2010). According to a recent White Paper from the Norwegian Ministry of Education, the school should “provide opportunities for all children and young people - regardless of social, cultural and linguistic background, gender, cognitive and physical differences. [This] requires an inclusive community and early efforts” (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020, p. 4, our translation).

A main principle has been that the organizational solution must be based on the needs of each individual pupil (Nilsen, 2010, p. 490). It follows from the Education Act, that the education in Norwegian schools must be adapted to the needs of each individual pupil in order to ensure that that pupil gets the most out of their schooling. The requirement of adapted education (*tilpasset opplæring*) is applied for all primary and lower secondary education, and all pupils, regardless of their qualifications (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020, p. 48).

2.2 Four phases of the school system

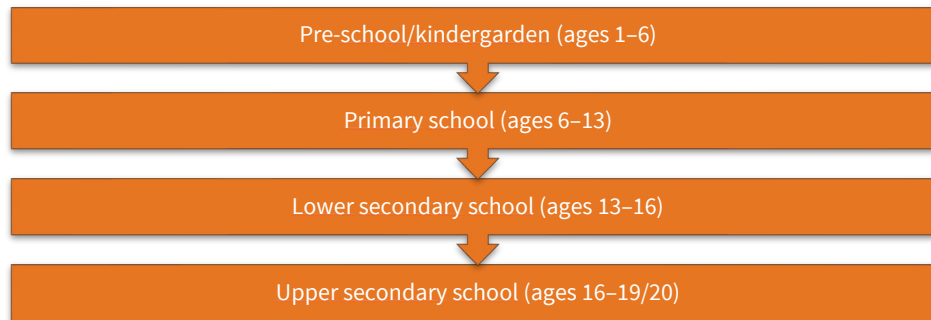
The Norwegian School system can be divided into four phases, as shown in Figure 1. Primary and lower secondary education in Norway are compulsory and usually attended from ages 6 to 16 years. In addition, the school system consists of pre-school and upper secondary education, which are both voluntary. Preschool is offered from ages 1 to 6 years (NOKUT, 2023).

Primary, lower, and upper secondary schools in Norway are free of charge. For primary and lower secondary schools, costs associated with teaching materials, transport during school hours, stays at school camps, and excursions or other outings that are part of the education, are free (Education Act). Pre-schools are subject to a fee, which in some municipalities is waived for certain families. The criteria for waiving vary between municipalities.

Upper secondary education gives pupils a choice between a general studies program or eight vocational education and training (VET) programs. General studies qualify pupils for higher education, while VET leads to more than 180 different trade

or journeyman’s certificates. Both programs usually last three or four years (Hansen et al., 2018, p. 62). Approximately 61% of the students in upper secondary education attend a general studies program (Hansen et al., 2018, p. 44). Upper secondary education in Norway is run by the counties and is also free of charge.

Figure 1 Four phases of Norwegian schooling



2.3 Decentralized school structure with regional differences

The Ministry of Education is responsible for drafting legislation, regulations, curricula, and framework plans, which ensures that the education maintains national standards. However, the responsibility for operating and administrating primary and lower secondary schools is decentralized to the municipalities, while upper secondary education is the responsibility of the county. Most Norwegian schools are public schools – only about 8% of schools in Norway are private (Hansen et al., 2018).

One consequence of a decentralized school structure is that schools vary geographically. Municipalities’ school budgets vary, as does the demography of pupils attending the schools. In Norway’s capital city, Oslo, almost 40% of the pupils have parents with an immigrant background, compared to 18% in the country as a whole (Udir, 2017a).

Norway is known for its extensive welfare state system, with high levels of welfare provided for citizens throughout their life course. At the same time, it is important to highlight that the country also faces social challenges. According to Hansen et al. (2018, p. 11), “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)”; this is reflected in both politics and research. As the next chapter will show, there have been several attempts to address these social challenges through the educational system.

2.4 High enrolment, high expenditure

Norwegian pupils have generally high enrolment rates, especially in pre-school, primary, and lower secondary education. Even though it is not compulsory and parents pay a fee, 93% of all children attend pre-schools (SSB, 2023). Primary and lower secondary are compulsory, and 96% of all pupils *complete* that education (Vika, 2021). The 4% who do not, are not referred to as dropouts in the literature or in official documents, but as pupils with zero points from primary and lower secondary education. They are mainly students who receive special education, students who have high levels of absences, and minority language students who have recently come to

Norway. In these instances, teachers do not have the basis they need to give the pupil a grade (Vika, 2021).

Almost all Norwegian students start upper secondary school even though this is voluntary. Out of these, approximately 70% finish within five years, meaning that the dropout rate from upper secondary schools is approximately 30%. This number has been relatively stable over recent years (Gundersen, Tveito, & Dokken, 2022; Rogstad & Reegård, 2016).

High levels of public expenditure also characterize the Norwegian school system. According to the OECD, Norway spends 1.6 times the OECD average, per pupil, on education, after the general price level in comparable countries is taken into account. Among other things, the high levels of public expenditure allow for the ratio of students to teaching staff in public institutions to be 10:1, the lowest among all OECD countries (OECD, 2022). It also allows for extensive use of non-teacher staff in schools. For example, most schools have hired advisors, nurses etc. who assist in following up children at risk.

3 Pupils who do not attend school: Rules and regulations

In this chapter, we answer the first of two research questions in this report: *What are the rules regulating absences and dropout in Norway?* The chapter is based on a document study of the Norwegian Education Act and supporting documents and guides produced by the Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training. These are documents that are publicly available online. The reader should note that we present rules and ways in which the Norwegian government states that schools and municipalities *should* deal with pupils who do not attend school. We have not collected data on how schools and municipalities *actually* act in instances where a pupil is missing or does not attend.

Our focus is on rules and regulations regarding primary and lower secondary education. However, because measures applied in upper secondary schools will be addressed in Chapter 4, some of the most important rules in this sector will also be presented.

3.1 Primary and lower secondary education

The right and obligation to attend

According to Chapter 2 of the Norwegian Education Act, all “children and young people are obliged to attend primary and lower secondary education and have the right to [such] education”. Furthermore, “[i]f a pupil is absent from compulsory teaching without having the right to do so, his or her parents or those who are in loco parentis may be liable to fines if the absence is a result of deliberate or negligent actions on their part” (Norwegian Education Act).

For children who are not born in Norway, the right to primary and lower secondary education applies when it is likely that the child will be in Norway for more than three months. The right must be actioned as quickly as possible and within one month at the latest. The obligation to attend primary and lower secondary education begins when the stay has lasted three months. The obligation is waived if a stay outside Norway lasts for more than three months (Udir, 2023a).

It is the parents or others who care for the child who are responsible for ensuring that the child receives the education to which they are obliged and entitled. The parents are free to choose how the right and duty to primary and lower secondary education is fulfilled and have the possibility of choosing between sending their children to public schools, offering private home tuition, sending them to private schools approved in accordance with the Free School Act, or sending them to private schools approved in accordance with the Education Act. Parents who choose to homeschool must follow the national curriculum. The municipality supervises homeschooling and can call pupils in for testing. The municipality must demand that the child or young person go to school, if the requirements set out in the Education Act are not

met.¹ It is the municipality that is responsible for ensuring that all children who live in the municipality fulfill their obligation to attend primary and lower secondary education (Udir. 2023).

Absences in primary and lower secondary schools

High levels of absence among students in primary and secondary schools are an increasing concern of Norwegian schools and school owners, educational-psychological services, state administrators, and sector organizations (Havik, 2018). High levels of absences can lead to teachers not being able to give grades and pupils not being awarded diplomas, which can have major consequences for their further education and working life. Absences and finally dropping out from upper secondary school are potentially linked (Andresen, Bjørnset, Reegård, & Rogstad, 2017; Bjørnset, Drange, Gjefsen, Kindt, & Rogstad, 2018; Drange, Gjefsen, Kindt, & Rogstad, 2020).

The Directorate of Education and Training has published statistics on absence since 2018. The numbers show that, in 2019/2020, Norwegian pupils in the last year of lower secondary school have had 6.6 days of absence, on average. Pupils whose parents have only compulsory education are more often absent than pupils whose parents have upper secondary or higher qualifications (Udir, 2019). There are no national registers of absence for primary and lower secondary education. Another study has found that there is reason to grant more attention to absences in Norway: 4.5% of pupils in Oslo, Bergen, Trondheim, Bærum, and Stavanger were absent for one month or more in 2017. According to international research, this can be labeled as an “alarmingly high absence” rate (Holterman, 2018).

Distinction between documented and undocumented absences

According to a guide to the law from the Directorate of Education and Training (Udir, 2022a), schools are to distinguish between documented and undocumented absences. Documented absences are absences in accordance with leave granted by the school after application to the headmaster, or absences for health reasons, where the parents have notified the school or where the pupil has a medical certificate from a doctor. Undocumented absences are absences that the parents have not notified or absences that are of longer duration than the school has granted the pupil leave for. Undocumented absences and absences for health reasons where no medical certificate is produced can be recorded on the pupil’s diploma, issued at the end of lower secondary school. The school can require a doctor’s certificate for long-term absences (Udir, 2022a).

The municipality or headmaster can grant a pupil leave for up to two weeks. The prerequisite is that the leave is considered reasonable. The headmaster cannot grant leave for more than two weeks at a time. If the parents wish to take their children out of school for longer than this, the rules on private home tuition apply (Education Act 14-3).

Children who do not attend school – Responsibilities guideline

In Norwegian municipalities, primary and lower secondary schools occasionally experience that children stop attending school altogether. This is a somewhat different phenomenon than having high absence levels, although the two can be linked. For

¹ Only 247 pupils received homeschooling for the school year 2022/2023 (hjemmeundervisningsforbund, 2023).

these situations, the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training has created a guideline² (Udir, 2023a). Here, they identify the different responsibilities that follow from the Education Act and other laws and regulations in situations where a child is absent from compulsory teaching (Udir, 2023a).

According to this guideline, there are different responsibilities applicable to the pupil, the parents, the school, and the school owner (municipality), in instances where a pupil does not attend school. As mentioned above, the main rule is that the municipality has the responsibility of fulfilling the right/obligation to primary and lower secondary education and thus of following up if a pupil does not attend school (Udir, 2023a).

The school should fulfill the following procedure in situations where a child has undocumented absence: First, contact the home/parents. If the school does not succeed in locating them, they should write a letter with information about the pupil's rights and obligations to education, mentioning the criminal liability that the parents face if their children do not attend (risk of being fined by the police). The school should also contact schools attended by siblings, visit the home of the child, contact the workplace of the child's parents, and access the child's address in the National Population Registrar (Udir, 2023a).

If the school finds the child in Norway, and the child is not receiving education in accordance with the Education Act, the school has a duty to report this to the child welfare services (Udir, 2023a).

If the school finds the child outside Norway, the child is no longer the responsibility of the school. However, the guidelines say that, if the school believes that the child is abroad without their parents, they can contact an integration advisor or minority advisor for advice (see Chapter 5). Integration advisors and minority advisors have experience with assisting pupils left behind abroad and can provide assistance to return to Norway, in cooperation between the child, the school, parents, when possible, child welfare services, and/or the police (Udir, 2023a). According to Norwegian law, children over the age of 12 must consent to longer stays abroad without parents/adults with parental responsibility. If the school is concerned that a pupil will be detained abroad against their will and/or the pupil is not present for the start of school, teachers should ask for a conversation with the pupil to investigate whether the departure from Norway should be attempted prevented.

If the school cannot find the child, the headmaster should report to the child welfare services, and the responsibility is referred to the municipality.

According to the same guideline, *the municipality* is responsible for overseeing that schools inform parents about the rights and obligations that follow from the Education Act. Municipalities should always have updated information on all the children of a relevant age for attending school. Municipalities should examine whether there are grounds for reporting parents to the police, and report if appropriate. The parents cannot be punished if the reason for the absence is not a lack of activity on the part of the parents, but other external circumstances, for example, illness. The same applies if the parents were unaware of the absence and thus cannot be accused of negligence (Udir, 2023a).

