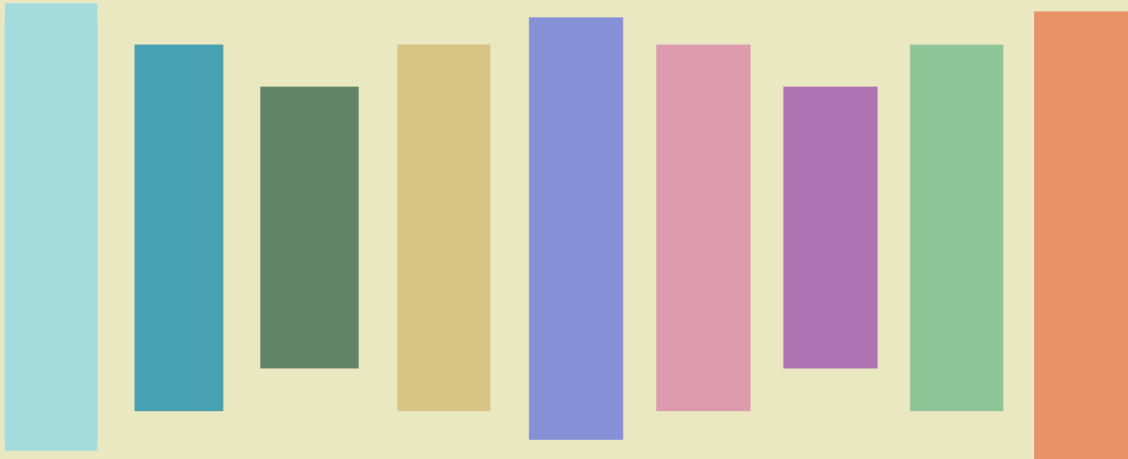


CHILDREN'S

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REPORT

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The Children's Report

Children's Report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child 2024

Child-friendly summary

Hello! This text is for children interested in our report. We are a group of children and youth who wrote the Children's Report. Our names are Dina, Orkidee, Iver, Maria, Sumeja, Herman and Hassan. We are all children with different experiences and have tried to make a report that talks about how children in Norway are doing.

In the report, we have written about how Norway takes care of children and the rights we have. We give advice on how Norway can become better at taking care of children, and how they can give us knowledge about our rights. The report will be submitted to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. The UN Committee decide whether Norway is doing enough to ensure that children have a good life.

If there is something you find difficult to understand, you can ask an adult to help you read.

In May 2024, we invited children from 13-18 years old from all over Norway to express their opinion in Oslo at an input day. Those who took part were able to share their experiences, stories and information about what it is like to be a child in Norway, and we have used this in the report. The Children's Report has five main themes: democracy and participation, diversity and inclusion, health and care, education, and climate. We have made some recommendations for the adults on how they can improve. Here are some examples of what we recommend:

- Children who have fled to Norway should have the right to kindergarten and school just like all other children
- Children should not be exposed to digital advertising
- Children who need a psychologist should not have to wait long for help
- Children must be involved in making changes to the school absence limit
- Children must be involved when adults decide what to do with climate and environmental policy

At the end of the report, you can see what children from 4-5 years old think is important for their well-being. We think it has been important to gather information from several age groups to know how children are doing today.

According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, all children have the right to be heard, and adults must do what is best for the children. We must know what rights we have, because if we don't know, we can't speak up. If we don't speak up, then the adults can't do anything about it. This report is a way of telling adults what they need to do so that more children in Norway have a better life.

We hope you enjoy the report!

Dina, Orkidee, Iver, Maria, Sumeja, Herman and Hassan

Content

The Children's Report consists of three parts and is based on information from both research reports and their own participation processes. Children and young people mentioned in the report are all children who are covered by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, meaning everyone in Norway who is under the age of 18.

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Part 1

What is the Children's report?

In the first part of this publication, you can read about how the report came to be and who made it. You can read more about how we worked, what has been important, and what challenges we have had along the way.

What is the children's report?

In the summer of 2024, the seventh report from Norway on their implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child was submitted. The state's report answered the questions asked by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in the list of issues. The report you are reading now is the Children's Report from civil society in Norway. This report will supplement the state and its report on how children and young people's rights are upheld in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

This report is important in making sure the voices of children and young people heard. Giving children the opportunity to get involved directly will ensure that their opinions and experiences are documented and presented. This is important to ensure measures that positively affect the lives of children. This report is not intended to be a method for documenting all children's thoughts, but as a tool for promoting changes that can improve children's everyday lives and future in Norway.

The report provides insight into how some groups of children in Norway experience their rights. It shows what challenges they face, and how these challenges should be handled. The aim is that this report can influence politicians and decision-makers to prioritise children's rights.

Who wrote the Children's Report?

This report is written by the Children's Working Group. The group consists of 7 young people aged 13-18 years. The group had 9 digital meetings and carried out a workshop in May 2024. This is the Children's Working Group:

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Project managers was Karoline Nylander (The Norwegian Children and Youth Council) and Maja Enerhaug Egge (Press - Save the Children Youth Norway / The Norwegian Children and Youth Council). Marius Sjølyst (Press - Save the Children Youth Norway) has followed the Children's Working Groups meetings.

How did the Children's Report come about?

The work on this report was initiated by the Forum for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, following a call for proposals from the Ministry of Children and Families (BFD). The application to the BFD included plans for the civil society's shadow report, as well as a separate Children's Report. The purpose of a separate report from children has been to ensure that children can freely express themselves about the rights they themselves believe are important. The process was developed by the Advisory Team for child participation consisting of UNICEF, Save the Children, Disabled Youth Norway, The Norwegian Children and Youth Council (LNU) and Press - Save the Children Youth Norway (Press). Press and LNU acted as the secretariat throughout the process. The Advisory Team's mandate was to facilitate child participation in reporting on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It has been important for the team that the process follows principles for meaningful participation.¹²

The Advisory Team developed a process based on the original deadline for the supplementary report, which was set for 1 August 2024. The allocation of funds from the Ministry of Children and Families was confirmed in January. The short time frame placed great limitations on the participation processes that could be carried out. The following activities were planned to complete the Children's Report within the short deadline:

- Appoint a Children's Working Group to act as an editorial committee for the Children's Report
- Conduct a workshop with children
- Obtain information from existing reports and documents

To select participants for the Children's Working Group a recruitment process was initiated at the end of March 2024. Through announcements on LNU's website, newsletters and in the channels of all the organisations in the working group, the invitation was spread well. Press and LNU reviewed 33 applications before a recommendation was presented to the working group for a final decision. The criteria for the selection were a balance in gender, age, location, field of interest and previous experience with similar participatory processes. We received a lot of great applications and would have liked to choose more people than we had room for. Those who were not offered a place on the Children's Working Group were invited to participate in the workshop.



1 [UN CRC, General comment no. 12 - The right of the child to be heard, 2009](#)

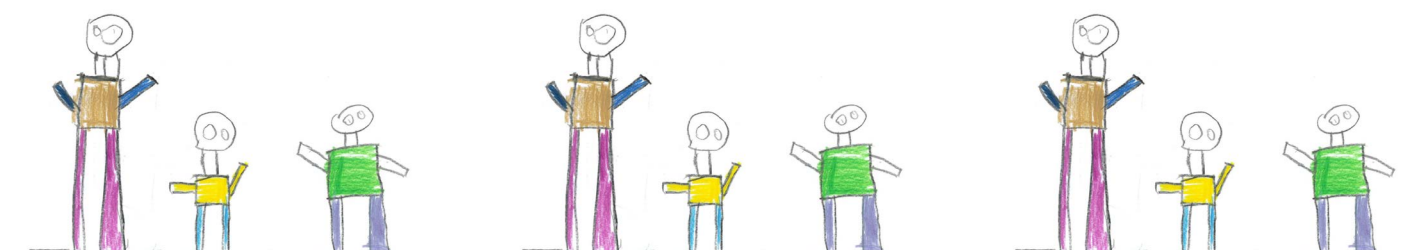
2 [LNU, Principles for real and meaningful youth participation, retrieved 1.10.24](#)

The Children's Working Group held a workshop on 25 May, where participants were recruited through the networks of the organisations in the advisory team and youth councils throughout Norway. The criteria for participation were that the children were part of a group, activity or organisation, and were young people between the ages of 13 and 18. The workshop has informed the Children's Working Group about which issues should receive attention in the further writing of the report. The day consisted of training and information about the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the reporting work, followed by group work where the participants worked together to identify issues and come up with possible solutions to situations where children's rights are violated. The members of the Children's Working Group led the discussions. The group work was referred by employees and representatives from the organisations represented in the Advisory Team. In addition, thoughts and ideas were written on post it notes, and mind maps were produced by the participants.

After the workshop was completed, the material was processed and interpreted by the Children's Working Group. The input was considered in the further meetings and discussions. Through digital meetings, the Working Group decided on several sub-topics for each of the main topics. You can read more about the topics in the main part of the report.

In June 2024, the Forum for the Convention on the Rights of the Child was informed of a new deadline for supplementary reports. The extended deadline was set for December 1, 2024. The working group consisting of UNICEF, Save the Children, Disabled Youth Norway, The Norwegian Children and Youth Council (LNU) and Press - Save the Children Youth Norway, agreed that an extended deadline did not necessarily provide much room for more activities in the preparation of the Children's Report. Possibilities for expansion were presented to the Children's Working Group for a final decision. The Children's Working Group decided that consultations should be carried out with kindergarten children to secure some views on children's rights from younger children. You can read about the results of this work in the last part of the report. In addition, the Children's Working Group identified some topics that came up during the workshop which were not highlighted well enough. The Children's Working Group decided to collect written input from interest groups and groups with children who could elaborate further with both situational descriptions and proposals for solutions. These groups primarily consisted of representatives of various minorities or users of specific services. Beyond this, there was limited time and financial resources to carry out more consultations or examinations, although this was something both the advisory team and the Children's Working Group would have liked to have had the opportunity to do.

From August 2024, LNU and Press contributed as secretariat to write drafts after discussions in the meetings of the Children's Working Group. The Children's Working Group has also produced texts themselves or in collaboration with the secretariat. The last review of the report's content was done by the Children's Working Group on 21-22 October 2024.



Challenges and limitations

Time and unpredictability

One of the biggest challenges for the Children's Working Group has been a lack of time. We are socially engaged young people, and this has created challenges when it comes to finding meeting times. We wish there was a more predictable plan for the work, where all meetings had been arranged long in advance. The Children's Working Group lives in different cities and places in Norway, and this has led to most of the meetings being digital. With more time and finances, we would be able to meet physically. There are always advantages to meeting physically, both in that we could have gotten to know each other better, but also that we could have more time to discuss and write together.

Much of the time that was initially set aside for supplementary reports required us to work during the summer holidays. July is the month for the joint holiday in Norway. The State was expected to submit its report in May, and the supplementary reports in August. This is far too little time in the middle of the summer holidays. The fact that the State report came late meant that we had limited time to write something that could comment on and supplement the State's response to the list of issues.

The last major challenge with time was the unpredictable deadlines we had to deal with. In June, we were told that we had more time than originally planned. It has been challenging not knowing what deadlines we should have adhered to.



Lack of knowledge about children's rights and reporting

We see that there is little information about what the Children's Report is. We would have liked to be able to attract more attention to it, and we want the same for children's rights in general. Most of the participants at the workshop we arranged did not know what the Children's Report was or how it is used. Some were even shocked that we have our own children's rights and had not heard of these. We wish we had more time to give the workshop participants training in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the reporting work.

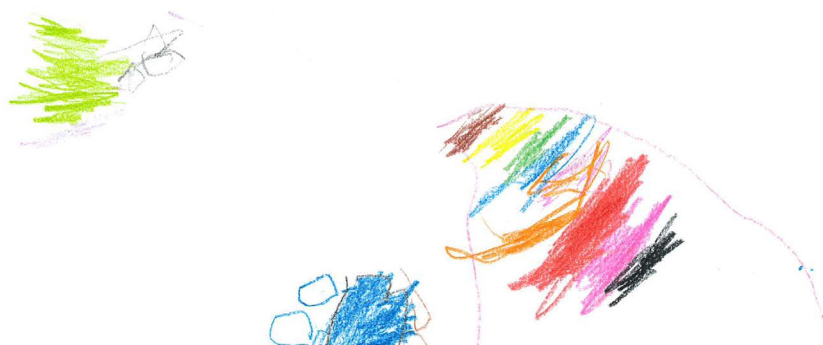
Implementation of workshop input

In May 2024, the Children's Working Group arranged workshop for children and young people from all over the country, to collect input on children's rights. There were good discussions, agreements and disagreements. We collected input on whether children's rights are being met, where they are being violated and what measures can help. There were many discussions, and it was difficult to get everyone to agree on common measures. We knew this was going to be a challenge when we started writing the report, and it was inevitable to touch on topics that are politically controversial. During the day, we discovered there were several topics that the participants were unknown to. Some of the participants had less of their own experiences to share and many had difficulty relating to some of the issues discussed. The Children's Working Group tried to explain and reformulate the questions, but it was difficult to create engagement and debate around some of the topics in the report.

Another challenge we encountered was to include all the suggestions or find a wording that covered what most people have said. Internally in the Children's Working Group, there were also some disagreements, but we realised that this will always be the case. Challenges exist in every participatory process, this applied not only to the Children's Working Group, but also to disagreements between participants at the workshop.

We do not speak on behalf of all children

The report is not a representative collection of all children and young people's opinions. Since the Children's Working Group and participants at the workshop have been recruited through organisational networks and more organised forms of participation, input has not been explicitly obtained from children who, for various reasons, are not affiliated with a group, youth council or organisation. In the previous reporting round, surveys and consultations were carried out in schools to reach as widely as possible. With the limited resources we have had for this process, we chose not to carry out such a process. The result is that we cannot say that this report is representative of all children in Norway. Nevertheless, many children have either directly or indirectly been involved in expressing their opinion in the work, and we believe that many important topics are addressed in the report.



