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1 Introduction

This report on the state of literacy in Norway is one of a series produced in 2015 and 2016 by ELINET, the European Literacy Policy Network. ELINET was founded in February 2014 and has 78 partner organisations in 28 European countries. ELINET aims to improve literacy policies in its member countries in order to reduce the number of children, young people and adults with low literacy skills. One major tool to achieve this aim is to produce a set of reliable, up-to-date and comprehensive reports on the state of literacy in each country where ELINET has one or more partners, and to provide guidance towards improving literacy policies in those countries. The reports are based (wherever possible) on available, internationally comparable performance data, as well as reliable national data provided (and translated) by our partners.

ELINET continues the work of the European Union High Level Group of Experts on Literacy (HLG) which was established by the European Commission in January 2011 and reported in September 2012. All country reports produced by ELINET use a common theoretical framework which is described here: “ELINET Country Reports – Frame of Reference”.

The Country Reports are organised around the three recommendations of the HLG’s literacy report:

- Creating a literate environment
- Improving the quality of teaching
- Increasing participation, inclusion (and equity).

Within its two-year funding period ELINET has completed Literacy Country Reports for all 30 ELINET member countries. In most cases we published separate Long Reports for specific age groups (Children / Adolescents and Adults), in some cases comprehensive reports covering all age groups. Additionally, for all 30 countries, we published Short Reports covering all age groups, containing the summary of performance data and policy messages of the Long Reports. These reports are accompanied by a collection of good practice examples which cover all age groups and policy areas as well. These examples refer to the European Framework of Good Practice in Raising Literacy Levels; both are to be found in the section “Good Practice”.

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1 For more information about the network and its activities see: www.eli-net.eu.
2 In the following, the final report of the EU High Level Group of Experts on Literacy is referenced as “HLG report”.
   This report can be downloaded under the following link: http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/school/doc/literacy-report_en.pdf
3 See: http://www.eli-net.eu/research/country-reports/.
4 “Equity” was added by ELINET.
2 General Information about the Norwegian Education System

In Norway, all children and young persons have the right to 13 years of schooling. Compulsory education lasts for 10 years. As shown in Figure 1 below, the educational system includes early education (0-6 years), which comprises ante-preschool (0-3 years) and preschool education (3–6 years). Children in Norway usually enter school at the age of six. The primary school phase extends through grade 7, and lower secondary phase goes through grades 8, 9, 10 (13-16 years). Upper secondary education extends to grades 11-13 (16-19 years) (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2007). All young people have a legal right to three years of upper secondary education (five years for students with special needs). Although upper secondary education is optional, the government has recently emphasised that all students should complete upper-secondary schooling (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2012).

The Education Act of 1998, last amended in 2013, states that education shall be adapted to the abilities and aptitudes of the individual pupil, apprentice and training candidate (Norwegian Government, 2013). Inclusive education is a fundamental principle in Norwegian primary and secondary education. It means that all children and young people should be met with trust and respect at school, regardless of whether they have a disability, and irrespective of their gender, social background, ethnic, religious or linguistic affiliation, sexual orientation or gender identity, etc. For a school to be inclusive, it must organise and adapt the tuition to all pupils. Each and every pupil should get the opportunity to learn in a way that is adapted to their talents and abilities.

Based on White Papers 54 (1989-1990) and 35 (1990-1991), the Norwegian Parliament in 1991 decided the Government would no longer be responsible for running special schools. Existing schools were either shut down or changed into resource centres. The system of resource centres has been reorganised several times and is today known as Statped, a national service covering four regions, intended to secure users all over the country equal access to its services. Statped, which is managed by the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training – the executive agency for the Ministry of Education and Research – is active in six defined core areas: Acquired Brain Injury; Complex Learning Disabilities; Deaf-blindness / Dual Visual and Hearing Impairment; Hearing Impairment; Speech and Language Impairment; Visual Impairment.

The Norwegian law of Education states that ‘Education in school is to be adapted to the individual pupil’s abilities and capabilities. Pupils who do not or cannot achieve a satisfactory learning yield from ordinary teaching, have a right to special needs education.’ This means that Norwegian pupils are entitled to teaching as specially adapted as possible, and that this should take place in the local mainstream school. In many cases, schools and local authorities will need guidance and competence. Statped provides special teaching services at individual and system level in areas in which the country’s local authorities do not have sufficient competence.