² The guide has been prepared in collaboration between the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, the National Police Directorate Norway and the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family.

3.2 Upper secondary education

Different rules and regulations apply regarding absence from upper secondary schools. The distinction between documented and undocumented absences also exists here, but the limits to what are considered documented absences are stricter. The main rule is that all undocumented absences shall be noted on the pupil's diploma. The student or the parents can demand that absences of up to ten school days per school year are not recorded on the diploma, if the absence is related to health reasons and has lasted more than three days, is related to a chronic illness or disability, or is documented (Udir, 2022a)

In 2016, the Norwegian government introduced an absence limit in upper secondary education, which states that if a pupil has more than 10% undocumented absences in one subject, the pupil will not, as a general rule, be entitled to a half-yearly assessment with a grade or a position grade in the subject, and the teacher cannot assign such grades either. If the pupil has between 10% and 15% undocumented absence and the reason for the absence makes it clearly unreasonable that the pupil should not be able to get a grade, the headmaster can decide that they will still get a grade (Udir, 2022b).

Documented absence is absence for medical reasons with a doctor's note, funerals, religious holidays, certain types of political work, relief work, or representation in events at national or international level, for example, sports or culture. Documented absences also include obligatory parts of driver's license attainment (Udir, 2022b). In 2019, the average upper secondary school pupil was absent for three days and 11 school hours (Udir, 2019).

Until the pupil is 18, the Directorate of Education and Training states that parents should be given information about every instance of absence. If there is a risk that the student will exceed the absence limit, or that the teacher has no basis for setting a grade at a half-yearly or yearly assessment, the school must notify the student (and parents if under 18), as early as possible. The school must notify once for each subject. If the school does not notify, the student must receive a grade (Udir, 2022b).

In situations where the pupil is not granted a grade, pupils in upper secondary education can take a private examination to pass their education (Udir, 2023b). It is the county that is responsible for offering and carrying out the private examination (Udir, 2021).

4 Practices from Norway:

A literature review

In the following two chapters, we answer the second research question of this report: *What are the measures implemented in Norwegian schools to reduce absence and drop-out, and what works?* In this chapter, we present findings from a literature review, looking at measures to reduce absences and dropouts from Norwegian schools.

4.1 Methods

This chapter is based on a literature review. We have restricted our search to literature about Norway, and to studies that have been conducted during the last 15 years. The literature review has been conducted in four stages, as illustrated in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2 Literature review in four steps

| |
|---|
| Step 1: Developed a search strategy in cooperation with librarian |
| Step 2: Searched for literature |
| Step 3: Identified relevant literature |
| Step 4: Analyzed and synthesized main findings |

Step 1, the search strategy, was developed based on the researchers' previous knowledge of the subject, and in collaboration with librarian Elin Maria Fiane at the Norwegian Foreign Policy Institute (NUPI). Fiane has specialist knowledge of searches in electronic databases, inclusion criteria, and keywords.

Step 2, the search for relevant studies, was conducted by Fiane, in close collaboration with the researchers. We searched for literature in Google Scholar, ISI Web of Science, and Oria (Norwegian search database). While Google Scholar gives the possibility to do a quite extensive search, ISI makes possible a search of high academic quality. ISI Web of Science includes Science Citation Index Expanded, Social Sciences Citation Index, Arts & Humanities Citation Index, and Emerging Sources Citation Index. Oria is a catalog of Norwegian university and subject libraries. It contains their collections, including articles, books, and reports. In addition, Oria includes collections from the Norwegian databases Idunn, Brage, and NORART.

We searched for the following terms in English: *School attendance, school non-attendance, school presence, school absence, school absenteeism, school attendance problems, school dropout*, student dropout*, school exclusion, truancy, school refusal, school withdrawal*. Depending on the options in each search engine, we added combinations of the search terms Norway and Norwegian. In Norwegian, we searched similar terms: *skolefravær, skole+høyt fravær, skole+bekymringsfullt høyt fravær, skole+frafall, skolevegring, problematisk fravær, skolenekt, skoleangst, skolefobi, skulk*. The librarian sent the literature to the researchers, who sorted thematically by relevance based on title, publication, and in some instances, abstracts. Student publications, duplicates, and

articles that were not at all relevant to the topic were excluded. This left the researchers with approximately 300 publications. Many of these were related to the topic, but relatively few were articles about implemented measures. When further reduced to only articles about measures, the number of publications was reduced to 69.

In Step 3, the researchers assessed which studies should be included in this report, based on the research question and direct relevance for the NOROC project. Contributions that were classified as relevant and of high academic quality were included. The possibility of taking elements from a measure and including them in the NOROC project was an important inclusion criterion. Another important inclusion criterion was that the measure was *evaluated*, to make sure that there were data on the effect or quality of the measure. This step of the literature review was done in Endnote. The researchers were left with a list of 21 relevant articles.

In Step 4, the researchers read and analyzed the 21 articles. Because of the relatively limited number of relevant articles found, the researchers also conducted a smaller search in Google Scholar aimed at identifying international best practices on dropout, for reference. Of this literature, the researchers read four international literature reviews on the subject.

4.2 Findings from the Norwegian literature

Measures implemented in lower secondary schools

As far as we have been able to examine, no one has studied the effect of a measure on children who do not attend lower secondary schools in Norway. Given the findings from the previous chapters and especially the fact that Norwegian pupils cannot technically ‘drop out’ from lower secondary schools, this is perhaps not surprising. Schools do report that children stop attending school, but the phenomenon does not seem to have been extensively researched.

We also found that there are relatively few studies describing measures which target *absences* in lower secondary schools. One exception is Havik and Ingul’s (2021, 2022) studies of experiences with homeschooling. They ask whether teachers in lower secondary schools find homeschooling or elements of homeschooling to be a relevant intervention when dealing with pupils who do not attend school. During the Covid-19 pandemic, 238 teachers from all Norwegian counties answered a survey about their experiences with homeschooling during periods of lockdown. All the teachers surveyed had one or more pupils who met the researchers’ definitions of having school attendance problems (absent from school more than two days in the last two weeks, with no documented absence and/or more than 15% undocumented absences in the last ten weeks). The teachers reported that the most important reason for their pupils’ school attendance problems was the pupil’s own lack of motivation and/or anxiety and stress. Parental factors were also important, according to the teachers, and to a lesser extent, problems in the school environment. The teachers were divided on whether or not they found homeschooling to benefit pupils with school attendance problems: 24% saw homeschooling as better for these pupils, 32% said it made no difference, and 22% said that these students participated less during homeschooling. The authors conclude that:

When students are absent from school due to a lack of motivation, homeschooling might not be a good intervention. For other students, homeschooling might be a relief for emotional symptoms, but this might be a mixed blessing because avoidance rarely results in symptom relief in the long run. (Havik & Ingul, 2021, p. 11)

Measures implemented in upper secondary schools

As a consequence of the lack of directly relevant literature concerning measures implemented in lower secondary schools, we turn here to a discussion of evaluations of measures concerning dropout prevention from upper secondary schools. It is important to note that very few of the measures that have been implemented to reduce dropouts in upper secondary schools in Norway have been developed in a way that has made it possible for researchers to evaluate effects.

The Los scheme

From 2011 to 2021, the Directorate for Children, Youth and Families (Bufdir) managed a grant scheme called the *Los* scheme. (The verb *å lose* in Norwegian means to find a way or path, or to guide.) The *Los* scheme was aimed at municipalities which wanted to establish a guidance service aimed at young people at risk of dropping out of upper secondary school. A prerequisite to receiving a grant was that the municipality which received it matched the grant with a deductible of 50%. In 2019, when Norwegian Social Research (NOVA) (Gundersen et al., 2022) evaluated the scheme, it had a yearly budget of NOK 52.6 million (approximately EUR 4.9 million). Many municipalities received grants through the *Los* scheme. Municipalities could choose to use their grants to be system oriented, to work individually or to be a combination of these two.

According to the objective of the *Los* scheme, guides were to follow up on youth at risk, put them in contact with support services, and contribute to ensuring that help in the school or from local businesses was arranged individually. The work was to be done in collaboration with the young people's parents or guardians. Guides were to contribute with close and organized follow-up in the form of motivational work and guidance in and outside school, and in the transition between lower and upper secondary education. Furthermore, they should be available for the youth at risk, and present in the youth's arenas (school, home, and free time). They should also work closely with the young people's parents or other caregivers and assist parents and caregivers in supporting the youth. The guides should also assist and motivate young people to come into contact with support services that can provide the necessary help.

The purpose of NOVA's evaluation (Gundersen et al., 2022) was to examine to what extent and how the *Los* scheme contributed to the municipalities' and districts' work to achieve close follow-up of young people who were at risk of dropping out of regular schooling. They also examined whether the *Los* scheme made coordination of municipal services aimed at the target group more effective. The evaluation was based on interviews with persons hired to be guides, their contact persons in the municipalities, and partners, as well as youth and parents in selected case municipalities. They also carried out two surveys aimed at the guides' contact persons in the municipalities and at persons hired as guides in all municipalities. The researchers found that the way the *Los* scheme worked, by offering flexible and organized follow-up for youth, contributes to increasing young people's coping skills and to preventing young people from dropping out of regular schooling. They found that all involved actors felt that the *Los* scheme had contributed positively. The researchers stress some important success criteria; these include that the fact that getting a guide was voluntary, that the guides were free to decide how they would work with each young person they met, and that they were flexible and available for the youth. At a system level, the guides succeed in their goals of adapting their help to the young people's resources and needs, and ensuring that the follow-up and help that is provided is

available and organized. The researchers stress that they do not think that the guides solve the problem of school dropouts alone, but say that, in their research, they found examples of guides who have prevented many young people from dropping out of school.

Lindesneslosen

Between 2014 and 2017, Lindesneslosen was a measure to prevent youth from dropping out of education and work. Lindesneslosen was one of the local measures that received grants through the *Los* scheme mentioned above. The target group in the project were young people living in the Lindesnes region, in the very South of Norway, who had dropped out of work or education, or who were at risk of doing so.

The measure included hiring six persons to be guides, following closely youth at risk. The guides were based at an upper secondary school in the region, but followed up youth from many schools. Youth were sent to the guides from local schools, from the follow-up-services (*oppfølgingstjenesten*), from the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration, and from the child welfare services.

Frøyland, Spjelkavik, Bernstrøm, Ballo, and Frangakis (2020) have evaluated this measure, through a follow-up with annual seminars, and interviews with the guides and their partners. In addition, they have analyzed register data to investigate the impact the measure has had at regional level. The follow-up evaluation shows that 180 youth were given assistance in the project period and up to 2019. The guides focused their attention on improving attendance, behavior, coping strategies, learning, obtaining or improving grades, and on mastering individual subjects in schools. One important measure used by Lindesneslosen was to offer youth jobs and training, in addition to the possibility of continuing their education. The follow-up evaluation found that the youth themselves, partners, and the guides experienced a number of positive effects from Lindesneslosen. However, the analysis of register data found no effects on the measure in terms of school completion, reduction in benefits from the Labour and Welfare Administration, or the proportion of persons not in education, employment, or training (NEETs) in the region (Frøyland & Spjelkavik, 2017; Frøyland, Spjelkavik, & Bernstrøm, 2018; Frøyland et al., 2020).

Absence limit

In the autumn of 2016, the Norwegian government introduced an absence limit in all upper secondary schools, as mentioned in Chapter 2. Fafo and Statistics Norway evaluated the introduction of the absence limit from 2017–2019. The analyses were based on quantitative and qualitative data. Among the quantitative data, the most important source was register data, which provided a detailed overview of daily and hourly absences over time. Furthermore, the project analyzed a number of surveys. The researchers also collected qualitative material consisting of 145 interviews with principals, teachers, pupils, health nurses, and advisers and employees in the educational-psychological service (PPT) and the follow-up service (OT).