Part 2

Violations on children's rights

In this part of the report, you can read about the issues that are important to ensure the rights of children in Norway. When we ask children what rights are important to them and what they want to improve, there is a wide range of answers. It can be anything from the right to be oneself, to democracy, leisure or education. Part 2 of the report has been divided into five main themes, each of which has several sub-themes. The Children's Working Group arrived on these five topics by discussing which issues the group members found important, as well as a review of the list of issues from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. The Children's Working Group decided that it was not necessary to prepare a report commenting on all the articles in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The issues raised have defined the structure of the report. The five main topics in the report is diversity and inclusion, democracy and participation, health and care, education, and climate.



1. Diversity and inclusion

Norway is a country with a diverse population in terms of ethnicity, background, socioeconomic status, gender identity, sexuality, disability, etc. Today, there are certain groups that do not have their rights fulfilled on an equal footing with others. This creates a divide between the various minorities in Norway and the rest of the majority population. There are many minority groups in Norway that are subjected to systematic discrimination. We have chosen to focus on some particularly vulnerable groups, but at the same time know that there are many more topics we could cover. Through the workshop arranged by The Children's Working Group and available reports where children have been allowed to express themselves, we have identified 6 sub-topics where we believe children are exposed to rights violations. Under each topic, you will find bullet points with suggestions for recommendations.



1.1 Refugees and asylum-seeking children

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

Unaccompanied minor asylum seekers are children under the age of 18 who are fleeing without parents or other caregivers. Being on the run alone at a young age makes these children particularly vulnerable to exploitation and rights violations.

Today, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children can be granted a temporary residence permit from the age of 16-18. These children cannot be sent back to their home country if they do not have parents or other close caregivers there. However, they can be returned to their home country at the age of 18 if they do not have a need for protection when they have become adults. With a temporary residence permit, the children are informed that they are allowed to stay in the country, but that they can only stay here until they turn 18. It is well documented that this type of permit is a very great psychological burden for young people, and in several cases has led to children trying to hurt themselves, committing suicide or disappearing from reception centres in fear of forced return.³

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who come to Norway alone have an extra need for care, security and predictability. If a child under the age of 18 in Norway does not have parents, or has an inadequate care situation, the Child Welfare Service shall be responsible for their care. For unaccompanied asylum seekers aged 15-18, the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) is responsible for the care of these children. Reception centres or institutions for unaccompanied children are therefore not subject to the same requirements concerning staffing, follow-up and quality requirements as the services other children in Norway receive. Norway has been criticized several times by human rights organisations and the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child for discriminatory practices but has nevertheless not made any changes.

With poor living conditions and an imminent risk of being returned, there are unaccompanied asylum children who are drawn to criminal environments or are involved in the sale of sexual services. The children are very vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Many children disappear either for short or long periods from their residential addresses, and it has been documented that the children are rarely reported missing or searched for by the police.⁴

3 [NOAS, A review of temporary residence for unaccompanied minor asylum seekers, 2017](#)

4 [NRK, 432 children and young people have disappeared from Norwegian asylum reception centres, 2022](#)

“ Things take time. We must first settle down in this country. I like living here, but it’s not long since I first arrived. After several years of bad experiences and a long wait for a residence permit, I have not landed yet to get the security and feel at home. Family means a lot, when the family lives far away, it’s difficult. It is perhaps easier for those who come with family than us unaccompanied minors. ⁵ ”

Our recommendations:

- Stop the use of temporary residence permits for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children
- Transfer the care of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children between the ages of 15 and 18 to the child protection services
- Give the police a clear instruction on the investigation of disappearance of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, and make sure they are taken as seriously as the disappearance of Norwegian children
- Ensure enough competent personnel and good care at reception centres for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children
- Strengthen the legal guardian/representative arrangement for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

Right to be heard

When unaccompanied children or families with children come to Norway as asylum seekers, it is rare that children’s right to be heard is fulfilled. In many cases, the children are not heard orally and directly in any part of their case. In cases where the children are invited to be heard they do not get sufficient information before, during or after the conversation. Refugee children report insufficient child related expertise, and that they have little trust in the case workers. For children, it is essential to be safe to talk about difficult experiences. The asylum-seeking process is not facilitated in a way that encourages and secure children to share their relevant experiences. Often, the immigration administration’s decisions are characterised by standard texts, rather than individual assessments of what the child has said and how the decision is in line with the child’s best interests. ⁶

“ I would like them to be kinder. Take care of us, sort of. We are there to tell our story. I would like them to express that they listen and believe what we say. While someone may be lying, that person may be telling the truth. So, I think that what we say should be taken seriously. Those who have not been in the same situation do not know what it was like. ⁷ ”

⁵ [Save the Children, The most important thing is to become Norwegian, 2020](#)

⁶ [Save the Children, Hearing children in cases of protection: What can we learn from the children’s house model, 2022](#)

⁷ [Save the Children, Hearing children in cases of protection: What can we learn from the children’s house model, 2022](#)

Our recommendations:

- Ensure independent assessments of the child's best interests in the application for protection
- Ensure that all children have their right to be heard when applying for protection
- Establish separate child friendly reception centres for children in the asylum process
- Continue and further develop child rights expertise in the immigration administration

Rejection of the asylum application

When families with children receive a rejection of their application for protection, it is generally the parents' responsibility to address the children's need for information and interests. Some parents are unable to inform their children about the rejection and struggle to shield them from how difficult their own situation is. In cases where parents do inform their children, it often happens in a way that is not sufficiently adapted to the children. This has consequences for the children, who are affected by how their parents are coping.⁸

Our recommendations:

- Strengthen legal aid for asylum seekers who have been rejected
- Extend the deadline for leaving the country after a final rejection for children and families with children
- Strengthen information, guidance and psychosocial follow-up of children and parents throughout the asylum process
- Ensure that children are not separated from their parents and siblings in connection with the asylum process

Limited residence permits

Long-term families with children are families who have previously had their application for protection rejected, but who are granted residence on humanitarian grounds because of the child's connection to Norway. Families with children who do not provide documentation of their identity will be granted a permit with restrictions. The permit does not entitle you to family immigration with the remaining nuclear family in your home country, and it must be renewed every year. Nor can you get a permanent residence permit or citizenship with such a status. Only when presenting a passport the restrictions can be lifted. One of the challenges for long-term families with children is that the children stay in asylum reception centres for a long time. These children are also not entitled to a daycare spot like all other children in Norway have. Such limited permits also have an inhibiting effect on integration because the parents cannot participate in working life and are exposed to great mental strain and insecurity.⁹

8 [NOAS, What children don't know, don't they hurt by?, 2020](#)

9 [NOAS, With life on hold, 2020](#)

“ *When we finally got a residence permit, I was very happy about it at first, but then it was like a punch in the stomach because it wasn't [a] proper residence permit.* ¹⁰ ”

Our recommendations:

- That all families with children with a limited residence permit are settled after the initial decision regarding their application.
- Introducing a statutory right to daycare for all children in reception centres
- Provide families with children with free legal assistance throughout the asylum process
- Expand the number of hours of Norwegian language training for residents of asylum reception centres
- Ensure that children seeking protection have the same access to daycare and school as all other children residing in Norway

Expulsion

Today, refugee children who have had their asylum application finally rejected can be returned. In connection with forced return, the police have the authority to detain children. This can be compared to imprisonment or deprivation of liberty. In the past, Norway has received strong criticism for its treatment of families with children at the immigration detention centre Trandum. ¹¹

Our recommendations:

- Ensure that children and families are not detained in immigration detention centres

¹⁰ [NOAS, With life on hold, 2020](#)

¹¹ [Norwegian Institution for Human Rights, 2024](#)

Asylum reception centres and services

One of the topics that children in asylum reception centres are concerned about is relocation. Many children report frequent moves across municipalities and regions, and little opportunity for predictability and a safe environment. The children lose networks, friends, leisure activities and other things they have worked to establish in their own lives.

“ *People on the run should not have to establish themselves several times. It's too hard.* ¹² ”

The children are also concerned that the staff at the reception centre can make a big difference, both in a positive and negative direction.

“ *Those who work at the reception centre have to be kind. They should talk to the children. And they have to smile. With their eyes, not just with the mouth. Caring and being kind can be done without speaking the language. Children get it.* ¹³ ”

Some children have experienced sexual abuse while living in asylum reception centres in Norway. It emerges that their background, as well as the precarious situation they find themselves in, makes them vulnerable to abuse and violations. ¹⁴ The children say that they did not know that they could say no, or did not dare to speak up because they were afraid that they would not be allowed to stay in Norway. However, the children and young people also emphasise that safety is more than physical security from violence and abuse. It is also about mental safeguarding. They say that the experiences they bring with them from their home country and the escape affect their sense of security after they arrive in Norway.

“ *After a while, I slept badly. Isolated myself. No one spoke to us. No one wondered about our story. If we complained about lack of sleep, perhaps because of bad memories, we were only given sleeping pills.* ¹⁵ ”

12 [Save the Children, Safety at reception centres, 2022](#)

13 [Save the Children, Safety at reception centres, 2022](#)

14 [Save the Children, Safety at reception centres, 2022](#)

15 [Save the Children, Safety at reception centres, 2022](#)

Children in reception centres need someone who talks to them and listens when they are ready to tell their story. They want to belong to a community and not be forced to constantly move from one reception centre to another. They also say that the unpredictability associated with being in an asylum process, and the uncertainty and fear of not being allowed to stay in Norway, lead to a feeling of insecurity.

“ *he reception centres are sometimes nice. Sometimes they look like a prison. Some have window bars, like in the movies, so we don't escape. But I don't really care about that.* ¹⁶ ”

Our recommendations:

- Provide child-friendly reception centres for families
- Ensure predictable and long-term housing solutions for asylum children and families



1.2 Racism

Many children experience racism and discrimination in everyday life, and some groups feel that hate speech against them is more accepted than against others.¹⁷ 45% in a 2023 survey reported having been subjected to racist speech in the last 12 months.¹⁸ Social media, school and sports are the arenas where racism most often takes place. Some children feel that the school lacks competence in both preventing and dealing with racism and discrimination, and that it seems that the teachers are dealing with this alone without much support from school management and support system.

Our recommendations:

- Support for multicultural organisations and events
- Stricter anti-discrimination laws and policies should be implemented and enforced
- Establish mechanisms to monitor and report discrimination
- Introduce a Receipt Scheme with the police¹⁹
- Ensure equal treatment of asylum seekers and refugees throughout the asylum institute
- Teachers and other adults who work with children and young people should have more knowledge about the prevention and handling of racism



¹⁷ [PROBA community analysis, Children and young people's experiences with racism and discrimination, 2023](#)

¹⁸ [PROBA community analysis, Children and young people's experiences with racism and discrimination, 2023](#)

¹⁹ [Oslo Police District, Notification of a Trial Receipt Scheme](#)

1.3 Integration

Many children who flee, experience challenges when they arrive in Norway. The challenges can last for a long time and can be an obstacle to living a normal life. Children who are new to Norway mention that school, friends, leisure, mental health, finances, cultural understanding and prejudice are topics that are important for good integration and a good start.

“ *I’m integrated when I’m in class, when I feel like I can talk, and when I sing in a choir, and when we dance together. I feel good when I’m with friends.* ²⁰ ”

Children with a refugee or immigrant background say that school can be the best place for good integration, but that it is also a place where they face many challenges and prejudice from both adults and other children. Several mention the importance of intercultural understanding and a desire for more people to show interest.

“ *Being involved in the things that are happening, for example at school.* ²¹ ”

Most children and adults say that language is essential for good integration. Some are satisfied with Norwegian language training and introductory programmes, while others are dissatisfied with the offer.

“ *It was easier to learn the language after we came to [municipality]. It was different at the reception centre. There were 60 young people there, and no one spoke Norwegian. We didn’t go to school and didn’t learn much language. It is important to listen to people sitting around you and speak Norwegian, and you listen to and gain knowledge. It is important to learn grammar. Then it will be easier to build up the language. With homework assistance, you learn the language more easily. Could have been two days a week* ²² ”

20 [Save the Children, The most important thing is to become Norwegian, 2020](#)

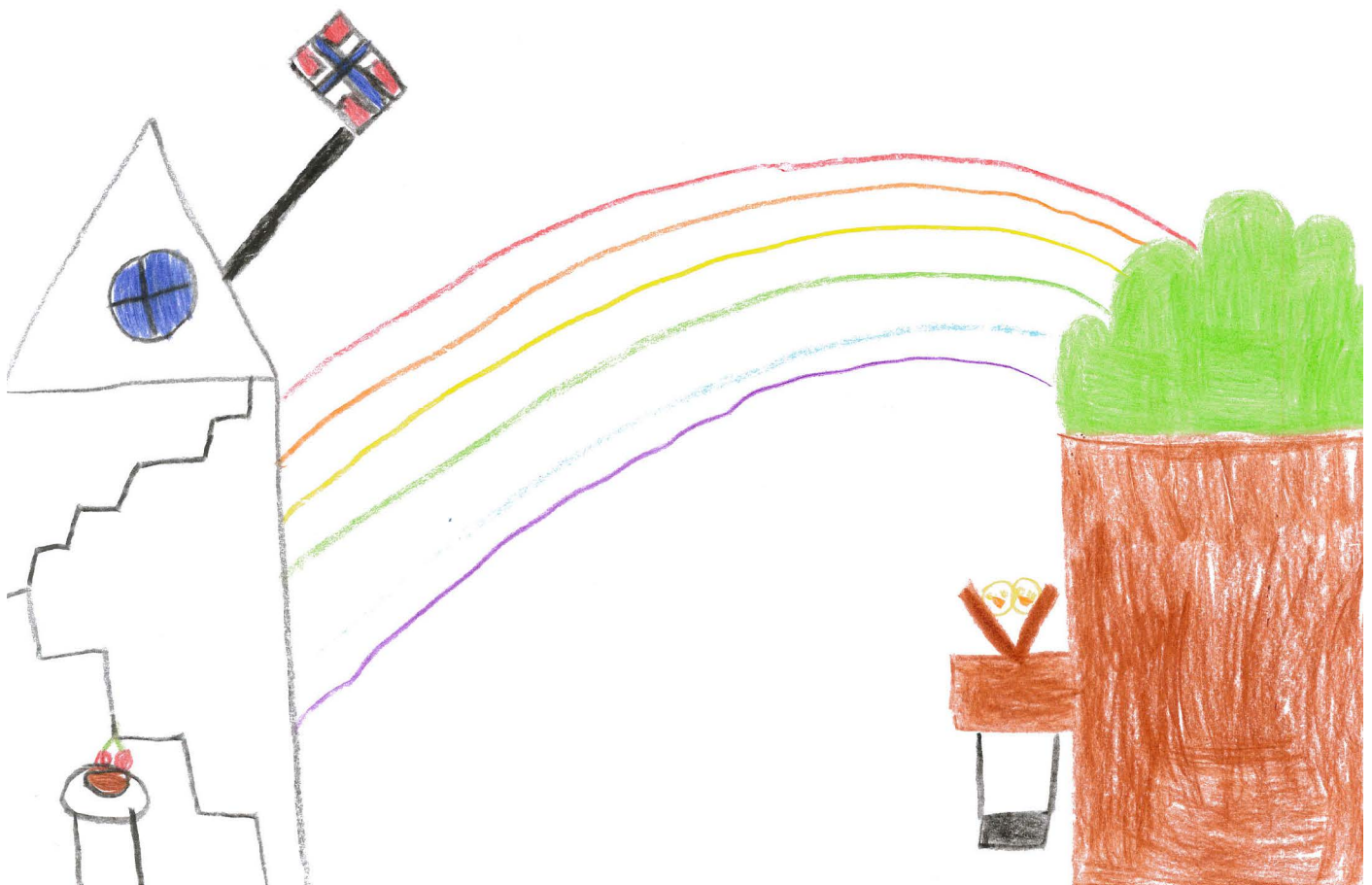
21 [Save the Children, The most important thing is to become Norwegian, 2020](#)

22 [Save the Children, The most important thing is to become Norwegian, 2020](#)

Local authorities can also work to create arenas where refugees can actively participate in society. This can be through leisure activities, volunteer work, and cultural events. Municipal collaborations should be established between schools, health services, NGOs, and the business community to ensure a holistic approach to integration.