Statped runs two national schools. These are the school for the deaf in Trondheim and the school for the deaf-blind in Oslo. These schools can offer part-time courses for pupils and for the parents and

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6 See: https://www.stortinget.no/no/Saker-og-publikasjoner/Saker/Sak/?p=5755.
teachers of deaf, blind and deaf-blind children and pupils needing alternative, supplementary communication. These courses supplement the ordinary, individually-adapted education that will take place at the school in the pupil’s own home community.

The government finances the activity of the municipalities and counties. The government supplies the funding, but the local authorities are responsible for making a budget distributing the money among the different activities (school, social service, roads, water etc.). Municipalities are school owners and are responsible for organising primary and lower secondary education (grades 1-10) and the counties (fylker) own the schools and are responsible for upper secondary education (grades 11-13). Municipalities and counties can organize classes for students with special needs as part of an ordinary school. These students will take part in the normal school activities (excursions, visits to museums, etc.) and can have part of their education with students from ordinary classes in suitable subjects.

Norway spends significant resources on providing special educational support and special needs education. It has long been a political goal to improve adapted tuition in schools. The aim is to improve learning outcomes for all pupils so that fewer of them require special needs education.

Figure 1: Structure of the Norway School System
3 Literacy Performance Data


Norway performed significantly below the EU average in PIRLS 2011 (507 vs 535 EU-average) and above the average in PISA 2012 (504 vs 489 EU average). While the performance in PIRLS slightly increased between 2001 and 2011, it remained nearly unchanged in PISA between 2000 and 2012.

In PIRLS, a high proportion of pupils (about 29%) can be considered as low-performing readers. This is more than the average across EU countries (20%). These students can read simple texts, retrieve explicit information, or make straightforward inferences, but they are not able to deal with longer or more complex texts, and are unable to interpret beyond what is explicitly stated in the text. The proportion of low-performing readers were even higher in 2000: it gradually and drastically decreased between 2000 and 2011 (from nearly 40% in 2001 to 29 % in 2011). In PISA 2012, the percentage of low-performing readers was somewhat lower than in European countries (16.2 vs 19.7%). The decrease of this proportion was much more limited than among 4th graders (from 17.5% to 16.2%). It should be underlined that the proportion of low performers among 15 year-old teenagers was much higher among boys than among girls (in 2012, 9.6 % among girls vs 22.5 % among boys).

Even if Norwegian grade 4 students show statistically significant improvements in PIRLS 2011, they still perform well below the EU average. Since the Scandinavian countries are very similar in languages, culture and educational systems, the analysis of results in PIRLS in these countries always has had a special focus on comparisons between Norway, Sweden and Denmark. Norwegian grade 4 students also lag behind grade 4 students in Sweden and Denmark. Obviously the low performance in PIRLS has caused concern in Norway, but not as much as one might have expected, and there is a simple reason for that.

The target group in PIRLS is grade 4. When Norway in 1997 lowered the age for starting in 1st grade to 6 years, the curriculum for the first year contained only preparatory activities and no formal education. As a result the Norwegian students in grade 4 had one year less formal education and were among the youngest students in PIRLS 2001. This also was the case in PIRLS 2006, and Norway was therefor allowed to include an additional separate sample of students for grade 5. By the time of PIRLS 2011 the curriculum had changed but progression is still very slow compared to other countries (no achievement goals before in grade 2) and the students are still among the youngest in PIRLS. Norway therefore also included a sample from grade 5 in PIRLS 2011.

In the main International report the results from the target group, grade 4, are reported, but in the Norwegian report both grade 4 and grade 5 are reported. In the Nordic countries it is also agreed that grade 5 is included when comparisons are made across the countries. In this way comparisons are more realistic. The Norwegian average in grade 5 in 2011 was 549 (grade 4: 507). As can be seen it makes a big difference if you discuss grade 4 or grade 5.