The evaluation can be summed up in two central findings: Data in all the reports highlighted the success of the absence limit, as measured in reduced absences. A consistent finding was that both hourly and daily absences were significantly reduced. Overall, the average absence decreased by 27% from 2015/2016 to the years after the absence limit. The absence limit is also a success if measured by changes in grades. The second central finding was that the absence limit also causes difficulties, for head teachers and teachers, who have to spend much more time than before on keeping track of absences and sending out notifications to pupils, for doctors, who are

consulted by healthy pupils, and for pupils, who are stressed by the provision and who have to spend time and money on obtaining documentation.

The absence limit means that all student groups are at school more, but some student groups have not reduced their absence sufficiently. They are thus not assessed in one or more subjects, which makes it more difficult for them to complete and pass upper secondary education. The researchers conclude that the absence limit is neither the problem nor the solution for the most vulnerable of pupils. Many students have more extensive problems, which highlights and underpins the need to supplement the absence limit with various compensatory measures, according to the researchers.

The evaluation also showed that the schools have varying practices related to how absences are managed, how they adapt to the regulations, and how they follow up students who risk exceeding the absence limit in one or more subjects. It also makes visible that there are groups of students who need measures other than the absence limit, in order to complete and pass upper secondary education (Andresen et al., 2017; Bjørnset et al., 2018; Drange et al., 2020; Rogstad, Bjørnset, Drange, Gjefsen, & Kindt, 2021).

The aim of the absence limit was twofold, to reduce absence, and in the longer term to contribute to reducing dropout by stimulating a greater proportion of pupils to complete and pass upper secondary education (Drange et al., 2020). Fafo and SSB's evaluation of this measure showed that absences were reduced, but that it was difficult to conclude whether the same applied to dropouts.

Early warning system

In 2008, Akershus County developed an early warning system for dropout, called the IKO-model. IKO is a Norwegian acronym for identification, assessment, and follow-up. The model aims to improve schools' abilities to identify and support students who are at risk of dropping out during the school year. IKO was implemented in four other Norwegian counties. It consisted of: 1) a small dedicated team responsible for the IKO activities at each school, 2) a software-assisted early warning system tracking grades and absences, which helped the team identify at-risk students³, 3) a guideline to teachers as to how to pay special attention to and interview at-risk students about their situations, and 4) a component of community learning where involved schools share best practices and where involved staff get training. The IKO model understands dropout as resulting from an interaction between individual student characteristics and schools, and that students are 'pushed out' because schools fail to create appropriate relations and conditions.

Sletten, Toge, and Malmberg-Heimonen (2022) conducted a two-year follow-up study of the IKO model in the school years 2016/2017 and 2017/2018. The study involved 7 677 first-year students in 42 upper secondary schools in the counties Nord-Trøndelag, Oppland, Hedmark, and AustAgder. The researchers analysed the effects of the IKO model on achievements, absence from lectures, and completion, which are factors they expected to predict both early school leaving and completion of secondary education without gaining a diploma. The study was cluster-randomized, and schools were randomised to experimental and control groups within each county.

³ At-risk students in this program were defined in the following way: (1) accepted by first choice of upper secondary school and having a GPA of 2.5 or below, (2) accepted by second or lower-prioritised choice of school and having a GPA of 3 or below, (3) total absence higher than 6%, (4) a failing or unknown grade in one or more subjects, and/or (5) prior history of special education.

After two school years, Sletten et al. (2022) found no significant effects on absence from lectures, completion rates, or academic results. Going to a school that followed the IKO model had no effect on students' risks of dropping out. Sletten and her colleagues concluded that "it is too early to reject the IKO model and its theoretical underpinnings. ... Additional research is needed, and in accordance with this short-term evaluation, it is also important to evaluate the longer-term effects" (Sletten et al., 2022, p. 14).

New possibilities

In 2010, the Ministry of Education introduced the nationwide measure "New Possibilities – Completion of Upper Secondary Education". As part of this measure, a sub-project named the transition project (*Overgangsprosjektet*) was introduced. The transition project implied that the 10% lowest performing pupils in each municipality were given intensive training in Norwegian and mathematics after the first term of the 10th grade. This part of the project was implemented from 2011–2013.

Statistics Norway has conducted an effect evaluation of this measure (Huitfeldt, Kirkebøen, Strømsvåg, Eielsen, & Rønning, 2018). They compared schools which had started the project early with schools which had started late, measuring the effect of the intensive training on various outcome measures, including later dropout. Huitfeldt and colleagues found no effect of the measure. The researchers hypothesized that the intensive education had no or very little effect because it had been implemented over a relatively short time and with little additional resources provided to the schools from the central government, and/or that intensive training was provided too late (Huitfeldt et al., 2018).

Another study of the same program looked at the effects of the intensive training on grades. Differentiated analyses of grade development indicated that participating students with the very lowest grades improved, while those with moderate grades did worse than non-participating peers (Holen, Lodding, Helgoy, & Homme, 2020).

Breakfast in school

In 2019, Rogaland County Municipality allocated NOK 4 million (approximately EUR 370 000) to 27 upper secondary schools to offer free breakfast. Among the goals of the project was to see if breakfast increased impact on concentration, learning, and the social aspect of everyday school life, including seeing if offering breakfast increased students' presence in school.

Nofima and the University of Stavanger evaluated the measure in 2020 and 2021, through a questionnaire to canteen staff, school managers, and pupils (Helland, Hansen, Havik, & Skuland, 2020, 2021). The responses from the canteen staff showed that oatmeal was almost exclusively served for breakfast, due to limited funds. Around half of the students never used the offer. There was a big difference in participation at different schools (2%–60%), but on average, 17% of the pupils ate the school breakfast every day, while 33% attended occasionally. The main reasons why the students didn't eat the meal were that they ate breakfast at home, didn't like the food, they didn't want to come to school earlier than they had to, or that they didn't have time for breakfast. The students reported that they did not change their perspectives about dropping out or their interest in school from 2019 to 2021. They were somewhat more absent, but the researchers conclude that this is most likely a consequence of the corona pandemic, and not related to the serving of breakfast. Further, the results indicated that pupils who were born outside of Norway attended the school breakfast more frequently than pupils who were born in Norway. The authors

conclude that it is unclear whether the measure was targeted well enough to meet those in most need (Helland et al., 2020, 2021). A recent literature review of the general international literature on the effect of school meals in developed countries concludes that, internationally, there is also great uncertainty as to whether or not serving free meals has any effect on academic results, what the pupils learn, how they prosper in school, or whether or not they attend (Kolve, Helleve, & Bere, 2022).

4.3 Discussion in light of international research

As we can see from the examples of evaluated measures described above, reducing absences and dropout levels in Norway has been an undertaking which has been attempted in several different ways, from small measures in a few schools to larger packages developed by the Ministry of Education. Most of the evaluated measures have been implemented in upper secondary schools.

It is important to note that the transfer of concepts and ideas from upper secondary to primary and lower secondary schools may be limited. The target group for most of the measures described is older, and upper secondary schools also have a totally different organization method compared to lower secondary schools. The most important factor dividing the two is probably that upper secondary schools are attended on a voluntary basis. It is also an important point that, despite many attempts to reduce the dropout rates from Norwegian upper secondary schools, the levels have not been reduced significantly over the last years (Rogstad & Reegård, 2016). This could be caused by the lack of effectiveness of the measures but could also be because pupils prefer to be in work, because they are not accepted to the line of schooling that they prefer, or due to other reasons.

The international literature on this topic can help shed light on these findings from Norway. Wilson, Tanner-Smith, Lipsey, Steinka-Fry, and Morrison (2011) conducted a systematic literature review of the effects of dropout prevention and intervention programs on school completion and dropout among school-aged children and youth internationally. The objective of this systematic review was to summarize the available evidence on the effects of these programs aimed at primary and secondary students, with the goals of increasing school completion and/or reducing school dropout. The primary focus of the meta-analysis was to examine the comparative effectiveness of different programs and program approaches in an effort to identify those with the largest and most reliable effects on school completion and dropout outcomes. A comprehensive and diverse international search strategy was used to locate qualifying studies reported between 1985 and 2010. A wide range of electronic bibliographic databases were searched, along with research registers, other grey literature databases, reference lists of all previous meta-analyses and reviews on the topic, as well as citations in research reports. Altogether, 548 reports describing 167 different studies were included in the review.

Overall, Wilson et al. (2011) found most dropout prevention programs to be effective in decreasing school dropout. Their conclusion was that prevention methods, regardless of type, will likely be effective if they are implemented well and are appropriate for the local environment. Their overall finding was that: 1) there is no quick fix to reducing dropout rates, 2) research shows the positive effect of doing *something* as long as it is implemented properly, 3) local adaptation and involvement are among the most important success criteria, and 4) simpler measures can also be effective. Overall, they stated that starting early; establishing strong, lasting, and trustworthy relationships with pupils; measures where pupils, teachers, and parents are involved

and believe in the effect; and measures involving systematic planning, development, and evaluation, are the most likely to succeed. Another international study concludes:

The research on dropout gives few answers as to which measures are most effective and which areas of practice decision-makers should invest time and money in The fact that something is done, and how it is done, is of decisive importance for whether what is done is going to be successful. (Karlsson & Krane, 2016)

To summarize, one finding that stands out in the Norwegian literature is that the measures developed in Norway generally are aimed at identifying or following up pupils at risk, through extra attention and focus from significant others. Neither the international literature nor the Norwegian literature give definite answers to which specific measures are the most effective. However, different measures seem to be effective in different contexts, and paying attention to context seems to be an important factor.

5 Example of practice: Minority advisors

To further answer the second research question of this report, *What are the measures implemented in Norwegian schools to reduce absence and drop out, and what works?*, the following three chapters present case studies. The case studies are included to give more insight into ongoing measures and because, as the previous chapter showed, few measures implemented in Norwegian lower secondary schools have been evaluated.

The measure presented in this chapter is minority advisors in lower secondary schools. Previous research on a similar measure in upper secondary schools (Bredal et al., 2015) has shown that the advisors work a great deal with youth with high levels of absences and risk of dropping out, even if it is not an explicit part of their mandate.

5.1 Methods

We interviewed five minority advisors in lower secondary schools in Oslo and an adjacent city. We also interviewed two teachers who work in schools that have a minority advisor, to understand more of the context within which the minority advisors work.

Each interview followed a semi-structured interview guide and lasted approximately one hour. The interviews with the minority advisors were conducted in the schools where the advisors worked. The interviews were taped and later transcribed. The interviews were analyzed in Norwegian and selected quotes later translated into English by the researchers. To ensure that it is not possible to identify particular pupils, the age and gender of the pupils described have sometimes been altered by the researchers, as well as the context around the stories described.

5.2 Minority advisors in lower secondary schools

In all, 59 minority advisers are employed by the Directorate of Immigration and Diversity (IMDi) and deployed at selected lower and upper secondary schools. Six of them are currently placed in lower secondary schools (IMDi, 2022). In addition, Oslo Municipality finances two minority advisors in lower secondary schools. According to their mandate, the goal of the minority advisers is to contribute to guiding and following up children and young people who are at risk of, or are exposed to, negative social control, honor-related violence, forced marriage and/or female genital mutilation, in line with their needs and rights (for definition of the concepts, see Box 1) (IMDi, 2022).

Negative social control refers to various forms of supervision, pressure, threats, and coercion that are exercised to ensure that individuals live in line with family or group norms. The control is characterized by the fact that it is systematic and may violate the individual's rights according to, among other things, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Norwegian law. Honor-related violence, forced marriage, and genital mutilation are forms of violence in close relationships.