Our recommendations:

- Strengthen language training for children and families with children who come to Norway
- Ensure adequate job training for youth and parents
- Strengthen the right to free leisure activities, leisure clubs and volunteer work for children and families with children
- Ensuring that children with refugee backgrounds have a safe home
- Strengthen education in inclusion, tolerance, solidarity and intercultural understanding
- Strengthen homework help programmes
- Ensure more competence on refugees among teachers and educators



1.4 Indigenous people and national minorities

Sami

Sami children experience challenges related to exercising their identity, culture and language in Norwegian society, especially outside Sami core areas. Although Norway formally recognizes the Sami language and culture as equal to Norwegian, this is often not the reality. Many young Sami face a lack of knowledge about Sami culture and language in the general population. Children experience major differences in access to Sami education, both in terms of access to qualified teachers and teaching aids. Many children struggle to receive education in the Sami language, especially outside the Sami administrative areas.²³

Another major challenge is Sami children's experience of discrimination and hate speech in everyday life, both physically and online. This happens especially in cities, where Sami people are often met with ignorance, prejudice and negative comments related to their culture, clothing and language.

Roma

Norway has previously received a lot of criticism for the use of foster home placement of Roma children. Most Roma children who receive Child Welfare Service are placed in non-Roma foster homes and are thus deprived of their right to practice their own culture and practice their mother tongue. Many Roma foster children are settled at a secret address where they are completely cut off from the Roma community, culture and language.²⁴ A few measures have been initiated in this area to gather more knowledge and experience²⁵, but little is being done to improve the situation of Roma children in Norway.

Kvens

Children in Troms and Finnmark with a Kven/Norwegian-Finnish background have the right to instruction in Kven as a second language in primary and lower secondary school and, according to the curriculum, can choose between Kven or Finnish. From August 2024, the right to education in Kven or Finnish for primary and lower secondary school pupils with a Kven/Norwegian-Finnish background in Troms and Finnmark was made statutory. However, it does not consider that there are many Kven children living in other parts of Norway today.²⁶

23 Written input from NSR-N, 2024

24 [NRK, Roma children lose language and culture in foster homes, 2023](#)

25 [UiT, project ROMFREM, retrieved 1.10.24](#)

26 Kvenungdommen, written input to the Children's Report, 2024

In the years to come, there will probably be even more Kven children living outside Troms and Finnmark. This puts the Kven language at risk of extinction and creates a divide between Kven children living south and north of the legal language border. All Kven children should have the right to learn the language that was taken away from the people during the Norwegianization policy. The right to Kven language education should apply already from daycare and continue throughout the child's education.

A report shows that only 19% of those who knew that Norway has national minorities had knowledge of the Kvens.²⁷ Kven children say that they are often expected to be able to explain and account for the Kven minority when meeting the majority population. Kven children often have little knowledge of historical conditions and feel too little Kven to be able to represent the national minority. Some choose to keep their identity secret precisely because of this. To counteract the pressure experienced by Kven children, it is important that all children in Norway learn about the Kvens and the other national minorities at school.

As a result of the Norwegianization policy, there is a lack of cultural heritage for the Kvens. This, together with the lack of language training and competence in the Kven community, contributes to many Kven children struggling to identify with their background. Kven communities are dependent on people who actively work to develop cultural heritage, document culture, create Kven language resources, and to bring the language into the light.

“ *What does it mean to be Kven? This is a question many Kven children ask themselves. There is also a lot of hurt and pain in the Kven history and the injustice we have been exposed to, and this can feel difficult to manage.* ²⁸ ”

Jews

In a 2023 survey with Jewish people in Norway, 69% of participants reported having had unpleasant experiences related to their Jewish identity. Of these, many parents talked about their children's experiences with bullying, harassment and threats after the terrorist attack in Israel on October 7 2023.²⁹ There is some increase in anti-Semitic attitudes in the Norwegian population³⁰, and this can affect children very negatively. Since 2016, Norway has had two action plans against anti-Semitism³¹, and in 2024 a new action plan will be presented. It is positive that there is comprehensive work against racism and discrimination, and that the work also includes action plans aimed at specific minorities.

27 [Norwegian Institution for Human Rights, Attitudes towards Sami and national minorities in Norway, 2022](#)

28 [Kvenungdommen, written input to the Children's Report, 2024](#)

29 [NRK, survey of hatred towards Jews in Norway after October 7, 2023-2024](#)

30 [The Norwegian Centre for Holocaust and Minority Studies, Survey on values and attitudes, 2024](#)

31 [The Government, Action plan against racism and discrimination - new efforts 2024-2027, 2023](#)

Our recommendations:

- Support to child and youth-led organisations representing indigenous peoples or national minorities
- Ensure financial support for the development of children's and young people's services, meeting places and cultural activities for indigenous peoples and national minorities
- Legislate the right to language training for all children belonging to indigenous peoples and national minorities. The right must apply throughout Norway, and extend from day-care to upper secondary school
- Increased support for daycares for indigenous peoples and national minorities
- Strengthen teachers' knowledge of indigenous peoples and all national minorities, their languages, history and cultures
- Establish a "signpost system" in schools that includes indigenous peoples and all the national minorities. The goal should be the dissemination of language, culture and way of life
- Follow up measures aimed at indigenous peoples and national minorities in the action plan against racism and discrimination
- Ensure adequate funding for measures in new action plans against racism and discrimination



1.5 Queer children

It is important that children have equal opportunities for self-expression and freedom to be exactly who they are. Even though queer children in Norway mostly report good lives and equal rights as other children, there are several areas worthy of criticism where not enough is being done to protect them. Queer children have poorer access to support services and public services. Some say that they face social invisibility and lack of recognition of their identity in the Child Welfare Service ³², others say that they are worse off at school. ³³

Queer children are more likely to be exposed to violence, discrimination and harassment both at school, at home and in their spare time. ³⁴ It has also been documented that the amount of hatred against queer people is increasing in social and traditional media. ³⁵

For a long time, there has been uncertainty related to whether unnecessary medical interventions are carried out against intersex children. Intersex children often undergo treatment that is intended to make the body fit the gender normative and is not medically necessary. The practice has been repeatedly criticised by international human rights organisations. ³⁶³⁷ Organisations have been particularly concerned about surgery that has the cosmetic effect of making a child's genitals look like a penis or a vagina, often performed before the child is 1.5 years old. ³⁸ If this is a practice that still occurs in Norway, it is important that this is banned, so that the child can make an informed decision later in life.

Our recommendations:

- Strengthen expertise on gender and sexuality diversity for everyone who works with children
- Requirements for freedom of expression
- Stricter enforcement of anti-discrimination legislation
- Prohibition of intersex surgery without the consent of the child themselves

32 [Svendsen & Paulsen, Queer Youth's Encounters with the Child Welfare Service, 2021](#)

33 [Udir, Poorer school environment for pupils with other gender identities, 2024](#)

34 [Centre for Gender Equality, Double taboo, 2024](#)

35 [Amnesty International, Explosive increase in critical statements about queer people, 2023](#)

36 [Amnesty, ensuring the rights of children born intersex, 2017](#)

37 [Human Rights Watch, Intersex Children, retrieved 10.10.24](#)

38 Written input from Queer Youth Norway, 2024

1.6 Children with disabilities

Disabled and chronically ill people are subjected to systematic discrimination in all arenas of society, and there is a lack of recognition of disabled people as equal and valued citizens. Many are exposed to bullying and violations. Some of the cases are so serious that it is categorized as harassment, hate speech and hate crime. Despite this, few people report the cases to the police, and discrimination, hate speech and hate crimes against people with disabilities are often trivialised or justified. This is a major problem and can lead to disabled and chronically ill people avoiding getting involved or not daring to participate in society. People with disabilities are also more exposed to violence and sexual abuse than the general population.³⁹

Disabled and chronically ill people may need various forms of assistive devices. User-controlled personal assistance (BPA) is an important tool and equality tool to ensure the opportunity for participation. Employing one's own assistants is crucial for young people who need assistance to be able to live good lives. Assistive devices are important for many people to make everyday life go around. For some, assistive devices are a robot vacuum or other products you can get in regular trade, while others need specialized aids such as wheelchairs, walkers, reading programs and memory calendars. The challenge today is that disabled, and chronically ill people are not allocated the necessary aids and assistance to be able to live equal lives.

Refugee children with disabilities

Loneliness, lack of friends and leisure activities are some of the things children and young people with disabilities who have fled to Norway and live in a municipality talk about their everyday lives.⁴⁰ In a report, the children say that they have been met with prejudice, lack of information about their rights and where they can get support, and about a lot of waiting.

“ *The transition from reception centre to settlement was difficult. I moved in June, but I wasn't allowed to start school all autumn. It was tough. There were a lot of delays, which they justified by the fact that they were going to assess what kind of aids I needed. I have a visual impairment. I wore my old glasses from my home country for a long time and bumped into things. It took 6 months before I got the aids I needed.* ⁴¹ ”

39 [Save the Children, Why are children with disabilities more vulnerable?, retrieved 16.10.2024](#)

40 [Save the Children, We must fight twice as hard, 2021](#)

41 https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/RB_Vi_maa_kjempe_dobbelt_saa_hardt_web_FI-NAL-2021.pdf/

Many children with disabilities and refugee backgrounds spend most of their time at home with their parents and siblings. Not everyone has a personal support contact ⁴², and several express that they need it, especially to get help with transportation to and from activities or social events. Those who have been granted a support contact say that the support contact takes them out 1-2 times a week to activities such as the cinema or restaurant. That is, activities where they are alone, not on leisure activities or social activities with other children.

“ I had to arrange all the facilitation and support with the school and other agencies myself. My family couldn't help me with that. I was pretty exhausted. ⁴³ ”

Our recommendations:

- Incorporate the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) into the Norwegian Human Rights Act
- Strengthen the sign language and writing interpreting service, and ensure arrangements that meets the need during the evenings and weekends
- Ensure that children in need of assistance are granted personal assistance to participate in the social arenas of their choice
- Grant user-controlled personal assistance (BPA) in advance when planning a move between municipalities
- Ensure accessible interpreting services that have expertise and understanding of health-related issues
- Ensure that children with disabilities and their families have adequate information about their rights in the asylum process
- Ensure that all refugee children with disabilities have adequate assistance and enough hours of support contact



42 [Helsenorge, Personal Support Contact, retrieved 19.11.24](#)

43 [Save the Children, We must fight twice as hard, 2021](#)

2. Democracy and participation

A democracy does not exist without participation. All children have the right to be heard, and their opinion must be given considerable weight. In addition, the Convention on the Rights of the Child obliges us to ensure that all actions and decisions are made in the best interests of the child. This means giving young people the right to participate in local and national affairs, as well as a right to individual participation in matters concerning their own lives. Children often know best for themselves what they need, and this makes the right to be heard essential. When policies and measures that affect young people are to be adopted, Norway has a statutory duty to include children. Nevertheless, many feel that child participation does not take place in a real and meaningful way. Children are used as tokens to achieve goals, and rarely listened to or included throughout an entire process. The Children's Working Group is concerned that children may lose faith in the usefulness of participation if it takes place in a meaningless way and would therefore recommend ensuring children's right to be heard and strengthen child participation in democracy.



2.1 Local participation and youth councils

There seem to be great variations in how children can participate in their community, at school, and in local and national decision-making processes. When asked about child participation in decision-making processes locally, many children believe that efforts are being made to ensure meaningful participation, and that the amendments to the Local Government Act about youth councils or other representative bodies for young people ⁴⁴ were the right thing to introduce. This has strengthened the work with youth councils, and efforts are constantly being made to ensure that children are more involved in decision-making processes in the municipalities. However, the youth councils have different conditions depending on where they are based. Some have coordinators with a lot of experience and capacity in their positions. Others have a coordinator without the capacity to perform their tasks as a support function for the councils, and the experience of the children will therefore be poorer.

Our recommendations:

- Adequate funding of municipal youth councils
- Ensure that all youth councils have a coordinator with capacity to ensure real and meaningful participation
- Develop a regulation for youth councils



44 [Lovdata, Act on amendments to the Local Government Act, 2023](#)

2.2 National participation

Both participants in the workshop and interest groups believe that less is being done to ensure meaningful participation from children at the national level, and that there is a lack of structure in the work. On a national level organisations can provide their input through hearings. Everyone can give their input to hearings, often both in writing and orally. Many children and young people take advantage of the opportunities to provide input and recommendations through hearings, even though the processes are not very well adapted for users in general, and children in particular.