The Norwegian grad 4 – grade 5 confusion can also explain why Norwegian 4th graders in PIRLS perform poorly while the performance of 15-year-olds in PISA is much better – as opposed to most countries where the results in PIRLS are better than in PISA. The sample in PIRLS is grade based, and younger age and less formal education will have a strong impact on achievement in grade 4 (PIRLS).
The sample in PISA is age-based, so there are no comparison problems due to differences in age and a slow start will be much less noticeable at the end of 10 years of education (PISA).

The proportion of top-performing readers was low in PIRLS (2% vs 9% in EU) and on the contrary, higher than the EU average in PISA (10.2% vs 7% in EU).

The gap according to the pupils’ socioeconomic background was lower than the EU average both in PIRLS (59 vs 76 on average) and in PISA (68 vs 89 on average). However, the indices of socioeconomic background are not the same in PIRLS and PISA, so the comparison should be taken with caution.

In PISA 2009, the gap between native students and students with a migrant background was higher than in EU countries on average (52 vs 38 EU-average), which is almost equivalent to one and a half year of schooling. However, in PIRLS the mean score difference between those who always spoke the language of the test at home, and those who sometimes or never did so was lower than in EU countries (19 vs 26). In PISA, this gap according to the language at home was close to the EU average (58 vs 54).

In Norway, the gender gap (in favor of girls) was higher than the corresponding EU average differences both in PIRLS 2011 (14 vs 12 on average) and in PISA (47 vs 44 on average). The gender difference at grade 4 in Norway was higher in the previous cycles (19 points in 2006 and 21 in 2001, always above the EU average). In PISA, the stability of the national overall reading performance observed between 2000 and 2012 was observed among girls (-1 point) while at the European level they improved their score by 5 points. Boys’ performance showed a decrease of 7 points just close to what was observed at European level on average.

In conclusion, at grade 4, even if Norway increased its performance in reading overtime, it still performs well below the EU average. The proportion of low-performing readers has decreased but is still very high: nearly a third of its pupils score in that category, which is matter of concern. Moreover, the percentage of top performers is very low. Among 15 year-olds, the pattern of results is quite different: Norway performed above the EU mean across the three cycles of the study with a perfect stability. Boys’ performance showed a small decrease and they are much more numerous in the category of low-performing readers than girls. The spread of achievement (gap between low and top performing readers) is smaller in Norway than in EU on average at both levels. At both levels, the gap according to socioeconomic status is lower in Norway than in EU on average. These results seem to indicate that Norway is more equitable in its educational system than most of the European countries. However, the gap according to migration or language spoken at home was somewhat higher.

As far as adults are concerned, Norway performed somewhat above the EU in PIAAC (278 vs 271). It should be remembered that only 17 EU countries took part in PIAAC in 2012, so the comparison with other age groups should be taken with caution. The spread of achievement – namely the gap between top and bottom performers – was just a little lower in Norway than the EU-17-average (115 vs 117 on average). The proportion of adults performing at or below level 1 in Norway was 13%, less than the EU-17 average (16.4%).

Females performed somewhat less well than men (276 vs 280) and the gender gap in favor of males was somewhat higher in Norway (4 score points) than in EU on average (2 score points). In PIRLS and PISA, the gap gender in favor of girls was higher. The gap according to parents’ level of education was somewhat lower than in the EU countries on average (35 vs 41), reflecting the same trend as in PIRLS.
and PISA. The reverse was observed for the gap according to the language spoken at home: the gap between native and non-native speakers was larger than the EU-17-average (40 vs 28).

**Challenge:** Below average reading performance in Norway needs to be addressed. There is a need to raise standards across the board, with a view to reducing the proportion of low achievers, and raising the performance of higher achievers.
4 Key Literacy Policy Areas for Development (age-specific and across age-groups)

4.1 Creating a Literate Environment

4.1.1 Pre-Primary Years

Providing a supportive home environment: Compared to the European average, the number of pupils in Norway whose parents like reading is very high. The importance of parental attitudes to reading is shown by the fact that there is a significant difference in reading performance at grade 4 between children whose parents like to read (average achievement 563) and those who do not (average achievement 541). The availability of children’s books in the home is very high, yet 4% of students in Norway had 10 or fewer children’s books at home, compared with a European average of 12%. Concerning the number of books at home (regardless of whether they are children’s books or not) the mean score difference between those with 10 or fewer books and those with more than 200 (16% in Norway) was 62 points – somewhat lower than the EU-24 average of 81 points.