Honor-related violence is violence triggered by the family's need to safeguard or restore honor and reputation. Honor-related violence can affect all genders and people in different age groups - children, young people, and adults. Honor-related violence can involve forced marriage, but also other expressions of violence such as humiliation, threats, ostracism and other psychological violence, physical violence, and murder.

Forced marriage is marriage where one or both spouses do not have the opportunity to choose to remain unmarried without being subjected to violence, deprivation of liberty, or other criminal or wrongful conduct or inappropriate pressure. In practice, forced marriage can also mean that the individual does not have the opportunity to opt out of an engagement or an arranged marriage, or to choose a partner contrary to the wishes of the family, without being vulnerable to reprisals. Work against forced marriage also includes preparations for forced marriage, child marriage, agreements on marriages, religious marriages, and marriages that are not valid under civil law in Norway. The victim's own experience of coercion must be given great weight.

Female genital mutilation is a general term for various types of interventions on girls and women, where, regardless of appearance, genitals are removed in whole or in part, or other permanent damage is inflicted without medical justification (IMDi, 2023).

As our interviews will show, and as the list of duties the minority advisors have reflects, many of the minority advisors are an extra adult at school, who feel that it is their responsibility to look out for and after children and youth at risk, including youth with high levels of absences. In accordance with their mandate, minority advisors' work should include the following:

- Preventive measures, for example discussion groups, presentations, and teaching plans for pupils, staff, and/or parents.
- Give advice, guidance, and follow up to pupils who are at risk or exposed to negative social control, forced marriage, honor-related violence, and/or female genital mutilation.
- Survey the need for, and carry out, competence-enhancing measures for staff at the school.
- Contribute to overall cooperation between the school and local support services, in individual cases.
- Contribute to drawing up and further developing routines for the prevention and handling of negative social control, forced marriage, honor-related violence, and female genital mutilation at school.

- Contribute to making integration advisers and the competence team against forced marriage, genital mutilation, and negative social control known among the target groups.
- Collaborate with IMDi's professional team on the prevention of negative social control and honor-related violence on competence-enhancing measures for employees in refugee services, Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV), adult education institutions, and other auxiliary services.
- Contribute to the development of guidance material and other content for an online portal (<https://www.imdi.no/nora/>).
- Report to IMDi, contribute to the exchange of experience, and provide input for method and subject development (IMDi, 2023).

According to IMDi, minority advisers should spend approximately 60% of their time on follow-up and measures aimed at pupils, and 40% on skills development of staff in schools and support services (IMDi, 2023).

Previous research (Bredal et al., 2015) has shown that the minority advisers in *upper* secondary schools report that, although it lies beyond their mandate, a large majority of the advisers use a lot of time to follow up youth with high levels of absences. Between 2008 and 2011, their mandate also included prevention of dropout from upper secondary school, as a part of their strategy to combat forced marriages. Education was understood as strengthening young people's independence and ability to resist forced marriage, as forced marriage and related abuse could in itself entail dropout. However, this turned out to be considered a problematic move: Emphasis on dropouts led to some schools expecting minority advisers to join the school's general work against dropouts and be a relief for the counseling service at the school. This meant that it was difficult for the minority advisers to concentrate separately on forced marriage prevention. Thus, it was specified from IMDi's side, that the emphasis on dropouts should be understood as "a strategy to reach student groups where one knows that forced marriage, extreme control or other forms of violence can occur", and that the minority advisers' work should not be measured in terms of reduction in dropout rates (Steen-Johnsen et al., 2010, p. 32).

5.3 What do the minority advisers do?

According to our respondents, minority advisers see themselves as an extra adult in the school, someone with extra competence on intercultural issues, and someone who can pay extra attention to youth who are at risk of, or are exposed to, negative social control. Although their titles and roles might imply that they would work more with pupils whose parents were born outside of Norway, this was not necessarily the case. However, most of them had immigrant backgrounds themselves, and many spoke languages also spoken by large immigrant populations in Norway. They were all educated and had work experience from schools, organizations working with intercultural issues, and/or from work with minority children. They emphasized that their background was a strength in their job, and sometimes this made their perspective somewhat different from those on the rest of the staff.

We also asked them how they introduced themselves to the pupils at school. Many reflected a great deal around the fact that their mandate topics are of a very serious nature, and that talking directly about them could scare pupils away from them. One of the minority advisers reflected on this, saying:

I never say that I work to combat negative social control and honor-related violence. No, I say that I work with children's rights. And that everyone should be allowed to participate in the community. That I'm an expert at knowing what parents are allowed to do, and what parents shouldn't do ... I don't think I've ever mentioned forced marriage ...

Another emphasized the cross-cultural element of her work:

I tend to say that I work with the cross-cultural. I don't go into our political mandate ... I've found out that I have to use more child-oriented language ... I don't want to scare them. So ... I talk a lot about children's rights.

Most of the minority advisors follow up pupils with high levels of undocumented absences, as one put it:

Interviewer: Have you also come across cases involving pupils with high levels of undocumented absence? Pupils that are not a lot at school?

Advisor: You can say that all the students I follow up have absences as part of their problems.

The minority advisors were careful about how they introduced themselves to students, focusing more on children's rights in general than the specific terms of their mandate.

Identify pupils at risk and build trust

All the minority advisors we interviewed said that building trusting relationships with the pupils is an important part of their job, and a prerequisite for being able to do anything else. In order to find out which pupils are at risk, what they are at risk of, and how best to follow them up, it is essential for the minority advisors to know the pupils and for the pupils to feel that they can talk openly to the advisors. All the minority advisors have their own offices at school where pupils who want to talk can come, but most are also active in engaging with the pupils at breaks or between classes. All of them mentioned trust as important:

The relationship is my most important tool. Building trust.

Just being physically where the pupils are is an important thing. When I am with them, I feel that I am doing something important, building relationships. And the pupils feel seen.

I didn't get a recipe when I started the job, but I thought ... where are the youth? How can I reach them? And I found out that I can't just sit in my office; I have to be where they are. By being outside with them, I get a lot of information about how they are doing, what their daily routine is like. Why they might be struggling. And I build their trust.

The minority advisors said that they identify youth at risk through active engagement with the pupils, but also that teachers and other staff inform them about pupils whom they think need more follow-up or whom the teachers feel that they do not reach in a helpful way.

All the minority advisors work in schools which also have a school nurse, social workers, career advisors, and other non-teacher staff. Some attend meetings with these staff where children with high levels of absences are discussed; others have

more direct dialogue with the other staff, where they divide the at-risk pupils between themselves. Teachers also contact the non-teacher staff when they need assistance or more follow-up of pupils. One of the minority advisors pointed to this collaboration and teamwork as important for her. She also feels that teachers might be busier than she is, and that she has more time to sit down with pupils:

I have a lot more time, don't I? Than what a contact teacher has. I have the opportunity to sit with the students, which of course they would prefer to do themselves, but, yes, resources ...

Support parents

Many of the minority advisors have direct contact with the parents of the pupils whom they have identified as being at risk, and/or pupils who have contacted them directly. This is especially relevant in situations where the minority advisors or the pupils themselves fear that the parents are planning to send children abroad. The minority advisors said that, although this was not very common, they experienced it from time to time. Some parents see sending their children abroad, for example to extended family, as a good solution if their children are acting out or if they have problems controlling them:

I spoke to a number of parents who had teenage boys who were starting to act out a bit, or hang out a bit too much in the city, and [the parents] had no control over them. ... They wanted to send their boys to their home country for a period ... they thought that only then would they change. I have worked a lot on that theme.

It has a lot to say that you manage to gain the trust of the parents, or that they gain trust in you, because my experience is that often it is not the case that parents want to send the children out of the country ... but they are desperate.

The stories of the minority advisors show that supporting and having conversations with parents is a good way of getting a better understanding of the situation the *pupils* are in. For parents who have little or no knowledge of the Norwegian school system and who know little Norwegian, minority advisors are sometimes the parents' way of getting to know and trust the school as an institution:

I am currently following up a child who has a lot of absences. My follow-up is mainly through dialogue with the mother. In this situation, the child is left a lot to himself. He has changed schools many times and had a rather tough time for a few years. His mother can neither write nor read, and she disconnects a little from school and the things she needs to follow up. I wonder if that might be the case for other pupils too. Many children are given too much responsibility from home. For example, they send their own notes of absence when they are away. Because their parents can't.

The minority advisors realized that the success of their work with pupils depends partly on the support and confidence of the parents; this work also assists the parents to integrate into the Norwegian school system.

Follow up when children do not attend school

We asked the minority advisors directly if they had been involved in cases where children stopped attending school, or children who did not meet up for the first day of

school. Only a few of them had been involved in such cases. Many said that they were very rare. Most saw their jobs as being primarily oriented towards preventing these situations from happening. For those who had experienced children not attending school at all, these were children who had been taken out of school by their parents to go abroad. One of the advisors described such a situation. She said that the school took the responsibility for locating the child and informing the parents of the child's rights, and that her role was in guiding the involved teachers in how best to guide the parents into bringing the child back to Norway.

We found more examples of situations where children were in school, but with very high levels of absences. In these situations, the minority advisors had different follow-up techniques that they used. Some made deals with the children, picking them up at home or making arrangements with their teachers so that they could be in the classroom with them or that the pupil could be with the minority advisor instead of in class. Below are some examples:

I am following up one pupil who profits a lot from making deals with me. ... I have an agreement with the teacher that he can come to my office whenever he wants [and not get undocumented absence]. It is better that he is here talking to me than that he is not at school at all. He is the kind of person who just needs to be seen and boosted, and really get a lot of love and care. And this works very well for him.

I follow up a girl now with very high levels of absences. She just comes and goes when it suits her. Sleeps late, comes at lunch time. ... The social worker and I have expressed a concern for the girl. Because I hang out in the corridors a lot and have established a relationship with her, she comes to my office. I really try to motivate [her]. I know when her different lessons are, and sometimes I go with her. If I say that I will come to her class tomorrow morning, she will be there. I feel that she doesn't get enough attention and seeks it desperately. I've seen positive development.

For example, I made a contract where mother and child, or father and child, sign that dad will wake you up in such and such a way every day ... we can't get anywhere if we don't have the parents on our team.

The minority advisors reported a range of tactics to help support children with high absences when they did come to school. The cooperation of teachers and parents assisted with these arrangements.

The context they work in

Through the interviews with the minority advisors, some things emerged about the general work done in lower secondary schools in Norway to increase attendance. Since the advisors worked in the schools but were not hired by them, they often had an outsider's view on how the school worked systematically on these issues. There were variations, of course, but in all schools, systems of registering attendance, picking up children who had problems getting to school, and serving free breakfast and lunch were measures mentioned. Many said that it wasn't they who did these things; it was often teachers themselves or other non-teacher staff. The systems in the schools varied, but they all had a system:

They call all students who haven't turned up. And after a break, they lock the doors, so if they are late, pupils have to go through someone from the staff to get back inside and answer why they were late.

The school works closely with, for example, Pedagogical-Psychological Services (PPT) in these cases, and closely with the home, to get the pupils to attend school. In several of the cases, the pupils are being treated for a type of anxiety or something similar. Arrangements are made at the school to make it easier for them to return [after a period of absence].

When asked what they felt was important in reducing absences, many of the minority advisors also talked about the importance of how the schools related to their pupils:

At this school, they work relationally. Yes, how, one might ask? Compared to other schools I've worked at, I see relational work in practice here. For example, everyone greets each other. When pupils arrive in the morning, everyone they meet says hello. The headmaster spends a lot of his time walking in the corridors and engaging with pupils. The assistant headmaster is outside with pupils in every break. There is a lot of focus on the adults being there for the pupils.