Most of the workshop participants agreed that a national youth council could be a good idea. Some participants were sceptical, unsure of how it could be solved in practice and would like this to be looked at more. Others believed that the intention is already being taken care of by networks for leaders in youth councils at regional level.

Our recommendations:

- Ensure the right to be heard for children with disabilities and counteract discrimination in the exercise of the right to be heard
- Strengthen organisations by and for children and young people with disabilities
- Ensure that child participation takes place in a real and meaningful way in future reporting to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child
- Ensure that involvement of children and young people is real, meaningful and in line with principles for child participation
- The state must commit to making child rights assessments in all official studies
- Establish a national youth council
- Lowering the voting age to 16

2.3 Knowledge and competence about participation

Knowledge about participation was discussed a lot during the workshop. All participants agreed that adults believe they have enough knowledge about fulfilling children's rights, but that they probably do not have the competence to implement it in practice.

“ Adults think they have it [enough knowledge about how to fulfil children's right to be heard], but I don't think they do. They say that they have been young people themselves, but today's youth have other opinions and think differently. It is the youth themselves who know best what it is like to be young. ⁴⁵ ”

Almost all the workshop participants agreed that children are often used by decision-makers to show how good they are at listening to children. Several said that it was good that they were invited to important meetings, but that they were rarely heard. Several participants said that they were not taken seriously, at the same time as their commitment to an issue was praised. Other participants talked about incidents where local politicians have used the youth councils' support as an argument in cases where the councils have not spoken out or had an opinion.

Our recommendations:

- Ensure that adult decision-makers who involve children have knowledge and expertise about child participation
- Ensure that participation processes with children receive sufficient funding to be carried out properly
- Ensure that thorough evaluations are carried out of participation processes initiated by the state, counties or municipalities
- Ensure a thorough assessment of an independent national competence centre for children and young people's participation
- Investigate new mechanisms to ensure that “youth washing” is counteracted at all levels of democracy

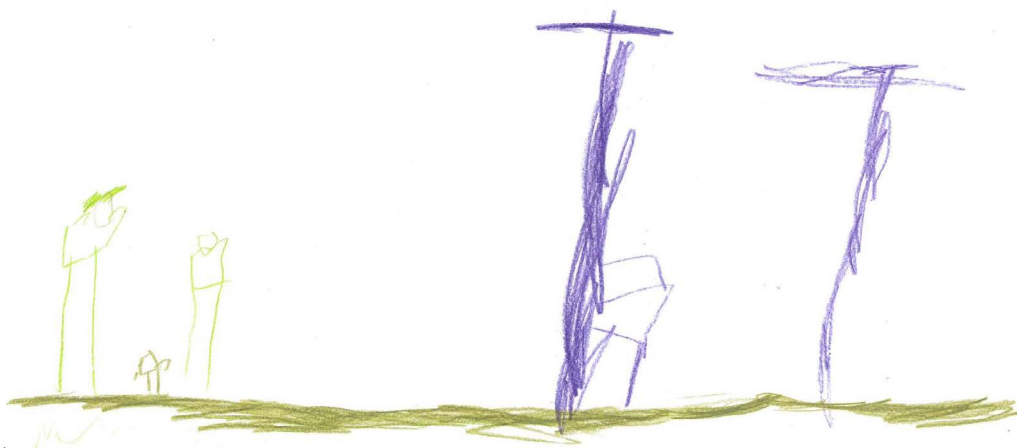
45 Workshop participant, May 2024

2.4 Hate crime, harassment and threats

The workshop participants believed that children are not always safe when they participate in public, and certainly not online. Children who speak out in public are often met with resistance, hatred and threats. Some participants viewed it as less likely to have physical effects, and that children usually are safe from physical attacks and violence. At the same time, they emphasized that working against threats, bullying, hatred and hate speech is important. Being exposed to hate and hate speech can contribute to children choosing to take less part in the public sphere and the democratic channels they have at their disposal. When children feel threatened into silence, it is both a violation of children's rights, and a serious threat to democracy. One participant said that they experienced poor security at one of the organisation's events and ended up being afraid to travel to similar events again. It is important that organisations and communities that bring children together know how to deal with potential crises but also work continuously with preventive and risk-reducing measures.

Our recommendations:

- Ensure sufficient resources in the police for investigations of hate crimes and threats against children
- Ensure good dialogue between child and youth-led organisations and emergency services such as the police, ambulance and fire brigade
- Establish a low-threshold service for reporting hate speech and threats, and that reported cases are adequately investigated
- Strengthen the core funding for child and youth-led organisations
- Ensure that children who participate in the public sphere receive support from organisations that can provide advice and help on hatred, hate speech and threats



2.5 Privacy and access to information

Social media and digital tools are an integral part of the everyday lives for most children in Norway. Many platforms collect data about their users and gain access to children's privacy without anyone knowing what this information is used for. Children often report harmful content, online risks, and targeted advertising.⁴⁶ Sexualised content, advertising about appearance and cosmetic surgery are commonly seen by children in their everyday life despite the ban on advertisement directed towards children. Children can also be exposed to grooming and potential sexual violations, and although adults talk a lot about the topic, there are constant reports of child abuse online. One of the proposals from the workshop was stricter regulations and new child rights related to digital life. Child protection should be more important than giving companies access to information.

“ Young people get a lot of advertising about things they are not supposed to, which makes them think that they are not good enough. For example, if you search for playing the piano you can end up getting ads for porn. ”⁴⁷

The workshop participants believed that children and young people have a more extensive digital competence than parents and other adults, and that it should have been the opposite. Several said that they had learned most of what they knew themselves, and not at school. IT knowledge in schools was highlighted as important for children now, but also for the future.

Our recommendations:

- Stricter regulations on digital advertising aimed at children
- Relevant IT education in primary and secondary school

⁴⁶ [Norwegian Media Authority, Robust, resigned or numb?, 2024](#)

⁴⁷ Workshop participant, May 2024

2.6 Standard of living

Family economy

The workshop participants had different perspectives on the challenges of families living in low-income households. One participant came from a municipality that continued with the Leisure Card even though many other municipalities decided to not carry on this arrangement, and thought this was a good measure to ensure that all children could participate in a leisure activity regardless of the family's economy. The same was said about places where children and families can rent skis, skates, bicycles and other leisure equipment for free. Another topic that was brought up was NAV,⁴⁸ and how the systems can seem very unfair to families, especially if you do not have Norwegian as your first language.

“ My mother goes to NAV. We barely have enough food and a little extra, but if she earns over a certain limit, she does not get support. That system is incredibly unfair.”⁴⁹

Municipal housing

Challenges with overcrowded apartments, low material standards and an insecure housing situation with frequent moves are the reality for many families with children who live in municipal housing or rent on the private market. Inadequate housing conditions can have a major impact on children's chances and opportunities in life.⁵⁰ Family economy and housing standards can in many cases be related to each other, and it is important that the state see the two topics as an intertwined and complex issue.⁵¹

Our recommendations:

- Reintroduce the Leisure Card in all municipalities
- Ensure that political measures against family poverty are developed together with children
- Ensure the principle of free school applies to all children in practice
- Create permanent jobs for young people
- Free public transport for children, also during school holidays
- Ensure predictable funding of services for low-income households with children
- A national overview of cheap and free venues for leisure use for children
- Develop measures that lead to less overcrowded households with children
- Ensure that municipal housing is safe for children and has good outdoor areas available

48 The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV)

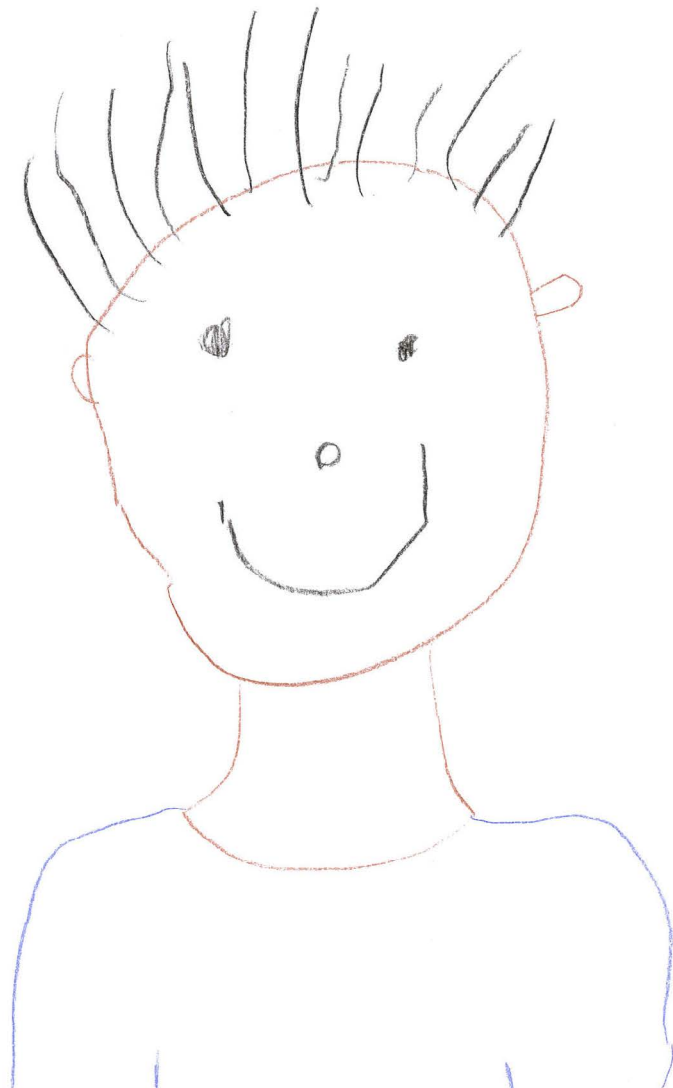
49 Workshop participant, May 2024

50 [BOVEL, Youth in municipal housing, 2023](#)

51 [BOVEL, Youth in municipal housing, 2023](#)

3. Health and care

All children have the right to life, survival and development. Physical and mental health are equally important and largely affect each other. Children and young people have the right to get the health care they need, but the queues and waiting lists are long. The pandemic in 2020-2022 meant less direct social contact, restrictions on leisure activities and a changed the school situation for most children. All of this may have contributed to health challenges. A particular cause for concern is the increasing number of young people who struggle with mental health challenges.



3.1 Mental health

There is great variation in the prevalence of mental health problems among children. Most common symptoms are stress, worries or the feeling that everything is a struggle.⁵² Some also struggle with sleep problems or that they are sad and depressed. The proportion of children with many mental health problems increases throughout adolescence, and girls are most bothered.⁵³ There has been a large increase in the extent of self-reported mental health problems through time, but in recent years the increase has levelled out. Among girls in lower secondary school, there is still an increase in reported problems.

“ I have tried to get a referral several times. I didn't get what I needed, so we had to put in money to see a psychologist. Fortunately, I had parents who had resources, but what about those who don't. ”⁵⁴

Many of the participants at the workshop we arranged were concerned with mental health and believed that there was a great need for improvements in the services for children. The participants agreed that there were big differences between health services depending on where you live, and the impression they had was that low-threshold services where you can get help without a referral from a doctor and a longer process, were almost non-existing. Some mentioned the municipal health centres for young people as a good offer, but this was not available to all children, partly because of long distances and travel.

One participant said that it was not the treatment within the mental health service that was the problem, but a lack of capacity. It was also mentioned that many are not seen as sick enough to get help and are given lower priority at admission. One participant also mentioned that it is extra difficult for boys to seek mental health care, and another mentioned eating disorders as a topic that should be brought up in school and in other arenas.

Our recommendations:

- Ensure equal mental health services for children regardless of place of residence
- Ensure there is minimal waiting time for children in need of mental health care
- Strengthen low-threshold conversation services for children and young people, such as the municipal health centres for young people, school psychologists, digital chat services and the like

52 [NOVA, Violence and abuse against children and young people, 2023](#)

53 <https://oda.oslomet.no/oda-xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/3083676/NOVA-Rapport-11-2023.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

54 Workshop participant, May 2024

3.2 Access to services

“ In my municipality they had to remove the school nurse because they couldn't afford it. I think about how medical centres work in general. It takes a long time, and if you need help or an attestation of illness, you need it quickly. ⁵⁵ ”

Through the workshop the Children's Working Group has been made aware that there are large variations in health services across the country. In small municipalities with large distances, mental health services are almost non-existent. The same applies to emergency departments and other health services related to physical health. It is reported that the school health service is being cut due to municipal finances, and that large travel distances prevent children from receiving good mental health care. Some of the workshop participants find that they do not get the help they need immediately, and that they must wait a long time for referrals or stand in line for a long time at the GP.

Our recommendations:

- Earmarked funds for the school health service
- Ensure that the differences in children's health services are equalised despite their geographical location
- Collaboration across health services
- Free doctor's appointments and medical attestation



3.3 Violence and abuse

Children often find violence and sexual abuse difficult topics to talk about, but during our workshop the Children's Working Group received feedback that it is important to talk about it early enough to pick up children who are exposed at a young age. Several believed that schools could play an important role in both preventing and detecting different types of violence. It was also mentioned that it is important that children have knowledge about what is allowed and what is not so that they can speak up if their rights are violated.

“ Teachers can gain better competence in how abused children behave and how to detect violence. ⁵⁶ ”

Physical violence and psychological abuse

Today, many children live with physical and psychological violence in the home. 16% of children state that they have been exposed to physical violence from a parent during their childhood, this involves all forms of violence. In addition, about two out of ten report repeated psychological abuse by a parent. ⁵⁷ Physical and psychological violence increases the risk of other problems in the lives of children who are exposed. It is important to ensure the safety of children when they confide about domestic violence.

Sexual violence

The extent of sexual violence against children has increased significantly from 2015 to 2023, and the proportion of victims has doubled. ⁵⁸ One in four children has been exposed to at least one incident of sexual violence in their lifetime, and girls are four times as likely to be victims. In total, one in ten under the age of 19 has been subjected to sexual violence that in a legal sense is defined as rape. ⁵⁹ Young people who report various problems in the home, have a different sexual orientation than heterosexuals or have disabilities, are more often exposed to sexual violence than others. Most cases of sexual violence happen between peers, usually someone the victim already knows. ⁶⁰

There is little knowledge among children and young people about legal boundaries for harassment and assaults, and sexual offences against children and young people are most likely underreported in a large scale. During the workshop arranged by the Children's Working Group some were concerned that cases of sexual abuse are often dismissed based on the lack of evidence when they are reported. Several were also concerned that both adults and children need more knowledge about sexual violence.