Parents engage often or at least sometimes in literacy related activities with their children. Considering the Early Literacy Activities before Beginning Primary School, the percentage of pupils in Norway whose parents engaged in literacy-related activities with them before the beginning of primary school is close to (but somewhat below) the European average, but is higher for singing songs, one of the nine early literacy activities investigated.

More family literacy programmes needed: Although there are some family literacy programmes provided by local authorities or private organisations, there is a need for programmes to raise awareness of all parents that literacy is a key to learning and life chances and that the basis for good literacy achievement is laid in early childhood.

4.1.2 Primary Children and Adolescents

Providing a literate environment in school: According to PIRLS 2011 40% of 4th graders in Norway were in classrooms without a library and the percentage of classrooms with more than 50 books available is relatively small (18%) compared to the EU-24 average of 32%. Furthermore, the percentage of children who can borrow books from the classroom library to take home (39%) is substantially lower than the EU-24 average (57%). These findings indicate that, despite the emphasis in the curriculum on reading for pleasure, the resources and infrastructure (at least in paper form) needed to support it in schools are not in place to the degree needed.

Supporting reading motivation, especially among boys and adolescents: Reading for pleasure has a major emphasis in the reading/language curriculum in Norway.

Strengthening the role of public libraries in reading promotion: In Norway, there is a strong general focus on the importance of reading and literacy development for children in the public domain and in the media. Public libraries are an important agent in reading promotion. As part of the national programme “Make space for reading 2003 - 2007” local libraries brought books to kindergartens and replaced them with new books every third month. The kindergartens used the books in their daily activities, informed the parents about the books and parents could borrow books to take home. The
programme was evaluated and suggestions for further initiatives were made, many of which have been implemented as part of national education policies, and strategies for public libraries. Most local libraries have one day a week where the focus is on children. Activities vary from reading of fairy tales, introduction to new books for the different age groups plays for/by children etc.

**Offering digital literacy learning opportunities at school:** A literate environment can also be created by incorporating digital devices into the school environment. According to teachers’ reports, 88% of students in Norway have a computer available for reading lessons, compared to the EU-average of 45%. Teachers report that at least monthly, 68% of students use instructional software to learn reading skills and strategies, look up information (79%), read stories or other texts (54%), and write stories or other texts (77%). These figures are well above the corresponding EU-24 averages (27%, 39%, 32% and 33% respectively) indicating that computers are used in very different ways in Norway than across the EU.

### 4.1.3 Adults

**Fostering literacy provision for adults:** Lifelong learning is an important principle of Norwegian education policy. Basic skills training and the validation of prior learning play a significant part in the country’s adult learning policies. The goal is to provide individuals with opportunities to develop their skills and widen their competences throughout the life course.

In Norway the term ‘basic skills’ is used, to include skills in reading, writing, oral communication, numeracy and digital literacy. Adult basic skills provision can be stand-alone; part of primary and secondary education for adults, including vocational education and training (VET); tailored to support job seekers and other adults receiving government benefits; tailored to support workers in their daily working tasks; tailored to support inmates with low basic skills to help them prepare for life outside prison. Most adult literacy provision is free of charge, and funded by national, regional or local authorities, depending on the type kind of course.

Adults with low basic skills have a statutory entitlement to literacy provision as it is described in the curricula from the first to tenth grades. Adults who are entitled to upper secondary education, including VET, also have the right to basic skills provision as part of their upper secondary education. Some adults self-identify their literacy needs, some are identified through their workplace, and some are identified by the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Service (NAV) or by other public services. Although there is no web-based programme that can function alone as an independent training in basic skills, Lesogskriv.no (for reading and writing) and Regnehjelpen.no (for numeracy) are web-based tools that have been developed to help adults improve their basic skills.