Another minority advisor explained how the school she works at has a team around pupils with high levels of absences, and how they work:

That a pupil has high levels of absence is, for example, mentioned as a concern from a contact teacher. She would bring it up in one of our interdisciplinary meetings, and then all the advisers will become involved, the school nurse, the therapist, and the environmental advisors at the school. So there are many people involved. And then we begin to map: What could be the cause? Is the pupil OK in school? Are there drugs being used at home? What could it be? Are there cultural elements? And if the family has been in Norway for a short time, we give them slack: Is it because it's raining that they keep the children at home? Could it be climate? So, there are hundreds of reasons that could be the reason for that, and the easiest thing is to ask directly. And the solution should be linked to the cause.

Others had similar experience with collaborative meetings, and addressed their importance:

From the 8th grade, we saw that he had gradually increasing absences. So we had what we call collaboration meetings.

Interviewer: What are collaborative meetings?

For example, that the headmaster, I and parents are there. In this case, child welfare services was involved, giving the father guidance. So they came too. In this case, we worked a lot together. At times, I talked to the parents daily. They wanted to know where their son was all the time. They called a lot, maybe too much, but it worked. It was good for the pupil. We found a measure that worked. The municipality has a place where he could stay for a while and learn about routines. And get away for a while. The needs of many of my pupils go far beyond my mandate. But when we get to work together, it can be really good.

We are quick with meetings with the parents. I think this works quite well, but the times I have been involved in situations where we have not been able to solve it, are when those things are missing. Maybe you don't see it early enough, and then a lot of other things happen so you don't make it. You want to arrange a meeting, but you can't make it. A week can be a very long time in such a case, if a pupil is not having an OK time at school. Over the course of a week, things build up. So it is important to take things very early.

Many teachers go to great lengths. They call home at each instance of absence. In cases where they are concerned, they have meetings, go home to the families, call in child protection.

5.4 Summary

Minority advisors in schools provide an intervention which is not in itself intended to follow up children who do not attend school or who have high absences; however, the interviews with the advisors show that these are youth that many of them have contact with. We have not conducted an evaluation here, but we show that the minority advisors work closely with building trusting relationships, following up parents, and ensuring that pupils have another safe adult to talk to when they want or need to. Our interviews also show how the minority advisors' work varies. They have in common that they all feel that they work in schools where they are 'extra', and where there are working systems already in place in schools to follow up youth at risk. Tailoring measures to each individual pupil (e.g., picking up children at home, closely monitoring absences, and having close dialogue with parents) are measures that they all underlined as important.

6 Example of practice: School Guidance for Roma Pupils

This chapter presents this report's second case study concerning the School Guidance for Roma Pupils. Increasing attendance, and reducing the number of pupils who do not attend school, is a specific part of their mandate.

Previous research has indicated that the Norwegian national minority – Norwegian Roma – is a group that has low school attendance or does not attend school at all (Engebrigsten 2015; Engebrigsten & Lidén 2010; Hagatun 2019; Hagatun & Westrheim 2014). In this section, we present a measure specifically directed at this minority: School Guidance for Roma Pupils. The goal of the School Guidance for Roma Pupils is to improve communication and understanding between schools and Roma families.

In the initial part of this chapter, we give a short presentation of the history of Norwegian Roma and their meeting with the Norwegian school system. Then we present findings from our interviews with four mediators involved in the School Guidance for Roma Pupils and describe what they experience as the challenges and possibilities regarding increasing Roma children's school attendance.

6.1 The history of Norwegian Roma

The Norwegian Roma were granted status as a national minority in 1999, protected by the *Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities*. Approximately 700 to 2 000 persons belong to the Norwegian Roma community. Almost all the Norwegian Roma live in the capital Oslo or just outside Oslo. The exact number is unknown as Norwegian law prohibits registration of people based on ethnicity. Accurate numbers on the group's educational attainment are also lacking due to the same reason (Hagatun 2020).

The Norwegian Roma, who migrated to Norway from the Romanian and Hungarian regions in the late 1800s, have been subjected to centuries of exclusion, persecution, and discrimination. In the 1920s and 1930s, Roma families were forced to leave Norway due to exclusion politics. A trauma that still exists between the Roma community and the Norwegian government is the history of a group of people who tried to return to Norway in 1934 but were denied entrance and stripped of their Norwegian citizenship. Many of them were killed in Nazi concentration camps (Engebrigsten, 2015). This backdrop can help explain Norwegian Roma's problematic relationship with the Norwegian state and its institutions, including the school system. The Norwegian society's approach to Norwegian Roma has alternated between pressure to assimilate, special measures, and 'equal treatment' (Hagatun & Westrheim 2014). From 1960 till today, the government has launched several programs directed towards the Norwegian Roma, in fields such as education, settlement, and labor.

6.2 The educational system's failed attempt to include

There is limited research literature on Norwegian Roma's experiences with the Norwegian school system. What is known is that several Roma children, and especially girls, stop coming to school in the transition between primary and secondary school (Engebrigsten, 2015; Hagatun 2020). Hagatun claims that cultural explanations are often used to explain why Roma only participate to a limited extent in the formal school system. She mentions three explanations from the national debate and existing literature: First, more girls stop attending school because their parents want to preserve their 'purity' when they reach puberty. Secondly, there are boys who stop attending and instead participate in the Roma community's informal education to learn their trade. Finally, some of the parents of Roma children do not want the children to go to school for fear that they will become 'too Norwegian' (Hagatun, 2019, 2020).

In two articles, Hagatun (2019, 2020) challenges these cultural explanations and argues that there are structural aspects of the Norwegian education system which contribute to the exclusion of Roma pupils. She describes how Roma pupils' academic challenges, poor knowledge of Norwegian, and the fact that they can be exposed to bullying, lead to more Roma pupils not wanting to be in school. Instead of the school addressing the relevant problems, pupils' school refusal is explained and understood in existing literature and public debate as a cultural problem that lies within the Roma community (Hagatun, 2019, 2020). On the other hand, Engebrigsten (2015, p. 124) summarizes all the different attempts to acclimate education to the Roma way of life and concludes:

The results have been much the same; whatever educational model the Roma have been subjected to, they have done what they generally do; consent orally and resist in practice. As long as the Norwegian Roma see their own way of life, social organisation and value systems as preferable to that of the non-Rom, formal education will not become a resource that can be converted as it will not become capital (Engebrigtsen, 2015, p. 124).

From 1992, Roma children, who had formerly been enrolled in separate Roma classes, were transferred to ordinary classes. When the children were included in the ordinary school system, extra funds were released by the government to the schools to support them in assisting Roma children who lacked formal education. The funds were used to employ assistants, supply extra time with teachers, and to buy different teaching aids. But, according to Engebrigtsen (2015), a general experience from this period was that school attendance was arbitrary.

In 2009, the Ministry of Work and Education presented an *Action Plan to Improve the Situation of Norwegian Roma in Oslo*. The action plan was developed together with Roma representatives and Oslo Municipality. One suggestion from the action plan was to start a pilot project using Roma mediators (Hagatun 2020). The purpose of the Roma mediators was to mediate between schools and home, in order to support teachers and Roma children. In an evaluation of the action plan, Tyldum and Friberg (2014) argued that the Roma had not been that interested in education but that the children attended school for social purposes. The report also concluded that the Roma mediator system was successful and should continue. Today, this measure is called the School Guidance for Roma Pupils.

6.3 Methods

We interviewed four persons in the School Guidance for Roma Pupils. Each interview followed a semi-structured interview guide and lasted approximately one hour. The interviews were conducted in the participants' offices in Oslo. The interviews were taped, and later transcribed. The interviews were analyzed in Norwegian and selected quotes later translated to English by the researchers. To ensure that it is not possible to identify particular pupils, the age and gender of the pupils described have sometimes been altered by the researchers, as well as the context around the stories described.

6.4 The School Guidance for Roma pupils: Role and mandate

Today, the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development finances the Oslo Municipality's initiative: 'School Guidance for Roma Pupils'. The aim of the measure is to improve communication and understanding between schools and Roma families and to increase the chances of Roma pupils completing primary and lower secondary education, this to be achieved by improving students' learning outcomes and reducing absences.

Schools with Norwegian Roma pupils can get assistance from the service. The School Guidance staff assist with cultural competence, participate in meetings between school and parents, assist in teaching, provide help with homework, and can act as bridge-builders between schools and home. The service also arranges help with homework at the Romani cultural center, Romano Kher.

6.5 Stories from the School Guidance for Roma Pupils

At the time we did the interviews, the School Guidance for Roma Pupils had five employees, including one leader, two Norwegian-speaking teachers and two Romanes-speaking mediators from the Roma community. We interviewed four of the employees during the summer of 2022.⁴ In total, the service explained that they have an overview of approximately 80 Roma children at different schools, but the time they spend at the schools and with each pupil varies. One of the mediators told us that they lack the resources to assist all schools and families that need support as much as they would like to, and some of the pupils who go to schools further away from the center of Oslo don't get visits that often. When they do not spend time at the schools, the mediators have meetings with the schools' leaders and teachers. This has two purposes. The first is that the school knows who to contact if there is any need for assistance; the second is that the mediators push the school to assist the pupils a little extra, since the school knows someone is paying attention.

Creating trust in the Roma community

If the mediators are in the classroom with a pupil, they need permission from the parents to assist the child since they are not part of the ordinary school system. The mediators were explicit that developing a good relationship with the pupil's family was central, and the most important thing was to establish close contact with families, thereby creating mutual trust. In the years that the service has existed, the mediators have slowly become known in the Roma community and their experience is that they have gained trust. They told us that, in the beginning, it was mostly schools

⁴ We call all the employees at the center 'mediators' to provide anonymity.

that contacted them to get assistance; however, in the last few years, they are contacted directly by parents. One example is when a family moves, they contact the service and ask for help to find a new school, so they can keep working with the Roma mediators.

One measure that has helped build a good relationship between the center and parents is the homework help that School Guidance for Roma Pupils runs, once a week, with the cultural center Romano Kher. It is a place where people meet and, as one of the mediators explained, a place where parents can observe how they work with their children. This gives parents an opportunity to get to know who spends time with their children and, when they like what they see, they get confidence in the School Guidance as a center. A central point stressed by all the mediators was that building trust and a relationship takes time, and one had to be patient, both with families and with the schools.

Language and cultural translation

The Romanes-speaking mediators can work as a language support for the youngest pupils. Many Roma children have not gone to kindergarten⁵ and do not speak Norwegian when they start primary school, since their parents speak Romanes at home. The mediators have experience with children who fall behind and struggle with feeling excluded, since they do not understand the messages from the teachers; it can also be hard to play with the other children due to problems with communication. For the mediator service, it was important that what they did was providing language support, not being a translator, because they also contribute with moral support for the children.

Another important task was to assist with the school-home collaboration. Mediators do this by acting both as language and 'cultural translators'. They explained that it was crucial that the school did not 'bombard' the family with too much written information or give the pupils home assignments that demanded help from parents. Many Norwegian Roma cannot read or write in Norwegian, and written messages could make parents feel alienated from the school. It was better to communicate with the families face to face or through making a phone call. Sometimes, the mediators were present at meetings with families and the school. During these meetings, the School Guidance service could help explain the Roma culture to the schools and how the Norwegian school system works to the parents. All the mediators were clear that the teachers and school leaders who have competence about Roma culture and the willingness to get to know the families had a better chance of explaining the importance of being present in school. And, like all parents, when the parents had a positive feeling towards the school, it affected the children and their interest in being at school. This is in line with findings from another Norwegian study that found that a good dialogue between parents and the school had positive outcomes for the teachers' understanding of Roma culture and Roma parents' attitude towards the school (Hagatun & Westrheim 2014).