56 Workshop participant, May 2024

57 [NOVA, Violence and abuse against children and young people, 2023](#)

58 [NOVA, Violence and abuse against children and young people, 2023](#)

59 [NOVA, Violence and abuse against children and young people, 2023](#)

60 [NOVA, Violence and abuse against children and young people, 2023](#)

Some workshop participants raised the need for a more thorough background check of adults who work with children. They believed that the current system for police certificates of conduct was not good enough to safeguard children.

Our recommendations:

- Ensure that all interrogation of children under the age of 18 are carried out at the Children's House in cases of violence and abuse
- Ensure that perpetrators of violence under the age of 18 are interrogated at the Children's House
- Ensure that the police have sufficient resources for the investigation of sexual offences
- Introduce a sexual consent legislation to the Norwegian penal code
- Ensure that children have sufficient information about illegality of violence, and knowledge of their own rights in situations of violence
- Secure the necessary funding of the Emergency Telephone for Children and Young People

Honour-related violence and negative social control

Honour-related violence is a form of violence in close relationships and aims to prevent the loss of honour. The family's honour is often linked to the behaviour of the women in the family. For the family, a loss of honour could mean that the family loses its reputation, that relationships are broken and that the family is excluded from their community. Honour-related violence can involve negative social control, physical violence, humiliation and other psychological violent behaviours, threats, forced marriage, exclusion and honour killings. Many children and youth fear being taken abroad against their will and left behind with relatives and family from their parents' country of origin.⁶¹

Some children are taken abroad against their will, and the motives behind such stays vary. This may include a desire to strengthen the children's sense of belonging to their parents' culture and for them to attend school abroad. It can also be reasoned by getting a young person out of a bad environment with drugs and crime. A challenge with such stays is that children and young people may lose their connection to Norway, Norwegian language skills and schooling. Some also experience being subjected to violence, deprivation of liberty and forced marriage, and some fear female genital mutilation. One of the Governments action plans against violence states that there is reason to believe that female genital mutilation of children and young people can take place when travelling abroad, but little is confirmed and documented about this.⁶²

61 [Oslo Crisis Centre, our offer for children and young people, retrieved 16.10.24](#)

62 [Government, Freedom from negative social control and honour-related violence 2021-2024](#)

“ I believe that integration is poor, and honour crimes are a result of that. There are very few who speak up if they are exposed. It is often in relation to family. I think we know too little about it. ⁶³ ”

In 2021, the Government presented an action plan against honour-related violence. There are few measures that are aimed directly at children in this action plan. Many of the measures concern services that help children and families (the Child Welfare Service, health services, etc.), but there is no sign that children have been involved in the work or have had a say in what they think is important to prevent negative social control or honour-related violence. ⁶⁴ It is important that children are allowed to express their views on what will be sufficient measures.

Our recommendations:

- Ensure that children are involved in the follow-up of the action plan Freedom from negative social control and honour-related violence (2021-2024)
- Ensure a new action plan against negative social control and honour-related violence, and that the measures are financed. The action plan must be followed up and evaluated



63 Workshop participant, May 2024

64 [Government, Freedom from negative social control and honour-related violence 2021-2024](#)

3.4 The Child Welfare Service and alternative care

Divorce

There were different opinions during the workshop about how children with divorced parents are doing in Norway. Some highlighted that children can often feel like a mediator between parents who are in conflict. The child's opinion should be given weight during a divorce but is often not the case when the level of conflict is high between the adults.

Our recommendations:

- Ensure that the child's opinions are given weight in divorces and child custody cases
- Ensure that the family counselling office provides a good enough service to children who mediate between their parents

Foster care

For some children, moving into a foster home means that they must adapt to both a new family and a new place to live. In addition, many people have to change kindergarten or school and make new friends. The children must gain confidence in new caregivers and other adults after having been through major challenges in the family situation in the past.⁶⁵

“ I understand that you need emergency homes before foster homes, but I was with my teacher, the school principal, the emergency services and then a foster home. Far too many moves. In addition, I was promised by the Child Welfare Service when I was 12, that I would get a foster home within four weeks. It took a year and a half. This leads to a loss of trust in those who are supposed to help you.”⁶⁶

Having a supervisor can be a good measure that ensures that children have some stability and security. Where the supervisors have the capacity to follow up the children, it is perceived that they really listen to the child's views and have the competence to follow up in a way that contributes to the placement in foster homes working better.⁶⁷

65 [Ombudsman for Children, Blood is not always thicker than water, 2023](#)

66 [Ombudsman for Children, Blood is not always thicker than water, 2023](#)

67 [Ombudsman for Children, Blood is not always thicker than water, 2023](#)

“ *The supervisor asks different questions than the Child Welfare Service. She is better at understanding my opinions. She has plenty of time, and sometimes she comes home late because she wants to listen to my opinions. We often go out and do nice things. I sing with her, and I know her well.* ⁶⁸ ”

Children have the right to be heard in questions about their living situation. This also applies to children who are placed in foster homes, who have the right to be heard about how the actual move should be carried out. Some children may have a desire to move into the foster home quickly, while others need more time. It does not seem that the Child Welfare Service sufficiently listens and considers the child's wishes when conducting foster care placement. ⁶⁹

Our recommendations:

- Ensure that all children in foster care receive adequate follow-up from a supervisor
- Ensure that more children have individual and independent representation in cases concerning their own care
- Fewer and shorter court cases concerning the care situation for children
- Ensure that parental visitation is always in the best interests of the child

Child Welfare Service

Many children have heard of, or experienced negative incidents in contact with the Child Welfare Service. Many workshop participants expressed dissatisfaction, and that they were aware of cases where the Child Welfare Service has not secured children's rights.

“ *It is believed that the only function of the Child Welfare Service is to tear the children away from their parents. The attitude towards the Child Welfare Service is poor today and is very stigmatized, especially among [immigrant] families. Visibility of the Child Welfare Service is important.* ⁷⁰ ”

The areas where the Child Welfare Service does not work well enough include communication between the Child Welfare Service and the family, the selection and follow-up of foster parents, moving between institutions, and little respect for the duty of confidentiality. Other important issues that we have looked at are whether the Child Welfare Service ensures the best interests of the child. Reports that have investigated this conclude that children rarely feel that measures in the Child Welfare Service are in their own best interest, and that they are rarely heard in cases that concern them. ⁷¹

68 [Ombudsman for Children, Blood is not always thicker than water, 2023](#)

69 [Ombudsman for Children, Blood is not always thicker than water, 2023](#)

70 Workshop participant, May 2024

71 [Riksrevisjonen, Report on the Child Welfare Service assessments of the best interest of the child in institutions, 2020](#)

“ I wanted to get as close to [name of city] as possible, and this is not close. This is four hours by boat. ⁷² ”

Compulsion and restraints can be used as part of the treatment in an institution when children struggle with substance abuse problems or externalising behaviours. ^{73 74} Many children find that they are placed either in institutions or in foster families against their will. Unsuccessful forced stays can have very negative consequences. A report from the Ombudsperson for Children shows that many of the children were at risk of being subjected to major additional burdens. Many cases ended with repeated moves, escapes or use of violence, and young people gradually developed even greater problems with time. ⁷⁵

“ At the end after all the acting out, I was just out and got high all the time, then I was calm and didn't have to act out. When I lived at home, I had 3 police cases, now I have 30-40. ⁷⁶ ”

It has been documented that many children who are under the care of the Child Welfare Service struggle with severe mental health problems, substance abuse and self-harm. ⁷⁷ Some of the children are as young as 11-12 years old. ⁷⁸ The challenges are great and complex, and children report that they do not get the help they need. There is a need for a comprehensive boost to ensure that children in public care get out of difficult life situations and have their right to care and security safeguarded.

Our recommendations:

- Mandatory offer of cultural interpreters to all families who are in contact with the Child Welfare Service
- Ensure that children are well informed about the Child Welfare Services measures in good time, and get the chance to be heard before decisions are made
- Ensure that children with disabilities are not placed in institutions against their will
- Adequate funding of competent staff in the Child Welfare Service
- Ensure that supervisory authorities exercise adequate control over the quality of Child Care Institutions
- Outreach workers or similar services in all municipalities
- Develop measures to prevent children in Child Care Institutions from being exposed to crime and human trafficking
- Fund research on how the Child Welfare Service can succeed in helping particularly vulnerable and exposed children
- Develop and implement a national model that ensures necessary mental health care for children in institutions

72 [The Ombudsman for Children, They think we are shitkids, 2020](#)

73 [The Norwegian Board of Health Supervision, Children's Home. Adult Responsibility, 2019](#)

74 [Norwegian Board of Health Supervision, Use of compulsion in Child Welfare institutions, 2021](#)

75 [The Ombudsman for Children, They think we are shitkids, 2020](#)

76 [The Ombudsman for Children, They think we are shitkids, 2020](#)

77 [NRK, Deaths in the Child Welfare Service, 2023](#)

78 [NRK, Looking for young people who have escaped to Oslo for drug use, 2024](#)

4.

Education

Regardless of background, gender, ethnicity or identity, school is a common arena that brings Norwegian children together. School should be a place where children can learn to understand, process information, analyse, and build competence as citizens. School is where children spend most of their day, and this provides an opportunity to build bridges and form friendships. The right to education is enshrined in both national laws and international conventions. Primary and lower secondary school shall be free and accessible to all children. It is important for the Children's Working Group that children are allowed to express their opinion about how they are doing at school, and we hope to help shed light on what can be done to secure children's educational rights. The Children's Working Group believes that school can function as a preventive measure for various problems children encounter in their upbringing. In this chapter, we highlight some important issues we believe Norway can improve to fulfil children's right to education.



4.1 Facilitation

Learning, writing and concentration difficulties

Many pupils in school struggle to concentrate for various reasons, and find that learning difficulties and challenges with concentration affect the entire educational pathway. 3-5% of children in Norway have been diagnosed with ADHD.⁷⁹ Children with this diagnosis may find schooling problematic and challenging, and they are at increased risk of poor results, bullying and dropout.⁸⁰ About 20% of pupils in school struggle with reading and writing. Dyslexia is a language-based learning disability that can be hereditary, and about 5-7% of children who struggle with reading and writing have dyslexia. Many report that children with diagnoses such as ADHD and dyslexia experience extra challenges with school as it is set up today.

Our recommendations:

- Ensure that the right to special education is maintained for children with learning, writing or concentration difficulties, and who do not benefit from ordinary differentiated education
- Strengthen teachers' and school leaders' competence in special education, differentiated teaching and inclusion

Disabled

Pupils with disabilities are met with prejudice and negative attitudes in school. Many feel that they are seen as stupid, weak or a problem, and teachers often place lower expectations on pupils with disabilities than on others. This means that not all pupils develop their skills and potential.

Many disabled and chronically ill pupils drop out of education, face inaccessible school buildings, low expectations, lack of facilitation, and exclusion from joint education. Organisations representing disabled children report that pupils are being trained by uneducated assistants, being taken out of the classroom and disempowered.

79 [The Council for Mental Health, ADHD, retrieved 1.10.24](#)

80 [The Council for Mental Health, ADHD, retrieved 1.10.24](#)

Many disabled children are forced to attend a different school than the other children in the neighbourhood because the schools are not accessible. In 2018, Bufdir⁸¹ launched the Roadmap for Universally Designed Primary and Lower Secondary Education 2030.⁸² This is a good measure that must be followed up with allocations and political decisions at both national and local level. Norway is far away from doing enough to achieve the goals in the roadmap.

Our recommendations:

- Ensure that all pupils receive an adapted and equal education, regardless of physical ability
- Ensure that special education is designed and delivered by qualified teaching personnel
- Make a plan for universal design of all kindergarten and primary school buildings with deadlines and fixed annual allocations
- Establish a deadline for the municipalities' upgrade of universally designed school buildings



81 Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs

82 [Bufdir, Roadmap for universally designed schools 2030, retrieved 1.10.24](#)

4.2 Absence and drop-out

School refusal

School refusal is a type of school absence receiving a lot of attention. School refusal is seen as a form of invalid absence, where the cause is often due to emotional challenges. Children with school refusal are usually motivated for schoolwork but are still unable to go to school. School refusal is not a diagnosis, but a collective term for characteristics such as somatic problems, signs of anxiety, depression and difficulty concentrating.⁸³ There are many indications that school refusal is increasing, and it is estimated that 3.6% of children in Norway have signs of school refusal or risk of developing this.⁸⁴ Children with diagnoses such as anxiety, ADHD and autistic disorders are overrepresented, and the likelihood of developing school refusal for children with autism is seven times higher than for other children.⁸⁵

Our recommendations:

- Ensure that children with school refusal receive adequate education even if they do not participate in regular school and education plans

Drop-out

Primary and lower secondary school in Norway is compulsory, but 7.8 % of 10th-grade graduating pupils still graduated with missing primary and lower secondary assessments. This is almost twice as many as in 2015.⁸⁶ Children who lack primary and lower secondary school points are mainly pupils with no basis for assessment due to high levels of absence, pupils who receive special needs support or minority language pupils who have recently arrived in Norway. Many schools state that these figures may be due to an increase in the number of pupils who have challenges with mental health.⁸⁷ In addition to the ambition that all children should complete primary and lower secondary school with school credits, Norway aim for all young people to complete and pass upper secondary education. Today, 82% complete upper secondary education within 5 or 6 years.⁸⁸ This means there are many children who are not in education and do not receive a sufficient offer of training. There is a need for children who are neither in school nor in work to receive adequate follow-up, and tailored services.