The Norwegian Government is developing a new and comprehensive policy for adults with low basic skills which will take into account the complex challenges this cohort faces. Through this work on a white paper (“Lifelong learning and social exclusion”, 2015) it is hoped that clarity will be achieved on where responsibility for adult education lies between the different ministries, agencies and levels of government.
4.2 Improving the Quality of Teaching

4.2.1 Pre-Primary Years

Providing free or affordable high quality preschool education for all children / investing more money in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC): The total public expenditure per child in pre-primary education as a percentage of GDP is 0.3%, which places Norway closer to the lower end among European countries for the total public expenditure per child on pre-primary education.

Raising the professional qualification level of staff in ECEC: The minimum required level to become a qualified teacher is Bachelor level (ISCED 5). Length of training is 3 years.

Improving early language and literacy screening and training: Many communities (kindergarten owners) and many kindergartens use a programme for assessing the development of skills related to language and social interaction. Based on the screening results from the programme the kindergarten can offer more focused stimulation and help to the children.

Children in centre-based ECEC settings receive language support. Norway seeks to employ staff from a migrant or minority background. These staff are involved in the teaching process to provide language support to migrant children and those from ethnic minorities to help them integrate in ECEC. Norway has encouraged ECEC settings to employ bilingual assistants and develop their skills in multicultural and bilingual education.

Introducing comprehensive literacy curricula in pre-primary schools: Norway has no preschool curriculum. There is however a National Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens. The plan is a framework for the work of supervisory authorities, owners, parents and staff, and provides guidelines for fundamental values, content and tasks for kindergarten. According to the Ministry of Education, all children should be provided with a rich and varied language environment at their kindergarten. Teachers should create an environment that stimulates children’s engagement with books, motivates them to use language actively, and encourages the development of listening and conversation skills. Furthermore, teachers should read books and tell stories to the children and discuss books on a daily basis.

4.2.2 Primary Children and Adolescents

Ensuring adequate time for language and literacy instruction in primary and secondary schools: According to PIRLS 2011, teachers in Norway report allocating less time to the teaching of reading across the curriculum and in reading classes (110 hours) than on average across EU countries (147 hours).

Improving the quality of literacy instruction: Literacy is an essential part of the Norwegian curricula. Steering documents at primary level mention the importance of drawing inferences, making connections between different parts of text and encouraging children to reflect on their own reading process.

In secondary school, literacy instruction is part of “Written communication” and “Language, Literature and Culture”. The curricula mention reading and writing of different texts (genres) and literacy is conceived of as cross-curricular. The focus of the curriculum is on the student’s competences. Advanced literacy skills, both when using printed texts as well as digital texts, is part of the curricula in all subjects and explained in supporting material. The teachers are persuaded to emphasize literacy,
reading and writing in all subjects. It is pointed that an important aim is to “develop strategic readers”, create motivation for reading and “active readers”. Schools should be active in promoting literacy at all levels and in all subjects. All teachers are thought to be responsible for literacy development of their students. However, according to PIRLS 2011 data, fewer students in Norway than on average across the EU-24 are engaged in specific reading comprehension strategies on a daily or almost daily basis. The negative finding on engagement in reading lessons, together with reduced opportunities to engage in reading comprehension strategies, needs to be addressed, and there should be a stronger focus on teaching and applying higher-order reading skills.

**Improving the quality of pre-service and in-service teacher training:** Norway requires primary and lower secondary teachers to have a bachelor’s degree which takes four years’ study. The Norwegian government has decided that primary and lower secondary teacher education will be reorganised as a 5-year master programme in 2017.

According to PIRLS 2011, 48% of the fourth grade students were taught by reading/language teachers with an educational emphasis on language, 48% were taught by teachers with an emphasis on pedagogy/teaching reading, and 15% had teachers with an emphasis on reading theory. These figures are below the corresponding EU-24 averages. Initial teacher education needs a compulsory focus on developing literacy expertise among future primary and secondary teachers. Innovations in the differentiated teacher education system should be capitalised on in the new master’s level programme to be introduced in teacher education, which should preserve its practical orientation. In addition, initial teacher education programmes should be reviewed to ensure that there is a stronger focus on addressing reading difficulties. The emphasis on assessment of reading also needs to be reviewed. There is also a need for greater involvement in CPD on the part of teachers.