The Roma mediators also act as 'cultural translators' for both parties, as one of the mediators told us:

It is very important to follow up both the parents and the school. (...) A lot of times, they [Roma families] must travel abroad, to visit family. They must give

⁵ In 2021, in Norway, 93.4 percent of all children between 1 and 5 years went to kindergarten. <https://www.udir.no/tall-og-forskning/statistikk/statistikk-barnehage/analyser/fakta-om-barnehager/tall-om-barnehagen/>

a message to the school, and I help explain our culture [to the school]. I tell the school that they are leaving for a few days and the school asks why? I explain that an uncle, or someone in the family is getting an operation or is sick or it is a meeting in the church. Stuff like that [...] Things that the family should attend. I explain that it is a tradition that we participate in these things. And many schools understand and says it is okay.

The Roma mediators felt that they could help both parties by being an intermediary for the dialogue between families and the school. Other studies have also pointed out that hiring mediators or school assistants, especially with a Roma background, eases the dialogue between teachers, school leaders, parents, and pupils (Skolverket, 2007). Mediators can help the school get more knowledge and understanding of Roma culture and they can help the families understand how the Norwegian school system works regarding rules and expectations.

When children do not attend school

Regarding pupils being absent from school, the School Guidance for Roma Pupils staff claimed that they had observed there had been a change in the more recent years towards more Roma children attending school. One of the possible explanations was that Roma travel in a different way than before. Today, many of the families take shorter journeys to attend weddings, church meetings, and funerals. They are not gone for months. The mediators believed this was for two reasons: the first was a fear of child welfare services if their children were gone for a long period of time. The second was that the Roma live more settled lives than in previous years. However, the mediators stressed that there were large variations between children in how much they attended school.

One challenge that the mediators addressed, was those children who were gone for a day or two every week, on a regular basis. The mediators told us that they believed that some parents thought it was sufficient that their children were there for half of the time. This leads to children falling behind academically and developing gaps in their education. The Roma mediators explained that it was a challenge to handle the combination of children who fall behind with parents who do not see the value in them being there every day. When the service gets a message from the school that a child who normally attends is not present, *they* sometimes assist by contacting the parents. If they cannot get hold of the parents, they contact the principal at the schools and push them to act. It was important for the mediator service that their role was not that of being a watchdog towards the families, as their role was to maintain a good relationship with the community. It was important that the school took the role of contacting parents when children did not attend school; however, the mediators could help with finding the reason behind the child being absent. Like Hagatun (2020) has pointed out in her study of Norwegian Roma and their educational situation, there could be other reasons than 'Roma culture' that explain why children did not show up at school.

One of the mediators provided examples of work with families where a child was absent from the school. If they had established a close relationship with the family, it was easy to pay the family a visit or call the parents and have an informal talk about the child. We were told how the service tries to explore the reasons for a child not being there and tries to help the parents and the school to find a solution. They work to map what the challenge is – is it that the child is absent because they have fallen behind with schoolwork? Is the child being bullied at school or is it the school-home

collaboration that does not work? Different reasons demand different approaches to help the child, and it was important for the service not to assume that the children were absent because their parents did not take school seriously – there could be other reasons.

Early intervention

In the past years, the School Guidance for Roma Pupils has focused on early intervention. They try to establish contact with families before first grade and have pre-school groups with children and their families before they start school. Someone from the service also tries to be present on the children's first day of school when the parents have information meetings. The mediators mostly work in primary school; this is because their experience is that the most important thing they can do is early intervention. This is done by establishing a close relationship with parents and by being there from the start. If the children who start school experience early that they master the schoolwork and that they can understand the messages from the teacher, the mediators think that this will have a positive outcome down the road. Based on experience, they believe that children who have fallen behind in subjects are at a bigger risk for not showing up at school. As one of the mediators explained:

If we manage to create trust and a good relationship between the home and the school. If we manage to make sure the pupils have fun in school from day one. Then maybe they want to come to school every day.

Another measure which the mediators believe works is adapted assignments. As mentioned in previous chapters, all schools in Norway must give all pupils opportunities for learning and development, regardless of their circumstances. The mediators told us that they believed it was important that teachers created adapted teaching assignments for Roma pupils, and that this was critical so they would feel some accomplishment in school and end up liking school more. Since some of the children had language barriers or gaps in their education, the Roma mediators stressed that this was crucial. But they had varied experiences with schools and teachers regarding how effective the teachers were in making sure the pupils were given adapted assignments.

6.6 Summary

The experiences of the School Guidance for Roma Pupils staff can be summarized into three challenges: The first is that many pupils do not speak Norwegian when they start school; the second is that the children do not attend school every day, while the third relates to the differing capabilities of schools in making sure that the pupils had (positive) experiences with adapted assignments.

For the School Guidance for Roma Pupils mediators, their main way of meeting these challenges is to gain trust in the Roma community, so that parents let the mediators assist pupils in the classroom and work as language support for the youngest pupils. Second, they acted as bridge-builders between home and school. If schools gain a better understanding of Roma culture and meet the families without prejudice, and the Roma parents understand how the Norwegian school system works, the mediators have a better platform for ensuring that the pupils are in school and get an education. The mediators also believed this helped to ease the communication and increase the school and home collaboration. Third, it was important for the schools to develop adapted assignments for children who had poor language skills or gaps in

their education, so they could feel like they mastered some of the schoolwork. Finally, it is important to start early, so that both the families and the children have a positive experience with school from the beginning.

7 Special education needs in Norway

This chapter presents the third case study. It will give an insight into how the Norwegian educational system helps children and young people with special education needs (SEN pupils).

The leading educational and organizational principle for the Norwegian inclusive school is individual adaptation: each pupil must have an education adapted to their personal needs. According to the Norwegian Education Act (act relating to primary and secondary education), whether or not a pupil benefits from ordinary education is the only condition that must be met in order to be entitled to special education. When ordinary education is insufficiently adapted to the individual pupil's abilities, the person concerned can potentially receive special education. This is a relational as opposed to a categorical perspective on special education. Receiving special education does not depend on characteristics of the pupil, such as learning difficulties, behavioral problems, disability, or that the pupil lives in difficult family circumstances (Nordahl et al., 2018).

The law does not categorize SEN pupils, but these pupils often experience particular difficulties or have a diagnosis. The most common diagnosis and difficulties include: behavioral problems but not ADHD, ADHD, general learning difficulties, specific learning difficulties, hearing impairment, and visual impairment (Nordahl, 2017). Special education can be, for example, that the student works according to different learning goals than the other students, that a teacher or assistant follows up the student in class, or that the student receives specially adapted equipment (Udir, 2022c). The student receives special education in the ordinary class, in a separate group outside the class, or individually (Udir, 2022c).

This chapter has three parts. In the first part, we will present and contextualize some key figures related to SEN pupils in the school year 2021/2022. In the second part, we will take a closer look at the formal special education process: Which actors should ideally do what in different phases of the process? In the third part, we will highlight some of the criticisms of this process. It is one thing to consider how the process should work ideally, another to consider how it works in practice.

The Nordahl et al. (2018) report, written by an expert group for children and young people in need of extra support in school and kindergarten, is the primary source used in this chapter. The Norwegian Minister of Education and Research established the expert group in February 2017. The rationale for setting up the group was that, according to the Ministry of Education and Research, the existing education offered for these children and young people was unsatisfactory. The group consisted of nine experts from Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, who were teachers, managers at various levels in the education sector, and education and special education researchers.

7.1 SEN pupils in Norway

In 2021, Norway spent, in total, NOK 87.3 billion (EUR 8 290 000 000) on primary and lower secondary school education. The municipalities spent an average of NOK 135 300 (EUR 12 850) per pupil in a public primary and lower secondary school (Udir, 2022d). Almost 18% of the teachers' person-years, 10 500 person-years (approx. 17 000 teachers), are used for special education. In addition is the use of unskilled assistants (Nordahl et al., 2018).

In the school year 2021/2022, almost 8%, or 49 000, pupils in Norwegian primary and lower secondary schools received special education (Udir 2022d). The proportion of pupils receiving special education has varied over the past years. In 1995/1996, the national average was 6.4% of pupils in primary and lower secondary school, while the figure was down to 5.5% in 2003/2004 (Udir, 1996; Udir, 2004). The 2007/2008 school year saw a "strong increase" (Nordahl & Hausstätter, 2009) in the number of pupils who received special education, as more than 7% of the pupil population received such specially arranged education. Since then, the figure has remained relatively stable at around 8% (Udir, 2022d).

In the 2021/2022 school year, 10% of boys and 5% of girls received special education (Udir, 2022d). These gender differences have been stable over time (Haug, 2017); thus, there are twice as many boys as girls who receive special education. According to Løken, Lekhal, and Haug (2017), the reasons for the reported gender differences can be that teachers have different expectations of girls and boys, and that the threshold for giving girls special education is higher than for boys.

The proportion of pupils receiving special education varies between municipalities in a county. In the Møre og Romsdal County, for example, the proportion of SEN pupils varies between 5% in some municipalities and 22% in others (Udir, 2022d). Nationally, the number of pupils with special education varies from 0% in some schools to around 20% in other schools (Nordahl & Hausstätter, 2009). A reason for this is that, as pointed out earlier, lack of benefit from ordinary education is the only criterion that gives the right to special education. The exact basis for receiving special education is thus unclear (Nordahl et al., 2018), and education defined as special education in one school can be defined as ordinary adapted education in another (Haug 2014).

7.2 Special education proceedings in Norway⁶

In order to safeguard the right to special education, a comprehensive special educational system and a chain of special educational measures, a formal case process, has been established (Nordahl et al., 2018). The state support system at the national level consists of the Storting, the Ministry of Education and Research, the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, Statped (a national service for special needs education), national centers, and the university and college sector. At the local level, we find the kindergarten, school, and the educational and psychological counseling service owner (i.e., the municipality), and the individual kindergartens, schools, and educational and psychological counseling services (Nordahl et al., 2018).

The school financing system in Norway is decentralized and characterized by local freedom of action. This means that special education's part in the economic

⁶ When nothing else is indicated, the information in this section concerning the case management of SEN students is taken from *Spesialundervisning – saksgang* (2017) published by The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training.

distribution models differs from municipality to municipality (Lund, 2014). We will highlight two types of models. In the first model, the municipality sets aside extra resources for special education. These resources are allocated based on the number of children and young people who receive the right to special education at each school (more on this right in what follows). In the second model, schools handle special education within a fixed allocation. In such a model, therefore, a right to special education will not trigger more funds for the school (Lund, 2014).

As noted by Lund (2014), a challenge with the first model is that schools can be motivated to increase the use of special education to gain access to extra resources. So this model can, in that sense, increase the use of special education at the expense of ordinary adapted education. One of the challenges with the second model, as reported by Lund (2014), is that a school that has to devote a large amount of resources to special education will have fewer resources for ordinary education. However, the European Agency's country study of Norway (European Agency, 2016) concludes that this second model, with fixed allocations to each school, can encourage each individual school to take more responsibility for adapting education to a greater diversity of students. According to Nordahl et al. (2018), it is this second model that is partly responsible for stabilizing the number of SEN pupils in Norway at around 8%.

The special education proceedings are divided into six phases:

- 1 Concern.
- 2 Formal referral to the educational and psychological counseling service.
- 3 Expert assessment (in Norwegian: *sakkyndig vurdering*).
- 4 Individual decisions (in Norwegian: *enkeltvedtak*).
- 5 Planning and implementation of the special education.
- 6 Evaluation of the pupil's development and the educational offer.

The process begins with a form of concern. During this first phase of the process, someone at the school, or the parents/pupil, questions whether the pupil is getting satisfactory results from regular education. The pupil may be struggling academically or socially.

The school must then survey, assess, and possibly try out new measures to help the pupil within the framework of ordinary education. To understand the pupil's needs, the school/teacher must be in continuous dialogue with the parents/pupil. Finally, it is the teacher's responsibility to assess whether the pupil needs special education and to notify the head teacher.