83 [Utdanningsforskning.no](https://utdanningsforskning.no), [Pupils with school refusal and their experience of implemented measures, 2022](https://utdanningsforskning.no)

84 [The Council for Mental Health](https://www.mentalhelse.no), [School refusal](https://www.mentalhelse.no), retrieved 1.10.24

85 [ADHD Norway](https://www.mentalhelse.no), [school refusal, 2022](https://www.mentalhelse.no)

86 [TV2](https://www.tv2.no), [The school absence crisis in primary and lower secondary school, 2023](https://www.tv2.no)

87 [TV2](https://www.tv2.no), [The school absence crisis in primary and lower secondary school, 2023](https://www.tv2.no)

88 [SSB](https://www.ssb.no), [Completion rates in upper secondary education, 2024](https://www.ssb.no)

Our recommendations:

- Ensure that children in primary and lower secondary school can graduate with school credits within the nominal time
- Ensure that children who drop out of upper secondary education receive adequate follow-up and are offered alternative education
- Ensure that children with school refusal, a need for adapted education or a minority background can complete their education within the nominal time

Absence regulations

If a pupil in upper secondary school has more than 10% undocumented absence in one subject, the pupil will not receive a grade in that specific subject. Pupils can have their absence documented with valid papers. During the pandemic, the Government introduced temporary exemptions from the documentation requirement for health-related absence. In 2022, the government reintroduced the absence rules, but at the same time announced that they would revise the regulations. In 2023, the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training sent out a proposal for consultation in which they proposed that all types of absence should be considered the same. After opposition from a broad civil society, the Directorate ended up going withdrawing their proposal. This is a clear sign that absence rules can easily fail and even prevent children from completing their education within the nominal time if they do not have their individual case considered regarding the right to graduate.

Our recommendations:

- Ensure that children have the right to freedom of association through 20 days of political and organisational work that is considered valid absence
- Ensure that children and their guardians can use self-certification in the event of absence due to illness in school
- Develop an alternative to the absence limit, with consultation and involvement of children and young people in the process



4.3 Health

School health service

The purpose of the school health service is to promote pupils' health, well-being and learning, as well as contribute to coping with everyday challenges and increased health literacy. There are major differences in the services children receive through the school health service. In some schools, the service is available with qualified personnel every day and offers mental health care from a psychologist. In other places, a public health nurse is present once a week or less. Some children talk about a service where they have inadequate access to help and guidance or mental health service and that the school health service does not have the capacity or competence to handle the challenges the children face. The result of children's bad experiences may be that the school health service is less used. Only 32% state that they have visited a public health nurse at school.⁸⁹

Our recommendations:

- Ensure that the school health service has low-threshold mental health services in all schools

Sexuality education

Sexuality education is a widely criticised subject in school. Many pupils believe that their right to sufficient and good information about sexual and reproductive rights is not met through education today.⁹⁰ 7 out of 10 pupils want more sexuality education than they receive, and there are especially many girls who wishes education that involves topics such as boundaries.⁹¹ Interest groups also express concern that children with disabilities and other minority groups receive even less relevant sexuality education than the rest of the pupils.

Our recommendations:

- Ensure that ability, gender and sexual diversity is compulsory parts of sexuality education in primary and lower secondary school
- Make sure to standardise sexuality education, and expand it to all grades
- Ensure that the school health service or other competent professionals give all sexuality education
- Concretize the curriculum on sexual and reproductive health

89 [NOVA, Ungdata - national results, 2022](#)

90 [Sex og samfunn, Sexuality Education in School, 2022](#)

91 [Sex og samfunn, What is included in today's sexuality education, 2022](#)

4.4 Reviews and assessments

Assessments should aim for pupils to develop based on feedback from their teachers. Today, assessments create a lot of stress, pressure, and can lead to unfair outcomes. It is largely a matter of chance how pupils are assessed both during the school year and the final exams and grades they receive in a certain subject.

Our recommendations:

- Improve the current arrangement with final exams
- Implement and evaluate other forms of assessment than final exams
- Cap the number of tests and assessments a pupil can have each week
- Ensure that pupils in lower and upper secondary school receive a more comprehensive assessment in all subjects, which consists of both numerical grades, oral and written feedback



4.5 Pupil participation

Children's influence over their own school life is a prerequisite for school democracy and for conscious, motivated pupils. Pupils in Norwegian schools have the right to participate in decisions that affect their own learning. In August 2024, it was stipulated in the Education Act that pupils have the right to participate in everything that concerns them and have the right to express their opinions freely.⁹² Even though pupil participation is now enshrined in law, there is still a way to go for children to be guaranteed an opportunity for a real and meaningful participation.

Our recommendations:

- Ensure that school leaders are well acquainted with the principles of real and meaningful participation
- Ensure that all pupils have at least one hour of class council each week
- Ensure that all schools have a well-functioning school council with real power and influence over their school
- Ensure that all school councils have an adult school council contact with time to facilitate good participation
- Mandatory class trip with a focus on democracy and history



4.6 Bullying

In recent years, there has been a large increase in the number of pupils who are being bullied at school. In 5th grade 15.5% of children report being subjects to bullying, but the proportion decreases somewhat in lower and upper secondary school.⁹³ The responses include bullying from other pupils at school, adults at the school and digital bullying. The statistics show a worrying development, and we are concerned that far too many children experience school life as unsafe because of bullying.

Our recommendations:

- Low-threshold whistleblowing mechanism for bullying in all municipalities
- Prepare an action plan against bullying



5.

Climate

One of the biggest crises in the world is the climate crisis. It is impossible to secure children's rights if there is no planet to live on. Children know that the climate choices the state makes can affect them on many levels. Children and young people today will grow up and live the longest with climate change. Norway is a country with many natural resources that we do not manage well enough. It is important that adults ensure that natural resources are extracted in a sustainable way in line with what is in the best interests of children.

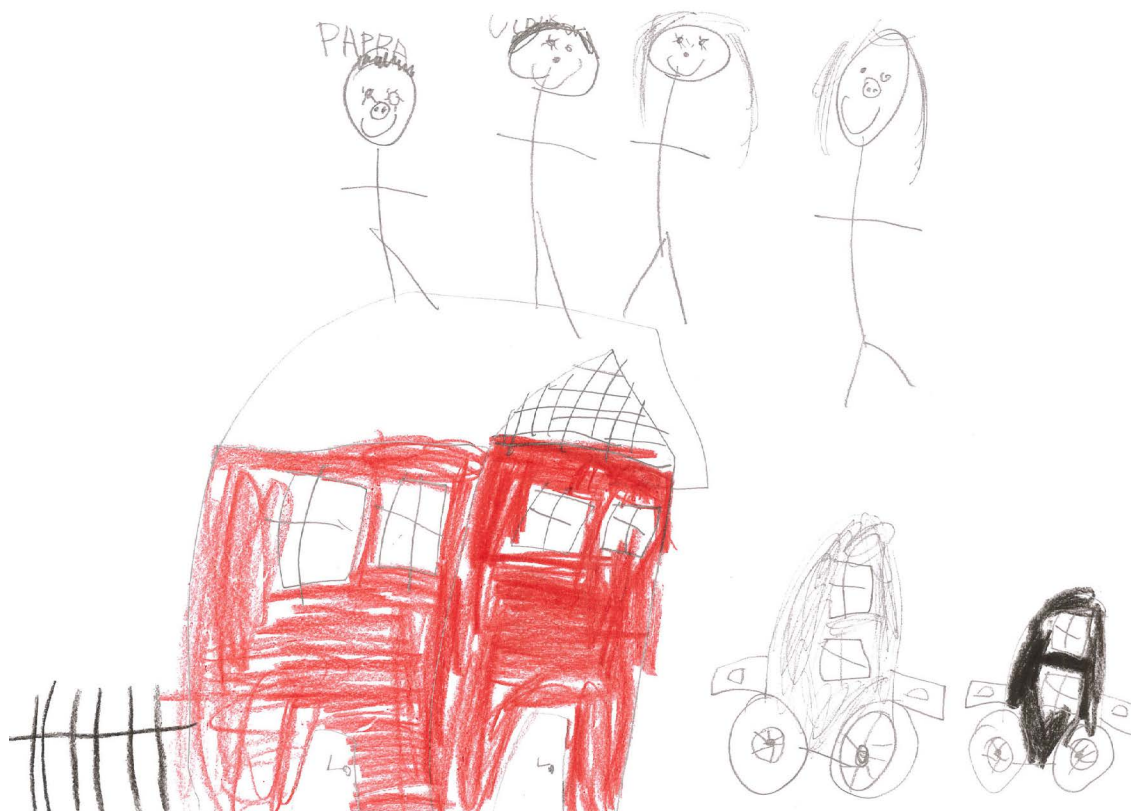


5.1 Transport

Walking, cycling or taking public transport is the climate change measure that most children and young people say they are implementing, and using more green, electric transport is often mentioned when children discuss measures that will reduce emissions.⁹⁴ Children have less opportunity to decide over their families and their own journeys by car, plane, etc., but many children travel by public transport to school and/or leisure activities. Children know very well what constitutes sufficient public transport solutions that are climate friendly. It is important that children and young people are allowed to participate in the planning of public transport services where they live, and that public transport becomes the cheapest and easiest option both in everyday life and holidays.

Our recommendations:

- Ensure all vessels start running on electricity or alternative fuels
- Lower the costs of bus, train and other means of public transport
- Increase the financial burden on the use of petrol and airplane travels



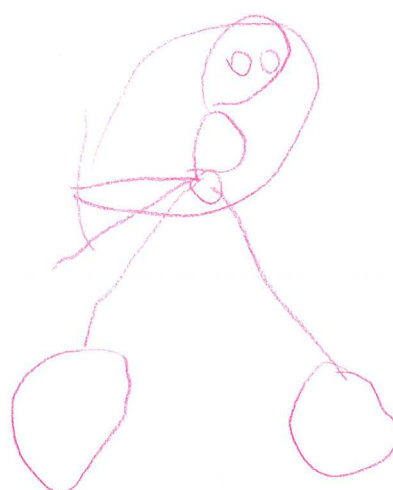
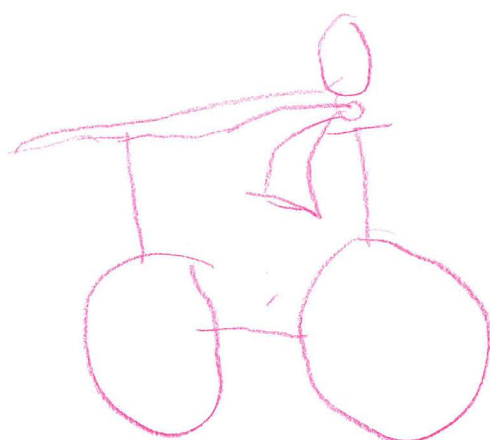
5.2 Knowledge and adaptation

In Norway many people are well informed about climate change, but sometimes children are exposed to a lot of information that can seem dangerous and frightening. It seems that most children are aware of climate change, but that they are not well enough prepared for the changes that will come, and how best to adapt to them. This came to light during the workshop. The children who participated were concerned that we are not well enough equipped to deal with extreme weather changes, and several children believe that they do not learn enough at school about climate adaptation.⁹⁵

Many children in Norway are more worried about children in other countries than about their own future concerning climate change.⁹⁶ This is due to observations and experiences the children themselves make of other parts of the world being hit harder by drought, heat and extreme weather than in Northern Europe. During the workshop, several participants said that they feel a responsibility to reduce emissions because they do not want children to suffer in other countries. Some were also concerned that Norway should prepare and be equipped to receive more climate change refugees in the future.

Our recommendations:

- Strengthen education about relevant climate change adaptation for children in Norway
- Develop realistic and concrete plans for climate change adaptation throughout the country
- Plan for the integration of climate change refugees
- Strengthen education about nature conservation



95 [Miljøagentene, Children's Climate and Environment Report, 2023](#)

96 [Miljøagentene, Children's Climate and Environment Report, 2023](#)

5.3 Participation

“ We want to know that we can live safely in the future. What the adults decide now will affect us later.⁹⁷ ”

Climate and environment are issues that largely affect children. Children are the ones who will live the longest with climate change, and therefore it is important to ensure their right to be heard also in the present. Many children have expressed frustration, dissatisfaction or hopelessness related to a lack of influence over climate policy. Only 18% of children feel that they are heard on issues related to climate and the environment, and only 12% feel that they can influence politicians in this matter.⁹⁸ There are arenas for being heard, e.g. by participating in hearings and input meetings, but the views children express rarely holds weight in decision making. The workshop participants talked about their own experiences of being involved in local discussions where they have worked actively to be heard. When decisions are to be made, the child's voice is not part of the decision. Children in Norway largely experience that their commitment to the climate crisis, nature and the environment is not taken seriously.⁹⁹

Our recommendations:

- Strengthen education about relevant climate change adaptation for children in Norway
- Develop realistic and concrete plans for climate change adaptation throughout the country
- Plan for the integration of climate change refugees
- Strengthen education about nature conservation



97 Workshop participant, May 2024

98 [Miljøagentene, Children's Climate and Environment Report, 2023](#)

99 [Miljøagentene, Children's Climate and Environment Report, 2023](#)

5.4 Health

Climate change may affect children's health in the form of heat stress, increased chemical pollution, air pollution and deteriorating air quality, changing disease patterns, poorer food safety and drinking water quality. This can lead to an increase in climate-sensitive infections, respiratory infections, asthma and allergies, increased stress, behavioural problems, poorer mental health and cognitive functioning, as well as reduced psychosocial health and quality of life.¹⁰⁰

During the Children's Working Group's workshop, participants were asked how they and their friends are affected by climate and environmental changes today. Some mentioned that the changes may contribute to the worsening of asthma, as well as an increase in pandemics and disease outbreaks. They expressed concern about how the pandemic had a severe impact on children and young people's mental health, and fear and anxiety about climate change were also mentioned as an important topic that affects children's mental health. It is well documented that children are concerned about climate change.¹⁰¹

Our recommendations:

- Reducing emissions and air pollution in urban environments
- Strengthening mental health care
- Strengthen research on climate-related mental health challenges



100 [NIPH, Public Health Report - Climate Change and Health, 2022](#)

101 [Miljøagentene, Children's Climate and Environment Report, 2023](#) & [Unicef, Children feel fear and anger, 2021](#)

5.5 Nature and environment

“ Wind and hydropower are renewable energy, and I think we should invest more in that, but then you also have to think about where they will be built. It [ruins] the nature.¹⁰² ”

Plastic waste

Plastic in the ocean is one of the major challenges of our time. The plastic that ends up in the sea can harm the animals that live there, and the plastic that we might believe decomposes, is instead torn up into microplastics. Calculations show that if we continue littering, there will be more plastic than fish in the sea by 2050.¹⁰³ The Children’s Working Group finds that littering, plastic in the sea, and safeguarding nature arise great engagement among children. In a report from Miljøagentene 71% of children say that they are worried about plastic littering in nature, and 85% think that it is important to stop littering and pollution of nature. Far more than half of children in Norway are concerned about the extinction of animal species and plant life, and believe it is important to prevent this.¹⁰⁴

“ We are good at [exploiting nature]. People are trying to use land, woods and nature to create climate friendly solutions, but it also destroys nature. Money is often prioritised higher than nature and the environment.¹⁰⁵ ”

Our recommendations:

- Ban more types of single-use plastics
- Facilitate for production of more goods by degradable materials
- Ensure that the ban on littering nature is followed
- Provide more clean-up, for example with boats that collects plastics
- Ensure easier access to environmentally friendly goods
- Introduce a food waste law
- Facilitate for more second-hand shops
- Provide more places where you can deliver damaged clothes for repair

102 Workshop participant, May 2024

103 [World Economic Forum, The new plastics economy, 2016](#)

104 [Miljøagentene, Children’s Climate and Environment Report, 2023](#)

105 Workshop participant, May 2024

5.6 Petroleum



*Norway is trying, they are just not trying hard enough.*¹⁰⁶



One of the largest sources of emissions from Norway is the petroleum industry. Norway is responsible for large greenhouse gas emissions both by producing oil and by exporting and using the petroleum worldwide. It is important that Norway does everything we can to help solve the climate crisis. Stopping or phasing out the petroleum industry is a much-discussed measure. Many believe that this is one of the most important things Norway can do to keep emissions down.