**Improving the quality and quantity (participation rates) of continuing professional development (CPD):** According to PIRLS 2011, 32% of students in Norway were taught by teachers who had allocated no time to professional development in reading in the last two years. Attendance of continuing training and in-service courses depends to a large degree on the resources and attitudes of local authorities. Municipal education authorities decide whether staff may participate or not. Top-level education authority assures CPD quality. For mandatory CPD programmes, local authorities need to ensure the conditions for the teachers to be able to attend such courses. Improving the quality and participation rates in continuing professional development targeted at building literacy expertise of teachers is a challenge for Norway.

**Extending systematic assessment of literacy skills:** In Norway, there are standards for what the students should master at the end of grades 2, 4, 7, 10, 11, 12, and 13. Struggling students are identified early in their school career. There are compulsory mapping tests in reading skills for pupils in grades 1, 2 and 3. The purpose of the mapping tests is for teachers and schools to identify which pupils may need additional follow up and adaptation. Norway has a programme of compulsory national tests in grade 5 and grade 8/9 in reading. Constructed similarly to PIRLS and PISA assessments including different texts, multiple choice and constructed response questions, the test allows for monitoring development over several years. The national tests for grade 5 are scored on a three-point scale, while those for grade 8/9 are on a five-point scale, the points indicating achievement levels; there are detailed descriptions of what students at the different achievement levels can do. The main purpose of the national tests is to collect information about pupils’ basic skills and to provide instruments for improvement and development activities locally and centrally. Results from national
tests are expected to give the teacher a better starting point for adapting and planning teaching that is well suited to their pupils. The tests are part of the National Quality Assessment System (NQAS).

**Building a stronger focus on literacy into curricula:** There is a need to mainstream reading / writing literacy across the curriculum and to offer content area literacy instruction in all school subjects throughout secondary education, whether academic or vocational. The new generation of competence-based curricula have integrated literacy skills across subjects, but often literacy dimensions are not described in literacy-specific terms. It would be worthwhile to sharpen the literacy focus to help teachers of all subjects to become literacy teachers.

**4.2.3 Adults**

**Monitoring the quality of adult literacy providers:** Adult literacy provision in Norway is delivered in a number of different sectors, meaning that there is no national quality system nor is there a consistent national quality framework. There are, however, standards within the individual sectors, for example, systems for accrediting providers, or for assuring the quality of teaching.

The Basic Competence in Working Life programme (BCWL) has its own quality standards, with projects being required to comply with programme criteria and the competence goals in basic skills for adults. The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training has developed a framework for defining the five basic skills (oral communication, reading, writing, digital skills and numeracy) and describing what is required at each level. These requirements are general and serve as a basis and reference point for developing subject and grade relevant competence aims in both general education and adult education.

**Developing curricula for adult literacy:** Vox, the Norwegian Agency for Lifelong Learning, has developed basic skills competence goals which describe the proficiencies adults are expected to have, and the intended learning outcomes, at each of three levels. The national standards these goals establish form the basis for training in the workplace, in a training institution or in other contexts. A goals are notable for describing how the competences translate into practical life skills by using real world examples. The competence goals are based on the curricula in the school Knowledge Promotion curriculum and the Framework for basic skills prepared by the Norwegian Directorate of Education and Training.

Vox has also developed basic job skills profiles, methodological guidelines for training providers, mapping tools and tests and various teaching resources and learning models. The basic job skills profiles are intended to facilitate the design of basic skills courses tailored to the needs of each workplace and individual learner. The profiles are also useful tools for the teachers to individualize their training offer to the participants’ needs.

Norwegian literacy provision is based on a social practices model and places a strong emphasis on understanding the motivation of the individual participants, and building on their prior knowledge and skills.

**Improving the qualification and status of teachers of adult literacy:** In general, adult education in Norway has a lower status than education for children and young people. However, teachers in primary and secondary education for adults are employed under the same conditions and with the same salaries as teachers in compulsory primary and secondary education. Most teachers working in primary and secondary education for adults are also employed full-time, but this is not the case in the private sector, which is characterized by part-time, temporary contracts.
For those working in primary and secondary education for adults there are no formal requirements to have specific training in either adult learning or in basic skills, although teachers should have the formal teacher training and competences required to teach at the primary or secondary level.