The head teacher cannot reject an inquiry from a teacher and is responsible for processing the case. Whether or not the pupil is referred to the educational and psychological counseling service, is for the head teacher to decide. Furthermore, the school must obtain the parents'/pupil's consent (depending on the pupil's age, it is the parents or the pupil who must consent) for the educational and psychological counseling service to assess the pupil's need for special education.

The educational and psychological counseling service makes an expert assessment in the form of a document that shows whether the child needs special education assistance. In this phase, the educational and psychological counseling service also outlines the proper education to be offered to the pupil. The educational and psychological counseling service must consult with the parents/pupil throughout this process.

If the parents/pupil do not consent to expert assessment and special education, the school must try to help the pupil within the framework of mainstream education. In serious cases, where, due to lack of consent from the parents, there is reason to

believe that a pupil's need for adequate education is unfulfilled, the school must consider contacting the child welfare service. Furthermore, if the parents/pupil ask for an expert assessment, the school *must* send the case to the educational and psychological counseling service, regardless of whether or not the school believes the pupil benefits from the regular education offer.

The school owner, the municipality, has the authority to make legally binding individual decisions. It is common for the school owner to delegate this authority to the head teacher. Individual decisions are made both when special education is granted and when it is refused, and the pupils/parents have the right to file an official complaint regarding the decision.

The planning and implementation phase starts when the head teacher makes an individual decision. The school must then, on the basis of the educational and psychological counseling services expert assessment, draw up an individual education plan for the pupil. The purpose of an individual education plan is to develop concise and practical proposals to help in planning, implementing, and evaluating special education. An individual education plan must show: goals for the education (goals related to educational and social competence), the content of the education (coordinated with the class's plan for ordinary education), and how the education will otherwise be conducted (organization of the education, use of time, use of personnel resources, and teaching aids and equipment). The school doesn't need parents'/pupil's approval of the individual education plan.

In the last phase of the formal process, the school must assess and evaluate the pupil's development and how the education offer is working. A report is written each year. It assesses the education the pupil has received and the pupil's development, based on the goals set in the individual education plan.

7.3 Challenges linked to the special education proceedings

Research has pointed out some challenges linked to the strongly individual and rights-based orientation central to the special education proceedings in Norway. Nordahl et al. (2018) point out that expert assessments and individual decisions take up a lot of time and resources; 80% of the educational and psychological counseling service's working time is used to prepare expert assessments.

Furthermore, as reported by Nordahl et al. (2018), the educational and psychological counseling service uses a relatively small proportion of its resources on direct guidance and support to teachers and other school staff. Part of the explanation for Finland's good PISA results is that the teachers there, already in the initial concern phase, receive more informal support from special education teachers for common challenges such as the pupils' reading and writing difficulties (Nes, 2017).

Children and young people who do not receive special education also struggle in Norwegian schools (Haug, 2014; Nordahl et al., 2018). Around 8% of pupils in primary and lower secondary school have received special education in recent years. However, various studies show that approximately 20–25% of pupils have challenges at school and need special accommodation. According to Nordahl et al. (2018), the current system with requirements for expert assessments and individual decisions would not be able to help 20–25% of children and young people.

When one looks more closely at the actual criteria for providing special education, Haug (2014) argues that the categorical perspective on children and young people too often overrides the relational view. Research reveals that the system uses diagnoses as a basis for deciding whether a pupil should receive special education, despite the

fact that the only criterion should be whether the pupil benefits from ordinary education. According to Nordahl et al. (2018), those involved in the practical work with SEN pupils, like teachers, head teachers, and the educational and psychological counseling service, still rely on a categorical perspective. They take for granted that the categorical perspective of an individual-oriented practice is rationally planned and objective, and have great faith in what, for example, psychologists and doctors have to say about the pupil (Nordahl et al., 2018).

In Norway, there are no formal and necessary competence requirements for people who teach special education. Assistants are currently responsible for half of the special education. Research shows that the qualifications of the teachers are decisive for the results of special education (Egelund & Tetler, 2009; Hattie, 2009), so when special education does not realize the learning potential of pupils, research explains this as the result of the extensive use of assistants (Nordahl et al., 2018). Unqualified assistants were responsible for about a third of special education in 2008 (Nordahl & Hausstätter, 2009), so more and more assistants are replacing qualified teachers.

Haug (2014) further points out that, contrary to the ideal of inclusion, the organization of the Norwegian special educational system leads to children and young people being taken out of ordinary class. Among the SEN pupils, in the school year 2021/2022, 48% received teaching in ordinary class, while 39% received special education in their own groups outside class, and 13% had special education alone (Udir, 2022d). Although the proportion of pupils receiving special education in ordinary classes has increased steadily from 28% in 2013/2014, there are still around 50% of pupils who receive their special education outside the class they belong to.

7.4 Summary

In this chapter, we have tried to give an insight into how the Norwegian educational system helps children and young people who need special help in primary and lower secondary school. We have also highlighted some challenges associated with this system. In conclusion, we want to underline that the role of special education in Norwegian society has been, and still is, highly debated (Hausstatter & Thuen, 2014). While the main debate from around the 1970s has been whether this type of support stigmatizes and marginalizes pupils, in the last 15 years, the distinct focus on whether special education is effective, that is, whether it works as desired or not, has dominated (Hausstatter & Thuen 2014). According to Nordahl et al. (2018), a key challenge is the lack of longitudinal data on children and young people who have received special education. Until such data exist, we know little about how these students actually fare in the longer term.

8 Summary

In this report, we have used a number of different methods to identify the rules and measures involved in ensuring that children go to school. In this chapter, we summarize our main findings and our answers to the two research questions:

- 1 What are the *rules* regulating absences and drop out in Norway?
- 2 What are the *measures* implemented in Norwegian schools to reduce absence and drop out, and what works?

8.1 Rules regulating absences

We find that the Norwegian government has established rules and regulations regarding absences. The main rule is put down in the Education Act, and states that all “children and young people are obliged to attend primary and lower secondary education and have the right to [such] education”. In accordance with the Education Act and a separate responsibilities guideline, there are defined responsibilities of the parents, the school, and the municipality when it comes to children who do not attend school. Absences are regulated through a distinction between documented and undocumented absences, and there are guidelines as to how these absences should be documented in the pupil’s diploma. An important aspect that can be said to indirectly regulate whether or not a child attends schools in Norway, is that the right to education is not dependent on whether or not a pupil attends school.

8.2 Measures that work

The literature review shows that there are few measures implemented in Norwegian lower secondary schools that have been evaluated and proven to work. However, through an extension to measures implemented in upper secondary schools and through the case studies, we have identified three elements that seem to dominate our material as success factors for ensuring that pupils attend school and to help those at risk of dropping out. These are: 1) identifying those at risk, 2) providing tailored follow-up within trusting relationships, and 3) supporting parents.

Identifying at-risk pupils is noted by both minority advisors and Roma mediators as being an integral part of their work. This is also a key factor emphasized by the guides in the *Los scheme* mentioned in the literature review. In their understanding, identification is more than defining at-risk-groups; it also needs to involve assessing the reasons behind each pupil’s non-attendance.

According to our interviews, tailored follow-up is key. This includes building trusting relationships with the at-risk pupil and creating a plan of follow-up which is tailored to that pupil’s needs and situation. Our interviews and literature review show that there can be many different reasons behind why a child does not attend school, and the measures implemented should, according to our data, be tailored to each individual pupil’s needs in order to be effective.

Supporting parents is the last factor identified in this report as important for the success of a measure. Independent of the reasons behind why a child is not at school,

it is important that their parents are involved and understand the child's situation and the reasons for why the child should attend. It is important that the relationship with parents is based on trust, which takes time and effort to succeed.

8.3 Suggestions for further research

A general finding from our study is that very little research has been done on children in primary and lower secondary education who do not attend school. Even less is done to understand the measures that can work to ensure that they attend. For this study, the lack of previous research means that the conclusions we are able to draw are based on limited material.

We see the need for more research on the topic of children who do not attend school, including but not limited to studies which include the perspectives of the children themselves.

Sources

- Andresen, S., Bjørnset, M., Reegård, K., & Rogstad, J. (2017). Fraværet er redusert, men ... Tilpasninger og konsekvenser av fraværsgrensen i videregående opplæring. Fafo-rapport 2017:33
- Bjørnset, M., Drange, N., Gjefsen, H., Kindt, M. T., & Rogstad, J. (2018). I fraværsgrensens dødvinkel: Evaluering av fraværsgrensen i videregående opplæring: Delrapport 2. Fafo-rapport 2018:41.
- Bredal, A., Bråten, B., Jesnes, K., & Strand, A. H. (2015). Et blikk inn i skolen: Minoritetsrådgivere sett fra brukeres ståsted. Fafo-rapport 2015:40.
- Drange, N., Gjefsen, H., Kindt, M. T., & Rogstad, J. (2020). Suksess og besvær: Evaluering av fraværsgrensen i videregående skole 2016–2019. Sluttrapport. Fafo-rapport 2020:09.
- Egelund, N., & Tetler, S. (Eds.) (2009). Effeter av specialundervisningen. Pædagogiske vilkår i kompliserte lærings situasjoner og elevenes faglige, sociale og personlige resultater. København: Danmarks Pædagogiske Universitetsforlag.
- European Agency. (2016). Financing policies for inclusive educational systems (FPIES). <https://www.european-agency.org/agency-projects/fpies>
- Engebriksen, A. (2015). Educating the Roma: The struggle for cultural autonomy in a semi-nomadic group in Norway. *Social Inclusion*, 3(5), 115–125. doi:10.17645/si.v3i5.275
- Engebriksen, A., & Lidén, H. (2010). Å finne sin plass som minoritet – Rombefolkningen i Norge i dag [Finding ones place as a minority – The Roma population in Norway today]. In A. B. Lund & B. B. Moen (Eds.), *Nasjonale minoriteter i det flerkulturelle Norge [National minorities in multicultural Norway]* (pp. 199–214). Trondheim, Norway: Tapir akademiske forlag.
- Frøyland, K., & Spjelkavik, Ø. (2017). Effekt og følgeevaluering av Lindesneslosen. Oslo: Arbeidsforskningsinstituttet ved HiOA.
- Frøyland, K., Spjelkavik, Ø., & Bernstrøm, V. H. (2018). Lindesneslosen. Oslo: Arbeidsforskningsinstituttet ved OsloMet.
- Frøyland, K., Spjelkavik, Ø., Bernstrøm, V. H., Ballo, J. G., & Frangakis, M. (2020). Lindesneslosen – Sluttrapport.
- Gundersen, T., Tveito, S. B., & Dokken, T. (2022). Evaluering av Los-ordningen for ungdom.
- Hagatun, K. (2019). “They assume that I don’t really want education for my children”: Roma mothers’ experiences with the Norwegian educational system. *Hungarian Educational Research Journal*, 9(1), 9-29. doi:10.1556/063.9.2019.1.2
- Hagatun, K. (2020). The educational situation for Roma children in Norway: Silenced narratives on schooling and future. *Nordic Journal of Comparative and International Education (NJCIE)*, 4(1), 118-137. doi:10.7577/njcie.3758