*If Norway continues with emissions, we will not reach the goals for a long time. We're nowhere near.*¹⁰⁷



During the Children's Working Group's workshop questions were asked whether Norway is investing enough in renewable energy. Some children gave examples such as public buildings being covered by solar panels or that a municipality invested in companies that work with renewable energy sources. At the same time, several participants expressed that they wished that Norway did more to support research on carbon capture and storage, wind and hydropower. Some participants expressed frustration over Norway's attempts to invest in green renewable energy projects and thought it was unsuccessful because there is a lack of discussion about consequences and other considerations. Many children feel that Norway is trying to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but that the few measures are not sufficient. It seems that Norway is trying, but that the state does not have the will to sacrifice enough to achieve the international goals and agreements.

Our recommendations:

- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions in line with international agreements
- Phasing out petroleum industry at a pace that meets the Paris Agreement
- Invest in green renewable energy
- Ban dumping of mine waste in fjords and other vital natural habitats

106 Workshop participant, May 2024

107 Workshop participant, May 2024

5.7 Indigenous people

Sami children's fundamental right to live in accordance with their culture has faced increasing threats from expanding industrial activities, including wind power and mining. This has created uncertainty about the preservation of traditional Sami industries such as reindeer herding and fishing, which creates uncertainty about the future of Sami children and their culture. At Fosen, a major issue about windmills has occupied the public debate.¹⁰⁸ Consideration of cultural heritage and the reindeer herders' livelihoods has been challenged in the work to obtain more renewable energy generated by wind. In the Children's Working Group's workshop several views emerged. Some felt that it was difficult to do anything about the situation as it is now, and that the damage has already been done. They believe that it is difficult to reverse the intervention that has been made in nature, and that wind power should be prioritized to contribute to green energy. Others pointed out that it is good that the Sami people in Fosen are being compensated for losses. Several participants pointed out that reindeer herding at Fosen is an important part of the culture and history of the Sami who live there, and the windmills can ruin the ways of life for the Sami.

“ You have to listen to those with less power, you can't just go for it. ¹⁰⁹ ”

Another issue that has also threatened Sami children's right to live in harmony with their culture is the permit for the mining project in Repparfjorden, which has received both discharge and operating permits from the government in 2019.¹¹⁰ In 2016, the Sámi Parliament decided not to support this mining project due to the overall negative consequences for fishing, reindeer herding, the environment and Sámi culture and society.¹¹¹ A report showed that the reindeer herders in the area may be forced to halve the number of reindeer as a result of the plans for the mining project.¹¹² In 2021, the building permit was revoked by the County Governor. Although the project has not been implemented, it shows how fragile children's right to Sami cultural expression is.

Our recommendations:

- Ensure that Sami children's right to live in harmony with their culture is safeguarded in all cases where Sami land is affected by interventions
- Protection of wild reindeer areas
- Protection of Sámi areas against further encroachment from industry and development, to secure the future of traditional Sámi industries

108 [NRK, This is the Fosen case, 2023](#)

109 Workshop participant, May 2024

110 [NRK, Europe screams for minerals from Sápmi, 2024](#)

111 [Natur og Ungdom, Why is mining in Repparfjord an important environmental issue?, retrieved 1.10.24](#)

112 [Protect Sápmi, analysis of the impact on reindeer herding of planned mining in Nussir and Ulveryggen in Kvalsund municipality, 2020](#)

Part 3

Other Topics and Remarks

This part of the report consists of topics and recommendations that are not covered by the five main areas in part 2. In this section, you can read about knowledge about children's rights, for example you can see the results of a separate survey we have conducted of kindergarten children's knowledge of children's rights. You can also read more about what the Children's Working Group finds objectionable when it comes to the conditions for the reporting work, and what recommendations we have for Norway and the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child to strengthen children's right to be heard.



3.1 Knowledge about children's rights

To demand fulfilment of their own rights, children are completely dependent on being aware of what kind of rights we have. The Children's Working Group has tried to find information about what children really know about their own rights. Unfortunately, we have not found any publications, research or other information that tells us anything about this. We do not currently know how many children in Norway are aware of children's rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. We also do not know if children have information about what they can do when their rights are violated. We would have liked to do a larger survey in schools with a wide outreach to children in Norway and find out more about this subject. Unfortunately, we have not had the resources to carry out our own survey with older children and had to limit ourselves to a survey done with younger children in kindergartens.

Our recommendations:

- Funding continuous assessments about the position of the Convention on the Rights of the Child among children in Norway
- Support research on children's understanding of their rights

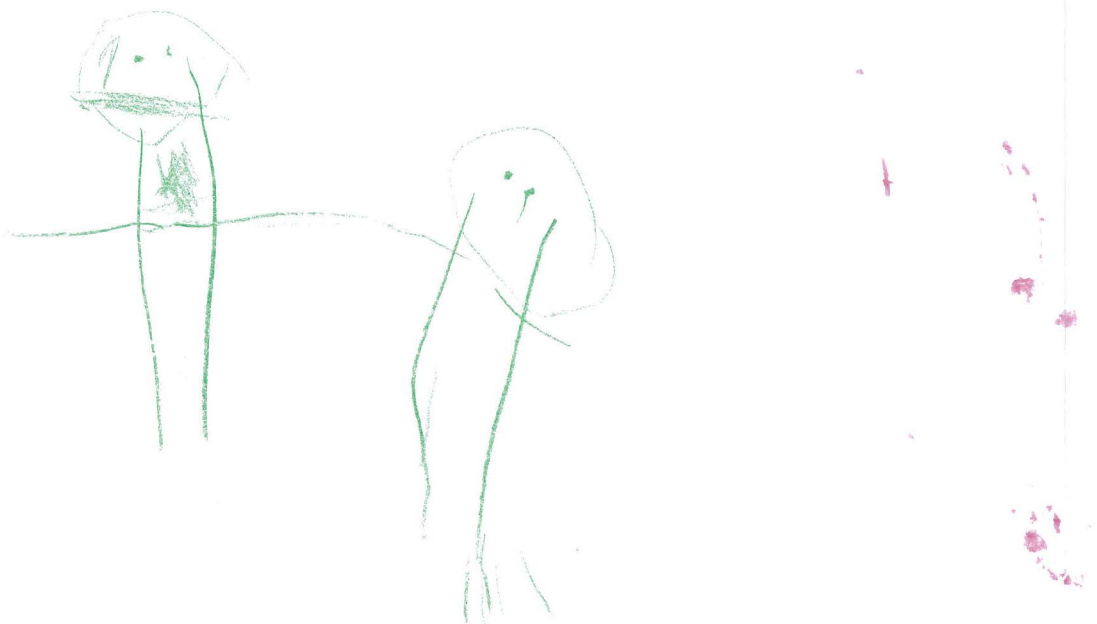


3.2 Kindergarten children about children's rights

As we have already mentioned in the text above, we know little about what children know about their own rights. When we were given an extended deadline to submit this report, the Children's Working Group decided that we wanted to hear from younger children too. The original plan was to limit consultations to children from 12-18 due to practical considerations, but with the extended deadline we wanted to hear from the younger children as well. We decided to conduct a short survey to find out what children of kindergarten age really know about children's rights, and what they see as important for their well-being. This survey was also conducted in the previous Child Report from 2017, and we used the same questionnaire and structure.

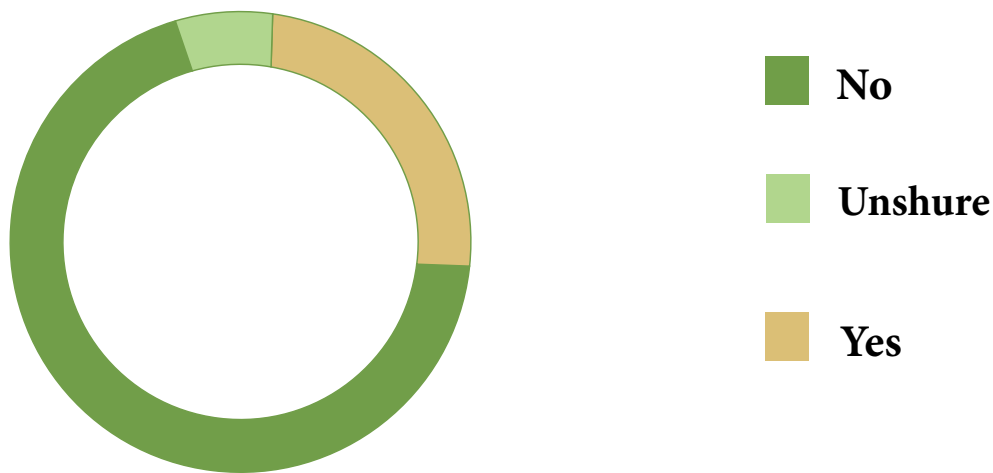
The kindergartens that participated were recruited through the Kanvas foundation. The children were aged 4-5 years. The surveys were carried out by the staff at the kindergartens so that the children would feel safe and could talk freely. The answers we received were anonymous and written down by kindergarten staff. The drawings you find in this report are answers given by the kindergarten children in the survey.

A total of 88 children shared their opinion by participating in the survey, and these were divided into 9 kindergartens from the counties of Akershus, Oslo, Vestland and Trøndelag.



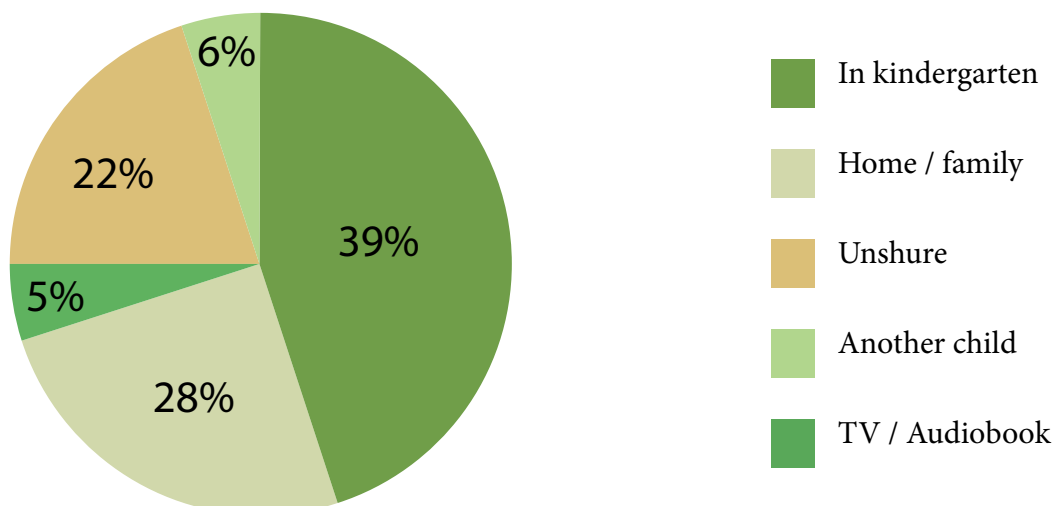
Has anyone told you about children's rights?

The first question the children were asked was whether anyone had told them about children's rights. Answers were given in the categories yes/no/don't know. 19.3% answered that they had heard about children's rights before. 75% answered that they had not heard of children's rights. 5.7% answered that they did not remember, did not want to answer or were unsure.



If yes; Where and by whom?

If the participants answered that they had heard about children's rights, they were asked both where and by whom they had heard it from. The vast majority answered that they had heard about children's rights in kindergarten (39%) or at home from parents (28%). 22% of those who had heard about children's rights did not know or remember where they had heard about children's rights before. 6% had heard about children's rights from another child, and 5% had listened to an audiobook or TV.



What is important for children to have a good life?

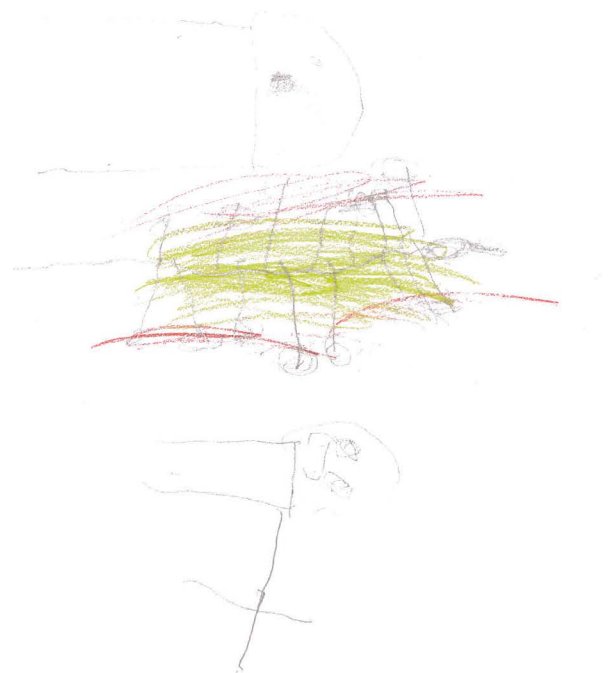
The children were also asked if they could name a maximum of three things they think are important for children to have a good life. It was not a requirement that they had to name three, and some mentioned fewer. In total, we received 250 responses from 88 children about what children need to have a good life.