Special training for basic skills teachers in the form of 30 European Credit Transfer courses is available from the University of Stavanger and the University College of Buskerud and Vestfold to those with teaching degrees, although in general these courses are under-subscribed due to cost barriers and difficulties getting time release from employers. There is a greater take-up of the short, regional courses financed by the Ministry of Education and Research.

### 4.3 Increasing Participation, Inclusion and Equity

#### 4.3.1 Pre-Primary Years

**Compensating socio-economic and cultural background factors:** In Norway, the proportions of children with parents born outside the country (6%) or only one parent born outside the country (12%) are quite close to the corresponding European averages. The proportion of children speaking a different language at home from the one used at school is 3%. There is a quite significant performance gap in reading competence at grade 4 between children who spoke the language of the test before starting school. Efforts to reduce the performance gap in reading competence at grade 4 between children who spoke the language of the test before starting school and those who did not speak the language should be made.

**Increasing pre-school attendance of disadvantaged children:** The Norwegian government has set a moderate maximum fee to be paid by parents for their children to attend pre-school. Financially disadvantaged parents will receive support, and for children with special needs kindergarten is free. While in Norway there are no national programmes to help the poorest parents, teenage mothers, single-parent families, or children whose home language is not the language of school, it must be noted that Norway has very well developed social and health systems. As part of these systems, there are provisions to look after the needs of teenage mothers, single parents and financially disadvantaged citizens.

Children in centre-based ECEC settings receive language support. Norway seeks to employ staff from a migrant or minority background. These staff are involved in the teaching process to provide language support to migrant children and those from ethnic minorities to help them integrate in ECEC. Norway has encouraged ECEC settings to employ bilingual assistants and develop their skills in multicultural and bilingual education.

#### 4.3.2 Primary Children and Adolescents

**Supporting struggling literacy learners:** It is estimated that 17.4% of students in fourth grade in Norway are in need of remedial reading instruction. It is also estimated that 12.1% are in receipt of remedial reading instruction. On average across EU-24 countries, 18.1% of students in Grade 4 are identified by their teachers as being in need of remedial teaching, while 13.3% are identified as being in receipt of such teaching. In Norway, 29.1% of students in fourth grade performed at or below the PIRLS low benchmark on overall reading. Hence, the percentages of students in Norway in receipt of remedial reading instruction (12.1%) is below the percentage that performed poorly on PIRLS.
As compared to the EU-24 average, in Norway, students had less access to specialised professionals, slightly less access to teacher aides, and the same (low) access to adult volunteers to support struggling literacy learners.

Almost all students in Norway (95%, which is above the EU-24 average) are taught by teachers who spend additional time working on reading individually with a student who falls behind. Similarly, 99% of students in Norway (and 97% on average across the EU-24) are taught by teachers who ask parents to provide additional support to a student who falls behind in reading.

Formal provisions to secure participation of foreign language speakers in the educational system are in place. However, the tradition of local autonomy is strong in the Norwegian administrative system and it is important to make sure that children and adolescents have the same opportunities regardless of where in Norway they live.

4.3.3 Adults

**Increasing offers for second-language learners:** Lifelong learning and opportunities for education for adults are important principles in Norwegian education policy, and adults who have not completed primary or lower secondary education earlier in life have a right to free primary and lower secondary education as adults. This right also applies to refugees and immigrants after they have sufficient command of Norwegian. Language training is a central plank of the Norwegian government’s integration strategy, with the local municipalities responsible for providing education programmes for the immigrants who settle there, within three months of their arrival. This provision is financed by the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion (BLD) or by the municipalities, depending on the status of the immigrant. Self-financed courses are available in the private sector.

All refugees and immigrants have a right to a minimum 550 hours and up to a total of 3000 hours of free tutoring in Norwegian language plus 50 hours of introduction to Norwegian society.

Norwegian as a second language courses are at different levels, including those for starting at adults with no literacy skills in their first language. Language tuition regulated by the Introduction Act follows the national curriculum in Norwegian language and social studies for adult immigrants. Vox, the Norwegian Agency for Lifelong Learning, is responsible for the implementation and further development of this curriculum as well as the development and implementation of the final tests in Norwegian language and social studies for immigrants.
5 References