- Hagatun, K., & Westrheim, K. (2014). "Vi klarer oss uansett – det har vi gjort i fem hundre år": Perspektiver på utdannings situasjonen til norske rombarn ["We manage anyway – We have done that for five hundred years": Perspectives on the educational situation of Norwegian Roma children]. In K. Westrheim & A. Tolo (Eds.), *Kompetanse for mangfold. Om skolens rolle og utfordringer i det Flerkulturelle Norge* [Expertise for diversity. About the school's role and challenges in multicultural Norway] (pp. 243–273). Bergen, Norway: Fagbokforlaget.
- Hansen, I. L. S., Jensen, R. S., Strand, A. H., Brodtkorb, E., & Sverdrup, S. (2018). *Nordic 0 – 24 collaboration on improved services to vulnerable children and young people: First interim report.*
<https://www.tarsc.org/publications/documents/FCH%20Norway%20case%20study%202019.pdf>
- Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible learning – A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement.* New York: Routledge
- Haug, P. (2014). The practices of dealing with children with special needs in school: A Norwegian perspective. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 19(3), 296–310.
- Haug, P. (2017). Kva spesialundervisning handlar om, og kva funksjon den har. In P. Haug (Ed.), *Spesialundervisning. Innhold og funksjon.* Oslo: Det norske samlaget.
- Hausstatter, R. S., & Thuen, H. (2014). Special education today in Norway. *Special Education International Perspectives: Practices Across the Globe. Advances in Special Education* (Vol. 28; pp. 181–207). Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing.
- Havik, T. (2018). *Skolefravær: å forstå og håndtere skolefravær og skolevegring.* Oslo: Gyldendal akademisk.
- Havik, T., & Ingul, J. M. (2021). Does homeschooling fit students with school attendance problems? Exploring teachers' experiences during COVID-19. *Frontiers in Education*, 6, 14. doi:10.3389/educ.2021.720014
- Havik, T., & Ingul, J. M. (2022). Remote education/homeschooling during the COVID-19 pandemic, school attendance problems, and school return – Teachers' experiences and reflections. *Frontiers in Education*, 7, 895983. doi:10.3389/educ.2022.895983
- Helland, M. H., Hansen, K. V., Havik, T., & Skuland, A. V. (2020). Evaluering av ordning med gratis skolefrokost i fylkeskommunale videregående skoler i Rogaland. Oppsummering av resultater fra første datainnsamling, høsten 2019.
- Helland, M. H., Hansen, K. V., Havik, T., & Skuland, A. V. (2021). Evaluering av ordning med gratis skolefrokost i fylkeskommunale videregående skoler i Rogaland - Del 2. Oppsummering av resultater fra andre datainnsamling, våren 2021.
- Holen, S., Loding, B., Helgoy, I., & Homme, A. D. (2020). Implementing a targeted, nationwide intervention to promote upper secondary school completion: Does it have the potential to strengthen students' achievement? *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 64(6), 869–885. doi:10.1080/00313831.2019.1629623
- Holterman, S. (2018, 13. juni). 22 000 skolebarn er borte i minst en måned. *Utdanningsnytt.* <https://www.utdanningsnytt.no/barneskole-fagartikkel-fravaer/22-000-skolebarn-er-borte-i-minst-en-maned/171035>

- Huitfeldt, I., Kirkebøen, L. J., Strømsvåg, S., Eielsen, G., & Rønning, M. (2018). Fullføring av videregående opplæring og effekter av tiltak mot frafall. Sluttrapport fra effektevalueringen av Overgangsprosjektet i Ny GIV. In Statistisk sentralbyrå.
- IMDi. (2022, June 14). IMDi minoritetsrådgivere på ungdomsskoler og videregående skoler. <https://www.imdi.no/revidert-mandat-for-imdis-fagteam-for-forebygging-av-negativ-sosial-kontroll-og-aresrelatert/minoritetsradgivere-pa-ungdomsskoler-og-videregaende-skoler/>
- Lund, E. (2014). Skoleeiers finansiering av grunnopplæringen. Kriteriemodeller og betydningen av tillitsvalgtes medbestemmelse. Temanotat 2/2014. Oslo: Utdanningsforbundet.
- Løken, G., Lekhal, R. & Haug, P. (2017). Lavt presterende elever og kjønnsforskjeller – hvem får og hvem får ikke spesialundervisning? In P. Haug (Ed.) Spesialundervisning. Innhold og funksjon. Oslo: Samlaget.
- Mandat for IMDIs minoritetsrådgivere. (2023). <https://www.imdi.no/globalassets/nora/00-dokumenter/mandat-for-imdis-minoritetsradgivere.pdf>
- Karlsson, B., & Krane, V. (2016). Hvordan redusere frafall blant elever i videregående opplæring – En oppsummering av forskningsbaserte kunnskaper og praksiser.
- Kommunal- og moderniseringsdepartementet (2021) Meld. St. 12 (2020-2021). Nasjonale minoriteter i Norge. En helhetlig politikk. <https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/b3beb7e9982f4cd3a6ab324cbe6f3a9b/no/pdfs/stm202020210012000dddpdfs.pdf>
- Kolve, C. S., Helleve, A., & Bere, E. (2022). Gratis skolemat i ungdomsskolen – nasjonal kartlegging av skolematordninger og utprøving av en enkel modell med et varmt måltid. Folkehelseinstituttet. <https://www.fhi.no/publ/2022/gratis-skolemat-i-ungdomsskolen/>
- Kunnskapsdepartementet (2020) Meld. St. 6. (2019-2020). Tett på – tidlig innsats og inkluderende fellesskap i barnehage, skole og SFO. <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/meld.-st.-6-20192020/id2677025/>
- Nes, K. (2017). Inclusive education and exclusionary practices in Norwegian schools. In F. Dovigo (Ed.), Special educational needs and inclusive practices. Studies in inclusive education. SensePublishers, Rotterdam.
- Nordahl, T. (2017). Forståelse av læringsutbyttet til elever som mottar spesialundervisning. In P. Haug (Ed.), Spesialundervisning. Innhold og funksjon. Oslo: Samlaget.
- Nordahl, T., & R. S. Hausstätter. (2009). Spesialundervisningens forutsetninger, innsatser og resultater. Hamar: Høgskolen i Hedmark.
- Nordahl, T. (leader), Persson, B., Brørup Dyssegaard, C., Wessel Hennestad, B., Vaage Wang, M., Martinsen, J., Kragset Vold, E., Paulsrud, P., & Johnsen, T. (2018). Inkluderende fellesskap for barn og unge. Bergen: Fagbokforlaget.
- Nilsen, S. (2010). Moving towards an educational policy for inclusion? Main reform stages in the development of the Norwegian unitary school system. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 14 (5), 479–497. doi:10.1080/13603110802632217
- NOKUT. (2023). General information about education in Norway. <https://www.nokut.no/en/norwegian-education/general-information-about-education-in-norway/>

- Norwegian Education Act (Act relating to Primary and Secondary Education and Training).
<https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/b3b9e92cce6742c39581b661a019e504/education-act-norway-with-amendments-entered-2014-2.pdf>
- Organisation for Education Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2022). Education at a glance 2022. <https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/>
- Rogstad, J., Bjørnset, M., Drange, N., Gjefsen, H. M., & Kindt, M. T. (2021). Fraværsgrensen i videregående skole: Perspektiver, konsekvenser og erfaringer. Oslo: Cappelen Damm akademisk.
- Rogstad, J., & Reegård, K. (2016). De Frafalne : om frafall i videregående opplæring - hvem er de, hva vil de og hva kan gjøres? Oslo: Gyldendal Akademisk.
- Sletten, M. A., Toge, A. G., & Malmberg-Heimonen, I. (2022). Effects of an early warning system on student absence and completion in Norwegian upper secondary schools: A cluster-randomised study. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 15. doi:10.1080/00313831.2022.2116481
- Skolverket. (2017). Romer i skolan – en fördjupad studie. Rapport 292. Stockholm: EO-print.
- SSB – Statistisk sentralbyrå. (2023). Fakta om utdanning 2023. <https://www.ssb.no/utdanning/utdanningsniva/artikler/fakta-om-utdanning-2023>
- Steen-Johnsen, K., H. Lidén & M. F. Aarset (2010) Handlingsplan mot tvangsekteskap: Evaluering av utvalgte tiltak. 2. delrapport. <http://www.samfunnsforskning.no/nor/Publikasjoner/Rapporter/2010/2010-007>
- Tyldum, G., & Friberg, J. H. (2014). Et skritt på veien: Evaluering av handlingsplan for å bedre levekårene blant rom i Oslo [First step: Evaluation of the action plan to improve the living conditions of the Roma in Oslo]. *Fafo-rapport* 2014:50.
- Udir. (1996). Utdanningsspeilet 1996.
- Udir. (2004). Utdanningsspeilet 2004. <https://www.udir.no/tall-og-forskning/finnforskning/rapporter/utdanningspeilet-2004---analyse-av-grunnopplaringen-2005/>
- Udir. (2017a). Barn, unge og voksne med innvandrerbakgrunn i grunnopplæringen. Retrieved from <https://www.udir.no/globalassets/filer/tall-og-forskning/rapporter/2017/innvandrere-i-grunnopplaringen-2017.pdf>:
- Udir. (2017b). Spesialundervisning – saksgang. <https://www.udir.no/laring-og-trivsel/spesialpedagogikk/spesialundervisning-for-voksne/veilederen-spesialundervisning-for-voksne/3-fasar-i-saksgangen-for-spesialundervisning/>
- Udir. (2019). The Norwegian Education Mirror, 2019. <https://www.udir.no/english/education-mirror-2019/about-the-education-mirror/>
- Udir. (2021). Spørsmål om privatisteksamen. <https://www.udir.no/eksamen-og-prover/eksamen/privatist/sporsmal-om-privatisteksamen/>
- Udir. (2022a). Fravær i grunnskolen. <https://www.udir.no/regelverk-og-tilsyn/skole-og-opplaring/saksbehandling/fravar/grunnskolen/>
- Udir. (2022b, September 23). Fravær i videregående. <https://www.udir.no/regelverk-og-tilsyn/skole-og-opplaring/saksbehandling/fravar/fravar-i-videregaende/>

- Udir. (2022c). Spesialundervisning. <https://www.udir.no/laring-og-trivsel/spesialpedagogikk/spesialundervisning/>
- Udir. (2022d). Utdanningsspeilet 2022. <https://www.udir.no/tall-og-forskning/publikasjoner/utdanningsspeilet/utdanningsspeilet-2022/>
- Udir. (2023a, September 1). Barn som ikke møter på skolen – for skoler og skoleeiere. <https://www.udir.no/regelverkstolkninger/opplaring/Skoleeiers-ansvar/barn-som-ikke-moter-pa-skolen---for-skoler-og-skoleeiere/>
- Udir. (2023b). Førings av vitnemål og kompetansebevis for videregående opplæring i Kunnskapsløftet – 2023. <https://www.udir.no/eksamen-og-prover/dokumentasjon/vitnemal-og-kompetansebevis/foring-vitnemal-kompetansebevis-vgs/>
- Utdanningsforbundet (2023) Nøkkeltall for grunnskolen t.o.m. skoleåret 2022/23. Faktaark 2/2023. <https://www.utdanningsforbundet.no/var-politikk/publikasjoner/2023/nokkeltall-for-grunnskolen-t.o.m.-skolearet-202223/>
- Vika, K. S. (2021). Elever med null grunnskolepoeng - Tilleggsanalyser av Utdanningsdirektoratets spøringer til Skole-Norge. <https://nifu.brage.unit.no/nifu-xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/2763749/NIFUarbeidsnotat2021-7.pdf>
- Wilson, S., Tanner-Smith, E., Lipsey, M., Steink-Fry, K., & Morrison, J. (2011). Dropout prevention and intervention programs: Effects on school completion and dropout among school-aged children and youth. *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, 8. doi.10.4073/csr.2011.8

Children who do not attend school: Rules, measures and practices from Norway

This report is about school dropout and high absences in Norway, primarily regarding pupils in primary and lower secondary school. The focus is on the rules and measures that have been put in place to increase attendance and ensure that pupils attend and complete their schooling.

The report serves as background information for the joint Norwegian-Romanian project “Inclusive Education for Children and Young People at Risk” (NOROC). The main purpose of the NOROC project is to ensure access to equitable quality education for Romanian children and youth at risk of dropping out of primary and lower secondary schools, through the implementation of relevant measures.



Borggata 2B
Postboks 2947 Tøyen
N-0608 Oslo
www.fafo.no

Fafopaper 2023:04
ID-nr.: 10381