The children were given the opportunity to respond both with drawings and with words directly to the kindergarten staff, who wrote the oral answers. The children answered in their own words, and afterwards we have categorised the answers, to see what was mentioned the most. The following table provides an overview of each main category, as well as a percentage that shows how often the category was mentioned. In the row under the main categories, you will find a specification where we have tried to write down all the variations and differences in wording from the children. The things that came up most times from kindergarten children when asked what is important for children to have a good life were play, no violence, having food and water, being kind, and to have safe adults around them. 19% mentioned play as one of the most important things for children to have a good life.



What is important for children to have a good life?	Percentage
To play To play, have toys, play outside, play nice with each other, play when you want to, play with water, have someone to play with, play family, play and enjoy yourself outside, play with snow, that others can join in the game, play with friends, someone to play with, to have fish to play with, that you get to play and make castles in a sandbox	19,2 %
No hitting or violence Don't hit each other, don't be beaten, learn not to hit or push, that adults don't hit children, that no one hits. When they are angry, they may punch, not kick, not push, not pinch	11,2 %
Food and water Food and drink, water, that you get a slice of bread, eat a lot, vegetables, eat healthy things and that you get apples	9,6 %
Being kind Be kind, be honest, be kind to each other, take care of each other, be nice, help each other, that adults help children, to give each other hugs, that you are not negative	7,2 %
Safe adults Be safe with adults, someone who can look after us, that the adults look after the children, that the adults make sure that the children are well, that we are safe, that adults are kind to children, that you have an adult you can talk to, that you can tell an adult if you are beaten, that you get help if you are in pain, that adults are not too strict	7,2 %
Be outside Be outside, look at the sky together	2,0 %
Sweets and candy Candy, eating chocolate, getting cake, candy, ice cream and biscuits	2,0 %
Drawing Drawing, writing, drawing a drawing for someone	1,6 %
Calmness That you can be calm, play a quiet game, that you feel calm and nice in your body, that you do not make noise and disturb	1,6 %
Have a place to live Having a house, place to live	1,6 %
Gifts Gifts, having a birthday, getting clothes	1,2 %
Other Going to school, going to kindergarten, going on holiday, being in the heat, sleeping when you want, being read to, brushing your teeth	3,2 %

Living To live, to feel good, that you are alive, that you do not get sick, that you do not die, do not have a fever, that children get help when they are sick, life is important	7,2 %
Getting help and being comforted To get help, to be comforted, to get comfort when you are sad/cry or hurt/sad, to get or give help, that children get help from the adults, that you get help from others	6,4 %
Having fun To have fun, that you can do something fun that you like (for example, cycling, playing "har'n", fishing)	5,6 %
Friends Friends, having friends, having a best friend	6,0 %
Staying safe That no one takes us, not taken by monsters, that there is no war, that we do not get lost in the forest	4,4 %
Have a family Family, parents, mom and dad, that they have mom, dad and family, cuddles from mom and my dog	2,8 %



What is most important for you to have a good life?

The last question we asked the kindergarten children was what is most important for them to have a good life. We have chosen to make a table with the answers we have managed to categorise, and which were mentioned the most times. The remaining answers were difficult to find categories for, and therefore they are rather collected as individual answers in a list. To this question, we received 94 responses among 88 participants, which means that some children mentioned more than one thing.

What is important for you to have a good life?	Percentage
To play That I get to play, that I get to play with others, play with my friend, play with my friends, play with friends and have fun, I want to play, play with the others in kindergarten, and sometimes the adults	22,3 %
To draw or bead To draw / bead / I like to draw and bead	5,3 %
To be looked after That mom and dad are watching, that parents are looking after us, that the adults are looking out for me	4,2 %
Food and drink that I get food and drink	4,2 %
Being kind That everyone is kind to each other, that you are not mean, that others are kind to me	3,1 %
Family Be with my family	3,1 %



The list of responses below are responses from kindergarten children that we found challenging to put in the same category. The answers can in themselves be good advice on what is important to prioritise for kindergarten children to thrive.

What is important for you to have a good life?

PLAY FOOTBALL

TO SWING

HAVE FUN

JUMP IN PUDDLES

DO SOMETHING INTERESTING

BEING WITH FRIENDS

PLAYING WITH FRIENDS

JOKING

JUMPING ON TRAMPOLINE

WHEN I GET ICECREAM OR CHOCOLATE

FISHING

BEING WITH MY BIG BROTHER

TRANSFORMERS

WHEN I'M HAPPY. I LIKE THE OCEAN

HOLDING HANDS

UNICORNS

PARTIES MAKE US HAPPY

MOMMY

DIGGING IN THE SANDBOX

DON'T DIE

PLAYING WITH DAD

BRUSHING TEETH AND EATING

CELEBRATING MY BIRTHDAY, MOM AND DAD SINGING

PILLOW FIGHT

**NOT BEING
TOO MUCH ON
MY OWN**

**WHEN IM
EATING
BANANA**

**WHEN IM GOING
TO THE DENTIST**

**WHEN SOMEONE
SAYS NICE THINGS
TO ME**

**HAVE TOYS
AND A TEDDY
AT NIGHT**

**NOT TODAY.
I AM HAPPY
TOMORROW**

**WHEN IT'S MY BIRTHDAY,
MY HEART IS BEATING.
THE HOUSE SHOULD NOT
FALL DOWN ON KIDS**

**WHEN I HAVE
SOMEONE TO
PLAY WITH**

**WHEN I CAN
BE INSIDE
MY HOUSE**

**CLIMBING
TREES**

**WHEN I
GET
PRIME**

HIKING

**BATHING
AND DRIVING
A BOAT**

**SOMEONE
SAYING NICE
THINGS**

**GOING TO MARS
THAT WOULD
BE COOL**

**PLAYING WITH
THE BIG TRUCK
IN KINDERGARTEN**

**SOMEONE
WATCHING
OVER ME**

**TO NOT DIE AND
NOT GETTING
PUSHED IN THE
OCEANW**

**PLAYING GAMES
WITH MOMMY**

**THAT OTHERS
ARE OKAY**

**WHEN IT'S
CALM AND NICE**

**WHEN IM
HAPPY**

**BEING IN
THE SUN**

Optional Protocol 3 on the Convention on the Rights of the Child – a communications procedure

The Convention on the Rights of the Child and the three optional protocols are intended to ensure that countries that have ratified the Convention give all children the rights they are entitled to. One purpose of the third optional protocol (OP3 CRC) is to ensure that children can try their rights further from the national courts. This is important in cases where the state commits child rights violations. Section 104 of the Norwegian Constitution and Article 3 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child state that the best interests of the child shall be taken into account as a fundamental consideration in cases that affect children, not only in cases concerning the individual child, but also as a collective right.

In 2013, an analysis was made of the advantages and disadvantages of possible Norwegian accession to the OP3 CRC.¹¹³ The Norwegian Parliament took a position on the matter in 2017, but at that time in a general assessment of several optional protocols to various conventions.¹¹⁴ The most recent consideration of the matter took place in 2022,¹¹⁵ but all proposals for ratification have been voted against. One of the strongest objections to joining the OP3 CRC is that it restricts the state's room for manoeuvre.¹¹⁶ Both the Ombudsperson for Children and civil society have criticised the lack of ratification ever since the protocol came into force. It is very disappointing that Norway does not guarantee children procedural rights related to the fulfilment of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Our recommendation:

- To ratify the third Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child

113 [Elgesem, Assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of possible Norwegian accession to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child's Additional Protocol on the Individual Right of Appeal, 2013](#)

114 [The Norwegian Parliament, Meld. St. 39 \(2015-2016\), Innst. 161 S \(2016-2017\), retrieved 1.10.24](#)

115 [The Norwegian Parliament, Document 8:56 S \(2021-2022\), st. 179 S \(2021-2022\), retrieved 1.10.24](#)

116 [Sæther, Norway's failure to ratify the Third Additional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 2021](#)

Child Rights Defenders reporting on the Convention on the Rights of the Child

We have faced many challenges in the work on the Children's Report. You can read about them in Part 1 of this report. However, we will use some time to make comments and suggestions for improvements so that children have a real opportunity to report on the state of children's rights.

Lack of follow-up from the state

In the reporting process, we have experienced a lack of communication from the state. On several occasions we have tried to get answers from the Ministry of Children and Families about timelines, deadlines or the Norwegian state's plans for child participation in the reporting procedure. With a very short deadline, the Forum for the Convention on the Rights of the Child was informed that it was possible to apply for funding for supplementary reports from civil society. A final agreement was put in place in February/March 2024. Although the Ministry has supported parts of the work financially, several of the civil society organisations have had to bear large parts of the costs themselves to be able to deliver the shadow reports. This also applies to the Children's Report. We believe that there has been a great deal of ambiguity about Norway's reporting, and communication with the ministry has been inadequate. We wish the work to be a more continuous and comprehensive process and encourage the Ministry to plan for clearer communication and plans leading up to the next reporting. This is particularly important if Norway continue with a simplified reporting procedure that requires several rounds of input at an earlier stage than before.

Our recommendations:

- Financial support for civil society's supplementary reports, including child participation, should be clarified two years before the reporting takes place
- Support civil society in disseminating the results of the reporting procedure to children

The Committee on the Rights of the Child's simplified reporting procedure

This is the first time Norway participates in a simplified reporting procedure. Simplifying a process will often have a positive effect and lead to more children understanding and having the opportunity to give input. In this process, we have experienced the opposite. There have been many questions and few answers, ambiguity, and not least difficult to understand the deadlines. One weakness of the simplified procedure is that there is more than one deadline which means the topics to be addressed when the state responds to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child are predetermined through the list of issues. There are positive sides by this arrangement, such as the possibility to go into more detail than if one is to cover all the areas of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. What is challenging, however, is that providing input to the list of issues requires that the participation with children is already underway at this stage. Ideally, work on a Children's Report should start before the deadline for submitting input to the list of issues. In our case children were not involved before the list of issues was published. This can contribute to restricting children's ability to raise topics and the information they find important. The children involved in this report chose to focus on what was important to the group, and the workshop participants. The result is a report about important topics but does not comment on the state report and is not structured in the same way as the list of issues.

Another weakness of the simplified procedure is the time limits. Once the state has submitted its report, there are only 3 months to submit written responses. In Norway's case the original plan was that this period would be at the same time as 3-4 weeks collective summer vacation. This means about 2 months to read and analyse the state's report, hear what children think about these answers, and then write a supplementary report. This is not possible to implement if child participation is to be real and meaningful.

A third weakness of the simplified procedure is what happens if the state does not submit within the deadline. In our case, we were not notified of the extended deadline until the end of June. Had the deadline been communicated earlier, it would have saved both the civil society organisations and the Children's Working Group a lot of unnecessary extra work and concerns. We hope that this feedback can help make the simplified reporting procedure easier for other children who want to have their say. We hope that the Committee on the Rights of the Child will ensure that children participating in the reporting can evaluate the process and provide input on how to make better arrangements for children when reporting on the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

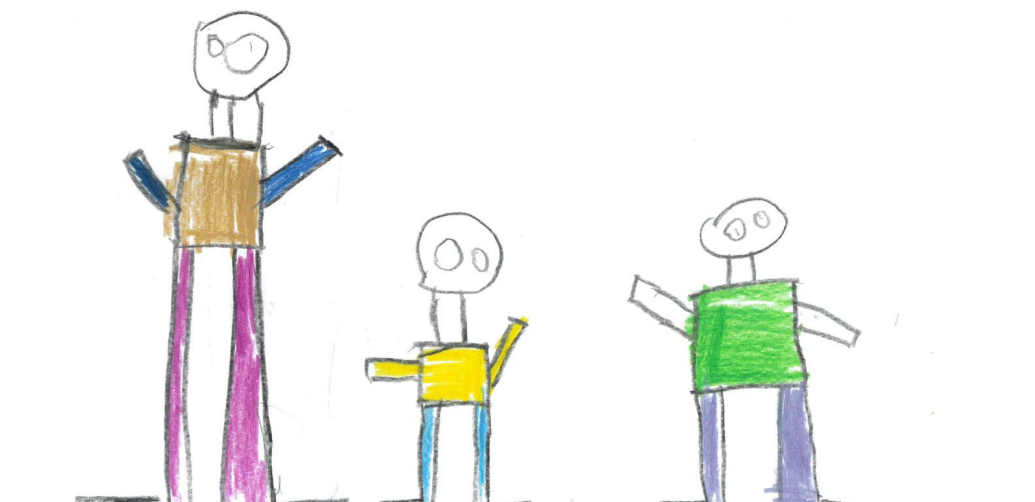
Conclusion

Dear reader,

Thank you for taking the time to read our report and hear what children in Norway have to say about their rights. You may not agree with everything, nor do you have to. Maybe you think we have forgotten something important or perhaps not included all the details of a matter that is important to you. However, we hope that you will find something you are passionate about in this report.

Perhaps you are passionate about how we can ensure all children the access to a low-threshold mental health service, or that teachers need a better competence on dealing with racism? Do you think it is important that children are allowed to participate in society? Or is it perhaps a matter close to your heart that all children should have the right to free meals at school? All of these are examples of topics and recommendations we have included in the report!

The Children's Working Group have spent a lot of time monitoring the status of children's rights in Norway. We encourage both children and adults who read this report to keep an eye on Norway's examination and the final comments from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. We also hope that you as a reader continue to take violations of children's rights personally!



Thanks!

Many thanks to all the kindergartens who contributed with illustrations and answers to the survey we conducted:

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Mental Helse Ungdom*

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